



ARCHAEOLOGICA HEREDITAS

Studies in
archaeological
ceramology

edited by
Zbigniew Kobyliński

Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

17

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Possible foreign origin of art decoration on Ptolemaic hemispherical faience bowls from Athribis (Nile Delta)

INTRODUCTION

Faience¹ played an important role, in Ancient Egypt not only because of its durability and aesthetic values², but also because it was a substitute of a mineral so prized by the Egyptians: lapis lazuli. Lapis is also associated with the worship of the goddess Hathor³. The production of faience goes back to the Predynastic Period⁴. In the following centuries this process was refined and modified. This is reflected by the huge number of objects made of this material, which are found on virtually all archaeological sites in Egypt. During the Ptolemaic period faience manufacturers were described as makers of a blue turquoise (Καλλαινοποιοί). This name is attested on a series of tax receipts and in some of the so-called “medical texts”⁵. Small beads and charms were produced *en masse*. The appearance of relief decorated vessels with polychromatic glaze in the Ptolemaic Egypt was a novelty, they stand out not only because of their original form, but also visually appealing decoration. Among them, the most numerous are bowls with a characteristic hemispherical body, a straight rim and low ring base⁶. The largest collection of this type of vessels is now stored in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria⁷.

Many fragments of similar bowls were also found during the Polish-Egyptian rescue excavations conducted in the Lower Egyptian city of Tell Atrib (Athribis)⁸. All of them come from well-dated stratigraphic contexts, making it possible to carry out a study of their decoration and recreation of certain aspects of production techniques⁹. This material has also become a starting point for a study of the archetype of Ptolemaic relief decorated faience vessels, the preliminary results of which will be presented in the course of this article.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAIENCE BOWLS

Relief decorated faience bowls from Tell Atrib have a distinctive hemispherical body shape (Figs 1–4). Although their height varies it does not exceed 12 cm. The diameter of the rim is between 14 and 22 cm¹⁰. The walls of the central part of the body are approximately 0.5 cm thick, widening slightly at the base of the vessel, and appropriately narrowing at the rim¹¹. The faience paste from which they were formed is white, and can also be characterised by low porosity. Glaze covering the surface of the faience core is relatively thin and smooth, usually pale blue with a slight green tinge. Depending on the firing temperature it can be slightly dull or shiny. Several fragments are characterised by a grey shade of the faience core and of the glaze covering it. Microscopic observations suggest that these vessels were slightly overfired during the heat treatment process in the kiln. Others still have unremoved conical props on the underside of the base, which clearly demonstrates their local, *i.e.*, Athribian provenance¹².

¹ Nicholson and Peltenburg 2000: 177. See also Lucas 1936: 141–164, 1962; Noble 1969: 435–439, pl. 121–122; Kiefer and Allibert 1971: 107–118; Kaczmarczyk and Hedges 1983 (base study); Tite, Freestone and Bimson 1983: 17–27; Tite and Bimson 1986: 69–78; Tite *et al.* 1998: 117–120; Vandiver 1998: 121–139; Paynter and Tite 2001: 239–254; Shortland and Tite 2005: 31–46.

² Nicholson 1993: 16.

³ Friedman 1998: 15.

⁴ As the earliest faience products manufactured in Egypt must be considered beads found in the burial context of Badarian Culture, see: Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928; Friedman 1998: 177.

⁵ Bogaert 1998–1999: 65–66.

⁶ About these vessels see also, among others, Givon 1963: 20–26; Adriani 1967: 109–111 pl. III–IV; Arnold 1988: 6–7; Lunsingh Scheurleer 1988: 558–567; Nenna and Seif el Din 1993: 565–602; Friedman 1998: 27–28, 251; Nenna and Seif el Din 2000; Caubet and Pierrat-Bonnefois 2007: 168–169, fig. 444. For faience vessels of a similar form and decoration found in Memphis, Petrie 1911: 36 pl. 17.

⁷ In addition to Alexandria, Ptolemaic relief decorated faience vessels are curated, among other places, in Munich (Staatliche Museum Ägyptischer Kunst), Cairo (Cairo Museum), Baltimore (Walters Art Gallery), Paris (Louvre Museum), London (Petrie Museum, The Victoria and Albert Museum), Oxford (Ashmolean Museum). See a comprehensive list of museum

collections with fragments of decorated faience bowls in Nenna and Seif el Din 2000.

⁸ On the subject of this excavations see, among others, Myśliwiec 1994: 35–46, 1996a: 34–43, 1996b: 34–36, 1996c: 7–20, 2000, 2009: 15–63; Myśliwiec and Bakr Said 1999: 180–219.

⁹ Welc 2011.

¹⁰ Relief decorated faience bowls from the Greek-Roman Museum in Alexandria have similar sizes: Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 157.

¹¹ Welc 2011.

¹² There is no doubt that at least part of the faience vessels found at Tell Atrib was produced on site. This is evidenced by burned, deformed fragments and those that have conical props, which were removed after firing, see Myśliwiec 2009: 53. About the conical props see, Petrie 1911: 35 pl. 18, 212; Papadopoulos 1992: 203–221; Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 26.

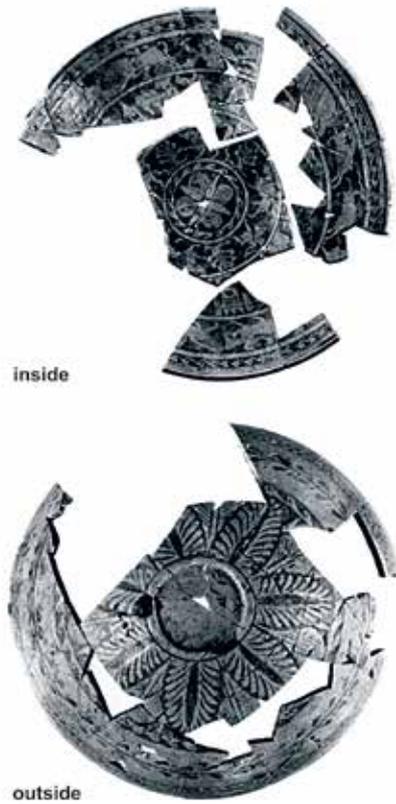


Fig. 1. The relief decorated faience bowl from Tell Atrib. Photographs of a bowl reconstructed from excavated fragments (photo not to scale), diameter rim 18 cm, sherd height 8 cm, thickness wall about 0.4 cm. See references Welc 2014: 86–87, Cat. 1; modified

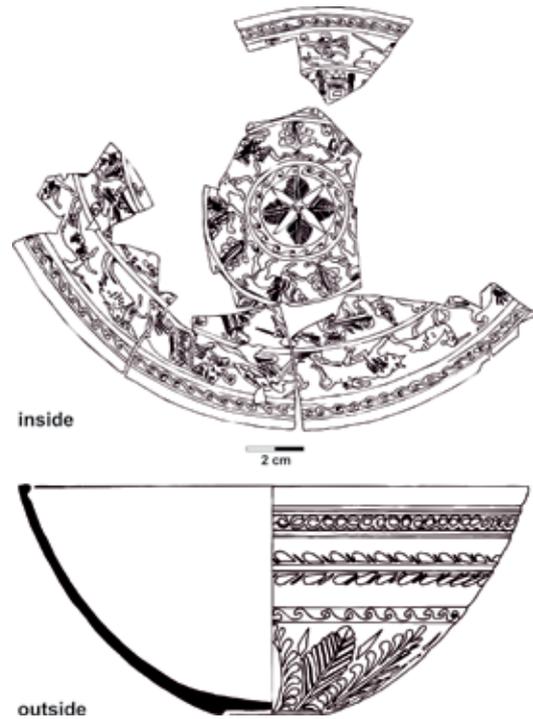


Fig. 2. The relief decorated faience bowl from Tell Atrib (reconstruction of relief decoration). See references Welc 2014: 85, Cat. 1; modified

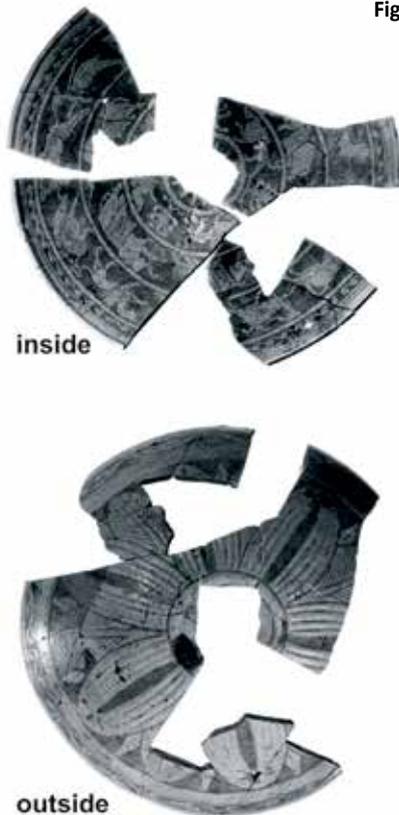


Fig. 3. The relief decorated faience bowl from Tell Atrib. Photographs a bowl reconstructed from excavated fragments (photo not to scale), diameter rim 18.5 cm, sherd height 7 cm, thickness wall 0.4 cm. See references Welc 2014: 90–91, Cat. 2; modified



Fig. 4. The relief decorated faience bowl from Tell Atrib (reconstruction of relief decoration). See references Welc 2014: 89, Cat. 2; modified

Ptolemaic craftsmen producing relief decorated faience bowls successfully exploited the effect that gives the use of light and dark tones of the same colour glaze and the simultaneous differentiation of individual parts of decoration by using concave and convex relief. As a result of these treatments, the individual items are very impressive and have a unique decoration. This decor is applied both on the inner and outer wall of the vessel. If, for example, the first band decorated with relief was coated with a light hue of glaze, the next band was coated with the same colour but with a much darker hue. The convex relief was usually covered with a clear glaze and the dark glaze was reserved for the concave relief¹³.

Relief decoration located on the inner wall develops, starting from the bottom, and ends a few millimetres below the rim of the vessel. In the central part of the base (on the interior of the vessel) was the focus of the whole composition. It usually consisted of a floral calyx. The width of the bands decorating the inner wall does not exceed 3.5 cm. Figural, floral or geometric motifs filled them. The number and width of bands depend on the height of the vessel, and the individual preferences of the artist, and perhaps also his or her skills¹⁴.

Decoration of the Ptolemaic faience vessels is characterised by a richness of iconographic motifs, included as part of an original, homogeneous style, which seems to be a synthesis of several artistic traditions, with a noticeable influence of Egyptian and Greek art, enriched with Oriental element. Previously made detailed analysis of figural and floral compositions preserved on discussed vessels did not allow to convincingly determine their archetype¹⁵. According to some scholars encoded content is purely symbolic¹⁶. R.A. Lunsingh Scheurleer defined the way of decorating of the Ptolemaic faience vessels, particularly hemispherical bowls, as “truly Hellenistic in spirit”¹⁷.

COMPARATIVE VESSELS MADE OF METAL, GLASS AND CERAMIC

The relation between the relief decorated Ptolemaic faience vessels and examples made of metal, glass or pottery from the same period have been discussed, among others in the publications of Lunsingh Scheurleer, Parlasca and Adriani. The publication of a monograph by Nenna and Seif el Din in the year 2000 entitled *La vaisselle en faïence d'époque Gréco-romaine* was a milestone in the study of Ptolemaic faience¹⁸. Conclusions derived from this extensive study will be presented below and will be the starting point for a re-analysis of the available material, the purpose of which will be an attempt to determine the probable archetype decoration of faience vessels produced in the Ptolemaic Egypt.

¹³ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 65.

¹⁴ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 571.

¹⁵ See the analysis of individual iconographic motifs found on relief decorated Ptolemaic bowls by Nenna and Seif el Din 1993; Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 84–96.

¹⁶ Friedman 1998: 251.

¹⁷ Friedman 1998: 251.

¹⁸ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 131.

Influences between faience and metal vessels were first discussed in detail in the article by Adriani in 1967¹⁹. At the end of the 1980s Pfrommer published the so-called “treasure” of silver objects discovered in Tukh El-Karamus²⁰. This set contained, *inter alia*, cups with an ovoid-shaped body and short neck, deep bowls decorated with a flower calyx and series of tear-drop reliefs and jugs of ovoid-shaped body and upwardly widening neck. These vessels have a strong resemblance to so called Achaemenid shaped faience bowls and cups. As Nenna argues, the resemblance of form and decoration suggests that there were common prototypes used by artisans producing faience and metal²¹.

It is difficult to determine the exact relationship between hemispherical metal and faience bowls, as these vessels have a quite “trivial” form, adapted very often in workshops producing items of metal, ceramic and faience. Bronze bowls often do not have any decorations except for a horizontal corrugation²². Vessels of this form, made of silver, are characterised by rich details that do not appear on faience vessels. This applies mainly to a calyx in relief decorating the lower part of the body, on the outer side. As Nenna correctly noticed, the shape of this motif, which is adapted for metal bowls is not present on their faience counterparts²³. Moreover, artists decorated vessels in high relief that contrasts with the “flat” modelling of the friezes on faience vessels²⁴. Silver bowl dated to 2nd century BC from the Fayum in Egypt with decoration of leaf calyxes was described by Pfrommer²⁵ (Fig. 5).

The band decoration, characteristic for Ptolemaic faience is also observed on silver alabastrons produced in the 3rd century BC²⁶. The lower part of the body (outer side) of these vessels is adorned with a calyx of *nelumbo* lotus or acanthus leaves. Engraved images of hanging garlands and other floral motifs were found above them²⁷. Silver alabastrons, unlike the faience ones, do not have figural scenes (dancing figures) and zones decorated with rosettes. Much more similarities can be noticed between the deep bowls made of bronze and their faience counterparts. This can be illustrated by a copper goblet curated in the Cairo Museum²⁸. Its outer surface

¹⁹ Adriani 1967.

²⁰ One of Pfrommer's most important conclusions of this work is the dating of the Ptolemaic workshops producing metal vessels in Egypt at the end of the 4th century BC and the first half of the 3rd century BC. The products of these *ateliers* were among other vessels shapes belonging to the so-called Persian artistic tradition, which were revived at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, Pfrommer 1987. See also a scene from the tomb of Petosiris in Tuna el Gebel, where craftsman are shown producing vessels in the Achaemenid style, Lefèbvre 1924: 51–54 pl. VII–VIII; Nenna 2002: 324. On the influence of Persian art on the Hellenistic art see also: Saldern 1975: 37–46; Parlasca 2006.

²¹ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000.

²² Pfrommer 1993.

²³ Nenna 2002: 325.

²⁴ See similar type of decoration on a set metal bowls published by Pfrommer 1987: pl. 56, 57, 58; 1993: 231 fig. 75, 76. See also Nenna 2002: 325.

²⁵ Pfrommer 1993.

²⁶ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 134.

²⁷ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 134; Pfrommer 1987: pl. 51.

²⁸ Parlasca 1976: 143–144; Grimm, Johannes and al-Miṣrī 1975: 59, pl. 99.



Fig. 5. Silver bowl with floral calyxes of nymphaea and acanthus leaves: second century BC, the Fayum (Egypt), registration number 4337 (Munich Staatliche Antikensammlungen). See references Pfrommer 1993: 55, fig. 43; modified

is decorated with motifs often found on faience vessels. The lower part of the body, on the outer side is decorated with a calyx, above it are images of floral wreaths.

The small number of well-dated metal vessels as well as the lack of a comprehensive typological study make it difficult to compare them with faience vessels²⁹. On the one hand, it seems that some types of faience vessels with their shape and type of decoration follow metal archetypes, which applies mainly to the forms inspired by the Achaemenid art. On the other hand, it may be noted, that these influences are common for other vessel types made of metal, faience, glass and clay.

According to Nenna, although faience vessels seem to be a substitute for much more valuable vessels made of metal, the ceramic forms were largely inspired by the creations of artisans producing faience³⁰. It should be noted, however, that the primary barrier to the study of the relationship and influences between the two groups is again the lack of well-dated Ptolemaic pottery. There is also no doubt that a comprehensive analysis of the interconnections between ceramic and faience vessels must be carried out in the broad cultural and geographical context, with particular emphasis on the area of Greece and the Middle East. As Jolanta Młynarczyk³¹ rightly noticed, some of the Ptolemaic faience forms seem to be a copies of the Greek ceramic forms, derived among others from the repertoire of the Attic black-glazed pottery of the 4th–3rd century BC. On the other hand,

at a later period, *i.e.*, from the 2nd century BC Ptolemaic faience vessels could provide inspiration for forms such as ceramic repertoire of the Eastern Sigillata A (ESA), which was produced in the area of northern Syria³².

It cannot be excluded that some forms were produced simultaneously in pottery workshops and those specializing in the production of faience. This applies mainly to the very popular bowls with hemispherical body and straight or contoured rim. A shape that may have been borrowed from the manufacturers of faience is a jug with ovoid body, wide neck and rim profiled on the outside³³. One of the vessels of this type is decorated with appliques showing the head of Bes, placed exactly in the same places where we see them in similar in terms of the form faience jugs with ovoid body and long, upwardly flared neck³⁴. Jugs with spherical bodies, short necks and a straight rim also have decoration similar to faience vessels. This is the only group of vessels for which their recently proposed dating to the 3rd century BC, coincides with the production of relief decorated faience vessels³⁵. These vessels are decorated with elaborate figured scenes made in a high relief. As in the case of faience vessels, they are arranged in horizontal bands of different widths. The lower part of the vessel is usually decorated with a calyx of the broad leaves of *nelumbo* lotus or acanthus³⁶. The central zone of these jugs are decorated with bands with images of rosettes, wreaths, crests of waves, bunches of lotus, *etc.*³⁷. Above them lie figural scenes, which are more complex and thematically diverse than similar compositions preserved, for example, on the walls of faience jugs. The differences can be illustrated by fragments of spherical ceramic jugs found during the Polish-Egyptian archaeological excavations at Tell Atrib³⁸. On most of them figural scenes are preserved showing sacrificial cattle being led towards the burning altar, or transportation of a barge with a shrine placed on a waggon. On another a representation of the triad: Serapis, Harpocrates and Isis fragment is preserved. An old Egyptian frieze of cobras is shown directly above them³⁹. Examples located in various museum collections are characterised by decoration, whose themes revolve around motifs such as transport of a barge with a shrine⁴⁰, representations of Eros, musicians or carriers of the sacrifices⁴¹. These figures are always shown in a typical Greek stature and style far from that

²⁹ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 134.

³⁰ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 134.

³¹ Authors would like to thank Prof. Jolanta Młynarczyk (Institute of Archaeology UW) for many helpful suggestions and remarks.

³² About the ESA vessels see, among others, Hades 1985.

³³ Nenna 2002.

³⁴ This vessel is currently in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, about it see Ballet 1998: 197–198 fig. 2.

³⁵ Mandel-Elzinga 1988; Myśliwiec and Południkiewicz 2003: 142.

³⁶ This type of decoration is shown on two completely preserved vessels from the collection of the Benaki Museum in Athens and Roemer- und Pelizaeus – Museum Hildesheim, Mandel-Elzinga 1988: 250 fig. 1, 2.

³⁷ Mandel-Elzinga 1988: fig. 1–7.

³⁸ See for example vessel dated to the turn of the 3rd and 2nd century BC, Myśliwiec 1989: 346, fig. 12, 2004: 465, fig. 7–10.

³⁹ Inv. TA 94/25p, see Myśliwiec and Bakr Said 1999: 204.

⁴⁰ Mandel-Elzinga 1988: 257, fig. 5–6.

⁴¹ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147. See also Thompson 1964: 317, fig. 5–8.

which appears in faience vessels. It is also worth mentioning that some of these vessels were painted with the colours (among others turquoise), which may have deliberately mimicked the faience colours⁴².

Ceramic alabastrons take up the themes and type of decoration of the jugs with ovoid body and short neck described above. This is illustrated by a series of vessels now in the Cairo Museum and published in one of the volumes of the *Catalogue Général*⁴³. Their lower part is usually decorated with a calyx separated with a narrow band from the central part of the body, where figural scenes or floral-geometric motifs are placed. Among the former dominates figures of dancers⁴⁴, Harpocrates⁴⁵ and Eros⁴⁶, which, though in a different stylistic manner also appear on faience alabastrons⁴⁷. Among floral themes garlands, rosettes, which are also present on alabastrons made of faience should be mentioned⁴⁸. The most popular motifs are patterns consisting of small geometric figures. Equally uncommon is a net motif girdling the central part of the body, which is not present in faience⁴⁹.

Ceramic bowls characterised by hemispherical bodies and rims profiled outwards were very popular in the 2nd and at the beginning of the 1st century BC in the entire Mediterranean region. Although they were manufactured of clay, metal and glass (so-called “gold glass sandwich”), they are almost completely absent in the workshops producing faience vessels⁵⁰.

Among other types of pottery should be mentioned in this context are bowls decorated with relief which are often referred to as Megarian bowls or more professionally: imbricate bowls, floral bowls and figured bowls⁵¹. Vessels of this type began to be produced in Athens in the second half of the 3rd century BC; Rotroff uses the term “Hellenistic moldmade relief bowls” for describing these vessels⁵². Bowls decorated with a calyx consisting of lotus leaves (imbricate bowls) are the most similar in form and decoration to the faience examples. In the case of so-called floral bowls the calyces are always composed of lotus leaves in blue or white colour, which do not overlap and are separated by the vine wreaths. The so-called figured bowls feature figural scenes



Fig. 6. Megarian bowl with floral decoration of nelumbo's leaf and petal (photo and relief decoration): Hellenistic, height 8.9 cm, diameter 15.5 cm, catalogue of group A 74, inv. no. P 1811 (the Agora collection, Athens). See references Homer 1934: 328–329, fig. 11a, 11b; modified

involving mythological figures, presented in a purely Greek manner – not known from faience vessels⁵³. The decoration of long-petals bowls that appear in the middle of the 2nd century BC, have some resemblance to deep faience bowls with a relief image of the calyx consisting of *nelumbo* lotus leaves with a separate central stigma⁵⁴. On the outer wall of imbricate bowls and long-petals bowls calyces occupy almost the entire available area of the body, respectively, two-thirds on the floral bowls and one-third on the figured bowls (Fig. 6)⁵⁵. Calyces are different in detail and size from those that adorn similarly shaped faience bowls. In the case of the former, between the leaves of *nelumbo* are unknown on faience details in the form of small twigs and plant wreaths.

⁴² Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147; Nenna 2002: 325. See also Pagenstecher 1913: 72, 198 pl. 24; Mandel-Elzinga 1988: 256, fn 56.

⁴³ Edgar 1911.

⁴⁴ See for example an alabastron with a scene showing a dancer in a company of a Sylen and Isis, Edgar 1911: no 26.294, 61, pl. 23; Wildung and Grimm 1978: cat. 120.

⁴⁵ Wildung and Grimm 1978: cat. 119.

⁴⁶ Edgar 1911: no 26.286, 58–59 pl. 23.

⁴⁷ See the alabastron from the Cairo Museum, JE 15065: Wildung and Grimm 1978: cat. 122; Bissing 1902: 104.

⁴⁸ See for example an alabastron stored in The Benaki Museum in Athens, with a figural scene and above it two bands with representations of garlands and rosettes, Mandel-Elzinga 1988: fig. 18: 9.

⁴⁹ See two alabastrons from the Cairo Museum, Bissing 1902: cat. 26.290, 26.291, pl. 23.

⁵⁰ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 136.

⁵¹ The first comparative study of the relief-decorated ceramic and faience bowls, Parlasca 1955: 129–154. See also a set of well-preserved Megarian cups found in Cyprus, Pieridou 1969: 64–66 pl. IX–XI.

⁵² Rotroff 1982a: 9–13, 1982b: 329. See also Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147.

⁵³ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147.

⁵⁴ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147.

⁵⁵ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 147; Thompson 1934: 328–329.



Fig. 7. Bowl of sandwich gold glass with a floral design in gold leaf sandwiched between two layers of clear glass: ca 250 BC, height 11.0 cm, diameter 20.0 cm, find spot Canosa di Puglia (Italy), made probably in Alexandria (Egypt) (British Museum, Collection online, museum number 1871,0518.2, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?museum_number=1871,0518.2)

Motifs characteristic for relief decorated faience are often found on ceramic vessels with painted decoration. Some of them even copy the decorative repertoire of some types of faience vessels closely. This can be illustrated by the fragment of an ovoid jug with a neck flared upwards, which was found in Tell Atrib⁵⁶. Its central body is decorated with a hanging ribbon garland. Above this garland several horizontal bands survive with representations of a braided line (chain) and a row of rectangles. These motifs, although they are painted rather casually, are following similar representations decorating interior walls of hemispherical faience bowls. Most of the pottery of Tell Atrib painted decoration is limited to hanging garlands in the central part of the body⁵⁷. Against this background, a small jug dating back to the 2nd century BC stands out, which is covered almost entirely by bands with representations of different types of floral wreaths⁵⁸. A passion for decorating vessels with horizontal bands, between which arranged were floral motifs, including in particular the image of hanging garlands, is what connects painted pottery⁵⁹ to faience products of Ptolemaic Athribis, thus proving the thesis that potters and faience manufacturers worked side by side, perhaps even in the same workshop⁶⁰.

The starting point for comparison of glassware and faience was Adriani's publication, in which a thorough analysis of decoration of the hemispherical faience bowls and the

so-called gold, glass sandwich type bowls was presented⁶¹. The central element of the decoration this type of vessels of is a large floral calyx covering the lower, outer side of the body. Above it, there are usually two or three horizontal bands containing such motifs as meanders, diamonds, piroettes (spirals), different types of floral wreaths, so-called "towers with battlements" (Fig. 7). Like in the case of metal bowls, calyces are enriched with additional iconographic elements, which are not present in relief decorated faience⁶².

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The above observations raise general conclusion. Ptolemaic faience vessels are characterised by a homogeneous style of decoration, which can be found on the contemporary metal, glass and ceramic vessels⁶³. It manifests itself, *inter alia*, in compositional system of bands and relief decoration coverage of the most part of available space on the inner and outer walls of the vessel. This way of decorating seems a bit "outdated" and refers back to Ancient Egyptian art⁶⁴ than it does to the Greek-Hellenistic canon which uses the space more freely. In the relief scenes decorating faience vessels the plastic modelling and proportions human figures are not as carefully worked out stylistically as on similar decorative representations, for example, Megarian bowls or clay alabastrons. The quality of relief details is linked to different properties of materials, which were used for faience and pottery manufacturing. The edges of the decorations made in clay material, even after glaze application remain sharp, while these made in silica paste are rounded and indistinct. Other factors that affect on quality of the decorations are: moulding and/or decorating techniques, glazing technique and firing process. These issues requires detailed, individual studies. At the same time, these compositions are not executed accordingly to the typical rules of the canon of Ancient Egyptian art. Their style is rather a synthesis of several artistic traditions than a formal adaptation of just one of them.

As it was well described by Lunsingh Scheurleer on relief decorated faience vessels we can distinguish three main iconographic-stylistic trends, which refer mainly to the art of Persia, Ancient Egypt and the Greek-Hellenistic world⁶⁵. Among the typical Egyptian motifs should be mentioned ducks picking up to flight among the thickets of papyrus and lotus⁶⁶, wide leaves of *nelumbo* lotus, palmettes, representa-

⁵⁶ Inv. TA III/25/85/R 1243, unpublished vessel.

⁵⁷ See for example, a jug with two handles (inv. TA 89/78), or a jug of slender proportions and upwardly widening neck (inv. TA 89/210), unpublished vessels.

⁵⁸ About this vessel see Myśliwiec and Abu Senna 1995: 212, fig. 7.

⁵⁹ Myśliwiec and Południkiewicz 2003: 146.

⁶⁰ According to Nicholson 1993 the application of the technique of shaping faience vessels on the potter's wheel, in the Ptolemaic period, is among others, evidence of a cooperation between potters and faience manufacturers.

⁶¹ These vessels usually have three forms: bowls of a hemispheric body and rim modelled outwards, bowls of an elongated downwards body and bowls with a deep body, see Adriani 1967: 126, fig. 4, pl. VI, A, B, C, I. See also Harden 1968: 21–47; Nenna 2002: 325.

⁶² Nenna 2002: 325

⁶³ Courby 1922: pl. XV; Thompson 1934: 354, fig. 37.

⁶⁴ See an example of a similar way of "infilling" the available space on faience vessels from the period of the New Kingdom, Freed 1982: cat. 138, 139, 140, 142, p. 142–144.

⁶⁵ Lunsingh Scheurleer 1988: 562. A similar opinion about the influences of the Persian art was earlier expressed by Petrie 1911: 37; Parlasca 1976: 152.

⁶⁶ See for example a motif of ducks picking up to fly decorating silver vessels that were found in Tell el Basta, Maspero 1907, pl. XLIV 2, XLVIII a, b. See also a similar representation preserved in a small faience plaque

tions of dancing Bes⁶⁷. Sphinxes, swings and griffins derived from the repertoire of the Achaemenid or Oriental art, and the same applies to certain forms of decoration in the form of horizontal ribs⁶⁸. In contrast, scenes of hunting, fighting, and compositions depicting rows of animal can broadly be understood with reference to artistic traditions of the Orient. The Greek style is clearly expressed by floral and geometric motifs such as floral wreaths, images of braided lines (the chain) and different varieties of wavy lines (so-called “wave crests”)⁶⁹.

Scenes showing a banquet, which mainly adorn the hemispheric bowls and jugs with ovoid body and long neck are the most difficult to interpret. Their style and iconography reveals a syncretism which refers both to the Egyptian, Oriental and Greek-Hellenistic art. Egyptian elements in these compositions are images of slender vessels placed on joint or separate stands, representations of tables supported by profiled legs, dancers performing the so-called dance of the god Bes, ducks and cornucopia⁷⁰. Greek-Hellenistic motifs include low tables, Greek tunics of the dancers, beds supporting banqueters, and altars framed with torches. Representations of vessels of characteristic Syro-Palestinian shapes belong to the sphere of oriental art⁷¹. Nenna and Seif el Din state that despite many variations, banquet scenes are constructed on the basis of a similar stylistic-iconographical manner, which seems to be a Hellenistic transposition of Ancient Egyptian funeral scenes, especially those which show the funeral rites, sacrifices, the deceased and his family⁷². In their findings the researchers mainly refer to the analysis of the reliefs found in the tomb of Petosiris. According to the authors of this work, even more analogies are provided by some reliefs from the Late Period, particularly those dating back to the times of the 26th Dynasty. A scene carved on a jamb stone in one of the Saite tombs discovered in Memphis (Mit Rahina) is particularly noteworthy⁷³. The preserved sequence of representations opens with the figure of the owner of the tomb, who sits on a straight-backed chair holding a lotus flower in his hand. Before him is a pile of sacrificial offerings and a group of musicians. The first of them is a man playing the lute; the other persons are women dressed in flowing robes with long sleeves. Just behind them is shown a rectangular table, and next to a small vessel placed on a sep-

arate stand. A little further is shown another man preparing a drink for the deceased. In doing so, he is accompanied by two nude female dancers-musicians⁷⁴.

The authors also noted that in the Greek-Hellenistic art the compositions representing a banquet look different and are divided into those which show a man lying with a woman or a servant, and those where there are few figures lying during a joint banquet, sometimes in a company of musicians⁷⁵. In fact, when we compare the banquet scene decorating faience vessels with similar representations preserved on Greek vases, we can see that the latter are composed in a different way, revealing the free use of the available space that is characteristic Greek art. Two vases with painted decoration from the Archaeological Museum in Madrid dating back to the 5th-6th century BC may be used as an example. The first of these vessels is a crater with the body almost entirely covered with a painted composition showing two banqueting men lying on high couches (kline), listening to a musician⁷⁶. Below them a few vessels are shown, that, in contrast to the scenes on faience vessels, are placed quite randomly, similarly to the position of the musician resting on a bed directly between feasters⁷⁷. In a similar convention was decorated the second vessel, *i.e.*, situla, about 30 cm height⁷⁸. This time, the artist shows a banquet, in which the gods are involved. All the characters were differentiated with gestures and costume details in a typical stylistic Greek manner. Above them is a hanging garland, which in this form is not encountered on faience vessels. Below kline a servant, vessels and a small table supported by straight legs is shown.

While the banquet scene seems to derive from the artistic tradition of the Dynastic Egypt, the scenes depicting hunting, rows of animals and fantastic creatures such as griffins and swings, reveal a very strong influence of Oriental art. The iconographical-stylistic analysis presented in this study allows to state that their content should be considered as purely symbolic⁷⁹. This includes, among others frequently appearing in these scenes an image of the hunter-warrior. In the Eastern art the figure of a hero battling with elemental forces embodied, *inter alia*, by sphinxes and griffins was very deeply rooted. We see him, among others on cylindrical seals⁸⁰ and relief scenes decorating metal vessels⁸¹. The motif of the Tree of Life flanked by griffins also belongs to sphere of Oriental art⁸².

from the period of the late 18th Dynasty, Caubet and Pierrat-Bonnefois 2007: fig. 231.

⁶⁷ Undoubtedly, theme of a calyx consisting of lotus leaves is derived from the repertoire of the art of Ancient Egypt. On vessels of the New Kingdom it usually adorns the lower part the body, on the outer side: Lunsingh Scheurleer 1986: 148. See for example a painted bowl found in Tell el Amarna, Freed 1982: 95–96 cat. 76, or a metal bowl of unknown provenance: 124 cat. 112. On many vessels of the blue painted pottery type that were produced during the New Kingdom, we find band decoration characteristic for the Ptolemaic faience vessels, see painted vessels from Tell el Amarna: 92-93 cat. 72, 93 cat. 73.

⁶⁸ Lunsingh Scheurleer 1972: 50–56, 1986: 148.

⁶⁹ See the stylistic analysis of individual motifs, Daszewski 1985: 34.

⁷⁰ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 92.

⁷¹ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 92.

⁷² Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 94.

⁷³ Maspero 1907: 84, pl. XXXIX, see also: Botti 1900: 346 cat. 3.

⁷⁴ It is worth mentioning that the Saite reliefs copied in the vast majority older patterns reaching back to the Old Kingdom. It is not excluded that, for example, the sequence with the dancers is a transposition of much earlier scenes showing the so-called *muu* dancers. On the subject of *muu* dancers and their iconography, see Donovan and McCorquodale 2000: 160.

⁷⁵ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 94.

⁷⁶ Warden 2004: 116 cat. 24. See also a similar vessel: Hemelrijk 1979: 7–9.

⁷⁷ Among vessels we can identify *olpe*, *skyphos*, *pelike* and two craters, Warden 2004: 117.

⁷⁸ Warden 2004: 146 cat. 39.

⁷⁹ Welc 2014: 71–83 fig. 18, 19.

⁸⁰ Collon 1993: 23–38, see also Frankfort 1954: 16 fig. 7, 9, 14, 63.

⁸¹ Frankfort 1954: fig. 68, 96, 98.

⁸² About the so-called The Tree of Life symbolism see James 1966; Cook 1974; Parpola 1993: 161–208; Porter 1993: 129–139.

The stylistic-iconographic syncretism of the scenes decorating the Ptolemaic relief faience described above suggests that the archetype had to emerge long before the Hellenistic period. In this process, influences of various cultures were absorbed. Certainly this will have happened outside Egypt, where artistic traditions and ideas intensively crossed and merged, otherwise the influence of the Egyptian art would be dominant.

Much evidence indicates that this particular artistic trend appeared in the Early Ptolemaic Egypt in an already developed form. Besides the appearance of foreign motifs on the Ptolemaic faience vessel decorations, Mao points to significant changes in their manufacturing technology⁸³. These changes are evident in relation to faience objects from older periods. They involve the colour and chemical composition of the glaze, shallower reliefs in contrasting greenish-blue colours instead of monochromatic glaze with coloured incrustation or novel, exotic shapes, *e.g.*, rythons probably taken from Greek culture. In her opinion, at least some of these changes are the result of the adaptation of production technologies from the Mediterranean and Middle East regions. The changes that took place in the process of the faience manufacturing in Ptolemaic period, described by Mao, were confirmed and extended with new aspects by Trzciński *et al.*⁸⁴. An opinion about foreign origins of the faience decorations was expressed earlier by Petrie. Analysing the decoration of the faience vessels found at Kom el Qalama in Memphis, he stated that Persia was the “school” of the relief decoration on the Ptolemaic faience vessels however, he failed to provide any evidence to support this thesis⁸⁵. According to the authors of these studies the source of decorations typical for Ptolemaic faience bowls may be Cyprus or Greece, while the sources of manufacturing technology, shallower relief decoration, should probably be sought in Greece.

Already in much earlier Cypriot art we find most of the iconographic motifs that characterise the Ptolemaic faience decoration. Pottery produced on the island has band decoration, including the division of individual scenes between *metopes*, as we’ve seen in faience vessels. This applies both to the examples known from the so-called Early Cypriot-Geometric style and those dating to the Cypro-Archaic Period⁸⁶. Among them an amphora with foot ring, ovoid

body, and long and wide neck, which in terms of the form is similar to long-necked faience jugs with spherical body, deserves special attention. On many vessels of this type we find the elements of decoration as weaves, rosettes, theme of joining lotus flowers separated by buds, griffins flanking the so-called tree of life, figural scenes involving humans and animals⁸⁷. The repertoire of the Cypriot art often used the image of a bull and hunting scenes involving wild boar (which occur on some hemispheric faience bowls)⁸⁸. In this context, it is worth discussing also a limestone sarcophagus (Fig. 8) found in Golgoi in Cyprus (site located 10 km from Kition⁸⁹ – a Phoenician colony, which remained under strong Phoenician influence)⁹⁰. On its sidewall was carved a scene showing two warriors “fighting” with wild animals. Their weapons are spears (protective equipment include: shields, Corinthian helmets and composite armor) that points toward the wild animals. This scene is similar to the composition preserved on a small piece of a faience bowl, now in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. We see a hunter-warrior who, armed with a shield and a spear (?) resists the attack of a wild boar⁹¹. On another scene from the sarcophagus from Golgoi people are shown feasting, while resting on high couches accompanied by playing musicians and a cock, which appears in a similar form in the banquet scene preserved on one of the faience jugs found in Bulgaria⁹².

⁸³ Mao 2000: 199–201, 2001: 21.

⁸⁴ Trzciński, Zaremba and Welc 2020.

⁸⁵ Petrie 1911: 37.

⁸⁶ In the terminology of Cypriote chronology of the Early Iron Age is also called the Cypro-Geometric Period (1050–750 BC, divided into three phases: CGI, CGII, CGIII), the following Cypro-Archaic (750–480, divided into two phases: CAI, CAII). See vessels with band decoration dated to both periods in Dikaios and Litt 1961, pl. XI, fig. 4, 6, pl. XIII, fig. 3, 4. The Cypro-Geometric Period is characterised by a clear political organisation of the island, based on ten independent kingdoms which maintain the divided picture of the island, related to geographical borders (Iacovou 2008). It is also a time of visible presence of migrants from East and West Mediterranean on the island; in the 9th century BC, Kition becomes a Phoenician colony (Bisi 1986: 341) and the first examples of the usage of Greek language appear (Smith 2002: 10). Iacovou 2008 and Knapp and Voskos 2008 argued for the importance of continuation or the possibility

of cultural hybridisation, respectively. Knapp argues even that arguments for ethnic divisions in EIA Cyprus were motivated rather by modern political circumstances (Knapp 2009: 281–282), as an example of a hybridised culture of the EIA Cyprus he discussed Proto-White Painted – “amalgamation of local, Aegean and Levantine pottery traditions” (Knapp 2009: 292).

⁸⁷ See for example a Cypro-Archaic I amphora, Karageorghis 2000: 91 cat. 143, or a painted amphora dated to 650–600 BC, Dikaios and Litt 1961: pl. XIII, fig. 1. See also Hubbard Amphora decorated with a scene with dancers, Karageorghis 1969: 250, fig. 104.

⁸⁸ An image of a bull is characteristic for the iconography of Cyprus and the Levant (and the Aegean) as early as the Early Bronze Age, see for example the Kotsiatis model of sanctuary with a bucranial wall, Steel 2004: fig. 20. Terracotta bovine figurines formed the majority of zoomorphic Early-Middle Cypriot figurines and/or vessels, with less emphasis on bull representations in Middle Cypriot III – Late Cypriot I, regaining importance again in the Late Cypriot periods (Late Bronze Age) Knox 2012. Bulls masks put on during rituals appears in Cypro-Geometric period, when they are also left in offering in sanctuaries and burials, Karageorghis 2000: 146–147, cat. 221, 224, 225. Ox skulls were found in the two main sanctuaries of Enkomi: of the Ingot God and Horned God, also metal figurines wearing horned helmets were found (resembling Near Eastern imagery) (Papadopoulos and Kontrolis-Papadopoulos 1992: 332). See also a ring with a representation of a hunting scene, including a wild boar attacked by a dog, Masson 1972: 131, fig. 10, pl. XXI, 2,3. See also bronze bovine figurines found in the temple of Athena/Anat in Vouni, Cyprus, Bazemore 2009: 26–27, fig. 6.

⁸⁹ Kition is a multi-period site located on the south coast of Cyprus, nowadays lying largely beneath the modern city of Larnaca, according to myth, it was founded by Belos, king of Sidon. However, the Swedish excavations revealed material dated also to Late Cypriot III and Cypro-Geometric I (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934), thereby proving the existence of a Late Bronze settlement prior to the Phoenician colony.

⁹⁰ Sarcophagus is dated to 470–460 BC, see, among others, Masson 1971: 316, fig. 5; Tatton-Brown 1997: 86 fig. 96.

⁹¹ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: pl. 22, fig. 47.

⁹² Toncheva 1972: fig. 8c.



Fig. 8. Limestone sarcophagus with scene of hunt (upper photo) and banquet (lower photo): ca 475–450 BC, dimensions 96.5 × 202 × 73.2 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.2451, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/242004>)



Fig. 9. Silver-gilt bowl: ca 725–675 BC, height 3.1 cm, diameter 16.8 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4554, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243823>)

Probably as early as 10th century BC bowls appeared in the Eastern Mediterranean decorated with a shallow engraving, produced mainly in bronze and silver⁹³. In the literature, these vessels are referred to as Near Eastern or Phoenician bowls⁹⁴. Their decoration, like that of the Ptolemaic faience, is based on a series of bands that develop around a central motif⁹⁵. Stylistically, they can be divided into those that are characterised by the so-called Egyptianising style, and those that were created under the direct influence of the art of the Ancient Egypt⁹⁶. In these compositions, we find the influence of various artistic provinces, not only Egyptian, but also the north-Syrian (Phoenician), and Assyrian – Persian (Fig. 9)⁹⁷. This specific cultural amalgam is particularly visible in the decoration of bowls found in Cyprus⁹⁸. According to Karageorghis it is “more lively than that of the Egyptians, less formal that of the Assyrians, more independent than of the Phoenicians, and less disciplined than that of Greeks”⁹⁹.

The most frequently used motifs in the decoration of the Cypro-Phoenician bowls are representations of griffins, the hunter-hero taming wild animals, scenes depicting dance, banquet, hunting, rows of animals, processions, narrative scenes relating to unspecified legends and military clashes¹⁰⁰. The main production center of these vessels is still unknown; although there is no doubt that at least some of them have been produced in Cyprus. On two of those bowls are preserved the names of owners: Epiorwos and Akestor king of Paphos (and on the same peace another name added later: Timukretes)¹⁰¹, wrote in the Cypriot syllabic scripture¹⁰². From our point of view, the most important, however, is that the decoration of some bowls is so similar to the way in which Ptolemaic relief faience vessels were decorated that it is possible to risk a thesis of a far-reaching mutual influence.

In this context, special attention should be paid to two metal bowls found in Olympia, Greece¹⁰³. The first one was

⁹³ The oldest metal bowl of this type was found on the island of Eubea in Lefkandi and dates back to around 900 BC, see Popham 1995: 103–106. Decorated metal bowls were produced to the 7th century BC Karageorghis 2000: 180. About them see, among others, Markoe 1985; Matthäus 1985; Vella 2010.

⁹⁴ In 1946, Einar Gjerstad was the first to use the term “Cypro-Phoenician” to describe a group of decorated metal bowls, dating to the first millennium BC, which were found at different sites in the Mediterranean, see Gjerstad 1946: 1–18.

⁹⁵ Frankfort 1954: 195.

⁹⁶ Markoe 2000: 184.

⁹⁷ A similar phenomenon of different symbols and iconographic motifs were observed in cubic seals, which are found in various parts of Cyprus. Most of them dates back to the first centuries of the first millennium BC. In their decoration we find the influence of Greek and Persian, and above all, Phoenician art, see Gubel 1987: 195–224.

⁹⁸ Karageorghis 1999: 13.

⁹⁹ Karageorghis 1999: 13.

¹⁰⁰ Karageorghis 2000: 180; Markoe 2000: 184.

¹⁰¹ Karageorghis 2000: 180. Some of these vessels were produced probably in the Phoenician workshops operating in Cyprus at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 7th century BC. In their decoration we see a strong influence of Assyrian art (motifs of griffins, the tree of life, etc.). This correlates with the political status of the island, which at the time was politically dependent on Assyria, Karageorghis 2000: 149–150. Fourteen metal bowls found on the island has been dedicated to Hiram II of Tyre, see Dussaud 1917: 308.

¹⁰² The undeciphered Cypriot script, named “Cypro-Minoan” by Evans, bears many similarities with the Aegean linear scripts (Evans 1909: 69). From the beginning of the Iron Age, the so-called “Cypriot-Classical” script was in use to write in Greek, and some signs from Linear B appeared in it (Chadwick 1979). This script can be read today because of inscriptions from the Hellenistic period, which were written in the dual system – the same text in Cypriot signs and the alphabet (Tatton-Brown 1997: 81).

¹⁰³ Frankfort 1954: 198 fig. 96.



Fig. 10. Fragment of the silver bowl: ca 710–675 BC, diameter 17.5 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4557, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243826>)

made of bronze. The inner side of the vessel was covered almost entirely with figural scenes in shallow engraving. Within the radiance of the base an image of a stylized rosette is preserved. Above it is engraved with a series of scenes that combines the characteristic “heavy” style of portraying the human figure. According to the authors, we find late reminiscence of it in the decoration of Ptolemaic faience vessels. We see there, among others, figures stylized as Egyptian deities, a scene showing the struggle of a hunter-hero with a griffin, a sacrificial table, musicians, and a man sitting on a high chair in a company of a female holding an *ankh* sign. Two silver bowls decorated in a similar manner were found in the temple complex dedicated to the goddess Athena / Anat in Vouni (Cyprus)¹⁰⁴. Influences of the Egyptian and Oriental art are particularly visible on the well-preserved band décor on these bowls. There we see, among others, a hero fighting with a lion, griffins trampling captives shown between stylized trees of life, horse riders equipped with a lance or a chariot with an accompanying group of armed warriors.

A bronze bowl, which was also found and probably produced in Cyprus has an even clearer resemblance to the decoration of the Ptolemaic faience vessels (Fig. 10)¹⁰⁵. This vessel has a diameter of 17.5 cm. Only a fragment of the upper part containing the rim with two bands of decoration is preserved along with part of a third band. The lower part of the body is missing, which was probably adorned a floral medallion representing the radiant of the entire composition. An ornament resembling a motif of a braided line or chain separates individual parts.

On the inner wall of the described bowl are preserved two images with figural representations made by extrusion, outlined in a shallow engraving using a sharp tool. In the upper band, is shown a group of women carrying vessels in their hands, flowers, meat and sacrificial fowl. Before them is a table with three vessels, among which is a prominent amphora with a wide body and two handles fixed on the collar¹⁰⁶. Ladles hanging on the outer edges of the table suggest that there was wine in these vessels. Next is a large amphora with a wide neck and narrowing downwards body. Another scene starts with a group of three female musicians, and a servant holding in one hand a small bowl, and a jug in other. Women are playing for a group of feasters using a tambourine, a small lyre and double flute. They are wearing long robes reaching their ankles. Their hair is let down or bound in a bun. A pair of feasters rests in a reclining position on high couches with profiled legs. Their outstretched hands are holding vessels, one of which seems to be a small cup or a mug shown *en face*¹⁰⁷. Between them is a stylized altar or a table with viands arranged in neat rows. Last figure in this scene is preserved very fragmentary. One can only assume that, in contrast to the previous two, was shown in a sitting position. This is most likely a musician playing for the feasters on a double flute¹⁰⁸. In the missing part of the scene there were probably another musicians and servants with gifts, who were divided into two groups approaching the feasters from both sides¹⁰⁹.

An inscription preserved above the main couple lying on beds refers to as the “king and queen of Egypt”¹¹⁰. This is also confirmed by the iconography of both figures. The woman is wearing a typical Egyptian wig/hair. The head of the man accompanying her is adorned with a headgear resembling the Egyptian royal crown, most likely a type of a *nemes* scarf with wide lobes falling on his chest.

A small section of a band showing, among others a hunt for wild animals and griffins separated by the tree of life is preserved only fragmentarily the lower part of the bowl. The sequence is divided into two parts by a figure of a hunter who shoots from a composite bow aiming at a deer, and another unspecified animal, most likely a representative of the same species. Right behind him is a pair of mentioned above griffins with bird heads, which lean their forelimbs on the stylized leaves of the tree of life, an iconographic motif very characteristic for Phoenician art¹¹¹. From the lowest part only a small fragment is preserved with a floral motif, *i.e.*, two papyrus flowers with widely opened umbels¹¹².

¹⁰⁴ Perrot and Chipiez 1885: 349, fig. 270, 353, 272; Bazemore 2009: 30–31, fig. 9, 10.

¹⁰⁵ The bowl was found along with other metal objects in the so-called royal tomb at Kourion, located on the south-west coast of Cyprus. About this vessel see Gjerstad 1946: 3, 6–8 pl. 3, fig. 36, 4a; Masson 1983: 44, 194–195, fig. 51, no 179; Mitford 1963: 29–30, 1971: 11–14; Markoe 1985: 175–177, 252–253; Karageorghis 1999: 13–20; Hendrix 1999: 21–31; Neumann 1999: 33–35; Karageorghis 2000: cat. 307, fig. 307.

¹⁰⁶ This amphora resembles storage vessels produced in Cyprus in 7th–5th century BC (Cypro-Archaic II period), Gjerstad 1946: 8; Karageorghis 1999: 17.

¹⁰⁷ Karageorghis 1999: 16.

¹⁰⁸ Karageorghis 1999: 16.

¹⁰⁹ Karageorghis 1999: 17.

¹¹⁰ Neumann 1999: 33–35.

¹¹¹ Frankfort 1954: 196. Images griffins flanking the tree of life are particularly characteristic for the Phoenician art from the 8th century BC, see Muscarella 1981: 306–307 no 265.

¹¹² Karageorghis 1999: 16.

However, the dating of the bronze bowl from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) remains problematic and is based mostly on the stylistic arguments. According to Markoe it comes from the first quarter of the 7th century BC¹¹³. In contrast, Gjerstad dates it back to the beginning of the 6th century BC¹¹⁴. Terence B. Mitford moved the date of the vessel to the 7th century BC¹¹⁵. While Karageorghis accepts the dating proposed by Gjerstad¹¹⁶.

In the decoration of metal bowls of the Cypro-Phoenician type, especially the aforementioned example from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the influence of the Ancient Egyptian art is very visible, even dominant¹¹⁷. Characteristic ancient Egyptian iconographic motifs, although processed and enriched with new details are still very visible (Figs 11–16). A Cypriot or rather Cypro-Phoenician artist adapted them according to his or her taste, so that the figures forming the individual scenes are full of life and less static than those, which form similar ancient Egyptian compositions¹¹⁸.

On the bronze bowl from the MMA we find a “standard” set of most themes, which were used to compose figural scenes on faience vessels of Ptolemaic period, particularly the images of: a table with a few vessels and fruits standing on the countertop, storage vessels standing on the ground, groups of musicians, feasters lying on high couches, figures accompanying the feasters, rows of wild animals, hunter-hero hunting for wild animals, griffins, and the symbol of the tree of life. The fragmentarily preserved scene showing the papyrus flowers, which often decorating the Ptolemaic relief vessels are no less important.

Other details also confirm the iconographic-stylistic correlation of Cypro-Phoenician bowls and Ptolemaic faience vessels. For metal bowls are especially characteristic band compositions showing hunting and related parts of hilly and lowland landscapes, stylistically inspired by Oriental art repertoire, *i.e.*, Near Eastern¹¹⁹. In these scenes, attention focusing are wild animals often shown on the background of bushes or small trees. This type of a rare perspective is also known from three faience bowls from Tell Atrib. The first of these vessels (Fig. 1) shows a running gazelle portrayed against the background of a tree resembling a small spreading palm tree, which crown forms three broad leaves. On an analogous bowl an image of a bull is preserved also shown also against the background of a palm tree (?). This time it has an unnaturally thick trunk and very schematically modeled leaf crown (Fig. 17). Additionally, on one of the preserved fragments of a hemispheric bowl we see an image of a deer or a hind running on a background of a tree similar to the above-described (Fig. 3).

¹¹³ Markoe 1985: 151, 153, 156.

¹¹⁴ Gjerstad 1946: 8.

¹¹⁵ Mitford 1971: 13.

¹¹⁶ Karageorghis 1999: 18.

¹¹⁷ Karageorghis 1999: 18. See other bowls of the Cypro-Phoenician type, which have a decoration related to the repertoire of the Ancient Egyptian art, Falsone 1992: 112; Karageorghis and Markoe 1996: 826–828.

¹¹⁸ This applies mainly to scenes depicting banquets in honour of the dead, see Karageorghis 1999: 18, fig. 2, 3.

¹¹⁹ Vella 2010: 31.



Fig. 11. Silver bowl: ca 675–625 BC, height 3.5 cm, diameter 15.3 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4555, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243824>)



Fig. 12. Silver bowl: ca 675–625 BC, height 4.2 cm, diameter 15.7 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4552, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243820>)



Fig. 13. Bronze bowl: 8th century BC, height 4 cm, diameter 13.3 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.5700, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/244578>)



Fig. 14. Two fragments of a silver bowl: 7th century BC, dimensions (left side) 6 cm, (right side) 8.9 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4558, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243827>)



Fig. 15. Fragment of the silver bowl: ca 710–675 BC, height 4.7 cm, diameter 18.1 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4556, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243825>)



Fig. 16. Silver-gilt bowl: ca 710–675 BC, height 3.2 cm, diameter 15.4 cm, culture – Cypriot (Metropolitan Museum, The Met Collection (online), accession number 74.51.4553, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243822>)



Fig. 17. Large pottery bowl with figural scenes in bichrome ware: 600–500 BC, diameters 32.40 and 34.29 cm, heights 10.16 and 9.60 cm, culture – Cypriot (British Museum, Collection online, museum number 1905,0712.1, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1905-0712-1)

Equally indicative for our considerations are representations of the so-called tree of life, which are a very common iconographic motif on both the Cypro-Phoenician bowls and Ptolemaic faience vessels. Despite the large time span involved these symbols are very similar to each other. An example of this might be a tree of life preserved in the richly decorated faience bowls from Tel Atrib¹²⁰.

Similarities between bowl from the MMA and Ptolemaic faience vessels were so far-reaching that it cannot be an ac-

cidental convergence. They manifest themselves not only in the selection and subject of scenes, but also in their iconography and style, although to a lesser extent, which is understandable due to the chronological difference.

There is no doubt that the canon of the relief decoration of faience vessels had to appear in Ptolemaic Egypt in an already developed form. It is only in this way that the lack of local iconographic-stylistic variants or traces of the gradual development can be explained. The question is when, from where and how this artistic know-how could have come to Egypt. Coins of Ptolemy I found in the context of one of the faience jars excavated in the Hadra necropolis in

¹²⁰ Welc 2014: cat. 1, 2.

Alexandria suggests that these relief faience vessels began to be produced no later than the reign of this ruler¹²¹. This is confirmed by the discovery of a decorated faience vessel in Kition, Cyprus. It was buried during the siege of the city by the army of Ptolemy I in 312 BC¹²². This discovery proves that at a very early period of the reign of this ruler, the production of faience vessels with relief had begun. According to the authors of this study, one of these moments could be the period of territorial expansion by Ptolemy I in the Mediterranean region.

Transplantation of what we find interesting artistic ideas might occur through the migration of a group of Cypriot and Greek artists, who may have come in the first stage to Alexandria or Naucratis, then settled in other cities (Memphis, Athribis), adding to the existing ethnic minorities there. Such a reconstruction of events is plausible, because a traveling group of experts from various fields (including the artists) was not something unusual at that time. In our case, it was probably the result of an organized action and it is conceivable that it was stimulated by the authorities. The fact that the production of decorated faience vessels started in a relatively short time in at least three centers, namely Alexandria, Athribis and Memphis can only be explained in this way. The lack of archaeological evidence, so far, for the existence of similar workshops in central and southern Egypt suggests that a group of manufacturers with a practical knowledge was not large, and their activity is likely to be focused exclusively in the Delta area (including Memphis). This limited area was probably determined by the resource base and proximity to the market, which was Alexandria. Faience vessels were relatively fragile, not suitable for long transport in larger quantities¹²³. Treated as luxury goods and, as such, in the first place were probably sent to Alexandria, because of its adequately large and wealthy clientele.

As mentioned before, the beginning of this “artistic emigration” could be Cypriot Phoenicians, who lived in certain areas of Cyprus, a few centuries before the beginning of the Hellenistic era¹²⁴. They also settled in Egypt, forming colo-

nies in some cities and distinct neighborhoods. For example, the presence of Phoenician minority is certified, inter alia, in Memphis, where in the mid-5th century BC a large diaspora lived in an area known as the “Tyrian Camp”¹²⁵. Incoming immigrants quickly joined those settled before getting involved in the interdependencies and personal connections which is confirmed by the negligible number of decorated faience vessels, found outside Egypt¹²⁶. In Memphis, the Phoenicians mostly engaged in trade, shipping, some of them acted high positions in the local police¹²⁷. Thompson suspects that some of them were artists producing items in a distinctive style, which was a synthesis of Greek and Egyptian iconographic motifs¹²⁸. The participation of Phoenicians from Cyprus or Greeks living in Egypt in the production of faience vessels decorated with relief, would explain the originality of the latter¹²⁹.

The fact is, that the final appearance of the relief decorated faience bowls were influenced by many interpenetrating cultures of the Mediterranean and the Middle East regions. Both compositions and motifs placed on them show a great resemblance to the Cypriot metal bowls and their clay imitations – Hellenistic moldmade relief bowls, which were produced in a similar period. The sudden appearance in the second half of the 3rd century BC in the Mediterranean region, of relief decorated faience objects and the related changes in their manufacturing technology, as well as the simultaneous appearance of relief decorated moldmade pottery bowls may points that both types of vessels were manufacturing using similar methods¹³⁰.

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¹²¹ Breccia 1913: 30, no 61; Hassan *et al.* 2002: 154.

¹²² Calvet 1993: 123; Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 38.

¹²³ Nenna and Seif el Din 2000: 34.

¹²⁴ Markoe 2000: 149–150.

¹²⁵ Herodotus, 2.112; “Tyrian Camp”; Thompson 1988: 83.

¹²⁶ Thompson 1988: 87. See the relationship between indigenous Egyptian people and settlers of Greek origin, Clarysse 1992: 51–56.

¹²⁷ Thompson 1988: 93.

¹²⁸ Thompson 1988: 93. See also Petrie 1909: 16.

¹²⁹ For example, in comparison with vessels known as *oinochoe* of queens.

¹³⁰ About the features which indicate for possibility of using a similar technology in the manufacturing of faience and ceramic vessels decorated with relief in the Ptolemaic period are mentioned by Zaremba *et al.* 2020: 35.

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