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**Tell El-Farkha (Ghazala): Season 2003**

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# TELL EL-FARKHA (GHAZALA)

## SEASON 2003

Marek Chłodnicki, Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz

*The present campaign, sponsored by the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, the Poznan Prehistoric Society and the Polish Centre of Archaeology of Warsaw University, lasted from April 5 to June 18.<sup>1)</sup>*

*During the 2003 season work continued on the western kom in an area which had been partly excavated in 2001. Further work was also carried out on the central kom, within the confines of a trench traced in 2000 and later extended to the west. On the eastern tell two trial trenches were explored: one at the cemetery site and the second in the settlement area. Post-processing work was conducted on site, dealing with the pottery, flint and other stone tools, as well as the animal remains.*

1) The team, headed by Dr. Marek Chłodnicki and Prof. Dr. Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz included: Ms Joanna Dębowska, Mr. Maciej Jórdeczka, Ms Iwona Kozieradzka, Mr. Ryszard Kirkowski, Ms Ewa Kuciewicz, Mr. Piotr Szejnoga, archaeologists; Dr. Mariusz Jucha, Ms Agnieszka Mączyńska, ceramologists; Ms Maria Ablamowicz, Dr. Daniel Makowiecki, paleozoologists; Prof. Dr. Maciej Pawlikowski, Mr. Michał Wasilewski, geologists; Mr. Robert Staboński, Mrs. Halina Żarska-Chłodnicka, documentalists; Mr. Paweł Hołda, Ms Anna Longa, Mr. Łukasz Obtulowicz, Ms Magdalena Piątek, Mr. Michał Rozwadowski, Mr. Krzysztof Stawarz, Mr. Leszek Szumlas, Ms Monika Zapart, students. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Mr. Yasser el-Said el-Gamal from the Mansura Inspectorate.

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE WESTERN KOM

The objective of explorations on the Western Kom in 2003 was to complete the clearing of a big Nagadian building, discovered and explored in 2000 (eastern part) and in 2002 (western part, the younger phases), and of the western part of a Lower Egyptian structure also discovered and examined in 2000 (eastern part).<sup>2)</sup> The entire trench opened two years earlier (505 m<sup>2</sup>) was explored, reaching a depth of 1 m below the last layer excavated in 2002.

Further exploration of the western part of the big Nagadian structure (*Fig. 1*) revealed no major differences compared to the eastern part of the building (older phase) recorded in 2000. A distinct destruction deposit was present beneath walls connected with the younger period of occupation. The phase in question is also characterized by a reduction in the thickness of the main wall and a division into smaller compartments evident under the destruction deposit. Relatively thin walls (0.30-0.60 m) forming narrow compartments, which were probably later filled with earth, formed the foundations of the building. Some of them were connected with the main building; others (on the northeastern side) constituted storerooms. A few storage vessels were found in these rooms, most of them crushed by the pressure of overlying deposits. Some had characteristic wavy handles and were made from non-Egyptian clay. They undoubtedly represent imports from Palestine. Other much smaller vessels were discovered abandoned on the floor of the building. A greywacke palette in the

shape of a bird was discovered in one of the storage vessels, together with a small flint knife (*Fig. 2*). West of the main building a number of ovens were recorded. As in 2000, a mud deposit that was practically sterile archaeologically was uncovered beneath the last layer of the building, possibly pointing to a temporary abandonment of the site. This episode of Nile flooding occurred before the Nagada settlers arrived at Tell el-Farkha.

In 2003, explorations reached strata associated with the Lower Egyptian culture, uncovering two structures of importance (not entirely excavated this year for lack of time). The first is a brewery, very much like the one uncovered in 1999 and explored fully in 2000.<sup>3)</sup> It lies 10 m to the west of the original brewery building and is the bigger of the two (5.90 x 6.10 m, compared to 4.70 x 4.70 m for the one previously explored). Both buildings display the same construction techniques, with 6-7 circles and a vat at the center of each (*Fig. 3*). As no other buildings of the kind have been found to date anywhere else in the Nile Delta, the two breweries from Tell el-Farkha are the earliest ever to be recorded in this region. Only a brewery at Hierakonpolis in Upper Egypt is older than our two, but its construction is completely different.

The other structure of importance is a Lower Egyptian building discovered already in 2000. Virtually the entire excavated area is covered with furrows forming rectangular units in which many post holes, mud stands for pots and other,

2) Cf. M. Chłodnicki, K.M. Ciałowicz, *PAM XII, Reports 2000* (2001), 86-95; *PAM XIV, Reports 2002* (2003), 100-103.

3) Id. id., *PAM XI, Reports 1999* (2000), 61-69; *PAM XII*, loc. cit.



*Fig. 1. Western Kom. Nagadian building, older phase  
(Photo R. Słaboński)*



*Fig. 2. Western Kom. Greywacke palette and flint knife found inside a storage jar  
(Photo R. Słaboński)*

not immediately recognizable features were found (cf. *Fig. 3*). Together with the section discovered three years ago the structure now covers at least 500 m<sup>2</sup> and is the largest foundation dating from the

Lower Egyptian culture known so far. It clearly testifies to the advancement of the indigenous populations of the Nile Delta obviously going far beyond what was previously believed.

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE CENTRAL KOM

The total area explored on the central kom, including a westward extension of the trench measuring 2.5 x 6 m, covers 521 m<sup>2</sup>. The thickness of the excavated deposits was about 50 cm (levels 32-35).

Further sections of mud-brick structures discovered previously<sup>4)</sup> were record-

ed. In the eastern part of the trench, several rooms oriented NE-SW were cleared around two courtyards separated from the rest of the excavated area by a 1.5 m thick wall (*Fig. 5*). Evidence of soil erosion caused by wind and water was observed in the northwestern section of the trench.



*Fig. 3. Western Kom. Remains of brewery and furrows of the Lower Egyptian Building (Photo R. Słaboński)*

4) Cf. PAM XII, op. cit., 96.

Mud brick structures were also recorded in this area.

Over 50 ovens and hearths of different shape and construction were found in the rooms and courtyards. These ovens characteristically had bottomless pots placed at their center. Large amounts of pottery, as well as stone and flint implements were also found. Based on the pottery assemblage, the excavated deposits can be dated to the beginning of the Nagada III phase. The remains of a grain silo were also discovered.

Among the more noteworthy finds was a stone pendant in the shape of a gazelle, a fragment of cylindrical seal with animal representations (Fig. 4), and a number of clay seals.



Fig. 4. Central Kom. Cylindrical seal with animal representations  
(Photo R. Słaboński)



Fig. 5. Central Kom. Mud brick structures  
(Photo R. Słaboński)

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE EASTERN KOM

One of the two trenches dug this year on the eastern kom was situated on the southern slope, where a cemetery had been identified in 2001 and explored in 2002. The team concentrated on exploring Grave 4, identified last year, but not excavated,<sup>5)</sup> and continued the exploration of a trench opened in the previous season (more work is still needed on this area measuring c. 250 m<sup>2</sup>, featuring 3 m deep deposits). Cleaning the north trench wall revealed yet two more graves, one of which (no. 13) was explored this year.

**Grave 4.** The grave turned out to be a structure built of mud brick, 413 x 200 cm in size, consisting of two chambers (inside dimensions: 90 x 150 cm north chamber; 190 x 150 cm south chamber, *Fig. 7*). The tomb lay a mere 10 cm below the present ground surface.

The poorly preserved skeleton – identified as that of an old man – was not in anatomical order, although the head appears to have pointed to the north. Thirty-seven pots were found inside the grave (29 in the north chamber, *Fig. 6*, and eight in the south one), along with a basalt vessel and a very small fragment of a greywacke palette (south chamber). The pottery included chiefly medium-sized jars, bowls and cylindrical jars. The grave can be dated to the Dynasty 0/period I.

**Grave 13.** An unfurnished burial containing a poorly preserved human skeleton was discovered 50 cm below the ground surface. The body lay in contracted position on its right side, head pointing west and looking south. The absence of grave goods made precise dating difficult. Judging by the stratigraphy alone, it could

be dated to the end of the Early Dynastic period or to the beginning of the Old Kingdom.

Excavation in the rest of the trench revealed the remains of a very large mud- and sand-brick construction extending beneath all of the tombs explored to date. The walls of this building (running north-east, as is the rule at Tell el-Farkha) are about 1 m wide and have bricks lying in different directions, positioned between them. This structure was examined to a depth of 1 m (from the top), but its function – whether sepulchral or occupational – remains to be resolved in future excavations.

The trench on the western slope, originally measuring 15 x 10 m (area delimited in 2002) was extended to the west. The enlargement, which measured 5 x 5 m, permitted explorations to continue around and below the roughly round building excavated in 2002.<sup>6)</sup> The upper layers yielded remains of Old Kingdom and Early Dynastic settlement. Among the more notable finds were two clay seals with hieroglyphic inscriptions dating to Early Dynastic Times.

The rectangular feature discovered under this round structure in 2002 was observed to stand over the remains of a floor made of red-brick tiles. These tiles measured roughly 20 x 34 cm and were about 4 cm thick. They had been made specifically as floor tiles, as evidenced by their smoothed upper surfaces and rough undersides. They were laid in a room which probably measured c. 5 x 2 m. Only part of one row of tiles at the south end of the room and some in its center have

5) Cf. *PAM XIII, Reports 2001* (2002), 113-117, and *PAM XIV*, op. cit., 106-108.

6) Cf. *PAM XIV*, op. cit., 109.

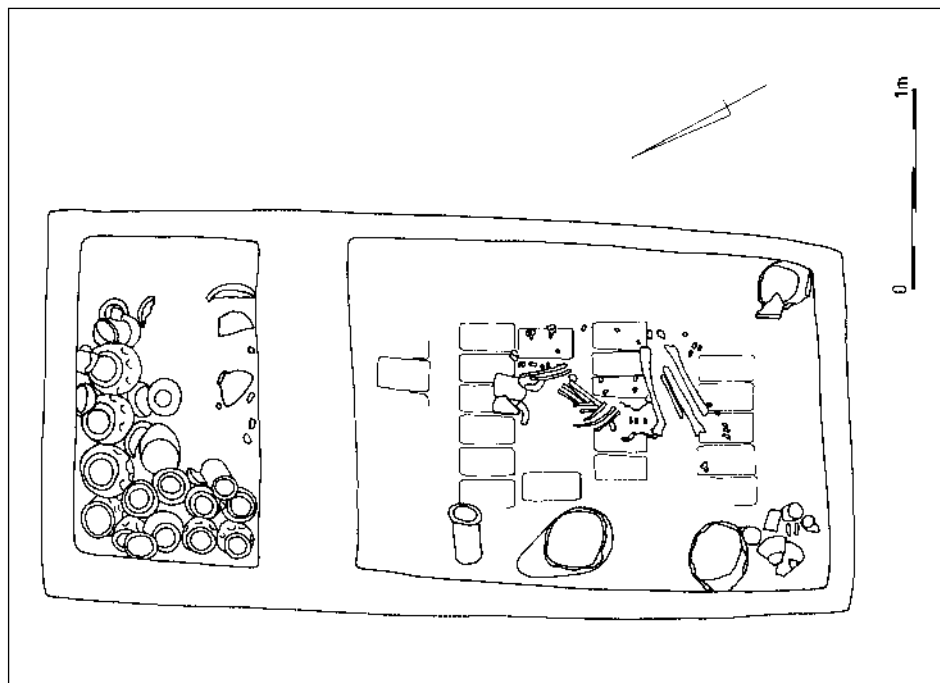


Fig. 7. Eastern Kom, Grave 4  
(Drawing J. Dębouska)



Fig. 6. Eastern Kom, Pottery found in the north chamber of  
Grave 4 (Photo R. Skałowski)



survived (*Fig. 8*). The rest of the room was filled with rubble consisting of crushed tiles and a red stratum indicating that tiles had been removed from these areas. A second rectangular feature of similar dimensions was noted alongside. This was filled with red rubble and may have originally had a similar floor of red-brick tiles.

In the levels beneath these two structures, a series of mud brick walls were discovered, forming a number of small rooms of no clear function. Contrary to buildings found on the central and western mounds, which have a NE-SW orientation, the walls here followed almost exactly the N-S and E-W axes. The rooms changed form in successive construction phases

until all traces of them vanished at level 23. A large number of ovens was found inside these rooms, but only those in the lower levels (17-21/22) contained vessels.

The remains of a complex pattern of walls, but only one course high, were discovered in the eastern end of the trench, beneath a 10-cm thick alluvial layer.

For the moment, the interpretation of the architecture on the eastern kom raises some difficulties. The assemblage of finds is not much different from that in other parts of the settlement, but the layout of the buildings (round structures, different orientation) and the construction materials used, such as red-brick not noted elsewhere on the site, make the area quite distinct.



*Fig. 8. Eastern Kom. Red-brick tiles in the trench on the eastern slope  
(Photo R. Słaboński)*

The answer may lie in a building standing to the south of the trench. A mud-brick wall can be seen in the southern end of the pit; it appeared without break from level 8 to level 22 and remained undisturbed despite the changing layout of the rooms abutting it from the north and explored this year. The orientation of this mysterious structure was apparently N-S and E-W, and dictated the orientation of all the other structures built onto it. This issue will be resolved in next year's digging.

Particularly noteworthy in the assemblage from this trench is a set of seals

with hieroglyphic inscriptions (dating from the First to Second Dynasty) found in the upper levels. Other interesting finds include fragments of two rectangular slate palettes discovered within a wall (Feature 16). Pottery was again the most common category of finds and provided a date for the mud-brick structures discovered this year no earlier than Nagada IIIa1. Other widely represented material included flint and stone tools, and large quantities of badly damaged animal bones. Luxury items, in the form of jewelry, were also noted – among them the only complete example of a bronze bracelet found at this site.