

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the Parent Bridge Programme, the Foundation for Polish Science in 2011 awarded Dr. AGNIESZKA MACZYŃSKA a scholarship enabling her to research in depth the role the Nile Delta played in the cultural processes slightly prior to and running up to the formation of a unified, riverine Egyptian state. In this context, Agnieszka organized the international workshop *The Nile Delta as a center of cultural interactions between Upper Egypt and the Southern Levant in the 4th millennium BC* that took place on 20 and 21 of June 2013, in the Poznań Archaeological Museum, the proceedings of which are now in front of you.

The workshop coincided with the 15th anniversary of the start of the still ongoing Polish excavations at Tell el-Farkha. During this period research at this site gradually took center stage in archaeological Delta research, and a new generation of young fieldworkers now spreading their wings was carefully nurtured by excavation directors K.M. CIAŁOWICZ and M. CHEŁDNICKI. One notable off-shoot of the Polish fieldwork at Tell el-Farkha is the Northwestern Nile Delta Survey Project that was started in 2008 by members of the Tell el-Farkha team, resulting *i.a.* in new excavations at Tell el-Murra, yet another Predynastic – Old Kingdom Delta locality and possibly a satellite site to Tell el-Farkha itself, while subsequent prospection around Tell el-Murra revealed once again a real *embarrass du choix* of densely packed Naqada III sites in this part of the Delta, noted already in the 1980-ies during the AUSE geo-archaeological survey for areas slightly more to the east.

The occasion in Poznań was marked by the opening of a photo exhibition in the museum, titled *Tell el-Farkha. Beginnings of the Egyptian State*. The well-organized and invigorating two-day event was concluded by a guided tour in the Archaeological Reserve *Genius Loci*, followed by an endearing reception.

It is a pleasure to open this volume with a very brief synopsis of the workshop's discussions. Fifteen papers were presented (two read *in absentia*)¹ and discussed during the workshop that also included eight, Tell el-Farkha-related poster sessions.²

Five papers center around different aspects of the excavations at Tell el-Farkha, including the beer breweries, metal finds, spatial settlement organization, reconstructed settlement architecture in 3D and petrographic analysis of pottery vessels. Two other

¹ This concerns the paper written by TH. REHREN & E. PERNICKA and presented on their behalf by M. CZARNOWICZ and the paper written by P. WILSON and presented on her behalf by J. ROWLAND. One paper, written by S. ROSEN and included in the present volume, had been presented slightly earlier on *ex cathedra*, in a related, one-day workshop “*Imports during the Naqada Period – Egypt and the Southern Levant: Investigating Two Sides of a Phenomenon*”, organized in November 2012 at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem.

² These include *Brewing Industry in 3D View* (K. ROSIŃSKA-BALIK), *Tokens from Tell el-Farkha: Facts and Questions* (P. KOŁODZIEJCZYK), *Early Dynastic Pottery in the Nile Delta* (M. JUCHA), *Bone Implements from Tell el-Farkha* (M. KURZYK), *Archaeozoological Study of Mammals from Tell el-Farkha* (R. ABLAMOWICZ), *Stone Working at Tell el-Farkha. Tools and Workshops* (M. JÓRDECZKA & M. MROZEK-WYSOCKA), *Settlement Architecture on the Eastern Kom at Tell el-Farkha, a 3D Reconstruction* (J. KARMOWSKI), and *Function of Ceramic Vessels at Tell el-Farkha* (K. ZIÓLKOWSKI).

site-related papers concern Kafar Hassan Dawood (focusing on interregional exchange) and Sais (concentrating on temporal and regional connections), located on opposite extremes of the Delta.

Three papers are written from a south Levantine perspective; one is site-specific (Ashqelon) and deals with aspects of late Early Bronze Age I copper production and trade, another compares 4th millennium Levantine flint production with that of contemporary Egypt, while a third paper takes a critical look at what is actually to be understood by an Egyptian colony in the region.

Two additional papers deal with aspects of the other side of the same coin, namely the apparent presence of Late Chalcolithic, Levantine migrants in the Delta in the 4th millennium BC and the presence of a stylistically rather diagnostic, short-lived and therefore highly chrono-sensitive type of Levantine pottery decorative style (“Tel Erani C”; mid-Early Bronze Age I) in Egypt.

Two contributions deal specifically with interpretive reappraisals of the formative processes at work in 4th millennium BC Lower and Upper Egypt leading up to a unified, Early Egyptian state.

As an outlier, without any obvious direct connection to the central theme of the present workshop, a final paper concerns an Upper Egyptian, site-specific excavation report (El Kab). Its nonconformity in the present context is more than compensated for by the first author’s (S. HENDRICKX) active participation in the discussions during the workshop, and for making available his exhaustive, digitalized data-base of pre-, proto- and early dynastic artefacts that laid the groundwork for a seminal workshop’s paper presented by E.CH. KÖHLER. That paper is one of several contributions to this proceedings (*e.g.*, MACZYŃSKA’S and DEBOWSKA-LUDWIN’S) touching upon a more general discourse presently going on in late Predynastic-Early Dynastic research in Egypt, fueled by significant increments in the archaeological record over the last three decades or so, critically reappraising and challenging, and concomitantly refining and gradually modifying one of the late prof. W. KAISER’S basic tenets concerning the very character of his postulated northwards expansion drift of proponents of the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture into the fertile heartland of the Nile Delta, at the time inhabited by exponents of the Lower Egyptian Buto-Maadi culture.

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