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Les dépôts et mobilier du trésor de Thoutmosis Ier

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Karnak-Nord (2023)
Les dépôts et mobilier du trésor de Thoutmosis Ier

Irmgard Hein, Joanna Cabaj and Alexander Haidegger

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Année de la campagne : 2023 (10 septembre – 05 octobre)
Autorité nationale présente : Ministère du Tourisme et des Antiquités (MoTA) représenté par Sanaa Mohammed Aly Youssef, sous la supervision de Fathi Yaseen, Mustafa es-Saghir, Abd el-Khalek Abd el-Hamid, Ahmed Dowyi et Ghada Ibrahim Fouad.
Composition de l’équipe de terrain : Irmgard Hein (égyptologue, université de Vienne, VIAS et institut d’égyptologie) ; Joanna Cabaj (égyptologue, université de Vienne) ; Gerda Esche (spécialiste IT et photographe, indépendant) ; Alexander Haidegger (tracéologue, université de Vienne) ; Sabrina Leixnering (égyptologue, université de Vienne) ; Kerstin Rigler (égyptologue, université de Vienne).
Partenariats institutionnels : Université de Vienne, Autriche.
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Introduction

1. We would like to explicitly thank the authorities of the Luxor region for their support: Fathi Yaseen, Director General of Upper Egyptian Antiquities; Mustafa es-Saghir, Director General of Karnak Temples and Avenue of the Sphinxes; Abd el-Khaelek Abd el-Hamid, Director of the Karnak Temples. We would also like to thank Ghada Ibrahim Fouad, Head of the Foreign Missions at Karnak, and Ahmed Dowi, General Manager of the Magazines at Karnak. Last but not least, we would like to thank our collaborator, Salah Abd el-Naby Abd-el Wahab for the careful handling of the objects, and Nicolle Leary for language corrections of the English text.

1. The Mission “Karnak North – The Archives”

2. The “Karnak North – the archives” mission is working at the request of the MoTA in order to complete the records of finds from previous IFAO excavations in the area under the leadership of Jean Jacquet.

3. From 1970-1978, fieldwork started by exploring the area of the temple of Harp-Re (“area H”) within the Monthu district enclosure wall, but soon switched to the neighbouring area outside of the enclosure wall where the treasury of Thutmosis I and its immediate surroundings were the focus of attention. This was known as the “Fouille A”, and the finds from these years are marked by the letter “A”. The building of the treasury from the beginning of the 18th Dynasty was conducted on ground already occupied since the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, and the later occupation of the site is attested by the analysis of the material culture until the Roman Period.

4. Some 8 years later, from 1986 to 1992, the fieldwork was expanded to the east, in “Fouille B” where again settlement structures from the Middle Kingdom onwards were detected, these finds being marked by the letter “B”.

5. With the exception of the finds that were transported to the Cairo Museum, all other finds were originally stored in the Monthu district storerooms and then transferred to the Sheikh Labib storage facilities in the summer of 2019.

2. Objectives of the 2023 Mission

6. The work of our mission is devoted to studying the objects and creating digital photographic records for publication and for an online database. Former seasons have already taken place in 2013-2015, 2017-2020, and after an interruption in 2021 caused by the pandemic, again in 2022. During the previous seasons, the digital recording of the ceramics was almost complete. The numerous fragments of reliefs from the former wall decoration of the treasury were already sorted by Helen Jacquet-Gordon, who had also published the epigraphically reconstructable fragments. However, a large amount of additional relief fragments was kept in baskets, which have also been digitally recorded during the last years, along with a number of other stone fragments and small-sized objects, as previously reported.
In 2023, the aim was to complete the documentation and recording of the finds using digital photography, to combine them with earlier archival materials in order to create a digital database and to finalise the Karnak North publication series with the unexamined or unpublished finds. This is being done through special studies for specific groups of objects, and in addition, this report includes a brief note to a relocated relief by Joanna Cabaj. A special study was undertaken on the silicas, and these objects were numbered and photographed already in 2022, but they have been chosen as the subject for a special investigation by Alexander Haidegger on the lithics from “Fouille B” (see below, Section 5).

In Spring 2023, the digitisation of the field records (the field diaries) was undertaken by colleagues from the IFAO archives in Cairo (under the guidance of Cédric Larcher, provided by Mazen Essam and his team), so that this source of information is now also digitally available for the study of the objects.

3. Documentation of Objects in 2023

During our mission, we digitally registered 535 stone items. Additionally, a detailed documentation of 163 seal impressions took place, which were already numbered in 2022. All the objects were recorded in Excel lists, indicating all the registration numbers, the type of object, the material and the measurements. The number of objects from the 2023 season is provided in Fig. 1 (the seal impressions from 2022 are not included in the total). The recording of the stone fragments has not yet been completed and will be continued in 2024.

Fig. 1. Registered objects in 2023, diagram according to groups of material (I. Hein).
3.1. Seal impressions

One of the main objectives was the photographic documentation of the 162 seal impressions which had already been numbered in 2022, most of which came from Fouille A. The photographic task was undertaken by Gerda Esche, in order to produce accurate images at an orthogonal angle, so that it will be possible to produce line drawings of the sealings for an in-depth study of the objects. This study will be undertaken by Philip Seyr and should continue in 2024 (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Sealing KNUV 2022.2604, detail of a seal impression (Middle Kingdom), and backside with a cord impression and a papyrus imprint (G. Esche).

3.2. Recording of stone fragments from Karnak North

Digital photography was done on 535 stone fragments of different material. 184 limestone fragments belong to the former wall decoration of the treasury of Thutmosis I, a large part of which has already been published in the 1988 volume Karnak Nord VI by H. Jacquet-Gordon.

The 59 fragments of black granite registered have inscriptions, most of which are probably parts of large column bases from later constructions in the area. The documentation is not yet complete and will be prepared for publication.
A large part of the corpus consists of 292 quartzite fragments from phases of reuse in the construction of Thutmose I or belonging to surface finds in the area. Some fragments are so-called Talatat, or parts of large blocks. Several items have been already published in the volume Karnak Nord VIII. However, a re-evaluation of some objects is worth considering and may possibly lead to new interpretations, as discussed by J. Cabaj in the following Section 4.

4. Remarks to a Hathor Cow Relief

Amongst the many fragments and chips relief documented and photographed during the 2023 campaign, a few sandstone fragments could be identified as belonging to a large relief block. This relief block was first excavated in 1974 and then published in the volume Karnak Nord VIII in 1999 (AB 229 + AB 230). It can be divided into two registers depicting scenes in raised relief: 1) the upper register showing an offering scene with two women standing around the offering table, and 2) the bottom register depicting a Hathor-cow surrounded by papyrus plants.

Three fragments of the relief block in question were located and documented during this year’s campaign: the woman standing on the left side of an offering table (KN-UV 2023 0277, Fig. 4) the cow in the papyrus thicket (KN-UV 2023-0336, Fig. 5), as well as the upper stems and flower crowns of papyrus plants (KN-UV 2023 0138). The whereabouts of other fragments – the woman on the right of the offering table, the other parts of the papyrus thicket and the cow’s feet – remains unknown to this day. The block was discovered in an already fragmented state, with individual pieces showing signs of moderate damage, especially along the break lines. There are no visible pigment traces on the individual relief fragments, aside from a slightly reddish
discolouration on the fragment depicting the female offerant. The same fragment also has a hole that could have been intentionally drilled, showing signs of potential reuse to some degree.

Fig. 4. Relief fragment, quartzite; standing lady before offerings; KNUV 2023-0277 (photo 23202346, J. Cabaj, S. Leixnering).

The upper register scene depicts two women standing around an offering table laden with various types of offerings. The woman on the left is wearing a flowing robe and a tripartite wig. Her counterpart on the right has a skin-tight dress and a heavy wig which is layered at the ends. As there is no inscription or trace thereof accompanying this scene, it is not possible to identify precisely the two women depicted in the upper register of the relief block. H. Jacquet-Gordon suggested that the figure on the right should be considered a goddess. Looking closely at the drawing provided in Jacquet-Gordon 1999, however, elements of the headdress worn by the woman on the right can be discerned, which could be identified as parts of the vulture crown – the vulture tail at the back as well as faint outlines of the vulture or cobra head at the front can be seen. There are no visible traces of the modius or the crowning elements of the headdress. It is important to state here that the upper part of the woman’s head with the traces of vulture crown is only recorded in the drawing and a relief fragment corresponding to it cannot be seen in the accompanying photograph. Details of any headdress worn by the woman on the left are not discernible, as her head has not been preserved. Such a headdress or variations thereof would have been worn by the God’s wives of Amun, which makes it plausible that one of the depicted women held this office.
The bottom register depicts a cow with a sun disc resting between its horns and two plumes placed behind it. The animal is wearing a Hathoric amulet attached to a necklace or a thread hanging down around its neck. The cow is depicted standing in a thicket of papyrus plants. The tall, thin stems, with their crowns and buds, are alternating rhythmically throughout the whole length of the bottom register. The animal can be identified as a likeness of the goddess Hathor thanks to its headdress and the pendant attribute. The presence of Hathor in the Karnak temple complex is generally regarded in the broader context of the ancient Thebes, as the cultic spaces dedicated to this goddess are well-attested in the West Bank, where she is known to have been venerated as the Lady of the Mountain. H. Jacquet-Gordon speculated that the presence of Hathor’s depiction could hint at the possible provenance of this relief block, that being a small Hathoric chapel adjacent to the temple sanctuary. The presence of an offerant in the upper relief register, that could be identified a God’s Wife of Amun, could strengthen such assumption and should be investigated in greater detail.

5. Preliminary Results of the Study on the Lithic Industries in the Settlement Area (“Fouille B”)

Despite their frequency in most settlement sites of the Dynastic period, the study of lithic artefacts is an often-disregarded topic in Egyptian archaeology. Nevertheless, the analysis of chipped stone tool inventories from the earliest state societies offers
further insights into complex dynamics and developments by revealing information on production systems, socio-economic behaviour, and possible exchange systems with regard to their evolution over time.

This section aims to present preliminary results of a study carried out on the lithic inventory from the area designated as “Fouille B”, located to the east of the so-called “Treasury”. Excavations at Karnak North yielded a total of 1,309 lithic objects, with a significant amount of 361 objects having been unearthed from “Fouille A”, while the vast majority of 935 objects has been retrieved from the settlement site of “Fouille B”. Furthermore, 5 objects can be ascribed to “Fouille H” while 8 other objects could not be assigned to any context. All of these have been registered and photographed during the 2022 season. A specific examination targeting the lithic industries of “Fouille B” has been undertaken in 2023.

The inventory of Fouille B has been selected for further examination for two reasons. First, due to its larger quantity, the material seemed more promising and easier to manage within the designated timeframe of the study. Moreover, the domestic character of the site, combined with its chronological position, has the potential for comparison with contemporaneous sites, not only in Karnak, but also from a broader perspective, with a look at sites in both Upper and Lower Egypt.

In total, 9 phases of occupation have been distinguished by J. Jacquet, spanning from the early Middle Kingdom with some hiatuses in between until the Roman period, and published in the volume Karnak Nord IX, whereas the objects from Fouille B have never been subject of reports, except for the pottery that was incorporated in the pottery corpus. The documentation methods posed a challenge when assigning the majority of finds to specific strata, however initial context reconstructions of the spatial position of portions of the lithic material indicated a strong inclination towards the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE. Regarding this time period, fieldwork revealed mudbrick structures which can be dated back to at least the 12th Dynasty including several installations, curved walls, open spaces, silos and fireplaces, thus representing domestic activities at the periphery of the earliest building phases of the Temple of Amun in Karnak, that being the Middle Kingdom court. Later developments showed the erection of a large enclosure wall dated to the Second Intermediate Period, which could have surrounded a settlement located on the same spot where the Thutmoside “Treasury” was later built.

J. Jacquet already noted that the abundance of lithic material, and especially stone implements for sickles, indicates that the majority of the settlement’s inhabitants might have been involved in agricultural activities. However, an in-depth examination of this inventory has not been realised until now.

5.1. Methodology

While lithic artefacts are studied either typologically, or with regard to macro- and microscopic wear, with the intention of explaining possible modes of use, this study aims at reducing objects into their different attributes, thus enabling the evaluation of techno-economic behaviour by analysing these aspects quantitatively.

The mode of recording applied is inspired by standard procedures that can be encountered in both Egyptology and Prehistoric Archaeology, and is aimed at
descriptive statistics mainly based on quantitative analysis. Its main framework is composed of three parts: 1) basic information (e.g. basic data class, raw material, preservation), 2) metric data (including weight, angles and depths of the platform), and 3) other attributes (e.g. cortex percentage, platform preparation, description of retouch).

The investigation on raw materials faced limitations, as only a classification based on macroscopic characteristics such as colour, texture, and granularity have been incorporated. More in-depth studies would additionally require the use of microscopic and geochemical examination, as well as adequate statistical methods. This would allow us to locate possible sourcing areas of chert material and enhances our understanding of network strategies and resource usage.

Additionally, the study incorporated variables like the relationship between platform angles and their respective depth (EPA-DP-model) as well as the observation of blade-torsion, which in previous examinations has been regarded as a surprising key indicator for determining the chronological positions of lithic artefacts on some sites.

5.2. Raw Materials

In total, the author has identified 107 groups of raw material. This wide range may be linked to the aforementioned limited contingencies for classification, but also to an actual strongly heterogeneous spectrum of material use. However, the application of this approach still allows some general tendencies to be identified. The three most frequent groups – largely homogenous opaque cherts with a greyish-white to medium-brown colours – represent about 50% of the entire inventory, while the remaining classes make up the other half. Their mere number and the comparisons made with raw material from around the site suggest that a local material, abundant and rich in quality in the Eocene limestone formations of Western Thebes, has been used for tool production. Nonetheless, one must keep in mind that such must be viewed with caution.

5.3. Primary Industry

The basic data class distribution (Fig. 6) suggests a strong emphasis on blade production within chipped stone tool industries, with 410 pieces comprising almost half of the total assemblage (Fig. 9). Their production, however, does not appear to be regulated in most cases. Plain platform remains, unidirectional dorsal scar negatives and the use of edge abrasion techniques dominate, while elaborate dorsal reduction can only be observed in rare cases. The latter, combined with punctiform platform remains that require careful preparation, could show that at least in some cases highly standardised procedures have been applied (Fig. 9.1-3). However, the possible chronological implications of this tool category still need to be explored at this point.

Additionally, there might be evidence for a distinctive bladelet industry. 43 objects have been designated as such on the blade criteria and widths below 1.2 cm (Fig. 9.6). The existence of recognisable bladelet cores further supports this observation and also demonstrates a specific selection of raw materials.

Though they number 192 pieces and are frequent, flake industries do not occur in a regulated manner. The diversity in morphology, material, technological treatment and
the presence of high cortex percentages rather characterise them as a constituent element of general debitage or side products of primary blade manufacturing, and not an individual technological mode. The almost complete absence of flake cores further promotes this impression.

Fig. 6. Lithics table 1 (A. Haidegger).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>basic data class</th>
<th>n total</th>
<th>% total</th>
<th>n unmodified</th>
<th>% unmodified</th>
<th>n modified</th>
<th>% modified</th>
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<td>184</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>53.1</td>
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<td>236</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16.5</td>
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<td>116</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39.6</td>
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<td>cores</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>gravel</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<td>retouched pieces</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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<td>notched pieces</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
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<td>33.3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>580</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5.3.1. Modified Tools

Informal tools comprise, among others, lateral retouched pieces (n=81), bilateral retouched pieces (n=72), retouched pieces (n=53), denticulated pieces (n=6) and notched pieces (n=5). Sidescrapers (n=53), sickle implements (n=47), burins (n=9), drills (n=7) and endscrapers (n=5) as well as arrowheads (n=3) and knife-fragments (n=3) could be detected on the side of formal tools (Fig. 10.5-8). A total of 369 objects have been designated as tools, showing signs of modification by retouch or occasionally explicit macroscopic use wear, thus making up 39.5% of the entire assemblage (Fig. 7).
Patterns of modification do not present themselves regularly, however, as the application of retouch varies strongly within tool categories. In most cases, it appears in short non-invasive extends and rather irregular sub-parallel patterns, as can be expected when using *ad hoc* tools.

Examination of metric data attests that sickle implements in particular, as opposed to the common blade industry, seem to be made according to standardised procedures (Fig. 8). The assemblage artefacts have mainly been designated as such due to the presence of diagnostic sickle sheen, yet 4 blades without this trait can be added to the group with certainty due to their distinct characteristics, namely the detachment of proximal ends in order to remove the bulbs and facilitate hafting into sickles made of organic materials such as wood or bone. Moreover, sickle implements have been more carefully modified by the application of invasive retouch. Treatments of the dorsal or both dorsal and ventral sides prevail, mostly running continuously at least one side of the blade (Fig. 9.7-12).
Surprisingly absent from this assemblage are microdrills or comparable instruments, which we would expect to find given the strong presence of carnelian debitage in the excavation records and which can be associated with bead manufacture²⁶.

Fig. 9. Silicas Karnak North 1, Fouille B.

1-3: Blade fragments with strong dorsal reduction and punctiform platform remains; 4-5: modified and unmodified blades; 6: bladelet fragment; 7-11: sickle implements; 12: sickle implement with clear traces of resharpening.

Grey = sickle sheen; filled dots = platform remains preserved; empty dots = platform remains not preserved (Graphics A. Haidegger).

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5.3.2 Debitage and Debris

Besides the aforementioned categories in blank distribution, large quantities of waste products make up almost one third of the entire inventory. The presence of shattered pieces (n=236), cores (n=25), core tablets (n=4) – both partial and complete – as well as crested blades (n=3) implies the performance of a wide spectrum of flint knapping activities in the settlement area. Unworked pieces of gravel (n=12) also appear, indicating intentional transportation of raw material inside the settlement. It is uncertain whether the presence of these nodules can be attributed to anthropogenic processes, such as their use for wall foundations and similar building measures in settlements, or if they rather got into archaeological layers by coincidence in the course of other site formation processes.

Differentiating between blade and bladelet cores has proven challenging, as most of the preserved cores have been used for removal until they were exhausted (Fig. 10.1-4). Bladelet cores are distinctly visible in five instances, while only 1 object exhibits evidence of blade removal. In one case, a flake has been used as a core. It must be noted at this point that so-called “test pieces” (n=5), i.e. gravel from which evidently flake removal took place before being discarded, have also been classified as cores in the framework of this study.

The visible evidence of core preparation stands in accordance with the general picture represented by the blank production. While the edge abrasion is present in most objects, dorsal reduction never appears at an advanced stage. Furthermore, plain and smooth striking platforms prevail besides cortical and patinated ones. Facetted platforms resulting from core rejuvenation appeared in two instances. Observation of the dorsal scar patterns shows that in most instances one platform served for flake removal, however in some cases opposed or multiple platforms have been employed.

It is important to approach the apparent presence of diagnostic core trimming elements such as crested blades with caution. As all preserved examples exhibit no traits of regulated preparation of guiding ridges, they should rather be designated as “natural” crested blades, where the desired morphological traits have already been available on the unworked chert nodule.
5.4. Summary and Outlook for the silex study

Excavations carried out in the North Karnak settlement area in the late 1980s to early 1990s revealed an industry of chipped stone tools, targeted towards blade production. The distribution of blank categories suggests that large quantities of the chaîne opératoire seem to have been present within the settlement area itself, evidence that is further supported by the presence of large quantities of granite or quartzite hammerstones showing use wear in the record. However, it remains difficult to discern explicit areas of flintknapping activity, which can be possibly lead back to documentation methods, complex site formation processes characteristic for settlements, or the possibility that production zones as such were simply situated outside the investigated area. One must be especially aware of factors such as the extent of sieving of the soil already removed during the excavation process. In the case of a limited application, this would serve as a possible explanation for the lack of microdebitage or the absence of certain tool categories such as the beforementioned microdrills.

Ad hoc tool production, the opportunistic modification of blanks with deficient morphological standardisation for in most cases expedient use and rapid discarding, becomes apparent especially on flakes and shattered pieces and can be associated with domestic tasks. Standardised procedures, however, are only visible in rare cases and it
is not surprising that sickle implements – representing a product with high demand in an agricultural society – appear as the most specialised category of tools.

Since these results are still at the preliminary stage, the observations described above must be viewed with caution. However, general tendencies are already emerging at this stage. Perspectives on relative chronology in particular require deeper investigation by consultation of archival material. Research elements like raw material management and production mode would benefit significantly, as they could be set in a more advanced chronological framework thus allowing observations in economic and technological change and more fruitful comparison with other sites.

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JACQUET 2001

JACQUET-GORDON 1988

JACQUET-GORDON 1999

JACQUET-GORDON 2012

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LI et al. 2022

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ROSEN 1997

TAFELMAIER et al. 2020

TILLMANN 2007
NOTES

2. JACQUET 1983.
11. See, for example, the summaries on the history of research in GRAVES-BROWN 2010, p. 20-22 or TILLMANN 2007, p. 12-19.
13. HEIN et al. 2023, p. 3-6. It should be noted that the given number of lithic artefacts differs from the last report, as few stone objects (carnelian, quartz and granite chips) have been excluded. This examination concentrated solely on the chipped varieties of cryptocrystalline SiO$_2$ rocks.
16. JACQUET-GORDON 2012.
18. JACQUET 2001, p. 21-34 and adjoining plates and figures.
20. 99 drawings of lithic artefacts of “Fouille A” and around 200 photos from all areas are kept in the IFAO archives.
21. TAFELMAIER et al. 2020, p. 5.
22. See e.g. BRANDL 2016.
23. See LI et al. 2022 for a summary on the experiments carried out by H. Dibble on this matter.
25. DEBONO 1975.
26. JACQUET 2001, p. 60. Large amounts of carnelian pebbles have been found especially during the ‘Treasury’ excavations, but in far fewer numbers in the settlement area. See also DEBONO 1987, p. 123, who mentions large amounts of microlithic drills that were discovered in course of his test excavations east of the Sacred Lake.
27. See e.g. TILLMANN 2007, p. 34.
29. On ad hoc industries see ROSEN 1997, p. 106.

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Year of Investigation: 2023

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