

SAQQARA

54. Canopic chest

Saqqara. Burial 483

Early Ptolemaic Period

H. 66 cm, wood

Saqqara, storeroom, Inv. No. S/06/13a

The mummification process required the internal organs to be removed from the body and placed in canopic urns. From the Late Period these organs were embalmed and wrapped in tissue, after which they could be replaced inside the body or put in small canopic chests. Boxes typical of the Ptolemaic period took on the shape of a naos; they were slender and colorful. On the four walls there were images of the four sons of Horus, guardians of the mummified entrails, and a *djed* pillar symbolizing Osiris in his capacity as Lord of the Underworld, with whom the dead were identified. The decoration of the chest from Saqqara is noteworthy, because the sons of Horus are depicted in the ritual of Opening of the Mouth meant to magically revive the senses of the dead, in this case the internal organs. The front wall presents a *djed* pillar adored by a weeping Isis and Nephtys, the back wall the falcon Sokaris, patron of the Saqqara necropolis. Under each figural representation there are six rows of heavily stylized figures, most likely divine judges accompanying Osiris in the last judgment of the dead. Topping the chest is a small figure of a mummified falcon, symbol of Sokaris who was a patron of the Memphite necropolis and who was frequently depicted in this convention over the grave of Osiris. The bird's head is decorated with two high ostrich feathers and solar disk. The undecorated inside of the chest contained only one cavity.

T.I.R.

