



COFFEE CUP HOLDERS “AZRUF” MADE OF BRASS

“AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARTISTIC STUDY”

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ABSTRACT

Cup holders (*Azruf*) were important utensils used for coffee in Egypt and other parts of the Islamic world especially during the 13th (AH) / 19th (AD) century. This paper aims to study seven brass cup holders (*azruf*) from Al-Ashmunein storehouse in Mallawi town - Minia governorate - Egypt. These cup holders were not previously published; this is the first time they will be studied and published. This study includes a discussion of the term (*zarf*) and an explanation of the relationship between this term generally used in the past and the term (*zarf*), which means a cup holder. This study highlights design, motifs, and some functional and aesthetic values of these cup holders. Through some archaeological, historical and cultural evidence, this study will date these cup holders (*azruf*) and determine their provenance.

المخلص

دراسة آثارية فنية لمجموعة من أظرف فناجين القهوة النحاسية تنوعت الأدوات والأواني التي كانت تستخدم في صناعة، وتقديم، وتناول القهوة. وأظرف الفناجين هي أحد أنواع هذه الأواني؛ حيث كانت تستخدم لحمل فناجين القهوة المعروفة باسم: “فناجين البيشة”، وقد انتشر استخدام الأظرف في مصر، وغيرها من بقاع العالم الإسلامي، وخاصة خلال القرنين الثاني عشر والثالث عشر الهجريين/ الثامن عشر والتاسع عشر الميلاديين. ويهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة سبعة أظرف فناجين، مصنوعة من النحاس الأصفر، ومحفوظة بالمخزن المتحفي بقرية الأشمونين، بمركز ملوي، محافظة المنيا، مصر. وهذه الأظرف لم يسبق نشرها من قبل، وسوف تنشر، وتدرس في هذا البحث لأول مرة. وتشتمل هذه الدراسة على مناقشة لمصطلح (ظرف)، وشرح العلاقة بين هذا المصطلح بشكل عام في العصور الإسلامية وبين مصطلح (ظرف) الذي يعني حامل الفنجان. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على تصميم هذه الأظرف، والعناصر الزخرفية المنفذة عليها، وبعض القيم الوظيفية والجمالية، وكذلك تاريخ هذه الأظرف، وتحديد مكان صنعها من خلال الدراسة المقارنة.

KEYWORDS

Cup holder - *Zarf* - Utensils - Design - Decoration

الكلمات الدالة

ظرف - فنجان - المعادن - حامل - أواني - تصميم - القهوة

INTRODUCTION

Coffee was one of the most important drinks of Egyptians and others in the 13th A.H. (19th) century. Drinking coffee in Egypt in the 13th (AH) / 19th (AD) century included particular customs and traditions¹. Some travelers and orientalist who have visited Egypt in this period such as G. De Chabrol², Edward W. Lane³, etc., talked about coffee, cafés and their tools.

¹ Al-Faramāwī, *Buyūt al-Qahwa*, 34-40.

² Chabrol, *Dirāsa fī ‘Ādāt wa-Taḳālīd Sikkān Misr*, 152-155.

They described and recorded many anecdotes related to these things. Some orientalist such as *Ludwig Deutsch* drew some paintings containing some coffee utensils (pls. 1- 4). A variety of coffee tools were used for cooking, serving, drinking, etc. Cup holders (*azruf*) were among these tools. There are seven cup holders (*azruf*) preserved in Al-Ashmunein storehouse; we will study them in the following topics:

Main Data

Type: Coffee Cup Holders (*azruf*). **Location of preservation:** Al-Ashmunein storehouse (Hall no. 1 in the small storehouse annexed to the storehouse of Al-Ashmunein); Mallawi town, Minia governorate - Egypt. **Register No.:** 338. **Material:** Brass. **Industrial and decorative methods:** Beating, incision and engraving. **Dimensions:** Height: 5.8 - 6.1 cm; the largest width: 4.2 - 4.5 cm; the narrowest width: 0.8 - 0.9 cm; base diameter: 2.3 - 2.5 cm; the diameter of the part between the base and the body: 1 cm; mouth diameter: 4.2 - 4.5 cm; base height: 1.2 - 1.3 cm; the height of the part between the base and the body: 0.3 cm; body height: 4.2 - 4.5 cm. **Pieces' condition:** Good but some parts were damaged.

Discussion

The term (*zarf*). The term (*zarf*) was used in the pre-Islamic period; we found it in the pre-Islamic poetry, for example, a poem of *Labid Ibn Rabe'a*, during describing the hunting of a wild bull.⁴

In the Islamic period, the term (*zarf*) was used a lot, *Ibn Sīdah* in his book *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, said: “*It is called so because wine was fermented in (zurūf)*”.⁵ In another mentioned: “... (*Zarf*) in which something is preserved.”⁶

we can understand from *Ibn Manzūr*, in his book *Lisān al-‘Arab*, that (*zarf*) means “vessel” or “any container”; he said: “(*Zarf*) of something is its vessel (its plural is (*zurūf*); (*zarf*) is the vessel for anything, even the ewer is a (*zarf*) regardless of what is in it”.⁷ According to *Lisān al-‘Arab*: “*Al-Jilf is every (zarf) or vessel*”.⁸

The author of *Kanz al-fawā'id fi tanwei' al-mawā'id* mentioned (*zuruf*), either made of pottery or glass, during his talking about storing grapes, he said: “*If you put the grape in a new pottery (zarf)*”.⁹ During his explanation of the ways for preserving food, he said: “*They were put in glass (zarf) for the time of need*”.¹⁰ He, also, said: “*Food is put in glass (zarf) and vinegar is added to [it]*”.¹¹ We understand through his sayings that (*zarf*) – pottery or glass – was a vessel used for storing and preserving food.

Al-Maqrīzī, in his book *al-khiṭaṭ*, referred to the water of the Nile, he said: “*Choose for this water in summer the vessels made of ceramic and pottery in month Tobi and stony (zurūf)*”.¹²

³ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

⁴ Al-Shāyī, *Mo'jam Lughat Dawāwīn*, 143.

⁵ Ibn Sīdah, *Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, vol. 3, 123.

⁶ Ibn Sīdah, *Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, vol. 1, 396.

⁷ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 9, 228.

⁸ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 9, 30.

⁹ *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, 253.

¹⁰ *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, 263.

¹¹ *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, 263.

¹² Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāiẓ wal-‘i'tibār*, vol. 1, 172.

We can understand from Al-Maqrīzī that stone (*zarf*) is a vessel used for storage and keeping water.

Al-Qazwīnī, in *Āthār al-bilād wa akhbār al-‘ibād*, during his talk about the city of *Qashan*, said: “Tools and (*zurūf*) were carried from *Qashan* to other countries”.¹³

In his book, *Al-Majmū‘ sharḥ al-muḥadhab*, *Al-Nawawī* said:

“Our companions mentioned about selling margarine in (*zarf*) many matters, one of which is if margarine or oil, etc., in (*zarf*), and someone saw and bought a pound or pounds of it, selling shall be correct... The second matter is if someone saw and bought it with its (*zarf*) by 10 Dirhams, selling shall be correct, whether (*zarf*) is made of pottery, wood, iron, copper or even leather, and whether they knew their weight or not...”.¹⁴

Through the previous discussion we notice that the word (*zarf*) is a general term including several kinds of vessels. There were several materials that were used in manufacturing (*azruf*) such as: pottery, ceramic, glass, wood, stone, iron or copper, etc. There were many uses of (*azruf*) but they were often used for containing, storing or preserving food, drinks or liquids.

But, what is the relationship between the term (*zarf*) in the past and the term (*zarf*), which means Coffee Cup Holder? Concerning the Cup Holder (*zarf*), and its plural is (*azruf*) were known as “Coffee Cup Holders”, it takes the form of a cup and was used for holding *bīsha* cup (*finjān al-bīsha*).¹⁵

The term Cup (*finjān*) generally refers to a mug, copper bowls in particular. It is, also, the utensil used for drinking coffee or tea.¹⁶

Concerning *bīsha* cup (*finjān al-bīsha*), the word (*bīsha*) is a Persian term that means craft and skill.¹⁷ The *Bīsha* Cup (*finjān al-bīsha*) is a small cup made accurately without a handle, were used for drinking coffee.¹⁸

G. De Chabrol, during his talk about cafés, said: “Cups are placed in small plates, made of brass, similar to vessels made of ceramic, which we know as (the egg *zarf*), the Arabs call it (*zarf*)”.¹⁹

Edward W. Lane said: “The coffee-cup (called *finjān*) is small... It is of porcelain or Dutch-ware, and, being without a handle, is placed within another cup (called *zarf*)”.²⁰

Reinhart Dozy (1820- 1833 AD) defines the term (*zarf*) with more than one meaning; he said: “(*Zarf*) is goatskin that is prepared to put liquid inside it. (*Zarf*) is cowhide that is

¹³ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, 432-433.

¹⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Al-Majmū‘*, vol. 9, 386-387.

¹⁵ Al-Faramāwī, *Buyūt al-Qahwa*, 360.

¹⁶ Al-Faramāwī, *Buyūt al-Qahwa*, 294.

¹⁷ Sulaymān, *T’šīl mā Warada fī Tārīkh al-Gabartī*, 49.

¹⁸ Dahmān, *Mo’jam al-‘Alfāz*, 40; al-Faramāwī, *Buyūt al-Qahwa*, 294; Zanātī, *Mo’jam Muṣṭalahāt*, 71.

¹⁹ Chabrol, *Dirāsa fī ‘Ādāt wa-Taḳālīd Sikkān Misr*, 152.

²⁰ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

stitched to be a container (as a goatskin). (Zarf) is a small plate of silver or brass, similar to Chinese porcelain, a cup is placed in it.²¹

We can conclude that the two terms are related by the function of containing; either food, drinks or liquids; (*zarf*) in the general linguistic sense or in a more qualified sense containing another vessel as in the coffee cup holder; for holding *bīsha* cups. That leads us to conclude that the term (*zarf*) generally is an ancient term used throughout the ages to carry meaning of a container of sorts, and the term (*zarf*), which means a coffee cup holder is derived from the ancient term, or in other words, (*zarf*), a coffee cup holder, is a kind of (*azruf*).

Materials

These cup holders (*azruf*) were made of brass. *Edward W. Lane* mentioned that Cup Holders were made of silver or brass according to the circumstances of their owners.²² We can deduce through *Lane's* statement that the rich were buying cup holders made of silver while the simple poor were buying cup holders made of brass, which its cost was suitable for their respective economic status. However, generally, cup holders (*azruf*) varied from wood, bone, ivory, brass, silver, gold and agate.²³

Usage

Some paintings of orientalists, during the 13th - 14th (AH) / 19 - 20th (AD) centuries, depict cup holders used to hold *bīsha* cups such as the paintings of the orientalist Ludwig Deutsch (1855-1935).²⁴ In his painting "the Chess Game" (1896), we see a dinner chair with coffee utensils on it, they are a brass coffee pot with a long handle and two brass cup holders (*azruf*), each of them holding a ceramic *bīsha* cup. (Pls. 1/2).



◀Pl. 1: The painting of *The Chess Game*, Ludwig Deutsch, Private Collection



▶Pl. 2: Cup holders (*Azruf*) in the painting of *The Chess Game*

Source: [<https://www.arageek.com/art/2015/11/04/great-egyptian-architect-portrations.html>] (2-5-2017)

²¹ Dozy, *Takmilat al-Ma'ājim*, vol. 7, 118-119.

²² Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

²³ Al-Faramāwī, *Buyūt al-Qahwa*, 360-361.

²⁴ Ludwig Deutsch (1855- 1935): Austrian artist, graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 1875, he visited Cairo for the first time in the early eighties of the 19th century, he came a lot to Cairo that was the source of his paintings subject matter until his death in 1935 (AD). Some consider him the major of accurate reality; see: Ramaḍān, "Ludwig Deutsch", 68.

In the Smoker painting, by Ludwig Deutsch (1903), we see a dinner chair with coffee utensils on it - a brass coffee pot with a long handle and a brass cup holder (*zarf*) holding a ceramic *bīsha* cup.²⁵ (Pls. 3/4)



◀ Pl. 3: The painting of the Smoker Ludwig Deutsch, Private Collection



▶ Pl. 4: A cup holder (*zarf*) in the painting of the Smoker

Source: [https://www.pinterest.com/pin/450571137698536569] (2-5-2017)

Edward W. Lane (1216-1293 AH/1801-1876 AD)²⁶, in his book “*The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*”, mentioned the function of the cup holder (*zarf*), he said: “*The coffee-cup (called finjān)... being without a handle, is placed within another cup (called zarf)*”.²⁷ This book includes a plate entitled *Coffee-Service* depicting coffee utensils - a tray holding an ewer between a group of cup holders (*azruf*) and *bīsha* cups. There are four utensils, at the front part of the plate, resembling some utensils that are on the tray - a cup holder holding a *bīsha* cup, a *bīsha* cup and a cup holder.²⁸ (Fig.1)

We can say, based on the above evidence, that cup holders were used for holding hot *bīsha* cups (*finjān al-bīsha*), in order to avoid scalding one's fingers due to the hot coffee.

Design

These cup holders (*azruf*) are very similar however there are, in fact, subtle differences in the dimensions and decorations. Each cup holder consists of a base and body. (Pls. 5-8; Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: Coffee-Service, Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 141.

²⁵ Ramaḍān, “Ludwig Deutsch”, 69.

²⁶ Edward William Lane (1216 - 1293 AH / 1801 - 1876 AD): English orientalist, visited Egypt three times; the first was in (1825-1828 AD), he mastered Arabic; writing and speaking, and he studied Egypt's affairs, then he returned to England, the second visit to Egypt was in (1833 - 1835 AD), then he returned to England and issued his book *the manners and customs of the modern Egyptians*, and the third visit to Egypt was in (1842 - 1844 AD). For more about lane, see: Murād, *Mo'jam 'Asmā' al-Mustashriqīn*, 989-991.

²⁷ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

²⁸ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 141.



Pl. 5: Seven brass cup holders (*azruf*), Al-Ashmunein storehouse

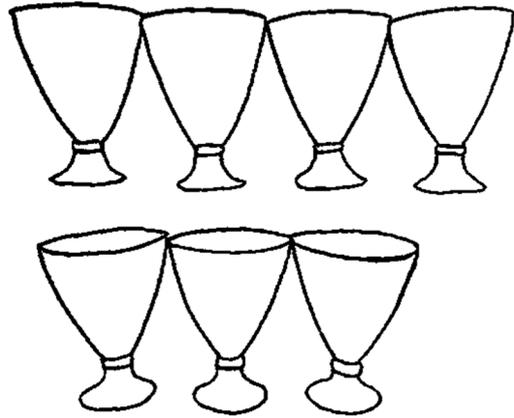


Fig. 2: Design of the seven brass cup holders (*azruf*)

The base is circular from the horizontal projection and conical from the vertical projection, the bottom of the base is wider than the top of it. This conical design of the base facilitates its function to be more efficient, this design makes the base more balanced. (Pls. 5-8).

Pl. 6



Pl. 7



Pl. 8



Pls. 6-8: Three brass cup holders (*azruf*), Al-Ashmunein storehouse

We can see this design of the base in other examples from Islamic periods, for example, an enameled glass lamp "*mishkāh*", from the Mamluk period, 8th (AH)/14th (AD) century, preserved in Louvre Museum in Paris.²⁹

From the outside, the base is rather flat and it becomes more concave and deeper toward the center. This design of the base prevents adhesion to anything being under the cup holder. (Pl. 9). Therefore, the base design features make its performance more efficient.

Between the base and the body there is a relief part decorated with slanted lines. This part seemingly used for two functions, to support the connection between the base and the body and to add an aesthetic value through the variety of shapes; the conical shape at the top of base, the circular shape at the relief part and the conical shape at the lower part of the body.

²⁹ Hasan, *Atlas*, fig. 751.

The aesthetic value is, also, achieved, through decorating this relief part with slanted lines. (Pl. 10; Fig. 3)



Pl. 9: The base of a cup holder (*zarf*), Al-Ashmunein storehouse.



Pl. 10: The part between the base and the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Fig. 3: Decoration of the part between the base and the body.

The body of these cup holders is circular from the horizontal projection and conical from the vertical projection, narrow at the bottom and wider toward the top. *Bīsha* cup's design is similar to the design of the body of the cup holder; this enables the *bīsha* cup to be balanced inside the cup holder's body. The base of the *bīsha* cup rests on the lower third of the cup holder's body from inside, and a part of the *bīsha* cup's body from outside touches the cup holder's body from inside. The sizes of both the hidden part of the *bīsha* cup inside the body of the cup holder and the apparent part outside the cup holder differ according to the design and dimensions of the cup holder's body and the *bīsha* cup. (Pls. 11/12; Fig. 1)



Pl. 11: The interior part of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Pl. 12: The interior part of a cup holder (*zarf*).

These cup holders are relatively small in size³⁰ and proportionate to the size of the *bīsha* cup. Regarding the sizes of cup holders (*azruf*) and *bīsha* cups, Lane said: “The coffee-cup (which is called “*fingán*”) is small; generally holding not quite an ounce and a half of liquid..., is placed within another cup (called “*zarf*”)..., and, both in shape and size, nearly resembling our egg-cup”.³¹

The dimensions³² of these cup holders (*azruf*) play an important role in the relationship

³⁰ See the Dimensions of these cup holders (*azruf*) in Main Data.

³¹ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

³² See the Dimensions of these cup holders (*azruf*) in Main Data.

between them and the palm of the hand. The height of the cup holder (*zarf*), generally, is 5.8 - 6.1 cm; this height is less than the height of the palm of the hand. The height of the base is 1.2 - 1.3 cm, and the height of the body is 4.2 - 4.5 cm. If someone wants to hold the cup holder by his palm, the top of his palm will touch the hot *bīsha* cup, and will therefore subsequently scald his palm. The base, with a height of 1.2 - 1.3 cm, is not appropriate for holding cup holder neither by the palm of the hand nor by the fingertips because of the small size of the base. Thus, the best way to hold the cup holder is from the body by some fingertips.

Decorations

The edge of the base of these cup holders (*azruf*) is decorated with a band of relief granules so-called “Sassanid pearl beads” (Pl. 13). Sassanid pearl beads are small contiguous or sticking circles making a chain, or used as a frame.³³



Pl. 13: Decorations on the base of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Pl. 15: A stamp with the word “correct” on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Pl. 14: Decorations on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Fig. 4: The stamp with the word “correct”.

The base includes a stamp with the word “**correct**” (Pl. 13). This stamp was common on Islamic metalwork, the word “correct” may refer to the quality of the metal and the weight, and their compliance with specifications after being checked by a competent official to prevent commercial fraud that was happening by mixing valuable metal with less valuable metals or by decreasing the weight.³⁴

The lower two-thirds of the body have no decoration except for two stamps with the word “**correct**”, and there is an unclear *tughra* inscription between them. (Pls. 14/15; Fig. 4)

³³ About Sassanid pearl beads in Islamic art see: AL-Bāshā, “Dirāsāt fī al-Zakhrifa”, vol. 2, 98; ‘Imāra, *Al-T’thirat al-Sāsāniyya*, 152-154; Al-Shikha, *Al-T’thirat al-Mukhtalifa*, 326.

³⁴ Abū-Shāl, *Al-Mabkhara*, 99-100.

Tughra in Arabic means signature, in Persian it is said *nishan*.³⁵ *Tughra* is a reference to a sign or signature bearing the name of sultan and his titles. It has specific form on the top of the Sultans' decrees to be a clear and distinctive sign which authenticates what has been written.³⁶

During the Ottoman period, it was common for owners to record their names and titles along with some religious phrases in the form of *tughra*.³⁷ Some scholars called this signature “*Tughra Formation*” to be different from *tughra* itself; as it includes some formal elements of *tughra*.³⁸

One of the oldest examples of *tughra* formations is on a copper candlestick base, preserved in King ‘Abd Al-Aziz Library in Medina, dated back to 947 (AH)/1566 (AD), its text is: “**Its owner is Sulaymān Pāsha**”.³⁹

There are many instances where Islamic metalwork bear the stamp that includes the word “**correct**” with a *tughra* formation, or two stamps and between them a *tughra* formation, or these stamps without *tughra* formation, or we see a *tughra* formation without stamps. There is an incense burner made of silver painted with gold made in Egypt dated back to the second half of the 13th (AH) / 19th (AD) century preserved in Al-Manial Palace museum in Cairo includes a *tughra* inside an oval frame which is read: “**Muḥammad 'Alī**” on each of the base, the body and the cover. Beside the *tughra* there is a stamp with the word “**correct**”. On each column of the base there is a stamp with the same word inside a small circular frame.⁴⁰

On each of these cup holders, there is a decorative band of slanted shapes in relief carving resembling olive leaves in two rows; slanting to the right in the upper row and slanting to the left in the lower row. This pattern is repeated on six cup holders, but on the seventh one the shapes slanting to the reverse direction. This is one of the most important differences between some of these cup holders. (Pls. 16/17; Fig. 5)



Pl. 16: Decorations on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Fig. 5: Decoration of slanted shapes on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Pl. 17: Decorations on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).



Fig. 6: Decoration of lotus flowers on the body of a cup holder (*zarf*).

³⁵ Marzūq, *Al-Funūn al-Zukhrofiyya*, 180.

³⁶ Bayūmī, *Al-Ṭuḡhrā' al-'Othmāniyya*, 12.

³⁷ Al-Ḥārithī, *Tuḡhaf al-'Awāni*, 276.

³⁸ Bayūmī, *Al-Ṭuḡhrā' al-'Othmāniyya*, 369, 440.

³⁹ Al-Ḥārithī, *Tuḡhaf al-'Awāni*, 276.

⁴⁰ No. 1230: 'Abū-Shāl, *Al-Mabkhara*, 178-180.

There is another decorative band of floral ornaments - repeated lotus flowers each one of them is above two spiral branches (Pls. 16/17; Fig. 6). Lotus flower is a popular floral motif used by Muslim artisans for ornamentation.⁴¹

The upper edge of these cup holders is decorated with relief granules so-called “Sassanid pearl beads”, similar to these at the edge of the base. (Pls. 16/17)

Dating

In dating these seven cup holders (*azruf*), I suggest they are from the 13th (AH) / 19th (AD) century based on the evidence below. These cup holders do not include any decorations or inscriptions that confirm dating them back to the pre-Ottoman period, but the *tughra* inscriptions lead us to date them back to the 10th (AH) / 16th (AD) century or to the next period.

These cup holders resemble some of Islamic metalwork in some features, stamps including the word “**correct**” with *tughra* formation, as well as metal incense burners dated back to the second half of the 13th (AH) / 19th (AD) century, for example, two incense burners preserved in Al-Manial Palace Museum in Cairo.⁴²

Edward W. Lane, who visited Egypt three times between 1825 and 1844, mentioned in this book (1835–1842) the cup holder (*zarf*). This book, also, includes a plate entitled “*Coffee-Service*” showing some coffee utensils as cup holders (*azruf*) and *bīsha* cups.⁴³ (Fig. 1)

Paintings by orientalist of Egypt during the 13th and 14th (AH) / 19th and 20th (AD) centuries, depict cup holders (*azruf*) used for holding *bīsha* cups. Examples can be found in the paintings of Ludwig Deutsch (1855-1935), who visited Cairo for the first time in the early eighties of the 19th century and continued to frequently visit Cairo (the main subject matter of his paintings until his death in 1935); *The Chess Game* (1896, Pls. 1/2) and *The Smoker* (1903, Pls. 3/4).⁴⁴

Based on the above evidence, we can date these seven cup holders back to the 13th (AH)/19th (AD) century.

Provenance

These cup holders do not include explicit inscriptions that confirm their provenance. In my opinion, they made in Egypt, and I make this deduction based on the evidence below.

These cup holders were found in Egypt,⁴⁵ they do not include inlaying with high-priced materials (Pls. 5-8), they can easily be produced locally, and Egypt has a long history with copper craftsmanship, that support our opinion that there is no need to import them.

⁴¹ About Lotus flower in Islamic art see; Hasan, *Al-Funūn al-ʿIrāniyya*, 120; Shāfēʿī, “Mumayyizāt al-ʿakshāb”, 290; AL-Bāshā, “Dirāsāt fī al-Zakhrāfa”, vol. 2, 100; Meşelḥī, *ʿAdawāt wa-ʿAwānī al-Matbakh*, 249-250; Fehérvári, *Islamic Metalwork*, pl. 53, n-155; ʿAbd Al-Ḥafīz, *Ashghāl al-Maʿādin*, 312-313; Al-Shīkha, *Al-Tḥīrat al-Mukhtalifa*, 302.

⁴² No. 1230, ʿAbū-Shāl, *Al-Mabkhara*, 178-180.

⁴³ Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 141.

⁴⁴ Ramaḍān, “Ludwig Deutsch”, 69.

⁴⁵ Registries of Al-Ashmunein storehouse mention that these cup holders (*azruf*) were found in Egypt.

These cup holders do not include any Persian or Turkish inscriptions or indication of being made in Iran, Turkey or any other country (Pls. 5-8).

Orientalists' writings about Egypt mentioned descriptions of cup holders as: "Nearly resembling our egg-cup", "Made of brass" and "Small in size"⁴⁶, descriptions consistent with these cup holders. In addition, orientalist paintings of Egypt depict cup holders similar to these cup holders, as mentioned above (Ludwig Deutsch; The Chess Game (Pls. 1/2) and The Smoker (Pls. 3/4).

These cup holders are decorated with the Egyptian lotus flower motif (Pls. 16/17; Fig. 6). Thus, I substantiate my conclusion that these cup holders were made in Egypt.

Conclusion

This study of seven cup holders (*azruf*) made of brass used for holding *bīsha* cups preserved in the storehouse of Al-Ashmunein in Mallawi town, Minia governorate, Egypt. This study finds the following results:

- Based on our discussion of the term (*zarf*), we can find that the term (*zarf*), meaning a cup holder, derived from the ancient term (*zarf*), which is a general term which includes many kinds of vessels and containers, and the function of containing was the common denominator between them despite the difference of the content.
- These cup holders have important functional values, in the design of its components– the base and the body, and their relation to the *bīsha* cups.
- These cup holders include aesthetic values, in the beauty and harmony of the designs and decorations.
- Through deduction and comparison with some archaeological, historical and cultural evidence, we can date these cup holders back to the 13th (AH)/19th (AD) century.
- Through deduction and comparison with some archaeological, historical and cultural evidence, we can conclude that these cup holders were made in Egypt.

⁴⁶ Chabrol, *Dirāsa fī 'Ādāt wa-Taḳālīd Sukkān Misr*, 152; Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 140.

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