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Handle-attachments from nubia. A note

Information on the distinctive bronze handle-attachments in the shape of a pair of human hands has been painstakingly collected by Dr. E. Cuadrado in his *Repertorio de los Recipientes Rituales metalicos con "Asas de Manos" de la Península Ibérica* (Trabajos de Prehistoria XXI, Madrid 1966). There is little room to doubt that metal vessels with this form of handle, whether we regard them as braziers (braserillos in the older terminology) or 'ritual vessels' as does Cuadrado, are related to the distribution of Phoenician or Punic trade and influence in the Iberian peninsula. The southerly 'Tartessian' distribution speaks for itself; for the western 'Levantine' distribution (from Murcia, Alicante, Valencia, Teruel, Tarragona, Málaga, Ibiza) we can postulate Ibiza, Málaga or Cartagena as a probable distribution centre. The examples in the west central meseta (Sanchorreja, El Berrueco, La Osera) come as no surprise in view of the fact that such obviously Phoenician objects as the Sanchorreja belt-buckle, the Berrueco bronzes reached the regions of Avila and Salamanca respectively. Even for the outlying spot on the hand-handle distribution map at Santa Olaya, the celtic oppidum at the mouth of the River Mondego, a context of Phoenician trade is likely, since pottery of Carmona and later types was found there and is now in the museum at Figueira da Foz.

Although all the evidence thus points to a Phoenician origin for type I (tipo oriental) braziers and at least a Phoenician prototype for handles of type II, (tipo ibérico) the fact remains that there is no surviving example from Phoenicia, Cyprus or Carthage or the Phoenician colonies in Sardinia. Indeed the only oriental prototypes known to Cuadrado are a number of handles brought back by Prof. M. Almagro from a Cairo dealer who happened to be a Cypriot. He could not say for certain where the handles came from. With them were two fibulae of Cypriot

type. Inconclusive though this information is, it gains in value when the Cairo handles, which, unlike the majority of Spanish examples, do not consist of a single bar terminating in hands, but of two separate hand-shaped attachments, are compared with their similar examples hitherto overlooked from the Sanam graves in Napata, Nubia. Two of these 'cauldron handles' are illustrated in line drawings by F. Llewellyn Griffith in his report 'Oxford Excavations in Nubia' *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, X, 3-4, 1923, here reproduced figs. 1, 2. A third is not illustrated but is described on p. 92 of the report as consisting of a single bar terminating in hands, and thus must match the single-bar handles from Spain.

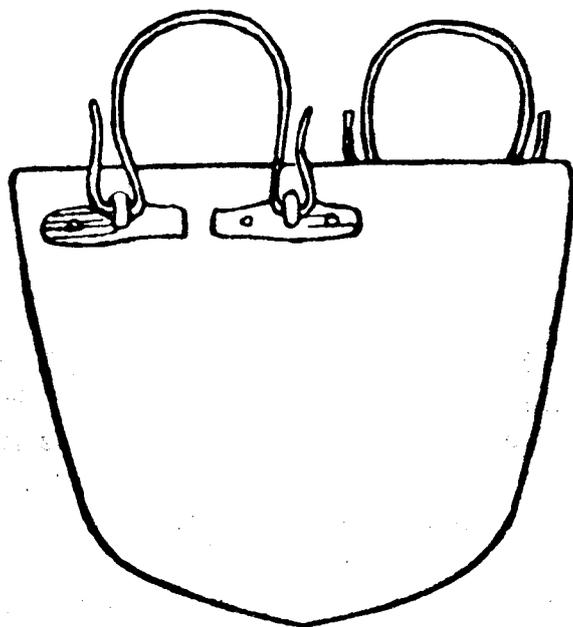


FIG. 1. Cauldron with swing handles from grave 662, Sanam, Nubia, after Griffith, pl. XVI, II.

The contents of the Sanam graves extend over the XXV-XXVI Dynasties. Griffith suggests the possibility of later material, but there is nothing Meroitic and, indeed, nothing of the Persian period. It is probable that the graves do not come down later than 550 B. C.

Unfortunately, the three graves of the Sanam cemetery which contained the cauldron handles are poor in content. In grave 851, parts of a cauldron were the only antiquities. In grave 921 the large and small cauldron handles consisting each of a single bar with two hand-shaped terminals and fixed to the body of the bronze vessel by four rivets, were accompanied only by a plain mirror and plain conical pottery beaker and undecorated hemispherical bronze bowl. However, nearby graves of similar type contained a scarab of Shabaka and a plaque of Tirhakah.

The cauldron in Grave 662B was associated with two bag-shaped alabastra of a type predominantly of XXV Dynasty date, and itself covered a green-glazed faience bowl (*ibid.*, pl. XXXII, 5) decorated with lanceolate leaves alternating with stems of *alopecuroides*. A 7th c. B. C. date for this bowl and several similarly decorated pieces of faience at Sanam is almost certain. The same decoration is

found on a small faience flask from the Regolini-Galassi tomb at Caere L. Pareti, *La Tomba Regolini-Galassi*, no. 390.4, an import direct from Egypt or from some faience workshop established in the Mediterranean, possibly at Rhodes. Fragments of faience vessels typical of the so-called Camirus faience occur in the rectangular tombs at Sanam, and it is interesting to note that a close parallel to the Regolini-Galassi flask with the same scale pattern on the upper part of the body, comes from the débris of the XXVI Dynasty 'Treasury' at Sanam, LAAA, IX, p. 122, pl. LVII, no. 10; and another, LAAA, X, pl. XXI, 10 from a rectangular grave there. Freiherr von Bissing accepted the significance of the connections between the Sanam and 'Rhodian' faience vessels in his *Zeit und Herkunft der in Cerveteri gefundenen Gefässe aus ägyptischer Fayence und glasiertem Ton*, p. 96, and it is fortunate therefore that Griffith's excavation report provides a close archaeological association between a cauldron and one of these faience pieces. Faience vessels belonging to a number of Egyptian and Egyptianising types, mostly however Camirus type, reached Etruria and Sicily in the 7th c. B. C. It cannot be shown that, with the specific exception of the pilgrim flasks and edgehog aryballoi, the flasks and pyxides continued to be manufactured, whether in Egypt, Rhodes or elsewhere, after 625 B. C. With regard to the Sanam faience, the banded design of small raised petals around vessels LAAA, IX, pls. LVII, 5; pl. XXXII, 7, 8, 10 and X, pl. XXI, 7 finds a parallel in the faience vessels in the 7th c. graves at Fortetsa in Crete, F. Brock, *Fortetsa*, nos. 1158, 1159, (compare 1159 with the faience bottle LAAA, X, pl. XXXII, 7 from the temple treasury). The vase LAAA, IX, 3-4 pl. LVII, 6, has a close parallel in a 7th c. grave at Ialysos, Rhodes, *Clara Rhodos*, III, p. 68, no. 2, fig. 58.

Thus, the existing indications, slight though they are, place the metal cauldron handles in the XXV Dynasty period. The drawing given by Griffith pl. XVI (here

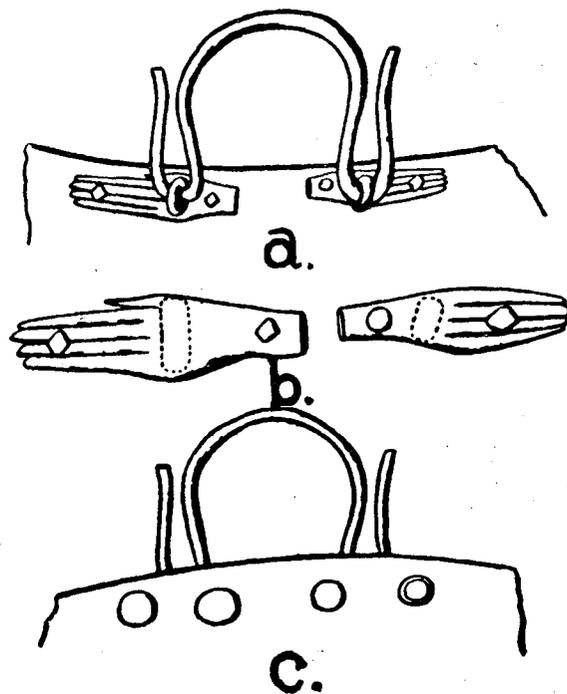


FIG. 2. *Cauldron handles from Sanam, Nubia, after Griffith, pl. LXVI, 4.*

fig. 2) is said to be 'a restoration of the crushed example' in grave 662. He gives no measurements for this example, so that it is impossible to guess how much of the body survived in order to make a restoration possible. It is noted, however, that the smaller cauldron of grave 921 was 15 cm. high and 20 cm. in diameter. It appears then that enough survived to make a satisfactory restoration and to indicate that the cauldron shape conformed with that of both bronze and pottery bowls from the Sanam rectangular tombs. This appears to rule out any immediate comparison with the differently shaped Punic braziers (except possibly that from Alicante, although 'restoration' of this is suspect) and certainly denies the possibility that these vessels are imports from Cyprus or Phoenicia, even though the general archaeological context besides the 'Camirus' faience, contains some Cypro-Phoenician pottery. The flask LAAA, X, pl. XXXI, 8 is a close relative of Cypriot Black-on-Red ware and for the red slipped and burnished flasks (*ibid.*, p. 97f, pl. XVII, VIb, VIc) there are parallels at Beth Pelet and Gaza, e. g. W. M. F. Petrie, *Beth Pelet I*, pls. XL, XLI. This suggests a climate of trade with the Cypro-Phoenician world which would make the spread of techniques possible. We must also include the degree of contact between Carthage and Egypt in the XXV Dynasty as shown in the faience pacotille of the Carthaginian graves. I refer to such openwork faience pendants as nos. 925-9 and 1914-15 of J. Vercoutter's, *Les objets égyptiens etc. du mobilier funéraire carthaginoise*, and LAAA, X, pl. XXXIX, 11.

The present evidence, however, suggests that the hand-handle attachments are originally Egyptian, which might well account for the Egyptian-style drawing of hands of the earlier and finer examples from Carmona and Aliseda. Chronological primacy must also be given to Egypt in the matter of the swinging 'omega' handle which was used on the Sanam cauldrons and the Punic braziers. This form of handle, simple though it is, was used on situlae from the XIX Dynasty onwards. On bowls, a XIX Dynasty vessel from Denderah, W. M. F. Petrie, *Denderah*, 1898, p. 65 pl. XXIV, n. 7, is the earliest example of the principle (Plate I C, D). This vessel is now in the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (n. 4720) and I am grateful to Joan W. Gartland for checking the details for me. Here the handle-plates have terminals in the shape of roughly drawn palmettes. There is nothing foreign about these attachments: good parallels are provided by the handle-plates of the silver jug in the XIX Dynasty Tell Basta treasure and 2 bronze bowls from Lisht in the Metropolitan Museum, *Bull. Metr. Mus. Art*, Dec. 1922, p. 15, fig. 18, which H. Winlock dated to the XXII Dynasty on the basis of a bronze mirror with ivory handle found with them. Attention should also be drawn to the two gold dishes of the treasure from Tell Basta, C. C. Edgar, *Le Musée égyptien*, II, p. 101 ff pls. XLVII, XLVIII, which have omega swing handles each attached by two bars with lotus terminals. The upper rims above the handles are decorated with gold-capped studs. It appears then that the handle-bar and swinging handle are predominantly of late second and early first millennium date in Egypt. The idea of providing handle attachments in the shape of hands may well have arisen there in the XVIII Dynasty, since tongs 'modelled in the shape of hands with bracelets' from El Amarna are described by H. Frank-

fort and J. D. S. Pendlebury in *The City of Akhenaten II*, p. 19 and elsewhere. A small bronze hand, *ibid.*, pl. XXXIII, 4, may be one of them.

Egyptian examples of the omega handle are, however, rare and it was certainly due to the Syro-Phoenician metalworking tradition that it was disseminated in the Mediterranean. At Nimrud these handles are used on the engraved "Phoenician" bowl, H. A. Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh*, II, pl. 52 and, in Phoenician tradition, on a Cretan orientaling bowl from Arkades, D. Levi, *Annario*, X, p. 377 ff, fig. 491a. A related tradition, in which the handle attachment takes the shape of a trumpet-ended bar, became established in Cyprus though there are no examples there demonstrably earlier than 600 B. C. From Sinjirli comes a single handle attachment, F. von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli*, V, p. 207, pl. 49, 0, and from Assur one with a bar attachment with flower-like terminals, *ibid.*, p. 107. Both can be assigned to the 8th c. B. C. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean there are omega handles without handle attachments. Lindos and Delphi may be mentioned, but they are not common. Perhaps a more significant example for the study of the vessels from the Iberian peninsula is the flat dish of engraved bronze from Etruria in the Louvre discussed by M. Villard, *Monuments Piot*, 48, 2 (1956) p. 25ff, pl. III, which is Rhodian with oriental traits. Swing handles from wooden coffins are common in the graves of Sidon. These were attached to the wood by looped pins: the exact equivalent is found at Carthage (R. P.), A. Delattre, *La néc. punique voisine de Ste. Monique*, 1898, p. 15 figs. 25, 26 and it is apparent that the swing handle from one of the early 7th century Phoenician graves at Almuñécar belonged to a wooden box rather than a metal vessel, as suggested by J. M. Blázquez, *Tartessos y los Orígenes de la Colonización fenicia*, p. 106, pl. 28B and M. Pellicer, *Exc. en la necr. púnica "Laurita" del Cerro de San Cristóbal etc.* pl. XIX, 4; for the remains of pins appear to be attached to it.

This short note on the Sanam handles must thus remain without significant conclusion. It is offered merely for the purpose of widening the context of this obviously traditional Ibero-Punic handicraft and to supplement the documentation in Cuadrado's admirable *Repertorio*. It does at least suggest a caution in regarding the handles with separated hand attachments as degenerated Iberian copies of the "Phoenician" single bar attachments. Griffith indicates that the most importante Sanam cauldron, that from grave 921 was intended for Manchester Museum. I thank Mr. T. Burton Brown for his enquiries on my behalf and the conclusion that the contests of this grave are not in Manchester. I am also grateful to Professor L. Shinnie of the University of Khartoum and to Dr. Thabit Hasan, Director of Antiquities of the Soudan, who were able, in the upheaval of museum-shifting, to locate and photograph for me one of the Sanam handles in Khartoum (Plate I, A, B) apparently one of the handles from grave 662.

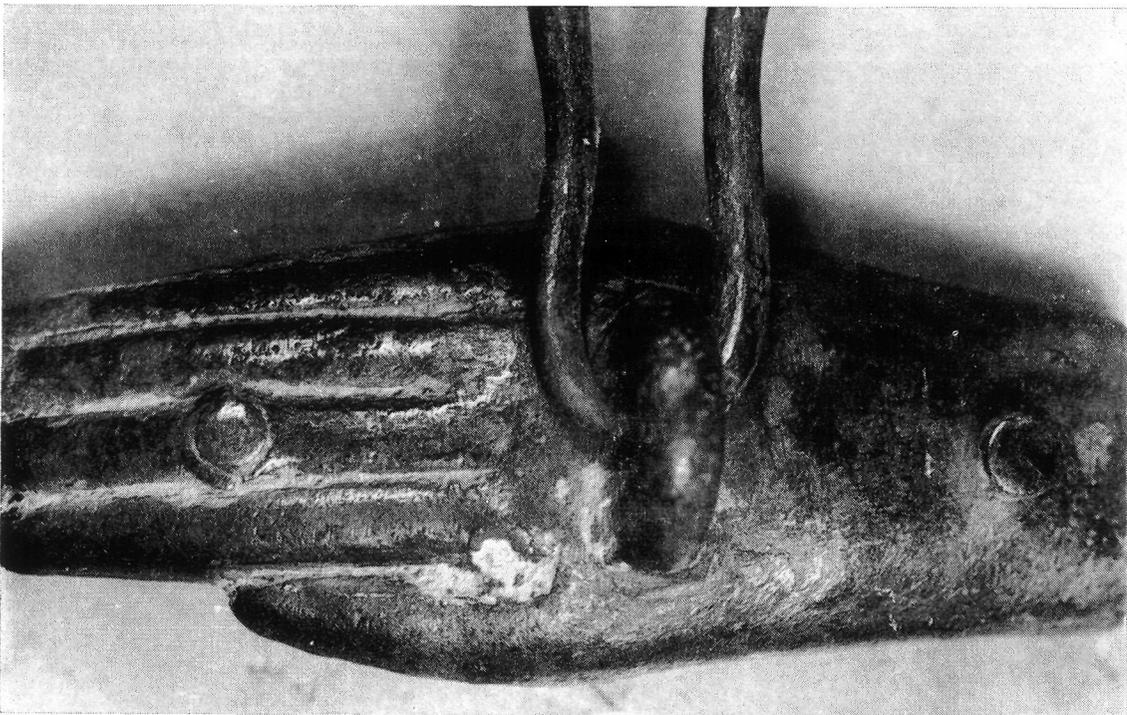
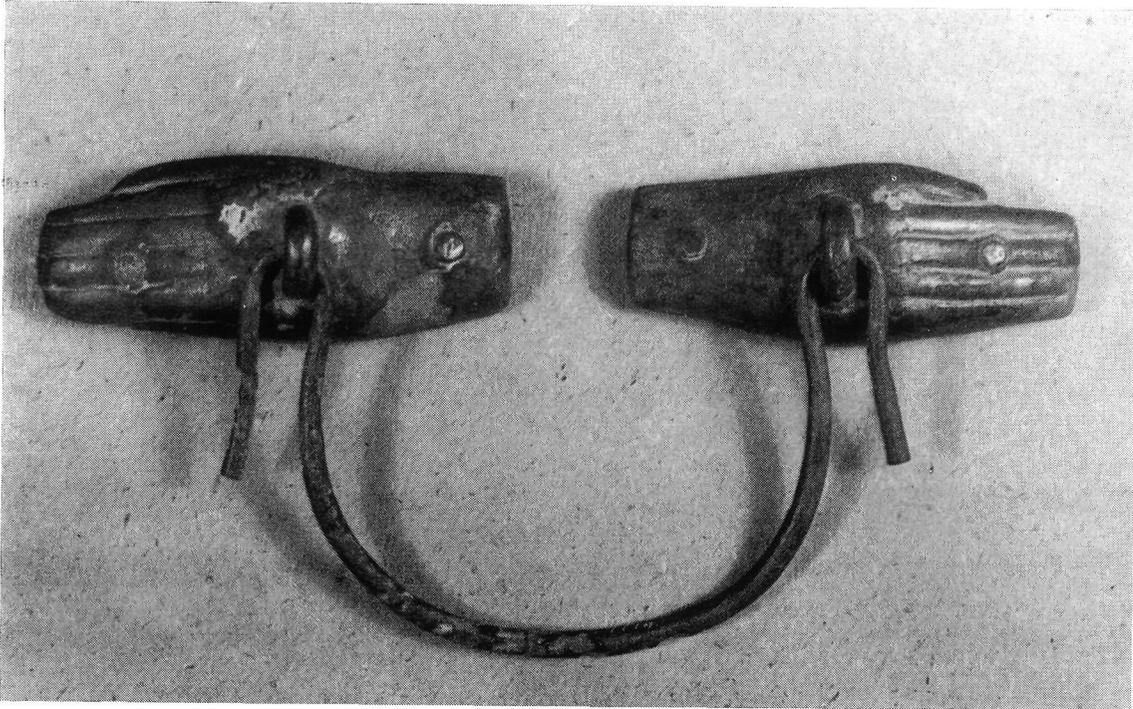


Plate I, A, B. *Handle with attachments, and detail, Sanam, Sudan Department of Antiquities.*

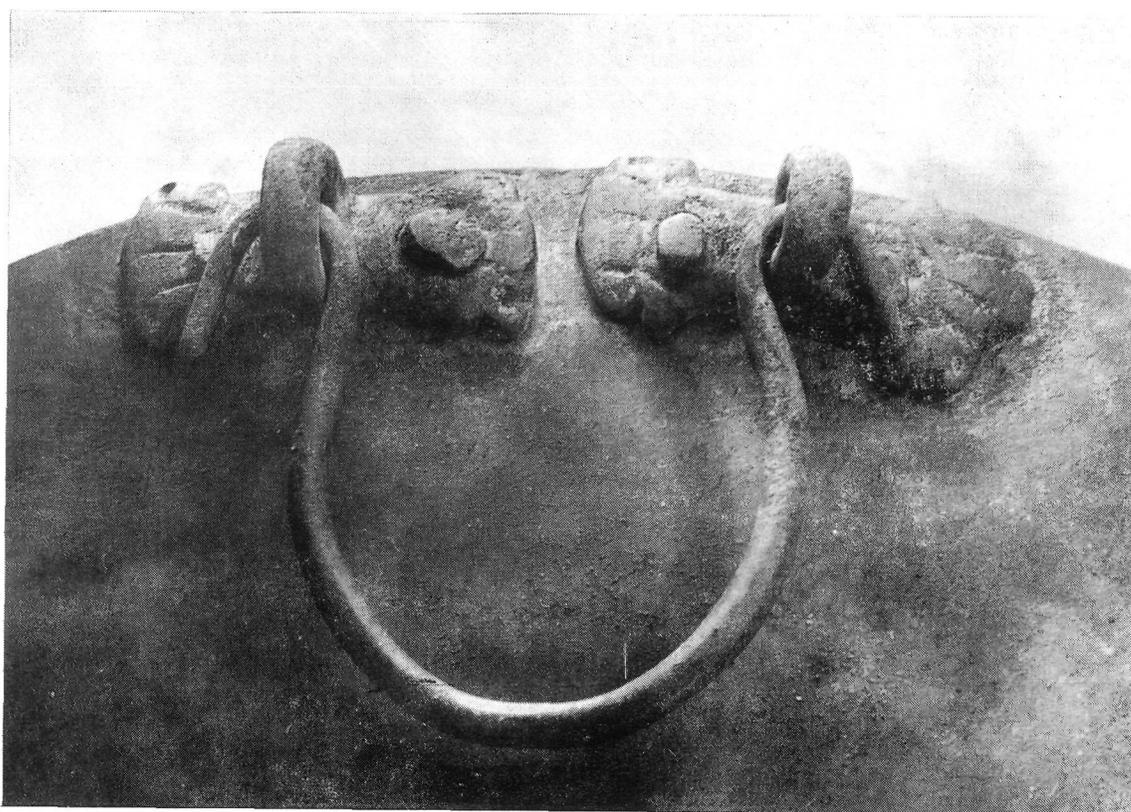
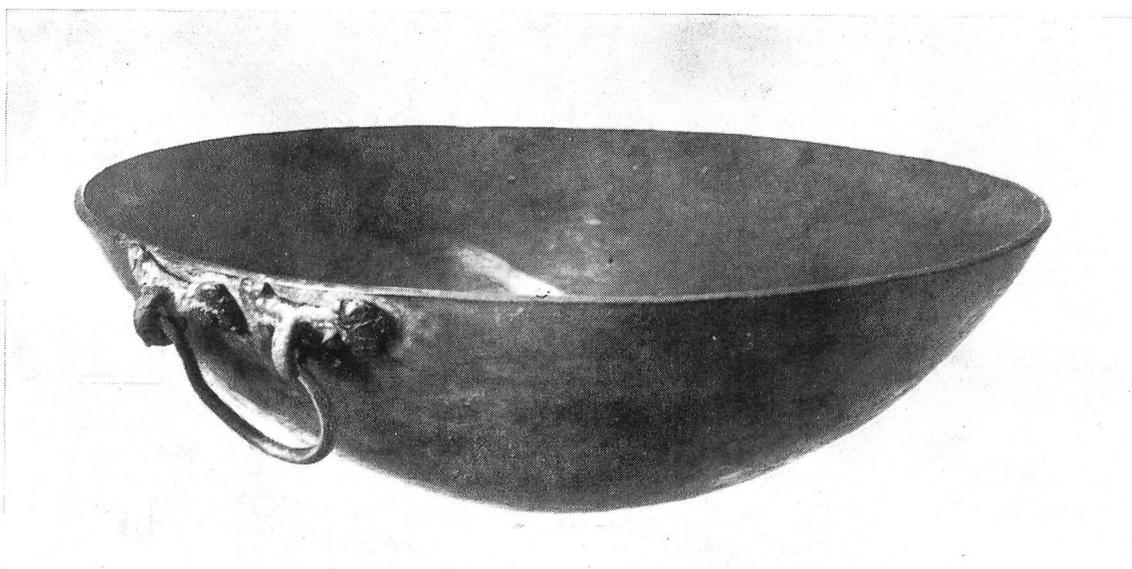


Plate I, C, D. Bronze bowl from Denderah, Egypt, with detail of handle. Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.