Maiherpri’s Canopic Chest (CG24005) and Jars (CG.24006) from the Cairo Museum, A Full Publication

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Abstract
The Canopic equipment of Maiherpri is among the few examples that were not only discovered almost intact\(^1\) from the private burials of the New Kingdom, but are in fact considered a perfect example from the upper social class. Moreover, their shape, inscriptions and decorations are complementary to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, thus revealing some of the mysteries around the dating of Maiherpri’s life time which is still considered unknown. This article will thoroughly study his Canopic equipment, which in fact was not fully published since 1902\(^2\), their inscriptions and decorations, aiming to shed light upon his social status and the identity of his ruling king, through the comparison between them and the most similar ones of their era.

Key words: Maiherpri’s Canopic Chest; Jars; Cairo Museum.

Discovery

The Canopic equipment of MA-Hr-pri (Maiherpri) \(^3\) was discovered in his tomb KV 36 \(^4\) (plan 1), specifically at the foot of his sarcophagus, next to the right wall of the tomb’s entrance. The chest was found covered with sand and debris. After painstaking efforts, Victor Loret \(^5\) and his workers were able to get out the funerary furniture of Maiherpri from his tomb, through widening the tomb’s shaft. However, Loret was not able to completely collect all the fallen fragments of the Canopic chest’s thin paint, which was affected by the weather conditions inside the tomb.

Moreover, after a close review, it was obvious that the sledge’s paint is the most corrosive, which might refer to the fact that the sledge was actually used during the funerary procession of Maiherpri\(^6\).

A) The Canopic Chest (CG24005).
Current location: Room 17 – 2nd floor - the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.
Material: Cedar wood, gilded inscriptions and decorations.
Dimensions: Length, width and height of the cube chest: 52cm.
Sledge length: 89cm.
Sledge width: 56cm.
Total height of the Canopic chest: 59cm.

i) State of Preservation
The chest is generally in a perfect state of preservation except for some limited damages; the black paint in some parts suffered from exfoliation as small parts of the thin paint layer flaked out. These fragments are all kept in a glass vessel, in the same showcase, under no. 4220. Moreover, cracks can be seen, especially on the outer lid of the coffer, on the side panel decorated by Hapy and Imesty and on the corners of the cavetto cornice decorating the top of the chest.

ii) Appearance
This cube chest follows the same style of the funerary assemblage of Maiherpri. The coffer, external lid and sledge\(^8\) are painted in black bitumen, in which a distinct contrast was made between the black color and its gilded decorations.
The four sides of the coffer were put together in a dovetail system and mortise joints at the corners. As for the sledge, it consists of a square wooden platform slightly wider than the chest itself from all sides, with two long planks longer and slightly upturned only at the frontal side of the chest (fig. 1).

The coffer is fitted with by two lids; an inner flat one at the top of the chest placed above a cross-shaped wooden partition which creates four compartments to house the Canopic jars (figs. 2a and b) in addition to an outer lid, taking the shape of the pr wr, representing the roof of the archaic shrine of Upper Egypt. The upper edge of the chest is decorated with a cavetto cornice, in which the concave board is decorated by black and golden strips represented alternately. Beneath the cavetto cornice, there is a torus molding followed by the four main side panels of the chest. Each side panel is decorated with two gilded figures of deities and framed only from three sides by a line of inscriptions; the top and two sides.

![Fig.2a and b. Flat lid of the Canopic chest and four compartments from inside, Personal cliché](image)

The chest was sealed by tying a rope around its two wooden knobs; one is attached to the external lid while the other is fixed in the coffer’s frontal side. Remains of a thin rope is still tied around the upper knob confirming the fact that the chest was once sealed. Moreover, eight copper rings were originally attached to the coffer; two at each side behind the deities’ figures, however, only one is still in situ and holes can be seen in the place of the missing rings. It should be noted that the rope was probably fastened through these rings to help lower and drag the chest into the tomb’s shaft.

### iii) Decoration and Inscriptions

#### a) The First side

It was decorated with identical representations of goddesses Isis and Nephthys, facing each other and identified by the emblems above their heads (fig. 4). The two goddesses are painted while raising both their arms and standing upon the nbw sign of gold. Each goddess is wearing the afeat headdress and a long tight fitting dress. Above the two goddesses there is a three sided frame of hieroglyphic inscriptions, divided into two halves by means of a knob.

![Fig.4. The First side of the Canopic chest, Personal cliché](image)

The Text above Nephthys

Dd mdw Nbt-Ht ab aA.ty Hr ntt im.t stp-sA.t Hr Hpy ntt imy.t

Words spoken by Nephthys: (I) embrace (with) the two arms within, Hapy makes upon protection (which) is in (him)
The Text above Isis

Words spoken by Isis: (I) embrace (with) the two arms within, Imsty makes upon protection (which) is in (him).

b) The Second side

On this panel, two of the sons of Horus are depicted in full human forms. Imesty and Hapy are identified from the text behind each of them (fig.5). They are wearing a stripped nms headress, a slightly turned up beard and a knee length kilt. They are standing upon a palace facade motif. They are represented with the face in profile while the body is in the frontal profile view. This depiction grants the genies a full ability of using both hands to protect the Canopic chest and jars against any dangers. Moreover, it gives depth to the scene and the impression that the figures are alert.

Fig.5. The Second side of the Canopic chest, Personal cliché

The Top column:

The children of Horus bring this under, your son(s) of Osiris.

The right column:

Honoured before Hapy, the deceased, the fan bearer Maiherpri, true voice.

The left column:

Honoured before Imsty, the deceased, the fan bearer Maiherpri, true voice.

c) The Third Side

This side panel depicts goddesses Neith and Serqet facing each other and identified by the emblems above their heads. The two goddesses are painted while praising both their arms and standing upon the nbw sign of gold. Each goddess is wearing the afnt headress and a long tight fitting dress. Above the two goddesses there is a three sided frame of hieroglyphic inscriptions (fig.6).

Fig.6. The Third side of the Canopic chest, Personal cliché

The Text above Neith

Words spoken by Neith “(I) cover (with) the two arms within, Duamutef makes upon protection (which) is in (him)”

The Text above Serqet
Words spoken by Nephthys: “(I) cover (with) the two arms within, Qebehsnuef makes upon protection (which) is in (him).”

d) The Fourth side

It depicts Qebehsnuef and Duamutef wearing a stripped nms headdress, a slightly turned up beard and a knee length kilt. They are standing upon a palace facade motif. They are represented in the frontal profile view while with one hand they are approaching slightly towards each other and the other is hanging at their sides. The genies have their backs to the chest as if ready to face any dangers (fig.7).

![Fig.7. The Fourth side of the Canopic chest, Personal cliché](image)

The Top column:

Words spoken: his sons of Horus gave to you, they carry you with their (two) arms.

The left column:

Honoured before Qebehsnuef, the deceased, fan bearer Maiherpri, true voice.

The right column:

Honoured before Dwamutef, the deceased, fan bearer Maiherpri, true voice.

e) The Outer Lid

Honoured before Osiris. He gives all things to the ka of Maiherpri.

A boon which the king gives (to) Osiris. He gives all things to the ka of Maiherpri.
.B) The Canopic Jars (CG.24006)

Current location: Room 17 – 2nd floor - the Egyptian museum, Cairo.
Material: Egyptian Alabaster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions:</th>
<th>The first jar:</th>
<th>The second jar:</th>
<th>The third jar:</th>
<th>The fourth jar:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height of the jar:</td>
<td>26.7 cm</td>
<td>26 cm</td>
<td>28 cm</td>
<td>28 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diameter of the base:</td>
<td>14 cm</td>
<td>11 cm</td>
<td>13 cm</td>
<td>13 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum diameter of the jar:</td>
<td>21 cm</td>
<td>17.5 cm</td>
<td>15.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diameter of the jar mouth:</td>
<td>9.5 cm</td>
<td>9.5 cm</td>
<td>9.8 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height of the lid:</td>
<td>13.8 cm</td>
<td>14 cm</td>
<td>11 cm</td>
<td>13 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diameter of the lid:</td>
<td>14 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total height (including the lid):</td>
<td>30.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) State of Preservation
All the four jars are in a perfect state of preservation except for some missing blue paste that was used to fill in the carved inscriptions. A spot of black resin appears in the middle of the inscriptions upon the jar, which carries invocation of Nephtys and Hapy.

ii) Description
The four jars were originally housed inside the Canopic chest. Two of them were found wrapped in linen; one of which is still wrapped with long strips of linen around the base, neck and surrounding the face of the stopper (fig.9). The second one was partly unfastened and the wrappings around the face stir remain. All the jars vary in the length.
and width, thus they are of non-identical shape; three jars are similar in the maximum diameter while the fourth is wider. Each of the four jars has an alabaster stopper (fig. 10) in the form of a human head, whose facial features does not resemble those of their owner, wearing the nms headdress.

Fig. 10, The Jar and Stopper Separately, Personal cliché

iii) Inscriptions

a) The first jar

Words spoken by Isis: (I) cover (with) the two arms within, Imsty makes a protection (which) is in (him), honoured before Imsty, the deceased, Maiherpri.

b) The second jar

Words spoken by Serqet: (I) pass (with) the two arms within, Dwamutef makes a protection (which) is in (him), honoured before Dwamutef, the deceased, Maiherpri.

c) The third jar
Words spoken by Nephthys: (I) embrace (with) the two arms within, Hapy makes upon protection (which) is in (him), honoured before Hapy, the deceased, fan bearer Maiherpri, the great god

**d) The fourth jar**

Words spoken by Neith: (I) cover (with) the two arms within, Qebehsnef makes upon protection (which) is in (him). Honoured before, the deceased, fan bearer Maiherpri.

**Commentary**

During the New Kingdom, the royal Canopic chests were mainly made of stone with decorations focusing on the four protective goddesses and four sons of Horus. However, the chests found in the private burials were mostly made of wood and show a stereotype in their form, with decorations and the inscriptions upon them. This was applied more obviously in the Eighteenth Dynasty rather than the Nineteenth Dynasty. The Canopic chest of Maiherpri belongs to this type, in which the following characteristics can be detected:

The chest is a wooden cube with a shrine-shaped vaulted lid at the front and slop down towards the end to take the shape of the archaic shrine of Upper Egypt "pr wr." It follows the same style and pattern of decorations of the three coffins and sarcophagus. The chest is decorated at the top with a cavetto cornice followed by a torus molding. The decorations included the depictions of the four protective goddesses and the four sons of Horus. The inscriptions upon the chest and the jars inspired from chapter 152 of the book of the dead. This chapter was very popularly used upon the Canopic chest especially in the New Kingdom. The Canopic chest lays upon a sledge whose main function was not only to facilitate its transfer, but also for its religious significance as being one of the means of transportation to heaven. It is worth-mentioning that the four goddesses were depicted with afnt headdress which became the most popular depiction for them during the New Kingdom upon funerary objects. As for the Canopic jars, they are made out of Egyptian alabaster. Some of the jars are found with their original wrappings, either may be to protect the easily breakable material or to provide magical protection.
Table (1): Comparing the Canopic equipment to the most similar ones from the New Kingdom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>points of comparison</th>
<th>Maiherpri</th>
<th>Yuya</th>
<th>Thuya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>Cube.</td>
<td>Elongated cube.</td>
<td>Elongated cube.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Elite-Private-Theban.</td>
<td>Elite-Private-Theban.</td>
<td>Elite-private-Theban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lid</td>
<td>Shrine-like Pr wr.</td>
<td>Shrine-like Pr wr.</td>
<td>Shrine-like Pr wr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorations(^3)</td>
<td>-Cavetto cornice on the top. -Gilded depictions of the four protective goddesses and the four sons of Horus.</td>
<td>-Cavetto cornice on the top. -Gilded depictions of the four protective goddesses and the four sons of Horus.</td>
<td>-Cavetto cornice on the top. -Gilded depictions of the four protective goddesses and the four sons of Horus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inscriptions</td>
<td>Gilded invocation for the four protective goddess and the four sons of Horus.</td>
<td>Gilded invocation for the four protective goddess and the four sons of Horus along with other gods.</td>
<td>Gilded invocation for the four protective goddess and the four sons of Horus along with other gods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealing Technique</td>
<td>A rope around two knobs.</td>
<td>A rope around two knobs.</td>
<td>A rope around two knobs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1, Compares the Canopic chest of Maiherpri (CG24005), to those of Yuya (CG51012) and Thuya (CG51013)\(^39\) (figs 15 a and b).

Table 2, comparing the Canopic jars of Maiherpri (CG24006), with those of Yuya (CG51014-17) and Thuya (CG51018-20) (figs. 16a and b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of comparison</th>
<th>Maiherpri</th>
<th>Yuya</th>
<th>Thuya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Egyptian alabaster.</td>
<td>Egyptian alabaster</td>
<td>Egyptian alabaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>The eyes in black and white and the eyebrows black.</td>
<td>The eyes in black and white and the eyebrows black.</td>
<td>The eyes in black and white and the eyebrows black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandage mask</td>
<td>Didn’t contain.</td>
<td>Didn’t contain.</td>
<td>Contained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inscriptions</td>
<td>Engraved on jars and covered with blue paste, inspired from chapter 152 from the book of the dead.</td>
<td>Engraved on jars and covered with blue paste, inspired from chapter 152 from the book of the dead.</td>
<td>Engraved on jars and covered with blue paste, inspired from chapter 152 from the book of the dead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

The Canopic equipment of Maiherpri is among the few examples that are complete and in a perfect state of preservation. It is made of the most expensive materials, which were not normally found in a private burial. This confirms the high social status of the owner, being not only an elite member of society, but also related to the royal family. This is concluded from the considerable similarities between his equipment and those of Yuya and Thuya, the owners of KV46. Since the Canopic equipment of the three owners share many resembling features, so they probably belonged to the same period of time. Based on that all Canopic equipment found in Theban cemetery for elite owners can be concluded that they might have been even made in the same workshop. However, comparing the Canopic chests of Yuya and Thuya to that of Maiherpri reflects that those of Yuya and Thuya are more advanced. This is well emphasized by the position of the arms of the protective goddesses. We can deduce that Maiherpri was living in a time just before that of Yuya and Thuya. As the death of Yuya is believed to be in the twelfth or thirteenth reignal year of Amenhotep III, therefore it is acceptable to say that Maiherpri was probably living during the reign of king Thutmos IV.
Bibliography

1. The thin rope that sealed the chest is still attached to the upper knob on the lid. See G. DARESSY, Catalogue Général des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire N° 24001-24990 Fouilles de la Vallée des Rois (1898-1899), (Cairo, 1902), 8.
2. G. DARESSY, Catalogue Général des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire N° 24001-24990 Fouilles de la Vallée des Rois (1898-1899), (Cairo, 1902), 8-12.
3. Maiherpri is the owner of KV36. He used to live during the Middle Kingdom and he held a number of titles like: the fan bearer of the right side of the king, the child of El Kap and the follower of the king in the Northern Foreign lands. See P. PIACENTINI, The Valley of the Kings Rediscovered: The Victor Loret Excavation Journals (1898-1899) and other manuscripts, (Milan, 2005), 56-57. His full titles are mentioned in his papyrus. See G. DARESSY, Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire N° 24001-24990 Fouilles de la Vallée des Rois (1898-1899), (Cairo, 1902), 54.
6. The funerary furniture especially the sarcophagus, coffin and Canopic chest were frequently shown as being dragged by two oxen during the funerary procession rituals. This is to deliver the deceased and his funerary furniture to the tomb in the west. See E. TEETER, Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt, (Cambridge, 2001), 138 This procession scene was also another one in which the coffin shrine and the other equipment together with the attendants on a boat heading to the west. See J. ASSMANN, Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt, (London, 2001), 300.
7. All photographs were taken by the researcher.
During the Middle Kingdom, the private Canopic jars with human head stoppers were intended to take the owner’s facial features like Kay’s Canopic jar (11.150.18a.1–2) from the Twelfth Dynasty, Metropolitan Museum of Art. During the New Kingdom, standard features for the human head stoppers became popular in the private burials rather than the deceased facial features; the head is covered by a headdress, the face is rounded with perfectly sculptured big ears, almond shaped eyes, delicate straight nose and slightly smiling thin lips. The neck is supported either by a short beard or by a headdress that surrounded the whole face including the neck part and rarely a thin neck with out support . These features can be recognized in many private Canopic jars stoppers’ dating back to the Eighteenth Dynasty for example; Senenmut Canopic jar’s stopper (MMA 27.3.559), Minmose’s jars (MMA 2005.106a-b), princess Any’s jars (MMA 10.130.1003a-b). Some of these features also clearly appear in the Canopic jars’ stoppers of Manuawai (MMA18.8.12a) and Maruta’s (MMA18.85a-b.)

The great god (mTR aN) a title of different gods and kings. The title was more common for god Osiris. See C. J. C. BENNETT, ‘Growth of the Htp-Di-Nsw Formula in the Middle Kingdom’, JEA 27, (1941), 79-81; R. SHALOMEHEN, *The Writing of Gods: The Evolution of Divine Classifiers in the Old Kingdom Volume 4*, (Wiesbaden, 2006), 50-51.Other gods received this title like Ptah and Horus of the sky. While a number of scholars explained the title with the kings names as it refers to the dead king who is identified as Osiris. See; R. SHALOMEHEN, *The Writing of Gods: The Evolution of Divine Classifiers in the Old Kingdom Volume 4*, (Wiesbaden, 2006), 50-51. It comes here for the identified deceased with Osiris, considering the determinative ing the name of Maiherpri is different than the other inscriptions. The determinative here is A42 in Gardiner’s sign list which is used with Osiris name and epithets. See M. SMITH, *Following Osiris: Perspectives on the Osirian Afterlife from Four Millennium*, (Oxford, 2017), 126. On the other hand Doxy included this title among others used to be royal titles but were awarded to members of the elite. See D. M. DOXEY, *Egyptian Non-Royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom*, (Leiden, 1998), 4.


The Canopic chest of king Tutankhamun follows this type of chest but it was made out of Egyptian Alabaster. And slightly elongated. See M. ZAKI, *The Legacy of Tutankhamun: Art and History*, (Cairo, 2008), 50-51

H. WILKINSON, *The Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings*, (Oxford, 2016), 467; With the exception of the Canopic chest of Henut-mehyt that has two shine-like lids in the shape of pr nw, the archaic shrine of lower Egypt. It is exhibited in the British museum under the number EA51813 .


In many examples of the Canopic equipments that were decorated with the four protective goddess like the Canopic chest of Maiherpri, the Canopic shrine of king Tutankhamun, the Canopic chest of king Tutankhamun, and the same position of the raised arms appeared on different coffins and jewellery. In the same position Mut and Nut were depicted as well. The position reflects the protection of this goddess toward the one who is under their protection. Hornblower relates the position of embracing someone especially with the mother goddess with protection and nourishment. See G. D. HORNBLOWER, *'Predynastic Figures of Women and Their Successors'*, JEA, Vol. 15, No. 1/2), (1929), 34.


It was a piece of cloth that covers the hair and being tied once at the back of the head to form a rear fold. See M. BUNSON, *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt*, (New York, 2002), 9.

The afn headress was related to many goddesses starting by Nekhbet, then Goddess Isis and Nephthys only as the mourner of Osiris. The four protective goddess are related too for their funerary role. See D. B. REDFORD, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt Volume 1*, (Oxford, 2001),324; Isis as well owned the title “the Mistress of the afn ” See M. EATON-KRAUB, ‘The ‘Khat’ headress Till the End of the Amarna Period’, *Studien zur Altegyptischen Kultur, Bd. 5* (1977), 29.

Different materials was used to make the Canopic jars and it’s sealing stoppers like wood, pottery, cartonage, and stone. Alabaster is one of the most expensive materials used. See Carol Andrews, *Egyptian Mummies*, (Massachusetts, 2004),24. The material was commonly used throughout the Egyptian history like the vessels and jars from the Giza
Maiherpri’s Canopic Chest (CG24005) and Jars (CG.24006) from the Cairo Museum, A Full Publication

mastabas. See J.P. O’NELL, Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids, (New York, 1999),492-493. Also, the alabaster sarcophagus of Queen Hetepheres, the mother of King Khufu. See M. LEHNER, The Complete Pyramids, (New York, 1997), 117. Alabaster was widely used in the funerary furniture by the Eighteenth Dynasty like the Canopic chest and jars of King Tutankhamun and in many other Canopic jars. The Egyptian alabaster was quarried from many quarries like, the southeast of Amarna, Hatnub, the Cairo-Suez desert and Wadi Gerraui near Helwan. See P. T. NICHOLSON, Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology,(Cambridge, 2000), 59-60; A. LUCAS, Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries, (New York,1999), 59.

35 S. D’AURIA, Offerings to the Discerning Eye: An Egyptian Medley in Honour of Jack A. Josephson, (Leiden, 2010), 137.
36 Linen was related to goddess Nephthys See A.M. M. OUDA ‘The Canopic Box of NsaArwd - (BM EA 8539)’ JEA 98, (2017), 137 , and Neith See B. S. LESKO, The Great Goddesses of Egypt,(Norman,1999),56. As They are two of the four protector goddesses depicted on the majority of the Canopic chests of the New Kingdom. In addition to their role with Isis in the Coffin text that related the three of them to medical bandages. See C. RIGGS, Unwrapping Ancient Egypt, (London,2014) 133-135.
37 The order and paring of the gods’s depictions upon the four sides of all the three chests is the same; which is (Isis - Nephthys), (Neith - Serqet ), (Hapy , Imesty) and (Qebhehsenu –Duamutef). Moreover, the on Maiherpri’s Canopic chest, all the four protective goddess are with upraised arms.

38 Extra decorations elements appeared on the chests of Yuya and Thuya like, the façade of a palace motif, god Anubis as a jackal and Wdjat eyes.


41 A. OSMAN, The Hebrew Pharaohs of Egypt: The Secret Lineage of the Patriarch Joseph, (Vermont, 2003), 54