

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Faculty Journal Articles

2002

Texts on the Canopic Boxes from the Tomb of Sen-nedjem

Lisa Sabbahy Dr.

The American University in Cairo AUC, lsabbahy@aucegypt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

APA Citation

Sabbahy, L. (2002). Texts on the Canopic Boxes from the Tomb of Sen-nedjem. *Egyptian Museum Collections around the World*,

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/5083

MLA Citation

Sabbahy, Lisa Dr. "Texts on the Canopic Boxes from the Tomb of Sen-nedjem." *Egyptian Museum Collections around the World*, 2002,

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/5083

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Journal Articles by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact fountadmin@aucegypt.edu.



5281
O.T.
2003
133
201
V.2

Egyptian Museum

Collections

around the World

Foreword by
Zahi Hawass

Edited by
Mamdouh Eldamaty and Mai Trad

Volume Two

Supreme Council of Antiquities
Cairo, Egypt

Distributed by the American University in Cairo Press

THE TEXTS ON THE CANOPIC BOXES FROM THE TOMB OF SEN-NEDJEM IN THE CAIRO MUSEUM

LISA SABBAHY
The American University in Cairo

Six canopic boxes were discovered among the objects in the tomb of Sen-nedjem at Deir el-Medineh on the West Bank of Luxor. Four of these boxes are now in the collection of the Cairo Museum: that of Sen-nedjem (JdE 27307), his wife Iy-neferty (JdE 27306), and those of two daughters-in-law, Tamaket (JdE 27305) and Isis (JdE 27304).¹ The four boxes are wood, mounted on sledge-runners. A cavetto cornice decorates the top of the boxes, and the lids are in the shape of a shrine roof. Each box was constructed with a knob on the front side and another on the lid. Sen-nedjem's box is by far the largest, measuring 50x61x72 cm. The other boxes average 45x44x50 cm.

Each canopic box was divided into four interior compartments, but only that of Sen-nedjem had canopic containers inside.² His box contained four painted, limestone coffinettes wrapped in linen.

The background color of all the boxes is yellow. The front and back sides are decorated with the figures of the protective deities Isis, Nephthys, Neit and Selket, while the sides of the boxes have the Four Sons of Horus: Imsety, Duamutef, Qebehsenuef and Hapy. The boxes of Iy-neferty and Isis have the goddesses in the correct positions,³ while on Tamaket's box Neit and Nephthys have switched places. On Sen-nedjem's box Neit and Selket are on the front of the box, while Isis and Nephthys are on the back. On the canopic

¹ *PM*, I, 1, 1970, pp. 4-5. Two other canopic boxes belonging to sons of Sen-nedjem were also found in the tomb: that of Khabekhnet is in the National Archaeology Museum in Madrid (15222), and that of Khonsu is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MMA 86.1.3ab).

² G.A. Reisner, *Canopics, Catalogue Général*, Cairo, 1967, pp. 173-177, pl. XCIII, 4249-4252. All the inscriptions on the coffinettes have *Dd mdw in* plus deity name.

box of Isis, the goddesses Isis and Nephthys do not have their insignia on their heads, as on all the other boxes. All the boxes have the Four Sons of Horus in the correct positions.⁴ The Four Sons of Horus are all shown with the correct heads, except on the canopic box of Isis on which they are all human-headed, and on the box of Tamaket where Duamutef has a human, rather than a jackal head.

The lids of all four boxes are very badly damaged. Those of Tamaket and Isis have panels with Anubis figures and djed pillars, but no inscriptions. Iy-neferty's box has similar decoration, as well as *Dd mdw in* plus Anubis and epithets on the front edge, and *Dd mdw in* plus Neit with epithets along the side edges. Sen-nedjem's lid has two panels with ankh and djed symbols and a *Htp-di-nsw* formula along the front edge of the lid.

As the largest box, Sen-nedjem's had the most room for inscriptions, and has three vertical lines of inscription on each side. Iy-neferty's box has two lines of vertical and one line of horizontal inscription on each side. Tamaket's box has two lines of vertical inscription for each of the goddesses, but only one line accompanying each of the Four Sons of Horus. Isis's box has one line of vertical inscription for all the protective deities except the side of the box with Hapy and Qebehsenuef, which was left uninscribed.

The protective formulae used on the boxes vary as well. Those on the box of Isis are the simplest, with either: *Dd mdw imAxy Hr*, "Words spoken: honored under . . ." or *Dd mdw in*, "Words spoken by . . ." followed by deity name and titles and name of the deceased.⁵ (See Plate IA) The canopic box of Tamaket also has fairly short unvarying inscriptions. All of the Sons of Horus are accompanied by *Dd mdw in*, "words spoken by", followed by the deity name and the titles and name of the deceased.⁶ The inscriptions with the four goddesses begin *Dd mdw in*, "Words spoken by", followed by deity name, titles

³ These positions became canonical in the New Kingdom: Isis, front left, Nephthys, front right, Neit, back left, and Selket, back right, see B. Lüschner, *Untersuchungen zu ägyptische Kanopenkästen*, *HAB*, 31, 1990, pp. 17-18.

⁴ Imsety and Duamutef are on the left side with Imsety to the front; Hapy and Qebehsenuef are on the right side with Hapy to the front.

⁵ The side of the box with Neit and Selket is damaged, and the inscriptions are illegible after the name of each goddess.

and name of the deceased, and then a further protective statement. Isis and Nephthys both say: "My two arms are around you". (See Plate IB) Neit says: "Come to me, I have filled for you your limbs with ointment". Selket says: "Come, I will be as your protection".

The canopic box of Iy-neferty has fairly straightforward protective formulae as well. The horizontal band along the top of the box on each side reads: "*Dd mdw imAxy xr Wsr . . .*", "Words spoken: honored under Osiris", followed by title and name of the deceased. The exact same phrase begins the inscription for all the Sons of Horus. The four protective goddesses have *Dd mdw in*, "Words spoken by . . .", and then the deity's name with epithets, and then the titles and name of the deceased. (See Plate IIA).

The protective formulae on the canopic box of Sen-nedjem are the most elaborate. The inscriptions accompanying the Four Sons of Horus use Spell 151 of the Book of the Dead.⁷ The vignette for this spell depicts the burial chamber of the tomb, with Anubis in the center tending to the mummy. At each corner squats one of the Four Sons of Horus, accompanied by a particular part of the spell.⁸ Spell 151 is also found on royal as well as non-royal sarcophagi in the New Kingdom and later.⁹ In fact, the very same Spell accompanies the Four Sons of Horus depicted on the large, outer, rectangular coffin of Sen-nedjem, as well as on his anthropoid sarcophagus, both in the collection of the Cairo Museum.¹⁰

All four inscriptions begin *Dd mdw in*, followed by the name of the Son of Horus and the titles and name of Sen-nedjem, and then the relevant part of Spell 151. Imsety states: "I

⁶ Tamaket's name is not fully written out, simply *tA* or *tA-m*, depending on the space.

⁷ A greatly shortened version of each of these spells was also used on the canopic box of Thuya, see J.E. Quibell, *The Tomb of Yuaa and Thuiu, Catalogue Général* Cairo, 1908, p. 33.

⁸ See T.G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth By Day*, SAOC 37, Chicago, 1974, p. 150, and R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, British Museum Publications, London, 1985, pp. 147-148.

⁹ See the discussion by Lüshcher, *Untersuchungen*, HÄB 31, 1990, pp. 73-75. For the use of this spell on royal sarcophagi, see W. C. Hayes, *Royal Sarcophagi of the XVIII Dynasty*, Princeton, 1935, pp. 83-84. Another sarcophagus from Deir el-Medineh also using the Four Sons of Horus speeches from this spell was published by T.G.H. James, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Inscriptions in the Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn N.Y., 1974, pp. 101-104.

¹⁰ Rectangular coffin on sledge-runners, JdE 27301; outer anthropoid coffin JdE 27308, see *PM*, I, 1, 1970, p. 4. For photographs, see A. G. Shedid, *Das Grab des Sennedjem*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz, 1994; and L. Sabbahy, *Ramses II: The Pharaoh and His Time*, Brigham Young University Press, 1985, p. 48.

have come that I might be your protection, that I might establish your house very firmly, (like) the command of Ptah, like the command of Re". Duamutef says: "I am your son whom you love. I have come that I might rescue (my) father Osiris from the one who does him harm".¹¹ Hapy proclaims: "I have come that I might join for you your head and your limbs. (Your) enemy under you, I have put¹² I have given you life forever". Qebehsenuef states: I have come that I might unite your bones for you. I have arranged your limbs for you. I have brought your head and (I) have put it in its place".

The protective formulae accompanying the goddesses Isis and Nephthys also use parts of Spell 151. After *Dd mdw in*, Isis says: "My two arms are behind you". Then, following the titles and name of Sen-nedjem, the spell continues: "Your face is illumined, may you open your two eyes forever, my brother Osiris". Nephthys words are only: "My two arms are around you".

The goddesses Neit and Selket have no part in Spell 151. Their statements on Sen-nedjem's canopic box derive from a speech of Anubis accompanying the vignette for Spell 1 of the Book of the Dead.¹³ This vignette is very similar to that of Spell 151, as it also depicts Anubis tending the mummy of the deceased.

The statements by these two goddesses begin with *Dd mdw in*, and the name of the goddess followed by the titles and name of Sen-nedjem. (See Plate IIB) Neit then says: "I have filled your body with linen and ointment, as what Anubis caused that (your) flesh remain in the place of your flesh".¹⁴ This compares to the inscription in Tomb 290 at Deir el-Medineh where Anubis states: "Come to me. I will be as your protection. I have

¹¹ The first *n* in *nkn* is not written; also the *f* suffix is written before the determinative. Literally the phrase reads "who does his harm".

¹² Arm holding the cone may have been written instead of the arm holding the stick. All other versions have "I have smitten", refer to footnote 8 above.

¹³ M. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in der thebanischen Beamtengräben des Neuen Reichs*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz, 1984, p. 10. There are three examples of this Anubis speech at Deir el-Medineh. The most complete examples are in tombs 219 and 290.

¹⁴ Her speech is more completely written out on Sen-nedjem's large rectangular coffin, see footnote 11 above. There *Inpw* is written with a determinative and *stp*, "flesh" has the *k* suffix pronoun each time.

embraced your body. My two arms are upon you. I have filled your body with ointment and every costly stone of god's land /// your flesh remains upon its place".¹⁵

Selket proclaims: "Come to me with your body. I have embraced your birthing place. O, very great of flesh in the midst of your jar".¹⁶ In Tomb 219 at Deir el-Medineh Anubis states: "Come to me. I will be as your protection. I have embraced your birthing place."¹⁷

For the most part the protective formulae on these canopic boxes are simple and straightforward: *Dd mdw in* or *Dd mdw imAxy Hr* is followed by the name of the deity. This kind of short text alludes to divine speech.¹⁸ The protective formulae associated with the protective goddesses on Tamaket's box differ, in that the speech of each goddess uses material from the Book of the Dead. Isis and Nephthys each state: "my two arms are around you". This comes from Spell 151, and is also used in a fuller form on the canopic box of Sen-nedjem. Selket says: "I will be as your protection", which is from Imsety's speech in Spell 151. Neit states: "I will fill your limbs with ointment", derived from the Anubis speech from the vignette for Spell 1, also used on Sen-nedjem's box.

All of the protective deities on Sen-nedjem's canopic box are accompanied by speeches from the Book of the Dead, either Spell 151, or derived from the Anubis speech from the vignette of Spell 1. Spell 151 is generally found on coffins and the Anubis speech in tomb decoration. In fact, none of the canopic boxes from the tomb of Sen-nedjem carry the more typical canopic box protective formula in which the goddess states that she is protecting a particular Son of Horus who in turn is protecting the deceased.¹⁹

¹⁵ M. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch*, 1984, p. 10, and a description of the tomb scene is given in B. Bruyere and C. Kuentz, *La Tombe de Nakht-Min at la Tombe de Ari-Nefer*, *MIFAO*, 54, 1926, pp. 130-132.

¹⁶ On the rectangular coffin *nmst* is completely spelled out.

¹⁷ See C. Maystre, *La Tombe de Nebenmat*, French Institute, Cairo, 1936, pl. 5.

¹⁸ For such simple text columns on coffins, see the discussion by H. Willems, *Chests of Life*, Leuven, 19088, p. 171, and the comments by W. Grojetzki, *Bemerkungen zu einige Sprechtype auf Särgen des später Mittleren Reichs*, *GM*, 166, 1998, p. 31. This would correspond to Sethe's Type XIII, see K. Sethe, "Zur Geschichte der Einbalsamierung bei den Ägyptern und einiger damit verbundener Bräuche", *SPAW*, XIII, 1934, 8*.

¹⁹ K. Sethe, "Zur Geschichte der Einbalsamierung", *SPAW*, 1934, pp. 1*-8*.



Plate IA: The canopic box of Isis (JdE 27304)



Plate IB: The canopic box of Tamaket (JdE 27304)



Plate IIA: The canopic box of Iy-neferty (JdE 27306)



Plate IIB: The canopic box of Sen-nedjem (JdE 27307)