



Cafarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery CCM 348.001

Object Type: Faience Bezel Mould

Material: Clay/Pottery

Period: New Kingdom

Provenance: Egypt

Dimensions (approximately): Height= 2.8cm

Width= 1.3cm at top and bottom; 1.9cm at widest

Thickness= 0.8cm

Impression- Height= 1.8cm

Width= 1.1cm

Depth= 0.3cm at top and bottom; 0.5cm in the centre

Object Analysis by **Debby Mercer**

Description

This is a small clay object that has an impression of three rows of hieroglyphs on one side. The clay is a muddy grey colour, consistent with Nile silt fabric. There are no apparent signs of wear or damage. The object does not have signs of use or embellishment, suggesting its current state is as originally intended. There are no tool marks or fingerprints on the object. On the reverse, there are the letters EA64 written in red paint. The back of the object is not flat, however, both ends have been slightly flattened. The object is 2.8cm long and 1.3cm wide at each end. It bulges near the centre to 1.9cm and is 0.8cm thick. The impression is 1.8cm long and 1.1cm wide, with depth varying between 0.3cm at the top and bottom edge and 0.5cm in the middle.

The hieroglyphs in the impression are  *ht* (N27),  *h* (v28),  *r'* (N5) and  *nb* (V30);

however, the central panel should be looked at as a whole  and read as *nhh*.

The hieroglyphs translate to “Every Eternal Horizon”¹ and have bilateral symmetry along a vertical axis.

Analysis

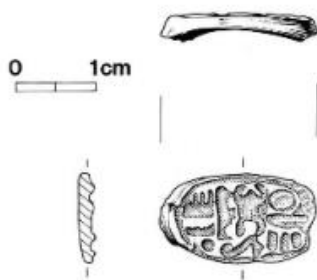
This object is a mould used to make a faience bezel for a ring. Faience is a man-made material comprised of crushed silica with small amounts of lime and an alkali, often natron². The resulting mixture creates a putty-like material that can be worked cold and subsequently hardened and finished in a kiln³. Though its malleability is similar to clay, it is notoriously

¹ Zinn, (2023), Pers. Comms.

² Nicholson & Pelthemburg, (2000), 186.

³ Nicholson, (2007), 138.

difficult to work⁴. It was used in Ancient Egypt to make scarabs, rings and amulets⁵. Faience has been used since the predynastic period, but moulding faience became more popular than modelling faience during the New Kingdom⁶. Though the impression is too shallow for metal, there is evidence of faience rings being made in similar, shallow moulds⁷. The size of this mould suggests it was used to create a bezel for a stirrup ring, as the oval is too long for a scarab, the most common faience object.



Rings were one of the most common types of faience jewellery produced⁸. Faience moulds do not need to be deep, as the material is pushed into the mould to create an impression⁹. The flat ends of the mould are likely a deliberate feature added during the making process to

make it easier to use. While it is worth noting that there is no residue in the impression, it is impossible to tell with this object whether this is due to treatment it received before coming to Cafarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery. The mould examined by Boyce not only had traces of a substance in the mould, but a faience counterpart was found nearby¹⁰ (Figure. 1). The mould (Figure.2) has not only a similarity of depth but also detail to the object from Cafarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery and the features on the mould are not seen on the faience bezel. Clearly, the details were not as important as the overall message.

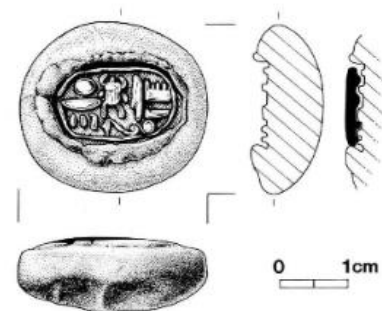


Figure 1: Bezel Mould (Boyce, (1989), 164)

⁴ Nicholson & Peltenburg, (2000), 187.

⁵ Riccardelli, (2017), para. 2.

⁶ Vanthuyne, (2013), 396.

⁷ Boyce, (1989), 165.

⁸ Vanthuyne, (2013), 402.

⁹ Boyce, (1989), 165.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 164.



Figure 3: Bezel Fragment
EC3024c, The Swansea Egypt
Centre.

Two faience bezel fragments at The Swansea Egypt Centre are similar to the mould. Object EC3024c (Figure. 3) has the hieroglyphs *nḥḥ nb*, just as can be seen on the mould from Cafarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery. The second bezel, EC3024d (Figure. 4), has the hieroglyph *ḥt* on its surface. These two fragments are clearly from different pieces as the colour is different.



Figure 4: Bezel Fragment EC3024d,
The Swansea Egypt Centre.

This object is an open-faced mould, a type of faience moulding developed during the New Kingdom¹¹. A wax master copy probably made the impression. The hieroglyph detail is unlikely to have been made from a finished object, like a metal or faience ring. As moulds became more popular in the New Kingdom, it became possible to mass-produce items for commemorative purposes¹². This mould could have been used to mass produce faience rings to commemorate a ritual or festival celebrating the afterlife and rebirth. The hieroglyphs are not specific to a person or event and suggest the object was a blessing or prayer for the afterlife as they reference the Egyptian belief of eternal rebirth after death¹³, so they could have been used on many occasions.

This object would not have been used in a mortuary context as it is part of a production process. Even the ring itself was probably not part of the funerary sphere. It is difficult to understand the role of faience in a mortuary context. In Ancient Egypt, faience was not considered an “imitation” material but more akin to an artificial “precious stone” and regarded in a similar way to lapis lazuli¹⁴. The distribution of faience objects in settlement

¹¹ Nicholson & Peltenburg, (2000), 82.

¹² Vanthuyne, (2013), 396.

¹³ Assmann, (2005), 147.

¹⁴ Nicholson & Peltenburg, (2000), 186.



Figure 5: Bezel Mould with Akhenaten's name E.GA.3605.1943, The Fitzwilliam Museum.

sites appears ubiquitous, with amulets found in temples and workman villages alike¹⁵; however, this is not reflected in the mortuary context. Though Tutankhamun was buried with over 200 faience rings alone, only a handful of faience objects have been found in workman cemeteries¹⁶.

The object is almost certainly

from the New Kingdom

Period. This type of open-faced mould became very popular during this period, and thousands of moulds have been found in numerous New Kingdom sites across Egypt¹⁷. Many comparable moulds bear the names of the Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, such as Akhenaten (Figure. 5) and



Figure 6: Bezel Mould with Tutankhamun's name 66.99.16, The Met Fifth Avenue.

Tutankhamun (Figure. 6). The hieroglyphs further re-enforce a New Kingdom date.

Representing “eternity” with the hieroglyph *nhh*. is a theme seen in other New Kingdom rings, including a signet ring belonging to Tutankhamun (Figure. 7) and a stirrup ring bearing the inscription “Long Live Khonsu, Lord of Eternity” (Figure. 8).



Figure 7: Signet Ring with Tutankhamun's Throne name 22.9.3, The Met Fifth Avenue.



Figure 8: Signet Ring with inscription, auctioned by Bonhams in 2012.

¹⁵ Vanthuyne, (2013), 398.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 397.

¹⁷ Nicholson & Peltenburg, (2000), 184; Vanthuyne, (2013), 396.

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Images

Figure 1 & 2: Boyce, (1989), 164.

Figure 3:

[https://egyptcentre.abasetcollections.com/Objects/Details/6673?SavedSelections=\\$Page-4\\$Ob-OSSC_403----](https://egyptcentre.abasetcollections.com/Objects/Details/6673?SavedSelections=$Page-4$Ob-OSSC_403----)

Figure 4:

[https://egyptcentre.abasetcollections.com/Objects/Details/6672?SavedSelections=\\$Page-5\\$Ob-OSSC_403-----](https://egyptcentre.abasetcollections.com/Objects/Details/6672?SavedSelections=$Page-5$Ob-OSSC_403-----)

Figure 5: <https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/object/58034>

Figure 6: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/558352>

Figure 7: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/549200>

Figure 8: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20021/lot/48/>