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## **Tell el-Farkha 2001: the settlement pottery of phases 5 and 4a - a preliminary report**

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The stratigraphy of Tell el-Farkha (Chłodnicki and Ciałowicz 1999, 2000; Jucha 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b), has been divided into seven occupation phases. Five of these (phases 1 – 5) were attested on the Western Kom of the site. While the lowermost levels of the settlement (phase 1) belong to the Lower Egyptian Culture and subsequent levels (phase 2) are considered as a transitional phase between the Lower and Upper Egyptian cultural tradition, the following phases - 3 to 5 - are dated from the Predynastic Period (Naqada II d2/III a1 or the end of Naqada II D2) to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period (Naqada III b/c1 or end of III B-C1). Subsequent phases 6 and 7 dated respectively to the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom times (dynasty III – IV ?) were found on the Central Kom of the Tell el-Farkha site.

In the following paper I will focus on the pottery found in 2001 on the Western Kom. During this season the upper strata of the then established new trenches, situated to the west of the area excavated in 1999 – 2000, were excavated. On the basis of current research on the pottery from this site, these strata can be assigned to phase 5 and the upper levels of phase 4 (lower levels of phase 4 were excavated in 2002) at Tell el-Farkha.

### **The pottery of Phase 5**

The upper levels of the Western Kom excavated in 2001 contained pottery types characteristic for the Protodynastic/Early Dynastic period which allowed us to include these levels to phase 5.

The ceramic assemblage of this phase is dominated by rough ware (R2). Most vessels of this class were tempered with fine to medium sand and fine to medium straw, though examples tempered with sand or sand and small amount of organic material were also found.

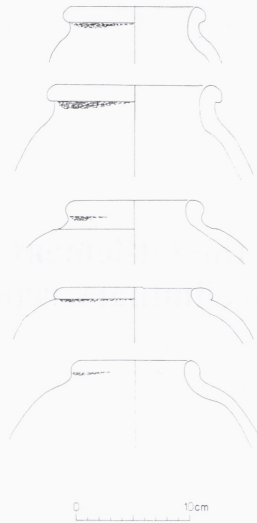


Fig. 1. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Rough ware (R2) jars.

Among the pottery forms the following types occur: different jars with rounded external extension or with roll rim and with or without necks (Fig. 1:1-4), fragments of jars with simple rim (Fig. 1:5), jars without the bottom which was probably broken intentionally (Fig. 2:1) as well as fragments of narrow jars with thickened external extension of the rim and almost straight or slightly convex sides (Fig. 2:2) which may belong to jars with very narrow flattened or irregular base, though these (both rims and bases) occur sporadically in this phase and are particularly typical for phase 4. Also bag-shaped jars (Fig. 2:3) were found. Moreover, fragments of hole mouth jars (Fig. 2:4), which may belong to the local ceramic tradition, occur. Among other forms following types were found: bowls with convex walls and simple rim with rounded rim top (Fig. 3:1) as well as with almost straight (divergent) walls and simple rim (Fig. 3:2), bowls with concave walls and with simple rim or slightly thickened external extension (Fig. 3:3) (Emery 1961: 213, Fig. 122: 26; Gophna 1995: 73-74, Fig. 1; Köhler 1998: 25, Taf. 32-33), deep bowls and pot-stands. Among the bases occur mostly both different flat and rounded ones.

Another group of pottery consist of various miniature vessels. These were made of higher quality fabric, tempered mostly with sand and without or with less amount of fine to medium straw (Fig. 3:4-6). Surface of these vessels was mostly smoothed. Another class of pottery is rough ware (R1) tempered with medium to coarse sand grains and fine to medium chaff or coarse straw. This class is also abundant in phase 5 though less in number than rough ware class R2.

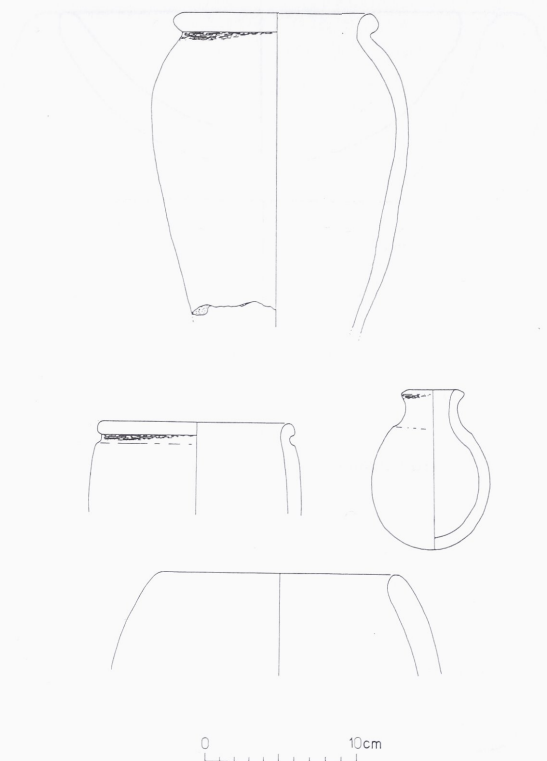


Fig. 2. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Rough ware (R2) jars.

Almost all potsherds of rough ware belong to thick walled bread-moulds (Fig. 4:1-2). Among them shallow spherical forms with rounded base and rounded rim top are the most frequent, though shallow forms, sometimes with flattened base also occur sporadically as well as examples with flattened or flat rim top and forms with slightly concave rim top. Pot-marks have been recorded also on the walls of some of bread-moulds. They occur mostly inside the vessels (but there are also known examples with pot-marks situated outside). Most of these bread-moulds belong to the forms which generally occur starting from the Naqada III period (Eggebrecht 1974: 176, Abb.1:d; Jacquet-Gordon 1981: Fig. 1:1-4; Köhler 1998: Taf. 42:1-3; van den Brink 1989: 78, Fig. 13:4,7-8; 1992: 52-53, Fig. 7:3).

Different types of red burnished or polished bowls, which represent the fine tableware were also collected from strata of phase 5. Most of these pots were made of Nile silt with very fine sand inclusion. Examples made of Nile silt

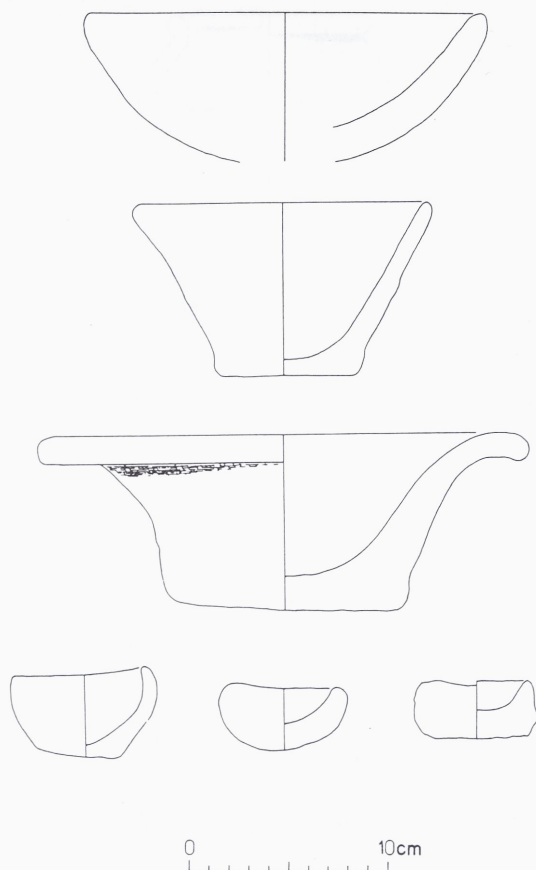


Fig. 3. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Rough ware (R2) bowls (1-3) and miniature vessels (4-6).

tempered with sand and small amount of straw, as well as examples made of marl clay also occur although rarely. Most fragments belong to different types of bowls. These bowls were mostly red slipped and streak burnished. Very characteristic are vertically burnished bowls. Examples horizontally burnished outside and vertically inside also occur, as well as examples which have the upper part of the inner surface, just below the rim, horizontally burnished and the lower part of inner surface burnished vertically. Shapes of these vessels include mostly simple shallow to medium or deep forms with more or less convex or straight walls and simple rim (Fig. 5:1-4) as well as bowls with breakdown of the walls in its upper part and forms with thickened external rim (Fig. 5:5). Similar examples are also known from other sites in the Nile Delta where they occur in Naqada III strata

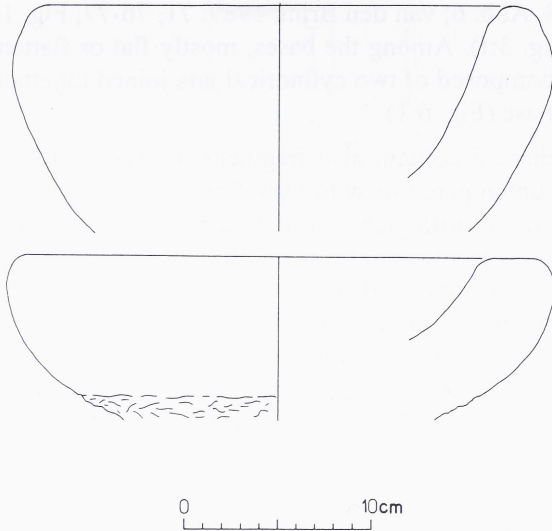


Fig. 4. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Rough ware (R1) pottery.

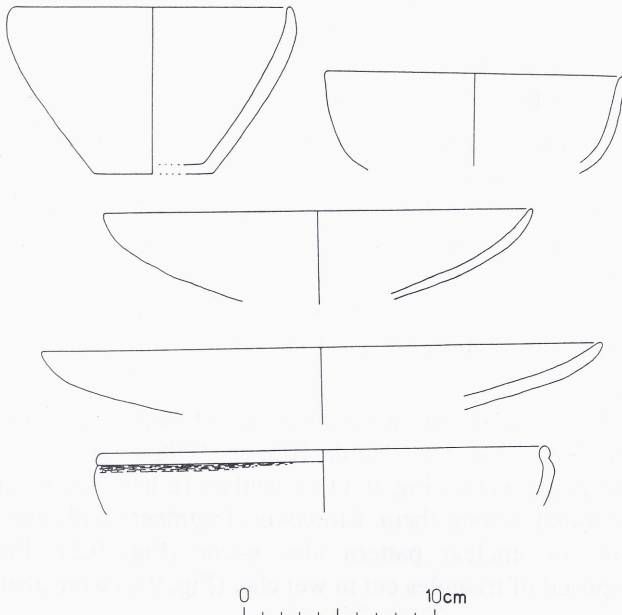


Fig. 5. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Red coated pottery.

(Köhler 1998: 7-8, Abb. 6; van den Brink 1989: 71, 76-77, Fig. 14:1-8; Friedman 1992: 200-202, Fig. 3:f). Among the bases, mostly flat or flattened forms occur. A double vessel, composed of two cylindrical jars joined together was also found in layers of this phase (Fig. 6:1).

Strata of phase 5 contain also fragments of very hard, fine ware pottery made of Nile silt untempered or with very fine sand inclusions. Examples made of marl clay also occur although rarely. The marl clay pottery, which in most cases belong to jars with modelled wavy pattern or to cylindrical jars with different incised, grooved or impressed decoration, is likely to be imported from Upper Egypt and represent only a small portion of the pottery assemblage. The surface of the fine ware pottery is very well smoothed. Pot-marks occur in few cases (Fig. 6:2; Fig. 7:1). Among the pottery shapes occur complete examples of small drop-shaped vessels (Fig. 3:3), and different kinds of necked jars (Fig. 7:1-7), sometimes with marks of turning device on the neck. Moreover to this class of pottery belong also: fragments of bowls and different flat and rounded bases as well as fragments of cylindrical jars with different decoration, potsherds decorated with wavy pattern and pottery with painted decoration.

Another class of pottery is characterised by the yellow coated surface. This pottery constitutes a very small part of ceramic assemblage of phase 5. Among them may occur: fragments of jars and bowls which were classified as fine ware pottery made of Nile silt untempered or with very fine sand inclusions, or made of marl clay. Examples made of Nile silt with coarser inclusions of sand and straw and also with a yellow coat may also occur.

Different kinds of potsherds with painted, impressed, incised, grooved or modelled decoration were also collected from layers of phase 5. Fragments with decoration composed of wavy lines and wavy parallel lines in short groups (Fig. 8:1-4), which is especially typical of Naqada IIIa2 though it may occur also later (Hendrickx 1993: 37-38, 71; Kaiser 1957: Taf. 24; Petrie 1921:Tab. XXXII: D20, D21; 1953:Tab. IX:53f; Tab. XXVI:87k, Tab. XXVII:91D7, Tab. XXIX: 94k) are dominant among potsherds with painted decoration, but other patterns also occur (Fig. 8:5).

Another kind of decoration is composed of impressed dots (Adams and Friedman 1992: 323-324; Fig. 4:a-d; Köhler 1998: 138, Taf. 57:3, 4, 6). Fragments belonging to jars (Fig. 9:1) as well as to bowls with internal ledge (Fig. 9:2) were found among them. Moreover, fragments with punctuated decoration and lines of unclear pattern also occur (Fig. 9:3). Potsherds with decoration composed of triangles cut in wet clay (Fig. 9:4) were also found.

Few potsherds with lightly impressed or smoothed row of half-bows on the shoulders (Fig. 10:1-2) were also found in the contents of phase 5. This

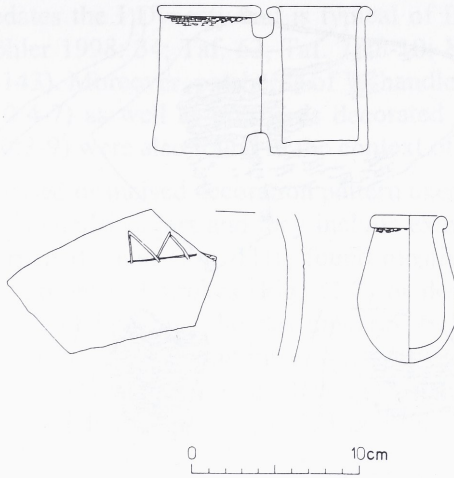


Fig. 6. Kom W. Complete vessels (1,3) and fine ware potsherd with pot-mark (2).

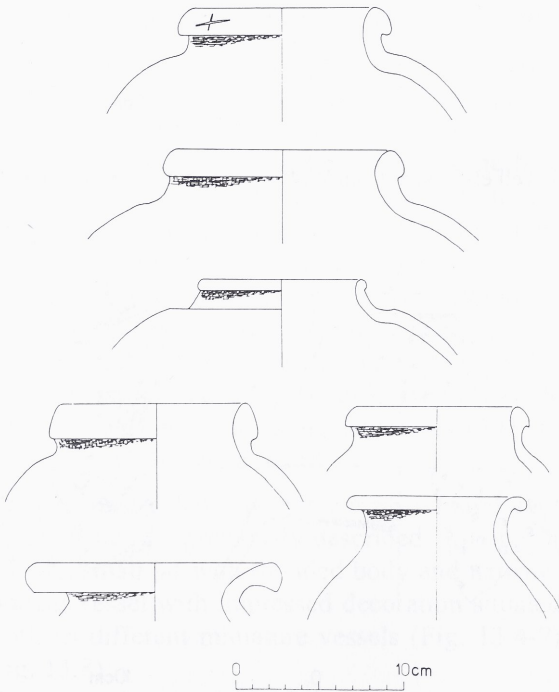


Fig. 7. Kom W. Fine ware jars.



Fig. 8. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Potsherds with painted decoration.

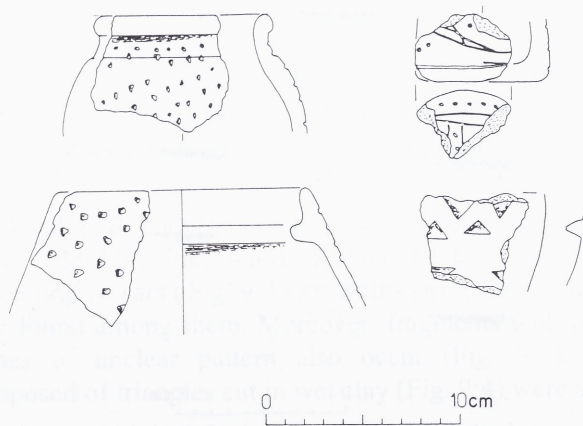


Fig. 9. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Potsherds with impressed decoration.



pattern generally predates the I Dynasty and is typical of Dynasty 0/beginnings of the I Dynasty (Köhler 1998: 34; Taf. 62, Taf. 71:8-10; Kroeper 1988: 14-16, Figs. 80, 91-95, 141-143). Moreover, potsherds of W-handled and decorated with wavy pattern (Fig. 10:4-7) as well as potsherds decorated with modelled wavy design (band) (Fig. 10:8-9) were also found in the context of phase 5.

Different impressed or incised decoration pattern executed beneath the rim occur on fragments of cylindrical jars and they include examples decorated with straight line with sharpened edges (Fig. 11:1) found mostly in uppermost layer, potsherds with line of impressed strokes (Fig. 11:2) or decorated with a raised band of decoration formed by pushing the clay upwards with the finger-nail (Fig. 11:3) as well as other types with different impressed pattern (Fig. 11:4-5). Due to their forms and decoration the cylindrical jars belong evolutionally to the stage of development of W-class dated to the Naqada III period. This decoration occur especially in Naqada IIIb and Naqada IIIb/c1, although some of them may occur even earlier in Naqada IIIa2 times (Hendrickx 1993: 84-85; Petrie 1921: Tab. XXX; 1953: Tab. VIII-IX; Köhler 1998: 33, 49, Abb. 24, Taf. 58:3-11; van den Brink 1992: 52-53; 1989: 77, Fig. 14:13-14; Kroeper 1988: Figs. 86-88).

### **Complete vessels found in architectural structures No. 106 and No. 115**

Apart from a few examples of complete pots mentioned above, a greater part of complete or reconstructable vessels coming from upper strata of Western Kom were found in great architectural structures discovered in 2001. These structures include the large building No.106 which on the basis of preliminary research, seems to be founded in the previous phase 4 but it still existed in phase 5. The most interesting is the pottery assemblage found in the southern room of this construction together with Early Dynastic (?) deposit composed of rattlers and anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines. Among pottery vessels found in connection with this deposit were two small jars (Fig. 12:1-2), a drop-shaped jar (Fig. 12:3), red burnished bowl (Fig. 12:4), a vessel with hole in the base (Fig. 12:5) and miniature vessels (Fig. 12:6-7). In other part of this building also another drop - shaped jar (Fig. 12:8), a miniature vessel (Fig. 12:9) and small bird - shaped vessel (Fig. 12:10) were found.

Complete or reconstructable pots were also found in the building 115 situated to the west of the one previously described. Among them were a bag - shaped jar (Fig. 13:1), small jar with rounded body and narrow neck (Fig. 13:2), very small cylindrical vessel with impressed decoration situated beneath the rim (Fig. 13:3), as well as different miniature vessels (Fig. 13:4-7) and a vessel of foreign origin (Fig. 13:8).



Fig. 10. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Potsherds with lightly impressed bows or with wavy pattern and modelled wavy design (band).

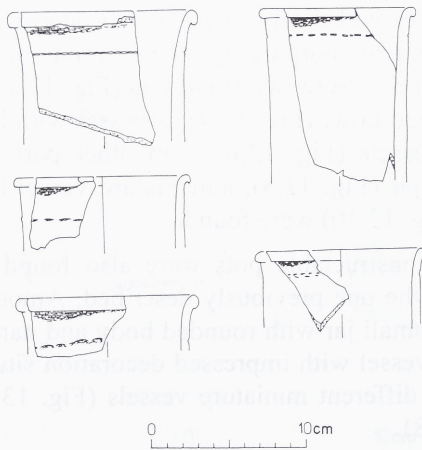


Fig. 11. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Cylindrical jars.

Current research on the recently found pottery indicates that phase 5 at Tell el-Farkha should be dated to the end of the Protodynastic Period/beginnings of Early Dynastic period and that this phase of occupation terminated at this site during the First Dynasty (Naqada IIIb/c1 or end of IIIB – C1).

### **The pottery assemblage of phase 4**

The lower strata excavated on the Western Kom in 2001 contained pottery which is characteristic for the Protodynastic period and so was connected with the phase 4 (the strata belonging to this phase were only partially excavated in 2001 and the lowermost levels belonging to phase 4 were finished in following season in 2002). As not all the levels belonging to phase 4 were examined in 2001, this part of my report should be considered as a short and preliminary description of their pottery; a full characterisation of this assemblage will be possible at a later date.

On the basis of pottery collected during the 2001 season from strata of the phase 4 we can tentatively say that both the wares and forms follow the types of phase 4 found in trenches excavated on the Western Kom during 1999 and 2000 seasons.

Rough ware pottery tempered with fine to medium sand and fine to medium straw (R2) is more abundant in this phase than in phase 5. Moreover, it was observed that going down the levels it becomes almost a dominant class of pottery. Among the forms the most popular are jars with almost straight or slightly convex sides and with thickened external extension. A majority of pottery may belong to jars with very narrow and flattened or irregular base. Moreover, examples of almost complete tall tapering vessels were found though all of them without the bottom part, which was probably narrow and flattened. These vessels were found left in different fireplaces (stoves) as were similar pots found on the Western Kom during the excavations in 1998-1999. These vessels differ in height and seem to be connected with the food preparation; they may had been used as jars to parch corn. Among other forms occur different jars with thickened external extension or roll rim, bag - shaped jars (one was found with two holes in the body), hole - mouth jars and different types of bowls. Most of their bases belong to flat or flattened and irregular forms though rounded bases also occur. Fragments of potsherds with two reworked edges were also found.

The rough ware pottery tempered with medium to coarse sand grains and fine to medium chaff or coarse straw (R1) also occurs though in less quantity than R2, and in this phase it constitutes a smaller part of the pottery assemblage than in the phase 5. Most of the potsherds of this kind of ware belong to thick walled bread-moulds of shallow spherical forms with rounded base and rounded rim top, which constitute a dominant group of forms among bread moulds.

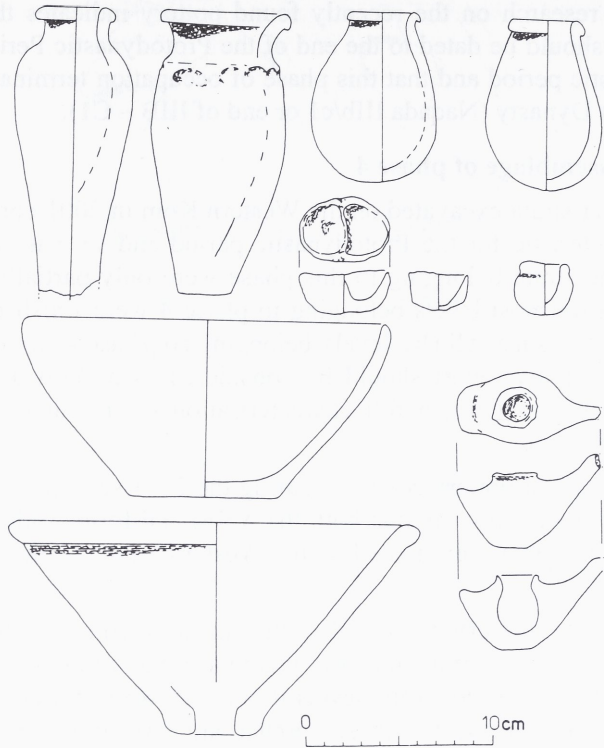


Fig. 12. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Complete or reconstructable vessels from building No. 106.

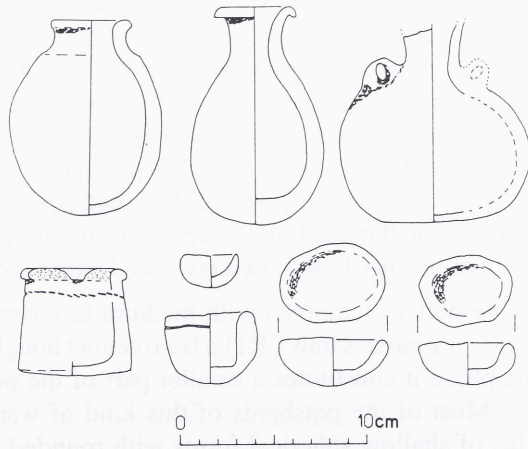


Fig. 13. Tell el-Farkha. Kom W. Complete or reconstructable vessels from building No. 115.

Although the bread moulds may occur in our phase 4, they become typical only in the subsequent phase 5.

The pottery with red polished or burnished surface also occurs though similarly to R1 it constitutes a smaller part of the pottery assemblage than in the phase 5. Moreover, it was noted that the quantity of this class of the pottery decreases down the strata of phase 4 and is more frequent in the upper than in the lower levels of this phase. Most of these pots were made of Nile silt with very fine sand inclusion although examples made of the Nile silt tempered with sand and small amount of straw as well as examples made of marl clay also occur although very rarely. Most of these sherds belong to different types of bowls with similar shaped and burnishing technique as they show in phase 5.

Fragments of very hard, fine ware pottery made of Nile silt, untempered or with very fine sand inclusions or - in few examples - made also of marl clay, also occur in phase 4. This class of pottery constitutes a smaller part of the assemblage than in phase 5. The surface of this pottery is very well smoothed. Fragments of pots belonging to this class in most cases belong to different necked jars.

Fragments of fine ware pottery with yellow coating also occur. This class of the pottery constitutes a very small part of the assemblage. Most of these sherds belong to jars although few examples belonging to bowls were also found.

Among pottery with decoration found in phase 4 occur potsherds with painted decoration, fragments of jars belonging to W-handled class with modelled or impressed wavy pattern and fragments of cylindrical jars, although they are in smaller quantity than in the subsequent phase 5.

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