Egyptian faience and glass


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Abstract

Egyptian faience is a hallmark of ancient Egyptian culture and is probably known to everyone who has visited the Egyptian gallery of a museum. This book examines the technology of making this vitreous material and outlines its long history, which stretches from early Predynastic times to the end of the pharaonic Egypt and beyond. The range of uses found for faience is examined and some of the reasons for its popularity discussed. The author then examines the related technology of glass making and working. Glass has a much shorter history, flourishing only in the New Kingdom before declining again, not to find popularity until much later times. Although glass was relatively rare, Egyptian glass makers were able to produce many masterpieces, and the making and development of these forms are described, along with the archaeological evidence for sites where glass or faience were made.

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Egyptian faience is a non-clay based ceramic displaying surface vitrification which creates a bright lustre of various blue-green colours. Having not been made from clay it is often not classed as pottery. It is called "Egyptian faience" to distinguish it from faience, the tin glazed pottery associated with Faenza in northern Italy. Egyptian faience, both locally produced and exported from Egypt, occurs widely in the ancient world, and is well known from Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean and in The ancient Egyptians did not invent glass. They did, however, become masters of its production. The actual invention seems to have taken place somewhere in the Middle East, perhaps in the land of Mitanni. Mitanni was around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Still, faience artisans would be best suited to adapting to the new material. Indeed, excavators often find that faience and glassmaking go side-by-side at New Kingdom sites such as Amarna. The newly made glass was probably produced as ingots. We now know that glass ingots, found off the coast of Turkey at a site called Uluburun, were originally made in Egypt (see reconstruction of ship's hull on page 41 [top]).

Egyptian faience and glass. Aylesbury: Shire- Egyptology.137–142.] The association of faience with turquoise and lapis lazuli becomes even more conspicuous in Quennou's funerary papyrus, giving his title as the director of overseer of faience-making, using the word which strictly means lapis lazuli, which by the New Kingdom had also come to refer to the 'substitute', faience .Nicholson and Peltenburg 2000.] Although it appears no glass was intentionally produced in Egypt prior to the 18th dynasty, it is likely that faience, frit and glass were all made in close proximity or in the same workshop complex, seeing as developments in one industry are reflected in others.Nicholson 1998. Nicholson, P.T.1993.] .