70 years Polish Archaeology in Egypt
4500 – 3050 BC
3050 – 2890 BC

PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD
TELL EL-FARKHA

1-2. Hoard
Tell el-Farka, Eastern Kom
Late Predynastic

1. Ripple-flake knife
L. 20 cm, flint
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), store no. R-536

2. Knife
L. 51.5 cm, flint
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), store no. R-537

A modest settlement and burial ground has been explored on the Eastern Kom in Tell el-Farka over five excavations started in 2001. All the more surprising was the discovery in 2006, in a layer corresponding to the Naqada III period (c. 3150–3100 BC), of a few dozen fragments of the gold sheet accompanying the beads, 382 of them, made of ostrich eggshell and carnelian, and two large flint knives, of which the ripple-flake one is a veritable masterpiece of the masterpieces of the flintwork. It resembles some of the best pieces known mainly from the Late Gerawar period. The other knife is impressive primarily because of its size, although the quality of the execution leaves little to be desired. The two knives were definitely not meant for the poor settlement where they were found and it is very likely that the entire assemblage, a hoard perhaps, is older than the context in which it was discovered.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

3-4. Macehead
Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Kom
Late PreDynastic

3. Standing male figurine
H. 57 cm; gold
Cairo, Egyptian Museum, R 483

4. Standing male figurine
H. 30 cm; gold
Cairo, Egyptian Museum, R 486

Once the crushed and bent pieces of gold sheet were laboriously reconstructed and conserved, they turned out to belong to two male figurines presumably representing an early ruler and his son and heir. The core of these statuettes was made of some perishable material like wood, no traces of which have been preserved. The gold sheet was attached to this core with numerous gold rivets — 140 such rivets were found — amply testifying to the exceptional skills of the goldsmith of the time. Both figurines were of standing naked males. The eyes of both were made of lapis-lazuli, a raw material then imported from as far away as present-day Afghanistan on the peripheries of the known world. This is by way further corroborating the enormous significance that gold had for the ruling elites of the emerging Egyptian state. The eyebrows of the statuettes were also inlaid with some other material than gold, possibly bitumen or ebony, but no trace of this has survived. Both these raw materials had to be imported to Egypt, bitumen from the Near East and ebony from Nigeria. The style of the figurines and the emphasis on some of the details, such as protruding ears, bigger than life phallics, and meticulously rendered nails on the fingers and toes, fit well with the character of PreDynastic art in Egypt. So far, however, there have been no discoveries of similar figurines made of precious materials, depicting what could have been early rulers and their heirs.

K.M.C.
5. Wine-jar with Narmer’s name
Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Karn
Early Dynastic
H. 32.5 cm, clay
Haloels (Tell el-Hafsa), storeroom, R-965

The southern part of the Eastern Karn was occupied by a cemetery from the times of Dynasty 01, continuing through the beginnings of the Old Kingdom. The richest of the 55 graves explored so far have been dated to the beginnings of Egyptian monarchy. Some pots bear the name of early Egyptian rulers; the most interesting of these being two different recorded versions of Narmer’s name.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

6-7. Clay vessels
Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the 1st Dynasty)
6. Jar
H. 23 cm. clay
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeno. B-599
7. Bowl
H. 6.6 cm. clay
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeno. B-598

The Western Kom, which was the smallest of the three mounds making up the site, was an elite location right from the start. Here stood the biggest Napatan building excavated so far in Egypt, an ambitious administration and cult complex dated to the beginnings of the Egyptian state. The structure consisted of several different rooms of varied function. At least two of these chambers served as early chapels connected with the cult of a ruler or god. In both, votive deposits were discovered. One of these deposits filled a jar with punctured decoration and engraved images of a bird, presumably an ostrich, and two horned animals, possibly gazelles. The jar was covered with a plain lid and it was packed inside with 82 objects, most of them made of hippo tusks, depicting human and animal figurines, models of objects and miniature vessels.

K.M.C.
The assemblage from Tell el-Farkha includes four figurines of women, three found inside the jar and one outside it. Some of the females were shown nude, the left hand supporting the breasts, the right by the side, others were dressed in a long robe, one of these holding a bowl in her hands. What draws attention in all these images is the meticulous rendering of facial features and details of the hair. Nude females appeared in Egyptian art in the Badarian period, becoming especially popular in the Naqada I age. Women in robes or coats were present in the Protoc and Early Dynastic periods. Both types of images continued in Ancient Egyptian art until the end of its existence.

K.E.C.
5. Women holding children in their laps
Tell el-Farkha, Western kids
Early Dynastic (beginning of the First Dynasty)
H. 4.1 cm. (hippo tusk)
Mendes (Tell el-Rub'), storecows, R-648

Two small statues of groups depict mothers with children either in their arms or laps. The iconographic model of a mother holding or supporting a child in her arms is known from Egypt, but there is no direct parallel for the Tell el-Farkha pieces. One of the figures is seated in a litter of some kind, most likely a plaited chair. She is dressed in a long robe, presumably a mantle, her arms folded on her chest, in a pose not known from the Egyptian art of the period. The child is seated sideways in her lap. Women shown in plaited litters, but never together with children, are known from the reliefs of the kings Scorpion and Narmer. The images from Tell el-Farkha evoke clear associations with the slightly later repert, that is, a statue of what was most likely the pharaoh's divine mother.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARHKA

10-11. Boys
Tell el-Farha, Western Tom	
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)
10. Sitting boy
H. 8.4 cm. (Hippo tusk)
Mendes (Tell el-huza), store rooms, R-638
11. Sitting boy
H. 5.2 cm. (Hippo tusk)
Mendes (Tell el-huza), store rooms, R-639

Two figurines of small naked boys in seated positions with knees pulled up to their chins, the fingers of the right hand inserted in their mouths and the left hand laid flat on the knee. Both have large and protruding ears. The craftsmanship and meticulously rendered facial features deserve note. Despite representing the same motif and a general similarity between the figurines, they are quite different. The first one is slimmer with fine, delicate features, a gentle expression of the large almond-shaped eyes, relatively small snub nose and not very wide mouth with narrow lips. The fingers of the left hand lying on the knees are long, narrow and well rendered. The other figurine is stocky with thick features: a large and crooked nose, wide mouth with fleshy lips, small almond-shaped eyes. The genitals are clearly marked in case of the second smaller figurine.

Representations of seated or standing boys with a finger of the right hand inserted in the mouth, executed of materials like bone, faience and stone, made their appearance in Egyptian art at the close of the Pre-Dynastic and in the beginning of the Early Dynastic; they remained popular until the decline of Egyptian civilization. In the early phase, they seem to have been connected exclusively with temple precincts (Elephantine, Hiersopolis, Abydos). The figures from Tell el-Farha are among the finest artistically that have come down to our times.

K.M.C.
Figures of men from Tell el-Farkha, as from many other early sites, can be considered in two categories: free men making up the core of society in those times and captives, whose images fit very well into the ancient Egyptian theme of conquering enemies, identified in a broader sense as the forces of chaos and disorder imprisoning Egypt's ruler and his people. A notable example in the first category is this image of a man wrapped in a cloak, left foot forward as if in stride. A short beard frames his face. The figure's eyes are almond-shaped on either side of a small nose, and the mouth is relatively narrow. The coat is short, barely knee-length, tightly enveloping the figure. Only the right hand appears from under it, and the clenched fist suggests that it had once held a now lost insignia. A possible interpretation of this figure is that it represents an early ruler during a heb-sed ceremony, images of captives constituting a separate category. This standing nude with nothing but a penis sheath on his genitalia belongs to it. The left leg is extended forward and the right arm is bent backward and presumably tied at the waist. The left arm was bent at the elbow, the palm touching the navel.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

14-15. Dwarves
Tell el-Farkha, Western Area
Early Dynastic (below the middle of the First Dynasty)

14. Dwarf
H. 4.8 cm, hippo tusk
Mendes (Tell el-Hube), storey, R-659

15. Female dwarf
H. 2.4 cm, hippo tusk
Mendes (Tell el-Hube), storey, R-659

The Tell el-Farkha representations of dwarves, both male and female, constitute the biggest single group discovered in Egypt to date. Two more discovered in 2007 were added to the 10 from the 2006 season presented on exhibition. The special position of dwarves in the land of the Nile is evidenced not only by their representations in art, but also by their burials found in the immediate neighborhood of the tombs of kings and aristocrats. Of the Tell el-Farkha group, only one is male. The images fall into one of two categories, either realistic or schematic in the rendering, but whichever category they represent, they are unmistakably the work of master craftsmen of the Early Dynastic period. The execution is of the finest quality, and none of the known parallels match them in the realistic rendering of the deformed body and the striking facial expression. One of the best examples is the male dwarf with bow-shaped legs (the left one is lost) and nothing but a penis sheathed on his genitalia. The strongly accentuated features of the face contribute to a powerful image. Similarly expressive is the tiny figure of a dwarfess standing on a cylindrical base with a crown held in her hand. The feet are joined together, the knees bent and pushed out. She appears to be dressed in a robe. The arms are bent at the elbows and pulled away from the body. The triangular face which is tilted slightly to the left draws attention with the inclined eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, wide, narrow-lipped mouth, and straight nose. The heavy wig, which is parted in the center, is composed of a plain upper part and a lower one made up of straight strands of hair descending to the shoulders both at front and back.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

16. Fantastic creature: falcon-headed feline predator
Tell el-Farkha, Western Norway
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the first Dynasty)
H. 7.2 cm. (Hippopotamus), storemen, R-626

The fantastic creatures from the Tell el-Farkha deposit are as yet unparalleled in Ancient Egyptian art. The falcon-headed feline predator with human arms and animal legs is among the most interesting representations, although it is still too early for a fuller interpretation. Griffins with lion or panther bodies and bird's heads and wings can be found among the Proto- and Early Dynastic reliefs from the Main Deposit at Hierakonpolis and on a dagger handle from tomb U-127 in Abydos, but so far not one example in statuary has been recorded. Interestingly, the feline is shown holding a jar, presumably with the intention of offering it. This is a frequent motif in Early Dynastic art, where both men and animals (baboons) are depicted offering a vessel or its contents. Therefore, the offerings are made by men, animals and fantastic creatures, but who the addressed/receiver is, whether god or king, remains to be determined.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

17-18. Animals
Tell el-Farkha, Western area
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

17. Cobra – uraeus
H. 6.3 cm, hippo task
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-630

18. Scorpion
L. 6.8 cm, hippo task
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-633

Four upright cobra-uraei from the Tell el-Farkha deposit are the only ones dated to this period. They seem to point to Medinet as the ruler’s divine haven from Lower Egypt. It is commonly believed that the cobra head became a characteristic element of pharaonic crowns from the rule of Den (the middle of the First Dynasty), but the cobras from Tell el-Farkha, apparently rather than Den’s reign, were obviously mounted on something and formed part of a bigger whole, whether a royal crown or a statue of a ruler remains to be seen. The holes in the ends of the tails are evidence of this. The holes in the noses of the cobras suggest that the tongues were made of a different material, possibly copper or gold, emphasizing their significance.

Figures of other animals (lions, dogs, scorpions, fish, different species of birds etc.) are known from many sites. They were made of different materials: clay, faience, stone, hippo, etc., and wary. They differ from the Tell el-Farkha examples in the details and general execution, but it seems that what credited with the ancient artist was the representation of a specific species rather than uniform stylistic elements. The variety is indeed testimony to the artists’ skills, and it goes far in making the art of the period less monotonous and schematic. The set of figurines from Tell el-Farkha includes some very good pieces — masterful images of a scorpion, dog, goose and fish. Other figurines can be schematic and poorly carved, often difficult to identify. Excavations at Tell el-Farkha had yielded previously in 2000 two figurines of baboons in faience (not exhibited) and the newest season in 2007 provided a miniature baboon and another unidentified animal, both made of bone.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

19. Model of a "papyrus" boat
Tell el-Farkha, Western Roman
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)
L. 6 ft. 1 in. Hippo tank,
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), store room R-644

The models of various objects discovered in large numbers in the deposits at Tell el-Farkha pose the same kind of problems as figurines of animals — some are obvious at first glance, others are rendered in a manner so conventional that it defies positive identification. Boats are among the best made models. The example on exhibition is a typical "papyrus" boat with a cabin in the center of the deck. The type is known from the fine arts, be it painting, relief or small statuette, beginning with the Predynastic period.

K.M.C.
20. Miniature jar with lug-handies
Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)
H. 3.2 cm, basalt
Mendes (Tell el-Khub), storehouse, R-601

A distinctive group is made up of these miniature vessels executed in different kinds of stone, as well as in faience and bone. Especially those made of stone are admirable for the precision with which the details were rendered.

K.M.C.
TELL EL-FARKHA

21. Small spoon with crocodile-shaped handle
Tell el-Farkha, Western Koh
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)
L. 10.5 cm, greywaxe
Mendes (Tell el-Makhsu), storeroom, R-666

The administrative and cultic complex discovered in Tell el-Farkha has yielded many different finds, not the least being hundreds of beads executed of semi-precious stones and faience. Another sizable group is made up of clay and stone vessels. Some of these, like the hem khef, were used for ritual libations. Others, like the so-called kitten bowl and the ceramic stand with matching bend were also undoubtedly of ritual significance. A few cosmetic palettes of greywaxe were found, the most interesting one being in the shape of a falcon. Carved in the same kind of stone was this small spoon with a handle in the shape of a crocodile. The animal has been rendered with much care for detail. Initions decorate both sides of the upper part of the mouth, while cuts in the lower part imitate teeth. The eyes are almond-shaped. The legs, shaped as claws and positioned regularly on either side of the body, are also incised and there are vertical lines cut on either side of the tail.

K.M.C.