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TELL EL-FARKHA 2006–2008.

POTTERY FROM CULT ROOM No. 211

During the three consecutive excavation seasons 2006-2008 work has continued in the administration and cult center at Kom W, in Tell el-Farkha¹. This area has already been of special interest to the excavators in the past – as early as 2001 a deposit of figurines, together with a set of ware was found in one of the rooms². A similar deposit of statues was unearthed in the course of 2006 season excavations in the north-western part of the Kom W – room No. 211. Together with the pottery, it is placed at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period and therefore connected with phase 5 of the settlement³.

During the examination of ceramics from Kom W, special attention was given to the examples from aforementioned room No. 211, due to the large variety of shapes, surface treatment and decoration. Both regular, domestic pottery types and those with cult functions are present.

¹ Tell el-Farkha site is located in the Eastern Nile Delta. Polish expedition, directed by Prof. K. M. Ciałowicz from the Jagiellonian University and Dr. M. Chłodnicki from the Archaeology Museum of Poznań, in cooperation with the Warsaw University Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology, has been conducting research there since 1998. See e.g. M. Chłodnicki, K. M. Ciałowicz, *Polish Excavation at Tell el-Farkha (Ghazala) in the Nile Delta. Preliminary Report 1998-2001*, *Archeologia* XIII, 2002 (2003), pp. 63-119; M. Chłodnicki, K. M. Ciałowicz, *Polish Excavation at Tell el-Farkha (Ghazala) in the Nile Delta. Preliminary Report 2002-2003*, *Archeologia* LV, 2004 (2005), pp. 47-74; M. Chłodnicki, K.M. Ciałowicz, *Tell el-Farkha. Preliminary Report 2006* [in:] PAM XVIII, 2008, p. 127-153.

² M. Jucha, *Tell el-Farkha 2001: The Settlement Pottery of Phases 5 and 4a – A Preliminary Report*, [in:] L. Krzyżaniak, K. Kroeper, M. Kobusiewicz (eds.) *Cultural Markers in the Later Prehistory of Northeastern Africa and Recent Research*, *Studies in African Archaeology* 8, Poznań 2003, p. 193.

³ M. Chłodnicki, K. M. Ciałowicz, M. Jucha, *Chronology*, [in:] Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz (eds.), *Polish Excavation at Tell el-Farkha (Ghazala) in the Nile Delta. Preliminary Report 1998-2001*, pp. 66-67.



Fig. I. Pot stand from room No. 211

Directly under ground level a set of pottery, placed together in the middle of the room was found – made mainly of medium Nile clay, tempered with fine to medium-grained sand as well as straw (Fabric SNII) but also of better quality, with fine clay and similarly fine sand (Fabric SNI). The whole group consists of: a pot stand with three triangular openings (Fabric SNII, pl. I: 10, Fig. 1) with a matching small, round jar (Fabric SNII, pl. I: 4); a bowl (Fabric SNI), of slightly convex, slipped and polished walls narrowing towards the base (pl. I: 9); two jars with rounded, externally thickened rim, spherical body and pointed base (Fabric SNII, pl. I: 2, Fabric SNI,

pl. I:1) and a miniature jar with two knobs on both sides (Fabric SNII, pl. I: 3). Clearly standing out from the group is a lidded barrel shaped jar with four holes at the top of the rim (Pl. II: 1; Fig. 2). The rim was internally ridged to facilitate the use of the lid. It was made of good quality clay, tempered with fine sand (Fabric SNI), the bowl's surface was slipped and polished but the red coat is only partially preserved. An eye-catching decoration consisting of punctured dots and incised lines forming triangles in the upper and waves in the lower part adorns the artifact. Similar design occurs on a couple of vessels from Nagada III period found in Egypt and Nubia – among them an example from Abu Zaidan, El Masa'id⁴ and Adaima⁵ – with the only part decorated being the lid. This type can be compared with Petrie's types D74 and D74D⁶. Also a Nubian vessel from Elephantine, dated to the later period – 2nd Dynasty, bears such decora-

⁴ W. Needler, *Predynastic and Archaic Egypt in the Brooklyn Museum*, New York 1984, pp. 227-229, Pl. 25: 92-93.

⁵ Needler, *Predynastic and Archaic Egypt...*, pp. 227-229, Pl. 25:94.

⁶ W. M. F. Petrie, *Corpus of Prehistoric Pottery and Palettes*, Londyn 1921, Pl. XXXVI: 74, 74D.

tion⁷. It is probable that the ceramics and smaller pieces of this kind all belonged to the group of pottery under the influence of Nubian pottery connected, possibly, with late phase of Nubian A Group. But such jars are also known from Palestine.

Of similar incised decoration, covering its whole surface, is a jar (Pl. III: 2, Fig. 3) found by the eastern wall of room No. 211, circa 40 cm below ground (Fig. 5). It held a deposit of 62 votive objects⁸ and was topped with a bowl of slightly concave walls and rounded, externally thickened rim (Pl.III: 1, Fig. 4), made of Nile silt (Fabric SNII). The jar itself was 23 cm high with a short, slightly concave neck, narrow body and flat base. It was made of fine Nile clay, its surface was coated with dark reddish slip and polished. The coat is only partially preserved. The aforementioned incised decoration appears not only on the sides of the body but also on its neck and base. The incisions form triangles, partly filled with white paste. Additionally, beneath the body's maximum diameter, in the middle of the vessel, four animals were carved in one horizontal line. First two, wholly preserved, were identified as gazelles, another two as ostriches – one complete, the other only halfway – probably left unfinished by the maker.

Decoration was seemingly linked directly to the vessel's function and storing of votive objects inside. Both ostrich and gazelle frequently occur in Predynastic and Early Dynastic art – on pottery, palettes or cylindrical seals⁹. A few examples are known from Tell el-Farkha. It is plausible to draw connection between those signs and objects found in the lower strata of room No. 211 – an ostrich egg with an oval hole at the top, placed in a large jar hidden within the N wall and faience cylindrical seal with decoration including two gazelles, their large horns curved and bent backwards. Seemingly, those animals played a role in the ritual taking place in room No. 211 (chapel?) with the pottery found there also being used during the ceremony¹⁰.

⁷ D. Raue, *Ägyptische und nubische Keramik der 1-4 Dynastie*, [in:] W. Kaiser et al., *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht*, MDAIK 55, 1999, p.188, Abb. 41: 5.

⁸ M. Chłodnicki, K.M. Ciałowicz, *Tell el-Farkha 2006*, PAM XVIII (in press); K. M. Ciałowicz, *Gazelles and Ostriches from Tell el-Farkha*, [in:] J. Śliwa (ed.) *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 12, Kraków 2008, pp. 21-34; A. Buszek, *Dwarf Figurines from Tell el-Farkha*, [in:] Śliwa (ed.) *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 12, pp. 35-55; K. Błaszczuk, *The Royal Figurine (?) from Tell el-Farkha*, [in:] Śliwa (ed.) *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 12, pp. 57-61.

⁹ K. M. Ciałowicz, *Les palettes égyptiennes aux motifs zoomorphes et Sans decoration*, [in:] J. Śliwa (ed.) *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 3, Kraków 1991, pp. 43-46, 55-56; S. Hendrickx, *Autruches et flamants – les oiseaux représentés sur la céramique prédynastique de la catégorie Decorated*, *Cahiers Caribéens d'Égyptologie* 1, 2000, p. 40, Fig. 8.

¹⁰ Ciałowicz, *Gazelles and Ostriches...*, pp. 21-34.

The vessel containing the ostrich egg (Pl. II: 7) is covered with a bowl of the same type (slightly concave walls and rounded rim, externally thickened) as the one covering the jar with figurines (Pl. IV: 13). The jar itself is slender, of a slightly rounded base, rounded rim, also externally thickened and a short neck. It is made of a fine Nile clay, tempered lightly with fine-grained sand (Fabric SNI). The surface is of grayish–black color – a result of either mineralisation or being burned through. Primary coloring: light reddish-brown can still be seen. The jar is very finely smoothed.

Of interest is also a set of four vessels from the lowest strata of room No. 211, clearly hidden under the floor. It includes two large storage jars, an oval lidded vessel with four holes at the top of the rim and a lower part of another large pot. Each element of this set contains inside hidden objects of different kinds.

Storage jars have a low neck, the rounded, slightly externally thickened rim and a flat bottom. The first, round shaped one, was made of medium quality clay (tempered with medium-grained sand and straw, Fabric SNII) – its surface finely smoothed (Pl. II: 5). It contained a large number of faience beads, a round object similar to a band worn on a finger, a bull's leg model and a piece of badly preserved woman figurine. The second jar is of better quality (Pl. II: 6), well made of fine clay (Fabric SNI) with finely smoothed surface. It is adorned with three rope bands: the first one above the base, the second at the maximum diameter of the body and the last one beneath the neck. The upper part of the decoration is a plastic band with finger impressed pattern, while the middle and lower ones have a band pattern consisting also of convex and concave elements interchangeably but are not as plastic as the first one. Those shallow depressions were also made by means of a finger or other blunt tool. This type of decoration is characteristic of Dynasty 0 and the beginning of Dynasty I¹¹, both in the Delta and Upper Egypt. Tell el-Farkha cemetery offers analogical material¹² – large wine jars, very slender and adorned with three plastic bands were found there. Interestingly, this type of pottery appears much more often at

¹¹ W. M. F. Petrie, *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty. 1900. Part I*. Egypt Exploration Fund 18, London 1900: Pl. XXXIX.1-3; E. C. M. van den Brink, *The Incised Serekh-Signs of Dynasties 0-1, Part I: Complete Vessels* [in:] J. Spencer, *Aspects of Early Egypt*, London 1996, p. 148, type IVa.

¹² R. Abłamowicz, J. Dębowska, M. Jucha, *The Graves of Tell el-Farkha (seasons 2001- 2002)*, [in:] S. Hendrickx, R. F. Friedman, K. M. Ciałowicz & M. Chłodnicki (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams. Proceedings of the International Conference "Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt"*, Kraków, 28th August - 1st September 2002, OLA 138, 2004, pp. 410-411; M. A. Jucha, *The Corpus of "Potmarks" from the Graves at Tell el-Farkha*, [in:] B. Midant-Reynes, Y. Tristant (eds.), J. Rowland, S. Hendrickx, *Egypt at its Origins 2. Proceedings of the International Conference "Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt"*, Toulouse (France), 5th – 8th September 2005, OLA 172, Leuven-Paris-Dudley 2008, pp. 131-148.

the cemetery than in the settlement itself.

The jar described above contained the largest amount of artifacts. One of the most important is a she-dwarf figurine made of hippo's bone. Two cosmetic palettes – the larger one rectangular, the other fish-shaped were also found inside, along with a model dagger and an object with an opening, probably a sheath, both made of bone. Two miniature stone vessels: a bowl and water bottle, a few beads and pieces of animal bones completed the set.

The third vessel (Pl. II: 3) was made of Nile silt of medium category (Fabric SNII). Delicate, easily breakable and poorly fired, its surface of light reddish-brown color

was well smoothed. Small remains of light reddish slip are still visible. The lidded vessel had four holes at the top of the rim but, in contrast to other examples of this type, had a slightly concave base. Only a few faience beads and a piece of animal bone were found inside. The last vessel (Pl. II: 4) is preserved only fragmentarily – with the lower part of the body and base remaining. It could be also of a lidded vessel type. A small incision – like an open triangle and slanting lines covering the better part of the surface, barely visible, could be an after effect of smoothing with a sharp tool, rather than an intentional decoration. A couple of beads were found inside. Room No. 211 probably housed more large storage jars, as pieces of characteristic rims and big, flat bases were unearthed there.

During two seasons (2006, 2007), parts of a vessel decorated with incised, horizontal lines were found (Pl. II: 2). A lidded barrel shaped jar was reconstructed. It was made of Nile silt, medium category (Fabric SNII), damaged surface makes exact identification problematic. Probably of light brownish color, the vessel was well smoothed. Partly preserved rim had holes at the top, it is plausible to suggest there were four of them. The whole surface, apart from the zone above the base and below the rim, was covered with incised, horizontal lines. This kind of decoration – be it incised or painted, is not popular and usually linked mainly with Palestine and Nubia, where it occurs frequently.



Fig. 2. Jar from room No. 211



Fig. 3. Deposit jar from the E wall of room No. 211

Similar examples are also known from Nahal Tillah¹³, where the majority of vessels was covered with incised, horizontal lines and vertical ones crossing them. But there were also pieces without the vertical incisions – here the analogy with Tell el-Farkha pottery can be clearly seen. In one of the rooms in the above mentioned site, likewise decorated vessels were accompanied by cult-stands, while a large number of bread moulds, atypical for Nahal Tillah, were found nearby. This co-occurrence may be connected with the objects ritual function – pottery bearing such a rare decoration pattern couldn't be of everyday, domestic use¹⁴.

The exact same conclusion comes to mind while exploring room No. 211, where cult-stands also occur alongside vessels with incised lines. Bread moulds are likewise present though their small number (5,52% of the pottery) may suggest they had a different role here. As we know, such moulds were used not only to bake bread but also as sacrificial gifts laid in the temple¹⁵. It seems reasonable to assume a similar function of objects from room No. 211 due to their number and diversity being distinctly smaller in comparison with the rest of Kom W area.

Apart from three lidded vessels, pieces of similar rims (from different jars) were found in the room. It is worth mentioning that this type of pottery is known from graves, temples and settlements¹⁶, but appear relatively rarely.

¹³ E.Kansa, S. Hendrickx, T. E. Levy, E. C. M, van den Brink, *Nahal Tillah Reed Decorated Pottery: Aspects of Early Bronze Age IB Ceramic Production and Egyptian Counterparts*, [in:] E. C. M. van den Brink, E. Yannai (eds.) *In Quest of Ancient Settlements and Landscapes. Archaeological Studies in Honour of Ram Gophna*, Jerusalem 2002, p. 202, Fig. 8.

¹⁴ Kansa, Hendrickx, Levy, van den Brink, *Nahal Tillah Reed Decorated Pottery...*, p. 197.

¹⁵ H. Jacquet-Gordon, *A Tentative Typology of Egyptian Bread Moulds*, [in:] D. Arnold (ed.), *Studien zur Altägyptischen Keramik*, Mainz 1981, pp. 12, 20.

¹⁶ C. Köhler, *Tell el-Fara'in Buto III. Die Keramik von der späten Nagada-Kultur bis zum frühen Alten Reich (Schichten III bis VI)*, AVDAIK 94, Mainz 1998, Taf. 24: 9.

Excavations in room No. 211 brought to light a large number of pot stands. Mostly of pottery ware R2 (medium rough ware, tempered with fine-grained sand and straw) and P (red ware with polished or burnished surface, with a small admixture of fine and medium-grained sand). The stands constitute 5,52% of the pottery from room No. 211. They were found in other areas of Kom W as well but the statistics clearly indicate that this type of pottery appear most frequently in the aforementioned room (31,63% of 100% of stands from Kom W). The stands are present throughout the whole time room No. 211 was functioning. A fully preserved artifact of the type with slightly concave walls, three triangular holes and rounded, externally thickened rim (R2 ware, Pl. I: 10; Fig. 1), was found already in the upper strata. It belonged to the group of cult vessels mentioned above. About a dozen centimeters below, three more stands appear – of straight walls, straight or slightly rounded at the base with cutting decoration of triangles (R2 Ware, Pl. I: 8) and a similar, incised pattern on the surface (R2/P Ware, Pl. I: 7). In the same layer, near the eastern wall of the room, a jar with figurines deposit was found. Another pot stand – the type with slightly concave walls and rounded, externally thickened rim (R2 Ware, Pl. I: 5) was unearthed in the strata, close to the *hes*-jar. There was also a fragment of a pot stand with walls slightly rounded at the base and cutting decoration of triangles located nearby. The rest of the pieces – mainly the type with straight walls, narrowing inwards, flat rim top (R2 Ware, Pl. I: 6) and thickened external or internal wall – appear frequently in lower strata of the room. It is worth mentioning that stands with cutting or incised triangular decoration from phase 5 of Kom W, are known mainly from this area. The vicinity of ritual vessels, as well as their high quality, suggest their connection with ceremonies taking place in the chapel.

The pot stands were used practically – their main function was to support vessels with rounded or pointed base (Pl. I: 1-2) that couldn't stand on their own. A discovery of such a ware in room No. 211 confirms it, though they could also be used to hold objects for the sacrifice. Similarly, sacrificial tables or altars were placed upon the stands – this composition symbolized the very act of sacrifice¹⁷. Such ritual function seems unlikely in case of the ware from room No. 211 as no sacrificial table or its fragments was found there, still the stands have a visual meaning and the

¹⁷ T. A. Sherikova, *Offering Stands in the Ritual Practice in Ancient Egypt. On the Materials from the Sanctuary at Tell Ibrahim Awad*, [in:] G. A. Belova, T. A. Sherikova (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad: Excavations and Discoveries in the Nile Delta*, Moscow 2002, p. 145.

one with a flat rim top could be supporting an object. Cutting decoration appearing on the stands (in this case – triangles) is also thought to serve a purpose – by allowing any object placed inside, as well as light from the fire burning in the stand, to be seen from the outside¹⁸. There is no indication that artifacts from Tell el-Farkha were used in such fashion. It is much more plausible that here the meaning of cuts is purely symbolic, they could represent ideas during the ritual. Stands are thought to be sacred in ancient Egypt, linked to the libation rite of purification and restoring all things on earth back to life¹⁹. Ritual status of the stands from room No. 211 is suggested by the context in which they were found, close to the *hes*-jar, vessel holding figurines deposit or the lidded one of Nubian decoration. Still, some of them were probably just used for supporting other ware. Analogical finds of stands from Abydos temple²⁰ or Tell Ibrahim Awad²¹, indicate that the objects from room No. 211 were of cult importance. Though it is not only their finding context that dictates it. Pictures of pot-stands are known from various artifacts of this time, with a scene from the head of king Narmer mace²² being just one of the examples.

Only one *hes*-jar (Pl. IV: 14), a type of a vessel used during the ritual libation in Early Dynastic Period also has been excavated in room No. 211. Almost completely preserved, with a short neck, emphasis on the shoulders area and straight, narrow base extending upwards. Made of good quality clay (with small amount of fine-grained sand, also pieces of unprocessed clay are visible at break point, Fabric SNI), it was covered with reddish–light brown slip. Fragmentarily preserved coat seem to cover mainly the upper part of the jar, especially at the body's maximum diameter. Vessels of this kind came usually from temples/ceremonial sites as similar finds from Tell Ibrahim Awad²³,

¹⁸ Sherkova, *Offering Stands*, p. 150.

¹⁹ Sherkova, *Offering Stands*, p.153.

²⁰ W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos I, 1902*, The Egypt Exploration Fund XXII, London 1902, pp. 9, 14, tab. XXXV: 195-202; W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos II, 1903*, The Egypt Exploration Fund XXIV, London 1903, p. 29, Pl. XII: 270-273.

²¹ Sherkova, *Offering Stands*, pp. 147-148, Ill. III: 1-5.

²² K. M. Ciałowicz, *Symbolika przedstawień władcy egipskiego w okresie predynastycznym*, Kraków 1993, pp. 60- 61, Fig. 18.

²³ E. C. M. van den Brink, *The Amsterdam University Survey Expedition to the Northeastern Nile Delta (1984-1985)*, [in:] E. C. M. van den Brink (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Nile Delta. Problems and Priorities*, Amsterdam 1988, Fig. 20, No. 17; 81, Pl. 20: 73; W. M. van Haarlem, *Temple Deposit at Tell Ibrahim Awad. A Preliminary Report*, GM 148, 1995. pp.45-46, 49, Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Bowl covering the deposit jar from room No. 211

Abydos²⁴, Hierakonpolis²⁵, Elephantine²⁶ suggest but also from cemeteries like Minshat Abu Omar²⁷ or Tell el-Farkha. A similarity of form can be seen in the *hes*-jar from N-W Saqqara²⁸ as well. Such vessels undoubtedly had a function connected with cult. They were used during ritual libations and purification ceremonies—essential elements of every funerary or temple rite. Jars of this kind, both ceramic and alabaster ones, are known from previous excavations at the site, in the eastern part of administrative and cult center²⁹.

²⁴ K. N. Sowada, *Black-Topped Ware in Early Dynastic Contexts*, JEA 85, 1999, pp. 95-96, Fig. 4a.

²⁵ J. E. Quibell, Hierakonpolis I, Egyptian Research Account 4, London 1900, p. 11, Pl. XXXV: 12a, 12b; B. Adams, R. F. Friedman, *Imports and Influences in Predynastic and Protodynastic Settlement and Funerary Assemblages at Hierakonpolis*, [in:] E. C. M. van den Brink (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition: 4th -3rd Millenium B. C.*, Tel Aviv 1992, pp. 327, 332-333, Fig. 8a; 14, Pl. 4; R. Friedman, *The Ceremonial Centre at Hierakonpolis Locality HK29A*, [in:] A. Spencer (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt...*, p. 27, Fig. 10:a.

²⁶ W. Kaiser et al, *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. Fünfter Grabungsbericht*, MDAIK 31.I, 1975, pp. 56-58, Taf. 26c.

²⁷ K. Kroeper, *The Excavation of the Munich East –Delta Expedition in Minshat Abu Omar*, [in:] van den Brink (ed.) *The Archaeology of the Nile...*, Fig. 99 (group 3b); K. Kroeper, D. Wildung, *Minshat Abu Omar I. Gräber I-114*, Mainz 1994, Taf. 30, No. 80:2; 41, No. 111:1.

²⁸ S. Yoshimura, N. Kawai, H. Kashiwagi, *A Sacret Hillside at Northwest Saqqara: A Preliminary Report on the Excavation 2001-2003*, MDAIK 61, 2005, pp. 374, 385, Fig. 18: 5.

²⁹ Jucha, *Tell el-Farkha 2001: the Settlement Pottery of Phases 5 and 4a- a Preliminary Report...*, pp. 193, 196, Fig. 12:1.

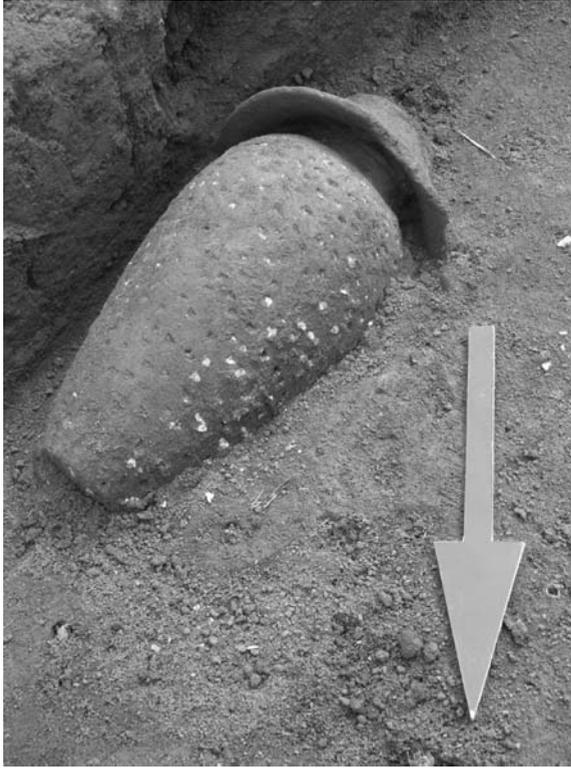


Fig. 5. Deposit jar from room No. 211, in situ

ce, tempered with fine and medium-grained sand and straw) – around 63,70% and Fabric SNII. Room No. 211 was dominated by bowls – 46,97% of the pottery. 25% of them were bowls of coated and polished surface. Most common types were the ones of straight rim with rounded top and convex walls, extending upwards (Pl. IV: 15). To this group belong also bowls with similarly modelled rim, externally thickened, and convex walls (Pl. IV: 9). Fragments of bowls with pointed or rounded tops, narrowing inwards, slightly convex walls, extending upwards (Pl. IV: 7) are present in the room as well. Occasionally, pieces of vessels with the breakdown of the upper part of the body, coated and polished surface, appear.

The rest of the bowls was made mostly of medium and good quality clay (Fabric SNI, SNII, R2 Ware). Most frequent among them are those of medium depth, straight rim and rounded top, with walls almost straight, expanding upwards (Pl. IV: 16) or with similarly modelled walls and externally thickened rim (Pl. IV: 8) and those of concave walls with rounded rim, extending outwards (Pl. IV: 13). It has been observed during studies,

Of similar use were probably small, jar-like forms with rounded body and base and rounded rim, extending outwards – probably a kind of ‘drinking cups’. Two pieces of such vessels had coated and polished surface of dark brownish color. Apart from everyday activities, they could also be used in ritual libations as there is a high probability that also the color had a symbolic meaning in this case. In Hierakonpolis vessels (of a different form), coated with black slip had cult functions³⁰.

Apart from the specific ware described above, room No. 211 also housed a group of vessels characteristic to the rest of Kom W. The most popular pottery ware was R2 (with rough surface,

³⁰ Friedman, *The Ceremonial Centre*, p. 29.

that the type of bowls predominant in room No. 211 is the one with straight, rounded rim and straight or convex walls expanding upwards, represented mainly by small, usually shallow bowls which could be used as sacrificial plates.

Of particular interest among the pottery ware R2, is a small bowl with a line of small knobs circling its upper part, just below the rim (Pl. IV: 12). This type of decoration wasn't popular in Egypt, while vessels like the one mentioned above were widespread in Palestine, from Chalcolithic to Early Bronze I period. The bowl from Kom W is probably an imitation of the foreign form³¹, made by the local potter. As contacts between Egypt and Palestine during early Dynasty 1 were well developed, occasional finds of Palestinian pottery fragments or their imitations at Kom W are not surprising. It is possible that the use of such atypical vessels in room No. 211 was intentional – to underline its special role.

Also a bottle-shaped vessel of cylindrical neck, with missing rim (Pl. IV: 10), can be included to this group as well. Made of good quality clay, tempered with small amount of fine-grained sand (Fabric SNI), its form is similar to Petrie types 95R³² and L64³³. Another such example comes from Elephantine³⁴. Its very form, as well as the small bowl with knobs is more typical for Palestinian pottery.

The second largest group is formed by the jars – 20,10%. Predominant among them is the type with a distinct neck and rounded rim, externally thickened. Jars with a gentle transition between body and rim, wide (Pl. IV: 1) and narrow body or a slight curve with wide (Pl. IV: 2) and narrow body (Pl. IV: 4) also fall in this category. They represent around 30% of all the jars in the room, made of medium and good quality clay (Fabric SNI, SNII). Quite distinctive a group – around 16% of vessels, is formed by jars with rounded rim and low neck. Cylindrical jars, typical for Tell el-Farkha cemetery are represented in room No. 211 only marginally. A small piece of miniature cylindrical vessel (Fabric SNI) was preserved but it is devoid of any decoration (Pl. IV: 11).

Yet another group is formed by fragments of jars with rounded and sometimes slightly flattened rims, distinct necks and convex walls (Pl. IV: 5), as well as those of rounded rim, heavily externally thickened, with concave neck (Pl.

³¹ R. Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land. From its Beginnings in the Neolithic Period to the End of the Iron Age*, Jerusalem 1969, pp. 46, 48, Pl. 10: 9; Photo 32; D. Esse, *Village Potters in Early Bronze Palestine: A Case Study* [in:] A. Leonard, B. B. Williams (eds.) *Essays in Ancient Civilization Presented to Helene J. Kantor*, Chicago 1989, p.84, Fig. 15.

³² W. M. F. Petrie, *Corpus of Proto-Dynastic Pottery*, London 1953: Pl. XXIX: 95R.

³³ Petrie, *Corpus of Prehistoric...*, Pl. L:64.

³⁴ P. Kopp, *Elephantine XXXII. Die Siedlung der Nagadazeit*, Mainz 2006, Taf. 22: 346.

IV: 6) and finally the jars with tight-finished rims (Pl.IV: 3). They are made of good quality Nile clay (Fabric SNI) and marl clay (Fabric M). The rest of the vessels from the room appear only occasionally.

Pottery found in room No. 211 for the most part showed similarity to objects discovered in other parts of the Kom W settlement. All types of pottery wares and fabrics, typical for Tell el-Farkha site were recorded³⁵. Among the large number of vessels also atypical forms, of cult function appeared – they were used during the ritual taking place in room No. 211. A set of vessels, discovered in the upper strata belongs undoubtedly to this very group. Their concentration in one place seems to be intentional. Distinct objects – pot stands, miniature jar with knobs or a vessel with Nubian decoration, confirm their cult functions. Also, the large number of pot stands accumulated in one room, suggests they had additional use during the ceremonies in the chapel.

There are no doubts about the ritual function of the *hes*-jar, as indicated by known examples from temple sites mentioned above. Only one vessel of this kind was found in room No. 211. Another small group are lidded vessels - in other parts of Kom W (explored in years 2006-2008) only one piece of this type was uncovered. Such rarity clearly indicates those objects were not of everyday use. Pottery of this kind, as well as stone and faience vessels, known from numerous sites in Egypt and Lower Nubia, are considered to be objects of prestige. Another thing worth mentioning are diverse decoration patterns found on pottery from room No. 211. Both incisions, cut horizontal lines, animal forms and small knobs can be found here. Those elements were not very popular in Egyptian pottery.

Fragments and vessels of Nubian origin, Egyptian imitations of Palestinian ware or a distinct group of bowls (which also could be used during sacrifice ritual) further indicate high rank of room No. 211.

Such unique set of forms and their limited number suggests, that the vessels housed there were not of common use and widespread among local population, while the room No. 211 must have played a significant role in the lives of Tell el-Farkha residents.

Two hidden deposits (from 2006-2008 seasons) confirm the value and importance of the material discovered. The first one, consisting of 62 objects, was found near the eastern wall and, in all probability, served as a hiding place for valuables right before Kom W was abandoned. The second one, within the northern wall might have been placed there when the temple was being built.

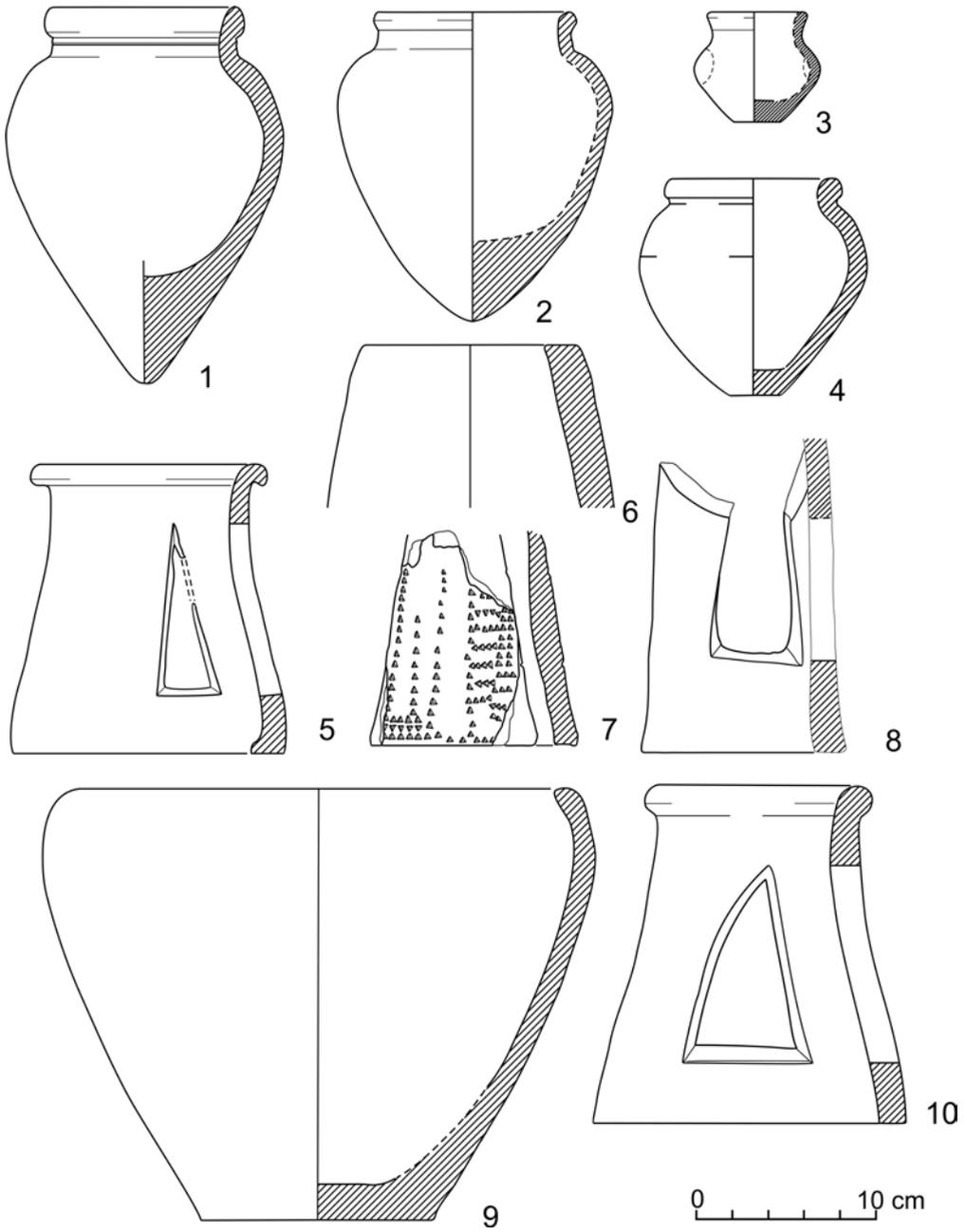
³⁵ M. A. Jucha, *Tell el-Farkha II. The Pottery of the Predynastic Settlement*, Kraków-Poznań 2005, pp. 27-34.

Those vessels, together with a set of four big ones, created a shelter for the objects hidden. Their decoration and form indicate its special use.

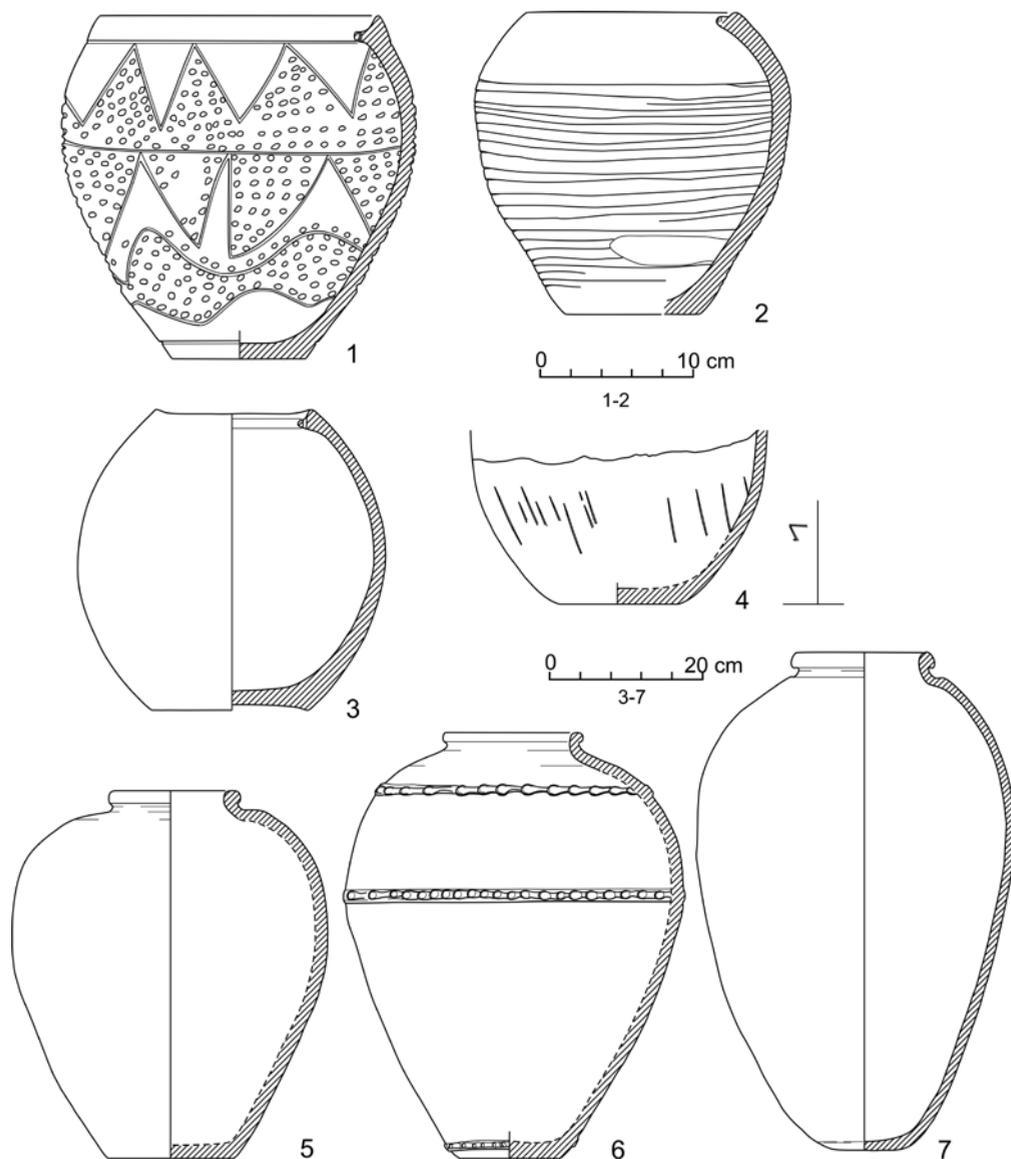
There is a correlation between the majority of ceramics found in room No. 211 and linked with cult, and religious function at other temple sites like: Tell Ibrahim Awad, Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine, Saqqara or Nahal Tillah. Their symbolic and ritual status is confirmed by numerous figurines found in the chapel of both cult and prestige function.

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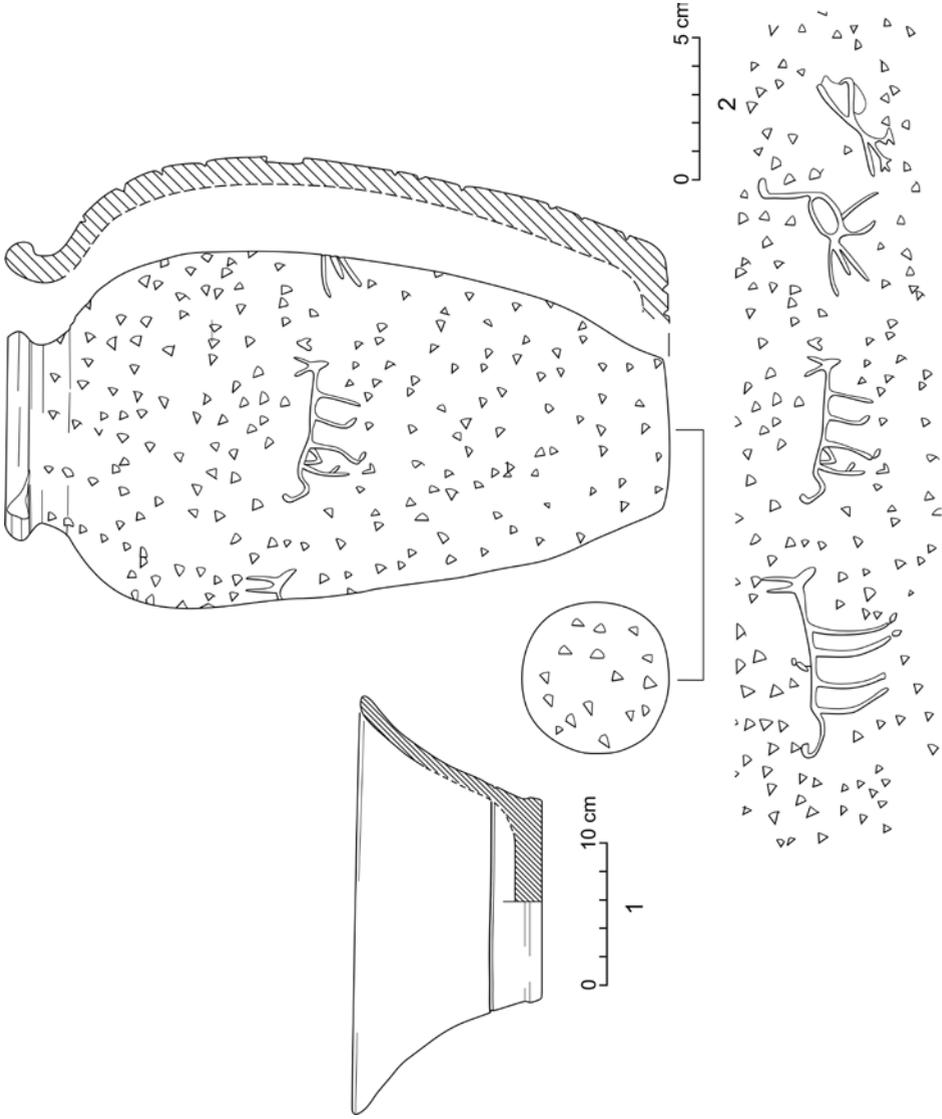
[All drawings by the Author. All photographs by Robert Słaboński]



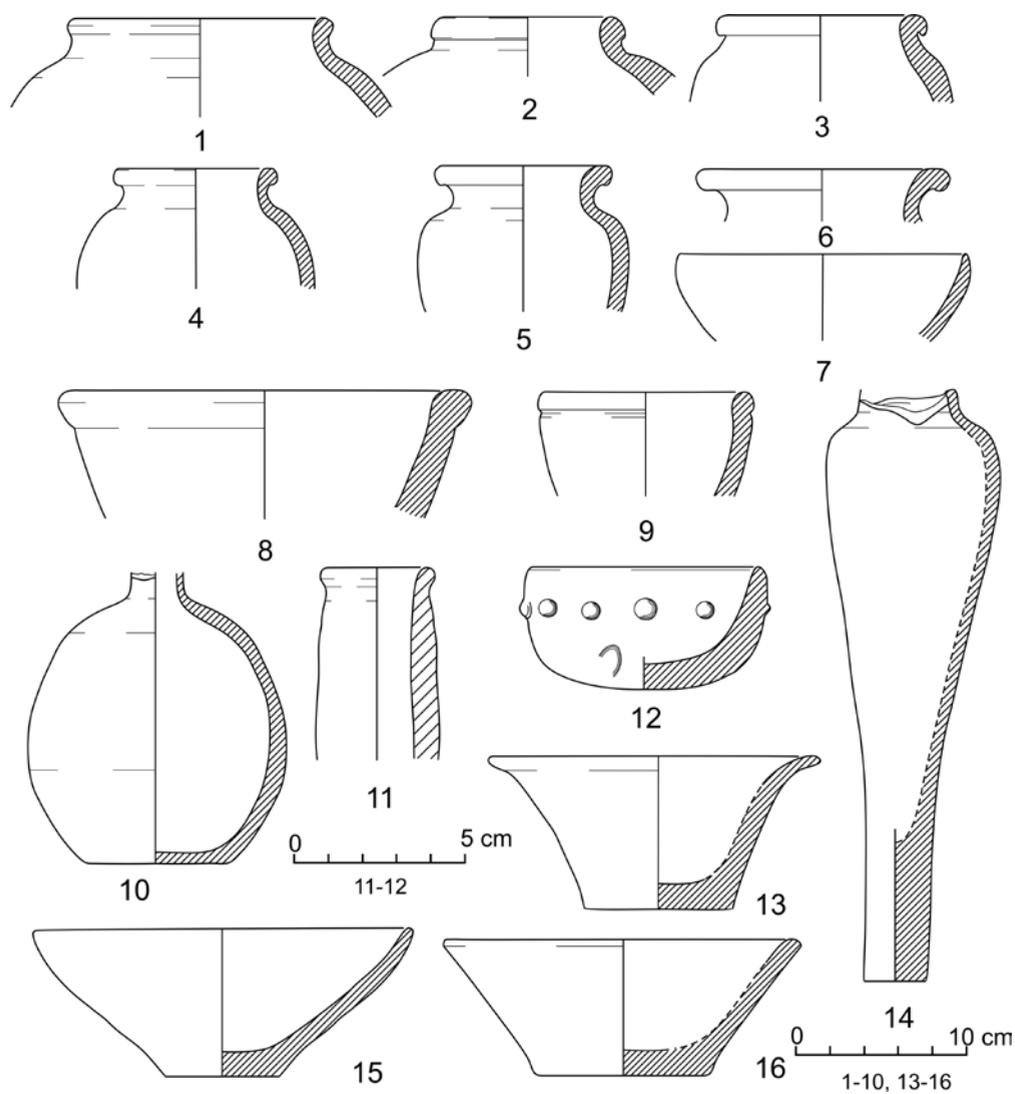
Pl. I. Tell el-Farkha, Kom W. Pottery from room No. 211



Pl. II. Tell el-Farkha, Kom W. Pottery from room No. 211



Pl. III. Tell el-Farkha, Kom W. Pottery from room No. 211



Pl. IV. Tell el-Farkha, Kom W. Pottery from room No. 211

