



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Technical and Experimental Study on Lapis Lazuli Artifacts from Mesopotamia and the Levant

SHARAFEDDIN Y. 1*

¹ GOETHE UNIVERSITY FRANKFURT AM MAIN, FRANKFURT , Germany

*Corresponding author

Abstract

This paper presents an artistic, technological, and experimental analysis of lapis lazuli artifacts from Mesopotamia and the Levant during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. Covering approximately 1,000 artifacts from 30 archaeological sites preserved in various museums, this research is part of my PhD at Goethe University Frankfurt, funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung and supervised by Professor Dirk Wicke. The study aims to analyze the distribution, artistry, and technology behind lapis lazuli artifacts and their manufacturing stages.

The artifacts fall into several categories, with beads being the most numerous, especially in southern Mesopotamia, where they were used as ornaments, often featuring melon-shaped or parallel-line grooves. Inlays, found in both the middle Euphrates and southern Mesopotamia, were carved in bas-relief to depict hair on statues. Additional categories include cylinder seals, amulets, pendants, and foundation stones.

An experimental study on lapis lazuli from Badakhshan, Afghanistan, replicated production stages, from lump separation and rough shaping to finishing, decorating, or perforating, depending on the object's purpose. Techniques included splitting, sawing, grinding, polishing, drilling, and grooving, using various tools to create reference samples for further microscopic analysis.

Keywords

Lapis lazuli, Experimental study, Bronze age, Levant, Mesopotamia

Session

1. Advances in Near Eastern Archaeology

Type of paper

Poster session