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TELL EL-FARKHA 2007
STONE VESSELS FROM GRAVE NO. 55

During the 2007 season a large number of stone vessels were discovered. A particularly interesting set was found in grave No. 55. The material was subject to analysis and allowed to reach conclusions regarding chronology resulting from the architectural structure of the grave, an analysis of the ceramic material and analogies known from other Egyptian sites. The set of stone vessels discovered in grave No. 55 is a typical example of vessels appearing from the 1st to the 3rd Dynasty. Due to a relatively smaller number of stone vessels in comparison to ceramic vessels discovered on Pre- and Early Dynastic sites we need to remember that such objects are not particularly useful for dating. A lack of distinguishable features makes obtaining absolute dating slightly difficult. On the other hand, the number of discovered stone vessels allows a statement that the forms and shapes of that type were the most popular during the period between the second half of the 1st Dynasty and the beginning of the 2nd Dynasty to later times.

Grave No. 55
It is one of the largest and richest graves that have been discovered in Tell el-Farkha up to date. It was surrounded by a wide wall with rounded corners.

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and it consisted of four chambers. The northern chamber contained a flexed burial. Directly above the head a cylindrical stone vessel was placed. The central part of the grave consisted of two smaller chambers. The east one contained the above described set of vessels. The west chamber contained a cosmetic palette as well as objects made of organic materials. The last chamber was filled entirely with ceramic vessels.

**Stone vessels**

The grave contained approximately 30 stone vessels (a part is still being studied). All of the vessels were deposited in the south chamber of the grave. Vessels discovered in grave No. 55 in Tell el-Farkha have forms typical for many such objects discovered in graves in Upper and Lower Egypt. However, among numerous standard forms, quite unique ones were also found, such as vessel E07/58 (Fig. 1) and bowl E07/22 (Fig. 2) made of carnelian. Most of the vessels, however, were made of an easily workable material – travertine. Interesting results of mineralogical studies were provided by a small fragment of a stone vessel discovered in the northern wall of the grave. It is a rim fragment, most probably of a bowl, which was similar in shape and form to vessel E07/22. Stone vessels during the discussed period were considered luxury goods. The fact that they appear in graves and other Places (e.g. Settlements) indicates that they were may be identified as special equipment. In case of graves we may also speak of high social status of the deceased. A few dozen treasures deposited in grave No. 55 points to the fact that we are dealing here with such a special burial. It is interesting, however, that the entire necropolis had relatively few graves so well equipped. Most probably the current state of research and the research area are yet to small to conduct a more thorough investigation and analysis. Stone vessels from grave No. 55 may be divided into six groups, all the items are made of travertine if not stated otherwise.

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2 Basic measurements: H – vessels’s height from the bottom’s outer surface to the rim’s edge; RoD – rim’s outer diameter; BD – maximum body diameter; BtD – bottom’s diameter. Most of the stone vessels from grave No. 55 are made of travertine, we must stress, however, that some of the vessels and fragments of vessels are still being analysed. I. Shaw, *Sources, [in:] P. T. Nicholson, I. Shaw (eds.), Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 59-60. In older literature the term *Egyptian alabaster* or simply *alabaster* was used for *travertine*.

Group I: cylindrical vessels

1. Inv. No.: E07/20. Pl.1:1. H: 15,9 cm; RoD: 11 cm; BtD: 9,8 cm. The walls in the middle part of the vessels are arched to the inside. The rim is round. The bottom surface is flat.

2. Inv. No.: E07/24. Pl.1:2. H: 16,5 cm; RoD: 12,4 cm; BtD: 9,8 cm. The walls are arched to the inside. The rim is round. In the upper part of the vessel, below the rim, a plastic slat with diagonal cuts is present. Between the rim and the slat the walls of the vessel are arched to the inside. The bottom surface is also arched to the inside.

3. Inv. No.: E07/55. Pl.1:3. H: 27 cm; RoD: 10 cm; BtD: 8,5 cm. The walls are arched to the inside. The rim is round. In the upper part of the vessel, below the rim, a plastic slat with diagonal cuts is present. Between the rim and the slat the walls of the vessel are straight. The bottom surface is flat.

4. Inv. No.: E07/56. Pl.1:4. H: 13,5 cm; RoD: 11 cm; BtD: 9,5 cm. The walls in the middle part of the vessels are arched to the inside. The rim is round. The bottom surface is flat.

5. Inv. No.: E07/57. Pl.1:5. H: 13,5 cm; RoD: 11 cm; BtD: 9,5 cm. The walls in the middle part of the vessels are arched to the inside. The rim is round. The bottom surface is flat.

Analogies for the above described group of cylindrical vessels may be found chiefly on the Saqqara necropolis (mastabas nos. 3038 – Anedjib, 3504 – Djet, 3505 – Qa’a, 3111 – Den or Anedjib, 3506 and 3507 – Den, 3477 - 2nd Dynasty)\(^4\). In el-Khouli’s classification they are part of Class I\(^5\). Further analogies to vessels from Tell el-Farkha E07/24 and E07/55 are known from Abydos\(^6\). Cylindrical vessels of various sizes made of alabaster were found in tombs Nos. 221, 251, 329, 420, 423, 461, 464, 485, 490, 531, 534, 602, 611, 702, 710 and were dated to the 1st Dynasty\(^7\). They have a well-defined plastic slant with diagonal cuts around upper parts of vessels. Yet another examples come from the excavations in Ballas. Three cylindrical vessels with a slant running in the upper part with clearly visible diagonal cuts were discovered in graves there. All were made of alabaster\(^8\). Other examples are cylindrical vessels from the excavations conducted on the Minshat Abu Omar necropolis. Three cylindrical stone vessels of alabaster were found in grave No. 160 dating

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\(^7\) W. F. Petrie, as above.

\(^8\) W. F. Petrie, J. E. Quibell, *Nagada and Ballas*, London 1896, pp. 20-21, Pls. X.
Pl. 1. Tell el-Farkha. Stone vessels from grave No. 55. Groups I-II
to Dynasty 0\(^9\). Vessel No. 160/11 – (height approx. 20 cm), has a slant in the upper part with diagonal cuts leaning to the left. Similar vessels with a well-defined plastic decoration come from graves Nos. 886 and 415, both dating to Dynasty 0\(^10\). In each case the vessels are made of alabaster, with straight walls and flat bottoms – in the upper part a slant with diagonal cuts is visible\(^11\). Four cylindrical vessels were also discovered in tomb 335 dating to the 1st Dynasty\(^12\). In case of three vessels (335/1, 335/4, 335/8) the walls are slightly arched to the inside\(^13\). Each has a massive bottom. An analogy may also be found in a funerary vessel from the former collection of the Archaeological Cabinet of the Jagiellonian University\(^14\).

**Group II: jars**

1. Inv. No.: E07/58. Pl.I:6 H: 21 cm; RoD: 9,4 cm; BD: 9 cm; BtD: 7 cm15.

   The rim is round. The most protruding part of the belly is located in the upper part of the vessel. The walls grow narrow towards the bottom and slightly widen at the base, creating a sort of a foot. The bottom is flat.

Vessels of this type were very popular during the 1st Dynasty and there are many examples of similar forms. Numerous analogies are also provided by ceramic vessels. One of them originated from Mesaeed (grave No. 230) and is dated to the 1st Dynasty\(^16\). A stone vessel of the above described type was discovered in Minshat Abu Omar in a grave dating to the 1st Dynasty\(^17\). It was larger and made of alabaster. The form and shape are identical to the vessel from Tell el-Farkha. Another example comes from Tarkhan. It was found in grave No. 178 dating to the second half of the 1st Dynasty\(^18\). Other analogies come from Cemetery 300 in Abu Roash. One of the graves (No. 343) dating to

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the end of the 1st Dynasty contained a vessel of the above described type\textsuperscript{19}. In this case, however, the rim is visibly divided from the belly by a clearly defined neck.

**Group III: small jars**

1. Inv. No.: E07/11. Pl.II:1. H: 5,8 cm; RoD: 2,9 cm; BtD: 2,2 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

2. Inv. No.: E07/13. Pl.II:2. H: 7 cm; RoD: 3,1 cm; BtD: 2 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and thick.

3. Inv. No.: E07/11. Pl.II:1. H: 5,8 cm; RoD: 2,9 cm; BtD: 2,2 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

4. Inv. No.: E07/16. Pl.II:3. H: 7,5 cm; RoD: 3,9 cm; BtD: 2,5 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

5. Inv. No.: E07/18. Pl.II:4. H: 6,8 cm; RoD: 3,6 cm; BtD: 2,4 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

6. Inv. No.: E07/19. Pl.II:5. H: 7,7 cm; RoD: 3,7 cm; BtD: 5,3 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

7. Inv. No. E07/54. Pl.II:6. H: 6,1 cm; RoD: 3 cm; BtD: 4,5 cm. The rim is rounded. The walls are arched towards the outside. There is a small neck between the rim and the belly. The bottom is flat and very thick.

Vessels of the above described type were discovered in Abu Roash in graves Nos. 453, 856 and 926 dating to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{20}. Klasens classifies them as type G2 and G12. Identical vessels were discovered in the mastabas of the two last kings, Semerchet and Qa’a in Abydos, but their rims were destroyed\textsuperscript{21}. Another identical vessel made of alabaster was found in grave No. 275 on the same site\textsuperscript{22}. Yet another few were deposited in Tarkhan (S.D 80) in grave No. 162

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\textsuperscript{22} W. M. F. Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers*, p. 7, tabl. IX.
dating to the reign of Djet. Petrie classifies them as class 78h\textsuperscript{23}. Five alabaster vessels similar in shape were discovered in graves Nos. 187, 219, 1017, 1008, 1029. Those vessels, classified as type 78h according to Petrie, are dated to the middle of the 1st Dynasty (S.D 81) – the reign of Den to Semerchet\textsuperscript{24}. Graves Nos. 80 and 1033 contained vessels of the 78n type. Graves Nos. 541, 1513 i 4056 in Naga ed-Der contained alabaster vessels of assigned to classes 78h and 78m according to Petrie’s classification\textsuperscript{25}. The first one – from grave No. 541, is dated to the reign of the 2nd Dynasty\textsuperscript{26}. Reisner assigned the vessels from this grave to group VB2. The next grave No. 1513 is dated to the times from Den to Semerchet\textsuperscript{27}. The last of the above mentioned graves – No. 4506, is dated to the 3rd Dynasty\textsuperscript{28}. Mastaba No. 3505 excavated by W.B. Emery in Saqqara dates to the reign of the last king of the 1st Dynasty – Qa’a\textsuperscript{29}. Vessels of the above described type were among the numerous objects discovered on the burial site. Emery assigned them in his classification to group G – barrel-shaped vessels\textsuperscript{30}. The grave contained 12 vessels of this shape made of calcite. The most similar types are G2 and G12. The differences between them concern the shape of the rim. Another vessel of the G12 type was discovered in a different grave No. 3038. That burial dates to the reign of Anedjib (S.D 79-80)\textsuperscript{31}. A number of similar vessels were discovered in Ezbet el-Tell in graves dating to the Early Dynastic Period\textsuperscript{32}. Among numerous characteristic fragments oval – barrel-shaped vessels were also discovered, the rims of which varied. All the vessels were made of calcite\textsuperscript{33}. Vessels of this type were also discovered in Tell el-Fara’on. Graves dating to the Early Dynastic period contained a few cosmetic vessels made of calcite. One of them is barrel-shaped and resembles the vessel discovered in Tell el-Farkha\textsuperscript{34}. Other examples come from an Early Dynastic grave No. A/87/3 from Tell el-Iswid. They are small and made of calcite\textsuperscript{35}.

\textsuperscript{23} W. M. F. Petrie, \textit{Tarkhan I and Memphis V}, London 1913, p. 3, pl. XLIV.
\textsuperscript{24} W. M. F. Petrie, as above.
\textsuperscript{25} G.A. Reisner, \textit{The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga ed-Der}, Leipzig 1908, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{26} G.A. Reisner, as above, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{27} W. M. F. Petrie, \textit{Tarkhan}, pl. LXVII.
\textsuperscript{28} A.C. Mace, \textit{The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga ed-Der I}, Leipzig 1909, pp.24-60.
\textsuperscript{29} K. CIAłowicz, \textit{Początki}, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{30} W. B. Emery, \textit{Great Tombs, III}, pl.35.
\textsuperscript{31} W. M. F. Petrie, \textit{Tarkhan}, p. 3; W. B. Emery, \textit{Great...I}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{33} K. Kroeper, as above.
\textsuperscript{34} K. Kroeper, \textit{Settlement...}, p. 186, pl. 129.
Pl. 2. Tell el-Farkha. Stone vessels form grave No. 55. Groups III-VI
Group IV: small squat jars
1. Inv. No.: E07/12. Pl.II:7. H: 5,6 cm; BoD: 3,0 cm; BtD: 2,2 cm. The rim is rounded. The belly is protruding. Slightly marked arms run on the outside of the vessel. A small neck is visible between the belly and the rim. The bottom is flat and very thick.
2. Inv. No.: E07/14. Pl.II:8. H: 5,5 cm; BoD: 3,5 cm; BtD: 2,5 cm. The rim is rounded. The belly is protruding. The walls are arched. The bottom is flat and very thick.
3. Inv. No.: E07/15. Pl.II:9. H: 8,2 cm; BoD: 4,6 cm; BtD: 4,0 cm. The rim is rounded. The belly is protruding. Slightly marked arms run on the outside of the vessel. The largest diameter of the belly is located in the upper part of the vessel. A small neck is visible between the belly and the rim. The bottom is flat and very thick.
4. Inv. No.: E07/17. Pl.II:10. H: 5,2 cm; BoD: 3,5 cm; BtD: 2,5 cm. The rim is rounded. The belly is protruding. Slightly marked arms run on the outside of the vessel. The largest diameter of the belly is located in the upper part of the vessel. The bottom is flat and very thick.

This type and shape of vessel was very popular in Early Dynastic Egypt. Examples were discovered in Tarkhan in graves Nos. 80, 1020 and 1029 dating to the middle of the 1st Dynasty (type 78e, m – in Petrie’s classification)\(^{36}\). Other examples come from graves Nos. 536\(^{37}\), 3015\(^{38}\), 3551, 4375\(^{39}\) from Naga ed-Der. The first dates to the reign of the 3rd Dynasty\(^{40}\), the others (3015, 3551), while grave No. 437 dates to the 2nd Dynasty\(^{41}\). Those vessels were classified as Va and V in Reisner’s classification. They were all made of alabaster. Another example comes from the royal tombs in Abydos dated to the 1st Dynasty\(^{42}\). Those vessels were also made of alabaster. Another examples were found in the chamber of mastaba No. 3505 discovered in Saqqara\(^{43}\). In Emery’s classification they fit into group G6 – squat vessels with rounded arms. The burial is

\(^{36}\) W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan*, p. 3, pl. XLIV.


\(^{42}\) W. F. Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers*, p. 7 pl. IX.

\(^{43}\) Emery B. W., *The Great Tombs, III*, pp. 5-36.
dated to the reign of Qa’a\textsuperscript{44}. Another vessel was found in grave No. 172 (404) in Minshat Abu Omar, dating to the reign of the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{45}. It is made of alabaster and was placed right next to the legs of the deceased between pottery vessels. A single example comes from grave No. 178 (886) dating to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{46}. It is also made of alabaster.

**Group V: miniature bowl**

1. Inv. No.: E07/22. Pl.II:11. H: 2,0 cm; RoD: 2,5 cm; BtD: 2 cm. Agate. Between the rim and small shoulders there is a slight groove forming a neck. The protruding arms are at the same time the widest part of the belly. In the lower part the walls of the vessel drop at a slight angle towards a massive bottom. Inside the vessel at the bottom there is a small hollow in the shape of a small opening.

Small bowl-shaped vessels were very popular in Early Dynastic Egypt. An identical vessel was discovered in grave No. 600 in Qau dating to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{47}. The vessel was made of diorite. Other examples come from graves Nos. 1012 and 1013 discovered in Tarkhan\textsuperscript{48}. They were classified as type 42f by Petrie. In case of grave No. 1013 the vessels were placed right next to the hands of the deceased. The vessels were made of alabaster and the burials date to the middle of the 1st Dynasty – S.D. 81\textsuperscript{49}. Another example of an alabaster vessel of the above described type comes from mastaba No. 3505 in Saqqara\textsuperscript{50} dating to the reign of Qa’a (the vessel was placed in the funerary chamber)\textsuperscript{51}.

**Group VI: large bowls**

1. Inv. No.: E07/62. Pl.II:12. H: 3,2 cm; RoD: 17,8 cm; BtD: 14 cm. The rim is flat. The walls are thick and massive. The bend between the walls and the bottom surface is sharp. The bottom is flat and thick-set.

Examples of such forms are vessels (Nos. 259, 260, 265) discovered in Hierakonpolis\textsuperscript{52}. Vessels Nos. 259 and 260 had traces of burning, which suggests

\textsuperscript{44} K. CIAŁOWICZ, *Początki*, p. 276.
\textsuperscript{47} G. BRUNTON, *Qau and Badari I*, London 1927, p. 52 Pl. XX.
\textsuperscript{48} W. M. F. PETRIE, *Tarkhan*, p. 11 pl. XXXVIII.
\textsuperscript{49} W. M. F. PETRIE, *Tarkhan*, p. 3 pl. XXXVIII.
\textsuperscript{50} W. B. EMERY, *The Great Tombs, III.*, pp. 5-36.
\textsuperscript{51} K. CIAŁOWICZ, *Początki*, p. 276.
that the items were in direct contact with fire. Vessel No. 260 was discovered in the main deposit dating to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{53}. All the vessels were made of alabaster. There are some differences in the shape of the main edge of the rim, which is usually rounded. All the vessels date to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{54}. Other examples come from Zawiye el-Aryan. In grave No. 118 two vessels of the described type were discovered. The first one and smaller one (No. 3) was made of yellow calcite, the second one (No. 5) was larger\textsuperscript{55}. In this case some differences are also visible in the shape of the upper edge of the rim. The most similar vessel to the one discovered in Tell el-Farkha is No. 3. This burial dates to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{56}.

2. Inv. No.: E07/21. Pl.II:13. H: 3,2 cm; RoD: 19 cm; BtD: 4,5 cm. The rim is rounded. The thick and massive walls drop towards the bottom at a wide angle. The bend between the walls and the bottom surface is gentle. Inside the vessel at the bottom part there a base countersunk is visible. The bottom is flat and thick-set.

Vessels of the above described type were discovered in Abusir in graves Nos. 10 and 11. Both burials date to the 1st Dynasty\textsuperscript{57}. Similar alabaster vessels come from grave No. 294 discovered in Tarkhan. Inside there is a base countersunk. The burial dates to the 1st Dynasty (S.D 81)\textsuperscript{58} - in Petrie’s classification – 8n and r\textsuperscript{59}. In case of group 8n the rim is sharp. Another vessel comes from grave No. 142 (322) in the above mentioned necropolis in Minshat Abu Omar\textsuperscript{60}. It is smaller, made of alabaster, with the height of 2,6 cm\textsuperscript{61}. In this case there is a visible lack of a base countersunk in the bottom. The vessel also has massive walls and the rim is rounded\textsuperscript{62}. The burial dates to the reign of the 1st Dynasty (MAO IV)\textsuperscript{63}.

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\textsuperscript{53} J. E. Quibell, \textit{Hierakonpolis I}, London 1900, Pl. XXXIV:5a.
\textsuperscript{54} A. A. H. el-Khouli, \textit{Egyptian Stone Vessels, II}, p. 646.
\textsuperscript{55} D. Dunham, \textit{Zawiye el-Aryan, The Cemeteries Adjacent to The Layer Piramid}, Boston 1978, p.16.
\textsuperscript{56} D. Dunham, \textit{Zawiye el-Aryan}, p.16.
\textsuperscript{57} H. Bonnet, \textit{Ein Frühgeschichtliches Gräberfeld bei Abusir}, Leipzig 1928, pp. 7-53.
\textsuperscript{58} W. M. F. Petrie, \textit{Tarkhan}, pl. XXXII.
\textsuperscript{59} W. M. F. Petrie, \textit{Tarkhan}, pl. XXXIII.
\textsuperscript{60} K. Kroeper, D. Wildung, \textit{Minshat Abu Omar II}, pp. 47-55, Pl. 15-17.
\textsuperscript{61} K. Kroeper, D. Wildung, \textit{Minshat Abu Omar II}, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{62} K. Kroeper, D. Wildung, \textit{Minshat Abu Omar II}, p. 49, fig. 322/8.
\textsuperscript{63} K. Kroeper, D. Wildung, \textit{Minshat Abu Omar II}, p. 47.