
Magdalena Kazimierczak
Krakow

POTTERY FROM TELL EL-MURRA
GRAVES. SEASONS 2011-2012

Abstract: *Excavations conducted at the Tell el-Murra cemetery in seasons 2011 and 2012 revealed five graves with pottery assemblages. Grave no. 3 contained pottery vessels which could be dated to the end of the Naqada IIIB period. The pottery vessels found here included two cylindrical jars (one with a cord impression and the second with an incised continuous line beneath the rim), as well as a quite elongated, ovoid jar with impressed half-bows on its shoulders. Two chronologically later graves (nos 1 and 2) should probably be dated to the Naqada IIIC2 period. The pottery assemblage of these graves included large, tall-shouldered jars with impressed half-bows and pot marks (grave no. 1), jars with rope band decorations, wine jars (grave no. 2), ovoid jars, barrel-shaped jars, small broad-shouldered jars, beer jars and undecorated cylindrical jars. Other pottery types included bowls with convex sides, a tray with an oval orifice, a red-polished plate and pot stands. Grave no. 7 seems to date to a different time period, as it contained rough ware beer jars and bowls with convex sides and simple rims. It therefore probably dates to the Naqada IIIC2/IIID period. The most recent of the graves containing pottery vessels (grave no. 5) was discovered in the 2012 season. It contained two pottery vessels: one was a miniature and the other was a bowl with convex sides, a simple rim, a slightly narrowing area of concave contour below the rim and a flat base. Based on pottery analysis, it should be dated to the second half of the 2nd Dynasty.*

Keywords: *Early Dynastic Egypt; the Nile Delta; burials; cemetery; ceramic vessels*

The site of Tell el-Murra is situated in the northeastern part of the Nile Delta, several kilometres to the east of Tell el-Farkha, a well-known archaeological site of the 4th/3rd millennia BC. Tell el-Murra has been explored since 2008, when the first survey was conducted here by the Polish Archaeological Expedition from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (Jucha 2009a). In 2010, the first test trenches were explored, and excavations have been carried out annually ever since. These have revealed settlement layers containing Predynastic (Lower Egyptian Culture), Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom (up until the 6th Dynasty) pottery (Jucha 2010).

Over three consecutive excavation seasons between 2010 and 2012, work was carried out on trench S3, located in the southwestern part of the tell, where a cemetery was found. Fieldwork in 2011-2012 revealed several graves in this area. Out of the seven explored up to 2012, five contained pottery vessels.

The oldest of the graves is grave no. 3, which was explored in the 2012 season. Situated in the western part of trench S3, it is a single-chamber brick structure containing a ceramic coffin, almost rectangular in shape, with rounded quoins. The offerings included five ceramic vessels. The complete examples were two cylindrical jars and two shouldered forms with a flat base. The final vessel, a shouldered jar, was only partially preserved.

The first of the cylindrical vessels was found inside the coffin, to the west of the skull. It was made of good quality Nile clay tempered with fine sand. The jar's surface was slipped and burnished, but the coat was only partially preserved. The black colour in the lower part of the vessel was probably a result of the pot being burnt. A decoration resembling a cord impression was observable just beneath the rim (Fig. 1: 1).

The second cylindrical jar was found in the northeastern part of the burial chamber, outside the coffin. It was decorated with an incised continuous line beneath the rim. The vessel was made of marl clay (Fig. 1: 2).

The cylindrical jars with a cord impression and an incised continuous line situated beneath the rim are forms which are comparable to Petrie's types 48s, 48t and 49l (1953, pl. IX). These forms are especially characteristic of the Naqada IIIB period (Hendrickx 1996, 62, tab. 7; Hendrickx 2006, 86; Hendrickx 2011, 67, tabs 1, 2, fig. 3) and similar examples have been discovered in other contexts dated to this time from other sites, among them those located in the eastern part of the Nile Delta. At Tell el-Farkha, jars with these kind of decorative patterns (especially those with a cord pattern) occur in the earliest group of graves dating to the Naqada IIIB period, most

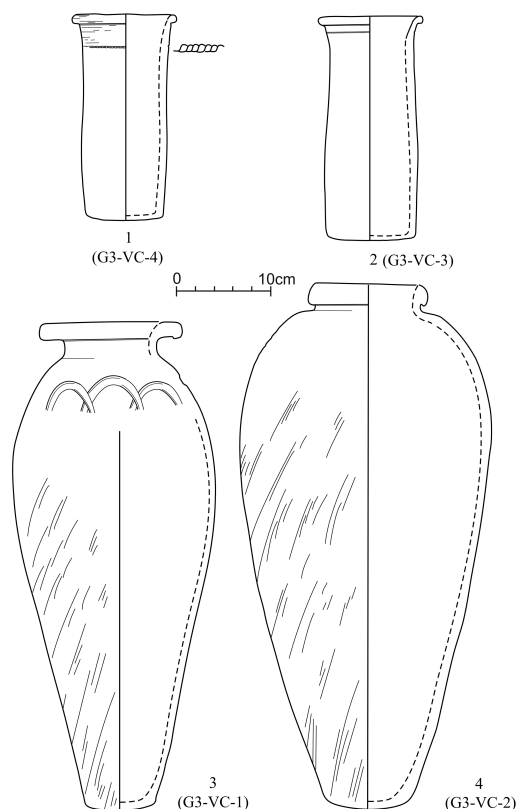


Fig. 1. Tell el-Murra. The pottery from grave no. 3. Drawings by A. Szczerbińska and the author

probably to its beginning, prior to Iry-Hor (Jucha 2012, 77). In the settlement context of this site, jars with an incised straight line occur mainly in the strata belonging to Phase 5, but also sporadically in the upper strata of Phase 4. These phases date to the Naqada IIIB-C1 (Jucha 2005, 77) and Naqada IIIA1-IIIB period (Jucha 2005, 74) respectively (Jucha 2005, 60). At Minshat Abu Omar, decorated cylindrical jars are the most characteristic element of group 3 graves dating to the Naqada IIIB/IIIC period. However, examples decorated with either an engraved line ornament imitating a cord or a simple scratched line around the neck are even more typical of graves belonging to an earlier phase of group 3, which is defined as 3b (Kroeper 1986/1987,

75-76, 87; Kroeper 1988, 14; figs 85-88; Kroeper and Wildung 2000, cat. nos 881/1, 866/20, 109/9, 415/6). Similar vessels have also been found at Helwan cemetery in a group of graves dating to the Naqada IIIB/C period (Köhler 2004, 308-309, fig. 7).

A further two vessels were discovered to the north of the ceramic coffin. These were located in the northwestern and northeastern corners of the chamber. The jar from the northwestern corner was ovoid in shape, but also quite elongated with an out-turned rim, flattened rim-top and flattened base (Fig. 1: 3). The vessel was decorated with two discontinuous bands of three impressed half-bows situated on the shoulders. This pattern was probably produced by impressing fingers into wet clay. The jar was made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium-grained sand, as well as straw, and its surface was finely smoothed.

This type of ovoid, elongated jar (but not its slight half-bow decoration) is analogous to Petrie's 74e (1953, pl. XVIII) and van den Brink's type III (1996, 144-147, figs 2: 9-13, 3: 16-17). Such jars date to SD 78 (Petrie 1953, pl. XVIII) or at least to within Hendrickx's Naqada IIIB-C1 (1996, 42). Jars of both this type and van den Brink's type II began to feature in Kaiser's Horizon A and continued into Horizon B (Jucha 2009b, 634-635), although they were previously more associated with the latter period. Shouldered jar forms and impressed half-bow decorations are also analogous to vessels characteristic of graves of group 3 from Minshat Abu Omar, which dates to the Naqada IIIB/IIIC period. They appear in graves belonging to an early phase of group 3 (group 3b), but also occur in the next chronological group (3c) (Kroeper 1986/1987, 76-77, 88-89; Kroeper 1988, 14-16, figs 79-81, 89-97, 140-143). Similar forms were present at the Tell el-Farkha cemetery in graves dating to Naqada IIIB (Jucha 2012, 78, fig. 1: 4). In Helwan, they were discovered in graves belonging to a group dated to the Naqada IIIB/C period (Köhler 2004, 307-308, fig. 7).

The shouldered jar found in the northeastern corner of the chamber has a flattened base and does not possess any decoration (Fig. 1: 4). It was made of medium category Nile clay, its outer surface was smoothed and covered with red slip and burnishing marks are still visible.

A fragment of the fifth vessel was found next to the ceramic coffin. The jar was preserved only partially, mainly in its upper section, which consisted of a thickened, out-turned rim with a flattened rim-top and part of its shoulders. It was made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium sand and straw. The shape of the vessel was probably similar to the jar decorated with half-bows mentioned above (Fig. 1: 3).

The analogy discussed between the pottery from Tell el-Murra grave no. 3 and the forms of vessel from graves belonging to group 3 at Minshat Abu Omar dating to the Naqada IIIB/C (especially to phase 3b), as well as its similarity to graves from Tell el-Farkha dating to Naqada IIIB, allow us to place grave no. 3 in the same period. It can therefore be considered to be the oldest found thus far at the Tell el-Murra cemetery.

The other graves are undoubtedly later in chronology. The pottery assemblage of two of them (graves 1 and 2) is, however, quite similar.

Grave no. 1, explored in 2011, is a double-chamber structure located to the east of grave no. 3. The deceased and most of the goods contained in the grave were placed in the southern chamber with only a few vessels deposited in the northern one. The pottery assemblage of the grave consists

of 28 different kinds of vessels, 17 of which were complete or in a state from which they could be reconstructed.

In the northern chamber, four large, tall-shouldered jars with slightly convex bases were found, all of them almost completely preserved (Figs 2, 3). The jars were decorated with lightly impressed half-bows on the shoulders and carried pot-marks in the upper part of their bodies. These vessels were made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium sand and straw. Their surface was smoothed and, in some cases, self-slip is also visible on their surface.

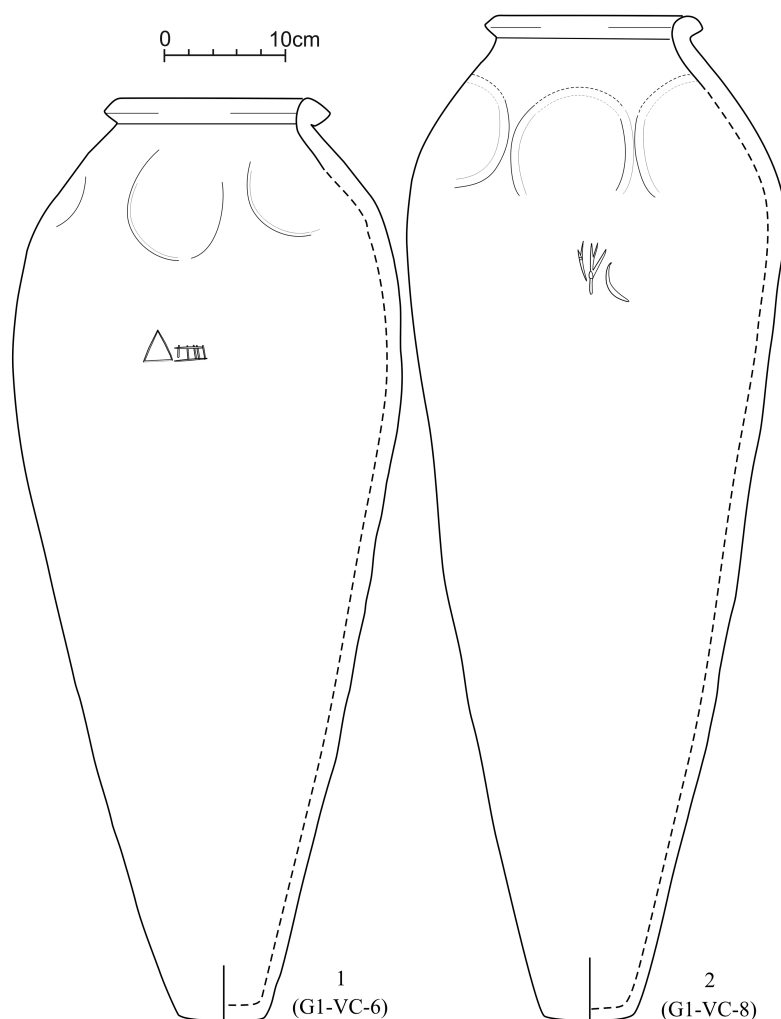


Fig. 2. Tell el-Murra. The pottery jars from grave no. 1. Drawings by E. Wątroba

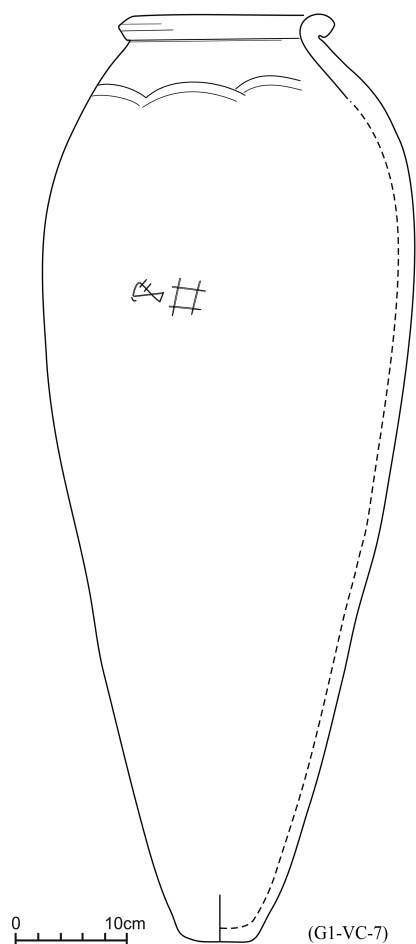


Fig. 3. Tell el-Murra. The pottery jar from grave no. 1.
Drawings by E. Wątroba

These jars correspond to Petrie's type 75v (1953, pl. XXI). At Minshat Abu Omar cemetery, similar forms of large jars decorated with half-bows on the shoulders appear in graves of group 4 dating to Naqada IIIC/IIID (Kroeper 1988, 16, fig. 160).

Other forms from the same location include two ovoid jars with slightly thickened rims and rounded or flattened bases (Fig. 4: 1) and one almost barrel-shaped jar (Fig. 4: 2) with a thickened rim and a flat base (types 85c,d,e: Petrie 1953, pl. XXV). The ovoid jars were made of medium quality Nile clay tempered with fine to medium straw and sand. In terms of surface treatment, they can be classified as medium rough ware. Ovoid jars also occur in a group of graves at Tell el-Farkha dating to Naqada IIIB/C1-C2 (Jucha 2012, 81), as well as in graves of group 4 at Minshat Abu Omar (Kroeper 1986/1987, 77, 81, 91, fig. 76; Kroeper 1988, 16, figs 165-167). The barrel-shaped jar is of better quality and is well constructed from fine Nile clay with a smoothed surface of a light red colour. Similar forms of jar also occur

in graves of group 4 at Minshat Abu Omar, where almost barrel-shaped jars are among the newest forms to be discovered there (Kroeper 1988, 16, figs 168-171). Finally, the Early Dynastic cemetery at Helwan also contained similar material. Almost barrel-shaped jars were found here alongside other vessels in graves belonging to groups dating to Naqada IIIC-D and Naqada IIID1 (Köhler 2004, 300, 302-303, figs 3-4; Köhler *et al.* 2011, 105).

Among the pottery assemblage of the southern chamber were six small, broad-shouldered jars with a concave lower part of the body narrowing

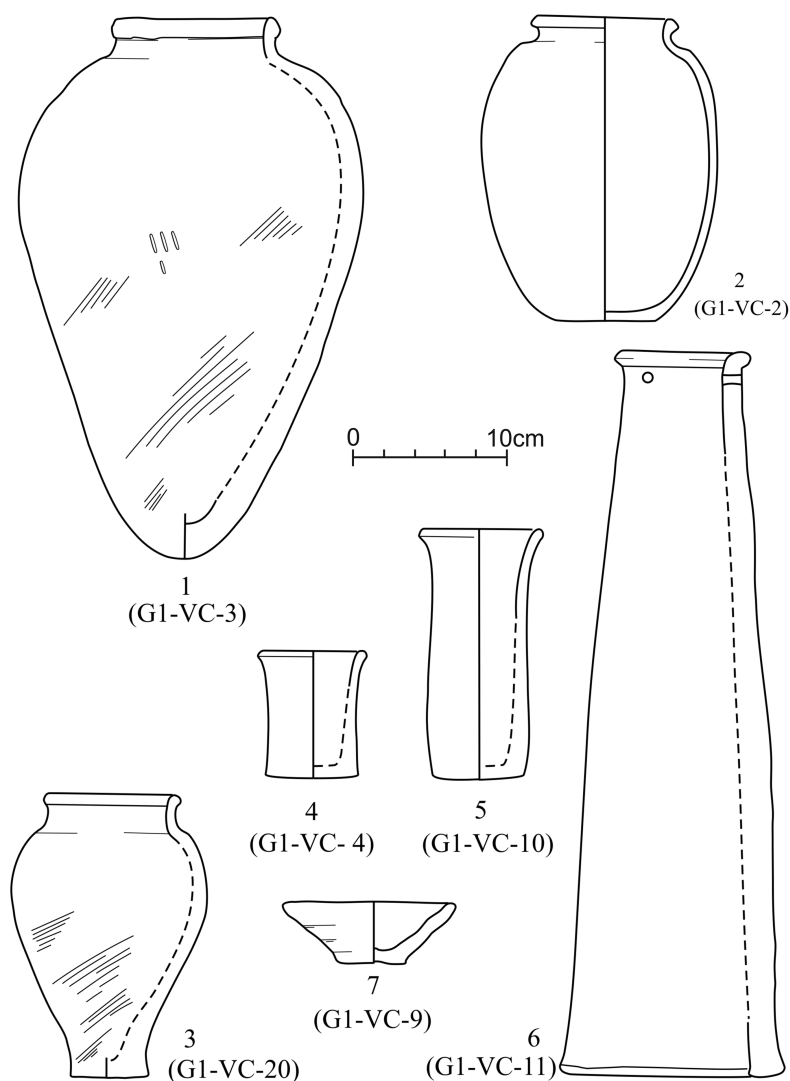


Fig. 4. Tell el-Murra. The pottery from grave no. 1. Drawings by E. Wątroba

towards a flat base (Fig. 4: 3). These vessels were classified as medium rough ware and in all cases the upper part of the jar (the rim and neck) was finished by slow turning, in contrast to the middle and lower parts, which were scraped. All these jars were made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium-grained sand and straw. In Petrie's *Corpus of Proto-Dynastic Pottery* (1953, pl. XI-XII), a similar form is described as type 57v. Similar small jars also occur in the Early Dynastic cemetery

at Helwan (as well as at other sites), where they are dated from middle to late 1st Dynasty – Naqada IIIC2/IIID (Köhler and Smythe 2004, 131, pl. 4; Smythe 2004, 320, figs 1-2).

Two undecorated cylindrical jars were found in the southeastern corner of the southern chamber. The first of them (Fig. 4: 5), categorised as fine ware, was made of fine quality clay tempered with a small amount of fine-grained sand. Its light-red surface was well smoothed. This kind of undecorated jar is well-known from Naqada IIIC1/IIIC2 (end of the Protodynastic to the beginning of the Early Dynastic period) (Hendrickx 1996, 62, tab. 7; Jucha 2005, 45; Hendrickx 2006, 86-87; Hendrickx 2011, 67, tabs 1, 2, fig. 3). These are some of the latest examples from Petrie's W-class (1953, pl. IX) and were described as type 50. At Tell el-Farkha, the presence of undecorated cylindrical jars is one of the characteristic features of the pottery assemblage from graves dated to Naqada IIIB/C1-C2 (Jucha 2008a, 72, fig. 9: 1-2; Jucha 2012, 80). Moreover, such forms also occur in Minshat Abu Omar graves belonging to the later phase of group 3, which are dated to Naqada IIIB/IIIC (described in earlier publications as 3c) (Kroeper 1986/1987, 76, 80, 87, figs 52-53; Kroeper 1988, 16, fig. 139).

The second vessel, a small cylindrical jar (Fig. 4: 4), was made of coarser medium category Nile clay and tempered with straw and sand. It has a slightly smoothed surface of a red colour, the upper part of the body was finished by slow turning and the middle and lower parts were trimmed diagonally. This kind of jar seems to be slightly later chronologically than the undecorated fine ware cylindrical jar, as it appeared around the middle of the 1st Dynasty (end of Naqada IIIC1/beginning of Naqada IIIC2) (Smythe 2004, 324-325, fig. 15a; Jucha 2008a, 73, fig. 9: 7).

In the southeastern corner of the southern chamber, a pot-stand was situated close to the abovementioned cylindrical jars (Fig. 4: 6). This vessel has straight, convergent walls. The base of the pot-stand was cut and its edge was smoothed and slightly thickened. Below the slightly thickened rim, the pot-stand has two small holes on two sides of the vessel. It was made of medium category Nile clay and its surface was slipped with red coat and polished.

Amongst the completely preserved vessels, a small bowl with slightly convex, divergent sides and a flat base should also be mentioned (Fig. 4: 7). This vessel was made of medium category Nile clay and had a smoothed surface.

Apart from the complete or reconstructable vessels, pieces of a few other partially preserved examples were found. The whole group consists

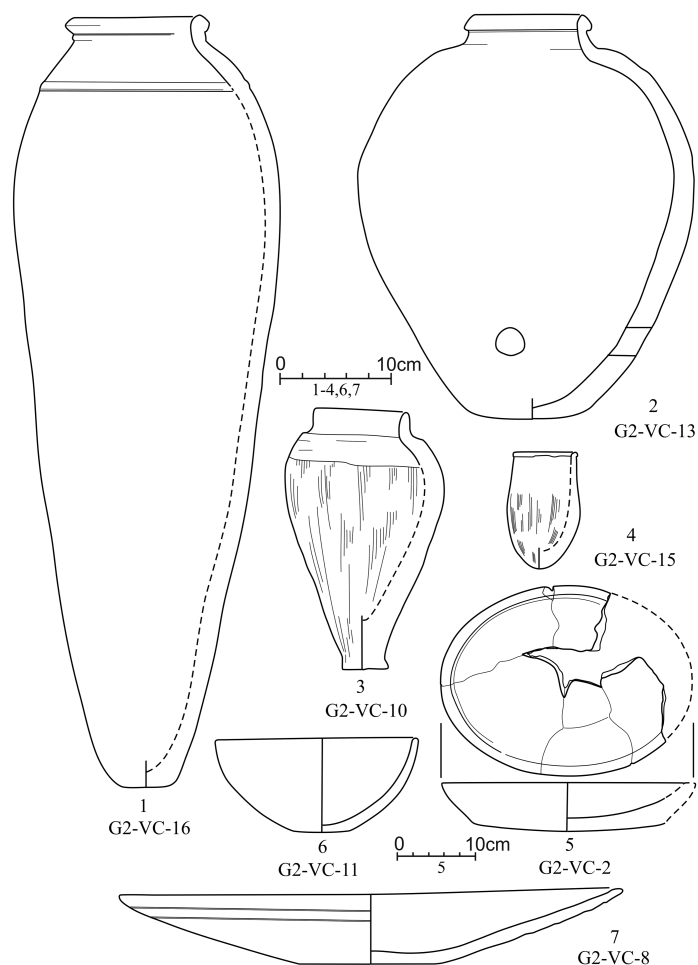


Fig. 5. Tell el-Murra. The pottery from grave no. 2.
Drawings by A. Drabik and E. Wątroba

of an almost barrel-shaped jar preserved without its base, three bases resembling feet probably belonging to small jars, rounded bases and upper parts probably belonging to four other jars, fragments of a tray and two jars with narrow shoulders, preserved without their bases.

Some pottery vessels from grave no. 1 are analogous to those discovered in graves at the Minshat Abu Omar cemetery which belong to the later part of group 3. The Tell el-Farkha cemetery also offers comparable material, as similarities can be seen with vessels from graves dated to the Naqada IIIB/C1-C2 period. These include cylindrical jars without decoration, as well as other types.

Most of the vessels from Tell el-Murra are, however, similar to forms which occur in group 3 graves from Minshat Abu Omar. These include large, elongated jars with half-bows on the shoulders, ovoid jars and barrel-shaped jars.

The affinity of some of these vessel types to pottery from Helwan graves can also be observed, especially (in terms of occurrence) with vessels from a group of graves dated to Naqada IIIC-D and Naqada IIID1. These were small, broad-shouldered jars and squat jars.

The pottery assemblage from Tell el-Murra grave no. 1 also shows similarities to the pottery corpus from Kafr Hassan Dawood, a site located in Wadi Tumilat (east Delta) (Hassan *et al.* 2008, 41-59). Similarities can be seen in terms of the occurrence of broad-shouldered ovoid jars with a flat base, small broad-shouldered jars, cylindrical jars, small cylindrical jars, bowls with convex sides and a flat base and tall pot-stands (Hassan *et al.* 2008, 45-48, figs 3-5).

On the basis of the analogy presented above, grave no. 1 from Tell el-Murra should probably be dated to the Naqada IIIC2 period.

Grave no. 2, located to the south of grave no. 1, was explored in the 2011 season. Besides the pottery and stone assemblages, it also contained a rectangular, ceramic coffin with a convex cover, composed of two parts. Out of the 18 pottery vessels discovered in this tomb, 17 were complete or in a state allowing reconstruction. Most of the pottery was situated in the northern part of the chamber, not within the ceramic coffin.

The pottery assemblage includes four slender wine jars. The first, which is completely preserved (Fig. 5: 1), has a surface covered with red slip and is polished. The jar was decorated with a cord pattern formed by a clay band applied around the shoulders. The second, preserved in a state allowing reconstruction, was also decorated with a rope band at the shoulders. Its light-brown-beige surface was very finely smoothed. The third, a partially preserved jar (mainly in the lower part of the body, below the shoulders), carried a rope band situated above the base. Fragments of a rim and shoulders decorated with rope bands were found in a tomb located close to this jar and were probably associated with it, which could suggest that the jar probably had two such bands on the shoulders and below the rim. The fourth example, preserved in a state allowing its reconstruction, has a decorative rope band on the shoulder. It also contains a pot mark incised on the shoulder below the rope band. The jar's surface was well smoothed. All four vessels have thickened rims and flattened or slightly convex bases

and are made of the same medium category Nile clay, tempered with fine to medium-grained sand and straw.

Once again, Minshat Abu Omar cemetery offers comparable material. Here, 'wine jars' decorated with a rope band feature among the newest forms appearing in graves of group 4, which dates to Naqada IIIC/IIID (Kroeper 1986/1987, 77, 81, 91, fig. 74; Kroeper 1988, 16, figs 157-158). A similar form of jars with a rope band pattern also occurs at the Early Dynastic cemetery at Helwan in a group of graves dating to the Naqada IIICD and Naqada IIID1 periods (Köhler 2004, 300, 302-303, figs 3-4). The three jars with a decorative band on the shoulder mentioned above correspond to Petrie's type 76n (1953, pl. XXIII).

In the northern part of the chamber (outside the coffin), other types of jar were also found. These were all made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium-grained sand and straw. They include four ovoid jars with a flattened or rounded base. They tend to have a rough, sometimes slightly smoothed surface. These jars are similar to the forms discovered in grave no. 1. They also show an affinity to egg-shaped middle-sized storage jars found in Minshat Abu Omar group 4 graves dating to Naqada IIIC/IIID (Kroeper 1986/1987, 77, 81, 91, fig. 76; Kroeper 1988, 16, figs 165-167).

Two broad-shouldered jars with a very short neck were also found. One of them, with a flattened base and a slightly thickened rim, has a hole in the bottom part of the body, which was probably made before firing (Fig. 5: 2). Its surface was very well smoothed and the remnants of red slip are still visible. The second jar also has a slightly thickened rim, but its base is rounded. The surface is finely smoothed, but its red-dy-greyish-yellow colour is probably a result of mineralisation or burning.

Other vessels to be discovered included a small, broad-shouldered jar, as well as a small, drop-shaped jar. The first has a simple rim, an angular transition between the neck and shoulders and a concave lower part of the body narrowing towards its flat base. The jar was made of medium category Nile clay tempered with fine to medium sand and straw. Many vertical scratch marks are visible on its surface below the shoulders (Fig. 5: 3) and the vessel could probably be classified as a 'beer jar' (Kroeper 1988, figs 161-162; Jucha 2012, 84). The small, drop-shaped jar (Jucha 2005, 46, 74, 77) has a slightly thickened, rounded rim and a rounded base (Fig. 5: 4). It was made of medium category Nile clay with a small amount of straw used as temper. Its surface is rough, with only the upper part under the rim slightly smoothed.

Another group of vessels, found in the northern part of the chamber, contained different kinds of bowl and a tray. The group included a shallow tray with a simple rim (Fig. 5: 5), an oval orifice and a slightly rounded base (Petrie 1953, pl. II: 10-11). The vessel was made of medium Nile clay, tempered with fine sand, quartz and angular particles of limestone. Its surface was damaged, which makes exact identification problematic. The surface was probably covered with red slip and polished, but the slip is only partially preserved. Examples of such trays have also been found at Minshat Abu Omar (Kroeper 1992, 23-25). At Tell el-Farkha, they occur in graves dated to Naqada IIIB/C1-C2 (Jucha 2012, 81).

A bowl made of good quality clay tempered with a small amount of very fine sand and straw was also found. It has convex sides, a simple rim and a flat base (Fig. 5: 6). The bowl's surface was slipped with red coat and polished.

A further shallow bowl with slightly concave divergent sides and a simple, rounded rim was discovered in the central part of the chamber next to the northern edge of the coffin. It was made of medium category Nile clay and its red surface was well smoothed.

A ceramic pot-stand, preserved without its lower part, was found next to the bowl mentioned above. The vessel has a rim which is slightly thickened on its outer side and straight convergent walls. It was made of medium category Nile clay tempered with sand, quartz and small particles of straw. Its well-smoothed surface was covered with red slip.

The pottery assemblage also includes a red-coated plate which was deposited between the eastern side of the coffin and the eastern wall of the grave. It was made of medium category Nile clay and only its interior surface was slipped with red coat and polished. The outer surface, uncoated and smoothed, was decorated with two incised lines beneath the rim (Fig. 5: 7).

An additional partially preserved jar was also recorded in the assemblage of grave no. 2.

Some of the pottery vessels found in grave no. 2 (as was the case with grave no. 1) show similarities to forms discovered at the Tell el-Farkha cemetery in graves dating to the Naqada IIIB/C1-C2 period (Jucha 2012, 80-83). This is visible in the occurrence of ovoid jars, squat jars with a flat base, small drop-shaped jars, a tray with an oval orifice, as well as a bowl with concave sides. However, the wine jars from Tell el-Murra are of a later type than those found at Tell el-Farkha. Furthermore, in the case of the beer jar and the red-coated plate, the assemblage of grave no. 2 shows

affinity to a group of graves from Tell el-Farkha dated to Naqada IIIC2/IIID (Jucha 2012, 84-86).

However, most of the pottery forms found in grave no. 2 can also be compared with the pottery assemblage of group 4 graves from Minshat Abu Omar, which includes wine jars with a rope band decoration, ovoid vessels, beer jars with scraped surfaces, barrel-shaped jars, bowls with convex sides and plates.

The forms of vessel from grave no. 2 are also analogous to pottery discovered at the Helwan cemetery in groups of graves dated to Naqada IIIC-D and Naqada IIID1. This specifically relates to the occurrence of wine jars with a rope band and squat jars.

The pottery assemblage from Tell el-Murra grave no. 2 is also similar to the pottery corpus from Kafr Hassan Dawood (Hassan *et al.* 2008, 41-59). Amongst the pottery vessels discovered during excavations at this cemetery, various forms have been identified: elongated wine jars with a rope band on the shoulder, broad-shouldered ovoid jars with a flat base, beer jars, trays with an oval orifice, bowls with convex sides and a flat base and tall pot-stands (Hassan *et al.* 2008, 45-48, figs 3-5).

The abovementioned similarities allow us to date grave no. 2 from Tell el-Murra most probably to the Naqada IIIC2 period.

Grave no. 7 seems to date to a different period. It was explored in the 2012 season and was probably created a little after the graves (1 and 2) mentioned above. The bigger, northern chamber of the grave contained a ceramic, rectangular coffin with a convex cover in which the deceased was placed. Most of the pottery assemblage (at least five vessels) of the grave was probably placed in the southern chamber, but the grave was damaged and some vessels could have been dislocated or crushed. Two almost complete rough ware beer jars were found in the southern chamber. They were made of medium category Nile clay and tempered with fine to medium straw and fine to medium sand, as well as a small amount of coarser sand grains. The vessels possess a broad-shouldered, conical shape and have slightly thickened lip-rims and flattened bases (Fig. 6: 1). The rims and necks of these jars were smoothed (turning marks are visible), while the surface at the shoulders and below the shoulders was roughly scraped with vertical or diagonal strokes. A third beer jar is partially preserved, mainly in its upper (the rim and the shoulder) and lower-bottom part. It has a lip-rim, an undistinguished neck and a flattened base.

Two bowls were also discovered. One was found next to the western wall of the grave, while the other was located near the southwestern

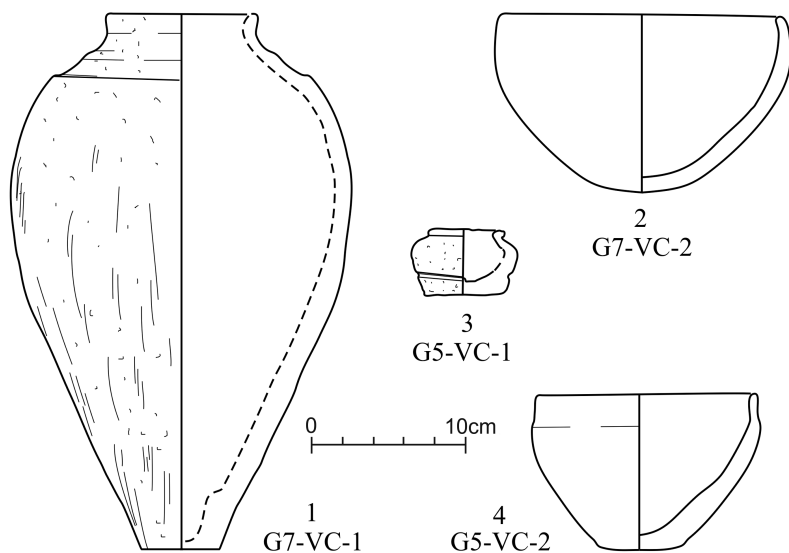


Fig. 6. Tell el-Murra. The pottery from graves no. 7 (1-2) and no. 5 (3-4).
Drawings by the author

corner of the ceramic coffin. The bowls have convex walls, a simple rim, and a flattened or slightly rounded base (Fig. 6: 2). They were made of medium category Nile clay and the outer and inner surfaces of these vessels were coated with red slip and burnished.

The assemblage of grave no. 7 from Tell el-Murra can be compared to pottery from a group of graves in Tell el-Farkha dating to Naqada IIIC2/IIID (Jucha 2012, 84). The most characteristic feature of this group is the presence of different types of beer jar. Two jars from Tell el-Murra grave no. 7 seem to be examples of earlier types of beer jar typical of the 1st Dynasty (type 59h: Petrie 1953, pl. XIII). They show the most affinity to a group of beer jars from Tell el-Farkha with a scraped surface dating to Naqada IIIB-C2/D (Jucha 2008b, 134; Jucha 2009c, 52-54). Besides the beer jars, there are also red polished bowls with convex sides in the Tell-el-Farkha group of graves which are similar to the two vessels discovered in grave no. 7 (Jucha 2012, 84-86). A similarity of form can also be seen when considering the beer jars and bowls found in Minshat Abu Omar group 4 graves (Kroeper 1986/1987, 77, 91, fig. 77; Kroeper 1988, figs 161-164; Kroeper and Wildung 2000, 111-113, cat. nos 404/11-404/15). The forms of beer jar occurring in Tell el-Murra grave no. 7 can also be compared to the first recorded specimens to appear from Naqada IIIA/B

from the typological sequence of beer jars presented by E. Ch. Köhler and Jane C. Smythe (2004, 133-134, fig. 2: 1). However, these forms did continue to be made later on and they may have been manufactured at the same time as other types of beer jar (Jucha 2009c, 50-54). Moreover, such jars are also similar to those from settlement contexts dating to Naqada IIIC and IIID in places such as Buto, where jars with a scraped surface are attested in Layers IV to VIa, but forms with flat bases occur mostly in Layer IV (Köhler 1998, 16-17, 52-58, Taf. 5-7; Köhler *et al.* 2011, 103). At the Tell el-Farkha settlement, examples of such jars were found in the strata of Phases 5, 6 and 7, which date to the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods (Jucha 2005, 42-43, pl. 26, fig. 14).

The pottery from grave no. 7 also shows an affinity to pottery found in graves no. 1 and 2 at Tell el-Murra, especially in terms of the occurrence of beer jars. However, wine jars and other forms are absent from grave no. 7. The occurrence of the beer jars could indicate a chronological relationship between the graves, but with the present state of research, it is very difficult to precisely define their relationship.

On the basis of the analogy above, grave no. 7 from Tell el-Murra can most probably be dated to the Naqada IIIC2/IIID period.

The most recent of the graves containing pottery vessels discovered thus far is grave no. 5. It is a single-chamber structure containing a small, ceramic, rectangular coffin with intentionally made holes in its base. Among the offerings made here were two ceramic vessels: one miniature vessel and a bowl. Both were located inside the ceramic coffin in the southeastern corner.

The miniature vessel was made of medium category Nile clay, with fine sand and straw used as a temper. It has a slightly thickened rim, a very short neck and broad shoulders. An irregular incised line can also be seen above its flattened base (Fig. 6: 3).

The other ceramic vessel from this grave is a bowl made of medium category Nile clay tempered with sand and straw. The surface of the bowl was smoothed, covered with red slip and burnished. The vessel has convex sides, a simple rim, a slightly narrowing area of concave contour below the rim and a flat base (Fig. 6: 4). This bowl probably corresponds to forms which occur in the second half of the 2nd Dynasty (Friedman 2007, 331, fig. 12: F55, F29) and this affinity allows us to date the burial chamber to this period.

The pottery assemblage from the Tell el-Murra graves described above contains forms which show an affinity to different types of vessel dating

to the Early Dynastic period. Analogical material is mostly provided by the cemeteries at Minshat Abu Omar and Tell el-Farkha, but the pottery is also comparable to forms found at other sites, such as Helwan, Buto and Kafr Hassan Dawood. These similarities allow us to date the Tell el-Murra cemetery to the Early Dynastic period.

References

- Brink E. C. M. van den 1996.** The incised-Serekh-signs of Dynasties 0-1. Part 1: complete vessels. In A. J. Spencer (ed.), 140-174.
- Friedman R. F. 2007.** New observations on the fort at Hierakonpolis. In Z. A. Hawass and J. E. Richards (eds), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt. Essays in Honor of David B. O'Connor*, 309-336. (ASAE 36). Cairo.
- Hassan F. A., Tassie G., Senussi A., Wetering J. van, Sharp D. and Calcoen B. 2008.** A preliminary report on the pottery from the Predynastic and Early Dynastic cemetery at Kafr Hassan Dawood, Wadi Tumilat, East Delta, Egypt. In B. Midant-Reynes and Y. Tristant in collaboration with J. Rowland and S. Hendrickx (eds), *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, 41-61. (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 172). Leuven.
- Hendrickx S. 1996.** The relative chronology of the Naqada culture. Problems and possibilities. In A. J. Spencer (ed.), 36-69.
- Hendrickx S. 2006.** Predynastic – Early Dynastic chronology. In E. Hornung, R. Krauss and D. A. Warburton (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section One: The Near and Middle East* 83, 55-93, 487-488. Leiden, Boston.
- Hendrickx S. 2011.** Naqada IIIA-B, a crucial phase in the relative chronology of the Naqada culture. *Archéo-Nil* 21, 65-80.
- Hendrickx S., Friedman R. F., Ciałowicz K. M. and Chłodnicki M. (eds) 2004.** *Egypt at its Origins: Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams*. Proceedings of the International Conference 'Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt', Krakow, 28th August-1st September 2002. (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 138). Leuven.

- Jucha M. A. 2005.** *Tell el-Farkha 2. The Pottery of the Predynastic Settlement (Phases 2-5)*. Krakow, Poznań.
- Jucha M. A. 2008a.** Wavy-handled and cylindrical jars in the Nile-Delta. A view from Tell el-Farkha. *SAAC* 12, 63-74.
- Jucha M. A. 2008b.** Pottery from the graves. In M. Chłodnicki and K. M. Ciałowicz with contributions by R. Abłamowicz, J. Dębowska-Ludwin, M. A. Jucha, A. Mączyńska, G. Pryc, M. Rozwadowski and M. Sobas, Polish excavations at Tell el-Farkha (Ghazala) in the Nile Delta. Preliminary report 2006-2007. *Archeologia* 59, 132-134.
- Jucha M. A. 2009a.** The north-eastern part of the Nile Delta – research perspectives. Polish archeological survey in the Ash-Sharqiyyah governorate. In J. Popielska-Grzybowska and J. Iwaszczuk (eds), *Proceedings of the Fifth Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists. Egypt 2009: Perspectives of Research*, Pułtusk, 22-24 June 2009, 83-88, figs 33-41. (*Acta Archaeologica Pultuskiensia* 2). Pułtusk.
- Jucha M. A. 2009b.** New Protodynastic *Serekhs* from the Nile Delta: the case of finds from Tell el-Farkha. *PAM* 21, 625-643.
- Jucha M. A. 2009c.** Beer jars of the Naqada III period. A view from Tell el-Farkha. In T. J. Rzeuska and A. Wodzińska (eds), *Studies on Old Kingdom Pottery*, 49-60. Warsaw.
- Jucha M. A. 2010.** Tell el-Murra. The Predynastic-Old Kingdom site in the north-eastern Nile Delta. *FoIOr* 47, 379-390.
- Jucha M. A. 2012.** Pottery from the cemetery. In M. Chłodnicki, K. M. Ciałowicz and A. Mączyńska (eds), *Tell el-Farkha 1. Excavations 1998-2011*, 77-86. Poznań, Krakow.
- Köhler E. Ch. 1998.** *Tell el-Fara'in – Buto 3. Die Keramik von der Späten Nagada-Kultur bis zum frühen alten Reich (Schichten III bis VI)*. (AV 94). Mainz.
- Köhler E. Ch. 2004.** On the origin of Memphis – new excavations in the Early Dynastic necropolis at Helwan. In S. Hendrickx *et al.*, 295-315.
- Köhler E. Ch. and Smythe J. C. 2004.** Early Dynastic pottery from Helwan – establishing a ceramic corpus of the Naqada III period. *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne* 7, 123-143.
- Köhler E. Ch., Smythe J. C. and Hood A. 2011.** Naqada IIIC-D. The end of the Naqada culture? *Archéo-Nil* 21, 101-110.

- Kroeper K. 1986/1987.** The ceramic of the Pre-/Early Dynastic cemetery of Minshat Abu Omar. *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 8, 73-94.
- Kroeper K. 1988.** The excavations of the Munich East-Delta expedition in Minshat Abu Omar. In E. C. M. van den Brink (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Nile Delta. Problems and Priorities*, 11-46. Amsterdam.
- Kroeper K. 1992.** Shape + matrix = workshop? Ceramic from Minshat Abu Omar. *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne* 3, 23-31.
- Kroeper K. and Wildung D. 2000.** *Minshat Abu Omar 2: Ein vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Friedhof im Nildelta. Gräber 115-204*. Mainz.
- Petrie W. M. F. 1953.** *Corpus of Proto-Dynastic Pottery*. (BSAE/ERA 66B). London.
- Smythe J. C. 2004.** The pottery from operation 3/tomb 1 at Helwan. In S. Hendrickx *et al.*, 317-337.
- Spencer A. J. (ed.) 1996.** *Aspects of Early Egypt*. London.

Magdalena Kazimierczak
c/o Institute of Archaeology
Jagiellonian University
magdakazimierczak@poczta.onet.pl