

THE PHYTOLITH ANALYSIS OF CERAMIC THIN SECTION. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

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Phytolith might be one of these objects observed during the description of the potsherd thin section. Apparently, their presence, distribution and spectra may vary from one ware to the other. Such variations were recorded during an extensive study of the collection of thin sections from the ceramic of the ed Dur site (Um al-Quaiwan, U.A.E.). These observations contributed to the classification of the pottery into local and non local production as well as to refine the identification of the clay sources of the local production (De Paepe *et al* 2003; Vrydaghs *et al* in press). However, by recording the presence of phytolith not reported by the phytolith analysis of classical samples, it also contributes to the palaeoenvironmental reconstruction (Vrydaghs *et al* in press).

The description system is fundamental to address the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental topics. The purpose of the present contribution is to introduce the system we adopted. It relies on the analytical scheme we set up for the phytolith analysis of the soil thin sections (Vrydaghs *et al* 2007). So far four aspects, labelled as indexes, are considered:

- the absence or presence of the phytoliths (or A/P index);
- the morphotype identification (or M index);
- the conservation of the phytoliths (the C index). This index consider the preservation of the phytoliths and their relative distribution being either in the pasta or in the voids (contiguous or isolated);
- the distribution of the phytoliths within the pasta or within the voids (or D index).

References

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