



ORIGIN OF THE COFFIN SET OF MERETITES (NAMA 2007.12.1–7)

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ABSTRACT

The coffin assemblage of Meretites (NAMA 2007.12.1–7) was purchased by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in 2007 for the reinstallation of the museum's Egyptian collection in 2010. While the museum initially proposed that the coffins were from Hermopolis, two recent articles argue that the coffin set was instead from Herakleopolis Magna. This paper analyzes Meretites assemblage texts and iconography with the intent of securely placing the coffins within the corpus of Herakleopolis Magna burials at Abusir el-Melek during the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE.

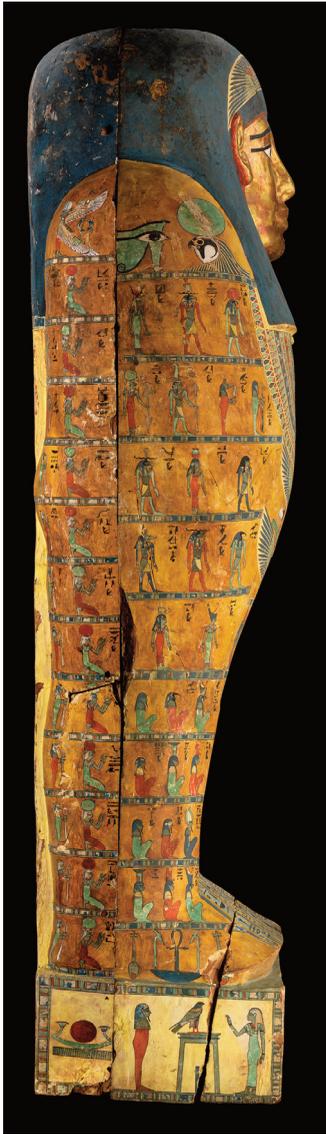
INTRODUCTION

The third or fourth century BCE coffin assemblage of Meretites¹ at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (NAMA 2007.12.1–7) (FIG. 1) includes a rectangular wooden *qrsw* outer coffin lid, trough, and carved falcon (2007.12.1.A–C), a wooden bivalve anthropoid inner coffin (2007.12.2.A,B), a cartonnage mummy mask, pectoral, and apron (2007.12.3,4.A,B), wooden statuettes of Isis and Nephthys (2007.12.5,6), and 305 faience *ushebtis* (2007.12.7–113; 115–312).²

The assemblage was purchased by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Nelson-Atkins) in 2007 as the centerpiece of a dramatic reinstallation of the museum's Egyptian collection in 2010. The museum initially proposed the coffins were from Hermopolis. However, two articles published in 2019, by Raphaële Meffre and by Jonathan Elias and Carter Lupton,

argue that the family of Meretites resided in Herakleopolis Magna and chose the cemetery of Abusir el-Melek for her burial. Her father was *sa-mer-*

FIGURE 1: The Meret-it-es Assemblage (not to scale). Late Period to Ptolemaic Period, Thirtieth Dynasty to Early Ptolemaic Dynasty, ca. 380–250 BCE. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust (by exchange). **a:** Inner coffin; wood, pigment, gesso and gilding; 2007.12.2.A,B; **b:** mummy mask; cartonnage (linen or papyrus covered in plaster), paint, and gold leaf; 2007.12.3; **c:** pectoral; cartonnage (linen or papyrus covered in plaster), paint, and gold leaf; 2007.12.4.A; **d:** apron; cartonnage (linen or papyrus covered in plaster), paint, and gold leaf; 2007.12.4.B; **e:** statuette of Nephthys; wood, pigment, gesso, and gold leaf; 2007.12.5; **f:** statuette of Isis; wood, pigment, gesso, and gold leaf; 2007.12.6; **g:** *ushebtis*; faience; 2007.12.7–113; 115–312; **h:** outer coffin; wood, pigment, and gesso; 2007.12.1.A,B (a–f, h, © The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; g, © Stacy Davidson).



a



b



c

d



e



f



g

h



ef priest of Herishef, chief god of Herakleopolis Magna, and Meretites' inner coffin iconography shows strong similarities to anthropoid coffins of the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE from Abusir el-Melek.³

A close look at the succession of owners of the Meretites assemblage published on the museum website not only confirms the legal ownership for the coffins by the Nelson-Atkins but also supports reasonable find spots near excavations financed by the first modern owner.⁴

The strongest evidence that Meretites was buried at Abusir el-Melek comes from two texts inscribed on the Meretites *qrs*-style outer coffin naming the cemetery. One is an offering formula that grants a "good burial in Abusir el-Melek for the spirit of Osiris Meretites." None of the anthropoid coffins included in the two studies published in 2019 are accompanied by *qrs* coffins. The array of surviving components of the Meretites assemblage is unique. The massive Meretites set, lavishly decorated with precious materials, is a remarkable addition to the Abusir el-Melek corpus and can provide an expanded iconographic reference for coffin motifs in use at this time.

This article will describe the variety of motifs used on the assemblage, highlighting possible regional connections and evidence for the proposed 3rd- or 4th-century BCE date. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Still, the Meretites coffin set merits additional research. It is hoped this introduction will be followed by future examinations of assemblage imagery and text. Currently underway is a study of the Meretites hour goddesses within the wider tradition of hour vigils for the deceased.

BACKGROUND

THE HERAKLEOPOLITES 20TH UPPER EGYPTIAN NOME AND HERAKLEOPOLIS MAGNA

Briefly, Herakleopolis Magna, now Ihnasya el-Medina, was situated at the mouth of the Fayum Oasis in *Nr.t*, the 20th Upper Egyptian "Naret-Tree" nome, or Herakleopolites to the Greeks.⁵ Herakleopolis Magna was the principal city of the region, rising to prominence as the home of the Ninth and Tenth Dynasty pharaohs.⁶ The Egyptian name was *Hw.t-(n)-nn-nsw*, *Hw.t-nsw* or *Nn-nsw*, "Mansion of the Royal Child,"⁷ referring to the direct transmission of power and throne from father to son,⁸ continuing from Ra, Shu, Geb, and Osiris. The belief in the existence of a tomb of Osiris in the Herakleopolitan region created an important link between Osiris and Herakleopolites that became

evident in the wider Osirian tradition.⁹ In recognition of the local importance of Osiris, the Abusir el-Melek cemetery, chosen by Late Period elite families of Herakleopolis Magna, was named *ꜥbdw mḥty.t* "Abydos of the North."¹⁰

From 1902 to 1905, German archaeologist Otto Rubensohn acquired the first excavation license at Abusir el-Melek in search of papyrus documents reused to make cartonnage mummy coverings. During his search, Rubensohn found a collection of Late Period coffins with more recent Graeco-Roman linen-wrapped mummies in numerous shaft graves dug into earlier burial chambers. The Late Period burials consisted of wooden post shrines with domed lids into which an anthropoid coffin had been placed. The chambers had been broken into repeatedly, old burials being pushed aside to make room for newer ones. Even well-endowed burials only had rough-hewn limestone tombs. Throughout the excavation area he found shallow graves of simple wooden or clay coffins. Numerous discarded corpses and empty coffins in ruins littered the area.¹¹ The state of the ancient cemetery, lack of detailed excavation records, and the ongoing looting has complicated establishing secure provenance for the surviving funerary materials in museums and private collections throughout the world.

HERISHEF

Creator god Herishef¹² (*Hry-š=f* "He who is upon his lake") was the chief local divinity. He was depicted as a man with the head of the *Ovis longipes palaeo-aegyptiacus*, a ram with long horizontal horns.¹³ He wore the *atef* crown of Re and Osiris.¹⁴ Herishef was known from a First Dynasty image of a ram in a temple, found by Petrie at Abydos,¹⁵ and again, recorded on the Palermo Stone, third row register 9: *ḥ' Nni-(n)sw(t) ḥm inb Hry-š=f* "attending the stone shrine of Herishef ... of Herakleopolis Magna."¹⁶ Herishef was worshipped at his great temple at Henensuten (Herakleopolis Magna), literally built on a lake island surrounded by canals. Remains of his temple lie southwest of the modern town.¹⁷

The *sa-mer-ef* (*s³-mr=f* "son whom he loves") was a funerary priest in the service of Herishef.¹⁸ Introduced to the Herakleopolitan region during the First Intermediate Period, *sa-mer-ef* became the most frequently used priestly title in the Herakleopolitan region. The name refers to Horus, son of Osiris, who officiated at the burial of his father.¹⁹ While the title could be included with names of other offices, Lucía

Díaz-Iglesias Llanos notes in her study of Herakleopolitan religious traditions that it was frequently alone, as the owner's sole title, or possibly the one most important to record. Outside the region it was used by people with ties to the Herakleopolites.²⁰

PROVENANCE

The Nelson-Atkins documents continuous ownership of the Meretites coffins from the early 20th century until 2007, when the Nelson-Atkins acquired the assemblage as the seventh modern owner.²¹

The Meretites coffins are first identified in the collection of Sayed Mohammad Khashaba (Pasha), member of a wealthy aristocratic family from Asyut, who has been credited with the sale of hundreds of Egyptian antiquities to major museums throughout the world.²² Prior to and during the First World War, Khashaba acquired authorization from the Directorate General of the Antiquities Service to excavate in Middle Egypt. He was permitted to keep a partage of findings in return for financing the expeditions. From 1910 through 1914, Ahmed Bey Kamal²³ directed a number of excavations financed by Khashaba between Deirout and Deir el-Ganadlah, notably at Asyut and Meir.²⁴ He also reported a short stint for Khashaba in the Fayum in 1915.²⁵ For each location, Kamal published detailed descriptions of the previous year's finds in the *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* (1911–1912, 1914–1916).²⁶ Sadly, he makes no mention of the Meretites coffins, and "No records exist of the finds made in the course of the excavations not directed by Kamal."²⁷ We cannot determine the location and date of the Meretites burial from the incomplete Khashaba excavation records.

The museum proposes that the Meretites assemblage was created around 380–250 BCE, during the Thirtieth Dynasty or early Ptolemaic period. Based on inscriptions on the inner coffin lid, the museum suggests that the coffins were "probably" found in Hermopolis Magna near the border of Upper and Lower Egypt.²⁸ The fact that Hermopolis is adjacent to a number of Khashaba excavations documented by Kamal²⁹ adds credence to the museum's initial proposal. However, recent publications suggest Meretites came from Herakleopolis Magna, outside the Fayum, probably from the local elite cemetery at Abusir el-Melek.³⁰ Kamal's report of the 1915 Khashaba-financed excavation at Dimeh in the Fayum indicates that Khashaba acted in this area as well.³¹

Sayed Mohammad Khashaba sought permits from the Antiquities Service in order to profit from selling his share of the artifacts from excavations he financed. Kamal's 1915 report describes his own effort to convince Khashaba to create a museum for the city of Asyut and donate a collection of antiquities to eventually start a large regional museum. Kamal tells of Khashaba's sale of the 1910 and 1911 shares, but in the next year Khashaba committed to the museum and constructed an exhibition space on his property. Over the next year Kamal cataloged and mounted the exhibition of the nucleus of the collection. Lord Kitchener visited the new museum as soon as the first objects had been installed and expressed great satisfaction with Khashaba's work.³² The 1929 Baedeker guide *Egypt and the Sudan* included directions to "see Khashaba's collection: Close to the post office, in a side street off the Sharia el-Mahatta, which diverges w[est] from the square, is the Egyptian Museum of Saiyid Khashaba Pasha, a wealthy resident of Asyut, who excavated ancient cemeteries at Asyut and Meir in 1910–14. Adm[ission] on application to the owner's private house in the Manshiya quarter."³³ The Meretites assemblage would have been a part of the "Khashaba Museum."³⁴ While Kamal's 1915 description of the museum formation suggests that museum pieces were donated to the public,³⁵ Winlock relates that the Metropolitan Museum of Art was later able to purchase the kneeling statue of Yuny (MMA 33.2.1) because of Khashaba's strained finances in running the museum.³⁶ Khashaba remained the owner of the museum pieces.

When Sayed Mohammad Khashaba died, the contents of his museum passed to his family who began selling the objects in the 1950s.³⁷ Osman Sayyed Khashaba is identified as the second modern owner of the Meretites assemblage "by inheritance." He retained the set from 1953 until sometime between late 1969 and 1972. Legal documents presented in the Millenium Art Holdings, Ltd. court proceedings in Berlin reference the Meretites equipment. On November 13, 1969, Osman Khashaba granted Ahmad Fahmi Ali Fahmi power of attorney to sell the assemblage on his behalf, and two days later, on November 15, 1969, Ali Fahmi delegated his power of attorney to Hagop Ohan Simonian, contracting with him to sell the objects.³⁸

By 1972, Simonian had facilitated the sale of the Meretites assemblage to Munzen and Medailen, A.G., of Basel, and by 1976 Michael Emil had

acquired the assemblage from Munzen and Medaillen A.G. until the end of 1978. During this time, the coffins were exhibited at the Roemer- und Pelizacus-Museum, Hildesheim, and the Rheingauer Weinmuseum, Broemsberg, Ruedesheim am Rhein.³⁹

On December 31, 1998, Millenium Art Holdings, Ltd., Jersey, Channel Islands, purchased the objects from Emil, showing them in three exhibitions: in Ausstellungszenrum Lokshuppen, Rosenheim, at Landesmuseum fuer Vorgeschichte, Dresden, and in Taiwan, before placing them in storage in Berlin.⁴⁰

During 2004, Egypt petitioned for the return of the Meretites coffins. Provenance records for the assemblage were presented to the District Court of Berlin in Berlin-Charlottenburg 15 November 2005, reference 9 O 511/05, and in Superior Court in Berlin-Schöneberg October 16, 2006, reference 10 U 286/05. In 2006, the German court denied the Egyptian claim, as ratification of the 1970 UNESCO

Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was not finalized by Germany until November 30, 2007.⁴¹ Further, Egypt's claim that Article 6 of Egyptian Law No. 117/1983 Egyptian Cultural Property Protection Act prohibited the sale or export of the coffin assemblage as property of the state of Egypt was also denied on the principle of territoriality. The objects had left Egypt more than a decade before the law was enacted and therefore the August 6, 1983, law did not apply.⁴²

Following the German Superior Court rulings in 2006, the September 30, 2005 Millenium Art Holdings, Ltd.,

sale to art dealers Noele and Ronald Mele of Westport, Connecticut, was allowed to proceed, and in December 2007, the Nelson-Atkins acquired the assemblage from the Meles.⁴³

OUTER COFFIN

The outer coffin is a *qrs*w-type⁴⁴ with a vaulted lid over a rectangular trough (FIG. 2). As decorated private tombs became less common after the New Kingdom, the *qrs*w-coffin style became increasingly popular, adapting tomb imagery, which depicted the sacred cosmos, for the coffin. The lid is the vault of heaven; the trough is the earth. This design scheme is composed of often-used elements, well-organized and well-executed. Only the exterior of the coffin is decorated. The interior remains unfinished and is visible through broken boards in the coffin side. The two texts which mention the Abusir el-Melek cemetery appear on the Outer Coffin.



FIGURE 2: Outer coffin of Meret-it-es (NAMA 2007.12.3.A lid, B trough). The statuettes of Nephthys and Isis (NAMA 2007.12.5,6) also appear in this figure (© The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).

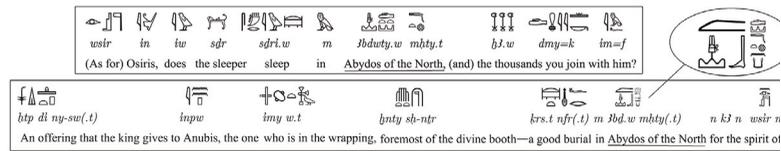


FIGURE 3: Excerpt from Book of the Dead Spell 89, outer coffin lid of Meret-it-es, with reference to “Abydos of the North,” and the offering formula from the Anubis end of the outer coffin trough of Meret-it-es, referencing her burial in “Abydos of the North” with the toponym expanded. Translation suggestions courtesy of Foy Scaif.

OUTER COFFIN LID

Book of the Dead Spell 89

Book of the Dead spell 89 fills the central panel of the vaulted coffin lid (FIG. 3). Spell 89 is the *r3 n rdi(.t) htp b^c hr h—t=f* “spell for making the *ba*-soul rest upon his corpse.” The vignette at the head end of the lid shows the mummified Meretites, lying on a lion bier, attended by Isis and Nephthys, as the *ba* descends from the sky. Isis is at the foot, next to the day-hour goddesses, and Nephthys is at the head, adjacent to the night-hour goddesses. Four canopic jars protect her organs. The snake at the bottom of the vignette guards Meretites’ provisions of grain.

The written spell begins over the mummy’s chest where the *ba* should return. A unique text modification appears in the second column, at a point between the seventh and the eighth hour goddesses along the sides. The Ptolemaic Turin Papyrus 1791 of Iuefankh, for example, uses the common toponym *’lwnw* “Heliopolis” in the phrase *mi nfr³ rs.w nn sdr.w m ’lwnw t3 m h3.w n(y) dmyti(.w) im=f* “like those who are awake, not sleeping in Heliopolis, land of thousands who are joined with him.”⁴⁵ Instead, the Meretites coffin reads *in iw sdr sdr.w m 3bdw mhnty(.t) h3.w dmy=k im=f* “does the sleeper sleep in Abydos of the North and the thousands you join with him?” The use of *3bdw mhnty(.t)* “Abydos of the North,” which is the Abusir el-Melek cemetery,⁴⁶ highlights the importance of this location in describing the nightly return of the *ba*-soul of Meretites.

Hour Goddesses

The twelve “hour goddesses” of the day stand before Meretites along the proper right side of the of the vaulted lid and the twelve hour goddesses of the night stand along the proper left. Meretites is at the foot end of the outer coffin in front of first hour goddess on each side. Day goddesses wear a sun-

disk headpiece, while the night goddesses wear a star.

The twenty-four “hour goddesses” are portrayed on both the Meretites inner and outer coffins. While the outer-coffin goddesses span the length of the lid, the inner-coffin goddesses line the edge of the trough. In both instances, day hours are positioned on the proper right side of the mummy, and night hours on the proper left. Inner-coffin hours start with hour 1 at the head, ending with hour 12 at the feet, while outer-coffin goddesses are in the opposite order, with hour 1 at the feet and hour 12 at the head. The names of the goddesses are essentially the same for the two hour representations. Some spellings differ, and the name on the lid tends to be more complete. What appear to be scribal errors appear in both versions. For each goddess, the outer coffin lists the name, hour number, and a short phrase that repeats for each hour; inner-coffin texts give only the goddess’s name. The format of hour 6 is representative (FIG. 4).

OUTER COFFIN

Day hour 6

h^c.y wnw(.yt) r^c mh 6 ir(r.t) s³ n Wsir Mr(i.t)-it=s ms n Mr(i.t)-it=s m^{3c}.t hrw

Goddess of the noon, day hour goddess of the 6th hour, who provides protection for Osiris Meretites, born of Meretites, (the justified).

Night hour 6

nb(.t) dsr st3 wnw(.yt) grh mh 6 ir(r.t) s³ n Wsir Mr(i.t)-it=s ms n Mr(i.t)-it=s m^{3c}(.t) hrw

Mistress of the secret holy one, night hour goddess of the 6th hour, who provides protection for Osiris Meretites, born of Meretites, the justified.

FIGURE 4: Hour 6 goddesses for the day and night hours on the outer and inner coffins of Meret-it-es: a: outer-coffin day hour 6; b: inner-coffin day hour 6; c: inner-coffin night hour 6; d: outer-coffin night hour 6 (a, c-d: © Stacy Davidson. b: © The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).



INNER COFFIN

Day hour 6

ḥ.t

Goddess of the noon

Night hour 6

nb(.t) sšt3.w

Mistress of secrets [The Gardiner N37 sign was probably damaged.]

Egyptological literature identifies three primary day- and night-hour text traditions active from the New Kingdom through the Ptolemaic period: the *Stundenwachen* (Hourly Vigil), the *Stundenritual* (Hour Ritual), and the *Livre du Jour and de la Nuit* (Book of the Day and the Night). The *Stundenwachen* was coined by Hermann Junker in 1911 in his *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirismysterien nach den Inschriften von Dendera, Edfu und Philae*.⁴⁷ The primary sources of the *Stundenwachen* were temples from Greco-Roman Egypt—usually in Sokaris-Osiris chambers in the northwestern corner of the temple, or in the roof chapels. Texts and representations show the ritualized guarding of the deceased Osiris during every hour of the day by protective deities assigned to the hour.⁴⁸ In 2011, Andreas Pries published *Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult. Eine Studie zur Tradition und späten Rezeption von Ritualen im Alten Ägypten*,⁴⁹ which includes additional examples from epitaphs, coffins, and papyri. *Stundenwachen* texts do not include named hour goddesses. Only numbers separate the ritual into the hourly components.

The remaining two traditions, the *Stundenritual*

and the Books of Day and Night (*Livre du Jour* and *Livre de la Nuit*), are associated with the solar cult, initially for Atum/Ra in Heliopolis and later the god Amun in Thebes.⁵⁰ There are two aspects to these solar cult texts: (1) that which deals with privileged knowledge (cosmography) of the solar journey needed by the king for his role as sun priest and (2) the performed ritual liturgy, the *Stundenritual*.

The hourly rituals were intended to keep the solar journey going, to maintain cosmic order, and to protect the life of the king and humankind in general.⁵¹ The Egyptian king (or priests acting on his behalf) sang or recited prescribed hymns to the sun god at the beginning of each of the twelve day hours.⁵² German Egyptologists Jan Assmann, Erhart Graefe, and Wolfgang Schenkel, working in the Theban necropolis in the 1970s, came across parts of the *Stundenritual* in the sun sanctuaries of New Kingdom royal mortuary temples, where the rituals were performed.⁵³ Hatshepsut's inscribed ceiling of the Southern Hall of Offerings is the earliest extant example of the composition.⁵⁴ The temple solar ritual had become a mortuary ritual for the king and eventually, from the 8th century BCE, was used by private individuals.⁵⁵ The original night-hour ritual consisted of excerpts from the Book of the Dead, but in the Late Period, in non-royal tombs, awakening hymns were added which called "those who are in their hour to awake." Book of the Dead passages disappeared from the ritual in the Greco-Roman period.⁵⁶

The cosmographic portions of the solar ritual are the *Livre du Jour* and the *Livre de la Nuit*. The day text

describes visible portions of the sun's journey across the sky in his barque with his crew of gods.⁵⁷ The *Livre de la Nuit*, composed in the New Kingdom, describes the sun's journey at night, protected and guided by gods and goddesses. It "was probably inspired by the Amduat, with which it will be later inscribed in sarcophagi of the last Dynasties and Greek Period."⁵⁸ It is significant that only this cosmographic portion was used in royal tombs. The king wished to receive the esoteric knowledge of the solar cult in order to unite with the sun as "one who knows the initiation (*bzw*) into the mysteries of the underworld."⁵⁹ Alexandre Piankoff published the earliest complete version of the *Livre du Jour* based on the tomb of Ramesses VI (KV 9) in the 1940s.⁶⁰ With the exception of the outer coffin's first hour of the night, and the inner coffin's eighth hour of the night, Meretites' night-hour-goddess names derive from the *Livre de la Nuit*.

Meretites' day hour names are different. They do not match hour-goddess names from either the *Stundenritual* or the *Livre du Jour* but represent a separate naming pattern, with the earliest examples found on the Twenty-fifth Dynasty Theban inner and outer wooden *qrsu* coffins of Ankhefenkhonsu (CG 41001 and 41001bis, respectively).⁶¹ The Ankhefenkhonsu night-hour-goddess names from the *Livre du Jour* are nearly identical to those of Meretites.⁶² Examples of the Meretites naming pattern from the Late Period through the Ptolemaic period in both Upper and Lower Egypt are part of my current research into hour-goddess traditions. While identifying the Meretites hour goddesses as an example of this lesser-known hour-vigil pattern does not provide evidence for the coffins' provenience or dating, identifying this additional example can help us better understand the development of this version of the hour-goddess tradition.

The Meretites hour-goddess names may be used to more securely link the Allard Pierson Museum coffin fragment of Shepenbastet (APM 8898)⁶³ to Abusir el-Melek. The fragment was identified by Cohon and Jackson⁶⁴ and was referenced by Elias and Lupton⁶⁵ based on stylistic similarities to the Meretites outer coffin. Examination of the goddess names on both objects reveals that the first six day-hour names are identical.⁶⁶ Notably, the first day-hour name, which has not yet been completely deciphered and is without known parallels, is composed of the same symbols on both the Meretites and Shepenbastet coffins.

Anubis and Kheker Frieze

A series of Anubis jackals on shrines alternating with *kheker*-plant bundles is painted along the edge of the lid along the two coffin sides. Michele Valentine cites several examples of the motif carved on granite sarcophagi in the Cairo Museum collection from the reign of Nectanebo II as evidence that the Meretites coffins likely date to the Thirtieth Dynasty or the early Ptolemaic period.⁶⁷ These examples show the protective frieze at the edge of the lid or the trough, immediately above or below the join.⁶⁸

OUTER COFFIN TROUGH

Recitations of Nut and Geb

The recitation by the goddess Nut, written below the night-hour goddesses, records the pledge to conceal the body of Meretites so it will endure. Often the hour goddesses along the crest of the vault are painted with an image of Nut stretched between the day and night hours, parallel to the mummy of the deceased, so the *ba*-soul of the deceased, like the sun, could spend the night in her womb before being reborn in the morning. This text could substitute for an image of Nut where space is limited.⁶⁹

The Geb text below the hours of the day references the principal scenes of the outer coffin: the *ba* joining the corpse (Book of the Dead spell 89 on the lid) and the successful judgement of the deceased (Book of the Dead spell 125 on the trough).

The Forty-Two Assessors—Book of the Dead Spell 125B

Symbolic of the final judgment, the forty-two assessors from Book of the Dead spell 125b stand in front of Meretites along the two sides of the outer coffin. Each wears a feather and holds a knife. With some spelling variations in the assessor names and the locations they represent, the text is virtually identical to the Ptolemaic Turin Papyrus of Iuefankh (FIG. 5).⁷⁰ The assessors appear in the same order on the Meretites coffin and the Iuefankh Papyrus.

CORNER POSTS

The distinctive design of the Meretites coffin corner posts is unique (see FIG. 8). *Qrsu* corner posts are often inscribed with text, but this seemingly abstract pattern is unparalleled.⁷¹ It has been suggested that the posts could reference an *Imiut* fetish,⁷² a part of the sacred embalming ritual (see FIG. 5).

COFFIN END PANELS

A horizontal text band separates the two registers on

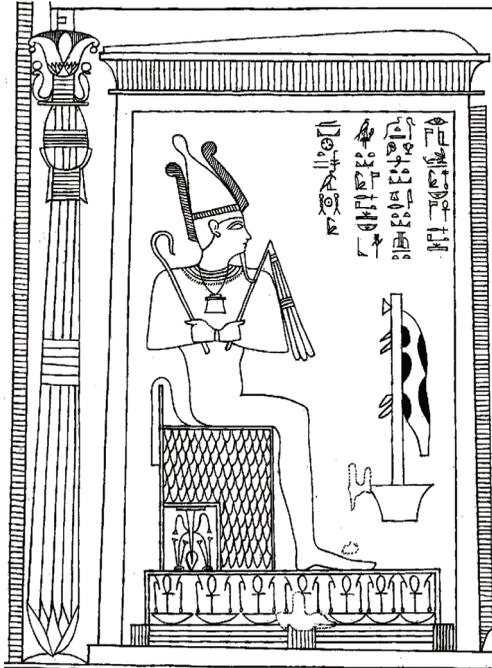


FIGURE 5: Osiris with an *Imiut* fetish. From the vignette for Book of the Dead Spell 125 of Iuefankh, Turin Papyrus 1791 (Lepsius 1842, 73).

Solar End

Two images of the sun above and below the text band appear to represent the sun rising over the horizon. Reading from the center the texts are “*im³hw hr...*” statements that Meretites is “revered before” Osiris. In the lower register, to the right is an Abydos fetish and Osiris as “lord of Abydos” (Upper Egypt); to the left is a *djed*-pillar with Osiris “lord of Djedu” (Lower Egypt). Isis, traditionally associated with the south, is on the right by the Abydos shrine, while Nephthys of the north is on the left with the *djed*-column. The sun below the text contains a scarab symbolizing the morning sun about to rise. The upper register sun with two uraei is labeled “lord of the sky; lord of Mesen,” Horus, the harpooner, who vanquishes Seth.

Anubis End

Anubis imagery dominates the foot end. The heavily restored areas are indicated by yellow painted backgrounds on the replacement pieces. The horizontal text band separating two pairs of Anubis images may again be a horizon. In the top register, Anubis is upon his shrine. The combination of *shen*, the vase, and water sign on each side has been suggested as aspective views of a magic bowl of water from the top, the front, and the water inside.⁷³

Lower-register Anubis jackals are on a standard. The surrounding imagery is enigmatic, and the full meaning is unknown. The symbols appear in various combinations on magical stelae and in royal tomb paintings.⁷⁴ Images include fans, broken sky signs, *shens*, and hybrid *djed*-pillar figures with *ka* arms holding a water sign in an oval (Gardiner sign R55). The sky and *djed*-columns might represent *tph*, the word for spring hole sources of the Nile.⁷⁵ Budge associated the Gardiner R55 hieroglyph with the god Khnum, god of the Nile source.⁷⁶ The water-related signs may suggest the Nile flood that brought a layer of fertile soil for the growing season, as the flood was equated to the efflux of fluids from the corpse of Osiris that brought life.

The band separating the registers records two versions of the offering formula (see FIG. 8, detail).



FIGURE 6: Solar and heavily restored Anubis ends of the Meretites outer coffin, with a closeup of the Anubis text band (© The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).

each end panel, continuing the design structure of the coffin sides. The head reflects solar themes, the foot depicts Anubis images and enigmatic symbols (FIG. 6).

LEFT SIDE

*hṭp di (ny-)sw(.t) inpw imy w.t nb t—dsr ḥ.t nb(.t)
nfr(.t) n k³ n Wsir Mri(.t)-i.t=s m³(.t)-ḥrw*

An offering that the king gives to Anubis, the one who is in the wrapping, lord of the sacred land—every good thing for the spirit of Osiris Meretites, justified.

RIGHT SIDE

*hṭp di ny-sw(.t) inpw imy w.t ḥnty sh-ntr qrs.t
nfr(.t) m ³bd.w mḥty(.t) n k³ n Wsir Mri(.t)-i.t=s*

An offering that the king gives to Anubis, the one who is in the wrapping, foremost of the divine booth—a good burial in Abydos of the North for the spirit of Osiris Meretites.

Again, the text on the right provides evidence that Meretites was buried at Abusir el-Melek. This passage specifically grants Meretites a good burial in Abydos of the North, the ancient Egyptian name for Abusir el-Melek cemetery.

SIMILARITIES TO THE TWENTY-SIXTH DYNASTY
MEMPHITE SARCOFAGUS OF ANKH-HOR (ÄM 41)

A nearly identical stone version of the Meretites outer coffin chest is the granodiorite sarcophagus of Ankh-Hor (Berlin Egyptian Museum, ÄM 41),⁷⁷ published by Brugsch in 1850 and Wiedemann in 1886.⁷⁸ Inscriptions state that Ankh-Hor was buried in the Memphite necropolis, a treasurer, “sole companion” of the king, and a son of a Bakenrenef. The layout of the four sides of the sarcophagus and the Meretites coffin are striking in their similarities. The forty-two assessors from Book of the Dead spell 125b are inscribed on the sides of the sarcophagus and the coffin chest. Other than one assessor on each side in a different position, the same named deities, nearly all from the same domains, appear in the same order on the two coffins.⁷⁹ The Ankh-Hor head and foot panels replicate the lower registers of the Meretites ends. At the foot, Anubis jackals on standards are surrounded by enigmatic symbols. In 1886, Wiedemann remarked that the puzzling symbols “form often-found combinations offering no particular interest.”⁸⁰ The solar ends of the Meretites and Ankh-Hor coffins are mirror images of each other. Isis and the Abydos fetish are on the right for Meretites and the left for Ankh-Hor, with Nephthys and the *djed*-pillar on the left of Meretites and the right of Ankh-Hor. Both coffins display a scarab inside a rising sun with five rays at the center and the deceased on the two sides

behind the Isis and Nephthys goddesses on gold signs. A biographical text band at the top of the chest encircles the Ankh-Hor sarcophagus. Texts also border the edge of the Meretites chest. That a parallel exists from the Saite period, three centuries prior to the dates proposed for Meretites, when contemporary examples have not yet been located, complicates our ability to understand transmission of these motifs through time.

INNER COFFIN

The style of massive 400-pound wooden anthropoid Meretites coffin⁸¹ (FIG. 7) originated in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties and continued into the Ptolemaic period. Adapted from sculpture, the deceased in the shape of a mummy stands on a rectangular plinth with a vertical pillar supporting the back.⁸² Ushebtis adopted the same form within a few decades.⁸³ During this time, “[g]reater emphasis was given to the head, wig, and chest, which became substantially enlarged.”⁸⁴ The imagery suggests that the inner coffin, like the outer coffin, represented a universe for the deceased.⁸⁵ Resting on its back in the tomb, the lid would logically symbolize the heavens, and indeed, the solar imagery is on the lid. The winged *kheper* beetle, the rising sun, appears two times. Solar disks also crown the *wesekh*-collar falcon-head terminals on the lid’s shoulders. The trough as the realm of Osiris contains the *djed*-pillar (backbone of Osiris), Isis and Nephthys, and Imentet (goddess of the necropolis).

Niwiński explains that there might be multiple portrayals of the horizon, the tomb, and heavenly and netherworld planes of existence on a coffin. As described above, the joint between the lid and trough acts as the horizon for the mummy, buried in the horizontal position, lying on its back “embraced and protected by Osiris or Imentet (from beneath) and Nut (from above), thus situated between the earth and the sky.”⁸⁶ However, for the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, a “crucial moment of the animation-ritual,” the coffin was stood up vertically on its footboard, so we could expect to see iconographic divisions that would reflect the heavenly realm at the head and chest, and the realm of Osiris, below.⁸⁷

In contrast with the simple design of many of the anthropoid coffins attributed to Abusir el-Melek, the exterior of the Meretites inner coffin is complex and masterfully executed. Scenes and symbols appear to be organized in deliberate, logical patterns.



FIGURE 7: Inner coffin of Meret-it-es (NAMA 2007.12.2.A lid, B trough) (© The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).

INNER COFFIN LID

The Meretites inner coffin presents her as godlike, using attributes of both Ra and Osiris, joined to perpetuate the cosmic resurrection cycle. Meretites' Egyptian-blue hair and golden face are like those of Ra, described in "The Book of the Cow of Heaven": *qs.w=f m ḥd ḥ.w=f m nbw šni=f m ḥsbd mꜥ.t* ". . . his bones of silver, his flesh of gold, and his hair of true lapis lazuli."⁸⁸ The mummiform inner coffin symbolizes the body of Osiris. A red line surrounds the face, possibly for protection.⁸⁹

The lid's central panel portrays elements of the resurrection process, culminating in text columns deriving from Pyramid Text 368 from the coffin's knees to the ankles. The texts implore Nut to cause Meretites to become a god and to protect her,⁹⁰ Geb to establish her heart, and Thoth to purify her and provide offerings to sustain her. Two colorful horizontal bands divide the central panel's physical space into the heavens, the liminal space of the Osiris's tomb, and the netherworld below. The lower band encircles the lid and the trough and marks the beginning of texts on both halves of the coffin. Protective gods at the edges of the lid are arranged so those above the second decorative band are standing, and those below are mummiform and are seated. The Meretites inner coffin incorporates both horizontal and vertical orientations into the design program.

Meretites appears twice on the inner coffin, both times dressed in white linen clothing of the living. On the outer coffin, Meretites is shown in colorful sheath dresses of a goddess.

Central Panel Vignettes

Directly below the neck between the wig lappets is a red pendant bordered in gold. It is a scene of Meretites standing before Osiris with a *was*-staff. Behind him is the Abydos fetish. The scene could be one of praise to the god of the netherworld, or Meretites' "declaration of innocence to Osiris" beginning the final judgment testimony.⁹¹ The location of this image at the neck is unusual. Normally the space is filled with strands of the *wesekh* collar. A nearly identical scene was identified by Elias and Lupton on the "Ta-akhet-weret" coffin from the Ancient Egypt Museum of Shibuya, Tokyo.⁹² The late Ptolemaic gilded coffin of Nedjemankh⁹³ shows a similar pendant, clearly detailed as a piece of jewelry with the deceased kneeling before seated Osiris and a goddess,

possibly Maat, behind him. All three coffins have been linked to Herakleopolis Magna.

A large *wesekh* or "broad" collar covers the chest beneath the Meretites wig lappets. John Cooney describes the *wesekh* as one of the oldest Egyptian necklaces and "part of most funerary outfits for well over two thousand years," yet its roll in protecting the deceased is not fully understood.⁹⁴ Elias and Lupton compare the Meretites collar and that of Padiouir (M1967.20), a second massive anthropoid coffin from the Milwaukee Art Museum, in an effort to identify designs and artist techniques which could link the two coffins to northern Upper Egypt. The "Tied & folded leaf" botanically inspired geometric bands between strands of flowers could indicate a Fayumic origin for the coffins, and the color palette of the two collars, "light green, dark blue, deep red . . . with yellow elements" is typical of Herakleopolis Magna.⁹⁵ Two large black winged scarab-beetles dominate the Meretites wig and chest, pointed toward the golden face. The beetle on the chest grasps a small sun-disc in its hind legs, painted red as if at the horizon. It appears to be lifted to the sky by the forelegs, becoming a large green orb, which possibly symbolizes life-giving power of the risen sun.⁹⁶ Below the scarab is the image of winged sky goddess Nut, also with a green sun disk on her head. Sousa notes the combination of scarab above a winged goddess, introduced during the New Kingdom, "assumed an ascending movement towards the light,"⁹⁷ here, the Meretites golden face. Both Elias and Lupton and Meffre indicate that the motif appears on a number of Late Period coffins of northern Upper Egypt, particularly from the area of Herakleopolis Magna.⁹⁸

The idea of the coffin as the embodiment of the goddess Nut was first described in the Pyramid Texts and continued through the Pharaonic era.⁹⁹ Nut was considered the mother of both Osiris and Ra.¹⁰⁰ Winged-Nut figures began appearing on coffin lids during the Eighteenth Dynasty and as styles changed, a variety of images could surround the Nut figure with unusual features appearing in "unexpected places, such as the depiction of the *ba* as a ram between the wings of the protective goddesses" (Fig. 2).¹⁰¹ Two rams on a plinth appear above Nut, flanking the feathers in her hands and the brief text columns. The ram, it seems, was a visual pun for the *ba* soul, as *ba* was the word for soul and for ram in the ancient Egyptian language.

Beneath the goddess Nut is the tomb scene of

Osiris, at the moment his *ba* returns to his corpse. The position of Osiris beneath the winged sky goddess is probably intended to show his *ba* descending from the sky.¹⁰² This scene echoes the scene on the outer coffin lid showing the mummy of Meretites in the Book of the Dead spell 89 vignette. There, the *ba* of Meretites descends from winged sun-disk beneath the sky hieroglyph. The position of Isis at the foot and Nephthys at the head in both scenes is prescribed in the Pyramid Texts, “Isis before him, Nephthys behind him.”¹⁰³ The day hours appear on the side of Isis; the night hours are on the side of Nephthys.-

The final central panel vignette represents the vindication of Meretites, concluding the final judgment. Thoth records the favorable outcome in the presence of Maat, using his reed pen and papyrus scroll. Captions identify the names and titles: *Mꜣꜥ.t* “Maat,” *Dḥwti nb mdw ntr tp.t Hsr.t* “Thoth, lord of god’s words, foremost of Heseret [the Hermopolis cemetery]” and *Wsir Mr(i.t)-it=s ms n Mr(i.t)-it=s mꜣꜥ(t) ḥrw* “Osiris Meretites, born of Meretites, justified.” This reference to Thoth and the Hermopolis cemetery led the Nelson-Atkins to attribute the Meretites coffin assemblage to the Hermopolis region, where Thoth was chief god.¹⁰⁴

Registers of Gods

On the edges of the Meretites inner coffin, nine registers holding a total of forty-eight named gods appear on the lid (FIG. 8) and twenty-four named hour goddesses are along the trough. Joints were considered a point of vulnerability that coffin builders and designers sought to remedy.¹⁰⁵ Above the gods, *wesekh*-collar falcon terminals and *wedjet* eyes appear on the coffin shoulder. Eyes on the sides of anthropoid coffins derive from the Middle Kingdom tradition of painting *wedjet* eyes on the front of the rectangular coffin, allowing the mummy to see. With the introduction of anthropoid coffins and their carefully rendered faces, eyes often remained on the coffin sides for the protection.¹⁰⁶ The arrangement of the gods on the lid appears intentional. Local gods significant to Herakleopolis Magna are prominently placed, related gods are grouped together, and their location is often an indication of their sphere of influence.

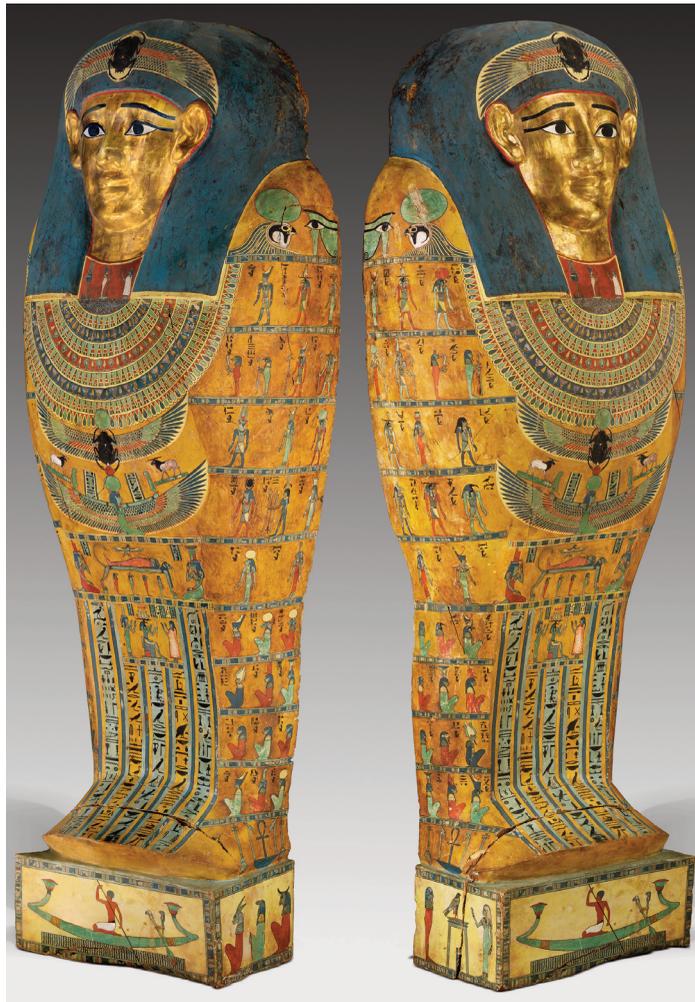


FIGURE 8: Oblique views of the inner coffin lid of Meret-it-es (© The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).

Renate Siegmann describes the cultic-religious records inscribed within the sanctuary of the Hibis Temple of Kharga oasis, built under Darius I between 510 and 490 BCE,¹⁰⁷ where three registers on the north face of the sanctuary wall list the temples and gods of the Herakleopolitan nome:¹⁰⁸

Hauptgötter des Gaus waren der widderköpfige Herischef (griech. Harsaphes), seine Gemahlin Hathor sowie sein Inkorporationstier, der Widdergott Ba-neb-djedet.... Seit dem Ende des Alten Reiches war Osiris von Naref eine der vorherrschenden Gottheiten. Der falkenköpfige Somtus (ägyptisch:

Sema-tau), bereits für das Alten Reich im memphitischen Raum belegt, besass in der Spätzeit eine Kultstätte in der Metropole des 20. Oberägyptischen Gaues.¹⁰⁹

The Meretites top register of gods seems to highlight the most prestigious deities. Ra and Atum, the sun gods, are at the center of the first register, visible on the front of the coffin (FIG. 7). Ra, the mid-day sun, is on the proper right, the side of the hour goddesses of the day. Opposite on the proper left is Atum, the first god who became the aged form of the sun, setting in the west, to travel the underworld, joining with Osiris for mutual reincarnation. Atum is on the side of the night goddesses. It is clearly a visual statement of the importance of the two gods and their primary association with the day and the night. Adjacent to the sun gods are two ram gods and their consorts. Herishef, on the proper right with Hathor, was the chief god of Herakleopolis. With his consort Hathor and their child Sema-tawy (Somtus, in the ninth register of the proper right side), they were the divine triad of Herakleopolis. A counterpoint to Herishef, on the proper left is Banebdjedet (“Ba of the Lord of Djedet”) and his consort, the fish goddess Hatmehit. They formed the divine triad of Mendes with Harpa-khered their child (not shown). Herishef, Hathor, Banebdjedet, and Sema-tawy, as noted above, are recorded on the Hibis temple as gods of the Herakleopolitan nome.

The second register is composed of three groupings of gods. The four sons of Horus are placed on the side where they appear on the Meretites cartonnage apron. Horus and Anubis on the proper left could be considered siblings (along with Bastet) as children of Osiris and Isis. Shu and Tefnut, the children of Atum from the first register, are on the proper right. They are the second generation of the Ennead. Geb and Nut, the third generation of the Ennead, children of Shu and Tefnut, are in the third register on the proper right. The Theban triad—Amun, Mut and their son Khonsu—is on the proper left. Neith and Selket, who protect the Sons of Horus, are on the proper right of the fifth register, the last register of standing gods.

Among the seated gods in the seventh register, Isis and Nephthys, protectors of the Sons of Horus along with Neith and Selket, appear on the proper right and again on the proper left with their brother Osiris. The ninth and final register on the proper right

contains Sema-tawy, child of Herishef and Hathor and member of the divine triad of Herakleopolis. Atum, Shu, and Tefnut, primordial gods, are on the proper left.

Other gods who are not grouped with related gods include a number of standing deities: Thoth, Khnum (creator of the Nile), Khepri (the morning sun), Hapi (god of inundation), Anubis in his wrappings, Nebethetepet (the female principle/hand of Atum in the first creation), Sekhmet, and Satis of Elephantine. More gods are depicted seated: Horus-who-avenges-his-father, Thoth, Ra-Atum of Heliopolis, Nun of the primeval waters, Osiris-neb-djedet, Maat or Swt, Ptah, Sepa, and Ra-Horakhty. A few other gods are unknown.

Vignette—Book of the Dead Spell 110

Cohon and Jackson, as well as Elias and Lupton, identify the images along base of the Meretites inner coffin pedestal as part of the vignette to Book of the Dead spell 110,¹¹⁰ “Beginning of the formulae of the Marsh of Offerings. Formulae for going out in the day, going in and going out in the god’s land. . . doing everything done on earth. . . .”¹¹¹ Flanked by boats painted on the sides of coffin trough, the scenes on the lid follow the top register of the spell 110 vignette from the Papyrus of Iuefankh (Turin 1791).¹¹² Reading from right to left, the deceased first makes offerings to the gods of the Great Ennead, the nine primordial gods of Heliopolis (FIG. 8), and then travels through the Marsh of Offerings by boat (FIG. 7), finally giving an offering to the Lord of the Sky (Horus) and the gods of the horizon dwellers (FIG. 8).¹¹³ The boats at the beginning and end of the scene resemble solar barques used by the sun during the day, the *mʿnd.t* “Mandjet” (FIG. 1), and at night through the netherworld, the *mskt.t* “Mesektet.” On the trough, a mummiform figure, possibly Meretites, rides in the company of Thoth and Re-Horakhty (FIG. 7). It seems remarkable that the Meretites inner coffin captures the spell 110 vignette through a detailed series of images when no coffins included in the *Das Altägyptische Totenbuch ein Digitales Textzeugenarchiv* database record spell 110 either as text or as a vignette.¹¹⁴ Elias and Lupton suggest the images present a “visual analogy” of the Fayumic region, the probable origin of the coffin.¹¹⁵

INNER COFFIN TROUGH

A central panel containing three registers of images runs from the back of the head to the knees, and five

columns of text in light blue and yellow extend from the knees to the feet. The texts are a continuation of Nut spells on the lid. The hour goddesses accompanied by gods holding mummy bandages line the side edges of the coffin trough.

The wig provides the background for the first register, the striding Ihet sky-cow flanked by seated ibis deities wearing *atef* crowns. Cohon and Jackson as well as Elias and Lupton identify the image as the vignette for Book of the Dead Spell 162 which assists in revitalizing the deceased.¹¹⁶ The formula for “placing warmth under the head of a transfigured spirit” includes instructions for the recitation, which have been adapted for Meretites as a coffin motif. The original spell instructs the funerary priest:

“Words spoken over an image of the Sky-cow, made of fine gold, placed at the neck of the transfigured spirit, and draw her on a fresh papyrus-roll, placed under his head. There will be much warmth coursing all over him, just as that which is upon earth.... Amun, the one who is in the sky, turn your face to the body of your son, make him whole in, in the god’s land.”¹¹⁷

The second register contains an anthropomorphic *djed* column with an *atef* crown. Rejoicing baboons who greet the morning sun stand above the heads of Isis and Nephthys flanking the *djed* column. The Ihet sky cow and the baboons at the head of the coffin trough again suggest the coffin’s vertical orientation during the Opening of the Mouth ceremony.

The last register portrays the Goddess of the West with six mummiform gods at her sides. The gods hold mummy bandages. The top four unnamed gods wear feathers on their heads, the two on the bottom labeled *Inpw* and *Dsr* are bareheaded. Similar mummiform deities stand behind the hour goddesses at the sides. Some are named, but most are not recognizable due to missing or unknown names. All carry bandages and none have head-dresses.

SIMILARITIES TO THE EARLY PTOLEMAIC ANTHROPOID COFFIN OF “TA-AKHET-WERET”¹¹⁸

Examination of the wooden anthropoid sarcophagus of “Ta-akhet-weret” (Shibuya),¹¹⁹ referenced several times by Elias and Lupton,¹²⁰ reveals a design program closely replicating the Meretites inner coffin. Measuring only 196 cm long, 80 cm wide, and

50 cm deep, some 25 cm shorter than the Meretites coffin (221 cm by 85 cm by 60 cm), figures may appear in slightly different arrangements, but the repertoire is virtually identical.

Coffin Lid

Like the Meretites coffin, two winged scarabs on the wig and the chest point to the gilded face. The red Osiris pendant appears between the wig lappets of both coffins, with an offering table and an image of Isis added to the “Ta-akhet-weret” scene.¹²¹ Unusual mosaic designs fill the space between the Osiris scene and the *wesekh* for both coffins. “Ta-akhet-weret’s” *wesekh*-collar Horus-falcon terminals, crowned with sun disks, face *wedjet* eyes at each shoulder. The necklace, however, more closely resembles the flower varieties and geometric strands of the Padiousir collar (M1967.20) discussed in detail by Elias and Lupton.¹²²

Two decorative horizontal bands separate the lid’s central panel into the heavens, Osiris’s tomb, and the netherworld. Nine registers of gods protect the edge of the lid, with standing gods above the lower horizontal band, and mummiform seated gods below. From the “Ta-akhet-weret” catalog images, seven gods on the proper left can be identified: row 2—Hapi, row 3—Qebehsenuf, row 4—Khonsu, row 6—Osiris, row 7—Horakhty, row 8—Isis, and row 9—Osiris-neb-djedet. On the more damaged proper right, four gods can be identified: row 3—Duamutef, row 6—Osiris-khenty-imentiu, row 7—Thoth, and row 8—Horakhty. As on the Meretites lid, beneath the ninth row of gods is a register of *nefer* and *was* signs surrounding a central ankh on a *nb* basket. The central panel’s heavenly region contains the Meretites pattern of winged Nut beneath a winged scarab and rams. Rams also appear between the winged scarab and winged Nut on the late Ptolemaic gilded coffin of Nedjemankh (formerly MMA 2017.255b), from Herakleopolis Magna.¹²³ The “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin has no indications of titles for the deceased or her family, but the father of Meretites and Nedjemankh were both priests of the ram god Herishef in Herakleopolis Magna, so it is possible the presence of rams on these three elite coffins reflect religious significance of the ram in the region.¹²⁴

The bottom two vignettes on the “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin are more elaborate than the Meretites versions. The tomb of Osiris includes three images of Anubis attending Osiris’s corpse in addition to mourning

Isis and Nephthys. While the vindication of Meretites is conveyed by Thoth recording the judgment before Maat, the “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin shows the Book of the Dead spell 125 “weighing of the heart” vignette with many elements used in the Ptolemaic funerary papyrus of Hor (BM 10479).¹²⁵

Beneath the judgment scenes are five columns of gilded text against alternating stripes of dark red and blue ground. They cannot be fully deciphered from the catalog images but do contain phrases from the Nut spells on the front of the Meretites coffin.¹²⁶ The front of the footbox, with the solar boat carrying Re-Horakhty, Osiris, possibly Seth with his spear, and five additional figures too damaged to identify, recalls the boat scenes at the base of the Meretites coffin.

Trough

Elias and Lupton have discussed many of the similarities in the design of the central column of the Meretites and “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin troughs. Notably, they mention the Ihet cow between two ibis gods on the back of the wig, the *djed* column between Isis and Nephthys, and the presence of black hieroglyphic text written on five light-blue and yellow columns beneath the vignettes.¹²⁷ Both also contain similar passages from Late Period “Nut” spells. Above the Ihet cow, a richly drawn winged Horus, clutching *shen* rings in its claws, completely fills the back of the “Ta-akhet-weret” wig. Damage to the top of the coffin has destroyed most of the hawk head and sun disk. Elias and Lupton point out the baboons above Isis and Nephthys on the Meretites trough.¹²⁸ Baboons and *wedjet* eyes appear on the “Ta-akhet-weret” chest, behind the *ba* rams. The Meretites third register shows the personification of the West instead of “Ta-akhet-weret’s” Nut goddess with the four sons of Horus.

Hour goddesses line the edge of the trough of both coffins. Because the “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin is smaller, the hour gods are arranged in nine registers instead of twelve. Hours one and two, three and four, and five and six are paired in the first three rows. Captions of *dd mdw in GN ir s3 n Wsir 3hty.t* “Words spoken by God Name to make protection for Osiris ‘Ta-akhet-weret’” accompany many of the gods appearing on the “Ta-akhet-weret” coffin, including the hour goddesses. Hours are identified by hour number. The goddess name is omitted, but spellings used in these protection phrases replicate those of the Meretites *qrsu*-coffin hour goddesses.

THE APPEARANCE OF SO MANY common elements in the design of the Meretites and “Ta-akhet-weret” coffins suggests the coffins were created from the same basic template, probably crafted in the same workshop. As demonstrated by these coffins, it is evident that clients could choose from a variety of vignettes to convey specific religious elements. The differing portrayals of the *ba* uniting with Osiris in his tomb and the favorable judgment of the deceased by the Osiris tribunal nevertheless present these notions successfully. An Abusir el-Melek burial for “Ta-akhet-weret” seems very likely. Both the Meretites and the “Ta-akhet-weret” coffins were produced for the elite, and the design template with the noted variations should be set forth as a recognized Herakleopolitan style, one that differs from the well-documented elite coffin design of Ankhemmaat, *s3-mr=f* and *hm-ntr n Hry-s=f sdm nh.t* “*sa-mer-ef* and *hm-ntjer* priest of Herishef-who-listens-to-prayers” (private collection of S. Simonian).¹²⁹ Because of their excellent state of preservation, the Meretites coffins provide an excellent resource not only for cataloging funerary images but also for identifying the gods depicted and the specific texts chosen, including scribal idiosyncrasies in language and spelling.

ASSEMBLAGE

ISIS AND NEPHTHYS STATUETTES

Isis and Nephthys statuettes¹³⁰ signify the goddesses who protected Osiris prior to resurrection. A published museum diagram shows the figures on the ground at the ends of the coffin.¹³¹ The wooden falcon (2007.12.1.C),¹³² not on display, was probably mounted at the head end of the lid. A falcon as Sokar or Horus was often paired with Anubis on *qrsu* lids, with Anubis at the foot.¹³³

CARTONNAGE MUMMY MASK, PECTORAL, AND APRON

The design of the cartonnage sections points toward a 3rd-century BCE date for the Meretites assemblage. At least three sections of gilded cartonnage (FIG. 1) once covered the mummy of Meretites. The mask,¹³⁴ pectoral¹³⁵ and apron,¹³⁶ reflect the style that began in the 3rd century BCE, in which separated cartonnage openwork pieces were attached to mummy bindings with string. The most complete examples include a mask, a *wesekh* collar, a winged-Nut pectoral, an apron for the abdomen and legs, and a footbox not present in the Meretites assemblage.¹³⁷ Full cartonnage mummy covers

replaced the pieced sections later in the Ptolemaic period.¹³⁸

Mummy Mask

The Meretites mummy mask covered her head and the chest to the sternum. The idealized youthful face is gilded, as are the high, exposed ears. Distinctive eyebrows and eyes are painted with cosmetic lines that extend to the edge of the face. A narrow red line has been drawn at the edge the face next to the wig.¹³⁹ Six rows of rosettes, lotus, and other flowers are incised between the wig lappets to indicate the top of a *wesekh* collar.

Cartonnage helmet masks fabricated from linen and plaster originated at the end of the Old Kingdom and flourished during the Middle Kingdom, often replaced by full cartonnage cases during the Third Intermediate Period.¹⁴⁰ Full production of helmet masks returned at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period,¹⁴¹ and cartonnage pectorals and aprons were introduced shortly after.¹⁴² Mass production methods resulted in idealized god-like designs, rarely inscribed with the owner's name or title and possibly formed using reusable workshop molds.¹⁴³ Two examples, similar to the Meretites mask, are the mask of Ankh-sema-taui¹⁴⁴ and the outer mask of the two-mask set belonging to Ankhemmaat.¹⁴⁵ Both are attributed to Abusir el-Melek. While these gilded masks are painted with striped *nemes* headcloths and do not include the red line at the edge of the face,¹⁴⁶ the faces show the same distinctive eyes and eyebrows, and ears that extend above the hairline. There is a such a striking resemblance in the soft lines of the nose, mouth, and ears of the three masks that it is as if a single hand had created them. Another unprovenanced mask in the Kikugawa collection also shows the same facial style, including the red line around the face. However, the pectoral and apron pieces are vividly painted cartonnage instead of the embossed gilded surface of the Ankhemmaat and Meretites pieces.¹⁴⁷

Pectoral

The Meretites gilded pectoral combines a *wesekh* collar and winged Nut into a single unit. Light incising in the gold leaf shows details of Nut's body and the falcon-collar terminals, but the central collar surface and the wings of Nut appear to have been left plain. Four vertical hieroglyphic text bands connecting the goddess to the collar are inscribed

with promises of protection and breath from Nut. A similar inscription appears on the Ankhemmaat pectoral.¹⁴⁸

Apron

The Meretites apron is a grid of eight gold cut-out figures arranged in four registers, facing a central text column. The four sons of Horus occupy the top two registers; their respective goddess protectors mirror their positions in the bottom two registers.¹⁴⁹ Human-headed Imsety is on the top proper right, with Isis on the bottom. Baboon-headed Hapi is on the top proper left, with Nephthys at the bottom. In the second register, hawk-headed Qebehenuief is on the proper right immediately above Selket. Jackal-headed Duamutef, on the proper left, is above Neith.

Ankhemmaat and Ankh-sema-taui pectorals and aprons use the same motifs. The Ankhemmaat example could once have been a copy of Meretites, but damaged sections roughly pieced together by the collector have distorted the set. The *wesekh* is lost, but the winged-Nut figure remains, with attached hieroglyphic text bands. The Ankhemmaat registers of deities on the apron are in locations identical to those of Meretites and display the same posture and gestures. Meffre notes the arm positions of the four goddesses at the bottom of the Ankhemmaat and Meretites aprons. Neith, with the red crown, and Selket, with a scorpion, raise their arms in praise, while Isis and Nephthys hold their hands to their faces in the gesture of mourning.¹⁵⁰ The Ankhemmaat hieroglyphic text, like that of Meretites: "se résume à un hymne à Nout, désignée comme 'la grande,' dont le défunt attend la protection."¹⁵¹

The Ankh-sema-taui pectoral and apron are rendered in a more ornate style, with pieces heavily incised over most of the surface area and embellishments added to the pectoral structure. The apron has painted vertical stripes at the sides of the central hieroglyphic text. Selket and Neith are missing, leaving three remaining registers in the same relative positions to Meretites and Ankhemmaat.¹⁵² The Ankh-sema-taui leg piece mentions "Abydos of the North," reinforcing its Abusir el-Melek provenance. According to Stadler, phrases inscribed on the Ankh-sema-taui cartonnage predate the Ptolemaic Period.¹⁵³

USHEBTIS

There are 305 faience *ushebti* figures included in the assemblage of Meretites (FIG. 1). The fourteen largest

ones measure between 18.5 and 19.9 cm tall and display an excerpt from Book of the Dead spell 6, “Formula for causing the *ushebti* to work in the god’s land.”¹⁵⁴ The 291 smaller ones, from 9.18 to 12.64 cm tall, are inscribed with the name of Meretites. Each figure is mummiform, standing on a plinth with a back column, and wearing a tripartite wig similar in shape to the Meretites anthropoid coffin. All but two wear a false beard; their hands are articulated and are holding agricultural tools.¹⁵⁵ Valentine outlines the creation process in which faience paste was pressed into one-sided open molds to form the figure front. The backs were hand-worked. Once removed from the mold, each figure was finished individually, so each face and body were unique. She postulates the structure of teams creating the Meretites *ushebtis* and the figures worked by each team based on size, shape, and finishing style.¹⁵⁶

Valentine suggests that the *ushebti* figures offer some of the best evidence for dating the Meretites assemblage, since *ushebti* inscription formats changed at definite points in time.¹⁵⁷ The large *ushebti* nine- or ten-line inscriptions are written inside framed horizontal bands, which was a common style from the Middle Kingdom.¹⁵⁸ Texts for 160 of the 291 smaller figures were written in a single column, another long-standing pattern. However, the remaining 131 figures were inscribed inside a framed “T,” a single horizontal row topping a single vertical column. The “T” shape began as unframed text in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, with the framed “T” pattern of the Meretites *ushebti* figures beginning only in the Thirtieth Dynasty, the earliest date suggested for her burial.¹⁵⁹

Meretites’ *ushebti* figures are similar to those of Ankhemmaat. Limme mentions figures in two sizes. Inscriptions for the larger ones (20 cm) are derived from Book of the Dead spell 6, written in nine horizontal bands on the front. Inscriptions for the smaller ones (12–13 cm) inside a framed “T” do not include spell 6. He estimates the date to be 4th or 3rd century BCE and references parallels to *ushebtis* of the Thirtieth Dynasty military general Pakhaas, “qui était très probablement originaire des environs d’Héracléopolis.”¹⁶⁰ From the photograph in *Le Crépuscule des Pharaons* exhibition catalog, Ankhemmaat’s *ushebtis* appear to be of a significantly higher quality than those of Meretites: the color of the figures is more uniform, and the carving of faces, hands, and texts is more skilled.¹⁶¹

LINEN MUMMY BANDAGES FROM MERETITES?

Das Altägyptische Totenbuch ein Digitales Textzeugenarchiv references inscribed linen mummy bandages for a Ptolemaic woman from Herakleopolis Magna named “*Mr-iti-s*.” Her mother’s name was “*Mr-iti-s*.” Serop Simonian is named as owner.¹⁶² He is also listed as the owner of mummy bandages belonging to Ankhemmaat.¹⁶³ The database transcription “*Mr-iti-s*” suggests a spelling similar to that of the name on the Nelson-Atkins coffins. It seems possible that these bandages once belonged with the assemblage now in the Nelson-Atkins. Twenty-six sections of bandage, nearly 13 m in length, are preserved. Written in hieratic, the linen is covered with more than sixty-eight spells and vignettes from the Book of the Dead.¹⁶⁴

A CANOPIC BOX OR VISCERA BOX FROM MERETITES?

The Egyptian collection of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore includes a *naos*-shaped wooden box (62.6) of unknown provenance that may have belonged to Meretites.¹⁶⁵ One is immediately struck that the painted corner posts are identical to the *qrsw*-coffin posts of Meretites. Bruwier considered the Baltimore piece during her examination of 118 containers in museums and private collections.¹⁶⁶ Most, she said were from Middle Egypt, and created after the 4th century BCE. She calls them “*Les coffrets/boîtes à viscères*,”¹⁶⁷ used as an alternative to canopic jars. Internal organs removed from the body would be separately wrapped and placed in a single viscera box. Bruwier attributes the Baltimore piece to the Abusir el-Melek cemetery, citing the painted doorway, Anubis, *djed* pillar, and sons of Horus on the box sides.¹⁶⁸ Elias and Lupton note the similarity between the Anubis on the Baltimore box and the row of jackals on Meretites’ outer coffin. They suggest the same person could have painted both.¹⁶⁹

CONCLUSIONS

In 2017, Caroline Rocheleau and John Taylor published their study of an unprovenanced anthropoid coffin of Amunred (G.73.8.5) from the North Carolina Museum of Art. The coffin, a 1973 gift to the museum, had been accompanied by a handwritten note by Madame Maspero stating it had originated in Herakleopolis Magna. Based on several details of design, including the *wesekh* collar, the

prominence of the color green, and the father's "Heryshefemhat" name, they tentatively supported the note's Herakleopolitan attribution. They lamented, however, that relatively little study had been devoted to dating the coffins created after the New Kingdom in the area from the Fayum to Memphis.

[F]ew coffins from the northern Nile valley can be dated by inscriptional evidence, and no site or cemetery has yielded the comprehensive picture of coffin development available for Thebes.... Indeed, it is necessary to conduct comparative stylistic studies and the investigation of important unprovenanced material.... [including] detailed examination of the religious iconography featured on the coffins as well as their body-field design and colouration scheme, and even the names of individuals mentioned on the coffins have permitted the redating and assignment of a place of origin....¹⁷⁰

Two 2019 articles from the proceedings of the Fitzwilliam Museum conference *Ancient Egyptian Coffins: Past—Present—Future* cataloged a number of securely provenanced, as well as unprovenanced, coffins. Elias and Lupton and Meffre believed the coffins had come from Herakleopolis Magna, including the Nelson-Atkins Meretites assemblage.

The research by Elias and Lupton highlighted strong artistic and iconographic similarities among four unprovenanced coffins: Kansas City's Meretites (NAMA 2007.12.1–2), Milwaukee's Pedusiri (M1967.20), Shibuya Tokyo's "Ta-akhet-weret" (collection9) and Ankhemmaat (private collection of S. Simonian¹⁷¹). They noted the frequently used "Khepri supra Nut" local motif—that is, a winged scarab above a winged Nut—on Late Period anthropomorphic coffins of northern Upper Egypt, citing the magazine advertisement for "Galerie Antiker Kunst N. u. Dr. S. Simonian 1978."¹⁷² It is an intriguing reference, as the Simonian name appears in the Meretites provenance data and elsewhere as an owner of a number of pieces from Herakleopolis Magna.¹⁷³

Meffre discovered the *sa-mer-ef* priestly title of Meretites' father on the *qrs*w coffin, and she related the winged-scarab and winged-Nut motif on the

anthropoid coffin to three coffins excavated at Abusir el-Melek: the coffin of Somtus (*Sm^c-t³wy*) discovered by Rubensohn in 1904, the coffin of Tadiusir (Leipzig, *ÄMUL* 1496), and a lost coffin from the 1903 Rubensohn excavations.¹⁷⁴ These attributions inspired the search for additional confirmation of the provenience of the Meretites burial. In the process of translating texts on the Meretites coffins, two instances of the Abusir el-Melek cemetery toponym, *3bdw mhty.t* "Abydos of the North," were discovered on the Meretites outer coffin (FIG. 3). Book of the Dead spell 89, along the crest of the Meretites *qrs*w coffin lid (FIG. 2), refers to *3bdw mhty(.t)* in place of the more commonly used Ptolemaic reference to *Iwnw* "Heliopolis" and Osiris sleeping there.¹⁷⁵ Convincing proof of an Abusir el-Melek burial is the offering formula to Anubis, inscribed on the end panel at the foot of the outer coffin (FIG. 6), which calls for *qrs.t nfr(.t) m 3bd.w mhty(.t) n k3 n Wsir Mri(.t)-i.t=s* "a good burial in Northern Abydos for the spirit of Osiris Meretites."

Until now, many of the securely provenanced coffins from Abusir el-Melek have been of simple design, with some roughly fashioned. Due to the richness of the Meretites assemblage design, this paper has endeavored to catalog the iconography and publish the museum's high-quality photographs. It is hoped this resource can lead to further research and an increased understanding of the 3rd- and 4th-century BCE funerary practices in Middle Egypt, specifically for the Abusir el-Melek cemetery of Herakleopolis Magna.

IMAGINE

In closing, one thought has sustained my interest and research. The coffins carefully designed and crafted to protect the deceased Meretites were removed from their original burial site and sold. Her body was unwrapped and lost; her mummy bandages were torn apart, and her viscera box emptied. It is a sobering reminder that our ability to view, study, and appreciate these burial objects has come at a cost. Can we know anything about the humanity of Meretites, or her father or mother?

I was struck by the concluding phrase of Nut's recitation on the outer coffin (FIG. 9). Meretites is deceased, she is "justified." Her mother, Meretites, also deceased, is "reckoned true of voice." Her father must have been alive at the time of her burial.



Osiris Meretites, true (of voice), daughter of the *sa-mer-ef* Hor-wedja, born of Meretites, reckoned true of voice.

FIGURE 9: Ending of the recitation by Nut beneath the hours of the night on the outer coffin trough (© The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art).

Hor-wedja was a *sa-mer-ef* priest, who served Herishef, the patron god of Herakleopolis Magna. His responsibility was to officiate at funerary rituals.

So, imagine: His wife has died, and now his daughter is gone, too. Her name was Meretites, “Beloved of Her Father.” Hor-wedja would have known exactly what images and texts to choose for her coffins.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Two people in particular have given their advice and encouragement throughout the research and the writing of this article. Stacy Davidson, adjunct assistant professor at Johnson County Community College, invited me to present my research on the Meretites coffins at the 19 October 2019 Egyptology Symposium at Missouri State University and encouraged publication of the findings. Her high-quality photography of details of the Meretites gallery display complement the images by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art that document the pieces acquired and the museum conservation work. Foy Scalf, head of the Research Archives at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, provided access to the library he manages, as well as advice on the scope of this initial Meretites research paper, correcting my translations of hieroglyphic texts and reading the cumbersome early drafts. The anonymous peer reviewers and the editors provided valuable, detailed suggestions to clarify the arguments presented and corrected grammatical and spelling errors. I am grateful for their expertise and their patience. Any errors that remain are my own and do not reflect on the quality of support received throughout this project. Finally, I am grateful to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for the permission to use their images.

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NOTES

- ¹ The spelling "Meretites" will be used for the coffin owner, in agreement with other scholars referencing the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art assemblage. An exception is made for Nelson-Atkins related citations and quotations. The museum uses "Meret-it-es," hyphenating the Egyptian phrase, which means "Beloved of her father."
- ² Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art n.d., "Meret-it-es"; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art n.d., "Object Number: 2007.12.114." One *ushebti* included in the museum purchase (2007.12.114), is not a part of the Meretites assemblage and is not on display. The inscription on its front, references a *sa-mer-ef* priest, the title of Meretites' father.
- ³ Meffre 2019; Elias and Lupton 2019.
- ⁴ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 2018, "Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es" Provenance.
- ⁵ Falivene 1998, 3. The nome boundaries included the modern governorates of Beni Suef and northern AI-Minya.
- ⁶ Griffith Institute 2015.
- ⁷ Naville et al. 1894, 3. Falivene 1998, 3. Herakleopolis Magna archaeological excavations were led by Naville, Petrie, Wilcken, the Beni Suef Antiquities Service, and, since 1966, the Spanish Archaeological Mission.
- ⁸ Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 108.
- ⁹ Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 95–96; Quirke 2013, 578–579.; British Museum. n.d.; Budge 1912, pls. LXXXVI–LXXXVII. The wide-ranging importance of the Herakleopolitan region is evidenced by the Greenfield Papyrus (P. London BM EA 10554) hymn to Osiris in the *Nsi-t³-nbt-š³rw* (Nestanebetisheru) Book of the Dead. The papyrus is from Thebes. Nestanebetisheru was priestess of Amun and Mut and was daughter of Pinedjem II, high priest of Amun.

dw³ wsir ... n wn-nfr nb t³ dsr
hk³ Ddt H³t-mhyt, nb N^crt, nsw m Nn-nsw, sr
wr/smsw m N-³r=f, nsw m P sr (m) Dp, hk³
idbw m Nn-nsw, bnw ntri m Hwt-sr.

Hymn to Osiris . . . to Wennefer, lord of the sacred land

Ruler of Mendes and the Mendesian nome, lord of (the) Naret (province), *nsw*-king in Herakleopolis Magna, great prince in Naref, *nsw*-king in Pe and *sr*-prince in Dep, *hk³*-ruler of the two banks in Herakleopolis Magna, divine benu-bird in the temple of the Prince.

- ¹⁰ Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 13; Möller 1926, 1–2.
¹¹ Siegmann 2012, 2; Rubensohn and Knatz 1904, 1–21.
¹² Leitz et al. 2005, vol. 114, 381.
¹³ Wainwright 1934, 140–141.
¹⁴ Elias 2014, 2.
¹⁵ Petrie and Griffith 1903, pl. v, 36; Wainwright 1934, 141.
¹⁶ Newberry and Wainwright 1914, 152; Toth 2016 “Palermo Stone.”
¹⁷ Griffith Institute 2015. The original Twelfth Dynasty structure was expanded during the Eighteenth Dynasty rule of Ramesses II.
¹⁸ Pérez Díe 2009, 321.
¹⁹ Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 169. An extensive list of scholars who support this view are referenced in n. 517.
²⁰ Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 171.
²¹ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art n.d. “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es.” Work is ongoing to validate and publish provenance documentation for the collection. In the event that website information for the coffin set is updated, an archived copy of the museum webpage from March 28, 2018, is stored by the Internet Archive WaybackMachine: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 2018 “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es,” with the referenced provenance.
²² Malek 2009: A scan of the Griffith Institute working file for the Topographical Bibliography identifies the following institutions in possession of artifacts from Kamal’s Khashaba excavations

published in the *Annales du Service des antiquités de l’Égypte*: Alexandria; Asyût Museum; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum; Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum; Cairo Egyptian Museum; Cleveland Museum of Art; Kraków; Munich, Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst; New York, Metropolitan Museum; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum; Paris, Musée du Louvre; private possession. Sandmeier (dealer) Göttingen; Toledo Museum of Art; Uppsala, Victoriamuseet för Egyptiska; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum; Walters Art Museum, Baltimore; Zurich, Kunstmuseum. A search of The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s online collection for “Khashaba” results in a list of 124 results, including “William the Hippo,” MMA 17.9.1 (<metmuseum.org/art/collection/search#!?q=khashaba >).

- ²³ See Reid 1985, 233; Schneider 2013, 160; Yehia 2017, 68–69. Kamal had been trained by leading German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch in the Madrast El Lesan Almasry Alqadeem (School of the Ancient Egyptian Language), opened by the khedive to train Egyptians for work in the Egyptian Museum and the Antiquities Service. His publications are detailed, and while they show no photographs or drawings of his work, the hieroglyphic inscriptions are carefully transcribed.
²⁴ Kamal 1911, 3 : “Les fouilles, faites aux frais de Said bey Khachabah et de Mohammed effendi Séoudi, commencèrent le dimanche 4 février 1910, dans une petite nécropole située au nord des ruines de l’ancienne ville de Manqabad.”
²⁵ Davoli et. al 2010, 152 n. 13.
²⁶ Kamal 1911 ; Kamal 1912; Kamal 1914; Kamal 1915; Kamal 1916a; and Kamal 1916b.
²⁷ Harvey 1991, 2.
²⁸ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art n.d. “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es.” See the Object, Date, Provenance, and note 1.
²⁹ Kamal 1911; Kamal 1912; Kamal 1914; and Kamal 1915. “Rapport sur les Fouilles Exécutées dans la Zone Comprise entre Déirout, au Nord et Déir-el-Ganadlah, au Sud.”
³⁰ In the Strudwick and Dawson 2019 published proceedings from the April 2016 Fitzwilliam

- Museum conference on ancient Egyptian coffins, Meretites is mentioned by Meffre (2019, 78) and Elias and Lupton (2019, 178, 180, and 184). Both suggest Meretites was from Herakleopolis and buried at Abusir el-Melek.
- ³¹ Kamal 1916b, 183.
- ³² Kamal 1915, 177. “Sayed bey Khachaba, qui avait obtenu depuis environ quatre ans de la Direction Générale du Service des Antiquités l’autorisation de faire des fouilles sous ma surveillance dans une vaste zone comprise a droite et a gauche du Nil entre Baouit au nord et El-Ghanaim au sud, avait eu d’abord l’intention de livrer au commerce les antiquités qui lui revenaient dans le partage des objets provenant des fouilles. Pendant deux ans il s’en tint à cette résolution; mais, la troisième année, je lui conseillai pour son bon renom à l’étranger et particulièrement pour sa situation et ses bonnes œuvres dans son pays, de doter sa ville d’une collection qui formerait plus tard le noyau d’un grand musée provincial. L’an dernier, il se décida à réaliser ce projet et il ne tarda pas à construire dans sa propriété un local convenable pour y exposer des antiquités. Cette année-ci s’accrurent ses désirs de compléter sa collection dans un intérêt public.”
- ³³ Riggs 2005, 119 n. 20.
- ³⁴ Elias and Lupton 2019, 178.
- ³⁵ Kamal 1915, 178. “Encouragé par notre Directeur général, je suis arrivé à former le premier noyau de la collection et à obtenir de Sayyed bey Khachaba un acte officiel établissant que cette collection devenait propriété publique sous la surveillance de M. le Directeur général du Service des Antiquités.”
- ³⁶ Winlock 1934, 184. “In December 1913, Sayid Bey Khashaba, excavating on a concession granted him by the Egyptian Government in the desert near Asyūt, discovered Yuny’s tomb and in it two limestone statues. The smaller of these, a statue of Yuny and his wife Renwet, about half life-size, he sold to the Metropolitan Museum in 1914.... the larger statue from the tomb was the most striking object in the museum which Sayid Bey had opened in his own city of Asyūt.... things have changed in recent years. Sayid Pasha, as he had become since 1914, finding it difficult to support single-handed the museum in Asyūt, offered the larger statue to us, and we have once more brought together the two statues from Yuny’s tomb.”
- ³⁷ Paul 2008. “Nelson curator [until 2018] Robert Cohon confirmed that heirs of the original private collector had been unloading the family holdings since the 1950s.”
- ³⁸ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 2018, “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es,” according to Provenance section note [3].
- ³⁹ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 2018, “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es,” Provenance and Exhibition History.
- ⁴⁰ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 2018 “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es,” Provenance and Exhibition History.
- ⁴¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization n.d.
- ⁴² Judicialis Rechtsprechung, n.d. and Anton 2010, 171.
- ⁴³ Thorson and Paul 2007.
- ⁴⁴ Greco 2014, 173.
- ⁴⁵ Adapted from Carrier 2010, 302; Faulkner and Andrews 2010, 84.
- ⁴⁶ Gauthier 1925, 4.
- ⁴⁷ Junker 1911.
- ⁴⁸ Vittmann 1981.
- ⁴⁹ Pries 2011.
- ⁵⁰ Nuzzolo and Krejčí 2017, 375–76. Conclusions: The archaeological and textual evidence does not conclusively support the Heliopolitan origins of the solar cult and the central role of Ra at its beginning. The Ennead and Atum were more likely the earliest cult worship at Heliopolis, and the “‘local’ god Atum might thus have been gradually absorbed by, or simply united with, a new (and mostly royal) god, i.e.[.] Ra.”
- ⁵¹ Greco 2014, 187.
- ⁵² Assmann 1995, 17.
- ⁵³ Müller-Roth 2008, 536–537.
- ⁵⁴ Barwik 1998, 109.
- ⁵⁵ Mueller-Roth 2008, 538.

- ⁵⁶ Griffin 2017, 98.
- ⁵⁷ Mueller-Roth 2008, 538.
- ⁵⁸ Miatello 2018, 91.
- ⁵⁹ Miatello 2018, 91.
- ⁶⁰ Mueller-Roth 2008, 538; Piankoff and Drioton 1942; Piankoff 1954.
- ⁶¹ Sheikholeslami (2010, 386 n. 41) references the unique hour names on the Ankhefenkhonsu coffins (CG 41001 and 41001bis).
- ⁶² Moret 1913, vol. 1. CG 41001bis day hours (35), night hours (37); CG 41001 mislabeled as CG 41003 day hours (77), night hours (76).
- ⁶³ Allard Pierson Museum. n.d. Museum records date the fragment to the Twenty-fifth or Twenty-sixth Dynasty with an archaeological site of Thebes, possibly the west bank.
- ⁶⁴ Cohon and Jackson 2010, 14.
- ⁶⁵ Elias and Lupton 2019, 178. The authors suggests that Shepenbastet's name might be that of the mother of Padiousir, owner of Milwaukee Art Museum coffin M1967.20.
- ⁶⁶ Allard Pierson Museum. n.d. The hieroglyphs are recorded on a flash image linked to the webpage. One spelling difference exists in writing Shepenbastet hour four, *sšt3* "secret/hidden one." Probably in error, the scribe used two Gardiner N35 water signs in place of the Gardner N37 sign on the Meretites coffin.
- ⁶⁷ Valentine 2010, 12. Valentine indicates the motif was used during the New Kingdom on coffins for Siptah, Sethnakhte, and Ramses IV, and that the Late Period sarcophagi revive the earlier designs.
- ⁶⁸ Maspero 1914. Photographs of a *kheker* and Anubis frieze on three Cairo Museum sarcophagi are shown on plates IX and X for the sarcophagus of Ankhophi son of Tefnakhti, plates XIV, XV, and XVI for Painmou's sarcophagus CG 29305, and plates XXIII, XXIV, XXV, and XXVI for the sarcophagus of the dwarf Taho (Djeho) CG 29307.
- ⁶⁹ Greco 2014, 184. Greco notes the close relationship of text and images in ancient Egypt and suggests that, when space is limited, in place of the Nut image an artist could substitute text that mentions the role of Nut in the reincarnation process.
- ⁷⁰ Museo Egizio 2019; Museo Egizio. n.d. "Iuefankh." Date is 332–30 BCE. Provenance is listed as "Thebes (?)"
- ⁷¹ Walters Art Museum n.d. With the exception of the Walters Art Museum viscera box, I have found no parallels to the Nelson-Atkins post design.
- ⁷² Christian Greco, personal communication, 15 November 2019. This idea was proposed in a conversation with Christian Greco and Stacy Davidson. A similar pattern is visible on the *imiut* fetish of Osiris in vignette to Book of the Dead spell 125 of Iuefankh (FIG. 7).
- ⁷³ Zamacona 2015, 15.
- ⁷⁴ See, for example, the Metternich stela (Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. "Magical Stela"), the Thonis-Heracleion stela, 378–362 BCE (Saint Louis Art Museum 2018; see slam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2-low-res-Sunken-Cities-object-images.jpg) and the beginning of the Book of the Earth in the first register on the south wall of the burial chamber of Ramesses VI, tomb KV9 (Dzikowski 2001).
- ⁷⁵ Erman and Grapow 1971, V 365.
- ⁷⁶ Budge 1920, cxxxiv. "Number 31: Khnemu."
- ⁷⁷ See Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst München n.d. for links to sarcophagus images and Ägyptischen Museum und Papyrussammlung 2020 for the Berlin Museum object information.
- ⁷⁸ Wiedemann 1886, 233. Wiedemann's reference to the sarcophagus in Brugsch's 1850 *Uebersichtliche Erklärung Ägyptischer Denkmäler des Königl. Neuen Museums zu Berlin* is incorrect. The catalog entry was 23, not 21. See Brugsch 1850, 85–87.
- ⁷⁹ Wiedemann 1886, 234. Wiedemann notes variations between the Ankh-Hor sarcophagus and the Turin 1791 papyrus in detail. See Lepsius 1842, 70, pl. XLVII, for the facsimile of Turin 1791.
- ⁸⁰ Wiedemann 1886, 233.
- ⁸¹ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. "Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es."

- ⁸² Taylor 2001, 236 and 241.
- ⁸³ Taylor 1989, 53.
- ⁸⁴ Taylor 2001, 241; Valentine 2010, 11–12.
- ⁸⁵ Taylor 2001, 237–238.
- ⁸⁶ Niwiński 1989, 54.
- ⁸⁷ Niwiński 1989, 55.
- ⁸⁸ The transliteration is based on the Maystre (1940, 59) transcriptions of texts from the tombs of Seti I, Ramesses II and Ramesses III. The translation is by Lichtheim (1976, 198).
- ⁸⁹ Arbuckle 2018. This same outline appears on the Meretites mummy mask, a detail which should be cataloged as part of this design style.
- ⁹⁰ Elias 1993, 604; Elias and Lupton 2019, 178.
- ⁹¹ The declaration of innocence to Osiris is part A of Book of the Dead spell 125, which contains knowledge the deceased must recite during the final judgement.
- ⁹² Elias and Lupton 2019, 182.
- ⁹³ Metropolitan Museum of Art 2018. Purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2017 (2017.255b) and returned to Egypt in 2019. The file was donated to Wikimedia Commons as part of a project by the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 22 January 2018.
- ⁹⁴ Cooney 1953, 16–17.
- ⁹⁵ Elias and Lupton 2019, 180–182.
- ⁹⁶ Cohon and Jackson 2010, 42.
- ⁹⁷ Sousa 2014, 105.
- ⁹⁸ Elias and Lupton 2019, 177; Meffre 2019, 75–80.
- ⁹⁹ Niwiński 2018, 33–34. The following quotation from Niwiński includes his inline citations in the format published: “The sarcophagus is (in PT 616) only identified with Nut, who as mother of the dead king protects him from all things evil (Faulkner 1969, 119; Schott[s] 1965, 81); the sarcophagus becomes at the same time the womb of Nut, who ensured celestial rebirth for her child, just as she gave new birth to the sun every day (Willems 1988, 134). A number of utterances in the Pyramid Texts (PT 580, 638, 777, 825, 1607) draw a clear parallel between the lid of the sarcophagus and the sky, in a text now known as the Nut formula: ‘your mother Nut has spread herself over you’ (Faulkner 1969, 114, 121, 141, 148, 241). This is later repeated not only on the coffin of the Middle Kingdom (Willems 1988, 134; Barguet 1971, 20), but also on numerous coffins and sarcophagi of the Late Period, where it usually accompanies the figure of Nut carved or painted on the lid, outside as well as inside (Sethe 1892, 95; Gauthier 1913, 34–5, 116; Moret 1913, 39; Sander-Hansen 1937, 70, 118).”
- ¹⁰⁰ Haikal 2020, 1–6, is an abbreviated summary of the original creation of Atum/Ra and beginnings of the cyclical journey of Ra in his various forms. Nuzzolo and Krejčí (2017, 357–371) discuss archaeological evidence for the development of the sun cult at Heliopolis and the uniting of Atum and Ra. Wells (1992, 318–320) focuses on astronomical patterns and events that support the concept of Nut giving birth to Ra as well as Ra’s self-creating aspect.
- ¹⁰¹ Sousa (2014, 97) cites the coffin of Ta-baket-en-Khons, ÄS 6265 (Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien n.d.) A later example from the Matsuoka Museum of Art in Meguro, created during the Thirtieth Dynasty or the Early Ptolemaic Period, shows rams on standard flanking the central panel winged Nut (Amith 2019).
- ¹⁰² Niwiński 2018, 35.
- ¹⁰³ See Allen 2005, 156: “459 Recitation from the Pepi I: Corridor” and 294: “524 Recitation of Pepi II.”
- ¹⁰⁴ “Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es” museum website object record: Provenance section note 1, as of October 2020.
- ¹⁰⁵ Arbuckle (2018, 191, 195, 211, 213, 237–238, 262, 328, 366–367, 371, 384, 400–401) notes the two-thousand-year practice of putting red paint along hidden coffin joints of some coffins as part of ritual practice that recognized the vulnerability at the joining of individual parts and the need for prophylactic measures.
- ¹⁰⁶ Cooney 2015, 283.
- ¹⁰⁷ Siegmann 2012, 5–6. Siegmann is associated with the Swiss Coffin Project. “Sie tradieren vignettenhaft die gesamten Kultmanifestationen (neben den Hauptgöttern und ihren lokalen Erscheinungsformen auch das erweiterte

- Pantheon), die lokalen Mythen, heiligen Gegenstände, Feste, Rituale, Priester etc.”
- ¹⁰⁸ Davies 1953, 3–7, pl. 3, 72b.
- ¹⁰⁹ Siegmann 2012, 6. “Unter den Kultabläufen um Osiris von Naref, dem heiligen Hain von Herakleopolis magna, erscheint die siebenköpfige Schlange Schai, begleitet von Renenutet, ihrer schlangengestaltigen Gemahlin (Sohn der Renenutet als Name des Grossvaters). Seit dem Ende des Alten Reiches war Osiris von Naref eine der vorherrschenden Gottheiten. Im Zuge der Zusammenführung der dort einheimischen Götter wird Somtus über Horus, den Sohn des Osiris, zu Harsomtus (Horus-Somtus). Seine Beliebtheit im Volksglauben der Spätzeit drückt sich in den mit Somtus gebildeten Personennamen aus.”
- ¹¹⁰ Cohon and Jackson 2010, 67–68; Elias and Lupton 2019, 184.
- ¹¹¹ Quirke 2013, 243. Papyrus of Nebseny (British Museum EA 9900, late Eighteenth Dynasty Memphis).
- ¹¹² Lepsius 1842, XLI.
- ¹¹³ Carrier 2010, 378–380.
- ¹¹⁴ Totenbuchprojekt Bonn. n.d. “0 Treffer.”
- ¹¹⁵ Elias and Lupton 2019, 184.
- ¹¹⁶ Cohon and Jackson 2010, 66–67; Elias and Lupton 2019, 182.
- ¹¹⁷ Quirke 2013, 394–95. The text cited is from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty Papyrus Marseille 291, of Nespasef.
- ¹¹⁸ The reading of this name is uncertain. Trismegistos (n.d.) (TM Ref 112777) name and person attestation reads it as $T^3-3h.t$, which would mean “The (female) effective one.” For this paper, “Ta-akhet-weret” in quotations will be the name used to facilitate locating the cited references for the coffin.
- ¹¹⁹ Kondo et al. 2004, 12–13, 100–101; Ancient Egyptian Museum Shibuya. n.d.
- ¹²⁰ Elias and Lupton 2019, 182, 184.
- ¹²¹ Elias and Lupton 2019, 182. Elias and Lupton mention Osiris, the deceased, and the Abydos fetish on the two pendants.
- ¹²² Elias and Lupton 2019, 180–181, 183; Milwaukee Art Museum. n.d.
- ¹²³ Metropolitan Museum of Art 2018. The image file was donated to Wikimedia Commons on January 22, 2018, as part of a project of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- ¹²⁴ Rocheleau and Taylor 2017, 213. Rams on the front of anthropoid coffins below the *wesekh*-collar were rare features before the mid-7th century but became increasingly frequent after that. They mention three coffins from Thebes: The North Carolina Museum of Art inner coffin of Djedmut G.73.8.4, Ankhefenkhons “viii” and Besenmut “ix.” Rams also appear on the University of Chicago Oriental Institute cartonnage of Meresamun (OIM 10797), temple singer at Karnak, from roughly 800 BCE, so admittedly the motif is not limited to northern upper Egypt.
- ¹²⁵ Faulkner and Andrews 2010, 9, 30.
- ¹²⁶ Kondo et al. 2004, 12, 101.
- ¹²⁷ Elias and Lupton 2019, 182, 184.
- ¹²⁸ Elias and Lupton 2019, 184.
- ¹²⁹ Bruwier, Marie-Cécile 1995, 11–15; Limme 1998, 1169–1180; Meffre 2012, 161; Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “TM 133751” and “TM 133765;” Elias and Lupton 2019, 82, 84.
- ¹³⁰ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. “Statuette of Nephthys from the Tomb of Meret-it-es” (object number 2007.12.5) and “Statuette of Isis from the Tomb of Meret-it-es” (object number: 2007.12.6). Dimensions of Nephthys: 15 x 7 5/8 x 4 inches (38.1 x 19.38 x 10.16 cm); dimensions of Isis: 15 1/4 x 3 1/2 x 7 inches (38.74 x 8.89 x 17.78 cm).
- ¹³¹ Garland et al. 2012, 131. The statuettes would not have been mounted on the lid using peg holes as claimed by Elias and Lupton (2019, 177).
- ¹³² Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. “Outer Coffin of Meret-it-es” (2007.12.1.C bird) Dimensions: 10 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 8 3/4 inches (26.67 x 6.99 x 22.23 cm).
- ¹³³ Taylor 2018, 35: “Painted wooden images of falcons were often placed on the four corner posts and a jackal and falcon on the central band of the lid.” Greco 2010, 31: “In genere una statuetta in legno dipinta di nero e raffigurante uno sciacallo era posta sopra il coperchio

- all'altezza dei piedi.”
- ¹³⁴ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. “Mummy Mask of Meret-it-es” (2007.12.3) Dimensions: 15 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 10 inches (39.37 x 24.13 x 25.4 cm).
- ¹³⁵ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. “Pectoral of Meret-it-es” (2007.12.4.A) Dimensions: 12 3/4 x 17 inches (32.39 x 43.18 cm).
- ¹³⁶ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. n.d. “Apron of Meret-it-es” (2007.12.4.B) Dimensions: 27 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches (70.49 x 19.69 cm).
- ¹³⁷ Meffre 2012, 163.
- ¹³⁸ Ikram and Dodson 1998, 187.
- ¹³⁹ Cohon and Jackson 2010. 78: The red line surrounding the face of the mask, and also the face of the inner coffin lid, magically protects it.
- ¹⁴⁰ Vandenbeusch et al. 2021, 281–282, 292. Vandenbeusch, O’Flynn, and Moreno studied the production process for five Ptolemaic cartonnage helmet masks in the British Museum collection, using X-ray, CT, and surface scanning to document and compare the layers for each of the masks.
- ¹⁴¹ Vandenbeusch et al. 2021, 282.
- ¹⁴² Ikram and Dodson 1998, 187.
- ¹⁴³ Vandenbeusch et al. 2021, 292, 298.
- ¹⁴⁴ Stadler 2004, 70–71: in the Martin von Wagner Museum. Meffre 2012, 163: Dimensions: 41.7 x 21.5 x 23 cm., Date: 4th century BCE. The remains of Ankh-somtus (Ankh-sema-tau), son of Hathoremakhet were found during German excavations in the necropolis of Abusir el-Melek and were sent to the University of Würzburg.
- ¹⁴⁵ Meffre 2012, 162; Bruwier 1995, 12, Dimensions: outer mask 36 x 21.5 x 29 cm., inner mask 33 cm.
- ¹⁴⁶ Habicht et al. 2016, 225.
- ¹⁴⁷ Kondo et al. 2004, 11, 100. The Kikugawa pieces are attributed to the Ptolemaic period but not to a specific locale.
- ¹⁴⁸ Meffre 2012, 163.
- ¹⁴⁹ See Raven 2005 for a discussion of the significance of the positions of the Four Sons of Horus and Isis and Nephthys.
- ¹⁵⁰ Meffre 2012, 162–163. Dimensions: pectoral 23 x 40 cm apron 75 x 17 cm.
- ¹⁵¹ Meffre 2012, 163.
- ¹⁵² Stadler 2004, 71–77. Dimensions: pectoral 43.7 x 41.5 cm apron 27.8 x 20.2 cm.
- ¹⁵³ Riggs 2010, 136; Stadler 2004, 71–76.
- ¹⁵⁴ Lepsius 1842, II.
- ¹⁵⁵ Valentine 2010, 4–5.
- ¹⁵⁶ Valentine 2010; use of molds, p. 49; summary of team structure, pp. 105–106.
- ¹⁵⁷ Valentine 2010, 11.
- ¹⁵⁸ Valentine 2010, 11.
- ¹⁵⁹ Valentine 2010, 11.
- ¹⁶⁰ Limme 1998, 1171n6. The general’s ushebti are in collections including the Brooklyn Museum (37.141E), the Cairo Egyptian Museum (47465, 47473, and 47466) and art dealer J. Bagot (20142132). See also *Ars Historica Archaeology* n.d.
- ¹⁶¹ Meffre 2012, 166–167.
- ¹⁶² Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “TM 133723.” Herakleopolis is listed as the “Herkunft.” The Díaz-Iglesias Llanos (2005, 76; bibliographical reference: “M. Simonian Private Collection 1 (g, 1-2), mr-iti-s, [Heracleopolis Magna]. Fragmentary state.”) specifically refers to Herakleopolis Magna. Recall that the Simonian family was involved in the sale of the Meretites coffins by Osman Sayyed Khashaba; see discussion in the present paper under PROVENANCE.
- ¹⁶³ Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “TM 133751” and “TM 133765.”
- ¹⁶⁴ Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “TM 133723.” Spells include “/// Tb 15 + V1 /// V18 - V19 od. V21? - V? - V31 - V33 - V36 - V39 - V41 - V? // /// Tb 75 - 76 - 77 - 78 + V23 + V24 + V25 + V26 + V27 + V28 + V29? + V30 + V43 + V50 + V47 + V10/48? + V56? + V57/V59 /// Tb 78 /// 86 - 87 - 88 - 89 + V85 + V86 + V87 + V88 + V89 + V91 + V92 + V93 - Tb 91 - 92 /// Tb 99/99B /// Tb 92 - 93 + V98 + V99/99B + V100/129 + V101 + V108 + V44 - Tb 94 - 95 - 96 - 97 - 98 - 99/99B /// V110 - 104 - 105 - 106 - 107 - 108 - 109 /// V110 /// 112 /// Tb 124 - 125A - 125B - 125C - TG - 126 - 127 - 130 - 131 + V126+V155 - 136/136A - 138 - 140 - 141 - 142 - 144 - 145” Spell 17 does not appear in this list but is referenced by Díaz-Iglesias Llanos (2005, 76) apparently on

bandage section g, F1 and F2 in a “Fragmentary state.” All three sections of spell 125 are included on the bandages while only the assessors from 125B appear on the outer coffin. The spell 89 text and vignette are on both the bandages and outer coffin.

- ¹⁶⁵ Walters Art Museum n.d. The Walters Art Museum dates the box to the Third Intermediate Period, ca. 850–700 BCE. Egypt is listed as the place of origin. “During the New Kingdom, ushabti figures were often placed in a painted wooden box shaped like a shrine. Only the sides of this box are preserved, and it may have held a number of ushabti figures or a set of canopic jars. The deities associated with death and the afterlife are represented on the box’s panels. There is the figure of a jackal on top of a shrine, which represents the embalming god Anubis. Isis and Nephthys flank the large symbol of Osiris and the four sons of Horus. All of the inscriptions are related to the god Osiris.”

¹⁶⁶ Bruwier 1998, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Bruwier 1998, 62, 79.

¹⁶⁸ Bruwier 1998, 67n36.

¹⁶⁹ Elias 2019, 182.

¹⁷⁰ Rocheleau and Taylor 2017, 218–220.

¹⁷¹ Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “TM 133751” and “TM 133765.”

¹⁷² Elias and Lupton 2019. 177.

¹⁷³ Totenbuchprojekt Bonn n.d. “Herkunft: Herakleopolis.” Items include: bandages belonging to *Mr-iti-s*, *Hr-s-n-f*, *nh-m-Mst* (2) and a papyrus of *Hr-s-n-f*.

¹⁷⁴ Meffre 2019, 75, 78.

¹⁷⁵ See Daressy 1902, 170 (Padiusir); Lepsius 1842, XXXIII (Turin 1791); Allen 1960, 164; Allen 1974, 74; Maspero 1914, 164 (CG20305).