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## **A Decorated Wooden Coffin from Tell-Tamiya**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents a study of an unpublished decorated wooden coffin housed in the Kom Aushim store museum. Originating from Tell-Tamiya near Fayoum, the artifact is an anthropoid coffin exhibiting an irregular hexagonal form, with its upper section now absent. The extant lid is organized into seven registers. Six of these, along with the footboard, feature depictions of religious, symbolic, and ritualistic scenes. The sixth register is distinguished by a hieroglyphic inscription containing a Nut spell. Following a detailed description and commentary on each register, this analysis concludes that the arrangement of the depicted scenes on the coffin lid adheres to a cosmological schema representing the sky, earth, and netherworld. This organization underscores the coffin's symbolic function as a microcosm of the universe. While current museum records attribute the Kom Aushim store museum coffin to the Roman Period, this study proposes a Late Period dating as more consistent with the artifact's iconographic and textual characteristics.

### **Keywords**

Wooden coffin; Anthropoid coffin; Decorated coffin; Kom Aushim; Tell-Tamiya.

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## المستخلص:

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة تحليلية معمقة لتابوت خشبي مُزخرف وغير منشور، محفوظ حالياً في مخزن متحف كوم أوشيم، والذي عُثر عليه أصلاً في تل طامية بالقرب من الفيوم. يتميز التابوت بهيئته شبه الآدمية وشكله السداسي غير المنتظم مع فقدان الجزء العلوي منه. يشتمل غطاء التابوت على سبعة سجلات تصويرية؛ ستة منها، بالإضافة إلى اللوح القديمي، تصور مشاهد دينية ورمزية وطقسية، بينما يحتوي السجل السادس على نص بالهيروغليفية يمثل أحد تعاويذ الإلهة نوت. بعد تقديم وصف وتحليل تفصيلي لكل سجل على حدة، يخلص البحث إلى أن ترتيب المشاهد على غطاء التابوت يتبع نمط السماء والأرض والعالم السفلي، وذلك للحفاظ على رمزية التابوت كتمثيل مصغر للكون. وعلى الرغم من أن سجلات متحف كوم أوشيم تؤرخ التابوت إلى العصر الروماني، يقترح البحث اعتبار العصر المتأخر تاريخاً أكثر ملاءمة لهذا التابوت بناءً على التحليل الأيقونوغرافي والخصائص الفنية.

## الكلمات الدالة

تابوت خشبي؛ تابوت على شكل إنسان؛ تابوت مزخرف؛ كوم أوشيم؛ تل طامية

## Introduction

This coffin is now preserved in the Kom Aushim store museum under the inventory number 786 (Figs. 1, 2). The information given in the museum register mentions that it was found at Tell-Tamiya, about 16 km south west of Fayoum city, according to a report from the police of antiquities. It was brought to the museum in the first half of 1980s by Ahmed Abdel-Aal, the inspector of antiquities in Fayoum region.

When the coffin was found it was broken into pieces, and parts of the face and the lid were completely lost. It was restored by the restoration department.

The coffin is made out of wood, measures 182 cm in length, 35 cm in height, while its maximum width is 56 cm. According to the register, it dates back to the Roman period. No information is given concerning the exact place of discovery.



### *Description and commentary*

The top is broken and the head is completely missing (Fig. 3). Only traces of the right side of the headdress (left of the viewer) are preserved, suggesting that it was an anthropoid coffin, but the absence of representation of the crossed arms shows that it was not a Mummiform or Osirian coffin. It follows the style of irregular hexagonal shape. The right side of the central part of the chest shows traces of a collar with multiple rows, while to the extreme left there are two faces depicted in a Roman style (Fig. 3).

On the two sides of the coffin, the four sons of Horus are depicted. Two on the right side, Imsety and Duamutef; and the other two on the left side Hapi and Qebehsenuef (Fig. 1).

The whole surface of the coffin is decorated with religious scenes except for the lower part that has a hieroglyphic inscription. In general, the coffin's decorations are shown in seven registers (Fig. 2). They are separated by seven decorated bands, each, except the second, containing triangles motifs in two rows; the upper row is white with black dots while the lower consists of red and greyish triangles. The second separator has dashes colored in black, white, red, and grey.

### *The First register*

**Description:** The register contains the scene of the 'hall of judgment' (Figs. 4, 5) in which the deceased is led by Horus and Anubis, who are represented under the balance, to the hall. The two scales of the balance are damaged because of wooden cracks. Then Thot (damaged) is represented standing recording the result of weighing the heart. In front of him, Amemet 'the swallower' is shown recumbent on a shrine-like plinth facing a seated figure of Osiris (damaged) and in between them is an offering table.

**Commentary:** The scene of judgment of the dead was very common on the coffins lids starting from the Third Intermediate Period. From its early depiction, it simply shows the deceased being led into the 'broad court of the two Maats', to be declared innocent of wrong before the great god, and before the full tribunal of forty-two divine assessors, including Osiris and Re. The principal scene illustrates weighing of the deceased's heart on scales against Maat, before Osiris<sup>1</sup>. It is manifested in chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead, which is attested for the first time during the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, in connection with a new burial custom of placing a funerary papyrus with the dead<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, Translated by David Lorton, (Ithaca, 2005), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Seeber, *Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts im Alten Ägypten*, MÄS 35, (Berlin, 1976), 13.



Throughout the history of its depiction from the Third Intermediate Period onwards, the judgment scene varied in the number and role of participant figures, and in scale within a composition field. The scales were managed by Thot in baboon form, beside the god Osiris on his throne; in some scenes Horus was in charge of weighing, while Thot is shown as a scribe declaring or recording the result of the weighing to Osiris; in other cases it could be Anubis, god of embalming, the deity who was in charge of weighing. The scenes focus more on the concept of declaration of innocence rather than the procedure of weighing itself, a concept that first appeared in Ramesside depictions<sup>1</sup>. In some cases, the four sons of Horus as protectors of the internal organs of the deceased appeared; in more complex vignettes some supplementary figures were added such as Isis and Nephthys supporting Osiris. In some weighing depictions, they may add nearby a monster called variously Amemet ‘swallower’, or Am-mut ‘swallower of the Damned’<sup>2</sup>.

According to the arrangement of themes depicted on coffins lids, this judgment is always depicted in the upper parts of the coffin directly under or above the winged figure of the sky goddess or the sky sign, the matter that supposes the sky to be the place in which the judgment is held. Such suggestion might be confirmed by a title given to Thot in some scenes of Third Intermediate Period coffins where he was described as ‘lord of justice before the divine booth which is in the sky’<sup>3</sup>.

### ***The Second register***

**Description:** This register represents four seated gods, Re in front followed by three others; the second one is more damaged due to the wooden cracks (Fig. 6). The gods sitting in the solar bark sailing over a waterway. The bark is distinguished by a solar disk on the prow and another one on the stern. It is provided with oars in order to sail through the watery course. The whole scene represents the course of the sun. It is protected by two winged and crowned cobras sitting on *nb* sign; the back one is much more damaged.

**Commentary:** The representation of solar barque among the scenes of the coffins lids in the late period was not rare. It reflects the various texts and vignettes of the solar barque in the Book of the Dead (for example BD 15, 100, 129, 130-6). Some of these spells that illustrate

<sup>1</sup> Seeber, Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts im Alten Ägypten, 75.

<sup>2</sup> B. Peterson, ‘Der Totenfresser in den Darstellungen der Psychostase des altägyptischen Totenbuches. Eine ikonographische Skizze’, *OrSuec* 10, (Stockholm, 1961), 31.

<sup>3</sup> A. Niwiński, Catalogue general of Egyptian antiquities in the Cairo Museum. Nos. 6069-6082: The Second Find of Deir El-Bahari (Coffins). Second Volume - first fascicle, (Cairo, 1999), 16.





the journey of the deceased in the solar barque can occur twice, in longer and shorter versions within the same roll. The vignettes complementing these spells, generally depicting the solar barque carrying the sun god Re and the deceased, are often indistinguishable from each other<sup>1</sup>.

The journey represents the sun god's rebirth as he, at the end of the journey, leaves the netherworld, the realm of Osiris, and emerges into the sky where he is greeted by the acclamation of gods, Ba spirits and jubilant baboons. Through his presence among the sun god's entourage, the deceased would experience an endless cycle of rebirth<sup>2</sup>. The concept is well documented in BD 15, with many variations, in which the gods of souls who judge sky and earth in the balance give praise to Re, lord of the sky, when he appears in his day barque. The deceased expressed his wish to find a place on the solar barque in the day, when the god ferries across the sky, and his hope to be received into the presence of Osiris<sup>3</sup>.

As well as in spell BD 89 for letting a soul rejoins its corpse, the deceased calls his soul to come to his corpse mentioning that the sacred barque will be joyful and the great god will proceed in peace when the soul is allowed to ascend vindicated to the gods. This spell was a favorite element of the decorations of coffins lids in the Late Period<sup>4</sup>.

Other important spells (BD100-2, 130-6) focus on the journey of the deceased in the sun barque. The daily course across the sky in the company of the sun god Re and his divine passengers guarantees his participation in the god's daily rebirth and being part of the everlasting cyclical system<sup>5</sup>.

It could be said that the representation of the solar barque here is to encapsulate the entire course of the sun in one scene<sup>6</sup>.

### ***The Third register***

**Description:** It has a depiction of a winged scarab with the new born and radiating sun (Fig. 7).

<sup>1</sup> R. Lucarelli, 'Making the Book of the Dead', in J. Taylor (ed.), *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London, 2010), 273.

<sup>2</sup> R. Lucarelli, 'The Perfect Afterlife', in J. Taylor (ed.), *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London, 2010), 241.

<sup>3</sup> Th. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms*, SAOC 37, (Chicago, 1974), 13.

<sup>4</sup> J. Taylor, 'Day of Burial', in J. Taylor (ed.), *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London, 2010), 89.

<sup>5</sup> I. Munro, 'The Evolution of The Book of the Dead', in J. Taylor (ed.), *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London, 2010), 57.

<sup>6</sup> E. Hornung, 'Zu den Schlussszenen der Unterweltsbücher', *MDAIK* 37, (1981), 217.



**Commentary:** The majority of Egyptian coffins of the Third Intermediate Period and later have a depiction of a winged figure in the chest area<sup>1</sup>. This could be explained by the multiple symbolisms of the winged figures in Egyptian beliefs.

The ancient Egyptians adopted the concept of the protection offered by birds through their observation for the birds, in nature, shading their offspring by outstretching their wings in order to keep them cool and protect them from the hot climate. Hence, the birds, or even their parts including wings, and feathers, are symbols for protection<sup>2</sup>. It became very familiar in Egyptian art to find the king routinely depicted with a vulture, falcon, or sun disc hovering protectively above his head, as being under the shadow of a god, or a king, simply means being under his protection<sup>3</sup>.

The depiction of the winged figures on coffins lids was not aiming to personify only the concept of protection but to represent two more symbolisms, the encircling protection and the height. The encircling protection is very well shown in depiction with the protective figure always standing behind, or hovering above the protected one, while his outstretched wings surrounded him. This notion of encircling protection is clearly displayed with the wings of the vultures and goddesses wrapped around the coffins such as those of Tutankhamen<sup>4</sup>.

The height could be understood within the fact that the bird cannot flutter off the ground without spreading its wings. As soon as it flapped away from the ground, even for a little altitude, it is always described as flying in the sky. These extended wings of the hovering bird might emphasize the symbolism of flying high in the sky.

In our coffin the winged figure is the scarab, but in many other cases it could be a falcon with ram's head, a winged scarab with ram's head, a winged sun disk, or a falcon<sup>5</sup>. Although all were meant to protect the deceased in the afterlife, it should be recognized that all of these figures related to the celestial world and creator gods, which confirm the symbolism of this upper part of coffin as the sky.

<sup>1</sup> A. Niwiński, 21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes: Chronological and Typological Studies, *Theben* 5, (Mainz, 1988), 11.

<sup>2</sup> R. Shon, 'Sheltering Wings: Birds as Symbols of Protection in Ancient Egypt', in R. Bailleul-leseur (ed.), *Between Heaven and Earth Birds in Ancient Egypt*, OIMP 35, (Chicago, 2012), 49.

<sup>3</sup> J. Assmann, 'Eine Traumoffenbarung der Göttin Hathor. Zeugnisse "Persönlicher Frömmigkeit" in thebanischen Privatgräbern der Ramessidenzeit', *RdE* 30, (1978), 31.

<sup>4</sup> H. Carter, *The tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen*, Volume II, (London, 1927), 74; N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: the King. the Tomb. the Royal Treasure*, (London, 1990), 106.

<sup>5</sup> A. Niwiński, 21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes, 11; J. Taylor, 'Coffins as evidence for a 'North-South Divide' in the 22<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> Dynasties', in G Broekman, R. Demaree and O Kaper, *The Libyan Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> Dynasties*, (Leiden, 2009), pls. I, II, V, VII, VIII.



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### ***The Fourth register***

**Description:** This register shows a winged goddess represented in a seated position outstretching her two arms in order to spread her protection on the coffin and its content (Fig. 8).

**Commentary:** In similar scenes of coffins decorations it was the goddess Nut who was shown in such place and attitude. She is always represented in a kneeling position, a depiction that started to appear in this area of coffins from the Eighteenth Dynasty<sup>1</sup>. There are many reasons to depict Nut in this upper part of the coffin. Firstly, Nut was not only considered mother of the deceased, who protected him, but also Nut herself was identified with the sarcophagus as Pyramid Texts Spell 364 (616d-e) states: '*you are given to your mother Nut in her name of sarcophagus, Nut has embraced you in her name of sarcophagus*'<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, Nut personified the Milky Way, which stretched east to west in the night sky at the time of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes; the sun disappeared in the Milky Way at dusk and rose from it at dawn<sup>3</sup>. Thirdly, and the most important significant reason for depicting Nut in this part of the coffin, is her personification as the goddess of the sky<sup>4</sup>, which leads us to suppose that this part of the coffin represents the sky, the concept which is confirmed in many cases with the depiction of the *pt*, the hieroglyphic sign of the sky.

In our coffin, however the goddess holds a feather in each hand and a solar disk crowned her head, these two symbols perhaps indicating that the figure represents the goddess Maat. The feather was her own emblem while the solar disc confirms her relation to god Re as she was his daughter<sup>5</sup>.

### ***The Fifth register***

**Description:** It has a representation of the mummification scene (Figs. 9, 10). It shows Anubis ending the final touches of the mummification process for the mummy of the deceased who is shown lying on the funeral bier decorated with the head, tail and legs of a lion under

<sup>1</sup> Niwiński, 21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes, 11.

<sup>2</sup> V. Tobin, 'Selections from the Pyramid Texts', in W.K. Simpson (ed.) *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, (New Haven, 2003), 252.

<sup>3</sup> A. Kozloff, 'Pharaoh was a Good Egg, but Whose Egg was He', in R. Bailleul-leseur (ed.), *Between Heaven and Earth Birds in Ancient Egypt*, OIMP 35, (Chicago, 2012), 63.

<sup>4</sup> A. Maravelia, 'Cosmic Space and Archetypal Time: Depictions of the Sky-goddess Nut in Three Royal Tombs of the New Kingdom and her Relation to the Milky Way', *GM* 197, (2003), 55-72.

<sup>5</sup> E. Frood, *Biographical Texts from Ramesside Egypt*, (Boston, 2007), 153, 207.



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which the four canopic jars are shown. The two mourners are represented in their usual positions, Nephthys at the head while Isis, much more damaged, is at the feet.

**Commentary:** The mummification scene was one of the familiar scenes on coffins. Although the mummification process was one of the most important funeral rituals, it was seldom depicted in tomb scenes during the Pharaonic period. Out of more than 450 tombs in Theban necropolis, only around 20 tombs have depiction of mummification<sup>1</sup>. On the contrary, such a scene was widely depicted on coffins and papyri of the Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout the history of its depiction on coffins, the scene of mummification has some basic elements that were usually shown in such scenes; normally there are slight differences in details from one coffin to another. The most repeated elements are the mummy lying on a bier, Anubis, the two mourners, the four sons of Horus, and the canopic jars. The traditional scene always contains the mummy of the deceased body lying on a bier; and the god Anubis attending the mummy as performing the final handling of the mummification process. In some scenes, Anubis holds a jar with one hand while the other touches the corpse. The two mourners, Isis and Nephthys, always appeared seated or standing at the feet and the head of the deceased. Below the bier, jars of unguent are always placed, almost always four jars when Anubis is absent and two when he attends. The four sons of Horus, or at least their heads on the four canopic jars, are among the attendants of the mummification. In some cases, the mummy was enclosed in a canopy on both sides the participants in the process appeared<sup>3</sup>.

Although there is a total absence of detailed Egyptian sources for the process of mummification, how and where it was practiced, there is no doubt that the mummification was an actual, not a symbolic, ritual. The process was factually performed somewhere in the genuine world of the Egyptians. It was the last process that could actually be performed on the body of the deceased, so the whole scene of mummification on coffins lids could be considered a personification of the realistic world of the Egyptians, or in other words the earthly world. Because of the funeral and religious nature of the coffin, it was not proper to represent the earthly world in daily life scenes as shown on tomb walls. It was only the mummification scene that could personify that earthly world.

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<sup>1</sup> P.M., I.<sup>1</sup>, 473.

<sup>2</sup> E. Doxiadis, The Mysterious Fayum Portraits. Faces from Ancient Egypt, (Cairo, 2000), Fig. 60.

S. Ikram and A. Dodson, The Mummy in Ancient Egypt: Equipping the Dead for Eternity, (London, 1998),<sup>3</sup> Figs. 6, 49, 106, 224.



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### ***The Sixth register***

**Description:** The register shows floral motifs representing a number of lotus stems ending with open flowers and joined to each other through branches. In between each two is another stem ending with a closed bud (Fig. 11).

**Commentary:** In Egypt, two native species of lotus (more accurately water lilies) grew, the white lotus (*Nymphaea lotus*) and the blue lotus (*Nymphaea cerulea*). A third type, the pink lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) was introduced to the country from Persia during the Late Period. All three species are depicted in Egyptian art; however, the sacred blue lotus was the flower most commonly used and the one depicted in the hieroglyph<sup>1</sup>.

The flowers of the blue lotus seemed to close at night and sink beneath the water, while they seemed to rise once again in the morning, opening to the sun. The lotus was the only flowering plant in Egypt that bloomed continuously throughout the year. Because of this, the blue lotus became a natural solar symbol corresponding to the process of creation and the continuance of life<sup>2</sup>.

In Hermopolis, it was believed that a giant lotus blossom was the first expression of living form to emerge from the primordial waters of Nun. From this flower, in turn, the sun-god then came forth<sup>3</sup>. Among the master works of art found in the tomb of Tutankhamen is a wooden carving of the head of the young king, represented as a boy<sup>4</sup>. This expert sculpture depicts Tutankhamen as the reborn child, or sun god rising from the petals of the sacred blue lotus as he first appeared upon the high mound<sup>5</sup>.

As a symbol of re-birth, the lotus was closely related to the imagery of the funerary and Osirian cults. The Four Sons of Horus were frequently shown standing on a lotus in front of Osiris<sup>6</sup>. The Book of the Dead contains spells for 'transforming oneself into a lotus' and thus fulfilling the promise of resurrection<sup>7</sup>. The lotus is usually found used as components of floral collars that adorned the deceased. Oil of the lotus is believed to be one of the seven sacred oils

<sup>1</sup> W. Harer, 'Lotus', in D. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2, (Oxford, 2001), 305.

<sup>2</sup> W. Harer, 'Pharmacological and Biological Properties of the Egyptian Lotus', *JARCE* 22, (1985), 52.

<sup>3</sup> J. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts*, (New Heaven, 1988), 25; S. Morenz und J. Schubert, *Der Gott auf der Blume*, (Ascona, 1954), 91.

<sup>4</sup> H. Carter, *The tomb of Tut-an-kh-Amen*, Volume III, (London, 1933), pl. I.

<sup>5</sup> Th. Hoving, *Tutankaamun the Untold Story*, (New York, 1978), 232.

<sup>6</sup> F. Servajean, 'Le lotus émergeant et les quatre fils d'Horus: analyse d'une métaphore physiologique', in A. Sydney (ed.), *Encyclopédie religieuse de l'univers végétal: croyances phytoreligieuses de l'Égypte ancienne* 2, (Montpellier 2001), 261.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day*, 70, Spell 81.



commonly used in ancient Egypt<sup>1</sup>. In the process of preparing the body of the deceased, the use of these oils was thought to unite the limbs, join the bones and assemble the flesh in order to protect the body from the beginning effects of decay, as well as the lotus having its narcotic and aphrodisiac potential<sup>2</sup>. In many tomb paintings, the deceased is shown smelling lotus blossoms to help restore the senses<sup>3</sup>.

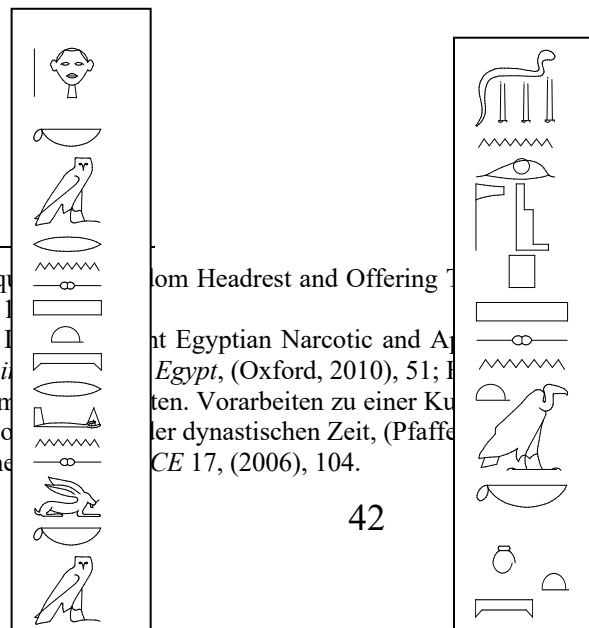
As a source of life, the lotus is a symbol of the womb, the cradle of the inception and subsequent development of pre-natal physical life<sup>4</sup>.

The depiction of lotus flowers on this part of the coffin aimed to emphasis the earthly world where the environment in which the lotus actually planted. As much as the lotus has its strong significant to the resurrection in the otherworld, this area of the coffin represent the transformation from the earthly world to the netherworld that is shown on lower parts of the coffin.

### *The Seventh register*

**Description:** contains a hieroglyphic text in two vertical columns extending on the footboard (Fig. 12). The text records a recitation by Osiris, read from top to bottom starting with the left side column (right of the viewer).

- <sup>1</sup> Z. Hawass, 'A Unique Egyptian Headrest and Offering Table', *Memnonia* 9, (1988), 1.
- <sup>2</sup> D. Counsell, 'Blue Lotus in Ancient Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2010), 51; D. Counsell, 'The Lotus in Ancient Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2010), 51; D. Counsell, 'The Lotus in Ancient Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2010), 51.
- <sup>3</sup> S. Weidner, 'Lotos in der ägyptischen Kunst', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, (Berlin, 1904), 102.
- <sup>4</sup> L. Manniche, 'In Thebes', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, (Oxford, 1975), 102.







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- *Dd mdw in Wsir pSs.n mwt .k Nwt*

- *Hr .k m rn .s St-pt rdi .n .s wn .k m nTr*

*Words spoken by Osiris, your mother Nut has spread herself over you in her name of Shetpet (Wadi Natrun), she put you as a god*

**Commentary:** This text is one of the Nut sequence of spells in the Pyramid Texts aimed to empower the deceased to rise into the sky and to become an imperishable star throughout eternity<sup>1</sup>. The origin of this text could be found in the Pyramid Texts, for example utterances nos. 356, and 368 or spells nos. 580c and 638a<sup>2</sup>.

The idea of Nut spreading herself over her son, the deceased, might involve the thought that the king's soul became a star<sup>3</sup>.

### ***The footboard***

**Description:** At the end of the texts and on the face of the footboard, Anubis is represented twice recumbent on a shrine-like pedestal guarding a door leading to the netherworld (Fig. 12).

**Commentary:** The recumbent Anubis on his shrine always appeared on the footboard or the lowest parts of the coffins lids. The multifunction of Anubis related to the necropolis and

<sup>1</sup> B. Lesko, *The Great Goddesses of Egypt*, (Norman, 1999), 28.

<sup>2</sup> PT 356, 368 (Pyr.580 c, 638a,b); J. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (Atlanta, 2005), 73, 82 (T145, 199b).

<sup>3</sup> J. Griffith, *The Origin of Osiris, MÄS* 9, (Berlin, 1966), 27.



the afterlife might explain this position for depiction. Anubis was the protector of the dead, the guardian of the necropolis, the guide to the dead, a means by which a way to the afterlife is opened<sup>1</sup>. He played a crucial role in the funerary rites of passage; some creatures mentioned in BD chapter 108 as spirits of the west are forms of the Anubis archetype<sup>2</sup>. The jackal god Anubis is a clear example of the interrelated functions of guardianship of the corpse and guide of the souls (psychopomp). He has a critical function in the processes of death, rebirth and reintegration. The Pyramid Texts feature him presiding over the gate 'Ro-setau at Saqqara', the bridge between death and rebirth that joins this world with the next and is located at the horizon. The king identifies himself with Anubis, since he must be able to assume the shape of others<sup>3</sup>.

Anubis, usually depicted in the form of a twin jackal, often appeared on the lowest part of the coffin. The texts explained their functions; the southern one says '*I am the protector of Osiris N, justified. I lead his steps on earth, and his ways in the necropolis. I present his ka to the great god*'. The northern jackal says '*I am the protector of Osiris N, justified. I lead him along the paths of the sky to Re when he rises, and Tem when he sets*'<sup>4</sup>.

### Conclusion

This coffin, like other coffins of the twenty-first dynasty onward, has a variation of scenes within very limited space. This matter resulted from giving up decorated tombs and accordingly caused a necessity of concentration of relatively a great number of the religious representation, considered to be indispensable for the ancient Egyptians, in much-limited surface of the coffins. This makes a correct interpretation very difficult.

Generally, the coffin could represent the deceased's universe in miniature. The lid is symbolically the sky, the case symbolizes the earth or exactly the netherworld, while the body of the deceased, occupies the area between heaven and earth, is the space in which the sun travels. In order to obtain the same symbolism when the coffin, thus the mummy, was placed in an upright position for the opening of the mouth ceremony, the decoration should serve the order of netherworld, earth and heaven.

<sup>1</sup> T. DuQuesne, The Jackal Divinities of Egypt I from the Archaic Period to Dynasty X. Oxford Communications in Egyptology 6, (Thame, 2005), 21- 53.

<sup>2</sup> T. DuQuesne, Anubis and the Spirits of the West. Oxford Communications in Egyptology 1, (Thame, 1990), 10.

<sup>3</sup> T. DuQuesne, Jackal at the Shaman's Gate. A study of Anubis Lord of Ro-Setawe, with the conjuration to chthonic deities. Text, translation, and commentary. Oxfordshire Communications in Egyptology 3, (Thame, 1991), 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> J. Bennett, 'The Symbolism of a Mummy Case', *JEA* 53, (1967), 165.



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As for our coffin, the same idea is very well represented. The arrangement of the scene on this coffin lid follow the pattern of the sky-earth-netherworld. The sky is personified in the upper three registers, the judgment scene, the winged scarab, and the kneeling winged goddess Nut (or Maat). The earthly world is shown in the mummification process, the last actual ritual performed on the deceased body on factual earth before leaving to the second life. The netherworld is clearly represented by the dual Anubis as guardian to that world.

Concerning the date of this coffin, there are two points that make an accurate dating a difficult matter. Firstly the total absence of any information relating to the exact place of its discovery. Secondly, the scenes depicted are very familiar throughout the Late Period and Graeco-roman Egypt. Although the museum register dates the coffin back to the Roman period, the style of execution of scenes and their figures is far from the Roman style. The only explicit Roman feature is the two round faces on the left side of the shoulder. They are not sufficient evidence to date the coffin as they might have been added in later times, if the coffin was reused. In spite that, according to the scenes style and execution, the Late Period could be the appropriate era to which our coffin belong.



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Figure 1. the coffin stored on shelf in Kom Aushim store museum.<sup>1</sup>  
Two of the four sons of Hours Hapi and Qebhsenuuf on the left side



Figure 2. the coffin moved for study and photography.

<sup>1</sup>All photographs captured by Wazir Abdelwahab. The authors express their gratitude to the manager and curators of Kom Aushim store museum for all their true assistance.



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Figure 3. the upper part of the coffin.



Figure 4. the first register shows the judgment scene.





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Figure 5. details from the judgment scene.

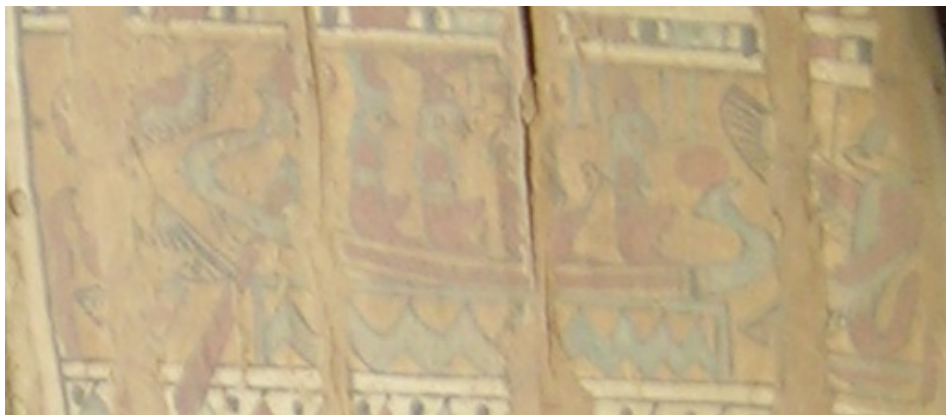


Figure 6. details from the solar barque in the second register





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details from "Figure 6" the solar barque in the second register.



Figure 7. the winged scarab in the third register.



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Figure 8. the winged goddess in the fourth register.



Figure 9. the fifth register shows the mummification scene.



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Figure 10. details from the mummification scene.





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Figure 11. the floral motifs in the sixth register.



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Figure 12. the hieroglyphic text in the seventh register, and the dual Anubis on the footboard.



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