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THE KILT AND THE TUNIC OF ANUBIS

RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY AT THE SERVICE OF CHRONOLOGY IN THE EGYPTIAN THEBES OF THE 2ND CENTURY AD

ABSTRACT: A collective burial from the early 2nd century AD, reusing the Theban Tomb 32, built in the Egyptian New Kingdom, offers a unique opportunity to learn about the practices of funerary workshops of the time. The particularity of this family group related to an archon named Soter lies in the fact that it allows the dating of their funerary assemblages in absolute and relative terms, as well as elements of their iconography. This circumstance is helpful for the study of these objects as well as other contemporary or nearby items. To illustrate the potential of this approach, we will focus on the image of the god Anubis when he accompanies the deceased to their judgement before Osiris.

KEYWORDS: Chronology; Anubis; vignette; Book of the Dead; Thebes; Roman Egypt

Introduction

The contextualisation of ancient Egyptian artefacts of unknown provenance is always complicated. From a geographical point of view, the lack of knowledge of

the circumstances of their discovery is due to their arrival in museums and private collections through the antiquities market, whether recent or ancient. There are also problems in determining provenance in cases when the place the objects were found in is provided by the sellers or buyers; in such cases, the information should be taken with caution, as it may not always be true: for example, because of the interest in establishing a 'more valuable' provenance as for the antiquities or because the place of purchase and sale is not always related to their origin. In addition to these spatial circumstances, it is often challenging to situate objects in a timeline, as most lack elements that allow absolute dates to be established.

In view of this, and focusing on Roman Egypt, in the case of objects with unknown context, an effective resource for geographical and chronological localisation, even if only approximate, has often been provided by texts with their palaeographic and grammatical features, etc. (see, for example, Smith 1997). Iconography has been used less frequently in this respect, with very few cases concerning the Egyptian religion of indigenous tradition in the Nile Valley (see, for example, Ortiz-García 2020); on the other hand, it is a somewhat more common approach for visual manifestations of dynastic beliefs (see, for example, Dziobek *et al.* 1992). In the case of tombs and grave goods with (mainly) illustrations from or derived from the Book of the Dead (hereafter, BD), iconography can be of great use to enable a specific contextualisation with the help of other aspects (Müller-Roth 2010, 174). This is where the primary efforts in Egypt in the 1st century BC-4th century AD have been directed (see Parlasca 1966; Grimm 1974; Parlasca 1985; Kurth 1990; Abdalla 1992; Corcoran 1995; Borg 1996; Bresciani 1996; Kaplan 1999; Venit 2002; Aubert and Cortopassi 2004; Riggs 2005; Aubert *et al.* 2008; Corcoran and Svoboda 2010; Kurth 2010; Venit 2016; Ortiz-García 2020; Müller 2021).

This paper presents a new example of the potential offered by the detailed analysis of non-realistic funerary representations, which were depicted on the assemblages of the deceased who professed beliefs and participated in practices of Osirian tradition and dynastic roots. Specifically, we will focus on the image of the god Anubis (for a study on his iconography in Graeco-Roman times, see Grenier 1977) in the area of ancient Egyptian Thebes (Pl. 1: 1) in the first third of the 2nd century AD. This will help us to see how the image of this divinity, which accompanies the deceased to the judgement before Osiris, can help in attempts to locate the components of the mortuary equipment (including papyri, which are eminently textual in their content) geographically and chronologically with a margin of years or a few decades.

The family tomb of the Theban archon Soter

The necessary support for the image of Anubis as a decisive contextualising element comes from a funerary assemblage found in a Theban tomb in the early 1820s (Henniker 1824, 138-139), identified as TT (Theban Tomb) 32 by László Kákosy (1995). The hypogeum was originally excavated and decorated for a person named Djehutymes, who held the titles of Chief Steward of Amun and Overseer of the Granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt during the reign of Ramesses II (*PM* I.12, 49-50), but was reused as a burial place from Ptolemaic to Roman times (Kákosy 1995, 61).

The tomb in question became a collective sepulchre in which a person named Soter, archon of Thebes between the second half of the 1st century and the first decade of the 2nd century AD (the date of his death is estimated at AD 105-109 [Ortiz-García 2017]), and several members of his family were buried (Van Landuyt 1995; Herbin 2002, 52-53; Riggs 2005, 278-284; Karig 2008, 145-146, 150-151; Vandenbeusch 2020-2021). The mummies and their funerary assemblages were dispersed among different collections to such an extent that only some items are unquestionably known to have belonged to the find, while in other cases, this can only be assumed on the basis of the similarity of the objects (although this is not always reliable).

The closest to a comprehensive study of the materials of the so-called “Soter tomb” have come: a work by F. R. Herbin on the objects of Padiimenipet (Petemenophis), one of the sons of the mentioned Soter (Herbin 2002); the publication of C. Riggs’ thesis on the elite funerary equipment, which devoted several pages to the Theban materials (Riggs 2005); and a monograph on painted shrouds from Roman Egypt, in which the textiles are analysed in the context of the Theban tradition of such products (Ortiz-García 2020). A complete study of all the objects from the Soter family has not yet been carried out.

In any case, the most relevant aspect of the collection, apart from the extensive textual and iconographic repertoire that it offers, is that it provides iconography that can be attributed with certainty to Thebes and a specific period, the 2nd century AD, since exact vital data of the owners is known for five of the assemblages:

- Sensaos, daughter of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake,” lived from 8 May 93 to 15 July 109 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 75).
- Petemenophis “Ammonios,” son of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake,” lived from 11 January 95 to 2 June 116 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 75).

- Petemenophis, son of Pebos, lived from 20 December 119 to 27 August 123 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 75-76).
- Tphous, daughter of Herakleios and Sarapous, lived from 29 October 120 to 16 January 127 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 78). In this case, the date of the funeral is also known; it took place almost ten months after her death: 8 November 127 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 78).
- Senchonsis “Sapaulis,” daughter of Pikos, lived from 12 May 101 to 11 March 146 AD (Van Landuyt 1995, 79).

On the other hand, the deaths of both Soter and another of his daughters named Kleopatra have also been dated with some accuracy based on the comparative study of the iconography and the personal data that appear on the lid of the coffin of the latter, which indicates that she lived 17 years, 5 months and 25 days (Ortiz-García, 2017, 321-322):

- Soter, son of Cornelius and Phimous, died around AD 105-109 (Ortiz-García 2017, 323).
- Kleopatra, daughter of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake,” died around AD 123-127 (Ortiz-García 2017, 323).

Thus, in a short period, there are seven individuals who have funerary objects with precise or fairly precise dates, as well as important textual and decorative programmes. Regarding the iconographic information of interest for this paper, it should be noted that the focus will be on the coffins and shrouds of four of the aforementioned deceased:

- Sensaos, daughter of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake.” Death: AD 109. Coffin “Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, AMM8-c” (Riggs, 2005, 183, 185-186, 188-189, 191-194, 196, 199, 280 [n° 76], Fig. 90 [with previous bibliography]) and shroud “Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, AMM 8-d” (Ortiz-García, 2020, with previous bibliography) (Pl. 1: 2).
- Petemenophis “Ammonios,” son of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake.” Death: AD 116. Coffin “Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13048 + E 13016” (Riggs 2005, 184-186, 191-193, 199, 227, 282-283 [n° 81], Fig. 92 [with previous bibliography]) (Pl. 2: 1) and shroud “Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13382” (Ortiz-García 2020, with previous bibliography) (Pl. 2: 2).
- Kleopatra, daughter of Soter and Kleopatra “Kandake.” Death: AD 123-127. Coffin “London, The British Museum, EA 6706” (Riggs, 2005, 183, 185-187, 191, 193, 195-196, 199-202, 281 [n° 78], Fig. 96 [with previous bibliography]) and shroud “London, The British Museum, EA 6707” (Ortiz-García 2020, with previous bibliography).

- Tphous, daughter of Herakleios and Sarapous. Death: AD 127. Coffin “London, The British Museum, EA 6708” (Riggs 2005, 183, 185-186, 191, 193-194, 282 [n° 79], Fig. 86 [with previous bibliography]).

The selection of these objects is not arbitrary. In all four cases, they have similar decorative programmes and a close chronology (from 109 to 127 AD). These circumstances will allow us to assess the evolution of funerary iconography and the similarity of the representation of a motif in a similar region and at a similar time, which will let us identify patterns of iconographic contextualisation, at least for the Theban area in the first third of the 2nd century AD. To this end, the focus will be on the image of the psychopomp Anubis, which is telling in this respect and relatively well preserved on the selected objects.

Theban Anubis: A chronological indicator

The coffins and shrouds in question include the aforementioned representation of Anubis in scenes linked to the accompaniment of the deceased to the judgement before Osiris, which refer to the spell BD 125 (see Seeber 1976). This divine figure appears with features quite characteristic of the period, such as a šndyt-kilt and another garment that runs from the waist under the kilt to the god's ankles, which is a tunic, but which may originally have been a cloak of the kind often depicted on Anubis in Roman times, even outside Egypt (see Klotz 2012; Saragoza 2019).

In the shroud of Sensaos (AD 109) (Pl. 3: 1) and the coffin of his brother Petemenophis (AD 116) (Pl. 3: 2), separated by seven years, it can be clearly seen how Anubis has an identical form, both in the components of his clothing and in the way they are represented: the reticulated pattern of the long garment which is a tunic similar to the reed pattern of the central figure of the shroud (Pl. 1: 2 and 3: 1). However, if we turn to the funerary equipment of Kleopatra (AD 123-127) (Pl. 3: 3 and 4: 1-2) and Tphous (AD 127) (Pl. 5: 2), a change in the tunic of Anubis can be observed, from a reticulated pattern in the cases of Sensaos (AD 109) and Petemenophis (AD 116) to different, more simplified forms: with only vertical lines or without in the case of Kleopatra (AD 123-127) (Pl. 3: 3 and 4: 1-2) and with only two central vertical lines and two columns of short horizontal strokes in the case of the Tphous coffin (AD 127) (Pl. 5: 1). Therefore, although it is a Theban-type representation in its elements (šndyt-kilt and tunic), it is subject to variation over time.

One of the explanations of this change in Anubis' tunic may have to do with the change in the dress of the central figures on the shrouds and the bases of Theban coffins as the second century AD progresses towards a more typically Roman dress of white tunic with black clavi (see Bender Jørgensen, 2011), which is already found on the coffin of Tphous (AD 127) and continued later (see Ortiz-García, 2020, 63, 66, 74-86, 149-150). It is possible that the two lines of the Anubis' tunic on the Tphous coffin are a representation of one of the aforementioned clavi. On the other hand, since this coffin is presumably later than the objects of Kleopatra (AD 123-127), the way Anubis is represented in 127 AD (Pl. 5: 1) may be an even more significant simplification of the tunic, in a way already advanced by Kleopatra's image of the jackal-headed god (Pl. 3: 3 and 4: 1-2), and also perhaps the result of the transmission through the papyri used as a reference for decoration by funerary artists.

On the other hand, having seen this set of funerary objects belonging to four individuals whose dates of death are known with greater or lesser precision, and having seen that there are significant regional and chronological features in the representations of Anubis, we believe it is interesting to apply these conclusions to other examples, particularly to decontextualised objects. To this end, we will focus on two coffins from Berlin, one of Ptolemaic and one of Roman date, and one from Marseille, dated to the Roman period. In all three cases, a Theban origin was assumed based on the similarity of compositions (and their style) to the Soter family ensembles.

The reason for including the anthropomorphic coffin "Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 836", which is situated in Ptolemaic Thebes (see Germer *et al.* 2009, fig. 128 [88]), is to show a fact relevant to the iconography of psychopomp Anubis in this region: prior to the Sensaos assemblage (AD 109), the Anubis tunic is different (Pl. 5: 2), a kind of cloak like that worn by the central Osirian images on Roman shrouds (see Ortiz-García 2020, 146-148 y fig. 5) (Pl. 2: 2) and by the deceased who are accompanied before Osiris (Pl. 5: 2). The square-cut kilt on the Berlin coffin, not the šndyt, is indicative of the type of representation of psychopomp Anubis before the 2nd century AD, just as there is no tunic, but a cloak falling down behind like a cape (Pl. 5: 2). Over time, possibly in connection with the Romanisation of the clothing of the central figures on coffins and shrouds (as well as on other objects), this type of cloak ended up becoming a tunic. It is not probable that this was an error, although we do not know the reason for the change of the kilt either.

Regarding the evolution of the image of Anubis, it is also interesting to mention other grave goods dated to the end of the 1st century BC, which would situate the Berlin coffin and its representations between them and those of the family of Soter, outside the supposed Ptolemaic chronology. In the so-called Rhind Papyri, belonging to Montsuef and Tanuat (“Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, A.1956.313” and “Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, A.1956.314,” respectively) (see Smith 2009, 302-348), dated 9 BC, there are representations of Anubis in which he does not wear a cloak-like mantle (Pl. 6: 1), but a square-cut kilt that appears on the anthropomorphic coffin in Berlin (Pl. 5: 2). Therefore, the cloak hanging behind the body of some gods (and deceased people) appears sometime in the 1st century AD and becomes a tunic at some point of the in 2nd-century AD Thebes (when the šndyt-kilt also begins to be represented). The anthropomorphic coffin “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 836” should therefore be situated in the 1st century AD and not in the Ptolemaic period.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning two other examples of coffins from Thebes that date from the Roman period: “Marseille, Musée d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne, 260” (Beinlich-Seeber 1998) and “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 505” (Grimm 1974, 118-119; Germer *et al.* 2009, 62-64). In both cases, there are representations of Anubis wearing a šndyt-kilt and tunic, which were previously mentioned dating to the 2nd century AD. The particularity of the example in Marseille (Pl. 6: 2) is the presence of the reticulated pattern as in the cases of Sensaos (AD 109) (Pl. 3: 1) and Petamenophis (AD 116) (Pl. 3: 2), but with a couple of significant differences: the Anubian tunic of the Marseilles coffin has an identifiable reed pattern (see Ortiz-García 2020, 150), which helps us to explain the reticulated pattern of the other two cases (Pl. 3: 1-2), namely, a tunic similar to that of the central images of coffin bases and shrouds such as the one in Sensaos’ objects (Pl. 1: 2); and, on the other hand, the kilt of the Marseilles Anubis also shows more details. Therefore, bearing in mind that the iconography of funerary assemblages tends to become simpler over time, and based on both these examples and previous studies of painted shrouds from Roman Thebes (see Ortiz-García 2020), the Marseille coffin would be situated geographically in Thebes and chronologically between the anthropomorphic coffin “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 836” (1st c. AD) and the coffin of Sensaos (AD 109).

On the other hand, the coffin “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 505” (Grimm 1974, 118-119, pl. 136.3 and 138.4; Germer *et al.*

2009, 62-64 and figs. 72-76), is part of the collective burial of the Soter's family and the names of the sisters who occupied it are known: Sensaos and Tkauthi, who were daughters of Kleopatra "Kandake" and possibly of the archon Soter himself (although this is not mentioned in the Greek inscription) (see Van Landuyt 1995, 75). However, before discussing the iconography in which Anubis appears, it is worth noticing that this coffin also contains an Egyptian text mentioning the fifth year of an unspecified emperor (see Germer *et al.* 2009, 63). The decoration of the coffin is somewhat different from the other cases seen, since Anubis is shown behind a lion-bed on which a mummy lies as a representation of one of the two deceased (Pl. 6: 3), in this case referring more to the illustration of the spell BD 151 (see Lüscher 1998), although mixed with BD 125 (in any case, referring to the otherworldly journey). The most interesting aspect is that, despite being partially covered by the bed with the mummy, the lower part of the jackal-headed god is perfectly visible, and there they are again: the šndyt-kilt and a tunic with vertical lines. This model is identical to the one discussed above, belonging to her sister Cleopatra (Pl. 3: 3), dated between approximately 123 and 127 AD. Together with the fact that the fifth year of the Roman emperor Hadrian fell in AD 122, the shared coffin and the death of Cleopatra's two sisters (also of Sensaos and Petemenophis) could be situated to this year. On the other hand, this also confirms the proposed range for Cleopatra's death (and the manufacture of her grave goods) in AD 123-127, without more precise dating possible at this stage.

Conclusions

One of the most relevant lines of research for understanding the complex religiosity of the indigenous tradition of Roman Egypt revolves around the burial objects of those who professed beliefs and participated in practices centred around the Osirian world. However, one of the main problems faced by these approaches, although not exclusively, is that of working with objects that reached their current location, especially museums, as a result of transactions on the antiquities market, mainly in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

In this light, the assemblages that accompanied the deceased from the family of Soter, who was the archon of the Egyptian Thebes between the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 2nd century AD, constitute a unique research opportunity. Since these objects have, in some cases, absolute dates and

include certain texts and images, they are particularly interesting for contextual studies of funerary beliefs and practices in 2nd century AD Thebes.

As has been shown, by following one of the most frequent iconographic motifs in these funerary repertoires, it has been possible to study these and other sets that present more doubts as to their chronology. Anubis preparing the deceased for the afterlife and accompanying them to their judgement before Osiris is an appealing subject to explore these questions because of its frequent presence in coffins and shrouds (although it is also found in some papyri that include mortuary texts) and, in addition, due to its characteristic type of clothing (šndyt-kilt and tunic [derived from a cloak]) that has made it possible to explore various questions which ultimately revolve around the transmission of funerary iconography in the workshops of the same region over the years. This is a line of study that will need to be taken up repeatedly in the future.

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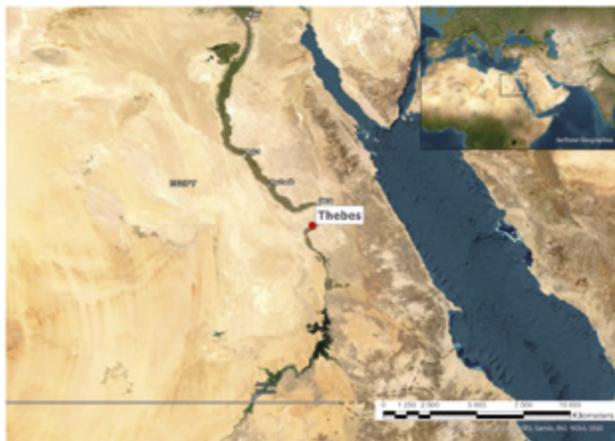
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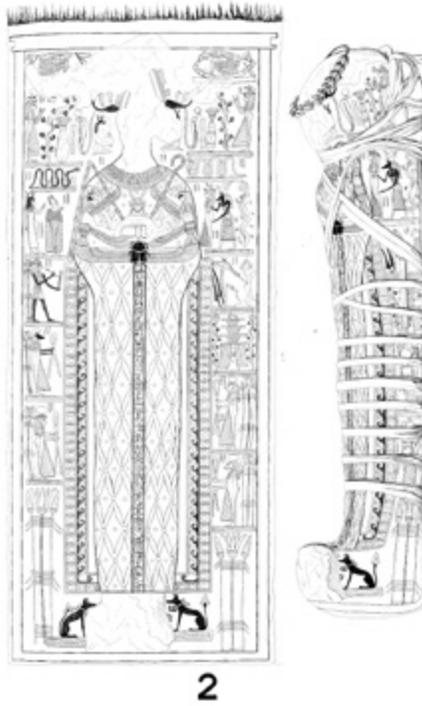
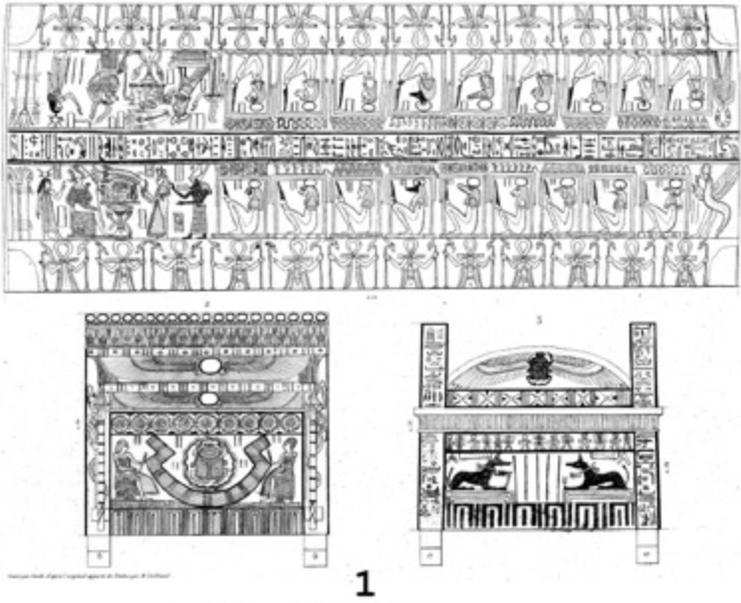
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Pl. 1: 1 – Location of Thebes

Pl. 1: 2 – Shroud “Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, AMM 8-d”. Thebes, AD 109. Photo: courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, <https://www.rmo.nl/collectie/collectiezoeker/collectiestuk/?object=22654>



Pl. 2: 1 – Coffin “Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13048 + E 13016”.

Thebes, AD 116. Source: Cailliaud 1823, pl. LXVII

Pl. 2: 2 – Shroud “Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13382”. Thebes, AD 116. Source: Cailliaud 1823, pl. LXX



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Pl. 3: 1 – Detail of shroud “Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, AMM 8-d”.
Thebes, AD 109. Source: courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden,
<https://www.rmo.nl/collectie/collectiezoeker/collectiestuk/?object=22654>

Pl. 3: 2 – Detail of coffin “Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13048 + E 13016”.
Thebes, AD 116. Source: Cailliaud 1823, pl. LXVII.1

Pl. 3: 3 – Detail of coffin “London, The British Museum, EA 6706”. Thebes, AD 123-127.
Photo: Jónatan Ortiz-García. Copyright: The Trustees of the British Museum



1



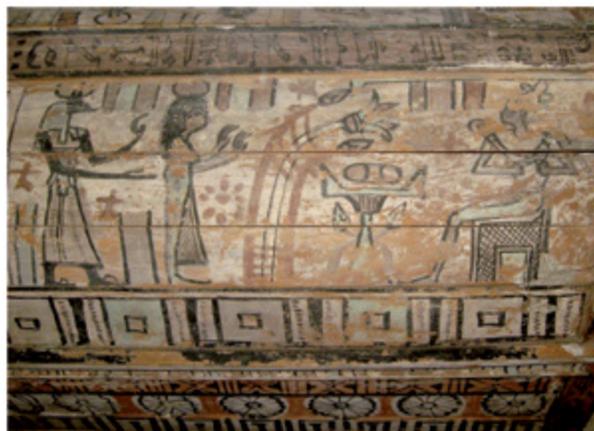
2

Pl. 4: 1 – Detail of coffin “London, The British Museum, EA 6706”. Thebes, AD 123-127.

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Pl. 4: 2 – Detail of shroud “London, The British Museum, EA 6707”. Thebes, c. AD 123-127.

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2

Pl. 5: 1 – Detail of coffin “London, The British Museum, EA 6708”. Thebes, AD 127.

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Pl. 5: 2 – Detail of coffin “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung,

ÄM 836”. Thebes, 1st c. AD. Source: Germer *et al.* 2009, fig. 128



1



2



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Pl. 6: 1 – Detail of papyrus “Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, A.1956.313”. Thebes, AD 9. Source: Birch and Rhind 1863, pl. II

Pl. 6: 2 – Detail of coffin “Marseille, Musée d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne, 260”. Thebes, late 1st c. AD-AD 109. Source: Beinlich-Seeber 1998, fig. 7

Pl. 6: 3 – Detail of coffin “Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, ÄM 505”. Thebes, AD 122. Source: Grimm 1974, pl. 136.3