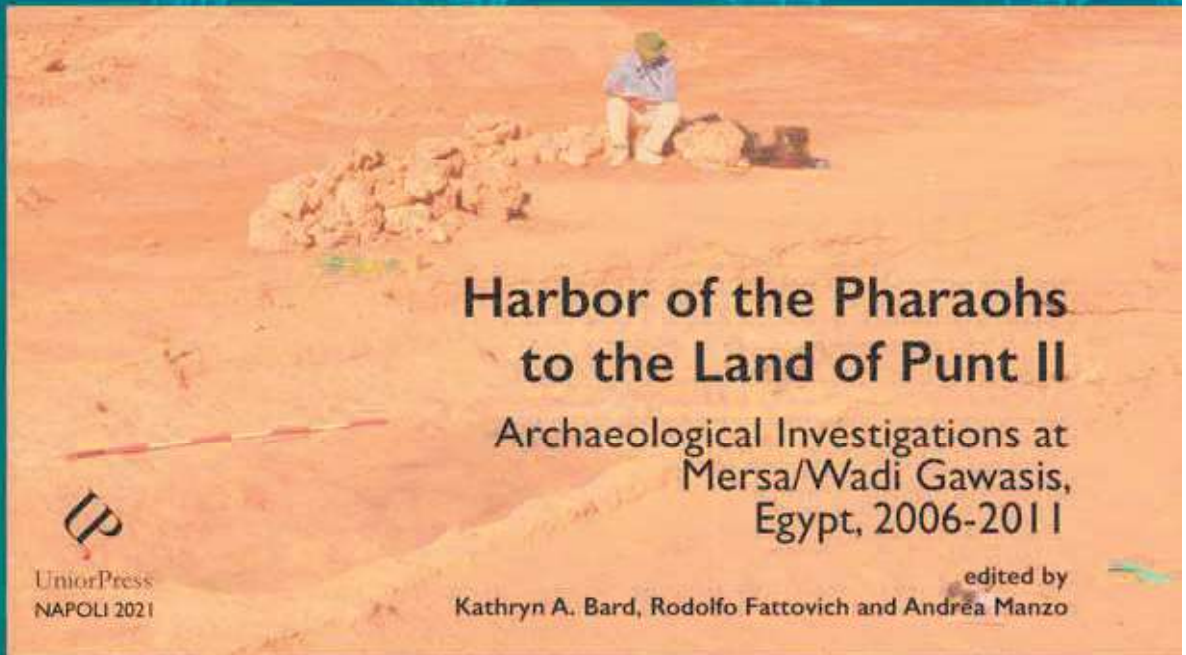




UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI  
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## Harbor of the Pharaohs to the Land of Punt II

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



UmorPress  
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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## Chapter 6

### Finds at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, 2006-2007 to 2010-2011: Other Wood and Wood Identification

#### 6.1 Wooden artifacts

##### *6.1.a Wooden boxes, 2006-2007*

ANDREA MANZO

Twenty-two complete or fragmentary wooden boxes were excavated in WG 32 in 2006-2007 (see 3.2.b Excavations, western terrace slope), in the same Middle Kingdom assemblage where other 21 similar boxes were found in 2005-2006 (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 60). The boxes were piled altogether and were from the same shipment. The boxes were covered and filled by a deposit of sand and sea grass (Figure 122). Some of them had been damaged by insect activity. An inscription on a box discovered in 2005-2006 suggested that they were used to transport products from Punt (Bard and Fattovich 2007: 238).

Nine boxes were 50-52 cm × 32-34 cm in size, like those discovered in 2005-2006, and in some cases 24-27 cm high. Four boxes were ca. 45-48 cm × 30-34 cm × 20 cm in size. Four were ca. 51-55 cm × 37-39 cm × >21 cm in size. The planks forming the boxes were always ca. 2 cm thick. Five boxes were very fragmentary and only the thickness of the planks was recorded.

The sides, bases and lids of the boxes were formed by two or more planks, matched and connected by dowels. The external and internal surfaces of the boxes were usually covered with plaster. A light red color is often visible beneath the plaster coating. Frequently, a thick layer of white plaster, different from the plaster of the coating, was found on plank joints and, in the case of Box 41, formed a stratum in the box fill. This plaster was probably intended to better seal or to preserve the content of the boxes.

All boxes are similar in typology and construction technique. The joints between the planks were fixed with dowels with a round cross-section, 2.5 cm to 10 cm long 0.5 cm to 2.5 cm in diameter. The base, when preserved, was always characterized by rectangular furring strips.

All the components of the boxes were analyzed to identify the wood used in their production (6.2.b Identification of wood and charcoal, 2006-2007).

On a lid and on a short side of box 42 conical pegs were preserved (Figure 123). They were intended to close the boxes with ropes. Their occurrence confirms that most of the clay sealings excavated here with impressions of a peg, ropes and wood grain may have been originally used to seal the boxes.

In particular, Box 21 had a hieroglyphic inscription painted in black on the external surface of one of the short sides, confirming that these boxes were used to transport products from Punt (see 9.4 Cargo box inscriptions). Shorter inscriptions consisting of few signs were remarked on Boxes 36 (possibly a fabrication mark), 40, 41 and 42 (see again 9.4 Cargo box inscriptions).

Boxes similar to those from Mersa/Wadi Gawasis were also found at Kahun in an assemblage dating to the 12th Dynasty (David 1986: Pl. 4).<sup>1</sup>

#### *6.1.b Wood artifacts, 2007-2008*

CHIARA ZAZZARO

During the 2007-2008 field season, four complete or fragmentary conical wood artifacts were found in different contexts in WG 55. They were ca. 3.5 cm in length and 2.2-3.2 cm in diameter and were interpreted as pegs, perhaps for closing boxes. One of them is complete, (3.5 cm long, 3.2 cm in diameter), with a dowelled end for insertion (Figure 124). It is similar to an artifact found at Kahun, now in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London (UC7371), probably dating to the 12th Dynasty. Similar artifacts were also interpreted as pegs or pins (*e.g.*, UC7448 and UC7095 in the Petrie Museum), and were also found at Kahun and dating to the same period.

Wood debris found in the sand deposit on the slope, in WG 32, WG 55 and WG 56, also included some fragments covered with white plaster; they were interpreted as possible box fragments (see 6.1.a Wooden boxes, 2006-2007). Among them was a complete side of a box (SF21, ca. 26 cm × 9.5 cm) with holes for pegs, found in WG 32. Two fragmentary ends of boxes were also found: one, 16 cm × 2.5 cm × 2 cm, from WG 56, A2, SU8 with a peg still in place, and the other was 34.5 cm × 3.7 cm × 2.5 cm, from WG 55, C1, SU11.

<sup>1</sup> See also the box in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London: UC7513.



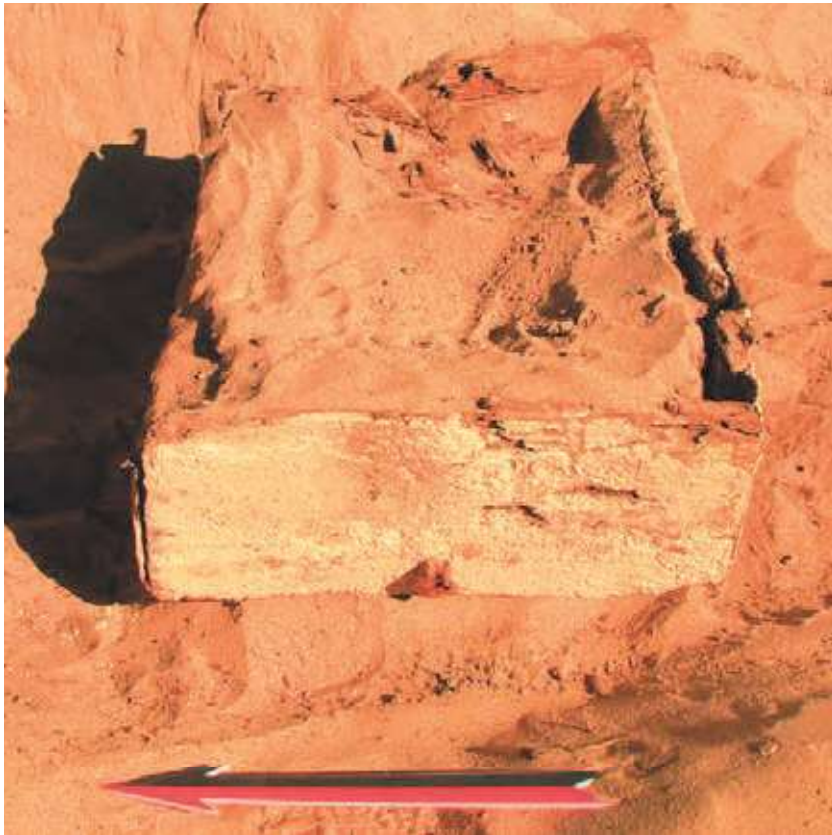


Figure 122. *Wooden Box 41 in situ in WG 32.*

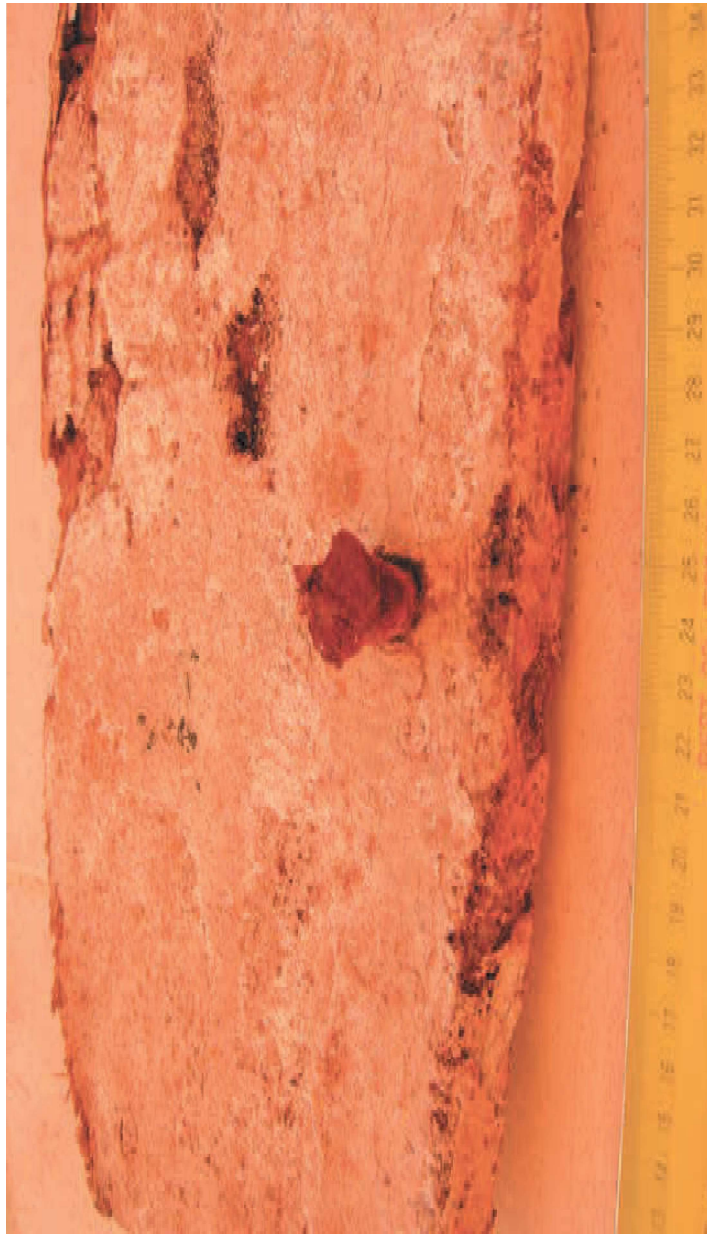


Figure 123. Detail of the wooden peg for sealing Box 42 from WG 32.