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## **Recent research at Tell el- Farkha (Eastern Nile Delta)**

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The site of Tell el Farkha was identified by the Italian Archaeological Mission in 1987. In 1988-1990 the mission, directed by Rodolfo Fattovich, carried out initial excavations at the site. Most of the fieldwork was concentrated on the centrally situated, biggest mound kom of the site. Only small trenches were made on the eastern and western kom (Chłodnicki et al. 1991; 1992; 1992a). The lower layers of the trenches located on the southern slope of the central mound had yielded evidence for a local Predynastic culture, while the upper ones contain material of the Nagada culture. The remains of the Old Kingdom and Early Dynastic architecture had been discovered on the top of the mounds of this site.

The activity of the Italian mission ended with the 1990 campaign. In this year at the top of the central mound a pit of 20 x 20 m was investigated but its excavation was not completed. The surface deposit brought to light some fire installations, very late pits and first evidence of architectonic remains. These remains are dated to the Old Kingdom times, and the two lowermost structures can be of the Early Dynastic chronology.

The research of the Italian mission has made evident several occupational phases of the site; the earliest going back to the Predynastic period and contemporary with the earliest phases of Tell el Iswid and Buto sites, and the later phases, dated to the protodynastic and early Old Kingdom times (van den Brink, 1989, 1992; von der Way, 1992).

In 1998 the Polish Archaeological Mission began a new stage of the exploration of the Tell el-Farkha site (Fig. 1-2). The aim of the first campaign was a reconnaissance of the site from the stratigraphic and geological point of view. In the 1999 season extensive excavations were made in the western kom (Ciałowicz, this volume). Test excavations were continued in the central kom in

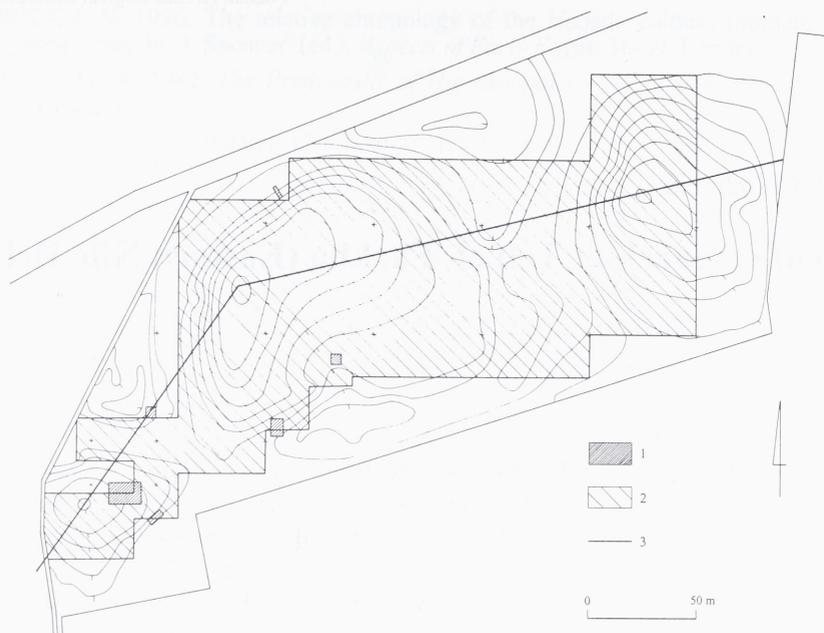


Fig. 1. Tell el Farkha. Archaeological activity on the site 1987-2000.  
1. Archaeological trenches 2. Area of geophysical survey 3. Line of bore-holes.

1999 and in 2000 extensive explorations were started in the place where the Italian expedition stopped its work (Chłodnicki & Ciałowicz 1999; 2000).

Geophysical surveying (Fig. 1 and 3) carried out by Tomasz Herbich in 1998 and 1999 covered almost the whole surface area of the site. Distinct traces of architectural remains dating to the youngest settlement phases (near the surface) were identified in the course of this survey. These features were particularly prominent in the southern and central part of the central kom. Evidence of buildings trails off towards the north of the site. This may be due to the increased build-up deposits overlying structural remains in this area. Survey results also suggest that the older settlement features continue further south, underlying the modern village of Ghazala (Chłodnicki & Herbich 2000).

Two auguring lines across the site were made. The first one, starting from the boundary of the village and ending in the cultivated fields, stretched from the south to the north (Fig. 2). The bore-holes, up to 5 m deep, permitted to define the top level of the gezira sand and the thickness of the overlying deposits. An important discovery was three layers with pottery fragments extending beyond

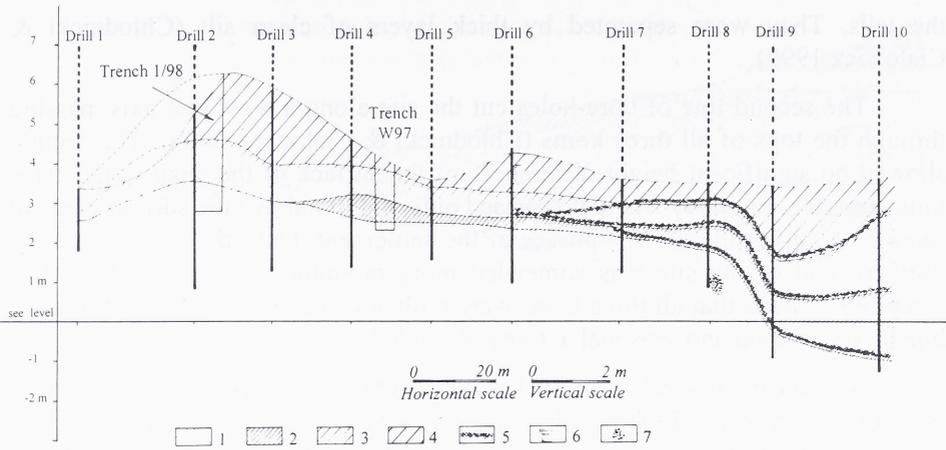


Fig. 2. Tell el Farkha. N-S geological profile through the site.

1. very fine sands 2. silt, very dark grey, sometimes with sand admixture 3. silt, very dark grey
4. silt, dark grey, usually with sand admixture 5. very intensive layer of potsherds
6. calcareous intrusions 7. reddish-brown stain.



Fig. 3. Tell el Farkha. Mudbrick walls outlines traced through geophysical study of the site.

the tells. They were separated by thick layers of clean silt (Chłodnicki & Ciałowicz 1999).

The second line of bore-holes cut the site along a west-east axis, passing through the tops of all three koms (Chłodnicki & Ciałowicz 2000). The section showed no significant height differences of the surface of the gezira sand. This indicates that this sandy island was raised only slightly above the surrounding silt sediments during the earliest phases of the settlement. Only the elevation at the northern end of the site was somewhat more pronounced. The results of this sampling confirm that all three koms were built at this site as a result of intensive human occupation and seasonal activity of the Nile.

At the central kom four trenches were excavated - on the southern, northern and western slope. First trench (C16) was located on the southern slope, close to the Italian excavations, in the area where the upper levels of the settlement were disturbed by sebakh diggers (Fig. 4). Seventeen cultural layers were identified in this trench. The upper layers (1-10) are dated to the Early Dynastic times. Levels 11-14 are connected with the Nagada IIc-d phase (Chłodnicki & Ciałowicz 1999). The best preserved level associated with the Lower Egyptian settlement yielded several pits and post-holes. Also recorded were furrows, forming a rectangular ground plan. This level contains relatively large amount of badly damaged ceramic material - mostly fragments of small, irregular bowls or small jars decorated with zigzag pattern.

The second trench (C49), situated on the southern slope of the central kom, was situated in the area (Fig. 5), where the magnetic resistance surveying had indicated the existence of a set of linear features and a round structure with strong magnetic properties. It was designed to verify the results of this survey and the excavations confirmed the presence of 50-cm-wide mud-brick walls running just below the surface. The round feature provide to be a hearth with a dense layer of ash.

Eleven levels were identified in this trench. The top three (with which the uppermost wall was associated) can be dated to Nagada III period. The lowest level containing mud-brick construction dates to Nagada II-d period. The two bottom levels, which produced the remains of a round shelter, can be linked to the Lower Egyptian culture. Features associated with the Lower Egyptian culture generally occur in two stratigraphic contexts: in the lower one, where only material of this culture occurs, and in the upper one with the admixture of the Nagadian pottery (Chłodnicki & Ciałowicz 2000). A large ceramic assemblage (including whole vessels) was discovered in this trench, as a well as large amount of flint tools. Sickle blades are the most common among them, with knives occurring in smaller quantities.

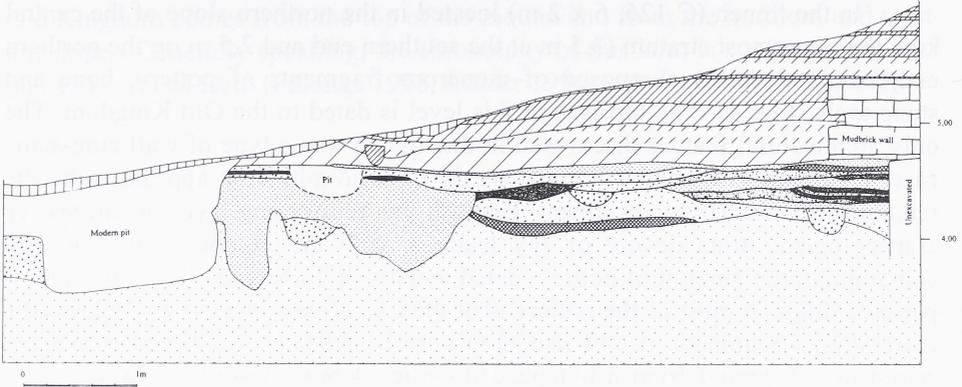


Fig. 4 Tell el Farkha. Central Kom. Trench C16. Western section

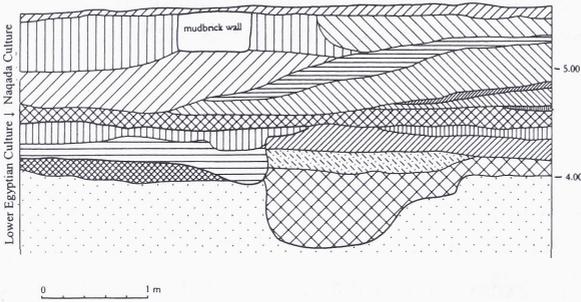


Fig. 5. Tell el Farkha. Central Kom. Trench C 49. Southern section

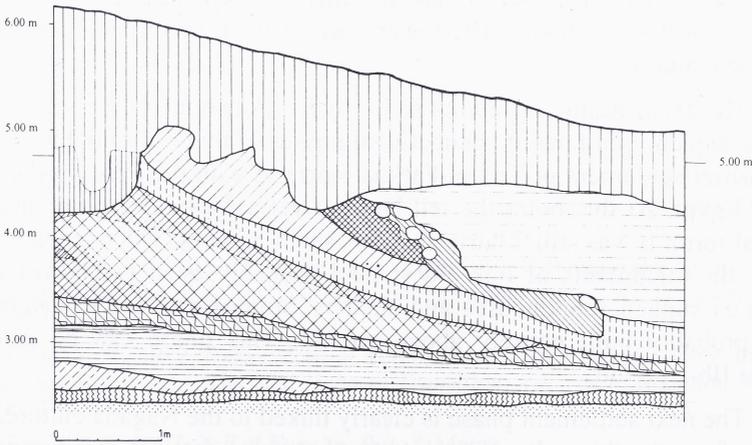


Fig. 6. Tell el Farkha. Central Kom. Trench C 126, western section.

In the trench (C 126, 6 x 2 m) located in the northern slope of the central kom the uppermost stratum (3,5 m at the southern end and 2,5 m on the northern end) contained debris composed of numerous fragments of pottery, bone and stone tools (Fig. 6). The top part of this level is dated to the Old Kingdom. The only architectural feature discovered in this trench was a type of wall-cum-staircase made partly of mud-brick and partly of solid silt. This appears to be the remains of a waterfront revetment. Beneath this reinforcing layer lie successive archaeological strata devoid of any features, with the exception of a backfill containing large amount of pottery, dated tentatively to Nagada IIcd - Nagada III period. Although most of the pottery is of the Late Predynastic or Early Dynastic chronology, fragments of Old Kingdom vessels indicate that these layers were raised in this period from a redeposited earlier debris. A sunken feature set in sand was unearthed beneath these layers of backfill, clearly separated from them by a thin layer of blue silt. This structure lay about 1,5 m below the present field level and is attributed to the Lower Egyptian culture. A clay bead or amulet was found among pottery sherds in this structure as well as a perforated disc which have served as a seal.

It seems that the sondage in question was situated in the area which was, after the Lower Egyptian culture times, within the immediate vicinity of the shoreline. No domestic buildings were raised here. The only feature present in this time period was a rubbish dump, which as it developed in Old Kingdom times, protected the settlement perimeters from flooding.

In 2000 the excavations were started on the top of the central mound, in the same place where in 1990 the Italian excavations were carried out. It was found that the uppermost layers of the trench are of the early Old Kingdom chronology. This level yielded the remains of fireplaces and badly preserved mud-brick walls and floors. The lowermost levels in this trench contained Early Dynastic material.

The excavations carried out so far by the Polish mission confirm the stratigraphic sequence and major occupational phases of this site found by the Italians. The earliest settlement of Tell el-Farkha emerged with the Predynastic culture of Lower Egypt. At this point the tell had not yet achieved its pronounced topographical form. It was still a fairly shallow, sandy mound. The occupation remains left by the inhabitants of this oldest (and probably most extensive) settlement consist of sunken roundhouses and shelters, storage pits and rectangular structures, probably built entirely above ground. This phase can be dated to the Nagada IIb-c period.

The next settlement phase is clearly linked to the Nagada culture, probably starting from the this culture. Architectural remains dated to this period occur in the central and southern part of the mound. The evidence for an occupation in the

Old Kingdom comes from the top of the mound and from the northern and western slopes. Generally speaking, the chronology of this kom is contemporary with phases II - VI of Buto (Faltings 1998; Köhler 1996; von der Way 1992; 1997).

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