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Assessment of Egyptian Talc-Carbonate Rocks in the Central Eastern Desert for Some Industrial Applications

By

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B.Sc. Geology - Chemistry, Mansoura Univ., 1996

THESIS

Submitted for the degree of
Philosophy Doctor in Science (Geology)

**GEOLOGY DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF SCIENCE
AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY**

2011



APPROVAL SHEET

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Title of thesis: **Assessment of Egyptian Talc-Carbonate Rocks in the Central Eastern Desert for Some Industrial Applications.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All gratitude is due to almighty God, who guided and aided me to bring-forth to light this thesis.

I wish to express my great indebtedness and heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Baher El-Kalioubi, Professor of Geology, Geology Department, Faculty of Science, Ain Shams University, for his critical comments, valuable suggestion, and supervision.

Sincere thanks are due to Associate Professor Dr. Mohamed Wahbi Ali-Bik, Associate Professor of Geology, Geological Sciences Department, National Research Centre, for proposing the plan of the study and supervising the present work. His guidance and critical reading of the manuscript are highly appreciated.

I gratefully thank Prof. Dr. Mohamed Abdel Kader Serry, Professor of Refractories and Ceramics, National Research Centre, who planned and supervised the application work.

Deep thanks are also due to Dr. Shamaa Eid Abdel Kader, Researcher of Refractories and Ceramics, National Research Centre, and Dr. Zeinab Ismail Taman, Lecturer of Geology, Geology Department, Faculty of Science, Ain Shams University, for their help and continuous encouragement through supervising of the present work.

All thanks must be to Prof. Dr. Mostafa Abdel Aziz, the former Head of Inorganic Industry and Mineral Resources Research Division, National Research Centre for his participating in planning of the present study and helping during the field work.

All deep thanks also are due to Associate Professor Dr. Mohamed F. Sadek, NARSS, for his help during the field work.

My warmest thanks are due to Dr. Ali Ismail, Researcher of Engineering Geology, National Research Centre, for his friendly cooperation.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Ahmed El Nazer, Geological Sciences Department, National Research Centre, for his efforts and friendly help.

I am also grateful to all staff members of the Geological Sciences Department, National Research Centre, for their kind help, facilities offered during the work of this thesis. Also All thanks must be to all staff members of the Geology Department, Ain Shams University.

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Title of thesis: Assessment of Egyptian Talc-Carbonate Rocks in the Central Eastern Desert for Some Industrial Applications.

ABSTRACT

Enormous quantities of practically untapped talc-magnesite rocks are distributed in the Barramiya and Wadi Atalla districts in intimate spatial and genetic association with the ophiolitic serpentinites. These deposits are an important potential source of magnesia, which is used in a broad spectrum of strategic industries. The ophiolitic serpentinites represent obducted oceanic slices onto island-arc successions. The talc-magnesite deposits are located: a) along major faults that cut the serpentinite slices, or b) at thrust contacts between obducted serpentinites and other country rocks of island-arc affinity. The latter were regionally metamorphosed at greenschist up to middle amphibolite facies conditions. The talc-magnesite rocks represent in situ fissure-fed metasomatic products of serpentinite precursors via extensive rock-fluid interactions. The main fluids involved in the transformation processes were SiO_2 aqueous solutions and CO_2 . The deposits located along the fault systems cutting the serpentinite-host are magnesite-rich, whereas those located at the contacts between serpentinites and the more siliceous country rocks are typically talc-rich. Based on the proportional distribution of talc and magnesite in conjunction with other accessories, the rocks have been distinguished into assemblages. Their characteristics, petrogenesis and evolution from serpentinite precursors are elaborated in the light of their petrography, XRD, EDAX and XRF data. Constraints on the conditions of their formation include temperature of about 490°C and a maximum XCO_2 of about 0.13. New mapping was undertaken for both Barramiya and Wadi Atalla districts using remote sensing and GIS techniques. The talc-carbonate rocks of both areas were mapped as separate layers and their reserve estimations were accomplished. Representative talc-carbonate samples were used in the production of refractory shaped cordierite ceramics. The latter is recommended as kiln furniture and car-top lining for the tunnel-kilns used in firing clay building bricks up to $1000 - 1100^\circ\text{C}$ as a maximum service temperature.

Key words: Talc-carbonates, Ophiolites, Serpentinites, Barramiya, Wadi Atalla, Petrogenesis, Cordierite, Refractory Ceramics.

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