



## REMAINS OF TWO PTOLEMAIC COFFINS FOR OSIRIS MUMMIES-CORN FROM THE GIZA PLATEAU

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### ABSTRACT

This article serves to publish the remains of two Ptolemaic Osiris corn-mummy coffins, currently kept in the storeroom of the Haram Museum. These two coffins were among five discovered during the 1994 excavation of the ring road around the Giza plateau. The two coffins are decorated with hieroglyphic texts and date back to the period of kings Ptolemy IV and VI. These coffin styles were found in Karnak, Oxyrhynchos, and the Giza plateau.

### المخلص

تركز هذه المقالة على نشر باقي تابوتين من العصر البطلمي خاصة بمومياء اوزير الذرة (الصغيرة)، وهي محفوظة في المخزن المتحفي للهرم. هذان التابوتان كانوا ضمن خمسة إكتشفوا في عام ١٩٩٤ في حفائر الطريق الدائري في منطقة الهرم. التابوتان عليهما نصوص هيراغلفية، تؤرخ بفترة الملوك بطليموس الرابع وبتليموس السادس. وتجر الإشارة إلى ان هذا النوع من التوابيت قد اكتشفت في الكرنك واوكسيرينخوس وهضبة الهرم.

### KEYWORDS

Ptolemaic coffins, Osiris, mummies-corn, Giza plateau

### الكلمات الدالة

التوابيت البطلمية، أوزير، المومياء النباتية، هضبة الهرم

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>:

In 1994 excavations along the ring road around the Giza plateau, in the west part of the plateau (about 2.5 km south of the sphinx) under the supervision of Zahi Hawas, the late Mr. Ehab Amer and Mr. Mohemd Yossef brought to light a Ptolemaic necropolis. Statuettes of the god Osiris were buried here inside small wooden coffins every year in the month Khoiak. Every tomb consists of a square shaft carved in the rock, with an 80 to 100 cm depth. At the western end of the shaft is a small burial chamber with a coffin (about 50

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Martina Minas-Nerpel and Willy clarysse for reading the draft of the article and their valuable comments.

cm) containing an Osirian statuette of clay and wheat wrapped with bandages. They sometimes still have the remains of an erect phallus; however, they are mostly lost.<sup>1</sup>



**Fig.1: General view of the rock hill with holes cut in the rock**

The rock hill, which contains the cemetery, has the form of a semicircle and a wide area in front. It was probably where the priests gathered when performing the burial rituals of the Osiris mummies before burying them. Excavations were carried out in a small part of the cemetery and then stopped due to the suspension of the Ring Road project at this site.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Finds:**

In addition to the coffins containing the mummies of Osiris, stone vessels, amulets, four clay balls, and a scarab were found inside the burials.

#### **Coffins:**

Five coffins, each with an Osiris mummy inside, are currently preserved in the El-Haram magazine<sup>3</sup>. Amal Samuel published these five coffins in her PhD dissertation, but the two pieces of two coffins in the El-Haram storerooms that she did not publish are published here.

#### **The first object:**

**Inv. No.:** 502 El-Haram storerooms.

**Measurement:** Length: 48 cm, width: 16 cm, height: 9 cm.

**Date:** Ptolemy IV (221-204 BC)

#### **Description:**

The coffin has been restored, with a narrow part at the mummy's feet inscribed in black ink. The hieroglyphic inscription comprises the cartouches of Ptolemy IV, the name of God Sokar-Osiris and the king's dynastic ancestors.

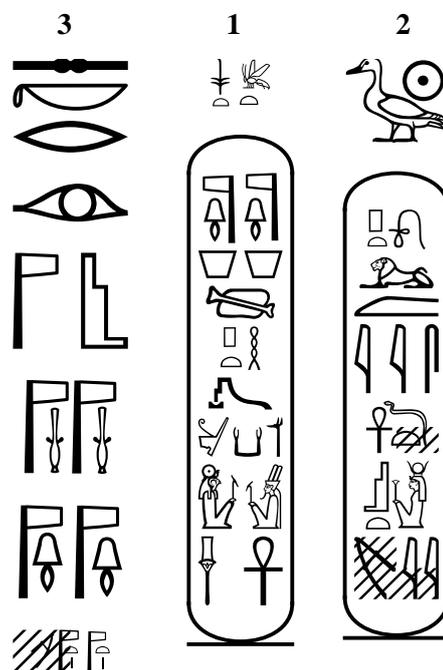
The text consists of three columns of hieroglyphic text, framed by incised lines from three sides and the sky-sign  on the top.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel, A., *šdà aštūrī aūzīr fī b'ḏ al-m'tqdāt al-dīnīf wālgnā'izīf ūmrākz 'bādth fī ḏū' al-āktšāfāt al-'atrīf al-ḥdīf ḥtā nhāif al-'šūr al-mt'ahrīf*, unpublished PhD dissertation, faculty of Archeology, Cairo University, (2010), 157-158.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel, A., *šdà aštūrī aūzīr fī b'ḏ al-m'tqdāt al-dīnīf wālgnā'izīf ūmrākz 'bādth fī ḏū' al-āktšāfāt al-'atrīf al-ḥdīf ḥtā nhāif al-'šūr al-mt'ahrīf*, 159.

<sup>3</sup> Reports of the excavation, Supreme council of Antiquities (SCA), Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 1994.

It is noteworthy that the left column (comprising Sokar-Osiris and the ancestor deities) faces to the right. In contrast, the two right columns (incorporating the royal cartouches) look to the left. This means that the living king faces Sokar-Osiris, the royal ancestors, and his royal epithet.



(1) *Nswt-bit* (*iw<sup>c</sup> n ntr.wy mnḥ.wy stp n Pth wsr k3 R<sup>c</sup> shm ḥnh (n) Imn*)

(2) *s3-R<sup>c</sup>* (*Ptwlmys ḥnh dt mry 3st*)

(3) [*mry*] *Skr-Wsir ntr.wy sn.wy ntr.wy mnḥ.wy ntr.wy [mry] itw*

(1) The king of Upper and Lower Egypt (the heir of the beneficent gods, chosen by Ptah, the strong one of Re's ka, the living image of Amun)

(2) son of Re (Ptolemy may he live forever, beloved of Isis),

(3) [the beloved by] Sokar-Osiris, the two brother gods (Theoi Adelphoi), the two beneficent gods (Theoi Euergetai) and the two gods [loving] their father.

**The second piece:**

**Inv. No.:** 503 El-Haram storerooms.

**Measurement:** length: 18 cm, width: 9 cm.

**Date:** Ptolemy VI (175-145, but probably not during the time of the joint reign with his brother, 170-164<sup>1</sup>).

**Description:**

Fragment with the foot side of a coffin containing the clay statuette of Osiris. The coffin is made of interlocking pieces of wood. The fragment displays an inscription in black ink.

<sup>1</sup> Huß, W., *Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit 332-30 v. Chr.*, München, (2001), 537-696



dedicated. The epithets of his royal ancestors are mentioned right after the divine name of Sokar-Osiris; the column ends with the title of the living king. Thus, the king groups his ancestors with the gods because he puts them in one column with the god Sokar-Osiris.

### Discussion:

In 1982 Maarten J. Raven<sup>1</sup> published a few papers on Sokar-Osiris mummies made of clay and corn. He focused on corn mummies without dealing with their coffins. In 2006, Martina Minas published objects made of clay and grain and their coffins in Museums around the world. These Ptolemaic coffins are inscribed with similar texts as the objects presented here. She mentioned three places where such coffins containing Sokar-Osiris mummies have been found: Karnak, Oxyrhynchus, and the Giza Plateau<sup>2</sup>.

Soon after, the Egyptian mission found a group of coffins with their mummies inside on the Giza plateau. In 2010, Amal Samuel published (in Arabic) five of these coffins in her PhD dissertation under numbers 501/1 to 501/5. Some of them retained their lids and had the standard text on the coffin from the outside towards the mummy's foot, and these coffins are kept in the Pyramid Antiquities magazine<sup>3</sup>.

Four of the five coffins found at the Giza plateau have vaulted lids, and the fifth has a flat lid. On the shorter side of the four coffins with a vaulted lid is inscribed a sign of a human

face <sup>4</sup>, probably to distinguish this side as the mummy's head side.

The five coffins all date to the period of King Ptolemy IV, but the second object presented here, which came from the same site, bears the name of King Ptolemy VI. Clearly, the Osiris rituals celebrated in the month of Khoiak continued until the reign of Ptolemy VI in the Giza plateau. Still, these rites may have begun under King Ptolemy III: Martina Minas listed a fragment of a coffin that was offered at an auction in London in 2004 bearing the name of Ptolemy III.<sup>5</sup> It may have also come from the Giza plateau. The ritual burial of the Sokar-Osiris statues inside their coffins continued until the reign of Ptolemy VIII, as illustrated by the coffin kept in the Barcelona Museum, whose place of origin is unknown<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Raven, M. J., *Corn-Mummies*, OMRO 63 (1982), 7-38. Id, "Four corn-mummies in the Archaeological Museum at Cracow," *Materialy Archeologiczne* XXX (1997), 5-11. id, A new type of Osiris burial, in: W. Clarysse et al., *Egyptian Religion – The Last Thousand Years. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur* I, OLA 84, Leuven 1998, 227-239.

<sup>2</sup> Martina Minas, "Die Ptolemäischen Sokar-Osiris-Mumien. Neue Erkenntnisse zum ägyptischen Dynastiekult der Ptolemäer," *MDAIK* 62 (2006), 197-213, Taf. 36-42.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel, *ṣḏà asṭūrī aūzīr fī b'ḏ al-m'iqdāt al-dīnī wālġnā'izī' ūmrākz 'bādth fī ḏū' al-ākīšāfāt al-'aṭrī al-ḥḏīṭī ḥtā nhāī al-'šūr al-mt'ahrī*, 157-161.

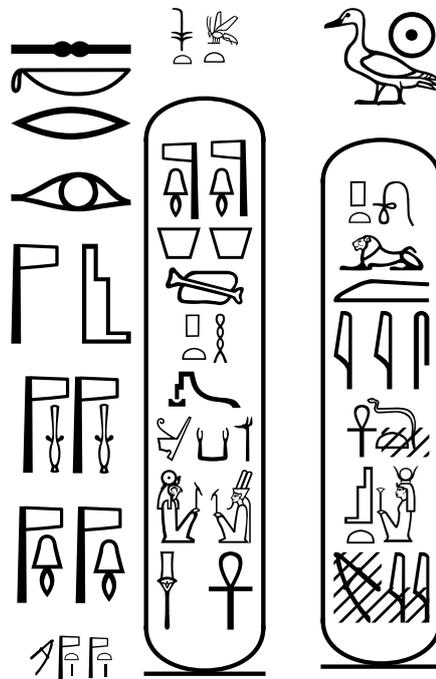
<sup>4</sup> Samuel, *ṣḏà asṭūrī aūzīr fī b'ḏ al-m'iqdāt al-dīnī wālġnā'izī' ūmrākz 'bādth fī ḏū' al-ākīšāfāt al-'aṭrī al-ḥḏīṭī ḥtā nhāī al-'šūr al-mt'ahrī*, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Martina, Die "Ptolemäischen Sokar-Osiris-Mumien," 203-204, Taf. 37c.

<sup>6</sup> Martina, Die "Ptolemäischen Sokar-Osiris-Mumien," 197, Taf. 36b.

**Appendix: The hieroglyphs of the five boxes of Amal Samuel**

As the work of Amal Samual is not published, we think that it will be very useful to at least the texts on the objects, she worked on. All the fives boxes date to the reign of Ptolemy IV (221-204 BC) and carry the same inscriptions as the following on the foot part of the box.

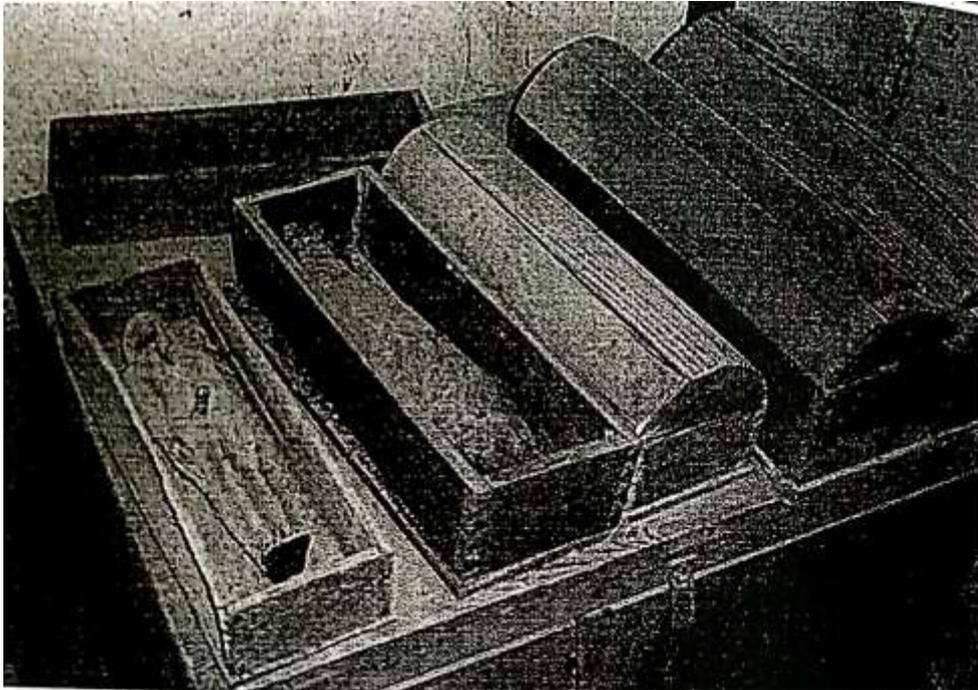


While on the head part of the box we only find the sign of the human face .

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**PLATES**



**The five coffins from Giza plateau ©Amal Samuel, fig. 72**



**The sign *hr* on one side of the coffin, After Amal Samuel, fig. 72**