Although Quibell 1898 and others have described the material as slate, Aston, Harrell and Shaw 2000 state authoritatively, "Siltstone and greywacke have sometimes been called 'slate', though the pronounced foliation (layering) and conspicuous flaking and splitting which characterize slate are absent from the Wadi Hammamat rocks".

According to Klemm and Kelmm 1993, "the so-called 'slate' palettes of the Predynastic period are actually siltstone; the rock is identical to that used for stone vessels in the Pharaonic period".