



70 years

*Polish Archaeology  
in Egypt*



Tell el-Farkha

4500 – 3050 BC  
3050 – 2890 BC

**PREDYNASTIC AND  
EARLY DYNASTIC  
PERIOD**

## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 1-2. Hoard

Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Kom  
Late Predynastic

#### 1. Ripple-flake knife

L. 30 cm, flint  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-536

#### 2. Knife

L. 51.5 cm, flint  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-537

A modest settlement and burial ground has been explored on the Eastern Kom in Tell el-Farkha ever since excavations started in 2001. All the more surprising was the discovery in 2006, in a layer corresponding to the Naqada III B period (c. 3150–3100 BC), of a few dozen fragments of thin gold sheet accompanied by 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 flintwork. It resembles some of the best pieces known mainly from the Late Gerzean 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. Hoard

Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Kom  
Late Predynastic

#### 3. Standing male figurine

H. 57 cm, gold

Cairo, Egyptian Museum, R-485

#### 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 goldsmiths 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 the way further corroboration of the enormous significance that trade 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 Nubia. The style of the figurines and the emphasis on some of the details, such as protruding ears, bigger than life phalluses, 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 figures made of precious materials, depicting what could have been early rulers and their heirs.

The necklace found together with the figurines appears to have been connected with the larger of the two statuettes. The fact that the beads were made of undoubtedly imported ostrich eggshells and camelian serves to emphasize the significance of the figurines.

K.M.C.



## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 5. Wine-jar with Namer's serech

Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Kom

Early Dynastic

H. 92.5 cm, clay

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-565

The southern part of the Eastern Kom was occupied by a cemetery from the times of Dynasty 0/I, continuing through the beginnings of the Old Kingdom. The richest of the 66 graves explored so far have been dated to the beginnings of Egyptian monarchy. Some pots bear the names of early Egyptian rulers, the most interesting of these being two different recorded versions of Namer's name.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 6-7. Clay vessels

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

#### 6. Jar

H. 23 cm, clay  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-599

#### 7. Bowl

H. 6.6 cm, clay  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-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 Naqadian building excavated so far in Egypt, set amidst an administrative and cultic 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 bowl and it was packed inside with 62 objects, most of them made of hippo tusks, depicting human and animal figurines, models of objects and miniature vessels.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 8. Nude female

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)  
H. 8.5 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-624

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 hairdo. 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 Proto- and Early Dynastic periods. Both types of images continued in Ancient Egyptian art until the end of its existence.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 9. Women holding children in their laps

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)  
H. 4.1 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-648

Two small statuary groups depict mothers with children either in their arms or laps. The iconographic motif 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 figurines 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 repute, that is, a statue of what was most likely the pharaoh's divine mother.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 10-11. Boys

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

#### 10. Sitting boy

H. 8.4 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-638

#### 11. Sitting boy

H. 5.2 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-639

Two figurines of small naked boys in seated position with knees pulled up to their chin, the finger 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 slender with fine, delicate features, a noble 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 amygdaloid 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 Proto-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, Hierakonpolis, Abydos). The figures from Tell el-Farkha are among the finest artistically that have come down to our times.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 12-13. Men

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

#### 12. King (?)

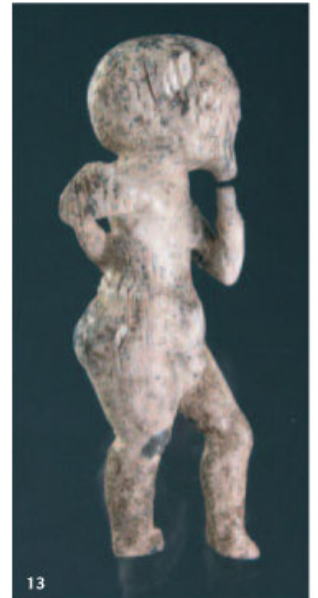
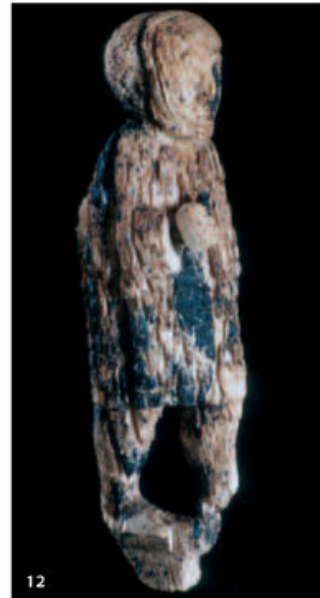
H. 6.5 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-654

#### 13. Captive

H. 4.3 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-646

Figurines 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 external enemies, identified in a broader sense as the forces of chaos and disorder imperiling Egypt's ruler and his people. Meriting interest in the first category is this image of a man wrapped in a coat, left foot forward as if in stride. A short beard frames the face; the 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 figurine is that it represents an early ruler during a *heb-sed* ceremony. Images of captives constitute a separate category. This standing male with nothing but a penis sheath on his genitals belongs in it. The left leg is extended forward and the right arm is bent backwards and presumably tied at the waist. The left arm was bent at the elbow, the palm touching the mouth.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 14-15. Dwarves

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

#### 14. Dwarf

H. 4.8 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-653

#### 15. Female dwarf

H 3.4 cm, hippo tusk  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-635

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 on 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 expressions. One of the best examples is the male dwarf with bow-shaped legs (the left one is lost) and nothing but a penis sheath on his genitals. The strongly accentuated features of the face contribute to a powerful image. Similarly expressive is the tiny figurine of a dwarfess standing on a cylindrical base with a round hole drilled in it. 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 incised 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.

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15

## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 16. Fantastic creature: falcon-headed feline predator

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom

Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

H. 7.2 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-636

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 figurine 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 addressee/receiver is, whether god or king, remains to be determined.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 17-18. Animals

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

#### 17. Cobra – uraeus

H. 6.3 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-630

#### 18. Scorpion

L. 6.8 cm, hippo tusk

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 Wadjet as the ruler's divine patron 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 earlier than Den's reign, were obviously mounted on something and formed part of a bigger whole, whether of 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 mouths of the reptiles suggest that the tongues were made of a different material, possibly copper or gold, emphasizing their significance.

Figurines 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 tusks and ivory. They differ from the Tell el-Farkha examples in the details and general execution, but it seems that what counted 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 2001) 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.

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17



18

## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 19. Model of a "papyrus" boat

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom

Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

L. 6.1 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Rubā), storeroom, 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 statuary, beginning with the Predynastic period.

K.M.C.

TELL EL-FARKHA



**20. Miniature jar with lug-handles**

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)  
H. 3.2 cm, basalt  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, 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.

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## TELL EL-FARKHA

### 21. Small spoon with crocodile-shaped handle

Tell el-Farkha, Western Kom  
Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)  
L. 10.5 cm, greywacke  
Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-686

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 *hes* jar were used for ritual libations. Others, like the so-called Nubian bowl and the ceramic stand with matching bowl were also undoubtedly of ritual significance. A few cosmetic palettes of greywacke 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. Incisions decorate both sides of the upper part of the snout, while cuts in the lower part imitate teeth. The eyes are almond-shaped. The legs, shaped as ovals 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.

M. Chłodnicki, K.M. Giałowicz, Tell el-Farkha 2006. Preliminary Report, PAM XVIII (in press).  
K.M. Giałowicz, Excavations of the Western Kom at Tell el-Farkha in 2006, *Recherches Archeologiques de 2003-2006* (in press).

