

The Book of the Dead of Gatseshen. Ancient Egyptian Funerary Religion in the 10th Century BC

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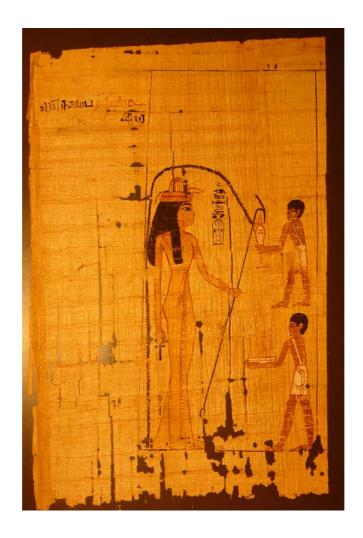
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THE BOOK OF THE DEAD OF GATSESHEN

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN FUNERARY RELIGION IN THE 10TH CENTURY BC

RITA LUCARELLI



DOCTORAL THESIS UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN 2004

The Book of the Dead of Gatseshen

Ancient Egyptian Funerary Religion in the 10th Century BC

Proefschrift

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door

Rita Lucarelli

geboren te Ostuni (BR), Italie

in 1972

Promotiecommissie

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of Rome "La Sapienza"
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Het onderzoek voor dit proefschrift is mogelijk gemaakt door een 4-jarig stipendium van de Onderzoeks School CNWS (Center of Non-Western Studies) te Leiden. Een studieverblijf van 15 dagen aan het Egyptische Museum van Turijn en aan de Universiteit van Bonn worden mogelijk gemakt door financiële ondersteuning van de Leidse Universiteit Funds (LUF).

To my parents

Preface

The so-called *Book of the Dead* is one of the highlights of ancient Egyptian funerary literature, which keeps attracting the interest of scholars of Egyptology and History of Religion. Volumes devoted to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead have been appearing since the last century, introducing the reader to the historical and religious context of use of the ancient Egyptian funerary papyri and attempting an exegesis and translation of the magical spells. Parallel to this trend of publications, in the last few decades scholarly editions of individual papyri have provided new material for study and comparison with the earlier published sources.

The present study on the papyrus of Gatseshen has drawn inspiration from both these kinds of investigations, which are devoted respectively to the interpretation and to the critical edition of the Book of the Dead. Indeed, when I first decided to begin this study on the papyrus of Gatseshen, I was confronted with two main issues. Firstly, I realised that an in-depth exegesis of the contents of a Book of the Dead papyrus could not be based on the mere translation of the spells taken individually, as they are presented for the most part of the Book of the Dead translations available for consultation. In order to understand fully the funerary beliefs underlying the texts, each spell had to be analysed within the general arrangement and thematic sequences of texts and illustrations characterising the papyrus. For this reason, the core of this thesis concerns the modalities of arangement and selection of the texts and of the vignettes in the papyrus. Secondly, the fact that Book of the Dead papyri were in use for a long span of time - from the beginning of the New Kingdom until the Roman period - makes it necessary to place and study the papyrus of Gatseshen within the specific historical and religious context to which its owner belonged, namely the 21st Dynasty State of Amon at Thebes. For this reason, the papyrus of Gatseshen has not been studied in isolation but has been taken as a case study for attempting an interpretation of the tradition of the Book of the Dead originating during the same time. Thus, the comparison of our papyrus with the other funerary manuscripts produced in Thebes in the same period has been a fundamental stage of this research.

Finally, this book arose from my personal interest in the funerary religion of ancient Egypt. It is widely known that the papyri of the Book of the Dead can provide the most valuable information on such a topic. This was at least immediately clear to me when, at the time when I was still a 1st year undergraduate student of Egyptology, I was faced for the first time with the translation of a spell from the Book of the Dead. First of all, I was struck by the fact that in a spell only few lines long a great number of names of gods, divine epithets and names of places in the netherworld occurred; secondly, the conceptions that were alluded to in every spell spoke of a various imagery of the netherworld, the study of which I have found fascinating to attempt.

This research has been possible thanks to the help and kind support of all my colleagues and friends at the Department of Egyptology of the University of Leiden and of the Research School CNWS, to whom I am deeply grateful. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. R. van Walsem for having read and discussed with me the issues concerning the iconography and the layout of the papyrus, and Dr. R. J. Demarée for his valuable help with the interpretation of some hieratic signs. My gratitude goes also to Prof. M.S.H.G. Heerma van Voss of Amsterdam University, who has always been keen to discuss with me various issues on the exegesis of the spells and illustrations of the papyrus.

I am especially indebted to Prof. A. Roccati, who read my thesis and provided me with valuable suggestions on the topic. My gratitude goes also to Prof. A. Niwiński from Warsaw University, who provided me with his private photographic material of unpublished Book of the Dead papyri of the 21st Dynasty.

The comparative study of the papyrus with the related hieratic manuscripts would not have been possible without my frequent visits to the archive of Book of the Dead manuscripts kept at the Department of Egyptology of Bonn University, where I have always found a very agreeable working environment and kind help in providing me with the information needed and photographs of the papyrological material. Therefore, I wish to express my gratitude to all the member of the Bonn team of the *Book of the Dead Project*, headed by Prof. U.Rössler-Köhler; I am particularly grateful to Dr. I. Munro for having read and discussed with me the core of my thesis, and for her constant support for my research.

During my enquiry into the production of the hieratic Book of the Dead of the 21st Dynasty, the research carried out through ancient Egyptian collections kept in the museums of Cairo, Turin and London has been fundamental and it has been possible thanks to the kind help provided for me by the staff of each museum. First of all, a special word of thanks must be reserved for the ex-director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Dr. Mamdouh Mohamed Eldamaty, for permission to photograph and study the original manuscript and other related manuscripts kept in Cairo. I owe my gratitude also to all the curators of the Egyptian Museum, and in particular to Dr. I. A. Gawad, who constantly helped me during my stay there. Furthermore, thanks are due to the Director of the Museo Egizio, Dr. A.M. Donadoni Roveri, for permission to take photographs of the 21st Dynasty papyri kept in Turin and to the curator Sara Demichelis for her kind help during my visit to Turin Museum. I wish to thank the staff of the Egyptological Department of the British Museum in London as well, in particular the director Dr. V. Davies and the curators M. Marée and Dr. R. Parkinson for their kind help during my study visit at the Museum and for providing me the necessary photographic material.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to Mrs. Helen Richardson for having patiently revised the English of this thesis.

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Summary

The papyrus of Gatseshen is an ancient Egyptian funerary papyrus of the 21st Dynasty (c. 1069-945 BC). It is about 18 m. long and contains 142 magical spells written in Hieratic. The spells are sometimes accompanied by illustrations, the so-called "vignettes". Gatseshen was a daughter of the Theban High Priest of Amon Menkheperra. Since the early publication of Naville (1914) this papyrus has been one of the major representatives of the funerary tradition of the Book of the Dead in Hieratic produced at Thebes in Upper Egypt during the 21st Dynasty. The first chapter of this thesis gives a technical description of the papyrus and an overview on the genealogy and titles of Gatseshen according to the evidence given by this papyrus and by the other items of her funerary equipment. In fact, the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen is only the most well known of a number of funerary objects belonging to the burial equipment of Gatseshen. These include another funerary papyrus, which is typical of the Amduat genre, a coffin, a shabti box, a number of shabtis and probably a wooden stela whose owner's name and titles seem to refer to our Gatseshen. An overview on these mortuary items, which is provided to the reader in an excursus at the end of the first chapter, helps to reconstruct the genealogy of the papyrus's owner and supplies more detailed information on Gatseshen's expectations for life in the Beyond.

Chapter 2 represents the central part of this study since it concerns the analysis of the textual arrangement of the document. Among the funerary papyri produced in Thebes in the same period, the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen stands out especially for the large number of texts compared to the vignettes, which are less in number although they occupy a considerable portion of the papyrus. The spells have been arranged according to an intense textual reworking and earlier sources have merged into new compositions. The result is a miscellary of texts, which pay particular attention to funerary themes like the magical protection of the body, the freedom of movement in the netherworld, the deceased's power of transformation and other similar matters concerning the needs of the deceased during her journey in the hereafter. Spells sharing the same topic have often been grouped together and can be recognised as thematic clusters throughout the papyrus. The subject matter of each spell is carefully expressed in the title, which is generally written in red ink at the beginning of a magical incantation. In the papyrus of Gatseshen the titles of the spells have often been elaborated and changed when compared to earlier versions from the New Kingdom. Therefore, special attention has been given to them by comparing the new texts with the earlier versions, in order to reveal if and how the function and interpretation of one spell has changed. The longer thematic groups of texts are named "Sequences", while shorter clusters composed by a pair of spells having a similar title or theme are indicated as "Chapter Pairing". Finally, isolated spells that do not share their theme with the spells

preceding and following, are mentioned as "Individual Texts". Sequences, Chapter Pairing and Individual Texts are all integrated with each other in a well thought-out cluster of texts describing the journey of Gatseshen in the netherworld, from her entrance into the Realm of the Dead to her final transfiguration as a glorious spirit. In this perspective the papyrus of Gatseshen can be considered a unitary composition, which supports the theory that the papyri of the Book of the Dead are not a mere collection of magical spells copied randomly one after the other. Instead, the scribe has tried to cluster the texts together according to their theme. Whether he has used one or more source books, it is clear that there has been a particular textual reworking of the spells, which have been shortened or enlarged according to the ideas and topics that he found necessary to stress. This issue has been investigated in depth by comparing the arrangement of the papyrus of Gatseshen with the similar selection of spells occurring in a group of contemporaneous manuscripts, which have been very probably produced in the same workshop. The originality of this redaction, which is representative of the 21st Dynasty at Thebes, is also confirmed by the colophon copied at the end of the papyrus, which has no parallels so far and reveal a rather negative view on the existence of evil on earth, recalling the wisdom literature of the Middle Kingdom.

Although in this papyrus the texts dominate the vignettes, the iconographic apparatus of the papyrus must not be undervalued since it complements and supplements the text of the spells and helps us to understand how, in the Book of the Dead, texts and illustrations integrate with one another. For this reason, the third chapter of the dissertation is concerned with the 44 vignettes contained in the papyrus of Gatseshen. In this chapter not only a description of each illustration has been given but the overall arrangement of the vignettes in relation to the accompanying spells has been compared with that of the other papyri belonging to the same redaction of our manuscript or presenting a similar iconographic repertory. The iconography of the papyrus also includes two main scenes copied at the beginning and at the end of the scroll. The opening scene is the so-called "Adoration of Osiris", which depicts the deceased in front of Osiris. The closing scene represents Gatseshen acquiring the status of a god and receiving offerings of clothes and fresh water. This recalls a well known typology of offering scenes occurring also on stelas and on the walls of the temples. Both the opening and closing scenes have a strong ritual character and deserve special attention, since they symbolise respectively the starting and arrival point of the deceased's journey. An excursus at the end of the third chapter discusses the issue of how to define and interpret the vignettes of the Book of the Dead, since they should not be considered subordinated to the texts but rather as central elements that interact with the texts. The vignettes are like images that can be interpreted according to a mental code of religious knowledge that is familiar to the producer and to the receiver of the manuscript.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis the relevant information concerning the group of papyri employed as parallels with the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen is provided, in order to show that the latter is representative of a wider production of funerary manuscripts originating from the same master copy or sharing some features concerning the arrangement of the texts and of the vignettes.

A conclusive overview on the patterns of textual selection in the papyrus of Gatseshen has been given in the fifth and last chapter of this thesis. The main issue is to point out the elements of novelty in the redaction of this manuscript when compared to earlier specimens of the Book of the Dead. New elements have been found especially in the titles, in the colophons and in other textual sections of the spells, including some compositions that have been copied more than once. In addition, two new spells and two new vignettes have been pointed out, which do not occur in earlier papyri of the Book of the Dead. It remains difficult to decide if these innovative parts of the papyrus are due to the scribe's personal intervention or if Gatseshen herself, as the customer for the scroll, may have also played a role in the arrangement of the papyrus. In any case these two possibilities are not exclusive, for the patterns of textual selection of the papyrus may derive from a combination of factors, including not only the personal intervention of any scribe, theologian or of the owner of the papyrus, but also the use of a master copy largely used at that time, which would explain the similarities with the papyri mentioned above and described in chapter four of this study. Finally, the texts and illustrations copied in the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen are a mirror of the funerary religion at Thebes in the 21st Dynasty. It is indeed possible to recognise a few themes that were considered central in the theocratic Theban State of Amon, like the solar-Osirian unity and the vivid representation of the regions of the underworld. Also, as is shown by the increasing popularity of the Amduat on papyrus in the 21st Dynasty, the deceased had to be provided with a good knowledge of the netherworld landscape, of which the solar boat and the journey of the sun are pregnant symbols. In fact, the solar journey is a very recurrent topic in the spells and vignettes of the papyrus. The theme of the deceased's fight against the evil and of her victory over the enemies also plays a central role in the papyrus, and it reflects not only the expectations of Gatseshen in the netherworld but also her religious hopes on earth. Therefore, this study shows that a mortuary papyrus like that of Gatseshen should not be seen exclusively as a magical object for the life in the beyond, since the funerary religion in Ancient Egypt and in particular in the 21st Dynasty, as expressed in the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen, was also a reflection of the religious experience and beliefs of people during life on earth.

Curriculum Vitae

Rita Lucarelli was born on the 23rd of August 1972 at Ostuni, Italy. From 1992 to 1996 she studied at the University "Oriental Institute" of Naples, where she has took her degree in Classical Languages and Egyptology, with a thesis entitled "Chapter 178 of the Book of the Dead". From 1996 to 1998 she followed a course leading to a Master in Oriental Archaeology at the University "La Sapienza" in Rome. In 1999 she attended the Advanced Master Program at the Research School CNWS of Leiden University, where she was granted with a nine-month scholarship by the CNWS. From 1999 to 2003 she was attached to the CNWS as AIO (Assistant in Opleiding) and has conducted research for her Ph.D. thesis on the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen in various museums in Europe and in Egypt.

Stellingen Behorend bij het proefschrift

The Book of the Dead of Gatseshen. Ancient Egyptian Funerary Religion in the 10th Century BC

I The peculiar arrangement of spells and illustrations in the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen shows that funerary texts, which scholars usually consider characterized by canonization and copying tradition, have instead a strong tendency to be "productive" by accommodating the older sources into a new context. Contra: J. Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism*, London 1985: 5f. (translated from the German *Re und Amun. Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20. Dynastie*, 1983)

II There is no specific evidence that allows us to prove that the papyri of the Book of the Dead belonging to female members of the High Priest's family like Gatseshen present any special features of arrangement and selection of texts which could indicate special attention to gender during the redaction of the funerary texts.

III The Book of the Dead of Gatseshen should not be studied as an isolated document but needs to be put into the context of the other objects of the funerary equipment of the deceased – if present - including the papyrus of the Amduat, the coffin and the shabti box. With such a wider context of funerary material as background, the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen gains credibility as an expression of the funerary religion of the period.

IV The heading ky r n, "another spell for", which occurs at the beginning of many compositions of the Book of the Dead of Gatseshen, does not necessarily imply a thematic relationship with the spell that precedes it. The use of ky may mean instead an "additional" (but distinct) spell to the previous one.

V The double or triple occurrence of one and the same spell in a papyrus of the Book of the Dead is not due to a scribal mistake. Rather it points to the will of the ancient redactor to stress certain ideas, which, as expressed in that particular composition, are copied more than once and may be distributed over more than one context in the papyrus.

VI The funerary texts of ancient Egypt can be included with the categories of magical and ritual texts at large, since they are meant as magical prescriptions for the deceased, and they include instructions for use elaborated for ensuring the efficacy of the spell, and they recall earthly magical rites.

VII Some categories of demons as described and represented in the funerary literature of ancient Egypt were not the original creation of theologians. Rather, they have been inspired by the demons of popular religion, which are mentioned in spells of everyday magic.

VIII The journey in the Netherworld as represented in the Book of the Dead, where the deceased has to face the mystery of and the inaccessibility of the regions of the beyond, resembles the feeling of estrangement which may be found in many novels of modern travel literature. This, too, is characterised by setting the travel experience in lands and among people which are stranger or unfamiliar to the traveller. Cf. T. Todorov, "Le voyage et son récit", in *Les morales de l'histoire*, Paris 1991.

IX Oral performance and written documents find a point of connection in the concept of "distance", which is physical in the case of the former (the speaker's physical distance from the listener) and temporal in the case of the latter (the author's temporal distance from the reader). Cf. J. Dagenais, "That Bothersome Residue: Toward a Theory of the Physical Text", London 1991.

X The fact that in the suburban population of modern Egypt a belief in the "magic of the Pharaoh" protecting ancient Egyptian tombs and a fear of profaning them is still alive shows that some elements of ancient Egyptian funerary magic have survived in the popular religion of Islamic Egypt outside the academic tradition.

XI The issue with the moral condemnation of female dancing in modern Arabic countries originates from the popular association of movement with morality: lightness of movement stands for lightness in morals. Cf. K. van Nieuwkerk, "Changing Image and Shifting Identities. Female Performers in Egypt", in S. Zuhur (ed.), *Images of Enchantment. Visual and Performing Arts of the Middle East*, Cairo 1998: 28.

XII The celebrity of the Italian First Minister Silvio Berlusconi as fashion *ikon*, marked off against his politically ineffective attempts to advance the economic position of Italy within the European Union, confirms the theory according to which the exclusive focus of modern cultural populism on consumption has produced a crisis of qualitative judgment in today's political life. Cf. J. McGuigan, *Cultural Populism*, London 1992: 4.