

INTRODUCTION

Research on the assemblage of faience finds from the site of Tell Atrib, excavated between 1985 and 1995 by a Polish archaeological mission from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW), was undertaken with the objective of contributing a solid dating base to existing studies of faience objects, both vessels and small statuary, which are based, for the most part, on stylistic grounds. The present catalogue contains 332 artifacts from both categories, covering most of the faience finds that were recorded from the excavations.

It should be kept in mind, however, that faience from this site does not preserve well on the whole and crumbles and disintegrates easily upon being uncovered. Hence the fragmentary state of many of the finds, which has made the task of identifying forms and interpreting their decoration more than difficult. Moreover, field registers did not include shapeless lumps of faience, which were fairly common in the excavation. Consequently, caution should be exercised with regard to the statistics presented in this study as they simply cannot reflect the actual number of finds.

The importance of this set lies in the well stratified contexts in which the faience objects were found. Hence the author's concentration on presenting a detailed discussion of the stratigraphy of the excavations in Tell Atrib in the context of the faience finds. A thorough analysis of the stratigraphic context of the finds, as well as of the nature of the finds themselves, has led the author to propose the presence of faience-producing workshops in the part of ancient Athribis excavated by the Polish mission. His remarks are supported by the results of a limited archeometric study of faience samples.

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