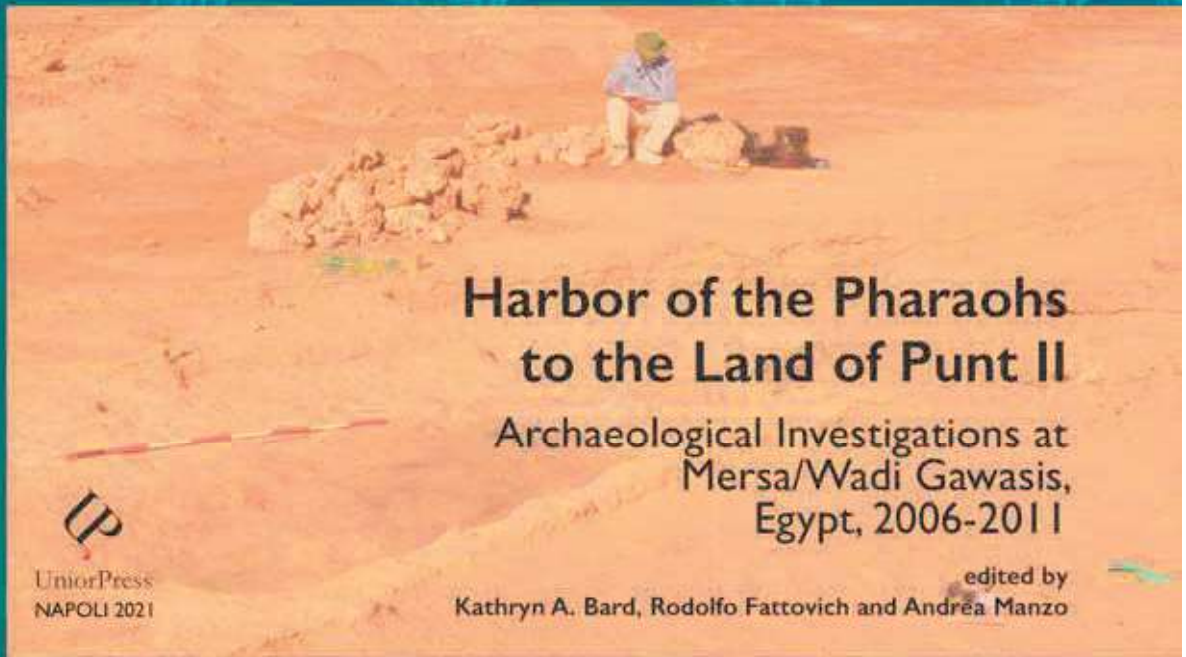




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Harbor of the Pharaohs to the Land of Punt II

Archaeological Investigations at
Mersa/Wadi Gawasis,
Egypt, 2006-2011



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NAPOLI 2021

edited by

Kathryn A. Bard, Rodolfo Fattovich and Andrea Manzo



Rodolfo Fattovich (1945-2018)

“Those having torches will pass them on to others” (Plato)



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WG Sealing 315: fragment of a sealing, approx. dimensions 0.9 cm × 0.8 cm × 0.6 cm, with the partially preserved impression of a sealing with a sign *ḥnh* and a partially preserved sign *nfr* from WG 32, C5, SU25. Most likely, this is the impression of the same seal occurring on WG Sealing 220. On the opposite side the impressions of parallel strings occur.

WG Sealing 316 (Figure 199 D): fragment of a sealing, approx. dimensions 2.3 cm × 1.9 cm × 0.8 cm, with a very partially preserved impression of a seal bordered by large scrolls from WG 32, C4, SU25. The upper part of the impression is lost, in the remaining lower part the name of *Pwn[t]* followed by the determinative of the foreign lands can be seen. On the back, the impression of fabric and a string occurs.

WG Sealing 317 (Figure 199 E): fragment of a sealing, approx. dimensions 1.8 cm × 1.7 cm × 1.6 cm, from WG 32, C5, SU25, with two very partially preserved impressions of the same seal with the sign representing the clump of papyrus, also occurring on WG Sealing 254 and referring to Lower Egypt, and a further unclear sign. Possibly this was a part of a composition with the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt. On the back, no clear impression are preserved.

WG Sealing 318 (Figure 199 F): fragment of a sealing, approx. dimensions 4.1 cm × 1.8 cm × 0.8 cm, from WG 55, D1, SU2, with the complete impression of an oval seal characterized by a symmetrical scroll pattern. A passing string was embedded in the sealing and on the back impressions of papyrus occurs.

WG Seal 1 (Figure 199 G-I): this 1.5 cm × 1 cm × 0.9 cm faïence scarab seal, with a perforation along its longer axis and well represented dorsal lines, was found in excavation unit WG 61, E4, SU45. The seal consists of a complex pattern of symmetrical scrolls with two *nfr* signs within the scrolls. The type of back and profile are characteristic of known classes of Middle Kingdom scarabs (see Martin 1971, Pl. 51 d and Pl. 54, Typology of the profiles d, e), dating to the 12th Dynasty (Ward 1987: 513, 517-518, Fig. 1).

9.5.b Preliminary remarks on the sealings

ANDREA MANZO

The sealings and the seal discovered in the 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 field seasons at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis considerably enlarged the number of identified institutions and officials that were involved in the organiza-

tion, administration, and management of the seafaring expeditions at *Saww*, and provide insights into the functional organization of the harbor. In general, from a chronological point of view, as already shown by the proposed comparisons, all of the sealings fit well in the Middle Kingdom.

It should be stressed that from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 sealings were collected in excavations WG 31, 32, 55-56, and 61/65, all of which are located along the western edge of the coral terrace, delimiting the ancient bay to the south, where also the entrances to some of the caves were recorded. As excavation units WG 61/65 are in front of the entrance to Cave 8, WG 55-56 are in front of Cave 7, and WG 32 is located in front of Cave 5 and Cave 6, this confirms what was remarked on the basis of the results of the 2001-2002 to 2004-2005 field seasons, i.e., that administrative activities were taking place on mid-slope terraces in front of some of the caves (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 237; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 90, 93, 95-96). Moreover, as excavation unit WG 55-56 also provided evidence of a shrine and some inscriptions, these administrative activities may have been associated with the ceremonial ones or, perhaps, the function of this spot changed through time. Of course, caves are not always related to administrative activities, as for example in the case of Cave 1 (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 70-72), where no sealings or other traces of administration were found. Although in general administrative activities were preferentially taking place in front of the entrances of the caves, at least for the area investigated by excavation unit WG 31, this may not have been the case. Sealings were found in WG 31 in 2005-2006 and others were discovered there in 2010, but no evidence of a cave was found so far in that sector.

As far as the types of seals whose impressions were found, the main classes already identified in excavation units WG 16/24 and WG 32 also were recorded in 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 232-233; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 67): 1) institutional shield-shaped seals; 2) private oval seals with inscriptions; 3) private oval seals with decorative patterns and protective hieroglyphic signs; and 4) private oval seals with decorative patterns.

As in the previous field seasons (Bard and Fattovich 2017: 234-235; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 87-89), traces of different materials occur on the back of the sealings: 1) wood and/or peg impressions (Figure 200 A) often associate with impressions of strings (Figure 200 B), suggesting that the sealings may have sealed boxes; 2) string(s) and fabric (Fig-

ure 200 C), suggesting that the sealings may have sealed containers for dry commodities; 3) vegetal fibres or mats (Figure 200 D), suggesting that the sealings may have sealed containers for liquid commodities; 4) leather (Figure 200 E), suggesting that the sealings may have sealed leather bags. The impressions of baskets and rope bags (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 235; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 89) are very rare and fragmentary in the sealings collected from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011. It should be also stressed that while no “noduli”, i.e., clay sealings without the impression of sealed objects (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 235), were recorded in the field seasons 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, for the first time clear impressions of papyrus were recorded at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis (Figure 200 F). This confirms that sealed papyri arrived and were opened there. Indeed, the large number of sealings for papyrus together with the fragments of papyrus discovered in WG 61/65 shows that letters and despatches were regularly sent to Mersa/Gawasis on the occasion the seafaring expeditions, and most likely that answers were sent back to the Nile Valley. Perhaps a kind of regular delivery service, similar to the one between Egypt and the Nubian fortresses, may have existed when the seafaring expeditions were taking place. Finally, the 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 sealing assemblages are also characterized by the occurrence of examples of double sealing, i.e., of the use of two seals, usually the institutional seal associated with the one of an official, a practice well known at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis and other Middle Kingdom sites (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 234; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 48, 52, 70). Moreover, the fact that containers or documents were not only opened but also sealed at the site of the ancient harbor, as was already suggested (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 237; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 90), is now confirmed, not only by the discovery of more fragments of prepared clay, but also by the scarab seal from WG 61, E4, SU45.

The distribution of the types of sealings is not homogeneous in the different assemblages (Table 20). In 2005-2006, it was remarked that two distinct phases of administrative use of the area were occurring in WG 16/24 and WG 32, near the entrances of Caves 2 and 5 (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 237; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 94-95). The later phase is characterized by a larger variety of containers opened, among which occurs a large number of sealings for wood boxes. The discovery of the boxes themselves in association with the sealings suggests that in the later phase of admin-

istrative use of the area near the entrances of Caves 2 and 5, the management of commodities imported from Punt, which arrived at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis in boxes and had to be sent to the Nile Valley, was taking place there. On the contrary, the sealings from the earlier phase, found only in excavation unit WG 16/24, were mainly related to the opening of containers of supplies arriving at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis from the Nile Valley. The sealing assemblages investigated in 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, in excavation units WG 32, WG 53, WG 55, and WG 56, are characterized by a larger variety in terms of impressions of the sealed containers and a large number of sealings with impressions of pegs and wooden surfaces, similar to the assemblages of sealings from the latest phase of use of the sectors of WG 32 and WG 16/24. Noteworthy, despite this similarity, all the assemblages from WG 32 investigated from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 with the only exception of the one from SU1 and SU10 can certainly be ascribed to a phase of use of the spot earlier than the one associated with the wood boxes discovered in front of Caves 2 and 5. On the contrary, the occurrence in WG 32 SUs 23, 25 and 28 of fragments of clay stoppers of jars and in WG 32 SUs 25 and 46 of sealings of mats and basket containers may suggest a relation with the earlier phase brought to light in WG 16/24. Also the sealing assemblages in excavation units WG 61/65, near Cave 8, are characterized by sealings for containers for liquids, such as in the case of the earlier phase of use revealed in excavation unit WG 16/24, suggesting that in that area supplies arriving from the Nile Valley could have been opened. In addition, a remarkable occurrence of sealings for papyrus characterizes WG 61/65, suggesting that despatches from the Nile valley were opened there, while just a few sealings used for papyrus occur in the assemblages of WG 32 investigated in 2006-2007 to 2010-2011.

As far as the institutions and titles recorded for the first time at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis are concerned, the possible mention of *ḥꜥw nsw* “the royal fleet” on Sealing WG 6 from WG 55, SU8 is intriguing. The mention of boats is not unknown in Middle Kingdom seals with names and titles of officials (see Martin 1971: Pl. 12, 9, Pl. 13, 13-14, Pl. 15, 11, Pl. 16, 19; Pl. 37, 29), as are titles referring to boats/ships (Ward 1982: 14, # 66-67, # 69), but boats are never found with the adjective “royal” or the genitive “of the king,” which characterizes the fragmentary sealing from Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, except in the case of an official named *imy-r ḥꜥw wr n pr-nsw*, “Chief overseer of the ships of the palace,” or of a *ḥry-tp ḥꜥw bity*, “Great overlord

WG55 SU2	X	X	X	X?		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
WG55 SU3	X					X									
WG55 SU5				X	X	X	X flat sur- face	X			X				
WG55 SU6								X							
WG55 SU8	X		X	X	X	X	X			X				X	
WG55 SU11	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X			X	
WG56 SU5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
WG56 SU7			X?	X?			X	X						X	
WG56 SU8	X					X									
WG56 SU11								X							
WG61 SU32			X							X					
WG61 SU46	X?	X	X	X?	X		X flat sur- face	X	X	X			X		X
WG65-61 SU19				X			X						X		
WG65-61 SU32													X		X
WG65-61 SU45	X?	X	X	X				X	X				X		

Table 20. Distribution of the types of sealings in the different assemblages.

Fragmentary sealings WG Sealing 08 (from WG 56, SU5) and WG Sealing 50 (from WG 55, C3, SU1-2) mention *ḥwt (n) niwt*, which can be read as “the estate” or “the temple of the city,” if we assume that the word *ntr*, to form the term *ḥwt-[ntr]*, originally preceded *ḥwt* but is not preserved. In the case of WG Sealing 04 (from WG 55, SU8), the institution is apparently associated with the title of an official: *imy-r md3t (n) ḥwt (n) niwt*, “Overseer of the archive of the temple of the city,” according to the preliminary reading provided for this sealing by El-Sayed Mahfouz.

An institution whose name included *pr* and *niwt* may also occur on the fragmentary WG Sealing 129 (from WG 31, SU1). If we admit that the first fragmentary sign is not a *pr* but rather a *t3* (Gardiner O17)⁶, whose upper part is lost, followed by a *niwt*, we may have part of the title *s3b t3yty niwt rsy*, “Chief Justice of Thebes”, occurring on a seal, notably characterized by a similar scroll pattern at the bottom, whose impression is known from Uronarti (Martin 1971: 142, n. 1845, Pl. 47, 9; Reisner 1955: 54, 8; Ward 1982: 148, n. 1277). A further institution or official related to a city, *...n niwt rsy*, in this case “... of the Southern City,” i.e., Thebes (see Ward 1982: 164, 184), is also mentioned on WG Sealings 126, 251 and 289 (from WG 32, SU46, WG 32, SU31, and WG 32, SU25, respectively).

The impressions of seals with inscriptions mentioning the *šnwt*, “the granary” occur on WG Sealing 242 from WG 32, A4, SU31 and on WG Sealing 256 from WG 32, A3-B4, box 21, SU10. Seals mentioning the granary are well known, in particular on WG Sealing 256 the sequence *ḥtm n šnwt*, “seal of the granary” was recorded on seals from the Nubian fortresses (see e.g. Martin 1971: 145, n. 1869, 1872b, Pl. 42 B, 8, Pl. 43, 9).

The impressions of seals mentioning the *pr-ḥd*, “the treasury” characterize WG Sealing 262, from WG 32, C4, SU25, and WG Sealing 283, from WG 32, C5, SU25. The mention of this institution was already recorded on sealings from Mersa/Wadi Gawasis (Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 67).

The title *imy-r...*, “Steward...” (see Ward 1982: 21, n. 132), certainly followed by other signs expressing the rest of the title or the name of the official (see e.g. Martin 1971: Pl. 1, 20-23) occurs on WG Sealing

⁶ All the references to the Gardiner list of signs are made to the third edition of the *Egyptian Grammar*.

168 from WG 32, C5, SU25, WG Sealing 243 from WG 32, A4, SU31 and WG Sealing 264 from WG 32, C4, SU25.

In the case of WG Sealing 244 from WG 32, A4, SU31, the title *imy-r pr*, “Steward”, is followed by a X shaped sign and a circle. It reminds of the same title followed by a X shaped sign occurring on Sealing 67, from WG 32, SU46 (Cave 6, entrance), although the seal is certainly not the same. The sequence of signs reminds the one occurring on a seal from a tumulus in Kerma and bearing the title *imy-r pr (n) hbsw*, “Steward of the plowed fields” (Martin 1971: 122, n. 1590, Pl. 40, 6; Ward 1982: 26, n. 174). Alternatively, the reading *hnrw*, “prisoners” or “conscript labourers” can be proposed for the X shaped sign and a circle (see *e.g.* Ward 1982: 40, n. 298), which may fit well also with the fact that two vertical strokes appear following the circular sign on WG Sealing 244. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that on seals usually the sign Gardiner U31 is used in the word *hnrw* (see *e.g.* Martin 1971: Pl. 3, 25, Pl. 30, 13, Pl. 15, 35): apparently on seals this word is not written with an X shaped sign Gardiner Z9 as it is sometimes elsewhere (Ward 1982: 40, n. 298, 302). Moreover, the hypothetical title *imy-r pr (n) hnrw*, “Steward of the conscript labourers” is not known on other documents so far, therefore the reading of the title on these sealings remains doubtful.

Institutional seals whose inscription ending with a place name followed by the determinative of the foreign lands like in WG Sealing WG Sealing 316 from WG 32, C4, SU25, are well known (see *e.g.* Reisner 1955: 53, n. 14), but in this specific case the occurrence of the place name *Pwn[t]*, which was suggested by Rosanna Pirelli, is so far unique. It certainly fits well with all the evidence referring to this specific region characterizing the site of the Middle Kingdom, harbor to the land of Punt, and suggests that specific branches of the administration were established for managing the expeditions to Punt or at least some activities related to the expeditions to Punt.

Some of these sealings may have been contained the personal name of officials. Noteworthy, sealings with personal names also provide important chronological insights, as scarab seals with names and titles of officials are not attested in assemblages earlier than the late 12th Dynasty, and their use may be connected to administrative changes during the reigns of Senusret III and Amenemhat III (Johnson 1977: 142; Martin 1971: 175-187, Pl. XII; Williams 1977: 136-137). WG Sealing 106 (from WG 61, D-E3-2/WG

65, A2-3, SU45), and WG Sealing 100 and 101 (both from WG 61, E4-5, SU46) mention *ss'Imnmh3t*, “scribe Amenemhat,” followed by the frequent goodwill epithet *k3 nfr* (see Marin 1977: 188). WG Sealing 127 (from WG32, SU46), mentions *imy-r pr [...Sn]wsrt*, “the steward [...Sen]usret”.

WG Sealing 183 from WG 32, C4, SU1 is characterized by the partially preserved impression of a seal with the sign *wḥm*, which, as it is likely located in the lower part or a seal cannot be part of the title herald, can be likely a part of the well-known epithet *wḥm ḥnh*, “repeating of life” (see Martin 1971: 187-188). This epithet, occurring in late Middle Kingdom times, was already recorded on a sealing collected in excavation unit WG 32 and at Wadi/Mersa Gawasis and always related to the latest phase with evidence of administrative activities in the area (Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 61), which also yielded WG Sealing 183. Most likely the epithet was preceded by the name of an official.

Certainly personal seals are the ones that are related to the fragmentary sealings with decorative patterns and well-wishing hieroglyphic signs, such as WG Sealing 104 with scrolls and possibly a sign *nfr* (from WG 61, D-E3-2/WG 65, A2-3, SU45); WG Sealing 105 (from WG 61, D-E3-2/WG 65, A2-3, SU45) with the *nbw*, *ḥnh*, and perhaps *nfr* signs; WG Sealing 164 from WG 32, C5, SU25 and WG Sealing 271 from WG 32, C5, SU25 with patterns consisting of a *nbw* sign; WG Sealing 120 (from WG 61, D3, SU45) with a scroll pattern framing a *nfr* sign, with *nb* signs on top and beneath it; WG Sealing 126 (from WG 32, SU46) with an *ḥnh* sign framed by a continuous scroll pattern; or the almost complete WG Sealing 124 (from WG 61, B-C2-3, SU19), with the impression of an oval seal with a *ḥnh* sign and a *nfr* sign along the main axis, framed by a scroll pattern; and also WG Sealing 125 (from WG 65, D-E4, SU32); WG Sealing 206 WG 32, C5, SU25 with the *sm3 t3wy*, “Union of the Two Lands” symbol; WG Sealing 220 from WG 32, C5, SU25, and WG Sealing 315 from WG 32, C5, SU25, and perhaps WG Sealing 208 from WG 32, C5, SU25, with a *nfr* sign symmetrically flanked by two *ḥnh* signs; WG Sealing 235 from WG 32, A4, SU31 with a symmetrical compositions of signs including the *dšrt* crown and an *ḥnh* sign; WG Sealing 161, WG Sealing 166 from WG 32, C5, SU25 and perhaps WG Sealing 254 from WG 32, A4, SU31 and WG Sealing 317 from WG 32, C5, SU25 all characterized by patterns with the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt; WG Sealing 170 from WG 32, C5, SU25, WG Sealing 318 from WG 55, D1, SU2,

WG Sealing 313 from WG 32, C5, SU28 with different complex patterns of symmetrical scrolls. The seal of WG Sealing 113 (from WG 61, E4-5, SU46), whose impression is almost complete and is has two symmetrical *dd* signs flanked by two *nfr* signs, can be ascribed to the same class of personal sealings.

WG Sealing 24 (from WG 55, C1, SU11), WG Sealings 25-27 (from WG 55, C1, SU11), WG Sealings 54-63 (from WG 32, SU46), WG Sealings 68-72 (from WG 32, SU46), and WG Sealing 109 (from WG 61, E4-5, SU46), and WG Sealings 171, 200 and 222 (from WG 32, SU25), and 249 (from WG 32 SU31) are all characterized by the impressions of the same personal seal with a decoration consisting of “8”-shaped signs, inscribed in ovals and symmetrically organized, and two *w3d* signs on the longer axis. The widespread distribution of the impressions of this personal seal allows us to relate the different assemblages in which it occurs, not only located near the entrances of Cave 6 and Cave 7, but also near the entrance of Cave 8. In WG 32, the impressions of this specific seal were from assemblages of a phase earlier than the one associated to a concentration of wooden boxes and sealings related to the expedition of Year 8 of Amenemhat IV. Therefore, this evidence may suggest that WG 32 and the area to the south of it were also used for administrative purposes also earlier than the Year 8 of Amenemhat IV. The occurrence there two well distinct phases of administrative use of the area is confirmed also by the fact that no impressions of the types of seals characterizing the phase of use related to the expedition of Year 8 of Amenemhat IV (see Bard and Fattovich 2007: 233-234; Manzo and Pirelli 2006: 69) were recorded in the assemblages the earlier phase investigated from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011.

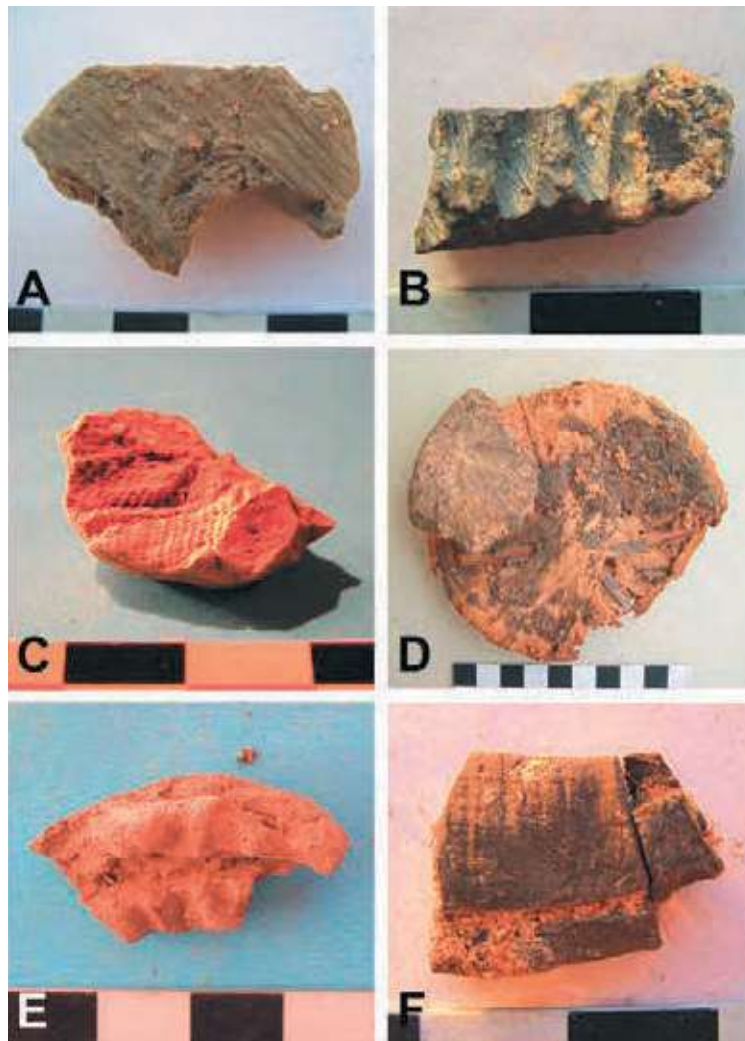


Figure 200: Impressions on the back of sealings A) wood and peg impressions on a sealing from WG 32, SU46 (Cave 6 entrance); B) impression of strings on a sealing from WG 32, SU46 (Cave 6 entrance); C) impression of string and fabric on a sealing from WG 32, C5, SU25; D) Stopper of vegetal fibres or mats sealed with mud from WG 61, D-E2-3, SU45; E) impression of folded and fastened leather from WG 32, C4, SU25; F) impression of papyrus from WG 61, D-E2-3 /WG 65, A2-3, SU45.