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DE L'UNIVERSITE JAGELLONNE DE CRACOVIE**

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Michałowice, Czarnocin commune, site 1. The urn from grave 80 (photo Jan Bulas)

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Joanna Dębowska-Ludwin¹, Karolina Rosińska-Balik¹, Marcin Czarnowicz¹,
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**Trade or conquest? The nature of Egyptian-South Levantine
relations in Early Bronze I from the perspective of Tell el-Farkha,
Egypt and Tel Erani, Israel**

Abstract: Early Egyptian colonization in the Early Bronze I period is one of the most widely discussed issue in modern archaeology of the Near East. The text focuses on two sites of major importance: Egyptian Tell el-Farkha and Levantine Tel Erani. Discoveries of imported pottery both in Egypt and in Israel, as well as Egyptian-style brick architecture found at Tel Erani suggest that relations between these two regions were based on long-distance trade. The article briefly discusses the most significant imported finds at both sites and the socio-economic changes which followed interregional contacts.

Keywords: Tel Erani, Tell el-Farkha, EB I, Levantine urbanization, Egyptian-Levantine contacts, copper, imports

1. Introduction

The problem of the early Egyptian colonization in the 4th millennium BC is one of the most vivid and engaging for current studies on both Egyptian and Levantine archaeology. The issue emerged when S. Yeivin began his archaeological research at the site of Tel Erani, Israel in the 1950s. The Israeli scholar had sought to discover the ancient city of Gath, however, it very soon became clear that the place he had chosen in fact hid the remains of settlement activity from another

period. The excavated archaeological material revealed a significant amount of foreign pottery which was initially referred to as “Chalcolithic”, yet further research proved that it in fact represented examples of pottery vessels imported from Egypt (see discussion by Brandl 1989, 368–379). An important change in interpretation of Tel Erani followed the publication of an article on the Narmer Palette by Y. Yadin (1955). The researcher claimed that the scenes depicted on this object represent Narmer’s military campaigns in the Near East, where he was to defeat and loot a fortified Levantine city, which stood in the way of his armies heading to the Euphrates and the Tigris. Yeivin connected these facts to his finds, namely

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imported Egyptian pottery, fortifications and some traces of fire destruction. All of these created the basis on which Yeivin built his interpretation of Tel Erani as the place represented in the Narmer Palette (Yeivin 1964). After many years, are we closer to answering the question on the nature and dynamic of connections between Egypt and the Levant by the end of the period of Early Bronze I (EB I)? Each of the hitherto proposed theories ranges from the peaceful infiltration of the Levant by the Naqadan people to military conflict. B. Anđelković (2012, 793–795) summarizes the most important theories which can be briefly presented as follows:

I) The military penetration model is based on the assumption that the Levant was dominated by Egyptian military power;

II) The commercialization model focuses on purely economic interconnections between Egypt and the Levant;

III) The colonial model suggests that the Southern Levant was in fact an Egyptian domain;

IV) The dynamic-tension model underlines socio-political and power relations with the actual, though limited, Egyptian presence in the Southern Levant,

V) The Émigré model, finally, points to one-way movements of Egyptian people to the Southern Levant.

Almost all of the above discussed proposals focus too strongly on Levantine data. In the opinion of the authors, such a question cannot be satisfactory answered without Egyptian comparison, especially with the area of the Nile Delta. Thus, the sites of Tell el-Farkha and Tel Erani were not chosen on a random basis (Fig. 1). The significance for the issue of Tel Erani, with its well preserved Egyptian-style brick architecture, and Tell el-Farkha, with its capital importance for the Pre- and Early Dynastic Nile Delta, as they proved their strong relation to the issue of

the Egyptian-Levantine connections, is well established yet there are major differences in the actual state of research.

Objects found at Tel Erani indicate that the newcomers from the Nile Valley must have at least temporarily inhabited the settlement and discoveries of bread moulds strongly corroborate this statement. Moreover, a large part of Naqadan pottery was in fact locally made in the area of Tel Erani, which is also supported by petrographic analyses of so-called “Egyptian” pottery from Hartuv (Porat 1996) and which forms another piece of evidence for the longer Egyptian occupation of the site. Verification research does not confirm the destruction of the site (see Weinstein 1984, 65–67) which was presumably the work of the army of Narmer, although his presence is in a way marked at Tel Erani by one of Egyptian jars which bears a serekh with his name (see Braun 2009).

E. Braun and E.C.M. van den Brink (2003) divide these Levantine sites, where Egyptian imports were discovered, into a few groups in accordance to the amount and importance of genuine Egyptian, imitated or hybrid pottery. Tel Erani found its place in Tier 2 among sites with high significance for Egyptian-South Levantine connections and mixed Naqadan-local settlement.

2. Tell el-Farkha

The site is located in Egypt in the Eastern Nile Delta, ca. 120 km northeast from Cairo. It is composed of three separate hills (Eastern, Central and Western), which cover an area of approximately 4.5 ha. Settlement activity at Tell el-Farkha dates back to the Lower Egyptian cultural period ending during the Old Kingdom, that is from Naqada IIB to Dynasty 4. The site was first registered during a survey by Centro Studi e Recherche Ligabue from Venice, Italy, in 1987, and then excavated by the Italian mission headed by R. Fattovich

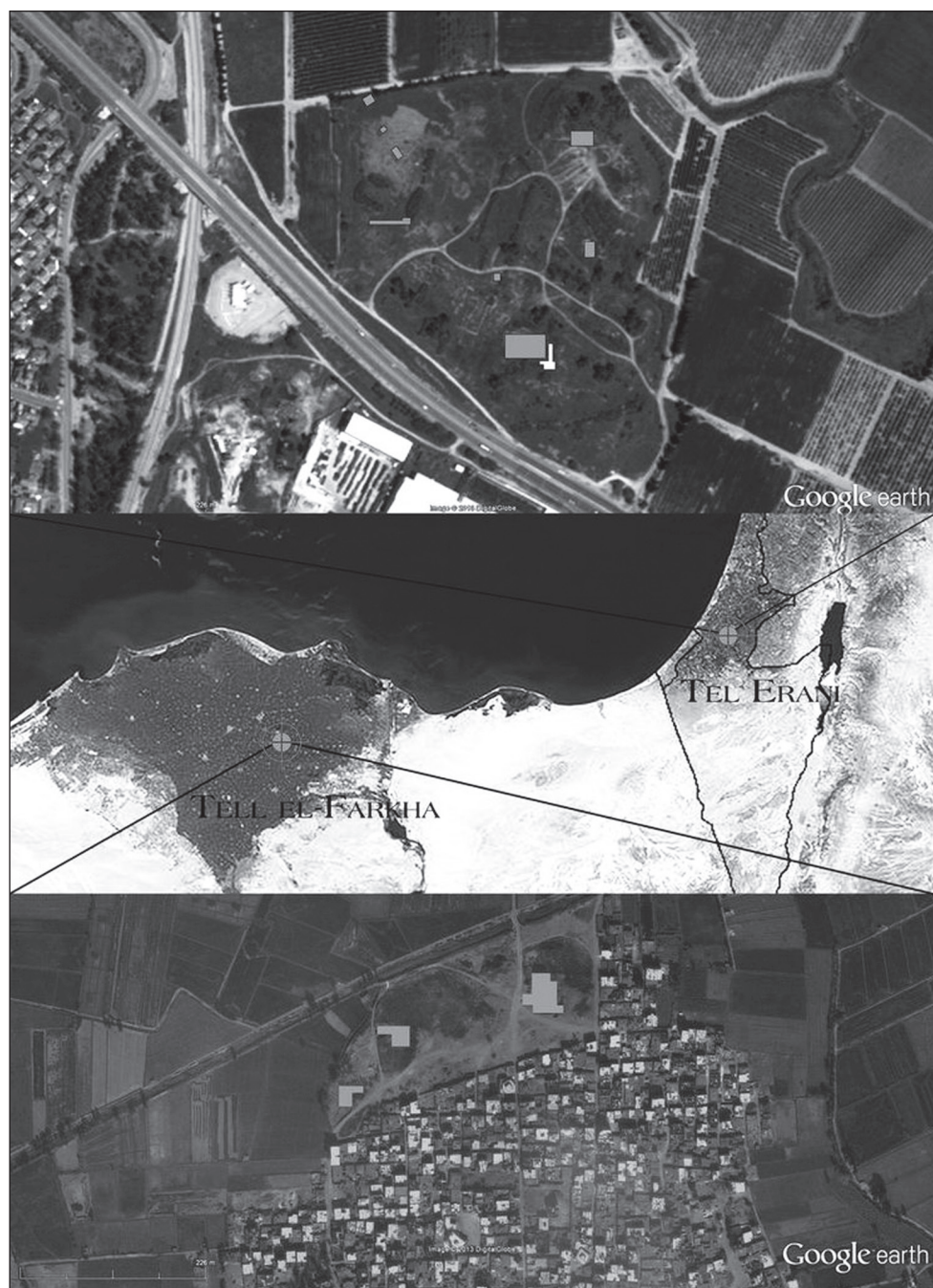


Fig. 1. Localization of Tell el-Farkha, Egypt and Tel Erani, Israel – their spatial relation and excavated trenches (prepared by K. Rosińska-Balik after Google Earth 2013)

from 1988 to 1990. Since 1998 the site has been explored by the Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Nile Delta directed by K.M. Ciałowicz from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and M. Chłodnicki representing the Poznań Archaeological Museum (for more details see Chłodnicki *et al.* 2012).

Recent excavations have proven the large significance which the site enjoys on the Egyptian archaeological map. The beginnings of the settlement there are connected with the development of the Lower Egyptian culture (also called Maadi-Buto complex). As early as at the first stage of the settlement, engagement in Levantine relations is clearly visible, mostly thanks to pieces of imported pottery wares. Interestingly, their large amounts were discovered in the context of the so-called Lower Egyptian residence. The feature soon became characteristic of the settlement in Tell el-Farkha and in subsequent

occupation phases, after the Naqadans arrived in the Nile Delta and founded their administrative centre at the site, still numerous imports were registered in the storage rooms of the buildings. There storage jars with characteristic ledge handles predominated (Fig. 2). Some amounts of Levantine pottery were also found in regular houses, although large storage jars were not represented, in contrast to typical small and medium-sized vessels of various types, such as teapots. Among other discoveries were also examples of imported pottery in the style of Erani C, Pijama ware or water skin. Moreover, a dozen local imitations of Levantine wares made of silt or stone were registered as well. The largest group of non-Egyptian pottery was composed mostly of knobbed and painted bowls and bottles found in a shrine dated to middle Dynasty 1. Analogies show that the majority of imported objects comes from area of the coastal plain

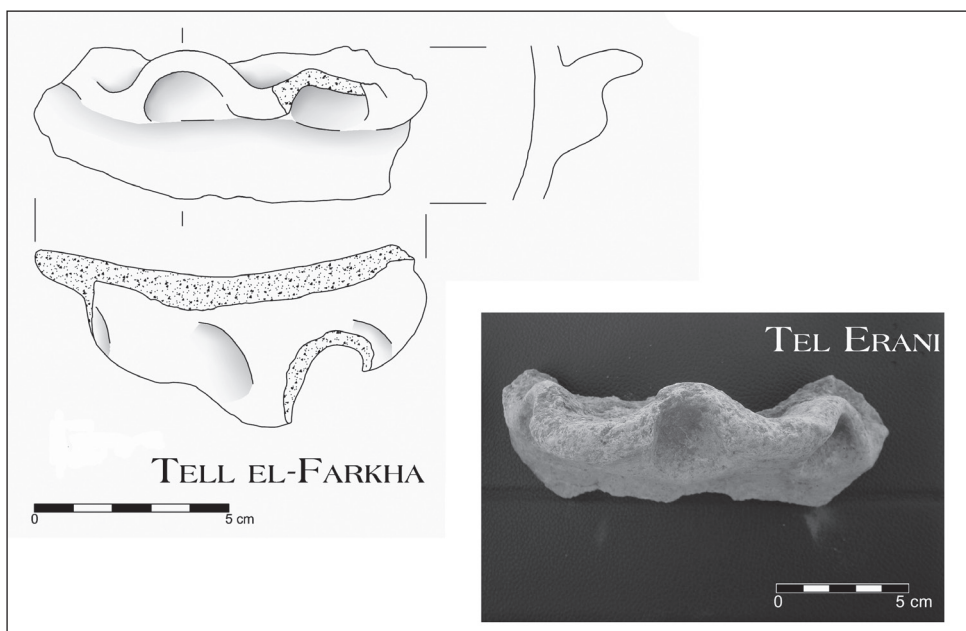


Fig. 2. Examples of Levantine pottery from Tell el-Farkha (drawing by K. Rosińska-Balik) and Tel Erani (photo by M. Czarnowicz)

but also other northern Levantine areas are represented.

To summarize, Tell el-Farkha brought the discovery of a vast group of imported Levantine pottery jars. The majority were unearthed in storage rooms of the administrative and cult centre of the settlement. Based on these finds, it can be suggested that the inhabitants of Tell el-Farkha took an active part in trade exchange with the Levant creating a centre for goods redistribution. Apart from imported pottery, the high importance of commercial activity for Tell el-Farkha's inhabitants is also borne out by other factors such as the decline of the site after the Naqadans retreated from the Southern Levant.

3. Tel Erani

The site is located in Israel in a place, where the eastern part of the coastal plain meets the northern edge of the Negev, approximately 20km east of Ashqelon. It is a large mound which covers an area of approximately 25ha, with an acropolis and two terraces rising up to ca. 32m above the surrounding ground level. The chronology of the site is rather tentatively determined as belonging to the periods from Chalcolithic, Early Bronze I to Early Bronze III (disputable), with areas occupied in Late Bronze II, Iron Age and the post Byzantine era. The presence of Chalcolithic settlement remains uncertain. The first excavations at Tel Erani were carried out by S. Yeivin on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums in years 1956-1961. In later times, a couple of teams led by various archaeologists (such as A. Kempinski from Tel Aviv University, I. Gilead from Ben Gurion University of the Negev, E. Braun and E.C.M. van den Brink from Israel Antiquity Authorities) made limited excavations in order to verify the previous works. From 2012, the site has been the subject of research by the Joint Israeli-Polish Expedition

of Ben Gurion University of the Negev and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow as a part of the TRONE project (Trade Routes of the Near East). In November 2012, the team visited the site, which proved to be in a relatively good condition, with interesting surface material and still visible position of old trenches (Fig. 3).

The actual significance of the site for the history of the Southern Levant is difficult to underestimate and fieldwork at the site has brought numerous important discoveries. Regrettably, the excavations carried out by S. Yeivin were far from presently accepted archaeological standards and, thus, a part of important data was lost. However, it can be said that the majority of Naqadan pottery (Fig. 4) comes from buildings located on the southern edge of the high terrace. Structures discovered at the site are similar to buildings from En Besor, which are recognized as constructed on the initiative of the Naqadans who arrived there. They were built of mud bricks without foundations and with a brick arrangement known from Egyptian sites, including Tell el-Farkha. The idea that the structures could be possibly dated to the beginnings of EB I seems to have no reflection in any published archaeological material. The non-Levantine pottery discovered at the site can be divided into three main categories:

- I) Storage jars imported from Egypt;
- II) Locally produced kitchen ware – bread moulds, bowls and large-sized kraters;
- III) Mixed pottery which combines both styles.

This classification is proved by petrographic analyses (Porat 1986/7). Objects found at the site indicate that the newcomers from the Nile Valley must have inhabited the site at least temporarily. The discoveries of bread moulds, which are interpreted as traces of local bread production, corroborate this statement.



Fig. 3. The site of Tel Erani in 2012 (photo by M. Czarnowicz)

4. Character of early Egyptian-South Levantine relations

The increasing Egyptian need for luxurious objects and natural raw materials resulted in a growing interest in the area of the Southern Levant which was rich in these goods. As a consequence of intense interregional contacts, the process of the social stratification at both sides of the trade route was much speeded up. In Egypt, control over the long-distance trade exchange was held by a political and religious elite, an idea supported by the results of excavations by the Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Eastern Nile Delta. The economic increase must have privileged the social position of the elite but also contributed to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, as well as strengthening the foundations of the new state. The Naqadans aimed to take over the trade routes leading from Egypt through Sinai to the Near East and with the end of the

Early Bronze Age I they managed to settle their people at a few sites of major importance (e.g. Tell es-Sakan, En Besor), which played the role of trading posts. The mentioned posts were located in the present area of Israel. The importance of commerce for the beginnings of the Egyptian state seems to be highly significant but much less is known about the impact of trade contacts on the Southern Levant. In our opinion, the inhabitants of the region were interested in food surpluses – especially grains, pork and fish, which could have been relatively easily imported from Egypt and which is indirectly supported by discoveries at Tell el-Farkha. In archaeozoological material, a large predominance of such bones as pig jaws or fish tails is observed (analyses by R. Ablamowicz and D. Makowiecki) that is, those parts which are less attractive for consumption purposes, while the meat rich parts are rather few. During the Bronze Age, people knew a number of effective methods for

TELL EL-FARKHA



TEL ERANI

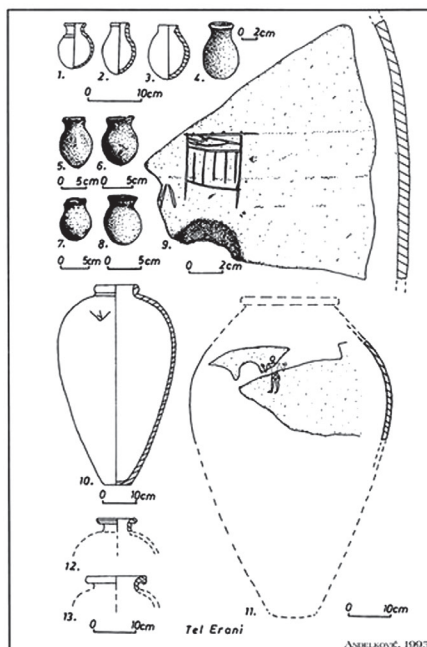
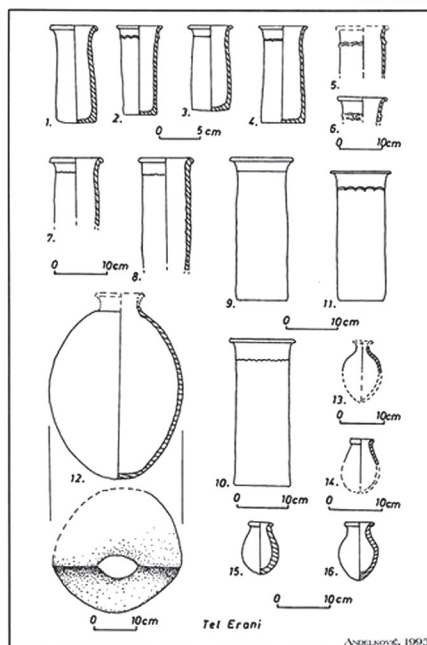


Fig. 4. Examples of Egyptian pottery from Tell el-Farkha (photo by R. Slaboński) and Tel Erani (after Anđelković 1995, pp. 44–45, figs. 15–16)

meat preservation, which enabled its transportation over even long distances. Moreover, discoveries from Ashqelon and other Levantine sites show the presence of imported Nilotic fish bones. Naqadan supplies in exchange for such goods as wine, olive oil or copper resulted in the accumulation of large food surpluses and thus, in demographic explosion and acceleration of social changes, as well as development of power centres. The latter were those centres which kept the closest co-operation with newcomers from the South-West and which, with the collaboration of local societies, gathered goods and controlled their exchange. At the places where the Naqadans were at least temporally present – discoveries of typical predynastic Egyptian table ware strongly corroborate the assumption. Thanks to contacts with Egypt, the centres developed at a much more visible pace that allowed them to become local leaders controlling smaller settlements. The “villages” were assigned to support the centre in the exchange by production of exported goods or by taking part in acquisition and redistribution of Egyptian imports. As a result of the changes there most probably emerged the oldest protourban settlements with social stratification and a centre of power, which controlled nearby areas. It is also assumed that the major settlements had a central granary meant to store grains from local cultivation and from

Egyptian trade. Local dignitaries must have organized strategies sufficient for rationing the remaining imported goods and been able to raise the best kinds of wine or olive oil accessible in the North of Palestine, as well as the copper and products of the Dead Sea. It should, however, be mentioned that Egyptian objects did not necessarily have to follow the route and some of exchanged goods might have originated from the area of the Northern Negev, middle Coastal Plain or Judean Mountains, where Naqadan settlement activity was concentrated.

5. Conclusions

The hypothesis which is the subject of verification by the Joint Israeli-Polish Expedition to Tel Erani is that in Central Palestine, under the influence of Egyptian contacts, new settlement centres of a protourban character were developed. Their economy was based on the local production and redistribution of goods, moreover, they acted as a middleman and facilitated trade exchange between Egypt and the most distant parts of the Levant. This is why well-organized commercial routes leading to places rich in raw materials, which were of the core interest for the Naqadans, were in fact a part of their development policy with a kind of a side-effect visible in urbanizing Palestine of the Early Bronze Age.

Handel czy podbój? Istota relacji pomiędzy Egipcem a Południowym Lewantem w okresie wczesnego brązu I z perspektywy stanowisk Tell el-Farcha w Egipcie i Tell Erani w Izraelu

Początki badań izraelskiego stanowiska Tel Erani sięgają lat '50, kiedy to S. Yeivin rozpoczął w tym miejscu poszukiwania biblijnego miasta Gat. Wkrótce okazać się miało, iż znaleziska pochodzące z wykopalisk wskazują na zupełnie inny okres w dziejach. Wśród zabytków ceramicznych pojawiło się wiele fragmentów o dowiedzionej w kolejnych badaniach proveniencji egipskiej. Owe fragmenty odnalezione zostały w kontekście struktur architektonicznych również wskazujących na pochodzenie

z kraju nad Nilem. Odkrycia te oraz zbiegająca się w czasie publikacja Y. Yadina na temat interpretacji ukazanych na palecie Narmera symboli umocnionych miast Lewantu, sugerujące zbrojny najazd władcy na te tereny, skłoniły Yeivina do zmiany interpretacji badanego przez niego stanowiska. Znaleźiska dotyczące bytności Nagadyjczyków w Tel Erani wskazują niezbicie na raczej długotrwały ich pobyt, o czym świadczyć może obecność zarówno naczyń typowych dla tej ludności o zastosowaniu w życiu codziennym, ale również lokalnie wykonywanych form naśladowujących wiernie wzorce przybyszów znad Nilu. Choć nie udało się jak dotąd potwierdzić zniszczeń osady dokonanej zgodnie z przedstawieniami z palety Narmera przez tego władcę, jednakowoż obecność wpływów potwierdza fragment dzbanka na piwo z serechem oznaczającym jego imię.

W tym miejscu pojawiło się pytanie o charakter relacji egipsko-lewentyńskich. Wśród teorii na ten temat zebranych przez Anđelkovića odnaleźć można szeroki wachlarz możliwości, od podboju militarnego, poprzez kolonizację, utworzenie faktorii handlowej aż do pokojowej infiltracji o modelu jednostronnej migracji. W chwili obecnej zagadnienie relacji pomiędzy oboma regionami w omawianym okresie czwartego tysiąclecia p.n.e. stanowi przedmiot żywej dyskusji wśród wielu badaczy. W naszej opinii, dotychczasowe wyniki badań skupiają się nieco zbyt intensywnie na zagadnieniu rozpatrywanym od strony Lewantu, z pominięciem terenów Egiptu, a w szczególności Dety, która najprawdopodobniej odgrywała tu znaczną rolę. W naszych badaniach proponujemy zagłębienie się w temat tych relacji, zarówno od strony Tel Erani, jak i egipskiego Tell el-Farcha, które to stanowiska dostarczyły niezbitych dowodów bliskich kontaktów w postaci odnajdowanych w obu ośrodkach importów, zbliżonej architektury, czy też samej pozycji Tell el-Farchy jako ośrodka wiodącego na terenie Dety okresu pre- i wczesnodynastycznego.

Przyczyn nawiązania relacji dalekosieżnych pomiędzy Egiptem a Lewantem oraz ich intensyfikacji w okresie IV tys. p.n.e. upatrywać należy w rozwoju wymiany handlowej, wzbudzonej przez coraz to silniej bogacące się elity społeczne. Chęć pozyskiwania przez Nagadyjczyków towarów luksusowych pochodzących z Bliskiego Wschodu oraz powstanie szlaków handlowych biegnących na linii Bliski Wschód-Synaj-Delta doprowadziły do przyspieszenia przemian, skutkujących w konsekwencji rozwarstwieniem społecznym na obu końcach dróg przepływu towarów. Nagadyjczycy, umocniwszy swoją pozycję na terenach Dolnego Egiptu, zapragnęli przejąć kontrolę nad tak powstałą formą wymiany handlowej, czego dowodzą założone przez nich faktorie na terenie dzisiejszego Izraela, jak En Besor czy Tell es-Sakan. Handel w takiej postaci przypuszczalnie odegrać mógł znaczącą rolę w całym procesie unifikacji Dolnego i Górnego Egiptu; wpłynął zarówno na przemiany ekonomiczne jak i społeczne ludności nagadyjskiej. Pytaniem pozostającym w chwili obecnej bez odpowiedzi jest stopień oddziaływania powstałych szlaków wymiany handlowej i – w konsekwencji – nowych wzorców kulturowych i technologicznych na tereny samego Lewantu i społeczności go zamieszkujące.

Temat kolonizacji Nagadyjskiej w okresie wczesnego brązu I jest obecnie chętnie dyskutowany wśród badaczy Bliskiego Wschodu. Niniejszy tekst skupia się na dwóch istotnych dla tego zagadnienia stanowiskach: egipskim Tell el-Farcha oraz izraelskim Tel Erani. Odkrycia ceramiki wskazującej na wymianę handlową pomiędzy oboma ośrodkami, importy palestyńskie w Tell el-Farcha, ślady architektury nagadyjskiej w Tel Erani zdają się potwierdzać twierdzenie o bliskich relacjach pomiędzy reprezentowanymi przez nie terenami i sugerują istnienie dalekosieżnego szlaku handlowego.

Na bazie powyżej przedstawionych faktów zrodził się projekt oparty na współpracy pomiędzy Instytutem Archeologii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego oraz izraelskim Uniwersytetem Ben Guriona w Beer Szewie. W ramach tej współpracy podjęta zostanie próba zweryfikowania hipotezy o wpływie egipskich kontaktów z Centralną Palestyną na powstanie i rozwój ośrodków o charakterze protomiejskim. Pierwszym krokiem w stronę realizacji tego założenia była wycieczka terenowa do Tel Erani,

która wstępnie potwierdziła w znajdowanym materiale obecność ceramiki z interesującego nas okresu w dziejach rozwoju zarówno osady, jak i prawdopodobnie fragmentu szlaku wiodącego dalej na wschód w odleglejsze części Lewantu.

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Aims and scope

Recherches Archéologiques Nouvelle Serie is an archaeological journal issued by the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In a new form, it continues the tradition of the Recherches Archéologiques, published by the Institute of Archaeology JU since 1968. That journal presented mainly field reports from excavations conducted by archaeologists from the Institute. This formula was changed in 2009 to broaden the journal's scope and open its pages for all researchers. Therefore, a subtitle 'Nouvelle Serie' was added and a new volume numbering was introduced.

The journal presents general syntheses, published in the 'Studies' section, as well as the analyses of archaeological materials (which should be discussed against a broad, multi-aspectual background), published in the 'Reports' section. The contributions may address any aspect of archaeology and any period of prehistory or history, both in the Old and the New World. We look forward to receiving the texts from authors both from Poland and from abroad. Among the contributions accepted are also summaries of MA theses or extracts from them adapted for publication, as well as outstanding papers by students. Basically, there are no restrictions as regards contribution size. Extensive publications which offer a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the discussed issue and which are provided with numerous and adequate illustrations are warmly welcomed. One should note, however, that the journal does not publish reviews. The original version of the journal is the paper version, however all contributions are also freely accessible on-line. The Recherches Archéologiques Nouvelle Serie accepts contributions in all of the so-called congress languages (English, German, French, Spanish and Russian); the preferred language is English.

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3. Abstract (up to 300 words, always in English).
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- Monographs:

Lityńska-Zajac M., Wasylkowa K., 2005 *Przewodnik do badań archeobotanicznych*, Vademecum Geobotanicum, Poznań: Sorus.

- Typescripts:

Goslar T., 2005 *Raport z wykonania datowań 14C w Poznańskim Laboratorium Radiowęglowym*, Archive of the Institute of Archaeology, Wrocław University (typescript).

- Web sites:

Furholt M., 2003 *Absolutchronologie und die Entstehung der Schnurkeramik*, http://www.jungsteinsite.uni-kiel.de/pdf/2003_furholt.pdf, 20.01.2011. [Access date]

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