

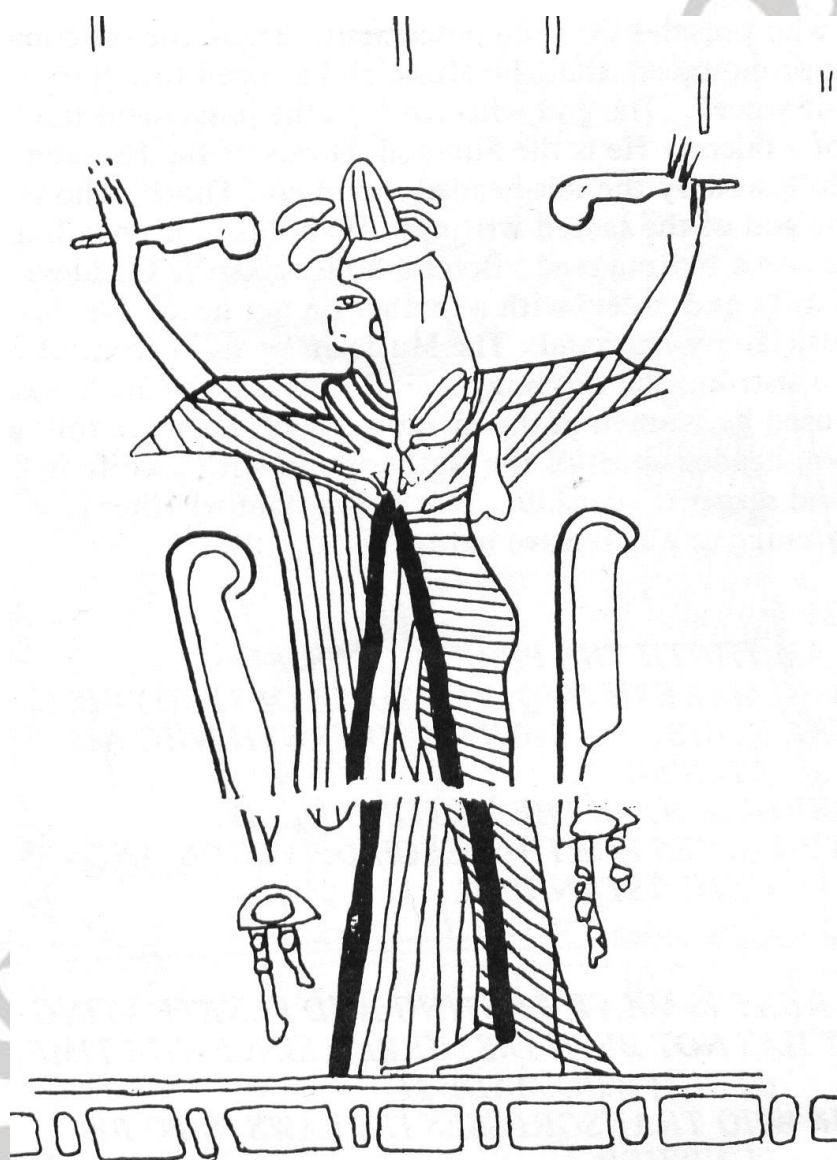
An Egyptian Priestess Reborn:

Scenes from the 21st Dynasty Coffin of Iwesemhesetmwt

by

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2013



This booklet is dedicated to Kate Bosse-Griffiths who cared for and researched the coffin as honorary curator of the Wellcome Collection at Swansea until 1993.

The outline drawings are based on those made by Emyr Davies prior to 1984 .

Egypt Centre 2013

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Introduction

This 21st Dynasty (1069-747BC) coffin belonged to a female musician called Iwesemhesetmwt. She was a *Chantress* in the temple at Thebes, singing, and playing music to please the gods. Her name means either 'She is in the Praise of Mut' or 'She is as a Singer of Mut'. **Mut** was a lioness-headed goddess. Iwesemhesetmwt would have been a wealthy, though not royal, woman. Her coffin was designed to make sure she was reborn.

The coffin was probably excavated in 1817 from the west bank at Thebes by the famous Giovanni Belzoni, originally a circus strongman. It was taken to England by the Rev. Robert Fitzherbert Fuller who was travelling with two other friends. In those days removal of antiquities from Egypt was almost unrestricted and wealthy visitors would bring back souvenirs such as coffins and mummies. In 1819, Fuller gave the coffin to the Exeter Museum. Over time it fell into a state of decay. In the 1970s, Professor Gwyn Griffiths of Swansea University, was doing some research on judgement scenes and the coffin came to his notice. He and his wife, Kate Bosse-Griffiths, brought it back to Swansea in 1981 and it was conserved with a grant from the Council of Museums in Wales. Exeter Museum retains the mummy board which originally belonged with the coffin.

In some ways the coffin is typical of its date. 21st Dynasty coffins are often coloured yellow with crowded scenes of the afterlife. Originally, the coffin would have had a white background with colourful scenes painted on top, however, the resin in which it was varnished has turned yellow with age. Even the varnish was designed to help the rebirth of the deceased. The gods and the blessed dead (those dead who succeeded in being reborn), were thought of as being shining in appearance, so coffins were made shiny in the hope that their owners would become so.

During the 21st Dynasty, the dead were no longer placed in tombs, and afterlife books, such as the *Book of the Dead*, were smaller than in earlier periods. Both the scenes in tombs and in the afterlife books were designed to get the dead through the afterlife. As both were very restricted in the 21st Dynasty, the Egyptians condensed the scenes from the tombs and books onto coffins. So the scenes on the coffins are a shortened, condensed version of the scenes that used to be put in tombs and coffins.

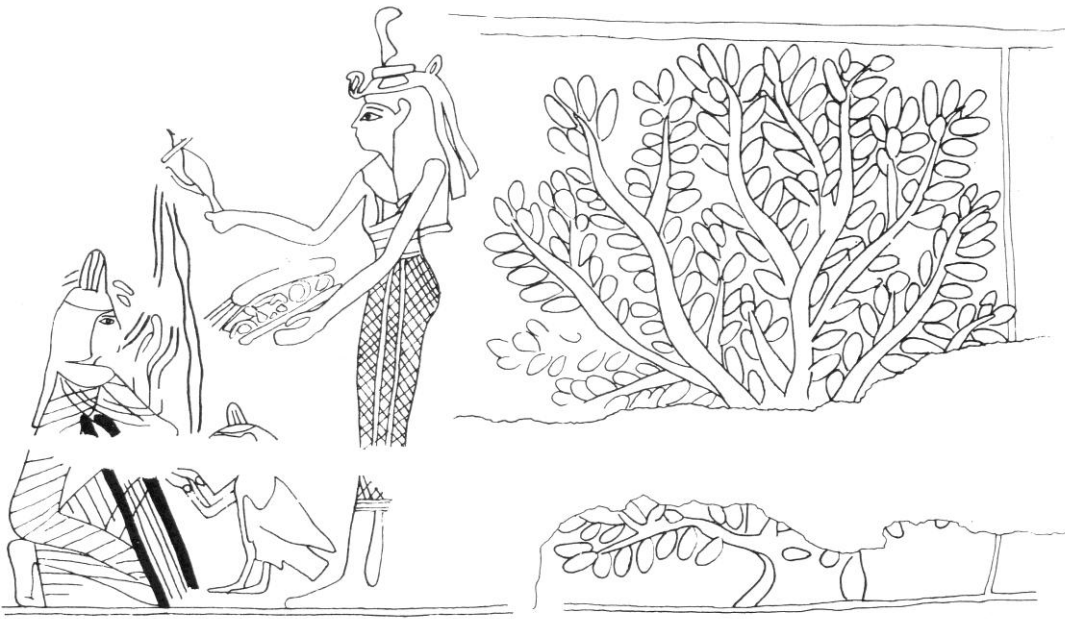
Additionally, it is common for scenes on 21st Dynasty coffins to be decorated so that each side mirrors the other in the type of scene and the idea it represents. So, for example, on one side of our coffin the deceased is presented to the enthroned god who wears the crown of Osiris, and on the 'mirror' side the deceased is presented to an enthroned god who wears the crown of Re. In the 21st Dynasty, the rebirth of the deceased was through both Re and Osiris combined (the Solar-Osirian unity) so both gods are represented. The idea of the Solar-Osirian unity, is stressed several times on the coffin.

However, there are some unusual scenes on our coffin. For example, in the scene of the sky-goddess Nut being separated from the earth-god Geb, it is usual for the god Shu to be doing the separating. However, on our coffin Shu is replaced by **Heka**, the god of magic (page 13). Additionally, on our coffin, Osiris, the god of the dead, is shown on his mound of resurrection as two gods sitting back to back (page 7).

This booklet gives an outline of the meaning behind the scenes on the coffin. They all relate to the rebirth of the deceased in the afterlife, so the coffin could be seen as a sort of resurrection machine. On the coffin the scenes actually flow from one to another making division arbitrary, nevertheless, we have divided them up in this booklet in order to explain them better. In the booklet we begin with the scenes on the right-hand side of the coffin, and then move to the left-hand side. In both cases we start at the foot-end.

More detailed information on the coffin can be found at: <http://www.egypt.swansea.ac.uk/index.php/collection/96-w1982>

The Sycamore Goddess



This scene shows the sycamore tree goddess, with the **Ma'at** feather on her head. She is standing in front of the tree, giving **libations** to the priestess who is kneeling. Such scenes are normally placed at the foot-end of 21st Dynasty coffins. Her **ba-bird** (part of the soul shown as a bird with human head) stands between the priestess and the goddess. Such

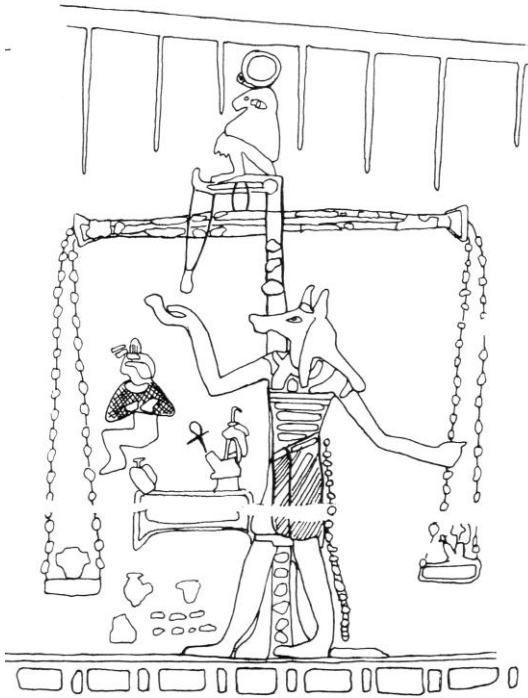
depictions of tree goddesses reviving the deceased are common from the 18th Dynasty (1550-1295BC) and the Centre has another depiction of such a scene on a piece of **cartonnage** (EC490).

The text in front of the goddess's head states she is the goddess Ma'at, a goddess of cosmic order and truth. However, the text behind the tree labels the goddess as '**Nut** the Great'. Sycamore tree goddesses could be identified with a variety of Egyptian goddesses and sometimes with more than one goddess at the same time. In Egyptian mythology gods and goddesses could change from one specific god or goddess to another and could be a combination of several deities at the same time.

The cone on top of the musician may represent a perfume cone, and/or show that the deceased had been divinised. Note that the *ba*-bird, which is an important part of the deceased, also wears a cone. Throughout the coffin scenes you will see that the dead woman can be recognised by the cone on her head.

In ancient Egypt the sycamore tree was the archetypal tree, used to give shade to the deceased. It is sometimes called the 'sycamore fig'. Such trees were planted by tombs and temples. The tree goddess is sometimes shown as a woman standing beside a tree, and sometimes part tree and part sycamore. In the earliest cases the tree feeds the deceased from her breasts. The milky white sap of the tree was used to heal wounds. In later examples, like this, the goddess pours liquid for the deceased.

The Weighing of the Heart



The weighing of the heart scene represents the judgement of the deceased. The heart of the deceased is weighed against the feather of **Ma'at** (truth and cosmic order) on a pair of balance scales. You can see the heart on the left balance. The scene first appears in the 11th Dynasty (c.2000 BC).

The type of scales represented here is the equal arm balance. In use, such balances operated by placing a measure weight in one of the pans and the item to be weighed in the other until the two are balanced by the level bar. On top of the balance sits the baboon representing the god Thoth. His importance in the weighing of the heart scene is shown in texts where he is both a judge and the scribe who records the result. His position, here, on top of scales suggests that he is the personification of judgement. **Ma'at** sometimes occupies this position.

The god **Anubis**, with the jackal head, stands in front of the balance. Anubis is sometimes given the title 'he who is over the scales' or, 'assessor of hearts' and 'overseer of the tribunal'. Two parallel lines

meaning 'true of voice' are positioned near Anubis right foot. 'True of voice' indicates that the deceased has been found suitable to enter the afterlife.

The mummy-shaped seated figure on the left-hand side, underneath Anubis's raised arm, represents the deceased person awaiting rebirth. Below her is a rectangular shape with a squatting goddess upon it. This is a birth brick with the goddess Ma'at squatting atop it. In ancient Egypt women squatted on birth bricks in order to give birth. In 2001 an actual archaeological example was found, from Middle Kingdom Abydos. The presence of the birth brick in the weighing of the heart scene may stem from the idea that a person's life is mapped out at birth on their birth brick by Thoth, which is taken into consideration on the day of judgement. Additionally, being reborn was parallel to being born in life as a baby.

Although the idea of the Judgement of the deceased goes back to the **Pyramid Texts**, the weighing of the heart scene was originally connected with spell 30B of the **Book of the Dead** and then later with spell 125. The scene is not explicitly described in any funerary texts. However, there are references to scales in **Coffin Text** 452 which mentions 'the balance of Re in which he weighs Ma'at'. Spell 30B is a spell which asks that the heart will not say negative things about its owner when it is weighed. It has recently been suggested that the translation of the text of 30B should read 'my heart of the balance scales' which would explain why the illustration of the scales is associated first with this spell. Spell 125 is a spell whereby the deceased is judged by forty-two deities and lists forty-two bad things which s/he has not done. It does not mention the heart being weighed in scales.

On some scenes of the weighing of the heart a monster called 'Ammut' is depicted (described on page 6). She would eat any of the dead who were considered unworthy and as one of her titles is 'Eater of Hearts' it has been suggested that she would eat the heart, though illustrations show her eating the whole person! However, as is shown on our coffin, and here described on the next page, our deceased lady hoped she would be considered worth of going to the Egyptian afterlife.

I am Pure, I am Pure!



If the deceased is found wanting, she will be eaten by the Devourer (described in more detail on page 6). If the deceased is successful, she will be able to declare 'I am pure, I am pure!'. This triumphal image appears adjacent to the heart weighing scene. Although she does not actually say 'I am pure' on the text of this particular coffin we can imagine that it is implied as the deceased raises her arms in jubilation. Moreover, an inscription begins above the left arm of the jubilant priestess and ends to the right of Thoth atop the scales. It reads: 'Lady of the House, the **Chantress** of Amun-Re King of the Gods, Singer of **Mut**, Iwesemhesetmwt, true of voice'. 'True of voice' shows that the deceased was judged successful.

Here the priestess raises her arms and waves two ma'at feathers. From the time of the **Pyramid Texts** (c.2400BC), this gesture stood for 'rejoice' and was also connected with an ascension to the afterlife. In spell 125 of the **Book of the Dead** she declares 'I am pure, I am pure, I am pure'. The feathers of the west are shown each side of her body. The west was, as the region in which the sun went down, the land of the west, and usually the dead were buried on

the west bank of the Nile. However, from death comes life. In some similar scenes the goddess of the west herself is shown with the deceased. This goddess is a symbol of regeneration and also protection.

The worthy deceased person would be able to continue life after death. Throughout Egyptian history there were several ideas as to what form life after death would take. At times it was believed that the deceased would become one of the imperishable stars in the northern sky, or they might sail with Re in day boat during the day, and his night boat in the **Duat** at night. The Egyptians at times also believed in a paradise in which corn grew high, the mythical field of reeds. On this coffin it seems that it was believed that the deceased would be reborn through the unity of Re and Osiris (Solar-Osirian unity) and would be reborn daily with Re.

This scene is generally placed adjacent to the weighing of the heart scene.

The Procession to the Throne of Osiris



The deceased, wearing a cone on top of her head, is led to the throne of **Osiris**. Here, from left to right we have **Ammut** (the devourer with crocodile head and sticking out tongue, described in more detail on page 6), **Harakhty** (Horus of the Horizon), Thoth, **Ma'at**, the deceased and finally an unnamed male god with feline head. This scene could be regarded as the successful outcome of the weighing of the heart, or as part of the actual judgement.

The scene of the deceased meeting Osiris is present in Theban tombs of the 18th Dynasty (1550-1295BC). On our coffin it is paralleled with another scene of the deceased presented to the god (page 11).

Ammut is described in the next scene. As a sky-god, Harakhty has a sun-disk on his falcon-head. The sun-disk is encircled by a protective snake. On coffins, Harakhty often introduces the deceased to Osiris, as he does here. Thoth is shown as a scribe with an ibis bird head with an elaborate crown on his head. He holds a pen in his left hand and a scribe's palette in his right hand. The two lines of inscription in front of his head read: 'Thoth the Lord of Hermopolis, Scribe of the Ennead.' The cult centre of Thoth was Hermopolis. His role as scribe of the Ennead (a group of gods) was particularly important in the judgement of the deceased. Thoth is followed by the goddess Ma'at, partly identified by the feather upon her head but also the two lines of inscription in front and behind her: 'Recitation by Ma'at, the Lady of the West.' Ma'at is of course essential to the judgement of the deceased and is shown on other coffins holding the hand of the deceased as she goes before the enthroned Osiris. Behind the deceased is a feline-headed male deity holding a snake and a knife and with another snake coming out of his shoulder. A feline deity of the **Duat** sometimes appears near the scales on other coffins, and is also shown leading the deceased. He is characterised by a corselet, a wide collar, kilt and bull's tail. Sometimes he is named as 'the Porter in the West'. He may be carrying a snake and knife to protect the deceased.

The Enthroned Osiris



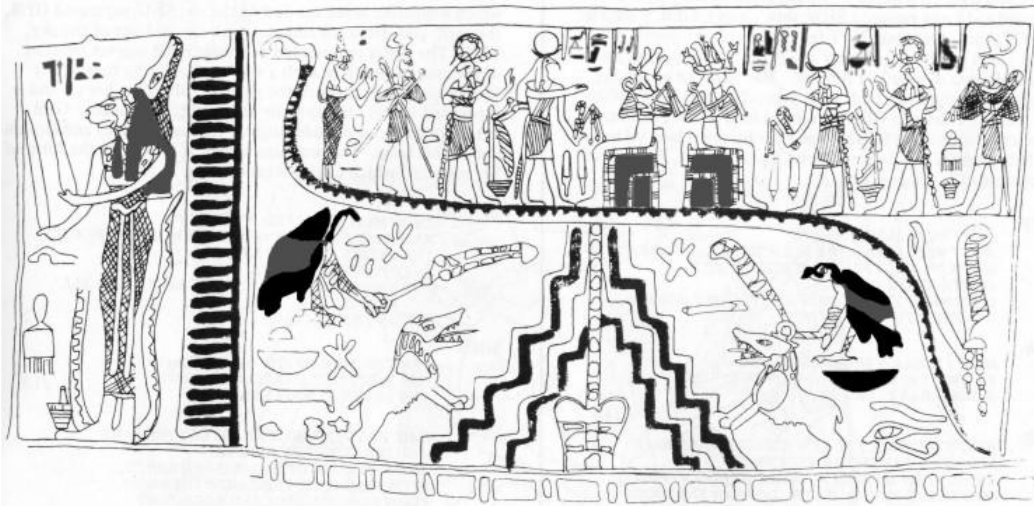
This scene, together with the weighing of the heart scene, the scene of jubilation, and the deceased being led before the enthroned **Osiris** who resides in judgement, may all be considered part of a larger judgement scene, related to spell 125 of the **Book of the Dead**. One might even add that the mound scene is also part of the same judgement scene (next Page), which would mean that the whole side of this coffin depicts judgement.

As king of the dead, Osiris is often shown as a mummy. However, here, he is shown in unbound human form with freely moving limbs. Representations of Osiris in unbound human form, occur mainly during the 21st Dynasty (1069-747BC). He is dressed in a kilt with a tail, corselet and broad collar. By means of a red ribbon, a uraeus (a protective snake) is tied around his head. His beard is curved. His right hand holds an **ankh-sign** and flail, his left hand the **heka-sceptre**. He sits on a **neb-basket** meaning he is lord of all. On top of his head is the **atef-crown** on ram-horns which end in uraei (protective snakes). Osiris and the **atef-crown** is discussed in spell 175 of the *Book of the Dead* where the **atef** is associated with much suffering by the wearer. On the opposite side of the coffin, Osiris is again shown enthroned but this time wearing the sun-disk. The two occurrences mirror the merging of solar and Osirian rebirth, shown in the *Book of the Dead* spells 17 and 180 and the various books of the **Duat**.

Behind Osiris are the goddesses **Isis** and **Nephthys**, his sister/wives. Between Isis and Nephthys is an object which looks like a bag with fringes. This is actually a bunch of onions associated with underground resurrection!

Facing Osiris appears a monster with the forepart of a crocodile, the hind-part of a hippopotamus and the middle-part of a lion (or leopard). Dog-like, she puts her forefeet on the steps of the throne of Osiris, looking up at him with opened mouth, from which a long tongue is stretched out between four sharply pointed teeth. The teats on the underside of the body betray her female nature; she also carries on her head a **tholos** similar to that borne by women. She is the devouress, **Ammut**, sometimes given the title 'Eater of Hearts'. Ammut would eat any deceased who were not judged worthy by Osiris. She is shown eating the dead whole. Her name means 'devourer of the unworthy dead'. In some scenes she appears by the weighing of the heart and on other scenes, as here, she appears by the throne of Osiris.

Osiris on the Mound



This scene can be sub-divided into three. On the far left, standing in front of a door is a daemon holding two knives (the door looks to modern eyes somewhat like a ladder), she is 'She who Embraces'. To the right of the door is a scene divided horizontally into two halves by a snake. Snakes are often protective and associated with rebirth. **Osiris** is often shown as being

rejuvenated in the Netherworld within the coils of a snake. Below the snake is a double staircase upon which two open-mouthed animals (the devourer) rest their front paws and behind them are vultures holding feathers. Above the snake are two back-to-back seated figures (Osiris) with deities standing in front of them. The deities include Thoth, **Heka** and **Isis**. The whole represents Osiris enthroned on the **primeval mound** (the double staircase) of the **Duat** with the deity 'She who Embraces' guarding the door. This is a scene of the triumph of a successful judgement and resurrection, it is thus placed as the culmination of the other scenes of judgement on this coffin. The deceased has been judged worthy to become one with Osiris, and here Osiris is reborn from the primeval mound.

The deity 'She who Embraces' is most commonly depicted outside the door of the resurrection of Osiris from the mound, apparently protecting the god. She also sometimes appears in judgement scenes, and occasionally leads the deceased to Osiris. Her presence may plausibly be due to her feminine nature. Within the mound, the two gods, Osiris and the sun-god Re, merged and led to rebirth. While, male gods were, in Egyptian myth, able to reproduce, the presence of the female was necessary for a successful outcome. The 'embracing' aspect of her name might allude to this. The theme of embracing, in regard to rebirth, though usually shown by hands 'embracing' the newborn sun, is common in the 21st Dynasty.

Below the snake is the Duat, indicated here by the stars. It is the place in which Osiris resides and from which amalgamation with the sun-god Re (an amalgamation essential for rebirth), takes place. Our scene shows the devourer standing each side of a double staircase within which is the **sema** sign. A vulture flanks each side. Both the motif of mound and that of the devourer, are important in judgement. The double staircase relates to the death and rebirth of Osiris. At Abydos the entrance before the Osiris Temple was called 'Great Stair of the Lord of Abydos.' Osiris was the 'Lord of the Staircase' in **Book of the Dead** spell 168. In the **Pyramid Texts**, the dead ascend to heaven by means of a staircase. The **sema** sign consists of 2 lungs attached to a trachea and is usually said to symbolise the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. **Sema**, in another form can also mean internment, as in **Book of the Dead** spell 17.

One of the allusions of the double staircase was to the **hb-sd festival**, a festival of the king's rejuvenation. This is reinforced above the snake by the two forms of Osiris, back to back in the centre of this scene. This is the way kings are shown sitting in their **hb-sd festivals**. On either side of the two thrones of Osiris, one can see a symmetrical arrangement of gods identified by hieroglyphs and their headdresses. These gods are commonly shown approaching the throne of Osiris. Thoth with ibis head is shown each time in front of Osiris. On the right, behind Thoth, is **Harakhty** followed by **Heka** (god of magic). On the left is Harakhty followed by Heka and then Isis.

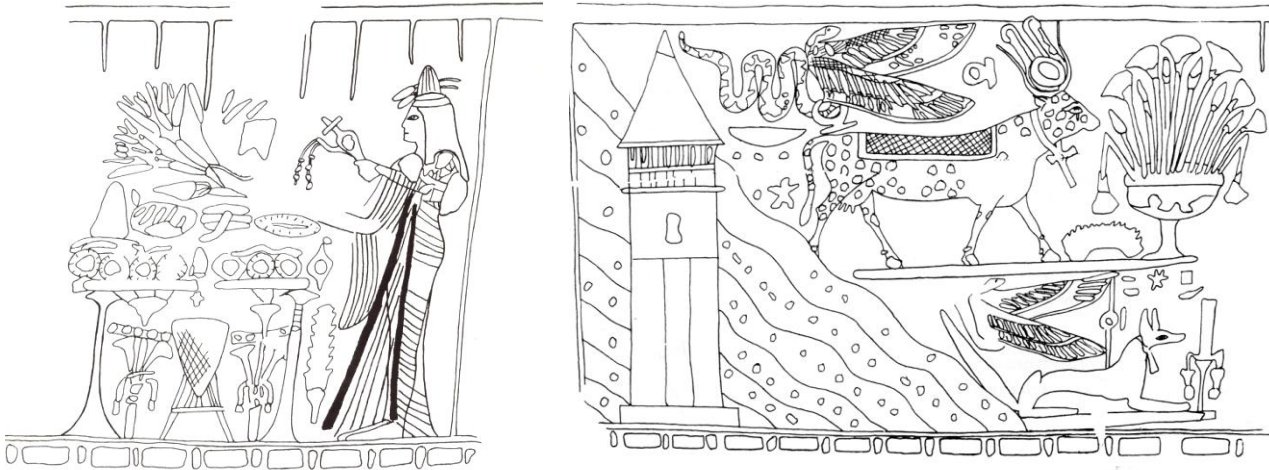
Two Animal-headed Deities



In a shrine with vaulted roof two male deities face one another. The one on the right is clearly a ram-headed god, the one on the left with hands raised in adoration, is less clear. Kate Bosse-Griffiths believed the latter was ichneumon-headed, but it is difficult to be sure. It could be a lion-headed. The ram-headed god holds a sceptre in his right hand and a flail in his left hand. A *uraeus* (protective snake) rises between his horns. This scene appears as an almost mirror image (at the other side of the head of the coffin) of that with the deceased worshipping the ram-headed god.

It is not clear who the ram-headed or lion-headed god is. Ram-headed gods represent a number of deities, for example, Khnum. From the New Kingdom, Re the sun-god could have a ram's head in his nocturnal form when fused with Osiris. Amun was perhaps the most important god associated with Thebes who had ram's horns, though his horns are of the curved type. As the fusion of Re and *Osiris* is particularly stressed on 21st coffins, it is likely that Re-Osiris is the god worshipped here.

The ichneumon is sometimes called an Egyptian mongoose. It attacks snakes and eats crocodile eggs. It is an animal sacred to the goddess Wadjet and also the god Atum. An ichneumon, or similar creature also appears on a number of funerary papyri. Together with the shrew mouse, it was thought to be an incarnation of Horus of Letopolis whose name, "the Blind and the Seeing", reflects the cycle of day and night. In the view of some Egyptologists, shrews and mongooses may have represented two sides (night and day, dark and light) of the same deity. The ichneumon, active during the day, represented daytime sunlight, while the shrew-mouse, a nocturnal animal, symbolized the darkness of night. If the ram-headed god is taken to be Re, and the other is an ichneumon, we have an animal of the day adoring an animal of the night.



This scene is at the foot of the left-side of the coffin. It shows the goddess Hathor, in cow-form with saddle-cloth on her back, **ankh** around her neck, and the **atef-crown** on her head. She is coming out of the Western Mountain at Thebes. The mountain is speckled with stone nodules and in front of it stands a pyramidion-capped tomb. A winged serpent appears above the tomb and another is shown above **Anubis/Wepwawet** who sits dog-like at the bottom. A clump of papyrus in a bowl is put in front of the cow deity. To the left the musician stands before an offering table making an offering toward the tomb. The motif of Hathor coming out of the mountain is common from New Kingdom (1550-1069BC) copies of the **Book of the Dead**, spell 186. The spell stresses both Hathor as a goddess of the necropolis and as a sky goddess.

The type of tomb here had ceased to be built by the time this coffin was constructed. It is a classic tomb structure of the New Kingdom in Thebes with a pyramidion (the pointed piece) above the entrance. By the 21st Dynasty officials were buried in smaller tombs and with fewer grave goods. The fact that the old form of tomb is shown, probably reflects the general conservatism which is usually associated with religious symbols not only in Egypt but elsewhere.

Hathor was 'Lady of the Western Mountain' and particularly associated with the Valley of the Queens. A natural water basin there, perhaps reinforces the meaning of the papyrus clump shown in front of her (papyrus needs a lot of water). Caves are frequently associated with Hathor, thus the cow may be emerging from a mountain cave. However, several depictions of her seem to suggest she is emerging from the 'living' rock. The Western Mountain had the form of a natural 'pyramid' above the Valley of the Kings and Queens. It seems to have been considered as a primeval mound which rose above the waters of chaos. It was thus a life-giving force.

A winged snake carrying the **shen** sign for eternity is above the cow goddess. The snake may represent Neith, one of the goddesses who were the daughters of the sun-god, and were the creative power of the god. Neith is also associated with Wepwawet who in his turn is often confused with Anubis.

And what of Anubis/Wepwawet, the jackal god? Anubis is a guide to the dead, a means by which the way to the afterlife is opened, and also a protector of the dead, a guardian of the necropolis. Wepwawet is also a guide, of the living and the dead.

Finally, the priestess, standing in front of two offering tables, makes a libation to Hathor. The libation is probably water.

Three Gods in a Snake

To the left of the celestial cow is a scene of three gods standing in the coils of a serpent, in a shrine. As in most other scenes of this type, the gods are anonymous. Elsewhere they are sometimes called 'great gods, lords of the *Duat*'.



In the cases where they are named, the ram is once called Re, once re-Khepri and often Osiris.

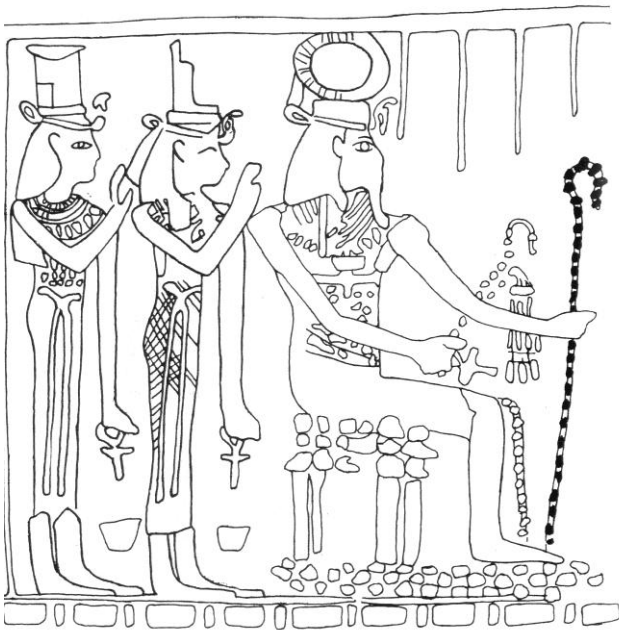
Lionesses are usually called Isis and the third is variously called *Anubis*, Duamutef, *Nephthys* and often Horus.

There are two main interpretations of this type of scene. This icon is usually said to show the 12th hour of the *Amduat*, an afterlife book. The 12th hour deals with the union between Osiris and Re (also discussed on pages 1, 6, 7 and 11). Re-Osiris is assumed to be the god in the middle here, with the head of a ram. He is, according to this theory, being reborn within the protective coils of the snake. Snakes were not only associated with protection but also with rebirth. However, others believe spell 18 of the *Book of the Dead* provides the best description of this scene. In this spell

the serpent is hostile.

Whatever is happening in this scene would seem to take place in the *Duat* (Underworld/Netherworld) as a star is present. This is in keeping with the fact that on some other coffins the gods are called 'great gods, lords of the Netherworld'.

Presentation Before Osiris



This scene is very similar to that on the opposite side of the coffin (page 6). Both scenes show the deceased being presented to an enthroned **Osiris**. Here, Osiris wears the sun-disk usually associated with Re, while on the opposite side of the coffin, he wears the **atef-crown** more usually associated with Osiris. We know he is meant to be Osiris, rather than Re because of the inscription in front of Osiris which includes the statement 'A recitation by Osiris'. Similarly, in both presentation scenes Thoth wears headgear mirroring that of Osiris. This scene, like that on the other side, follows the successful judgement of the deceased, who, on being proclaimed pure, is led before Osiris/Re.

Two groups face each other. On the left Osiris is seated upon his throne with Isis and Nephthys standing behind him. He is faced by Thoth, and behind him, the deceased. She is bowing down under the outstretched hands of a goddess (Isis) behind her. Between the hands of Isis are three parallel lines, water lines. I begin by describing the group on the right.

The 3 water-lines between the hands of **Isis** in her form as Goddess of the West are remindful of the *ni-ni* gesture. This type of gesture with water lines is one which is made by the king performing rituals and also by gods. It is usually said to be a sign of welcome. The ritual is sometimes performed at funerals. Some also argue that the waterlines also connote the 'purification from sins'.

Thoth, with ibis head, stands in front of a bowing **Chantress**. In this scene, compared with the one on the other side of the coffin, Thoth, has changed his crown and here is wearing the radiant sun-disk on top of ram's horns which end in uraei. On the opposite side of the coffin in the parallel scene of the presentation before Osiris, he wears an **atef-crown**.

Opposite this group of three sits the enthroned Osiris. In both this scene, and the 'mirror image' on the right of the coffin, Isis and Nephthys appear behind Osiris, as is common in such scenes. As is usual too, Isis, as the wife of Osiris, stands in front of her sister Nephthys.

The Falcon



This is a scene of Underworld rebirth through Osiris, the falcon representing a god of rebirth.

In a shrine with vaulted roof three figures can be seen. On the left a crowned falcon or hawk stands on top of a crowned *uraeus*. The falcon wears the *atef-crown* of *Osiris*, with ram-horns topped at their ends by uraei. The falcon and uraeus are perched on top of a building or shrine with cavetto cornice. To the right stands a mummiform figure with a band around her middle. The perfume cone and lotus bud on top of her hair, and the inscription over the head identify this as the deceased. The inscription reads: 'Lady of the House. *Chantress* of Amun.'

The falcon is unnamed on our coffin. While there are several parallels for unnamed falcons, named falcons elsewhere are either given Osirian names (Osiris, Sokar, Ptah or combination thereof), or solar names (Re-*Horakhty* or Re-Horakhty-Atum). However, they may have crowns suggesting an opposite identity. The ancient Egyptians had several ideas of rebirth. The falcon is usually associated with rebirth and the solar but is sometimes associated with the Osirian. The *atef-crown*, while usually worn by Osiris, is sometimes worn by Re and Horus. In the combination of the usually solar falcon and usually Osirian *atef-crown* the dual nature of rebirth through Osiris and Re is stressed. By the end of the New Kingdom, Re-Horakhty-Atum had become more closely associated with Osiris, who was generally seen as the nocturnal manifestation of Re (Re reborn in the Underworld). Horakhty is also often associated with Amun, and the owner of the coffin was a Chantress of Amun.

The Separation of Heaven and Earth



This scene of the sky-goddess **Nut** stretching over the heavens developed from the New Kingdom, becoming particularly popular at Thebes in the 10th and 11th centuries BC. As on our coffin, the scene is usually put at the height of the deceased's shoulder on the coffin, opposite the mound scene. The scene is taken from a Heliopolitan creation myth concerning a group of nine gods. The myth begins with Atum who created himself and in his turn creates **Shu** and Tefnut. They couple and produce **Geb** (shown here languidly reclining) and Nut. They are usually separated by Shu, the dry air, who appears to hold up Nut. However, on our coffin the sign on the head of the main god holding up Nut indicates that this is Heka. With the help of Thoth, the

couple are allowed five days outside the regular year (there were 360 days in an Egyptian regular year) and from their union Seth, Isis, Nephthys and Osiris are born.

On our coffin Nut is shown arched over the other characters. On each side of her are symbols for the west. Nut is the sky-goddess from which the sun is daily reborn so this is a scene of daily regeneration. Geb is not lying prone, but appears in an act of rising himself up. This enhances the rebirth feel of the iconography.

On the Swansea coffin, two kilted, ram-headed deities help Geb. Rams were associated with a number of gods in Egypt. In the Theban area, they were particularly associated with the nocturnal aspects of **Amun**, the main god of Thebes, though Amun usually had round horns. Ram deities with straight horns are associated with the nocturnal fusion of Re and Osiris. Rams generally also represent virility, which is important for rebirth. That the ram is a metaphor for the *ba*-soul probably derives from the Egyptian word for the *ba* soul was also the word for 'ram'. The idea that these are indeed intended as soul birds is reinforced by the addition of the *ba*-bird (the birds with human heads), and the fact that two of these *ba*-birds (those beneath the arms of the kilted ram-headed figures) appear to have rams horns.

One of the unusual things about the Swansea coffin is the replacement of Shu by Heka. The replacement is unusual, though not unique. There are two other published examples of Shu being substituted by Heka. One is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the other is probably in the British Museum (it is published by a previous curator of the British Museum but its museum number is not indicated so it is not certain that it is in the British Museum). Heka is usually shown associated with magic and appears on the scene of Osiris on the mound on the other side of our coffin.

In other separation scenes of this date **Heka** is present, though not as a manifestation of Shu. Heka more usually occurs as a more 'subsidiary figure' in the separation. Heka and Shu are both connected in the *Coffin Texts* as being the first born of Atum and in the much later 21st Dynasty coffins Heka appears connected to the concepts of creation and revival. Heka also appears on our coffin in the scene of Osiris enthroned on the mound, which is also a scene of creation and revival.

The Chantress Worshipping a Ram-headed God.



This is an almost mirror image of the scene on the opposite, head-end of the coffin. As on the latter, we have two figures within a shrine, one ram-headed. Additionally, as with the 'mirror image', the ram-headed figure is adored.

In a shrine with vaulted roof, the *Chantress*, on the right, worships the ram-headed deity on the left. The ram-headed god holds the ankh-sign in his right hand and probably a sceptre in his left hand. There is a *uraeus* on his head. The deceased holds up her hands in adoration. The inscription on the right, above the musician, although imperfect, names her as the Chantress of *Amun-Re*. Unfortunately the ram-headed deity, as on the opposing side is not named. It could be either Khnum, or, more probably, the nocturnal fusion of Osiris and Re. The ram-headed deity is unlikely to be Amun, as Amun is usually shown with curved horns. It was hoped that the deceased would be reborn daily, just as the merging of Re and Osiris in the underworld caused the sun-

god to be reborn.

As has been shown throughout this booklet, the Osirian-Solar unity in which the sun-god Re joins with Osiris in the Duat is a common theme on this coffin.

Glossary

Amduat	Literally 'that which is in the Duat'. The Duat is sometimes translated as 'Underworld' but actually the Egyptians sometimes referred to it as being in the sky. It is the realm of Osiris, and the realm through which Re travels during the night. Hence it is often indicated by stars.
Amun	God with cult temple at Thebes. As the importance of Thebes grew, Amun became extremely important throughout Egypt. His name means 'the hidden one'. He is sometimes combined with other gods, for example Re (as Amun-Re).
Ammut	A creature of the Netherworld who is part crocodile, part lion and part hippopotamus. She ate the hearts of those who were not judged suitable for the afterlife.
Anubis	Dog-headed god of the Dead associated with mummification.
ankh	The symbol of life.
atef-crown	Crown associated with the god Osiris. This takes the form of the white crown of upper Egypt flanked by two tall feather plumes. Sometimes horns are added.
ba-bird	The <i>ba</i> was part of the soul and an idea similar to our idea of personality.
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	A funerary text consisting of a collection of 'spells' used to help the deceased be reborn.
cartonnage	Layers of linen or papyrus stiffened with gesso (plaster). These were often decorated by painting and often used for making mummy masks and funerary cases.
Chantress	A female cult singer who worked in the temple.
<i>Coffin Texts</i>	Funerary text consisting of a collection of spells used to help the deceased be reborn. Many of the <i>Coffin Text</i> spells were later used in the <i>Book of the Dead</i> .
Harakhty	Horus of the Horizon, a form of the sun-god Horus who usually took the form of a falcon.
<i>hb-sd</i> festival	A festival of rejuvenation of the king.
Heka	The god of magic.
Isis	The sister-wife of Osiris who was associated with motherhood, protection of the king and healing.
Khnum	A creator god.
libation	liquid offering, often water, but sometimes wine, beer, or milk
Ma'at	Goddess of truth and cosmic order.

mummy board	A wooden cover placed inside a coffin and over the deceased. It shows a likeness of the deceased.
Mut	Lioness goddess associated with Thebes.
Nephthys	A goddess who was the sister of Isis.
Nut	A sky goddess who was considered the daughter of Shu and wife of Geb.
Osiris	A god associated with death and resurrection, whose realm was the Duat.
primeval mound	The mound which arose at the beginning of time from the waters of the Nun. It was a symbol of creation.
<i>Pyramid Texts</i>	The earliest Egyptian funerary texts consisting of around 800 spells. These were first written in the burial chambers of the Old Kingdom pyramids, c2400BC.
<i>sema sign</i>	Symbol of the unification of upper and lower Egypt. It can also be a symbol for internment.
<i>shen</i>	A symbol denoting infinity and protection.
Shu	God of air and sunlight who supported the goddess Nut.
tholos	A circular headdress often worn by royal women.
uraeus	A protective rearing cobra often worn by kings and gods which was a symbol of protection.
Wadjet	A cobra goddess particularly associated with lower Egypt.
Wepwawet	A jackal god whose name means 'opener of the ways'.