



## **BUTO (MODERN NAME: TELL EL-FARA'ĪN)**

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The settlement of Buto (modern name: Tell el-Fara'Īn) is situated in the flood plain of the northwestern Nile Delta, c. 40 km south of the modern shore line of the Mediterranean. It covers an area of approximately 1 km<sup>2</sup>. Buto is assumed to have been the archaic capital of Lower Egypt and played an important role throughout the pharaonic period as a counterpart to Hierakonpolis (Nekhen) in Upper Egypt, both in religious belief and in cultic life.<sup>1</sup> Since the late New Kingdom, Buto was known under the name of *Pr-W3dt*, i.e., “House of (the Goddess) *W3dt*” (Uto), from which the Greek name *Buto* derives. Buto is also identified with the twin cities of *P* and *Dep*, known from pharaonic inscriptions and mentioned already on Early Dynastic seal impressions. Another name connected with Buto is *Db'wt*, mainly known from Old Kingdom sources. The earliest evidence for this name, written with a heron on the roof of a building, occurs on small bone labels from the late Predynastic (Naqada IIIA1) tomb U-j at Abydos.<sup>2</sup>

According to Early Dynastic depictions several events and ceremonies are thought by scholars to have taken place in archaic Buto. Also supposedly located in Buto is an estate and probable temporal residence named “Palace of the Harpooning Horus.”<sup>3</sup> However, although Buto seems to be quite well attested in written sources and depictions of late Predynastic and Early Dynastic date, only little is known of the archaeology of the site. The impressive mounds of mud-brick ruins rising up to 15 m above the cultivation, which affect the appearance of Buto today (Figure 1), are mostly of Ptolemaic/Roman date. All occupation remains before the Late Dynastic period are deeply buried below later cultural deposits.

The first excavations on behalf of the EES<sup>4</sup> exposed only Roman, Ptolemaic, and Late Period remains. It was only during the early 1980s that W. Kaiser (former director of the German Archaeological Institute) initiated investigations at Buto with the aim of clarifying the early history of the site. The work revealed for the first time not

only the chalcolithic Lower Egyptian Maadi Culture of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium in the Nile Delta proper but also Early Dynastic settlement remains which seemed to belong to a large administrative building.<sup>5</sup> However, the limited size of the excavations inhibited a more complete understanding of the exposed structures.

During the last decade, besides a systematic survey combining auger drillings and geophysical measurements to answer questions about the development of the settlement throughout its long history and its topographical setting in respect to the surrounding landscape,<sup>6</sup> excavations were continued in the previously investigated location but in a considerably enlarged area (Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> As a result—after the investigations of overlying Saite building structures and Third Intermediate Period remains—a much more complete picture of the Early Dynastic settlement remains can now be drawn. From the late Predynastic until the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty several phases of construction can be distinguished which seem to mirror the development of a presumable royal estate throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty until its modification into a palace complex in the late 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and its destruction by fire and final abandonment towards the middle and late 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty.<sup>8</sup> The architectural features of the subsequent construction phases and the material culture connected to them (e.g., the pottery and the flint industries) clearly reveal an increasing level of organization and a strengthening of the representation of power connected to the consolidation of political and administrative structures in the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

The palace complex (Figure 3) constitutes doubtless the climax of this development. The building, oriented north-south, must have been at least 50 m wide. Its total length cannot be determined because its walls continue southward beyond the limits of the excavation and below a modern village. Although badly disturbed, the excavations have revealed essential parts and allow for some reconstructions. The complex is surrounded by an

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enclosure wall and comprises several compounds of specific function, such as prestigious rooms, workshops, magazines, and rooms for private<sup>9</sup> and probably cultic purposes, which are arranged around a central reception hall. The general plan reveals the intention to connect economic, administrative, cultic, reception, and private functions within one and the same building, i.e., all those aspects that characterize palaces and residences of the king and high officials in later times. Such an Early Dynastic building was hitherto known only from Hierakonpolis.<sup>10</sup> The well-planned regular construction is based on repeatedly employed architectural principles and standardized measurements. This, along with the solid building techniques, leaves no doubt that the complex was built at Buto as an official enterprise. Especially interesting is the arrangement of the entrance area with its long and meandering corridor from the outer gate at the northwestern corner of the complex to the reception room in the center (see Figure 3). Such a long and winding route was surely not established by accident but—in addition to its protective function—in order to emphasize the social distance between the likely high status individual and his visitors.<sup>11</sup>

So far, the question of whether the excavated complex can be identified with the so-called Palace of the Harpooning Horus mentioned above cannot yet be answered, and there is also no direct evidence as to who might have been the owner of the complex, whether the governor of the region or the king himself. The king could have used the building together with his followers as a temporary residence when the court came to Buto during royal journeys across the country.<sup>12</sup> During his absence the main task of the complex might have been the organization of the agricultural production of the region, the storage and distribution of commodities, and the manufacturing of different luxury items such as stone vessels and flint knives whose production is attested. Like in the Late Period and in Ptolemaic/Roman times trade with the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>13</sup> might have also played a role in early Buto; connections to the Levant are indicated by fragments of imported pottery.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, in addition to its economic, administrative, and probably cultic functions, the complex was also a clear statement of power and political interest that was perhaps of particular significance in the remote region of the western Nile Delta.



**Figure 1: The Tell of Buto from the north.**



**Figure 2: Excavations in Buto with Early Dynastic building structures just showing up. In the foreground the overlying Saite building remains are still visible.**



Figure 3: Plan of the palace complex dating to the late 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty.

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### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Cf., among others, John A. Wilson, "Buto and Hierakonpolis in the Geography of Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 14 (1955): 232; Werner Kaiser, "Einige Bemerkungen zur ägyptischen Frühzeit, III. Die Reichseinigung," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 91 (1964): 123; Donald B. Redford, "Notes on the History of Ancient Buto," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 5 (1983): 67–101.
- <sup>2</sup> Günter Dreyer, *Das prädynastische Königsggrab U-j und seine Schriftzeugnisse*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo 86 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 130, Abb. 80, Nr. 127–129.
- <sup>3</sup> E.g., Wolfgang Helck, *Untersuchungen zur Thinitenzeit*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 45 (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag 1987), 180, 212–213, 228; Thomas von der Way, *Untersuchungen zur Spätvor- und Frühgeschichte Unterägyptens*, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens 8 (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993), 128; *Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto I, Ergebnisse zum frühen Kontext, Kampagnen der Jahre 1983–1989*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo 83 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 173.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles T. Currelly, "The Site of Buto," in W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Ehnyasa 1904*, Memoirs of the Egypt Exploration Fund 26 (London: Bernhard Quaritch, 1905), 38; Veronica Seton-Williams, "The Tell el-Farâʿîn Expedition, 1964–1965," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 51 (1965), 9–15; "The Tell el-Farâʿîn Expedition, 1966," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 52 (1966), 163–171; "The Tell el-Farâʿîn Expedition, 1967," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 53 (1967), 146–155; Dorothy Charlesworth, "Tell el-Farâʿîn: The Industrial Site, 1968," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 55 (1969), 23–30; "The Tell el-Farâʿîn Excavation, 1969," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 56 (1970), 19–28.
- <sup>5</sup> Thomas von der Way, "Early Dynastic Architecture at Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto," in Manfred Bietak (ed.), *House and Palace in Ancient Egypt*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie XIV (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 247–252; von der Way 1997, 137–171; Dina Faltings et al., "Zweiter Vorbericht über die Arbeiten in Buto von 1996–1999," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 56 (2000), 154–162; Martin Ziermann, "Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto. Bericht über die Arbeiten am Gebäudekomplex der Schicht V und die Vorarbeiten auf dem Nordhügel (site A)," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 58 (2002), 461–494.
- <sup>6</sup> Buto was continuously occupied from the early 4th millennium until the end of the Old Kingdom and re-settled in the late 8th century BC until the 6th century AD; cf. Ulrich Hartung, in: Ulrich Hartung et al., "Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto, 10. Vorbericht," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 65 (2009), 172–188. The urban development of Buto in Ptolemaic and Roman times is the focus of investigations conducted by Pascale Ballet (University of Poitiers/France) in cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute.
- <sup>7</sup> Ulrich Hartung, "Recent investigations at Tell el-Faraʿîn/Buto," in Béatrix Midant-Reynes, Yann Tristant, and Stan Hendrickx (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 2*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 172 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley: Peeters, 2008), 1195–1219; Ulrich Hartung et al., "Tell el Faraʿîn-Buto, 8. Vorbericht," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 59 (2003), 199–267; "Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto, 9. Vorbericht," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 63 (2007), 69–165; Hartung et al. 2009, 83–190; Pascale Ballet et al., "Et la Bouto tardive?," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 111 (2011), 75–100; Ulrich Hartung et al., "Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto, 11. Vorbericht," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 68 (2012), 83–114.
- <sup>8</sup> Ulrich Hartung, "Recent investigations of Early Dynastic Building Structures at Tell el-Faraʿîn/Buto," in Manfred Bietak and Eva Lange (eds.), *Palaces and Residences in Ancient Egypt: Reaching Beyond the State of the Art. Proceedings of the conference held 12–14 June 2013, London, Ägypten und Levante*, forthcoming; "Constructions of the Early Dynastic Period at Tell el-Faraʿîn/Buto," in Béatrix Midant-Reynes and Yann Tristant (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 5*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Leuven/Paris/Dudley: Peeters, forthcoming); Hartung et al. 2007, 72–98 ; Hartung et al. 2012.
- <sup>9</sup> Several of the rooms excavated in the 1980s might have belonged to the private part of the complex; see already von der Way 1997, 169–173.
- <sup>10</sup> Walter A. Fairservis, Jr., "Preliminary Report on the First Two Seasons at Hierakonpolis, Part I," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 9 (1971/72), 7–27; Kent R. Weeks, "Preliminary Report on the First Two Seasons at Hierakonpolis, Part II, The Early Dynastic Palace," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 9 (1971/72), 29–33; Walter A. Fairservis, Jr., *The Hierakonpolis Project, Excavations of the Archaic Remains East of the*

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*Niched Gate, Season of 1981*, Occasional Papers in Anthropology III (Poughkeepsie 1986); Renee Friedman and Richard Bussmann, "The Early Dynastic Palace at Hierakonpolis", in: Manfred Bietak and Eva Lange (eds.), *Palaces and Residences in Ancient Egypt: Reaching Beyond the State of the Art. Proceedings of the conference held 12–14 June 2013, London, Ägypten und Levante*, forthcoming. The Early Dynastic estate/residence at Tell el-Farkha in the Eastern Delta (see, e.g., Marek Chłodnicki, "Lower Egyptian, Protodynastic and Early Dynastic Settlements on the Northern Part of the Eastern Kom," in Marek Chłodnicki, Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz, and Agnieszka Mączyńska [eds.], *Tell el-Farkha I, Excavations 1998–2011*, [Poznań/Kraków, Poznań Archaeological Museum/Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University Kraków, 2012], 21–34; Marek Chłodnicki, "Protodynastic, Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Settlement on the Central Kom," *ibid.*, 105–113; Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz, "Protodynastic and Early Dynastic Settlement on the Western Kom," *ibid.*, 163–180) seems to have

had a similar function, but the structures so far exposed do not yet allow for the reconstruction of such a comprehensive building complex as in Hierakonpolis or Buto.

<sup>11</sup> See also, e.g., Felix Arnold, "Der Palast als Labyrinth. Peru und Ägypten im Vergleich," in: Dietmar Kurpkat, Peter I. Schneider, and Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt (eds.), *Die Architektur des Weges. Gestaltete Bewegung im Raum*, Diskussionen zur Archäologischen Bauforschung 11 (Regensburg, Verlag Schnell und Steiner, 2014), 348–359.

<sup>12</sup> See already von der Way 1996, 252; 1997, 173.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Janine Bourriau, in Hartung et al. 2003, 224–233; Gonca and Ahmet Şenol, in: Hartung et al. 2007, 146–147.

<sup>14</sup> See E. Christiana Köhler, *Tell el-Faraʿîn-Buto III, Die Keramik von der späten Naqada-Kultur bis zum frühen Alten Reich (Schichten III bis VI)*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo 94 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 37–39 for finds from the work in the 1980s. Additional evidence came to light during the recent excavations.