

Acknowledgments

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Proto- and Early Dynastic Necropolis of Minshat Ezzat Dakahlia Province, Northeast Delta

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Minshat Ezzat is one of the small villages of the Sinbillawein District (Dakahlia Province) located 40km to the south of Mansoura and 20km to the southwest of Mendes².

The excavation areas at Minshat Ezzat are agricultural lands. It was unknown to Egyptologists as an archaeological site until 1997. When a farmer using a part of these agriculture lands accidentally found a sculpture fragments, comparable to old kingdom types, and fragments pottery vessels dated to the Late Predynastic Period, the inspection of the Dakahliah Province immediately put these lands under the control and supervision of the Supreme Council of the Antiquities.

In 1903, this archaeological site covered more than 50 feddans³ on Egyptian maps. It became a completely agricultural area before 1970. It was named Tell El-Heglla on old Egyptian maps after 1930. It lies about 1km to the south of Minshat Ezzat village, and Kafr Azaam canal splits. The excavation works were concentrated on 4,5 feddans in the western part of the Kafr Azaam canal.

Excavation of Minshat Ezzat land

The SCA archaeologists started the excavation in September 1998 and went on until June 1999. The work was carried out by S.G. El-Baghdadi, chief inspector of the area, under the supervision of Mr. M. Abd El-Ftah A. El-Ghani, general director of the

1. Chief Inspector of Dakahlia Province.

2. Mendes was the capital of 16th nome in the Prehistoric Period.

3. 1 feddan = 4200m².

Fig. 3
Tomb 6 (Early-Dynastic).
Chambers for the funeral equipment.

Dakahlia zone. The work was concentrated on two feddans on the western part of the excavation land which includes the Greco-Roman and the Late Predynastic/Early Dynastic cemeteries.

The work was resumed from August 2000 to May 2002 in seasonal excavation by S.G. El-Baghdadi under the supervision of Mr. Najeeb Nour, general director of Dakahlia zone. The excavation was concentrated on the same part of the cemeteries, and was completed on the eastern part, on another 2,5 feddans.

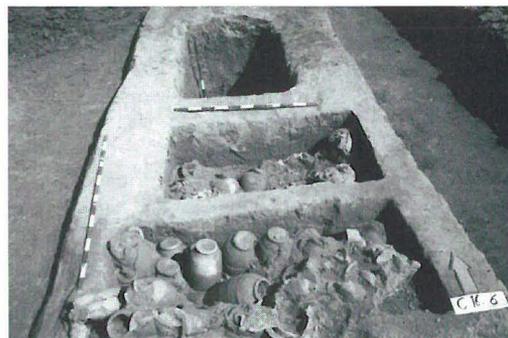


Fig. 1
Tomb 46 (Proto-Dynastic Period).

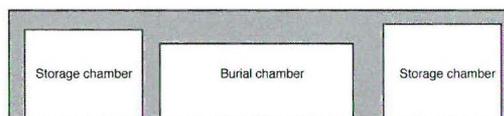
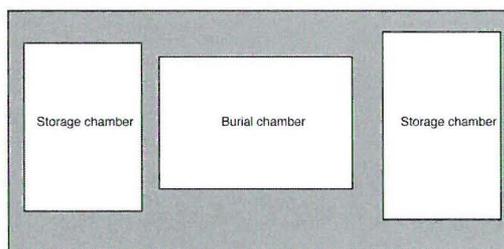
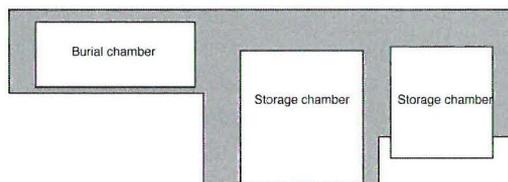
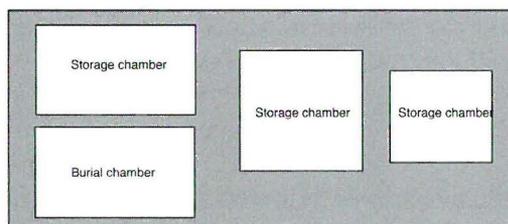


Fig. 2
Early-Dynastic tomb.

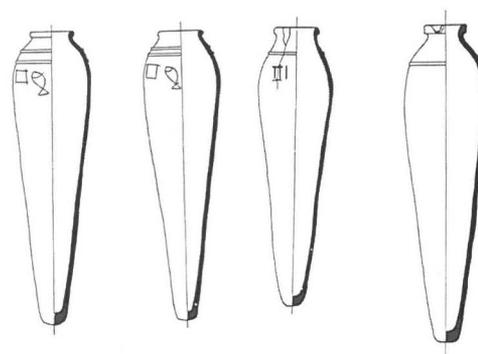
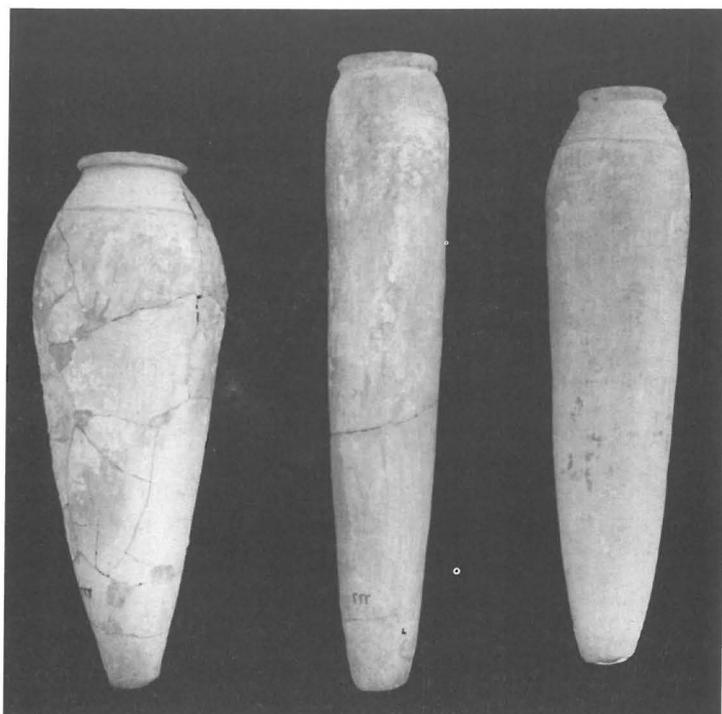


The cemetery

The excavations have mainly revealed three distinct cemeteries of three periods: Proto-Dynastic Period (Fig. 1), Early-Dynastic Period (Fig. 2) and Graeco-Roman period. From 1998 to 2002, 122 graves were found in an area of about 2 feddans from the cemetery area that still expands to the north and the west in the agriculture field, and also to the south under an orange grove. They are classified into:

- 20 Greco-Roman graves without funerary offerings. 8 of them were in the center of the Minshat Ezzat necropolis (1 burial was intact and contained 8 skeletons buried on their back, with a steatite scarab) and 12 were separated and intermingled with the Early Dynastic graves. These graves were built with mud-bricks.

- 92 Early Dynastic graves were found at 2nd stratum. They were built in rectangular form lined with mud slabs. They consist of one chamber for the burial and funerary equipments to five chambers for rich graves, one of these chambers being devoted to the burial and the others to the storage of different types of funerary equipments (Fig. 3) such as many important alabaster and schist vessels, flint knives, stone and copper bracelets, necklaces, porphyric rock bowls and pottery jars. Some of the wine pottery jars bear signs of the fish symbol (Fig. 4). Among the unearthed objects was a cylindrical bead, in the center of a necklace, which bears hieroglyphic inscriptions reading *smr-sk3 smr.s Hr* that might represent the owner's title (Fig. 5) and a beautiful 48 cm tall flint knife with a incised Den's serekh, fourth or fifth king of the 1st Dynasty (Fig. 6 a-b).



0 50 cm

Fig. 4b

Wine jars with a fish symbol (Tomb 20).

Fig. 4a

Wine jars (Tomb 18).



Fig. 5
Necklace (Tomb 61).

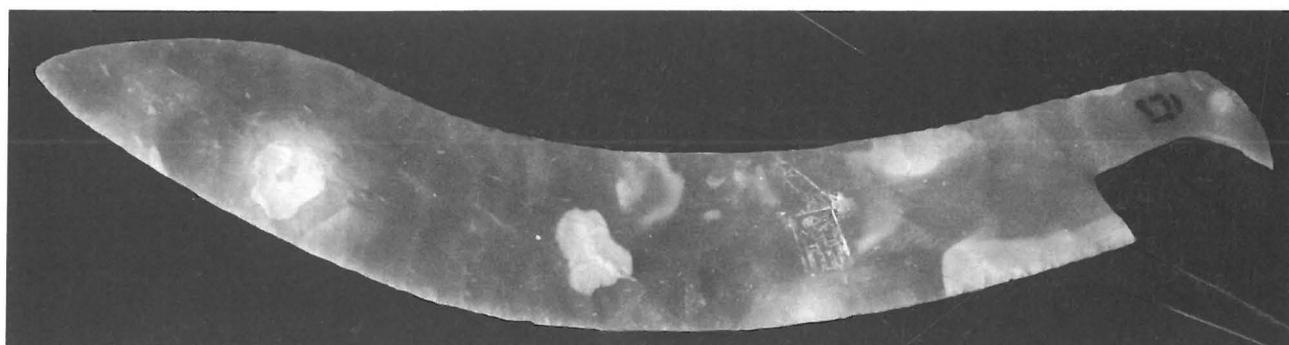


0 5 cm



Fig. 6a-b

Flint knife with an incised Den's serekh.



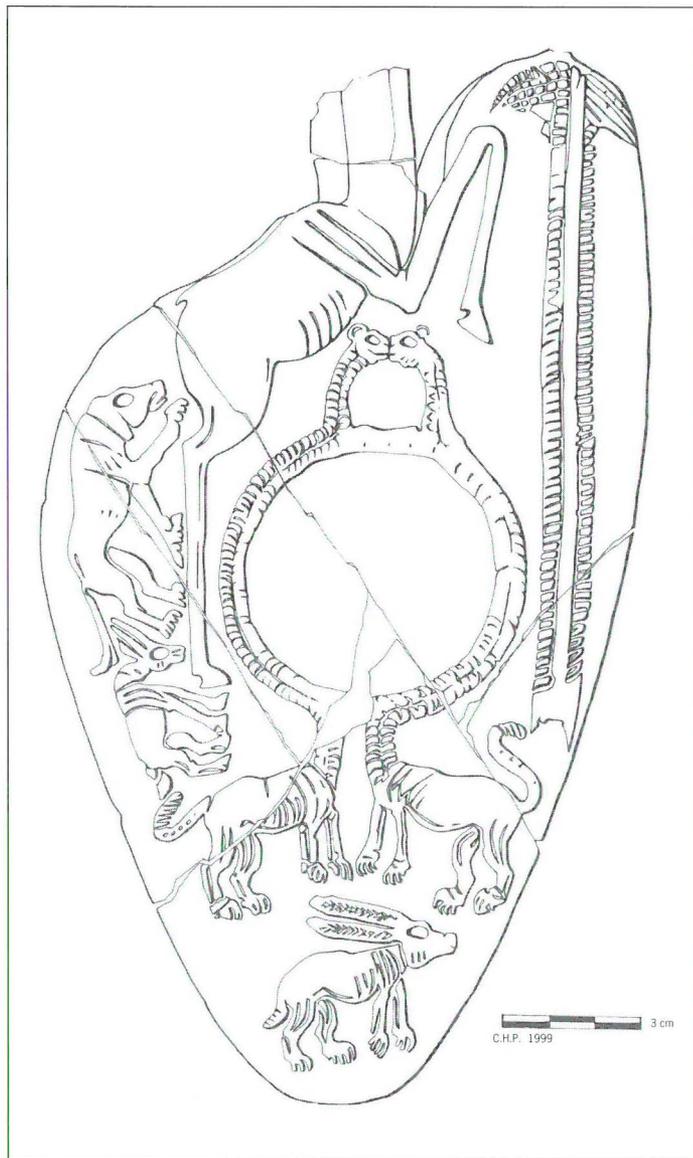


Fig. 7a-b
Decorated palette.



● 10 Proto-Dynastic graves were found. One of these graves consisted of five chambers. Three of them were built in rectangular form: the burial chamber in the middle and two storerooms at each end, lined with mud slabs, their bottom at the 4th stratum, which was completely burnt, and its top at the 2nd stratum. They were full of different masterpieces types of funeral equipments. The most important object was a decorated palette (Fig.7 a-b; El-Baghdadi 1999) presently displayed in Cairo Museum.

The pottery

The pottery of Minshat Ezzat can be classified into the following types:

● Small ball-shaped jar (Fig. 8 a-b). This type is comparable with the types R-Ware dating from Naqada II d1-III a1. Similar jars were found at Minshat Abu Omar (Kroeper 1988: 8, fig. 1; Wildung 1981: 30).

● Tall jars with roll rim, tapering body and rounded base, red-brown ware (height from 70 to 85 cm; rim diameter from 13 to 17 cm). Some of these types have a roll around the shoulder or on the base and some of them bear signs of the fish symbol (Fig. 4 a-b). Others have different signs. This type of jars is known as wine jars, which dates from 1st Dynasty) C.Emery 1949: 149, fig 80; 1963, type A3). Such type was also found in other Early Dynastic tombs in the Eastern Delta at Kufur Nigm (Bakr 1988), Minshat Abu Omar, Tell El-Dabaa and Tell-el Samara (Dakahlia Province).

● Tall jars with roll rim, bulbous body, rounded base and others with external rim, low neck and flat base, red-brown ware (height from 28 to 50 cm; rim diameter from 12 to 20 cm). This type of jars dates from the 1st Dynasty (Fig. 9 a-b).

● Jar with bulbous body, wide neck and flat base. This type is comparable with the similar at Abydoss, Abu Rwash and Buto dates from 1st Dynasty.

● Jar with bulbous body, flat base, and wide neck, which has just a handle. This type known in Abydos dates from 1st Dynasty (Fig. 10 a-b).

● Small rounded and oval store oil jars.

● Cylindrical jar with thickened external rim, flat base and cord decoration under the rim, red brown ware and buff ware (Fig. 11). This type is known since Naqada III b. It was found in a tomb of the first half of the 1st Dynasty (Emery 1963: 212).

The stone material

The stone jars equipment's of Early Dynastic graves can be divided into the following:

● Cylindrical alabaster jars with roll rim, flat base and rope band (cord) decoration under the rim (height ranging from 5 to 50 cm; rim diameter from 4 to 20 cm). Three types of schist have been discovered.

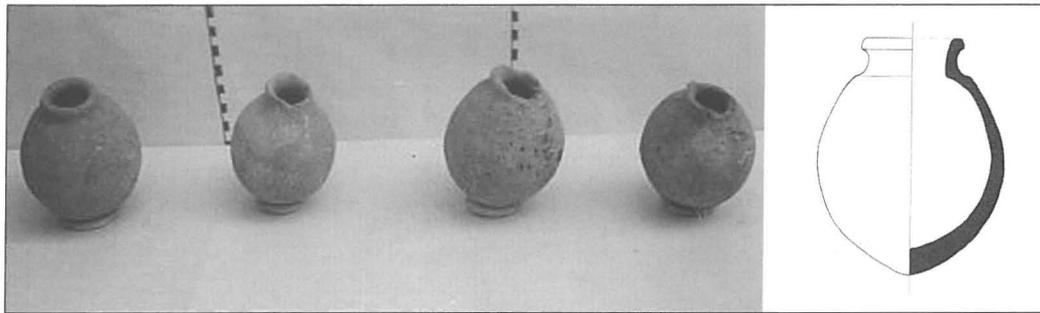


Fig. 8
Small ball-shaped jars.

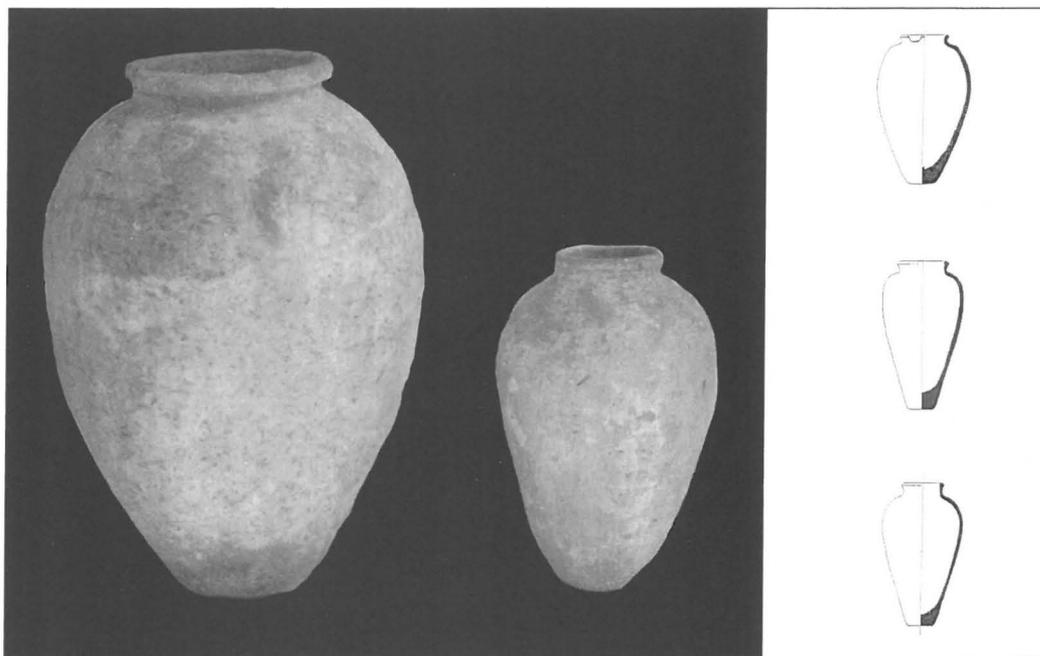


Fig. 9
Tall jars with roll rim
(Tomb 18).

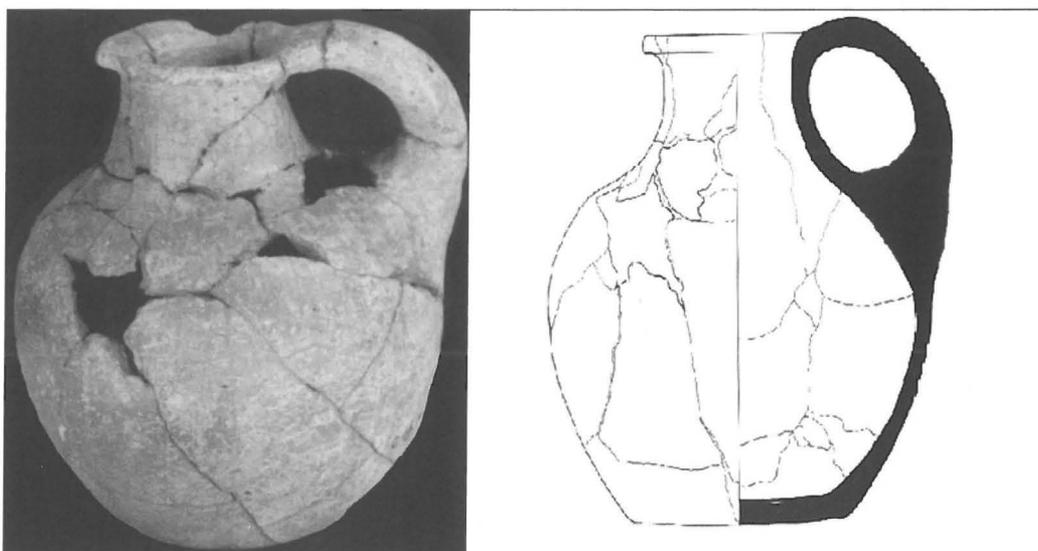


Fig. 10
Handled jar with
bulbous body.

Fig. 11
Cylindrical jars
(Tomb 18).



0 5 cm

- Rounded bracelets (Fig. 12) made from schist, flint, and bones (diameter from 8 to 14 cm (and necklaces made from schist, limestone, bones and carnelian beads (Fig. 13).

- Wide alabaster, schist plate, maybe offering table (height from 3.5 to 8 cm; rim diameter from 30 to 38 cm) dating from to the first half of the 1st Dynasty (Fig. 14).

- Different size of deep vessels with sharp rims, straight sides expanding to a contracted mouth and flat base from schist, alabaster, and breccia (height from 10 to 15 cm; rim diameter from 15 to 30cm). Some of schist types bowls show signs of restoration (Fig. 15).

- Different types of stone vessels, oval lug-handled, with external rim and flat base (height from 6 to 19 cm) and a small bowl, made from alabaster, schist, porphyric rock (Fig. 16).

- Rounded alabaster pot with wide shoulders, one of them has a lid and the mouth in its center (Fig. 17).

- Different types of flints knives, scrapers and sickle blades (Fig. 18). The masterpiece is a beautiful knife bearing Den's serekh (Fig. 6).

- Many palettes were found at most graves of Minshat Ezzat cemetery. A decorated palette has been found in a proto-dynastic grave (No. 82). On the left upper part of the palette, a dog is hunting an elegant animal, which looks like a jumping gazelle (the head is missing). In the center part of the palette, there are two animals, their mouths facing, their tails in a different position, their long necks interlacing in a mythological look. At the center of the palette a shape (the Sun disk) has a brown colour traces of kohole materials. On the lower part of the palette, is an animal with long ears and a tail lying at his back and standing in a very peaceful position. On the right part of the palette, a palm tree is depicted up to the furthest right of the palette.



Fig. 12
Rounded bracelets.



Fig. 13
Necklaces.

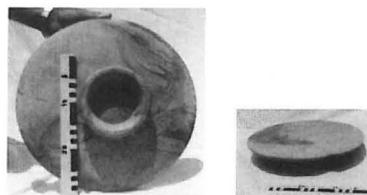


Fig. 14
Plate.

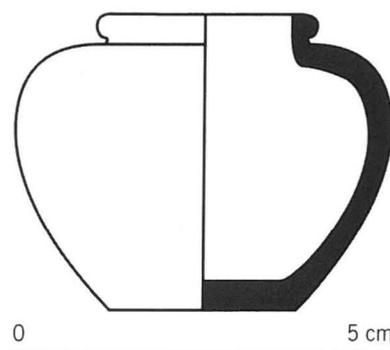


Fig. 16
Small bowl.

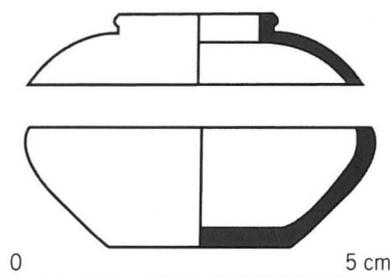


Fig. 17
Rounded alabaster pot.

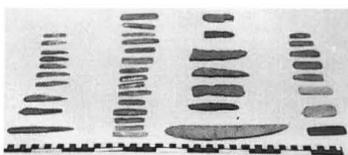
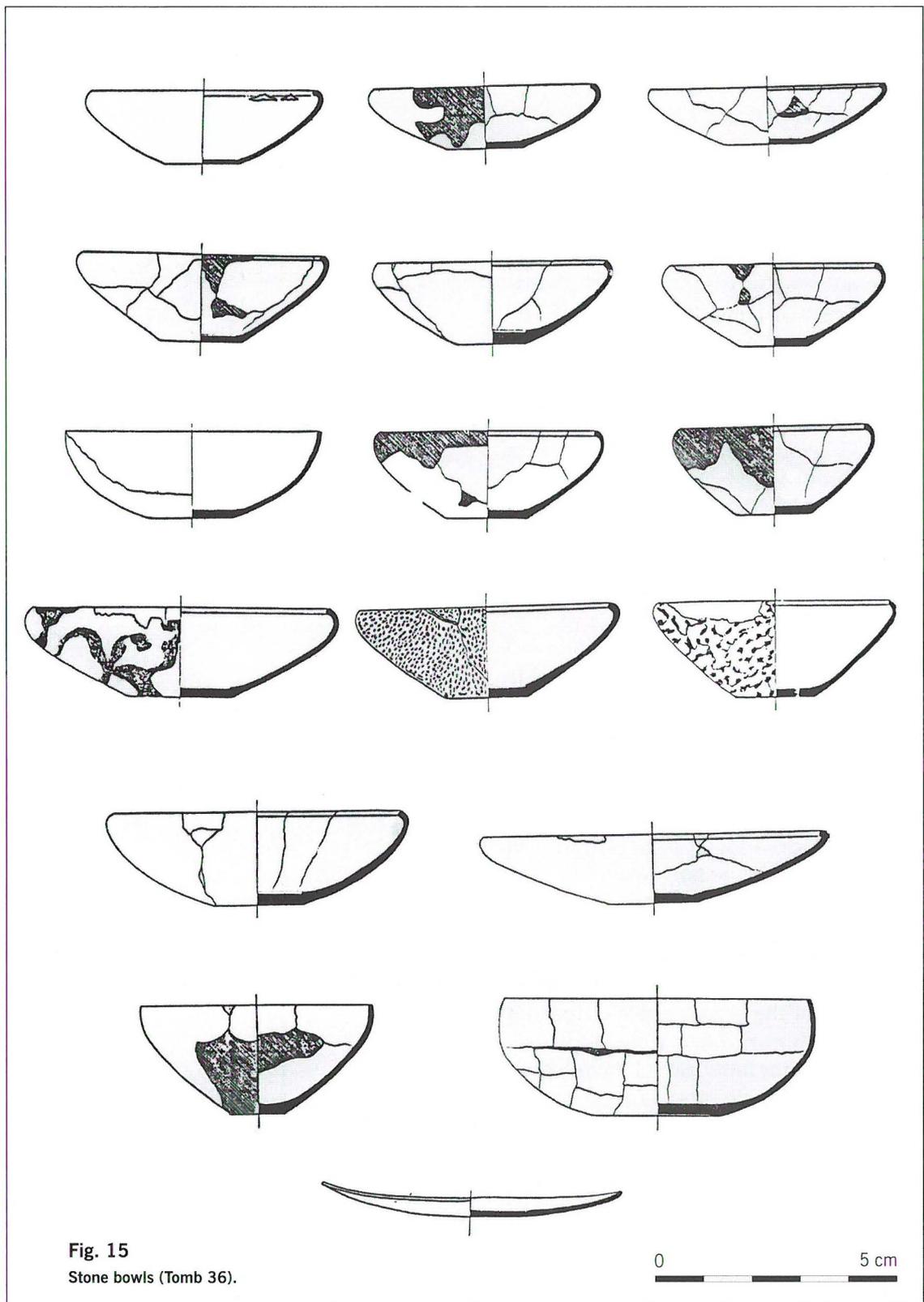


Fig. 18
Flint material.



The settlement

The settlement lies directly to the east of the cemetery, and its extension. The excavation in the northern and western parts of the settlement area revealed Proto-Dynastic remains of mud walls under the ground water level shaping rectangular rooms of different dimensions, full of sherds of broken ovoid pots which dated back to Naqada IIIb, hearths, 200 flint knives, scrapers on blade, sickle-blade elements (Fig. 18) and grinding stones. In the center of the western part of the settlement were

eleven big broken storage pots. One of them, which has three ovoid pots (Fig. 19) dating from Naqada IIIb.

The excavation in the southern part of the settlement revealed Greco-Roman storage rooms, built with mud bricks, full of sand. In the southern east part of this building were very big storage pottery jars (Fig. 20) surrounded by many pottery jars in situ, of types known in the Greco-Roman Period. Among these jars, many terracotta figurines of limestone and faience were discovered.. ■



Fig. 19
Storage pots.

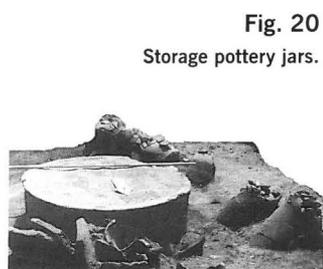


Fig. 20
Storage pottery jars.

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