

PAKAPU'S OUTER COFFIN

Fitzwilliam E.2.1869 *

The 'water pourer' (choachyte) Pakapu was buried in Thebes (modern Luxor) in the 25th Dynasty, ca. 675 BC.

The decoration of his double coffin set reveals the steps the deceased follows to become the god Osiris during the night and be reborn as the sun, to sail through the sky in the solar boat every day.

The outer coffin lid iconography features imagery from the Book of Coming Forth by Day, including the characteristic scenes of the judgment over the heart and embalming above the abdomen.

At the ankles, the less common scene of baboons adoring the solar boat, in which the deceased hopes to sail eternally, appears. It also adorns the lid of outer coffin Vatican D 2067.

Sokar in his shrine on the footpiece, the entrance to the nocturnal realm of Osiris, faces the coffin mask.

*all photographs of Pakapu's coffin set
© The Fitzwilliam Museum / Andrew Norman



Vatican D 2067
© Musei Vaticani

PAKAPU'S INNER COFFIN

Some outer coffin lid decoration is repeated in the same positions on the inner coffin lid.

The Abydos emblem of Osiris lies above the mummy's legs on the lid.

On the back is the djed pillar, symbolizing Osiris.

Inside, the mummy becomes Osiris during the night.



INSIDE PAKAPU'S OUTER COFFIN*

The mummiform falcon-headed Sokar-Osiris – with whom the mummy is identified – is protected by the goddesses Isis and Nephthys and an encircling cobra.

An unusual detail, taken from Theban tomb paintings, is the tree goddess Nut giving water to the ba birds, placed under the mummy's head.

This image is shown inside three other outer coffins:

Tübingen 150a
Truro 1837.23.3
Turin S.5221

The last two have rosettes, seen also on the somewhat later coffin of Reriu (below right), or a checkerboard pattern on the edge, symbolizing the celestial circuit, and a winged vulture instead of the sun disk above the head.

The mummy is reborn as the sun through the solar disk above his head at sunrise.



Truro 1837.23.3 © A. Dodson

WHO OWNS COFFINS LIKE PAKAPU'S ?

At least 45 Theban outer coffins of the 25th Dynasty have the distinctive images of Sokar-Osiris and the goddesses Isis and Nephthys as seen inside Pakapu's outer coffin.

Coffins of this type belong to men titled doorkeeper, porter, barber, brewer, lotus cultivator, craftsman, water pourer (choachyte), or necropolis chief, and women who are simply called house mistresses, but who are sometimes daughters of men with such titles.

These middle-ranking male titles, often hereditary, involve practical duties (in contrast to the more elite performance of temple ritual). Since the coffin sets represent a substantial investment in funerary equipment, these men must have had sufficient income to enable them to provide such impressive coffin sets for themselves and their families.

Some coffin owners lack titles. It has been suggested they are not Egyptians – perhaps some are Kushites.

HOW DID PAKAPU'S COFFIN SET COME TO CAMBRIDGE?

In February/March 1869, Edward, Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) visited Egypt for the second time.

In Luxor (ancient Thebes), the Prince had been granted permission to dig on the west bank of Thebes during his first visit in 1862. The British consular agent Mustapha Agha organized the digging for the Prince in 1869. The work was in the area of the wide valley between the hills of Gurnet Marei and Sheikh Abd el-Gurna,

On the evening of March 10, the Prince's party, including his wife Princess Alexandra, visited Mustapha Agha's house to see the dancing girls and a collection of 32 coffins and mummies from these excavations. The visit is described in the diary of Mrs. William Grey, lady-in-waiting to the Princess. The Prince bought some of the coffins for about £83, and brought them back to England.

Edward gave them to some of his friends and to important institutions. They have since been known as the 'Prince of Wales coffins'.

One set was given to the Fitzwilliam Museum. The mummy that came with it has disappeared, but it may not have been Pakapu in any case.

WHAT DOES A CHOACHYTE (WATER POURER) DO?



Pakapu's title
(detail from the back of his inner coffin)

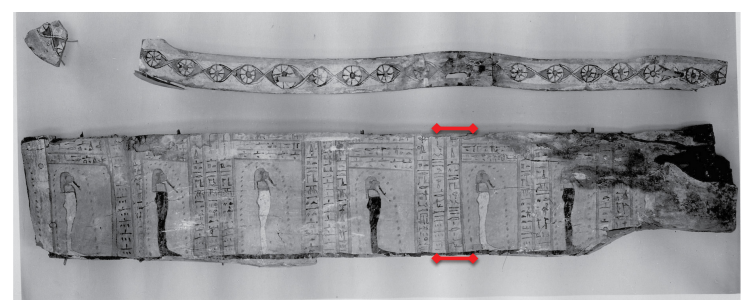


Wennefer, the choachyte of Harsiese I
Fitzwilliam E.11.1937 © The Fitzwilliam Museum

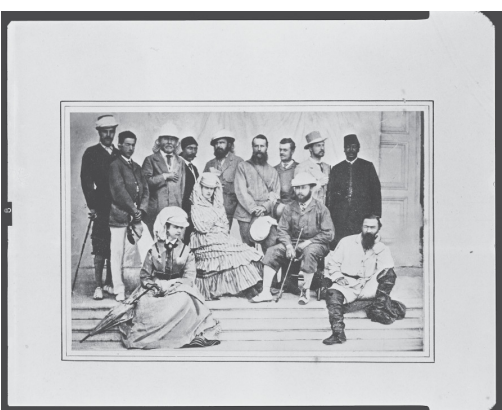
Pakapu and his father Amunhotep-iy-w both had the title 'water pourer (choachyte) on the west of Thebes (i.e., in the necropolis)'. This official, who was contracted by the family of the deceased, poured ritual libations over the offering tables for the deceased in his tomb, thus magically ensuring that the food and drink necessary for survival in the afterlife would be provided.

The bronze statuette of the choachyte of king Harsiese named Wennefer (Fitzwilliam E. 11.1937) illustrates the activity (probably a figure of the god Osiris was originally set before his kneeling figure), and is nearly contemporary with Pakapu's coffin. The statuette shows that the funerary cult of the 22nd Dynasty rival Theban king Harsiese I (ca. 870-860? BC), buried at Medinet Habu, lasted into the 25th Dynasty, since Wennefer is likely the same man as the father of the choachyte Reriu in the abnormal hieratic papyrus P. Louvre E.7856 (dated to year 19 [of Taharqa], 672 BC).

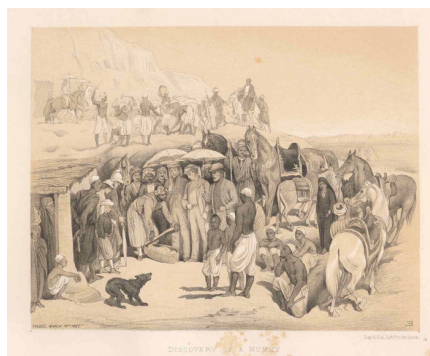
Winlock excavated fragments of the choachyte Reriu's coffin (below) in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahari. Reriu's coffin has features that appear on some of the parallels to Pakapu's coffin set, but was probably made later, at the very end of the 25th Dynasty.



Fragments of the coffin of the choachyte Reriu, son of the choachyte Wennefer © Metropolitan Museum of Art



Group photograph taken in Egypt, April 1869. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and Alexandra, Princess of Wales, both sitting on chairs; the Honorable Mrs Grey, seated on the steps in front of the Princess of Wales; Hon. Oliver Montagu, standing in the back row at the left; Major-General Sir Christopher Teesdale, standing in the back row, 5th from left, and a number of other unidentified gentlemen.
RCIN 2108746
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016.



Discovery of a mummy in an excavation near Thebes in the presence of the Prince of Wales (dated March 18th, 1862). Lithographed from a drawing by Mrs. J. Blackburn as the frontispiece to S. Birch, *Description of the papyrus of Nas-Khem, priest of Amen-Ra: discovered in an excavation made by direction of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, by the permission of Said Pascha, late Viceroy of Egypt, 1863 in a tomb near Gournah, at Thebes*. Bungay, Childs (printed for private circulation by desire of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales).

The original watercolor by Jemima Blackburn was a Christmas gift to the Prince of Wales in 1862. The tomb shown is probably on the lower slope of Gurnet Marei.

References: Donker van Heel, K. (1998) Papyrus Louvre E 7856 verso and recto: leasing land in the reign of Taharka. *Revue d'Égyptologie* 49, 91-104.
Grey, W. (Mrs.) (1869) *Journal of a visit to Egypt, Constantinople, the Crimea, Greece, &c. in the suite of the Prince and Princess of Wales*. London, Smith, Elder & Co.
Inley, C. (1979) A bronze statuette of Unnefer, Choachyte of King Harsiese, in the Fitzwilliam Museum. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 65, 167-169.
Sheikholeslami, C. M. (forthcoming) Iconography and Dating of Some Vatican Coffins. Proceedings of the First Vatican Coffin Conference, 19-22 June 2013. Edizioni Musei Vaticani.
_____. (2014) Sokar-Osiris and the goddesses: some Twenty-fifth-Twenty-sixth dynasty coffins from Thebes. In *Thebes in the First Millennium BC*, E. Pischikova, K. Griffin, and J. Budka (eds.), 453-482. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
_____. (2013) Mrs. William Grey and the Prince of Wales Coffins. In *Souvenirs and new ideas: travel and collecting in Egypt and the Near East*, D. Fortenberry (ed.), 142-157. Oxford, Oakville: Oxbow.