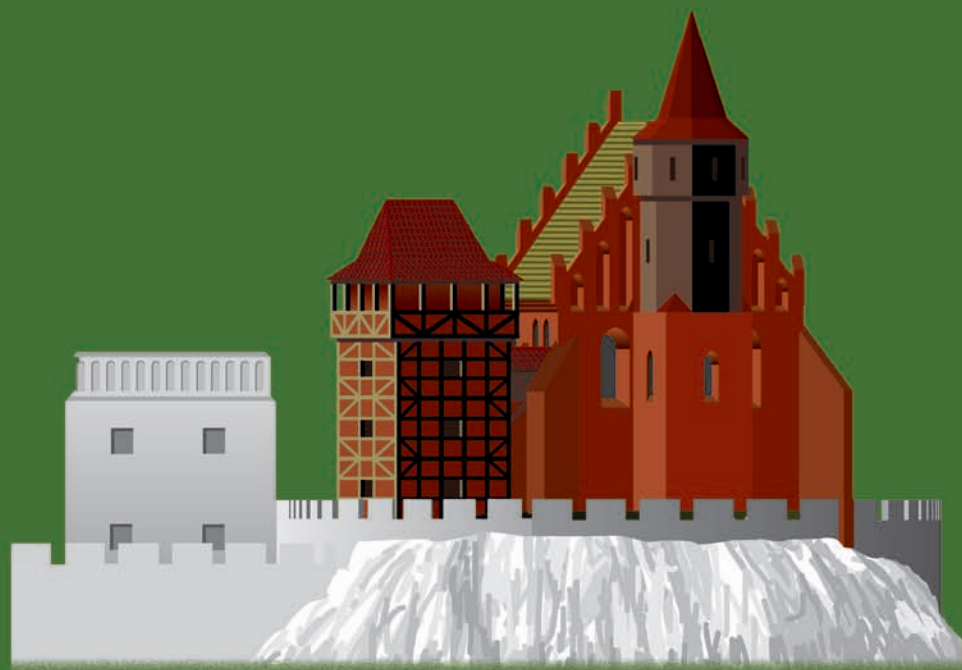


L'INSTITUT D'ARCHEOLOGIE
DE L'UNIVERSITE JAGIELLONNE
DE CRACOVIE

RECHERCHES ARCHEOLOGIQUES

NOUVELLE SERIE 2



KRAKÓW 2010

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DE L'UNIVERSITE JAGELLONNE DE CRACOVIE**

**RECHERCHES ARCHEOLOGIQUES
NOUVELLE SERIE 2**

KRAKÓW 2010

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Marek Nowak

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Jan Chochorowski, Krzysztof Ciałowicz, Piotr Kaczanowski, Janusz K. Kozłowski, Jacek Poleski,
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Magdalena Dzięgielewska

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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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Joanna Dębowska-Ludwin

The necropolis at Tell el-Farkha reconsidered

Works on the necropolis at Tell el-Farkha have reached the 9th season and resulted in locating over 100 burials (Fig. 1). In this situation, almost every succeeding campaign was bringing such a number of new data that preliminary statements were continuously being changed almost year by year. Numerous analyses of pottery, stone vessels, architectural details and stratigraphy, finally, seem to lead to some more profound conclusions. According to them, all graves at Tell el-Farkha have been divided into 3 main chronological groups, which means that the previously proposed 4 categories of burials were reconsidered and replaced with the chronological units. The descriptions of the majority of graves quoted as examples supporting general remarks on the cemetery have already been published (see: Dębowska-Ludwin 2010), however, the presented below description of the groups and

changes of the burial-ground structure is far more precise than ever before and based on much wider material. A list of particular graves with groups they have been attributed to is shown in Table 1.

Group 1

Based on pottery analyses, this group of burials should be dated from Dynasty 0 (Naqada IIIB) to the middle of Dynasty 1. The most recent discoveries point that this period should be additionally divided into at least 2 units labelled “a” and “b” that would better describe the horizontal stratigraphy of the cemetery at that time. Accordingly, the oldest burials concentrate in the south-eastern part of the excavated necropolis area. Graves assigned to the group, in their majority, belonged to the middle class society of Tell el-Farkha, however, they reveal examples of both wealthy people and

Table 1. Chronological groups of burials and graves attributed to them

GROUP OF GRAVES AT TELL EL FARKHA	GRAVE NUMBER
1	1–9, 12, 14, 19–21, 23–32, 60, 63, 67, 69–70, 72, 75, 80, 86, 89, 91, 94, 98–100, 102, 104 and probably 11, 17–18, 22, 33, 88
2	50–53, 55, 57–58, 61–62, 64–66, 71, 73, 108 and probably 13, 49, 59, 68, 74, 77–79, 81, 84–85, 87, 90, 92–93, 105
3	15–16, 34–48, 95–97, 101, 107

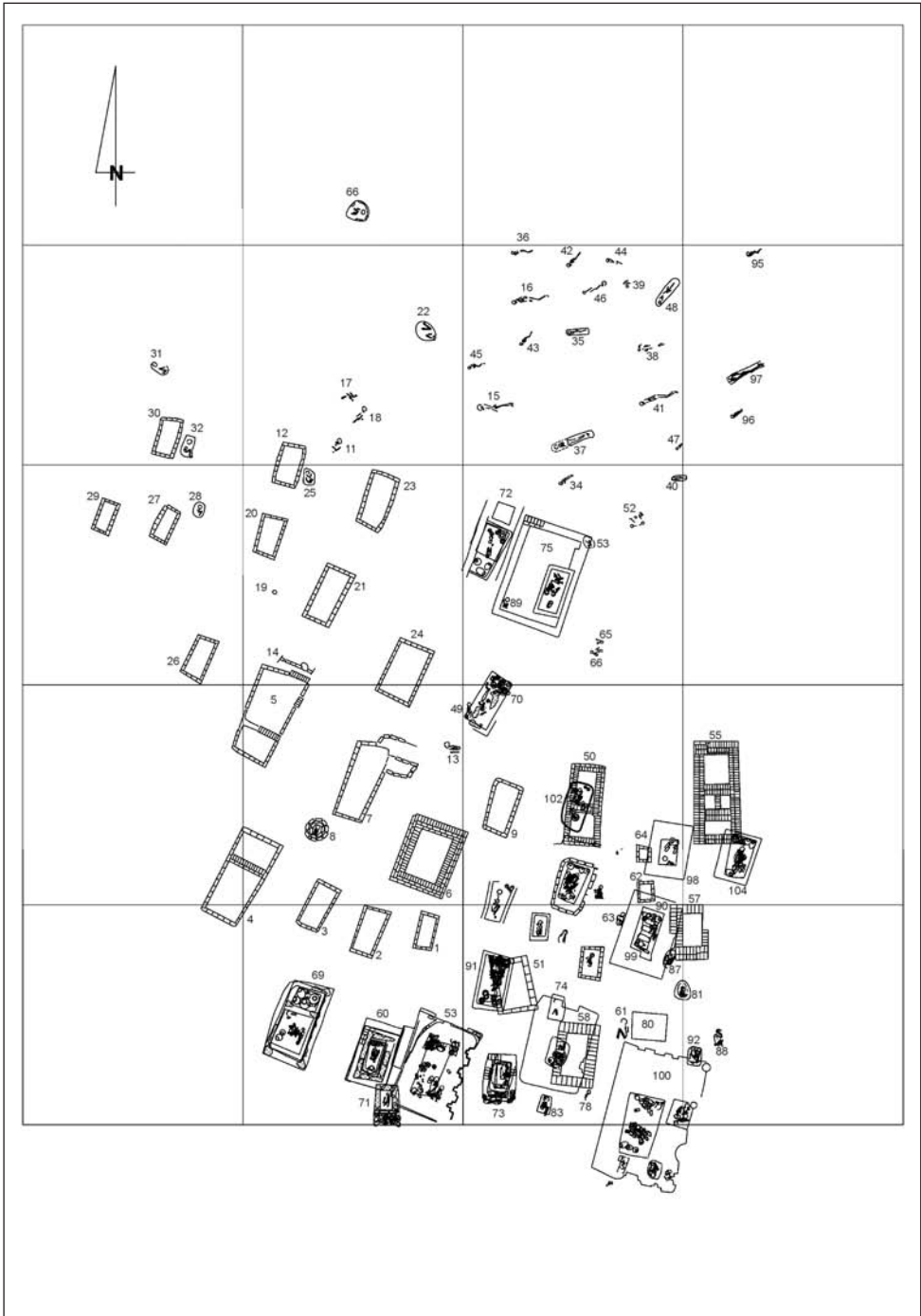


Fig. 1. The general plan of the cemetery in 2009

paupers. The economic status of the tomb owners is confirmed by differences in offerings assemblage and chosen architectural solutions. Most of these structures were built of mud bricks and, what is more, their construction required significant effort, as they were carefully lined with mats and often secured with a massive superstructure. The older tombs from the ancient necropolis centre seem to be wealthier than the smaller ones located on the outskirts.

A typical burial representing the group is a middle-sized (3–2 m long and 1.8–1.2 m wide on average) tomb oriented along the NS axis with a small declination to E and composed of a sub- and superstructure. The aboveground part was probably meant as a kind of a tombstone that precisely marked the burial place, played a role in some rituals and, additionally, secured the eternal peace of the deceased and his or her offerings. The superstructure was usually constructed as a kind of compact mud-bricked cover. The process of building such a structure started at the then ground level. A small heap formed over the burial with the earth that filled the grave up was encircled by succeeding layers of bricks until a regular rectangular shape was obtained. In the majority of preserved examples, such a cover occupied a larger area than the subterranean part and its outer surfaces were quite commonly plastered with a layer of sandy mud. A solution of this kind is represented by, among others, grave no. 1. On the other hand, grave no. 21 had a very similar superstructure, but its size was equal to the one of its underground part. The original height of superstructures is presently hard to define since numerous graves have preserved only very little or even none of their overground parts. Nevertheless, it should be strongly suggested that a part of burial custom practiced at ancient Tell el-Farkha was to mark graves with such constructions. The deeper

a tomb lies below the present surface of the tell, the more probable it is that a well preserved superstructure may be excavated. The south-eastern part of the cemetery offers such a possibility.

In most cases, the subterranean part of tombs was constructed as a roughly rectangular pit lined with a single row of bricks. The average measurements of the so-called burial chamber are usually 1.8–1.5 m long and 0.8–0.6 m wide. What is interesting, these quite small chambers were often dug surprisingly deep into the ground, even far over 1 m (e.g. graves nos 1 and 24). If the inner length of a grave exceeded ca. 3 m, the wide space was divided (Fig. 2) into the actual burial chamber – the bigger one, meant for the deceased and the most valuable objects of his or her offerings – and an additional, smaller side chamber that was used as a store for mass goods presently recovered as large pottery jars (graves nos 4, 5 and 69). Grave no. 67 (Dębowska-Ludwin 2011: 267) proves that some kind of roofing was used to close a tomb of this type before its upper part was constructed. In this case, it was a kind of mat structure – sloping like a tent, possibly leaning over an unpreserved crosswise beam.

Another type of tombs registered at Tell el-Farkha are structures of a mastaba type (graves nos 6, 63, 94 and 100). The excavated examples concentrate in the south-eastern part of the cemetery and, what is more, structures nos 94 and 100 belong to the oldest burials known from the site (except for so-called mastaba no. 10 of a still unclear function; Ciałowicz 2006). The general idea was very similar to that of a typical grave, but in this case the major differences are a larger size and a massive, almost monumental form – even over 6 m long, as seen in grave no. 100. Thick walls of mud bricks were ranging from 0.6 m in smaller grave no. 6 up to ca. 2 m in much

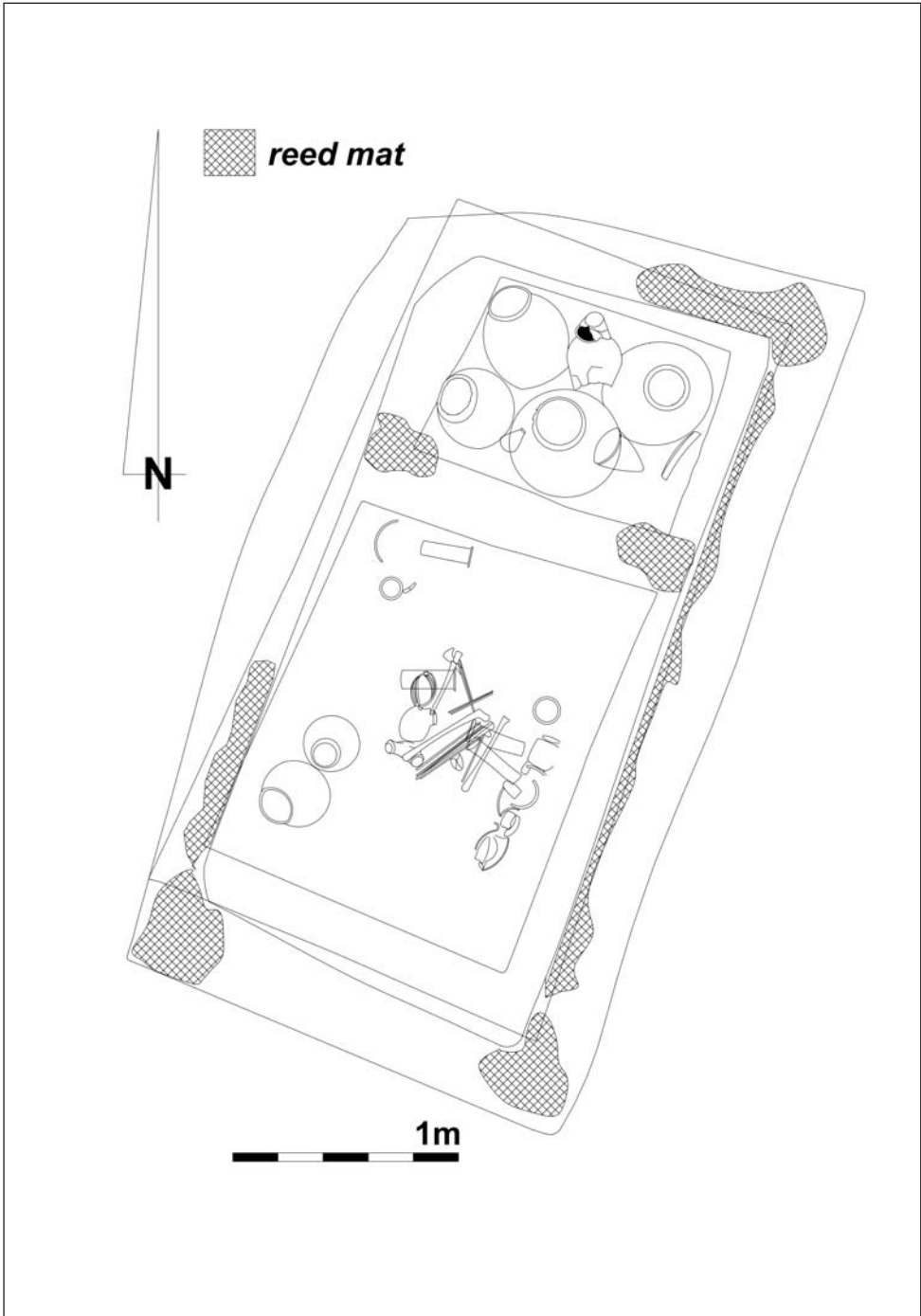


Fig. 2. Grave no. 69

larger grave no. 100 (Dębowska-Ludwin, *et al.* 2010) and every few layers of bricks were usually interleaved with mats for a greater wall stability – an issue of crucial importance as proven by some structural flaws in grave no. 63 (Dębowska-Ludwin 2011: 260–263). The outer façades of these buildings were plastered with a clear layer of light-coloured, sandy mud and even decorated with niches (graves nos 63, 94 and 100). The niches (usually two-stepped) were found in the eastern walls of Tell el-Farkha mastabas in the number 1 to 5, however, not solely since grave no. 100 had 3 niches in the southern wall and another, four niches in the northern one, while graves nos 63 and 94 (Fig. 3) had also accented corners of their northern walls, which gave the impression of a kind of shallow niche. Examples known from Tell el-Farkha do not support the common idea that a mud-brick mastaba has always sloppy walls. It might be true in the case of grave no. 100 is or grave no 63, although some further research still must be done. The uppermost parts of these structures did not survive and so it is impossible to assess their original height (e.g. grave no. 100 was preserved to ca. 3 m and grave no. 6 to ca. 2 m) and roof construction. A kind of shaft (in grave no. 94 it was over 2 m deep), whose size was similar to that of the burial chamber, led probably from the top to the bottom of these structures, where in every case burials were found in a single inner room. Unfortunately, the works around the most interesting mastabas have not been terminated yet. That is why not much can be said about the way their substructures were built. It seems that, apart from the mentioned features, the rest of architectural details was pretty much the same in the case of a mastaba or another, less elaborated burial construction. However, future excavations may revise the opinion soon.

As it was stated above, the major difference between regular mud-brick tombs and mastabas from Tell el-Farkha is their size. When we compare extreme examples, e.g. the repeatedly quoted burial no. 100 and small, twisted and somehow hurriedly finished graves nos 12, 27 and 30, the division is obvious. More problematic is a proper classification of graves nos 86, 98 and 99 that bear some transitional features. All of them were found in the same, oldest sector of the cemetery. Grave no. 86 was rather large (ca. 3 m wide and 5 m long), while graves nos 98 and 99 were small (ca. 2.5 m wide and ca. 3.5 m long) but they all had very massive superstructure walls. The aboveground parts formed a kind of shaft in their centre, yet the quite massive construction was clearly seated on the contemporary surface level, marked by edges of mats that covered burials from above and were turned from the burial chamber up on the top of the substructure thin walls.

A small number of graves assigned to group 1, mainly because of their stratigraphic position, is represented also by simple pit burials. They were devoid of any extra architectural features or offerings and usually only lined with mats. Graves like nos 11, 25 or 32 were found mostly on the north-western outskirts of the cemetery, spread among numerous other burials of brick construction.

The significant number of graves belonging to group 1 contains also some so-called “experimental” examples. They are represented by, among others, grave no. 7 with a system of side annexes, where a part of most valuable offerings was stored, or a very simple pit burial no. 8, which, surprisingly, was paved with mud bricks. Worth a mention is small and compact grave no. 26 with a kind of bottom niche for the burial alone or almost square grave no. 80, unfortunately, badly preserved. Interesting is also

grave no. 102 – an elongated and rounded pit, plastered inside with only a layer of mud, without bricks, typical in such a context. Such “strange” structures can be well treated as traces of a long process of the perfect burial form evolution, considering especially their early date.

Regardless of their architectural form, typical burials from Tell el-Fakha are very similar. Normally, graves were designed for a single individual but in 4 exceptional cases (graves nos 1, 7, 23 and 75) two bodies were found entwined inside one burial chamber. No matter whether the burials were single or double, the deceased were buried in graves lined with mats and covered with them from above. In a few cases (e.g. graves nos 4, 6 and 99), a kind of catafalque was found below the body, usually made of bricks arranged in 3 or 4 benches that were probably the base for the actual funeral structures, possibly in the form of a bed. The preferable body position was contracted, usually left-sided, oriented along the NS axis (with the characteristic declination to E) and the head turned N. However, also in this case numerous differences can be observed. Bodies were found so tightly contracted that it is reasonable to think they may have been bound (graves nos 8 and 26); or, contrariwise, they were laid in a comfortable sleeping position (graves nos 5, 6 and 21). Moreover, the contraction degree varies so much that it seems not to be of great importance for the ancient inhabitants of the site. The deceased in simple pit graves tend to be more tightly packed, but it is not a strict rule as in some larger structures (graves nos 3 and 30) this may be the case as well. Other body positions and directions where heads were pointed to were also registered, however, they were significantly less frequent. In the author’s opinion this supports the thesis of the evolution of burial rules

which at that time were not very strictly followed yet.

Another interesting issue concerns the presence of burials in “strange” positions, found in anatomical disorder. Once again, the burial may be a pile of bones or represent a limited, to various degrees, dislocation of some body parts. In the first case the interpretation is rather easy: if the disorder was not caused by later disturbances (as it was presumably with grave no. 12), we probably deal with secondary burials (e.g. grave no. 53). However, the mentioned dislocations are more difficult to explain. There is a wide scope of cases where limbs or jaws were found transferred (e.g. graves nos 2, 24 or 91). On some occasions that can have resulted from natural decaying processes, but more surprising examples are those like grave no. 4, where almost all the phalanges and vertebrae were scattered around the body. An interesting coincidence is that in the majority of the unanatomical examples, the graves were furnished with numerous objects and interred in brick structures. So it seems possible that we deal with burials that were somehow postponed, maybe for the time necessary to complete a tomb structure or offering set, as contrasted with usually anatomical simple pit graves where the delay was pointless. Another explanation may be some special burial practices. Unfortunately, human skeletal remains from graves of group 1 were all found in a very bad preservation state, so no traces of mutilation – if they ever were present – cannot be attested. On the other hand, maybe the crucial idea was to gather all body parts of a particular deceased in his or her tomb and, when it was accomplished, not much effort was invested in a perfect posing of the body.

In a typically organized internal space of a burial chamber, the deceased occupied its central area and was surrounded by objects offered for his or her eternal use. Usually,

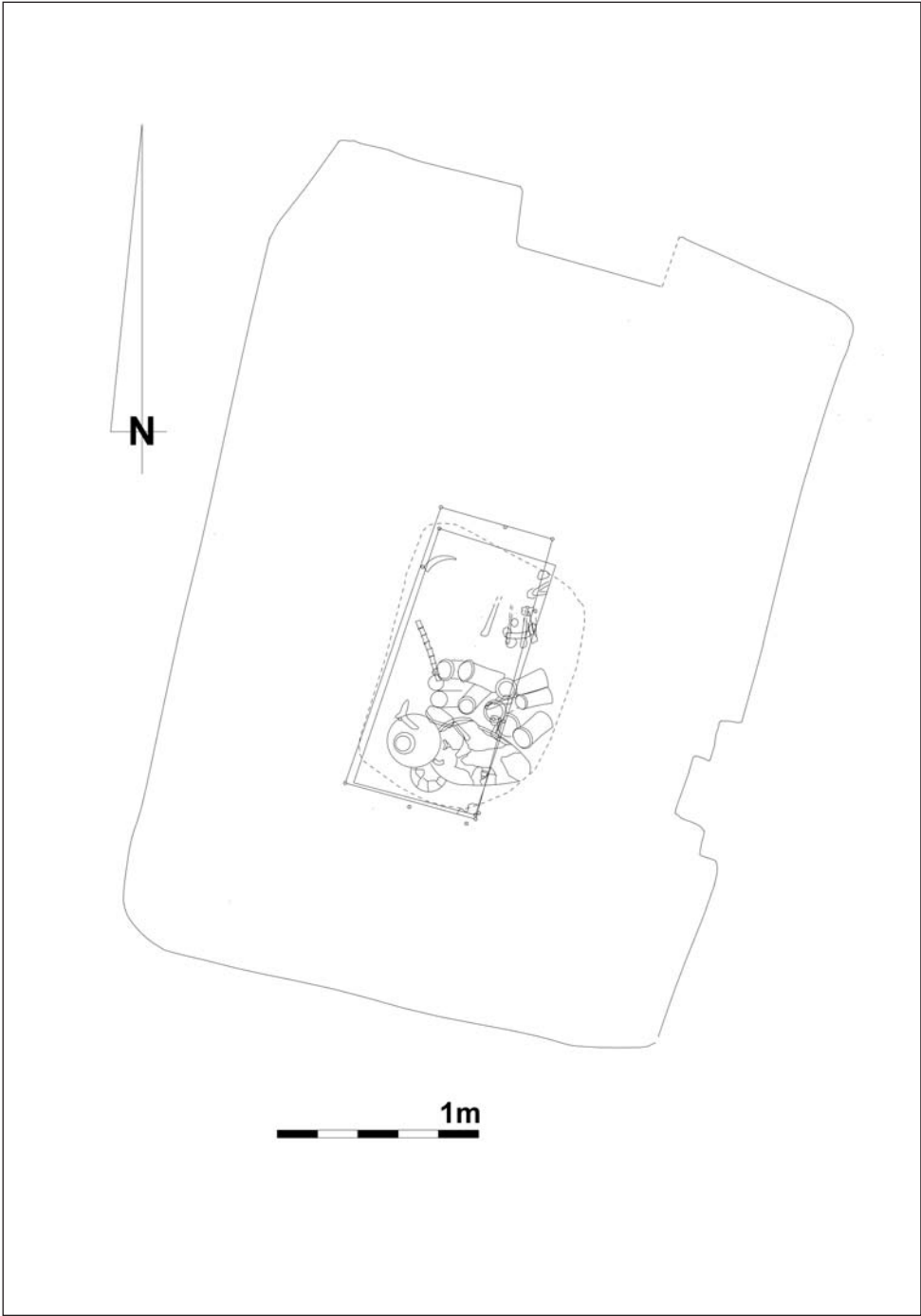


Fig. 3. Grave no. 94

larger items were arranged along the shorter walls of a chamber (e.g. graves nos 7, 21, 60 or 70), while smaller objects were placed closer to the body: at the back (e.g. graves nos 1, 4 or 9), in front of the face (e.g. grave no. 9, 69) or even over lower parts of the body (e.g. graves nos 98, 100). In some cases – like in grave no. 3 – offerings were tightly packed in a relatively small space, piled in numerous layers when the remaining room had been left empty, while in others – like grave no. 6 – objects were evenly distributed around the deceased. 3 burials (graves nos 4, 5 and 69) attributed to group 1 had an additional storage chamber, where plentiful pottery vessels were found very tightly arranged; sometimes pots at lower levels were even crushed by the overlying ones. In the light of currently known data no clear or commonly followed pattern of goods distribution inside tombs can be observed and since the material is quite large and comparable with that from other sites (e.g. Minshat Abu Omar – Kroeper, Wildung 2000), it may be suggested that such a pattern did not exist at that time yet.

The most frequent type of burial equipment in group 1 was pottery. A typical set of offerings was composed of a few items: some large and middle-sized jars and small cylindrical vessels. The more wealthy a burial was, the more pots – of course – were found in it. The highest registered number is 73 jars from grave no. 63, but usually it was ca. 10. The pottery forms a quite interesting and diversified set; there are numerous large-sized beer and wine jars; middle, small and miniature items, also some of Levantine connotations (grave no. 9, see: Czarnowicz 2009). Various vases were decorated, moreover, some bore serekhs with names of early rulers (graves nos 2, 5, 9, 69 and 91). However, since pottery is a crucial dating factor, it constitutes a separate field of research and will not be discussed here (see: Jucha 2006;

2008; 2010A). In the majority of cases pots were accompanied by other categories of objects such as: personal adornments (usually strings of beads of carnelian and agate, sometimes even regular necklaces, as in grave no. 6); geometric cosmetic palettes of greywacke, sometimes with matching grinders; small objects of bone such as awls, spoons, miniature jars; some copper objects (awls, chisels) and stone objects: innumerable flint tools (usually knives) and vessels, mainly in the form of cylinders or bowls. Again, all these items are an object of separate research studies (see: e.g. Pryc 2006). In the majority of cases a rule may be observed according to which more valuable artefacts (which apparently did not include pottery) were placed closer to the deceased. Apart from that, an important remark must be made: regardless of the actual number of objects offered for burial equipment, almost each set appears to be carefully collected, with every item perfectly made and all of them representing various forms or categories of objects. It seems that everything was intentionally, not randomly, chosen.

Some significant observations have been made inside burial chambers that point to some rituals a burial itself was accompanied by. 2 graves (nos 86 and 94) preserved traces of a funerary feast in the form of numerous animal bones and broken pottery, thrown into the tombs after the deceased was placed in the burial chamber and covered with a mat but before the superstructure was definitively closed. In the case of grave no. 86 it must have been a magnificent spread since hundreds of remains of numerous species (fish, birds, 31 pigs, 3 goats, 2 cattle, a dog, 2 cats, a hippopotamus and a donkey – analysed by R. Abłamowicz) were recognized there. In a group of graves just below the upper mat, a thin layer of pure sand and traces of red or yellow ochre (e.g. graves nos 9 and 98) were registered. In grave no. 99 in

fact the whole burial chamber was covered with red ochre. Some particular pottery jars (found e.g. in graves nos 91 or 98), whose form refers to granaries, also seem to be an element of some funerary beliefs connected with rebirth in afterlife. Equally difficult to interpret is the presence of liquid mud that was poured into burial chambers just before they were closed for ever. This kind of treatment surely resulted in an almost perfectly secured entrance to a chamber as the mud was greasy and tightly covered everything it touched. On the other hand, the seasonally fluctuating groundwater level very seriously affected objects deposited below the waterproof mud. So, if the mud was used for security reasons, it proved efficient as no robberies turned out to be successful (in grave no. 100 a robbery trench was registered but it did not cut through the mud) and even archaeological exploration was extremely difficult. However, since in numerous pottery vessels only plain mud was registered, the treatment could also play some role in funerary beliefs. Nevertheless, the unquestionable result was a really weak condition of all offering items and human remains, too.

Another puzzling element of burial customs known from Tell el-Farkha is the presence of subsidiary burials found by grave no. 100. With the tomb early date of Naqada IIIB, it is the oldest recognized example of this practice in Lower Egypt. It is represented by 4 small and very simple graves, devoid of any objects that were placed in between layers of bricks forming the southern wall of the mastaba. Two of the sub-graves held children from 5 to 6 years old, the third one was burnt and in such a bad condition that its identification was impossible, while the last one contained an older child left in an almost rectangular pit, carefully inlaid and covered with mats. In general, the deceased had been placed in a tightly contracted side

position and wrapped in mats. The bodies were oriented along the main axis of the structure, with their heads turned to N or S. It is evident that the subsidiary burials accompanied the largest structure of the group, but what is striking is their localization within the main tomb and the fact that this tomb was not the richest one. What is more, the sub-graves comprised bodies of children, which never was a common practice in Egyptian history.

Group 2

Again, it is pottery that enabled the dating of this part of burials from Tell el-Farkha, which come from the middle of Dynasty 1 to late Dynasty 1 or even to early Dynasty 2. The tombs assigned to this group are either simple and poor or quite elaborated in their architectural form. Some of the latter preserved massive and probably freestanding superstructures of mud bricks, while their subterranean parts, in some cases, were divided into several chambers. The main differences, in comparison to the previous group, are the fixed burial form and a typical set of offerings, composed of numerous items which often have almost identical shapes. Today, it seems a rule that burials dated to this group concentrate in the southeastern sector of the hitherto excavated cemetery part.

In many respects, such as building materials, architectural form, burial rules or offering objects, group 2 constitutes an evolutionary continuation of older group 1. However, group 2 retained no originality and freshness typical of its predecessor. No “experimental” structural forms were found, either. On the other hand, larger material differences among typical graves within the group were identified. Members of the society were rather clearly divided into the wealthy, the middle class and the poor. Simple pit graves with no offerings or any extra

architectural features predominate in the group. The pits were oval (e.g. graves nos 81 and 87) or roughly rectangular in shape (e.g. graves nos 74 or 93) and usually preserved remains of mats that inlaid the bottom or covered the body from above. The remaining graves were constructed of mud bricks. Most of them were small (from 1.6 x 0.7 m wide to 0.9 x 0.6 m wide) and insignificant in form, rather carelessly built (e.g. graves nos 79 and 85). Some of them preserved very scarce remains of superstructures – rectangular, made of bricks, very similar to those from the previous group.

Much more interesting are multichamber structures (graves nos 50, 55, 71 and 73). The last two are examples of compact, rather small but well planned constructions that were found with only little traces of their aboveground brick parts. The substructures were almost uniform as they were composed of the actual burial chamber and a southern storage chamber. Graves nos 50 and 55, with 2 and 6 chambers respectively, represent wealthy burials of the group. Both were perfectly preserved with their large and massive superstructures. What is more, grave no. 55 (Fig. 4) is an example of a burial enclosure with niches, an external wall and subsidiary burials, unique in the cemetery (Dębowska-Ludwin, 2011: 264–266). The impressive structures were constructed in a very similar manner as those from group 1, and surely the same building materials were used: standardized mud bricks, mats interleaved in between layers of bricks, mud plaster put on the façades and a combination of smaller walls constructed of dark mud bricks or of light sandy ones, probably for greater stability (a solution known from the older large mastaba with no. 10). The most important structural feature is that after the subterranean part of a tomb had been made, furnished, used as a burial place, and closed, and only after a

thick layer of plain earth had been spread in the burial area, was an elaborate superstructure built over the levelled space. So, we deal here with a significant change: from that moment on, the deceased and his or her offerings were safely closed for eternity far below the ground level, while the process of a tomb expansion could be extended over time on the surface.

Grave no. 55 is also important when traces of cult activity are discussed. The eastern superstructure façade was decorated with 2 shallow niches located close to the northern and southern end of the wall. The small space between the construction's main body and the enclosure wall was found to be full of broken pottery, mostly bread moulds, which are viewed as remains of offerings that were made long after the structure was built. Grave no. 55 is dated to the period of late Dynasty 1 or early Dynasty 2. If we accepted the first date, the tomb would provide a very early example of cult niches. If the second date was accepted, the niches date would perfectly coincide with the rest of similar cases, known e.g. from Helwan (see: Koehler 2004), but subsidiary burials (graves nos 62 and 64, small and lined with bricks) accompanying the complex would be dated extremely late. Unfortunately, to solve the problem, much more field research must be done.

A typical burial was designed for a single individual, as before, with only 2 exceptions (graves nos 52 and 66) that confirm the rule. The preferable position of the deceased was tightly contracted, left-sided, with the head turned N. Some few exceptions were – of course – also registered, however, it seems that the rather strict rule was commonly accepted in the period under discussion. Another rule was to furnish the deceased with some objects that, together with the architectural form of the grave, highlighted the material status. Obviously, the majority of



Fig. 4. The aboveground parts of grave no. 55, photo by R. Słaboński

simple pit burials was found without any equipment but multichamber structures were full of objects. The most frequent was still pottery (Jucha, 2010 B) – usually ca. 10 items, yet graves nos 50 and 55 brought 37 and 51 jars respectively. What is striking in comparison to group 1 is that very often pots in an offering set represented very similar shapes and the largest forms were usually missing. Moreover, pottery objects were frequently arranged rather carelessly and placed on the top of walls of substructures, so, when excavated, they were severely crushed.

Apart from pottery jars, an important group of objects proved to be stone vessels. They appear in sets ranging from 6 in grave no. 51 to 30 in grave no. 55 (Pryc 2009), but the material used for their production is

mainly only travertine, and their forms are standard and repeatable. Other items that formed burial goods were: beads of carnelian and agate – elements of some unpreserved jewellery; pottery objects like cones, counters, game pieces, so-called cornets and marbles; quite numerous seal impressions; 2 copper harpoons from grave no. 55. Grave no. 50 brought also an interesting deposit of granary models (Kołodziejczyk 2009) found in the layer of earth between the sub- and superstructure – a continuation of the idea known from group 1 but in a modified form. Additionally, despite the fact that in particular graves the number of items exceeded 70, the general impression is the most important thing was the sheer number of goods, and not the original composition, so characteristic of group 1. Actually, the tendency

is more visible when structural differences within group 2 are considered, where the interest was clearly focused on the largest constructions only. As a result, they were perfectly planned and carefully built but in their excellence they lost much of the freshness and human touch, typical of group 1.

Burials attributed to group 2 were oriented along the NS axis, in contrast to group 1, usually almost perfectly and sometimes even with a small declination to W. Moreover, many of the graves were cut into older structures (e.g. graves nos 71 into 63, Fig. 5; 85 into 86; or 108 into 100) or built over them (e.g. graves nos 50 over 102; 55 over 98 and 104; 57 over 99; or 58 over 94), which affected older superstructures, but saved burial chambers connected to them. It seems obvious that since so large structures as graves nos 63 and 100 were damaged by later burial activity, they must have been long covered with new earth layers and forgotten.

Group 3

It is the most homogenous group in the cemetery. Dating of these graves is difficult as they usually reveal nothing but small fragments of pottery. However, the pottery date of the beginning of the Old Kingdom (Dynasty 3–4?) can be confirmed by their high stratigraphic position, just beneath the present surface, and their range, limited to the very top of the tell. Another novelty is a very simple burial custom characteristic of these inhumations: all the bodies (many of them of infants) were found resting in oblong simple pits (usually ca. 1.7×0.4 m wide) in a straight position, mostly on their right side, the head consequently pointing more or less precisely to W (Fig. 6). Only very few burials were equipped with scarce objects, so it seems the rule was to leave the deceased with no goods for their afterlife. However, it was a simple pit burial with no. 97 that brought the only fragment of cloth

preserved in the cemetery. The plain weave and the position of the discovery under the head of the deceased may suggest it is a preserved fragment of a shroud the body was originally buried in. If so, it could evidence a change in the burial custom that favoured cloth over previously popular mats. The change could take place in a period between the end of phase 2 and the beginning of 3. Unfortunately, this is a hypothesis that at the present state of research is hard to be proved with certainty.

Graves assigned to the group were clustered in the highest part of the tell. The specific localization, the relatively good state of bone preservation and especially the burial custom, so different from the earlier one, as presented by these inhumations, correspond to the final stage of the Tell el-Farkha settlement attested on the Central tell.

Conclusions

The oldest burial activity discovered at Tell el-Farkha is probably connected to the large mastaba with no. 10 and dated to the turn of Naqada IIIA2 and Naqada IIIB1 (Ciałowicz 2006). Regardless of its actual function, it was soon abandoned and, SE of it, a new cemetery was started. That was our group 1, which, while expanding N, covered also the older structure and made it a solid base for some interesting, diversified and carefully planned burials. Clearly, people buried there were of Naqadian origin, represented wealthy society, and they also experimented, trying to reach a perfect grave form. The process is the best explanation of the presence of so many “strange” structures and differences in position of the deceased, but on the other hand, also numerous elements of typically early dynastic burial custom (e.g. niche façades or subsidiary burials) seem to emerge in that time.

Then, another change happened and the people of group 1 flew away to be quite

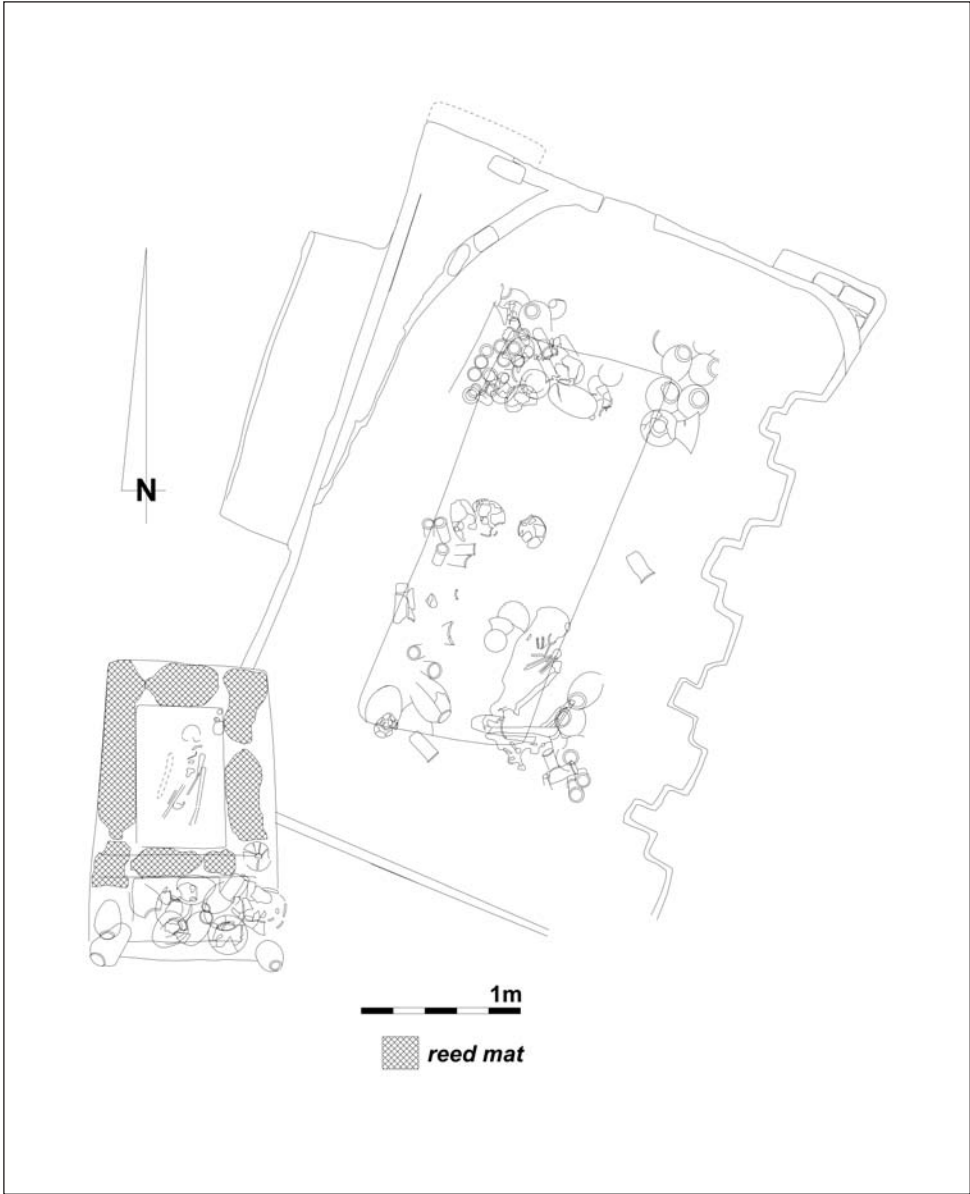


Fig. 5. Grave no. 71 (smaller) cut into grave no. 63, drawing by M. Czarnowicz

soon replaced by a successive, although not directly related, Naqadian community that started the second cemetery (see: Ciałowicz 2008). Graves of the younger group are clearly a continuation of the older custom

(which opinion is confirmed by pottery and building strategies) and so the origin of both societies must have been similar. It should be stressed that in the Egyptian weather conditions mudbrick structures could easily

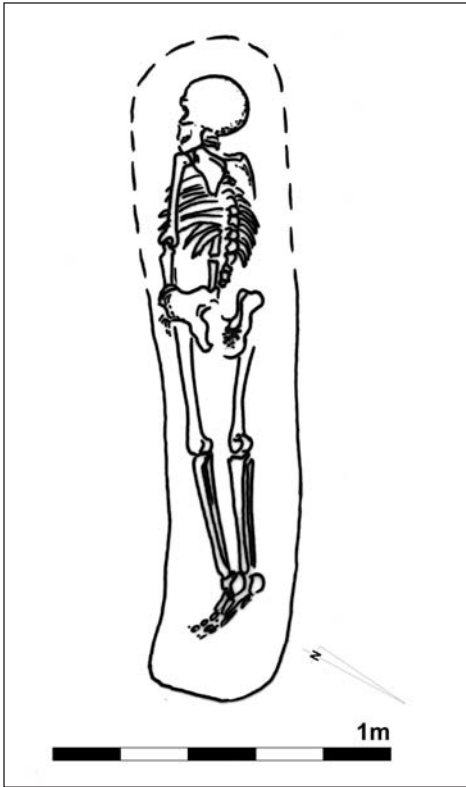


Fig. 6. Grave no. 37, drawing by J. Dębowska-Ludwin

vanish in about 20 years. Such a period is sufficient also for human memory to fade away and so shortly afterwards new settlers chose the same place for their cemetery and probably unconsciously damaged older structures. They built their tombs and proved they were more complex society following fixed rules, also those concerning burial custom with a standardized grave form and set of offerings.

The final phase of the cemetery at Tell el-Farkha was surely separated from the previous ones by a much longer period of time. The flourishing community turned into insignificant and impoverished one, and also its beliefs underwent a transformation since the grave form typical of group 3 is so disparate (no offerings, stretched body position, heads oriented towards W). The change took place by the end of Dynasty 2, which correlates with the situation attested elsewhere in Egypt and explained as evidencing possible social unrest connected to the instability of central authorities. We do not know the essence of the relation between groups 2 and 3, especially that no clear break in settlement activity is observed in other sectors of the site. Fortunately, it is still possible that the missing link will be discovered in the SE, unexcavated part of the cemetery. Whatever may be found, burials of group 3 confirm the overall decline of the settlement significance but also corroborate deeper cultural transformations.

It should not be underestimated that in the case of Tell el-Farkha we deal with a unique situation when 3 distinct phases of a cemetery can be correlated with relevant settlement remains. So, there appears a chance to observe how ancient people lived and died, but, unfortunately, in order to fully use the opportunity, many seasons of fieldworks must be completed. Also, further works on the necropolis are planned to explain the nature of the relation between the succeeding phases of the cemetery use in greater details.

Cmentarzysko w Tell el-Farcha w nowej interpretacji

Dziewiąty sezon prac polowych na cmentarzysku w Tell el-Farcha przyniósł odkrycia kolejnych grobów, których całkowita liczba przekroczyła 100. Tak bogaty materiał spowodował konieczność przemyślenia i przeformułowania niektórych poglądów na to cmentarzysko. Najważniejsze zmiany w dotychczas publikowanych obserwacjach dotyczyły chronologii poszczególnych pochówków. W wyniku analiz różnorodnych obiektów ruchomych tworzących wyposażenie zmarłych, zmian w preferowanych technikach wznoszenia grobów oraz stratygrafii horyzontalnej i pionowej stanowiska zdecydowano podzielić dotychczas odkryte groby na 3 grupy chronologiczne. Grupy te odzwierciedlają 3 kolejne etapy użytkowania starożytnego cmentarzyska.

Grupa 1 jest najstarszą na stanowisku. Datowana na okres od Nagada IIIB do połowy I dynastii, reprezentuje działalność zamożnej społeczności, która znajdowała się dopiero na etapie ustalania reguł idealnego pochówku. Stąd dość liczne formy eksperymentalne grobów, ale też należące do późniejszego kanonu architektury grobowej przykłady dekoracji niszowej.

Grupa 2 jest datowana na okres od połowy I dynastii do jej końca, bądź początku II dynastii. Groby zaliczone do tej grupy należały do przedstawicieli społeczności wyraźniej zróżnicowanej majątkowo, ale zakładane były zgodnie z jasno określonymi i dość ściśle przestrzeganymi regułami. Co ciekawe, pod względem rozwoju kulturowego grupa 1 i 2 są ze sobą bez wątpienia spokrewnione, jednak niewielka przerwa w użytkowaniu cmentarzyska, drobna, ale wyraźna zmiana orientacji struktur grobowych oraz zaskakujący fakt ich przecinania się prowadzi do wniosku, że młodsza grupa nie była bezpośrednią spadkobierczynią starszej.

Grupa 3 została wyróżniona wyłącznie na samym szczycie tellu i datowana jest głównie na podstawie obserwacji stratygraficznych na okres Starego Państwa. Groby przypisane do tej grupy to przykłady bardzo prostych i ubogich pochówków składanych w wyraźnie zmienionej pozycji – wyprostowanej, z głową na zachód. Pochówki te odpowiadają śladom ubogiej aktywności osadniczej znanej z innych obszarów stanowiska, niestety, na chwilę obecną, nie można określić natury relacji tej grupy w stosunku do grup ją poprzedzających.

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