

Canopic Jar Lid & Funerary Beliefs In Ancient Egypt

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What is a Canopic Jar?

A Canopic jar is an item used in Ancient Egyptian burials. This was designed specifically to hold the embalmed Viscera (the internal organs) of the person after their death (Stevenson, 2010).

Where the Canopic Jars are found & where are they placed in a burial chamber?

Canopic Jars are found in the tombs of the Pharaohs in Ancient Egyptian burials appearing in the Fourth and Fifth dynasties. Canopic jars are either placed in a chest or an area created in the tomb for them, or near the Mummy on the floor (Taylor, 2001).



(Museum, n.d.)



(Dahl, 2008)



My object on loan from the Cyfarthan Castle Museum and Art Gallery, is a Lid to a Canopic Jar. This is an important piece of funerary equipment. This item was passed on to the Museum from an Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

Pottery

The Canopic Jar Lid is believed to be Marl pottery. The pottery is from marl clay which is found along the Nile. This piece of pottery fires to a pale grey colour similar to the lid (Bourniau, et al., 2006).

Dating the item

The Canopic jar lid is believed to have been made with a potter's wheel and this can be seen in the rings on the inside of the lid (Lacovara, 2017).

Due to the fact that the lid is one of the sons of Horus, Amseti this makes the lid being made after the New Kingdom, especially after the 18th dynasty (Germer, 1997).

It is also argued that because of the beard that the lid, makes it more Middle Kingdom than the Late Kingdom. Especially as Amseti is never pictured with a beard unlike our my object meaning it possibly represents a human-headed one.



The Four sons of Horus and the Goddesses

In Ancient Egypt, it was very important to protect the internal organs. The reason for this is for the afterlife as it was believed they would need their bodies and internal organs.

Four deities protected the Canopic Jars, they are the sons of Horus. The first human-headed jars are believed to be the sons of Horus, before evolving into animal-headed jar lids (Bard, 2008) (Spencer, 1984).

Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Selkis are the four deities that protect the Sons of Horus in helping to protect the internal organs (Spencer, 1984).

The first son of Horus is Amseti or Imseti, he or she is represented by the Human head. Amseti looks after the liver (Trustees of the British Museum, 1994) (Spencer, 1984). Isis (Protective Goddess) is the Goddesses that provides extra protection to Amseti. This can be

seen in an inscription

'O Isis may you take care over Imset who is within you! The revered one before Imset, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Aw-ib-re.' (Spencer, 1984, p. 157)

The Falcon headed, Qebhsenuf (God of Protection) holds and looks after the intestines inside his Canopic Jar (Trustees of the British Museum, 1994). Selkis (Scorpion Goddess) is one of the four goddesses that looks after and Qebhsenuf (Taylor, 2001) (Trustees of the British Museum, 1994).

Hapy (God of the flooding of the Nile river) is the Baboon headed Canopic Jar that looks after the body's Lungs. Hapys has added protection from Nephthys (Taylor, 2001).

Duamutef (Guardian of the East) is the Jackel headed lid that protects the stomach with extra protection from Neith (Taylor, 2001) (Trustees of the British Museum, 1994).

(Pinch, 2002) (Oakes & Gahlin, 2007)

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