

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT AND PLACEMENT:

A CASE STUDY ON THE COFFIN SET OF MERUAH NMR.27



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I declare that this thesis is the product of my own work and has not been previously submitted for assessment at a tertiary institution.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Danielle Smith'.

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Abstract

The 21st Dynasty was a time of intrigue and change, not only politically but economically and archaeologically. Funerary practices, including the production of coffins and their decoration altered producing some of the most beautiful and densely decorated material. The coffin set of Meruah NMR.27 housed in the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University is one such example. Through an analysis of the decoration on the coffin set of Meruah an understanding is gained on the relationship between the content of the scenes and their placement on the coffin. This thesis will explore the symbolism and meaning tied to the decoration in order to understand why the ancient Egyptians decorated their coffins in this manner.

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List of Abbreviations

BACE *Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology*

JEA *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*

JEOL *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1: *Introduction*

The Third Intermediate Period has long attracted the attention of Egyptologists. From the French Egyptologist Daressy to the English scholar John H. Taylor, various studies have been completed on this intriguing time period. The 21st Dynasty spans approximately 132 years from 1076BC to 944BC¹ and marks the beginning of what Egyptologists call the Third Intermediate Period. The 21st Dynasty was a time of intrigue and change, not only politically but economically and archaeologically. Funerary practices, including the production of coffins and their decoration altered producing some of the most beautiful and densely decorated material. These coffins, anthropoid in shape and also referred to as ‘yellow’ coffins, have intrigued scholars and collectors alike due to their aesthetically pleasing nature. The coffin of Meruah NMR.27 housed in the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University is one such coffin set. Acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson in 1856-57,² the coffin set of Meruah has been one of the most popular items in the museum. Despite the prime position the coffin set holds, it has been somewhat overlooked by scholars and not given the scholarly attention it rightly deserves. This study aims to provide an in depth analysis of this coffin set through the exploration of the relationship that can be observed between the decoration and its placement on the coffin.

1.2: *The 21st Dynasty*

In order to examine this coffin set, it is most important to have a firm understanding of the complex and convoluted nature of the 21st Dynasty. The convoluted chronology of the 21st Dynasty has caused many scholars to try and piece together its mysteries. With the lack of acknowledgement of the 21st-25th Dynasties in most pharaonic king lists, attempts have been made to analyse Manetho’s history and to synthesize it with other evidence from the

¹ This dating has been taken from Aston (2009: 21). There is some contention around the exact dates of the 21st Dynasty such as Shaw (2000: 485-486) who suggests a date range of 1069BC-945BC.

² Nicholson (1891: V).

21st Dynasty.³ However, there are still many questions left unanswered leaving much to be desired. Taylor,⁴ one of the well-known scholars on the 21st Dynasty, provides a basic introduction in his chapter on the Third Intermediate Period in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*.⁵ Whilst this is a basic introduction and merely a starting point for research, it does provide the reader with an insight into some of the changes that occurred in the political and economic spheres.

The political situation in Egypt during the 21st Dynasty appeared to outsiders as still united however, internally there was a major political upheaval.⁶ This began in the 20th Dynasty with severe economic scarcity that affected not only Egypt, but its neighbours in the Near East and Mediterranean.⁷ A series of weak kings succeeded Ramesses III and in combination with the migration of the Mediterranean 'Sea Peoples', led to decentralized socio-political patterns.⁸ The Kings of Egypt, ruling from Tanis in the Delta, left the rest of Egypt to fend for themselves, meaning that the High Priesthood of Amun in Thebes gained power by taking control of the South and ruling in place of the king.⁹ Control of Egypt had been divided between two powerful sectors. The line of kings positioned mostly in the north and who traditionally had control, and the army commanders who doubled as High Priests of Amun in the south. This diarchy of sorts¹⁰ meant that Egypt was occupied with internal affairs instead of expanding its borders. This led to Egypt's loss of control and influence over much of the Levant and Nubia which was rich in resources including gold. Due to the loss of resources there was an increase in tomb robberies and the reburial of many kings and high officials, in order to reuse the gold buried with them.¹¹ This is evident in the Deir el-Bahri

³ Graffiti has been found on the roof of the temple of Khonsu at Karnak which mentions Pharaoh Osorkon *Pr-ḥꜛ Wsirkn* the Elder who was the fifth ruler of the 21st Dynasty. For a full translation see Ritner (2009: 11-14). Priestly annals have also recently been discovered at Karnak by Frédéric Payraudeau. See Dodson (2009: 103-112). James & Morkot (2013: 219-256) deconstruct the 21st Dynasty presented by Manetho and attempt to establish more firm datelines for the High Priest of Menkheperre.

⁴ Taylor (2000: 324-330).

⁵ Taylor (2000: 324-330).

⁶ Taylor (2000: 324-325).

⁷ Sousa (2018: 11).

⁸ Cooney (2014: 45).

⁹ Cooney (2014:45); Muhs (2016: 171-172).

¹⁰ Kitchen (1996: 3). Kitchen states that there is an "apparent dyarchy" and that both the line of kings as well as the line of priests must be examined in order to fully understand this period of Egyptian history. Aston (2009: 21-22) discusses the dating for the high priests and suggests that they can be tied to the reigns of the kings.

¹¹ Cooney (2014: 45), Grimal (1995: 290-291), Ritner (2009: 5), Partridge (1994: 189).

cache and the cache from Bab el-Gasus.¹² Ritner also suggests that this is evident in the royal tombs of Tanis which had been left unplundered and feature the sarcophagus of Merenptah which had been reused, as well as large amounts of gold.¹³ It is well known that the High Priests of Amun purposely reburied kings and other high officials in order to reuse the gold buried with them and save them from being plundered.¹⁴ This situation allows scholars to interpret the economic situation of Egypt during this time. It has been considered that due to the loss of control of foreign influence and resources, the economy of Egypt was declining further.¹⁵

The standard resource on the Third Intermediate Period was written by K. A. Kitchen. Kitchen's study, published first in 1973, with revised editions published in 1986 and 1996, provides a comprehensive overview of the 21st Dynasty.¹⁶ Whilst at times difficult to follow, Kitchen's study still remains the first point of call. The aim of Kitchen's work is to provide an historical outline of the five centuries of the Third Intermediate Period by using primary sources and only relying on secondary sources to help analyse evidence that is more complex, although this is done with caution. Kitchen argues against the naming of the 21st Dynasty as the time of the priest-kings¹⁷ and considers other possibilities. He refutes the early scholars such as Edwards whom titles her 1883 article "Relics from the Tomb of the Priest-Kings at Dayr el-Baharee"¹⁸ and Petrie who discusses the rise of the priest-kings and the "unnatural arrangement"¹⁹ which can only be explained by looking at this rise. Among those refuted is Rawlinson, who in his book *Ancient Egypt*, provides the reader with an overview of the history of Egypt, including a chapter which he entitles "The Priest-Kings

¹² Niwinski (1988: 24-27); Niwinski (2009: 277, 281); Niwinski (1984: 73-81).

¹³ Ritner (2009: 5); Partridge (1994: 189). The unplundered royal tombs in Tanis were discovered in 1929 by P. Monet. Cooney (2014: 46-48) also explores the reuse of coffins due to the economic situation.

¹⁴ Grimal (1995: 288-291).

¹⁵ It should be noted here that the decline had begun in the Late Ramesside era. Grimal (1995: 288-291), discusses a 'scandal' during the reign of Ramesses IX where the royal necropolis was plundered.

¹⁶ Kitchen (1973); Kitchen (1996). The 1986 edition was the second edition and also included a supplement. The 1996 edition was a reprint of the 1986 second edition and includes a new preface.

¹⁷ Kitchen (1996: 3) disagrees with early scholars such as Petrie (1904: 39-40), Edwards (1883:79-87) and Rawlinson (1893: 297).

¹⁸ Edwards (1883: 79-87).

¹⁹ Petrie (1904: 39-40).

Pinetern and Solomon".²⁰ Even with Kitchen disagreeing with the title "Priest-Kings", scholars still use this term to describe the political situation of the 21st Dynasty.²¹

Niwinski, as one of the main authors on 21st Dynasty coffins, explores the chronology of the period by examining various sources, among them are Manetho, scenes and inscriptions from the temples of Luxor, Karnak and Medinet Habu, inscribed monuments which once belonged to temples or civil constructions, funerary materials and the Report of Wenamun.²² Niwinski takes into account the writings of those before him such as Černý, Young and Kitchen and opens up new interpretations of the evidence.²³ He addresses problems which have not yet received an answer accepted by the academic community.²⁴ By addressing these problems, Niwinski offers up new proposals for chronology and genealogy in a way that critiques previous scholars in light of new evidence and questions some of their assumptions that are made without full explanation.²⁵ Whilst Niwinski is quite extensive in his analysis of the chronology and genealogy of the 21st Dynasty, he leaves this open-ended stating that these new theories will remain theories until new materials from this period are unearthed.²⁶ Dodson²⁷ explains this evolution of history writing as similar to the history of Egypt. There are periods that are more stable where there is consensus among scholars. Dodson suggests that Kitchen's 1973 work was the beginning of an era of consensus that would last until the 1980's.²⁸ In 2007 a conference on the cultural and historical studies of the 21st to 24th Dynasties held in Leiden proved that the stable period was over and as new hypothesis were presented, the consensus among scholars is no more.²⁹

²⁰ Rawlinson (1893: 288-297).

²¹ Partridge (1994: 188-189).

²² Niwinski (1988: 37-38).

²³ Niwinski (1988: 38-52).

²⁴ Niwinski (1988: 39-40).

²⁵ Niwinski (1988:40-41). Niwinski often quotes other scholars and compares their hypothesis in order to explain the complications in the chronology.

²⁶ Niwinski (1988: 52).

²⁷ Dodson (2009: 103).

²⁸ Dodson (2009: 103).

²⁹ For proceedings of the conference see Broekman, Demarée & Kaper (eds.) (2009).

Dodson has been a major contributor to the discussions of the 21st Dynasty. Presenting at the conference in Leiden, Dodson put forth a discussion on the end of the dynasty and the transition to the 22nd Dynasty.³⁰ Analysing new priestly annals found at Karnak by Frédéric Payraudeau,³¹ his paper was amended, and Dodson changed his methodology to analyse the transition from a differing angle. This new angle allowed for a different interpretation of new material such as graffiti from Abydos. The conclusion that Dodson draws is in relation to Pasebkhanut II and his independent reign, however, there are still many questions unanswered in terms of his origins and career. Kitchen adds to this discussion proposing that the Third Intermediate Period be looked at as a Post-Imperial Egypt,³² a title which he suggests is more politically correct. In this article, Kitchen begins with the end of the Third Intermediate Period and works backwards to provide an overview, using more recently found materials and hypothesis from Aston and Jansen-Winkel.³³ His article sums up a more recent consensus among scholars, finding the common ground between the varying framework which is mostly agreed upon.³⁴

1.3: 'Yellow' Coffins

As with most other periods of Egyptian history, much of the material culture that has survived has come from a funerary context and the same can be said for the 21st Dynasty. The end of the 20th Dynasty saw an evolution of the Ramesside coffins which lead to a new type which scholars often term 'yellow' coffins.³⁵ With the economy declining, many could not afford to build such lavish tombs seen in other periods of Egyptian history.³⁶ Instead, the ancient Egyptians reused tombs and placed the essentials needed for the afterlife on the coffins. In a way, the coffins became a version of the tomb in terms of its function.³⁷ Studying these coffins allows scholars to draw conclusions about the production of the

³⁰ Dodson (2009:103-112).

³¹ Dodson (2009: 103); Payraudeau (2009: 297-302).

³² Kitchen (2009: 161).

³³ Kitchen (2009: 161-202).

³⁴ Kitchen (2009: 198-199).

³⁵ The yellow coffins prior to this are referred to as Proto-'yellow' coffins. Sousa (2018: 37).

³⁶ Niwinski (1988: 15).

³⁷ Niwinski (1988: 15), Sousa (2014: 106). This also known as the architectonisation of coffins which has been discussed by Sousa (2018:12) and van Welsem (1997: 361).

coffins and workshops in which they were made, the political situation³⁸ and the religious views of that time. The coffins of the 21st Dynasty are aesthetically pleasing and one of their main features is that the decoration is quite dense. The nature of the decoration has led many scholars to examine them for various purposes.

Niwinski in 1988 published a typology of 21st Dynasty coffins, with a focus on those originating from Thebes.³⁹ This study is extensive and Niwinski provides a catalogue of the 458 coffins which he utilised to complete the study.⁴⁰ The typology is the first of its kind for the 21st Dynasty and was much needed to help further studies in this field. The typology is founded on the basic formal elements of decoration and includes colour, form and composition and proportions of figures and backgrounds.⁴¹ It is important to note here that Niwinski does not use the content of the texts and scenes to create his typology, but the way in which the decoration is set out. By breaking down the coffin decoration to the three elements listed above, Niwinski has successfully been able to track changes over time from the late 20th Dynasty to the beginning of the 22nd Dynasty and to provide an evolution of the coffins.⁴² The lids of the coffin are examined separately from the base,⁴³ and there is in effect a separate typology for each, however, Niwinski does remark on which type of lid is usually paired with which base. Securely dated coffins found in each type along with other evidence such as text on mummy braces and bandages, are used to relatively date each type⁴⁴ and Niwinski is clear in explaining the evidence he uses for his dating. There is also an acknowledgement of the chronological problems that arise from the typology and these are addressed within the discussion of each type.⁴⁵ An important aspect of this work is that

³⁸ Taylor (2009: 375-415) explores a theory that coffins from the 22nd to 25th Dynasties can be used as evidence for a political north-south divide.

³⁹ Niwinski (1988).

⁴⁰ Niwinski (1988: 108-184). It should be noted that some of the information provided in the catalogue is not currently correct in 2018. New studies from Bettum (2014: 167-186) have made an attempt to consolidate Lot 14 from Bab el-Gasus which is housed in Sweden and Norway. Inventory numbers have been changed and links have been made between the coffin ensembles. Bettum (2014: 169) makes it explicit that he is not meaning to criticize Niwinski, but highlighting the need for a collaboration of international and local expertise.

⁴¹ Niwinski (1988: 65-66). For an understanding of the importance of colour on 21st Dynasty Coffins see Taylor (2001: 164-181).

⁴² Niwinski (1988: 98-99).

⁴³ Niwinski (1988: 68-97).

⁴⁴ Niwinski (1988: 52-55). Some of the evidence that Niwinski has used, such as the bandages seem to be a bit stretched and arguments can be made for this being circumstantial evidence.

⁴⁵ Niwinski (1988: 82-83).

Niwinski puts forward new research ideas, such as studying the details of the collars of the lids which he believes will contribute further to scholarly works.⁴⁶ Niwinski's studies have been very beneficial for the study of 21st Dynasty coffins and allowed for scholars to provide a relative date for new finds by examining their composition.⁴⁷

Whilst in earlier scholarship there was a focus on the chronology of the 21st Dynasty and the dating of the coffins, there has been a shift in more recent years towards attempting to understand their religious and ritual significance. Niwinski repeated numerous times in his typology that there would be a second volume dedicated to the study of the content of the decoration, however this has yet to appear.⁴⁸ On the general iconography of the 21st Dynasty, Niwinski has published an article which attempts to see the changes in iconography as the result of political impact.⁴⁹ There are five phases to which Niwinski maps changes, making comment on the political and economic situations to help explain the changes. The iconography that he looks at comes from a range of sources including temples, papyri and funerary equipment. In a more detailed look at iconography, Sousa examines the iconography as well as the symbolism and overall meaning of the central panel on 'yellow coffins', to detect cultural trends in Thebes.⁵⁰ This study, again has an underlying goal to provide what Sousa terms a "genealogical perspective of iconographic development",⁵¹ in other words, mapping how the iconography on the central panel of the coffin changes during the course of the 21st Dynasty. Sousa very clearly explains his approach and methodology and addresses the problems with some of the dating of the objects used in his study⁵² and the complex notion of individuality and standardisation or normalisation.⁵³ This study does more than just provide a genealogical perspective, it also makes an attempt to

⁴⁶ Niwinski (1988: 97-98).

⁴⁷ A new typology has been devised by Taylor in his unpublished Thesis and this focuses on iconographic details as well as workmanship. The author has not yet had access to this Thesis, however a summary of the types can be found in Aston (2009: 269-281).

⁴⁸ Niwinski (1988: 7). This is the first time Niwinski mentions a second volume focusing on the iconographic and textual analysis of 21st Dynasty coffins.

⁴⁹ Niwinski (2000: 21-43).

⁵⁰ Sousa (2014: 91-110).

⁵¹ Sousa (2014: 92).

⁵² Sousa (2014: 91-92).

⁵³ Sousa (2014: 106).

analyse the sociological scope of the 21st Dynasty and the notion of the individual which is becoming increasingly popular in wider research areas.

A new typology has emerged from Sousa who has used an art historical perspective to track the 'genealogical evolution' of these 'yellow' coffins in the 21st Dynasty.⁵⁴ So far, only one volume has been published which focuses on the iconography on the lid and the mummy-cover or mummy-board.⁵⁵ Sousa divides the lid into five sections, the head-board, upper section, central panel, lower section and foot-board,⁵⁶ and analyses the composition of the decorative elements in combination with the iconography to establish his typology.⁵⁷ This typology is very useful for relatively dating these funerary objects and there are three main types or schemes which Sousa suggests. The basic scheme which dates to the first half of the 21st Dynasty, the classical scheme which dates to the mid 21st Dynasty and the Complex scheme which dates to the second half of the 21st Dynasty.⁵⁸ Whilst this typology does not provide absolute dates for each scheme, it does provide a more narrow range than just "the 21st Dynasty" and it is clear from his work, that there is indeed an evolution which can be tracked through the coffins.

The sociological scope is also examined by Cooney. Cooney discusses the possibility of a new coffin typology focusing on social rank and incorporating economic and political factors.⁵⁹ Her social typology focuses on 11 formal markers to develop relative dating categories. These are not limited to the composition but also include the content of some elements of decoration, more specifically the presence of chapter 161 from the Book of the Dead and a series of winged figures.⁶⁰ This seems to build on Niwinski's typology in an attempt to understand how the social sphere influenced coffin decoration. There are some concerns with using this method. That is the issue of the reuse of coffins and ascertaining the date of the original and of the reuse. Cooney herself acknowledges this difficulty and reiterates that

⁵⁴ Sousa (2018: 12, 15).

⁵⁵ Sousa (2018: 14). There has been some discussion over the terminology of the mummy-board or mummy-cover and scholars have yet to agree on terminology. The terminology used for the remainder of this paper will be discussed in the following pages

⁵⁶ Sousa (2018: 44-46).

⁵⁷ Sousa (2018: 15).

⁵⁸ Sousa (2018: 175).

⁵⁹ Cooney (2014: 48-66).

⁶⁰ Cooney (2014: 48).

this study is still in a preliminary stage.⁶¹ Cooney concludes with the hopes that by utilising coffins not only as funerary equipment, but as social documents, then the changing society of the time can be better understood.⁶²

The iconographic details in the decoration are also becoming more popular in recent studies. The First Vatican Coffin Conference held in June 2013 had many scholars present their work on coffins of all time periods of Egyptian history. In terms of iconography, there has been a trend to identify the links between the decoration on the coffin and papyri. Some of the examples include the *Book of the Dead* and the *Amduat*.⁶³ Guilhou presented a paper at this conference which focused on three coffins housed in the Cairo museum. The iconographical programme of each was identified and compared.⁶⁴ This programme is then compared with two papyri to show the similarities and to examine the theory of the connection between painters of coffins and painters of papyri.⁶⁵ Although this study was completed on a small scale, using only three coffins and two papyri, it does show the usefulness of comparing the two mediums to help inform scholars on the funerary and religious beliefs of the 21st Dynasty.⁶⁶ Similar studies have been carried out by de Araújo Duarte who identifies the *Amduat* on 21st Dynasty coffins⁶⁷ by examining iconographic details. Jamen⁶⁸ also completes a textual-iconographical study of unpublished coffins from Lyon. Approaching coffins in this way allows for insights into the religious and funerary views of those living in the 21st Dynasty.⁶⁹ This is important as it allows for an understanding of the Egyptian society.

⁶¹ Cooney (2014: 48, 64). For more regarding the reuse of coffins in the 21st Dynasty see Cooney (2017: 101-112). Paganini (2017: 349-355) reinforces Cooney's argument by suggesting a socio-economic investigation into the coffins found in Bab el-Gasus.

⁶² Cooney (2014: 64).

⁶³ de Araújo Duarte (2017: 137-144) examines scenes from the *Amduat* on 21st Dynasty coffins.

⁶⁴ Guilhou (2017: 184-185).

⁶⁵ Guilhou (2017: 189-190).

⁶⁶ Guilhou (2017: 190).

⁶⁷ de Araújo Duarte (2017: 137-144).

⁶⁸ Jamen (2017: 219-230).

⁶⁹ Malgora & Elias (2017: 271-276) also analyses coffin fragments in a similar manner. However, they look more at the symbolism of the decoration from a more artistic point of view.

Another study which focuses on the coffin set of *P3-di-Imn* in the Cairo Museum, provides a comprehensive description, analyses and commentary of each component.⁷⁰ This study is easy to read and comprehend as the methodology is made clear throughout. Through this detailed analysis, Abbas has been able to propose a theory on the relationship between the rituals depicted in scenes and their placement on the coffin.⁷¹ This theory is of extreme importance to my current study as I am examining in similar detail the coffin set of Meruah NMR.27 to see if there is a similar relationship. Abbas understands the case of the outer coffin as being associated with the burial rites⁷² whereas the inner coffin shows a close association with the judgement of the dead.⁷³ Similarly to Guilhou,⁷⁴ Abbas makes one final remark, suggesting that in light of these ritual scenes and their similarities to papyri, the texts and scenes can be viewed as ritual papyri.⁷⁵

The above works of Niwinski and Sousa in terms of their typology are some of the works that have been favoured for this study. They both provide differing ways of dating coffins which in combination help to more securely date the coffin of Meruah NMR.27. In regards to the chronology of the 21st Dynasty, there are still elements such as the ones discussed above to which consensus among scholars has not yet been achieved. For the purpose of this study I have aligned myself with Kitchen and his notion of the “Post-Imperial Egypt”, however I do not fully dismiss the idea of the ‘priest-kings’ of the 21st Dynasty.

1.4: The Coffin Set of Meruah NMR.27

In the case of the coffin set of Meruah NMR.27, little has been written in terms of scholarly research. The coffin set was first mentioned by Sir Charles Nicholson, who in 1860 donated it to the Nicholson Museum at Sydney University. Nicholson provides a brief visual description of the coffin, however, no analysis of the scenes or translation of the text is present.⁷⁶ Niwinski, identifies the coffin set in his typology as belonging to type IIIa of the lid

⁷⁰ Abbas (2014).

⁷¹ Abbas (2014: 70-84).

⁷² Abbas (2014: 75-77).

⁷³ Abbas (2014: 77-82).

⁷⁴ Guilhou (2017: 183-190).

⁷⁵ Abbas (2014: 84).

⁷⁶ Nicholson (1891: 10-13).

and also dates the coffin to the mid-late 21st Dynasty.⁷⁷ This is very useful as it provides a starting point for further research however, there has been no explanation as to why the coffin is dated to this period. Niwinski also seems to have only analysed the lid of the coffin as he did not supply the type for the trough of the coffin nor the mummy cover.

The other major component lacking is the exact provenance of the coffin. It is known that it was purchased by Nicholson in 1856-57,⁷⁸ but from where in Egypt is unknown. By analysing the style of the coffin, it is obvious that it has come from the Theban region, which is why Niwinski has included it in his typology. One of the most recently published works which features the coffin set of Meruah is a book entitled *Treasures of the Nicholson Museum*.⁷⁹ As the title suggests, this book serves as a catalogue for some of the main artefacts on display. This features a translation of Meruah's titles as well as limited information on its production and a summary of the scientific analysis of the mummy found inside the coffin.⁸⁰ Further scientific analysis is being completed on the mummy, including CT scans and C14 dating. The preliminary results suggest that the mummy does not belong to the coffin set of Meruah and is in fact a few hundred years older than the coffin and of a different gender.⁸¹ It has been suggested previously that this could indicate reuse of the coffin which is common during the 21st Dynasty, but in discussions with Dr Karin Sowada, a more likely scenario is agreed upon.⁸² The coffin does not show any signs of reuse and in many cases of reuse, the coffin is normally older.⁸³ The most likely theory is that the dealers who sold the coffin set to Nicholson found a mummy to put inside the set to sell it as a whole in order to maximise profits.⁸⁴ Due to the lack of research on the coffin set of Meruah, my research will fill this large gap in the academic record. It will not only assist the wider academic community, but also the Nicholson Museum who plays host to numerous school visits. The Nicholson Museum is also in the planning stages of a new mummy gallery in which the coffin set will

⁷⁷ Niwinski (1988: 170).

⁷⁸ Nicholson (1891: v); Sowada (2006: 2, 6).

⁷⁹ Potts & Sowada (eds.) (2004: 56-57).

⁸⁰ For more information on the scientific analysis of the mummy see Sowada et al. (2005: 101-116).

⁸¹ Personal communications on 11th October 2018 with Karin Sowada who is part of the team investigating the mummy. Sowada (2006: 6), Sowada (2005: 101-116).

⁸² Personal communications with Karin Sowada on 11th October 2018.

⁸³ Such as the reuse of the coffin of Merenptah. Cooney (2014: 46-48), Ritner (2009: 5), Cooney (2017: 215).

⁸⁴ This has been suggested by Sowada (2006: 6), however had not been confirmed due to the lack of study on the coffin set.

be featured. Having further research on this coffin set means that the general public can also be more informed on the treasures of the 21st Dynasty.

1.5: Research Question and Methodology

Whilst the coffin set of Meruah NMR.27 is being analysed as a case study, it is important to understand the question underpinning the rest of this research. It is clear that the ancient Egyptians decorated their tombs and temples with purpose, nothing was placed by accident, everything had its place and significance. Even the decoration and architecture of temples were constructed in a way to make the temple appear as the cosmos. The same can be said for coffins of the 21st Dynasty. With the economic situation as severe as it was, people did not have the luxury of building tombs like they did in the 20th dynasty. It is because of this, that the coffins became more important. They were no longer just containers for the body of the deceased but through architectonisation, became sacred spaces in their own right, a magical sphere of sorts with the intention of transforming the deceased into a justified god,⁸⁵ as Sousa describes it a, “self-sufficient magical enclosure”.⁸⁶ My research seeks to understand the meaning and significance of the decoration and why it is placed where it is. With similar studies undertaken by Sousa, I aim to apply some of his theories as well as my own, to the coffin set of Meruah NMR.27.

My research will overall be governed by a Hermeneutic/Semiotic framework. Hermeneutics or Semiotics is most widely used in the analyses and interpretation of symbols. This analyses not only focuses on the interpretation of the meaning of these symbols, but also on their interaction and dependency upon other symbols to make sense. A key component to understanding through hermeneutics is that symbols are polysemous, that is, to have multiple meanings or significances which can only be fully interpreted with the comprehension of myth and ritual. Another key component is that these symbols and their significance is shared. This assumption means that conclusions can be drawn about the meanings of these symbols in a larger context, i.e. a larger society. By using this framework,

⁸⁵ Sousa (2018: 197), Bettum (2017: 82), Liptay (2017: 262-263), Niwinski (1989: 93), Niwinski (1988: 15) suggests that during this period, the function of the coffin had assumed that of the tomb.

⁸⁶ Sousa (2018: 198).

the texts/scenes can be analysed for their symbolic value in combination with their location on the coffin set, for it is only within a combination such as this, that the interpretation can be made. Another key reason for using a Hermeneutic approach is discussed by Taylor,⁸⁷ who argues that the separate items in the coffin set, such as the lid, the trough and the mummy cover, must not be looked at in isolation. That is, that the components must not be taken out of the context of the set and the ensemble must be analysed as a whole in order to fully understand the significance of the decoration of each component.

As my research is a case study, most of my focus will be placed on the coffin set of Meruah NMR.27. My methodology will focus on a close analysis of the text, scenes and decoration. After an overall description of the coffin has been completed, the analysis will have two main stages. The first stage focuses on the translation of the texts and identification of the scenes, providing a link between the two if need be. Part of this stage also involves identifying the scenes and drawing connections with other religious and funerary texts. For example, the weighing of the heart ceremony which is commonly depicted on 21st Dynasty coffins comes from chapter 125 of the *Book of The Dead*. The second stage will involve a discussion on the religious significance of the scenes and texts as well as the importance of their position on the coffin. This framework has been adopted by many other scholars including Abbas⁸⁸ who has done extensive research on the 21st Dynasty coffin set of *P3-di-imn* located in the Cairo Museum.

1.6: Terminology

Before the analysis of this coffin set can be undertaken it is crucial to understand the terminology that will be used for the remainder of this paper. The coffin set of Meruah NMR.27 is made of three pieces, the lid, the trough and the mummy-cover. These three terms will be used when discussing each of the elements. There are cases where other coffin sets include two coffin troughs and lids and are labelled inner and outer coffins. As

⁸⁷ Taylor (2001: 165).

⁸⁸ Abbas, E. S., (2014).

Meruah is limited to the one trough and lid, there is no need to adopt this terminology. There is some confusion in terms of the terminology used, especially when discussing the mummy-cover. I have chosen to use the term mummy-cover based on the observations made by Sousa.⁸⁹ The mummy-cover is also referred to as a mummy-board, however it has been found that the term mummy-board covers the openwork cartonnage, the board which features the deceased dressed in the clothes of the living and the mummy cover typical of the 21st Dynasty. The following terms has been adapted from Sousa in order to further clarify this terminology:⁹⁰

- Mummy-board: Open work cartonnage;
- Funerary plank: full length board featuring deceased in the clothes of the living or 'festive dress';
- Mummy-cover: full length board which displays features similar to that of a 21st dynasty 'yellow' type coffin.

It is also important to note that when discussing the left and right sides of the coffin I will be following standard convention which refers to the anatomical left and right. The term liminal elements also needs to be explained. This term has been adapted from Sousa⁹¹ in which he uses the term to describe the smaller elements of decoration that don't seem to be a part of the main scenes. At first glance they seem to act as space fillers⁹² however, these decorative elements play a crucial role in helping to identify the figures in the scenes and provide further religious symbolism in regards to the deceased's transformation and journey to the afterlife.

⁸⁹ Sousa (2018: 14).

⁹⁰ Sousa (2018: 14). A similar approach has also been taken by Abbas (2014: 65)

⁹¹ Sousa (2018) does not explicitly define the term "liminal elements" however the meaning is inferred in the way in which he discusses them throughout the work.

⁹² Niwinski (1988: 66).

Chapter 2

The Lid of Meruah NMR.27.1



Fig. 1: NMR.27.1 The lid of Meruah. Photo courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University

2.1: General Description

The lid of Meruah NMR.27.1 (fig. 1) is anthropoid in shape and features a modelled face, wig, and hands all in polychrome decoration. The underside of the lid and foot-board are not decorated. The lid is made of wood covered with gesso or plaster with the upper surface modelled using linen over mud/sawdust fill.⁹³ The length is approximately 1,860mm and the width 540mm.⁹⁴ The polychrome decoration is water-soluble pigment and has been varnished with a natural resin, providing the overall yellow colour. The lid is in relatively good condition, however there are areas both on the left and right sides as well as the foot-end where the decoration is no longer preserved and heavy conservation work has been carried out. According to conservation reports,⁹⁵ the wood has split in various locations partially due to a flood in the museum storage area which occurred in the 1963 and at some point in recent history, the base and head area of the lid were attached with steel screws.⁹⁶ Much of the pigment has been lost from the face, neck, earrings and breasts. There is also some loss of pigment on the blue wig.

2.2: Head-board and Upper Section

Head-board

As the name suggests, the head-board features the head, face and wig of the deceased. The face of the deceased is modelled, including the lips, nose, cheeks and eyes and the cosmetic lines and eyebrows are painted in blue. Much of the paint is no longer preserved on the face, however what is remaining indicates yellow. There are also faint traces of red anatomical lines which indicate the eyelid.⁹⁷ A blue tri-partite wig is adorned with a

⁹³ This information was gained from the 1997 Conservation Report by Jo Atkinson, courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

⁹⁴ Measurements gathered from the conservation report completed in May 2000, kindly provided by the Nicholson Museum.

⁹⁵ Supplied courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

⁹⁶ Nicholson Museum Condition report from May 2000, supplied courtesy of the Nicholson Museum. There are two other conservation or condition reports, one dating to 1997 and the other between 1963 and 1997. This second report has no date on it, however it must have been completed after the floods which occurred in 1963 as there is mention of water damage.

⁹⁷ A thin red line painted between the eye and the brow.

headband and a bunch of 3 lotus flowers with buds adorn the crown. No ears are depicted, however there are earrings which function as a gender marker and indicate a female.⁹⁸

Upper Section

The Upper section of the lid includes the area from the shoulders to the elbows. This section of the lid features a large floral collar which covers the whole area including most of the forearms and features a falcon terminal facing outward on each shoulder.⁹⁹ The last band of the collar features lotus flowers and previous bands alternate between geometrical patterns, persea tree buds and lotus petals. Even though most of the forearms are hidden, the elbows and hands are still visible. The elbows are decorated with lotus flowers and the hands are painted yellow, the same as the face, and displayed transversally and outstretched just below the breasts. The hands are modelled separately to the lid and feature thin red lines to indicate the anatomy. The thin red lines are drawn between each of the fingers and are also used to signify the nail bed. It is also important to note that the nails are painted a different colour, possibly a pale yellow or white. The breasts are depicted modelled, just under the lappets of the wig however, only traces of pigment are preserved on the right breast. The pigment that is preserved is blue and seems to be in the shape of a circle, with traces of red inside. This could be suggestive of rosettes which features frequently on female coffins.¹⁰⁰

There is a small triangular space on the edge of the lid between the collar and the elbow. In this small space on the right side is a depiction of a kneeling mummiform deity with the head of a snake adorned with a feather holding the flail.¹⁰¹ The deity also features a divine beard. Above the head of the deity is what looks to be a *ntr* 𓏲 sign, however there are no

⁹⁸ Sousa (2018: 48). Coffins intended for males feature ears either painted or modelled.

⁹⁹ This feature is common during the 21st Dynasty and is featured on various other coffins such as the outer coffin of *P3-di-Imn* CG6080 Abbas (2014: 14), Cairo 26195, the coffin of Tanakhtnettahat from the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, and also on various sketches by Niwinski (1988: 68-69), where he provides examples of the different types of coffins.

¹⁰⁰ For example: E.g. 184.a-e Musée d'ethnographie Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Küffer & Siegmann (2007: 53). The mummy-cover of Meruah has more paint preserved, and the rosettes are evident both on the earrings and the breasts.

¹⁰¹ In various other coffins such as the mummy-cover of A.136 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon, this area depicts a similar mummiform deity with no identifiable head, just a feather or sign of the west.

other captions to identify this deity. The left side is damaged at this point however the flail, head of the snake and feather can still be seen. Above the head of this snake appears to be the *k*  and *ntr*  signs. Other coffins depict other mummiform gods such as Osiris, Cobra's, feathers, ba-birds or even patterns similar to that of rishi-coffins and it seems as if the deity depicted on Meruah is a combination of these other depictions.¹⁰²

Commentary

These two sections of the lid are very important in terms of determining the gender of the owner. The presence of earrings, breasts and also outstretched hands all indicate a female.¹⁰³ The rendering of the fingers with the thin red lines and the differing colour of the nails also suggest a female coffin.¹⁰⁴ Lids intended for males normally feature ears, either modelled or painted, beards, hands clenched in fists and the absence of breasts.¹⁰⁵ The transversal outstretched hands can also be used to help determine the date of the coffin. Sousa has observed the evolution of the placement of the hands during the 21st Dynasty and has come to the conclusion that during the first half of the dynasty, the hands are slightly raised forming a V-shape pattern (fig. 3), but later in the dynasty, as the collar grows larger and the forearms become hidden underneath, it is only the hands that protrude through the collar and the position changes slightly to be more transversal (fig. 2).¹⁰⁶ This conforms with Niwinski's types II where the forearms are depicted and type III where the forearms are covered.¹⁰⁷ It is with these two typologies that we are able to start considering the date of the lid. The small mummiform deity depicted between the collar and the elbow is common for the mid to late 21st Dynasty. As the floral collar grew larger, this area became smaller and eventually disappeared.¹⁰⁸ Considering just these few formal elements, it can be

¹⁰² Sousa (2018: 65-66).

¹⁰³ Sousa (2018: 47, 48, 61, 66); Taylor (2017: 543). It must be noted that the colour of the skin is no longer a gender marker during the 21st Dynasty. Both sexes were depicted with yellow skin to imitate the radiance of the gold skin that was associated with the gods.

¹⁰⁴ Sousa (2018: 62); Taylor (2016: 57); Taylor (2017: 543).

¹⁰⁵ Niwinski (1988: 68-69); Sousa (2018: 49, 61); Taylor (2016: 57).

¹⁰⁶ Sousa (2018: 61), Niwinski (1988: 67).

¹⁰⁷ Niwinski (1988: 68-69) dates type II from the Ramesside period through to the middle of the 21st dynasty and type III from the middle through to the late 21st Dynasty.

¹⁰⁸ Sousa (2018: 65).

suggested that the coffin lid dates to the middle-late 21st dynasty, however this will be discussed in the following pages with supporting evidence from the rest of the ensemble.

The head-board and the upper section, whilst they do not depict many scenes or text, still represent important religious aspects and motifs. The hands of the deceased being outstretched and flat are reminiscent of wooden and ivory clappers used in rituals for the goddess Hathor.¹⁰⁹ This Hathoric meaning as Sousa calls it, in combination with the other female gender markers and the rosettes, hints at connotations of eroticism, sexuality and rebirth and is a way of making connections between the Goddess of the West who watches over the deceased as they are regenerated in the afterlife, and the deceased themselves.¹¹⁰ The male equivalent of this is the presence of the beard and its association with the Osiris. These are both attempts at connecting and transforming the deceased into the divine or 'just' god. The allusion to rebirth and rejuvenation is put forward again in the form of the floral collar. The lotus flowers that border the collar are strongly connected to symbols of resurrection and rebirth.¹¹¹ This is emphasised with the lotus flowers which adorn the head of the deceased.



Fig. 2: Close up of the hands on NMR.27.1, the lid of Meruah. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum



Fig. 3: Close up of the hands on NME 892 the lid of Ankhnesenmut. Dodson (2015: 22)

2.3: Central Panel

The central panel on the coffin lid of Meruah features three horizontal registers and is located directly below the collar and elbows. The first and third registers are very similar and follow the same pattern:

¹⁰⁹ Taylor (2017: 544); Sousa (2018: 76).

¹¹⁰ Taylor (2017: 543); Sousa (2018: 76-77).

¹¹¹ van Walsem (1997: 116).

Centripetal block + centrifugal block + Nuclear or salient image + centrifugal block + centripetal block¹¹²



Fig. 4: Close up of the central panel of NMR27.1. Photo courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University

The first register is symmetrical with the salient or nuclear image being that of winged scarab. The winged scarab is on top of *nbw*  sign with a *shen* ring between its hind legs. In between the two front legs is a sun disk with two uraei encircling it on either side. On the upper outside of each of the wings is also the *ntr*  signs. Underneath each of the wings of the scarab is a *ba*-bird in a centrifugal position, that is, facing away from the scarab and towards the edge of the lid. The body of the scarab as well as the sun disks, the inside of the *shen* ring, part of the *nbw* sign and the body of the *ba*-bird, were modelled with gesso before being painted in order to give the effect of raised relief.¹¹³

The scene on the right is centrifugal and features a mummiform Osiris, seated on a throne holding a crook and flail, with his consort Isis standing behind him with her right arm placed around him and her left hand by her side. There is also a cobra and lettuce-vase in front of Isis and an *imi-wt* totem in front of Osiris. These deities can be identified as such not only

¹¹² Adapted from Sousa (2018: 100).

¹¹³ This is a technique known as *Pastiglia* and can be exhibited on various coffins. E.g. Outer lid of Gautseshen F93/10.1a Leiden. Geldhof (2018: 61).

because of their headdress, but also by the text that accompanies them. In front of the figure of Osiris is *hnt.t*,  an abbreviation of Foremost of the West and the primordial egg  is featured in front of Isis.¹¹⁴ The two deities are depicted in a shrine, with cobras embellishing the top. The crown of Osiris, his body and throne as well as the sun disk on the head of Isis, her red dress and hair and the *imi-wt* totem are modelled to imitate raised relief, much like the scarab.

The next block is centripetal, meaning that it faces towards the centre of the lid. Much of this scene is damaged however it is possible to identify a kneeling winged goddess in the protective position. In other words, the left arm straight out and the right going across the body, both towards the figures of Osiris and Isis. The area which depicts the headdress of the goddess is partially damaged however it is possible to identify a cobra as well as a falcon with a sun disk above its head. Most of the area between the goddess's wings is also damaged. Standing behind the winged goddess is a mummiform god with a feather for a head. As this is a symmetrical composition, the scenes to the left side are much the same as the right. There is slightly more of the winged goddess preserved on the left and it is possible to identify a vulture accompanied by the *ḥnh* on a *nb* sign as well as the *imi-wt* totem. The headdress of the goddess is damaged, however the falcon can still be seen.

The second register is simpler in its decoration and features a kneeling winged goddess with her arms outstretched transversally and her head facing towards the left. The body of the goddess is again modelled in raised relief and on top of her arms are a series of smaller alternating figures. These figures are centripetal towards the head of the goddess and feature a vulture with an *ankh*, a *shetiwt* shrine, a seated god, a falcon with a *w3s*-sceptre and *ankh* and a cobra. The right wing of the goddess is damaged just before the end. To the outside of the right wing is a ba-bird facing a *Ta-wer* totem.¹¹⁵ Small hieroglyphs are situated on top of the head of the ba-bird, including *ntr* , , , , , , and the Duat . The outside of the left wing features a similar scene, however the ba-bird has its hands outstretched in

¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the primordial egg is also depicted just in front of the *ba*-bird outside of the shrine.

¹¹⁵ This *Ta-wer* totem is also exhibited on the lid of A.136 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon.

adoration of the *Ta-wer* totem. Small hieroglyphs are again present above the head of the ba-bird and feature *i* 𓂏, *w* 𓂐, *k* 𓂑.

The third register is similar to the first and features a symmetrical design centred around a nuclear image. The nuclear image in this register is a scarab on top of a *nbw* sign with a *shen* ring between its hind legs and the sun disk above its forelegs. Bordering the scarab on both sides are cobras holding an *ankh* on top of what looks similar to a *djed* pillar. Again, the body of the scarab, part of the *nbw* sign and the sun disk are all modelled. The right scene features Osiris seated on a throne with a crook and flail and his consort Isis standing behind him, much like the scenes in the first register. Osiris is seated in front of an offering table, all of which is depicted inside a shrine. *hnt.t* is written in front of Osiris, however in front of Isis is a cobra and lettuce-vase. Above the offering table is a *shetiyt* shrine and a vulture with an *ankh* on top of a *nb* sign. Again, the body of Osiris, part of the throne, the dress, hair and sun disk of the goddess and the stand of the offering table are all modelled. A kneeling goddess is depicted again with a vulture and an *ankh* in front of her face however there is no headdress depicted. Between her wings is another vulture with an *ankh* on a *nb* sign and the *imi-wt* totem. The left-hand side features the same scene as the right, however there is an unguent vase in front of Isis instead of the lettuce-vase.

Commentary

It has been argued that the central panel of the lid plays one of the most important roles in the symbolism of the coffin.¹¹⁶ The Solar-Osirian unity that occurs in the realm of the Duat¹¹⁷ is commonly displayed on coffins and finds its first appearance here with the scarab representing the rebirth of the sun and the solar aspect and Osiris representing the Osirian. The goddess with her wings outstretched in the second register is normally associated with Nut.¹¹⁸ As mother of Osiris and goddess of the skies, Nut is associated with the protection of the deceased as they travel with her in the sky.¹¹⁹ This association with Nut extends back to

¹¹⁶ Sousa (2018: 99).

¹¹⁷ For a discussion on the Solar-Osirian unity see Niwinski (1989: 89-106).

¹¹⁸ Sousa (2014: 103); Sousa (2018: 104); Taylor (1989: 11).

¹¹⁹ Hart (2005: 111-112).

the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom where the goddess is said to “enfold the king in her “soul” or to uncover her arms for the monarch”.¹²⁰ In other words, the king was to be placed in the coffin and buried and by doing so would live in the sky with Nut. This concept continued through Egyptian history and is evident in the various texts that are displayed on the coffin lids: “Oh, my mother Nut, spread yourself over me, so that I may be placed among the imperishable stars and may never die”.¹²¹ The notion of passage may also be inferred here. As the deceased travels with Nut, he also becomes *ntr* 𓆎 the great god, and journeys with the sun during the day, joining Osiris at night.¹²² The central panel of the lid thus reflects not only the journey made by the deceased but, the realm of the Duat¹²³ in which much of this journey takes place.

The central panel can also be used to date the lid. The composition of this scene aligns with the Sousa’s ‘classical scheme’ which dates to the middle of the 21st Dynasty.¹²⁴ The modelling of the key features such as the scarab and the sun disks, as well as the symmetrical structure between the first and third registers are key features of this scheme.¹²⁵ The decoration beneath the wings of the goddess in the second register is another feature of this scheme. Earlier in the 21st Dynasty this space was left blank, but it gradually began to be decorated as the dynasty went on *horror vacui* prevailed.¹²⁶

2.4: Lower Section

The lower section of the coffin lid features a change in orientation from the central panel, showcasing a tripartite layout, three vertical partitions with a longitudinal column of text used as the divider. The two outside partitions feature similar scenes and are divided into smaller vignettes using a transversal band of text. The middle partition does not contain any text, but three similar scenes divided by geometrical and floral motifs. Inscriptions 1 and 2 divide the three vertical panels, whilst inscriptions 3 to 7 and 8 to 12 are the transversal

¹²⁰ Hart (2005: 111-112).

¹²¹ Sousa (2014: 103).

¹²² Niwinski (1989: 93), Taylor (2016: 59).

¹²³ This is also evident in the use of N15 𓆎 to signify the Duat.

¹²⁴ Sousa (2018: 107).

¹²⁵ Sousa (2018: 107).

¹²⁶ Sousa (2018: 108).

inscriptions which divide the right and left panels respectively. All of the inscriptions are polychromatic.



Fig. 5: The lower section of NMR.27.1.
Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

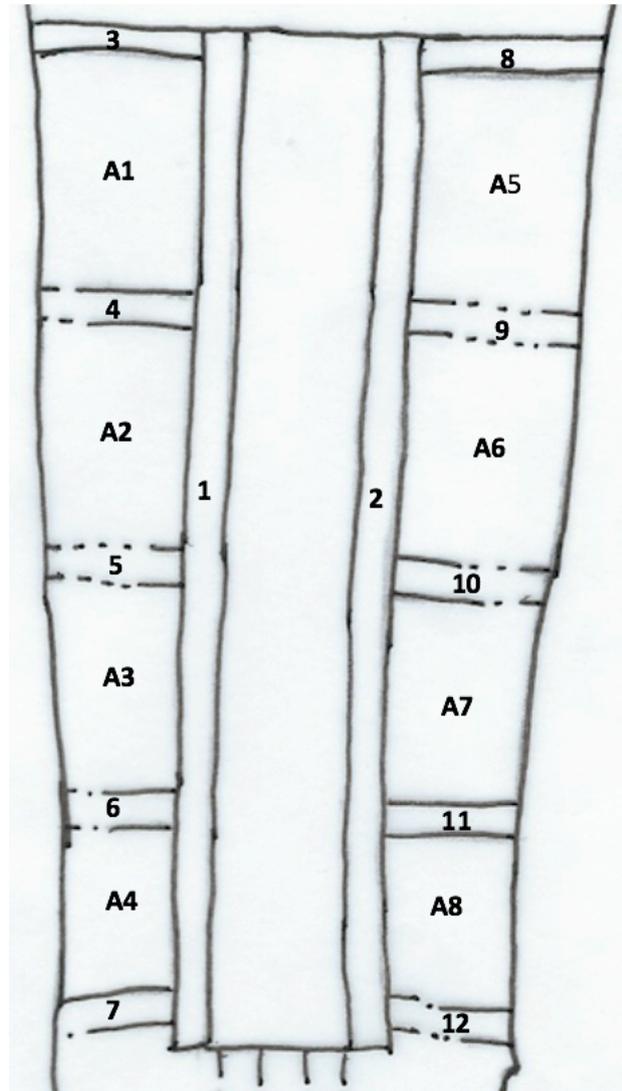


Fig. 6: A drawing of NMR.27.1 labelling the inscriptions and vignettes

Inscription 1:

ḥtp di nsw Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb 3bdw ntr ʿ3 tp ʿIḡ(r.t) Wnn-(nfr) {wr t3.wy} Wsir nb.t pr šmʿyt n(.y) Imn.w-Rʿ.w nsw ntr(.w) ḥs n p3 Mwt wr ʿIšrw Mrw-ʿḥ m3ʿ-ḥrw{nb} 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t Rʿ.w

An offering which the King gives (to) Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer {great of the two lands} Osiris¹²⁷ Lady of the House,

¹²⁷ This section of the text seems to be corrupt and this is a translation suggested by Niwinski (2004: 141) based on the text on the mummy cover of an anonymous woman at the Egyptian Museum in Turin CGT 10118. This same corruption is also on a mummy-cover fragment LMHR Ar-227 at the Lviv Museum of the History of

Chantress of Amun King of the God(s), Adorant of Mut the Great of Isheru Meruah, true of voice {all/every}¹²⁸ Isis the Great, Mother of the God, Eye of Re.

Inscription 2:

ḥtp di nsw Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb 3bdw ntr ʿ3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr) {wr t3.wy} Wsir nb.t pr šm^cyt n(.y) Imn.w-R^c.w nsw ntr(.w) ḥs n p3 Mwt wr Išrw Mrw-^cḥ m3^c-ḥrw{nb} 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t R^c.w

An offering which the King gives (to) Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer {great of the two lands} Osiris¹²⁹ Lady of the House, Chantress of Amun-Re King of the God(s), Adorant of Mut the Great of Isheru Meruah, true of voice {all/every}¹³⁰ Isis the Great, Mother of the God, Eye of Re.

Right Partition

Inscription 3:

im3ḥ.y ḥr Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb [3bdw]

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord [of Abydos]

Inscription 4:

im3ḥ.y ḥr Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb...

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord...

Inscription 5:

im3ḥ.y... [ḥ]nt.t imntt

Honoured one... Foremost of the West

Inscription 6:

im3ḥ.y ḥr Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord

Inscription 7:

im3ḥ.y ḥr Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb [3bdw]

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord [of Abydos]

Religion in Ukraine Tarasenko (2017:536-538), and the lid NME893a housed in the Medelhavsmuseet Sweden. This coffin previously held the inventory number VM152 and was located in the Victoria Museum, Uppsala Bettum (2014: 183).

¹²⁸ This section of the text is also corrupt, however there is currently no parallel.

¹²⁹ This text features the same corruption as inscription 1 on the right-hand side and has been translated with the same precautions.

¹³⁰ This is the same corruption observed in inscription 1.

Vignette A1:

The first vignette on the right partition is similar to the centrifugal block depicted in the central panel. It features Osiris seated on a throne in front of an offering table with his consort Isis standing behind him enclosed in a shrine. Osiris is depicted in mummiform holding the crook and flail with the designation *hnt.t* , an abbreviation of Foremost of the West as seen in the central panel. Isis is also designated with the primordial egg , and a *t* , as well as a red sun disk above her head. The goddess is wearing a collar as well as a red dress and green skin, whilst Osiris has more of a red skin tone with a green crown and blue wrappings. Above the offering table, which features two large lotus flowers, is the image of the vulture with the *ankh*. On the other side of the offering table is a mummiform god with the head of a snake wearing the Atef crown, a beard and tripartite wig underneath a red, blue and green vaulted ceiling. There are two hieroglyphs in front of the mummiform god  . Whilst these two signs are liminal elements, they function to help describe the deity as belonging to the Duat, i.e. a chthonic deity.

Vignette A2:

The second vignette depicts a similar scene to A1 with some minor differences. The goddess Isis is depicted wearing a red dress with blue dots, reminiscent of the bead net and this is no longer modelled. There is also some damage to part of this vignette. Part of the offering table and the area in front of the snake-headed mummiform deity are damaged and no longer visible.

Vignette A3:

Out of the four vignettes on the right side, this one has suffered the most damage. This vignette features a green goddess wearing a red dress with blue dots with a modelled sun disk on her head, much like in vignette A2. In front of the goddess is the remains of the legs of a modelled blue mummiform deity seated on a modelled throne. It is possible to suggest

that this deity is Osiris, based on the similarities with vignettes A1 and A2. Both of these deities are depicted within a shrine. Opposite the seated deity is the remains of a standing mummiform deity. Only the legs and part of the Atef crown can be discerned. This deity is depicted underneath a blue, green and red vaulted ceiling and these two liminal elements accompany it: ☐ ⊕.

Vignette A4:

This vignette differs to the above three and feature two seated mummiform gods, one with the head of a falcon and one the head of a baboon. These two deities are two of the four sons of Horus, Qebhsenuf and Hapy. These two deities are depicted sitting on a *nb* basket and are both within one shrine. In front of Qebhsenuf is *ntr* ☩ 𓆎. On the outside of the shrine facing the two gods is a mummiform deity with a feather as the head underneath a red, green and blue vaulted shrine. The mummiform gods stands before a libation vessel, and the following signs are depicted: *ntr* ☩ 𓆎, ☩, ⊕, ☐

Left Partition

Inscription 8:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imntt nb 3b[dw]

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos

Inscription 9:

im3h.y... [h]nt.t imntt nb

Honoured one ... Foremost of the West, Lord

Inscription 10:

im3h.y hr ... [h]nt.t imntt...

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West...

Inscription 11:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t 3bdw

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of Abydos

Inscription 12:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t ... nb

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost ... Lord

Vignette A5:

This vignette is nearly identical to A1. The scene features Osiris seated on a throne with a standing Isis behind him. They are depicted enclosed in a shrine in front of an offering table. The red dress of Isis as well as the red sun disk on her head and the body and crown of Osiris are all modelled. On the other side of the offering table is a snake headed mummiform deity wearing a beard and the Atef crown underneath a blue, green and red vaulted ceiling. The scene is damaged and the lower half of Osiris as well as some of the offerings and the upper body of the mummiform deity are no longer visible. There are many liminal elements that help to describe the scene. In front of Isis is a *t* ☉ as well as the primordial egg ☉, and a *nb* ☉ sign, confirming the identity of the goddess as Isis. In front of Osiris is the designation *hnt.t nb*  ☉, referring to the epithets of Osiris as Foremost of the West and Lord of Abydos. Above the offering table is the vulture with an *ankh* on a *nb* basket. Above the head of the mummiform deity is *ntr* ☩ , *k* ☉, and behind the head is a star referring to the Duat ✨. These hieroglyphs, especially the star provide links with the snake-headed mummiform deity being related to the underworld and the Duat.

Vignette A6:

This scene has suffered a significant amount of damage. What remains is a standing goddess with green skin in a red dress with blue dots and a modelled sun disk above her head. The goddess is assumed to be Isis, based on the A5 and A2 vignettes. The goddess is within a shrine, however the space in front of her is damaged. Based on the symmetry displayed with the right partition, it can be reasonably suggested that this scene would have also featured a seated figure of Osiris in front of an offering table. To the far end of the scene is again the snake-headed mummiform deity depicted wearing the Atef crown and divine beard underneath a vaulted ceiling. Although the scene is quite damaged, *ntr* ☩ can still be read just above the head of the mummiform deity.

Vignette A7:

This is again another scene featuring a seated figure of Osiris with his consort Isis within a shrine in front of an offering table. The goddess is identified as Isis based on the modelled sun disk above her head as well as the primordial egg in front of her face.¹³¹ Next to the offering table facing Osiris is another mummiform deity with a feather for a head standing underneath a vaulted ceiling. In front of the feather is a depiction of a *shetiyt* shrine and a vulture with an *ankh* on a *nb* basket.

Vignette A8:

This final vignette depicts the other two sons of Horus, Duamutef with the jackal head and Imsety with the human head inside a shrine. These two gods are both depicted seated on a *nb* basket with a libation vessel in front of them. The scene is slightly damaged near the heads of the gods and only remnants of vertical hieroglyphs can be seen. Facing the two gods is a depiction of a mummiform deity with a feather as the head. This deity is underneath a vaulted ceiling and the liminal elements *ntr* 𓂏 can be read.

Middle Partition

The middle partition features three similar scenes where the salient image is a scarab holding up a sun disk surrounded by mummiform deities and liminal elements. The top scene is centred around a blue scarab holding up a sun disk with a *shen* ring between its hind legs positioned above a *nb* basket. The body of the scarab, *shen* ring and sun disk are all modelled. Two cobras protect the sun disk and it is possible to see their tails wrapped around it. In front of each of the cobras is the book role determinative 𓄏. Two modelled mummiform deities with feathers as heads centripetally flank the scarab. There are also liminal elements present in this scene which are positioned between the scarab and the mummiform deities. A *shetiyt* shrine is depicted as well as the following hieroglyphs: 𓂏,

¹³¹ It is interesting to note that there is no designation for Osiris such as in Vignettes A1 and A5. I posit that the reason for this is due to lack of space. This area of the lid becomes narrower and so the scenes must be slightly more compact.

☉, ☀, and ☪. The whole scene is depicted under a *pt* sign ☰ and enclosed in a shrine. Below this vignette are four floral patterns used to separate the vignettes.

The second vignette is the same as the first, however the third vignette differs slightly to the other two. The third vignette is enclosed in a shrine and features the scarab, *shen* ring and sun disk as its salient images. The sun disk is still surrounded by the cobras however these cobras are now holding *ankhs* which flank either side of the scarab and rest on djed pillars. Two mummiform deities with feathers as heads are still depicted centripetally flanking the scene. There are a series of three floral patterns below this vignette, with the third one being lotus flowers.

Commentary

The lower section of the lid features various vignettes relating to both the sun god and Osiris. The middle partition focuses on the sun god in the form of Khepri who rises from the east and pushes the sun into the sky every morning. This is symbolic of the rejuvenation and rebirth that the deceased will undergo as she travels with the sun.¹³² Sousa has also suggested that the middle partition represents the sun gods journey through the gates of the underworld and the mummiform deities and liminal elements that flank Khepri act as protection.¹³³ The first three vignettes of the outside partitions focus on the deceased's association with Osiris and the underworld. This is reiterated with the presence of the mummiform deities wearing the Atef crown and the liminal elements reinforcing the realm of the Duat. The Solar-Osirian unity which occurs in the Duat and allows the sun to travel through the hours of the night and rise again at dawn is also alluded to in this section.¹³⁴ Overall, the two outside partitions feature Osirian scenes which flank the central partition which focuses on a solar motif. This same notion is depicted in the vignettes of the middle partition. The middle partition is focused on Khepri and flanked by mummiform deities and symbols associated with Osiris, such as the djed pillars in the bottom scene. This further emphasises the importance of the union of the sun god with Osiris and the journey that the

¹³² Taylor (2006: 266).

¹³³ Sousa (2018: 144).

¹³⁴ Taylor (2006: 270); Abbas (2014: 50).

deceased makes with them as the *ntr* 𓂏. The presence of the four sons of Horus can be linked to the *Book of the Caverns* and the role they play in assisting the sun god with his journey during the night.¹³⁵ The outside partitions depicting Osiris, various mummiform gods associated with the underworld and the four sons of Horus are common motifs found in the coffins dating to the second half of the 21st Dynasty.¹³⁶ The middle partition, featuring all solar motifs is also found on coffins dating to the second half of the 21st Dynasty.¹³⁷

This section can also be used to assist in the dating of coffins. The tripartite nature of this section along with the consistent use of the solar imagery in the central partition and the Osirian or underworld motifs in the lateral partitions all point to Sousa's 'complex scheme'.¹³⁸ The 'complex scheme' dates to the second half of the 21st Dynasty. The corruption of the text in inscription 1 and 2 can also help provide a more definite provenance for the coffin. The same corruption is seen in three other coffins that the author is aware of. The mummy cover of an anonymous woman CGT 20118 at the Egyptian Museum in Turin, a mummy-cover fragment LMHR Ar-227 at the Liv Museum of the History of Religion in the Ukraine and the lid of an anonymous woman NME893a at the Medelhavsmuseet Sweden all feature this same corruption. NME893a comes from Lot 14 from Bab el-Gasus and this suggests that the other three parallels as well as the coffin of Meruah may have been made at the same workshop.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Taylor (2006: 271).

¹³⁶ Sousa (2018: 137-138).

¹³⁷ Sousa (2018: 141).

¹³⁸ Sousa (2018: 137, 141).

¹³⁹ It is interesting to note that two of the four coffins with this corruption are anonymous 'parish' coffins. That is that there is a space left for the name of the deceased however it has been left blank. This suggest the mass production of coffins.



Fig. 7: A close up of the corrupt text in inscriptions 1 and 2 of NMR.27.1, Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum



Fig. 8: The lower section of NME893a, featuring the same textual corruption seen in inscriptions 1 and 2 of NMR.27.1. Bettum (2014: 183 Fig.8).

2.5: Foot-Board

The foot-board, much like the lower section is divided into three parts. The two lateral parts feature mourning goddess scenes whilst the centre part is composed of three columns of text. They can be viewed as autonomous as the orientation of the scenes has reversed.

There is a large section that stretches transversally over the middle which has been damaged, leaving gaps in the inscription and only partial scenes.

Inscription 13:

im3h.y ... [hnt.t] imntt ... 3bdw

Honoured one ... [Foremost] of the West ... Abydos

Inscription 14:

Wsir nb... n p3 Mwt Mrw-ḥ

Osiris lord... of Mut Meruah

Inscription 15:

im3h.y ... [hnt.t] imntt nb 3bdw

Honoured one ... Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos

Right side

This scene features a mummified Osiris standing before a kneeling goddess. The scene is severely damaged and it is only possible to observe the head and lower legs of Osiris, the bottom of the *imi-wt* totem in front of Osiris, the *nbw* sign on which the goddess kneels and the very top of the head of the goddess. The goddess is able to be identified as Isis based on the faint throne that can be determined above her head. Above the head of Isis is a winged deity with its wings in a protective stance towards the head of Osiris. It is holding an *ankh* and a *wadjet* eye and *shen* ring is depicted between the wings. A *sekhem* sceptre is depicted in front of a recumbent jackal which is orientated differently to the rest of the scene. The jackal is depicted perpendicular to the *nbw* sign upon which the goddess sits.

Left side

The left-hand side is very similar to the right-hand side, however the goddess that kneels before Osiris is Nephthys, not Isis. Nephthys is identified by the iconography on her head. The middle section of the scene is again damaged so that only the head and feet of Osiris, as well as the bottom of the *imi-wt* totem, the *nbw* sign and the head of the goddess along with the liminal elements such as the winged deity can still be seen. The perpendicular recumbent jackal with the *sekhem* sceptre is fully visible.

Commentary

The inscriptions in the centre section of the foot-board are similar to the transversal inscriptions in the lateral partitions of the lower section, however the middle column of text differs slightly, featuring the name of the deceased and is more closely linked to the longitudinal inscription. It is interesting to note that these three columns of text continue onto the edge of the lid, whilst all other scenes terminate before the edge, which features a separate inscription to be discussed in the following pages. The tripartite nature of the foot-

board as well the mourning scene depicting a mourning goddess before a figure of Osiris is typical of Sousa's 'classical scheme' which dates to the middle of the 21st Dynasty.¹⁴⁰

The scenes depicted on either side of the inscriptions are reminiscent of a mourning scene and suggest a strong connection to the mourning rituals and resurrection of Osiris.¹⁴¹ The orientation of the scenes suggest that this was made for the deceased to be able to view the goddesses mourning for him and Sousa has suggested that it was meant to be viewed when the coffin was in a horizontal position.¹⁴² In this way, the depiction of Isis and Nephthys mourning Osiris, is reminiscent of chapter 151 of the Book of the Dead, where Anubis is standing over the mummy with the goddesses Isis and Nephthys kneeling on either side. This provides further evidence linking the deceased with Osiris.

2.6: Border Inscriptions

Four inscriptions border the decoration of the coffin and are viewed on the very edge. Two longitudinal inscriptions (16 and 17) run from just underneath the elbow to the bottom of the lid. The other two inscriptions (18 and 19) are on the edge of the foot-board and begin perpendicular to the end of the three columns of text on the foot-board. Inscription 16 is quite damaged and in many cases only a small portion of the glyph remains.

Inscription 16:

...*hnt.t imntt nb 3bdw ntr ʕ3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr)*¹⁴³ [*Wsir*] *nb nhḥ ḥk3 ... di ... k3 3pd kbḥw..n Nb.t-ḥw.t sn.t{di=f w} 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t R^c.w ... di=s ḥtp ... Wsir nb 3bdw ntr ʕ3*

...Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer Osiris Lord of Eternity, Ruler ... oxen, fowl and *kbḥw* water to Nephthys sister ... Isis the Great, Mother of the God, Eye of Re ... may she give offerings ... Osiris, Lord of Abydos, Great God.

Inscription 17:

ḥtp di nsw Wsir hnt.t imntt nb 3bdw ntr ʕ3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr) {wr t3-wy} Wsir nb nhḥ ḥk3 d.t di=s prt-ḥrw 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t R^c.w ḥnw.t pr-ʕnh di ... Nb.t-ḥw.t di=s pr.t-ḥrw di=s kbḥw ḥt nb.t 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t R^c.w pr.t-ḥrw di=s

¹⁴⁰ Sousa (2018: 158).

¹⁴¹ Sousa (2018: 161).

¹⁴² Sousa (2018: 161).

¹⁴³ This is the same corruption seen in inscription 1 and 2.

An offering given by the king to Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, the Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer... Osiris, Lord of Eternity, Ruler of Eternity, may she give invocation offerings (to) Isis, the Great, Mother of the God, Eye of Re, Mistress of the House of Life give ... Nephthys may she give invocation offerings, may she give *ḳbḥw* water and all things Isis, the Great, Mother of the God, Eye of Re, may she give invocation offerings.

Inscription 18:

im3ḥ.y ḥr Wsir ḥnt.t imntt nb 3bdw...

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos...

Inscription 19:

im3ḥ.y ... [ḥnt.t] imntt nb 3bdw ntr ʿ3

Honoured one ... [Foremost] of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God.

Commentary

As it can be seen from the previous pages, inscriptions 16 and 17 have suffered from damage and some slight textual corruption. Inscriptions 18 and 19 are much the same as the transversal texts on the lower section.

Chapter 3

The Trough of Meruah NMR.27.4



Fig. 9: The right side of the trough NMR.27.4. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

3.1: General Description

The trough follows the same anthropoid shape as the lid and is decorated on both the internal and external surfaces with the exception of the external foot-board and external base. The trough measures 1,860mm in length 540mm in width and 620mm in depth. The trough is made from five pieces of wood, presumably sycamore fig.¹⁴⁴ A single flat piece has been used for the base, one for the foot and one for each of the sides which has been shaped around the shoulders. A curved piece of wood has been used for the top half of the head. The trough incurred much damage from the floods in 1963, evidence of which can still be seen in the darker stains¹⁴⁵ along the sides. Heavy conservation was completed on the trough in 2000 and included the reconstruction of some areas such as the right edge and repairing splits, the most significant of which occurred on the head-board.¹⁴⁶ Gesso was applied to the external surfaces before being painted in polychromatic decoration and varnished. The internal surfaces were also covered in gesso before being painted however

¹⁴⁴ Suggested by Jo Atkinson in the 1997 condition/conservation report kindly supplied by the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

¹⁴⁵ Possibly water stains.

¹⁴⁶ Conservation/Condition report completed by Jo Atkinson. Access of which was given courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

no varnish was applied. A frieze of alternating cobras and feathers runs along the edge of the external surfaces above the vignettes and inscriptions and adorns the whole trough. The feather represents Maat who judges the dead and the cobra is for protection to ward off unwanted hostile forces.¹⁴⁷ At the very top of the head, the frieze includes an *ankh*.

3.2: Exterior Head-board

The head-board of the trough includes the area from the crown of the head to the shoulders. In the case of NMR.27.4, three vignettes are present separated by a single column of text (1 and 2), with the two lateral vignettes (B2 and B3) centripetally orientated towards the central (B1).

Inscription 1:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imntt nb

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord

Inscription 2:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imntt nb

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord

Vignette B1:

The crown vignette features a *tit* amulet as the central image flanked by mourning goddesses and various liminal elements. There is one mourning goddess on each side of the amulet and can be identified as Nephthys based on the headdress she adorns. In between the goddess and the amulet are various smaller elements. Flanking the top of *tit* amulet are a pair of *wadjet* eyes on a *nb* basket. Moving down, there are other elements such as , , , , , , , , , , ,  and unguent vases.

¹⁴⁷ Hornung (1984: 37).



Fig. 10: The exterior head-board of NMR.27.4, showing vignette B1 and inscriptions 1 and 2. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University

Vignette B2

A falcon with an *iaret* above his head standing on a pedestal is the central image of this scene. Behind him is the goddess Nephthys who holds her right hand up in protection whilst her left arm is by her side holding an *ankh*. In front of the falcon is a mummiform deity with a feather for a head. There are various liminal elements including the *wadjet* eye on a *nb* basket, cobras, *shen* rings,  and . The whole scene is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette B3:

This scene is similar to B2 and features a falcon with an *iaret* cobra on top of its head standing on a *nb* basket. Nephthys is standing behind the falcon and holds her left arm up in protection whilst the right arm is beside her and holds an *ankh*. A mummiform deity with a feather for a head stands before the falcon. There are various liminal elements including the *wadjet* eye on a *nb* basket, cobras,  and .

Commentary

The *tit* amulet depicted in Vignette B1 is a symbol of protection which is why it is also flanked by the *wadjet* eyes. Vignette B2 and B3 are connected with the deceased's association with the sun god, which is depicted on the lid. This may also allude to chapters 77 and 78 of the *Book of the Dead* which regards the sacred falcon.¹⁴⁸

3.3 Exterior Right Side

The right side of the trough stretches from the shoulder down to the feet and includes 5 scenes separated by various inscriptions. The inscriptions range in size from one to three columns. There is also some text visible within some of the larger scenes.



Fig. 11: The right side of the trough of NMR.27.4. Photo Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

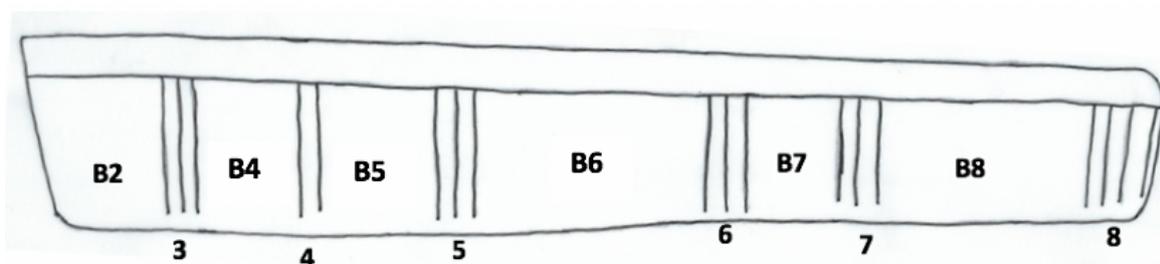


Fig. 12: A drawing of the right side of the trough of NMR.27.4 showing labelling the vignettes and inscriptions.

¹⁴⁸ Niwinski (1989: 96).

Inscription 3:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr) {wr t3.wy} Wsir

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer, {great of the two lands} Osiris

Inscription 4:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos

Inscription 5:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr) {wr t3.wy}

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer, {great of the two lands}

Inscription 6:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr) {wr t3.wy}

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer, {great of the two lands}

Inscription 7:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr)

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer

Inscription 8:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn-(nfr)...{t3.wy} Wsir nb prt-hr.w...

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer... Osiris, Lord invocation offerings...

Vignette B4:

Osiris is depicted seated on a throne holding a crook and flail, with a goddess (possibly Isis) standing behind him with her right hand on Osiris and the left by her side holding an *ankh*. In front of the goddess is a lettuce-vase. Before Osiris is an offering table with two lettuce-vases underneath and a mummiform god with a feather as the head. *hnt.t* is written before him as a contraction of *hnt.t imnt.t*, Foremost of the West. There are various liminal

elements including the *shetiyt* shrine, a culture with an *ankh* on a *nb* basket, a cobra, ☉ and ☾. This whole scene is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette B5:

Similar to vignette 4, Osiris is seated on a throne holding a crook and flail with a goddess standing behind him (Isis). The goddess's left arm is on Osiris and her right arm is beside her holding an *ankh*. In front of the goddess is a lettuce-vase. An offering table with two lettuce-vases and a mummiform god with a feather for the head, stand before Osiris. There are many liminal elements including a *shetiyt* shrine, a vulture with an *ankh* on a *nb* basket, a cobra, ☉, ☉ and ☐. The whole scene is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette B6:

This is one of the larger vignettes and features text to caption the scene. Osiris is seated on a throne holding the crook and flail and is depicted with a goddess behind him (possibly Isis). In front of the goddess is a lettuce-vase and she is depicted with her left hand on Osiris and her right by her side holding an *ankh*. In front of Osiris is an offering table with two lettuce-vases and an unguent vase underneath. These two deities and the offering table are depicted within a shrine. The remaining space in the shrine is filled with liminal elements such as the *shetiyt* shrine, the vulture with an *ankh* on a *nb* basket, ☉ and ☾. Before the shrine are a procession of three figures, Thoth, Meruah and a mummiform deity. Thoth is depicted with the head of an Ibis and is wearing a short-striped kilt with a tail and an elaborate Atef crown with ram horns and cobras. Thoth is followed by a female figure dressed in the clothes of the living, holding an unguent vase and an *ankh* connected to a *djed* pillar, a *was* sceptre and another *ankh*. As the name of the coffin is Meruah, we can assume that this is her. The third figure is an unidentified mummiform deity with a snake head, divine beard and Atef crown, holding the crook and flail. His arms are depicted across his chest wrapped in a bead net. In front of Thoth is the depiction of lion body with a crocodile head. This is the goddess Ammut 'Devouress of the Dead', who is normally present in the weighing of the heart ceremony in the Hall of the Two Truths. There are 5 short columns of text above the figures and are translated as:

Dḥw.ty sš m3ꜥ.t nṯr ʕ3 nb.t pr šmꜥyt n Imn.w- Rꜥ.w nsw nṯr

Thoth Scribe of Maat, great god. Lady of the House, Chantress of Amun-Re King of the Gods.

ntr 𓂏 is also depicted just in front of the face of the mummiform deity.

A winged *wadjet* eye is depicted in the upper right corner above the mummiform deity.

Various liminal elements are also visible including *dd* pillar, 𓂏, 𓂏, 𓂏, 𓂏, 𓂏, 𓂏 and 𓂏.

Vignette B7:

This is a smaller vignette and features a winged scarab with a *shen* ring between its hind legs and a sun disk with uraei between its forelegs. The scarab is depicted on a barque with cobras just underneath each wing. To the outside of each of the wings are two snakes.

Underneath the barque is a giant serpent, possibly the god Apophis.¹⁴⁹

Vignette B8:

This is one of the larger vignettes and features four figures standing before the tree goddess. The tree goddess is standing in front of the Sycamore tree, and wears the standard of the west on her head. An offering table with various offerings is in front of her. On the other side of the offering table are 4 figures facing the tree goddess. The first is a goddess holding offerings up to the tree goddess. The next figure is a female dressed in the clothes of the living and it can be suggested that this is Meruah, the owner of the coffin. She holds an unguent vase as well as an *ankh*, which is connected to a *dd* pillar and a *w3s* sceptre. Behind Meruah are two mummiform deities, one a snake head holding a staff and the other with a feather for the head. They are both depicted under a vaulted ceiling. There are three short columns of text up Meruah and they read:

*Wsir, nb.t pr šmꜣy.t n Imn.w {mr s.t nb}*¹⁵⁰

Osiris, Lady of the House, Chantress of Amun...

¹⁴⁹ A similar scene is depicted on the inner coffin of Gautseshen F 93/10.1b Leiden, Mann et al. (2018: 41) and on Eg. 184.c Musée d'ethnographie Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Küffer & Siegmann (2007: 58).

¹⁵⁰ This part of the text seems to be corrupt.



Fig. 13: Vignette B4. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

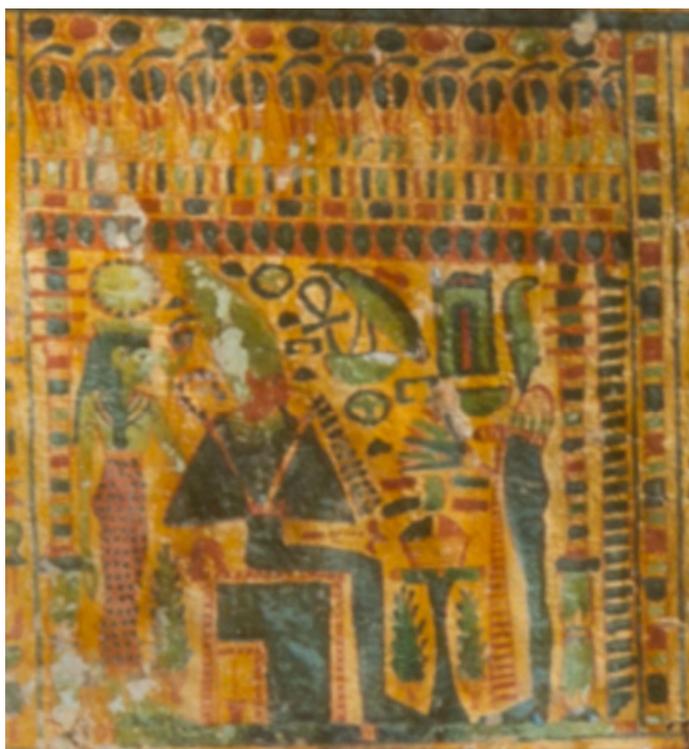


Fig. 14: Vignette B5. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 15: Vignette B6. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 16: Vignette B7. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 17: Vignette B8. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

Commentary

Vignette B4 and B5 are similar to the vignettes in the lateral partitions of lower section of the lid. Vignette B6 is one of the larger vignettes and depicts a very significant ritual, chapter 125 and 30b of the *Book of the Dead*, the judgement of the dead and the weighing of the heart. In many cases when this chapter is depicted, the balance is shown for the weighing of the heart.¹⁵¹ Whilst this vignette does not depict the scales, it does feature other elements such as the god Thoth presenting the deceased (Meruah) to Osiris with the presence of Ammut.¹⁵² This was one of the most important chapters as the ritual decided whether or not the deceased would be allowed to enter the underworld and join with the sun god and eventually Osiris as they travel through the sky. Vignette B7 is also very significant and depicts the sun god as Khepri in a solar barque above a serpent. This alludes to the triumph of the sun god over Apophis.¹⁵³ The journey that the deceased makes with the sun god is alluded to here. After she has passed the judgement, she joins the sun god as he journeys

¹⁵¹ The lid of the inner coffin of *P3-di-imm* CG 6079, Cairo. Abbas (2014: 59).

¹⁵² This is a variant of the judgement of the dead. Abbas (2014: 55); Niwinski (1995: 16).

¹⁵³ Hornung (1984: 37).

through the sky and defeats Apophis before rising again. Vignette B8 is a continuation of this journey. The tree goddess is normally associated with Nut who helps to nourish and protect the deceased in their journey.¹⁵⁴ The two chthonic deities behind Meruah further emphasise her journey through the underworld with their protection. The overall layout of composition of the exterior sides of the trough fits into Niwinski's Type B. It features polychrome decoration on a yellow background with vertical composition and features a medium degree of liminal elements.¹⁵⁵ This type dates from the middle of the 21st Dynasty through to the middle of the 22nd Dynasty.¹⁵⁶ Whilst this is a large time frame, it can be correlated with the dates prescribed for the lid.

3.4: Exterior Left Side



Fig. 18: The left side of the trough of NMR.27.4. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

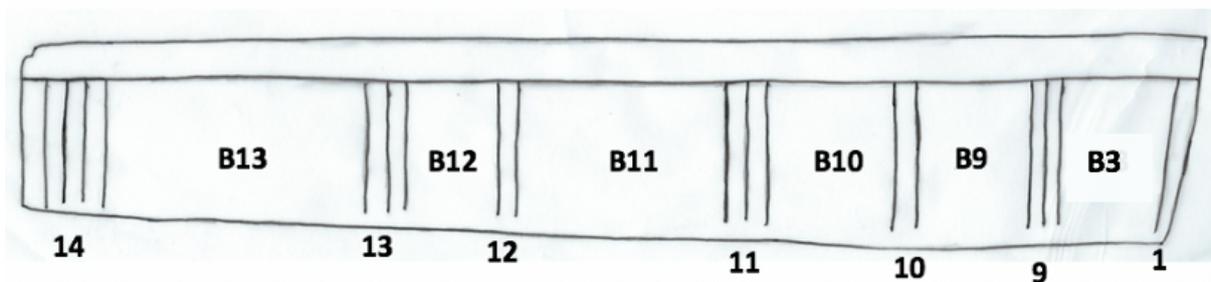


Fig. 19: Drawing of the left side of the trough of NMR.27.4 labelling the inscriptions and vignettes.

¹⁵⁴ Abbas (2014: 27, 56) explores a possible connection between chapter 148 of the *Book of the Dead* and he depiction of the tree goddess.

¹⁵⁵ Niwinski (1988: 89).

¹⁵⁶ Niwinski (1988: 89).

Inscription 9:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr) {wr t3.wy} Wsir n

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer... Osiris...

Inscription 10:

Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3

Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God

Inscription 11:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr) {wr t3}

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer...

Inscription 12:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr) {tt wr n}

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer...

Inscription 13:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr)

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer

Inscription 14:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t imnt.t nb 3bdw ntr 3 tp Ig(r.t) Wnn(-nfr) {wr t3.wy} nb Wsir 3st wr.t mw.t ntr ir.t R^c.w hnw.t pr(-nfr) di... 3pd kbhw imnt.t di=s

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost of the West, Lord of Abydos, Great God, Head of Igeret, Wennenefer... Lord Osiris, Isis the Great, Mother of the God, Eye or Re, Mistress of the (beautiful) house that (she may give) ... fowl, libation (to) the west, may she give (offerings)

Vignette B9:

This vignette features a seated Osiris with a crook and flail in front of an offering table.

Behind Osiris is a standing goddess with a sun disk above her head and a lettuce vase in

front of her legs. There is a cobra in front of the goddess's face and *hnt.t* in front of Osiris. There are many liminal elements including a *shetiyt* shrine, a vulture with an *ankh* on a nb basket, , ,  and . This offering scene is placed inside a shrine.

Vignette B10:

This scene is similar to vignette 9 and features Osiris seated on a throne with a goddess with a sun disk on her head and a lettuce-vase in front of her feet, standing behind him. The two deities are depicted in front of an offering table, with various offerings and are within a shrine. *hnt.t* is written in front of the face of Osiris and is short for *hnt.t imnt.t*, Foremost of the West. The rest of the space in the shrine is filled with liminal elements including; a *shetiyt* shrine, a vulture on a nb basket with an *ankh*,  and .

Vignette B11:

Osiris is seated in front of an offering table with a goddess standing behind him. The goddess has her right arm on Osiris and the left is holding an *ankh* by her side. She also has a sun disk on her head and a cobra in front of her face. *hnt.t* short for *hnt.t imnt.t* Foremost of the West, is also written in front of Osiris, and the two deities are depicted within a shrine. Various liminal elements such as the *shetiyt* shrine, a vulture on a nb basket, , , and  fill the rest of the space within the shrine. Two other deities are depicted facing Osiris outside of the Shrine. The first is Thoth who is depicted with the head of an ibis wearing an Atef crown holding a scribal palette. The deity behind him is a mummiform god with a feather for a head. *ntr 3* is written in front of the feather. There is a small figure depicted at the feet of Thoth, however due to the water damage, it cannot be identified. Various liminal elements also surround these two deities including a *wadjet* eye, , , ,  and . This scene also depicts two columns of text above Thoth and the can be read as:

Dhw.ty m3.t R.5w sš psd.t

Thoth the justified, Re, scribe of the Ennead.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ This text seems corrupt and it seems as if it should read as scribe of Maat and Re.

Vignette B12:

This is a small scene and features a serpent coiled around three standing mummiform deities with feathers as heads.¹⁵⁸ All of these figures are depicted underneath a vaulted ceiling.

Vignette B13:

This is one of the large vignettes which also includes some text. This scene features the Hathor Cow coming out of the Western Mountain, with a clump of papyrus with buds hanging down in front of her.¹⁵⁹ A winged cobra with a *shen* ring and *wadjet* eye between its wings is just above the cow and unguent vases are placed between the legs. A recumbent jackal is depicted with below the cow and the Goddess of the West is standing in front of them both holding a lotus flower staff in her left hand and an ankh in her right. A winged cobra is depicted above the goddess with a *shen* ring and a *wadjet* eye between its wings. In front of the goddess is an offering table with various offerings. A female in the dress of the living is standing on the other side of the offering table presenting an unguent vase and holding an *ankh*. This female is most likely a figure of the owner of the coffin, Meruah. Behind Meruah is a mummiform deity with a feather for a head and *ntr* 𓆎 written in front of the feather. Both Meruah and the mummiform deity are standing underneath a vaulted ceiling. There are various liminal elements which fill the rest of the space in the vignette and include 𓂏, 𓂐, 𓂑, 𓂒 and 𓂓.

Above the head of Meruah is the following text:

nb.t pr šm^cyt

Lady of the house, Chantress.

¹⁵⁸ A similar scene but with different deities is depicted on the coffin A.4 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon Sousa (2017: Plate 14 and 15) and the inner coffin of Ikhy inv. 25035.3.3 Vatican Gregorian Museum.

¹⁵⁹ This can be linked to the Cow of the Necropolis in chapter 186 of the *Book of the Dead*. Similar scenes are depicted on the Coffin of Padiamun/Amunempermut Cairo CG 6153, Coffin of Tjentthat/Tjentipet Cairo CG 6190 and Coffin of Djedmaatiusankh Cairo CG6183 Guilhou (2017: 184, 186, 188).

This text mentions two of Meruah's titles Lady of the house and Chantress of Amun. There are another two short columns of text depicted at the top of the scene in the space between the Hathor cow and the Goddess of the West. The text reads:

ḥtp di nsw Ḥw.t-ḥr nb.t dw3t

An offering which the king gives (to) Hathor Lady of the Duat.



Fig. 20: Vignette B9. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 21: Vignette B10. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 22: Vignette B11. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 23: Vignette B12. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.



Fig. 24: Vignette B13. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

Commentary

Vignettes B9 and B10 are reminiscent of the vignettes in the lateral partitions of the lower section on the lid. They are also the same as vignettes B4 and B5, showing symmetry in the decoration of the trough. Vignette B11 also shows similarities with vignette B6. The appearance of Thoth before Osiris and Isis, however the deceased is not present. It has been suggested that vignette B12 represents the triumph of Osiris-Re over Apophis and Seth, similar to vignette B7.¹⁶⁰ Vignette B13 has been derived from the decoration of 18th and 19th dynasty Theban tombs where it was used as a vignette to chapter 186 of the *Book of the Dead*.¹⁶¹ This scene was found at the end of the wall and is now found at the foot end of the coffin, alluding to the arrival of the deceased to the west.¹⁶² The cow goddess would provide the deceased with nourishment and protection much like the tree goddess.

¹⁶⁰ Sousa (2017: 18 – 20), Niwinski (2004: 55).

¹⁶¹ Abbas (2014: 30-31), Heyne (1998: 60-63).

¹⁶² Abbas (2014: 30-31), Heyne (1998: 60-63), Liptay (2014: 74).

3.5 Interior Floor-board

The floor-board is painted red and dominated by a large depiction of the Goddess of the West standing on a *nbw* sign.¹⁶³ Her head is surrounded by stars and is flanked by two cobras with *shen* rings and *ankhs* and on her right is also a vulture with an *ankh*. Her legs are also flanked by two mummiform deities. The body of the goddess is difficult to discern due to the resin staining and debris stuck to it. Below the goddess is a yellow *shm* sceptre¹⁶⁴ flanked by two mummiform anthropomorphic deities on a blue *pt* sign. A yellow and blue tit amulet is positioned underneath and is flanked by standards of the west. Various liminal elements are again present including \triangle , \otimes , \square , ☩ , 𐀓 and 𐀔 .



Fig. 25: The interior decoration of the trough of NMR.27.4. Photo courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

¹⁶³ A similar figure is depicted on the floor-board of A.110 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon Sousa (2017: Plate 58). The Goddess of the West is depicted on a red background with stars. The coffin of Ta-useret-em-pernesu E. 05883 in the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels very closely matches the interior decoration of Meruah.

¹⁶⁴ This is seen on the floor-board of A.27 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon Sousa (2017: Plate 31).

3.6: Interior Head-board

The head-board features a depiction of the *ba*-bird with outstretched wings that extend down the sides to the shoulder. The body of the bird is blue with white dots and the human head is rendered frontally. The tail feathers are black as is the outer feathers of the wings whilst the rest of the feathers are blue, green and red. Above the two outstretched wings are snakes centripetally orientated towards the *ba*. Two kneeling mummiform deities with animal heads are aligned transversally on the sides of the head. There are another two snakes depicted in front of the deities and \square above the snake on the left. The background of the head-board is painted red.¹⁶⁵

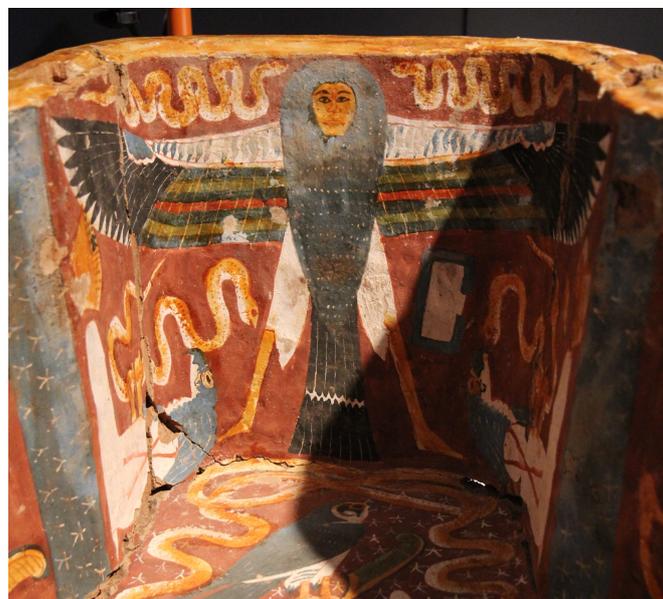


Fig. 26: The interior head of the NMR.27.4. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum.

3.7 Interior Right Wall

The right wall is painted red and is divided into three registers with blue *pt* signs decorated with stars used as the dividers. Two standing mummiform deities dominate the first register, one with the seth-animal head and the other with a feather. They are each standing before libation vessels on a stand and are centrifugally orientated to the floor-

¹⁶⁵ Similar depictions of the *ba*-bird can be seen on A.4, A.110 and A.136 in the Geographical Society of Lisbon Sousa (2017: Plate 17, 61 and 108), Inv. 51.2093/2 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest Liptay (2017: 262).

board. \triangle , \cup , \square and \aleph are all liminal elements. The second register features another two centrifugal standing mummiform deities, one with the head of a vulture and the other a crocodile. Both are standing before libation vessels on stands with the liminal elements being \aleph , \triangle , \cup and \oplus . The final register features another two mummiform anthropomorphic deities, one with a human head and the other a jackal. These deities can be identified as Imsety and Duamutef, two of the sons of Horus. The deities are again centrifugal and are standing before libation vessels on stands with the liminal elements being \triangle , \cup and \square .

3.8: Interior Left Wall

The left wall is painted red with blue *pt* signs decorated with stars acting as dividers and is symmetrical to the right wall. The first register features two centrifugal standing mummiform anthropomorphic deities, one with the head of a snake with a divine beard and the other a crocodile. The deities are standing before libation vessels on stands and \triangle , \square and \dagger act as liminal elements. Another two standing mummiform anthropomorphic deities make up the majority of the second register. One with the head of a snake and the other a rabbit. They are both centrifugal and stand before libation vessels on stands. The liminal elements \triangle , \cup , \aleph and \square surround the pair. The last register comprises of two centrifugal standing mummiform anthropomorphic deities, one with the head of a falcon and the other a baboon. These deities are Qebhsenuf and Hapy, the other two sons of Horus. Before the two gods are libation vessels on stands and \triangle , \square and \dagger act as liminal elements.

3.9: Interior Foot-board

The interior foot-board is painted red but features no other decoration.

3.10: Commentary on the Interior

The use of the *ba*-bird above the head of the deceased is significant and suggests the passage of the *ba* descending from the divine world.¹⁶⁶ This is the point where the *ba* comes and goes from body and represents the unification of the deceased with the sun god.¹⁶⁷ All of the other decoration has connections to the chthonic regions, such as the Goddess of the West and the four Sons of Horus. Liptay suggests that these depictions were used to portray the cosmic space that is the netherworld, where the deceased is embraced by the Goddess of the West.¹⁶⁸ The overall layout of the interior of the trough according to Niwinski can be used to date the coffin.¹⁶⁹ The interior trough decoration conforms to Niwinski's type 3-a which features polychromatic figures on a dark or red background, with vertical centrifugal composition which is featured on the floor-board and walls with a medium to high density of decorative/liminal elements.¹⁷⁰ This type dates to the middle to late 21st Dynasty and aligns "with the date suggested by the lid. The presence of the mummiform deities on the walls can also assist in the dating. Earlier coffins portray figures that represent the Litanies of Re, however this changes towards the end of the 21st Dynasty where the figures become mummiform.¹⁷¹ Hornung describes these figures as "Schutzgöttern" – "guardian gods",¹⁷² emphasising the protective nature of interior design.

¹⁶⁶ Liptay (2017: 261).

¹⁶⁷ Hornung (1984: 36).

¹⁶⁸ Liptay (2017: 261). This is more evident on coffins where the interior floor-board features a goddess with wings outstretched onto the walls. Taylor (2016: 60) suggests that the depiction of the Goddess of the West on the floor-board is a common depiction.

¹⁶⁹ Niwinski (1988: 90-97).

¹⁷⁰ Niwinski (1988: 95).

¹⁷¹ Niwinski (1989: 103).

¹⁷² Hornung (1984: 36).

Chapter 4

The Mummy-Cover of Meruah NMR.27.2



Fig. 27: The Mummy-cover of Meruah NMR.27.2. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

4.1: General Description

The mummy-cover is anthropoid in shape and is stylistically very similar to the lid. The length of the cover is 1 675mm, the width 815mm and the depth 80mm, and is made from a pale-coloured, lightweight wood, possibly sycamore fig.¹⁷³ Condition/conservation reports suggest that the cover is made from one piece of wood with the exception of the two hands which have been made separately and attached. The head has been modelled much like the lid, using mud/saw dust and covered with linen and gesso.¹⁷⁴ Polychromatic decoration adorns the entire cover with the front and sides finished with a varnish. The underside of the mummy-cover is also decorated however this decoration varies considerable in comparison to the front. Overall, the mummy-cover has suffered much damage. As mentioned previously, a flood in the Nicholson Museum storeroom caused damage to the coffin set. It is also clear that there has been a lot of conservation work done to the cover, especially in the central panel and lower section. The crown of the head has also suffered a lot of damage, where the paint and gesso have been lost and the linen can be seen. The gesso appears to be cracked and crumbling around the head where it is still preserved. A craquelure pattern on the cover is also observed due to the varnish cracking.¹⁷⁵

4.2: Head-board And Upper Section

Head-board

The face of the deceased is modelled including the cheeks, eyes, lips, chin and nose (which has now broken off). The skin is painted yellow and the cosmetic lines and eyebrows are blue, much like the tripartite wig that the deceased is wearing. Anatomical lines used to identify the eyelids are depicted as a thin red line between the eye and the brow. The deceased is also depicted wearing earrings with blue and red rosettes. The crown of the

¹⁷³ This was suggested by Jo Atkinson in the 1997 condition/conservation report kindly supplied by the Nicholson Museum.

¹⁷⁴ Jo Atkinson has suggested this in the 1997 condition/conservation report provided by the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

¹⁷⁵ Jo Atkinson has suggested in the 1997 condition/conservation report, that the “cracking is probably due to the differential expansion and contraction of the wood, gesso and paint as the object has responded to fluctuating relative humidities”.

head is very damaged, however there are some remnants of decoration left which identify a bunch of lotus flowers adorning the head.

Upper Section

The upper section of the mummy cover is dominated by a large floral collar which extends down to the elbows. The collar terminates at the shoulder with the head of a falcon and a lotus flower. The last band of the collar is a row of lotus flowers and the previous bands are a collection of persea tree buds, lotus petals and geometrical patterns. As the collar is so large, the most forearms are covered leaving only the elbows, a small section of the forearms and the hands uncovered. The elbow is decorated using a lotus flower and the forearm in a green and blue striped pattern. The hands are displayed transversal and outstretched and are painted yellow, much like the face. Thin red anatomical lines are also drawn on the fingers to help define digits as well as the nail, which is painted a lighter colour. It is clear that the hands have been attached to the mummy cover using dowels, as some of the paint has chipped off and the two holes can be seen. Breasts are also modelled just underneath the lappets of the wig. They are again painted yellow and feature a blue and red rosette (similar to the earrings) to represent the nipples, the centre of which is modelled. There is a small triangular space between the elbow and the collar where a small figure on both the left and the right is depicted. The figure is a seated mummiform deity with a feather as the head. The background of this triangular area is yellow with thin red horizontal lines and the only other decoration is *ntr* 𓄏 𓄏 which is written in front of the feather.

Commentary

Much like the lid of the coffin, the head-board and upper section can be used to identify the gender of the intended deceased. The presence of earrings, outstretched hands and nipples are all gender markers indicating a female which matches the lid. The collar and outstretched hands can also be used to assist in the dating of the cover. The extended

collar, transversal hands and absence of forearms suggests a date from the mid to late 21st Dynasty, agreeing with the date suggested for the lid in the previous chapter.

4.3: Central Panel

The central panel is comprised of three registers the first and third are designed in the following manner:

Centripetal block + centrifugal block + Nuclear or salient image + centrifugal block + centripetal block¹⁷⁶.

And the second panel features a winged deity with liminal figures. Even though there is a large amount of damage sustained in this area, most of the above elements are still able to be identified.

Due to the damage in the first register, the salient image is not able to be identified with the exception of a modelled sun disk surrounded by two uraei just underneath the collar. It is possible to suggest that the salient image contained a solar motif, based on the sun disk and similarities with the lid. The blocks on the right side are both very well preserved and the whole scene can be observed. The centrifugal block features Osiris seated on a throne with the goddess Isis as his consort behind him. Osiris is depicted in mummiform holding the crook and flail, with *hnt.t*  short for Foremost of the West depicted in front of his crown. Part of the seat as well as the body of Osiris and his crown are modelled. Isis is depicted with green skin and a red dress with blue dots, imitating that of a bead net. There is a modelled sun disk on her head and she is identified as Isis by the *t*  and primordial egg  depicted in front of her face. Both the deities are enclosed in a shrine surmounted by cobras. The centripetal block features a green-skinned, winged, Goddess of the West kneeling upon a *nbw* sign with one wing stretched out towards Osiris and the other across her body. The goddess is identified as the Goddess of the West by symbol of the west  depicted on her head. Between the goddess's wings is a sign symbolising the Duat , a

¹⁷⁶ Adapted from Sousa (2018: 100).

vulture on a *nb* basket with an *ankh* and an *imi-wt* totem. The *imi-wt* totem as well as the body of the vulture are modelled. The same vulture with the *ankh* as well as a *shetiyt* shrine is depicted in front of the face of the winged goddess, however this one does not show any modelling. Other liminal elements such as ☉, ☐, ☽ and ☽ are depicted below and adjacent to the *shetiyt* shrine.

The left side is slightly more damaged, and part of the centrifugal block is lost. Traces of paint that are still left indicate a standing figure clothed in a red dress with blue dots with a seated figure in front. The modelled crown of the seated figure as well as the hook can still be made out. The edge of *hnt.t*  can also be observed just in front of the crown as well as the lower legs of the seated figure. The combination of these trace elements suggest that the scene again depicts Osiris seated on a throne with a goddess behind him in a shrine, the cobras of which can also be observed. The centripetal green-skinned, winged Goddess of the West is again depicted kneeling on a *nbw* sign. The modelled vulture on the *nb* basket as well as the modelled *imi-wt* totem are depicted between the wings of the goddess. The liminal figures in this scene are numerous and include the *shetiyt* shrine the vulture on the *nb* basket with the *ankh*, ☉, ☐, ☽, and ☽.

The second register is again severely damaged in the centre, however some of the wings can still be deciphered. Faint outlines of a kneeling figure can be observed, and due to the similarity with the lid as well as other mid to late 21st dynasty mummy-covers,¹⁷⁷ it is possible to say that this was once a kneeling goddess with outstretched wings. Liminal figures also appear above the wings of the goddess in an alternating pattern and include the *shetiyt* shrine, seated gods, snakes holding an *ankh*, vultures and various hieroglyphs such as ☉ and ☽.

The third register is very similar to the first, copying the same pattern as the lid. The salient block is again severely damaged however it is possible to see the outline of the body of a scarab with a *shen* ring below it. A sun disk is also visible above the body and evidence of modelling is still left. An *ankh* is only just visible on the left side of the sun disk. From these

¹⁷⁷ Mummy cover of Iyemhetep E13041, Louvre.

elements that are remaining, it is possible to reconstruct this salient block as a scarab with a *shen* ring between its hindlegs and holding up a sun disk with its forelegs. The *ankh* next to the sun disk can also suggest that cobras were wrapped around the sun disk and whilst they also flank the disk, they each hold an *ankh*.

The right side only suffers from a small amount of damage. The centrifugal block features Osiris seated in a throne holding a crook and flail with a green goddess wearing a red dress with blue dots and a sun disk standing behind him. This goddess is identified as Isis by the primordial egg  depicted in front of her face. The name of Osiris  is written in front of his face which differs from the first register where the *hnt.t*  is written. Osiris and Isis are again pictured in a shrine. The centripetal block features the Goddess of the west in front of Osiris. The goddess is winged and a vulture on a *nb* sign with a *w3s* sceptre as well as the *imi-wt* totem are depicted between her wings. The *imi-wt* totem as well as the body, crown and throne of Osiris are modelled. There is another variation in this block and that is the *wadjet* eye protected by a winged cobra that is depicted near the headdress of the Goddess of the West. Other liminal elements include the vulture with the *ankh*, ,  and .

The Left side is more damaged than the right, however the centrifugal figures of Osiris seated and Isis standing can still be discerned. The deities are depicted within the shrine and the body, crown and throne of Osiris are modelled. The primordial egg  is again depicted in front of Isis and the name of Osiris  in front of his crown. The centripetal winged Goddess of the West is depicted again with her wings towards Osiris. There is damage sustained to the area just in front of Osiris including the lower wing of the goddess. The winged cobra is again depicted in front of the standard of the west with a *shen* ring between its wings. Various liminal elements include the vulture with the *ankh*, ,  and .

Commentary

The central panel on the mummy-cover is remarkably similar to the lid displaying only minor differences. Some of these differences such as the absence of the mummiform deity behind

the centripetal winged goddess can be put down to lack of space. The mummy-cover is narrower than the lid and may be the reason for the absence. The Solar-Osirian unity¹⁷⁸ that is portrayed on the central panel and lower section of the lid also finds its prevalence here, alluding the importance of the journey that the deceased makes with the sun god as they join with Osiris and travel through the Duat.¹⁷⁹

4.4: Lower Section

The lower section features three vertical partitions that extend to the end of the cover. The two lateral partitions are divided into four smaller vignettes (C1-C8) using a horizontal band of text. The inscriptions are similar to the transversal inscriptions of the lid and the same can be said about the lateral vignettes. It is more difficult to analyse the middle partition as much damage has been sustained.



Fig. 28: The lower section of the mummy-cover NMR.27.2 Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

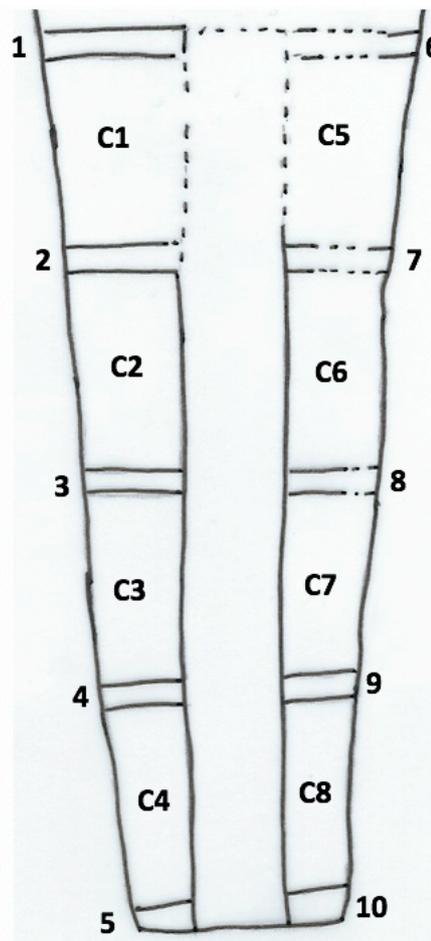


Fig. 29: Drawing of the lower section of NMR.27.2 labelling the inscriptions and vignettes.

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion on the Solar-Osirian unity see Niwinski (1989: 89-106).

¹⁷⁹ Niwinski (1989: 93); This is also evident in the use of N15 ⊕ to signify the Duat.

Right Partition

Inscription 1:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t nb ntr 𓄿

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost, Lord, Great God.

Inscription 2:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t nb

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost, Lord

Inscription 3:

im3h.y hr Wsir hnt.t

Honoured one before Osiris, Foremost

Inscription 4:

im3h.y hr Wsir ntr 𓄿

Honoured one before Osiris, Great God

Inscription 5:

im3h.y hr

Honoured one before

Vignette C1:

This vignette depicts Osiris holding a crook and flail with Isis in a red dress with blue dots standing behind him. The *t* 𓄿 and primordial egg 𓄿 is pictured in front of the goddess to identify her as Isis. The body, throne and crown of Osiris and the sun disk on the head of Isis are modelled. A mummiform deity with a feather as the head stands before them. The liminal elements include the *shetiyt* shrine, a vulture on a *nb* basket with an *ankh*, 𓄿, 𓄿, 𓄿 and 𓄿. The whole vignette is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette C2:

Osiris is depicted sitting on a throne, holding the crook and flail and is accompanied by Isis who wears a red dress with blue dots and is standing behind him. The throne and crown of Osiris and the sun disk on the head of Isis are modelled. A mummiform deity with a feather

as a head is standing before them. The t \ominus and primordial egg \circ are pictured in front of Isis. Liminal elements include a vulture on a *nb* basket with an *ankh*, \ominus , and \otimes . The whole vignette is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette C3:

Osiris is depicted seated on a throne with holding a crook and flail. Isis is standing behind him clothed in a red dress with blue dots. The sun disk above her head is modelled and the t \ominus and primordial egg \circ are pictured in front of her. A mummiform deity with a feather for a head is depicted in front of them. There are less liminal elements in this vignette and include an ankh, \otimes , \ominus and \cup . The whole vignette is depicted in a shrine.

Vignette C4:

This vignette depicts two seated centrifugal gods with feathers on their knees, one with a falcon head and one with a baboon. Both of these gods have red sun disks above their heads and can be identified as Qebehsenuf and Hapy, two of the four sons of Horus. The two gods are depicted with the following liminal elements: \ominus , \star and \square . Below the two gods are various offerings such as lettuce, and various fruits.

Left Partition

Inscription 6:

im3h.y... hnt.t nb

Honoured one ... Foremost, Lord

Inscription 7:

im3h.y... hnt.t

Honoured one... Foremost

Inscription 8:

im3h.y hr ... hnt.t

Honoured one before ... Foremost

Inscription 9:

im3h.y hr Wsir

Honoured one before Osiris

Inscription 10:

im3h.y hr

Honoured one before

Vignette C5:

This vignette is fairly damaged; however, Isis is depicted in a red dress with blue dots standing behind a seated god, more than likely Osiris, of which only the lower legs can be seen. The sun disk above the head of Isis is modelled and the t \triangleleft and primordial egg \circ are depicted in front of her face. A mummiform god with a feather for a head is standing in front of them. Liminal elements include a *shetiyt* shrine, \triangleleft , \star , \otimes and \cup . The scene is depicted within a shrine.

Vignette C6:

Osiris is holding a crook and flail, seated on a throne with Isis standing behind him. The sun disk above the head of Isis and the crown and throne of Osiris are all modelled. The t \triangleleft and primordial egg \circ are depicted in front of Isis. A mummiform deity with a feather as the head is standing in front of the two deities. The scene is depicted in a shrine with liminal elements including: a vulture with an *ankh*, \triangleleft , \cup and \circ .

Vignette C7:

Osiris is depicted seated holding a crook with the goddess Isis standing behind him in a shrine. The sun disk above the head of Isis is modelled and the t \triangleleft and primordial egg \circ are depicted in front of her. This scene has sustained some damage resulting in half of the body of Osiris missing as well as the rest of the scene. The head of a vulture and an *ankh* is still visible in front of the crown of Osiris.

Vignette C8:

Two seated deities are depicted within a shrine. One has the head of a jackal and has a star upon his knee, whilst the other has a human head and has a feather. These deities are the other two sons of Horus, Duamutef and Imsety. The only liminal element in this scene is the \curvearrowright which is depicted three times in front of Duamutef. Below the deities are a variety of offerings including various jars and fruit.

Middle Partition

Much of the middle partition has been damaged, and only the last scene is fully preserved. The first trace of decoration that can be seen in the middle partition are three partial lines of floral motif. These are situated in line with *inscription 7*. The damage takes over again until we can see part of a shrine and some liminal elements. The end of a *pt* \curvearrowright sign as well as *di* Δ , part of cobra, a vulture on a *nb* sign and *shetiyt* shrines are visible. Below this scene is a series of four floral patterns below which is the fully preserved scene. This scene focuses on the salient image of a scarab beetle with a *shen* ring between its hind legs, holding up a yellow sun disk with its forearms. The sun disk is encircled by two uraei and which are flanked by Δ . A vulture on a *nb* sign is below this and stands upon a *shetiyt* shrine. Presiding over the whole scene is a *pt* \curvearrowright sign. Below this scene is another four floral patterns, the last one being three lotus flowers.

Commentary

The lower section of the mummy-cover is much like the lower section of the lid. The lateral partitions allude to the Osirian whilst the middle partition alludes to the solar, thus depicting the Solar-Osirian unity that is heavily conveyed on this coffin set.

4.5 Underside of the Mummy-Cover

The underside of the mummy-cover is in very good condition. The decoration of the cover focuses on a large mummiform figure of Osiris holding a crook and flail and wearing the Atef crown on a red background. The face and hands of Osiris are green whilst the upper half of his body is cloaked in a yellow material, reminiscent of a bead net. The name of Osiris is written near the top of the Atef crown and the rest of Osiris is surrounded by various liminal elements such as ☉, ☾, ☐, ☳, ☶ and ☱. Under the feet of Osiris is the tit  amulet flanked by the standard of the west .



Fig. 30: Underside of the mummy-cover NMR.27.2. Courtesy of the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University.

Commentary

Abbas suggests that the mummy-cover developed as a result of the fusion of the funerary mask with the mummy-board.¹⁸⁰ Whilst the funerary mask protected the deceased as a living god, the board addressed the body where the regeneration of Osiris took place. The underside of the mummy-cover is thus decorated in order to unite the body with Osiris whilst conveying protection under the various deities including the four Sons of Horus.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Abbas (2014: 43).

¹⁸¹ Abbas (2014: 43).

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks

5.1 *Dating*

The coffin set of Meruah NMR.27 dates from the mid to late 21st Dynasty. This date has been achieved by utilising the various typologies of Niwinski and Sousa.¹⁸² Various elements of the coffin set were analysed including the formal composition and layout of each of the elements as well as the iconographic decoration that adorns the coffin. The lid and mummy-cover conform to Niwinski's Type IIIa, the exterior decoration of the trough to Type B and the interior decoration to Type 3a. These three types all date from the mid to late 21st Dynasty. This agrees with Sousa's typology of the lid which places the coffin set in the Classical Scheme which dates from the mid 21st Dynasty, however there are some elements that fit within the Complex Scheme which dates to the second half of the 21st Dynasty. It is for this reason that I suggest a date from the mid to late 21st Dynasty for the coffin set.

5.2 *Conclusion*

It is clear from the previous pages that the coffin set of Meruah is densely decorated and features a variety of scenes. The scenes although varying, connect to one another to form a repertoire that conveys the journey of the deceased whilst creating the sacred space of the coffin in its own right. The lid and mummy-cover are very similar and convey the journey of the deceased in the sky and Duat with the sun god and Osiris. The lower section of the lid and mummy-cover portray part of this journey. It begins with the solar central partition, alluding to the deceased's journey with the sun god through the sky, being rejuvenated and reborn¹⁸³. The lateral partitions feature the second part of the journey in which the sun god joins with Osiris to travel through the Duat in order to rise again the next day.¹⁸⁴ In a way the lid and mummy-cover portray the celestial world and the solar cycle.¹⁸⁵ This is further emphasised with the central panel and the depiction of Nut spread across the chest as she

¹⁸² Niwinski (1988), Sousa (2018).

¹⁸³ Taylor (2006: 266).

¹⁸⁴ Taylor (2006: 270), Abbas (2014: 50), Liptay (2017: 260).

¹⁸⁵ Abouelata & Houssain (2017: 30).

protects the deceased travelling with the sun god through the sky.¹⁸⁶ The rebirth of the deceased is further reiterated in the lotus flowers that adorn the collar and head.¹⁸⁷ The head-board and upper section are aimed at transforming the deceased into the 'just' god.¹⁸⁸

The trough describes another journey that the deceased makes which is similar to that depicted on the lid, however these are grounded in ritual. The head-board of the trough indicates the east and the foot the west. Scenes on the head-board feature solar motifs such as the sacred falcon and the *tît* amulet, indicating the protection of the deceased when she is united with the sun god in the east. As you move down the sides of the coffin towards the foot-end, the iconography changes and the deceased is no longer orientated with the sun god but is depicted in the clothes of the living as she has not yet passed judgement. The exterior walls of the trough parallel each other in terms of symbolism and passage. On the right the deceased is depicted being presented to Osiris by Thoth in a variation of the judgement of the dead.¹⁸⁹ On the left is a similar scene however Meruah is absent. The journey continues and the next scene on the right features the winged scarab on the solar barque above the serpent. This is the defeat of Apophis by the sun god with whom the deceased is now aligned. The left features three deities standing on a coiled serpent which again represents the sun god beating Apophis.¹⁹⁰ The final vignette on the right features Meruah before the tree goddess. The tree goddess provides nourishment to the deceased and the chthonic deities depicted indicate the realm of the Duat.¹⁹¹ The final scene on the left is the Hathor cow emerging from the mountain. The mountain is associated with the necropolis and the tomb and this alludes to the deceased reaching the west and completing the journey.¹⁹² The vignettes on the trough depict the deceased's journey through to the netherworld.

The interior decoration of the trough is made up of deities and symbols associated with Osiris and the netherworld. In this way the inside of the trough represents the realm of the

¹⁸⁶ Hart (2005: 111-112).

¹⁸⁷ van Walsem (1997: 116).

¹⁸⁸ Taylor (2017: 543); Sousa (2018: 76-77).

¹⁸⁹ Abbas (2014: 55); Niwinski (1995: 16).

¹⁹⁰ Sousa (2017: 18 – 20), Niwinski (2004: 55).

¹⁹¹ Abbas (2014: 27, 56).

¹⁹² Abbas (2014: 30-31), Heyne (1998: 60-63), Liptay (2014: 74).

netherworld.¹⁹³ The head is still associated with the sun god and the living and this is evident in the depiction of the *ba*-bird. This is the place through which the *ba* can travel to the divine world with the sun.¹⁹⁴ It can be said that the lid and exterior decoration on the trough act as a cosmic map through which the deceased travels in order to reach the netherworld.¹⁹⁵

By depicting these various scenes in different realms, the decoration on the coffin creates a sacred space.¹⁹⁶ A space where the *ba* is free to journey and return and where the deceased can be protected by the various deities. In this way the coffin set has taken over the function that the tomb once held.¹⁹⁷ The deceased is not only protected by the various deities and magical elements on the coffin, but travels with them. Each element of decoration features elements of magic, rejuvenation and rebirth all placed on the coffin for one purpose, to protect Meruah and guide her through the afterlife.

¹⁹³ Houssain (2017: 30).

¹⁹⁴ Liptay (2017: 261).

¹⁹⁵ Liptay (2017: 263), Houssain (2017: 30).

¹⁹⁶ Bettum (2017: 75).

¹⁹⁷ Liptay (2017: 263).

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