

## TELL EL-FARKHA

### **3-4. Hoard**

Tell el-Farkha, Eastern Kom

Late Predynastic

### **3. Standing male figurine**

H. 57 cm, gold

Cairo, Egyptian Museum, R-485

### **4. Standing male figurine**

H. 30 cm, gold

Cairo, Egyptian Museum, R-486

Once the crushed and bent pieces of sheet gold were laboriously reconstructed and conserved, they turned out to belong to two male figurines presumably representing an early ruler and his son and heir. The core of these statuettes was made of some perishable material like wood, no traces of which have been preserved. The gold sheet was attached to this core with numerous gold rivets — 140 such rivets were found — amply testifying to the exceptional skills of the goldsmiths of the time. Both figures were of standing naked males. The eyes of both were made of lapis-lazuli, a raw material then imported from as far away as present-day Afghanistan on the peripheries of the known world. This is by the way further corroboration of the enormous significance that trade had for the ruling elites of the emerging Egyptian state. The eyebrows of the statuettes were also inlaid with some other material than gold, possibly bitumen or ebony, but no trace of this has survived. Both these raw materials had to be imported to Egypt, bitumen from the Near East and ebony from Nubia. The style of the figurines and the emphasis on some of the details, such as protruding ears, bigger than life phalluses, and meticulously rendered nails on the fingers and toes, fit well with the character of Predynastic art in Egypt. So far, however, there have been no discoveries of similar figures made of precious materials, depicting what could have been early rulers and their heirs.

The necklace found together with the figurines appears to have been connected with the larger of the two statuettes. The fact that the beads were made of undoubtedly imported ostrich eggshells and carnelian serves to emphasize the significance of the figurines.

K.M.C.

