



The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The papyrus of Ani

Ani

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The Book of the Dead is an ancient Egyptian funerary text, used from the beginning of the New Kingdom (1550 BC-50 BC), consisting of a number of magic spells intended to assist a dead person's journey through the Duat, or underworld, and written by many priest over a period of about 1000 years. The corpus includes the earlier Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts, which were painted onto objects. Some of the spells were drawn from these older works and date to the 3rd millennium BC. The Book of the Dead was placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased and was most commonly written in hieroglyphic or hieratic script on a papyrus scroll, and often illustrated with vignettes depicting the deceased in their journey into the afterlife. 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. The Papyrus of Ani is a manuscript with cursive hieroglyphs and color illustrations created circa 1250 BC, in the 19th dynasty of the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt, which was acquired by the British Museum in the year 1888, and is the largest, the most perfect, the best preserved, and the best illuminated of all the papyri from the second half of the XVIIIth dynasty (1500 to 1400 BC). His rare vignettes, and hymns, and chapters, and its descriptive and introductory rubrics render it of unique importance for the study of the Book of the Dead, and it takes a high place among the authoritative texts of the Theban version of that remarkable work. Ani's exalted official position as Chancellor of the ecclesiastical revenues and endowments of Abydos and Thebes would have provided he this large selection of the finest materials.

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