



## AN ANONYMOUS COFFIN AND CARTONNAGE FROM LAHUN: RETRIEVING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDS

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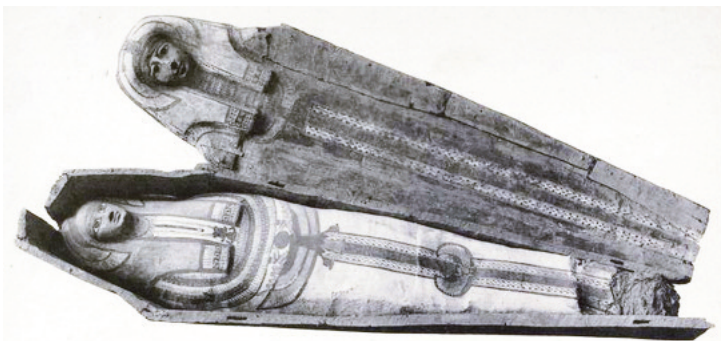
### ABSTRACT

*The publication of a coffin set, consisting of an anthropoid coffin and a cartonnage mummy-case, with a mummy, from Lahun. The coffin set, which was re-found in the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo without inventory, represents the Northern provincial type of Middle Egypt and Fayum of the Third Intermediate to Late Periods. This study aims accordingly to retrieve its archaeological context by identifying its provincial type and date, putting the set and its archaeological records in context for the first time. In addition to a full publication, the article points out the importance of re-examining and republishing museum objects that were hastily published several decades ago. This comes in accordance with the approach of re-contextualizing the archaeological collections, and in particular, museum objects that have lost their original contexts and records.*

**EDITORIAL NOTE:** The following individuals have collaborated on this project, of which one part is presented below:

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**FIGURE 1:** The coffin and the cartonnage as discovered. After G. Maspero, "Un Cercueil du Fayoum," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 2 (1901): pl. I.

**T**he funerary ensemble of an unknown lady, consisting of an anthropoid wooden coffin and a cartonnage mummy case, with an intact mummy, was re-found in the basement of the Egyptian Museum, during the work season 2004. It lacked any archaeological context, acquisition data, or even accession number. The ensemble was then given a temporary inventory number (N.37) in 2005 and has not yet been entered into the *Journal d'entrée*. To identify its archaeological context, a survey was carried out and substantial



FIGURE 2: The coffin before restoration and reassembling. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

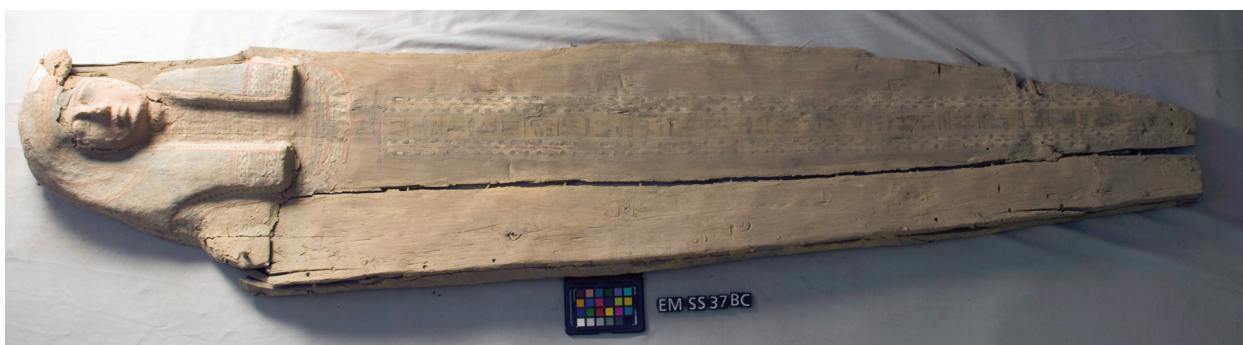


FIGURE 3: The lid of the wooden coffin, inscribed with one column. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

comparison with photographs in the JdE, the museum archive, all known discoveries of same type, and the available publications of coffins and cartonnages from the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. A huge research process was carried out, demonstrating the efforts that museums and scholars might made to identify the archaeological context of objects that are stored for decades. Fortunately, it was possible to identify the pieces as a set illustrated by Gaston Maspero in 1902, which identifies its archaeological context to the excavations of Flinders Petrie at Lahun in April 1900 (Fig. 1). The coffin set, which entered the Egyptian

Museum in 1900–1901, was not then formally accessioned due to difficult circumstance that year.<sup>1</sup> Eleven decades later, the coffin set has now been re-contextualized, reassembled, and studied.

The article presents a full publication of the coffin set, as well as a comparison with parallels of the same type, provenance, date, and presentations. It also puts its archaeological records in context, highlighting, on one hand, the importance of the primary publication of museum objects. On the other hand, it demonstrates the need for better conservation practices and a re-examination of museum objects that were hastily published decades





FIGURE 4: Detail of the human mask from the coffin lid. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

ago,<sup>2</sup> as well as the necessity of providing updated publications while correcting any inaccuracies in earlier publications. Furthermore, the article and this coffin set suggest that stock production for cartonnages might have been existed during the Third Intermediate Period, if not earlier. It has been noted that workshops existed throughout Egypt, producing coffins and other items and creating variations in style and quality. As the article discusses, the remarkable difference in the measurements between the corpse and the cartonnage case, together with the identical palaeographical features on the coffin and the cartonnage types, supports this suggestion. A conclusion will be suggested that both designs were produced at the same workshop; consequently, a debate about stock production and workshops for cartonnage cases is highly recommended.

#### CONDITION

The coffin, which is in poor condition, has deteriorated into several pieces (base, two sides, and fragments). A few pieces are still joined together with wooden dowels, including a large joined piece that preserves the head and chest, together with the extended inscription into the lower part (Figs. 2–4). The head block has areas of loss, cracks, breaks and disjoints (Fig. 4). Some smaller pieces from the lid and the coffin case are also preserved. Maspero's photograph (Fig. 1) indicates, however, that it was in much better condition at the time of discovery. The coffin consists of wood, a layer of gesso, and a layer of paint. Blue, red, yellow, and black pigments were used in the decoration of the coffin (Fig. 2). The coffin has been conserved and reassembled recently at the Egyptian museum (Figs. 15–16).

The cartonnage with the mummy is substantially complete and moderately stable, except for the lower part (Figs. 5–13). The lower part of the cartonnage is damaged in the area of the foot, which has suffered severe damage (Figs. 12, 13). There are few other damaged spots on the nose, the left side of the face, and on the back of the forehead. The cartonnage has an irregular surface and a slightly pushed-up area that possibly resulted from the positioning or repositioning of the mummy beneath. The paint and coloration of the cartonnage are in a good state of preservation. They are quite similar to those of the wooden coffin: a white background with blue, red, black, and yellow used for the text and decoration. There are lots of abrasion, micro-cracks, and scratches in the painted layer. The pigments have vanished in some areas. The cartonnage has areas of loss, crumbling, and distortion, and it is covered heavily with dust; some black greasy stains were located on the right side. The textile bandages are directly exposed, and the gesso layer and painted layer were almost lost except for a small part, which is loose and powdery. Further scientific investigation, and detailed study to specify the age and gender of the mummy, wood, linen, layers, and other materials, would be performed.

#### THE ANTHROPOID COFFIN

##### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The anthropoid wooden coffin is 185 cm long and consists of a case and lid. The case and lid are each made of several boards, which were found in the basement in eleven pieces and fragments (Figs. 2–4), probably because of the unsuitable preservation

environment.

Its features are in accordance with those defined by John Taylor as of the “Northern” provincial type, found during the later Third Intermediate Period.<sup>3</sup> The frontal design consists of a sculpted face, with a tripartite wig and broad *wesekh*-necklace. The central scene under the chest is absent (Fig. 2); the wig and the collar are brightly painted. There is a depiction of a scarab atop the head, painted black on a yellow ground (Fig. 4). The middle and lower sections of the coffin lid are neither decorated nor painted except for the central vertical inscribed column with the funerary formula. Whereas the rest of the outer part of the coffin case and lid are also not painted, the inner surface is covered with a yellow wash, but no decoration. The coffin lid design is simple and made of small pieces of wood held together with dowels (Fig. 2), typical of coffins of its type<sup>4</sup> (compare, e.g., the outer coffin of Nairis from Thebes, 25th dynasty, at the Hermitage Museum,<sup>5</sup> and the middle coffin of Isetirdis, probably from Thebes, dated to the 22nd–26th Dynasties<sup>6</sup>).

#### THE UPPER PART OF THE COFFIN LID

The features of the face are well proportioned for such a provincial work of art (Fig. 4), with the mouth, nose, and eyes roughly designed. The face was carved as a separate element and fastened on the main wooden surface. It shows the deceased wearing a tripartite wig covered with the feminine vulture headdress. The ears are hidden under the two frontal lappets of the wig, the its lower ends of which are decorated with three horizontal stripes. The absence of a beard suggests that it have been made for a female person. Below, the upper part of the chest, the deceased wears a *wesekh*-necklace made of floral ornaments and beads with a painted black scarab beetle at the middle. The scarab pushes the sun disk and faces down toward the formula. A further scarab, which occupies the forehead of the coffin lid, and the floral decorations and *wesekh*-necklace are

again motifs typical of such a coffin type. For example, a coffin in Bolton Museum (inv. 1892.7.2)<sup>7</sup> from Lahun, dated to the 22th–25th Dynasties, shows identical floral decorations, *wesekh*-necklace, tripartite wig, and the scarab on the forehead of the lid.<sup>8</sup>

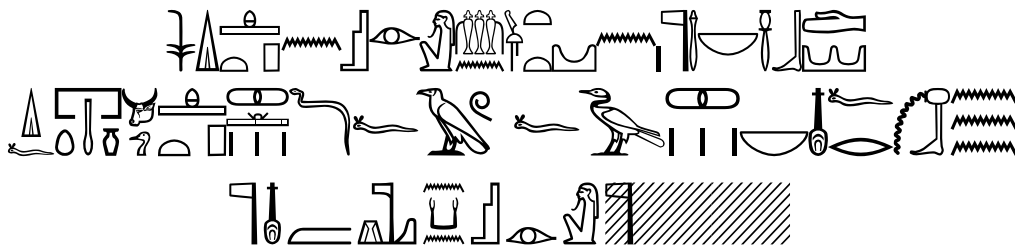
The wig and the collar are painted in green, blue, and yellow on a white ground. The scarab on the forehead and the collar are drawn in black, which is common to coffins of this design and period (e.g., compare the same depiction on the outer coffin and the cartonnage of Nairis<sup>9</sup>). The head is in poor condition, its left side together with the wig being damaged and partly lost. There are several cracks, fractures and missing parts on the face, neck and chest.

#### TEXTS

Although the texts (Fig. 3) are limited to one column on each of the coffin and cartonnage, they are significant in terms of their paleographical features, which are in accordance with the output of a local workshop. It even suggests the same workshop, and probably the work of the same individual. The texts are a mix of hieroglyphs and hieratic writing, which appear clearly in several signs, with a number of mistakes, including the use of inappropriate signs. Although the texts were reproduced in Maspero’s 1902 report,<sup>10</sup> neither translation nor commentary was provided. His copy is still useful in identifying some of the lost signs in the areas that have subsequently suffered damage. It also shows several mistakes in his reading of the hieratic signs. Consideration of the inaccurate reading because of the unclear signs has been considered in the suggested reading and translation here.

A single inscribed column on the front of the lid extends from beneath the broad collar to the lower end. It is written on a yellow ground in roughly cursive writing using black ink. The column is flanked by thick borders decorated with black ink

TEXT 1:





spots on a white ground. The black spots are still well preserved, while the white ground is mostly gone. A small figure of a recumbent Anubis is drawn in black above the formula.

The text (Text 1) reads:

*h*tp<sup>(a)</sup> di Nsw n wsir *h*nty-*imnty*<sup>(b)</sup> n<sup>(c)</sup> ntr-<sup>ε</sup> nb <sup>ε</sup>*bdw*,<sup>(d)</sup>  
 di.f<sup>(e)</sup> prt-*hrw* (m) t *hnkt* [k<sup>ε</sup>.w] <sup>ε</sup>*bd.w* *h*tp.w<sup>(f)</sup> *df*<sup>ε</sup>w<sup>(g)</sup> nb  
*nfr*<sup>(h)</sup> w<sup>ε</sup>b  
*ntr nfr*<sup>(i)</sup> m *hr-ntr*<sup>(j)</sup> (n) k<sup>ε</sup> n wsir [... ...]<sup>(k)</sup>.

*An offering that the king gives to Osiris, lord of the west, to the great god, lord of Abydos. May he give the offerings: (of beer) [oxen] and birds, and all the good and pure offerings of the lands' products and sustenance/ supplies. The good god in the necropolis, to the soul of Osiris [ ... ...].*

**Commentary:**

The scribe has mixed up the determinatives, as well as mixed hieroglyphic and hieratic writing in the same text.

- a) The *h*tp-sign is confused with the hieratic of the papyrus roll (𓆎). The sign 𓆎 is written in hieratic instead of its hieroglyphic form, although the beginning of the text is in hieroglyph.
- b) *imnty*: the determinative 𓆎 was used instead of the appropriate determinative 𓆎.<sup>11</sup>
- c) The hieratic sign after the word *imnty*, whether to be the preposition (n) or to be the three strokes 𓆎 for plural in the word *imnty.w*.
- d) <sup>ε</sup>*bdw*, for Abydos, is written in hieratic form. The determinative 𓆎 is used instead of the appropriate determinative of 𓆎.<sup>12</sup> Probably the scribe confused the determinatives in *imnty* and <sup>ε</sup>*bdw* where the two determinatives are switched in place.
- e) The writing of di.f is abnormal writing in both the coffin and cartonnage.
- f) *h*tp.w,<sup>13</sup> "offerings". *h*tp.w and *df*<sup>ε</sup>w occur often in the offering formula on coffins and cartonnages from the 22nd to 25th Dynasties; e.g., for a parallel, on the outer coffin of Lady *Nairis* from the 25th Dynasty, the words occur with the orthographies: 𓆎𓆎𓆎𓆎𓆎𓆎𓆎𓆎.<sup>14</sup>

- g) *df*<sup>ε</sup>w,<sup>15</sup> a sort of offerings. The word ends with three strokes of the plural.
- h) The sign beside *nfr*, probably the complementary writing of the word [𓆎]; not the sign that Maspero read.
- i) The hieratic signs are not clear enough, but it might be read 𓆎, to be translated "the living god"; otherwise, the reading of Maspero, 𓆎, is possible as well.
- j) The word after *m* might be read *hrt-ntr* necropolis,<sup>16</sup> but not the orthography that has been copied by Maspero.<sup>17</sup>
- k) The damaged space after the word *wsir* is supposed to give the name of the deceased to whom the offerings are presented. Unfortunately, the hieroglyphs were erased and no traces of any signs to suggest a name, which also is damaged on the cartonnage. Though the damage on this area does not seem to be a recent change, which is clearly seen also in the photograph within Maspero's report, he nonetheless gave a reading of two signs<sup>18</sup> that can no longer be traced:



- l) Outside the frame of the text, in the wood, is probably an incised sign that reads *prt-hrw*. Perhaps it is a correction to the text that the scribe noted.

**THE CARTONNAGE**

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

The cartonnage, made of linen, pigments, and gesso (with human remains inside), is 174 cm in length and 37 cm in width. It has the general aspect of the cartonnage of a female, but unfortunately, the place where the name would be is damaged on both the coffin and the cartonnage (Fig. 12). Its surface is decorated with simple decorative motifs on the front, while the back is plain (Fig. 5). The face is modelled in the round and is framed by a tripartite wig (Fig. 6). A broad *wesekh*-necklace hangs below the wig, covering the breast. Two necklaces are hung round the neck; the inner one is a heart pendant, while the outer, which is slightly longer, represents a pendant in the form of a sun disk with two feathers on a boat sign 𓆎 (Fig. 5). The forehead is occupied by the image of a winged scarab, which is depicted also on



FIGURE 5: The cartonnage with the intact corpse inside. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

FIGURE 6: Details of the sculpted head from the cartonnage. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.



the coffin (Figs. 7–8).

Beneath the broad collar is the central motif, a falcon, holding the *sn* sign in each foot.<sup>19</sup> Above its wings, two winged serpents stand in a symmetrical pair, flanking the sun disk above the falcon (fig. 9). Below the depiction of the falcon, the middle and lower part is occupied only with one central column of inscription. In its middle, a winged scarab divides it into sections. The rest of the cartonnage is left empty of decoration, except for the white background (Figs. 9–11). The main elements of the design are drawn in red and black outlines, while the details are filled with blue, green, and yellow. The background is plain white, the whole scheme reflecting the Third Intermediate/Late Period provincial type,<sup>20</sup> characterized by a central image and only one central inscribed column on a plain white ground.

#### THE ICONOGRAPHIC FEATURES

##### *The Upper Part*

The upper part depicts an apparently female face, with a tripartite wig and lacking a false beard (Fig. 6). The ground of the long wig is painted green. The limbs and nose are formed in the cartonnage, while the eyes and eyebrows are drawn on the surface. Black lines determine the outer and inner form of the eyes, which are drawn a little bit bigger and wider than normal. The mask is well preserved, and the colors, except for a few small spots, are undamaged. Such small blemishes are seen on the nose, skin, and left side of the face. Two pendants hang on the chest, each on a cord that falls from the neck (Fig. 5). The smaller is a heart amulet, a pendant that appears on several parallels, generally of women, thus reinforcing the assumption that it is a female.<sup>21</sup>





FIGURE 7: The forehead of the cartonnage. Upper view showing the figure of the scarab and the hole atop the head. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.



FIGURE 8: Detail of the scarab at the forehead. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

FIGURE 9: Details from the beginning of the text on the cartonnage. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.







FIGURE 10: Details from the text and the middle winged scarab on the cartonnage. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

#### *The Central Image of the Falcon*

A winged falcon is depicted on the middle field below the chest (Fig. 5). The body is painted yellow, as is the sun disk above his head, while its wings are painted in several colors: yellow, blue/green, and red. The falcon holds š-signs, which are linked to the outer borders of the vertical inscription below. The image of the falcon is common on provincial anthropoid coffins and cartonnages of the period.<sup>22</sup>

#### *The Scarab Beetle on the Forehead*

The forehead is occupied with a depiction of a winged scarab (Figs. 7–8). The scarab, as the common design on the head,<sup>23</sup> is a motif common on 22nd Dynasty Theban cartonnage cases and their “Northern” counterparts,<sup>24</sup> although it was mostly replaced with the figure of Nephthys by the 25th–26th Dynasties.<sup>25</sup> The scarab motif supports strongly the suggested dating of the coffin set in this discussion. Taylor has commented on the likely meaning of this motif, that when the coffin is in an upright position, this motif placed the mummy directly beneath the life-giving solar rays.<sup>26</sup> It was often counterbalanced at the foot end of the cartonnage or the coffin by a depiction of the Apis bull carrying the mummy on its back, a legacy of the 22nd Dynasty.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the decoration of the foot end cannot be proved in this cartonnage or even its coffin, since these are the most damaged parts. The entire body of the scarab is painted black on a yellow ground. The wings of the beetle extend over the wig on the sides of the forehead, where they are outlined in white, yellow, and red on the blue ground of the wig. The winged scarab flanked the head, providing protection and rebirth.

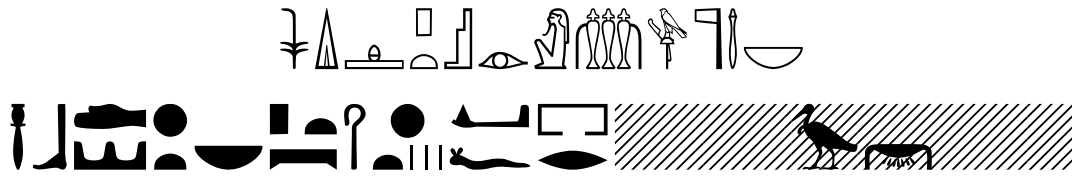
Another small winged scarab is depicted in the middle of the inscribed column on the lower part (Fig. 11). Painted blue, green, and red, it divides the offering formula into two parts. This decorative



FIGURE 11: Details from the end of the text on the cartonnage. Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.



TEXT 2:



motif does not appear on the coffin,<sup>28</sup> although it appears on other parallels of the same period.

THE TEXT

The sole text on the cartonnage is a vertical column that occupies the central part (Figs. 9–12). Inscribed on a yellow ground and flanked with simple decorative motifs, it runs from beneath the central image of the falcon to the feet. It is a version of the offering formula addressed to Osiris, which is also copied on the coffin with few changes. The text (Text 2) reads:

*h<sup>t</sup>p<sup>(a)</sup> di Nsw n wsir hnty imnty<sup>(b)</sup> ntr-<sup>c</sup> nb 3bdw<sup>(c)</sup>  
nb pt, hk3 psdt<sup>(d)</sup> di.f<sup>(e)</sup> pr[r b3.k ... .<sup>(f)</sup>].*

*An offering that the king gives to Osiris, lord of the west, the great god, lord of Abydos, lord of the heaven, the chief of the Ennead. May he give the offerings [... ].*

Comment



The text displays the same general features of the text on the coffin lid. It shows also repetition of the same palaeographical features, including mistakes and the mixing of cursive hieroglyphs and hieratic writing, which indicates an unprofessional scribe. Thus both texts share several odd features that can only be explained as the idiosyncracies of a particular scribe. This might also support the suggestion that the coffin and cartonnage came from the same workshop, as will be discussed below. Interestingly, it is noted also that the decorations on the coffin and the cartonnage are very similar, which leads to the suggestion also that the same individual was decorating both the cartonnage and the coffin.









FIGURE 12: The lower part of the cartonnage, showing the damage to the feet and the pedestal. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

- a) The hieratic of the sign *h<sup>t</sup>p* is interesting; see above, the same sign on the coffin lid.
- b) This writing shows a different orthography of the same word on the coffin lid.
- c) *3bdw*,<sup>29</sup> the scribe again mixed the determinatives,



using the sign  instead of , which repeatedly appears in the inscription on the coffin.

- d) *psdt*, the    last sign    is not clear. It probably represents the three strokes, as often appear in its orthographies.<sup>30</sup>
- e) The writing of *di.f* is abnormal in both the coffin and cartonnage.
- f) The end of the text is mostly damaged because of the damage at the lower area of the pedestal. Few ink traces suggest two other signs. The first is probably the sign for the *b3* bird, while the second sign is either *k* or *nwb*. The black ink traces on the two side ends of the sign suggest it is more likely a *nwb* sign. Maspero suggested an alternative reading, rather the end of the text reads:

*di.f prr b3.k,8, ... .., "may he let your ba go forth ...".*

- g) According to Maspero's reading, the masculine suffix pronoun in *b3.k* might indicating a male, not female, owner. But it should be taken in account also that the misusing of pronouns, possessive articles, and feminine endings for words became common during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, and this is even more common from such provincial workshops. The formula *di.f pr b3.k* is attested also on other parallels from Middle Egypt and Lahun dating to the same period, e.g., the coffin in the Manchester Museum (inv. no. 2277) from Lahun.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE OWNER

As already noted, the ends of the texts are damaged on both the coffin and the cartonnage. Although Maspero read some traces beyond those now surviving, some damage had clearly occurred before

FIGURE 13: Details from the damaged area at lower end of the cartonnage, showing traces of some signs. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.







FIGURE 14: Details showing a textile woven with different colored linen used in the wrappings of the corpse. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

the group was photographed or examined by him. A few traces of surviving signs and those copied by Maspero do not strongly allow the suggestion of a certain gender. The apparent masculine pronoun may suggest a male person, but the poor writing of the text, suggesting a less-competent scribe, could support a view that the use of a masculine pronoun came about through a mistake or through the copying of a master text. The matter of the gender could only be—and was finally—solved by scanning, which was recently done on the body, which certainly proved to be the corpse of an adult female.

#### THE BODY

In spite of the obvious damage to the cartonnage, the body of the deceased is still preserved inside. The preliminary investigation indicates that although the corpse is covered with bandages, it seems not to be embalmed, or it was the subject of a very poor technique. The skull is wrapped in linen, with more than sixteen layers of different types of linen (Figs. 12–14). Three distinct types of linen have been found on the body; one of them seems to be a reused material.

The irregular surface of the cartonnage, particularly the raised area at the chest, indicates that the the corpse beneath is not in a normal position. It was possible, through the crack at the forehead, to determine its current status and position, which

proves that the mummy had slipped down 24 cm. The head is positioned now beneath the collar on the chest, which has caused some cracks in the chest area. Thus, the exact length of the mummy is 154 cm, i.e., less than the length of the cartonnage. The primary examination indicates that parts of the skull are lost, the instep bones are missing in both legs, and feet are damaged (tarsal and metatarsal phalanges are lost). It may be concluded that the mummy was actually smaller than the cartonnage. Coffins often bought from local workshops were usually prefabricated and ready to use, with the possibility of adding only the name of the dead person. There may also have been, likewise, stock production of cartonnages, although no stock production for cartonnages is known.<sup>32</sup> The actual measurements of the corpse in comparison with the cartonnage may open a debate about such stock production, which deserves further research and evidences. On the other hand, the damage that happened to the pedestal and the lower end caused the mummy to slip down inside the cartonnage. Particularly, as is noted above, parts of the feet and legs are damaged and lost. A CT scan is proposed and is definitely needed to identify the body's condition, actual height, gender, age, and whether there are any accessories or amulets included in the wrappings.<sup>33</sup>

#### PROVENANCE, PARALLELS, AND DATING

Among the known parallels from the site from which the Cairo material derives, Lahun,<sup>34</sup> are the Bolton Museum coffin lid (1892.7.2) and the Manchester Museum coffin (2277).<sup>35</sup> These examples, among other parallels, lead the research to identify the provenance of the coffin set in discussion while asserting the suggested dating.

As a parallel from Lahun, the coffin lid at the Bolton Museum (inv. 1892.7.2) is dated to the 22nd to 25th Dynasties.<sup>36</sup> It shows the same design and decorative motifs on the upper part, except for the inscription on the center of the middle and lower part, which is absent in the Bolton coffin lid. Another parallel from Lahun, the wooden coffin lid at the Manchester Museum (inv. 2277),<sup>37</sup> is painted yellow, with dark green face and black-and-white striped wig, a winged scarab on top of the head, and a multi-colored broad collar. It has one inscribed column on the front, with a version of the funerary offering formula. Another parallel, but from Thebes,<sup>38</sup> is the outer coffin of Nairis at the Hermitage Museum,



FIGURE 15: The lid of the wooden coffin after reassembly. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.



FIGURE 16: The case of the wooden coffin after restoration and reassembly. Courtesy The Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph by Eman H. Zidan.

dated to the 25th Dynasty.<sup>39</sup> The case and lid are made of several boards. It shows the deceased wearing a tripartite wig covered with the feminine vulture headdress and a floral headband, and wearing an *wesekh*-necklace made of floral ornaments and beads. From the chest to the feet, the body was left undecorated, except that the axial column is inscribed with an offering formula. The inner part of the lid was left undecorated, while the inner part of the case is occupied by a frontal depiction of goddess Nut.<sup>40</sup>

These parallels, together with the other parallels cited above, as well as Taylor's analysis of the "Northern" coffins and cartonnages, as compared with the relatively well-dated Theban pieces, strongly suggested a date between the 22nd and 25th Dynasties. Among the motifs that strongly support this dating is the depiction of the scarab, which is certainly dated between the 22nd and 25th dynasties

(see above).

Lastly, the coffin set under discussion strongly recommends a debate regarding the workshops and the availability of stock production during this period. It has been noted that the styles of coffins and cartonnages differed from place to place, indicating local production.<sup>41</sup> Evidence for coffins production and workshops can even be traced from the Middle Kingdom onward.<sup>42</sup> During the Third Intermediate Period, cartonnage cases have been found in wooden coffins of identical type, indicating that both styles were in use during the same period of time. Taylor identified two designs of cartonnage cases, where also palaeographical evidence suggests that both designs were produced in the same workshop.<sup>43</sup> Our coffin set belongs to one of these designs, where many signs were formed in an identical manner that can be explained only as the idiosyncrasies of a particular scribe. Thus, the combination of features



of the coffin set, together with other parallels, indicate local coffin production at Lahun. However, too few examples are known from this period to come to any firm conclusion. The coffin and cartonnage under discussion seem to attest a local production; however, stock production for cartonnages probably was not well known because of the scarcity of evidence. So far it is not known how this production functioned in practical terms. One may assume that the coffin set was the creation of a local carpenter, who might have done the poor decoration himself, or else with the help of another local craftsman or scribe. Further excavations and research may shed new light on these questions.

#### CONCLUSION

The coffin set under discussion is an example of numerous museum objects that have been separated from their archaeological contexts. This is the case for tens of thousands of museum objects worldwide. The article ascertains the importance of publishing preliminary reports of the excavated objects, including images, which are very significant in case a full publication is never produced. It expresses also the necessity of providing museums with copies of all relevant records and information from the excavators or archaeologists, which assist museums to build full records of their collections. It also emphasizes the importance of re-examination and republishing museum objects, which might not have been the subject of a full publication. Furthermore, this might reveal corrections to early publications.

The remarkable difference between the length of the corpse and the cartonnage presents arguments to assume that such stock productions might have existed at this time. More arguments are presented through the identical presentations of the coffin and its cartonnage. It has been noted that the same mistakes are obviously repeated on both items, as are the same features of their decoration. This might suggest that the coffin and cartonnage were decorated by the same individual and sheds new light on the nature of workshops at that time.

It has further been concluded also that this is a coffin set of an adult female person, which has been proved through the CT Scan of her corpse. The coffin set is dated between the 22nd and 25th Dynasties according to its type and presentations and in comparison with other dated parallels. The coffin set reflects a Middle Egyptian local workshop, seen in the method of preserving the corpse, in its wrappings, in the simple decorations, and in the

poorly written texts.

#### ABBREVIATION:

*Wb* A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1926–1931), Bd. 1–7.

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- 1 G. Maspero, "Un Cercueil du Fayoum," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 2 (1901): 192, pl. I; in his report, Maspero gave no clue regarding the circumstances that stopped objects from being entered into the museum registers. It might also be noted that at that time the Egyptian collection were moved from Giza to the current location at Tahrir Square.
  - 2 Due to the lack of conservation efforts while sitting in storage, the coffin has deteriorated to the extent that it is now in fragments and badly preserved. Therefore, it was in need for better conservation practices, publication, and scientific analyses, a task that has been achieved through the preparation of this article. A comparison of the Figures 1, 2, and 15 shows the difference between its status at discovery, rediscovery in the basement, and after restoration.
  - 3 A type with a decoration program only on its exterior surface, limited to the head with the wig and the central vertical inscription on the lower part, while the rest of the outer and the interior surfaces are not decorated. For the type and features, cf. J. H. Taylor, "Coffins as Evidence for a 'North-South Divide' in the 22nd–26th Dynasties," in G. P. F. Broekman, R. J. Demaree, and O. E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt* (Leiden: Peeters, 2009), 379.
  - 4 For this design and its examples from Thebes and other necropolises, cf. J. H. Taylor, "Theban Coffins from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty: Dating and Synthesis of Development," in N. Strudwick and J. H. Taylor (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis: Past, Present and Future* (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 108, "Design 1"; D. A. Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25: Chronology – Typology – Developments* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 277.

<sup>5</sup> R. Meffre and A. N. Nikolaev, “The Funerary Ensemble of Nairis in the Hermitage Museum,” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 45 (2016): 77ff, figs. 5, 6. Compare also the outer coffin of Setjaimengau, Amiens, musée de Picardie (M.P. 94.3.3.1); cf. O. Perdu, and E. Rickal, *La collection égyptienne du musée de Picardie* (Amiens/Paris: Musée de Picardie, 1994), 34–35.

<sup>6</sup> An anthropoid middle coffin, representing the deceased wearing a tripartite wig, with a fillet surrounding a sun-disk with two cobras on top of the head, and a broad collar, all painted in polychrome. Below the collar, the lid is primarily bare wood, with decoration restricted to a single column of text extending down the centre to the tip of the feet. A. Dodson, *Ancient Egyptian Coffins: The Medelhavsmuseet Collection* (Världskulturmuseerna, 2015), 30f.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor 2009, pl. II.1.

<sup>8</sup> For examples with the black scarab on the forehead, see also an anthropoid coffin of the same date at the Egyptian Museum (with the inventory T.R. 23.11.16.5).

<sup>9</sup> Meffre and Nikolaev 2016, 78f, figs. 1, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Maspero 1901, 192.

<sup>11</sup> *Wb* 1, 87.1–13 (imntt). The title of the god of the dead is written in this orthography:



*hnty imnty* since the Eighteenth Dynasty (*Wb* 1, 87.13), while its original writing was



*hnty imnty.w* (*Wb* 1, 86.22).

<sup>12</sup> For the writing and the proper determinative in the name of Abydos, see: *Wb* 1, 9.1

<sup>13</sup> L. H. Lesko, *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian I* (Providence: B.C. Scribe Publications, 2002), 337; R. Hannig, *Grosses Handwörterbuch, Ägyptisch – Deutsch* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 568f. For similar orthographies, see, Lesko 2002, 337.

<sup>14</sup> Meffre and Nikolaev 2016, 82 (text 1a, and 5a), and fig. 5.



*df3w*, “provision; sustenance.” *Wb* 5, 569.9-571.5.

For other orthographies see the word in *Wb* 5. See also *htp.t d3fw. Wb* , 570.5, where the word enters in combinations with other terms as names for sorts of specific offerings, etc.

<sup>16</sup> *Wb* 3, 394, 10–13.

<sup>17</sup> Maspero 1901, 192.

<sup>18</sup> Maspero 1901, 192.

<sup>19</sup> For the winged falcon, but without the serpents above, compare the cartonnage case from Meidum (Metropolitan Museum of Art 06.1232.2): see Taylor 2009, pl. III.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Taylor 2009, 390.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the same pendant on the Ptolemaic coffin of a woman at Manchester Museum (13783).

<sup>22</sup> This subordinate position is occupied with protective deities and figures with outspread wings (scarab, solar disk, falcon, or vulture), while often the choice of images depended on the individual symbolic potency rather than on their functions as elements of a unified concept. Taylor 2003, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. a parallel to this winged scarab on the forehead of the lid on another coffin from Lahun (Manchester Museum 2277: Taylor, 2009, pl. III).

<sup>24</sup> For parallel coffins with the scarab on the forehead, see, e.g., Egyptian Museum TR.23.11.6.5; see also Taylor 2009, 387, pl. II[1], V, X[2], XI[2–3].

<sup>25</sup> Taylor 2003, 115–116.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor 2003, 116.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. the anthropoid cartonnage coffin of Isetirdis, probably from Thebes, dated to the 22nd–26th Dynasties. Cf. Dodson 2015, 28f (with illustrations).

<sup>28</sup> See above. It is noted that a scarab appears as the central motif of the *wesekh*-necklace of the coffin lid.

<sup>29</sup> *Wb* 1, 9.1.

<sup>30</sup> *Wb* 1, 559.2–3.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor 2009, pl. III.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor 2009, 389, 391, and note 95.

<sup>33</sup> The present paper represents only one element of a multifaceted project examining this coffin in detail and seeing to its conservation. Among the additional anticipated studies is a CT scan of the cartonnage in collaboration with the



Conservation Department of the Egyptian Museum, which would be published in a technical report.

<sup>34</sup> For other discoveries, including coffins, by Petrie at Lahun, cf. W. M. F. Petrie, G. Brunton, and M. Murray, *Lahun II* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1923), pls. LI, LXIX.

<sup>35</sup> Together with other parallels listed by Taylor in his study of the coffins as evidence for a north-south divide: Taylor 2009, 383.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor 2009, pl. II.1.

<sup>37</sup> Taylor 2009, pl. III.

<sup>38</sup> For examples from Thebes and other necropolises, cf. Taylor 2003, 108; Aston 2009, 277.

<sup>39</sup> Meffre and Nikolaev 2016, 77–85, figs. 5–7. Also the middle coffin of Isetirdis mentioned above. Cf. Dodson 2015, 30f.

<sup>40</sup> Meffre and Nikolaev 2016, 78.

<sup>41</sup> H. Willems, *Chests of Life: A Study of the Typology and Conceptual Development of Middle Kingdom*

*Standard Class Coffins* (Leiden: Ex Oriente Lux, 1988), 62–117; W. Gratezki discusses the coffins production and the local workshops, indicating examples from Abydos, Thebes, and Memphis: W. Grajetzki, “An Early New Kingdom Coffin from Abydos,” *Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne* 9 (2016): 47–63.

<sup>42</sup> For earlier examples, Grajetzki (2016, 62–63) indicated that the Theban and Abydos coffins were made in different workshops and most likely locally. Therefore it seems plausible that Abydos had a local coffin production from the Middle Kingdom to early New Kingdom, different from the one in Thebes despite the many points in common.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor 2009, 391. As far as I know, John H. Taylor is preparing a study about the workshops and stock production of coffins and the relevant materials during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods.