The Second Intermediate Period model coffin of Teti in the British Museum (EA 35016)

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The British Museum possesses in the collection of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan a model coffin purchased in 1868 as part of the Robert J. Hay collection. Although much of the Hay Collection comes from Thebes, the provenance of this piece is not known. It is made of two pieces of wood, one for the box, the other one for the lid. The outside is plastered and then painted. The measurements are: length: 29.5 cm, width: 10.8 cm (10.0 cm at the head end), height: 15.4 cm (including lid). The walls are 2.5 cm thick at the short ends and about 1.0–1.4 cm thick at the long sides. At the short ends there are holes for keeping the lid on the box (Fig. 12). The box is made of one piece of wood which was hollowed out to a depth of about 6.0 cm. The box has on the underside two floor battens (2.5 cm wide) also carved out of the wood. The lid is vaulted with rectangular raised ends (each about 3.5 cm wide). These raised ends are diagonally cut on the back side only of the lid, perhaps because of the shape of the wood used (see Fig. 10). The coffin is in general well preserved, though the plaster has flaked away at some points. The inscriptions on the foot end are no longer visible (Fig. 8, Fig. 9).

The decoration is painted in black on the white plaster. The decorative pattern follows closely 'real' coffins of the Second Intermediate Period. At the top of the four outer sides there is a horizontal line of hieroglyphs and there are vertical text columns all around. At the front side there are eight of these, at the back nine and on each short end two columns. All animal hieroglyphs are mutilated on this model coffin, as is common for the Second Intermediate Period on objects placed in a burial chamber. The edges on the sides are framed with a black line. This black framing line appears also on the lid (see Fig. 5). On the front side there is a panel bearing two wedjat eyes and a shen-ring between them. On the head end is painted the figure of a standing woman.

The texts on the coffin are quite garbled, and no spell seems to be complete. However, in several cases it is possible to identify these broken spells from other sources. The horizontal text lines contain mainly spells also known from two royal pyramidia of the late Middle Kingdom. The columns have speeches of different gods, introduced by ḫḧ ṭ święt (“Words spoken by”). The texts are as follows:

I would like to thank John Taylor for providing me with access to this coffin and encouraging me to publish it here. All photographic pictures and drawings are my own. A photo and short description will be found in Taylor and Strudwick, Mummies: Death and the Afterlife, 206–7.

Other model coffins of the Middle Kingdom are made from several pieces and constructed almost like a real coffin: compare Arnold, The Pyramid of Senwosret I, The South Cemeteries at Lisht I, 147–49, and also ibid., 34–39, pls 13–14.

Willems, Chests of Life, 169.

http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/bmesa05/issue05/grajetzki.html
Transliteration:

*Left (front) side (Fig. 1, Fig. 6):*

(top line)  $\dd$ $mdw$ $b^r$  $us$-$irt$ $mn$ $pn$ $mr^r$-$hrw$ $m$ $nt$-$frm$-$w$ $m$ $sir$ $r$ $ir(t)$ $nt$ $r^r$-$prj$ … (a)

(columns, from right to left)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $r^r$-$tdi$.$n(i)$ … (b)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $imst$ ii.$n(i)$…(c)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $nt$ ii.$n(i)$

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $nbh$-$bwt$ ii.$n(i)$ $mm$

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $nt$ ii.$n(i)$ $hp$ …(d)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $nt$ ii.$n(i)$ …

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $dtr$-$mut$.$f$ ii…

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $sht$ {nf} $rt$ … (e)

*Right (back) side (Fig. 2, Fig. 7):*

(top line)  $\dd$ $mdw$ 'wu $inpw$ $tp$ $dw$mnit-$w$ $nt$-$ttr$-$hr$ $hu$ $mn$ $pn$ … $immi$ …(f)

(the columns, from left to right)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $n.$…(g)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $hpy$ ii…

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $ptq$ $nt$t…

$\dd$ $mdw$ in

$\dd$ $mdw$ in

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $us$-$irt$ $rdi$… (h)

$\dd$ $mdw$ in $qbb$-$snw$.$f$ ii…

$\dd$ $mdw$ in

$\dd$ $mdw$ in

$\dd$ $mdw$ in

*Head end (Fig. 3, Fig. 10):*

(top line)  $\dd$ $mdw$ q$i$ $us$-$irt$ $mn$ $pn$ $mr^r$-$hrw$ $r$ $q$ $sih$…(i)

(from right to left)

$\dd$ $mdw$ $r^r$-$mn$.$s$ $n$ … (j)

$\dd$ $mdw$ $mhn$ $hkp$ $k$ $hr$…

*Lid (Fig. 4, Fig. 11):*

$\dd$ $mdw$ $hr$ $us$-$irt$ $tt$ $mn$ $pn$ $mr^r$-$hrw$ $n$ $nm$ $n$ (k)

between the first and second line:  $\te$ $hqi$ $tt$ $mr^r$-$hrw$

$\dd$ $mdw$ $hr$ $us$-$irt$ $tt$ $mn$ $pn$ $mr^r$-$hrw$ (k)

$\dd$ $mdw$ $hr$ $us$-$irt$ $mn$ $pn$ $mr^r$-$hrw$ $w^b$ $w^b$ $m$ $sht$ … (l)

Translation:

*Words spoken: May the Osiris this NN, true of voice appear as Nefertem as the lotus at the nose of Ra, when he goes forth…*

*Words spoken by Ra: I gave (the beautiful horizon to NN)*

*Words spoken by Amset: I came … *

*Words spoken by Isis: I came…*

*Words spoken by Nephthys: I came … *

*Words spoken by Nut: I came *

*Words spoken by Nit: I came … *

*Words spoken by Duamutef: I came … *

*Words spoken by the (beautiful?) Horizon*

*Words spoken: the arms of Anubis, who is upon his mountain, who is in his embalming place, lord of the holy land, are around this NN … the Western …*

*Words spoken by (Anubis?)*

*Words spoken by Hapy: I came … *

*Words spoken by the Small Ennead … *

*Words spoken by…*

*Words spoken by…*

*Words spoken by Osiris: I came … *

*Words spoken by Qebehsenuef: I came *

*Words spoken by…*

*Words spoken by…*

*Words spoken: the Osiris this NN, true of voice is raised to the heights of Orion…*

*Words spoken by Ra: she may be firm…*

*Words spoken by Mehnet: may you be satisfied because of…*

*Words spoken: O Osiris Teti, this NN, true of voice, this NN, true of voice, should not go…*

*Words spoken: O Osiris, this NN … *

*Words spoken: O Osiris, this NN, pure is who is purified in the fields (of Iaru)*

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Fig. 1  Drawing of left (front) side

Fig. 2  Drawing of right (back) side

Fig. 3  Drawing of the head end

Fig. 4  Drawing of the lid

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(a) This is the beginning of a spell (PT § 266a–b) focusing on Nefertem. It is found on the east side on some coffins which seem to date to the very end of the sequence of coffins in the tradition of the Middle Kingdom. In this position Coffin Text spell 788—the 'opening of the face' formula—is more common on coffins of the late Twelfth and early Thirteenth Dynasty. The spell with Nefertem (PT § 266a–b) is also attested on canopic boxes. It appears on the coffin of Khakheperreseneb Iy from Meir (M20), where the spell is part of the 'opening of the face' formula. As main horizontal spell on the long east side it appears on the Theban coffin of Nub-redi-her (T7C), on the Theban coffin of Ikhet (T6NY), on three other coffins found at Thebes (T5NY, T7NY, T8NY), on the model coffin of Khonsu CG 48404 (unknown provenance) and on two coffins found at Hu. Together this evidence suggests that this spell replaced the ‘opening of the face’ formula at a certain point, at least in Upper Egypt, perhaps in the late Thirteenth Dynasty. However, there are at the moment too few coffins of the period published to draw any firm conclusions (only the coffin of Nub-redi-her T7C is fully preserved and published).

(b) On other coffins this spell is always placed on the front (east) side at the head end, as on the model coffin of Teti. The complete version goes: \( \text{∂d mdw ñr } \text{t nfrt n 'NN} \) ‘Words spoken by Ra: I gave the beautiful Horizon to NN.’ This spell seems to be one of the most important, as can be seen from this position and as it appears on several coffins of this period (Maz1, T6NY, T7C).

(c) The reading of Amset in this column is a guess, supported by the fact that Amset quite often appears on coffins at the region of the chest on the left (east) side (Maz1, T6NY, T7C).

(d) The reading of the last sign as \( \text{¢tp} \) is uncertain: \( \text{wnn} \) is also possible. The latter word would fit better to the phrase ‘I came, that I might be in your protection’ (T7C), spoken by the Small Ennead.

(e) The ‘r’ after \( \text{£∞t} \) is unexpected. The ‘horizon’ is on several other coffins called \( \text{£∞t-nfrt} \) (Da6X, T7C).

Perhaps the \( \text{nfr} \) sign was forgotten by the copyist, who only wrote the ‘r’ ending. The spell seems to have

4 Vernus, RdE 28 (1976), 124; Willems, Chests of Life, 168; Lohwasser, Die Formel ‘Öffnen des Gesichts’.
5 Lüscher, MDAIK 45 (1989), 217, fig. 28 on page 236.
6 The sigla mentioned in this article follow Willems, Chests of Life, 19–40:
   Da2C Nubhetepti-khered (Cairo CG 28104; de Morgan, Fouilles à Dahchour I, 110, fig. 263)
   Da4C king Awibre Hor (Cairo CG 28106; de Morgan, Fouilles à Dahchour I, 101, fig. 241, 241bis)
   Da6X Amenhotep (de Morgan, Fouilles à Dahchour II, 70, fig. 116–117)
   G2 unknown owner (Cairo CG 28032)
   Ha3 Zatimpy (Engelbach, Hanageh, 24, pl. LV, 2
   L7 Wahnfeherhotep—Lisht (Dorman, in ibid, 37–9, 147–9, pl. 14)
   M20 Khakhpeperresenb Iy (Kamal, ASAE 14 (1914), 75–7)
   Maz1 Bebut (found at Hawara, Petrie, Wainwright, Mackay, The Labyrinth, Gerzeh and Mazghuneh, 35, pl. XXXVII)
   T6C Khonsu (Cairo CG 28028)
   T7C Nub-redi-her (Cairo CG 28030)
   T10C Senebni (Cairo CG 28029)
   T13C Hemenhotep (coffin lid, Cairo CG 28126)
   T4L queen Menthuhotep (Geisen, Die Totentexte des verschollenen Sarges der Königin Menthuhotep aus der 13. Dynastie)
   T5NY Nefert (New York MMA 32.3.429, unpublished, Hayes, Scepter of Egypt I, 348)
   T6NY Ikhet (New York MMA 32.3.430, unpublished: New York, Hayes, Scepter I, 347–8, fig. 228)
   T7NY unknown (New York MMA 32.3.431, unpublished: New York, Hayes, Scepter I, 348)
7 Following: Willems, Chests of Life, 168, n. 167.
8 The two coffins are only recorded in Mace’s notebooks: tomb 219 (notebook no. 41 Hu), tomb 511 (notebook no. 42 Hu). These notebooks are published on The Petrie Museum Archive CD-ROM.

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been especially important, being the only one selected on the rishi coffin of king Sekhemre-heruhermaat Intef⁹ (Seventeenth Dynasty). On T7C the spell reads: \( \text{qd mdw sht-nfrt htp[.i] hrs mr.n NN} \). The spell belongs to the pyramidion spells. However, on the pyramidia the ‘horizon’ is not called ‘beautiful’.¹⁰

(f) This is the beginning of the spell which is very common on the western side of late Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period coffins. The spell is attested in different versions and from coffins found in all parts of Egypt (Ha3—Harageh; T7C—Thebes; model coffins: L6—Lisht; L7—Lisht, Cairo CG 48404—unknown provenance). It is again a pyramidion spell, appearing on the west side.¹¹

(g) On coffin T7C Anubis appears at this position.

(h) For Osiris here see again T7C.

(i) This is again a spell known from the pyramidia,¹² appearing on the North side, as here on the coffin and on several other late Middle Kingdom coffin.

(j) The more complete version of this spell appears on Cairo T7C: ‘Words spoken by Ra: may NN be made firm on top of the sky goddess’.

(k) I am not able to provide any parallels for these two spells on the lid. On many coffins the Nut formula appears, and the middle line could be a garbled version of that (compare T13C).

(l) The spell—Pyramid Text § 275a-c—is also known from the coffin lid of Hemenhotep (T13C) \( \text{w™b w™b m s∞t £rw w™b r™w m s∞t irw w™b m sht irw w™b NN m sht—} \) pure is the one who is purified in the marshes of Iaru, pure is Ra in the marshes of Iaru, pure is the one who is purified in the marshes of Iaru, pure is NN in the marshes’ and in a short version from the model coffin of Khonsu (Cairo CG 48404).

Model coffins seem to appear at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom and they always contained a human figure. The examples of queen Neferu (Eleventh Dynasty) were found in her tomb, and they contained wax and mud figures in the form of a naked woman. These appear to represent the queen as can be seen from the inscriptions they bear.¹³ The coffin and the figure of Si-iah, found in his tomb at Deir el-Bahari,¹⁴ belong perhaps to about the same time. In this case the figure is mummi-form. Examples of the Thirteenth Dynasty have been found in contexts separate from tombs. The model coffin of the high steward Nenyemweskhet was excavated inside a small model sarcophagus and also contained a mummiiform figure. The whole group was discovered at floor level in an Abydos chapel.¹⁵ The coffins and enclosed single figures of Bener (L6) and Wahneferhotep (L7) were found next to the pyramid of Senusret I at Lisht and in each case contained a mummiiform figure inscribed with the shabti spell. These examples provide the impressions of dummy burials. The owners of these model coffins were most likely buried somewhere else, but they wished to be close to a certain god (Osiris at Abydos; at Lisht, Senusret I?) and therefore set up a substitute burial at the place in which they wished to be. It is even possible that some of these burials were made when the real body of an

⁹ Taylor, JEA 86 (2000), pl. XX–XXI.
¹⁰ Willemis, Chests of Life, 169.
¹¹ Willemis, Chests of Life, 169; it is also attested on the miniature mastaba of Kemet: G. Lapp, MDAIK 50 (1994), 251.
¹³ Hayes, Scepter of Egypt I, 327; compare the model coffins of the royal women Kemsit and Kawit: Naville, Deir el-Bahari I, pl. IX, XI.
¹⁴ Winlock, BMMA 17, Dec. 1922, 34–5, fig. 36; Hayes, Scepter of Egypt I, New York, 327.
¹⁵ Bourriau, Pharaohs and Mortals, 93–4, no. 74: whether under the floor or on the floor is not clear from the excavation photograph published there.
official had been lost, as might happen, for example, in war, a fire or drowning. Only in the New Kingdom do the model coffins seem to have been placed more regularly in tombs, from which they developed into shabti boxes.  

The decorated model coffins seem to have followed in general the development of the contemporary ‘real’ coffins:

**Early Middle Kingdom**: the shabti coffins of queen Neferu dating to the Eleventh Dynasty are decorated with one line of inscription on each outer side. 16 This is also typical for the contemporary coffins. 17

**Thirteenth Dynasty (Late Middle Kingdom)**: the more elaborate model coffins of the Thirteenth Dynasty (L6, L7, the coffin of Nemtyemweskhet 19) have adjacent to the horizontal text line four vertical columns on the long sides and two columns on the short ends. This is similar to the coffins of the late Twelfth and early Thirteenth Dynasty. 20

**Sixteenth Dynasty (Early Second Intermediate Period)**: the coffin of Teti also follows the decorative scheme of its contemporaries among full-size coffins: it presents on the long sides eight (front) and nine (back) columns. This is comparable to other coffins found at Thebes (T6C, T10C, T4L, T5-8NY) and Abydos 21. Only three of them are connected with a royal name. The coffins of Senebni (T10C) and of (his wife?) Khonsu (T6C) from Thebes are datable to the time of king Sewahenra or shortly after; a staff with the name of this king was found with these coffins. 22 This king is generally dated to the late Thirteenth Dynasty, although this is far from certain; 23 his few monuments were all found in Upper Egypt and it is possible that he dates instead to the Sixteenth Dynasty, defined as the line of Egyptian kings restricted to Upper Egypt. 24 The coffins are also similar in style to the coffin of queen Mentuhotep (T4L). This queen was most likely the wife of king Djehuty, who is also not securely dated. 25

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17 Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt I*, 327, fig. 215.


19 Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals*, 93–4, no. 74.

20 Compare the coffins of king Awibre Hor (Da4C) and of the ‘king’s daughter’ Nubhetepti-khered (Da2C) with a similar design.

21 Peet, *The Cemeteries of Abydos II*, 1911–1912, 60; pl. XIII, 4, 5; pl. XIV, 15; pl. XXXVI.


24 For this dynasty as a separate phase later than the late Thirteenth Dynasty (the line of kings at Ijtawy) see Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*, 151–62; note that there is not yet an Egyptological consensus on the use of the term Sixteenth Dynasty, and that von Beckerath places these kings within the late Thirteenth Dynasty or Seventeenth Dynasty, with no intervening Sixteenth Dynasty.

25 Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*, 152, 259–60. All attempts to place king Djehuty within a certain dynasty depend on the assumption that his wife Mentuhotep was the granddaughter of the ‘overseer of the compound’ Ibiaw, dated to the reign of king Ibiaw by stela British Museum EA 1348 (Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals*, 57–9, no. 45). However, the link is indirect, depending on the following identifications: (1) the ‘overseer of the compound’ Ibiaw with the vizier of the same name, and (2) the ‘director of the broad hall’ Senbehenaf, son of a vizier Ibiaw, with the vizier Senebhenaf, who was the father of the queen. Both identifications involve people with different titles and identical but popular names. These connections are possible but far too vague to arrive at any firm conclusions, especially on chronology; compare Grajetzki, *Die höchsten Beamten der ägyptischen Zentralverwaltung zur Zeit des Mittleren Reiches*, 29–30, 136, 159.

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The predominant background colour of published coffins of the Thirteenth and of the Sixteenth Dynasty is black. However, a coffin similar in style (but from Gebelein) has a white background and is richly decorated with other patterns. The rich use of certain patterns (mats or degenerate false doors), seems to be typical for the end of the Second Intermediate Period. This feature is found on the well-dated coffin of Abed, which shows a similar kind of decoration and dates to the very end of the Second Intermediate Period under king Apophis or even later. The Gebelein coffin thus seems to be later than the black coffins cited in the preceding paragraph, as one might also suppose from its very garbled inscriptions, although poor quality is a weak argument for any dating. Even if later, it shows that the white background in combination with the high number of text columns is not without parallels.

The coffins with this high number of columns display one of two sets of texts. Several examples have the so-called Coffin Text spells 777–785, while other examples present speeches of different gods in connection with the pyramidion spells, which were written on the long horizontal bands. The inscriptions on model coffins tend to give abbreviated, often garbled versions of the texts found on ‘real’ coffins. The example of Teti is in this respect a good example. It presents speeches of gods. Most often only the beginning of a speech is written down, while the end is missing. The same holds true for the horizontal lines, where longer texts are presented, but they also break off in the middle of the spell.

The closest parallels for the model coffin of Teti are the coffins of the ‘king’s ornament’ Nub-redi-her (T7C) and the ‘wab priest’ Ikhet (T6NY), both from Thebes. The coffin of Ikhet offers an especially close parallel: it also has eight columns on the front side (the back side is not yet published). Both coffins (T7C, T6NY) have the Nefertem spell on the front, where coffins with fewer columns (all earlier?), have often the un-ḥr—‘opening of the face’ formula. The coffin of Nub-redi-her (T7C) also displays the Anubis formula on the back.

A remarkable feature on the model coffin of Teti is the appearance of ‘this NN’ (mn pn) instead of the owner’s name. It is in this case especially strange because before this phrase there is left a blank field for adding the name. The coffin was certainly made as a stock item, but it seems on the first glance more logical just to leave a blank space and not to add NN which had to be erased when a customer purchased the model coffin. An explanation might be that ‘this NN’ (mn pn) was written on a papyrus roll as a prompt to insert the personal name relevant to that funeral or mortuary rite, rather than as a phrase to be recited; it was copied on the model coffin only because of a careless or non-literate copyist or draughtsman, or was left there because the rituals associated with these spells functioned only with at least ‘this NN’ in place of the name. There are several parallels for the use of NN instead of a name: the closest in date are an as yet unpublished coffin from Thebes (T7NY) and fragments of a coffin found at Hu.

26 These coffins are briefly discussed: Willems, Chests of Life, 117.
27 Cairo CG 28108.
29 See a list of such coffins: Grajetzki, GM 166 (1998), 32–3.
31 Mace’s notebooks: tomb 511 (notebook no. 42 Hu), available on The Petrie Museum Archives CD-ROM.
On the cover there is the fragment of Teti’s title: ‘tt-hqs, written between the text bands. This is not a title of the Second Intermediate Period and the writing is therefore most likely incomplete. There are two titles with these elements: ‘nh n tt-hqs (‘soldier of the ruler’s crew’) and ‘tsw n tt-hqs (‘officer of the ruler’s crew’). The latter is the higher title and it seems more likely that Teti bore this one, as not many monuments of ‘soldiers of the ruler’s crew’ are known. With the latter title Teti is a typical representative of the Upper Egyptian ruling class in the Second Intermediate Period.

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32 Examination of the original has revealed no traces of signs in front of the title.
33 Ward, Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom, 75, no. 611.
34 ibid, 7–8, no. 13.
35 Compare the appearance of the title in the tomb of Sobeknakht at Elkab: Tylor, The Tomb of Sebekneket.


Taylor, J.H., ‘Edward Poole’s Drawings of Two Royal Coffins of the Seventeenth Dynasty’, *JEA* 86 (2000), 155–58, with pl. XX–XXI.


Fig. 5 View of the lid from the side
Fig. 6  The left (front) side

Fig. 7  The right (back) side

Fig. 8  The foot end
Fig. 9  Drawing of the foot end

Fig. 10  The head end
Fig. 11 The lid from above

Fig. 12 The interior of the lower part of the coffin