

= Book of the Dead =

The Book of the Dead is an ancient Egyptian funerary text , used from the beginning of the New Kingdom ( around 1550 BCE ) to around 50 BCE . The original Egyptian name for the text , transliterated *rw nw prt m hrw* is translated as Book of Coming Forth by Day . Another translation would be Book of emerging forth into the Light . " Book " is the closest term to describe the loose collection of texts consisting of a number of magic spells intended to assist a dead person 's journey through the Duat , or underworld , and into the afterlife and written by many priests over a period of about 1000 years .

The Book of the Dead was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts , which were painted onto objects , not papyrus . Some of the spells included were drawn from these older works and date to the 3rd millennium BCE . Other spells were composed later in Egyptian history , dating to the Third Intermediate Period ( 11th to 7th centuries BCE ) . A number of the spells which made up the Book continued to be inscribed on tomb walls and sarcophagi , as had always been the spells from which they originated . The Book of the Dead was placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased .

There was no single or canonical Book of the Dead . The surviving papyri contain a varying selection of religious and magical texts and vary considerably in their illustration . Some people seem to have commissioned their own copies of the Book of the Dead , perhaps choosing the spells they thought most vital in their own progression to the afterlife . The Book of the Dead was most commonly written in hieroglyphic or hieratic script on a papyrus scroll , and often illustrated with vignettes depicting the deceased and their journey into the afterlife .

= = Development = =

The Book of the Dead developed from a tradition of funerary manuscripts dating back to the Egyptian Old Kingdom . The first funerary texts were the Pyramid Texts , first used in the Pyramid of King Unas of the 5th dynasty , around 2400 BCE . These texts were written on the walls of the burial chambers within pyramids , and were exclusively for the use of the Pharaoh ( and , from the 6th dynasty , the Queen ) . The Pyramid Texts were written in an unusual hieroglyphic style ; many of the hieroglyphs representing humans or animals were left incomplete or drawn mutilated , most likely to prevent them causing any harm to the dead pharaoh . The purpose of the Pyramid Texts was to help the dead King take his place amongst the gods , in particular to reunite him with his divine father Ra ; at this period the afterlife was seen as being in the sky , rather than the underworld described in the Book of the Dead . Towards the end of the Old Kingdom , the Pyramid Texts ceased to be an exclusively royal privilege , and were adopted by regional governors and other high @-@ ranking officials .

In the Middle Kingdom , a new funerary text emerged , the Coffin Texts . The Coffin Texts used a newer version of the language , new spells , and included illustrations for the first time . The Coffin Texts were most commonly written on the inner surfaces of coffins , though they are occasionally found on tomb walls or on papyri . The Coffin Texts were available to wealthy private individuals , vastly increasing the number of people who could expect to participate in the afterlife ; a process which has been described as the " democratization of the afterlife " .

The Book of the Dead first developed in Thebes towards the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period , around 1700 BCE . The earliest known occurrence of the spells included in the Book of the Dead is from the coffin of Queen Mentuhotep , of the 13th dynasty , where the new spells were included amongst older texts known from the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts . Some of the spells introduced at this time claim an older provenance ; for instance the rubric to spell 30B states that it was discovered by the Prince Hordjedef in the reign of King Menkaure , many hundreds of years before it is attested in the archaeological record .

By the 17th dynasty , the Book of the Dead had become widespread not only for members of the royal family , but courtiers and other officials as well . At this stage , the spells were typically inscribed on linen shrouds wrapped around the dead , though occasionally they are found written on

coffins or on papyrus .

The New Kingdom saw the Book of the Dead develop and spread further . The famous Spell 125 , the ' Weighing of the Heart ' , is first known from the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III , c.1475 BCE . From this period onward the Book of the Dead was typically written on a papyrus scroll , and the text illustrated with vignettes . During the 19th dynasty in particular , the vignettes tended to be lavish , sometimes at the expense of the surrounding text .

In the Third Intermediate Period , the Book of the Dead started to appear in hieratic script , as well as in the traditional hieroglyphics . The hieratic scrolls were a cheaper version , lacking illustration apart from a single vignette at the beginning , and were produced on smaller papyri . At the same time , many burials used additional funerary texts , for instance the Amduat .

During the 25th and 26th dynasties , the Book of the Dead was updated , revised and standardised . Spells were consistently ordered and numbered for the first time . This standardised version is known today as the ' Saite recension ' , after the Saite ( 26th ) dynasty . In the Late period and Ptolemaic period , the Book of the Dead remained based on the Saite recension , though increasingly abbreviated towards the end of the Ptolemaic period . New funerary texts appeared , including the Book of Breathing and Book of Traversing Eternity . The last use of the Book of the Dead was in the 1st century BCE , though some artistic motifs drawn from it were still in use in Roman times .

= = Spells = =

The Book of the Dead is made up of a number of individual texts and their accompanying illustrations . Most sub @-@ texts begin with the word ro , which can mean mouth , speech , a chapter of a book , spell , utterance , or incantation . This ambiguity reflects the similarity in Egyptian thought between ritual speech and magical power . In the context of the Book of the Dead , it is typically translated as either " chapter " or " spell " . In this article , the word " spell " is used .

At present , some 192 spells are known , though no single manuscript contains them all . They served a range of purposes . Some are intended to give the deceased mystical knowledge in the afterlife , or perhaps to identify them with the gods : for instance , Spell 17 , is an obscure and lengthy description of the god Atum . Others are incantations to ensure the different elements of the dead person 's being were preserved and reunited , and to give the deceased control over the world around him . Still others protect the deceased from various hostile forces , or guide him through the underworld past various obstacles . Famously , two spells also deal with the judgement of the deceased in the Weighing of the Heart ritual .

Such spells as 26 @-@ 30 , and sometimes spells 6 and 126 relate to the heart , and were inscribed on scarabs .

The texts and images of the Book of the Dead were magical as well as religious . Magic was as legitimate an activity as praying to the gods , even when the magic was aimed at controlling the gods themselves . Indeed , there was little distinction for the Ancient Egyptians between magical and religious practice . The concept of magic ( heka ) was also intimately linked with the spoken and written word . The act of speaking a ritual formula was an act of creation ; there is a sense in which action and speech were one and the same thing . The magical power of words extended to the written word . Hieroglyphic script was held to have been invented by the god Thoth , and the hieroglyphs themselves were powerful . Written words conveyed the full force of a spell . This was even true when the text was abbreviated or omitted , as often occurred in later Book of the Dead scrolls , particularly if the accompanying images were present . The Egyptians also believed that knowing the name of something gave power over it ; thus , the Book of the Dead equips its owner with the mystical names of many of the entities he would encounter in the afterlife , giving him power over them .

The spells of the Book of the Dead made use of several magical techniques which can also be seen in other areas of Egyptian life . A number of spells are for magical amulets , which would protect the deceased from harm . In addition to being represented on a Book of the Dead papyrus , these spells appeared on amulets wound into the wrappings of a mummy . Everyday magic made

use of amulets in huge numbers . Other items in direct contact with the body in the tomb , such as headrests , were also considered to have amuletic value . A number of spells also refer to Egyptian beliefs about the magical healing power of saliva .

### = = = Organization = = =

Almost every Book of the Dead was unique , containing a different mixture of spells drawn from the corpus of texts available . For most of the history of the Book of the Dead there was no defined order or structure . In fact , until Paul Barguet 's 1967 " pioneering study " of common themes between texts , Egyptologists concluded there was no internal structure at all . It is only from the Saite period ( 26th dynasty ) onwards that there is a defined order .

The Books of the Dead from the Saite period tend to organize the Chapters into four sections :

Chapters 1 ? 16 \* The deceased enters the tomb , descends to the underworld , and the body regains its powers of movement and speech .

Chapters 17 ? 63 Explanation of the mythic origin of the gods and places , the deceased are made to live again so that they may arise , reborn , with the morning sun .

Chapters 64 ? 129 The deceased travels across the sky in the sun ark as one of the blessed dead . In the evening , the deceased travels to the underworld to appear before Osiris .

Chapters 130 ? 189 Having been vindicated , the deceased assumes power in the universe as one of the gods . This section also includes assorted chapters on protective amulets , provision of food , and important places .

### = = Egyptian concepts of death and afterlife = =

The spells in the Book of the Dead depict Egyptian beliefs about the nature of death and the afterlife . The Book of the Dead is a vital source of information about Egyptian beliefs in this area .

### = = = Preservation = = =

One aspect of death was the disintegration of the various kheperu , or modes of existence . Funerary rituals served to re @-@ integrate these different aspects of being . Mummification served to preserve and transform the physical body into sah , an idealised form with divine aspects ; the Book of the Dead contained spells aimed at preserving the body of the deceased , which may have been recited during the process of mummification . The heart , which was regarded as the aspect of being which included intelligence and memory , was also protected with spells , and in case anything happened to the physical heart , it was common to bury jewelled heart scarabs with a body to provide a replacement . The ka , or life @-@ force , remained in the tomb with the dead body , and required sustenance from offerings of food , water and incense . In case priests or relatives failed to provide these offerings , Spell 105 ensured the ka was satisfied . The name of the dead person , which constituted their individuality and was required for their continued existence , was written in many places throughout the Book , and spell 25 ensured the deceased would remember their own name . The ba was a free @-@ ranging spirit aspect of the deceased . It was the ba , depicted as a human @-@ headed bird , which could " go forth by day " from the tomb into the world ; spells 61 and 89 acted to preserve it . Finally , the shut , or shadow of the deceased , was preserved by spells 91 , 92 and 188 . If all these aspects of the person could be variously preserved , remembered , and satiated , then the dead person would live on in the form of an akh . An akh was a blessed spirit with magical powers who would dwell among the gods .

### = = = Afterlife = = =

The nature of the afterlife which the dead person enjoyed is difficult to define , because of the differing traditions within Ancient Egyptian religion . In the Book of the Dead , the dead were taken into the presence of the god Osiris , who was confined to the subterranean Duat . There are also

spells to enable the ba or akh of the dead to join Ra as he travelled the sky in his sun @-@ barque , and help him fight off Apep . As well as joining the Gods , the Book of the Dead also depicts the dead living on in the ' Field of Reeds ' , a paradisiac likeness of the real world . The Field of Reeds is depicted as a lush , plentiful version of the Egypt of the living . There are fields , crops , oxen , people and waterways . The deceased person is shown encountering the Great Ennead , a group of gods , as well as his or her own parents . While the depiction of the Field of Reeds is pleasant and plentiful , it is also clear that manual labour is required . For this reason burials included a number of statuettes named shabti , or later ushebti . These statuettes were inscribed with a spell , also included in the Book of the Dead , requiring them to undertake any manual labour that might be the owner 's duty in the afterlife . It is also clear that the dead not only went to a place where the gods lived , but that they acquired divine characteristics themselves . In many occasions , the deceased is mentioned as " The Osiris - [ Name ] " in the Book of the Dead .

The path to the afterlife as laid out in the Book of the Dead was a difficult one . The deceased was required to pass a series of gates , caverns and mounds guarded by supernatural creatures . These terrifying entities were armed with enormous knives and are illustrated in grotesque forms , typically as human figures with the heads of animals or combinations of different ferocious beasts . Their names ? for instance , " He who lives on snakes " or " He who dances in blood " ? are equally grotesque . These creatures had to be pacified by reciting the appropriate spells included in the Book of the Dead ; once pacified they posed no further threat , and could even extend their protection to the dead person . Another breed of supernatural creatures was ' slaughterers ' who killed the unrighteous on behalf of Osiris ; the Book of the Dead equipped its owner to escape their attentions . As well as these supernatural entities , there were also threats from natural or supernatural animals , including crocodiles , snakes , and beetles .

= = = Judgment = = =

If all the obstacles of the Duat could be negotiated , the deceased would be judged in the " Weighing of the Heart " ritual , depicted in Spell 125 . The deceased was led by the god Anubis into the presence of Osiris . There , the dead person swore that he had not committed any sin from a list of 42 sins , reciting a text known as the " Negative Confession " . Then the dead person 's heart was weighed on a pair of scales , against the goddess Maat , who embodied truth and justice . Maat was often represented by an ostrich feather , the hieroglyphic sign for her name . At this point , there was a risk that the deceased 's heart would bear witness , owning up to sins committed in life ; Spell 30B guarded against this eventuality . If the scales balanced , this meant the deceased had led a good life . Anubis would take them to Osiris and they would find their place in the afterlife , becoming maa @-@ kheru , meaning " vindicated " or " true of voice " . If the heart was out of balance with Maat , then another fearsome beast called Ammit , the Devourer , stood ready to eat it and put the dead person 's afterlife to an early and unpleasant end .

This scene is remarkable not only for its vividness but as one of the few parts of the Book of the Dead with any explicit moral content . The judgment of the dead and the Negative Confession were a representation of the conventional moral code which governed Egyptian society . For every " I have not ... " in the Negative Confession , it is possible to read an unexpressed " Thou shalt not " . While the Ten Commandments of Judeo @-@ Christian ethics are rules of conduct laid down by a perceived divine revelation , the Negative Confession is more a divine enforcement of everyday morality . Views differ among Egyptologists about how far the Negative Confession represents a moral absolute , with ethical purity being necessary for progress to the Afterlife . John Taylor points out the wording of Spells 30B and 125 suggests a pragmatic approach to morality ; by preventing the heart from contradicting him with any inconvenient truths , it seems that the deceased could enter the afterlife even if their life had not been entirely pure . Ogden Goelet says " without an exemplary and moral existence , there was no hope for a successful afterlife " , while Geraldine Pinch suggests that the Negative Confession is essentially similar to the spells protecting from demons , and that the success of the Weighing of the Heart depended on the mystical knowledge of the true names of the judges rather than on the deceased 's moral behaviour .

## = = Producing a Book of the Dead = =

A Book of the Dead papyrus was produced to order by scribes . They were commissioned by people in preparation for their own funeral , or by the relatives of someone recently deceased . They were expensive items ; one source gives the price of a Book of the Dead scroll as one deben of silver , perhaps half the annual pay of a labourer . Papyrus itself was evidently costly , as there are many instances of its re @-@ use in everyday documents , creating palimpsests . In one case , a Book of the Dead was written on second @-@ hand papyrus .

Most owners of the Book of the Dead were evidently part of the social elite ; they were initially reserved for the royal family , but later papyri are found in the tombs of scribes , priests and officials . Most owners were men , and generally the vignettes included the owner 's wife as well . Towards the beginning of the history of the Book of the Dead , there are roughly 10 copies belonging to men for every one for a woman . However , during the Third Intermediate Period , 2 / 3 were for women ; and women owned roughly a third of the hieratic papyri from the Late and Ptolemaic Periods .

The dimensions of a Book of the Dead could vary widely ; the longest is 40m long while some are as short as 1m . They are composed of sheets of papyrus joined together , the individual papyri varying in width from 15 cm to 45 cm . The scribes working on Book of the Dead papyri took more care over their work than those working on more mundane texts ; care was taken to frame the text within margins , and to avoid writing on the joints between sheets . The words *peret em heru* , or ' coming forth by day ' sometimes appear on the reverse of the outer margin , perhaps acting as a label .

Books were often prefabricated in funerary workshops , with spaces being left for the name of the deceased to be written in later . For instance , in the Papyrus of Ani , the name " Ani " appears at the top or bottom of a column , or immediately following a rubric introducing him as the speaker of a block of text ; the name appears in a different handwriting to the rest of the manuscript , and in some places is mis @-@ spelt or omitted entirely .

The text of a New Kingdom Book of the Dead was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs , most often from left to right , but also sometimes from right to left . The hieroglyphs were in columns , which were separated by black lines - a similar arrangement to that used when hieroglyphs were carved on tomb walls or monuments . Illustrations were put in frames above , below , or between the columns of text . The largest illustrations took up a full page of papyrus .

From the 21st Dynasty onward , more copies of the Book of the Dead are found in hieratic script . The calligraphy is similar to that of other hieratic manuscripts of the New Kingdom ; the text is written in horizontal lines across wide columns ( often the column size corresponds to the size of the papyrus sheets of which a scroll is made up ) . Occasionally a hieratic Book of the Dead contains captions in hieroglyphic .

The text of a Book of the Dead was written in both black and red ink , regardless of whether it was in hieroglyphic or hieratic script . Most of the text was in black , with red ink used for the titles of spells , opening and closing sections of spells , the instructions to perform spells correctly in rituals , and also for the names of dangerous creatures such as the demon Apep . The black ink used was based on carbon , and the red ink on ochre , in both cases mixed with water .

The style and nature of the vignettes used to illustrate a Book of the Dead varies widely . Some contain lavish colour illustrations , even making use of gold leaf . Others contain only line drawings , or one simple illustration at the opening .

Book of the Dead papyri were often the work of several different scribes and artists whose work was literally pasted together . It is usually possible to identify the style of more than one scribe used on a given manuscript , even when the manuscript is a shorter one . The text and illustrations were produced by different scribes ; there are a number of Books where the text was completed but the illustrations were left empty .

## = = Discovery , translation , interpretation and preservation = =

The existence of the Book of the Dead was known as early as the Middle Ages , well before its contents could be understood . Since it was found in tombs , it was evidently a document of a religious nature , and this led to the widespread misapprehension that the Book of the Dead was the equivalent of a Bible or Qur 'an . They didn 't recognize them as a funerary ritual .

In 1842 Karl Richard Lepsius published a translation of a manuscript dated to the Ptolemaic era and coined the name " Book of The Dead " . He also introduced the spell numbering system which is still in use , identifying 165 different spells . Lepsius promoted the idea of a comparative edition of the Book of the Dead , drawing on all relevant manuscripts . This project was undertaken by Édouard Naville , starting in 1875 and completed in 1886 , producing a three @-@ volume work including a selection of vignettes for every one of the 186 spells he worked with , the more significant variations of the text for every spell , and commentary . In 1867 Samuel Birch of the British Museum published the first extensive English translation . In 1876 he published a photographic copy of the Papyrus of Nebseny .

The work of E. A. Wallis Budge , Birch 's successor at the British Museum , is still in wide circulation ? including both his hieroglyphic editions and his English translations of the Papyrus of Ani , though the latter are now considered inaccurate and out @-@ of @-@ date . More recent translations in English have been published by T. G. Allen ( 1974 ) and Raymond O. Faulkner ( 1972 ) . As more work has been done on the Book of the Dead , more spells have been identified , and the total now stands at 192 .

In the 1970s , Ursula Rößler @-@ Köhler at the University of Bonn began a working group to develop the history of Book of the Dead texts . This later received sponsorship from the German state of North Rhine @-@ Westphalia and the German Research Foundation , in 2004 coming under the auspices of the German Academies of Sciences and Arts . Today the Book of the Dead Project , as it is called , maintains a database of documentation and photography covering 80 % of extant copies and fragments from the corpus of Book of the Dead texts , and provides current services to Egyptologists . It is housed at the University of Bonn , with much material available online . Affiliated scholars are authoring a series of monograph studies , the Studien zum Altägyptischen Totenbuch , alongside a series that publishes the manuscripts themselves , Handschriften des Altägyptischen Totenbuches . Both are in print by Harrassowitz Verlag . Orientverlag has released another series of related monographs , Totenbuchtexte , focused on analysis , synoptic comparison , and textual criticism .

Research work on the Book of the Dead has always posed technical difficulties thanks to the need to copy very long hieroglyphic texts . Initially , these were copied out by hand , with the assistance either of tracing paper or a camera lucida . In the mid @-@ 19th century , hieroglyphic fonts became available and made lithographic reproduction of manuscripts more feasible . In the present day , hieroglyphics can be rendered in desktop publishing software and this , combined with digital print technology , means that the costs of publishing a Book of the Dead may be considerably reduced . However , a very large amount of the source material in museums around the world remains unpublished .

= = = Chronology = = =

c . 3150 BCE - First preserved hieroglyphs , on small labels in the tomb of a king buried ( in tomb U @-@ j ) at Abydos

c . 3000 BCE - The beginning of the numbered dynasties of kings of ancient Egypt

'c . 2345 BCE - First royal pyramid , of King Unas , to contain the Pyramid Texts , carved precursors ( intended only for the king ) to the funerary literature from which the Book of the Dead ultimately developed

c . 2100 BCE - First Coffin Texts , developed from the Pyramid Texts and for a time painted on the coffins of commoners . Many spells of the Book of the Dead are closely derived from them

c . 1600 BCE - Earliest spells of the Book of the Dead , on the coffin of Queen Mentuhotep , a descendent of kings from the New Kingdom

c . 1550 BCE - From this time onward to the beginning of the New kingdom , papyrus copies of the

Book of the Dead are used instead of inscribing spells on the walls of the tombs

c . 600 BCE - Approximately when the order of the spells became standard

2nd Century CE - Possibly the last copies of the Book of the Dead were produced , but it is a poorly documented era of history

313 CE - Christianity spreads to Egypt

1798 - Napoleon 's invasion of Egypt encourages European interests in ancient Egypt ; 1799 , Vivant Denon was handed a copy of the Book of the Dead

1805 - J. Marc Cadet makes the first publication , on 18 plates , of a Book of the Dead , Copie figurée d 'un Roleau de Papyrus trouvé à Thèbes dans un Thombeau des Rois , accompagnée d 'une notice descriptive , Paris , Levrault

1822 - J. François Champollion announces the key to the decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing , subsequently developed in his later publications , the most extensive after his death in 1832

1842 - C.R. Lepsius publishes the first major study of the Book of the Dead , begins the numbering of the spells or chapters , and brings the name ' Book of the Dead ' into general circulation