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Figured Ostraca from Dra Abu el-Naga (TT 11 – 12)

Gemma Menéndez*

Abstract

The aim of this article is to present an unpublished selection of eighteen figured ostraca that were found in Dra Abu el-Naga in the archaeological works carried out by the Spanish-Egyptian mission outside the tomb-chapels of Djehuty and Hery (TT 11-12). This collection of ostraca gathers a wide variety of designs that make it highly interesting.

Introduction

Gangs of trained craftsmen were in charge of designing, cutting and decorating the temples, royal tombs and private tomb-chapels in the Theban west bank during the New Kingdom. Most of the information about these workers was documented in ostraca, fragments of pottery vessels and limestone chips which were used as writing and drawing supports. These materials were inexpensive compared to papyrus and, thus, were used for casual notes and preliminary sketches. The limestone chips resulting from the cutting of rock-tombs had the natural colour of the wall where the final work of art would be drawn or carved afterwards. The shards of pottery were within everyone's reach among the broken remains of the vessels and were the main support for texts and schematic sketches. In general, red and/or black ink was chosen for the sketches because these were the colours of the scribe's palette. In some cases, the range of colours was extended to emphasize the details depending on the purpose of the drawing. The figured ostraca contain preliminary drawings, sketches and free artistic expressions which were not necessarily done by professional artists. Some of them have religious value by themselves in such a way that they were used like stelae or votive objects.¹ The main subjects are: animals, flora, portraits, divine and human figures, satirical compositions, scenes from tombs and geometrical motifs. All together constitute a wide collection for a plentiful Theban documentation that covers all the history of the necropolis.

The crew of the necropolis who dwelled in the village of Deir el-Medina in the New Kingdom focused their work on the royal tombs and, occasionally, on the design of those belonging to a prominent official of the administration. Most of the information relating to the organization of the work, deliveries, letters, litigations, designs and preliminary sketches come from Deir el-Medina. However, this is not the only source of information. The discovery of ostraca in several areas of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna inform us about the existence of other work forces which took part in building and designing the memorial temples and the private tomb-chapels in the necropolis. These crews apparently were not related to the workmen of Deir el-Medina, except on rare occasions, and they also left traces of their labour on inscribed and figured ostraca. The earliest sources come from Deir el-Bahri, where Winlock discovered a large number of ostraca that reported on the organiza-

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¹ See for example, ostrakon TR 23.2.22.1, where Amun is represented like a ram, and ostrakon JE 43660 dedicated to Anoukis, both done by the foreman Hay; A. Minault-Gout, *Carnets de Pierre. L'art des ostraca dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 2002, 57, 64–65, pl. 39, 43. Another interesting example is the ostrakon Stockholm, Medelhavsmuseet. Inv. MM 14011 depicting Anoukis; G. Andreu (ed.), *Les artistes de Pharaon. Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois*, 2002, 273 (cat. 221b).

tion of the work during the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III,² but they also include sketches, plans and building designs.³

A Selection of figured ostraca from Dra Abu el-Naga (TT 11-12)

A Spanish-Egyptian mission has been working at Dra Abu el-Naga outside the tomb-chapels of Djehuty and Hery (TT 11-12),⁴ dating to the reign of Hatshepsut-Thutmosis III and to the reign of Amenhotep I, respectively. During the seasons carried out between 2002–2007, 43 figured ostraca were discovered. They were probably produced by the crew responsible for cutting and decorating the private tomb-chapels at Dra Abu el-Naga, or by those who stopped by in this northern area of the Theban necropolis for one reason or another. This area was a royal cemetery in the Second Intermediate Period,⁵ and from the XVIIIth Dynasty onwards was heavily occupied by tomb-chapels of the elite and also of members of the middle and lower classes.⁶

Some ostraca can be dated through stylistic criteria and the topic chosen, others due to the archaeological context, and others remain difficult to date with accuracy. The use of this area as cemetery from the Middle Kingdom down to the graeco-roman period produced a great amount of debris and removed and mixed up the material in such a way that make the archaeological dating quite difficult. Most of the ostraca were found in superficial levels, among the debris accumulated in the area as a result of three reasons: firstly, many tombs were reused in the Third Intermediate Period and later; secondly, the activity of thieves and archaeologist have caused repeated movements of the debris; and finally the torrential rains have carried down the remains of other tombs located higher up the hill.

The aim of this article is to present a selection of the figured ostraca that were found in the archaeological works right outside the tomb-chapels TT 11-12. The find spot of each ostrakon is indicated at the first line of its entry and can be located in the plan of fig. 1.

1. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 6-E 01 (06/30/1). (Figs. 2, 20)

Limestone. 13.6 x 16.4 x 5 cm.

New Kingdom.

A sketch of an owl painted in black ink. It is the hieroglyphic sign for the phoneme /m/.

2. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 4-E 01 (06/13/2). (Figs. 3, 21)

Pottery. 14.6 x 9.6 x 10.7 cm.

New Kingdom.

Preliminary drawing painted in black and red ink on both sides. On the *recto*, the outer side of the vase, a goose and another bird flying are depicted; both figures are related to marsh scenes. On the

² H. E. Winlock, in: BMMA 18, 1932, dec. II, 11–39; id., in: BMMA 19, 1924, dec. II, 5–33; id., in: BMMA 23, 1928, feb. II, 3–58; dic. II, 3–28; id., in: BMMA 25, 1930, dec. II, 3–28; id., in: BMMA 27, 1932, march II, 4–37. Only a part of them has been published in W. C. Hayes, *Ostraka and name stones from the tomb of Sen-Mût (No. 71) at Thebes*, 1942; id., in: JEA 46, 1960, 29–52; P. Dorman, *The Tombs of Senenmut. The Architecture and Decoration of Tombs 71 and 353*, 1991, 87–88.

³ Hayes, *Ostraka and name stones from the tomb of Sen-Mût*, 9–16, pl. I–VIII; Dorman, *Tombs of Senenmut*, 87–88, pl. 46.

⁴ J. M. Galán, in: J.-C. Goyon / C. Cardin (eds.), *IXe Congrès International des Egyptologues*, 2006, 779–789 id., in: JEA 93, 2007, 95–116; J. M. Galán / F. Borrego, in: *Memnonia* 17, 2007, 195–208.

⁵ H. E. Winlock, in: JEA 10, 1924, 217–277; M. Dewachter, in: RdE 36, 1985, 43–66; D. Polz, *Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Dra' Abu el-Naga*, 2003.

⁶ F. Kampp, *Die thebanische Nekropole: Zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der XVIII. bis zur XX. Dynastie*, Theben 13, 1996.

verso, a duck flying, similar to hieroglyphic sign /p3/, and the hindquarters of an animal, which is difficult to identify are represented.

3. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 13-F 01 (03/8/2). (Fig. 4)

Pottery. 6.8 x 10.5 x 2.2 cm.

New Kingdom.

Drawing painted in black ink. Part of three figures have been depicted, but only one of them, the head of a falcon, can be recognized. This bird, linked to Horus, appears in other sketches as a hieroglyphic sign.⁷

4. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 14-E 01 (03/26/1). (Fig. 5)

Limestone. 7.5 x 15 x 2.3 cm.

Undated.

Drawing of a fish painted in red ink.

5. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 12-G 20A (05/20/2). (Fig. 6)

Pottery. 7.7 x 11 x 1 cm.

New Kingdom.

Preliminary sketch in black, with the goddess Hathor represented as a cow wearing the *menat* necklace. Hathor was called “Mistress of the West” and “Mistress of the mountain” as patron of the Theban necropolis.⁸ Her main worship place was Deir el-Bahri, but she also attained great importance at Deir el-Medina. There are many representations of the goddess as a cow among the expressions of personal piety during the XIXth Dynasty, in tomb-chapels and in stelae coming from Deir el-Medina and from other places.⁹

6. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 14-F 01 (03/12/2). (Fig. 7)

Limestone. 7.00 x 6.5 x 2 cm.

Undated.

Drawing with the figure of an animal in black, apparently a jackal or another canine.

7. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 15-C 80 (07/3/2). (Figs. 8, 22)

Pottery. 7 x 8.8 x 1.1 cm.

New Kingdom. XVIIIth Dynasty (?).

Drawing of a lotus flower in black. This flower is connected with the funerary scenes of the New Kingdom where the deceased and the banquet guests hold and smell a lotus. It is a cyclical rebirth symbol, due to the fact that it usually closes up and submerges under the water during the night, and when the sun rises it emerges and opens again.¹⁰

⁷ O. UC 33203; A. Page, *Ancient Egyptian Figured Ostraca in the Petrie Collection*, 1983, 46, fig. 67. O. IFAO 2996; J. Vandier d'Abbadie, *Catalogue des ostraca figurés de Deir el Médineh II* (4), 1959, 219, pl. 149. O. BM EA 29561; R. Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca*, 2002, 27, pl. 92.

⁸ See, E. Blumenthal, *Kuhgöttin und Gottkönig. Frömmigkeit und Staatstreue auf der Stele Leipzig Ägyptisches Museum 5141*, 2000; G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 1993.

⁹ Amenemone (TT 277); J. Vandier d'Abaddie, *Deux tombes ramessides à Gournet-Mourraï*, 1954, pl. 15.1. Ramose (TT 250); B. Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1926), 1927, pl. 7. Stela BM EA 555; M. L. Bierbrier, *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc. Part 12*, 1993, 12, pl. 30–31 (12); Andreu, *Les artistes de Pharaon*, 2002, 286–287. The proximity to Deir el-Bahri and the possible existence of a late-Ramesside sanctuary at Dra Abu el-Naga related to Hathor could explain the find of this ostrakon; see, U. Rummel, in: EA 14, 1999, 6.

¹⁰ L. Manniche, in: N. Strudwick / J. H. Taylor (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis. Past, Present and Future*, 2003, 43.

8. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: debris falling into the inner chamber of TT 11 (06/30/1). (Fig. 9)
Pottery. 7.5 x 7.8 x 10.5 cm.

New Kingdom.

A white plaster was first applied over the pottery and then the drawing was done. Two standing figures are represented painted in black and red. They are part of a scene which is broken. It is difficult to ascertain what the scene is about because the figures are schematized and much damaged.

9. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 10-G 01 (05/13/2). (Fig. 10)

Pottery. 8.5 x 10 x 0.9 cm.

New Kingdom.

Drawing of an uncertain funerary scene. This representation could be identified with an offering table with baskets, round loaves and lotus flowers.

10. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 7-F 01 (06/6/2). (Fig. 11)

Pottery. 19 x 10.5 x 1 cm.

New Kingdom. Early XVIIIth Dynasty.

Sketch painted in red ink with a funerary scene organized in two registers separated by horizontal lines. The lower one reproduces an offering procession where one of the bearers carries the foreleg of an ox (*hps*), and the other one an incense burner. The upper register depicts the end of the procession of the burial ceremony and the meeting of the cortege with the *mww*-dancers¹¹ in the necropolis. The funerary cortege is headed by a priest or relative of the deceased that salutes the *mww*-dancers. Three strokes beside the single *mww*-dancer figure indicate that three similar figures would be depicted in the definitive composition as it is customary in the tomb scenes. Three or four *mww*-dancers are represented in some tomb-chapels of the early XVIIIth Dynasty, such as Hery (TT 12)¹², Tetiky (TT 15)¹³, Nebamun (TT 17)¹⁴ and Ineni (TT 81).¹⁵ Behind the *mww*-dancer there is a priest performing some kind of ritual. Scenes included in the iconographic repertoire of wall paintings are depicted in many Theban ostraca, like the one discovered in the courtyard of the tomb-chapel of Ahmose (TT 121)¹⁶ with a representation of the dragging of the canopic chest, another one from the surroundings of the tomb-chapel of Senamon (TT 252)¹⁷ with the processional boat crossing the river to the other bank, and the ostrakon from tomb-chapel of Senneferi (TT 99) with the representation of an Opening of the Mouth ritual.¹⁸

11. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 7-E 01 (06/15/2). (Figs. 12, 23)

Pottery. 8.4 x 8.7 x 1.2 cm.

New Kingdom. Early XVIIIth Dynasty.

Sketch painted in black, depicting part of a funerary scene with the god Osiris holding a *w3s*-scepter, the *hk3*-scepter and the flagellum. Before him, Anubis is holding the sign for "life", *nh*.

¹¹ H. Junker, in: MDAIK 9, 1940, 1–39; H. Altenmüller, in: SAK 2, 1975, 1–37; id., in: LÄ IV, 271.

¹² PM I (1), 24 (1–2); G. Menéndez, in: Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología 15, 2005, 45–48, 65, fig. 19.

¹³ PM I (1), 27 (2–3); N. de Garis Davies, in: JEA 11, 1925, pl. V.

¹⁴ PM I (1), 31 (11); T. Säve-Söderbergh, Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs, 1957, pl. XXV.

¹⁵ PM I (1), 162 (17); E. Dziobek, Das Grab des Ineni: Theben Nr. 81, AV 68, 1992, pl. 25 (b).

¹⁶ Hayes, Ostraka and name stones from the tomb of Sen-Mūt, 11 (10).

¹⁷ Hayes, Ostraka and name stones from the tomb of Sen-Mūt, 10–11 (8).

¹⁸ N. Strudwick, in: Memnonia 11, 2000, 251, pl. LVII B.

This scene is parallel to one in the tomb-chapel of Hery (TT 12),¹⁹ showing Osiris and Anubis in the Hereafter, standing up and holding those same objects.

12. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 8-E 01 (06/9/2). (Figs. 13, 24)

Pottery. 6.2 x 4.8 x 0.8 cm.

New Kingdom. Early XVIIIth Dynasty.

Sketch painted in black, depicting part of a funerary scene. Two standing up male figures are drawn without arms. They remind of “the gods of the great doors” in charge of guarding the access to the Hereafter. These figures can be found in some tomb-chapels of the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty, like that of Hery (TT 12),²⁰ Nebamun (TT 17),²¹ Paheri (el-Kab)²² and Rekhmire (TT 100).²³

13. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 13-G 20 (04/14/2). (Figs. 14, 25)

Pottery. 8.4 x 5.5 x 1.1 cm.

New Kingdom. XVIIIth Dynasty.

Sketch done in red with part of an offering scene. The bearer carries in his hands a small statue, probably of the deceased. A similar representation can be found in a scene in the doorway of the passage of the tomb-chapel of Suemniut (TT 92).²⁴

14. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 11-E 00 (02/20/2). (Figs. 15, 26)

Pottery. 4.5 x 8 x 0.7 cm.

Undated.

Drawing painted in black. Part of a male figure depicted with a false beard and a wig, probably to be identified with the deceased.

15. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 6-E 02 (06/12/2). (Fig. 16)

Limestone. 10.00 x 4.8 x 4.5 cm.

New Kingdom. XVIIIth Dynasty (?)

Sketch painted in red with a representation of a male figure wearing a long robe. His left arm is stretched down along the body and the right hand holds a staff. The vertical strokes painted beside the figure could be related with its measurements. This figure reminds of some representations of statues from the tomb-chapels of the XVIIIth Dynasty, as in the Opening of the Mouth ritual of the tomb-chapel of Rekhmire.²⁵ A second nearby example can be found in the inner chamber of the tomb-chapel of Djehuty (TT 11).²⁶

16. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 8-G 01 (05/26/1). (Fig. 17)

Pottery. 8.5 x 8.00 x 1.2 cm.

Undated.

Drawing painted in black of a human face that could be the representation of a Nubian.²⁷

¹⁹ Unpublished.

²⁰ Menéndez, in: *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología* 15, 2005, 41–42.

²¹ Säve-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs*, pl. XXV.

²² J. J. Tylor / F. Ll. Griffiths, *The Tomb of Paheri at el Kab*, 1894, pl. V.

²³ N. de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-rēʿ at Thebes*, 1943, pl. LXXXVII.

²⁴ PM I (1), 189 (13); Baud, *Les dessins ébauchés de la nécropole thébaine*, pl. XXIII.

²⁵ Davies, *Tomb of Rekh-mi-rēʿ*, pls. XCVII–CII, CIV, CVII, CIX–CXII.

²⁶ Unpublished.

²⁷ Some images of foreigners can be seen in ostrakon Stockholm Medelhavsmuseet Inv.14021; B. E. J. Peterson, in: *Medelhavsmuseet Bulletin* 7–8, 1973, 92–93, pl. 44 (78).

17. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 5-E 01 (06/4/2). (Fig. 18)

Limestone. 23 x 14.8 x 6.5 cm.

Undated.

Schematic drawing done in black ink of a human face. In the east wall of the tomb of Sesostris III²⁸ there are many graffiti dated after the Ramesside Period with caricatures similar to the face drawn on this ostrakon.

18. Ostrakon TT 11-12, find: 9-F 16 (07/1/2). (Figs. 19, 27)

Limestone. 29 x 21 x 7.5 cm.

Undated.

Line drawing painted with black ink. Ceilings of Theban tomb-chapels of the New Kingdom have this same kind of geometrical line design, a sort of rectilinear spiral, like in the tomb-chapels of Ineni (TT 81)²⁹ and Senenmut (TT 71).³⁰

²⁸ D. Arnold, *The Pyramid Complex of Senwosret III at Dahshur Architectural Studies*, 2002, 42, pls. 23c–27a.

²⁹ Dziobek, *Grab des Ineni*, pl. 19 (c).

³⁰ Dorman, *Tombs of Senenmut*, pl. 27 (b). An ostrakon with a similar geometrical pattern is Brussels Inv. E. 6780 a; M. Werbrouck, in: *Bulletin des musées royaux d'art et d'histoire* 25, 1953, 94, fig. 2.

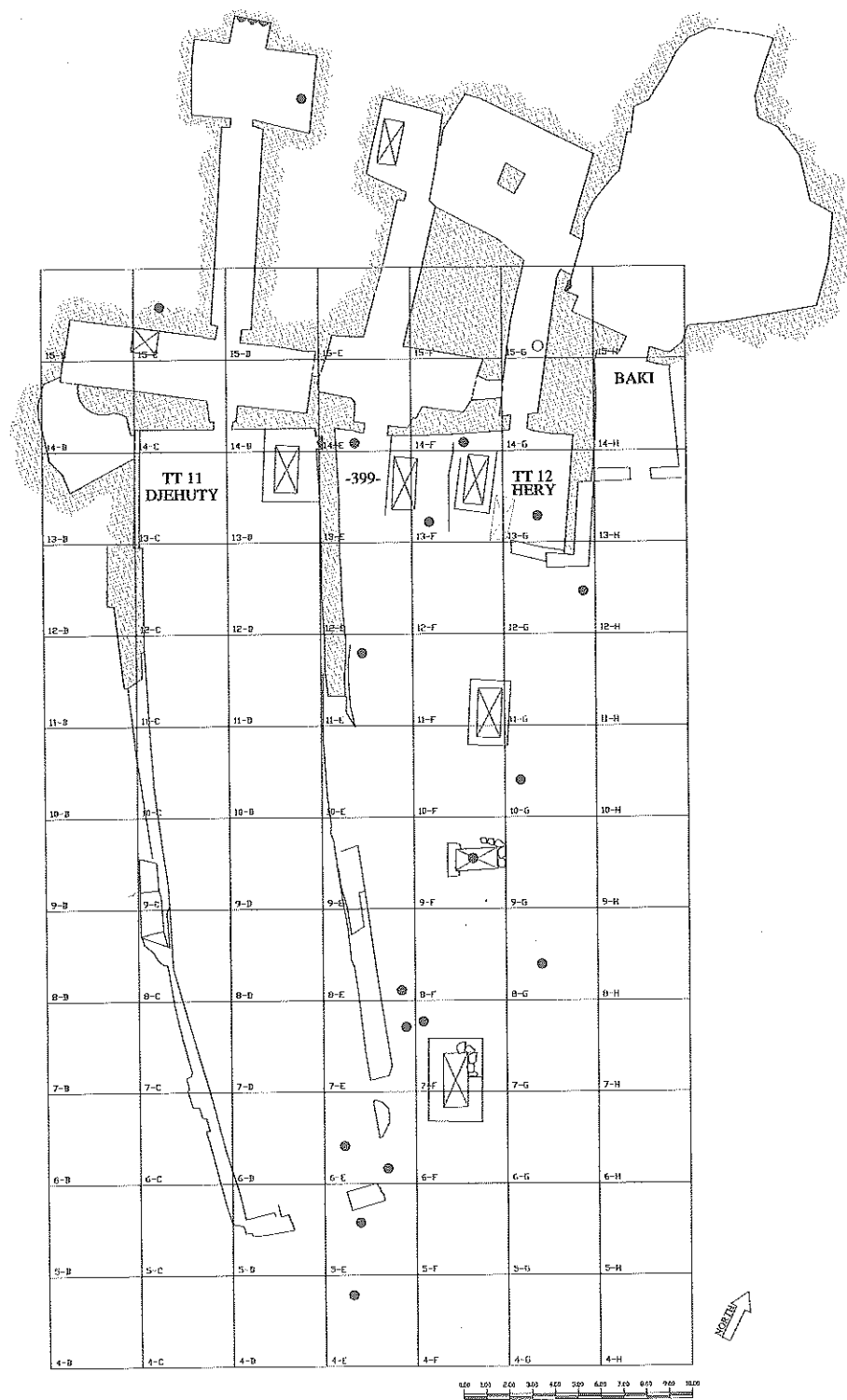



Fig. 1:

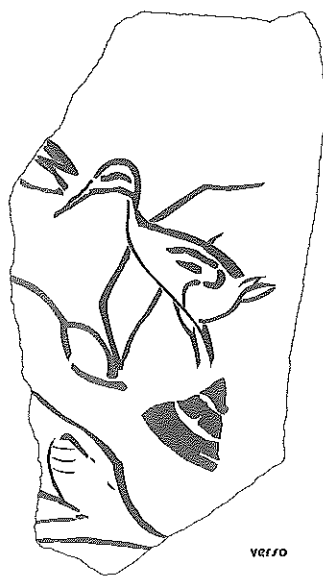
Dra Abu el-Naga, site of Spanish-Egyptian Mission. Find spots of figured ostraca.





Fig. 2: Ostracon 1



recto



verso


Fig. 3: Ostracon 2

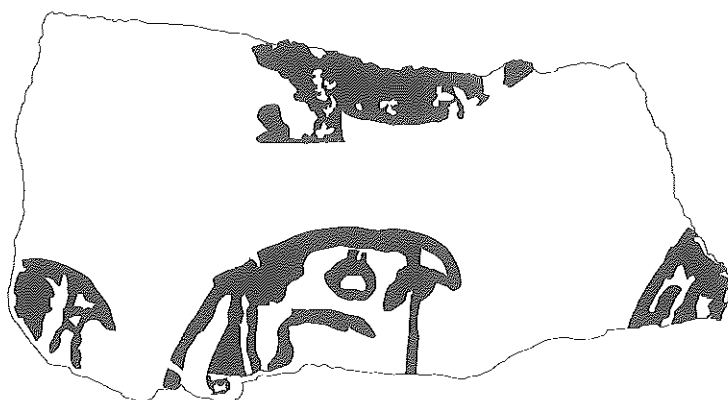


Fig. 4: Ostrakon 3

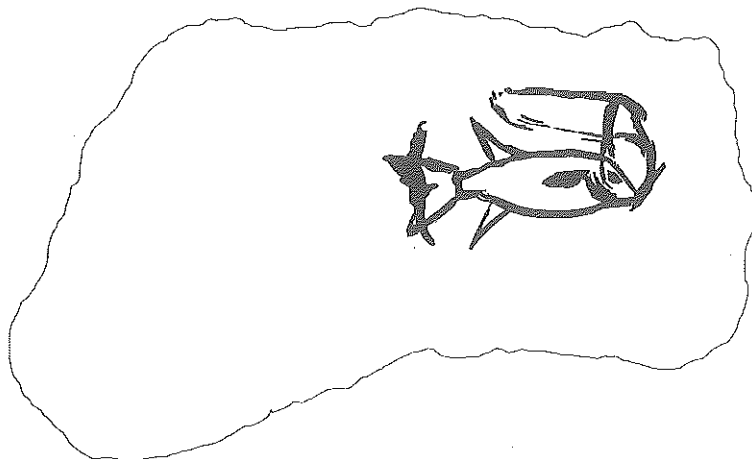


Fig. 5: Ostrakon 4



Fig. 6: Ostrakon 5

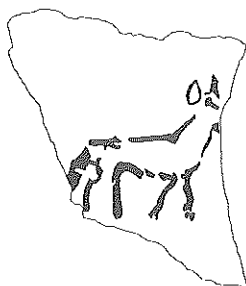


Fig. 7: Ostrakon 6



Fig. 8: Ostrakon 7

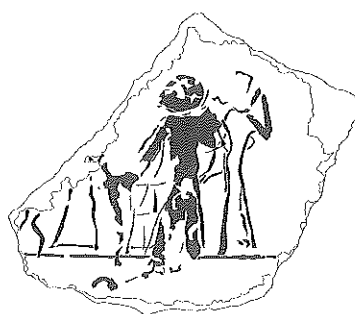


Fig. 9: Ostrakon 8



Fig. 10: Ostrakon 9

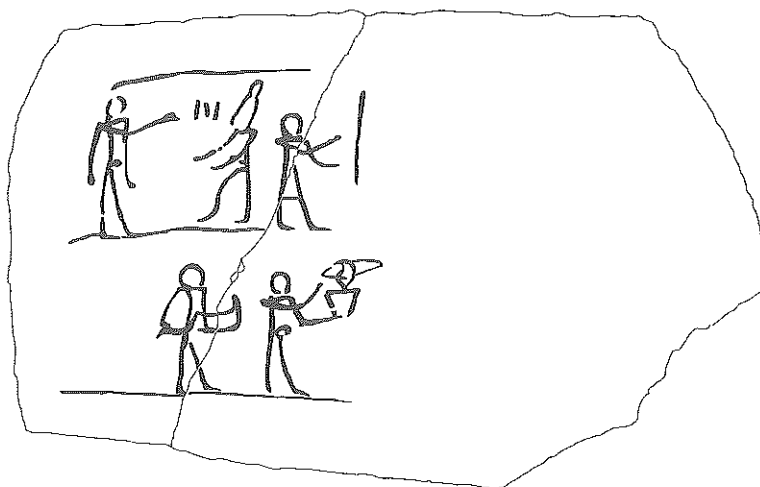


Fig. 11: Ostrakon 10

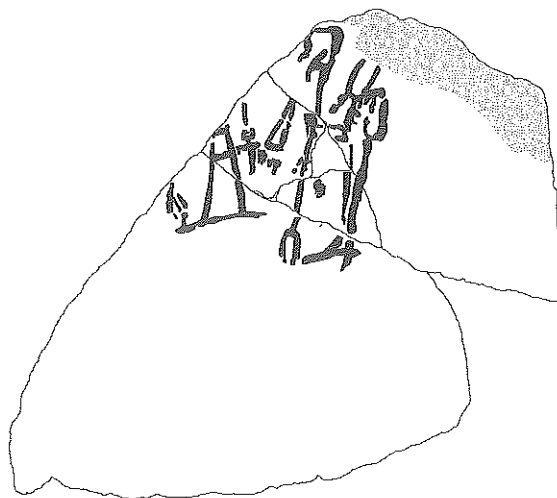


Fig. 12: Ostrakon 11

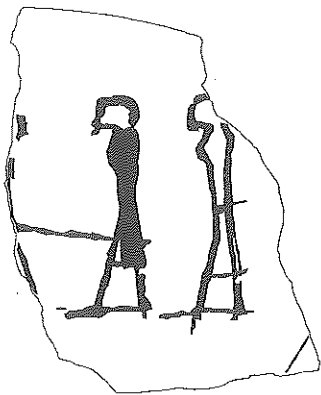


Fig. 13: Ostrakon 12

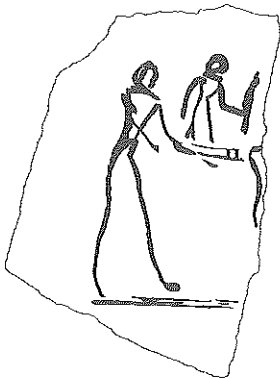


Fig. 14: Ostrakon 13

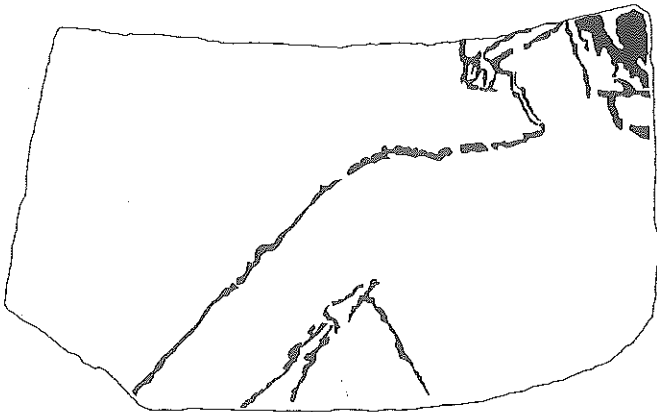


Fig. 15: Ostrakon 14

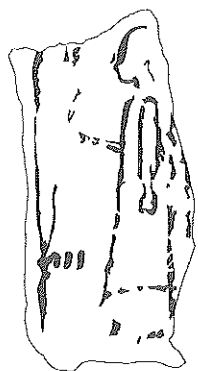


Fig. 16: Ostrakon 15



Fig. 17: Ostrakon 16

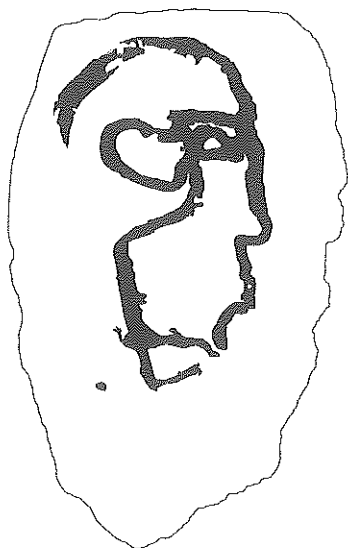


Fig. 18: Ostrakon 17

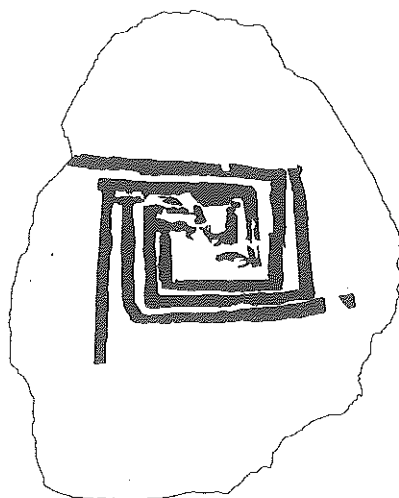


Fig. 19: Ostrakon 18

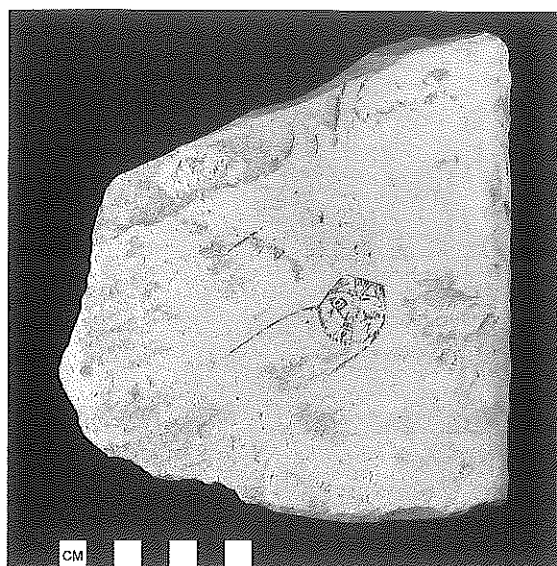


Fig. 20: Ostrakon 1



Fig. 21: Ostrakon 2

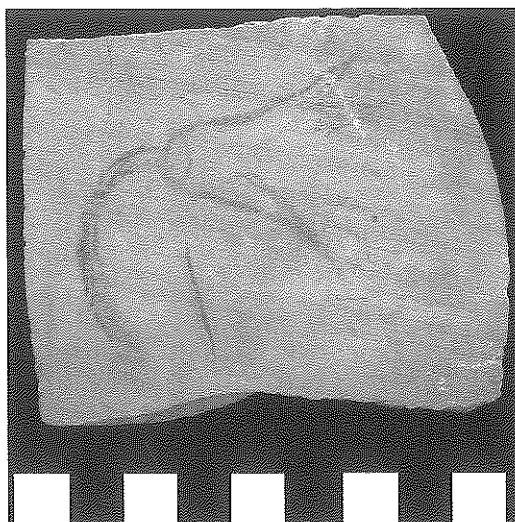


Fig. 22: Ostracon 7

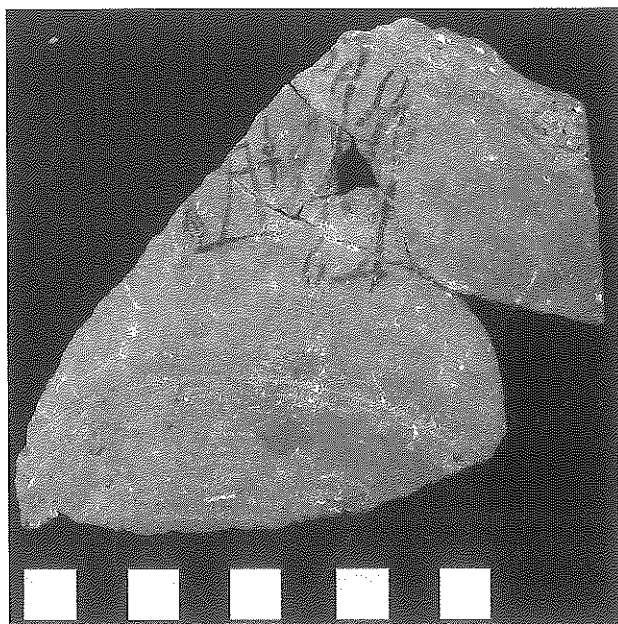


Fig. 23: Ostracon 11



Fig. 24: Ostrakon 12

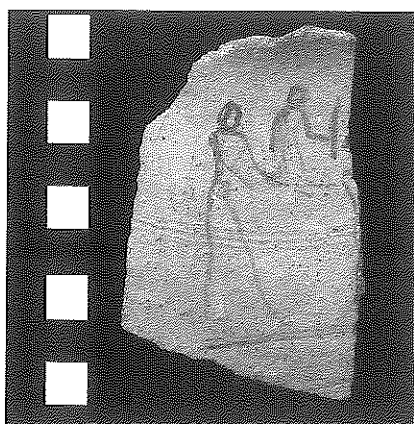


Fig. 25: Ostrakon 13



Fig. 26: Ostrakon 14

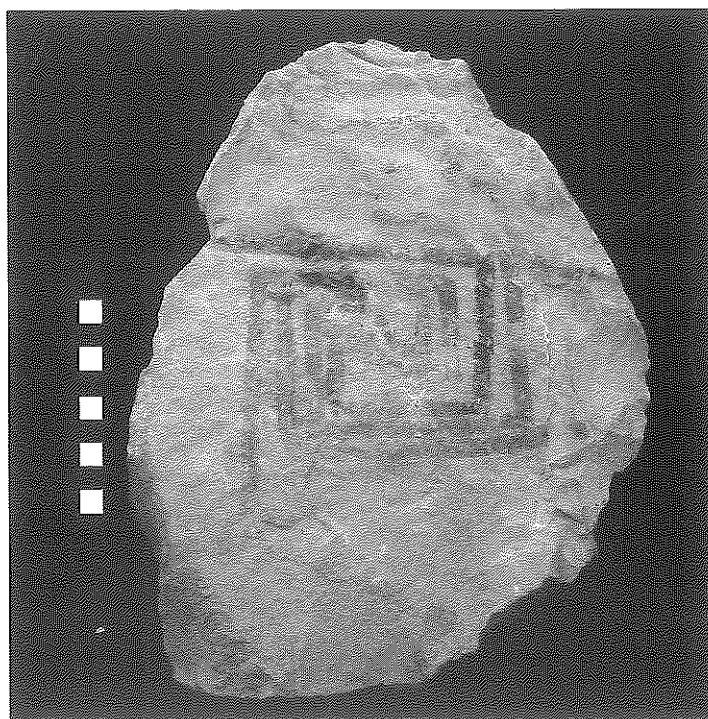


Fig. 27: Ostrakon 18

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