

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The ancient Egyptian perception of nb 'nh:

the images of coffins on the items from the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

Lavrentyeva Nika

1. *nb* '*nh* – describes the function of a sarcophagus/coffin as a containers of the buried bodies that revives the dead to life. Used from the Old Kingdom, even personified as a deity (Hannig 2003, AWb I, 613). In the Middle Kingdom the term became widespread (Hannig 2006, AWb II, Teil 1, 1240-1241), especially in the "Coffin Texts" (CT 54, 60, 75, 160, 312, 340, 441, 534, 647, 50)



I.1a.1622 (ИГ 4488 a-b) of a mummy in a box-form coffin Ushabti of Dhwtj-ms in a form with a vaulted lid New Kingdom 1st half of 18 Dyn.

2. The interior space of the coffin is described as a goddess Nut, mother of gods, giving rebirth of the sun, creating a cyclic revival of the universe.

3. krsw – physical sheath surrounding the deceased. The word can be used to name a coffin or the whole burial, and equipment of the tombs. It has an archaic form of the sanctuary of Lower Egypt - pr nw. The Egyptian word krsw depicts an old-styled type of coffin, but allows also an anthropoid determinative. The word krsw is often written with a sign ks (T19) – as well as bone harpoons, bone (Pr. 5,1; West 10,10; BD 100,14), and it also used in the definitions as "painful, difficult, dangerous". Through this sign is written and "sculptor, carver of reliefs" (ksty). The morphegrapheme (base) kr is also a part in the words «cave» (krrt), «storm» (kri), «bag» (krft), «container» (krht) and the door lock (k3rt). So, on the one hand, its semantics is linked with the «bone» and some «danger» and on the other hand – with the meaning of "concealing something".



I.1a.5364 The model of a boat with a coffin Middle Kingdom The coffin has a box form with a vaulted lid typical for the Old Kingdom

І.1а.1948 (ИГ 3550) Ushabti-box of priest Unnefer Ist millennium BC This item depicts a box-form coffin not typical for the Ist millennium BC



Государственный музей

изобразительных искусств

имени А.С. Пушкина

The Pushkin State Museum

Of Fine Arts

Egyptian coffin is an essential part of the burial equipment throughout Egyptian history. The image of *nb* '*nh* can be found on different types of items: sculpture models, ushabti-boxes, tomb reliefs, shrouds of mummy, etc.

The collection of the PSMFA contains some objects with depictions of coffins from different epochs that illustrate the perception of the central item of the tomb equipment and one of the main themes of Egyptian religious art.

It is particularly interesting to discover this phenomenon in the Middle Kingdom, when the coffin and models are placed in close proximity to each other in the burial chamber and made of the same material - wood. However, the shape of the coffin on the models followed the traditional form of the sign, perhaps because the model - is a form made for the space of offerings and is another way to demonstrate the same things that are shown in the drawings or carvings in *frise d'objets*.

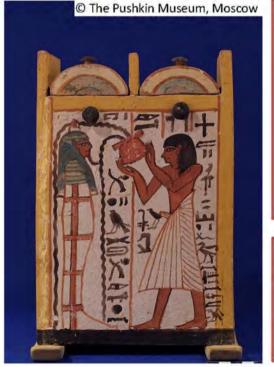
I.1a.5249 Coffin of Mahu New Kingdom, 18 Dyn.,



he Pushkin Museum, Mosco

© The Pushkin Museum, Moscow

І.1а.1662 (ИГ 3853) Ushabti of Sn-ndm sdm-'š m st m3't in a form of a mummy in a model of an anthropoid coffin . New Kingdom, 19 Dyn. (Seti I-Ramses II)



I.1a. 1025 From the Museum-Institute Of Classic Orient, 1924 Lid of an ushabti box with a hawk-Akhom I millennium BC The lid has an ornament on its sides typical for the Old Kingdom coffins The hawk is dressed in a mummy net that was placed over the outer wrappings of mummies from the 25 Dyn to the Ptolemaic Period (Taylor 2001, 206)

І.1а.1918 (ИГ 3547) Ushabti box of Hnsw New Kingdom, 19 Dyn. (Ramses II) The box has a form of dual sanctuary The coffin depicted has a mummy form New Kingdom

The form of coffin images and models can vary from the style of form and décor of full-size coffins used in particular epoch and place. We can see simultaneous applying of anthropoid full-sized coffins and the boxforms in models and hieroglyphic descriptions.

The Middle Kingdom "chests" are used in tombs of nobles together with "old-fashioned" krsw forms of models of the tomb equipment.

© The Pushkin Museum, Moscow

From the time of the New Kingdom and TIP - on the display there are examples of anthropoid coffins, but models still can represent forms of the Old Kingdom.

But there is an exception - the anthropoid coffin for ushabti of Sn-ndm from Deir el-Medina typical for the 19th Dyn. The hieroglyph krsw can have a determinative in the form of anthropoid coffin, but more often is used the classic form of determinative, thus in the manufacture of models can follow the hieroglyphic form, i.e. the model inherently linked with hieroglyphic form.

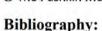
But krs - is not only a sarcophagus or coffin, it is the designation of the entire equipment of the tomb or a shrine (naos over coffin); in tomb models it can play a role of 3D image of the hieroglyphic sign Thus the model of a twt figure of deceased depicted as a sign is placed in a model of krs sign.

But do not rule out the possibility of natural and simultaneous relationship of coffin forms and its images. This kind of correlation forms the majority of such cases. But some examples described above make it possible to reflect on how Egyptians constructed an image nb 'nh on the funeral equipment.

І.1а. 5638 (ИГ 4117) Burial procession from unknown tomb. From Saqqara New Kingdom Late 18 Dyn.

І.1а. 5637 (ИГ 4124) Burial procession from the tomb of Twjj. Transportation of coffin, the "opening of the mouth" ritual From Saggara New Kingdom Early 19 Dyn.

Nika Lavrentyeva, PhD The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, head of department "Ivan Tsvetaev Educational Art Museum" nika27-merty@yandex.ru



Berlev O.D., Hodjash S.I. The Way to Immortality. Monuments of Egyptian Art in the Collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Moscow, 2002

de Buck A. The Egyptian Coffin Texts. Vols. I-VII. Chicago,

Forman W., Quirke S. Hieroglyphs & the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt. Norman, University of Oklahoma press, 1996. P.101. Lapis I.A. Coffin of Mahu, from the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts// Vestnik Drevney Istorii, № 4.Moscow, 1956. P.157-

Taylor J. H. Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2001. P. 206. Taylor J. H. Egyptian Mummies. London, The British Museum Press, 2010. P.76-103.

nika,layrentyeva@arts-museum.ru