

Canopic Jar Lid

Melisa Pak

Object: Canopic jar lid, possibly Imsety

Material: Marl clay

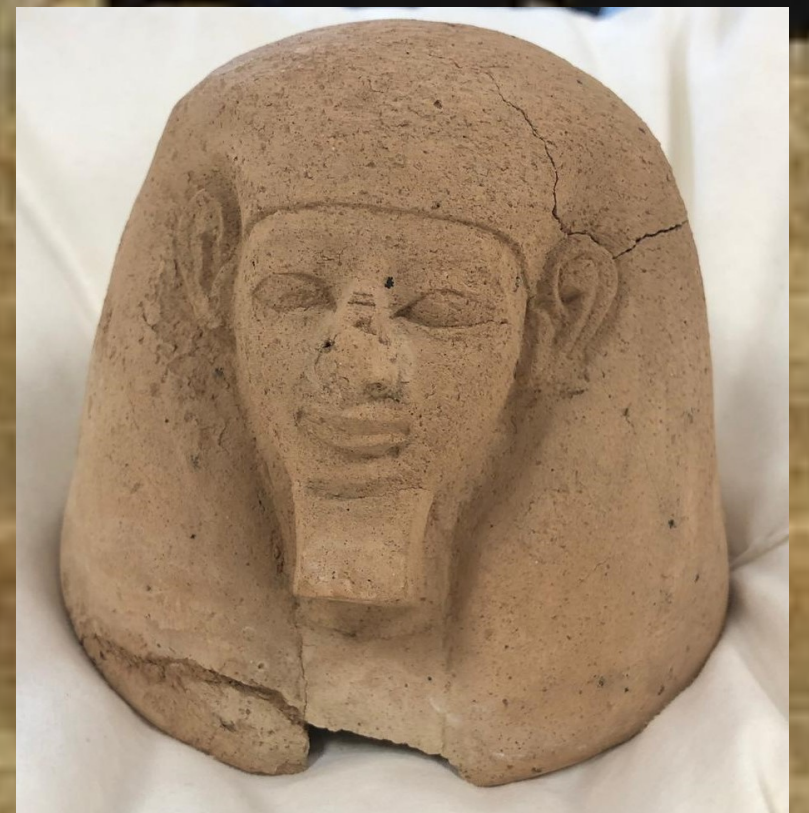
Dimensions: Base circumference 41 cm, height 11 cm

Location: Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil

Donated from Cairo Museum by Major Harry Hartley Southey, 1917

Date and tomb unknown although the pottery rings inside suggest Late Period.⁶

This canopic jar lid may be a fake because of some discrepancies in its construction however canopic jars played a vital role in Ancient Egyptian funerary practices and beliefs.



Canopic Jar Lid . Pak, M (2019) CCM 184.004³



Human Headed canopic jar.

(Met Museum n.d.) 30.8.125a, b

Funerary Practices and Beliefs

Canopic jars have been involved in ancient Egyptian's funerary beliefs since the Old Kingdom up to the Late Period⁴ (approx. 2,343 years)⁴. The jars contained soft organs or viscera, to preserve and restore function for the afterlife⁴. They were made from a variety of materials such as limestone and Egyptian alabaster⁴. The jars would be found in the burial chambers near the deceased for easy access once they were reborn⁴. Canopic jars were important in funerary practice. Funerary practices supported funerary beliefs to ensure life after death;

- * Mummifying the corpse and preserving organs⁴
- * Casting magic spells⁴
- * Tombs⁴
- * Grave goods that were essential for the afterlife⁴

Mummification and associated practices were expensive⁴. This could explain why the canopic jars are found in high status tombs⁴.

To access the afterlife it was vital for the corpse to be preserved correctly⁴. Without their organs they would not be able to do this. The heart was left untouched because it represented who you were and where your knowledge was⁴. The heart was then weighed in the judgement scene in order to enter the afterlife⁴.

Protectors of the Dead

The jars came as a set of four; each represented by the four sons of Horus and grandsons of the god of the underworld, Osiris; Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef and Qebehsenuef⁵. Each son had a protective role over an organ and had their own protective goddess who played an important role within the Egyptian's funerary beliefs⁵:

- * Imsety, protector of the liver, Goddess Isis a mourner, sustainer and protector of the deceased⁵
- * Hapy, protector of the lungs, Nephthys a funerary goddess⁵
- * Duamutef, protector of the stomach and upper intestines, Neith a funerary goddess⁵
- * Qebehsenuef, protector of the lower intestines, Selket protector of coffins and canopic jars⁵

Canopic jars were a small but vital part of the funerary process.

Bibliography

- 1 Met Museum. (n.d.) Human headed canopic jar. Available at https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/550886?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&what=Canopic+jars&ft=*&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=16 [Accessed 25/03/19]
- 2 Met Museum. (n.d.) Four sons of Horus. Available at <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/559935> [Accessed 25/03/19]
- 3 Pak, M. (2019) Canopic jar lid.
- 4 Taylor, J. H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. London: The Trustees of the British Museum.
- 5 Wilkinson, R. H. (2003) *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames & Hudson
- 6 Lacovara, P. (2017) *The World of Ancient Egypt: a daily life encyclopedia*. 2nd Vol. California: Greenwood



From left to right: Qebehsenuef, Imsety, Hapy and Duamutef (Met Museum n.d.) 28.3.58a, b²