

EGYPTIAN OBJECTS FROM SINAI IN THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

RAPHAEL GIVEON

Tel Aviv University

W. M. Flinders Petrie financed his important excavations in Egypt and Palestine through the Egypt Exploration Fund by distributing part of the objects dug out to institutions and persons who had contributed to the cost of the expedition. Many of these private owners gave their share in their lifetimes or as a legacy to museums. Thus objects from Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai are as widely distributed as Sydney and Toronto—with England and Scotland in between.

There is in the Australian Museum, Sydney, an interesting collection of finds from this important site.

Already at the time of the Old Kingdom—from the time of the third Dynasty onwards—Sinai served as a source of turquoise.¹ The earliest mines were at Magharah, not far from the road which leads from the Gulf of Suez to the monastery of St. Catharine, at the foot of the traditional Mount Sinai.

During Middle Kingdom times the centre of mining activities moved further north, to Serabit el-Khadim. In Magharah the mining area was confined to the slope of a single hill and reliefs and inscriptions were placed near the entrances of these mines. At Serabit el-Khadim the mines were more widely dispersed. Inscriptions were near these mines and near the paths leading to them. However, the fundamental difference is that here, at Serabit el-Khadim, the Egyptians erected, at the centre of the mining district, a temple to Hathor. Hathor was, besides her other functions in Egypt, a goddess of expeditions abroad and of mining. Her temple at Serabit el-Khadim consists of the shrine proper, which is a transformed private tomb of Middle Kingdom times, and a series of rooms, added as time went by, on an East-West

axis. The rooms were erected by kings of the XVIIIth Dynasty (beginning with Amenophis I) to the XXth Dynasty (ending with Ramses VI). The "Shrine of the Kings" and other installations which are not part of the East-West axis are witnesses of XIIth Dynasty activities. During the time of the great crises in Egypt (Intermediate Periods, Tel-Amarna Period), Serabit el-Khadim was neglected because of the difficulties in sending missions abroad at times like these.

The missions to Sinai stayed in the area only for a few months, mostly in winter; they lived in simple huts, the remains of which can still be seen near the mines and near the temple. In order to assure the success of the mission it was necessary, in the eyes of the Egyptians, to win the goodwill of the patroness—Hathor. Thus added the kings who sent missions rooms to her temple or carried out other work of construction or repair. The building-stones and the stelae were made from local stones and work was carried out by Egyptian workmen at the site: the quality and style of the work is exactly like anything contemporary in Egypt.

The members of the expeditions had still other means to gain the favour of Hathor: they brought to her sanctuary small presents, mostly of faience.² These had a connection with the worship of Hathor: for instance musical instruments (sistra and menats) were very popular as such presents. The reason for this was that Hathor was the goddess of music in Egypt. Sculptures and paintings of the serval-cat allude to the legend of the "goddess from afar": Hathor sent out on a mission in a far-away country, dissatisfied with the treatment she receives, turns into a fierce lioness and only under gentle persuasion changes into serval-cat. These faience objects were all found broken. There is reason to assume that the breakage occurred at the moment of presentation to the goddess: in any case the instruments made of faience and not of metal were of no use for producing tunes—and no metal sistrum has been found so far in the temple.

The Australian Museum has both groups of objects: royal inscriptions from the walls of the temple and faience objects. Besides the objects described here there are in the collection beads and amulets, which in all probability were also offerings to Hathor.³



Fragment of Inscription. Amenemhat II. E. 157 55.

Broken, reconstructed from three fragments.

To the right there is the Horusname of the king written within the Serekh: (Horus Heken)emma'at.

To the left, in an upright cartouche, there is the prenomen of the king: "King of (Upper) and Lower Egypt, Nubkaure, given life, like Re', eternally".

This fragment has been noticed by Petrie, was brought by him to London to an exhibition he arranged of his finds there in 1905. The copy made of this fragment by the Egypt Exploration Fund was published by Gardiner-Peet-Černý as No. 75.⁴ In "Inscriptions of Sinai" there is the remark: "Present whereabouts unknown". This indication can now be corrected.



Fragment of Wall Decoration. Dynasty XII. No. E. 15742.

This is part of a large scene, showing the king, perhaps in adoration before Hathor, under the protecting wings of the goddess Nekhbet.

What remains is the left wing of the bird-shaped goddess, the claws of the left leg holding, as usual, the ring *sn*, symbol of the infinity of the king's rule. Beneath this there appears the end of a beautifully made cartouche with the nomen of a king. The signs which remain are: *r, t, s, n*. This is part of the name

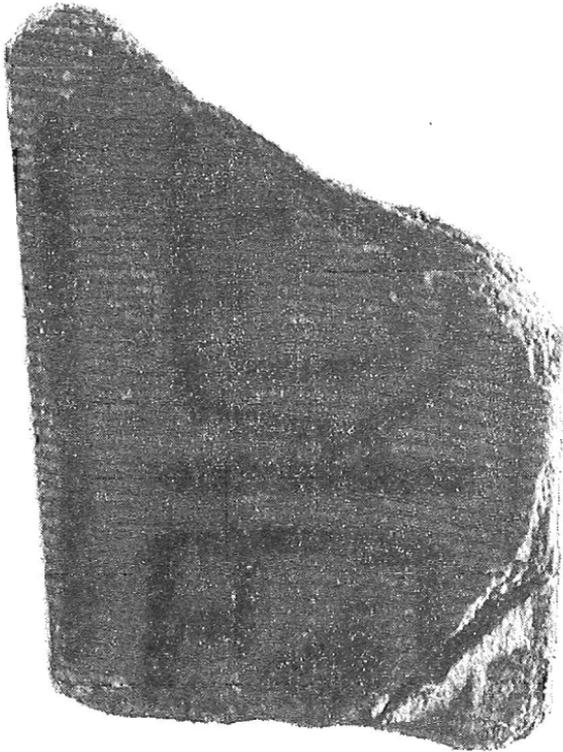
(*ws*)*rt**sn*: Senwosert, in its Greek form Sesostris, the name of three kings of the XIIth Dynasty. All three are represented in the temple of Serabit el-Khadim, Sesostris I—10 times, Sesostris II—twice, and Sesostris III—three times.

Below there appears the crown decorated with two high feathers, which is the typical headdress of the god Amon, here worn by the king. Amon was close to the hearts of the kings of the dynasty, who were either called Amenemhat or Sesostris.⁵



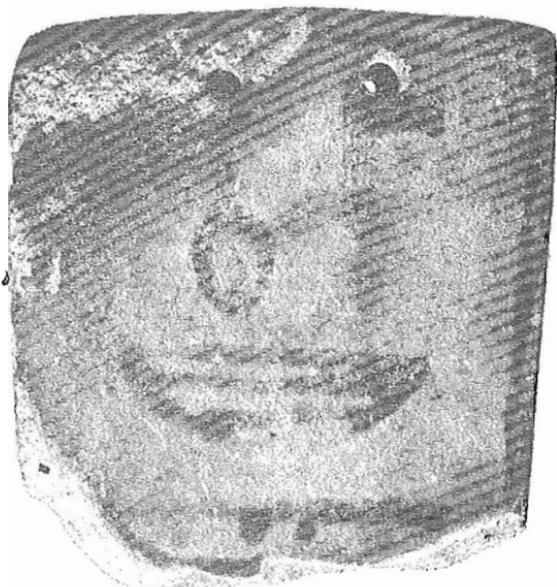
Handle, Faience. Hatshepsut. No. 15754 (1).

What remains, between two dark lines, is the lower fragment of a cartouche with the lower part of a sign ending with a horizontal line, and the sign *k3*. This is part of the prenominal of Queen Hatshepsut of the XVIIIth Dynasty (*M3^{ct}—k3—r^o*). Below the cartouche there appears the word "Hathor". Undoubtedly the whole reads: King (!) of Upper and Lower Egypt, Maat-Ka-Re', Beloved of Hathor, Lady of the Turquoise.

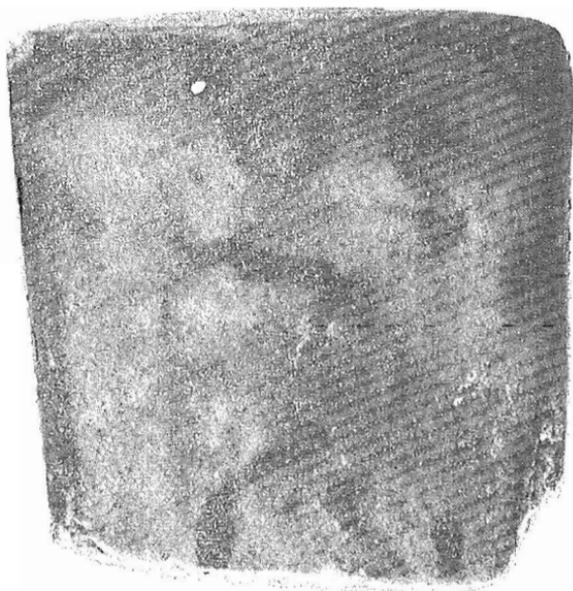


Reverse of 15754 (1).

The other side has the same arrangement only this time the lower end of the cartouche shows a scarab: the sign hpr is part of the prenomen of Thutmose III: $mn-hpr-r^c$. We have here a document of the co-regency of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. This co-regency is also represented in other faience objects and inscriptions in Sinai. Military activity seems to have been restricted at the time, and expeditions for commercial and economical purposes seemed to have been preferred. Later, when Thutmose III reigned alone, he added the splendid pylon and other installations at Serabit el-Khadim.



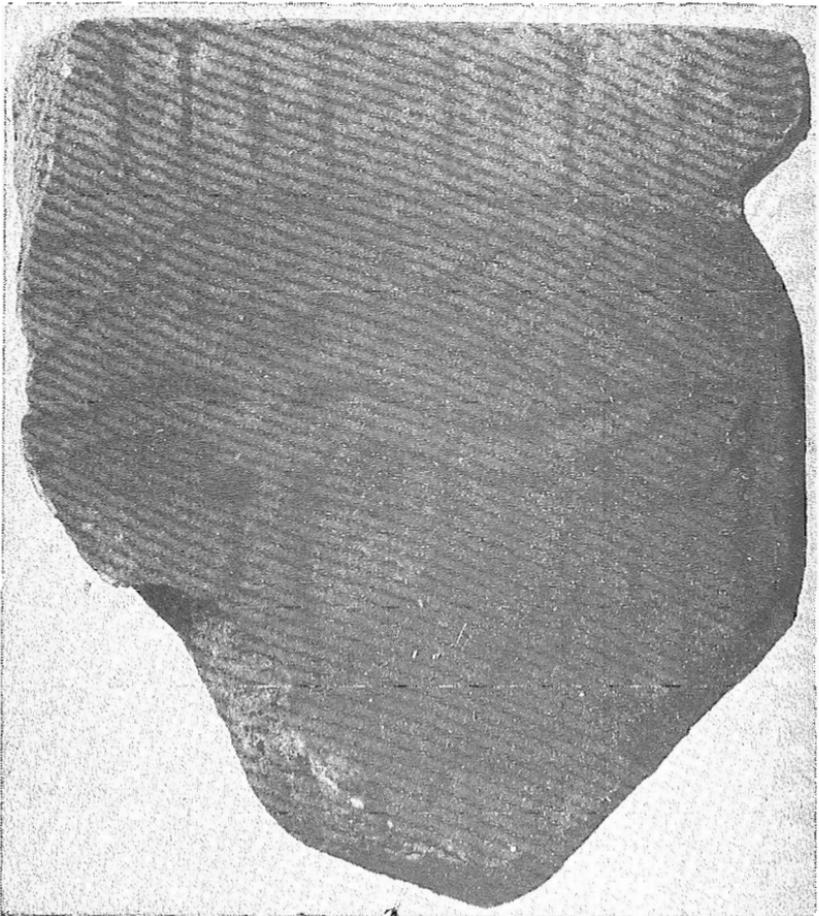
Handle, Faience. XVIIIth Dynasty. No. 15754 (2).



Reverse of 15754 (2).

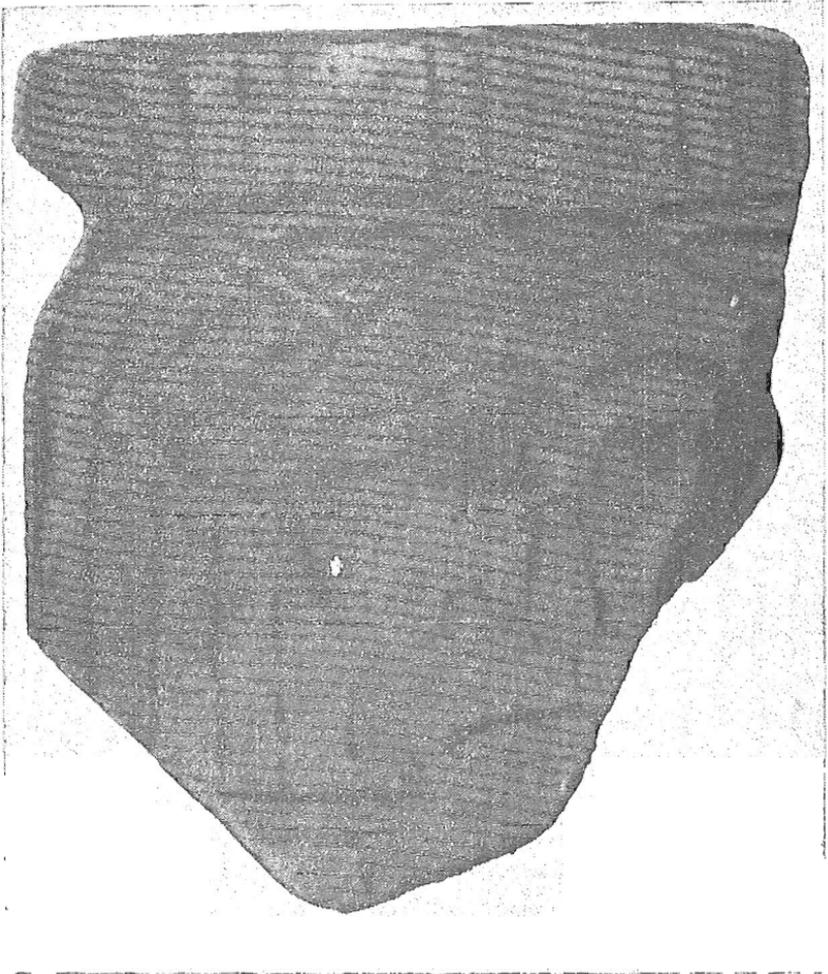
This is part of the straight part of a Menat-handle, with two holes pierced through the object after it was finished. The remaining part of the inscription has "Son of Re" and the upper end of a cartouche, inside which there is an ibis. The title "Son of Re", together with the ibis, the bird of Thot, would fit any of the kings of the XVIIIth Dynasty: Thutmosis I, Thutmosis II, Thutmosis III, Thutmosis IV. It is a peculiarity of this object that the ibis within the cartouche faces to the left while the s3-bird in the title faces to the right.

The other side of the object has part of the royal protocol: "The good god, lord of the two countries". A prenomen, within



Sistrum handle, Faience. New Kingdom. No. 15752.

a cartouche, which would follow, is broken away. The two holes pierce the upper part of the sign "god" and the sign "good".

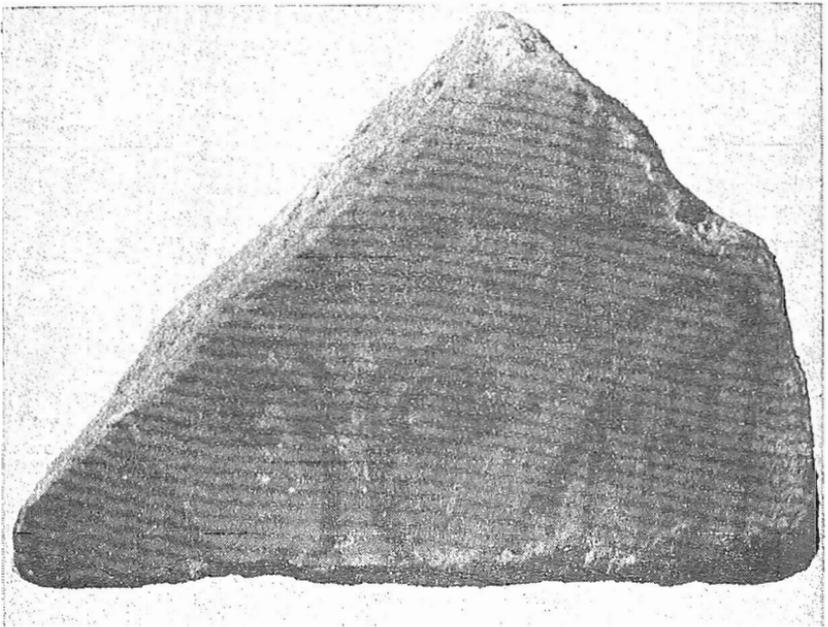


Reverse of 15752.

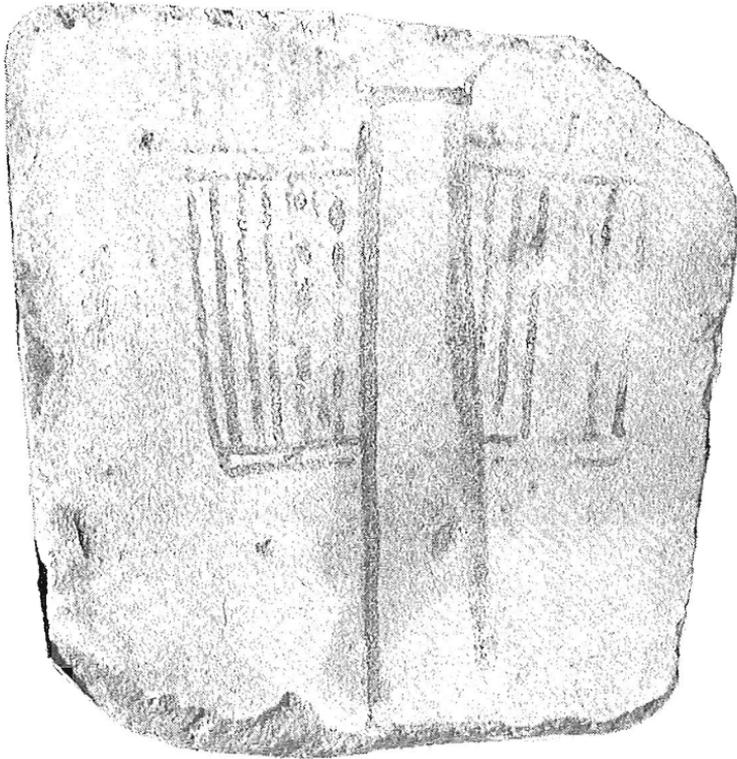
Upper part of a sistrum handle, lower left corner broken away. The design, as usual, is a Hathor-head in the form of a woman's head, with cow's ears and a typical coiffure, en face. The upper part of the coiffure ends in a sort of flat crown which

served, in metal sistra, as a base for the frame. She wears an elaborate frontlet with pearls descending on her forehead. The lines of the eyebrows are continued in the cow's-ears. The straight nose is embellished by two circular lines near the nostrils, indicating an elegant widening of these. The philtrum is indicated and the lips are fairly thick.

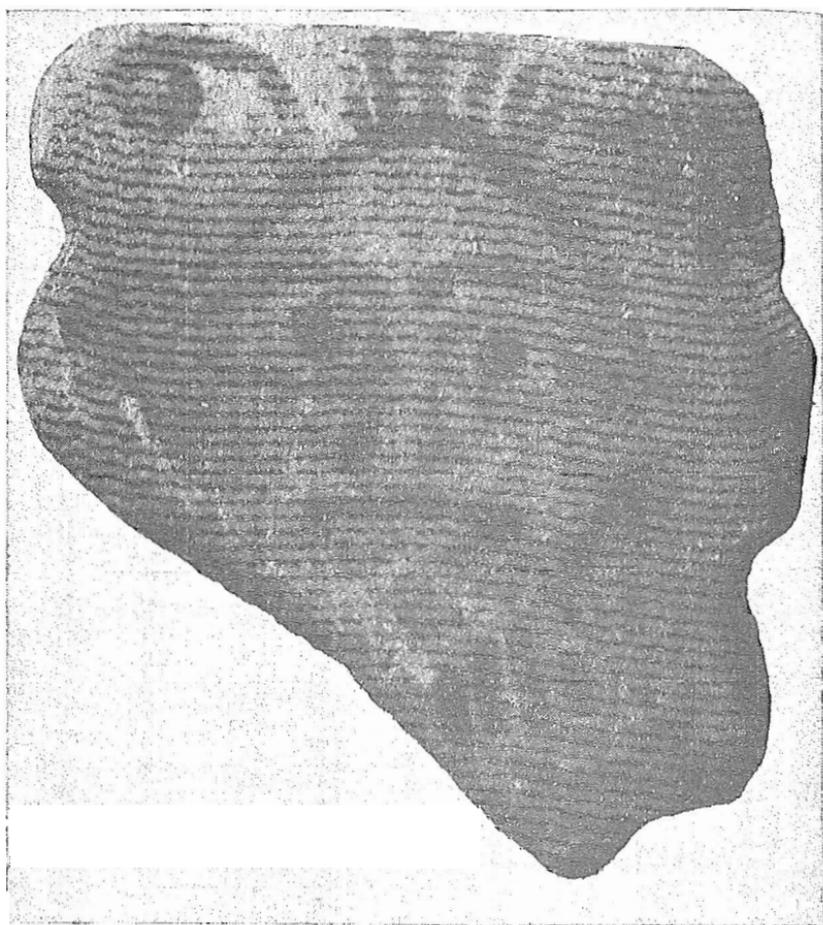
Hathor-heads appear as parts of faience sistra or as painting of sistra on faience plaques in Serabit el-Khadim. This is, of course, connected with the function of Hathor as goddess of music and dancing. However, faience was never used for real sistra, for which it would be unfit: these are always of metal. All the objects, described here, made of faience, were symbolical offerings. Many or all were ceremonially broken when given to the goddess—none were found intact.



Sistrum. Painting on Faience Plaque. Two Parts, New Kingdom. No. E. 15753 and E. 15748.

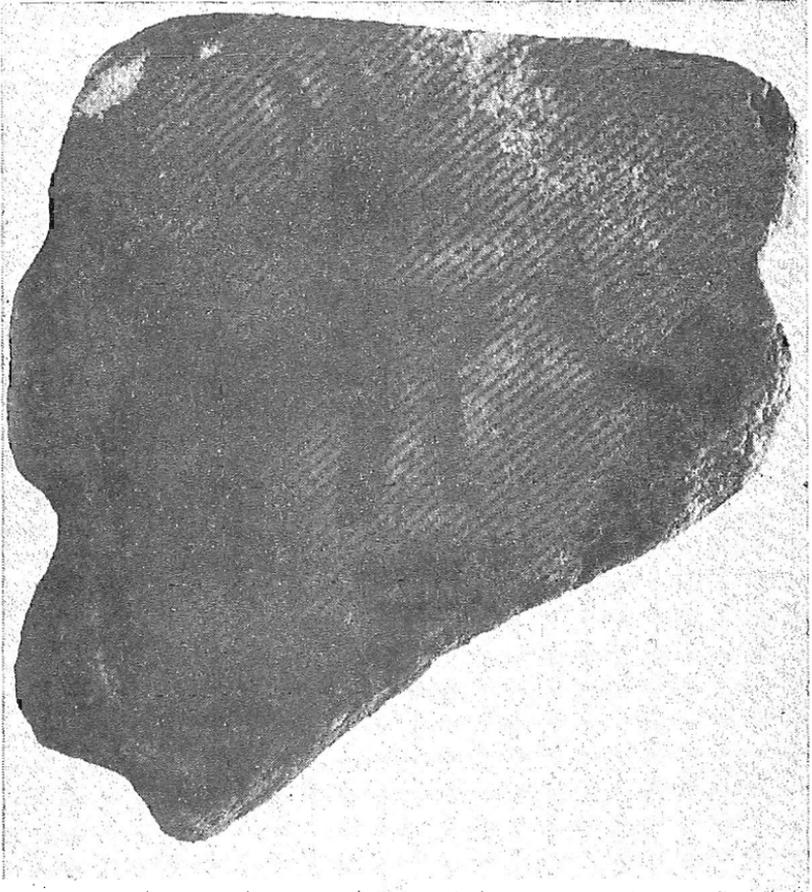


This resembles in many aspects the foregoing item, the frontlet has no pearls or tassels, the eyebrows slant upwards to continue in the cow's-ears. The neck of Hathor forms the handle of the sistrum: the upper part of this shows the lower part of the coiffure, negligently painted. The upper ridge of E. 15748 is more or less straight; it seems that the two parts of the painting were manufactured separately.⁶



Sistrum Handle, Faience. New Kingdom. No. E. 15751.

Negligent painting, partly faded. Lower left corner broken away. The forehead of Hathor has a triangular shape. The hair on the crown of the head is standing up straight, on the right of this there is a flower-like decoration. The eyeballs are better preserved than the surrounding lines and the rest of the face; all this gives this object a peculiar, nearly demoniacal aspect.⁷

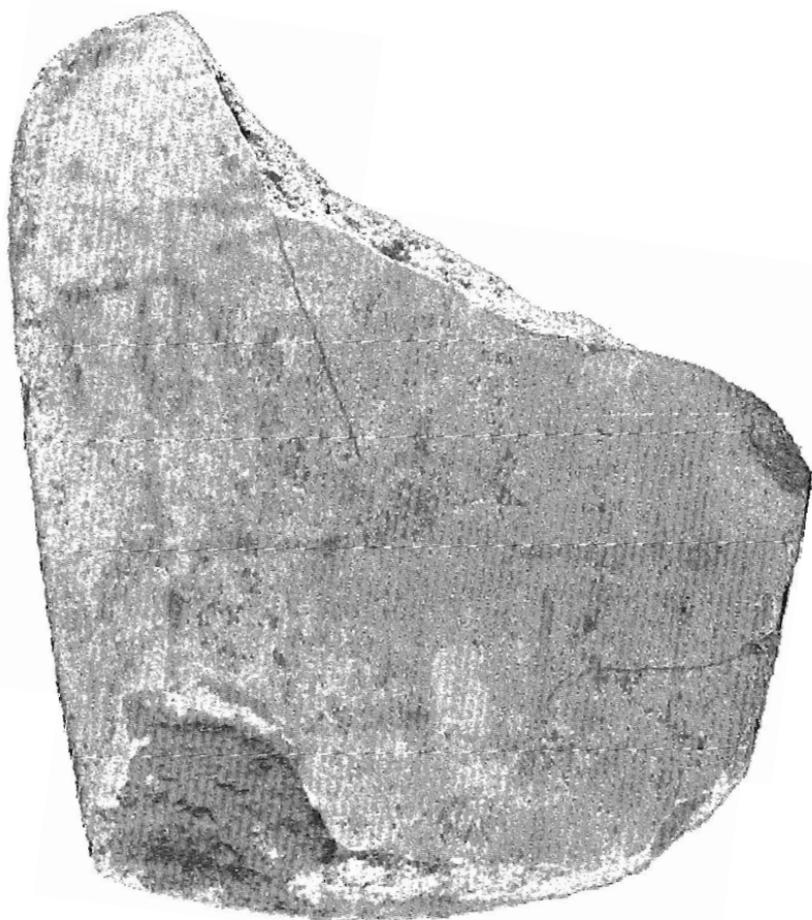


Reverse of 15751.

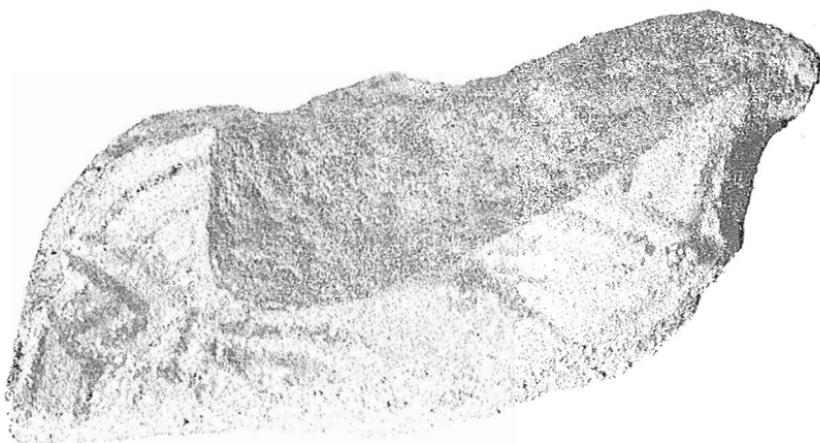


*Sistrum. Painting on Faience Plaque. New Kingdom.
No. E. 15749.*

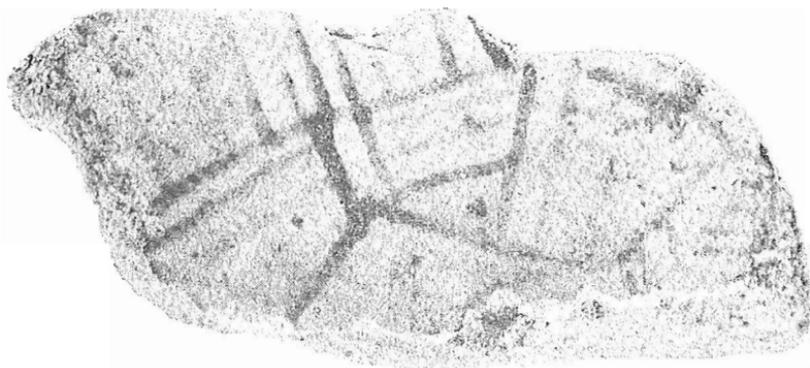
Very faded painting. The coiffure takes the whole width of the plaque. The neck of Hathor is shown as the handle of the sistrum and is fairly wide. The reverse of this plaque is even more faded and only a few lines remain.



Reverse of E15749.



Sistrum Handle, Faience. New Kingdom. No. E. 15750.

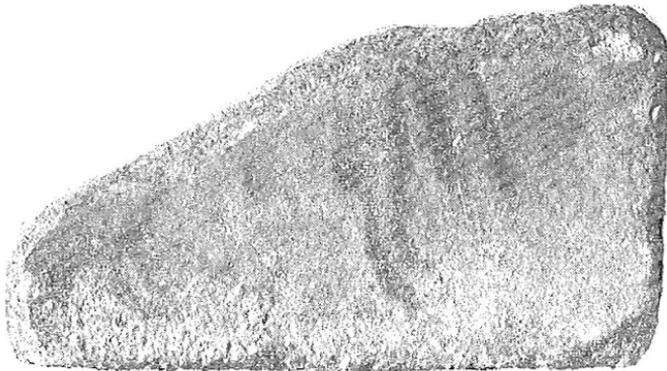


Reverse of E15750.

Only a fragment of the upper part of the head remains: eyes, forehead and part of the coiffure. The reverse has the tholos-like upper part of the coiffure, which serves as a base for the sistrum-frame.



*Serval Cat. Painting on Faience Plaque. New Kingdom.
No. E. 15745 and E. 15746.*



This is a fragment of the larger object, of which No. E. 15746, showing the legs of the animal, may be a lower part. Represented is the head of the cat, showing the two ears, eye, mouth with moustache. Along the neck the colouring of the fur is indicated by short vertical strokes. The shoulder is shown on what remains of the lower left corner.⁸ The legs have the typical "trousers" of the representation of this cat in Serabit el-Khadim. This is really a claw, pointing backwards. The animal could also be a cheetah.⁹



Menat, Faience. New Kingdom. No. E. 15754.



Reverse of E15754.

This is a fragment of the round, lower end of a Menat-counterweight, decorated, as often, with flowers and leaves.¹⁰

AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

1. W. M. F. Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, London, 1906. Abbreviation used: Petrie, *RS*; A. H. Gardiner, T. E. Peet and J. Černý, *Inscriptions of Sinai I*, London, 1952 id., *Inscriptions of Sinai II*, London, 1955. Abbreviation used: *Sinai I*, *Sinai II*.
2. For the use of the term faience for glazed quartz frit see: A. Lucas-J. R. Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, London, 1962, p. 156.
3. I wish to thank the Trustees of the Australian Museum, Sydney, for their permission to publish the objects; Mr. D. R. Moore, Curator of Anthropology at the Museum; and Miss Zoë Wakelin-King, Assistant Curator, for their kind and patient help in making the publication possible. Mr. G. Millen took the photographs.
4. *Sinai I*, Pl. XIX; *Sinai II*, p. 88.
5. For Middle Kingdom representations of a king with this crown adoring Hathor see inscriptions 126 and 404 at Serabit el-Khadim. (*Sinai I*, Pl. XLV; Pl. LXXXIV.)
6. Petrie, *RS* fig. 152.7.
7. Petrie, *RS* fig. 153, 5 (the reverse is unpublished).
8. Petrie *RS* fig. 154.
9. The lower part is unpublished. For the legs see: R. F. S. Starr and R. F. Butin, *Excavations and Protosinaitic Inscriptions at Serabit el Khadem*, London, 1936. Pl. 13, No. 92.
10. Compare: Petrie, *RS* fig. 148, 7 and 8.