



Unpublished Anthropoid Coffin at Beni-Suief Museum No. 1248: Renaissance of the Glory of the 26th Dynasty

This coffin, No. 1248, is part of a group of individual coffins manufactured in the Ihnasyia cemetery and has been kept at the Beni-Suief Museum. The authors were able to date it clearly because it closely resembles other coffins from the 26th Dynasty in terms of the design of the anthropoid having square shoulders, as opposed to coffins from the New Kingdom or the Third Intermediate Period.

26th Dynasty coffins are notably decorated using the concept of archaism, wherein artists attempted to restore the Old Kingdom's past glory. It is known that the Saite Dynasty kings were interested in representing art and encouraged the Old Kingdom's art. The upper parts of 26th Dynasty coffins (shoulder to end of chest) were rectangular in shape. The coffins were influenced by the Old Kingdom's rectangle-shape design. The coffin was carved without arms or hands, which was a distinctive feature of the coffins during the Late Period. Moreover, during the Saite Period, there was a special copy of the BD used for coffins of individuals. We must keep in mind that many factors, such as social, economic, and regional factors, have influenced the design and decoration of the coffin. For example, coffins made for people in the Theban region differ from those made for people in the Ihnasyia region. As a result, the coffins of individuals discovered at Ihnasyia during the Late Period were notable for their inaccurate and low-quality decoration. The technique of attaching the lid to the coffin's floorboard, which relied on rectangular recesses offset by wooden pegs, was developed in the New Kingdom. During the Late Period, this technique became modest and imprecise. After studying many coffins dated to the 26th Dynasty, clearly this coffin dates to the 26th Dynasty as well, and more specifically, from the late 26th Dynasty.

The 26th Dynasty coffins were distinguished by the use of materials to strengthen the poor quality of wood; these materials were a mixture of linen and papyrus rolls that include a layer of plaster which was used for drawing on. The layers of linen and papyrus were then adhered with resin gum. Plaster coated linen first appeared in the New Kingdom and continued to spread throughout the Late Period. Since it has inexpensive material value and ability to create mummy forms, the white mortar surface also contributed to the design as an excellent canvas for creating outstanding scenes.

During the Late Period, all coffins had presentations of the four sons of Horus. As a result, they appeared as canopic vessels under the deceased's funerary bed at times and as full deities on both sides of the coffin at other times. Their role had been known since the Old Kingdom via Pyramid Texts, and each of them was known to protect a part of the human body. The first figure is Imsty, who was entrusted with protecting the liver alongside the deceased's consort, whereas QbHsnwf was depicted with the head of a falcon protecting the intestines alongside his role in protecting the sA, or the deceased's body, and his place in the coffins was often on the left side. Hapy appeared on the coffin's left side with the Kbhsnwf and he was assigned the lungs' protection. The authors note that the artist of this coffin did not adhere to what was prevalent in individual coffins during the New Kingdom or the Late Period in terms of placing gods on the coffin or coloring them with symbolic religious colors.

Finally, during the Saite Period, coffins were inscribed with spells and supplications from the Pyramid Texts, a matter that led the authors to believe that it has a political implication that crystallizes around the kings of this family's interest in restoring the past and returning to its origins, that is, the ancient



Fayoum University
Faculty of Tourism & Hotels

جامعة الفيوم
كلية السياحة والفنادق



Egyptian civilization, believing that this matter will restore the Egyptian nation's lost glory among nations. The use of Pyramid Texts alongside the BD was tangible evidence of the ancient Egyptians' interest in the Saite Period return to its Old Kingdom civilizational roots.