

ERANI C POTTERY IN EGYPT

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One of the most important aspects connected with the socio-political development of Egypt are the relations with its neighbors, especially with the Near Eastern area. From the very beginning of its history, Egypt explored the Sinai and Levant in search for natural resources and luxurious goods, which were demanded by local Egyptian elites. This was the situation in the Pre- and Early Dynastic periods, when settlement network oriented to support trade exchange on the line Upper Egypt-Near East was developing in the Eastern Nile Delta. One of the crucial points on the route was certainly Tell el-Farkha (CZARNOWICZ 2011). Local economy of the site was – among others – based on trade, which was controlled and coordinated by an administrative-cultic centre localized at the Western Kom (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 263-264). Beginnings of the relations in Tell el-Farkha reach the foundation period of the settlement, when its first inhabitants, who represented the Lower Egyptian culture, were engaged in long-distance trade (CZARNOWICZ 2011; CZARNOWICZ 2012ab).

At present, relations connecting Egypt and the Near East in the Pre- and Early Dynastic periods can be traced thanks to imported objects found in both areas. The definition of “imports” is highly imprecise and in the majority of cases it is used to name not the actual objects of trade exchange but only pottery containers, in which the traded goods were transported from their producer to receiver. A deeper analysis of the items produces numerous interesting evidence, as recognition of the place of the goods’ origin (see OWNBY *this volume*) or enables to establish chronological correlation of both areas. However, in the last case the situation is not so obvious. The majority of Egyptian vessels discovered in the Levant is limited to the reigns of rulers from late Dynasty 0 and early Dynasty 1, what gives no larger possibility to develop the chronological correlation backwards. Levantine pottery found in Egypt usually represents vessels types used for storage and transport of wine (DREYER 1992: 297; MURRAY 2009: 577) or olive oil

(GOPHNA & LIPSHCHITZ 1996: 147-151; SERPICO & WHITE 2009: 399). Their shape is little characteristic and thus, has no larger chronological significance (*cf.* CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 245-246). To compare here Naqadan and Levantine pottery it must be admitted that items originating from the Near East are far less diversified, what makes, in general, interpretation difficulties, especially at the field of chronology (*cf.* YEKUTIELI 2000). There are, however, a few pottery groups with very characteristic decoration or surface treatment, which may serve as good dating markers and elements useful as a base for chronological correlation of different areas of the ancient world. Undoubtedly, into these groups may be counted Erani C pottery. It can be found both in Southern Levantine site as well as at least at a few sites in Egypt. The possibility to correlate the areas on the basis of Erani C pottery was underlined by BRAUN and VAN DEN BRINK (1998).

The term of Erani C defines vessels with very characteristic decoration, which are known from the Levantine area in the period of EB IB1 (YEKUTIELI 2000: 130, 150; 2006: 229, tab. 1). The style was named after phase C from the site of Tel Erani, where researchers from Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beer-sheva, that is A. KEMPINSKI and I. GILEAD (KEMPINSKI & GILEAD 1991; YEKUTIELI 2006: 225-226), found vessels of the type for the first time. YEKUTIELI (2000: 150; 2006: 233) in his description focuses on local character of the pottery group and defines typical forms made in the tradition. BRAUN (2012: 11-12) characterizes in detail decorative motives typical of Erani C. The scholar distinguishes two subgroups thanks to different ornamentation. Group I consists of white-slipped vessels with painted decoration in the form of horizontal stripes made with dark brown or red paint. This type of ornamental motif occurs later in the Levant *e.g.* on the Pijama Ware pottery (*cf.* BRAUN 2012: 15), however, it is distinguishable from the Erani C style by a series of incisions of punctuations located below the rim (BRAUN 2012: 12). Moreover, storage vessels have atypical ledge handles with heavily curved edges (KEMPINSKI & GILEAD 1991: fig. 11:4; BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: 74). Group II is composed of vessels with handles decorated with a series of horizontal or vertical incisions and/or clay rollers creating a ring around the handle or a spout (BRAUN 2012: 12). Moreover, these ornaments can be met on specific types of vessels, *e.g.* painted and incised decoration was most often used on small and medium-sized jars (storage vessels), while plastic decoration and incised handles appear on small forms, such as spouted juglets or amforiskos (BRAUN 2012: 12). Interestingly, there is no pitoi nor vessels without a neck, so characteristic of EB I, which were decorated in the style (YEKUTIELI 2006: 233). The presence of Erani C pottery is restricted to the areas of the central and southern part of present Israel (YEKUTIELI 2006: 238; BRAUN 2012: 12) and can be met at such sites as Jericho (KENYON 1960: figs. 13:30, 14:3), Azor (BEN-TOR 1975) or Site H, Wady Ghazzeh/Nahal Besor (MACDONALD 1932: pl. XXXVII), Amatzia (MILEVSKY *et al.* 2012: fig. 6.2), Hartuv 2 (MAZAR & DE MIROSCHEJJI 1996: 18, fig. 18:5,8) or Ashkelon Afridar (GOPHNA 2002: fig. 4:1). YEKUTIELI (2000: 150) states, on the basis of the research by GOREN (KEMPINSKI & GILEAD 1991: 179), that Erani C pottery was produced locally from local clay by a local workshop.

Table 1. Correlation of the chronology between Egypt and the Levant.

PHASE (TF)	PERIOD		DATABLE IMPORTS
	EGYPT	LEVANT	
1	NIIB-IIC	EB IA2	FOLDED LEDGE HANDLE
2	NIID1	EB IA2/IB(?)	
3	NIID2-III A1	EB IB (ERANI C)	ERANI C
4	NIIIA	EB IB (ERANI C)	ERANI C
	NIIBB	EB IB	
5	NIIBB-C1	EB IB (TERMINAL)	

Erani C pottery is known from four sites in Egypt. It is also present at the Sinai, where a trade route from the Delta to the Levant was crossing. Two tombs from cemetery U in Abydos revealed imported pottery with features characteristic of the Erani C style. These are complexes U-j and U-k (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: 74, DREYER 1992: 295-299). Tomb U-j is the largest structure localized at Umm el-Qaab. C14 dates from wooden beams found there point to the period between 3200 and 3150 BC as for the time of its construction (DREYER *et al.* 1993: 35). The relative dates were established on the basis of pottery preserved in the grave as for the period of Naqada IIIA2 (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: 73; DREYER 2011: 128). The structure has an almost square shape and is divided into 12 chambers. DREYER (2011: 129-131, fig. 14.3) points that grave offerings were deposited according to a specific order. The most precious objects were found just by the deceased and the farther items were localized from the burial chamber, the smaller was their value. It is worth to stress here that objects imported from the Near Eastern area were found only in chambers localized in the eastern part of the tomb. The number of vessels offered to the deceased is almost inconceivable. Researchers claim that the structure could comprise even 700 jars (DREYER 2011: 131-132). Laboratory analyses show the vessels comprised wine (DREYER 2011: 132). Among the published imported jars, one bears decoration typical of group I Erani C (U-j 10/93) in the form of paintings and rows of incisions visible on the neck (HARTUNG 1993: Abb. 64: 10/93). Two objects have handles characteristic of the group (HARTUNG 1993: Abb. 64; BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: 74). Very interesting is also one more decorative motif, which can be found at vessels from tomb U-j, however, it cannot be explicitly connected with Erani C, because until very recently it was not observed on a single example from the group. The quoted motif is a plastic band imitating a rope present at the upper part of the body. At least three vessels imported from the Levant and found at tomb U-j bear this type of decoration. Apart from the above mentioned jar with typical Erani C ornaments, these

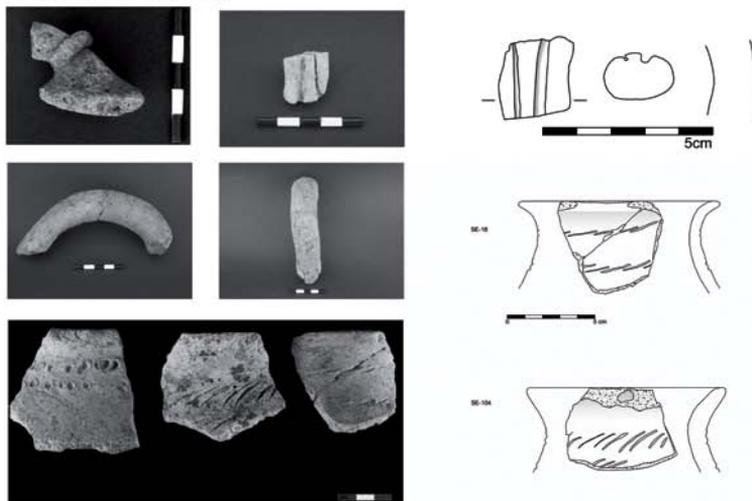
are objects labelled with nos 7/50 (HARTUNG 1993: Abb.61: 7/50) and 11/17 (HARTUNG 1993: Abb.70: 11/17). All three are quite typical storage jars with ledge handles. Until recently they had no good analogies from the Levantine area, although petrographic analyses conducted on object 11/17 showed it was made of loess clay (PORAT & GOREN 2001: 408). The material is known *e.g.* from the neighborhood of Tel Erani (BRANDL 1989) in the area where the Negev turns into the Coastal Plain. Recently a mission of the Israel Antiquities Authority has started rescue excavations at a site localized 2km south-east from Tel Erani, where it found remains of settlement from the period of EB IB1. The only object, which might be an Egyptian import there, is a stone bowl the earliest dated to the late Gerzean period (BRAUN *in press*). The place name is Ptora (MILEVSKI & BAUMGARTEN 2008). Among pottery material a ledge handles storage jar with deep incisions and painted stripes similar to other Erani C vessels was found. In addition, the object was plastically decorated in the same way as it was observed at the vessels from tomb U-j (MILEVSKI & BAUMGARTEN 2008: fig. 7:11). Taking into consideration far advanced local diversity of Levantine pottery from the period of EB I, the case can be interpreted as a decoration motif of the Ptora type. Apart from tomb U-j and the above mentioned Near Eastern site, similar applications were discovered on vessels from such sites as Abusir el-Meleq, Minshat Abu Omar or Naqada. The first who noticed the similarity of jars from Ptora to imported Levantine objects discovered in Egypt was E. BRAUN (*pers. comm.*).

Tomb U-k is not much older than U-j. Its relative dates belong also to the period of Naqada IIIA2. It is not, however, such an impressive structure as U-j, although, also there some vessels imported from the Levant were discovered. One of them is a jar with more slender body than its counterpart from tomb U-j but with the same decorative elements as the quoted analogy. The vessel has no plastic decoration of the Ptora type (DREYER 1992: 295-299).

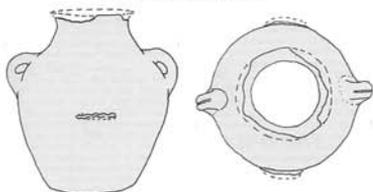
A jar of a different type, bearing vertical loop handles with vertical long incision, was found at the cemetery in Gerzeh in grave 185 (PETRIE *et al.* 1912: pl. 11/2c). The drawing, which presents the vessel, does not show any traces of painting. There are, however, two short applications on the body interpreted as remains of ledge handles. The grave, where the above mentioned jar comes from, is dated to the period of Naqada IIcd (ANDELKOVIĆ 1995: 60).

A vessel of similar type, though smaller, was found at the site of Minshat Abu Omar in grave 115 (799) (KROEPER & WILDUNG 2000: 1). It was a little juglet with two vertical handles and a longitudinal incision. The vessel had also applications in the Ptora style attached to the upper part of the body. The structure belongs to group I of graves from MAO. Although recently have aroused many questions around the dates and division into groups proposed by the German researchers (see MACZYŃSKA *this volume*), it seems that the date of grave 799 estimated as for the period of Naqada IIcd (KROEPER & WILDUNG 2000: 1) is correct. In the particular case, the presence in the grave vessels W73 next to a well worked out juglet with an oval bottom, neck and rim might point, in particular, to the period of Naqada IIcd as to the time of the structure foundation. From the same site

Tell el-Farkha



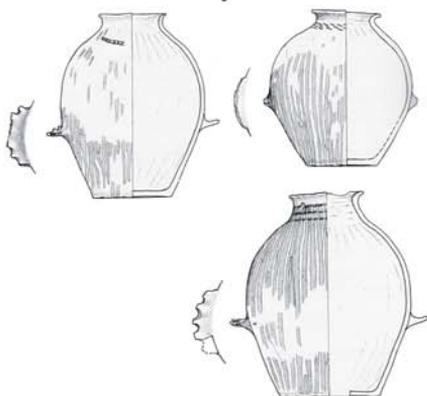
El Gerzeh



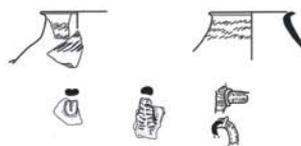
Minshat Abu Omar



Abydos



Sinai



not in scale

Figure 1. Erani C pottery in Egypt: a) Tell el-Farkha; b) Gerzeh (PETRIE *et al.* 1912: fig. 11.2c); c) Minshat Abu Omar (KROEPER & WILDUNG 2000: fig. 799/1); d) Abydos (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: fig. 1); e) Sinai (BRAUN 2011: fig. 12.11).

comes one more imported jar with the Ptora type decoration. It is a storage vessel with ledge handles. On its surface, remains of red paint can be seen. The interesting, in the case, application covers the upper part of the body. The vessel was found in grave 316 (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998: fig. 2:A).

The majority of the above mentioned examples of Erani C vessels or dated to the same period objects with application of the Ptora type was found at cemeteries of the Naqada culture. Moreover, these jars belonged mostly to group I. The situation is different at Tell el-Farkha. Up till now, researchers there have discovered not a single example of imported Levantine vessels in the funerary context. All known Levantine objects were discovered at the settlement or in the context of public buildings like the Lower Egyptian residence, Naqadan residence or the administrative-cultic centre at the Western Kom. What is interesting, most of storage pottery comes from the centres of early administration (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 261-264). Group II of Erani C pottery is represented at the site by a vertical handle with two incisions (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 274, figs. 2.2, 11.3), as well as another handle with a single vertical and a few horizontal incisions (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 274, fig. 11.2), both found in the context of Phase 3. Petrographic analyses have shown that in the second case we deal, most probably, with an imitation of a Levantine vessel, because the handle was made of Nile clay (OWNBY *this volume*). The find is dated to Phase 4. From the site comes also an example of a handle with a pottery ring, which was discovered in the course of works conducted at the Western Kom in layers dated to the turn of Phases 3 and 4. Another five examples of vessels with decoration typical of group I Erani C were also found at the site. These are fragments with very clear incised decoration in the form of dots placed on a vessel's neck (a single example) (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 248, fig. 11.1) or in the form of various incisions (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 248, fig. 8, 11.1). Two vessels with ornaments of the type were indentified during the last season of fieldworks. Pottery of group I is known from many parts of the settlement, starting from the very beginning of Phase 3 till the middle Phase 4. It is worth to stress that remains of this type of pottery were discovered also inside an enigmatic structure discovered at the Eastern Kom. It is assumed that it might have served as a cenotaph, a large construction of symbolic grave significance, predating tomb U-j but very similar to its architectural form (*cf.* CIAŁOWICZ 2006: 92-94; DEBOWSKA-LUDWIN 2013: 38-39). It remains uncertain if a vessel found in the Naqadan residence at the Western Kom is connected to Erani C. Although it presents a chronologically uncharacteristic shape, it bears some analogies to vessels from Ptora. It may be presumably associated with phase EB IB1 (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 245-246). Basing on small objects, chronology of the jar can be established to the period of Naqada IID (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: 246). On account of that it may be stated that in Tell el-Farkha imported vessels connected with Erani C are present from the period of Naqada IID to IIIA1 (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: tab. 1).

Pieces of Levantine vessels, which belong to the group of Erani C, were discovered also during surveys in the northern Sinai. These are two storage jars with decoration typical of group I preserved as fragments of their body, neck and rim (OREN 1989: fig. 9:14-15),

with clearly visible three rows of oblique incisions. Also three handles were discovered, one of them has a single vertical incision (OREN 1989: fig. 8:6), the second – a single vertical and a series of horizontal incisions (OREN 1989: fig. 8:5) and the last one bears two colons of short horizontal incised lines (OREN 1989: fig. 8:7). A painted vessel is also known with dark color stripes running vertically and Ptora type applications (OREN 1989: fig. 9:16).

The significance of discoveries of Erani C pottery as well as those decorated with Ptora type applications is very large. Firstly, it enables to establish closer chronology of both regions. Secondly, it points to the trade route with the stress to the meaning of the Delta as an exchange centre.

As it was stated before, Erani C pottery does not go beyond the period of EB IB1. In Egypt, the discovered fragments come from layers dated from the period of Naqada IID till Naqada IIIA2. The beginnings of the phenomenon can be established more precisely to the turn of Naqada IID1 and D2. The terminal date is based on the youngest examples of Erani C pottery discovered in tomb U-j, that is to the period of Naqada IIIA2. It should be stated in this place that building more detailed chronology will be possible after deep analyses of stone bowl from Ptora are made. In can be indisputably said that EB IB1 corresponds to the middle of Naqada IID and continues to the end of Naqada IIIA2¹. It stands in contradiction to the correlation presented by BRAUN (2011: 122). The period cannot be restricted only to the period of Naqada IIIA as it is certified by a number of objects discovered at Egyptian sites.

Local character of pottery production in the Early Bronze Levant, as well as geological differentiation of the area, which enables to conduct very detailed petrographic analyses, give the possibility to recreate trade routes, along which exchange of goods was lead in the period of EB IB1. One of them must have started at Wadi Lachish and, passing through Ptora and Tel Erani, then through the strip of coastal lowlands and the northern Sinai (the Way of Horus), it reached the Delta, which was at the time an important centre of imported goods redistribution. In a unanimous opinion of scholars, one of the most important places on the route in the Delta was Tell el-Farkha. The settlement was the point from which caravans was setting off on the way both to the east and to Upper Egypt, carrying previously bought in the Levant goods like *e.g.* wine, copper or metal tools (CZARNOWICZ 2011; 2012ab). Thanks to the system it became possible to satisfy the needs for luxurious goods of the emerging Egyptian state elites. Distribution analysis of imported examples of Erani C pottery corroborates the general thesis on the shape and way of trade leading in the period of Naqada II/III. Similar arguments were brought by petrography research made on other fragments of imported vessels found at Tell el-Farkha, as well as copper objects discovered at the site (CZARNOWICZ 2012b; OWNBY *this volume*; REHREN & PERNICKA *this volume*).

¹ It is the place to admit that into the correlation table published in Tell el-Farkha I (CZARNOWICZ 2012b: tab.1) crept an error. At the position 4 it should be Naqada IIIA2.

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