



Mansoura University
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**PUBLICATION OF COPTIC NILE MUD JAR
STOPPERS PRESERVED IN EL ASHMOUNIN
MUSEUM STORE**

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الملخص

تعتبر دراسة سدادات الجرار المختومة مهمة للغاية وذلك لإستخداماتها الفنية والتاريخية، تنشر المقالة إثني عشر سداة مصنوعة من طمي النيل الممزوج بالقش، وهم مقسمون إلى ست مجموعات، وهي محفوظة في المخزن المتحفي بالأشمونين، وأرقام تسجيلهم في سجل المخزن المتحفي كالتالي 247 ، 248 ، 249 ، 985 ، 986 ، 987. لقد تفردت هذه المجموعات بتصاميم مختلفة لأختام مطبوعه يعود تاريخها إلى العصر القبطي، إلا إن مكان إكتشافهم الأصلي غير معروف، تم الإعتماد علي المناهج الوصفية والمقارنة والتحليلية لإستيفاء البحث.

الكلمات الدالة:

قبطي، سدادات الجرار، طمي النيل، اختام، الأشمونين، أنتينوبوليس.

Abstract

Sealed jar stoppers are very essential objects in art history for both their artistic and historical purposes. This article publishes sixteen mud jar stoppers. They are divided into six groups. They are preserved in in El Ashmounin Museum store. Their registration numbers in museum store record are (247, 248, 249, 985, 986, and 9870; stamped with different Christian designs. The whole collection was made out of Nile mud mixed with straw; unfortunately, their place of discovery is unknown. This study follows descriptive, comparative, and analytical methodology.

Keywords

Coptic, Jar stoppers, Nile Mud, Seal impressions, El Ashmunin, Antinoe.

Introduction

Jar stoppers are an archaeological artifact and a historical document, always used to close the jar necks. Their forms usually vary, the most common form is a conical shape that extends deep into the amphora's neck. They are made of different materials such; Reed stoppers, ceramic stoppers, and clay stoppers. Clay stoppers are thick clay discs put into the neck of the amphora while it is still wet. The function of using such stoppers was to protect jars contents, make opening jars easier, and properly close the amphora. Moreover, keep wet clay or plaster from contaminating the contents of the containers during the sealing process.¹

The purpose of sealing the jars are important to keep information of the jars' contents, origin, destination, and ownership. So, analyzing stamp

¹ Evelien Denecker and Katelijn Vandorpe, "Sealed Amphora Stoppers and Tradesmen in Greco-Roman Egypt: Archaeological, Papyrological and Inscriptional Evidence," *BABesch* 82 (2007), 115-116.

impressions helps a lot to obtain information about an individual's ethnicity, and class.²

The Custom of closing the jars with stoppers were known since ancient Egypt and lasted till the Coptic Era. Clay stoppers were first used in the early dynastic period. A cylinder seal of a wine jar dates back to the reign of king Den from the 1st dynasty was found at his tomb at Abydos carrying information about the king's name, a grape sign, as well as the geographic region of made was imprinted on these vessels.³ Moreover, cartouches of royal pharaohs were frequently found stamped on jars found in their own tombs.⁴

The manufacture technique of such clay stoppers during the Greco-Roman period were

² L. Blue, R. J. Whitewright and R. I. Thomas, "Roman Vessel Stoppers, in Myos Horms- Quseir al-Qadim. Roman and Islamic Ports on the Red Sea 2: Finds from the 1999-2003 Excavations," in *BAR International Series* 2286, eds. D. P. S. Peacock and L. Blue, 11-34, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011), 11.

³Eva-Lena Wahlberg, "The wine Jars Speak: A text Study," (Master thesis, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, 2012), 15.

⁴David A. Aston, "Amphorae in New Kingdom Egypt", *Agypten Und Levante/ Egypt and the Levant* 14 (2004), Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 187.

always done by hand. The clay is applied to the amphora's neck and molded into shape; resulting a rough surface. When the clay has slightly dried, a stamp can be imprinted.⁵ The mud mixed with other materials like sand or straw to gives cohesion and hardness and to avoid cracks.⁶ Also, jars with mud stoppers were used for wine produced by estates unlike jars with plaster stoppers that were commonly used by wine traders.⁷

During the late antique and early byzantine period, the Copts used both clay and plaster stoppers. Seals are important to be applied on clay stopper and sometimes many imprints were applied to a single jar stopper. The content of seals is interesting and expresses their Christian religious identity. That was very clear in Coptic inscriptions

⁵Evelien Denecker et al., " Sealed Amphora Stoppers,"116.

⁶ T.G. Wilfong, "Stamp Seals and Seal Impressions from the Post-Pharaonic Period (Nos. 30-349)," in *Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals, and Seal Impressions from Medinet Habu*, Vol. 118, eds. Thomas A. Holland and Thomas G. Urban, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 2003), 188.

⁷ A. J. Dowler et al., "Catalogue of British Museum Objects from the Egypt Exploration Fund's 1913/14: Excavation at Antinoupolis (Antinoe)," in *Antinoupolis II, Scavi e Materiali*, eds. Guido Bastianini and Rosario Pintaudi, (Florence: Istituto Papirologico G. Vitelli, 2014), 485.

conveying a liturgical phrase or a name, as well as a monogram, animals, roses, and crosses. Also, Saints, such as Saint Menas are always applied.⁸ Red or white pigment were used to tint the impression. So, stamps were originally filled with colored materials before being put to the stopper.⁹

Sealing the jars with clay discs were not among the potter's job because of pre-production of them in a damp environment was problematic. The way to remove the clay stopper was difficult when opening the jar for use, therefore the neck was cut under the stopper with such different types of strings to drag the stopper out of its place without polluting the jar liquids.¹⁰

The article studies sixteen clay vessel stoppers that are preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store.¹¹ They are impressed with different

⁸ Pascale Ballet, "Ceramics, Coptic" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* II, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 493.

⁹ Emily Teeter, *Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals, and Seal Impressions from Medinet Habu*, 118, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 2003), 145.

¹⁰ Evelien Denecker et al., "*Sealed Amphora Stoppers*", 116.

¹¹ The city of El Ashmounin was the capital of Upper Egypt's fifteenth Nome. It had a Hare as its symbol. It followed the Hermopolite Nome

seal depictions and registered into six groups. Thus, the main objective of this research is to study describe and analyze this new group of vessel stoppers; and answer further inquiries such as: the original place of their discovery, their dating.

Iconographical study

First group no. 247

First group includes four objects made of clay. The longest object is ca. 17 cm., and the shortest is ca. 11 cm. high. Traces of white color is still seen. Their registration record number is 247 (Fig. 1). Two of them are impressed with some Coptic letters, may refers to the owner, and the other two

in Greek. It was the place where God Thoth, the god of writing and science, was worshipped. It is shaped like a baboon or an Ibis. Some early churches were unearthed among the ruins of Thoth Temple, and St. Severus was honored with the remnants of another seven churches and a monastery. Outside the temple of deity Thoth, there are the ruins of a large church. It was erected in the fifth century. It is thought to have been one of Egypt's largest churches. It has three aisled transepts and follows the basilica plan. See: E. Amelineau, *La Géographie de L'Égypte A L' Époque Copte*, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1890), 168-170; Peter Grossman, "Ashmunein" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, I, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 285-288.

impressed with geometrical designs. Each clay jar stopper has only a single imprint.



Fig. 1. First group no.247 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)

The first impressed clay stopper shows only one square seal. The imprint is formed by a circle inside a square (Fig. 1a). The second is imprinted with a rectangular seal with inscription may refers to the owner written with Coptic letters (Fig. 1b).



Fig. 1 a. First group no.247 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)



Fig. 1 b. First group no.247 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)

The third object is broken away and may it be impressed with an inscription similar to the object fig. 1b (Fig. 1c). The fourth one is sealed also with a rectangular seal with white pigment indicates a geometrical form (Fig. 1d).



Fig. 1c. First group no.247 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in E1 Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)



Fig. 1d. First group no.247 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in E1 Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)

Second group no. 248

The second group of mud jar stoppers includes three objects. Their registration record number is 248. It is imprinted with different designs of crosses. Their imprints were applied in sunk relief. Two of them were applied with square stamps and

the third with circular one. All of them are imprinted on one side with a single imprint. Their dimensions are varied; the longest is ca. 15.5 cm. high, the shortest is ca. 9 cm. high. (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Second group no. 248 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)

The first mud jar stopper takes the form of conical shape. It is ca. 15.5 cm. high. Its stamped in one side with a round stamp in sunk relief. It is stamped with a large cross with flared arms (Fig. 2a). Its back side is plain of any impressions. A part of red pottery jar is still seen from the lower part (Fig.2 b).



Fig. 2 a. Second group no. 248 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)



Fig. 2 b. Second group no. 248 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store (By the author)

The other two clay jar stoppers are identical in their conical form and their dimensions are ca. 11cm. high. They are stamped with a square seal. The cross with equal arms encircled with a square is impressed. They are stamped with sunk relief. Traces of white color is still found. They are stamped in the top sides (Figs. 2c; 2d)



Fig 2c. Second group no. 248
of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved
in E1 Ashmounin Museum
Store (By the author)



Fig. 2d. Second group no. 248 of
Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in E1
Ashmounin Museum Store (By
the author)

Third group no. 249

The third group registration number is 249 in record of museum store. They are all impressed with circular stamps bear animal forms. One of them is imprinted many times. Their dimensions are different; the highest is ca. 15 cm. high and the shortest is ca. 6 cm. high. (Fig. 3)



Fig. 3. Third group no. 249 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmourin Museum Store (By the author)

The first jar stopper is ca. 15 cm. high. Its sealed with a circular stamp four times. Three of them is preserved and the side parts is broken away. A lion is shown in the middle of the stamped seal. The lion body parts can easily identify; the mane, jaw is opened, and the tail is above his body (Fig. 3a). The same design of impressed circular stamp with a lion is implied and traces of white color is obviously seen in its background (Fig. 3b).



Fig. 3a. Third group no. 249 of
Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El
Ashmounin museum (By the
author)



Fig. 3b. Third group no. 249 of
Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in
El Ashmounin museum (By the
author)

The other two jar stoppers are impressed with animal designs in circular forms. A unique jar stopper stamped with an animal form. Its form of body, head, and legs in walking suggest that it is a gazelle (Fig. 3c). unidentified animal is shown in a circular form with six legs (Fig. 3d).



Fig. 3c. Third group no. 249 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)



Fig. 3 d. Third group no. 249 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)

Fourth group no. 985

The fourth group registration number is 985 in the record of the Museum store of Al Ashmunin. Their dimensions are ca. 10.5 cm. high. It includes two objects; the first one presents a stamp seal of a large cross with four small crosses in the corners (Fig. 4), while the other is decorated with figural design represents two saints with haloed heads and traces of white pigment is still obvious (Fig. 4a).



Fig. 4. Fourth group no. 985 of Mud Jar stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)



Fig. 4a. Fourth group no. 985 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)

Fifth group no. 986

Registering record number of the fourth group is 986. It includes only one clay stopper in conical form ca. 9.5 cm. high. Its stamped with a round seal with figural theme. He is represented in frontal pose. His head is encircled with a sacred halo. Both arms are upraised. Both sides are decorated with an identified figure. Based in the form of the body and design of the figure it suggests that he is St. Abu Menas (Fig. 5).¹² The lower part of this clay jar

¹² From the third century, St. Abu Mina was a well-known martyr. He was born into a prosperous household. After confessing Christianity

stopper represents along part made of mud that once goes deep in the neck of the jar (Fig. 5a).

and refusing to offer to the pagans, he was persecuted and killed. He was known for his miracles, and his tomb was in Alexandria, where a cathedral was built over it. The church recalls his martyrdom on Hatour's 15th. See: René Basset, "*Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite (Mois de Hatour et de Kihak)*", in *Patrologia Orientalis, III*, eds. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 203-208 The Abu Mina Church, in Maryut, some 45 kilometers south of Alexandria, has been turned into a pilgrimage center. It consisted of a population of ordinary houses and a core ecclesiastical area. The ecclesiastical center was predominantly planned out according to classical town planning principles, with colonnaded streets, squares, street arches, and a variety of public buildings distributed in a systematic manner. See: Peter Grossman, "The Pilgrimage Center of Abu Mina," in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 286-287.



Fig 5. Fifth group no. 986 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)



Fig. 5a. Fifth group no. 986 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmounin museum store (By the author)

Sixth group no. 987

Registration number of the sixth group is 987 in museum store record. It's about ca. 7.5 cm. high. It consists of two mud jar stoppers. Although both of them are stamped with a circular stamp with a cross, but they are different design. (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Sixth group no. 987 of Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in El Ashmourin museum store (By the author)

The first clay jar stopper is impressed with circular seal in form of cross with equal sides. Its corners are plain of any decoration (Fig. 6). The second one is sealed with a circular stamp with a large cross surrounded with four small crosses. Traces of the white background is still found (Fig. 6a).



Fig 6 a. Sixth group no. 987 of
Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in
El Ashmounin museum store
(By the author)



Fig 6 b. Sixth group no. 987 of
Mud Jar Stoppers preserved in
El Ashmounin museum store
(By the author)

Many mud jar impressed stoppers were discovered in ancient Egyptian sites and museums around the world have displayed several of such stoppers. A number of them are selected to be compared with the studied collections preserved in El Ashmounin museum store. Madint Hapu,¹³ Bawit,¹⁴ Saqqara,¹⁵

¹³ Madinat Habu is located in Thebes' western region (Luxor). The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago excavated the site from 1926 to 1933. Five hundred objects from Madinet Habu have been registered at the Egyptian Museum. A number of Coptic artefacts have been brought to the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Within or upon Madint Habu's massive girdle wall, as well as inside the great temple itself, the ruins of the Coptic homes that make up the remains of the Byzantine

El Bahnasa.¹⁶ and Antiopolis¹⁷ are among these ancient sites.

city of Jeme may be located. See: Wilfong, T. G., "Stamp Seals," 1, 6.

¹⁴ Bawit lies in midway between Dayrut and Asyut. The site rose to prominence as a result of excavations carried out there around the turn of the twentieth century, the results of which were crucial in the history of Coptic art. According to the numerous inscriptions unearthed there, it was dedicated to a Saint Apollo, who appears to have been its founder. The land had housed a large Coptic population before being abandoned for unexplained reasons. See: René-Georges Coquin, "Bawit, History, in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, II, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 362.; Amelineau E., *La Géographie*, 4.

¹⁵ The remains of Saqqara, Memphis' old necropolis, which functioned as a burial cemetery for Memphis people until the late Roman period, are found on the western borders of Dayr Apa Jeremiah. The monastery's northern boundary is roughly where Unas' pyramid's causeway intersects with the monastery's northern boundary. From there, it runs for some 300 meters to the south. The westward expansion of the monastery has yet to be documented. The monastery was not totally male; inscriptions, murals, and burials suggest that its shared space with a nunnery. See: Peter Grossman, "Dayr Apa Jeremiah, Archaeology", in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, III, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 373-374.

¹⁶ The site is about three-square miles west of the existing town of Behesa. Only one pre-Roman item of art has been discovered. Multiple church artefacts, including glass flasks, pots, and several amphorae, were discovered on the site. On some long-necked amphorae, the stamps were set on Conical caps of mud that covered the necks of jars. See: Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers and Oxyrhynchos* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt University College, 1925), 12, 17, 18.

¹⁷ In the year 130 A.D., the Roman Emperor Hadrian built Antinoopolis, naming it after his favorite Antinoos, who drowned in the Nile during

Sample One: mud stamp seals found at Coptic houses in Madint Hapu

Mud stamp seals found in the Coptic houses in Madint Hapu are dated back to sixth to eighth centuries. Their decorations are varied geometrical like crosses and figural like St. Abu Mena. A stamp seal no. 334 shows a large cross with wedges between the arms. A stamp no. 338 represents the cross with four small crosses. A seal with human figure no. 345 (Figs. 7; 7a; 7b).¹⁸

an official visit to Egypt. See: Massimo et al., "The Roman Quarries at Antinopolis (Egypt): Development and Techniques", *Archaeological Science* 38 (2011), 2696-2707.

¹⁸T.G Wilfong, *Stamp Seals and Seal Impressions from the Post-Pharaonic Period (Nos. 30-349)*, in *Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals, and Seal Impressions from Medinet Habu*, Vol. 118, eds. Thomas A. Holland and Thomas G. Urban, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 2003), 203,205,209.



Fig. 7. Stamp seal, After;
T.G Wilfong, *Stamp
Seals and Seal
Impressions, pl.no. 334,*
203.



Fig 7a. Stamp seal,
After, T.G Wilfong
*Stamp Seals and Seal
Impressions, pl.no*
334, 205.



Fig 7b. Stamp seal,
After; T.G Wilfong,
*Stamp Seals and Seal
Impressions, pl.no 334,*
209.

Sample Two: mud stamp seals presented in Catalogue general

Catalogue general presents a number of mud jar stoppers. They are similar to the studied collection in way of manufacture and designs of seals applied. They may date back to the sixth century. Traces of white or red color are still observed. Three mud jar stoppers are presented with numbers 9005, 9007, and 9029. Stamp seal no. 9005 is sealed with a horned animal. Seal no. 9007 shows a circular stamp in red color represents a cross with flared arms. Seal no. 9029 present a circular seal

with St. Abu Menas in praying attitude and two camels beside him (Figs. 8; 8a; 8b).¹⁹



Fig. 8. Stamp seal, after;
Josef Strzygowski,
Catalogue Général des
Antiquités, pl. no. 9005,
236.

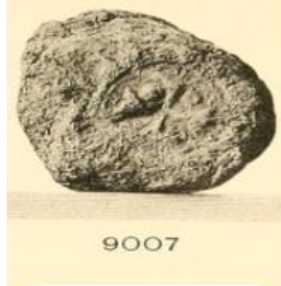


Fig. 8a. Stamp seal, after;
Josef Strzygowski,
Catalogue Général des
Antiquités, pl. no. 9007,
236.



Fig. 8b. Stamp seal, after;
Josef Strzygowski,
Catalogue Général des
Antiquités, pl. no. 9029,
237.

Sample Three: mud stamp seal found at El Bahnasa

El Bahnasa excavations revealed Similar objects to that of El Ashmounin Store in their material and

¹⁹Josef Strzygowski, *Catalogue Musée du Caire, Nos. 900* Holzhausen, 1904), 236, Pls. 900



Fig. 9a. Stamp seal, after;
Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of
the Courtiers and
Oxyrhnhkos.* 19, Pl.

es du

Adolf



Fig. 9b. Stamp seal, after;
Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers
and Oxyrhnhkos,*
Pl. XLVIII.

seal impression designs. Also, it is stamped in one side.²⁰



Fig. 9. Stamp seal, after; Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers and Oxyrhinkhos* 19,



Fig. 9a. Stamp seal, after; Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers and Oxyrhinkhos* 19, Pl.



Fig. 9b. Stamp seal, after; Flienders Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers and Oxyrhinkhos* 19, Pl. XLVIII.

In Saqqara archaeological site, excavations uncovered also a number of mud jar stoppers. These seals stamped with figures such St. Menas, animals, birds, and monograms (Figs. 10;10a;10b).²¹

²⁰ Petrie, "Tombs of the Courtiers," Pl. XLVIII, 19.

²¹ J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1908-9, 1909-10): The Monastery of Apa Jeremias* (Le Caire: Imprimerie de L'Institut Francais D'Archéologie Orientale, 1912), 140.



Fig 10. Stamp seal, after;
J.E. Quibell, Excavations
at Saqqara, 140.



Fig. 10 a Stamp seal, after,
J.E. Quibell, Excavations
at Saqqara, 140.



Fig. 10 b. Stamp seal,
after; J.E. Quibell,
Excavations at Saqqara,
140.

Sample Five: mud stamp seal found at Bawit

Similar objects are found in Bawit. They are stamped with such monograms and a dancing boy seal (Figs.11; 11b).²²

²² M. Jean Clédat, *Le Monastère Et La Nécropole De Baouît* (Cairo: Imprimerie de L'Institut Français d' Archéologie Orientale, 1904), Figs. 6- 8, 11.



Fig. 11. Stamp seal,
after; M. Jean Clédat,
Le Monastère Et La
Nécropole De Baouît,
11, fig.6.



Fig. 11 a. Stamp seal,
after; M. Jean Clédat,
Le Monastère Et La
Nécropole De Baouît,
11, fig. 6.

Sample Seven: mud stamp seal found at Antinopolis

British museum exhibited a number of mud jar stoppers excavated from Antinopolis city. The city of Antinopolis on the Nile was connected to the Red Sea and Berenice through via Nova Hadriana. As a result, Antinopolis had to be a large trading center. As a result, a considerable number of such

jar stoppers, whether made of clay or plaster were discovered in the area.²³

These stamps are with different designs like animals, crosses, and inscriptions. White traces are still seen. Part of the necks are still attached to the clay stopper. The Nile mud is mixed with straw. Its stamps are of animal forms like a donkey and inscriptions refers to a personal name (Figs. 12, 12a, 12b). All these features and technique of manufacture features are like those of el Ashmonin store. They are dated from late fourth to seventh centuries.²⁴

²³ Coli, M. et al., "*The Roman Quarries*," 2696-2707.

²⁴ A. J. Dowler et al., "*Catalogue of British Museum*", 485, 486, 487.



Fig. 12. Stamp seal, after; A. J. Dowler et al., Catalogue of British Museum Objects, 487.



Fig. 12a. Stamp seal, after; A. J. Dowler et al., Catalogue of British Museum Objects, 486.



Fig. 12b. Stamp seal, after; A. J. Dowler et al., Catalogue of British Museum Objects, 487.

Jar stoppers of Al- Ashmonin museum storeroom

Based on the previous comparative study of similar objects found in different archaeological sites in Egypt. The studied objects preserved in El Ashmounin Museum Store were first discovered in Antinopolis City and then were transferred and preserved in El Ashmounin store. That's because of the closeness of both cities (Antinopolis and El Ashmounin). Also, the same technique of manufacture of mud mixed with straw. The same white pigment is used. Moreover, the imprint seal

designs are similar in form being circular or square and in content itself such as crosses, animals, figures. El Ashmounin clay stoppers dated back to the same era from the end of the fourth to seventh centuries.

Seal designs of El Ashmounin collection can be classified into many categories. The first category of these jar stoppers is impressed with different forms of crosses which are implied in circular or square seals (Figs. 2a, 2c, 2d; 4, 6a, 6b). The second category represents animal forms like the lion (Figs. 3a; 3b) and a fleeing gazelle (fig. 3c). Unidentified animal is also found (Fig. 3d). The third category have inscriptional designs but unfortunately, they are difficult to guess the name written, but it sometimes refers to the jar owner.

The fourth category includes a figural representation for St. Abu Minas. Where he could be identified through his figure; haloed head, raising hands, and sometimes accompanied with camels (Figs. 4a; 5).

Although wine manufacture was popular in the Abu Mina area due to the great number of winepresses found there, it is worth noting. It's impossible to say whether impressed clay stoppers with the figure of St. Abu Mina were made at Marryat due to a lack of Nile Mud material and low clay quality. It's possible that there was a wine trade Centre somewhere in the Nile Valley.²⁵

²⁵ Grossman, "*The Pilgrimage Center*", 298-99.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned comparative study indicates that the studied mud jar stoppers once were discovered at Antinopolis city and then transferred to El Ashmounin store due to their similarity in technique and imprint seals. It also indicates that these mud jar stoppers can be dated to the fourth to the seventh centuries due to their similarity in technique and imprint seals to those found at Antinopolis.

Mud jar stoppers are made of Nile mud mixed usually with a straw to avoid cracklings and guarantee consolidate. Their forms are varied while the conical shape with a long-tapered part is attested for all of them. Using such mud jar stoppers for jars refers to a local use and not for trade. The potter's necks of these jars made of red pottery are still attached to clay sealing. That supports the evidence that these jars were opened through they were cut straight under the clay stopper by strings.

Coptic seal impressions are applied with different seal forms like round, rectangular, and

square seals. The cylindrical outline seals are most preferred to be applied. Jar stoppers are almost stamped with only one impression and sometimes with four seal impressions. It is worthy to note that Coptic seal impressions are always dipped the stamp in white pigment before stamping the clay stopper in order to show the details of the impression. Traces of such white pigment are still found on the studied collection.

Coptic jar seal impressions differ than their predecessor's seal impressions. The Coptic impressions are mainly based on Christin designs. The Coptic artist prefers to express his religious belief in his depictions applied on mud jar stoppers like crosses, figures like saints, animals, and inscriptions refers to the owner in Coptic language.

Decorative elements like Crosses had varied and take many forms like, plain cross, cross surrounded with four crosses, and the cross surrounded with letters. Figural forms applied like those of saints and St. Abu Mina is found it relates his place or may be his sanctity. That also supports

hypothesis that there was trade center of St. Abu Mina in Nile Valley.

Animal forms applied like the lion and the gazelle and camel. Inscriptions in Greek or Coptic languages may refer to the owner or the town of the liquid also used.

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