

TELL ATRIB

63. Portrait of a ruler

Tell Atrib. Kom Sidi Yussuf

End of 1st century BC

H. 6 cm, Nile silt, terracotta

Zagazig, storeroom, Inv. No. TA 87A/490

Fine portrait of a mature king in a wreath of grapevine tendrils and bunches of grapes. The deep fold on a massive neck shows that the head had been turned strongly to the left. It is a bony face with severe expression, emphasized by the thick wrinkled brows and the deep grooves cut already after firing around the long hooked nose. The high, already balding forehead is wrinkled, too. The hair, rendered also on the back of the head, is curly with three rows of locks appearing under the wreath. Eyes are bulging and almond-shaped with only the lower eyelid rendered separately. Furrowed cheeks and deep wrinkles around the mouth hint at the man's age and experience. The right hand raised to the forehead holds what appears to have been a spear. The head must have belonged to a standing figure of a heroized ruler wielding a spear. It may have been Antiochus III the Great to judge by the wreath which points to an assimilation with the god Dionysus. The color of the clay betrays a possible import from the center in Smyrna which specialized in making copies of bronze and marble statues in clay.

H.S.

H. Szymańska, *Terres cuites d'Athribis*, Monographies Reine Elisabeth 12, Turnhout 2005, pp. 28, 51, 121-123, 226, Cat. No. 190, pl. XXIII; cf. bronze figure of Alexander the Great (150 BC) from the Walter Gallery in Baltimore (R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Sculpture*, London 1991, pp. 19, 25, fig. 2)

