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The site of Tell el-Farkha is located near the village of Ghazala, c. 120 km northeast of Cairo, in the central Nile Delta. The site is composed of three koms (Western, Central and Eastern). The first occupation at Tell el-Farkha is connected with the Lower Egyptian culture, and began c. 3700–3600 BC. The Western Kom was the first part of the site to be occupied and was abandoned at the beginning of Dynasty 1; the other two mounds continued to be occupied until the beginning of Dynasty 4.

After 12 years of research by the Polish Mission, the site can be divided into three main sectors, each with distinctive functions: residential and cultic on the Western Kom; habitation and utility on the Central Kom; and cemetery and settlement on the Eastern Kom. Some of the most important discoveries at the site are connected with an Early Dynastic administrative-cultic centre on the Western Kom.

During the 2001 campaign, a small deposit, consisting of figurines and vessels made of faience, clay and stone, was discovered just below the surface of the Western Kom (Fig. 1; cf. Chłodnicki and Ciałowicz 2002, 73–75; Ciałowicz 2004). The deposit was uncovered within the massive walls that delimited a relatively small room (c. 3 x 3.2 m), which was part of a building of considerable size. This structure was made up of a series of rooms, which agglutinated over a certain period of time or were rebuilt and developed after natural disasters with cataclysmic consequences. One such event may have been a relatively minor earthquake which resulted in the collapse of the walls in some of the rooms lying southeast and northwest of the area in which the deposit was discovered. The debris covered many of the items, including large storage vessels, thin-walled red bowls and cosmetic palettes of greywacke.

The differences in the materials used to produce the bricks of this building are particularly notable. The bricks were made either of silt with a considerable quantity of sand, or silt practically devoid of sand, although brick size remained more or less constant at c. 15 by 30 cm throughout the period. Another observation that should be emphasized is the functional distinction of particular rooms and the related differences in the thickness of walls and wall construction techniques. The main walls and those surrounding the deposit are the thickest, measuring c. 120 cm across. Walls, measuring one, one-and-half, or two bricks thick (i.e., 30 to 60 cm), surround other rooms that are of distinctly domestic character. Small hearths were discovered chiefly in the small units, enclosed by thin walls that separated them from the neighbouring spaces. A remarkable concentration of such hearths was discovered in the northwestern part of the complex, and whole vessels, querns and grinders were recovered from the vicinity of the hearths. In some of the other, larger rooms, storage vessels were preserved standing *in situ*, or else the mud stands that supported such vessels were present.

During the 2006–07 campaigns, the western part of the complex was excavated. In 2006, investigations to the west of the area previously excavated revealed the rectangular outline of walls (Room 211) in the northwestern corner (Area 53). Room 211, measuring 8 x 3.30 m, was surrounded by brick walls (1.5 bricks or 45 cm wide) and oriented along a NW–SE axis. In the middle of this room was a concentration of eight vessels (Fig. 2), two of which are of particular interest. The first is a so-called ‘Nubian’ vessel, a bowl decorated with punctate dots within incised triangles (Fig. 3). The second is a pot stand with triangles cut out of its body found together with a bowl that fitted onto it. Both vessels (and probably the others found in close proximity) may be considered in connection with cultic or ritual activities (Hendrickx et al. 2002, 294; Kansa et al. 2002, 197ff.). Pottery stands supporting vessels are known from representations dating to the beginning of the Early Dynastic period, where they mark cultic places, as for example on the Narmer mace-head (cf. Ciałowicz 2001, 203).

A few centimetres below this, but in the same stratum within the same room, two stone vessels were found together with a thin pottery slab (7 cm wide) to which was attached four round containers (each about 4.5 cm in diameter) filled with a black substance. This object may be receptacle for ink or for offerings (Fig. 4).

Beside the eastern wall of the room, a small jar (23 cm high) was found covered by a bowl as a lid (Figs. 5–6). Inside it were 62 objects, evidently a deposit of cultic items that were hidden within the jar. This deposit comprised 34 ivory figurines: 5 women; 2 men; 2 captives; 2 boys; 9 dwarves (Fig. 7); 2 fantastic creatures; and 12 various animals (Fig. 8). All of them were made of hippopotamus ivory. In addition, the jar contained 17 models of different items (Fig. 9) made of hippopotamus ivory, various stones, clay and copper, as well as 11 miniature vessels of stone, faience and bone. Near this jar, five other small objects of hippopotamus ivory and faience were found together with dozens of beads made in a variety of materials including semiprecious stones (agate, carnelian, amethyst, and hematite), limestone, faience and clay.

The jar containing the deposit was decorated with impressed dots and incised with schematic depictions of two herbivores and a bird, before which stands a partial image of an unidentifiable figure (Fig. 6). The bird has an ovoid body, a small head with no beak, a long neck and legs, and three long feathers for a tail. It seems to portray an ostrich. Behind the bird a smaller horned animal is shown. The body and neck are represented by a horizontal line ending with a relatively long, upward curling tail. The head is oval-shaped with straight horns. Four lines running downward from the body represent legs. The triangle carved between the hind legs of the animal is undoubtedly a schematic depiction of an udder. The second animal is larger and depicted in a similar way but without an udder. A male and female of some horned species (gazelles?) are therefore portrayed on the vessel.

The difference in artistic quality between the objects inside the jar, many of which can be counted among the most outstanding works of early Egyptian art, and the drawing decorating the exterior of the vessel is notable. Presumably the vessel was not made by an exceptional artist like the creator of the materials deposited within it, but rather by the person who packed the figurines into the jar and hid it by the eastern wall of the room. The reasons for doing so may have been various: the need to make space for new votive gifts; the desire to hide them from some approaching danger; or even a situation in which this early sanctuary had to be abandoned, probably for economic reasons, perhaps at the same time as the entire

western part of the city at Tell el-Farkha fell into disuse. In this case, the relatively primitive drawing on the vessel is unsurprising, but the combination of motifs applied to the jar no doubt had particular significance (cf. below).

During the 2007 campaign, excavations continued in the same area. Further rooms were revealed to the north and south, abutting the room in which the deposit was found (Fig. 10). An open space extending to the east probably represents an internal courtyard enclosed by much thicker walls than those separating individual rooms from one another. The situation to the west of the deposit room is unclear. Here, the tell has been damaged by the creation of modern fields, and in particular by the digging of a canal (now filled in) which was still operational at the start of the Polish excavations in 1998. Only fragments of the walls survive; they originally extended further to the west and probably formed an outer ring of rooms encircling the shrine that contained the deposit.

To the north and south were relatively small rooms aligned along a NE–SW axis and enclosed by thin walls (30–45 cm thick). The remains of ovens and hearths were recorded within these rooms, as were layers of ash, abundant potsherds (very occasionally complete vessels) and relatively rare examples of flint and stone tools. Unfortunately, work in these rooms, particularly those to the north, is complicated by the presence of numerous pits dug by animals as well as layers of modern rubbish.

The most significant discoveries made in 2007 were also associated with the room containing the deposit. This room was excavated very slowly and meticulously; individual layers were designated every 5 cm and all sediments were sieved. The fact that fragments of the same artefact were found at considerable distances from one another, and at a variety of depths, suggests that we are dealing with a building and accumulation of fill representing a single period (first half of Dynasty 1). Examples include a stone vessel that had been broken in two, the pieces being recovered from strata separated by a vertical distance of 50 cm. Similarly, various fragments of clay figurines and the aforementioned ink container (or offering stand) were found in different layers within this room.

The walls of this room are slightly thicker than in the topmost layers, but still not as thick as those walls of the room surrounding the deposit discovered in 2001. In the middle of the room (Fig. 11), near its northern wall, were three large storage vessels, which had clearly been concealed beneath the floor. Nearby, although hidden within the north wall, was a jar covered by a small bowl identical in type to that covering the jar containing the deposit found in 2006. Each jar contained collections of interesting objects, which will be discussed in detail below. In addition to numerous pottery sherds, the room also yielded several other complete, or almost complete, pottery vessels. The most significant of these were a ceramic stand with matching vessel and a *bes*-jar, used in ritual libations during the Early Dynastic period. Similar *bes*-jars were found in the temple deposits at Tell Ibrahim Awad (van Haarlem 1995, 45–46). The same stratum of fill also produced two stone vessels and fragments of a clay statuette representing a seated figure. Unfortunately, all that survived of this figurine was a pair of relatively long legs (18 cm) with closely drawn up knees, suggesting that it may have portrayed a seated boy with a finger to his mouth. Other miniature figurines carved in bone portray a schematic representation of a baboon, an unidentifiable animal with a long snout (an anteater?) and a further example of a female dwarf. Also worthy of note was an amulet in the shape of a bull's head. Amulets of this type are particularly characteristic of terminal

Naqada II and the whole of the Naqada III period (Hendrickx 2002, 285–88). One of the most significant finds was a greywacke spoon (10.5 cm long) with a crocodile-shaped handle (Fig. 12). Other finds worth mentioning include a flint knife found with several cattle ribs alongside the three storage jars mentioned above, fragments of a greywacke bracelet, part of a bone spoon, remnants of copper artefacts (which are unidentifiable due to their poor state of preservation), a bone model of a fish-tail knife, and a pear-shaped mace-head. Beads made of both semi-precious stones and faience were especially numerous (c. 350 items).

The objects recovered from the four storage jars mentioned above deserve separate consideration. The vessel concealed in the north wall (possibly as a foundation deposit) contained several dozen faience beads and a faience cylinder seal (2.4 cm high) incised with crosses and two gazelles (Fig. 13). Above one of the crosses, a poorly preserved sign may be a very schematic rendering of a falcon. At the bottom of the jar was a complete, but undecorated, ostrich egg with an oval-shaped hole cut in its top. In the vicinity and also hidden under the same wall were two pear-shaped mace-heads and the horn of a gazelle. A large shell from the Red Sea (*Pteroceras* or *Lambis truncata*) was found beneath the floor in the centre of room (Fig. 14). Such shells are sometimes depicted in Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic art. The most important representations are depicted on the sides of the famous Coptos Colossi. On the statue in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, two shells and the head of a gazelle are visible, while carved onto the statue in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, are two shells with an ostrich above, amongst other figures (Williams 1988, fig. 2).

The combination of gazelle and ostrich may be of some significance. As mentioned above, the vessel containing the deposit of carved ivories was decorated with drawings of an ostrich and quadrupeds, probably gazelles (Fig. 6). The combined use of these two motifs appears on other Predynastic artefacts, for instance on the famous smaller (“Two-Dog”) palette from Hierakonpolis in the Ashmolean Museum (Ciałowicz 1991, 43–46). It is possible that this combination of motifs bears some reference to power, authority or cult in the broadest sense of this word. On the Central Kom at Tell el-Farkha half of a stone cylinder seal was discovered in 2003 (Chłodnicki 2008, 494). It was decorated with a representation of an ostrich and an herbivore, but unfortunately only the back legs of this unidentifiable animal are preserved.

This group of objects and the decoration on the jar containing the deposit of ivory figurines seem to point to a strong relationship between the inhabitants of Tell el-Farkha and the two species in question (cf. Ciałowicz 2008). These animals may have had a cultic-symbolic meaning, especially since neither was present in the Delta at that time. The ostrich egg must have been brought from the south; placing it in a foundation deposit instead of using it to produce beads indicates the symbolic significance of such a deposit. On the cylinder seal are depictions of gazelles and a simplified image of a Horus-falcon, while the cross below may be a schematic rosette, similar to that which appears on objects related to Kings Scorpion and Narmer, and at the end of some rows of animals decorating the Brooklyn knife-handle and the Davis comb. Such rosettes should probably also be associated with the iconography of rulers (Ciałowicz 1992, 254). All these symbols may then point to a connection with a ruler and his symbolism. We should probably interpret the mace-heads found in the vicinity in the same way; the fact that they were discovered in a cult shrine only strengthens and emphasizes this relationship. It is worth remembering that among the figurines in the deposit are): a man

in a characteristic cloak, which is probably a representation of an anonymous ruler during the *sed*-festival (Fig. 25); a woman with a child on her lap sitting in a palanquin (perhaps the mother of the ruler) (Fig. 22); four cobras-uraeui (Fig. 33); and a schematic figure of a falcon (Fig. 8), amongst others (cf. below).

The occurrence of the ostrich and (probable) gazelles incised on the vessel containing the cultic deposit is probably not a coincidence. Combining the same animals as those found in the foundation deposit only emphasizes their role in such rituals, perhaps suggesting that both animals were somehow connected to specific rituals or cult, or were even symbols of the gods or powers worshipped in the shrine at Tell el-Farkha. It is also possible that they were somehow connected with the name of the place, perhaps the settlement itself, or a shrine built within it. Such a conclusion may seem improbable, but it should be considered nevertheless.

The three aforementioned jars hidden beneath the floor contained a great number of items. The content of each jar was different. The first contained only a few faience beads and small fragments of animal bone. Over 400 faience beads were found in the next jar, together with three objects made of hippopotamus ivory: a circle (a finger ring?) of 2 cm diameter; a model bull's leg (3.2 cm high); and the poorly preserved and fragmentary remains of an anthropomorphic figurine. Only the top of this figure survives, its hair featuring a central parting. The eroded surface and indiscernible details make it impossible to establish whether this is a figure of a woman or a man, although the former seems more likely.

The greatest number of valuable objects was concealed in the third vessel: a hippopotamus ivory figurine representing a female dwarf; two cosmetic palettes: the larger one rectangular (17 x 8.8 cm) and the smaller one fish-shaped (8.7 cm long). Other items found inside the jar include a bone model of a dagger (Fig. 15), which imitates the copper daggers of this period known from only a few sites in Egypt (Ciałowicz 1985, 163), and a hollow bone object which is probably an imitation of the sheath for the dagger. Two small stone vessels (a bowl and a water bottle), several beads and a few fragments of animal bone were also recovered from this jar.

It is thus clear that an important administrative centre, perhaps containing a cultic place within it, was present on the Western Kom at Tell el-Farkha at the beginning of the historic period. Votive deposits were discovered in two shrines. The first shrine in the eastern part of the complex was discovered in 2001, and produced figurines, rattles, miniature models of different objects and vessels of faience, pottery and stone. The faience figurines of baboons (Fig. 16) and a prostrate man (Fig. 17) deserve special attention.

Representations of baboons are well known from Early Dynastic sites. They have been found in all temple areas excavated in Upper and Lower Egypt: at Hierakonpolis (Adams 1974, pls. 18–20), Abydos (Schlögl 1978, 23–25), Elephantine (Dreyer 1986, 70–72) and Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photos 71–73, 120). Some of them, although without provenance, are important for their size and inscriptions, such as the seated baboon in the Berlin Museum with the name of Narmer on its base (Priese 1991, 12).

In contrast, representations of prostrate men are very rare: two of them are known from the Kofler-Truniger collection, but probably originate from Abydos (Schlögl 1978, 95–96). Another example was found several years ago in Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 39). The example from Tell el-Farkha is much better preserved than the others

and shows many more details (Fig. 17). The prisoner is naked, although he probably wears a penis-sheath of which only a fragment of the belt is visible. His hair is long with a central parting. He has a large nose and a wide mouth. Some anatomical details along the back are also indicated.

In the second, more recently discovered deposit, the number of figurines was much higher, and more than 70 figurines and models made from hippopotamus ivory, stone, faience and copper were found together with hundreds of beads.

The human figurines, all made from hippopotamus ivory, can be divided into several groups. The first category is formed by representations of women (6 examples). Two of them are depicted naked. The better preserved example (8.5 cm high) was found in 2006 in the deposit jar (Fig. 18). She is portrayed standing, with legs together, her right arm hanging straight down along the side of the body, with the right hand resting on the thigh. The fingers are clearly modelled. The left arm is bent at the elbow, while the well-modelled hand is turned upwards and holds the right breast. The features of the face are rounded: the lips are relatively large and narrow; the nose is large and hooked; and the eyes are almond-shaped with slightly curving eyebrows. The lack of pupils in the eyes may be the result of surface damage. The figure's long hair is parted in the centre, hanging down the back to the waist and falling onto the breasts in two separate bands. The figure's pudendum and buttocks are modelled plastically. The second example (3 cm high) was discovered in the fill of the room around the jar. Its face is badly destroyed, and the left hand and lower legs are missing.

Two other figurines depict women wearing robes. The first (8.0 cm high) is dressed in a long robe extending down to the lower-calves and belted at the waist (Fig. 19). She stands on a round base with her legs together. Although the face is badly damaged, a large hooked nose, almond-shaped eyes, and small, thick lips are visible. Her long hair is parted in the centre and extends to the shoulders, ending in a curved lower edge. The figure holds a vessel, either a bowl or a plate, in her outstretched hands, and leans forward slightly as if she is in the act of offering the object. Her toes are well modelled.

The second statuette (6.9 cm high) also stands on an oval base and is dressed in a robe or coat that extends below her slightly bent knees (Fig. 20). Her feet, with clearly indicated toes, are close together. The hands hang down along the sides of the body to the hips, but are less delicately modelled than the previous example. All of the fingers are individually carved. The face is large and expressive with large almond-shaped eyes, clearly indicated eyebrows and small, relatively thick lips. The figure's nose is wide and straight. The left ear is marked more deeply than the right, but both are large and protruding. The figure's long hair extends midway down the back in a series of horizontal waves, although the bands run vertically across the top of the head.

The representations of women with children are particularly interesting. The first of them (4.7 cm high) holds a child in one arm (Fig. 21). The woman stands on a base and is dressed in a long robe that extends to her ankles. Her long hair falls midway down her back and onto the front as two segments resting on her large breasts. The face is not preserved, although it was almost certainly schematically rendered. The right arm is only partially preserved, but originally hung down along the side of the body. With her left arm the woman holds on her hip a child who was probably depicted naked. The child has a round head and protruding

ears; its face is not indicated in any detail. The child's left hand is bent at the elbow and rests on its chest.

A second figurine (4.1 cm high) shows two figures sitting in what is probably an oval palanquin, possibly made of wood and basketwork, composed of four clearly separated horizontal segments (Fig. 22). The woman is shown from the waist up. She is enveloped in a cloak, its edges visible at her neck. The body is very schematically modelled. The face is unfortunately severely damaged, but the almond-shaped eyes, straight and narrow nose, and lips can be distinguished. The figure's hair is parted in the centre and most probably fell onto her shoulders. The woman holds on her knees a child who sits sideways to her. This figure is very schematically rendered, but is almost certainly dressed in a cloak with its hands held together on the chest. The facial features are not clearly indicated.

Numerous representations of naked women occur in Predynastic and Early Dynastic art. They appear already in the Badarian culture (Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928, pl. 24.2; Spencer 1993, figs. 9–10, BM EA 58648 and EA 59679), and increase in popularity in Naqada I. One of the most significant examples, though of an unknown origin, is in the British Museum collection (EA 32141). This small figurine (11.4 cm) depicts a naked woman, standing with her hands holding her breasts. Her hair falls to either side of the face in thin plaits, and the disproportionately large eyes, which are inlaid with lapis-lazuli, are particularly striking (Donadoni Roveri, Tiradritti 1998, 31; Spencer 1993, frontispiece). Overall the secondary sexual features are strongly emphasized.

Representations of naked women continued to be popular in the Protodynastic and Early Dynastic periods. A badly damaged figurine of bone showing a naked woman with her hands held along the sides of the body comes from the Early Dynastic deposit at Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 55). A few examples are also known from the Main Deposit at Hierakonpolis. To this group belongs, among others, a figurine in the Petrie Museum (Adams 1974, cat. no. 360, pls. 44–45). This large (20 cm high) ivory figurine depicts a standing naked woman. Despite the fact that both her hands are broken off, it is evident that the left arm was bent at the elbow and held below the breasts, while the right arm hung along the side of the body; the right hand on the right thigh is preserved with carefully modelled fingers. The face is distinctively modelled, with almond-shaped eyes, a relatively wide nose and thick lips. Also of interest is the hairdo: the long hair or wig extends to the figure's waist, with the individual waves of hair represented by horizontal lines. This sculpture is therefore very similar to both of those found at Tell el-Farkha (Fig. 18). The majority of figurines from Hierakonpolis are in the Ashmolean Museum (Capart 1905, figs. 132–33), and amongst them are representations of naked women, in poses identical to those from Tell el-Farkha, as well as some dressed in long robes also like the examples from Tell el-Farkha.

There are no exact parallels for the figurine of the woman holding the bowl (Fig. 19), although various statuettes from Upper and Lower Egypt show that this iconographic type was known. Among the objects from Elephantine are three figures holding objects in their hands. One of them represents a man clasping a round item (possibly bread) to his chest; the second is only partially preserved and shows a woman holding a vessel on her head; while the third, also incomplete, depicts a squatting figure holding a large vessel (Dreyer 1986, cat. nos. 24, 25, 27; pl. 14). To this type also belongs a figurine from Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 104), which depicts a standing woman holding a jar in her outstretched

hands. She is dressed in a long robe, with her hair falling onto the shoulders. Similarly, a faience figurine from the same site shows a squatting baboon holding a jar in front of its chest (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 72). This object has a counterpart in a baboon figurine from Abydos, now part of the Kofler-Truniger collection (Schlögl 1978, 25).

A similar observation applies to the representations of women with children. No exact parallels are known for the Tell el-Farkha example (Fig. 21), but from Elephantine there is a partially preserved figure of a woman with a child on her back, and two other figurines of standing women each holding in their arms two highly schematic representations of children (Dreyer 1986, cat. 34, 36, 37, pls. 15–16). Statues of mothers with children are also housed in the Berlin Museum collection (Priese 1991, 10), but these are without provenance. In the first case, a naked woman holds a child to her stomach, in the second on her hip. Thus, while the figurine from Tell el-Farkha depicting a standing woman with a child is not original, it shows another variation on the theme.

A different view, however, is required when discussing the representation of the woman and child sitting in the oval basket-like object, which is probably some type of litter or carrying chair (Fig. 22). In this case attention should be focused on several representations in relief and small objects of plastic art. In the former, figures in litters are shown, for example, on the mace-heads of Scorpion and Narmer (Ciałowicz 2001, 197 ff.). Covered litters are known from sculpture, sometimes including a figure within (e.g., Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 49; Schlögl 1978, 26–27). Such objects suggest that the representation from Tell el-Farkha might be related to the *rpm.t*, the image of a mother, a divine pharaoh's mother (Kaiser 1983, 262), or in a broader sense, women from the royal family (Millet 1990, 59).

The next group from the deposit at Tell el-Farkha consists of two representations of children. It is worth noting that the figurines of boys show two different physical types, but in both the high skill of the artist is evident. The first boy (8.4 cm high) is a slender figure (Fig. 23), shown squatting on the ground with knees drawn up, but apart, and the feet placed together with clearly modelled toes. The face is distinctively rendered: the eyes are large and almond-shaped, but not identical, with clearly indicated pupils. The ears are also large and unnaturally protruding. The mouth is relatively wide and thick, and the nose slightly snubbed. The hairline is indicated over the forehead down to the ears. The left hand, with disproportionately long and thin fingers, lays on the bent left knee, while the right hand reaches to the mouth, with three fingers together, the thumb pointing outward and the index finger (only partially preserved) touching the lips.

The second boy (5.2 cm high) is much more robust (Fig. 24). His face is distinctively modelled, with large, almond-shaped eyes. The ears are also large and unnaturally protruding; the mouth is relatively wide and thick, the nose large, wide and crooked. Over the forehead the hairline is marked down to the ears and is also visible on the back of the head. The genitals are plastically modelled and the line separating the buttocks line is also emphasized. As in the previous examples, the knees are drawn up with the left arm resting on the left thigh, although this figure has a more hunched posture. The right elbow is placed before the right knee, the hand is drawn up to mouth level with three fingers together, and the thumb or the index finger (only partially preserved) touching the mouth.

Several dozen figurines depicting a child with a finger to the mouth are known from Elephantine (Dreyer 1986, pls. 11–13). The majority show standing figures, which are

unknown from Tell el-Farkha. There are also a dozen or so figurines, mostly in faience, showing generally naked boys (sometimes wearing a loincloth) sitting on the ground with their knees drawn up high. They are characterized by relatively large heads and clearly modelled features. All of them have the finger of the right hand held to the mouth, while the left hand rests on the left knee. Similar figures are also known from other sites (e.g., Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 38). The best—from the artistic point of view—are the figurines from Abydos. They were made of stone and are now in the Brooklyn Museum (Needler 1984, 347) and the Kofler-Truniger collection (Schlöggl 1978, 28). The latter, in particular, is artistically comparable to the examples from Tell el-Farkha.

Another category comprises representations of men (4 examples). In the Tell el-Farkha collection there is a figure of a striding man (6.5 cm high) with his left leg forward (Fig. 25). His right foot stands on a base, with the toes plastically modelled. The figure is dressed in a cloak that extends down to his knees. The right hand emerges from beneath the cloak and originally held a now unidentifiable object – most probably a *heka* scepter or some other insignium of power. The cloak is decorated with horizontal incisions. The face, framed by short hair, is somewhat effaced and some of the facial details are not clear, but the eyes are almond-shaped and the eyebrows are visibly emphasized. The nose is relatively small and straight, while the mouth was thin with a thick lower lip. The undercutting beneath the lips and on the cheeks suggests that a beard may once have been present. The figure's ears are poorly preserved, but were originally large and protruding.

Another ivory figurine of a walking man (4.8 cm high) shows him marching in a pose almost identical to that of the previous example (Fig. 26). His left leg is forward, and the right arm hangs down by the side of the body, with the hand in a fist and the thumb extended downward. The left arm is bent at the elbow with the hand in a fist held on the chest. The line of the eyebrows is clearly indicated over the almond-shaped eyes; the nose is large and wide, the lips relatively thick and the ears protruding. The hairline is visible over the forehead. A loincloth is modelled at the back and falls in two segments at the front. Between them there was probably originally a penis-sheath, now lost.

A distinct subcategory among the male figurines is the representation of a captive (two examples) with one or both hands bound behind the back. The first shows a standing male figure (4.3 cm high), his left leg forward and slightly bent at the knee (Fig. 27). The left arm is bent at the elbow and the hand (only partly preserved) covers the mouth. The right arm is bent back behind the waist and was probably bound. The figure wears a penis-sheath and loincloth around the waist. The buttocks are plastically modelled. It is not quite clear whether the man is bearded, although this seems likely. The musculature of the figure's body is lightly indicated.

The second example (5.4 cm high) is unfortunately very poorly preserved, and as a result is difficult to interpret. The face and arms are practically destroyed; only a fragment of the left side of the head and the hairdo is present. The hair probably extended to the shoulders; the eyes were almond-shaped, and the nose and mouth are now missing. The preserved part of the right shoulder and a probable trace of a hand slightly bent backward, suggest that the figure may have had its hands tied behind the back. The lower part of the figurine is rather better preserved, and indicates that the figure was dressed in a long robe and kneeling on a round base.

The cloaked man from Tell el-Farkha (Fig. 25) has no direct counterpart, but the famous figurine from Abydos in the British Museum (Petrie 1903, pl. 2.3; Spencer 1993, fig. 52, EA 37996) wears a very similar garment. In this case, too, one hand protrudes from underneath the folds of the elaborately decorated cloak. Identification of the Abydos figure is facilitated by the Upper Egyptian crown on his head—doubtless this sculpture represents one of the early rulers during his *sed* or jubilee festival. The identity of the figure from Tell el-Farkha is not so certain, although the decorated cloak is a significant attribute. In early Egyptian art, this cloak is reserved for rulers as can be seen, for example, on the statues of Khasekhem or Djoser and several reliefs (Sourouzian 1995). In many depictions, the hands protrude from beneath the cloak's fold and grasp the royal insignia. Similarly, the Tell el-Farkha figurine appears to have held a now effaced *heka*-scepter or some other symbol of power. The lack of a crown is not a definitive criterion since in the *sed*-festival scenes of Nyuserra, the king leads the procession dressed only in an apron and headscarf (Kaiser 1971, 87–105). Although the situation is not identical, it does allow us to suggest that in the early period a ruler could have been shown without his crown. Thus, it may be suggested that the man in the cloak from Tell el-Farkha may represent an anonymous ruler during his jubilee (Błaszczuk 2008).

There are no direct parallels for any of the figures of captives found at Tell el-Farkha (Fig. 27), although it was a common theme in Predynastic and Early Dynastic art. The best examples are the expressive figurines from Hierakonpolis (Quibell and Petrie 1900, pls. 11–12). Representations of defeated and captured enemies are also known from Abydos (Schlögl 1978, 29) and Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 106), where the so-called 'primeval idol' is doubtless a very schematic rendering of a captive with his arms bent at the elbows and bound behind the back.

The 13 figurines of dwarves (1 man and 12 women; Fig. 7) from Tell el-Farkha are the largest concentration ever found in a single location in Egypt (Buszek 2008). At present, about 30 figurines of dwarves are known from different sites of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods; however, the level of workmanship evident in many of the examples from Tell el-Farkha, particularly in their expressive faces and the realistic way in which their deformed bodies are shown, are without equal in other, hitherto known representations of dwarves.

Of particular interest is the very realistic figurine of the single male dwarf (4.8 cm high) in the collection (Fig. 28). The man, with bent and bandy legs, is dressed only in a loincloth and a penis-sheath, which looks like it was made from a piece of cloth. The pigeon toes are modelled in detail as are the torso muscles and the disproportionately short arms that extend only to the waist. The fingers are carefully indicated; the convex buttocks are plastically modelled. The head is disproportionately large and round with almond-shaped eyes and marked eyebrows. The nose is large and wide, and the mouth is fleshy and thick. The shoulder-length hair is parted in the centre and several strands are emphasized with vertical incisions.

Some of the figurines of female dwarves are similarly realistic. One of them (3.4 cm high) represents an expressive image of a woman standing with her bandy legs sharply bent at the knees (Fig. 29). The knees are splayed, but the feet are together. The woman is dressed in a long robe and she wears a heavy wig on her head. The figure's body is schematically modelled; only the short hands are more carefully carved with individual fingers indicated. The arms are bent at the elbows and carved away from the body. The face is almost triangular, and slightly tilted to the left. The eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, thick lips and straight nose are clearly

emphasized. The wig, parted in the centre, consists of a smooth upper section, below which thin plaits hang down the back and over the shoulders.

Amongst the female dwarf figurines from Tell el-Farkha are two very schematic examples. One of them (5.9 cm high) depicts a woman dressed in a long robe with her legs bent, the knees splayed and her feet together (Fig. 30). The short arms with subtly indicated muscles hang down close to the sides of the body. The hands are very schematic and the fingers not indicated at all. The figure's breasts are modelled as a single curve. The face is extremely simple; only the lips are indicated in any detail. Her hair is parted in the centre and extends down to her mid-back. This schematic treatment cannot be the result of a lower level of craftsmanship; on the contrary, because the artistic standard of these figurines is very high, we must suppose that it is a result of a conscious decision, thus suggesting that in these early times Egyptian artists were not as restricted as they were in later times.

Figurines of dwarves from the former MacGregor collection are regarded as the oldest examples (Steindorff 1946, 19, pl. 1). They depict naked women with bald or shaven heads, large eyes and ears, and visibly deformed bodies: their legs are short and bent at the knees; their arms do not extend as far as the waist. A faience figurine from Elephantine (Dreyer 1986, cat. 1; pl. 11) is also considered to be a dwarf based on the short legs and large head when compared to the rest of the body, which seems to be proportional. A few figurines from Abydos and Hierakonpolis also represent dwarves (Buszek 2008, 38). They are made from stone, ivory and faience. Some of them represent female dwarves wearing heavy wigs. They are shown naked or wearing long robes. Others are male, usually naked. Their state of preservation and level of artistic execution is much lower than that of the figurines from Tell el-Farkha. Two further figurines, from Tell Ibrahim Awad, can be treated as representations of dwarves (Belova, Sherkova 2002, photos 100–102). Both are made of ivory and their state of preservation is much like that of the bone objects found outside the deposit jar at Tell el-Farkha. The level of decay makes it difficult to evaluate the first figure from Tell Ibrahim Awad from the published photography (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 101). The figure appears to be squatting with its knees drawn up; only the left leg is preserved and the left hand rests on the knee. The body proportions do not suggest a dwarf, although (as far as it can be discerned) the slightly grotesque cast of the features may justify this opinion. To sum up, it is quite difficult to state whether the figurine in question actually represents a dwarf rather than a squatting boy, perhaps with his finger to his mouth. Nevertheless, the figurine in Belova and Sherkova (2002 photo 102) seems to be a female dwarf, in view of the bent legs, short arms and heavy wig, although final conclusions depend on better photographs or illustrations of the Tell Ibrahim Awad finds.

The figurines of fantastic creatures and cobras-uraei are unique to Tell el-Farkha; none have any direct counterparts among the hitherto discovered small objects of art. The bird-headed figure with a lion or panther body, wings(?) on its back and two human hands (7.2 cm high) is the most fascinating (Fig. 31). Seated on a flat base, the creature holds a tall wine jar in its hands and between its drawn-up knees. The head is bird-like with the clearly indicated beak of a bird of prey (probably a falcon) and incompletely preserved, pointed ears. Its eyes are almond-shaped with a clear swelling of the eyelids. Female breasts are visibly rendered on the body and small incised curves presumably imitating feathers on the back. A clear swelling on the lower part of the figure is most probably a tail. The arms are bent at the elbows and

end in hands with distinctive human fingers; however, there are no visible toes and the feet are more like feline paws. In the Ashmolean Museum there is a small limestone figurine from grave 721 at Naqada, which is dated to Naqada IIC (Payne 1993, 15). It portrays a recumbent animal, probably a feline, with a bird(?) head. Unfortunately, the separately modelled ears and tail are not preserved, but the figurine possibly represents a griffin. Griffins with a lion or panther body, bird head and wings appear in late Predynastic reliefs from the Main Deposit at Hierakonpolis (Ciałowicz 1999, fig. 189), on the golden knife-handle from Gebel Tarif (Ciałowicz 1992, fig. 9), the small palette from Hierakonpolis (Ciałowicz 2001, fig. 32), and on the more recently discovered dagger handle from grave U-127 at Abydos (Dreyer 1999, 209). The motif of the griffin is then fairly well-known in early Egyptian art, but never (up till now) has it been shown as it appears in the Tell el-Farkha figurine.

It is difficult to assess whether or not the small figurine (2.4 cm high) from Tell el-Farkha depicting a snake with a female face should be connected with the goddess Wadjet (Fig. 32). The base on which the figure stands is decorated with cross-hatching on the sides, from which the tip of a tail emerges, suggesting that the artist meant to represent a basket, perhaps specifically a *neb*-basket. The four cobras-uraei (6.1–7.3 cm high), however, seem to clearly point to Wadjet, the divine patroness of the Lower Egyptian king (Fig. 33). The uraeus became a characteristic element on royal crowns from the reign of Den. However, the holes at the ends of the tails of the cobras from Tell el-Farkha, which are earlier than the reign of Den, were evidently attached to something and therefore part of a larger whole. Whether they were meant to be attached to royal crowns or sculptures depicting the rulers already at this early period remains unknown.

Representations of animals form another group of images from Tell el-Farkha (Fig. 8) and include lions, dogs, a scorpion (Fig. 34), a fish, a falcon, and a goose (Fig. 35). Some of them exhibit the same level of execution as the human figurines; others are more poorly executed. Similar animal figurines are known mainly from Hierakonpolis, although they are also present at other sites, including Elephantine, Abydos, Saqqara and Tell Ibrahim Awad. A significant group of them are now in various collections, but their origin (and therefore their date) is not precisely defined. They are made of various materials: clay, faience, ivory, bone and stone. They differ in details and workmanship from the Tell el-Farkha figurines, but probably of greater importance than the standardization of stylistic features was to have representations of this specific set of species. Moreover, this diversity is testimony to the level of artistry at the time and shows that the art of this period is neither monotonous nor schematic.

The same is true for the models of various objects and miniature vessels (Fig. 9). Amongst the models from Tell el-Farkha are three boats (Fig. 36), several gaming pieces, boxes, probably a mirror and even a model of an *Aspatharia*-shell. Models of (sickle-shaped) papyrus boats are known from a number of sites, for example in stone and faience from Elephantine (Dreyer 1986, 121–22) and from Tell Ibrahim Awad (Belova and Sherkova 2002, photo 50). At Tell el-Farkha, the boat models probably also depict papyrus boats, although one represents a boat with a high stern and prow.

Discoveries of the most recent campaigns confirm earlier assumptions. At the beginning of the historic period, Tell el-Farkha was an important administrative centre with cultic places incorporated within it. The first was discovered in 2001 and the second in 2006. It is still

unclear to whom the shrines were dedicated, but it is at least possible to suggest the name of the place (cf. above).

Deposits of similar material, hitherto discovered at several sites, could not be precisely dated. Most contained not only objects from Protodynastic and Early Dynastic times, but also a significant number of objects from later periods, i.e., from Dynasty 6 or even the end of the First Intermediate Period. In the deposit found in 2006 at Tell el-Farkha, all of the objects can be dated to the transition between Dynasty 0 and Dynasty 1. This precise date is suggested by the discovery of both deposits in surface layers on the Western Kom, which is known to have been abandoned no later than the middle of Dynasty 1 based on ceramic finds. In addition, the deposit from 2006 seems more homogenous than the one discovered in 2001. Among objects undoubtedly coming from the end of Dynasty 0 and the beginning of Dynasty 1 in the first deposit were also some earlier objects, though they probably were not numerous.

The deposits from Tell el-Farkha rank among the most important of recent discoveries in Egypt. Previously, the only known deposits in the Delta came from Tell Ibrahim Awad, which have thus far only been described in a very preliminary manner. Nevertheless, it can still be stated that—concerning the quality and variety of the objects—the assemblages from the Delta are equal to other deposits known from Upper Egypt.

Most of the figurines from Tell el-Farkha are unique pieces of art, previously unknown from such an early period in Egyptian history. Overall analysis of the deposit from Tell el-Farkha has revealed some interesting points. In the Tell el-Farkha deposit, figurines representing people always occur in pairs: 2 naked women; 2 clothed women; 2 mothers with children; 2 boys; 2 men; and 2 prisoners. In this context, special attention should be paid to the representations of dwarves (1 male and 12 female figurines), suggesting the unique importance of this group of people for the inhabitants of Tell el-Farkha, or for the authority who ordered the manufacture of the figurines.

Most of the representations of humans are masterpieces of early Egyptian art, but because of the poor state of preservation this is sometimes difficult to appreciate at first glance. Even in the case of the very poorly preserved figurines, some individual details usually support this statement. Special care was given to the figurines of the squatting boys, which show a differentiation in physical type and level of workmanship. Particularly expressive, and fortunately quite well preserved, are representations of dwarves and the realistic way their deformed bodies and facial expressions were shown. It is especially in this group of statuettes that the unusual talents and perceptiveness of the artist are visible. It is possible that most, if not all, of the human figurines discovered on the Western Kom are the work of a single person—perhaps to be known as the ‘Artist of Tell el-Farkha.’

A different situation pertains to the animal figurines (Fig. 8). Almost all of them, with the exception of the scorpion, the goose and the fish, were poorly executed. Perhaps they were the work of a less talented person or a pupil of our artist. The style of the work indicates that all of them were created at about the same (rather limited) time. It is difficult to judge whether the artist worked at Tell el-Farkha, or whether his figurines were brought to the site from the better known centres of Early Dynastic Egypt, and deposited in the shrine at a later time. The first possibility seems to be more reasonable considering the remains of the administrative-cultic centre found at Tell el-Farkha, and the likelihood that artists were connected with such centres.

There are many visible similarities in style and subject matter in the deposit from Tell el-Farkha and others discovered both in Upper and Lower Egypt. It now seems probable that at this time all cultic places held similar items. On the other hand, certain stylistic and iconographic distinctions confirm the existence of local variation.

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Fig. 1: The first deposit of objects in situ when discovered in 2001.



Fig. 2: Cultic vessels discovered in 2006 in Room 211 on the Western Kom.

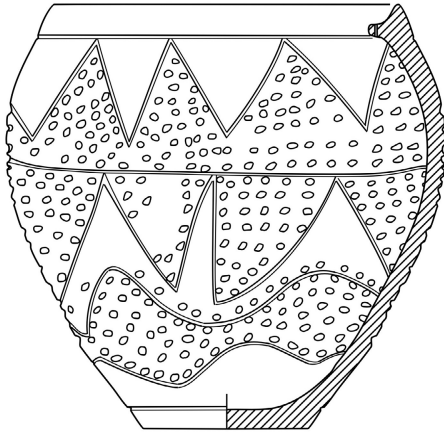


Fig. 3: The Nubian vessel decorated with punctate dots within incised triangles.



Fig. 4: Ceramic stand for ink or offerings after restoration of dispersed pieces.



Fig. 5: Jar containing the deposit of ivory figurines in situ.

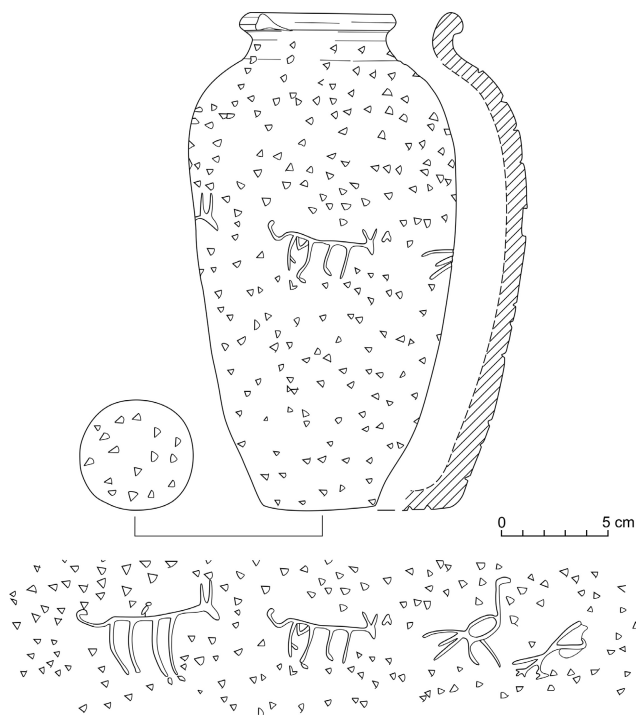


Fig. 6: Decoration on the jar containing the deposit.



Fig. 7: A selection of the statuettes of dwarves found within the jar.



Fig. 8: A selection of the animal figurines from the deposit from the jar.



Fig. 9: A selection of the model objects found within the deposit jar.



Fig. 10: View of the administrative-cultic centre on the Western Kom at Tell el-Farkha.



Fig. 11: Cultic shrine during the excavations of the 2007 campaign with the buried storage jars in situ.



Fig. 12: Greywacke spoon with crocodile-shaped handle.

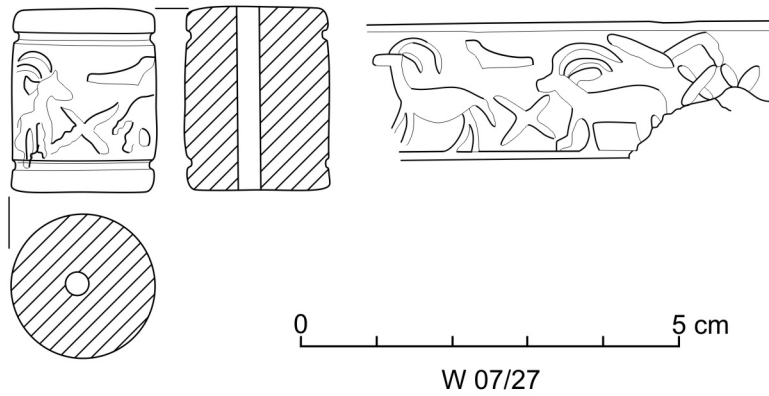


Fig. 13: Faience cylinder seal with gazelles and crosses.



Fig. 14: Pteroceras shell in situ.



Fig. 15: Bone model of a dagger.



Fig. 16: Figurines of baboons from the first deposit.



Fig. 17: Figurine of a captive from the first deposit.



Fig. 18: Figurine of a naked woman from the deposit jar.



Fig. 19: Figurine of a lady holding a bowl, front and side view.



Fig. 20: Figurine of a robed woman.



Fig. 21: Figurine of a mother holding a child.



Fig. 22: Figurine of a mother with child in a palanquin.



Fig. 23: Figurine of a slender boy.



Fig. 24: Figurine of a squatting boy.



Fig. 25: Figurine of a king(?).



Fig. 26: Figurine of a walking man.



Fig. 27: Figurine of a captive.



Fig. 28: Figurine of the male dwarf.



Fig. 29: Figurine of a realistic female dwarf, front and side view.



Fig. 30: Figurine of schematic female dwarf.



Fig. 31: Figurine of a griffin.



Fig. 32: Figurine of a snake with female face.



Fig. 33: Figurine of a cobra-uraeus.



Fig. 34: Figurine of a scorpion.



Fig. 35: Figurine of a goose.



Fig. 36: Models of boats.