

## 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.

The book would not have been written without the support, generosity and guidance of Prof. Karol Myśliwiec. Special thanks go to Prof. Hanna Szymańska for her many invaluable remarks and suggestions, as well as to Dr. Paul T. Nicholson for his penetrating review and constructive criticism of the manuscript.

Many of my colleagues have contributed their remarks at various stages of my research; I would like to mention especially Dr. Marie-Dominique Nenna, Dr. Mervat Seif El-Din, Dr. Jerzy Trzciniński, Prof. Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal, Prof. Barbara Lichočka, Prof. Adam Łukaszewicz, Anna Południkiewicz, Dr. Teodozja I. Rzeuska and Małgorzata Radomska.

I would also like to thank the Director of the PCMA UW, Prof. Piotr Bieliński and the head of the PCMA Research Center in Cairo, Dr. Zbigniew Szafranski for their generosity and assistance during my stay at the Centre in Cairo and my work on the volume of finds from the Centre's excavations in Tell Atrib. Mr. Piotr Mieliwodzki kindly shared with me his extensive documentation of the faience objects presented in this book. I also greatly appreciate the heart and effort put into the editing of the final shape of this publication, both text and illustrations, by the entire editorial staff of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology and especially Iwona Zych.

My thanks go to the authorities of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Authorities and in particular Mrs. Somaya Abu Senna, the SCA inspector cooperating with the Polish–Egyptian Archaeological mission in Tell Atrib.

Last but not least, I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Teresa Żurkowska for her generous support that made the preparation of my dissertation for publication possible.