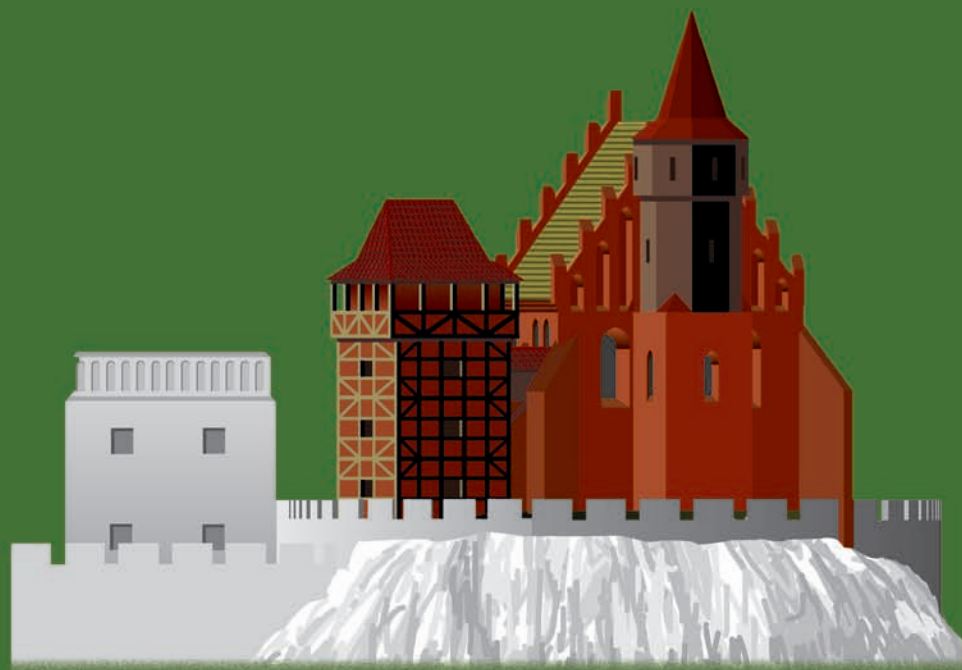


L'INSTITUT D'ARCHEOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITE JAGIELLONNE  
DE CRACOVIE

# RECHERCHES ARCHEOLOGIQUES

NOUVELLE SERIE 2



KRAKÓW 2010

**L'INSTITUT D'ARCHEOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITE JAGELLONNE DE CRACOVIE**

**RECHERCHES ARCHEOLOGIQUES  
NOUVELLE SERIE 2**

**KRAKÓW 2010**

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L'Eglise StMichel et le monastère paulinien à Cracovie dans le début du XVIIe siècle  
(la reconstruction par J. Poleski)

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Mariusz A. Jucha

## Tell el-Murra. The Polish Archaeological Survey in Ash-Sharqiyyah Governorate (Egypt, the Nile Delta)

A growing number of excavations in the Nile Delta continuously increases our knowledge about that area and the role which the sites situated there played in Egyptian history. The data obtained from the archaeological work prove that some very important changes took place there, especially during the period of the state formation, at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia B.C.

In the light of new finds (especially from Tell el-Farkha; Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2002; 2004; 2006), it seems that the Nile Delta sites had great significance not only in developing contacts between Egypt and Canaan but also in the process which finally led to the formation of the Egyptian state.

It is also obvious that a number of sites of that period occur in that region (especially in the North-Eastern part of the Nile Delta) (Fig. 1). Several of them were localized during the surveys conducted in the discussed area almost twenty years ago: the Amsterdam University Survey Expedition to the North-Eastern Nile Delta (Van den Brink 1987; 1988; 1989; 1993), Munich East-Delta Expedition (Krzyżaniak 1989), the Italian Archaeological Mission of the “Centro Studi e Recherche Ligabue” Venice to the Eastern Nile Delta (Chłodnicki *et al.* 1992) but only a few of them were later researched archaeologically. It seems that

especially the sites of the North-Eastern Nile Delta, situated on the trade roads to Canaan, must have played an important role (Van den Brink 1993, 291–298) but our knowledge of their early history is still limited. The information concerning these periods was, until lately, obtained mostly from the excavations at Minshat Abu Omar, North-Eastern part of the Nile Delta (Kroeper, Wildung 1994; 2000), and Buto, Western part of the Nile Delta (Köhler 1998; Von der Way 1997). More new information has recently (over several years) been gained from: Polish excavations at Tell el-Farkha, French excavations at Kom el-Khilgan (Midant-Reynes *et al.* 2003; Tristant *et al.* 2008a), and Tell el-Iswid (Tristant *et al.* 2008b). These data were supplemented also by excavations at Tell Ibrahim Awad (Van den Brink 1992; Van Haarlem 1998; 2000) and Tell el-Iswid (Van den Brink 1989) as well as Tell el-Daba’a (el-Qanan), Tell el-Samara (El-Baghdadi 2008), Beni Amir (Abd El-Moneim 1993a; 1993b; 1996a; 1996b), Ezbet el-Tell / Kufur Nigm (Bakr 1988; 2003), Minshat Ezzat (El-Baghdadi 2003), Tell el-Masha’la (Rampersad 2003; 2006) Tell Gabbara (Rampersad 2008). Unfortunately, on several sites mentioned here, excavations were conducted for only a few seasons, archaeological works have been discontinued

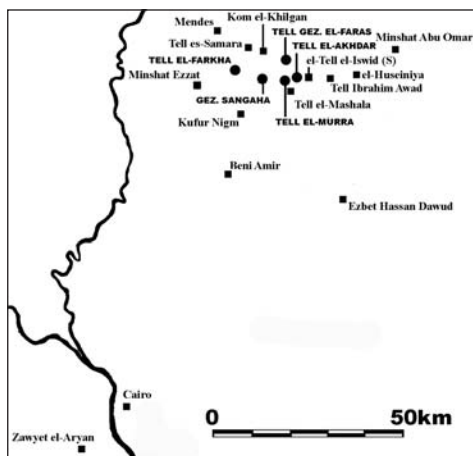


Fig. 1. North-Eastern Nile Delta (After: Hendrickx, Van den Brink 2002, 366, Fig. 23.2)

and the results of the research still remain unpublished. Although the above-defined period is one of the most important, the number of Predynastic/Early Dynastic sites presently excavated in the Nile Delta is limited to just a few (e.g.: Tell el-Farkha, Tell el-Iswid, Buto).

Further data concerning the early history of the Nile Delta were obtained recently (2008) during the Polish Archaeological Survey in Ash-Sharqiyyah Governorate<sup>1</sup>.

The main aims of that project were:

- to locate the new archaeological sites from the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods;
- to choose the site most suitable for further research and dated to the mentioned periods;
- to check the present state of preservation of several sites (the most promising

archaeologically) visited in the 1980s and to gather more pottery material allowing their more precise dating (e.g. Gezira Sangaha);

- to gather more new data concerning the sites which existed in that part of the Delta that would allow comparison with the results of the recent research in other sites of that area (especially Tell el-Farkha).

The area under the survey was defined by: the road between the cities Abu el-Shuquq, Kafr Saqr, Abu Kebir, El-Beirum near Faqus (in the south), Bahr Hadus Canal (the border between Ash-Sharqiyya and Ad-Daqahliyya) (in the west), the canal and the road connecting Aulad Saqr and El-Sufiya (in the north) and the canal and the road connecting El-Sufiya, El-Nawaf'a and El-Beirum near Faqus (in the east). It is the part of the Delta through which the former Tanitic branch supposedly flowed. It is also the area situated to the west of the course of yet another former Nile branch, the Pelusiatic branch (Bietak 1975, 99ff, Abb.12; Van den Brink 1993, 291–297; Butzer 2002, 88–92, Fig. 4.5; Van Wesemael 1988, 128–129). It seems that during the period in question most of the sites were concentrated along the former one (the Tanitic branch) and its distributaries (Van den Brink 1993, 294).

During the preliminary reconnaissance of the area six sites were visited: Tell el-Murra, Tell Gez. el-Faras, Tell Akhdar, Gezira Sangaha, Tell Ginidba, and Tell Abu Umran<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1) (Jucha 2009).

Two of them (Tell Gez. el-Faras and Tell el-Murra) revealed pottery material of the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods.

<sup>1</sup> The team headed by Dr Mariusz A. Jucha included: Prof. Krzysztof Ciałowicz, Dr Marek Chłodnicki, Artur Buszek, Marcin Czarnowicz – archaeologists, and students from the Institute of Archaeology in Kraków (Jagiellonian University). The work was carried out under the supervision of Abd el-Salam Mansour Abd el-Salam from the Faqus SCA Inspectorate.

<sup>2</sup> Two of them (Tell Ginidba, Tell Abu Umran) are presently being excavated by the Egyptian Archaeological Expedition and on two others (Tell Akhdar, Gezira Sangaha), no material of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods was found.

Of these two, the site of Tell el-Murra (Figs 2; 3) is most promising archaeologically<sup>3</sup>. It is almost undisturbed (only fragments were levelled) and it still rises several metres (c. 3 m) above the field level.

The geophysical research revealed some architectonic structures yet these are hardly visible, most probably due to the local condition of the soil and rubbish. However, in several places distinct remains of the walls were attested.

The geological core drillings indicate that the bottom layers with pottery material were situated to the depth of more than 4 m from the top or slope of the Tell and to the depth of c. 3 m from the field level. Moreover, it was observed that the water level occurred at the depth of c. 2–3 m below the field level. That means that the deeper layers with pottery material are archaeologically accessible.

The pottery material (Figs 4–5) found on the surface includes different types of rough ware jars with a simple rim or a lip-rim (Fig. 4:2–3). Among them there are fragments of beer jars (Fig. 4:5), typical of the Old Kingdom. Moreover, there were also attested fragments of fine ware jars with a lip-rim (Fig. 4:4). Other forms comprise fine ware cylindrical jars (Fig. 4:1) characteristic of the end of the Protodynastic/beginning of the Early Dynastic period. Among the bowls, we found red polished examples with convex sides and a simple rim (Fig. 5:8) or lip-rim, as well as forms with a thickened internal part of the rim (Fig. 5:1–2). “Medium bowls” (Fig. 5:4–5) – so characteristic of the Old Kingdom – occurred as well. Other forms include: fragments of rough ware trays (Fig. 5:14) and sherds with a lip-rim belonging to vats (Fig. 5:13, 15). Different types of rough ware bread moulds



Fig 2. Tell el-Murrah



Fig 3. Tell el-Murrah

were also very frequent. These include: shallow forms which are generally wider than high, fragments belonging to slightly deeper forms, as well as fragments belonging to medium deep to deep forms with an angular transition dividing the body into two zones. Among them there are examples with a rounded, flat or slightly concave rim top and examples with a slightly thickened internal part of the rim (Fig. 4:10–11). All these forms show a strong affinity with the pottery assemblage of the Early Dynastic and the Old Kingdom periods.

As the pottery material on the surface dates back mostly to the Old Kingdom (though some pottery fragments belong to earlier periods), it is quite possible that

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately Tell Gez. el-Faras was almost completely overbuilt by the modern village and cemetery.

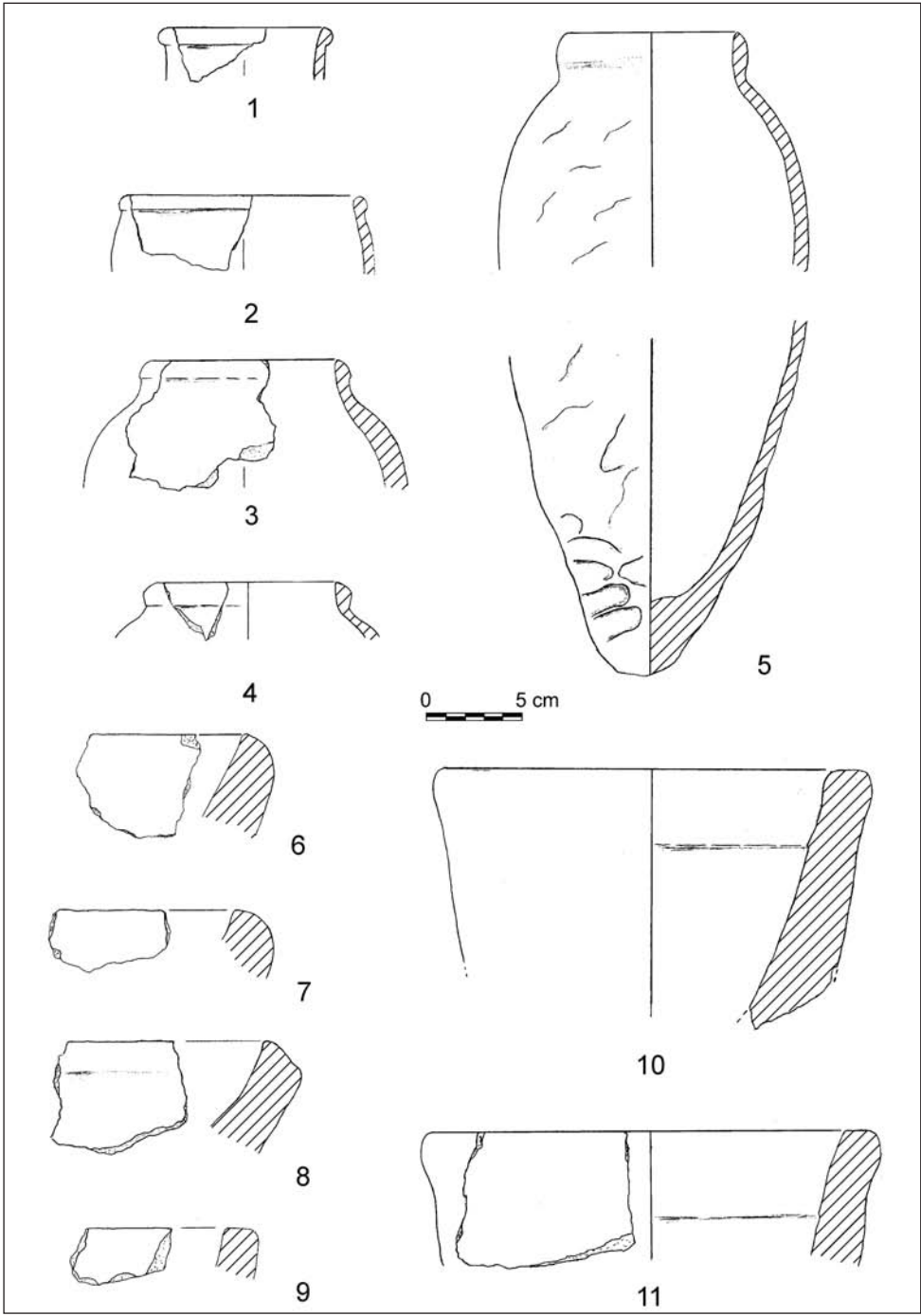


Fig. 4. Tell el-Murra – Pottery



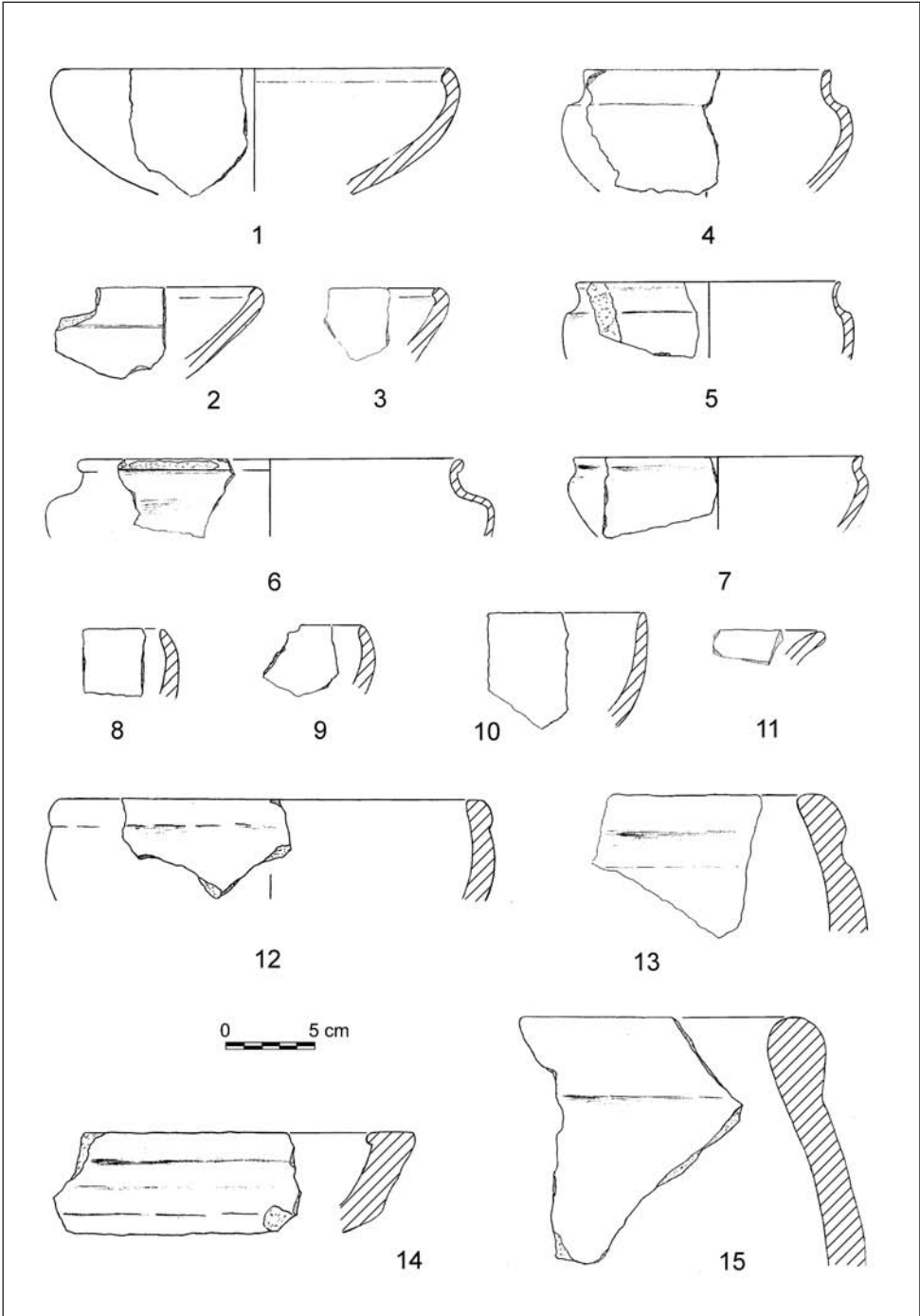


Fig. 5. Tell el-Murra – Pottery

below the upper strata there are some older occupation layers, presumably of the Early Dynastic and even Predynastic periods.

It is worth mentioning that the discussed site is situated only several kilometres to the east of Tell el-Farkha<sup>4</sup> and most probably also along the main trading route leading from West to East towards Canaan. Tell el-Iswid<sup>5</sup> is situated on the same line further to the east. Inhabitants of those sites most probably participated in the commercial relations between Egypt and Canaan. The presence of those and other sites in the North-Eastern Delta (Van den Brink 1987, 20–24, Tables 1–2; Van den Brink 1989, 56, Fig. 1; Van den Brink 1993, 286–294, Figs 4–7; Chłodnicki *et al.* 1992, 46–53, Fig. 2, Table 1; Hendrickx, Van den Brink 2002, 348, 366, 370–371, Fig. 23.2, Tables 23.1, 23.3; Levy, Van den Brink 2002, 15,

Table 1.6) must be related to the role they played in relations with the Near East and increasing commercial links between both regions, especially at the beginning of the Egyptian state.

The results of the survey were quite promising. Of the six sites visited during the short period of time, two yielded pottery material from the beginning of the Egyptian state. Of these two, the site of Tell el-Murra seems to be most suitable for further research due to the good state of preservation, the results of geophysical research and geological core drillings as well as the chronology of the material (mostly pottery) found on the surface.

Moreover, the location of Tell el-Murra makes it a suitable site to search for comparative material and data, useful in studies of the relations between Egypt and Canaan as well as between settlements of that part of the Nile Delta.

<sup>4</sup> The site explored presently (since 1998) by the Polish Archaeological Expedition.

<sup>5</sup> The site explored presently by the French Archaeological Expedition.

#### **Tell el-Murra. Poskie badania powierzchniowe na terenie prowincji Ash-Sharqiyyah (Egipt, delta Nilu)**

Przez długi okres czasu informacje dotyczące dziejów Deltę Nilu w okresie formowania się państwa egipskiego (IV/III tys. p.n.e.) pochodziły z dwóch zaledwie stanowisk (Minshat Abu Omar, Buto). Na innych prace prowadzono jedynie przez kilka sezonów, a ich wyniki nie zostały w pełni opublikowane. Również obecnie, chociaż badania powierzchniowe potwierdzają znaczną gęstość osadniczą w wymienionym okresie, prace archeologiczne prowadzone są zaledwie na kilku (Tell el-Farkha, Tell el-Iswid, Buto). Wyniki tych badań (zwłaszcza w Tell el-Farkha) wskazują na to, że położone tutaj stanowiska odgrywały bardzo ważną rolę nie tylko w rozwoju relacji handlowych pomiędzy Egiptem a Kanaanem, ale również w procesie, który doprowadził do powstania państwa nad Nilem.

Słaba znajomość dziejów tego obszaru w tak ważnym dla rozwoju państwowości egipskiej okresie skłania do objęcia badaniami kolejnych stanowisk. W czasie badań powierzchniowych przeprowadzonych przez polską ekspedycję archeologiczną materiał z okresu początków państwowości egipskiej znaleziono na 2 (Tell el-Murra, Tell Gez. el-Faras) spośród 6 stanowisk. Na stanowisku Tell el-Murra wykonano wiercenia geologiczne oraz badania geofizyczne. Wyniki tych prac, jak również dobry stan zachowania tego stanowiska, skłaniają do kontynuowania tutaj badań wykopaliskowych.

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