

A Study of Some Heritage Artifacts Based on Alabaster Stone in Ancient Egyptian Art

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Abstract:

Heritage is of great importance in the field of plastic arts where the contemporary artist was able to derive various and multiple methods from it for plastic and artistic aspects, and through good knowledge of many different systems for the variation of decorative units that can be used in the field of arts in general and the field of artistic and popular works in particular. Egyptian civilization is considered one of the most ancient civilizations throughout history, it is longer than any other civilization in the world, as the ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for more than three thousand years, and the ancient Egyptian heritage is characterized by artistic richness, which made it important for scholars and researchers.

The geographical location of Egypt and its temperate climate had a great impact on the continuation of ancient Egyptian civilization, as the Nile River helped to stabilize the lives of the ancient Egyptians on the shores, which provided them with all the essentials and ways of life and living, as the desert covers more than 90% of the land of Egypt. The so-called Red Land, which led to the fact that the vast majority of Egyptians "inhabited the banks of the Nile or near the channels that branch from it, which is the land called the (Kemet) or (Black Earth) relative to the dark fertile silt layer that was cultivated and if it had not been for this fertile soil, this civilization or others would not have existed on the land of Egypt. "Also, the desert of Egypt and the valley region had a great role in extracting a lot of minerals needed to build the ancient Egyptian civilization, so all these factors contributed to trade operations with countries surrounding Egypt.

The societal entity and governmental actions of the ancient Egyptian civilization consisted of three layers and each layer has its own social function. The first layer included the king and the royal family and was known as the upper class and it was the one that supervised the management and protection of the country's affairs, while the second layer is the private layer consisted of priests and clergies, which is known as the middle class and is responsible for religious rituals in all its forms, which also used to oversee the government budget, including the collection of taxes and the recovery of those who pay them, while the third class, which was the general public class was represented by peasants, craftsmen and slaves, and this class was the lowest class and its role was to serve the upper and middle classes and pay taxes. The ancient Egyptians made the main features of a stable life that continued to play a civilized role in all disciplines. "and no specialization is free of human, social, natural, mathematical, engineering, or medical studies without referring to the original scientific efforts created by ancient Egyptian people. The ancient Egyptian civilization manifested itself among the homelands of the ancient world as a well-built

country with strong strength and abundant wealth, based on a firm foundation in the political system and administration.

Architectural Works in Egyptian Civilization: The ancient Egyptian civilization presented various architectural forms characterized by huge artistic richness, which are valuable treasures to humanity. It is truly among the most creative countries in the world in this art, both in quantity and quality, as ancient Egyptian architecture had distinctive characteristics linked to the idea of immortality after death, which made it interested in building cemeteries and temples, the building materials used for this purpose were evidents for that throughout the ages.

Architectural works can be divided according to the building material in ancient Egypt into two types:

The first type: for structures built with stone, which is the type for building cemeteries and temples as a building of survival and eternity. Egypt has a wealth of stones. Where it was built with interest and solid stones that help to keep it as long as possible, as it was built using the highest building arts and various sciences of engineering, sport and astronomy, and the ancient Egyptian chose the site of its construction so that it was built in the desert area away from the Nile river flood line, and it included materials Construction such as basalt, limestone, Egyptian alabaster granite and other hard stones.

The second type: for mud-brick facilities, which was used to build homes and houses for Egyptians in their daily lives; They are simple substances that disappear with the disappearance of life. They have been used since the ancient Egyptian period to the present time in some villages.

Where the character of construction was inherited from generation to generation. These generations were supplied and were the result of the continuation of construction activities throughout the ages through the ancient Egyptian ages. Architectural designs and inscriptions were found on the remains of pottery or stones. The ancient Egyptian civilization is distinguished by the presence of craftsmen who were skilled in construction works with its sophisticated techniques that dazzled the world with unique and varied architectural forms; The most important of these are the royal tombs, temples, dams, and others that were supported by the state, as well as the royal tombs at an early stage in the ancient Egyptian civilization; Especially since it enjoyed the prestige of unique architecture in the ancient and central countries, which is represented in the pyramids, of which the total discovered number is about 110 pyramids.

Nature of the land of Egypt has many types of beautiful stones, which caused Egypt to be distinguished by making and using stones all over the world, and it is not surprising, then, if we find ancient Egyptian civilization is being from the greatest nations in the world, it had mastery and wisdom of building art, and the king was the monopoly to extract minerals and stones. All inscriptions and written documents have been evidences of this since ancient times and royal ages.

**From the above, the research problem is summarized in the following question:
What are the technical, plastic, ideological and functional features of the ancient Egyptian heritage based on the use of alabaster stone?**

So the research aims to: -

1- Identifying an aspect of the traditional artifacts based on the use of alabaster stone in the ancient Egyptian heritage.

2- Defining the technical and plastic features of the ancient Egyptian traditional artifacts used in implementing the Alabaster stone.

3- To know the functional and ideological purposes of using alabaster stone in ancient Egyptian artifacts.

Research importance:

1. An aspect of the heritage dealt with a definition of its customs, traditions, and beliefs, and what it contains in terms of art and plastic features, worthy of study and inspiring from them in order to preserve identity.

2. Popular arts and crafts in general and the Egyptian alabaster artifacts in particular are characterized by the uniqueness and specificity imposed by the natural environment and the origins of the population, as well as their customs, traditions and beliefs.

Research Methodology: The research follows the descriptive analytical method in describing and analyzing some ancient Egyptian artifacts.

Theoretical framework:

The traditional artifacts based on alabaster stone:

An introduction:

The geographical location of Egypt and its temperate climate had a great impact on the continuation of ancient Egyptian civilization, as the Nile River helped to stabilize the lives of the ancient Egyptians on the shores of what provides them with all the essentials and ways of life and living, as the desert covers more than 90% of the land of Egypt which is called the Red Land, which led to the fact that the vast majority of Egyptians inhabited the banks of the Nile, which is the land called the Black Land in relation to the dark fertile silt layer that farmers cultivated with their crops. If it had not been for this state, this civilization or others would not have existed on the land of Egypt, as the desert of Egypt and the valley region had a great role in extracting many of the minerals needed to build the ancient Egyptian civilization, so all these factors contributed to the trade operations with the countries surrounding Egypt.

Alabaster stone:

The ancient Egyptian used stones not only in building but also in making coffins and statues, and small things such as cups, utensils, machines and weapons, and the most important stones used in ancient Egyptian civilization were white limestone, sandstone, granite stone, Egyptian alabaster stone, basalt, quartzite, breccia and other types of precious and semi-precious stones, and we mention in particular alabaster stone (alabaster) as it is one of the most important and most famous Egyptian stones in the world, as there are multiple uses, whether in construction or activities which aren't related to building , such as making tools and utensils and other everyday necessities.

Alabaster stone (alabaster) or calcite, which is the geological name for transparent alabaster and is known as alabaster.

It is clear that the alabaster stone was one of the favorite and preferred stones for the ancient Egyptians due to the beauty of its appearance after polishing, as it was soft and easy to work with, in comparison to the rest of the stones, and beside its use in building and architecture, it was used for other purposes. Where it was used to craft jewelry and some pieces of furniture. Also tools and utensils were found as bowels of the deceased, sacrificial tables, dishes, and statues were placed in the pre-dynastic era till the late Pharaonic era.

The stages of manufacturing alabaster stone:

People of the village of Al-Qurna are now fleeing from this arduous profession, due to the difficulty and the heavy workload in it, as work begins from the early morning by bringing alabaster stone on the backs of donkeys and camels from the mountains for about 200 kilometers from the "Valley of the Kings", due to the inability of cars to climb those mountains and walk between the rugged mountain paths, at this stage they brought stones of huge sizes and then started the process of manufacturing them manually, which took four stages:

The first stage: It was concerned with cutting huge stones into small pieces suitable for carving, where they are cut using a hammer called (daburah) according to the size and shape of the piece to be carved, then the stones were wrapped with a piece of fabric and was left in the heat of the sun for at least three days.

The second stage: It was the stage of emptying the stone from the inside according to the form to be removed.

The second stage: It was the stage of sanding, smoothing and sanding the stone with sand.

The fourth stage: It was the last stage where the stone was placed after the slicing inside the oven at a temperature of 250 degrees Celsius for a quarter of an hour, after which the stone was removed from the oven and painted with a layer of wax in order to show the color and alabaster compositions.

The manufacture of alabaster stone in this manual way is a difficult process and it takes a long time compared to the mechanical way which is easier than manual as it is suitable for mass production, but handicrafts are characterized by accuracy, uniqueness and beauty, where people of Qurna village work in "more than 80 workshops for making alabaster statues, unlike those who work inside their homes in that craft, and sell what they make to these workshops, where 70,000 people work in that craft, representing 90% of the Qarna people, children are begun to engage in that profession from the age of 15 years, where Every sculptor begins teaching his children how to engrave and make statues of alabaster stone, but at that time, with the difficulties and crises of the profession related to tourism, he became abandoned by boys and children and refused to complete the path of their fathers, which threatens the future of the profession, "so the researcher was interested in shedding light on an aspect of the ancient Egyptian heritage which is the artifacts of ancient Egyptian art used in the implementation of Alabaster stone (Alabaster) due to the importance of studying these heritage arts and relying on their basic principles and sailing in the depths of their meanings and guides in order to preserve the heritage of parents and grandparents.

Research results:

To achieve the aims of the research, some of the ancient Egyptian artifacts used in the implementation of alabaster stone (alabaster) were analyzed to identify technical and plastic features and to identify functional and ideological purposes for the use of alabaster stone as follows:

Based on the above, the research reached a set of results, namely:

1. The ancient Egyptian civilization was distinguished from other civilizations by using alabaster stone in various artifacts, as it is considered one of the most famous Egyptian stones in the world.

2. Also, the ancient Egyptian artist used the calligraphy in a variety of shapes, sizes and function in order to achieve artistic value, and this is helpful in the part related to the cover of the vessels, which is represented by the queen who wears the Nubian wig.
3. Alabaster is characterized by white or yellowish-white color, and its thin sectors are somewhat transparent and often veins, as it is easy to work in comparison to the rest of the stones and is characterized by the appearance of beauty after passing through four manual stages of polishing.
4. Alabaster stone (alabaster) had an important role in the worldly life of ancient Egyptian civilization, as it was multiplied and diversified in its uses in the construction and paving of corridors, the work of niches and stone covering, as it was also used in making coffins and statues and making small things such as cups and utensils, tools, weapons and jewelry items.
5. It becomes clear through the analysis of some artifacts the importance of the religious and ideological role of using alabaster stone (alabaster), from which he made pots of religious rituals and the vessels of the viscera in which the entrails of the deceased were placed.

Recommendations:

1. Attention and encouragement for studies dealing with ancient Egyptian arts and crafts in order to preserve and record the heritage in various forms and to monitor the variables affecting it.
2. Supporting the origins of the ancient Egyptian heritage and those in charge of the traditional artifacts based on the Egyptian alabaster stone (for alabaster) and encouraging them to continue producing their works and research methods of protecting them in order to preserve their artifacts from extinction.
3. The importance of printing and translating scientific studies and research that deals with the ancient Egyptian arts and crafts in order to publish them and introduce their artistic and plastic features and their associated customs, traditions and beliefs, and to this end increase cultural awareness of our cultural heritage.

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