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—

**PART OF AN UNIDENTIFIED ARTIFACT FROM THE
FAIENCE AT THE ARAB EL-HESN ANTIQUITIES
STORE IN AL-MATARIA NO.241**

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Abstract

This study deals with an unidentified and unknown artifact that lost its upper part and its remaining part was inscribed with hieroglyphic texts on the body and the base in a bad condition. This research studied this piece to offer various interpretations of its use by comparing it with similar artifacts. Several possibilities have been raised about the nature of this artifact, which is believed to be part of a Funerary Cone, part of a Sistrum handle, part of a Mirror handle, part of a Tube for storing Alkuhl and Cosmetics, or part of a Cylinder Seal. However, only its base was used for the engraving process such as the Button seal. It may have been a seal, but it was used as an Amulet only and not for the purpose of the seal itself, or perhaps for other purposes. It was found near the "Ra" temple complex in Heliopolis during archaeological surveys and excavations in the area in 1992 AD and it is currently preserved in the museum store in Arab El-Hesn in Al-Mataria No. 241.

Key words: Sistrum, Cylinder seal, Funerary cone, Faience, Abydos, Osiris, Amulets.

ملخص البحث:

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة قطعة أثرية غير محددة وغير معروف ماهيتها، وفيما استخدمت نتيجة لفقد الجزء العلوي منها، والجزء المتبقي محل الدراسة مدون عليه نصوص هيرغليفية على البدن والقاعدة في حالة سيئة، ونتيجة لذلك سأحاول في هذا البحث دراسة هذه القطعة وعرض عدة تفسيرات مختلفة لاستخدامها وذلك بمقارنتها بقطع أثرية أخرى مشابهة لها، ولهذا تم طرح عدة احتمالات حول ماهية هذه القطعة الأثرية، التي المعتقد أن تكون جزء من مخروط جنائزي أو جزء من مقبض سيستروم، أو جزء من مقبض مرآة، أو جزء من أنبوب لحفظ الكحل ومواد التجميل، أو ربما تكون جزء من ختم اسطواني ولكن تم استخدام القاعدة فقط لعملية النقش مثل الختم الزرار. وربما كان ختماً ولكن تم استخدامه كتميمة فقط وليس لغرض الختم نفسه أو ربما لأغراض أخرى. وقد تم العثور عليها بالقرب من مجمع معابد "رع" بهليوبوليس، أثناء عمل جسات أثرية وأعمال حفائر بالمنطقة عام ١٩٩٢م، ومحفوفة حالياً بالمخزن المتحف بعرب الحصن بالمطرية رقم ٢٤١.

الكلمات الدالة: سيستروم، ختم اسطواني، مخروط جنائزي، الفياس، أبيدوس، أوزير، تماثم.

1. Introduction

Through the cracking and loss of the upper part of this artifact, and through its current form (Fig.1,2), it was difficult to determine what this artifact was and the purpose for which it was made for. Therefore, the study in had conducted an extensive investigation of this piece and put several possibilities that may clarify what it is and what it is used for.

1.1. Fragment of a Faience Artifact N.241

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Type | An unspecified artifact possibly part of a Sistrum hand, a mirror hand, or a part of a Cylinder seal. |
| Material | Faience. |
| Publishing | Unpublished. |
| Period | Undefined? |
| Dimensions | Max length 7cm. Diameter 3,2cm. The body: 12cm. |
| Provenance | The Temple Complex of "Ra" in Heliopolis. |
| Current location | Al-Matareya and Ain Shams Antiquities Inspection Store. |
| Record No. | Prison Farm Register N.241. |
| Description | The lower part of an artifact is from Faience. On the cylindrical part two rows of hieroglyphs appear in a vertical line, and an unfinished bas-relief appears on the base. |

Table (1) Artifact Description

1.2. Discovery place

The studied artifact was discovered near the compound of the temples of "Ra" in Heliopolis during archaeological surveys and excavations in the area in 1992 AD and was discovered two meters away in the middle of the rubble.

1.3. General description

The upper part of the vague Faience artifact is missing, while its lower part is intact. Its hull has four faces, each is identified by a vertical longitudinal line from the right and left, and there are three circular lines in an incomplete horizontal line surrounding its body below the Cylindrical part. The first face of what seems to be a seal has a sunken incomplete and dilapidated hieroglyphic text in a vertical line and broken from the top. The hieroglyphic text ends with three lines that surround the body. Its second face is very worn out and appears in the upper part of its 6 circular lines surrounding the body, while the lower part is eroded and does not show those three lines surrounding the body. The third face has a sunken hieroglyphic text in an incomplete vertical line and broken from the bottom, as well. Finally, its fourth face is largely dilapidated from the top and the bottom. Only four circular lines remain in the upper part of its body with incomplete sunken hieroglyphic inscription on the base in a poor condition.

2. Hieroglyphic text

2.1. First face



Mry (3sir/Wsir nb 3bdw) di ʕnh dt

Beloved (Osiris lord\master of Abydos), give life forever.

2.2. Third face




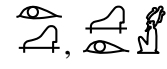





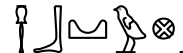

Mry (3sir/Wsir nb) 3bdw di ʕnh dt

Beloved (Osiris lord\master) of Abydos, give life forever.







2.3. The base

As a result of the great scratching at the base of the artifact, it was difficult to identify and read the hieroglyphic text inscribed on it. Only the words ‘give life’ $\Delta \uparrow di \text{ ʕnh}$, but we could guess its missing text, which would probably read: Made by Ka-ptah May he give life forever *Tr n k3-ptḥ di ʕnh dt*, or gives life forever and eternity *di ʕnh dt r nhḥ*.







3. Linguistic comment





The name of Osiris ,  *3sir/Wsir* did not appear in the hieroglyphic text on the artifact, and it is possible that the name Osiris is in the missing upper part of the artifact, and this is indicated by the presence of the remains of the word Abydos  *3bdw*¹ that appeared in the text in the full written form  Where it is written as orthographic presentation,² and the word Abydos was written in several written forms, including: , , , , .³

Abydos (El-Araba El-Madfuna) is located in M.Balina, south of Sohag Governorate. It was known in ancient

Egyptian texts as Abdju and Abdo and then became in Greek Abydos, which is the name by which it is currently known.⁴ Abydos is the main center of the cult of the god Osiris. The name of Abydos was associated with Osiris the master of the Westerners and Abydos was the Qiblah of pilgrimage in ancient Egypt. It contains the house of  *k3* and the house of the  *b3*⁵ of the god Osiris. The god of Osiris took many titles, including Lord of Abydos  *nb 3bdw*, Lord of Djedu  *nb ddw*, Onnophris (The living being)  *wnn nfr*, and Lord of the Westerners or the Dead  *hnty imntw*.⁶

There were priestly functions associated with the god Osiris, such as the high Priest of Osiris called Nebwawy from the reign of King Thutmose III. The titles of Osiris appeared on one of his stelaes in the British Museum,⁷ as well as from the reign of Ramesses II revealed several other people holding the position of high priest of Osiris such as Wenennefer, Hori, Mery.⁸

As for the inscriptions on the base, they were heavily scratched and only some hieroglyphs remains read  *di* *nh* meaning given life and is a Optative formula for the king, and underneath it is the shape  which is closer to the word  *pth* with  a plus letter, and it is possible that the remnants of the word  *dt* meaning forever, and then the word  *nhh* in the

sense of eternity also, and for information *dt* means eternity in the life of this world, while *nhh* means eternity in the other world. The use of the two terms means the confirmation of eternity in the life of this world and in the next world. To the left are possible residues  *ir* or  *r*,  *n*, and possibly residues  *k3*.

4. Suggested possibilities for the nature of this artifact




4.1. part of a Funerary Cone

There is a possibility that this artifact follows the Funerary Cones because it is inscribed from the base like the Funerary Cones, However, after making a comparison between this artifact and Funerary Cones, it was found that Funerary Cones are of a conical shape and inscribed from the bottom only and not on the body. Furthermore, the shapes and sizes of Funerary Cones are Cylindrical and Wedge shapes of rectangular and square molds with bilateral and quadrilateral faces that contained two on each side and their size differed in length, width and thickness (Fig.3).⁹

4.2. Part of a Sistrum Handle


The Sistrum is a musical instrument of the percussion family. It consists of a handle and a U-shaped metal frame made of brass or bronze. When shaken, the small rings or loops of thin metal on its movable crossbars produce a sound that can be from a soft clank to a loud jangling. The Sistrum tool is considered one of the sacred tools in

ancient Egypt and was known in the ancient Egyptian language as a Seshesht or a

Seshesh  sššt It is in the form of a Naos and Sekhem , *sh*m. It has a hoop-like shape¹⁰ and the Sistrum player is known as  *ihy*, which is the title of the priests of the goddess Hathor.¹¹ The Sistrum was sacred to Hathor and used in the ceremonial worship of Isis.¹²


The Sistrum was closely associated with ritual rites in honor of the goddess Isis, where the goddess Isis was depicted in her role as a mother and creator who was depicted holding a Pail in one hand, symbolizing the flooding of the Nile, and a Sistrum in the other. The sistrum was used in dances and religious ceremonies particularly in the worship of the goddess Hathor. The U-shape of the Sistrum's handle and frame seem to resemble the face and horns of the cow goddess.¹³ The Sistrum was made of many materials such as metal, wood, and faience and museums were filled with many of them. It is possible that the artifact in study is a broken part of the Sistrum handle, as there are some pieces that can be compared to it such as:

(A) Part of a Faience Sistrum Handle displayed in the Catawiki Gallery (fig.4) with a cartouche of King Darius I of the Twenty-seventh Dynasty, height 5,5 cm.¹⁴


Ntr nfr Nb t3wy driwš (mry) p(t)h


The perfect god/good god Lord of the Two Lands, Darius I, (beloved of) Ptah.

(B) Part of a Faience Sistrum Handle on display at the National Museums Liverpool M.13560 (fig.5) with a cartouche of King Ahmose II of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, Measurements 53 mm x 30 mm.¹⁵


Ntr nfr hnm-ib-rꜥ s3-Rꜥ (iꜥh-ms(.w) s3-nt) ...
 The perfect god Khnum-ib-Ra son of Ra (Ahmose, son of Neith).

4.3. Part of a Mirror Handle

The Egyptians used mirrors for the first time in the Old Kingdom and the shape of the mirrors changed over time. In the Eighteenth Dynasty the traditional oval disk was replaced by a circular form. Handles appeared in a wide variety of shapes including images of animals, adolescent girls and papyrus flowers. Mirrors were made of polished copper or bronze with handles of wood or ivory and perhaps Faience.¹⁶

There are many mirrors made of bronze, copper and gold in various shapes and sizes.¹⁷ The vast majority of handles were made of metal with a few models made of wood and Faience, such as the Faience mirror handle inlaid with gold in the Louvre Museum E.25424 (fig.6) that belongs to Djehutynakht  *dhwtyn-ht* Lord of El-Bercheh from the Middle Kingdom: height 12,1cm and diameter 5,8cm.¹⁸

4.4. Part of Kohl Tube

Men and women in ancient Egypt used cosmetics and wore jewellery.

Therefore, there are various models and shapes for keeping Alkuhl and Cosmetics, which were made of various materials of stone, wood, glass, Faience and many other materials, among which we mentioned the model of the Kohl Tube of Faience in the Metropolitan Museum No. 26.7.910 (fig.7) inscribed with a cartouche of King Amenhotep III and Princess Sat-Amun. Height 14,4cm.¹⁹



*Ntr nfr Nb-M3^ct-R^c s3t nsw(t) hmt nsw(t) wrt
S3t-Imn ^cnh.ti*

The perfect god Neb-Maat-Ra, the Royal Daughter and Great Royal Wife, Sat-Amun, may she lives.

4.5. Part of a cylinder seal

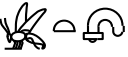



Seals were used as ornaments and tools for decoration or protection amulets in addition to their original function as a seal. Cylinder seals appeared in the form of buttons then the scarab seals, which was one of the most important forms of seals in ancient Egypt. Many seals that were found in tombs were used as Amulets for the deceased.²⁰ Scarab-shaped seals are a representation of the ancient Egyptian belief "Creation out of nowhere".²¹ Ancient Egyptians took the cylinder seal from Mesopotamia, where they were significantly influenced in their initial inception by both in terms of inscriptions, subjects and even the method of execution. However, ancient Egyptians developed their manufacture of seals to suit the environment and the ancient Egyptian spirit.²²

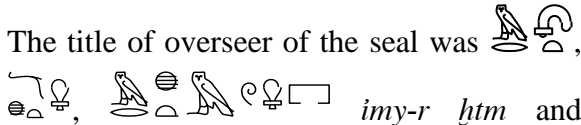


A seal is defined as a symbolic piece of metal, clay, glass or a precious

stone bearing a stamp writing or drawings and each one had a mark that distinguished it from the others according to people and regions. Since the Predynastic Period ancient Egyptians used seals as a protective Amulet.²³ Engravings on the seals, drawings, indicated hunting, grazing, and geometric, plant and animal shapes and various shapes from human and animal bodies.²⁴ Seals were considered personal belongings of individuals and served as a deed to determine personal ownership and to record various agreements. Seals were made of various stones and pierced from the middle to hang around the neck as a way to identify a person around others.²⁵

4.5.1. Seals in the ancient Egyptian language

Seals were known in the Ancient Egyptian Language as *sd3yt*,²⁶ and was written as while in the Old Kingdom ,²⁸ and also known as *htm*, Which was written in different forms ,²⁹ and also known as the word *dbwt*, which means seal or signet written in various inscriptions .³⁰ Seals were made of many easy-to-use materials such as clay, Faience, wood, bones, limestone and other stones.³¹ There was a profession associated with seals, which was the seal-maker *htmy*,³² and as a result several other jobs were associated with them.³³

The title of the seal-bearer of the king of lower Egypt appeared  *htmw-bity* or *sdwty-bity*³⁴ and was written in other forms ,³⁵ as well as the seal-bearer of Upper Egypt  *htmw-smw*. This title appeared during the reign of King Seth-Peribsen of the Second Dynasty.³⁶ The seal-bearer of the god  *htmw-ntr* and all those who held this title appeared in different time periods in ancient Egypt.³⁷

The title of overseer of the seal was , *imy-r htm* and assistant seal-bearer  *htmw hry-c*.³⁸ Most of the seals were made of clay  *sint* due to its availability in the Egyptian environment and ease of access.³⁹

4.5.2. Types of seals in ancient Egypt

Seals in ancient Egypt were divided into several types:

- Cylindrical-Shaped seals: They are the oldest types of seals that were commonly used in Ancient Egypt since Pre-dynastic period until the Middle Kingdom, and most of them were used as Amulets for protection,⁴⁰ and are considered the subject of study.
- Button-Shaped seals: They are easier to use than the Cylinder seal because ancient Egyptians used to write on papyrus and not on clay like Mesopotamia.⁴¹ Its use led to the emergence of the Scarab seal, which became a common seal after that.⁴²

- Scarab-Shaped seals: They replaced Cylinder seals by the end of the Middle Kingdom due to the large surface of the Scarab relative to that of the Cylinder seal on which the drawings and inscriptions were recorded in detail along with the decorative shapes. After the Eighteenth Dynasty, Cylinder seals became rare, although some appeared until the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.⁴³
- Various forms of seals: These seals didn't follow a specific shape some were Plaque seals with a flat base others with various ring shapes, or small models of men and animals, or sculptures in the form of various geometric shapes and many other models.⁴⁴

5. Conclusion

5.01. As a result of the cracking and loss of the upper part of this artifact and incompleteness of its hieroglyphic texts recorded on its body and base, it was difficult to determine its type, form and the purpose for which it was made for. This led way to several possibilities that could clarify the nature of this artifact when compared with similar artifacts.

5.02. Several possibilities have been put forward for various models of artifacts that may resemble the artifact in study to determine what it is. It may have been part of a Funerary cone, a part of a Sistrum handle, a part of a mirror handle, a part of a tube for keeping

Alkuhl and Cosmetics, or perhaps a part of a Cylinder seal, but only its base was used for the engraving process like a Button seal. It well may have been a seal, but it was used as an Amulet only and not for the official purpose of the seal itself, or perhaps for other purposes.

5.03. After assuming that the artifact in study is a part of a Funerary Cone due to its base inscriptions like funerary cones, it was found that Funerary Cones are of a conical shape, large in size, and engraved from the bottom only and not on the body. Thus, this assumption was refuted because there is an imperfect connection between Funerary Cones and artifact in study.

5.04. Initially it was assumed that there is a high possibility that the artifact in study is a part of a Sistrum handle, especially after studying similar Sistrum handles that supported this assumption that the artifact in study is more likely to be part of a Sistrum handle. However, after extensive research of a number of Sistrums, it was found that Sistrums handles were inscribed from the front and the back with identical columns of hieroglyphic writing, and sometimes inscribed from the front only. No inscriptions on the bottom of the base were found similar to that on the artifact in study. This weakened this hypothesis and lead to another assumption that perhaps the inscriptions below the base are a new

pattern or form in the manufacturing of Sistrums, but not for sure.

5.05. As for the possibility that the artifact in study was a part of a Mirror handle, similar mirror handles were studied and the findings were that mirrors were mostly made of metal materials, with an exception of few models of handles that were made of Wood and Faience. Furthermore, the handles appeared to have a variety of shapes and sizes that didn't seem to match the artifact in study.

5.06. As for the possibility that the artifact in study was part of a tube for storing Alkuhl and Cosmetics due to its cylindrical shape, findings revealed that tubes of Alkuhl and Cosmetics appeared in multiple shapes and sizes other than the Cylindrical shape, and they must have a hole from the top for storage, which was not found in the artifact in study, perhaps due to the loss of its upper part, which did not support this hypothesis .

5.07. As for the possibility that the artifact in study is part of a Cylinder seal, research reveals that seals had various uses besides using them as ornaments and tools for decoration or as protection amulets. Moreover, they were used to document property and marriage contracts, kings used them in political agreements, and to lock tombs. Furthermore, many seals that were inside tombs in Egypt were cylinder seals made using the bas-

relief technique and used as amulets for the deceased. Not only that, but the forms of seals in Ancient Egypt were divided into several types, Cylindrical seals, Buttons-Shaped seals, Scarab-Shaped seals, and other types of seals.

5.08. Cylinder seals were made of various materials such as clay, wood, Faience, bone, ivory, stones such as serpentine or steatite, and metal. Cylinder seals began to disappear by the end of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the New Kingdom. They were gradually replaced by the Scarab-Shaped seals due to the large surface of the Scarab relative to the seal on which the drawings and inscriptions were recorded, which did not prevent the appearance of Cylinder seals until the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty and thereafter.

5.09. After conducting an intensive study on seals, their forms and their use, it became clear that cylinder seals must be pierced on both sides to install the roll, which was not present in the artifact in study. This fact cast doubt on the possibility that the artifact in hand is part of a Cylinder seal in addition to the cracking and losing its upper part. This led to several possibilities that the artifact in hand:

- was part of a Cylinder seal and the two holes on both ends of the seal were erased due to the cracking of the artifact.
- part of a Cylinder seal that was used as an Amulet for the purpose of protection only and not for the purpose of official sealing; or
- part of a Cylinder seal, where its bottom part it was used for printing like a Button seal.

5.10. It is possible that the purpose of using this artifact in study was for religious or funerary purposes because of the specific text to the god Osiris, the master of Abydos, and the god Osiris who was the god of resurrection and reckoning and the head of the court of the dead.

5.11. Finally, findings leave us unsure about the nature of the artifact in study and the purpose of its manufacture. It leaves us with several assumptions that need to be further studied such as it being closer in shape to a Sistrum handle, being a new type of a Cylinder seal, or perhaps something else. The question remains about the nature and use of this piece but does not take away from its value.



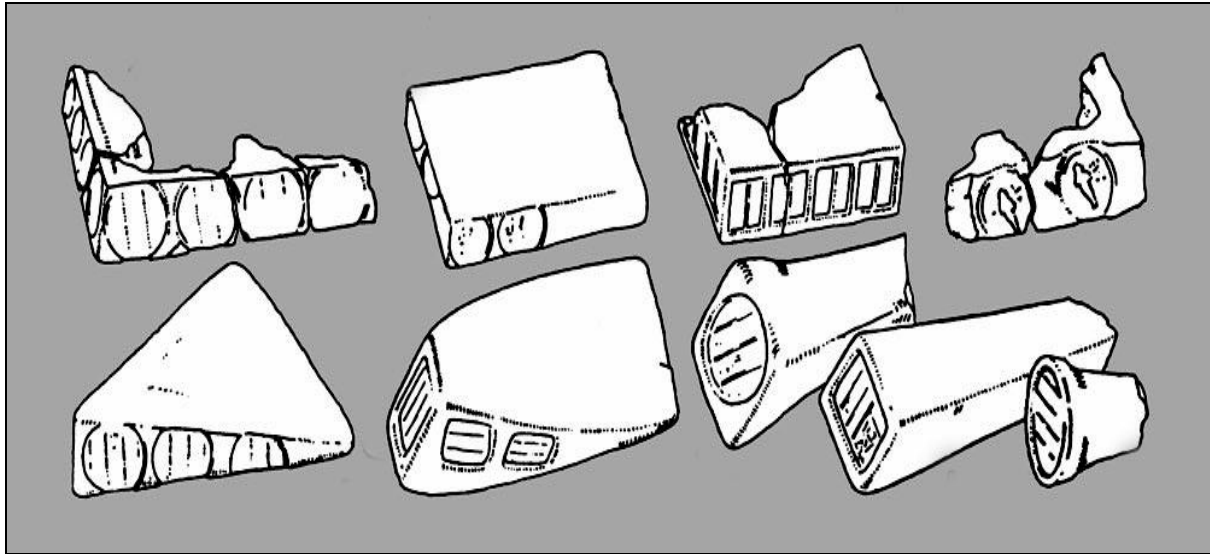
(Fig.1) The inscription of the four faces on the faience artifact body in Arab El-Hesn Antiquities Store No. 241.

(Photograph by the author and the drawing by Walid El Sayed)



(Fig.2) The base of the faience artifact in the Arab El-Hesn Antiquities Store No. 241.

(Photographed by the author - Drawn by Walid El Sayed)



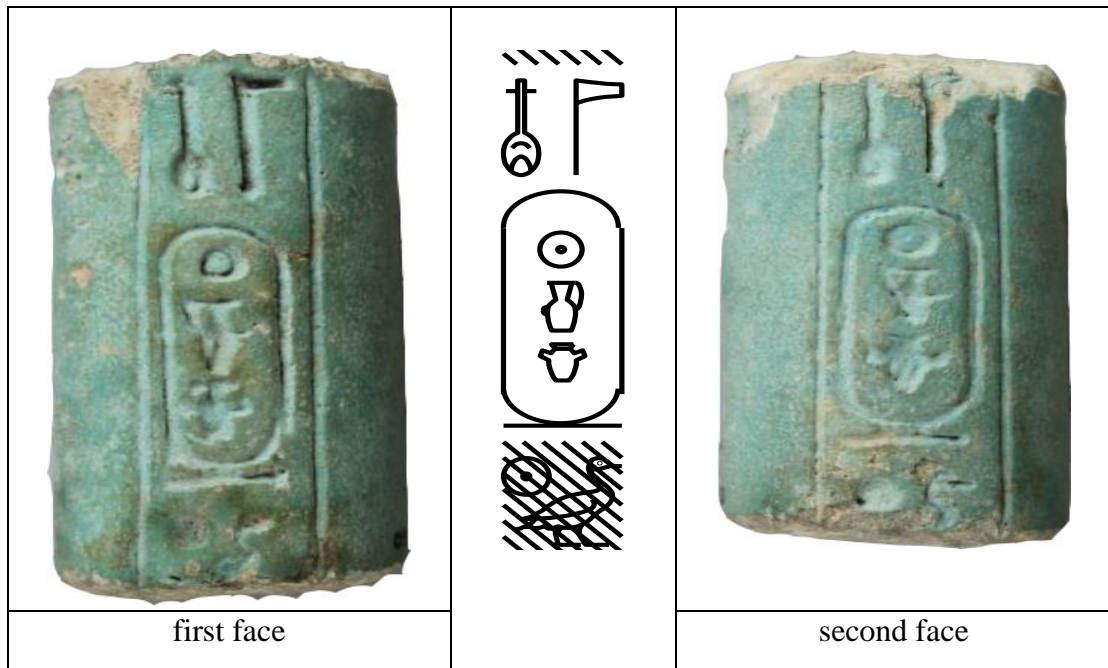
(Fig.3) Different shapes and models of Funeral cones.

Borchardt, L, Königsberger, O and H. Ricke, H., “Friesziegel in Grabbauten,” ZÄS 70, p. 28.



(Fig.4) Sistrum with a Faience Handle and cartouche of Darius I in Catawiki Gallery N.3326.

<https://2u.pw/lwkY4>



(Fig.5) Sistrum with faience Handle and cartouche of Ahmose II in National Museums Liverpool M.13560.
<https://2u.pw/vvtz3>



(Fig.6) Faience Mirror handle of Djehutynekht, Lord of el-Berchah In the Louvre Museum E.25424.
<https://2u.pw/5RqZZ>



(Fig.7) Kohl tube made of Faience and inscribed for Amenhotep III and Princess Sitamun in Metropolitan Museum N. 26.7.910,

<https://2u.pw/2YMWG>

Hayes, W.C., *The Scepter of Egypt: A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Vol. 2, The Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (1675–1080 B.C.)*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, (1990), p. 257.

6. Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| JEA | <i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. Egypt Explor. Soc. (Londres). Continue AREEF</i> |
| JNES | <i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Dept. of Near Eastern Lang. and Civilis., univ. de Chicago (Chicago, Ill.). Continue AJSL</i> |
| Urk | <i>Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums (Leipzig, Berlin)</i> |
| KRI | <i>Kitchen (K.A.), Ramesside Inscriptions, 1969-1990 (Oxford)</i> |
| WZKM | <i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes. Verb. der wissenschaftl. Gesellsch. Österreichs (Vienne, Autriche)</i> |
| Wb | <i>Erm an (A.), Grapow (H.), Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, 1926-1963 (Berlin)</i> |
| ZÄS | <i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde (Leipzig, Berlin). Cf. ÄZ</i> |

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