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THE CANOPIC BOX OF NS-ꜣ-RWD
(BM EA 8539)*

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Primary publication of the canopic box of Ns-ꜣ-rwd, perhaps from Thebes dating to late Twenty-fifth/early Twenty-sixth Dynasties. No exact parallels exist for the texts on this box, which bears some unique epithets and unusual extensive formulations for the four protective goddesses, invoking a close relationship with Osiris and Horus, especially for Isis and Neith. The box’s owner, title, family, and status, as well as textual parallels for deities’ titles and epithets, are discussed.

In the collections of the British Museum, there is a painted wooden canopic chest belonging to Ns-ꜣ-rwd, in the form of a Pr-wr shrine with inclined roof (BM EA 8539; fig. 1). The museum acquired it as part of Henry Salt’s first collection, which arrived in London in 1821 and was accessioned in 1823. Each side displays a scene in which one of the four protective goddesses, Isis, Nephthys, Neith, and Selkis, are making a libation for one of the sons of Horus on the right, with four columns of hieroglyphic inscriptions on the left (fig. 2). The box (H. 44.5 cm, W. 45 cm, and D. 42 cm) is in good condition apart from three fragmented lines on the sides of the box pertaining to Neith, Nephthys, and Isis, and a break in the sloping lid on the Nephthys side. Its provenance was not recorded, but the title of the owner (‘Singer in the interior (of the Temple) of amun’) suggests it came from Thebes. Additionally, the bulk of Henry Salt’s collection was acquired in Thebes by Giovanni Battista Belzoni and then Yanni Athanasi. This type of canopic box has been dated, on stylistic and typological grounds, to the first half of the seventh century BC. J. Taylor dates this type to the late Twenty-fifth/early Twenty-sixth Dynasties; the alternating yellow and white columns of the hieroglyphic inscriptions are also characteristic of this period.

Its owner is Ns-ꜣ-rwd (written once as Nꜣ.s ꜣ rwd), daughter of Wsrkn. The name occurs five times, once on each side and once on the lid. The sign ꜣ, which appears before rwd in her name, does not seem to be essential, because it is omitted on the lid. Although her name is not registered in Ranke, the masculine form Nꜣ.f ꜣ rd is found

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1 D. A. Aston, ‘Canopic Chests from the Twenty-First Dynasty to the Ptolemaic Period’, Ä&L 10 (2000), 160–1, pl. 2.
3 Aston, Ä&L 10, 160–1, 178, pl. 2.
4 J. Taylor, personal communication, September 2010.
6 Ranke, PN I, 212.
7 Ranke, PN I, 170.18; II, 364.
on a Twenty-sixth Dynasty limestone stela,\(^8\) as well as being the name of the first king of the Twenty-ninth Dynasty, Nepherites I.\(^9\) The name of her father, Osorkon, is not a common name in Thebes during the late Twenty-fifth/early Twenty-sixth Dynasties,\(^10\) however, an Osorkon, Priest of Montu, is named as the father of \(Tj'-r\-t\-n-Ist\), lady of the house, on her coffins CG 41037\(^11\) and CG 41065-66.\(^12\) These coffins can be dated, on stylistic grounds, to around 625–600 BC.\(^13\) It is, therefore, quite possible that box EA 8539 could date to the same period.

Fig. 1. Technical drawing of BM 8539 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

**Parallels**

As is typical with Late Period canopic boxes, EA 8539 does not have internal compartments; no canopic jars survive, but these may also be absent in intact sets from this period.\(^14\) Comparing Dodson, Reisner, and Sethe,\(^15\) there are no exact parallels

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\(^{8}\) E. Chassinat, ‘Textes provenant du Sérapéum de Memphis’, *RT* 22 (1900), 170.

\(^{9}\) J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (MÄS 20; Mainz, 1984), 280.

\(^{10}\) Ranke, *PN* I, 87.2; F. L. Griffith, ‘A Tourist’s Collections of Fifty Years Ago’, *JEA* 3 (1916), 195, pl. 34-7.

\(^{11}\) M. A. Moret, *Sarcophages de l’époque babasteïte à l’époque saïte* (CGC 41001–41; Cairo, 1913), 301–7, 310, 312 (no. 41037); cf. Moret, *Sarcophages*, 290–1, 294, 297 (CGC no. 41035).

\(^{12}\) M. H. Gauthier, *Cercueils anthropoïdes des prêtres de Montou* (CGC Nos 41042–72; Cairo, 1913), 430–5, 443–7, 449, 450–5, 457 (no. 41065), 462–4 (no. 41066); Gauthier dated the first coffin to the Twenty-second Dynasty and the second to the pre-Saite Period.

\(^{13}\) J. Taylor, personal communication, March 2011.

\(^{14}\) B. Lüscher, *Untersuchungen zu ägyptischen Kanopenkästen vom Alten Reich bis zum Ende der Zweiten Zwischenzeit* (HÄB 31; Hildesheim, 1996), 7.

for the texts on EA 8539. The closest comparison is with the canopic box of Ns-ḥnsw CG 4737, found at Thebes and dated to the first half of the seventh century BC.\textsuperscript{16} CG 4737 represents the four sons of Horus on each side being purified by one of the four goddesses, with three or four columns of inscriptions on each side, but placed in front of the deities (though the distinctive texts of EA 8539 are not present).\textsuperscript{17} Nephthys purifies Hapi, Isis purifies Amsety, Neith purifies Duamutef, and Selkis pours water over Qebehsenuef.\textsuperscript{18}

Another canopic box, CG 5028, presents on each side a scene with the sons of Horus, but without a purification motif. Six lines of hieroglyphic inscriptions pertaining to the protection of the deceased accompany each son of Horus.\textsuperscript{19}

A third parallel, the canopic box of Pt-di-Imnt at Luxor Museum J 75, was found at Deir el-Bahari (dated to the Twenty-second Dynasty),\textsuperscript{20} but the maternal grandfather,
King Takeloth III, dates it to the end of the eighth century bc or the first half of the seventh century, and so closer to the date of EA 8539. Here the four goddesses each pour water over one of sons of Horus, and the scene is in the middle of each side, with a column of hieroglyphic inscriptions on each side. In this example, the lid names the owner of the box, his family background, and titles.

Three other canopic boxes of the same type, CG 4734–6, were found at Thebes and are datable to the first half of the seventh century bc, although they do not have the same scenes or texts of EA 8539. A fourth parallel is a fragment from el-Qurna, which dates to the Late Period/Ptolemaic Period. It bears just one scene showing Nephthys pouring water on Qebehsenuef, not Hapi. The hieroglyphic inscriptions are behind Nephthys. The traces behind Qebehsenuef are not clear.

In conclusion, these parallels, excepting the last one, date the British Museum box to seventh century bc Thebes.

**Description**

**Lid (fig. 3)**
The lid is fragmented in the middle and on the right, being thicker at one end. Two holes in the edges of the lower right side and upper left side perhaps secured the lid of the box. A hieroglyphic text runs from the raised edge down the middle of the lid. There is a two-line border in blue on either side of the inscription. The text is written in black on a yellow background:

\[ Wsir \ h(t) \ h(n)\-Imn \ Ns-\tau\-rwed \ st \ n \ Wsrkhn \]

The Osiris, Singer in the interior (of the Temple) of Amun, Ns-\tau\-rwed, daughter of Osorkon.

This is the only reference to any other family members on the box. The title of Ns-\tau\-rwed—which also occurs abbreviatedly as ‘Singer in the interior (of the Temple)’—indicates her elite temple position, participating in rituals by singing and shaking the sistrum. Women who held this title, which is associated with Karnak, were the daughters or sisters of the kings, mayors, governors, and high priests, and it was often held by a ‘God’s Wife of Amun’. In the Twenty-second Dynasty, Karoma,

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perhaps daughter of Osorkon II,\textsuperscript{30} and Meresamun on her coffin Oriental Institute Museum 10797, bore this title.\textsuperscript{31} Other examples dating to the end of the Twenty-fifth to the Twenty-sixth Dynasties include the canopic jar of Dbh CG 4281 from Dra‘ abu el-Naggah,\textsuperscript{32} and the fragment canopic jar of Bsttt-ir-di.s from Medinet Habu.\textsuperscript{33}

There is no evidence for holes for attaching a depiction of an Anubis figure to the lid, although Aston suggested that the lid of this box may be unfinished, comparing boxes of the same type which show the two Anubis figures lying on a couch to the right and the left of the text.\textsuperscript{34}

Selkis side (fig. 4)
Selkis purifies a mummified falcon-headed figure with yellow body, wearing a red garment and blue wig. Selkis stands on a blue base, in human form wearing a red dress and white wig, and identified by the scorpion on her head. She holds a jar with both hands in an act of purification. The text between them reads:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textit{wḥ b sp-sn Wsir Ns-ꜣ-rwḏ mi}
Purification, purification, Osiris Ns-ꜣ-rwḏ like (Qebehsenuef).

Unlike the other sides of the box, the writer here omitted the name of the god (here Qebehsenuef). Above the scene runs a line of text, continued in four columns behind Selkis, making it clear that the goddess is uttering the purification:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Teeter, \textit{Meresamun}, 21–2.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Reisner, \textit{Canopics}, 191 (no. 4281).
\item \textsuperscript{33} Reisner, \textit{Canopics}, 355 (no. 4711).
\item \textsuperscript{34} Aston, \textit{Ä&L} 10, 161 n. 28.
\end{itemize}
Words spoken by Selkis, god’s wife,\textsuperscript{35} beloved of her husband,\textsuperscript{36} the noble,\textsuperscript{37} and the powerful one, who came forth from the primeval water,\textsuperscript{38} the noble serpent, great of awe, who heals every snake bite,\textsuperscript{39} who seized the two lands in glory,\textsuperscript{40} lady of speech,\textsuperscript{41} great of magic,\textsuperscript{42} who causes people and gods to live, who causes to breathe after misery, who gives the breath in …?

**Neith side (fig. 5)**

Neith, depicted on a blue base wearing a red dress, and red crown of Lower Egypt, purifies a mumiform Duamutef with jackal’s head. His headdress is blue and his face black. Two columns between them in black on a white background read:

\[
\text{wr}b \text{ sp-sn Wsir N[. ]-rt (rd) mi Dwst-mct.f nty im.t}
\]

Purification, purification, Osiris Ns-rt (rd) like Duamutef who is with you.

Above the scene runs a line of text (black on white background), continued in four columns behind Neith (black on yellow and white background). The borders of the inscriptions are in blue apart from the lower edge, which is in black:

\[
\text{dd mdw in Srtkt hmt-ntr mry(t) hy.s } \text{sp(s) wr(s) m nw (i)r(s) sp(s) wr(s) šfit šmmt } \text{r nb psh itt trcy m šbt nb(t) mdtw wr(t)-hksw s’nḥ(t) rmṯ ntrw srtk m-ḥt itd } \text{tsw m … ?}
\]

\textit{dd mdw in Srtkt hmt-ntr mry(t) hy.s sp(s) wr(s) m nw (i)r(s) sp(s) wr(s) šfit šmmt r nb psh itt trcy m šbt nb(t) mdtw wr(t)-hksw s’nḥ(t) rmṯ ntrw srtk m-ḥt itd tsw m … ?}

\textit{Words spoken by Selkis, god’s wife, beloved of her husband, the noble, and the powerful one, who came forth from the primeval water, the noble serpent, great of awe, who heals every snake bite, who seized the two lands in glory, lady of speech, great of magic, who causes people and gods to live, who causes to breathe after misery, who gives the breath in …?}

\textit{Neith side (fig. 5)}

Neith, depicted on a blue base wearing a red dress, and red crown of Lower Egypt, purifies a mumiform Duamutef with jackal’s head. His headdress is blue and his face black. Two columns between them in black on a white background read:

\[
\text{wr}b \text{ sp-sn Wsir N[. ]-rt (rd) mi Dwst-mct.f nty im.t}
\]

Purification, purification, Osiris Ns-rt (rd) like Duamutef who is with you.

Above the scene runs a line of text (black on white background), continued in four columns behind Neith (black on yellow and white background). The borders of the inscriptions are in blue apart from the lower edge, which is in black:

\[
\text{dd mdw in Srtkt hmt-ntr mry(t) hy.s } \text{sp(s) wr(s) m nw (i)r(s) sp(s) wr(s) šfit šmmt } \text{r nb psh itt trcy m šbt nb(t) mdtw wr(t)-hksw s’nḥ(t) rmṯ ntrw srtk m-ḥt itd } \text{tsw m … ?}
\]

\textit{dd mdw in Srtkt hmt-ntr mry(t) hy.s sp(s) wr(s) m nw (i)r(s) sp(s) wr(s) šfit šmmt r nb psh itt trcy m šbt nb(t) mdtw wr(t)-hksw s’nḥ(t) rmṯ ntrw srtk m-ḥt itd tsw m … ?}

\textit{Words spoken by Selkis, god’s wife, beloved of her husband, the noble, and the powerful one, who came forth from the primeval water, the noble serpent, great of awe, who heals every snake bite, who seized the two lands in glory, lady of speech, great of magic, who causes people and gods to live, who causes to breathe after misery, who gives the breath in …?}

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\[
\text{wr}b \text{ sp-sn Wsir N[. ]-rt (rd) mi Dwst-mct.f nty im.t}
\]

Purification, purification, Osiris Ns-rt (rd) like Duamutef who is with you.

Above the scene runs a line of text (black on white background), continued in four columns behind Neith (black on yellow and white background). The borders of the inscriptions are in blue apart from the lower edge, which is in black:

\[
\text{dd mdw in Srtkt hmt-ntr mry(t) hy.s } \text{sp(s) wr(s) m nw (i)r(s) sp(s) wr(s) šfit šmmt } \text{r nb psh itt trcy m šbt nb(t) mdtw wr(t)-hksw s’nḥ(t) rmṯ ntrw srtk m-ḥt itd } \text{tsw m … ?}
\]
Fig. 4. Selkis side (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

Fig. 5. Neith side (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).
The first two titles of Neith are the same as Isis on this box.

44 *Wb.* IV, 297.11, 18, perhaps referring to her body (=statue) in her temple at Sais; Neith bore many epithets linking her to Sais, but this epithet is not otherwise attested: R. El-Sayed, *La déesse Neith de Sais* (BDÉ 86; Cairo, 1982), 32.

45 This epithet occurs in the Coffin Texts referring to Nut (*CT* II, 18g), and may also be used for the goddess Menet(?) in the Late Period temple at Hibis: N. de G. Davies, *The Temple of Hibis in El Khargeh Oasis*, III (New York, 1953), pl. 8. Nephthys also bears this title on this box.

46 Re, the sun god, had this epithet in the New Kingdom: *LGG* II, 246.

47 Not attested for Neith before the Ptolemaic Period, but later Re, Sobek, and Horus are described as ‘heir of Neith’ on the walls of Esna and Tod respectively: *LGG* I, 172, 178.


49 Neith is closely linked to the sacred cloth, and her temple in Sais was famous for producing strips of linen to be used for mummification from at least the Eighteenth Dynasty: El-Sayed, *La déesse Neith de Sais*, I, 76–7; II, 332–3.

50 For this epithet and the next two, see El-Sayed, *La déesse Neith de Sais*, 117–8, 120–1. She protects the mummified body and limbs of Osiris, and scatters his rebels: R. O. Faulkner, ‘Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys’, *Mélanges Maspero*, 1/1 (MIFAO 66; Cairo, 1934), 340 col. 5.8; R. O. Faulkner, *The Papyri Brenner-Rhind (British Museum no. 10158)* (BAe 3; Brussels, 1933), 15, 17.

51 Neith is described on Pap. Berlin 3068 thus: ‘she will be a protection to your body forever’; Faulkner, *Mélanges Maspero* 1/1, 340, col. 5.8.

52 Osiris is described thus: ‘you are at rest beside your mother (Neith)’; Faulkner, *Mélanges Maspero* 1/1, 340 col. 5.7.
Words spoken: Hail to you, Isis the great, mother of the god, the first great royal wife of her husband, the wife of the god in the resting place of Mendes, lady of stride in the House of Hen, lady of offerings in the cemetery, who assembled her husband in Heliopolis, beloved of her son, who placed him on his father's throne, who knows things in the portable shrine Chemmis, lady of protection in the sacred bark.

**Nephthys side (fig. 7)**

This side is the only one which does not have a horizontal text line above the scene. A humanoid Nephthys, wearing a red dress (surmounted by a baboon's head) and standing on a blue base, purifies a humanoid mumiform Hapi with a baboon's head. The text between them reads:

\[ w\text{sp-sp nWsr Ns-ŋ-red mi Hpi nty im sp fdw } \]

Purification, purification, Osiris Ns-ŋ-red, like Hapi who is there, four times.

The text behind Nephthys reads:

\[
\text{qd mdw in9 hr t} \text{st wr(t) mw4-ntr hmt-nsw wrt n tpt hy.s hmt-ntr m h}n n Ddt nbt nmtt n Pr-Hn nb(t) htpw m stw mw(t) hy.s m Twm Hst mw(t) st.t srm(t) s(w) hr st t.f rh(t) ht imyi k(n)yn (i)h-bit nb(t) mkt(t) m w13
\]

53 A common title of Isis: M. Münster, Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis: Vom Alten Reich bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches (MÄS 11; Mainz, 1968), 205.

54 The s11 was written in the place of hmt and subsequently corrected. The n should be after tpt: cf. L. Troy, Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History (Uppsala, 1986), 194. The title hmt-nsw wrt was common for queens (Troy, Patterns of Queenship, 106–8, 193–4), but only the goddess Nebet-hetepet bore it on a block statue of the Saite Period: I. Gamer-Wallert, Ägyptische und ägyptisierende Funde von der Iberischen Halbinsel (Wiesbaden, 1978), 206.

55 Cf. Hathor who is described at Philae as ‘the wife of the god in Mendes’: G. Bédérite, Le Temple de Philae (MMAF 13; Cairo, 1983), 92–6.

56 ‘House of Hen’ perhaps refers to Athribis where a part of Osiris’ body was found: H. Gauthier, Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques (Cairo, 1925), II, 111–12; alternatively it may be the sanctuary of the Sokar bark at Memphis: K. A. Kitchen, ‘Henu-Barke’, LÄ II, 1120; Gauthier, Dictionnaire des noms géographiques, 111–12. It could denote the underworld or a part of it: J. Yoyotte, ‘Études géographiques I. La cité des Acacias’, RdE 13 (1961), 93 n. 1; however, the other topographical references in this passage refer to earthly toponyms (Qdw, Twm, (i)h-bit). nbt nmtt m pr-Hn is not otherwise attested, but cf. nbt (nmtt) m w13 n [hkat] for Hathor in the tomb of Amenemope (TT 41): J. Assmann, Das Grab des Amenemope (Mainz am Rhein, 1991), 82–3; see also nbt (nmtt) m hmt-g7 and nbt nmtt m Wnw on the Late Period Louvre 3129 and BM 10252: Urk. VI, 53.18. nbt nmtt m hpt-ntr occurs in Tewosert’s Tomb (KV 14; KRI IV, 356.10) and on three coffins of the Late Period: G. Daressy, Cercueils des cachettes royales (CGC Nos 61001–44; Cairo, 1909), 42 (no. 61024), 123 (no. 61030), 181 (no. 61032). Finally, cf. also nbt nmtt smsw-Hr on a Late Period coffin: Daressy, Cercueils, 162 (no. 61031).

57 While this extended title is not otherwise attested, nbt htpw is common from the Middle Kingdom on (e.g. CT III, 3149; IV, 171); for the New Kingdom, referring to Renenutet, see M. E. Grébaut, Le Musée égyptien: Recueil de monuments et de notices sur les fouilles d’Égypte (Cairo, 1890–1900), VII, pl. 5; Urk. IV, 1199.16; J. Broekhuis, De godin Renenoutet (Assen, 1971), 143. It was also a name of a realm in the sixth hour of the Book of the Gates: E. Hornung, Das Buch von den Pförten des Jenseits nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches (AH 7; Geneva, 1979), 240.

58 Ns-ŋ is not otherwise attested, but m-w13-ntr is known in the Graeco-Roman Period: LGG III, 542.

59 For this goddess, see J. G. Griffiths, ‘Hesat’, LÄ II, 1170. Hesat is here a name for Isis rather than a separate goddess; this is typical of the late Twenty-fifth/early Twenty-sixth Dynasties, rather than the Ptolemaic Period: Griffiths, LÄ II, 1170.
Fig. 6. Isis side (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

Fig. 7. Nephthys side (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).
Words spoken by Nephthys, the great, mistress of women,\(^{60}\) Sopdet,\(^{61}\) lady of Ankhtawy,\(^{62}\) lady of the two eyes,\(^{63}\) shining of eyes,\(^{64}\) sharp of knife,\(^{65}\) enduring of body, lady of red linen,\(^{66}\) mistress of green linen,\(^{57}\) beautiful one of the divine bark, lady of grace,\(^{58}\) enduring of love,\(^{60}\) who encircles every heart in [perfection],\(^{70}\) the braided one in the midst of the Great Temple,\(^{71}\) sailor in the great sacred bark.\(^{72}\)

**Discussion**

From the Middle Kingdom, canopic jars might be put inside a canopic box,\(^{73}\) which from the New Kingdom began to take the shape of a naos or a shrine (as in the present example), sometimes being decorated with a figure of a falcon or a jackal.\(^{74}\) In the Late Period, the canopic boxes became higher and narrower.\(^{75}\) In the early Saite Period, the custom of using canopic boxes began to die out.\(^{76}\)

The parallels and title of the owner suggest that the BM EA 8539 canopic box is perhaps from Thebes and dates to late Twenty-fifth Dynasty/early Twenty-sixth

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61 Sopdet as a separate goddess was associated with the fixed star, Sirius, and hence with the inundation. She is also identified with many deities, e.g. Isis, Hathor, and Hesat. See L. Kákosy, *Sothis*, *LÄ* III, 1110–11.

62 Many deities had the epithet of ‘lady of Ankhtawy’ (=Memphis), e.g. Isis, Iunet, Wadjet, Bastet, and Hathor. See *LGG* IV, 30.

63 This title is not otherwise attested for females, but occurs once in its masculine form for *Hr-mhnty-irty*: A. H. Gardiner, *Chester Beatty Gift* (HTBM 3; London, 1935), pl. 36 verso 2.6.


66 Wdṯt, *idmī, ins, hft* are four kinds of linen which were presented in the daily ritual and the Opening of the Mouth ritual: A. Egberts, *In Quest of Meaning: A Study of the Ancient Egyptian Rites of Consecrating the Meret-Chests and Driving the Calves* (EU 8/1; Leiden, 1995), 140–1, 177.

67 For the second time on the canopic box, the correct word, *wdṯt*, was written over the incorrect one (*wt*).

68 A common epithet for goddesses from the New Kingdom, e.g. Mut (*KRI* I, 208; *KRI* I, 321–7; *KRI* 316–16); also Maat (*KRI* I, 287.12), Sekhmet (*Uch. IV, 1764–11), and Remnet: R. J. Leprohon, *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, III: Stelae. II. The New Kingdom to the Coptic Period* (CAA; Mainz am Rhein, 1991), 16. It is also borne once by deified queen Ahmose-Nefertari: B. Bruyère, *Rapports sur les fouilles de Deir el-Médineh 1929* (FIFAO 7; Cairo, 1930), II, 41.

69 Not otherwise attested for Nephthys, though she was commonly linked to love: J. Lévi, *Aspects of the Goddess Nephthys, Especially during the Graeco-Roman Period in Egypt* (Ann Arbor, 2007), 168–77.


73 Cf. *Wb. I, 231.6; nfr ‘sailor’ (or ‘captain’) is used elsewhere in the titles ‘chief sailor of Maat’ and ‘sailor of the barque of Ptah’: A. G. Gaballa, "False-door Stelae of some Memphite Personnel", *SAK* 7 (1979), 42–4 fig. 1, 50–1.


75 Martin, *LÄ* III, 319; Lüscher, *Kanopenkästen*, 7; Reisner, *Canopes*, 369–71 (nos 4735–).

76 See also Aston, *Ä&L* 10, 161.
Dynasties. Her father, Osorkon, whose name is mentioned on the lid of the canopic box, was not common in this period, but an Osorkon, a Priest of Montu, is attested on the coffins CG 41037 and CG 41065–6.

Canopic boxes were under the protection of Osiris and Anubis, but the most frequently mentioned deities on them are the sons of Horus (associated with the rituals of the night-vigil and funeral), and the four protective goddesses: Isis, Nephthys, Neith, and Selkis. The representation of the sons of Horus and the protective goddesses on the walls of canopic boxes began in the New Kingdom, when it becomes widespread to depict the sons of Horus on the short sides of the canopic boxes, whilst the four protective deities were represented on the long side. In contrast, both of them are depicted on the same sides of the British Museum EA 8539. Continued innovation can be seen elsewhere in the Late Period, with new decorative motifs occurring on the canopic boxes.

There are no exact parallels for the texts on BM EA 8539, and several of the goddesses’ epithets are otherwise unknown or not attested for them. Neith’s role as protectress of Horus is mentioned, as is also found in Late Period inscriptions, where she is ‘the nurse of her son Horus’, as his protector in Chemmis, and as ‘the divine mother who protects Horus’ (elsewhere Horus too can be described as ‘son of Neith’). BM EA 8539 also invokes Isis’ strong relationship with her husband Osiris and her son Horus, and mentions Chemmis where she gave birth to Horus, and her reassembly of her husband’s body in Heliopolis. Simultaneously, BM EA 8539 highlights her protective role, which she performs on the solar bark along with Nephthys. Taken together, the captions to BM EA 8539 represent an unusually dense and rich set of mythological allusions unparalleled on other canopic boxes.

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78 Lüsch, Kanopenkästen, 7; Martin, LÄ III, 319; Dodson, Canopic Equipment, 2.
79 Neith is occasionally replaced in the tetrad of protective goddesses by Tefnut.
81 Lüsch, Kanopenkästen, 7; Martin, LÄ III, 320; Aston, Ä&E 10, 170–1, pls 16–19.
82 See detailed documentation in footnotes above; see nn. 35–42 (Selkis), nn. 43–52 (Neith), nn. 53–9 (Isis), nn. 60–72 (Nephthys).
83 For Isis as protectress, see Münster, Isis, 147; Assmann, MDAIK 28, 63; her role in protecting Osiris and conferring kingship on Horus is attested earlier, e.g. N. de G. Davies, The tomb of Nefer-hotep at Thebes (New York, 1933), pls 58–9.
84 Münster, Isis, 185.
85 Assmann, Chests of Life, 133, 135.
86 For Isis occurs in this role in all but one hour of the Amduat, being named explicitly as ‘Isis’ in the seventh hour, and referred to in the other hours as nbt tiit ‘lady of the sacred bark’ or frct tmt ‘who protects the sacred bark’; see E. Hornung, Das Amduat: Die Schrift des verborgenen Raumes nach Texten aus den Gräbern des Neuen Reiches (AA 7; Wiesbaden, 1953), I, 10 (no. 45), 31 (no. 154), 69 (no. 204), 85 (no. 359), 107 (no. 433), 123 (no. 505), 142 (no. 573), 159 (no. 647), 172 (no. 720), 182 (no. 777), 198 (no. 848). For Nephthys in the solar bark, see E. Graefe, ‘Nephthys’, LÄ IV (Wiesbaden, 1982), 458.