Three funerary papyri from Thebes: New evidence on scribal and funerary practice in the Late Period

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The three papyri

The following ideas are based mainly on evidence provided by one specific group of funerary papyri from Late Period Thebes. The three papyri P. Berlin P. 3158, P. Berlin P. 3159, and P. Aberdeen ABDUA 84023 (Backes 2009b) have so many peculiarities in common that they are believed to have been produced by the same workshop around 300 BC (see below).1 It has been argued that all three owners belonged to the same family—the grandmother Reret (Rr.t, owner of P. Berlin P. 3158), the father Padihorpakhered (Pt-dj-Hr-p3-hrd, owner of P. Aberdeen) and the daughter Taatum (T3-(n-)Im, owner of P. Berlin P. 3159)2—since the names of the owners’ parents are written on each.

The absence of significant titulary, and the fact that the three papyri in question probably come from a group burial—which is assured for the two papyri now in Berlin (Passalacqua 1826, 170, no. 1; see Backes 2009b, 3)3—make it likely that their owners did not belong to the highest rank of society. Without more information, an attribute such as ‘middle class’ or ‘sub-elite’ might be most appropriate to describe their status in broad terms.

Identification of a workshop

Hardly anything is known about the ‘workshops’ where funerary papyri were produced, and even their existence, although most probable, is hypothetical (see Kockelmann 2008, 117–18, especially nos. 1–2). It is difficult to envisage how decorated funerary papyri, or other types of tomb equipment, might have been produced without the existence of something akin to what would now be called a ‘workshop.’ We are largely ignorant of how such work was organised, and without written evidence it is very difficult to identify in the historical record.4 Several arguments can be advanced, however, and while specific cases may include others, the following criteria can generally be used:

1 I am very grateful to M. Smith for reading a first draft of this paper, for fruitful discussion, and for making the text of an unpublished article available to me; furthermore to G. Roberts and C. Jones for taking upon themselves the task of correcting the English version of this paper.

2 On the dating of the papyri, see Munro in Curtis, Kockelmann and Munro 2005, 52–53, and Backes 2009b, 3–4.

3 The pedigree, which also includes Reret’s parents as well as Padihorpakhered’s father and his wife, was first established by Munro in Curtis, Kockelmann and Munro 2005, 52–53.

4 On artistic production in general see Verbovsek 2006, especially 675–83 (with further references), and 681–82 for a critical view on too careless an assignment of the term ‘workshops.’

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmasae/issue_15/backes.aspx
1. Similar or identical handwriting (Kockelmann 2008, 118 with no. 7).
2. Vignettes painted in a very similar style or even by the same hand (Quaegebeur 1997, 73; Kockelmann 2008, 118).
3. Similar or identical layout (Kockelmann 2008, 118).
4. Use of the same model/master copy for text or vignettes.
5. Owners belonging to the same family (Kockelmann 2008, 118 with no. 10).

None of these arguments can be used without some reservations. Very similar handwritings might tell us that the scribes had the same teacher, but this does not necessarily mean that they were employed in the same workshop. Furthermore, a scribe could have moved from one workshop to another during his lifetime, or even founded his own. The same is true for vignette painters, with the added difficulty that identifying a single artist is always a delicate task. The layout of texts and images on papyri (and other media) might depend on the layout of the original template, and templates could be transferred from one workshop to another, or even throughout the whole country. Also, there is no reason why a workshop could not have employed various templates in order to offer a wide range of choices to their customers. Similarities in iconographic and scribal details prove a tradition, not a single workshop. Finally, while one family could, and perhaps usually did, procure their funerary equipment from the same workshop, this can by no means be taken as a rule.

I propose that at least two of the five arguments listed above are necessary to make the case that the same ‘workshop’ produced a series of funerary papyri. In this case, the same master copy was evidently used for most of the vignettes on P. Berlin P. 3158 and P. Aberdeen. Probably the best example is the vignettes of chapter 125 on the two papyri (Figs. 1–2; see Backes 2009b for the other vignettes). P. Berlin P. 3159 differs in the sequence of scenes, and in single elements of such large scenes as the Judgement of the Dead (Fig. 3), but the scenes themselves are similar to the other two papyri. The painting style is definitely similar on all three papyri, featuring rather short human figures, painted using thick layers of colour without indication of many details, but this is not sufficient to conclude with certainty that the vignettes were painted by a single hand rather than that they belong to the same tradition. The situation is clearer for the texts, for although each papyrus has texts not attested on the other two, there are a number of spells in common (Table 1). Some of these are not yet attested on any other papyrus. Furthermore, the orthography of the texts

5 For example, Quaegebeur 1997, 73 with pl. 35: ‘There can be little doubt, for instance, that the weighing of the heart scene in P. Louvre N 3126 was drawn by the same man who was responsible for the illustrations in P. Berlin 3135 and the P. Lafayette College.’ His impression might have some foundation from an investigation of the original, but looking at the plate in the publication I have more than only ‘little doubt’ about his hypothesis.
6 See I. Munro’s contribution in this volume.
7 For details of the vignettes on all three papyri see Backes 2009b, chapter 17.2 and plates.
8 Some of the colours used for P. Berlin P. 3159 are not the same as those on the other two papyri, see Backes 2009b, 70–73.
9 This is the case for the Invocations to the West A and B and the Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night Bark, for which I could not find an exact parallel. The Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus and
is highly characteristic, which will serve as a starting point for the main part of this article (see below). The texts share many further features ('mistakes'), making it highly likely that they were copied from the same model, and the handwriting is indeed very similar on all three papyri. The basic layout of the papyri is identical, but not original: a row of vignettes without separation lines running over a zone of hieroglyphic columns, interrupted by the large vignettes of BD 15 and BD 125. Thus, even if impossible to prove, the assumption that the three papyri were produced in a single workshop is at least likely.

The writing system of the papyri

At first sight it is apparent that the three papyri contain numerous ‘mistakes.’ Without recourse to parallels, about half of the texts could not be properly understood (see Backes 2009b, 31–69). This is nothing remarkable as, through centuries of copying and re-copying of texts, some strands of the Book of the Dead tradition resulted in very erroneous copies, a prominent example being Books of the Dead from Ptolemaic Akhmim. The current case is different: all three papyri present not only misunderstood signs, words or phrases, but also a consistent, unetymological writing system which makes it unlikely that all of the ‘mistakes’ can be explained by erroneous copying (although many of them certainly can).

The main characteristic of this ‘system’ is its extensive use of monoliteral signs. Some words are only written with these, showing neither determinatives nor ideograms. A choice of the clearest examples will suffice to demonstrate this:

igr.t ‘necropolis/Beyond’ (P. Berlin P. 3159, 83)
ngm ‘sweet, pleasant’ (P. Berlin P. 3159, 71)
ngm-ib ‘joyful’ (P. Berlin P. 3158, 49–50)
htsf ‘repel’ (P. Aberdeen, 157)
grg ‘lie’ (P. Aberdeen, 161)
d.t=f ‘his body’ (eleven instances on all three papyri)

. . .
iht/ih (various writings) for the preposition hr (P. Berlin P. 3158, 61, 67, 77; P. 3159, 61; P. Aberdeen, 131)

the Invocation to the Heir of the Gods are not attested on papyri similar to the three treated here, but do occur on other media (see Backes 2009b and Assmann 2008, 249).

10 For initial remarks on the handwriting on the three papyri see Backes 2009b, 14–18.
11 Note that adding the ‘same family argument’ (no. 5) here would be circular reasoning, because without the similarities of the papyri, it would not have been believed that their owners belonged to one family (Munro, in Curtis, Kockelmann and Munro 2005, 52–53).
12 See, for example, the synopsis of BD 1 in Akhmim papyri in Lüscher 2000.
13 For a more extensive list see Backes 2009b, 27–30.
Two aspects characterise these and similar spellings:

1. By replacing multiliteral signs and determinatives with monoliteral signs, there are considerably fewer hieroglyphs than in texts with more traditional orthographies (i.e., featuring multiliteral signs and determinatives).
2. The monoliteral signs do not reproduce the traditional phonetic values of the absent logograms and multiliteral signs, but seem to be closer to the contemporaneous pronunciation of (the consonants of) the words in question (Backes 2009b, 27–28).

Recitation and understanding

There are several possible explanations for the appearance of these unetymological spellings. One is that they could add a second layer of meaning to a word,14 similar to what has been called ‘visual poetry’ for hieroglyphic texts (Morenz 2004).15 For the three papyri in question this aspect does not seem to have played a significant role. There are instances where a word has come into the text for phonetic reasons without being written alphabetically (e.g., dj ‘give’ replacing dr ‘repel’ in BD 89), but I cannot see any examples of ‘visual poetry’ within them.

A second explanation frequently proposed is that unetymological, and especially ‘alphabetical,’ writings could facilitate the pronunciation. F. Hoffmann (2002, 227), for example, assumes that unetymological writings (alphabetical as well as ‘group writings’) in the demotic P. Vienna D 6951 facilitate the recitation of a (neo-)Middle Egyptian text.16 This, however, is an assumption and is not as self-evident as it may initially seem because the Egyptian script does not render vowels, and so the reader has to identify the actual word in order to be able to pronounce it correctly. Spellings like the ones noted above do not necessarily facilitate such identifications: readers would still have to know which words they expected in a text in order to recognise them. For those who did know, the writings could indeed have offered some help in providing an acoustical aide-mémoire.

Another possibility is that the reduction of the total number of signs in the writing system might have been less of an aid for the reader than it was for the scribe.17 Certainly, the incomprehensibility of the texts is due not only to the writing system but also to ‘real’ mistakes, so there does indeed seem to have been at least one point at which a scribe needed some help. Still, this does not fully explain the influence of contemporaneous pronunciation, which is especially clear when the monoliteral signs do not render the traditional value of the logograms they replace. This is clearly visible in krk for grg, 3kr for igr.t, and especially in the use of 3h and iht for the preposition hr—a spelling attested in demotic texts as well (Smith 1978, 23–25; 1987, 58, l. 7, n. b; 2005, 87). Hieroglyphic examples seem to be extremely rare,

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14 See Widmer 2004, 677–86. More recent contributions that add examples of unetymological spellings in demotic are Smith 2005, 87, and Stadler 2006, 201–203; soon also Smith in press, where earlier literature can be found.
15 There are also innumerable examples in Graeco-Roman temple inscriptions, to which the term 'poetry' has been applied (Derchain and von Recklinghausen 2004, especially 118–20).
16 See also the general statement of Quack 2005, 2–3.
17 I am grateful to Mark Smith for pointing out this alternative to me.
with most, if not all, known examples coming from the Roman decoration in the temple of Dakka (Smith 1978, 24, n. 22), though it is possible that \(\frac{1}{2}\) in the triumphal stela of Pi(ankhi) is also a writing of \(hr\).^{18}

One could add that a writing system such as occurs in the papyri considered here was indeed meant to facilitate pronunciation\(^{19}\) because this fits so well with the attested use of some texts as recitation texts (see below). However, possible alternatives must not be discarded. One should not forget that the current papyri were probably decorated not much later than Dynasty 30 when alphabetic writings flourished in monumental inscriptions, their exact function(s) still being a matter for discussion (Schweitzer 2003; Engsheden 2006). Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the strange spellings should perhaps be considered as the result of a ‘scribal zeitgeist.’

Regardless of the writing system, the possibility exists that the texts were intended for recitation, since this usage is indeed attested in other sources for some of them. The ‘Invocation to the Bringer of Bas’ is perhaps the best known of these, the spell being integrated into one of the great ‘glorifications’ of the Late Period.\(^{20}\) Other parts of the short texts on the papyri give the impression of ‘recitation texts’ as well; notably, short statements of the deceased’s approaching include the ritual cry \(zd-t\), which hardly makes sense without a loud recitation. Generally the possibility of an original ritual context for texts on funerary papyri may have been underestimated (see Gee 2006, especially the list on 80–81).

In this respect the three rather small papyri are reminiscent of papyri found in contemporaneous tombs, which contain liturgical texts that could be meant for the deceased as well as for Osiris.\(^{21}\) This makes it difficult to decide whether they were originally meant to be funerary papyri at all. Some of them are not personalised by having the deceased’s name written instead of that of Osiris, and these might well have been used in temples before they were placed in a tomb.\(^{22}\) However, in contrast to this sort of ‘ritual book,’ the Book of the Dead title and vignettes, along with the hieroglyphic script used on the three papyri examined here, show them to have been intended originally to accompany their owners in the afterlife. Bearing excerpts for liturgical texts was only one of several functions of such papyri (on this aspect see below).

If the possibility exists that at least some of the texts on these papyri could have been

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\(^{18}\) Smith 1978, 24, n. 22 disagrees with this interpretation of \(lh\) in the Piankhi stela, proposed by Möller (1913) and used by Osing (1976, 151, n. 190), but partly because this instance is much older than the comparable demotic writings (most of them of Roman date) and those at Dakka. On the basis of the three papyri studied here the gap can/should be reduced by a few hundred years to around 400. This is still a very long time, but this evidence makes it reasonable to not discard the possibility of earlier instances.

\(^{19}\) Similarly Quack 1999, 310–11. On the influence of the spoken language on late temple inscriptions see Quack 1995.

\(^{20}\) Second part of spell 14 of ‘s\(lh\)w I,’ following Assmann 2008, 212. In earlier numbering it was spell 15 (Goyon 1974; Assmann 1990, 32–33; Schneider 1994, 356–57).

\(^{21}\) See, for example, Smith 2009, especially the introductions to parts 1 (adapted Osirian liturgies) and 2 (texts originally written for the deceased); Assmann 2008, 3; Quack 2009a, 616–20.

\(^{22}\) This seems very likely in cases where the manuscript had been secondarily personalised by adding a colophon with the owner’s name at the end (P. Bremner-Rhind, see now Smith 2009, 120–23), or by replacing Osiris’ name with that of the deceased (Schott 1929, 3). For an overview and further thoughts see Smith 2009, 61–65; Smith in press.
recited, then the question arises to what extent their potential listeners or their scribes could understand them. For the scribes, at least, there is reason to conclude that the function of the texts was known to them: the best argument for this is the position of BD 30B on P. Aberdeen, in which the famous address to the heart of the deceased has been written immediately before the judgement of the dead scene, and thus in the place where it makes the most sense. Another example of this placement is known from the Third Intermediate Period (P. BM EA 10020), and during the New Kingdom the same formula could even appear in the judgement scene, as in the papyri of Ani and Hunefer (e.g., Faulkner and Andrews 1985, 14 with figure above).

This striking example of a meaningful arrangement in the text means that the scribe—or at least the one who designed the model used by the scribe—was probably aware of what the text was about. Yet it is clear that many passages in this and other texts on these three papyri do not make sense in the form in which they are written. Sentences or phrases are missing, and the end of P. Berlin P. 3159 is a mixture of repeated, incomplete texts whose only function seems to be to fill the remaining space. Furthermore, on the two Berlin papyri, the pronouns have not been adapted to the sex of their female owners.

Overall, somebody listening to a recitation of texts from papyri similar to those examined here would probably have understood some sentences and a large number of important words, among them the names of the deceased and of gods. This may have been sufficient for most people who had not learned any Middle Egyptian. The ‘Horus stelae’ of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods offer a good comparison. As early as the Ptolemaic period, many of their inscriptions cannot be read as whole texts any more, and just as with these three papyri certain ‘catch words’ appear between incomprehensible passages (Sternberg-El Hotabi 1994, 222–31). Heike Sternberg-El Hotabi (1994) has concluded that these inscriptions testify to an early stage of the ‘death’ of the hieroglyphic script.23 As Sternberg-El Hotabi herself admits, inscriptions on ‘Horus stelae’ do not tell us much about the hieroglyphic skills of a hierogrammateus designing ritual scenes and texts for a new temple wall (Sternberg-El Hotabi 1994, 237–245). The same is true for funerary papyri like the three treated here. The level of reduced ‘hieroglyphic literacy’ to which they seem to testify does not reveal anything about the people who wrote long liturgical papyri of high quality, like the contemporaneous P. Bremner-Rhind (305 BC). A reduced level of literacy of scribes working for a ‘sub-elite’ does not necessarily indicate the imminent demise of a script, especially when the script was of almost exclusively religious function (as hieroglyphs by this time were). Not only a reduced ability to read, but perhaps even complete illiteracy, is attested for people writing hieroglyphs on coffins as early as the Third Intermediate Period (Martin 1991, 144).

As noted above, it is clear that at least some of the texts on the three papyri were recited from similar (and hopefully better) copies normally in hieratic script, such as in the long ‘glorification’ papyri. If this is true, we have the right to assume a ritualist—not necessarily a professional lector priest—at a ‘middle class’ burial reciting Middle Egyptian texts which, from a modern point of view, could be quite erroneous. Only very few, if any, of the persons present at such an occasion would have been able to decide if a recited Middle Egyptian text was correct and complete or not. With the exception of the small group of well-trained

23 For the most recent overview of the demise of Ancient Egyptian writing systems see Stadler 2008; see also Houston, Baines and Cooper 2003, especially 445.
(lector) priests, only very few Egyptians of the Late Period (and earlier) can be expected to have been able to understand all of what was recited during funerary rites; this may even have enhanced the ‘sacred’ status of Middle Egyptian religious texts (see te Velde 1988).

But everybody would have been able to judge from the understandable words and phrases that these Middle Egyptian texts were dealing with the deceased, the gods, the beyond, and thus were appropriate for a funeral. Such a scenario might seem unusual at first sight, but—to take a more recent example—the average Catholic attending Mass before Vaticanum II would not have understood much of the priest’s Latin recitations. I argue that for people attending the funeral of, say, Rr.t, owner of P. Berlin P. 3158, a lack of understanding need not have lessened the experience. In such a case, the alphabetic spellings discussed above might really have offered some help to a lector-priest, not necessarily enabling him to correctly pronounce a Middle Egyptian text, but at least to pronounce words that sounded correct. The ritualist’s prior knowledge of what a text should contain would have helped him to identify what he ought to say.

This argumentation can be extended to such texts as BD 30B and BD 72, which are written in the first person. It ought not to prevent one from arguing that the writing system would facilitate their recitation, in this case not by a living speaker, but by the deceased in the Beyond.

**Functions of funerary texts versus functions of funerary papyri**

As noted above, texts similar to those on the three papyri in this study were recited, but they were not recited from these papyri. These are funerary papyri, designed to be placed on or near the deceased’s mummy in the tomb. Apart from the use of hieroglyphs, which were not normally used for liturgical papyri, this is demonstrated by the vignettes, and by the overall layout of the papyrus, which is that of a ‘normal’ abridged Book of the Dead. Indeed, both Berlin papyri, the beginnings of which are preserved, start with an abridged version of the title of the Book of the Dead (Backes 2009b, 31–32). The addition of ‘other’ texts to a Book of the Dead is by no means unusual. In most cases the added texts are few compared with the amount of the BD chapters (e.g., P. Greenfield: see Zaluskowski 1996), and normally Book of the Dead and other texts are clearly separated.

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24 On the use of Middle Egyptian language and hieroglyphic script as important criteria for a text’s sacredness, see Vernus 1990, especially 42–43 with notes 29–30. For the comparable use of a few words, lines or captions of hieroglyphic text in hieratic or demotic documents, see Vernus 1990, 46–47. So-called ‘pseudohieroglyphic’ inscriptions, such as those on ‘Horus stelae’ of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, can be mentioned here, where the incomprehensible copies merely (or still) signal the presence of a sacred text; see Sternberg-El Hotabi 1994, 231. Stadler 2004, 552–53 provides examples of ‘pseudohieroglyphs’ that potentially enhance the magical efficacy of a demotic funerary papyrus (P. BM EA 10415).

25 For the function of BD 72 as a ‘Netherworld text’ in contrast to recitation spells, see Bommas 2006, 12–15.

26 A list of examples of ‘short’ Book of the Dead papyri from the Late Period (in contrast to the ‘long’ papyri containing chapters 1–165) is provided by Kockelmann 2008, 191, with n. 3.

27 On the definition of these papyri as ‘Books of the Dead’ see Backes 2009b, 100–102.

28 There are a number of examples of the Late and Ptolemaic periods. Papyri in which texts are added at the end of a Book of the Dead include P. Ryerson (probably Dynasty 30), where some columns of hieroglyphic...
because the other texts replace Book of the Dead chapters. A closer parallel than the examples just cited might be seen in the papyrus of Mentuemhat, which contains spells for amulets, among them BD chapters 155 and 157, alongside chapters 89, 100 and 162 (Munro 2003). As BD 100 is the most popular chapter on single spell amulet papyri of the Late Period, the function of the whole papyrus seems to have been ‘amuletic,’ and therefore different from the papyri in question. However, the combination of ritual texts and popular chapters of the Book of the Dead is a noteworthy parallel. But what were the criteria for choosing the texts?

At this point it is necessary to discuss the relation between the few Book of the Dead chapters present in the papyri discussed here and the majority of other texts. Without the background knowledge that they are attested as spells of the pr.t m hrw collection, one might not conclude that BD 30B, 72 and 89B were in any way different from the other texts, being characterised by the same largely ‘alphabetical’ spelling and absence of determinatives described above. Indeed, these chapters had not been identified on the papyri before (Backes 2009b, 1, n. 2). The situation is different for the four transformation spells (BD chapters 79, 80, 85 and 86) that open the textual sequence of P. Aberdeen, which are easily recognisable. Furthermore, some hieroglyphs in these chapters have different shapes to their counterparts in the other texts, and some logograms and determinatives appear only here, which might be due partly to the more traditional writings (Backes 2009b, 14–15). Obviously, the versions of chapters 30B, 72 and 89B that occur on the papyri under consideration here had not been transmitted as part of the collection now referred to as the ‘Book of the Dead’ (pr.t m hrw), but were taken together with, and as part of, the other texts.

One common feature of the heterogenous ‘other’ texts is that several are known from parts of tomb equipment: coffins/sarcophagi, tomb-walls, stelae, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures and other items (see Table 2). This might offer a practical explanation for the sequence of spells on the papyri. At least for the two Berlin papyri it is clear that they were found in a group burial (see above), and it is reasonable to conclude the same for the papyrus now in Aberdeen, for which no such record exists. As the space for each burial was very limited in such a family tomb—be it a new tomb or an older, reused one—texts that one would otherwise texts are added after a long hieratic Book of the Dead, among them the ‘Invocation to the Bringer of Bas’ (Allen 1960); P. Berlin P. 3008 where, conversely, a hieroglyphic Book of the Dead is followed by a hieratic text which is a short version of the ‘Recitation of Glorifications Which the Two Sisters Performed’ (Smith 2009, 124–34 with previous literature to be found there); P. Paris Louvre N. 3125 (probably 1st century BC), where a Book of the Dead is followed by a hitherto unparalled parallel (Lejeune 2006, 197–202); P. BM EA 9995 (reign of Augustus), which is noteworthy for including a ‘Book of Breathing made by Isis for her Brother Osiris’ between an introduction scene and three Book of the Dead vignettes (V 1, 146, 125) with hieroglyphic captions (Herbin 2008, 37–45 with pls. 15–24). The so-called ‘Ba Book’ is attested on two BD papyri from Akhmim; one written at the beginning, the other at the end (Beinlich 1999). One might raise the question of whether the different solar hymns on New Kingdom BD papyri (traditionally counted as BD 15) and the hymns to Osiris (partly counted as BD spells 183 or 185) were really seen as being part of the ‘Book of the Dead’ in that period. At least in some instances they clearly were not, such as on the papyri of Hunefer (P. BM EA 9901) and Ani (P. BM EA 10470) where the hymns are separated from the BD chapters (Backes 2009a, 16–17); see also Quack 2009b, especially 13–15.

29 Twelve out of fifteen single-spell Book of the Dead papyri from the Late and Ptolemaic periods feature BD 100/129 (Illés 2006, 123, 130). BD 89 and 162 are each attested on one single-spell amulet papyrus as well (Illés 2006, 129–30), and indeed both spells can be linked to amuletic objects: BD 89 by its postscript; BD 162 being the most popular chapter on hypocephali (Illés 2006, 124–25).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/backes.aspx
have carved on walls, sarcophagi and other elements of the deceased’s equipment had to be written on mummy cartonnage, mummy linen, or a papyrus.\textsuperscript{30} A. Niwiński’s observation that, at least during some periods, the possession of a Book of the Dead text on one medium practically excluded its existence on another medium in the same tomb (Niwiński 1989, 29–34) supports this idea. Although his rule should not be taken as definite for all instances,\textsuperscript{31} it seems plausible to think a step further and suggest that the occurrence of papyri containing texts usually found on tomb equipment might mean that the traditional spaces these texts occupied were unavailable.

The master copies from which the texts were chosen and copied would probably have included short inscriptions for tomb equipment of all kinds. The three Book of the Dead chapters 30B, 72 and 89B seem to fit this scenario. BD 30B is the classic inscription of ‘heart-scarabs’ (Malaise 1978, 13–40 and passim), and although there was enough space for a heart-scarab in every coffin or mummy cartonnage, the text may well have been a part of a collection of tomb equipment texts available to the scribes responsible for the burial. The case is even clearer for chapters 72 and 89, which are the most popular Book of the Dead spells on sarcophagi.\textsuperscript{32} The main difference here is that the three papyri contain only the second half of BD 89 (called ‘BD 89B’ in Table 1), but this distinguishes them from all known copies of BD 89, both on papyrus or other media.

The ‘practical’ explanation offered here for the surprising sequences of texts on the three papyri by no means diminishes the possible function of the texts as recitation spells at burials, mentioned above. It is important to differentiate between the possible functions and meaning the texts could have, and the functions of the papyri as funerary objects, since the texts are only one element of them, albeit a pre-eminent one.

\textbf{The papyri as funerary objects}

This second aspect—the functions not of the texts themselves, but of the papyri bearing them—needs further discussion.\textsuperscript{33} The primary aim of funerary papyri was to provide the deceased with some important spells and images for the afterlife. These had to be chosen from a wide range of possibilities. As already stated, a choice was made from a range of texts

\textsuperscript{30} I have already proposed this practical reason in the publication of the papyri (Backes 2009b, 104). Independently, Mark Smith has come to very similar conclusions for funerary texts of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Smith 2009, 47–49). For the limited space available for inscriptions in Late Period ‘elite’ burials, see Aston 2003, 138–166, especially the drawing on p. 162.

\textsuperscript{31} In the Late and Ptolemaic periods the same individual could have two Books of the Dead: one on papyrus and the other on mummy bandages (Kockelmann 2008, 217–23).

\textsuperscript{32} For BD 72 on sarcophagi of the Late Period (and earlier) see Bommas 2006, 1–15, with the necessary references on 6. Attestations of BD 89 on sarcophagi of Dynasty 30 are listed in Manassa 2007, 375–76 (CGC 29302, CGC 29306, CGC 29307, Vienna 1, Louvre D8), and more of the entire Late Period in Buhl 1959, 227. Typical Theban coffin ensembles of the 3rd century BC show either BD 72 or another BD chapter on the exterior of the inner lid, and BD 89 on its interior (Illés 2006, 126).

\textsuperscript{33} For a comparable approach, i.e., to consider a papyrus ‘not simply as a collection of ritual compositions, but rather as a concrete object, an artefact, asking how that object was actually employed, where, in what circumstances, and by whom,’ see Smith in press.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/backes.aspx
that otherwise would have been written on sarcophagi, stelae, or parts of funerary equipment that the owners of the three papyri probably did not possess. A comparable process could/can be postulated for the amuletic papyrus of Seta-gewa (3rd or early 2nd century BC), found in Theban Tomb 32, and bearing BD 1 at a time when this spell was no longer part of the standard programme for coffin inscription (Illés 2006, especially 126).

Collecting inscriptions was not the only purpose of these papyri, however. Their images are Book of the Dead vignettes, and their layout is that of a typical Late Period Book of the Dead where a register of vignettes runs above a higher register containing the texts, interrupted occasionally by large vignettes (V 15, V 125). In the Late Period, a Book of the Dead was still by far the most popular funerary papyrus, and a fundamental element of each elite burial. One should expect that owners of long papyri with Osirian liturgies would also have owned a Book of the Dead.\(^\text{34}\) Alternatively, a Book of the Dead and other spells could be contained on a single papyrus (see above, especially note 28). The papyri studied here were Books of the Dead, according to their titles and outer forms, so that their owners could claim to possess a copy of the most important type of funerary papyrus, regardless of the exact content of the texts. This is an early instance of a later custom whereby funerary papyri containing versions of the Book of Traversing Eternity could include the formula pr.t m hrw in their titles.\(^\text{35}\) In these later instances the meaning of the traditional title could have shifted to ‘funerary texts’ in general, instead of indicating one specific collection. This is especially true for papyri dating to the first two centuries CE, when the Book of the Dead was no longer used.

Thus, each funerary papyrus was an element of funerary equipment with at least one specific function, as well as containing specific meaning and function in each text and image. The papyri studied here, although they are by no means ‘sophisticated’ objects, can be seen to have at least three layers of function:

1. Being a Book of the Dead.
2. Providing the most necessary texts and images (BD chapters and other texts).
3. Perpetuating recitations/rites.

The first aspect is fulfilled by the layout of the papyri, by their vignettes, and especially by

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\(^\text{34}\) For example the priest Nesmin owned P. BM EA 10188 (P. Bremner-Rhind) and 10208 (‘Ceremony of Glorifying Osiris in the God’s Domain’), together with the funerary papyrus P. BM EA 10209 (offering liturgies for the feast of the valley), and the Book of the Dead P. Detroit Institute of Arts 1988.10 (see Smith 2009, 97 and references given there). Imhotep, son of Psintaes and Tjehenet, was the owner of the liturgical papyrus P. New York MMA 35.9.21 and the Book of the Dead P. New York MMA 35.9.20 (Smith 2009, 67; Munro 2003, 5).

\(^\text{35}\) P. Paris Louvre N 3147: \(\text{ky} \, \text{r}\, t\, n\, \text{pr}(\, t\, m\, \text{hrw ‘another spell for going forth by day’}; P. Chicago OIC 25389: \(\text{r}\, t\, n\, \text{pr}\, t\, m\, \text{hrw r bw nsw=f ‘spell for going forth by day to the place he wishes’ (see Herbin 1994, 330). Even closer is the demotic P. Paris BN 149 (Stadler 2003, 27): [\(\text{m}\)]\, \text{shw n n pry m p1 hrw ‘[the] writings of going forth by day.’ In this case, one might object that the combination of the Book of Traversing Eternity with the famous demotic translation of BD 125 would have led to a title resembling that of the Book of the Dead, but BD 125 has its own title on this papyrus (see Stadler 2003, 30, 59), and the two other examples just cited show that pr.t m hrw could be used as a designation for copies of the Book of Traversing Eternity. See also the remarks by Smith 2009, 396, 403.
the title that opens the sequence in the two Berlin papyri (and probably also in P. Aberdeen), rather than by the existence of BD 72 and 89B in the sequence. On P. Aberdeen, the four transformation chapters that open the sequence are a further Book of the Dead element.

The second aspect is clear from other attestations of the texts as well as from their contents (see below). For the third aspect it should be remembered that the texts contained within were not necessarily identical with what was recited at the owners’ burials (see above). But by their orthography they appear to be recitation spells, and throughout all periods of ancient Egyptian history the mere existence of recitation texts in a tomb was seen as a guarantee for perpetuating the ritual (Smith 2009, 64–65 and references provided there). Furthermore, short texts that consist of not more than one or two sentences might be a reference to a longer text, similar to some captions on tomb walls. In any case, whilst being Books of the Dead, the three papyri fulfil a function similar to that group of funerary papyri which contain parts of burial rites.

Tradition, workshops and individual choice

Whatever choices were made from this wide range of possibilities, they were not determined only by cost, for there was room for personal preference. However crude one might find the texts on the three papyri, and however modest they might appear in comparison with the great contemporaneous Books of the Dead of the Late Period recension and long liturgical papyri, each of them is unique, showing its own sequence of vignettes and texts. The uniqueness of each papyrus shows that people in Late Period Egypt, whose knowledge of religious literature was rather restricted, did spend time considering what outer form, texts and images should be chosen for a funerary papyrus.

It is not known to what extent the owners of the papyri, members of their family, scribes, and even their superiors were involved in these decisions. The fact that the outer form of all papyri—‘classic’ Book of the Dead layout—is virtually identical makes it probable that the workshop where they were produced had at least one model to offer. It seems reasonable to imagine a sort of catalogue of texts which the scribes had at their disposal, and from which customers could choose, because there must have been master copies of the texts. Master copies of the texts could have included titles or other indications of their purpose that have not been copied onto the papyri, which was a common way of shortening texts (Kockelmann

36 E.g., the frequent phrase iy nTr – zl-ti found in various rituals (see references in Backes 2009b, 47). On short captions on tomb walls that point to longer texts on papyri, focussing on examples from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, see Morenz 1996, 60–62.

37 On these and their double function—recitation and eternalising rites—see Smith 2009, 212, and texts 11–20, 24, and 58 (Embalming Ritual, hourly vigil texts, texts for the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, glorification texts), with earlier literature to be found there.

38 See R. Lucarelli’s conclusion on the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen which in her opinion ‘is not simply a magical object made for the dead, but also a reflection of her owner’s religious experience in this world’ (Lucarelli 2006, 261). I would not go so far for the papyri discussed here, but they still testify a vivid discourse about preparation for the afterlife (see Conclusion below).

39 The texts could also be arranged in thematic groups as is the case in the much older Gardiner papyri, which are generally believed to be master copies (Gestermann 2003, especially 204 with further references).
2008: 201–202 with examples from mummy bandages). The scribes should also have been able to provide their customers with some information on texts and images if necessary.

Indeed, the choice was not made without purpose. By examining the content of the texts and the vignettes it is apparent that they comprise most of what might be called the ‘basic needs’ of the deceased:

1. To arrive in the Beyond (V 1, invocations to the West and texts around them, V 162).
2. To be justified in the judgement of the dead (V 125, BD 30B).
3. To participate in the daily cycle of the Sun-god (BD 89B, V 15, V 17).
4. To dispose of provisions (offering formulas, BD 72).
5. Protection (BD 72, Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus, Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night Bark, coming of Anubis).
6. Uniting of ba and mummy (Invocation to the Bringer of Bas; BD 89B).
7. Mobility of the ba (BD 72, BD 89B; BD 79, 80, 85, 86 in P. Aberdeen).

Missing is a direct allusion to repelling netherworldly dangers, but with this exception, all major contents one usually attributes to the Book of the Dead are covered in the three papyri.

Conclusion

The ideas presented here include elements of speculation, but as long as there are no clear statements from the Egyptians themselves about how they came to produce an individual funerary papyrus, one must rely partly on imagination. Only ‘partly,’ because even a rough view over the mass of evidence makes it clear that freedom of individual choice and variation did not mean that traditions or rules were not followed. The exact combination of textual and iconographic elements on these three papyri is indeed unique but, as noted above, most elements are attested in other sources, and those which are not express well-known ideas in different words. Together with their peculiar writing system, this shows the papyrus to have (at least) a triple function: as replacements for texts on funerary equipment; as collections of ritual spells; and as ‘classic’ Books of the Dead.

Where at first sight the standardised Late Period recension of the Book of the Dead gives an impression of greater uniformity, in reality the range of variation is as wide as it was during earlier periods of Egyptian history. The three papyri studied here add more evidence to current knowledge of how funerary papyri of Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt could look, and what factors mattered to make them such. They also show how people

40 See Bommas 2006, 14 with n. 87.
41 Compare, for example, the possible explanations for the use of Osirian liturgies in funerary papyri discussed by Smith 2009, 61–65.
42 Taking into account all sorts of funerary papyrus (and other media) found in tombs of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods and adding the different forms of (and decoration on) coffins and sarcophagi, I cannot see much less variation than during the time around late Dynasty 21 when, in S. Quirke’s words, ‘the variety of the papyri, and of decoration on the ornate wooden coffins, reaches its peak’ (Forman and Quirke 1996, 145).
who could not afford an elaborate elite burial found a way to have a wide range of aspects embodied in their funerary equipment. Evidence like this does not make it easier for us to understand what ‘the’ Book of the Dead was for ‘the’ Egyptians. Far from being the result of a profound theological discourse, it is exactly this shifting position between tradition and individual solutions which makes the three papyri considered here such valuable sources for a more substantial knowledge of religious practice in Late Period Egypt.

Bibliography


43 Without a papyrus, spells, vignettes, and even images of amulets could still be written and drawn on mummy bandages and thereby accompany the deceased. On the Book of the Dead on mummy bandages in general, see Kockelmann 2008, with 309–46 on linen amulets.


Century BC. EgUit 21. Leiden.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P. Berlin P. 3158</th>
<th>P. Aberdeen ABDUA 84023</th>
<th>P. Berlin P. 3159</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–5: Title of the Book of the Dead</td>
<td>[x+]</td>
<td>1–5: Title of the Book of the Dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–7: Invocation to the West A (16.8)</td>
<td>1–3: BD 79, end (beginning lost)</td>
<td>5–11: Firsts words of BD 1, here as an invocation to Osiris-Khontamenti, containing wishes from the offering formula to Osiris-Khontamenti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–10: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
<td>5–19: BD 80</td>
<td>12–19: Offering formula to Osiris-Khontamenti, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris and Anubis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: $\gamma n = \frac{i}{r} k = r m^{3-\gamma} hrw ib = k$</td>
<td>19–47: BD 85</td>
<td>19–29: Offering formula to Re-Horakhti and other gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–13: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td>48–68: BD 86</td>
<td>29–33: Captions to an adoration scene (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13–16: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>69–70: Invocation to the West A</td>
<td>34–38: Words by Osiris-Khontamenti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17–27: Invocation to the Bringer of Bas</td>
<td>70–73: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
<td>38–40: Coming of Anubis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28–30: Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus</td>
<td>73–74: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td>40–44: Invocation to the West B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–35: Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night-Bark</td>
<td>74–77: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>45–46: Invocation to the West A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–43: Offering formula to Re-Horakhti and other gods</td>
<td>77–84: Offering formula to Re-Horakhti and other gods</td>
<td>46–50: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49–52: Captions to an adoration scene (?)</td>
<td>86–90: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>67–79: Invocation to the Bringer of Bas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53–58: Words by Osiris-Khontamenti</td>
<td>91–101: Invocation to the Bringer of Bas</td>
<td>80–90: Invocation to the Heir of the Gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59–70: BD 89B</td>
<td>101–103: Words by Osiris-Khontamenti, containing wishes from the offering formula to Osiris-Khontamenti</td>
<td>91–92: Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night-Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71–82: BD 72, beginning</td>
<td>104–107: Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus</td>
<td>92–95: Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83–94: Invocation to the Bringer of Bas</td>
<td>107–111: Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night-Bark</td>
<td>95–96: Formula Concerning the Sons of Horus (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94–95: $\gamma n = \frac{i}{r} h n = k hr = k r m n ib = k$</td>
<td>112–118: Offering formula to Re-Horakhti and other gods</td>
<td>96–99: Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night-Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95–99: Offering formula to Osiris-Khontamenti and Ptah-Sokar-Osiris</td>
<td>119–120: Invocation to the West A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>100–101: Offering formula to Hathor</td>
<td>120–123: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
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<tr>
<td>101–105: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>123–134: BD 89B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105–107: Invocation to the West A</td>
<td>134–135: BD 72, beginning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107–110: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
<td>136–143: BD 89B, end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111–120: A sequence of wishes for the beyond (addressed to the deceased)</td>
<td>144–150: Offering formula to Osiris-Khontamenti and Ptah-Sokar-Osiris; wishes from the offering formula to Re-Horakhti and other gods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120–121: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td>150–152: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122–125: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>152–155: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125–128: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td>156–161: BD 30B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128–132: Invocation to the West B</td>
<td>162–171: Invocation to the Bringer of Bas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133–135: Invocation to the West A</td>
<td>171–172: Invocation to the West A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135–140: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
<td>172–175: Coming of the deceased as a god</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>176–182: Words by Khepri</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>182–184: Coming of Anubis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>184–186: Invocation to the West B</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sequence of texts in the three papyri.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BD 72, 89 (Backes 2009b, 34–40)</td>
<td>Coffins and sarcophagi (see above), tomb walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invocation to the Bringer of Bas (Backes 2009b, 40–43)</td>
<td>Coffins and sarcophagi (Buhl 1959, 228), mortuary liturgy (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula concerning the Sons of Horus (Backes 2009b, 43–45)</td>
<td>Sarcophagi, tomb walls, stela, mortuary liturgy (Assmann 2008, 249)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text addressed or related to the West-Goddess (Backes 2009b, 45–47, 49–50)</td>
<td>Tomb walls, sarcophagi, ‘Documents of Breathing’ (Herbin 2008, 119, “Line 5”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BD 30B (Backes 2009b, 32–34)</td>
<td>Heart scarabs (see, for example, Malaise 1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BD 30B (Backes 2009b, 32–34)</td>
<td>Stelae, coffins, sarcophagi, tomb-walls …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iy.n god YX; speeches of gods (Backes 2009b, 48–49, 54–55)</td>
<td>Coffins and sarcophagi, Osirian festivals (texts on papyri and temple walls) …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iy ntr zA-tA</td>
<td>Ritual texts for the deceased or Osiris on coffins, tomb-walls, temple walls … (Backes 2009b, 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions to adoration scenes (?) (Backes 2009b, 53)</td>
<td>Stelae, tomb walls, temples …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Texts on the three papyri with attested parallels on other media.

1 On the previously unknown ‘Coming of the Gods at the Prow of the Night Bark,’ which follows this formula on all three papyri, see Backes 2009b, 45.
2 In addition to the references given there, see also Piehl 1895, 68, text γ; von Bergmann 1883–1884, 2:12; Refai 1996, 6; von Falck and Martinssen-von Falck 2008, 93–108, especially 96–97.
3 The sentence iy.n=k or similar is a regular feature of the ‘canopic spells’, for which see Elias 1993, 516, 557–84.
Fig. 1: The judgement scene on P. Berlin P. 3158, photomontage of two photographs by Sandra Steiß, Ägyptisches Museum Berlin (see Backes 2009b, colour plates 5–6).

Fig. 2: The judgement scene on P. Aberdeen ABDUA 84023, part of a photograph by Michael Craig, University of Aberdeen, Marischal Museum (see Backes 2009b, colour plate 15).
Fig. 3: The judgement scene on P. Berlin P. 3159, part of a photograph by Sandra Steiß, Ägyptisches Museum Berlin (see Backes 2009, colour plate 22).