

## ***Canopic Chest and Jars of Henutmehyt*** **The British Museum**

From the tomb of Henutmehyt at Thebes, Egypt  
19th Dynasty, around 1250 BC

### **An essential part of a good burial**



This is the painted wooden chest containing the wooden canopic jars of Henutmehyt.

When the internal organs were removed from the chest cavity during mummification they were embalmed separately and wrapped. Until the end of the New Kingdom (about 1070 BC), the internal organs were placed in four jars, known as canopic jars. In later times they were returned to the chest cavity, or sometimes placed between the legs of the mummy., though canopic jars were still provided as they were considered an essential part of a good burial.

These examples are typical of those of the later New Kingdom. From the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty (about 1295 BC), the lids were in the shape of the heads of the Sons of Horus, who protected the organs. Each can be identified by his head, and by the inscription on the front of the jar. In this case the features on the head and the inscription is carved and filled with white pigment to make it stand out.

Canopic jars were often placed in wooden chests divided into four compartments. The chest was usually positioned close to the mummy in the tomb. The two lids of this example are rounded, and could be lifted off the chest easily, using the wooden knobs.

J.H. Taylor, *Studies in Egyptian antiquities*, British Museum Occasional Paper 123 (, 1999)

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