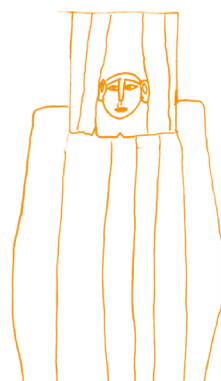


Deir el-Bahari as a provenance zone for a distinct class of Roman period wooden coffins



Abstract: This paper seeks to associate a specific category of coffins, discovered in the 19th century, with the Deir el-Bahari area. These coffins date to the Roman era, specifically between the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. The aim is to describe the type of coffins produced by Theban workshops for the necropolis active at Deir el-Bahari during this time. The author analyzes supporting evidence drawn from discoveries made by the Metropolitan Museum's expedition in the 1920s, as well as from ongoing research on coffins sharing the same stylistic and iconographic features, whose provenance from the necropolis at Deir el-Bahari is based on other forms of evidence. Although these coffins have rarely been the subject of in-depth analysis with respect to their provenance –often due to the lack of contextual information– recent investigations provide a plausible framework suggesting that Deir el-Bahari functioned as a broader area of origin for these finds.

Keywords: Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Mentuhotep II, Temple of Hatshepsut, Roman era, wooden coffins, research in the 19th century

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Finally, I thank the anonymous reviewers, whose comments helped improve this work. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

INTRODUCTION

The Deir el-Bahari area displays evidence of prolonged occupation across various periods. As archaeological evidence indicates, the area was occupied into later historical phases (Barwik 2011; Chudzik 2022: 125–144). This paper focuses primarily on material pertaining to the Roman period. The evidence for activity during this time includes not only reuse of earlier funerary complexes but also the continued funerary use of the area itself. More broadly, the entire region of Western Thebes displays sustained occupation during the Roman era (Bataille 1951; Strudwick 2003: 171–179; Riggs 2003; 2005: 175–244; 2012; Kóthay 2017).

Based on the hypothetical historical framework discussed here and the available archaeological record, this paper identifies the area of Deir el-Bahari —specifically the vicinity around the funerary temple of Hatshepsut— as the most plausible provenance for a particular category of Roman-period coffins. This conclusion is supported primarily by concrete data from the Metropolitan Museum's expedition and, more recently, by findings from the mission of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw. During the 1923–1924 excava-

tion season, Herbert Winlock, then director of the Metropolitan Museum's excavations, unearthed material in the Deir el-Bahari area —between the temples of Mentuhotep II and Hatshepsut— clearly datable to the Roman period. These finds included mummies of young individuals equipped with cartonnage and various coffin fragments corresponding to the class of Roman-period coffins discussed here (Winlock 1924: 32–33). Notably, no comparable specimens or fragments have been documented to date outside the Theban area (see below: A group of wooden coffins?).

The antiquarian dimension must also be considered as part of an attempt to construct a more complex and integrated understanding of the issue. Thebes was a prominent destination for European travelers during the 19th century, and numerous sites are mentioned in contemporary accounts (see below: Deir el-Bahari provenance and evidence from 19th century research). However, it is important to note that the landscape of the Deir el-Bahari and Asasif areas at that time differed significantly from what can be observed today.

A GROUP OF WOODEN COFFINS?

The coffins from the Metropolitan Museum's excavations at Deir el-Bahari have been classified by researchers as belonging to a group defined as “Soter-nalia” (Riggs and Depauw 2002). This paper, however, uses the more accurate and specific term “*sarcofagi sagomati*”,

which also encompasses other coffins (or their parts) housed in various European museums (see below: Catalog). The term “*sarcofagi sagomati*” is used to refer to a particular category of coffins that, due to their structural peculiarities —especially the “angular” and sharp-edged

rendering of physiognomic features— do not easily fit within a neutral macro-group. The more general classification of “anthropomorphic wooden coffins” of the Roman period, which typically refers to fully anthropoid examples, is here supplemented by the Italian term “*sarcofagi sagomati*”, adopted in this study. This designation is derived from “*cassa sagomata*”, a term introduced by Pier Roberto Del Francia in a marginal note of an unpublished list he compiled in preparation of a volume later published in 2001 (Del Francia 2001). To the best of our knowledge, all known specimens of this type have been found or acquired in the Theban region. This article argues that this specific group of coffins most likely originated in the Deir el-Bahari area, thereby offering a more precise provenance for many of the specimens discovered in the 19th century (cf. below: Deir el-Bahari provenance and evidence from 19th century research). These were often broadly labeled as coming from the “Theban area”. Notable examples include:

- Inv. Nos 2166 (**Cat. No. 1**) and 2167 (**Cat. No. 2**) found by Rosellini (cf. below: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze);
- Inv. No. A.1956.357 (**Cat. No. 3**) acquired by Rhind (cf. below: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh);
- Inv. No. AE I/1–2 (**Cat. No. 4**) acquired by Baron Franz von Reyer (cf. below: Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt);
- Inv. No. 1714 (**Cat. No. 5**) acquired by Consul Breganza (cf. below: Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen).

These coffins were previously documented without specific interest in narrowing their area of origin. For references to the provenance of the remaining specimens, see the relevant literature cited below. For the associated mummy masks related to these wooden coffins but not discussed in this work, see Haslauer 2006.

There are currently approximately 18 known specimens, of which only six can be classified as intact; the remainder are fragmentary, consisting primarily of mummy masks or foot ends. For the sake of clarity and focus, this paper discusses only the intact examples —along with one additional coffin lacking its case and floor base— preserved in the following collections:

- Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2166 (**Cat. No. 1**) and Inv. No. 2167 (**Cat. No. 2**). For photographic references, see Botti 1941: 36–38, Pl. IVa (note that Inv. No. 2166 was incorrectly switched with another coffin — Inv. No. 2165); see also Guidotti 2001: 45–47;
- National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357 (**Cat. No. 3**). For photographic references, see Manley and Dodson 2010: 140–142;
- Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2 (**Cat. No. 4**). For photographic references, see Horak and Harrauer 1999: 9–13, 58–62; see also Hamernik 2002: 185–189, Pls 1–2, 5–6;
- Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714 (**Cat. No. 5**). For photographic references, see Brunner-Traut and Brunner 1981: 234–236, Pls 156–157;

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (**Cat. Nos 6 and 7**). Now lost following their discovery in the 1923–1924 excavation season. See Winlock 1924: 32; Grimm 1974: 144; photographic references in Riggs and Depauw 2002: 75–80, Pls IX–XI.

In this paper this particular group is attributed—and geographically, typologically, chronologically circumscribed—to a specific workshop active between the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE in the Theban region, in particular Deir el-Bahari. The owners of such coffins would have made “use” of them at Deir el-Bahari. However, whether this workshop was located precisely at Deir el-Bahari itself remains an open question.

As for the surviving portions of fragmentary specimens, some museums preserve wooden masks or foot ends that were once part of these distinctive wooden coffins. The possibility of re-

constructing the whole depends, first, on identifying the provenance context—wherever possible—and is further aided by the joints and coupling points of the individual masks. The author is currently preparing a future publication on these fragmentary specimens.

Detailed analyses of this type of coffin are unfortunately scarce. The only archaeometric study concerns the coffin preserved in Edinburgh (**Cat. No. 3**) (Edwards, Jorge Villar, and Eremin 2004). Raman spectroscopy—a non-destructive chemical analysis technique based on the interaction of light with chemical bonds within a material—revealed a broad color spectrum of mineral pigments and pigment mixtures. Chemically, it was found that the lid and case of the coffin shared elements of hematite mixed with gypsum and silicate minerals, which were used to achieve shades ranging from green to red (Edwards, Jorge Villar, and Eremin 2004: 790, 793).

DESCRIPTION OF THE COFFINS

Before addressing the central argument—namely, the attribution of this particular group of wooden coffins to the Deir el-Bahari area—it is useful to first analyze their typological and structural features in detail. Iconography forms an integral part of a holistic study of the materiality of such objects (see Baines 2007).

Although the small number of specimens under discussion precludes the notion of true mass production, it is likely that these coffins adhered to a standardized, relatively inflexible structural form. In contrast, their iconography appears to have been subject to variation, allowing

for the customization of scenes, motifs, and color schemes according to the preferences of individual patrons.

The drawing shown in [*Fig. 1*] illustrates the general appearance of a coffin at an early stage of manufacture, after the wood—*tamarix*, *articulata* or *nilotica*—had been roughly shaped and fitted with the coffin’s characteristic angular lid. The foot end was intended to serve as a pedestal for the entire coffin [see below, *Fig. 4:C*]. The head portion was separately attached to the lid using nails and pins [see below, *Fig. 4:B*], with only the face carved in three dimensions, unlike the rest of the lid.

This group of coffins —also described as “stylized anthropoid-shaped”— was constructed by joining multiple wooden elements. The lid typically features two distinct end sec-

tions: an almost cubic head from which stylized, three-dimensionally rendered facial features emerge, and a quadrangular foot end that functions as a pedestal for the entire coffin.

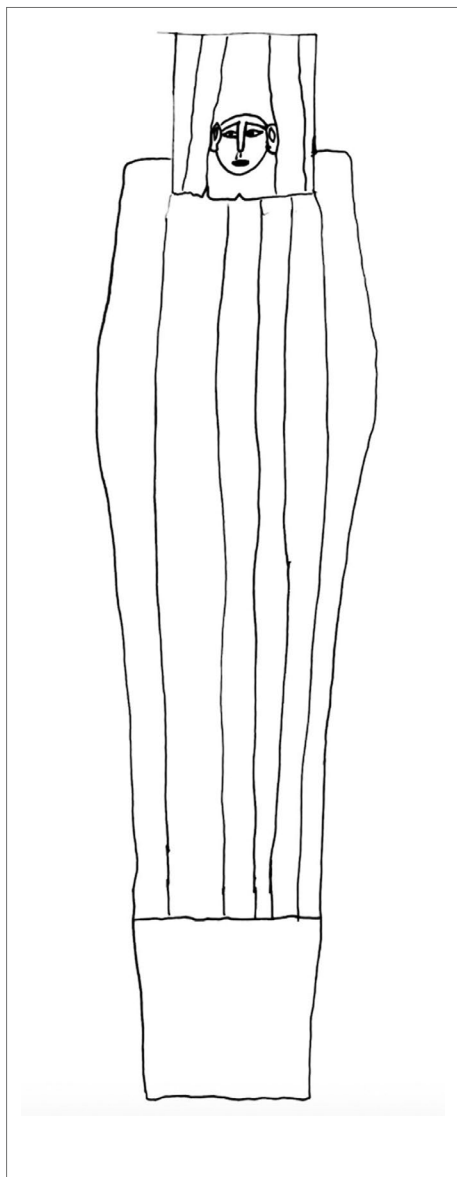


Fig. 1. Drawing illustrating the main structural features of this coffin type (Drawing A. Panetta)



Fig. 2. Cat. No. 1, coffin Inv. No. 2166 (Image courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, Direzione Regionale Musei Nazionali Toscana-Firenze)

CATALOG OF KNOWN INTACT COFFINS

The catalog presented here aims to document, through descriptive and photographic comparison, the known specimens of this coffin type discovered between the 19th and 20th centuries. An autoptic analysis —undertaken here for the first time— supports the assertion that this particular group of coffins forms a coherent corpus in terms of provenance, construction, iconography, and dating.

The following entries describe the coffins and their respective iconographic programs, focusing exclusively on intact specimens (defined as those preserving both lid and case in their entirety):

CAT. NO. 1

Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2166 [Fig. 2]

Dimensions: Overall length: 181 cm; overall width: 46.5 cm

Description: The lid is decorated with a motif featuring, directly beneath the face, a depiction of the hawk Horus with outstretched wings and a solar disk. No traces of paint are preserved on the lid itself. At the pedestal-like base of the lid, two slender, elongated jackals are depicted. A Demotic inscription runs longitudinally along the center of the lid. The coffin retains its original case. The bottom of the coffin case (i.e. the floor base) also features painted decoration on the inside, though the author was unable to examine it fully due to conservation issues. This observation is based on direct inspection, corroborated by Giuseppe Botti (1941: 36), who noted a representation of the deceased; however, it is here assumed that the goddess Nut was depicted instead.

Botti compared this coffin —both structurally and iconographically— with Inv. No. A.1956.357, preserved in Edinburgh (Botti 1941: 36; for Inv. No. A.1956.357, see below: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3**). *Bibliography:* Rosellini 1830: 16–17, No. 6; Migliarini 1831: 28, No. 152; 1856: No. 2166; Schiaparelli 1883: 43, No. 9; Botti 1941: 36–38; Hamernik 2002: 193–194, Pl. 10; Riggs and Depauw 2002: 77, n. 13; Riggs 2005: 286, No. 91; Vleeming 2011: 643–645, No. 1099.

CAT. NO. 2

Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167 [Figs 3, 4]

Dimensions: Overall length: 181 cm; overall width: 46.5 cm

Description: The coffin features an anthropomorphic, anepigraphic lid with a rectangular head protruding at shoulder height, from which the lid tapers down to a pedestal-like base approximately equal in width to the head. The lid bears a depiction of the deceased: the head is shown as an oval form emerging from the wooden surface. The face, framed by a heavy wig, has a narrow nose, tiny mouth, and elongated ears; the eyes are outlined in black, and the eyebrows slant downward. The female figure wears a long tunic displaying two reddish *clavi*. She also wears earrings and two necklaces — one shorter, and the other longer with a pendant attached to it. The overskirt is decorated with alternating green and red stripes and includes an anepigraphic central band. The tunic leaves the feet visible, and they are adorned with sandals.

Flanking the figure are the Four Sons of Horus: Hapy, Qebehsenuef, Duamutef, and Imsety. In addition, there are two uraei with solar disks and two lotus buds. To either side of the head are Isis and Nephthys, depicted kneeling and holding bandages, symbolizing eternity. At the pedestal-like base of the lid, above a stylized portal, are two antithetical jackals —each bearing a key around its

neck— similar to those depicted on Inv. No. 2166. These are flanked by mirrored representations of the solar bark. The lid is secured to the bottom of the case via ten tenons. The floor base of the coffin case features a frontal image of the goddess Nut, wearing a long tunic with short sleeves and two *clavi*. Her wig features a wavy hairstyle gathered into a bun, the so-called “*Scheitelzopf*” style (Wessel 1947).



Fig. 3. Cat. No. 2, coffin Inv. No. 2167 (Image courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, Direzione Regionale Musei Nazionali Toscana-Firenze)

She is adorned with two circular earrings and a necklace; two wrinkles are visible on her neck. The goddess is not accompanied by other figures, but is flanked only by two undulating floral stems.

Bibliography: Rosellini 1830: 76, No. 95; Migliarini 1831: 28, No. 153; 1856: No. 2167; Schiaparelli 1883: 42, No. 1; Guidotti 2001: 45–47, No. 9A.

CAT. NO. 3

National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357 [Figs 5, 6]

Dimensions: Overall length: 114.5 cm; overall width: 53 cm

Description: The specimen is a *hapax*, as the anthropoid coffin was designed for two individuals, as indicated by the two wooden masks on the lid [Fig. 6:A] and



Fig. 4. Cat. No. 2, coffin Inv. No. 2167, details: A – floorboard; B – detail of the head; C – detail of the pedestal (Images courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, Direzione Regionale Musei Nazionali Toscana-Firenze)



Fig. 5. Cat. No. 3, Inv. No. A.1956.357 (National Museums Scotland)

two depictions of the goddess Nut on the floor base [Fig. 5:A]. The two symmetrical figures on the lid are rendered in Osirian fashion, with arms on chests and hands holding flails. The floor base of the coffin features two representations of Nut. Each is shown wearing a long tunic adorned with *clavi*, extending to her sandaled feet. Around her neck is a pendant necklace, and circular earrings hang from her earlobes. Above the centrally parted wig “floats” a *nw* jar — an iconographic and textual symbol of the goddess. Traces of scenes on the long outer sides of the lid resemble those on Firenze Inv. No. 2167 (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see Fig. 3]). The pedestal-like base of the lid bears faint images of crouching jackals — possibly more than two, though the

heavily worn condition of the base prevents certainty. At the head end of the lid is a depiction of the hawk Horus with outstretched wings [Fig. 6:B].

Bibliography: Rhind 1862: 108–109; Murray 1900: 36, No. 546; Dawson 1927: 290–294; Grimm 1974: 118, Pl. 139.4; Hamernik 2002: 189–190; Riggs and Depauw 2002: 77, n. 15 (wrongly identified as NMS A.1956.137); Edwards, Jorge Villar, and Eremin 2004; Riggs 2005: 185, 189, 191, 193, 285, No. 89; Manley and Dodson 2010: 140–142, No. 61.

CAT. NO. 4

Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2 [Fig. 7]

Dimensions: Overall length: 181 cm; overall width: 28.5 cm

Description: The lid is a *unicum*, as the figure of the deceased is carved in a way that emphasizes her three-dimensionality. Unlike other specimens, where only the face emerges from the wooden surface, this example presents the entire naked body of the deceased in pronounced high relief. The well-finished wig frames a rounded face with deep-set eyes; the arms are extended along the bare torso, from which two breasts are modeled in relief, and the long legs are rendered in full down to the feet. Traces of dark paint are still visible on the figure. Scenes of offering and *prothesis* of the deceased appear on the lateral sections of the lid, along with two undulating floral stems. The pedestal-like foot end of the lid bears traces of crouching jackals. No inscriptions, either incised or painted, are present on the wood.

The floor base of the case depicts the goddess Nut, whose physiognomy is comparable to that in the other examined



Fig. 6. **Cat. No. 3**, coffin Inv. No. A.1956.357, details: A – faces; B – headboard (National Museums Scotland)

specimens. She is not accompanied by multiple figures but flanked only by two undulating floral stems.

Bibliography: Horak and Harrauer 1999: 9–13, 58–62; Hamernik 2002: 185–189, Pls 1–2, 5–6; Riggs and Depauw 2002: 77, n. 16; Riggs 2005: 286–287, No. 93.

CAT. NO. 5

Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714 [Fig. 8]

Dimensions: Overall length: 175 cm; overall width: 54 cm

Description: The coffin features an angular-shaped lid, with a quadrangular head pro-



Fig. 7. Cat. No. 4, Inv. No. AE I/1–2, Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt (After Horak and Harrauer 1999: 10, Pls 1–2)

truding at shoulder height, from which the lid tapers downward, ending in a pedestal-like base slightly wider than the head. The face appears to emerge from the wooden surface; originally framed by a heavy wig, it has a narrow nose, half-open mouth, and prominent ears. The eyes, rendered as two ovals outlined in black, are accompanied by downward-slanting eyebrows that merge with the earlobes. A hieroglyphic inscription runs down the center of the lid, extending to the bottom of the case. The square base—as usual—depicts two crouching jackals, in this case positioned above what appears to be a stylized portal. The lid is secured to the bottom of the case with ten tenons.



Fig. 8. Cat. No. 5, coffin Inv. No. 1714, Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen (After Brunner-Traut and Brunner 1981: 234–236, Pls 156–157)

On the inside bottom of the case is a depiction of the goddess Nut, dressed in a long tunic bearing two reddish *clavi*; earrings hang from her earlobes, and a pendant adorns her neck. Unlike the other examples, the Nut goddess on the Tübingen coffin wears a *Scheitelzopf*-style wig (Wessel 1947) modified with the addition of as many as seven hanging braids. The overskirt is decorated with alternating green and red stripes and includes an anepigraphic central band. The tunic leaves the sandaled feet visible. No additional figures flank the goddess.

Bibliography: Brunner-Traut and Brunner 1981: 234–236, Pls 156–157; Hamernik 2002: 192–193; Riggs and Depauw 2002: 77, n. 14; Riggs 2005: 289, No. 103.

CAT. NO. 6

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (lost after its discovery, post-excavation season 1923–1924), coffin No. 1 (see archive photographs M5C 25) [Fig. 9:A, B]

Dimensions: Overall length: 175 cm; overall width: 70 cm

The exact proportions of the specimen were not recorded; however, approximate measurements can be inferred from archival photographs and the dimensions of the find pit (unspecified) [Table 1]. The iconographic analysis of lid and floor base decoration is based on the observation of archival photographs.

Description: The coffin features an anthropomorphic lid with a square head. A stylized face is absent—likely lost either during excavation or in antiquity. The lid tapers downward, ending in a pedestal-like base.

A Demotic inscription runs down the center of the lid, extending to the bottom.

The square foot end depicts two elongated crouching jackals. On the inside of the floor base of the case is a depiction of the goddess Nut, dressed in a long tunic bearing two thick reddish *clavi*. Her

neck is adorned with a double pendant. Nut wears a *Scheitelzopf*-style wig (Wessel 1947). Her feet, clad in sandals, are visible beneath the tunic. Plant stems line the perimeter around her figure. The lid is



Fig. 9. Cat. Nos 6 (A, B) and 7 (C), coffins from an unknown location, found by the Metropolitan Expedition (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art Archives M5C 25)

secured to the bottom of the case unusually by nine tenons.

Bibliography: Riggs and Depauw 2002: 80–84; Riggs 2005: 290, No. 107; Vleeming 2011: 645–646.



Fig. 10. Cat. No. 7, lid from an unknown location, found by the Metropolitan Expedition (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art Archives M5C 25)

CAT. NO. 7

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (lost after its discovery, post-excavation season 1923–1924), coffin No. 2 (see archive photographs M5C 25) [Fig. 9:C, Fig. 10]

Dimensions: Overall length: 175 cm; overall width: 70 cm

The size proportions of the specimen were not recorded; however, approximate measurements can be inferred from archival photographs and the dimensions of the find pit (180 cm in length and 70 cm in width) [see Table 1]. Iconographic analysis of the lid is based on the observation of archival photographs.

Description: The coffin has an anthropomorphic lid, with a quadrangular head projecting at shoulder height, from which the lid tapers downward, ending in a pedestal-like base slightly wider than the head. The face appears to emerge from the wooden surface, originally framed by a heavy wig, now faded. It has a narrow nose, half-open mouth, and elongated ears; the eyes are rendered as two ovals outlined in black, and the eyebrows are slanted downward.

A Demotic inscription runs down the center of the lid extending to the bottom. In the upper left corner of the lid, an inscription in Greek characters reads $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ (Horus), presumably the name of the coffin's owner.

The square base—as usual—depicts two crouching jackals. Flanking the figures are the Four Sons of Horus: Hapy, Qebehsenuef, Duamutef, and Imsety. The coffin case lacks a corresponding base.

Bibliography: Winlock 1924: 32; Grimm 1974: 144; Riggs and Depauw 2002: 78–80; Riggs 2005: 290–291, No. 108; Vleeming 2011: 643–644.

Table 1. Schematic description of the discovery context and area of provenance (from excavations led by Winlock), along with the respective numbered specimens cited in Riggs and Depauw 2002

Place of discovery	Description	No. (after Riggs and Depauw 2002)
Forecourt of Mentuhotep II's temple (Deir el-Bahari)	Shallow oval pit of unspecified dimensions	II–III (lid + base)
Forecourt of Mentuhotep II's temple (Deir el-Bahari)	Irregular oval pit: 1.80 m long, 0.70 wide, 0.80 m deep	I (lid)
Hill directly behind the north side of the Middle Platform of Hatshepsut's temple (Deir el-Bahari)	Pit 2 m long and 1 m deep	XII b; XIII b

ICONOGRAPHY AND TYPOLOGY IN DETAIL

We are aware of cases in which the lid is undecorated and shows no traces of painting, leaving the gnarled grain of the wood visible (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2166, **Cat. No. 1** [see *Fig. 2*]; Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714, **Cat. No. 5** [see *Fig. 8*]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin No. 1, **Cat. No. 6** [see *Fig. 9:A*]). In other contexts, depictions of the Four Sons of Horus occur (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Figs 3, 4*]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin No. 2, **Cat. No. 7** [see *Fig. 9:C, Fig. 10*]); or, alternatively, representations of the transfigured deceased are found (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Figs 3, 4*]; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5*]; Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2, **Cat. No. 4** [see *Fig. 7*]).

They often bear a Demotic inscription (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2166, **Cat. No. 1** [see *Fig. 2*]; Metropolitan Museum of Art,

New York, coffin No. 1, **Cat. No. 6** [see *Fig. 9:A*]; cf. below, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin No. 2, **Cat. No. 7** [see *Fig. 9:C, Fig. 10*]); or a hieroglyphic one (cf. above: Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714, **Cat. No. 5** [see *Fig. 8*]), drawn on a vertical column in the center of the lid, running from the edge of the wooden headboard to the pedestal. The formulas provided—in this case those rendered in Demotic—adhere to a standardized category of intercessions (Riggs and Depauw 2002: 82). In the Edinburgh specimen (cf. above: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5*]), the inscription does not follow the usual placement within the central vertical column; instead, four inscriptions—unfortunately not well deciphered (perhaps the names of the two owners were inscribed on them)—were written on three sections of the lid:

- two on the front of the Osirian figures [see *Fig. 5*];
- one on the left side of the lid [see *Fig. 5:C*];
- one on the head side [see *Fig. 4:A*].

In summary, the lid is presented as:

1. undecorated, with coarse wood grain visible, a central column with a Demotic inscription, and, at the top of it, Horus with outstretched wings (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2166, **Cat. No. 1** [see *Fig. 2*]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin No. 1, **Cat. No. 6** [see *Fig. 9:A*]); or with the Four Sons of Horus, arranged in two groups flanking the central inscription (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Figs 3, 4*]; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Figs 5, 6*]; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin No. 2, **Cat. No. 7** [see *Fig. 9:C, Fig. 10*]); or undecorated, with gnarled wood grain and central inscription in hieroglyphs (cf. above: Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714, **Cat. No. 5** [see *Fig. 8*]; for photographic references, see Brunner-Traut and Brunner 1981: 234–236, Pls 156–157);
1. decorated in bright, light colors to replicate the depiction of the goddess Nut, rendered with similar features on the base of the coffin floor (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Figs 3, 4*]; for photographic references, see Guidotti 2001: 45–47);
1. a borderline case: a female figure is carved with deliberately three-dimensional rendering (cf. above: Landesmuseum Kärnten,

Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2, **Cat. No. 4** [see *Fig. 7*]; for photographic references, see Horak and Harrauer 1999: 9–13, 58–62; for additional photographic references, see Hamernik 2002: 185–189, Pls 1–2, 5–6).

The lateral sides feature an established practice: the insertion of consistent elements:

- two mourners, Isis and Nephthys, kneeling on either side of the face portion (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Fig. 3:A, C*]; for photographic references, see Guidotti 2001: 45–47; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5:B–C*]; for photographic references, see Manley and Dodson 2010: 140–142);
- below the mourners, along the lateral axis of the lid: a snake, a *djed* pillar, and vegetal elements (lotus flowers or simple stems) that frame the figures (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Fig. 3:A, C*]; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5:B–C*]);
- in some cases, the *djed* pillar is replaced by the Four Sons of Horus, or both elements appear together (cf. above: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5:B–C*]);
- at the side sections of the pedestal-like base (i.e. the foot end), the solar

boat recurs (cf. above: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. No. 2167, **Cat. No. 2** [see *Fig. 3:A, C*]; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5:B–C*]).

The depiction of the goddess Nut fully occupies the space provided by the floor base (also called the floorboard or bottom of the coffin's case) [see *Fig. 4:A*]. In the past, the female figure was identified solely—and sometimes incorrectly—as a representation of the female deceased (Rosellini 1830: 16–17, n. 6; Botti 1941: 36; Guidotti 2001: 45–47; see also the discussion in Riggs 2005: 191–194). However, if this were the case, we would expect to find a greater number of coffins belonging to female individuals. Such a result appears even more unlikely when considering the presence of male mummies within intact coffins. Moreover, during the Roman period, the goddess Nut appears not only on the floor base of anthropoid wooden coffins but also on the floor base of rectangular *qrsw* coffins (see, for example, the coffins of the Soter group; Herbin 2002) and on funerary shrouds (Bresciani 1996).

The goddess is shown frontally, with her arms extended along her sides, wearing a long, short-sleeved tunic with two *clavi* encircling her chest, and adorned with jewelry at her neck, ears, and wrists. Nut's tunic, tightly fitted at the waist, extends to the feet, which are left uncovered and shown wearing sandals. In the case of the Edinburgh coffin (cf. below: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357, **Cat. No. 3** [see *Fig. 5:A, right*]), the goddess is

represented by the phonetic sign of the *nw* jar above the head. In this specimen as well, the protection of the goddess was meant to extend to both owners; thus, her image became a mirrored representation.

The face is framed by a wavy hair-style gathered into a bun—the so-called “*Scheitelzopf*” type wig (Wessel 1947; see also Riggs 2000: 126)—and resembles the *Zeitgesicht* discernible in the portraiture of women of the Severan period, particularly in the style of Julia Domna (170–217 CE), the second wife of Septimius Severus and mother of Caracalla (for the blending of different artistic styles, see Castiglione 1961). She is depicted with a large wave wig and a wide chignon at the nape, a style already worn by Manlia Scantilla (†193 CE), wife of Didius Julianus. The *Scheitelzopf* also aids in dating these specimens—particularly where the archaeological context has been disturbed in antiquity or modern times—to between the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE. Indeed, this element corroborates the textual evidence: in this case, the Demotic inscriptions, which can be paleographically dated to this same period. There is no fixed artistic canon for the depiction of the goddess Nut. Rather, we observe representational variation, presumably influenced by patron preferences, but primarily on the prevailing fashion of the time—as evidenced by the jewelry and wig style on the Tübingen coffin (cf. below: Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714, **Cat. No. 5** [see *Fig. 8*]). Nevertheless, the *Scheitelzopf* type remains a consistent feature shared by all specimens. Regarding the

use of the same wig type for the goddess Nut, it is most likely that the pursuit of uniformity by private individuals under the reign of a given emperor (and in this case, empress or other imperial family members) reflects a voluntary adherence to figurative conventions or fashion trends. The adoption of such models sometimes occurred without full awareness of their origin — a phenomenon known in classical archaeology as “assimilated portraiture” (see Varner 2008).

Antithetical jackals

At the sides of the feet are two jackals with keys around their necks (Morenz 1975; Parlasca 2010). The depiction of two crouching, antithetical jackals bearing *hakenförmige Schlüssel* (Morenz 1975; Parlasca 2010) was uncommon in the Pharaonic era. Their first known appearance dates to the beginning of the 2nd century CE, on coffins and shrouds belonging to members of the family of Soter, Archon of Thebes (Parlasca 2010: 225; regarding Soter, see Herbin 2002). From the Fayyum region come rectangular wooden coffins featuring double-layered lids, *acroteria*, and friezes decorated with scenes dominated by squatting jackals. The placement of these jackals is consistent: always at the pedestal-like base, and in some cases, also at the feet of the goddess Nut on the floor base. This iconographic alignment —between the goddess Nut and the antithetical jackals— provides an additional element for dating this category of coffins to between the mid-2nd and early 3rd centuries CE, in accordance with Roman stylistic influence.

Deir el-Bahari provenance and evidence from 19th century research

Many descriptions compiled in the account of 19th century travelers to Egypt are often influenced by extemporaneous emotions, relying more on the immediacy of the *hic et nunc* personal experience than on a logical, scientific approach. As a result, it is often difficult to untangle the threads of narrative and objective reality. However, by attempting to build a dialogue between what was written in the 19th century and what scholars actually brought back from their “excavation campaigns” or pleasure trips, it is sometimes possible to reach a moment of recognition —an agnition— successfully linking documented references to artifacts now housed in specific museums.

The analysis presented here is based on research into primary sources: the documentation produced in the 19th century by scholars or private individuals who acquired and transported one or more of these particular coffins.

For each specimen described in the Catalog, a brief history of its discovery in the 19th century has been included. Through this historical reconstruction, the aim is to provide a solid contextual background to support or strengthen the assertion of its inclusion within a well-defined typological group and its provenance from Deir el-Bahari.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze, Inv. Nos 2166 and 2167 [see Figs 2–4]

The coffins now in Florence represent the outcome of the Franco-Tuscan Expedition (1828–1829) led by Ippolito Rosellini (Betrò 2013; Bierbrier 2019: 399–400) and Jean-François Champol-

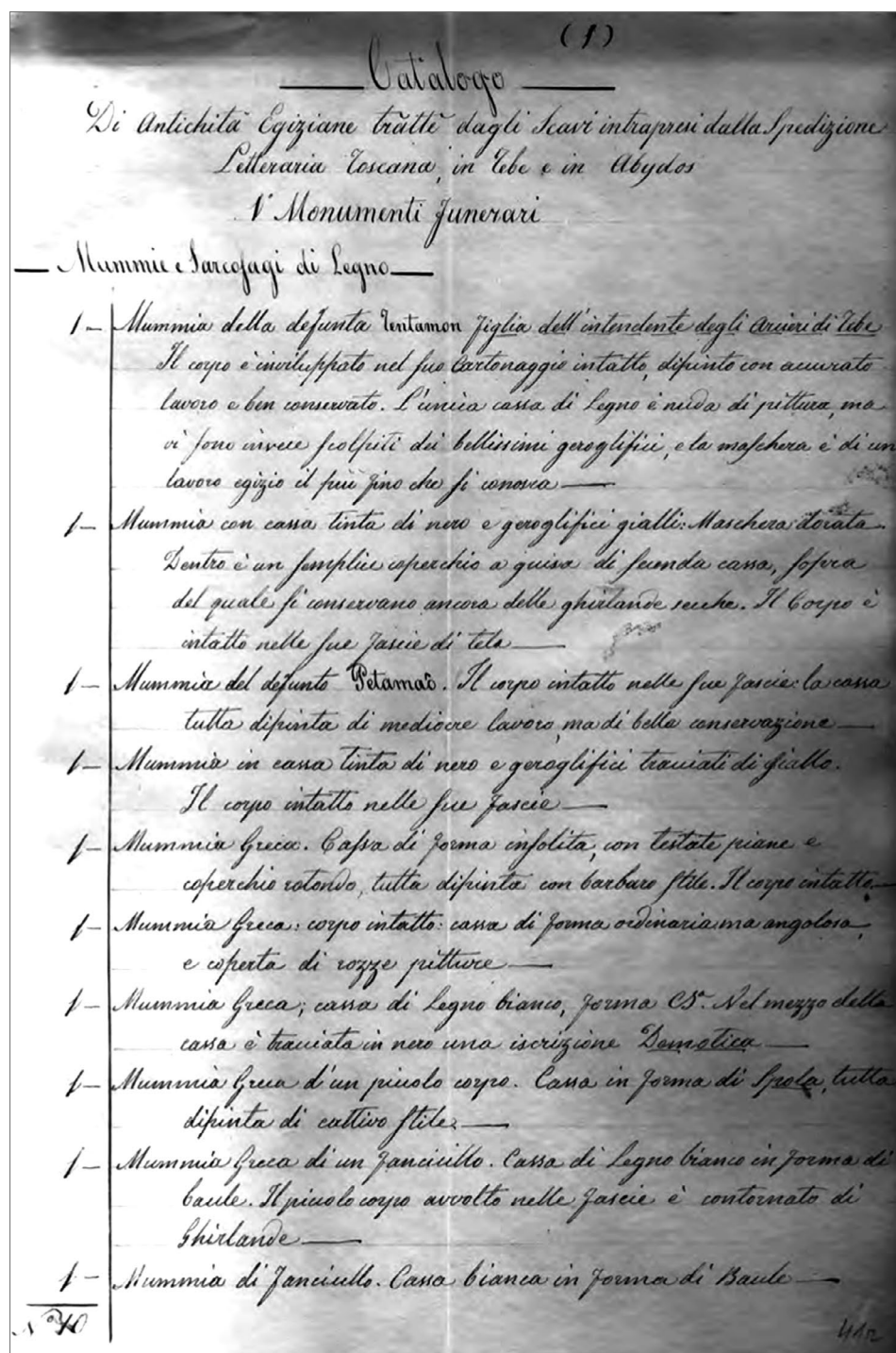


Fig. 11. First page of the list of finds in Prague, RAT, L. II, f41r (After Betrò 2013: 49, Fig. 4)

lion (Bierbrier 2019: 97–98). Coffins Nos 1 and 2 in the Catalog were first described by Rosellini himself in the so-called “*List of Praga*” —a document sent to the Grand Duke (now preserved in Prague, hence the name) [Fig. 11] (Gregorovičová 2008; Betrò 2013)— and, shortly thereafter, in the *Breve Notizia* of 1830 (Rosellini 1830: 16–17, n. 6, 76, n. 95), in the manuscript compiled by Migliarini in 1831 (Migliarini 1831: 28, nn. 152, 153), and later again in 1856 (Migliarini 1856: nn. 2166, 2167).

Rosellini wrote a letter to the Grand Duke of Tuscany on 29 December 1829, while in quarantine at the lazaret in Leghorn. This letter was accompanied by four lists, now held in Prague:

Approssimandosi oramai il termine della nostra contumacia, mi faccio un dovere di umiliare a V.A.I e R. il presente rispettosissimo foglio, il quale accompagna:

1. *Una nota del numero e qualità dei disegni riportati d'Egitto*
2. *Una nota distributiva dei lavori di ciaschedun membro della spedizione*
3. *Il Catalogo delle Antichità ricavate dagli scavi*
4. *Il Catalogo delle Antichità ricavate nel corso del viaggio*

Of particular interest for the purposes of this discussion is the list concerning the artifacts recovered from the excavations (Betrò 2013: 43, n. 2). On the first page of the *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities taken from the Excavations undertaken by the Tuscan Literary Expedition in Thebes and Abydos*, under the section *Funerary Monuments — Mummies and Wooden Coffins*

[see Fig. 11], entries five through eleven on the second page refer to “Greek mummy” (with the exception of the tenth entry). Coffins **Cat. Nos 1** and **2** are mentioned in the sixth and seventh entries, respectively. It reads:

- *Mummia Greca: corpo intatto: cassa di forma ordinaria ma angolosa e coperta di rozze pitture. (Cat. No. 1 [see Fig. 2])*
- *Mummia Greca; cassa di legno bianco, forma csa [=come sopra]. Nel mezzo della cassa è tracciata in nero una iscrizione Demotica. (Cat. No. 2 [see Figs 3, 4])*

In addition to the correspondence that both Rosellini and Champollion sent during their months of travel to scholars and family members, several volumes dedicated to the excavation work and results obtained were published by the Pisan scholar and financed by him.

In *Monumenti Civili I*, Rosellini (1834: 117–118) states that, during the excavations conducted at Thebes, he found “mummies” —used as a *pars pro toto* to mean coffins— dated to the Greek period. In his words:

Parecchie mummie ho tratto dagli scavi fatti fare in quella necropoli, le quali appartengono all'epoca greca. Già lo stile delle pitture, la forma delle casse, il modo stesso d'involgere le mummie, per sé abbastanza lo mostrano; della qual cosa dovrò discorrere altrove: ma ne vien tolto ogni dubbio dalle greche iscrizioni, che unite talora alle geroglifiche su queste mummie si trovano.

The two wooden coffins experienced alternating fortunes in terms of exhibition. Initially, only one (Inv. No. 2167) was displayed in the 1830 exhibition held at the *Accademia di Arti e Mestieri di S. Caterina*, Florence. It was for this occasion that Rosellini arranged the drafting of a short guide for visitors, which became the *Breve Notizia*. The *Breve Notizia* (brief guide) contains the first descriptions of the two coffins (Rosellini 1830: 16–17, n. 6, Inv. No. 2166, 76, n. 95, Inv. No. 2167).

INV. NO. 2166:

Num. 6

Mummia greco-egizia

La cassa è rozzamente fatta alla maniera di quei bassi tempi dell'arte egiziana. L'iscrizione posta nel mezzo è in caratteri demotici. Nel fondo della cassa è dipinta la figura della defunta [sic.] vestita alla foggia greco-egizia di quei tempi. Il corpo è involuppato nelle sue fascie e ben conservato, ma non si trova nella Sala.

INV. NO. 2167:

Num. 95

Mummia Greco-Egizia

Cassa e Mummia di persona Greco-Egizia che non porta scritto il suo nome. Sul coperchio è rozzamente scolpita e dipinta, alla maniera del tempo, la maschera del tempo, la maschera della persona defunta; e nel fondo interno della cassa tutta la figura n'è dipinta col medesimo costume della Mummia N. 14 [Inv. No. 2165].

National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Inv. No. A.1956.357 [see Figs 5, 6]

The specimen preserved in Edinburgh is linked to the figure of Alexander Rhind

(Irving and Maitland 2015: 94–95; Bierbrier 2019: 391–392). Rhind, the only surviving son of a well-known and wealthy banker, began his excavation experience in Egypt during the winter of 1855–1856. This first trip yielded a large body of objects that entered the then National Museum of Antiquities (now the National Museum of Scotland). In November 1856, he published a summary of this experience —“Egypt; its Climate, Character, and Resources as a Winter Resort”—which expounded on the climatic conditions of Egypt.

Invigorated by this first fruitful trip to Thebes, Rhind undertook a second expedition during the winter of 1856–1857. In a letter dated 9 January 1857, he wrote (Stuart 1864: 13–14):

“Having stated to our consul-general, Mr Bruce, when at Cairo, the objects I had in view, he very kindly applied for and obtained for me a firman from the viceroy. Armed with this precious document, under the seal of Said Pacha, enjoining all the governors throughout Egypt to aid me in whatever I may require, and permitting me to excavate wherever I like in the whole country, I possess here, where I have taken up my position, a sort of irresponsible power. I certainly shall not abuse it; [...] At the former I was cheered yesterday by the discovery of eight mummy cases, and to-day of six more. They were not within a tomb, but give evidence, I hope, of the proximity of one, and I shall diligently persevere in search of it, as, from the position, it would probably be interesting. [...]”

It was during this second expedition that Alexander Rhind acquired the “double” wooden coffin dated to the Roman period. Although his documentation does not explicitly mention any purchase transactions in Luxor (Margaret Maitland, personal communication, 2023), it is almost certain that by “procured” he meant “acquired through purchase” on the antiquities market. In fact, unlike other coffins found inside tombs — accompanied by plans and sectional drawings — he merely wrote the following for the double coffin (Rhind 1862: 108–109):

“[...] a curious double mummy-case which I procured at Thebes, and which, as a singular and rare relic, I may mention, contained two infants, side by side, with necklaces, small papyri over their left arms, and figures of Pthah on their breasts – all fastened to the folds of the outer bandages. [...]”

Given the explicit mention of Thebes as the place of origin of the wooden specimen, it is likely that the place of purchase (Luxor) corresponds with the original place from which the coffin was taken — an unknown tomb in Western Thebes.

Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2 [see Fig. 7]

During his stay in Alexandria and Beirut, Baron Franz von Reyer¹ wrote extensive reports which, due to his keen powers of observation combined with an expressive style, make the first report in particular

a valuable historical source on conditions in Egypt under the reign of Said Pasha (1854–1863). His itinerary shows that he had traveled as far as the “Cataracts”, that is, up the Nile to Aswan. This also indicates that Reyer, like most European travelers to Egypt in the 19th century, made his journeys by boat on the Nile (in 1857, the Cairo–Aswan railway line was not yet in operation). From the perspective of reconstructing collecting history, this mode of travel implies greater cargo space, sufficient for the transport of larger and bulkier antiquities, such as wooden coffins. It is presumed that von Reyer passed through and stayed in Luxor, where he made at least most of his purchases, including the coffin Inv. No. AE I/1–2. However, we do not know with whom he specifically conducted these transactions.

Ägyptologisches Institut, Tübingen, Inv. No. 1714 [see Fig. 8]

Purchased by the Consul Breganza, probably at Luxor, the coffin Inv. No. 1714 eventually reached the kingdom of Württemberg (then ruled by King Wilhelm I, 1816–1864, the same enlightened monarch who founded various museum institutions in the kingdom). It was presented to the Museum of Natural History in 1861. Shortly thereafter, various objects — including this particular coffin — were transferred to the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, the kingdom’s capital. It was only in 1972 that the coffin and other objects were moved 40 km further south to the Ägyptologisches Institut in Tübingen.

1 The information about Baron Franz von Reyer is based on documentation preserved in the HHStA (=Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatsabteilung), *Diplomatische Korrespondenz*, Reyer F4/285.

20th century excavations

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, coffin Nos 1–2 [see *Figs 9, 10*]

With regard to Deir el-Bahari as the proposed context of provenance for these particular wooden coffins, concrete and reliable evidence is provided by the excavations conducted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art Expedition. Since at least 1920, under the direction of Herbert Winlock, the museum's Egyptian Department excavated extensively in the area of Deir el-Bahari, unearthing a considerable number of Roman period burials. These included mummies of young individuals with associated *cartonnage*, as well as intact coffins and various wooden fragments consistent with the typology of Roman period wooden coffins (Winlock 1924: 32–33).

Founded in 1906, the MET's Department of Egyptian Art was involved, from its inception, in directing an archaeological expedition to Egypt at the behest of the Museum Board (Winlock 1942). A major focus of these missions was the Deir el-Bahari area. Although the primary aim was the excavation of the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut (New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, 1478–1458 BC), further excavations were also carried out in the surrounding areas (Winlock 1926; Winlock 1928). The excavations were conducted personally by Herbert Winlock until at least 1931, after which he was appointed Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art by the Board of Trustees. Later work at the temple was conducted by the Polish mission (see e.g. Dąbrowski 1968; Lipińska 1968).

Within the first court of the funerary temple of Nebhepetra Mentuhotep (Mentuhotep II), Winlock identified what he

described as “shallow pits”: very shallow shaft tombs of limited depth and width, often ovoid in shape [see *Table 1*]. It was in these that the two wooden coffins were found (cf. above: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Cat. Nos 6 and 7* [see *Figs 9, 10*]).

As Christina Riggs and Mark Depauw noted more than twenty years ago, these wooden specimens inexplicably never reached the Metropolitan Museum (Riggs and Depauw 2002; Janice Kamrin, personal communication, 2023).

One might assume that they were left behind in Cairo; however, that hypothesis does not hold up, as neither the *Journal d'Entrée* nor the *Temporary Register* of the Egyptian Museum contains any record or reference to them. The relevant *Journal d'Entrée* volumes examined for the 1920 Winlock excavations were:

- Volume IX, covering the years 1913–1922;
- Volume X, covering the years 1922–1927;
- Volume XI, covering the years 1927–1931.

It can be inferred that none of the wooden coffins or fragments pertaining to Roman-era specimens uncovered during the excavations at the Deir el-Bahari area were recorded in the documentation of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. We can therefore conclude that none of these items were ever formally entrusted to the museum. Instead, it is reasonable to assume that the specimens were brought to the USA — though not to the Metropolitan Museum. Remaining in the realm of speculation, it is possible that Winlock may have donated some of these specimens to another American museum or scientific

institution. It is also worth noting that for several decades during the 20th century, a section of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo served as a sales space, the “*Salle de Vente*” (Piacentini 2013–2014; Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 85; see also Piacentini 2017), where duplicates or items not deemed especially important were sold, presumably as a response to overcrowding. In any case, Winlock’s discovery of this type of coffin supports a more reliable correlation with the 19th century finds. The consistency between the documentation and data emerging from Winlock’s research offers a compelling interpretative framework.

Deir el-Bahari as the hypothetical provenance context?

Since no further information has emerged concerning 19th century investigations, we must turn to contemporary accounts for comparison. Among these, only one individual is explicitly named: Victor Gustave Maunier (also known as Victor Galli Maunier, 1819–1874), a businessman and somewhat eccentric figure (Bierbrier 2019: 309–310; Weens 2019). As an antiquarian and photographer, Maunier conducted “excavations” primarily in the Theban region, on both the west and east banks of the Nile. He is described as “not inclined to make any scruples” regarding the treatment of antiquities, as exemplified by his burning of several coffins — reportedly a significant number were used as firewood (Brugsch 1860a: 15).

Maunier carried out excavations under the authority of the Khedive and was often mistakenly regarded as a French consular agent (a position that did not formally exist until at least 1880). This quasi-official role, effectively conferred *ad honorem*, ena-

bled him to assemble an impressive collection of antiquities, housed in the *Maison de France* in Luxor, where he resided for nearly twenty years. This aura of pseudo-officialdom earned him considerable respect in Egyptological circles. It is no coincidence that Maunier soon developed a close friendship with Auguste Mariette (1821–1881) and became the antiquities dealer responsible for the first report on the discovery of Queen Ahhotep’s treasure (Miniaci 2022: 36).

Thanks to Heinrich Brugsch, we know with certainty that Maunier conducted excavations in the Deir el-Bahari area on behalf of Mariette (Brugsch 1860b: 8; Sheikholeslami 2003: 133–134), specifically near the Hathor shrine in Hatshepsut’s funerary temple. There, nine “tomb shafts with intact coffins, including their mummies (the number of which was over 60)” (Sheikholeslami 2003: 133, n. 44) were found. Brugsch himself claimed to have seen many wooden coffins stored in Maunier’s house in Luxor (Brugsch 1860a: 15). Among them was the coffin of Heter, the only Graeco-Roman coffin he identified and subsequently published in 1860 due to its fine painted depiction of the Zodiac (Brugsch 1860a). A more in-depth study of the astronomical imagery appeared in 1863 (Lauth and Brugsch 1863). The coffin of Heter — now lost — was a *qrs*w type dated to the Roman period and is the only Roman era coffin explicitly mentioned by Brugsch. Roman period *qrs*w coffins were inspired by those of Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (see Aston 2009). While it is tempting to link the so-called “*sagomati*” coffins now held in Edinburgh, Kla-

genfurt, and Tübingen to this group, along with the lost coffin of Heter, such a connection remains speculative and difficult to prove. If we cross-reference the available information concerning the location of Maunier's excavations—never clearly defined—it seems plausible that Mariette's work during the 1857–1858 season, focused on the Hathor shrine and the adjacent Punt colonnade, is the same area from which the several mummies (=coffins) mentioned by Brugsch originated. Forty years later, Édouard Naville resumed excavations at the Hathor shrine and found its floor still filled with debris—presumably left behind by earlier excavations (Naville 1898: 10). Sheikholeslami speculates that one of the tombs excavated by Maunier and cited by Brugsch was located in what Naville describes as “a large mummy-pit” at the end of the Hathor shrine (Naville 1898: 10; Sheikholeslami 2003: 134). Naville also reports that this pit contained a large number of coffins that Mariette later transferred to the museum in Boulaq (Naville 1898: 10). This same area would later be re-excavated by the Polish mission (Chudzick 2022: 131–144). Perhaps it is no coincidence that both Winlock (working near the first court) and the Polish mission discovered coffins or fragments of this particular type.

During the 2021–2022 excavation season, shaft tombs were discovered within the cult complex dedicated to the goddess Hathor, attached to the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut (Chudzick 2022). In trench S3/21, excavations in the vestibule of Hathor's shrine led to the discovery of

an oblong cavity in the southern corner of the eastern wall. From this cavity, an opening extended beneath the entrance to the southern niche of the vestibule, leading to a chamber. The shaft tomb, designated as “Tomb XXIII”, consisted of a small pit and two crypts. Many objects were also found mixed in with the rocky debris (Chudzick 2022). Among the discoveries were wooden fragments of anthropoid coffins and *qrs*w coffins dated to the Late Period. Particularly noteworthy for the present discussion is the discovery of a foot end (i.e. pedestal base) decorated with crouching jackals, attributable to a specimen of the so-called “*sagomati*” type. These findings help to strengthen the hypothesis that Deir el-Bahari played a significant role in the production of this distinctive category of Roman period coffins.

Moreover, it is imperative to point out that the area known as Asasif (or el-Assasif), located opposite the valley of Deir el-Bahari, is of considerable importance in this discussion (for the excavations conducted there by Manfred Bietak and Julia Budka, see Bietak 1972; Bietak and Reiser-Haslauer 1978; Budka 2008; 2009; 2010; 2019; 2020). The relationship between Asasif and Deir el-Bahari can be traced throughout the Pharaonic era (see Bietak and Reiser-Haslauer 1978: 19–29; see also Strudwick 2003: 174, n. 83). In any case, the continuity of use of this area is well established from the Middle Kingdom through to the Roman period. Excavations conducted in the early 1900s revealed the presence of materials dating to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Carnarvon and Carter 1912: 42–45; see also Winlock 1914: 14–15; Lansing 1917: 8).

In the case of this particular group of coffins, in addition to Deir el-Bahari, the Asasif area must also be considered, where Austrian excavations have led to the discovery of several fragments—such as wooden masks— belonging to lost specimens of complete coffins, at least five of which can be identified with certainty (three of them published by Haslauer; see Haslauer 2006).

Asasif is undoubtedly one of the primary areas from which some of the coffins examined here may have originated. For instance, several masks—formerly part of complete coffins— were found in the tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414) (Bietak and Reiser-Haslauer 1978: 85), as well as the distinctive specimen from the tomb of Padihorresnet (TT 196) (Graefe 2003/I: 120; 2003/II: 294, Pl. 48).

CONCLUSIONS

The coffins—at least those preserved with both lid and floor base sections—display a consistent and shared iconographic pattern, characterized by the following characteristics:

- an angular structure of the coffin;
- a small, oval face on the lid with a pointed chin, very low forehead, narrow nose, large eyes, and small mouth; the ears are flat and lack an auricle [see *Fig. 4:B*];
- the presence of multiple wooden

elements favoring geometric forms over realistic human features (except for the Klagenfurt specimen; cf. above: Landesmuseum Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Inv. No. AE I/1–2 [see *Fig. 7*]);

- a quadrangular facial area [see *Fig. 4:B*];
- both ends of the lid are formed by an almost cubic head, from one of which stylized facial elements emerge in three-dimensional relief;

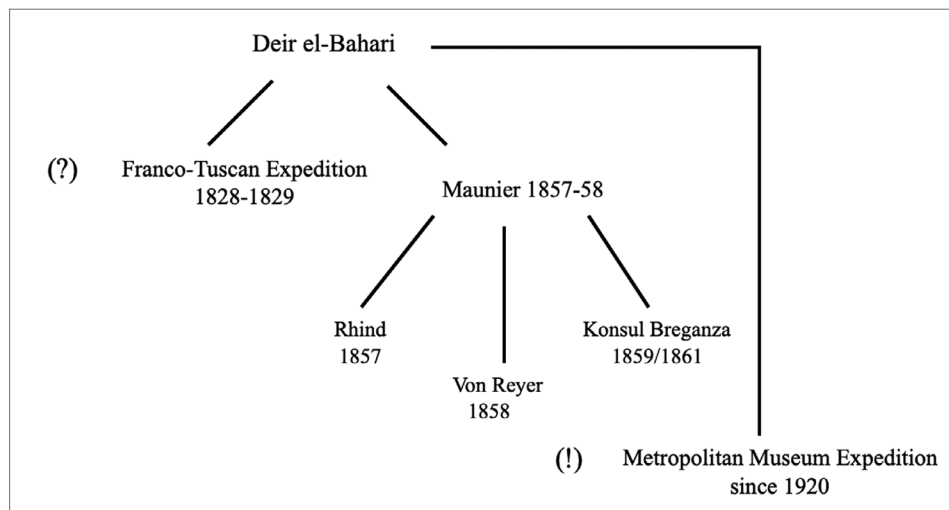


Fig. 12. Certain or hypothetical provenance from the Deir el-Bahari area (Graphic A. Panetta)

- a quadrangular base at the foot of the lid functioning as a pedestal for the entire coffin [see Fig. 4:C];
- an inner back panel entirely occupied by the depiction of the goddess Nut [see Fig. 4:A];
- Nut's figure showing traits comparable to the *Zeitgesicht* of the 2nd century CE;
- a quadrangular base of the lid consistently featuring mirror-imaged crouching jackals with keys hanging from their necks [see Fig. 4:C].

If one were to adopt the *lectio facilior*, it could be assumed that, among the numerous discoveries, Maunier may have found some of the so-called “*sarcophagi sagomati*”. Although the exact location of these coffins remains unknown (Chudzik 2022: 131), the area in question seems to correspond roughly with that excavated shortly afterward by Naville and, decades later, by the Polish mission (Chudzik 2022: 131). This topographical coincidence could lend additional weight to the identification of Deir el-Bahari as a significant context for these finds. Whether this scenario is plausible depends on the actual contact collectors involved in this work might

have had with Maunier — an unprovable hypothesis. However, the arrival of these so-called “*sarcophagi sagomati*” shortly after 1857–1858 could represent a kind of *terminus post quem*. It could be argued that Maunier, and thus part of his finds, serve as the archetype of a virtual *stemma codicum* relevant to the history of antiquities collecting [Fig. 12]. Based on this premise, the coffin purchased by Rhind in 1857 in Luxor, the one that arrived in Klagenfurt in 1858, and the Tübingen specimen from 1861 may all originate from the same restricted area within Deir el-Bahari.

The precise provenance of the two coffins linked to the Franco-Tuscan Expedition remains unresolved. The general attribution to Deir el-Bahari is already too broad and fails to indicate a specific burial or storage context, particularly since their discovery dates to an earlier period (1829).

However, the evidence presented by Chudzik (2022: 137) —specifically, a foot end [Fig. 13] decorated with jackals and attributed to this coffin type, found in the area of the Hathor shrine (Chudzik 2022: 133, Fig. 7)— offers an even more solid basis for connecting this type to the Deir el-Bahari complex. The finding of such items in this macro-area no longer appears to be coincidental; instead, it gains increasing validity as a hypothesis, which can only be strengthened through further research.

The data provided by both Winlock's work and recent Polish excavations strongly point to the Deir el-Bahari area —specifically, the space between the funerary temples of Mentuhotep II and Hatshepsut— as the likely provenance of this particular group of anthropoid coffins, dated to the 2nd–3rd century CE.



Fig. 13. Foot end of a wooden coffin (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki. After Chudzik 2022: 137, Fig. 14)

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