

NAOS OF THE KING DARIUS I N^o.200
AT MALAWI MUSEUM

BY

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ABSTRACT

[AR]


ناووس الملك داريوس الأول بمتحف ملوى رقم (200)

ناووس صغير من الخشب الملون والمغطى بالجص، بشكل صندوق يعلوه كورنيش كافيتو في منتصفه قرص الشمس المجنح رمز المعبود «حورس البهتدي»، يرجع تاريخه لعهد الملك دارا الأول في مصر، ثم أعيد استخدامه في العصر اليوناني الروماني حيث عثر عليه بتونة الجبل. يهدف البحث هنا إلى دراسة ونشر الناووس عن طريق دراسة المناظر المصورة عليه، وترجمة النص الموجود عليه، كما أن هناك تعليقاً عاماً على الرسوم والزخارف والألوان الخاصة بالناووس وكذلك الآلهة وأوضاعها على جوانبه، ومن خلال الدراسة يمكن للباحثة أن تستنج ملامح تأثير الفن المصري على الفرس أثناء تواجدهم في مصر.

[EN] The target of this paper is the study of a small colored wooden sarcophagus covered with plaster. It took the shape of a box, topped by a cavetto cornice, in the middle of which is a winged sun disk, the symbol of the god «Horus Behedeti». It dates back to the reign of King «Darius I» in Egypt, and then was reused in the Greco-Roman era, when it was found in «Tuna al-Gabel». This research aims to study and publish the sarcophagus by studying the scenes depicted on it, and translating the text on it. The author will undertake a general comment on the drawings, decorations and colors of the sarcophagus, as well as the gods and their condition. Through this study, the researcher could deduce the influence of Egyptian art on Persians in Egypt.

KEYWORDS: Egyptian art, Greco-Roman era, king Darius I, naos, Persians, sarcophagus, Tuna al-Gabel, winged sun disk.

I. INTRODUCTION

Naos¹  is a box of stone or wood that surrounds the statue of a god to save and protect it with a wall that becomes difficult to penetrate. It has a door closed and sealed by the king who impersonates the role of the high priest. Hence, it is clear that kings, specifically, between the Twenty-Seventh and Thirtieth dynasties, sealed most of their private sarcophagi in temples² [FIGURE 1].

The Object of Study

The study focuses on a small wooden Naos in box shape, dating back to the twenty-seventh dynasty, and later re-used by the Greco–Roman times at Tuna al-Gabel. The interior consisted of a baboon wrapped in linen wrappings. The baboon was the sacred animal symbolizing the god Thoth, the god of knowledge and writing.

The Aim of the Study

The research aims to redate the piece in the Malawi Museum, which is wrongly dated in the museum's records and the artifact's display card. The author tries to prove the history of the Naos by using the equivalent examination, and deciphering the existing remaining texts. Furthermore, the author will comment on the Naos motifs and colors, as well as, the deities that decorate the sides of the Naos. Throughout the study it was concluded that Egyptian artistic features exerted an influence over the Persians during their stay in Egypt. The Naos has been re-documented at the museum³ to date back to the twenty seventh dynasty.

II. DESCRIPTION⁴

Lengths and sizes [FIGURE 2]

Front width: 28 cm.

Side width: 34.5 cm.

Height with the base: 42 cm.

Cornice: 47 cm.

Roof size: 30x27 cm.

Cornice size: 3x27 cm.

Size doorstep: 27x3 cm.

¹Naos is a Greek word for the cabin where there was a statue of the god inside the Holy of Holies / sanctuary. It is of two types: fixed and movable. For more on the Naos, see: GEORGE 1943: 57; SAFAA 2003:15; AL-MURSI 2016: 200.

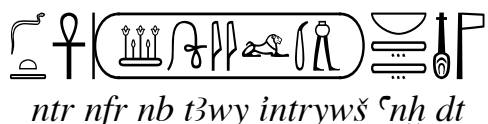
² WILKINSON 1992: 1.

³ GABRA 1947:161-162; MESSIHA & ELHITTA 1979: 15.

⁴The overall description, the measurements and Photographing of the Naos is a personal effort by the researcher.

The Frontal Side

The naos has a high base covered with plaster, with colorful inscriptions decorating all sides. The upper part is surmounted by a cavetto cornice. The venter has a winged sun disk⁵, followed by a ledge [FIGURE 3] with hieroglyphic inscriptions written in two opposite directions starting with the sign 𓎃 .



ntr nfr nb t3wy intrywš 𓎃 dt

The good god, Lord of the two lands Antrocha⁶ may live forever.

The *cavetto* cornice is an important architectural element used to decorate the upper parts of the Naos. Some scholars believe that the cornice most likely symbolizes the tradition of a palm sky of palm fronds from which the sun god descends and rises. The latter architecture was a major purpose at the front of naos⁷.

The naos has a door that opens up, similar to a door and bolt; it is used to close the door after the end of the burial rituals done on the god's statue [FIGURE 2]⁸.

The decorations represent a winged scarab directly down the winged sun disk. On both sides of the door, the king wears the double crown standing with his left leg forward offering, *wḏt*-eye placed on the sign «*nb*» 𓎃 , in front of him. The king's name was written in two cartouches flanking the door.

This was followed by a vertical writing as the following:



Nsw-bity intrywš

King of the Upper and Lower Egypt Antrocha.

Compared to the amulet in the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris [FIGURE 5]. It is clearly noticeable that the lovely amulet to the left, which contains the name of the Achaemenid king Darius the Great was placed in a cartouche. It is not an ordinary

⁵ Winged sun disk: The winged sun is a symbol associated with divinity, royalty and power in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Persia. The symbol is attested from the Old Kingdom, often flanked on either side with a *uraeus*. In early Egyptian religion, the symbol *Behedeti* represented Horus of Edfu. ENGELBACH 1930: 115-116; GARDINER 1944: 49-51; MARWA 2016: 152.

⁶ Darius I: A Persian king, whose reign lasted from 522 to 486. He seized power after killing king Gaumâta, fought a civil war (described in the *Behistun* inscription), and was finally able to refund the Achaemenid empire, which had been very loosely organized until then. Darius fought several foreign wars, which brought him to India and Thrace. When he died, the Persian empire had reached its largest extent. He was succeeded by his son Xerxes. CURTIS & TALLIS 2005: 266.

⁷ PETRIE 1895: 89-99.

⁸ FISCHER 1978: 91-92, 97-98.


amulet, but the counterpoise of the *menat collar*, which is a ritual necklace associated with goddess Hathor, goddess of love, joy, music and maternity⁹.



nṯr nfr nb t3wy intrywš ʿnh dt

«The good god, lord of the two lands, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Darius;
life forever»

It can be compared with the cartouche of «Darius I», which was found in the Temple of Hibis [FIGURE 6] which is located in Kharga oasis of the 5th century BC, the Persian era. The cartouche of «Darius I» of Persia, as Pharaoh of Egypt.

The lower parts of the naos's side has geometric motifs; both in longitudinal and transversal directions, representing a façade of a royal palace known as a *sreh*¹⁰  [FIGURE 7] which was associated with the ownership¹¹. This form of decoration continued until the end of the Late Period, which was known by comparing the naos of Darius I, which was found by Petrie in AboSerpena in 1887 and now lies at the British Museum Inv. N°*.BM 37496*¹².

As for goddess *W3dt*, on the frontal side, she appears wearing the white crown of upper Egypt and other times wearing the red crown of lower Egypt [FIGURE 8].

The Left Side

On the left side, king «Darius I» kneels wearing a short-pointed beard, and a blue crown surmounted by a cobra [FIGURE 9], his eye was clearly drawn in a full-frontal form. The nose was done in a square shape. The artist wished to show part of the triangle patterned apron¹³.


⁹«Amulet of Darius» <http://www.livius.org/pictures/a/egypt/amulet-of-darius>, Accessed on 21 / 02 / 2022

¹⁰ A **serekh** was an ornamental vignette combining a view of a palace facade and a plan (top view) of the royal courtyard. The word «*serekh*» derives from the Egyptian word for «facade». Different *serekh* on different types of object display countless variations of the facade decor in its complexity and detail. It seems that no strict artistic rules for the design of the *serekh* itself existed, *serekh* was normally used as a royal crest, accentuating and honoring the name of the pharaoh. Its use can be dated back as early as the *Gerzeh* culture (ca. 3400 BC). The hieroglyphs forming the king's name were placed inside a rectangular extension atop the *serekh*, which represented the royal courtyard. Additionally, the falcon of the god Horus, or in a few cases the Set animal, topped the *serekh*, showing the celestial patron of the named king. WILKINSON 1999: 201-202.



¹¹ ARNOLD 1999: 77, FIG. 37.

¹² «Naos of Darius I, BM: 37496»: [Http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object), Accessed on 21/02 /2022; NAVILLE 1887: 27, PL.VII.

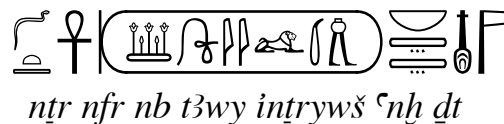
¹³ **Wadjet**: The name Wadjet is derived from «*wadj*» meaning «green», hence «the green one», and was known to the Greeks and Romans as «*uraeus*» from the Egyptian «*iaret*» meaning «risen one» from the image of a cobra rising up in protection. *Wadjet* was one of the earliest of Egyptian deities who later became associated with other goddesses such as *Bast*, *Sekhmet*, *Mut*, and *Hathor*. She was the tutelary deity of Lower Egypt and the major Delta shrine the «*per-nu*» was under her protection. Hathor is also depicted with this eye in Egyptian myth; the eye was not the passive organ of sight but more an agent of action, protection or wrath. Funerary amulets were often made in the shape of the Eye of Horus.

The king sits above the façade of the palace, offering the *udjet* eye ¹⁴ to god Horus who sits above a lotus flower holding the famous *ʿnh* sign, in one of his hands. Horus protects the king along with the winged sky goddess *Nwt*. Below this scene, goddess *Nehbet* is also found winged with beautiful geometric motifs decorating the edges vertically and horizontally [FIGURE 10].

The Backside

God«Khnum» appears holding a *w3s* sign , seated above an offering table surrounded by both the winged goddess *W3dt* wearing a *3tf* crown, and sitting on top of the *nb* sign and a papyrus plant. Each deity has the *šn* ¹⁵ sign and a cartouche of king «Darius I» [FIGURE 11].

A winged scarab crowned with the solar and held the *šn*-sign of eternity. The text above the winged scarab reads [FIGURE 12]:



«The good god, lord of the two lands, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Darius;
may he live forever»

Other sacred symbols decorate the Naos in order to renew the living soul of the king and the god¹⁶. The lower parts of the backside also have geometric motifs in longitudinal and transversal directions [FIGURE 13].

The Right Side

The right side is similar to the left side in all its details [FIGURE 14].

The Upper Surface (Ceiling) of Naos

The ceiling of the Naos has the usual designs which were found in ancient Egyptian temples and tombs, where the lines cross, as well as stars representing the sky¹⁷ [FIGURE 15].

The *Wadjet* or Eye of Horus is «the central element» of seven «gold, faience, carnelian and lapis lazuli» bracelets found on the mummy of Shoshenq II. The *Wedjat* «was intended to protect the pharaoh [here] in the afterlife» and to ward off evil. Ancient Egyptian and Middle-Eastern sailors would frequently paint the symbol on the bow of their vessel to ensure safe sea travel. JAMES 2000: 426; WILKINSON 2003: 202; PINCH 2004: 131–132.

¹⁴ WESTENDORF 1966: 64.

¹⁵ A *shen ring* is a circle with a line at a tangent to it, which was represented in hieroglyphs as a stylized loop of a rope. The word *shen* itself means, in ancient Egyptian, encircle, while the *shen* ring represented eternal protection. In its elongated form the *shen* ring became the cartouche which enclosed and protected a royal name. KEMP 2007: 106; AL-MURSI 2016: 79.

¹⁷ WESTENDORF 1966: 64 (52), 72 (60), PL.71.

III.COMPARISON

When compared with the Naos of «Darius I», which was found by F. Petrie in Abosserpena in 1887; and is now located at the British Museum [FIGURE 16] BM:37496-

Type: wooden door for king Darius I.

Size: Height 28cm, width 23.5cm



The same details appear but with different gods and offerings. King Darius I wears the same costume. It is a Naos made of wood inlaid with blue and red colored glass.¹⁸ The upper part of the door is decorated with stars of the sky. The sky has a group of five-pointed stars, and below it is a winged sun disk.

King Darius I wears a royal *3tf* crown while his name appears next to the crown as follows:



ntr nfr nb 3wy intrywš3



The good god, Lord of the two lands *Antrocha*

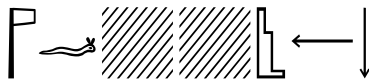
He raises both hands offering (statue of goddess Maet)  to god Anubis who stands before him. In his left hand he holds the *w3s* sign, while a partial *ʿnh*  is in his right hand; only few remains of his name are left¹⁹:



Inp(w) ntf ...

Anubis, he is ...

Behind King Darius I, (god Anubis) goddess Isis holds in her left hand the  and  in the other hand, the remaining vertical text above reads as follows²⁰:



3st ... f ntr

Isis ... the divine

The lower parts of this side also have geometric motifs in both longitudinal and transversal directions representing the royal palace façade known as *srh*.

¹⁸ «Naos of Darius I, BM: 37496»: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object, Accessed on 21/02/2022.

¹⁹ YOYOTTE 1972: 220-221, PL.19; TAIT 1991: 62; NICHOLSON & SHAW 2000: 196.

²⁰ ALY 1992: 133; ALLEN 2005: 110.

IV. COMMENTARY

Architectural Elements

1. The Ceiling of the Naos

The ceiling of the naos is similar to the sky in which Ra moves daily from the east to the west, this naos is the type of *sh-ntr*, the naos type *sh-ntr* is associated with god Anubis, who supervises the process of embalming. This appeared since the time of the ancient state on the walls of tombs as part of the scenes transferring the statue and even the pilgrimage. The repetitive use of the word *sh-ntr* since the twenty seventh dynasty as a nominative [FIGURE 15]²¹.

2. Columns of the Naos

The columns of the naos extend from the bottom of the upper lintel of the naos to the base, the ancient Egyptian artist made sure to decorate them from the outside, to protect it from various external and climatic factors [FIGURE 8]²².

3. Threshold of the Naos

It is the upper part directly above the door opening, and with the columns of the Naos, it represents a frame surrounding the façade.

4. The Base of the Naos

It represents the lower part of the naos on which the body of the naos is based, inscribed on it is a group of religious scenes, one of the most important scenes is the decoration of *Serekh* [FIGURE 7]²³.

5. The Frieze

The frieze represents the upper part of the naos above its threshold. It was decorated with the Egyptian Corniche with a winged sun disk in the center. The serpents surrounding the winged sun disk symbolize the transition of the sun from east to west [FIGURE 3]²⁴.

Technical Elements

The decoration of the walls of the naos with artistic elements that were associated with religious thought, and was keen on their presence within the different scenes, including:

²¹ DAVIES 1953: 23-26; ALTENMÜLLER 1977: 328-329; ARNOLD 1992: 15.

²² WESTENDORF 1966: 65.

²³ PETRIE 1895: 89; WESTENDORF 1966: 75.

²⁴ WESTENDORF 1966: 70.

1. The Sky and the Earth

The religious significance lies in likening the sky to the birth of the king, where the goddess gives birth to king. Nut in the morning is like the birth of the sun, it means the start of a new day²⁵.


2. Winged Sun

The winged sun disk is one of the main artistic elements in the decoration of the Naos, as a symbol of protection on the one hand and ensuring the birth of the king on the other hand²⁶.

3. Facade of the Palace

The lower part of the Naos was decorated with the facade of the palace, and this indicates ownership and its connection to the Hurrian name of the king²⁷.

4. The Goddess *Nekhbet* and the Goddess *Wadjet*

They appeared holding the Shen sign *šn*  , which symbolizes the protection of the king and gives him eternal power and eternal life [FIGURE 10]²⁸.

V. CONCLUSION

- 1- The artistic elements are Egyptian and have nothing to do with Greco-Roman art especially when compared with the Naos of «Darius I» (BM: 37496) now in the British Museum in London.
- 2- The cartouche of King «Darius I» has no other compared to the amulet in the Louvre Museum which contains the name of the Achaemenid king Darius the Great in a cartouche.
- 3- Ancient Egyptians used many colors including red, green, yellow, black and blue.
- 4- Ancient Egyptians were interested in the following technical elements:
 - The sky and the earth.
 - Winged sun disk.
 - Sacred symbols.
 - The facade of the palace.
 - The king appears making offerings to gods.
- 5- From all the above, the date of the piece can be traced back to the twenty-seventh Dynasty rather than dating it from the Greco-Roman period. Thus, the museum records need to be modified along with the museum's display cards.

²⁵ ALTENMÜLLER 1977: 1103.

²⁶ RADWAN1975: 266.

²⁷ ARNOLD 1999: 77.

²⁸ MÜLLER & WINKLE 1984: 577; WILDUNG 1982: 341; BONNET 1952: 504.

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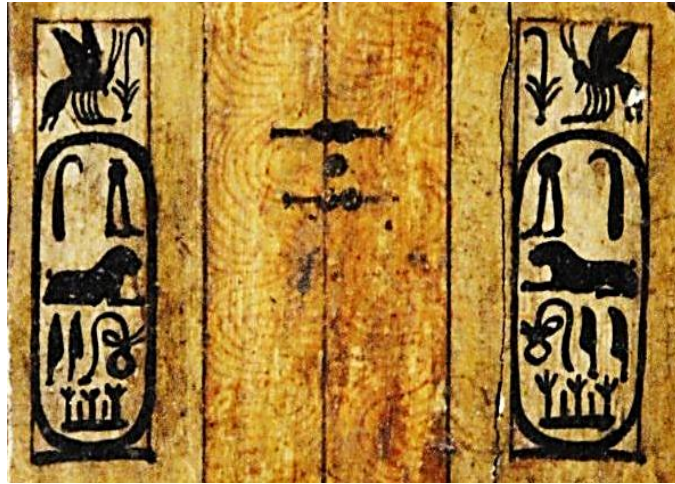
[FIGURE 1]: Small wooden naos in box, dating back to the twenty seventh dynasty.
© Photo taken by M. Mahmoud.



[FIGURE 2]: The frontal side © Photo taken by M. Mahmoud



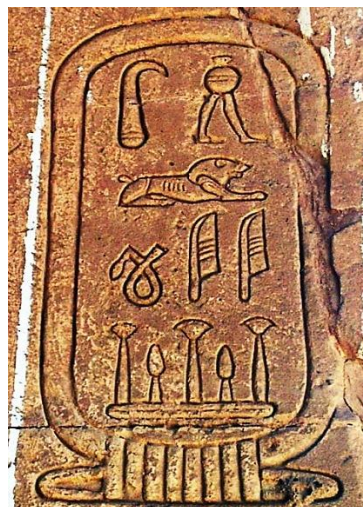
[FIGURE 3]: Egyptian cornice © Photo taken by M. Mahmoud



[FIGURE 4]: The naos' door has the form of a horizon.



[FIGURE 5]: «Amulet in *Musée du Louvre*» <http://www.livius.org/pictures/a/egypt/amulet-of-darius>, Accessed on 21 /02/2022



[FIGURE 6]: Cartouche of Darius I, found in Temple of Hibis.
[Http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object) in 21/02/2022.



[FIGURE 7]: The lower parts of frontal side.



[FIGURE 8]: Goddess *W3get* .



[FIGURE 9]: The left side © Photo taken by M. Mahmoud



[FIGURE 10]: The left side goddess *Nebet* © Photo taken by M. Mahmoud



[FIGURE 11]: The back side.



[FIGURE 12]: The back side. A winged scarab holding solar disk above its head.



[FIGURE 13]: The lower parts of the back side.



[FIGURE 14]: The right side is parallel in scenes to the left side.



[FIGURE 15]: Upper surface (ceiling) of naos.



[FIGURE 16]: Naos of Darius I. Located at the British Museum in London.
[Http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object)
Accessed on 21/02/2022.