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Canopic Chest

Richard Fazzini: Mummification entailed the desiccation of the body and the removal of soft parts, which wouldn't survive within the body. Some of these got mummified separately and placed in containers, which Egyptologists called canopic chests. A canopic chest would be in a tomb, with the deceased person's mummy.

This canopic chest is decorated to be symbolic of a number of very important things. There's a small figure of a recumbent falcon on top of this chest, and that's a deity named Sokar. He's basically a funerary deity. On two sides of the chest, there are images of the four sons of the god Horus, who protect the mummified innards. This is a way of ensuring that the deceased will live onwards. There are also wall patterns on this chest—the rectangles that run around all four sides. Those walls make this chest in a way an image of a temple precinct, the whole temple domain.

You will notice that on each of the corners there is a kind of pillar going up, and on top of those pillars are supporting bands of sky with stars painted on them. The symbolism here is that this little container is now actually the universe, with the four pillars of heaven holding the skies up above it. So now this becomes a universe that the dead person can inhabit.