

Guts and Eternal Glory

Death and Afterlife played a critical role in the belief system in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed that to enjoy the afterlife the physical body of an individual must be preserved along with their worldly possessions. For this the body was embalmed and prepared in a specific manner before mummification. The internal organs were removed and kept in canopic jars. These jars were kept inside canopic chests which were ritually sealed for eternity.

The jars were placed beside the mummified body in the burial chamber. Each jar was guarded by one of the four sons of Horus, one of the most prominent gods in the Egyptian pantheon. These are the falcon headed Qebekh-senu-ef guarding the intestine, the jackal headed Dua-mut-ef guarding the stomach, the baboon-headed Hapy guarding the lungs, and the human-headed Imsety guarding the liver. The sons of Horus were themselves protected by four goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Serget which is depicted on the sides of the chest.

The customs and rituals in funerary traditions of ancient Egypt were complex and elaborate. Their importance was in facilitating a smooth transition for the deceased from earthly existence to immortality. The canopic chests in burial chambers were often found attached to sledges which were inseparable and integral to the chests. The sledges were used to transport the canopic chests on their way to the burial chamber during the funerary procession, a process representing a passage to the afterlife.



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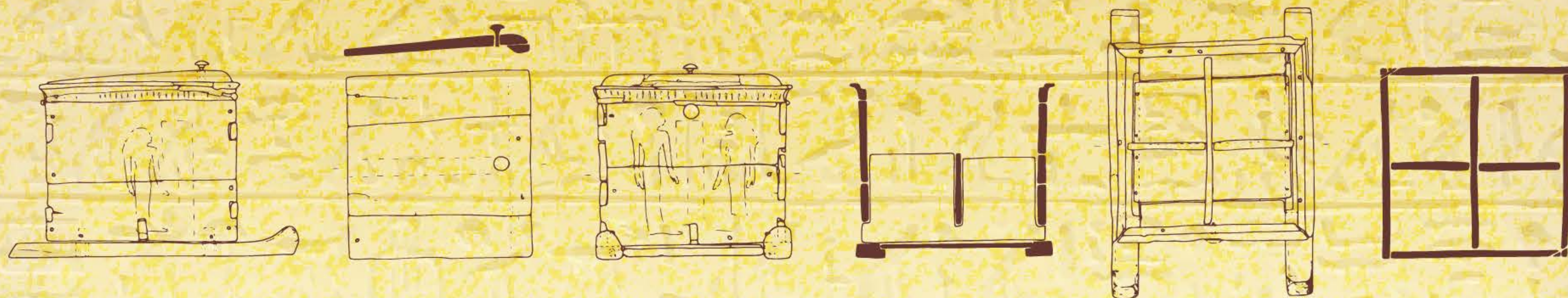
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Wooden Canopic Chest
Ancient Egypt
18th Dynasty

GUTS & ETERNAL GLORY

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Wooden Chest for Canopic Jars

Ancient Egypt, 18th Dynasty

This wooden canopic chest belonged to a man named Amenemhat. It is mounted on sledge runners and takes the form of a *naos* (shrine). The chest is divided into four compartments, each originally containing a canopic jar used for carrying the embalmed organs of the deceased.

On the sides of the chest painted hieroglyphic text and representations of the protector goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Serquet can be seen.

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