

TELL FARAMA

EGYPT

SOME TERRACOTTA FIGURINES FROM TELL FARAMA (PELUSIUM)

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Limited excavations in the theater at Tell Farama West (ancient Pelusium) and its nearest surroundings brought to light a great deal of terracotta fragments. This report includes the finds from the season in 2004,¹ as well as objects only mentioned in earlier reports,² altogether 38 registered pieces.

All of the terracottas from the theatre were poorly preserved, some of them only in small fragments, making it difficult or impossible to identify the subject. Thus, it seems reasonable to consider these fragments from the technological point of view before dealing with their iconographical features.

The terracottas were generally produced of medium coarse, but mostly purified clay. The occasional inclusions include small-fraction gravel, small fragments of crushed rock and/or isolated grains of sand (quartz). Mica typically occurs in the clay in relative abundance, and is usually discernible on the surface as tiny scattered flakes. Nile silt seems, therefore, an obvious choice as far as fabric is concerned.

The thin-walled figurines are usually fired a uniform color inside and out, displaying a grayish core only in the thicker parts. By contrast, the solid and thick-

walled terracottas have a dark or light gray core, sometimes turning to reddish or purple just under the surface. The surface color ranges from dark and light brown through reddish-brown to red and light red. At least one example seems to have been overfired. Few figurines included fillers in the clay, most often chopped straw, which left voids after burning. Another but less frequent type of filler is sand (quartz).

Virtually all the terracottas from the theater can be regarded as fragments of hollow figurines open at the base. Solid examples, which are extremely rare, were produced in the same manner as the parts of hollow figurines, the clay being finger-pressed into a mould. In the hollow pieces, fingerprints can be discerned on the inner surface. In the solid terracottas, the back could be smoothed, but it was also modeled by hand, leaving blurred fingerprints. Strokes and fingerprints appear also on the joints between the front and back, sometimes even overlapping on the front. Some figurines bear traces of modeling with a thin and sharp tool after removal from the mould.

As the figurines remained for a very long time in a humid and salty environment, the painted decoration has been preserved but

¹ See report by K. Jakubiak in this volume.

² M. Gawlikowski, "Tell Farama. Preliminary Report on a Season of Polish-Egyptian Excavations", *PAM XV, Reports 2003* (2004), 71 passim; K. Jakubiak, "Tell Farama. Preliminary Remarks on the Stratigraphy and Pottery", *PAM XV*, op. cit., 74.