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Conversations in the House of Life

A New Translation of the Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth

Richard Jasnow · Karl-Theodor Zauzich



Harrassowitz Verlag

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Richard Jasnow · Karl-Theodor Zauzich

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A New Translation of the Ancient Egyptian
Book of Thoth

2014

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

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To the Memory of our Mothers

Eleanor Jasnow (1918–2002)

Emérence Josephine Hünnerfeld, verwitwete Zauzich,
geborene Jünemann (1913–2011)
Righteous Among the Nations (2005)

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Abbreviations

Ca.	<i>circa</i> , about, approximately
Col.	column
Fig.	Figure
L.E.	Lower Egyptian
p(p).	page(s)
P.	Papyrus
U.E.	Upper Egyptian
...	damage in papyrus or unread passage
[]	restoration
⌈ ⌋	partially damaged signs
Bold	rubrics or signs written in red ink in the original papyrus are reproduced in bold font in the translation
AfR	<i>Archiv für Religionsgeschichte</i> . Stuttgart, 1999–.
BibOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i> . Leiden, 1943–.
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> . New York, 1843–.
SAK	<i>Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur</i> . Hamburg, 1974–.
Wb.	Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow. <i>Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache</i> . Seven volumes (and five volumes <i>Belegstellen</i>). Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971.

Acknowledgements

The present volume draws on the same material and research as the larger scholarly publication which we are now preparing as a supplement to our *editio princeps* of the Book of Thoth. It is therefore fitting here to acknowledge with gratitude the friends and colleagues who have aided us in our ongoing study of this composition. Without such support and encouragement we could scarcely continue work on the Book of Thoth. The manuscript witnesses to the Book of Thoth are scattered throughout the major papyrological collections of the world. Those responsible for these collections have been exceptionally generous with images, information, and hospitality. We are deeply grateful to Prof. Guido Bastianini (Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli'), Dr. Marc Etienne (Louvre), the late Prof. Traianos Gagos (University of Michigan), Prof. Todd Hickey (University of California at Berkeley), Dr. Verena Lepper (Berlin Museum), Prof. Bernhard Palme (Papyrusammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek), Dr. Richard Parkinson (British Museum), Dr. Cornelia Römer (Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek/ Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Cairo), Prof. Kim Ryholt (University of Copenhagen), and Prof. Terry Wilfong (University of Michigan).

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August, 2013

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Johns Hopkins University

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Introduction

In 2005 the authors published an edition of an Ancient Egyptian composition which we entitled, "The Book of Thoth."¹ That volume presented to the scholarly world a completely "new" Egyptian religious text. Despite all of the problems of decipherment, translation, and interpretation inherent in such a first edition, we believe the "Book of Thoth" contains such striking passages that it deserves an audience beyond that of specialists in Demotic and Late Period Egyptian Religion. In fact we consider this work one of the most important surviving monuments of Ancient Egyptian thought. We have therefore decided to offer a more "popular" edition of the Book of Thoth. However, this volume is not a mere abridgment or simplification of our scholarly publication. Rather, it incorporates the results of our continued engagement with the text. We feel confident about much in our translation, but are keenly aware that virtually every line deserves an individual article and every sentence alternative renderings. The multi-leveled character of the composition, so rich in symbolism and philosophical or theological concepts, makes the text extraordinarily difficult to translate. In fine Egyptian style, the priestly author compressed as much meaning as possible into each verse. Such Ancient Egyptian compositions as the Book of Thoth thus defy "certainty" in any obvious way. Those wishing to deal with this kind of material must accept this reality.

In this book we translate the better preserved sections of the Book of Thoth. Unfortunately, much of the Book of Thoth is fragmentary. We render or summarize (from the especially damaged beginning of the composition) such broken passages, but generally omit the indications of uncertainty included in scholarly editions. We are fully aware that many lines, particularly in the beginning, yield little obvious sense and may puzzle the non-specialist. We hope that the facing commentaries will help the patient reader follow our understanding

¹ R. Jasnow and K.-Th. Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth. A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica* (Wiesbaden, 2005). We abbreviate this volume here as *Book of Thoth*.

of such lines. Significant phrases or words do indeed provide essential clues as to the subject matter, and thus even damaged lines are crucial to obtaining an idea of the arc of the text as a whole. In some ways this volume is more of an interpretation rather than a literal translation. Gaps in our available manuscripts and textual problems preclude a consecutive translation. For the purposes of this book, we have ourselves assigned arbitrary line numbers.² These “lines” often extend beyond simple grammatical sentences, comprising, more or less, units of meaning. Some ancient scribes did in fact indicate the individual “lines” of the composition, that is, employ a stichic format. Where possible we have followed those manuscripts. Still, our line numbers should not be understood to indicate a metrical parsing of the text; they are intended principally for convenience of citation.³ We have also indicated whether the “Master” or “Disciple” is speaking, again, sometimes a subjective judgment. Similarly we have sometimes provided headings of distinct sections of the composition. Our explanatory notes are concise; they are addressed more towards the general reader than the specialist. In this vein we have added also short introductory essays concerning the gods and key subjects appearing in the Book of Thoth.

We direct the reader desiring to delve deeper into this fascinating composition to our previous publication and also to the forthcoming third volume of our scholarly edition.⁴ We will be publishing there many “new” fragments. We have incorporated information from such still unpublished fragments into this version, and ask the indulgence of our specialist colleagues in this regard. The Book of Thoth is an “on-going” project. While we think many of the main points of the Book of Thoth are clear enough at this time, it will be years before a totally reliable edition and translation of the composition can be offered.

2 A concordance between these arbitrary line numbers and the sections of the scholarly publication is on pp. 211–212.

3 In fact, lengthy sections of the Book of Thoth (e.g., lines 324–448) have a pronounced poetic character and would reward closer examination from this perspective.

4 See also the articles and books cited in the “Suggestions for Further Reading” on pp. 206–210.



Figure 1. Detail of a Demotic legal document from the second century B.C. (P. British Museum 10561). (© Trustees of the British Museum)

On the Demotic Script and Problems of Decipherment

What we call “The Book of Thoth” is in fact a composition reconstructed from many papyri stored in different museums. These papyri date from the last periods of Ancient Egyptian civilization, when the Ptolemies and Roman emperors ruled Egypt (ca. 330 B.C. to 400 A.D.). Almost all of the papyri are written in the cursive form of the Egyptian script called “Demotic.” This is the style of script that came into fashion around 700 B.C. It was especially used for documents of daily life (e.g., letters, legal contracts (see Figure 1), and accounts). The Greek historian Herodotus calls this type of Egyptian writing “the common (*demotika*) script” (Book 2: 36), and it is from him that the modern designation derives. However, from about 400 B.C. Demotic was also employed for literary texts (see Figure 2) and somewhat later for religious works such as the Book of Thoth.

A few fragments of the Book of Thoth are composed in the older and more conservative style of cursive script known as “hieratic” or “sacred (script).” Throughout Egyptian history scribes generally favored hieratic for formal religious and literary texts on papyri (see Figure 3).

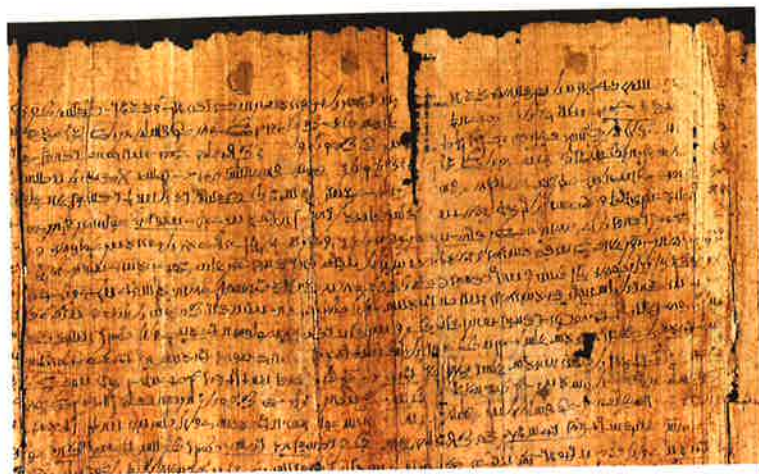






Figure 2. Detail of a Demotic literary text from the first century A.D. (The Second Tale of Setne= P. British Museum EA 10822). (© Trustees of the British Museum)

The first task of the authors was to decipher the Demotic text in which the Book of Thoth was chiefly written. Reading any ancient script is not easy, and a few words on the special challenges of Demotic are therefore appropriate.

Derived ultimately from the hieroglyphs, Demotic is a highly flowing script in which the signs, originally distinct, are often joined or linked together, much like our modern English cursive handwriting. Although originating from the pictorial hieroglyphs, it is often difficult to identify what a Demotic sign represents. With some imagination one can perhaps recognize a hieroglyphic horned viper  in its Demotic form, . It is a bit harder, however, to see the hieroglyphic newborn hartebeest  in .

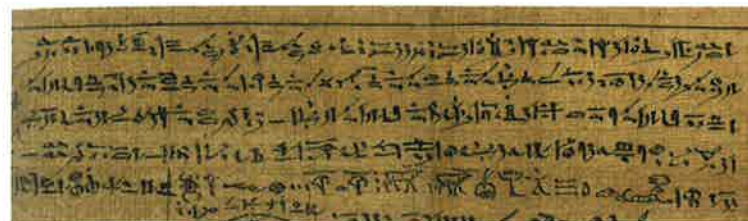
















Figure 3. Detail of a religious text in hieratic from the Ptolemaic Period (P. Salt 825). (© Trustees of the British Museum)




As a rule Demoticists do not take into account the hieroglyphic equivalences of the Demotic signs when reading their texts.

In the cursive scripts Egyptian words are generally written from right to left with a combination of “sound” signs, that is, signs with a specific sound value (e.g., the viper , Demotic  = f; the owl , Demotic  = m), and “sense” signs or determinatives. In the hieroglyphs words can also be written from left to right or in vertical columns. The basic principles of the writing system are the same for the hieroglyphs and the cursive scripts. Egyptian scribes did not indicate the vowels (a, e, i, o, u), but only the consonantal skeleton of the word. The “sound” or phonetic signs provide that consonantal skeleton. Egyptologists insert a short “e” (as in “let”) between the consonants in order to pronounce the Egyptian words. This is absolutely artificial, of course, and done solely for practical reasons. Now “sound” or phonetic signs are just one kind of hieroglyph. Almost as important are what Egyptologists generally call “sense” signs or determinatives. In the Egyptian writing systems (whether hieroglyphic, hieratic, or Demotic) the determinatives are silent signs (i.e., without a specific sound-value) indicating the broad category of meaning for the word in question.

Thus, a “seated man with hand to mouth” sign  (1 in Demotic) implies that the scribe understands the word as referring to an activity relating to the mouth (e.g.,  wenem, “to eat”), the divine determinative  (1 in Demotic) that the word is associated with notions of the divine ( Amen, the god “Amun”), the walking legs determinative  (1 in Demotic) that the word deals with motion ( per, “to go out”).


A Demoticist becomes very familiar with such common determinatives, which also function practically as “word-dividers,” as it were (The Egyptians did not insert spaces between words and had no punctuation).

Now, these determinatives are supremely important in reading any kind of Ancient Egyptian. Why should this be? Since the Egyptian scribes were only concerned with the consonants, many words had the same series of sound signs, that is, the same consonantal “skeleton.” For example, the word for “seed” or “fruit” also had the consonants p and r. It could be spelled , exactly like the verb per, “to go out,” just quoted above. However, by adding the determinative for granules or material, namely, , after the sound signs: , the Egyptian scribe would instantly see that the word for “seed” was intended, and not the verb per, “to go out,” which would have had the walking legs determinative .

Given the random nature of the preservation of texts, Demoticists generally work with papyri written by many different scribes. These scribes naturally often developed very individual hands or ways of forming signs. The Demoticist must become sensitive to the specific characteristics of each hand. The handwriting of Demotic scribes varies just as much as that of modern writers of English. Thus, that walking legs sign  may appear as  in the hand of one scribe, but as  in the hand of another scribe.

Occasionally, individual scribes develop particularly unusual forms of signs or “sign groups.” Thus, the scribe of perhaps our most important papyrus in Berlin (designated by us as B02) writes the verb


djed, “to say,”⁵ in a unique manner (e.g. B02, 4/1) in which the normally slanting upper stroke is written as a horizontal:

Djed, “to say,” in B02 



Almost all other Demotic scribes write djed, “to say,” as 

Such variant writings of signs may initially give the editor trouble in recognizing the intended word. In the case of this djed, the puzzle is not especially difficult, but sometimes it can take a long time for an editor to figure out which sign or word is meant. Nevertheless, such individual features are ultimately a great aid in identifying small fragments belonging to the same manuscript. Sadly, only seldom is a papyrus preserved intact. More often a papyrus is broken up into smaller and larger pieces. Sometimes portions of the same papyrus may therefore end up in different museums. Since, for practical reasons, museums generally put a multitude of loose fragments derived from different texts in one glass or plastic frame, Demoticists must often examine many fragments of miscellaneous papyri mounted indiscriminately together. Precisely such diagnostic features as that found in the B02 writing of djed enable the Demoticist to recognize a particular hand and thus pick out the pieces of the papyrus which interests him or her.





Several scribes of Book of Thoth manuscripts combine the older hieratic style, mentioned above, and Demotic. While not an obstacle for the editor, it is certainly a striking feature of the text, and hints at the high status of the composition. The hand of the scribe of the Louvre papyrus (designated by us as L01) well displays this mixing of styles. He freely alternates, for example, between the hieratic writing of nryt, “vulture,” and the Demotic writing:

hieratic 




Demotic 







In the first example n — is hieratic n (= hieroglyphic ) , while in the second example the scribe writes the Demotic n  . Similarly,

5 For ease of citation, Egyptologists conventionally assign a Roman letter sound value equivalent or a similarly generally accepted symbol, if no Roman letter with a similar value exists, to Egyptian hieroglyphs and Demotic signs. This is called “transliteration.” An Egyptologist would transliterate the verb “to say” as *dd*. For the purposes of this book we do not use academic transliteration, but simply spell out the words in English, in this case as *djed*.

in the first example he has the hieratic *r* (hieroglyphic ) while in the second example the Demotic equivalent  (actually an *l* sound).  is the bird determinative (= hieroglyphic ) in both examples. This sign is the same in Demotic and hieratic.

Ambiguous Signs

A big problem for Demoticists is that many Demotic signs may be read in several different ways. Depending on the context, the sign , for example, may be understood as the sound sign *s*, the man with hand to mouth determinative, or the number “2.” This ambiguity is one of the main difficulties in reading the Demotic script. Damage or a lack of parallels can lead the editor to suggest a wrong reading or miss alternatives. In our first edition we read the word group  as hes, “to praise,” which Joachim Quack corrected to *ip*, “to reckon,” in his review of our book. Now, one can in fact find examples in the Demotic dictionaries which would justify our understanding of this group as hes, “to praise,” on the basis of the form, but we nevertheless think that the evidence favors Quack’s interpretation on the basis of context. The problem is that the sign  may be read as both *ip* and hes.

Even ancient scribes occasionally had problems recognizing the word intended in their texts. The scribe of one Book of Thoth papyrus wrote  may, “lion,” in the same place where the scribe of another papyrus wrote  *ip*, “to reckon.”⁶ Now, the main difference between these two words is the determinative at the end of the word; the animal skin determinative (hieroglyphic  = Demotic ) in the first example versus the man with hand to mouth determinative  in the second. The problem is that the Demotic sign  can also be read as may, in addition to *ip* and hes. It is easy to understand how such variants between manuscripts come to pass when one understands how confusingly similar are the forms of the signs.


The aspiring Demoticist soon realizes that it is virtually impossible to produce an error-free decipherment of a difficult text. The process of “refining” an edition, that is, improving the readings, can take de-

cades and is, in one sense, a collaborative effort made by the community of specialists.

Unusual Writings of Uncommon Words

Since the Book of Thoth is a religious or theological work, it sometimes incorporates older Egyptian words not otherwise attested in their later Demotic form. Such words, that is, have only so far been found in hieroglyphs or hieratic. The Demoticist can have great difficulty in recognizing them in their “new clothing.”

Just as with a modern language like English, Egyptian words went in and out of fashion over the centuries. For example, Graeco-Roman Period Demotic typically employs different words for “dog” from those used in the earlier Pharaonic Period. We had long puzzled over a word spelled *djesem* before we realized that it was an “ancient” term for a “dog” in “modern” Demotic dress:

djesem for ancient *tjesem*, “dog,” in B02,10/9 

Here the scribe has written from right to left *dj-s-m* and concluded with the animal skin determinative.

On the History of Ancient Egyptian

Ancient Egyptian writing systems enjoyed a long life. That is, of course, one of the main attractions to learning them. Like any language, Egyptian changed through the years, and scholars traditionally divide the stages of Ancient Egyptian into:

- Old Egyptian (2600 – 2100 B.C.)
- Middle Egyptian (2100 – 1600 B.C.)
- Late Egyptian (ca. 1600 – 600 B.C.)
- Demotic (ca. 650 B.C. – 400 A.D.)
- Coptic (ca. 100 A.D. – 1100 A.D.)⁷

Both the grammar and vocabulary of these stages are distinctive, although there is natural overlap between them. Coptic is basically Ancient Egyptian written in Greek letters, with a few signs borrowed from the earlier Demotic for sounds not present in Greek. Middle

6 Book of Thoth, p. 95.

7 Based on J. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 1.

Egyptian was considered the Classical stage of the language, and priestly scribes cultivated knowledge of it through the millennia. Due to its cultural prestige, Middle Egyptian was still read and written, after a fashion, into the Roman Period, despite the fact that the spoken Egyptian language of the time was very different. Demotic reflected more closely the colloquial language of the Graeco-Roman Period. The sophisticated author of the Book of Thoth was almost certainly well versed in the Middle Egyptian written and spoken two thousand years before his time. This means that he occasionally employs very archaic words in his Demotic text, as in that word for “dog” mentioned above. The artful use of ancient words or grammatical constructions may have impressed the scribe’s colleagues, but they make life hard for the modern Demoticist.

As is the case with modern languages (cf. in English, the verb “be” and the insect “bee”), many Ancient Egyptian words sounded alike. Encouraged, no doubt, by the fact that vowels were scarcely indicated in the script, only consonants, Demotic scribes often wrote an old rare word by means of a similar-sounding more familiar one. The fact that the more common word has a completely different meaning apparently mattered little to the scribe. Demoticists call such spellings “unorthographic” writings. Thus, the word *sip*, “to inspect,” an ancient word scarcely found in the Graeco-Roman Period, may be written with the very common word *sep*, “remainder,” in the Book of Thoth. Such unorthographic writings or spellings cause headaches for the Demoticist, and provide much room for debate by scholars with different opinions.

Now the reader understands, we hope, the challenges of editing a composition such as the Book of Thoth. We have spoken here only of the obstacles in the reading of the Demotic script, and have refrained from emphasizing that the papyri themselves are often terribly fragmentary and abraded. The poor Demoticist must often long puzzle over only half of a word or a broken single sign. But ... enough self-pity.

History of Work on the Book of Thoth

While a few earlier scholars had cited individual words from the Book of Thoth or may have seen some of the papyri preserving it, the chief witnesses and indeed the composition itself were virtually unknown

until Zauzich began to study an impressive papyrus in the Berlin Museum, P. Berlin P 15531, in the 1960s.

This was the first manuscript containing the composition with which we were acquainted. For ease of reference in preparing the first edition we labeled the numerous papyri with abbreviations, chiefly according to location, i.e., B for “Berlin,” C for “Copenhagen,” and so on. We designated P. Berlin P 15531 as B02. Of course, the small size of many pieces and similarities in handwriting make it sometimes difficult to decide whether a given fragment represents a separate “manuscript” or should be associated with another fragment. Most of the papyri preserving the Book of Thoth come from two towns, Dime (also called Soknopaiou Nesos) and Tebtunis (see Figure 4). Both were located in the Fayum, a sort of oasis southwest of modern Cairo. They date from about the first century B.C. through the Second Century A.D.

In 1989 Zauzich invited Jasnow to collaborate on the research project. They presented a paper on the Book of Thoth in 1995 at the International Congress of Egyptology in Cambridge, and, as mentioned, the first edition itself appeared in 2005. There have been several, in part quite extensive, reviews of the publication.⁸ We have gladly incorporated many, if not all, of the corrections and suggestions found in these reviews.⁹

We had begun with the long above-mentioned Berlin papyrus B02 (= P. Berlin P 15531 [see Figure 5]). Although relatively well preserved, there were still frustrating problems of decipherment of this scribe’s hand. It was therefore a great event when Jasnow recognized that another long papyrus, previously published, but scarcely translated or studied, was a parallel manuscript of the Book of Thoth. This papyrus we call L01 (= P. Louvre E 10488), since it is chiefly preserved in the Louvre. We later saw that another impressive Berlin papyrus, B04

8 See the articles and reviews cited in “Suggestions for Further Reading” on pp. 206–210.

9 See the textual notes on pp. 213–216 for references to particularly important corrections and suggestions made by reviewers. Again, in the context of this semi-popular book we have not attempted to cite references for every correction which we have adopted.

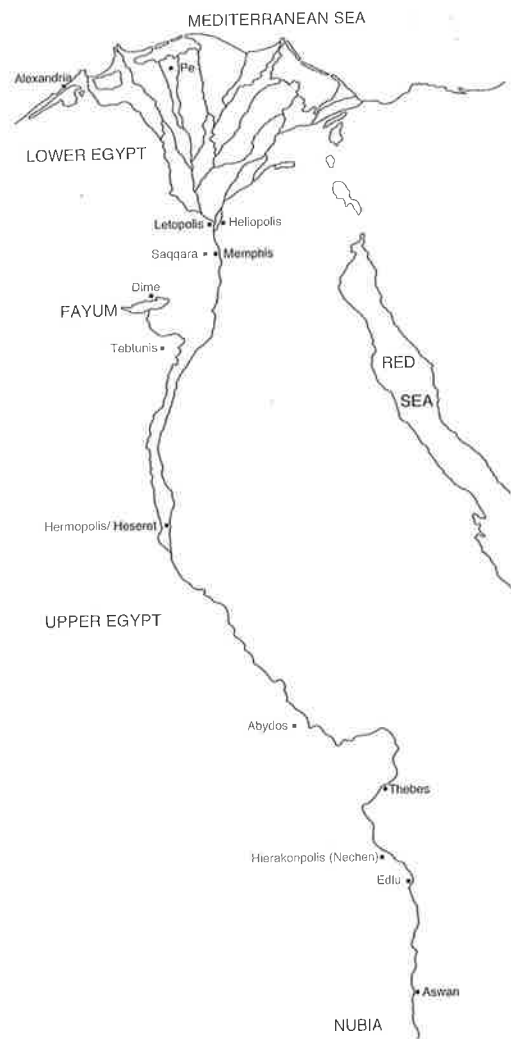


Figure 4. Map of Egypt.

(= P. Berlin P 8027), provided an additional substantial witness to the **composition**.

Now some individual lines have up to seven witnesses, an amazing total for an Egyptian text. Many literary works from Ancient Egypt are only preserved on a single papyrus. This demonstrates just how popular the **Book of Thoth** was.

Presenting the **transliteration**¹⁰ of the original in romanized letters for intelligibility we offer here an example of how these three versions interact:

B02, 9/16 *sekheger=y t n im=w nae=y (?) kheger.w yer=y ah [kh]en ta a kek*
 B04.2, 3/19 *my (?) sekheger=y ty n im=w n nae=y kheger.w yer=y [ah] khi en ta a keky*
 L01.2, 6/11 *[.....] n im=w nay kheger.w i yer [.....]*
 "May I arm myself with them, my weapons, that I may fight in the Chamber of Darkness." (= 435)

Demotic text editors use the brackets [...] to indicate that the papyrus is destroyed and signs lost. Where possible, because a parallel exists or the word is sufficiently preserved for restoration (that is, only a part of the word is lost), the editor may supply the missing transliteration.

Some of these variations in the above example may seem trivial, but others are not, and influence the translation. Whatever their level of importance, the differences between the papyri illustrate the complicated history of manuscript tradition for the Book of Thoth.

It was in fact the abundance of distinct manuscripts, with their variations and different hands (some clearer than others!), which allowed us to decipher and translate the composition. We have often observed that it can be almost impossible to decipher and translate a passage securely when we have only one version of the text.

Further fragments, some tiny and some quite large, were later identified as containing important new sections of the Book of Thoth or contributing parallels which confirm readings. Such fragments are in the collections of the Berlin Museum, the Louvre, the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection at Copenhagen, the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" in

¹⁰ See footnote 5 for a definition of "transliteration."

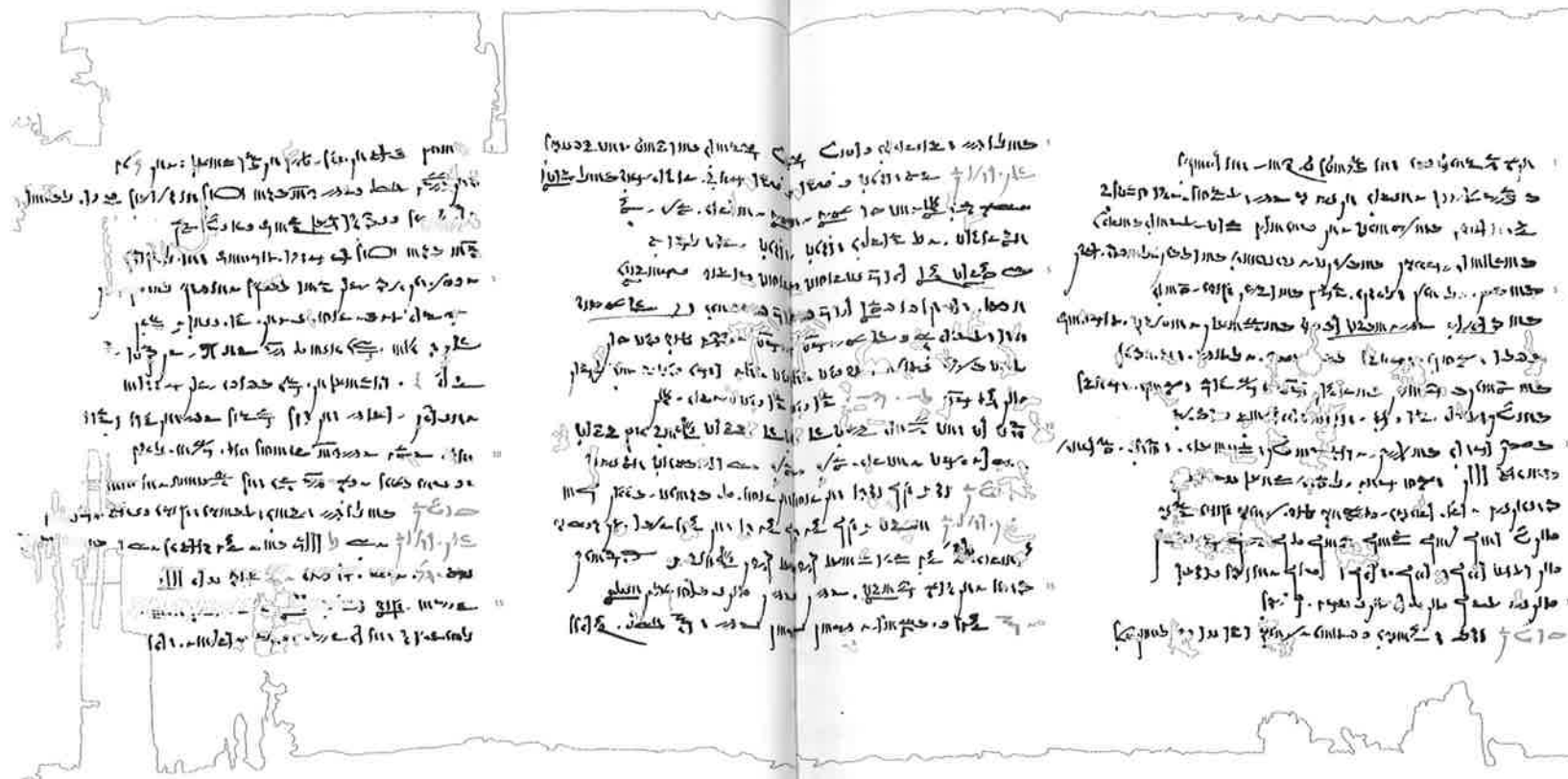


Figure 5. Facsimile of a section of P. Berlin P 15531 (= B02).

Florence, the Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, the British Museum, The Beinicke Library at Yale, the University of Michigan, and the University of California at Berkeley. As already mentioned, it was not uncommon for the same papyrus to be divided up over the years. While most of one papyrus may be found in Berlin, for example, portions of it may be in the Louvre or Vienna. This naturally complicates the study of the Book of Thoth, but

colleagues have been helpful in identifying such fragments in museums and libraries and bringing them to our attention.¹¹ This on-going process of recovery will certainly continue for many years. There are now approximately thirty manuscripts of the Book of Thoth, which was clearly a popular composition in the Graeco-Roman Period.

¹¹ We should mention here especially Joachim Quack, Kim Ryholt, and Marco Perale.



Figure 6. New fragment of the Vienna Papyrus (V01) which unites previously separated columns.

One big obstacle to understanding the Book of Thoth is that no single papyrus preserves the entire composition. There are consequently still many problems in the reconstruction of the work. Even a minute fragment can offer important readings or link previously floating pieces of the text.

A section of one broken Vienna papyrus, for example, published years ago by E.A.E. Reymond, was first thought to be two individual columns with a gap between them. Joachim Quack then acutely noted in his review of our first edition that these two columns almost certainly belonged together, that is, the two columns were in fact one. In 2008 the two authors visited again the collection at Vienna and found a tiny piece which actually joined the two sections. This proved that Quack was correct (see Figure 6).

The beginning of the Book of Thoth is especially broken. Doubtless, in the next few years scholars will begin to fill in these gaps.

Overview of the Book of Thoth

It is difficult to provide an overview of the Book of Thoth. First, the condition of the papyri often prevents connected translation, particularly in the beginning of the text. Second, the number of subjects treated is quite large. Nevertheless, there are certainly basic recurring themes and even the most damaged sections generally preserve good clues as to their subject matter.

The Book of Thoth is not a simple narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. It is rather a dialogue between a "Master" and a Disciple, and the discursive nature of the composition is determined largely by its question and answer format.¹² The designation of the "Master" is a name which we understand as Hesperet(y), "The-one-of-Hesperet,"¹³ or Hes-rekh, "The-one-who-praises-knowledge." We identify the Master with Thoth himself, but this is not certain; naturally a priest may have assumed the role of Thoth or even Imhotep, the divinized seer. The des-

12 If not quite like the Book of Thoth, one may nevertheless reasonably compare the famous Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead, which contains a series of questions and answers in an underworld dialogue, see R. Faulkner and C. Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London, 1985), p. 33.

13 "Hesperet" is the name of a sacred locality near Hermopolis, the city of Thoth.

ignation of the Disciple is Mer-rekh, "The-one-who-loves-knowledge" or "The-one-who-wishes-to-learn." This Disciple aspires to be admitted or initiated into the House of Life, the center of priestly scholarly activity in an Egyptian temple. While there does seem to be an overall "shape" to the composition, it sometimes conveys the loose character of an encyclopedia. One basic aim of the work was evidently to present different types of useful scribal/theological/scholarly knowledge to the ambitious disciple or reader. As such, the author often moves from point to point in a fashion difficult for us to discern today.

Still, as Joachim Quack has particularly emphasized, the Book of Thoth is an initiation text, as it were, and one can consequently perceive a certain structure in the composition. Here is a very broad overview; we observe that the divisions are seldom explicitly indicated, but are based on our own interpretation:

1. Title, introduction, and first appearance of main characters. (1–20)
2. Description of the character of scribal knowledge, the hieroglyphs, the sacred texts, and the House of Life itself. The Disciple lists the duties which he will undertake to perform in the House of Life. (21–66)
3. Description of the progress of the Disciple and the nature of his quest. (67–284)
4. Intense dialogue between the Disciple and the Master on the nature of scribal training. (285–403)
5. Hymn to Imhotep recited by the Disciple. (404–413)
6. Dialogue between the Master and the Disciple focusing on entering the House of Life, but also mentioning other subjects, such as the creation of the hieroglyphs. (414–500)
7. The Disciple describes his transformation. More intensive questioning by the Master about the Disciple's knowledge of underworldly landscape and watery regions, the symbolic world or space of the House of Life. (501–519)
8. The Disciple describes denizens in the sacred landscape of the House of Life. (520–576)
9. The Disciple reaches goal of Support of Life. (577–578)

10. The Disciple describes sacred snakes and other creatures in the Field of Turquoise and other sacred localities. (579–609)
11. The Master asks the Disciple about his knowledge of certain animals and objects (= the hieroglyphs?) and (by implication) the 42 sacred places and the 42 vultures between them. The reply of the Disciple. (610–643)
12. The Master asks about and the Disciple recites the “Vulture List,” wherein each vulture and her nestling are identified with one of the 42 sacred nomes (administrative units or “states”) of Egypt. These 42 sacred places are almost certainly to be identified with the traditional 42 sacred books of the House of Life, as mentioned, for example, by the Church Father Clement of Alexandria.¹⁴ (644–688)
13. Concluding lines. (689–694)

It is not always clear where a given passage is situated in time and space. One has the impression that much of the action is set in the House of Life in connection with specific occasions or events, probably associated with the process of initiation. The constituent physical elements of the House of Life were imbued with symbolic force; the author certainly understands this institution as reflecting the underworld or, perhaps better, the divine world. The author of the Book of Thoth often employs a powerfully metaphorical and figurative language. The process of attaining mastery of scribal knowledge, for example, mirrors the deceased’s striving to attain rebirth.

The beginning of the composition sets the stage for the entire text: “[The word]s which instruct a youth to take counsel with a son of Wen-yema (= Thoth).” (1)

The first damaged column introduces several key characters, notably Osiris, the god of the dead, and Sefekhabwy, who is Seshat, the female personification of the act of writing. (2–3)

The beginning also raises topics central to the composition. Most striking is the heading or rubric: “The Ritual of Entering into the

¹⁴ See the comment to lines 637–638.

Chamber of Darkness.” (4) This almost certainly refers to the initiation of the Disciple. The Chamber of Darkness is the usual term for the House of Life in the Book of Thoth. The reader is enjoined to pay attention to the “Lords of Offerings” (9), clearly deities associated with Thoth (possibly the sacred ba-souls or the hieroglyphs themselves). The Disciple presents himself as someone who wishes to learn about and to enter the Chamber of Darkness, that is, the House of Life. (16–20)

The Master warns the Disciple about the difficulties of the Chamber of Darkness. Those approaching it must be ritually pure and ascetic. The Disciple echoes these concerns.¹⁵ (21–34)

The Disciple asserts that he will perform the various mundane manual functions expected of an assistant, such as cleaning the scribal equipment, and doing other basic duties. (35–39)

The Master asks the Disciple concerning a dream. Quite possibly the Disciple was expected to sleep in the sacred locality in the hope of having a vision of the divine relevant to the initiation process. (40–42)

The Master emphasizes the harsh demands of the scribal profession. He lists several activities expected of the scribes, such as the maintenance of the annals of the kings. The sacred rolls are described and their difficulty underscored. Some of these statements (e.g., 58), to be sure, fit the Disciple better than the Master. (50–72)

The Disciple then seems to enter the House of Life (or perhaps declares his wish to do so). He speaks about the House of Life in mythological terms, equating it, for example, with the Nun, that is, the sacred flood waters surrounding the earth. (73)

Several severely damaged passages and fragments follow in which little more can be discerned than that the Disciple questions the Master and the Master advises the Disciple. (76–86)

There is a gap of uncertain length (but probably not very long) between these beginning sections and the next continuous text.

¹⁵ In the first edition we translated the statements introducing the speech of the characters as present tenses, see our discussion of the subject in *Book of Thoth*, p. 101. Upon consideration we have now decided to render them in the past, i.e., “he said,” instead of “he says.” One still has the impression that the dialogue is conceived as taking place in a sort of timeless zone.

The following fragmentary columns do not permit a narrative reconstruction. (201–225)

When the more continuous text resumes, the Master advises the Disciple about the scribal tools and their use in the Chamber of Darkness (= House of Life). Significant is the first mention of the “scribal palette.” (226–231)

The Master emphasizes that the teachings must be held in the highest esteem, being more important than mother’s milk (if the broken passage is correctly understood). The image of the nurse appears, a figure prominent throughout the composition. (232–237)

Mythological or cultic references continue in the following broken lines. The author speaks of “ears of grain of gold” and the “Lord of Hermopolis” (= Thoth). (239–240)

These passages describe the creative aspects of writing in richly symbolic terms. The author mentions nets and hunting, while using too the figure of the ba-souls, here “the sacred rolls” or “sacred souls.” The Disciple is anxious to display his knowledge, and begins to explain the “hieroglyphic signs of Isten,” Isten being an epithet of Thoth. The images of fishing, fowling, and netting symbolize the activity of writing or reading itself. Hieroglyphs are often in the form of birds and other animals and thus control over them is expressed by fishing, hunting, and netting. (240–50)

In the following section the author continues his description of hunting and fishing. The fragmentary passage again appears to compare the act of writing to fishing and fowling. Scribal equipment may be symbolically explicated.

The broken sections after this provide tantalizing phrases, such as “Lake of Life which is before her” (probably = Shai, a form of “Seshat,” the divine personification of writing). The author refers to the “scribal palette,” “baboon,” “lapis lazuli,” “nets,” “beasts” and “birds” which “possess no herdsman.” The Disciple may address Seshat herself. (251–282)

With the statement: “I am the son of a man who ...[...]” (283), the Disciple establishes his credentials vis-à-vis the Master (“The-one-who-praises-knowledge”). The Master questions the Disciple regarding the teacher-student relationship. This sadly obscure passage preserves revealing phrases: “wise one,” “father” and “son,” “heart

and tongue,” and the “prophet.” These subjects remain important throughout the composition. (283–289)

The Master exclaims of birds and wild animals: “Is a father the one who is a guide for them or is a learned one the one who instructs? The beasts and the birds, teaching comes to them, (but) what is the book chapter which they have read? The beasts who are upon the mountain, do they not have guidance?” (290–92)

The Master’s point is that the divine creator, Thoth or Re, has provided animals with intelligence. Since the entire composition deals with sacred animals, this may be, on one level, a rhetorical justification of efforts to understand the “sacred speech” of animals, perhaps expressed through omens. However, one has the impression that the animals and objects appearing throughout the Book of Thoth can also represent the sacred hieroglyphs themselves. Their “speech” would be then the sound value which they possess.

The next much damaged section treats a quite different topic. It has the distinctive title: “The Chapter ... of the Scribal Equipment. The action which has power over it.” (293) The section may deal with the ritual connected with the offering of the scribal palette, a ceremony represented, for example, in scenes at the Temple of Edfu. Of great interest is the mention of the “sons of Wen-yema” (302), a phrase also known from Edfu as an epithet of the king (in the singular), but here possibly applied to priestly scribes; Wen-yema designates either Thoth or Imhotep. In any case, the remainder of the relevant column of the main manuscript (B01) names the “hieroglyphic signs of Isten (i.e., Thoth),” “collection of the papyrus rolls,” the “teaching,” “She who began to enchant” (= Seshat), “the treasury in/of the House of Books,” the “secret boxes,” the “craftsman,” and the “papyrus books.” Clearly, the author explicates aspects of the scribal art and the institutions connected therewith. The Master here expounds upon the excellent qualities of Thoth and the special relationship of that god with his adherents. He praises the library as a treasury. (293–308)

The Master speaks in the next lines about the scribe. He advises the Disciple on how to attain scribal success. He uses designations such as “prophet” and “craftsman,” which may denote varying levels of proficiency in the scribal arts. While many of the images and phrases in

this rather broken passage are obscure, the Master definitely praises the teaching, the benefits of which are summed up thusly: "His beloved (= the Disciple) is in total darkness. (But) the teaching will light for him a torch." (309–323)

At this point the composition becomes excellently preserved. The Master describes the successful scribe or scholar, that is, the "ideal" of the Disciple. In many ways this paragon resembles the blessed deceased. The Master recounts that he (= the Disciple?) is seeking "in the secret chambers of the Lord of Hedenu (= Thoth; the hedenu-plant is the scribal brush)." (325) The Disciple aspires to many of the same goals as those of the deceased. The scene of the action may be the Chamber of Darkness (= House of Life), but it is also probably equated with the underworld. The Disciple joins the crew of the Bark of the sun-god, Re, learns the heavenly constellations, and achieves control over his body. There may be allusions to the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, best known for being performed on the mummy in order to "activate" it. Instead of the goal being control over one's body, which is the result of that ceremony for the deceased, in the Book of Thoth the consequence is that the living Disciple gains control over a series of sacred books. He is deemed worthy of becoming an exalted "apprentice of the Majesty of Thoth." An alternative rendering for "Majesty of Thoth" is "the Servant of Thoth." In this case the "Servant" may be the seer, Imhotep. (324–38)

The Disciple then queries Thoth ("O Select of Speech") about the "claw which fastens on the tongue." He is concerned here with the implements of the scribal craft. The Disciple requests knowledge about these "tools." He asks specifically about the "nurse" who sustains or nurtures language. (339–340)

The Master describes in detail the goddess, who in L01 seems to be the divine personification of a gate. He instructs the Disciple about the proper fashion of greeting her. She resembles the formidable goddess Tefnut who gave Thoth himself so much trouble, as recounted in the Myth of the Sun's Eye (see Glossary). There are probably also allusions to the goddess Sothis (= Sirius, the Dog Star). Despite Thoth's difficult experience with the intimidating Tefnut, the Master encourages the Disciple. (341–350)

This helpful response emboldens the Disciple to inquire about the "book" or "writing" and its location. In a poetical reply the Master answers: "The book (or 'writing') is a sea," and advises the Disciple to immerse himself without hesitation. By this the Master presumably means that the Disciple should involve himself deeply in scribal activity. The author develops this image of the sea and the reeds on its shores. (351–354)

The Master then moves to a description of "the seven reeds which resemble the plow in the seven fields of 'He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands (= Thoth).'" (355) The Master presents an extended exposition on these sacred localities, the farmer, the fields, the crop, and the storerooms. Much is obscure in this section, but clearly the Master draws an analogy for the Disciple between the act of writing and cultivation of the fields, using, it seems, the fields surrounding the underworld Lake of Fire as a metaphor. The Master encourages the Disciple to persevere in his scribal efforts. The latter then expressly asks the Master to describe the "work of the fist." In reply the Master explains in detail the art of holding a brush. (355–372)

The Master advises the Disciple to learn and not to shun writing. In this spirit the Disciple asks concerning the brush, an inquiry answered by the Master with a symbolic designation of that utensil as the "at-reed of life." (373–374)

The Disciple expresses a great desire for knowledge, a request phrased in colorful imagery. The Master assents and presents a kind of short wisdom text. This contains standard advice, such as "Take counsel with the wise man!"; "Ask the one greater than yourself! Desire to listen to the voice of the wise man!" and "Take thought for tomorrow!" (375–390)

The Master concludes his "wisdom text." Thereupon the Disciple praises the Master for his advice and expresses his own hopes for what amounts almost to a spiritual rebirth. The Disciple avows his loyalty to Thoth and promises his future cultic activity on behalf of the god. (391–403)

The Disciple recites a praise of Imhotep (or Thoth?) at the festival of Imhotep. (404–413) He expresses the wish to join his entourage, become a seer, and worship Seshat, the divine personification of writing.

The Disciple aspires to personal experience and knowledge of events and phenomena associated with Thoth. (414–419)

The Disciple continues his speech of glorification. He desires to worship the god, partake in his ceremonies or processions, and acquire further familiarity with the underworld. The actions described, such as that of bowing “the shoulder under the papyrus roll of the great god” (428), reveal that the Disciple is thinking of the functions of the *khery-heb*, “the lector priest.” (420–437)

The Master then begins to narrate the creative activities of the deity (= the sun-god or Thoth as the “heart of the sun-god”). The Master vividly portrays the deeds and divine qualities of the god. He refers to the ten vultures of Upper Egypt and the nine vultures of Lower Egypt (the precise significance of these vultures is obscure). He recounts his creation of script and understanding of the language of sacred animals (perhaps meaning the hieroglyphs themselves). The Disciple joins in with praise of the deity. (438–453)

Thereupon the speaker (the Master or Disciple?) declares that an unidentified third person “will go to the House of Life.” (454) A rubric suggests that now another character or designation appears, “He-created-the-thoughts,” although this again likely refers to Thoth or the Master. There is mention of the “way of the dog,” perhaps the path leading to the Chamber of Darkness (= the House of Life). In any case, this fragmentary section almost certainly describes the physical components of the House of Life, namely, the window, lock, and gates. The composition probably deals here with the rituals connected with actually entering the House of Life. In the next sections the Disciple addresses the guardians or gatekeepers of the House of Life. The Master questions the Disciple about these guardians and the guides, as it were, who brought him to the gate. The Disciple characterizes them as the sacred animals of Thoth, namely, jackals and ibises. Questioned as to what gifts he has brought (presumably for these gatekeepers), the Disciple replies that his gift is the proper demeanor of an apprentice. There is a somewhat ironic-sounding dialogue in which the Disciple asserts that he has the “bone of a spirit” and “heart/mind of a donkey.” Clearly, spirits have no bones, while, in Egyptian tradition, donkeys are not known for their intelligence. After more questions and

answers, the Master is apparently satisfied, and declares that he will continue to instruct the Disciple before he actually enters the House of Life. (454–496)

At this point yet another designation is given to the speaker, “He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back.” This appears to be a new name for the Master or Thoth. The designation is an obscure one; it can be translated in a variety of ways. (496)

In the following column, principally preserved in L01, there is a dialogue between the Master and the Disciple (but the Master is called two different names: “He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back” and “The-One-of-Heseret”). The Master warns the Disciple not to enter the House of Life (which he calls “the divine shrine,” the “land of the divine word,” and “the landing place”) without proper preparation. The Disciple apparently assumes here the guise of a mummy and a snake. The Master questions the Disciple about his acquaintance with Thoth and funerary sacred books. The Disciple confirms his knowledge of such “prescriptions” (meaning the “funerary sacred books”) and warmly praises the efficacy of Thoth’s writings. Much is made of marsh fishing, fowling, and netting in this column. The Master asks the Disciple both about the Chamber of Darkness and about his experiences in this marshy landscape: has he, for example, “crossed their canals?” This too the Disciple confirms, adding that he has trapped birds in the locality. The marshy landscape and the hunting activities of the Disciple are all presumably to be situated symbolically within the Chamber of Darkness, that is, the House of Life. (496–518)

The Disciple then emphasizes again his knowledge of the underworld seas and the sacred bark. He significantly mentions the “Arms of Shu,” a well-attested feature at the conclusion of the *Amduat*, an important New Kingdom Underworld Book. In that composition the deceased is raised to the heavens by the “Arms of Shu” to begin once more the cycle of life. The Disciple avows that he has entered the “Ferry of the Snake” which may also figuratively refer to scribal activity (it is defined in the Book of Thoth as the “container of the hieroglyphic sign”). He then asserts that he has spent years in the “nether” regions, fishing and fowling. He recounts how a series of sacred animals (baboon, dog, and ibis) gave to him individual objects, all relevant to fish-

ing and fowling. Not only did these creatures present to him the items, but they also explained to him their symbolic meanings, all of which seem to be associated with scribal activity. (519–528)

The Disciple recounts fully his voyage in the underworld seas or lakes. The sailors, the mooring place, the animals which he found there, all are described. Particularly significant words and phrases are: “the landing place of life” and the “canal of life.” The total amount of time spent there is twenty years. The Disciple then requests of the Master that he elucidate the “fighting,” by which he means perhaps the act of writing itself. The Disciple proclaims that he already has some familiarity with this combat and the weapons involved. He speaks of the heavy lance (= the scribal brush?) of the underworld beings and mentions a “sympathetic confidant,” who taught him (that is, the Disciple) how to carry it. (529–540)

The Master asks the Disciple about the “gate of green stone.” The Disciple confirms that he has entered into it, and seems to emphasize the minerals and stones of the structure. Clearly, this is equated not only with the Chamber of Darkness, but also with the “Hall of the Two Truths.” This is the place of the Underworld Judgment before Osiris and the other judges of the afterlife. There are 42 ba-souls or sacred souls, understood as vultures in the Book of Thoth, connected with this Hall (and with, presumably, the Chamber of Darkness). In Egyptian iconography the ba-soul is usually shown as a human-headed bird. Having been asked by the Master, the Disciple begins to explain them all. He lists them according to groups and provides details about their function and appearance. He refers to his finding of the mother vulture and her nestlings “between the columns” of the House of Life. He declares that he has associated himself with this vulture, who is almost certainly to be understood as Seshat, the personification of writing. (541–557)

The Disciple describes this deity, and then narrates in rich detail his experience on these underworldly waters, the nine boats sailing upon the lake, the minerals, the plants, and the rowers themselves. (558–576) As throughout the Book of Thoth, there are numerous allusions to scribal activity and implements, such as papyrus and the brush. The author refers to a “Storeroom of Life,” undoubtedly the

House of Life or the library thereof. He explains, moreover, the mode of worship practiced there, conducted especially by certain divine beings (= lector priests?). These benevolent denizens of the region help the worthy dead, and perform the necessary rituals for them. The last section mentions such sacred localities as Pe and the Four Corners of Nun (the Flood, that is, the four corners of the universe).

This is manifestly a climax of the Book of Thoth, wherein the Disciple declares that he has “found her/them (= Seshat and the associated deities?) [at] the Support of Life which Isten (= Thoth) established.” (577) The following passages are too destroyed for consecutive translation, but the Disciple seemingly continues the first person description of a watery region and then a “Field of Turquoise.” This field is populated by a variety of snakes and bulls. (578–598)

We now come to a very obscure section, wherein the Disciple is still speaking, declaring that he wishes to “kiss the earth for the gods of the House of Life and place myself upon the path of their forms.” The Disciple here thus emphasizes that he wishes to pay his respects to the deities of the House of Life and be counted among the members of that august institution. (599–609)

The Master queries the Disciple about his knowledge of various animals (e.g., lions, dogs, jackals, and bulls) and objects (e.g. swords and lances). (610–617) These too are probably symbolic representatives of the hieroglyphs themselves. The Master is testing the Disciple about his familiarity with the hieroglyphs and with the act of writing.

In the next section the Disciple strongly asserts his personal knowledge of various potent religious episodes. (618–636) He offers three statements describing Horus defeating in turn the turtle, the oryx, and the hippopotamus (symbolic of Apophis and Seth). These statements reflect an association with the theology of the Temple of Edfu in the Book of Thoth, a connection also evident in other passages and phrases. The Disciple declares that he has personally carried out several activities pertaining to certain deities or sacred animals. He specifically names the vulture, crowns, the combat between Horus and his enemies (?), the House of Life, the “Ba-souls of Re,” the White and Red Crowns, and sacred birds, such as the kite, falcon, and ibis.

The Disciple speaks of the “42 sacred places in the House of Life.” (637–643) There are 42 vultures associated with these sacred places (perhaps the previously mentioned spaces between the columns in the House of Life?). He then moves on to the nestlings of the vultures. The Disciple elaborates at length on a mother vulture, who sits on a throne with a lion nearby.

The Master then asks the Disciple to describe these 42 vultures, which he proceeds to do. (644–645)

In the following lines (646–688), the Disciple lists the 42 nomes (= the administrative sub-units, “states,” which comprise Ancient Egypt) in sequence and a vulture with her nestling specifically associated with each. In strict geographical order a vulture and her nestling are described as doing something or being something in a manner alluding to the name or symbol of the nome in question. The author employs numerous wordplays and visual puns. This list concludes with the “total” and a reference to Re.

The Disciple then names and comments on the two most important sacred animals of Thoth, namely, the baboon (= the “sacred animal” in 691?) and ibis. The column, and possibly the entire composition (?), fittingly finishes with a praise of Thoth or his prophet. (689–694)

Main Characters, Deities, and Institutions in the Book of Thoth

We present here overviews of the most important characters, deities and institutions in the Book of Thoth. Shorter descriptions of gods and goddesses figuring less prominently in the composition are provided in the notes to the translation and the glossary.

“The-one-of-Heseret” or “The-one-who-praises-knowledge”

The Master in the Book of Thoth is most commonly designated as “The-one-of-Heseret.” Heseret is Thoth’s sacred precinct within Hermopolis (the main cult locality of Thoth; see map in figure 4) or perhaps rather its necropolis, modern Tuna el-Gebel. A variant in the manuscripts also appears, “The-one-who-praises-knowledge.” In the Demotic or hieratic scripts “The-one-of-Heseret” and “The-one-who-praises-knowledge” actually closely resemble each other, and thus such a variant is readily understandable.

“The-one-who-loves-knowledge”

The Disciple in the Book of Thoth is “The-one-who-loves-knowledge” (Egyptian *mer-rekh*). It is similar to the Greek word *philosophos* (“lover of wisdom”), i.e., “philosopher,” although one should perhaps not push too far that similarity in meaning. He both questions the Master and answers questions set by him. The “One-who-loves-knowledge” certainly seems to be a human disciple, but the name can be written with both the simple seated man determinative and even the divine determinative. Sometimes it receives no determinative at all.

THOTH

Although the ancient original title is lost, we believe Thoth is such a key figure in the composition that our designation “The Book of Thoth” is justified. For that reason we provide more detail here about Thoth than for the other deities mentioned in this work.

If not as famous as Osiris or Isis, Thoth is certainly one of the most important of the Egyptian national gods. Already in the Old Kingdom he is closely associated with Egyptian notions of wisdom (Maat in Egyptian), funerary ritual, and fundamental mythical or theological motifs. His role and character remained remarkably consistent into the Roman Period. The Greeks equated Thoth with Hermes; both gods were fantastically eloquent and often played the role of divine messenger. Indeed, as the wise Hermes Trismegistos, “Hermes-the-three-times-great,” Thoth survived the end of Ancient Egyptian Civilization, and became a cultural hero of the Renaissance (see figure 16). He is still important in contemporary mystical traditions.

There is no generally accepted etymology of his name “Thoth.”¹⁶ Similarly, there were variant stories regarding his origins or birth. In the Book of the Dead, for example, Thoth is:

16 Especially in the Late Period the Egyptians do sometimes provide etymologies or explanations for the name of Thoth. In the Esna Temple, for example, we read: “Thoth (Tehuty) came out from his heart (= the heart of Re) in a moment of bitterness (Teher), a fact which earned him his name of Thoth,” S. Sauneron, *Les Fêtes religieuses d’Esna aux derniers siècles du paganisme*, Publications de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale- Esna 5 (Cairo, 1962), pp. 266–67 (reference courtesy of Mark Smith).



Figure 7. Thoth (Detail from the Greenfield Book of the Dead Papyrus of the 21st Dynasty). (© Trustees of the British Museum)

“the son of an eggshell who came out of the two eggshells” (Book of the Dead Chapter 134)¹⁷

The most famous tale of origins associated with Thoth deals with his distinctive crown. Towards the end of the New Kingdom story of the “Contendings of Horus and Seth” an oft-quoted episode recounts how a sun disk grew out of the head of Seth, which Thoth promptly appropriated.

Egyptian gods are frequently organized in triads (father-mother-child), but Thoth does not fit easily into this pattern. Most commonly the spouse of Thoth is called Nehemetawy, but she is not a distinctive goddess, and the priests do not emphasize the connection. A son of Thoth and Nehemetawy is only rarely mentioned.

– *Thoth and Osiris*

In the myth of the murder and rebirth of Osiris, Thoth helps Isis, the bereaved widow. Thoth aids the goddess in the search for her spouse, works with her to reassemble the limbs, and uses his magical knowledge to revivify the dead god. He acts with the other allies of Osiris on his behalf.

– *Cult Centers of Thoth*

Thoth was worshipped throughout Egypt and Nubia (= modern Northern Sudan). However, his most prominent cult center is Hermopolis (the “City-of-Hermes”), located near the contemporary Egyptian city of Mallawi. The priests of his temple at Hermopolis developed one of the most elaborate Egyptian cosmogonies, based on a group of eight primeval deities (called the “Ogdoad” by Egyptologists), who have the forms of snakes and frogs. Considerable evidence survives for the priesthood of Thoth; the high priest of the deity at Hermopolis held the title “Great One of Five.” Heseret, possibly the necropolis of Hermopolis, is prominent in the Book of Thoth.

¹⁷ Faulkner and Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 123.

– The Forms of Thoth and Animals

From the earliest stages of Egyptian civilization, Thoth is shown as an ibis (or ibis-headed man) or a baboon (see Figure 7). These animals remain sacred to him into the Roman Period. Other animals, notably falcons and bulls, are also associated with Thoth. In the Late Period considerable numbers of priests and temple-workers were employed in raising sacred ibises, baboons, and falcons. Such sacred animals played an important role in the cult of Thoth, and when they died, they were carefully mummified.

– Thoth and the Moon and Stars

Thoth is closely identified with the moon. He is responsible for the regular phases of the moon. In Graeco-Roman Period inscriptions Thoth catches and protects the moon with nets. As the moon, he is a natural counterpart to the sun, Re. In this role he can also be identified with Khonsu, the moon god *par excellence*. Through these lunar aspects, Thoth invariably becomes associated with the stars and all matters of calendrical events dependent on the movement of the stars.¹⁸

– Thoth in Funerary and Underworld Traditions

As a benevolent deity, versed in writing, adept at magic, and functioning often as a messenger, Thoth understandably assumed an important role for the deceased in the Underworld. He most importantly oversees the correct procedure during the weighing of the heart episode of the Underworld Judgment (Book of the Dead Chapter 125; see Figure 8).

– Thoth as Vizier of Re

The special abilities of Thoth allowed him to execute the significant functions of chief administrator, or vizier, of the sun-god, Re (or Horus). He is the “deputy” of Re. In this post he is prominent as a judge, an activity traditionally associated with mortal viziers in Ancient Egypt. Thoth was talented as a mediator of quarrels. Thus, one of his main epithets was *wep rehwy*, “He-who-Separates-the-Two-

18 Thoth is the “Lord of Commanding” who created “day, month, and year,” see K.-Th. Zauzich, “Wer ist der ‘Herr des Befehls’ im P. Insinger 32.2?” *Enchoria* 30 (2006/2007), pp. 161–62.



Figure 8. Thoth in the Underworld Judgment (from The Book of the Dead of Ani).
(© Trustees of the British Museum)

Disputants,” that is, Horus and Seth. Thoth is also responsible for steering the bark of the sun.

– Thoth in the Myth of the Sun’s Eye

Thoth plays a central role in the important mythological tale known as the Myth of the Sun’s Eye. This “Eye” was understood as a goddess (often identified as Tefnut) in Ancient Egypt. The Eye of the Sun, having become enraged for unspecified reasons, leaves Egypt for the South. She ends up in Nubia, modern Northern Sudan. The sun-god, who naturally needs the Eye, dispatches the eloquent Thoth in the form of a small baboon (or monkey) in order to find the Eye and convince her to return to Egypt (see Figure 9). The Eye assumes the form of a lioness for most of this tale. In the fullest account of this myth (preserved in Demotic) the author clearly exploits the humorous aspects of the attempts by the small baboon (Thoth) to convince the fearsome lioness (the Eye) to return to Egypt. After numerous adventures, he succeeds in leading her back home, to general rejoicing. There is probably an astronomical background to this myth, which, in various versions, is attested from at least the New Kingdom through the Roman Period.

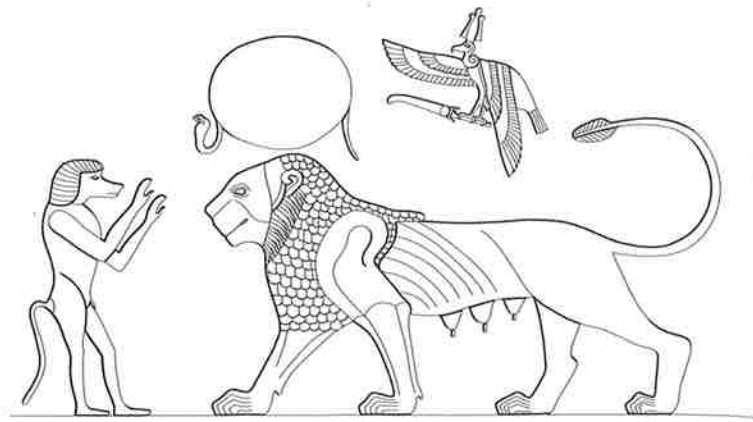


Figure 9. Thoth as a baboon before the goddess Tefnut as a lioness from the Graeco-Roman Temple of El-Dakka in Nubia. (Digital drawing of Christina Di Cerbo after G. Roeder, *Der Tempel von Dakke*, *Les temples immergés de la Nubie* [Cairo, 1930], vol. 2, pl. 115; J.-F. Champollion, *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie*, Reprint of Centre de Documentation du Monde Oriental- Genève [Geneva, 1974], vol. 1, pl. 52)

Many epithets and statements in temple texts refer to the role of Thoth in returning the Eye to the sun-god.

– Thoth and Magic

As a master of scribal traditions, Thoth is naturally a great magician, the “lord of magic” (Egyptian Heka). Being “fully equipped with magic,” Thoth provides powerful protection to gods and humans. He is particularly involved in the battle against the giant snake, Apophis, who daily seeks to prevent the sun-god, Re, from journeying through the Underworld in his sacred bark.

– Thoth and Writing

Thoth is the inventor of writing and, specifically, the hieroglyphs (the metu netjer, “words of god,” in Egyptian). In hymns he is similarly credited with distinguishing the different languages of the peoples in the world.

– Thoth and Ritual

Thoth is the cultic specialist and is thus frequently associated, in both text and image, with temple ceremony. He is often shown with the goddess, Seshat (the divine personification of writing), in Temple Foundation scenes. He also appears frequently with that goddess in reliefs representing the writing of the names of the pharaoh on the leaves of the sacred Ished-tree of Heliopolis.

– Thoth and Knowledge

The concept of “Knowledge” (Egyptian rekh) is fundamental to Egyptian scribal tradition. It naturally comprises innumerable aspects, from technical knowledge through ethical or cultural norms. Thoth represents, as it were, the summit of Knowledge.

IMHOTEP

Imhotep was a very popular divine figure in the Graeco-Roman Period (see Figure 10). He is an unusual deity since he was originally an actual historical personage, who lived during the reign of Pharaoh Djoser of the Third Dynasty (ca. 2670 B.C.). He was the architect of the great Step Pyramid of Pharaoh Djoser at Saqqara and, doubtless because of the achievement, acquired later fame as a seer. Already in the New Kingdom Imhotep was the patron of scribes. In the Graeco-Roman Period he was particularly venerated; he figures prominently in Demotic literature. He was considered a son of Ptah, the great Memphite creator god and patron of craftsmen. As a sort of intermediary between humans and divine beings, Graeco-Roman Period worshippers would address letters of supplication to Imhotep, hoping that he could solve their problems himself or act as an advocate on their behalf in the divine court. In the Book of Thoth he is expressly mentioned in association with Ptah and his great temple in Memphis. Given his special status as intermediary, his reputation as a wise man, his position as patron of scribes and craftsmen, Imhotep may play an even larger role in the Book of Thoth than we have indicated in our edition. It is possible that some epithets understood by us to refer to Thoth (e.g., Wen-yema) actually designate Imhotep.



Figure 10. Imhotep holding a papyrus roll (Late Period bronze statuette British Museum EA 40666). (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 11. Seshat from Colossus of Ramesses II in the First Court of Luxor Temple. (Photograph of Werner Forman reproduced by permission of age fotostock America Inc.)

SESHAT

Seshat is the female divine personification of “writing.” Her name means “She-who-writes.” While certainly not among the most prominent of Egyptian gods and virtually never an active figure in narrative “myths,” Seshat does appear often on temple scenes and in ritual compositions. She is represented as wearing a panther-skin, and has a very distinctive crown of seven “rosettes.” The precise nature and significance of her crown are much debated. Seshat is particularly associated with the actions of recording and registering; as already mentioned, she is represented frequently in temple foundation ceremonies

or, with Thoth, in inscribing the name of the ruling king on the leaves of the sacred Ished-tree (see Figure 11). Seshat is naturally also identified with libraries and is called "Foremost-one-of-the-Library." She is closely associated with the House of Life. She has virtually no divine family, although Thoth may be referred to as her brother or father. There is little evidence for a specific cult center of Seshat or a distinctive priesthood dedicated to her worship.

OSIRIS

Osiris is perhaps the best known and most important of all Egyptian deities. The meaning of his name is much disputed. Scholars have proposed, for example, "Seat of the Eye" and "The Mighty-one," but there is no general agreement. He is represented in mummiform, wearing the White Crown, and holding the flail and the crook. The son of the Earth (Geb) and the Sky (Nut), he is the brother and husband of Isis (see Figure 12).

The central event of Osiris's life is his murder by his own brother, Seth. The precise details of his death are left quite vague in the native Egyptian texts; the best-preserved narrative is that by the Greek writer Plutarch. He becomes the King of the Underworld and the judge of the deceased. Although murdered, Osiris is brought back to life by his wife Isis, with the magical aid of Thoth. Restored, he is able to have sex with Isis and thus father Horus even after death. This cycle of Osiris's death and rebirth became central in Egyptian thinking about mortality. Particularly the Ceremony of Opening the Mouth performed on Osiris, and on every Egyptian mummy, is fundamental to Egyptian funerary cult. Each individual identified himself or herself with the deceased, but resurrected god. There are throughout Egypt important temples and shrines dedicated to Osiris, the most extensive one being in Abydos. The cult of Osiris, with its countless symbolic possibilities, permeates Egyptian religious tradition.



Figure 12. Osiris and Isis (Detail of the Book of the Dead of Ani). (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 13. Red granite statue of Khonsu from the Temple of Karnak (reign of Tutankhamun). (Cairo Museum; reproduced by permission of age fotostock America Inc.)

KHONSU

Khonsu, whose name means “The Wanderer,” becomes particularly important in the New Kingdom; he is the moon god par excellence (see Figure 13). Khonsu appears in mummiform shape, with the lunar crescent often set upon his head. As the son of Amun and Mut, he has a large temple in Karnak in Luxor. In the Graeco-Roman Period he becomes known especially as a healing deity. He is sometimes merged with Thoth, who is also closely associated with the moon, as Khonsu-Thoth. Khonsu is venerated as an oracular and protective deity.

The House of Life or “The Chamber of Darkness”

The institution of the House of Life is often mentioned in Egyptian texts, but remains vague and difficult to define. The sources generally do not provide much information as to what was actually done within the institution. It has traditionally been described as the scriptorium attached to major temples, and there is little doubt that the scribes in the House of Life did compose and copy many different kinds of literary and religious works. It has sometimes also been portrayed as a sort of priestly “college,” but it is unlikely that the House of Life closely resembled a modern university. Still, one would not want to deny that instruction in the more advanced kinds of hieroglyphic, hieratic, and Demotic writing may have been offered within the House of Life, while there would also certainly have been a creative aspect to the production of the literature associated with the House of Life. However, as already implied above, we know little about the details of the organization of the personnel and physical layout of the House of Life. Sometimes one is inclined to understand the House of Life as representing a symbolic ideal rather than a physical entity. In addition to the practical composition and copying of texts, there was a very prominent ritual function to the House of Life, as indeed is suggested by its very name. There were daily rituals especially revolving around Osiris. This aspect of the House of Life is the focus of a famous Ptolemaic Period papyrus, P. Salt 825 in the British Museum (= BM 10051). Particularly important is an illustration in P. Salt 825 of the House of Life which underscores its role as an Osirian cult place (see figure 14). This double function of the House of Life is expressed very clearly in the Book of Thoth, where both scribal activities and Osiris receive their due.

The designation “House of Life” occurs numerous times in the Book of Thoth. However, we believe that the author of the Book of Thoth often employs another name, “The Chamber of Darkness,” for the House of Life. The very word used in that name for “darkness,” *keku*, would have resonated with the Egyptian scribes, for this term is closely associated with the infernal darkness at the edge of the universe. The Chamber of Darkness in the Book of Thoth frequently projects underworldly connotations, very appropriately given the just mentioned Osirian aspects of the House of Life. Of course, one of the

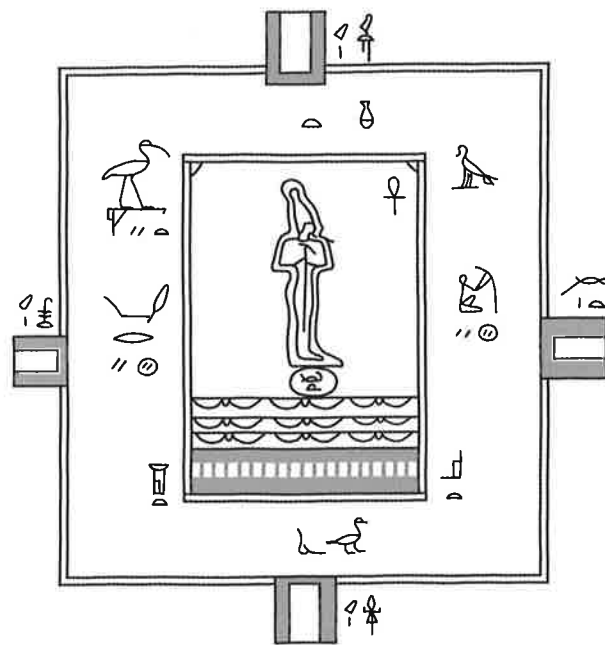


Figure 14. Illustration of the House of Life, with Osiris in the middle, from P. Salt 825. (Digital drawing of Christina Di Cerbo after A. Gardiner, "The House of Life," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 [1938], p. 169)

points of a composition such as the Book of Thoth is to offer "secret" or "esoteric" alternative names to deities, persons, and objects. The Egyptians had a genius for epithets and names. Thus, "The Chamber of Darkness" would almost certainly have been the "secret" or esoteric name of the more familiar House of Life.

Scribes and Scribal Training

A very small percentage of the population (some estimate about one to two percent) in Ancient Egypt was literate. Nevertheless, writing, whether in hieroglyphic or cursive scripts, plays a very big role in

Egyptian civilization. The first examples of hieroglyphs date to about 3,200 B.C., and knowledge of the hieroglyphs and related scripts was only lost around 400 A.D. Throughout this enormous time span religious and secular texts are almost incredibly abundant, and the scribes who wrote them enjoyed a very high status within Egyptian society. There was naturally a great variety of scribes, some associated with the royal bureaucracy, others with the temples. They could be rather specialized, as, for example, the military scribes who accompanied the New Kingdom armies on their conquests in the Near East for the purpose of recording their campaigns and booty. Temple scribes too could be engaged in a wide range of duties, from keeping track of the harvest yields of temple lands through composing and copying the highly sophisticated religious compositions required by the temple cult (see Figure 15). Naturally, scribes consequently became specialists, and we must further assume there was a considerable range of expertise in the art of writing. There would certainly have been many priestly scribes of moderate abilities who could scarcely have understood the very complicated Book of Thoth. Indeed, such a composition as the Book of Thoth would have been copied, read, and discussed by a very small circle of priestly scribes, probably all of whom would have been connected with the House of Life.

We know surprisingly little about the education of scribes. While one may imagine highly organized schools attached to temples or palaces, we have in fact little evidence for such elaborate formal institutions. Of course, there were probably groups of young students learning to read and write under the supervision of an older master, and we do have copies of texts, usually on potsherds (called ostraca) which have obviously been corrected by a more experienced scribe. In the Roman Period we know that candidates for priesthood had to demonstrate the ability to read hieratic, the more formal cursive script; we have actual certificates confirming that a prospective priestly candidate has passed an exam in hieratic. Still, Egyptologists tend to think that much instruction was done informally within scribal families; the simplest case would be a father teaching his son. While the House of Life was not a "college" or school in a modern sense, it is nevertheless not unreasonable to suppose that within the House of Life a



Figure 15. Egyptian scribes at work (from the Theban Tomb of Menna). (Photograph of Katy Doyle, courtesy of Melinda Hartwig; reproduced by permission of the American Research Center in Egypt, inc. [ARCE])

master priest might have provided advanced instruction in the highest levels of Egyptian writing and literature. Certainly, the (ideal) Disciple in the Book of Thoth who is hoping to be initiated into the House of Life displays a very impressive command of not only the writing system, but of Egyptian theology in general.

The Significance of the Book of Thoth and its Place in Egyptian Tradition and Beyond

As is the case with so many Egyptian theological texts, we cannot state with certainty the purpose of the Book of Thoth and the motivation behind its composition. It has doubtless become clear to the reader, however, that we do think it a work intimately associated with the House of Life, and probably, as emphasized also by Quack, connected with the rituals of initiation into that institution. The theme of initiation in Ancient Egypt is immensely rich.¹⁹ An initiation text naturally operates on many levels. The Book of Thoth may well allude to or mention actual episodes in the initiation process of a priestly scribe into the House of Life. It does at many points seem to refer to actions performed, for example, at the entry of the House of Life or within the physical structure itself. The clear indication of speakers and the dialogue format suggest that it could even have been “performed” as a kind of sacred “drama.” Moreover, the composition contains an enormous amount of information about the theology associated with the House of Life. This is to be expected, of course, for an initiation text. The Book of Thoth provides very rich insight into Ancient Egyptian thinking about the writing system and the act of writing itself. The author of this book manifestly aimed to give to the engaged reader a deep understanding about the symbolic and religious aspects of writing within the Egyptian world view. The “true” names of the scribal palette and brushes, the pervasive bird imagery so embedded in the writing system, all of these topics and more are of intense interest to the Master and Disciple. In one sense, the very act of overcoming the difficulty of the writing system may have been considered a kind of offering of the priestly scribe to the gods; a

¹⁹ The Underworld Judgment of Book of The Dead Chapter 125 can itself be understood as a form of initiation into the afterlife, Faulkner and Andrews, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 29–34.

sacrifice of knowledge, time, dedication, and creative energy. The *tour-de-force* of the Vulture List (645–688), with its exposition of the sacred geography of all of Egypt, is an ideal climax to the entire composition, the perfect conclusion to the Book of Thoth.²⁰ After all, one of the most popular epithets of Thoth in the Graeco-Roman Period was “He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands” and by the end of the Vulture List, the Disciple has proved that he is a worthy follower of the god.

The Book of Thoth offers so much new content that it is intrinsically significant. While there are other Graeco-Roman Period texts related to the House of Life such as, for example, P. Salt 825²¹ and the Book of Fayum,²² the Book of Thoth is unique among them in the nature and variety of its material. Preserved in numerous Roman Period manuscripts, the Book of Thoth joins an ever-growing body of evidence from the latest periods of Ancient Egyptian history demonstrating the vigor and richness of Egyptian intellectual achievements even at that date.²³ Great societal changes, marked by substantial cultural interaction between Greeks and Egyptians, occurred in the Roman Period. Despite the efforts of excellent scholars, there is still much that is obscure about the character of native Egyptian religion at this time.²⁴ We will never be able to understand adequately the deep transformations taking place in Late Antiquity without a proper appreciation of late Ptolemaic and Roman Period Egyptian Religion.

20 It must be kept in mind that there are many unplaced fragments of the Book of Thoth, so it can hardly be considered certain that the Vulture List is the actual conclusion of the composition.

21 See P. Derchain, *Le Papyrus Salt 825 (B.M. 10051), rituel pour la conservation de la vie en Égypte*, Académie Royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres, Mémoires. Collection in -80. Deuxième série, Vol. 58 (Brussels, 1965).

22 H. Beinlich, *Das Buch vom Fayum. Zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 51 (Wiesbaden, 1991), pp. 124–130.

23 In this it is to be understood with other works such as the Book of the Temple, see K. Ryholt, “Late Period Literature,” in A. Lloyd (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt* (Malden, MA, 2010), vol. 2, p. 725.

24 Fortunately, more and more researchers are focusing their attention on this crucial age, see, for example, D. Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun: Egyptian Temple Construction and Theology in Roman Thebes*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth 15 (Brussels, 2012).

We quite deliberately subtitled our first edition *An Egyptian Pendant to the Classical Hermetica*. Hermetica is the traditional designation of a core group of about seventeen texts preserved in Greek and Latin, and dating to between the First and Third Centuries A.D., that is, the Roman Period.²⁵ Now, Hermes (that is, the Greek equivalent of Thoth) and other similar deities or seers (e.g., Asclepius= Imhotep) play a central role in the Hermetica. These highly philosophical treatises are generally structured as dialogues, not unlike the Book of Thoth. The subjects treated in the Hermetica range widely, but deal broadly with different aspects of sacred “Knowledge.” The Classical Hermetica proclaim on occasion their Egyptian ancestry.²⁶ While some of these compositions do indeed clearly incorporate authentic Egyptian elements and doctrines (together with material from other traditions as well),²⁷ various forms of Greek philosophy or schools of thought have a dominant role in the Classical Hermetica. For that reason, the self-proclaimed Egyptian roots have often been doubted by scholars, who see it as a literary fiction at best. While there are no obvious verbal “parallels” between the Book of Thoth and the Classical Hermetica, there are a number of points of contact or similarity.²⁸ Most obvious perhaps is the aforementioned dialogue format shared by both the Classical Hermetica and the Book of Thoth. Also striking is the fact that we have the “thrice-great” Thoth in the Book of Thoth, a parallel to Hermes Trismegistos (426) (see Figure 16). As already stated, the figure of Asclepius (= Imhotep) is quite fundamen-

25 For translations of these texts, see B. P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English Translation with notes and introduction* (Cambridge, 1992); for a fine general discussion, see G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton, 1986).

26 E.g., Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, pp. 58 and 201–202.

27 Thus, the House of Life is explicitly mentioned in one of the Hermetica, see *Book of Thoth*, p. 70. The title of one of the most famous Classical Hermetic texts is *Asclepius*. Asclepius is the Greek name of Imhotep, the seer so important also in the Book of Thoth.

28 See *Book of Thoth*, pp. 65–71. It is also interesting to see the same kinds of word plays in the Book of Thoth as are found in the Hermetica, see Jasnow, “Caught in the Web of Words—Remarks on the Imagery of Writing and Hieroglyphs in the Book of Thoth,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 47 (2011), p. 301.

tal to both the Hermetica and the Book of Thoth. Now, the study of the Book of Thoth is yet in its infancy, and it is easy to dismiss such “similarities” as insufficient to posit a meaningful relationship between the Book of Thoth and the Hermetica. Still, we feel that it is nevertheless very important that students of the Classical Hermetica not ignore such works as the Book of Thoth, virtually contemporary in date. That was the main reason for our mildly “polemical” subtitle. Both the Classical Hermetica and the Book of Thoth deal with sacred knowledge and the transmission of that knowledge, even if they treat the subject in different ways. For our part, we are confident that even if there are no simple connections between the Book of Thoth and the Classical Hermetica, specialists will ultimately discover significant associations between this indisputably Egyptian composition and its Classical colleagues.²⁹ But that is a task for the future.

²⁹ Of course, it is also of great importance to identify connections between the Book of Thoth and other Egyptian or classical religious, literary and scholarly texts, quite apart from just the Hermetica. In our opinion, much remains to be done in this regard.



Figure 16. Hermes Trismegistos from the Cathedral of Siena mosaic (fifteenth century). (Image from Wikimedia Commons)

The Book of Thoth

(rubrics or signs written in red ink in the original papyrus are reproduced in bold font in the translation)

Notes to the Translation of the Book of Thoth

1 These first lines provide the purpose of the Book of Thoth, which is to teach the “youth” how to take counsel (literally, “to question”) the Master. The translation of this line is ambiguous. One may instead render “[The word]s which cause a youth to learn and to question a son of Wen-yema.” The identity of the “son of Wen-yema” is problematic. Wen-yema has usually been equated with Thoth. The more straightforward “son of Thoth,” for example, is a designation of the ibis, the sacred bird of the god, C. Leitz (ed.), *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 115 (Leuven, 2002), vol. 6, p. 100. However, Quack suggests that Wen-yema is rather an epithet of Imhotep, a famous Ancient Egyptian sage. If Wen-yema is Thoth, then a “son of Wen-yema” is perhaps Imhotep. If a “son of Wen-yema (= Imhotep)” is to be understood, then the phrase may designate the Master in the Book of Thoth, who would presumably be a high-ranking priest in the House of Life.

2 The author of this text emphasizes the important role of Osiris Neferhotep (with the variant Naneferhotep), a form of the rejuvenated or youthful Osiris, see P. Collombert, “The Gods of Hut-Sekhem and the Seventh Nome of Upper Egypt,” in C. Eyre (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 82 (Leuven, 1998), pp. 291–92.

3 “Lords of Offerings” refers to various deities. In the Book of Thoth it may designate gods closely associated with Thoth (and the House of Life), namely, Hu (“Divine Utterance”), Sia (“Divine Insight”), Iry (“Seeing” [god]), and Sedjem (“Hearing” [god]), Leitz, *Lexikon* 3, p. 816. R. Ritner, “Setna’s Spell of Taking Security (Setna I, col. IV/31–34),” in H. Knuf, C. Leitz, and D. von Recklinghausen (eds.), *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 194 (Leuven, 2010), p. 427, observes that Nebhetepu, “Lord of Offerings/Contentment,” was also an epithet of Thoth. Shai (“She-who-has-initiated”) is a name of Seshat, the divine personification of writing.

Translation of the Book of Thoth

1 (TITLE)

**[The word]s which instruct a youth
to take counsel with a son of Wen-yema (= Thoth).**

2

[The beginning (?)] of the protection of the purity of the [Osiris]-Naneferhotep,
the great god, in every form.

3

... the offering-place of his body of the Lords of Offerings,
the offering (?) of Shai in [every] name of hers,

4 Sefekhabwy ("She-who-loosens-the-two-horns") is another epithet of Seshat. The Chamber of Darkness denotes the House of Life in the Book of Thoth. This important line thus underscores the connection between the Book of Thoth and the act of entering or being initiated into the House of Life.

5 This obscure sentence may allude to the effectiveness of the Disciple's prayers and utterances.

6 This line possibly refers to the physical layout of the House of Life. An alternative translation of the end of the line is "which knows not violence/evil." The idea would be that the walls or sides of the House of Life are magically protected from harm.

7 Again, the author may deal here with the (four) doors leading into the House of Life, a feature mentioned in other Late Period Egyptian compositions. The "divine word" is the hieroglyphs.

8 Too obscure for consecutive translation, the line probably has to do with the carrying of offerings, perhaps by the previously mentioned "servants." There is evidently a contrast made here between the "lifting high" and the "burden."

9 The Disciple is enjoined to pay attention to the above named Lords of Offerings (note on line 3).

10 The Disciple should prepare for the forthcoming experience.

11 The author refers to scribal instruction (does "it" refer to the scribal brush?), another fundamental topic for the Book of Thoth.

12 The "baby birds" (?) may denote the Disciples themselves, who "swallow" (i.e., learn) the divine instruction.

4
... before Sefekhabwy.

The Ritual of Entering into the Chamber of Darkness.

5 (MASTER)
... while they lack a son,
they give birth to ... by means of your utterance.

6
[They] will be great (in) four sides (?),
while their foundation is small of violence.

7
[They] will serve as doors,
as servants at the beginning of the divine word.

8
[Look!] They lift exceedingly high
... not ...to make them ... a burden.

9
[Who are] these Lords of Offerings?
Do you wish to hear them?
Place your ears to hear them!

10
[O one dar]k in thoughts,
lift your forehead that you may experience the taste.

11
[Let me supply] it to the fist (?).
Equip it in the place of instruction of writing.

12
... to baby birds,
while they hurry to the sacred animals,
while they swallow with their excellent mouths.

13 This may refer to the physical positioning of the Disciples during ritual ceremonies. It develops the idea of swallowing found in the previous line.

14 The line is possibly an exclamation of the celebrant. Istes is a designation of Thoth, and the "prophets of Istes" are the priestly scribes of Thoth. The son of Wen-yema may be Imhotep, the Disciple, or, perhaps, the Master (see the note on line 1). "Him" probably is Thoth. The word translated as "Joy" here can also mean "beer." Hathor, for example, can be called the "Mistress of Joy/Beer" (Leitz, *Lexikon* 4, p. 41), and perhaps the "Lord of Joy" in this line is Thoth. The puzzling phrase at the end "He said" or "He meant" may be a gloss.

15 The Disciple speaks. It may be that the Disciple has slept in the sacred precinct, the Chamber of Darkness (= House of Life), presumably in the hope of a divine vision or as part of the ceremony of entering the divine space. The ibis is, of course, Thoth himself. The translation "character" is uncertain.

16 The Disciple introduces himself and asserts his willingness to study and learn in the House of Life.

17 Dogs and jackals play an important role in the Thoth cult. Horapollon states that the scribe must learn "to bark," see Jasnow, "'Caught in the Web of Words'—Remarks on the Imagery of Writing and Hieroglyphs in the Book of Thoth," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 47 (2011), p. 316. Shai is Seshat, the personification of writing.

18 The Disciple wishes to be with the other disciples or assistants (= youths) of the Master (or Thoth).

19 The Master asks the Disciple about his identity and goal. The puzzling end of the line may mention the "fillet" and refer to a sort of "coming-of-age" ceremony, cf. E. Feucht, *Das Kind im alten Ägypten* (Frankfurt and New York, 1995), p. 243.

20 The Disciple again introduces himself, now with the name which he will bear throughout the Book of Thoth, "The-one-who-loves-knowledge." The "craft of the mouth" generally denotes magical spells. The Disciple asserts that Thoth himself (as the ibis) conducted his "coming-of-age" ceremony by tying his fillet.

21 The speaker, presumably the Disciple (although the admonition would also suit the Master), warns against entering the House of Life (= the "cavern" = the "Chamber of Darkness") insufficiently prepared. The Disciple displays his own knowledge to the Master, and, in effect, addresses the reader.

13
It is **when their feet are at their proper place**
that **they are able to drink it (wisdom) in ...**

14
O (?) **prophets of Istes, the son of Wen-yema belongs to him.**
"Lord of Joy." He said/meant.

15 (DISCIPLE)
"... **May I awaken in the Chamber of Darkness,**
the character of the Ibis leading him.

16
[I am] **the one who hears** in the Chamber of Darkness,
in the **shrines of the Spirits.**

17
[I] wish to bark among the dogs of Shai, the great one.

18
[The wish of] **my heart is that** which brought me (here).
May I be one **with the youths!**"

19 (MASTER)
"... **He said:**
"Who are you? What is that which you have sought?
Who, who is the one who created/tied your fillet?"

20 (DISCIPLE)
"**I am The-one-who-loves-knowledge,**
the one who has sought the craft of the mouth.
The Ibis is the one who bound me up that I may comprehend it.

21
Do not enter into the cavern, if you do not know its manner.
Do not draw near to the hand of the ...

22–23 The Disciple desires to participate in the service, as it were. The metal imagery emphasizes the strength and vigor of his recitation. The “you” in “barking with you” is plural, and probably refers to the group of celebrants (or the scribal deities themselves?). On the significance of barking, see the note on line 17.

24 The Disciple maintains his readiness to enter the House of Life. He possibly asserts that he has abandoned “childish things,” and is now prepared for the serious work at hand.

25 The Master declares that those smelling of myrrh are like “stinking bulls” and thus have no place in the House of Life. The author may be at least obliquely alluding to the form of Thoth as a bull, on which see M. Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir*, *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 1* (Tübingen, 2009), p. 31. On the role of such rituals as burning incense within the Hermetic tradition, see, e.g., L. Kákosy, “Hermes and Egypt,” in A. Lloyd (ed.), *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, Occasional Publications 8 (London, 1992), p. 258, who states: “Evidence suggests that, in spite of the well-known episode in *Asclepius*, where burning of incense is condemned as a sort of sacrilege, an unambiguous and general anti-ritualism was in no way characteristic of Hermetism as a whole.”

26 The Master sets strict guidelines regarding those permitted to enter the House of Life. There is a strongly ascetic coloring; for a general treatment of this subject, see R. Finn, *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2009). For an interesting example of “monastic” admonitions in Demotic, see Zauzich, “Koinobitische Regeln in Narmuthis?” *Enchoria* 34, forthcoming.

27 This poorly understood line evidently deals with the distinction between father and teacher.

28–29 The Disciple proclaims his familiarity with the “abominations” or “forbidden things” associated with the House of Life.

22
The ... stone of dolerite are they,
the throat of iron.

23
The one who ... windpipe of bronze.
Let me make a barking with you!

24
... while the excellent spirits think in my heart.
I have cast my back to the youths (?)."

25 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:
“Do you smell of myrrh?
Do not enter into the House of Life.
Stinking bulls are the ones who are in [it (?).]

26
Do you have a wife? Do you have a daughter?
You do not then have a place here (in the House of Life)!
Place your face (to it)!

27
Have you ... is it the father who has sent you
or is a teacher/teaching of a vagabond (?) suited to remove you/
cause you to fall?"

28 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
“I know the abominations which are in the Chamber of Darkness.
I come in their lack.

29
My abomination is wine.
I reject (?) the perfume of myrrh.
My clothes are worn.
I am in eagerness. ..."

30-31 A remarkable series of statements and rules for such aspiring priestly scribes. "Ibises" here apparently designates the disciples or scribes of the House of Life.

32 Seshel can mean "demons," but may denote here the whole range of creatures, presumably including unpleasant ones, represented in the hieroglyphs. The point of the passage seems to be that the serious scribe does not think about food, but only about the hieroglyphs in all their diverse forms. Compare the statements in Book of the Dead chapter 125, Faulkner and Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 33: "Your bread is the Sacred Eye, your beer is the Sacred Eye."

33 These animals represent the hieroglyphs themselves. The Disciple must live only from the study of the sacred script. Both Hoffmann and Quack have proposed "donkey," where we had read "baboon" in our first edition. The word rendered "reptiles," has a broader meaning in Egyptian, and can denote "snakes," "worms," and all sorts of creeping things.

34 The Master raises the subject of the practical duties of the Disciple in the House of Life. The snakes or other hole-dwelling animals are possibly equated here with the scribes and their students. The "cave" probably denotes the chapels or shrines of the Houses of Life, often designated the "Chamber of Darkness" in the Book of Thoth. The Disciple explicates the "mode of serving" in the next lines, which comprise his answer.

35-39 Most of these duties are clear enough, despite some obscurities of translation. However, the force of some statements, such as "I will draw near to the bed," is uncertain. To be sure, the topic of "dreams" appears in the next lines. The phrase "after them" (39) may refer to a procession.

30 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:

"The ibises who are here,
difficult is their food,
painful is their mode of life.

31

They do not sate themselves with bread.

They do not become drunk with wine.

They do **not** anoint with **unguent**.

Their **abomination** is saying a name to the bedroom (?).

32

Some seshel-animals are the ones who remain at their mouths.

Some snakes are upon the two lips.

33

Their offering is dog.

Their food is donkey.

Their fruit is the reptiles.

34

Will you be able to live with the ones who are in their cave?

What is their mode of serving?"

35 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"I will wash off the scribal jars.

I will wipe the scribal tablets (?).

I will blow off the dust from the papyrus containers.

36

I will fill the remainder.

I will light the torch,

I will prepare coal for the ...

35–39 Most of these duties are clear enough, despite some obscurities of translation. However, the force of some statements, such as “I will draw near to the bed,” is uncertain. To be sure, the topic of “dreams” appears in the next lines. The phrase “after them” (39) may refer to a procession.

40–41 The Master alludes to the idea of sleeping in the sacred precinct of the House of Life, doubtless in order to receive a dream vision. Dreams were immensely important in Egypt, as in the rest of the ancient world, see K. Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes. Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* (Swansea, 2003). The Classicist Gil Renberg is preparing two comprehensive volumes on this vast subject: “Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World” and “‘Commanded by the Gods’: Dreams and Divination in the Greco-Roman Epigraphical Record.”

42 There may be a problem in the text here, as the Master speaks twice in succession. The uncertainly translated phrase “The Bull who serves the bed ...” may refer to the bull or bovine shaped legs of Egyptian beds, although in later periods the legs are most commonly those of a lion, W. Needler, *An Egyptian Funerary Bed of the Roman Period in the Royal Ontario Museum*, Art and Archaeology Division-Occasional Paper 6 (Toronto, 1963), p. 4.

43–49 In these broken passages the Master conveys to the Disciple rather specific information regarding the deities and sacred images associated with the House of Life. Khnum was a creator god, here described as a plurality. For the “Lords of Offerings,” see the note on line 3.

37
I will **crush** the an-stone vases.
I will **tie up** the chests.
I will create ...

38
I will **receive** the **chests**.
I will **draw near to the** bed.

39
I will bring the sacred rolls (the ba-souls) to the [pa]th after them.”

40 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:
“Do you have a dream?
Behold, it is the Chamber-[of-Darkness] ...”

41 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
“Return behind me!
The sleeper (?) is placed [in the pl]ace of dreaming.”

42 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:
“The Bull who serves the bed ...”

43 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:
“O disciple of the majesty of the sacred signs,
of the Lords of Offerings!

44
(I will) ... in your own limbs, saying:
‘I will be a baboon among them.’

45
(I will bring) you before [the sacred boo]ks.
I will cause that you stand (at the front) ...

43–49 In these broken passages the Master conveys to the Disciple rather specific information regarding the deities and sacred images associated with the House of Life. Khnum was a creator god, here described as a plurality. For the “Lords of Offerings,” see the note on line 3.

50–51 The Master now emphasizes the difficulty of the writings of the House of Life. Instead of “scattering,” perhaps translate “haste (with regard to the Ones-of-the-House-of-Life).” In line 50 the author seems to assert that inattentive or careless users of the manuscripts will be punished.

52–54 The Master appears to mention recitations or prayers held at specific times of the day. The Disciple may be instructed to maintain respectful silence at the proper times. The statement regarding a “woman” is obscure. “Woman” (hemet) is an epithet of Isis, Leitz, *Lexikon* 5, p. 133, and the accusation may pertain to the murder of her husband, Osiris. With the mention of the “lifetime,” the speaker seems to shift to the topic of annals, treated in lines 55–57.

46
... this snake which ...
while he (the snake) brings a falcon ...

47
... live ... the craftsmen (?) of the House of Life,
the Khnum-builder gods ...

48
... the nurses of the divine-images (?) ...

49
... on account of a command (?) ...

50
Great is their body, it being strong, ...[...],
they punishing on account of scattering of the Ones-of-the-
House-of-Life.

51
They are difficult, namely, the writings.
Easy (?), however, is this finding of their sweetness,
they creating youthfulness upon hearts.

52
Give a hearing to my voice!
Give silence at a (specific) hour!
Hear the accusation on account of a woman (= Isis?)!

53
I will think for my part (?)
with regard to contemplating the extent of the lifetime.

54
... hurry (?) by the containers of the books.

55
[The scho]lars [of the House of Life] sit,
while a court (?) is before him.

55–56 The Master here describes the reading of Royal Annals, a genre of text closely associated with the House of Life, see D. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books*, SSEA Publication 4 (Mississauga, 1986), pp. 65–96, and especially pp. 84–85.

57 The sentence is not certainly rendered. The idea may be that the names of the pharaohs will be pronounced in chronological sequence.

58 The translation “cause to live the images of the gods” is not secure; there may be something missing between “cause to live” and “the images.” The Ennead is the group of nine gods, traditionally Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. “The Double Ennead” (= “the two great Enneads”) is a figure of speech used by the Egyptians to denote “all the gods,” E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt. The One and the Many* (Ithaca, 1982), p. 223. The identity of the “nurse of the two great Enneads” is unclear (= Seshat?).

59 The line deals with the distribution of the written sacred rites to the various temples.

60–67 This much broken passage treats the role of the scribal priests in the ritual, particularly in relationship to the king. In 66 the Disciple expresses his wish to join with the other scribal priests of the House of Life.

56
They will proclaim the royal titulary,
and they will [recount] the ones who were kings,
reign by reign.

57
And the first of the pharaohs are the ones
who (will) cause that their names be recited in this land.

58
And I will cause to live the images of the gods,
they being the nurse of the two great Enneads.

59
...
They will give the rites to the houses of the gods,

60
while their dogs and their baboons stand,
they saying a word for a short moment.

61
... of a scholar,
apart from the chief office of the King of Lower Egypt.

62
...
after many years which had gone by.

63
... millions of sons,
while hundreds of thousands of gods (?) were with a daughter.

64
...
The children of the teaching are the good herdsmen of their
bulls (?) ...

60–67 This much broken passage treats the role of the scribal priests in the ritual, particularly in relationship to the king. In 66 the Disciple expresses his wish to join with the other scribal priests of the House of Life.

67 Instead of “fist,” translate perhaps “character,” as proposed by Quack.

69 There may be a problem in the text here, since this statement is also presumably spoken by the Disciple, who is evidently responsible for the next line as well.

70–71 In this fragmentary passage the Disciple asserts his desire to participate in the worship within the House of Life. These are the divine personifications of “Utterance” (= Hu), “Insight (= Sia),” “Seeing,” and “Hearing,” mentioned above (line 3). They could also be considered aspects of Thoth himself. The author puns between uba, “butler,” and ba, “sacred book(s)” (ba-souls).

72 The “Field of the Reptiles” may be the papyrus roll or sheet itself, the “reptiles” denoting the hieroglyphs. The word rendered “reptiles,” can also denote “snakes,” “worms,” and all sorts of creeping things. The “deceased spirits” are either the sacred books, the authors of these sacred books, or the “magical” power itself of the sacred writings. The aspiring scribe is to pay attention to these compositions.

73 The Disciple asserts that he has entered the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness). The House of Life here symbolically represents a sacred landscape. The Nun is the primeval water, which plays an important role in Egyptian religion. Instead of Nun, one may understand rather Nut, the “sky.”

65

I came (?).

... the reeds being fresh (?) ...

66

They enter to the nature.

Let me become one with the assistants.

67

... fist ... the measurements ...

the spirits ... let (one) cause (that I) know them (?).

68

... his heart.

I come as a noble one.

69

I will bow down.

I will worship.

Let them furnish me with that which he would teach.”

70 (DISCIPLE)

(The-one-who-loves-knowledge), he said:

“Behold! Hu (= Divine Utterance),

Sia (= Divine Insight), Seeing, Hearing,

the butler of the place of the sacred books (ba-souls).

71

... to the Forecourt of the spirits.

Give his face to ... the baboons.

72

Let him reveal the Field of the Reptiles!

Let the eye see the deceased spirits!”

73 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

“I have entered the Chamber of Darkness at the Mountain of

... I have gone out so as to circle Nun (or Nut, the sky).”

74 The mention of a candle implies a ritual activity.

75 Wen-yema is either "Thoth" or "Imhotep"; see the note on line 1.

76-86 Instead of "field," translate perhaps "threshold."

83 Instead of "room," translate possibly "birds."

84-86 In this damaged section the Master apparently instructs the Disciple to undertake some action regarding the sacred scrolls kept in the House of Life.

201-216 Fragments of the speech of the Master.

217-225 Speech of the Disciple.

226 Since the next evident speaker is the Master in 240, these lines may rather be spoken by the Disciple, who addresses the reader or displays his own knowledge before the Master. In any case, this and the following lines may advise the aspiring student not to engage in scribal activity on a bad, that is, "inauspicious" day. As was the case for many ancient peoples, the Egyptians believed that certain days might be lucky (literally, "good") or unlucky (literally, "bad") for a person. Extensive "calendars" of such lucky and unlucky days have been preserved, see R. Wells, "Horoscopes," in D. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2001), vol. 2, p. 117.

227 This translation of nehyt is one possibility. While it may be a "protective amulet" or an object made of sycamore wood, the determinative indicates that it is a book of some kind. The water-jar is that used by the scribe. The phrase "good day" is damaged and not securely translated.

228 Seshem is also uncertain; the term perhaps denotes a sacred figurine.

229 This obscure sentence probably deals with rituals performed when first taking out or using the scribal palette. The word rendered "whips" may also mean "feathers."

74 (MASTER)
(The-one-who-praises-knowledge), he said:
"Gave to him ... out of the House of Life, the candle

75
... to the middle ...
he will lead the son of Wen-yema ... the secrets ...

76
Lines 76-86 are too broken for translation. They mention a "field," "baboons," snakes, the Khnum-gods (line 77), and a "nurse." A few interesting phrases appear, such as "take you to the excellent child." There is also reference to the "Chamber of Darkness."

A GAP IN THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

201
Lines 201-225 are too broken for translation. They mention "your tongue," "mouth," "weapons of fighting," "raising a fight," "evening to morning," "writing," "spirits," "the dead ones" and "your scribal palette." One of the speakers is "The-one-who-loves-knowledge."

226 (MASTER)
"Do not take your container of Shai (= Seshat) to the house of your doctor on your [bad day (?)]!

227
Do not touch a nehyt-book of protection upon your water-jar on your good day (?)!]

228
... Two seshem-figures serving the scribal palette with ... with its ...
... placed upon you.

229
Have you gone by(?) so as to cause that the palette appear in glory,
while the two whips (?) are at ...

230 The Disciple is to spend the night (sleeping?) in the House of Life. "Container of coal" may figuratively designate the House of Life or Chamber of Darkness. Egyptian scribes utilized carbon in the production of the black ink.

231 The aspiring disciple is warned to focus on the obligations of scribal training.

232 An admonition to the student to adhere to the Master's teaching. The translation is extremely tentative. The "custom of praising god" may denote the traditional manner of reciting or composing hymns to deities.

233 The speaker underscores the significance of the Master and his teaching vis à vis the Disciple and his fellows. Again, the translation, which follows Quack, is uncertain.

234-239 These statements emphasize figuratively the overwhelming importance of the teacher's instruction to the Disciple. They clearly describe the special role of the Master for the Disciple.

230
[If you (?)] spend the night and spend the day in the container
of coal,
you find the scribal equipment ... the Chamber of Darkness.

231
Beware! Beware between them!
Do not be weary with regard to them!
Be strong of heart ...

232
Do not ... with regard to this which you have learned
about the custom of praising god.

233
Abominate his abomination!
Love that which he loves!
... his nature with regard to your skin.

234
Who is the one who will raise you up in ...
among your assembly of people? ...

235
Attest to the sustenance which your father has made for you.
More important is that which he has taught ...

236
... the milk of your nurse and your mother ...

237
The milk can of his mouth is the breast of his tongue.
His back is a ...

238
Do not be separated from his bushes. ...
They are all ...

234-239 These statements emphasize figuratively the overwhelming importance of the teacher's instruction to the Disciple. They clearly describe the special role of the Master for the Disciple.

240 "He-hunted-the-Ba-souls" is apparently another name of the Master or Thoth. The *bas* (which we render as "ba-souls" in this volume) are the divine spirits, but may here also designate the hieroglyphs themselves. The *bas* are usually shown as human-headed birds in Egyptian iconography. "Lord of Hermopolis" is a title of Thoth; Hermopolis is the main cult city of the god. We cannot read the significant word in the middle of the line. Thoth is equated with a hunter or trapper in this passage. We may understand therefore something like: "A man of the Marshland (qebah) is the Lord of Hermopolis (= Thoth)." The prefix "man-of-x," is a common construction used for professions. "A man of bread," for example, means a "bread-seller."

241 This line, again apparently spoken by the Master, seems to describe Thoth speaking with his "noble lector priests," here perhaps representing the hieroglyphs, sacred writings, or associated scribal deities.

242 Thoth is a herdsman, and the *ba-souls* of Re are the sacred writings or hieroglyphs that fly to him, their keeper. "The Wise-One" is Thoth himself.

243 The sacred *ba-souls* are tame, as it were, and trust their keeper.

244 There are several puns or wordplays here. The word for "document" is *sesh*, but in Egyptian *sesh* also means "nest." This is followed by a pun between *djome*, "(papyrus)-book," and *djom*, "nestlings." The "shade" (translation uncertain) signifies the "protection" of Thoth.

245 There are probably also sound plays here between *wehy*, "fisherman," and *weha*, "to interpret." In any case, the Disciple states his wish to learn the scribal arts and to write hieroglyphs (expressed figuratively by the phrase "hunt his *ba-souls*"). Several words in this line can be translated in at least two different ways, i.e., "bird-netter" or "fisherman" and "praises" or "(hieroglyphic) signs." *Isten* is a designation of Thoth.

246 The net captures the statements from the mouth of the speaker in the form of written signs. Again, "He-hunted-the-Ba-souls" is the Master or Thoth.

239
Do not be weary of nursing from his sayings.
They are the ears of grain of gold."

240 (MASTER)
He-hunted-the-Ba-souls, (he said):
"He hunted the dogs of the fisherman.
A man (?) of the ... (is) the Lord of Hermopolis."

241 (MASTER)
He opened his mouth. He replied to his noble(?) lector
priests, the Lords of Offerings:

242
"The *Ba-souls* of Re, they are possessors of wings.
They fly to the Wise-One.

243
He is their herdsman who makes for them sustenance.
They are quiet so as to place themselves by him.

244
The document is a nest.
The books are its nestlings.
That is, t[hey are] in his shade (?)."

245 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"I desire to make an explanation /to be a bird-netter/fisherman
of the (hieroglyphic)-signs of *Isten*,
and I will hunt his *ba-souls*."

246 (MASTER)
He-hunted-the-Ba-souls, he said:
"Your net has caught what is upon the tongue of your mouth,
your perch (?) is upon your ...

247–249 Despite the breaks in the papyrus, the import is relatively clear. The Master advises the Disciple to study the sacred script and writings (= the birds and fish). These “abstract” animals do not perish (writings last!), and require neither food nor special care, unlike “real” animals.

250 The Master generalizes about the relationship between the herdsman (here Thoth) and his charges (the sacred rolls or hieroglyphs themselves).

251–259 In this increasingly broken passage the Disciple expresses (in 255–258) the wish to engage in “hunting” and “trapping,” that is, “writing” and “reading.”

247
Your nets have caught ... his nose,
your ... fishermen are upon it.

248
The fish and birds who enter to ...
protect me (?) his ... open the mouth.

249
Press them.
Do not weary of catching birds.
They do not eat [grain] of the storeroom.

250
They do not fear retribution in a year of misery.
They do not die in a year of [plague.]

251
Are you able to fish ...
They do not neglect you. ...
And there is no difficulty.

252
Fish catch in their hand is that which they are in,
they being caught in your net (?) ...

253
Do you go upon the way, while they are behind you?
They do not abandon you (?) ...

254
Every herdsman makes sustenance for their charge,
these are the ones who make ...”

255 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
“The net ...
Let me make one with them (?).

251–259 In this increasingly broken passage the Disciple expresses (in 255–258) the wish to engage in “hunting” and “trapping,” that is, “writing” and “reading.”

260–261 Here the Disciple seems to allude to Seshat, the female divine personification of writing, as a trapper or huntress.

256

They have hunted.

Let them place me before the trap ...

257

... my scribal palette under its perch.

Let me make ...

258

... places (?) of hunting.

I will spend tomorrow (?) ...

259

... and I ... in its openings,

let ... doors. Let ...

260

... Let ... the hearts

... her exaltations/spells in the going around of the tongue ...

261

... her sections of field overflowed ...

her ...

262

..... the ones who caused that seed grow (?) ...

263

fishing ... her warm springs (?) ... the nets ...

264

[Let them bring me between them,

the hunters with the net ...

265

He has revealed it to ...

If I do not ... to catch birds with traps ...

266 For the god Khnum, see the comment on 43–49.

267 The Master intercedes with a short statement, possibly referring to the goddess Seshat.

268–269 Again, the Disciple refers to the feminine deity, Seshat, with a series of questions about her role as a trapper or similar.

272 Lapis lazuli is generally associated with the goddess Hathor.

273 The imagery is the same as used elsewhere, but are the herdsmen here the teachers?

274 The Lake of Life is where Thoth and Anubis perform rituals to revive the dead Osiris. The speaker of these lines is obscure; the next clearly named speaker is the Disciple in line 278.

266
... **Let them make me** before Khnum (?)
... **place them!**"

267 (MASTER)
~~He-hunted-the-Ba-souls~~, **he said:**
"The ... **to bow**, she greeting (?) ..."

268 (DISCIPLE)
(~~The-one-who-loves-knowledge~~, he said:)
"Are you **the net which catches** ...
while she captures thoughts (?) ..."

269
Are you the huntress who hunts for the ...
... find the baboon which ...

270
... Ibis (?) ... in her mouth,
that which is in the mouth of her porters.

271
... elder who bows ...
It is her perch.

272
... these sacred animals who open the warehouse
... to seek its products of lapis lazuli.

273
... the great sacred ones,
these herdsmen who herd those who are not sated (?)
and those who are not drunk,
and those who are at rest (?) ...

274
... the Lake of Life which is before her,
it overflows with water/thoughts ...

279–282 The Disciple once more addresses the goddess Seshat in her aspect as a trapper.

283–284 “Son of a man” in Egyptian (since the Middle Kingdom [ca. 2100–1600 B.C.]) denotes a gentleman or a person born of elite parentage. The Disciple justifies his claim to initiation into the House of Life on the grounds that he is of good family.

275
[Consider] these wild beasts, these birds, these [reptiles],
who do not have a herdsman ...

276
Are you the one who traps them,
they being doubled (?) ... hunting ...

277
Every sort of net, their hunting ...
hunting in truth ...”

278 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
“The good net is the daughter ...
father of judging (?).

279
Are you the huntress who hunts ...
judge me!

280
Are you the netter who nets the ...
let ...

281
Are you the binder ...
prophesy ...

282
Are you the bird-netter ...

283
I am the son of a man who ...

284
I am like unto ...”

285 Here the composition is on firmer textual footing. The Master queries the Disciple regarding the nature of the teacher and teaching itself. It is the "wise one" who deserves the designation of "teacher."

286 The probable point of this line is that it is not the father, and certainly not the stick, that should be the teacher, but the "Overseer of Learning."

287 Again, the Master emphasizes that learning is difficult and painful. A "prophet" in the Book of Thoth is an advanced scribal priest.

288 The "field" is perhaps the papyrus roll itself. The "children" are the writing upon it or once more the papyrus rolls. "The field which bears its children" may also denote the school.

289 This is a problematic statement. Does the author maintain that one must be deeply motivated to learn the scribal arts?

290 The word rendered "hair-cloths" may rather mean here "nets" or "trees." The passage contrasts the father with the teacher.

291-292 In this interesting passage the Master treats the innate knowledge of animals. They do not need books and teachers, since they follow their natural instinct. Again, the author may be referring in these lines to sacred animals, but the animals possibly also symbolize the hieroglyphs themselves.

285 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-who-praises-knowledge, he said:

"Do you say 'leader' to the one who knows how to act or is a wise one the one who will instruct that which one should do?"

286

Is a father the one who prepares his son or is it compulsion of the stick?

Is the Overseer of Learning the one who instructs?

287

Suffering of heart and tongue is that which causes a prophet to come into being.

288

The field which bears its children belongs to one! Exalt the children (?)!

289

Is not a single seed-corn that which gives to it (the field) life?

A hungry man, he is the one who takes a piece (of the remainder of the harvest).

290

Who are they, the hair-cloths, the sellers (?) of true lapis lazuli? Is a father the one who is a guide for them or is a learned one the one who instructs?

291

The beasts and the birds, teaching comes to them, but what is the book chapter which they have read?

292

The beasts who are upon the mountains, do they not have guidance?

293-294 Here apparently begins a new chapter. The author seems to shift to other topics, such as that of scribal tools. He evidently deals with several subjects, and one has the impression that the background to the passage is the ritual connected with offering the scribal palette to Thoth. This ritual is represented in Graeco-Roman Period temple scenes, particularly at Edfu. However, the Master comments too in this section on Thoth, his relationship with the sun-god, and other aspects of scribal activity.

295 Perhaps this refers to Seshat.

296 Quack suggests [Djehuty], "Thoth," at the beginning of the line, which fits the following epithet *yeb en Ra*, "Heart of Re." Thoth is often called the "Heart of Re (the sun-god)."

297 The author of the Book of Thoth frequently refers to the "land of fathers," which is almost certainly a playful or unorthographic writing of the title, "Vizier," a common epithet of Thoth. "Land of fathers" is approximately *taitou* in Demotic, which sounds like *taity*, "vizier." This old word for "vizier" is rarely attested in Demotic.

298 Egyptian religious or royal texts regularly illustrate the insight of the creator god, here Thoth or Re, by emphasizing that he knows what is in the sealed egg, otherwise naturally hidden from view.

299 Again, the "field" is perhaps the papyrus roll. The "Foremost One" is presumably Thoth himself. Hesperet is the name of a sacred locality near Her-mopolis.

300 This broken sentence possibly deals with the offering rites performed for Thoth. "First," *meh-1*, is written to the left of the column. It seems to be a gloss on the composition.

301 The "Heart of Re" is Thoth.

293
The Chapter of ... the Scribal Equipment.
The action which has power over it ...

294
Would that the one who ...
be the one who prophesies the beginning of praise and exalta-
tion ...

295
... she who began to enchant ...

296
... Thoth (?), the Heart of Re, is the one who causes the knowl-
edgeable ones to know.

297
They come forth ..., it being with them,
the good office of the Vizier (= "land of fathers" = Thoth).

298
The one who put it in the womb,
he looks to the interior of the egg.

299
They ... the field ...,
while the lamp is before them,
they being a living image of the Foremost One of the Temple of
Hesperet.

300
Their product is before them through the saying of the divine,
namely, the bread and beer (?), foremost of the birds,
sustenance entirely. First

301
That in which they are, the Heart of Re,
is that which causes that they know.

302 If Wen-yema is indeed Thoth (or the divine seer Imhotep), this line proclaims that the god will bring glory to his disciples.

303-304 The meaning of these lines is that one initiated into the scribal mysteries does not easily or willingly leave them. Shai is another epithet of Seshat, the personification of writing. The word translated "persuades" is literally, "turns." We had previously translated "praises," but "hieroglyphic signs" is a preferable rendering. Isten is the epithet of Thoth. Presumably, the concluding (rhetorical) question means that his heart, i.e., his "mind," is focused upon the hieroglyphs.

305 Here the author moves to another topic. This line does not seem to be a complete sentence and may be the title or heading for the next section. The subject appears to be now the relationship of the priestly scribe and the library itself (the House of Books). The point is that the value or worth of a library is its books.

306 The hen sheta, "secret box," is a term used for a container of relics, such as the head of Osiris, J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, Études Préliminaires aux Religions orientales dans l'empire Romain 39 (Leiden, 1975), p. 222, or a sacred papyrus roll, L. Morenz, *Beiträge zur Schriftlichkeitskultur im Mittleren Reich und in der 2. Zwischenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1996), p. 146. See also *Book of Thoth*, p. 181. The "secret boxes" hold here the sacred books or similar objects. The "craftsman" would be the scribe.

307 This is a problematic line; especially uncertain is the translation "aged." Clearly paralleling the previous line, it refers to the relationship between the scribe and his books.

308 The "field" is the blank papyrus.

309 Again, the Master speaks. The papyri or the ba-souls (the "sacred books") assist the scholar, who aspires to become a prophet or a "craftsman." Once more, this "craftsman" would be the (accomplished) scribe.

310 This enigmatic statement may refer to the function of an "apprentice" as a "second body" of the scholar or teacher. This may allude to the chain of scholarly tradition, wherein the disciples keep alive the "spirit" of deceased scholars.

302
His children, his sons of Wen-yema, are the ones
whom he (Thoth) will exalt in the ...

303
As for the one whose heart Shai persuades among them
and the hieroglyphic signs of Isten enchant,

304
is it in his power to turn himself away from them?
Is (not) his heart that which is upon them?

305
A collection of the papyrus rolls, they being collected as a
teaching,
they will make a treasury of the House of Books.

306
If they reveal one of their secret boxes,
their craftsman is the one who proclaims them.

307
If an aged scribe draws near to a support,
the papyrus books are gathered by him.

308
If a scholar ascends to a field (?),
the book-rolls are spread out around him."

309 (MASTER)
He-hunted-the-Ba-souls, he said:
"Do they not serve the one who wishes to become a prophet,
that means, will he not be able to become a craftsman?"

310
The scholars who came about before,
do they not have a second body? An apprentice.

311 The Master encourages the Disciple ultimately to transmit the teaching himself. "He-who-understands-the-body" is probably the god of wisdom, Thoth. The "body" in his epithet obviously repeats the "body" mentioned in the previous line.

312 The Master begins a series of admonitions to the Disciple, outlining proper behavior for such a scribal student. Quack has suggested that "The-first-of-his-hourly-service" designates "the best (educated) of the group." "The-first-of-his-hourly-service" is an epithet of the divine seer, Amenhotep, son of Hapu.

313 Egyptian wisdom texts traditionally emphasize the importance of silence or listening (when appropriate) and rhetoric (when it is proper to speak!).

314–315 These lines are too broken for continuous translation.

316 Or perhaps "more than (through) enchanting the heart."

317 The craftsman in the Book of Thoth is the advanced scribe. The author may contrast the "strong one" with the successful scribe (= the "craftsman"). Instead of "flattering," translate possibly "annoying."

318 The masses honor the Master or accomplished scholar.

319 The Master expresses the importance of the teaching for the Disciple with this vivid image.

311
Let him act as the Overseer of Learning!
Let his mouth reveal the teaching of He-who-understands-the-body! (= Thoth)

312
Bow to the scribe!
Write a papyrus roll!
Recite a book of prayer!
Incline to the advice of The-first-of-his-hourly-service!

313
Listen to an excellent word!
Be sweet of tongue!
Be comforting to the comforting ones!

314
Be great of ... of the hieroglyphic sign!
A quiet craftsmen, strong in his right arm!

315
... one ... the ...

316
... servants of Horus who raise troops, while they act effectively.

317
They will(?) ...
they flattering the strong one,
they being bowed down to the craftsman, who has acted.

318
His ...
and myriads bow themselves down before him.

319
His beloved (= the disciple) is in total darkness.
(But) the teaching will light for him a torch.

320–321 Could “Isis who traverses eternity” be the otherwise unattested title of a **composition**? If so, the import may be that the neglectful student risks extreme **punishment**.

322 We understand this to mean “utterly” or “completely.” One may compare the German expression “auf Herz und Nieren prüfen” or, in English, Psalm 7:10: “For the righteous God trieth the heart and reins.” The “Chamber” is the House of Life. There is sound play between **keky**, “burned,” and **keky**, “kidneys.”

323 The possible mention of the “initiated ones” is intriguing.

324 Here the main Berlin Manuscript (B02) becomes securely **available**. The Master describes the arrival of the initiate Disciple into the **House of Life** (or an associated locality). The Disciple must **perform** ritual activities upon reaching the place. **Teshepes** is the name of a **fragrant** plant or tree substance used in Egyptian cult, often understood as a kind of oil, resin, although some suggest it is “cinnamon,” P. Wilson, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon: A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 78 (Leuven, 1997), pp. 1124–25.

325 In Egyptian “**receives** them” is **shepes**, which is probably a sound play with the previous **teshepes**-oil. “The one who has come” is the initiate Disciple, while the Lord of Hedenu (hedenu = “scribal brush”) is an epithet of Thoth. The “secret chambers of the Lord of Hedenu (= Thoth)” almost certainly refer to an ancient sanctuary of Thoth first appearing in the famous Tales of Westcar from the Middle Kingdom, written almost two thousand years before the Book of Thoth, see the translation of W. Simpson in W. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, 2003), p. 18, who renders “Isshrines.” As soon as the Disciple has received the candles or torches, he should explore the secret chambers of Thoth where presumably are stored the sacred books of Thoth.

326 This difficult sentence seems to relate again to the Disciple; the translation is conjectural. The first phrase, “As for the one whose heart is removed,” is especially obscure; perhaps translate rather: “May the heart recite!” In any case, the author clearly contrasts the notions of “lightness” and “heaviness.” It may mean that the search for knowledge is not for the light-hearted. We assume the author refers to a well-attested “stone,” actually a meteorite, which was venerated in the city of Letopolis in the Delta.

320
Does he abandon “Isis who traverses eternity?”
They will burn him to his bones.

321
They will make a burning upon his lips.
They will burn his limbs.

322
She will make a weakness upon his heart
... (in) the Chamber which has burned his pair of kidneys.

323
If it happens that he (the successful disciple) appears in glory
(?) with his ... ,
the initiated ones/torches ... approach before him.

324
He will put teshepes-oil after their wicks,
new cloth on their candles.

325
As soon as the one who has come receives them (the candles),
he will seek in the secret chambers of the Lord of Hedenu.

326
As for the one whose heart is removed (= the ignorant disciple),
let his lightness be removed!
It (the search for knowledge) is heavier than the stone which is
in Letopolis.

327 Here begins a series of seven similarly constructed sentences offering wishes for the Disciple in the Chamber of Darkness. The first three pertain to the wish that he be able to walk confidently in the "light of his lifetime," which accompanies him there. The next four concern the sailing on the waters of the underworld. The author here probably intends a connection between the work of the scribe in the House of Life and the imagery of these sentences. The (black) coals in line 329, for example, evoke the black ink used in writing. The phrase "light of his lifetime" is uncertainly translated. The point is evidently that the Disciple should be ready to face the challenges of entering the House of Life and the scribal duties associated therewith.

328 The author employs the traditional terminology of seafaring in representing the quest of the Disciple for scribal initiation.

329 The "Circuit" is an insecure translation; in place of "sea of (the) Circuit" render perhaps "sea of nets." The phrase may refer to the waters of the "Ocean," which the Egyptians understood to surround the earth. As already mentioned, in the Book of Thoth coal or carbon is associated with the ink used by the scribe.

330 The ba-souls and the "deceased spirits" are the sacred books. The "storeroom of the deceased spirits" and the "chapel of the ba-souls" probably designate the House of Life or the Temple Library. In the House of Life is the "effective" library ("chapel of the ba-souls"). "Effective" is also then the one who takes possession of the storeroom of deceased authors.

331 The author advises the Disciple to praise the sacred library. He emphasizes how many different epithets or names the House of Life can possess, a point amply proven by the Book of Thoth itself. Indeed, one primary purpose of the Book of Thoth was doubtless to teach aspiring students the many epithets pertaining to the scribal arts.

332 This is perhaps a reference to a ceremony or rite performed at the entrance of the House of Life. The "powerful one of the Great Mother of Writing" is presumably the name of a gate associated with Seshat, the personification of writing. The "powerful one" whom the Disciple should invoke, a thought developed later as well, is probably the name of the gate itself. "Powerful" (sekhes) is a word-play with the verb "to write" (sesh> sekh). The same epithet appears in line 341.

327
Let him prepare himself upon his feet!
Let him bind himself against the darkness!
Let him move confidently in the light of his lifetime!

328
Let him grasp the oar of the rudder with his strong arm!
Let him make firm his hand upon the mooring-post!

329
Let him make a sailing in the sea of (the) Circuit!
Let him row in the river of coals!

330
Effective is the chapel of the ba-souls.
Effective is the one who takes possession for himself of the storeroom of the deceased spirits.

331
Let him open his throat!
Let him praise it (the library)!
Many are the names of the chapel of the ba-souls.

332
May he learn the number of times of calling out to the (door)
'The powerful one of the Great Mother of Writing.'

333 Knowledge of astronomy or astrology is important for the Disciple. Astronomical and astrological compositions were prominent in the holdings of temple libraries in the Graeco-Roman Period. In the Book of Thoth mentioned first is astronomy, which was naturally taught on the temple roof offering a view of the stars.

334 This may refer to rites performed on the temple roofs, a significant aspect of Graeco-Roman Period cult. The passage may refer to the lion-form water-spouts on the temple roofs, called "strong ones upon the roof," which the Disciple should be able to "separate" (i.e., distinguish), see B. Ventker, *Der Starke auf dem Dach: Funktion und Bedeutung der löwengestaltigen Wasserspeier im alten Ägypten*, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 6 (Wiesbaden, 2012). Perhaps translate the second section of the line "so as to raise the arm (against) the strong ones upon the roof."

335 The body parts represent the faculties of seeing, hearing, thinking (an action performed by the heart according to the notions of the ancient Egyptians), speaking, grasping, and walking; taste and smell are lacking. This line is reminiscent of the famous Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, which restores the use of the limbs to the deceased, see S. Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York, 1992), pp. 93–94. It is, however, here applied to the living scribe.

336–337 In B02 a total of 11 topics are mentioned, each supplied with the book-roll determinative. This determinative implies that presumably book titles are intended. A title at the end of line 336 is mostly destroyed. Unfortunately these determinatives are lacking in the two parallel manuscripts L01 and B05. In line 336 the three manuscripts differ dramatically from one another, probably because of the ancient misreading of certain signs. The suggested translation here rests mostly on B02, with the correction of some signs according to the parallel manuscripts. While "annals" of kings are a well-established text genre in Egypt, the other titles are obscure and the translation uncertain. The books mentioned in line 337 may designate manuals of hieroglyphs. The Djed-Pillar (?) may refer to Osiris, since that object is sacred to this deity. "The Book of Flood," perhaps refers to the medjat Hapy, the "Books of Inundation," associated with Thoth, M. Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir*, p. 181.

338 If the Disciple applies himself to mastering all this material, he will become an apprentice or assistant of the god Thoth himself. Alternatively, one may read "an apprentice of the servant of Thoth." In that case, the "servant of Thoth," whose assistant the Disciple should become, is probably Imhotep. Imhotep, as a divinized man, is the most fitting intermediary between gods and humans, see

333
As for the one who would take possession for himself of the teaching, may he look to the star.
May he learn the constellation of the heaven in night.

334
May his fingers be active in the chapel of the lion (= roof-shrine?)
so as to understand (?) the strong ones upon the roof,

335
until he finds the mastery over eye, ear, heart, tongue, hand,
sole of the foot

336
and he learns the Book of Insight, the Book of Power, the Book of Annals, the Book of the Djed-Pillar (?), the Book of Interpretation ... the Book of Flood, and the Book of ...

337
And he drinks from the Book of Order, the Book of the Mother of the Signs,
and the Book of Honoring their (= the signs') Father who is Powerful.

338
And he understands the difficult passages,
and he elucidates the hieroglyphic signs,
and he becomes an apprentice of the Majesty of Thoth."

D. Wildung, *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt* (New York, 1977), pp. 31–81. Instead of “hieroglyphic signs,” possibly translate “praises.”

339 The author seems to describe the writing brush which “grabs” the words spoken by the tongue. The Disciple thus now asks about language and the instruments which “fasten,” “grab” or “capture” language. The author is here also alluding to the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, which was performed upon mummies, statues, temples, and other objects. The “claw” is the implement used in the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, which resembles a small adze or axe, and as a hieroglyph has the reading setep. One is thereby reminded of the epithet setep met, “select of speech,” in this line. “Select of Speech” is probably a designation of Thoth.

340 The Disciple obviously invokes here a female deity, *Alma mater*, from whose breast he wishes to drink of the “milk of wisdom.” On one level, this may be Seshat, the personification of writing. However, on another level the passage fits Sothis, that is, Sirius the Dog Star. Seshat and Sothis are closely associated divinities, see Jasnow, “On Sothis and the So-called Clepsydra (?) in the Book of Thoth (B02, 3/16–4/11),” H. Knuf, C. Leitz, and D. von Recklinghausen (eds.), *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 194 (Leuven, 2010), p. 241. The author seems to introduce other goddesses, such as Mut, into this passage as well. The word translated “breasts,” menet, is very similar in sound to the word for “door-keeper,” menet, and there is certainly a play on these meanings within this line.

341 This answer of Thoth or the Master is at first obscure, since it contains the puzzling word sekhes, which, however, can be reasonably translated as “the powerful one.” The same epithet also appears in lines 332 and 343, but in no other compositions, to our knowledge. From the following lines it becomes clear that Seshat, the personification of writing, is meant. This goddess is closely associated with Thoth. Significantly, the versions of this difficult line diverge in the two main manuscripts. Door or gate imagery is prominent throughout the Book of Thoth. Here the goddess is herself to be identified with the door. The Disciple is instructed to approach her with praises. “The powerful one” is a plausible epithet for the door or gate, although the author may also be alluding to Seshat, Sothis, or Mut.

339 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

“What is the claw which fastens on the tongue?

O Select of Speech, reveal the tools!

340

Let one say to me the nurse who sustains language,
that I may nurse from her breasts.”

341 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:

“Take for yourself ‘the powerful one’ (L01: ‘the door’) which
protects (B02: ‘is loaded with’) ba-souls.

Praise her. Let her answer you.

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The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

“What is the claw which fastens on the tongue?

O Select of Speech, reveal the tools!

340

**Let one say to me the nurse who sustains language,
that I may nurse from her breasts.”**

341 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:

“Take for yourself ‘the powerful one’ (L01: ‘the door’) which
protects (B02: ‘is loaded with’) ba-souls.

Praise her. Let her answer you.

342-343 The reference to the "New Year" fits Sothis (= the Dog Star Sirius) very well, for she is connected with the New Year in Egyptian Astronomy.

344 This line apparently means that if the Disciple approaches the deity correctly and with comprehension of the proper ritual, she will permit him to nurse. Instead of "(hieroglyphic) signs," perhaps translate "praises."

345 "Heart" here can be interpreted in various ways, e.g., "divinity." The heart, which the Disciple should "open," is the seat of understanding for the Egyptians. Again the author refers to the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, during which a metal implement, which was called *netjerti* (the word rendered "heart" here is *netjer*) was employed. The "120" continues the references to the Egyptian year of 360 days.

346 This somewhat unclear line evidently alludes to the popular Myth of the Sun's Eye. According to this myth the Eye of the Sun (identified with the goddesses Tefnut or Mut in some versions) became angry and left Egypt for the Sudan. Thoth was sent in the form of a small baboon (also called a "jackal-monkey" in the Egyptian texts) to persuade her to return. He recounts several stories to her in an effort to convince her that home (i.e., Egypt) is best, and that she should leave the Sudan. The phrase in the Book of Thoth, "great is the immense number," probably refers to the number of speeches spoken by Thoth. Quack has suggested that instead of "great," "small" should be translated. "Great" and "small" are written similarly in Demotic. In any case, Thoth's eloquence successfully induces her to come back to Egypt. The goddess is generally identified with Tefnut/Mut/Sakhmet, but the period of absence from Egypt has also been equated with the 70 days in which the Dog Star (= Sothis/Sirius) is invisible in Egypt.

347 Again, after some very tense moments, the goddess does indeed listen to Thoth (= the "intelligent dog") in the Myth of the Sun's Eye. Just as Thoth himself has addressed Tefnut, so should the Disciple invoke Seshat. Tefnut does not hesitate to be "strong of face" against the intelligent dog (= the intelligent jackal in line 346).

348 The manuscripts differ with regard to the number. The line emphasizes that the dog or jackal (= Thoth) has called out to Tefnut with great frequency, but without success. This line then would refer to the times in which she does not listen to him.

342
Your causing that your voice be loud
(means) her wish to hear you and her coming quickly to you.

343
If you should praise her at the occasion of the New Year,
'The powerful one' will return so as to answer to you.

344
If you understand her (and if) you comprehend her (hieroglyphic) signs,
she will make her place at your mouth,
you being thirsty.

345
Open the doors of your heart before her.
Call out to her **120** times. She hears.

346
B02: Great is the immense number which the intelligent jackal listens to her,
and she loves him (the intelligent jackal).
L01: Great is the immense number which she listens to him,
this one, the intelligent jackal
and she [loves him.]

347
She does not disdain to act (as) one strong of face.
Hers is the intelligent dog (?),
and she delays to answer him.

348
And he calls out to her **seven thousand** times **seventy-seven** times
and she does not come at his voice.

349 The author here stresses the long journeys of the Dog Star (= Sothis/Sirius). We think that the goddess predicts her own return, but that she nevertheless wishes to be explicitly asked to return to Egypt.

350 "The day of desiring her" is a phrase associated with the return of Sothis (= Sirius), see R. Jasnow and M. Smith, "As for Those Who have Called me Evil, Mut will Call them Evil: Orgiastic Cultic Behaviour and its Critics in Ancient Egypt (PSI inv. [prov. v.] D 114a + PSI Inv. 3056 Verso)," *Enchoria* 32 (2010/2011), pp. 29–30. This section about Seshat and Tefnut, comprising about 10 lines in all, ends suddenly with the consolation that the goddess ultimately listens and comes to the one who asks her.

351 The Disciple questions the Master about the nature of writing itself, having changed the subject of the dialogue. The Disciple explicitly wishes to hear metaphors and similes, that is, the type of figurative language which distinguishes the Book of Thoth. We take "Overflowing One" as an epithet of Thoth. An alternative translation of this group, palaeographically possible, "before me," is problematic to us, because this preposition is only used by higher-status figures, and is not suitable in the mouth of the Disciple before the Master. It is just possible, however, that the Disciple assumes this tone ironically.

352 The Master compares "writing" to a sea, meaning perhaps the papyrus roll itself. The reeds may also be identified here with the scribal reed brush. There is sound play too; the "shore" (adj) is compared to the "reed" (adj) used for writing. Quack has suggested "little by little" instead of "little one." Still, inasmuch as the previous line ends with an effusive epithet ("Overflowing One"), then it is fitting that this answer should conclude with a somewhat ironic address in turn.

353 This line is uncertain, but clearly the Master advises the Disciple to immerse himself in the task of learning the scribal profession. There is a clear sound play here in the insecurely translated ten tenyw "count the dikes." Alternatively, one could render "Count the elevations in it." The "elevations" of the sea would then be the waves which could frighten the Disciple just as the "elevations" (tenyw), that is, the "difficult passages" (itenyw), obstacles, of a text frighten the student.

354 Again, this obscure line may deal with the "permission" granted to the Disciple from Thoth to be initiated into the scribal craft. The word rendered "permission" is uncertain, however, and an alternative version of this line would be: "and he makes a ... place in your presence."

349
 She looks before her entire (?) journey (?).
 She completes millions.
 They do not complete her.
 (L01 "before her. Her ... complete.
 She completes millions.
 They do not complete her.")

350
 Your seeking her (means) her coming quickly.
 On your day of desiring her, you find her."

351 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
 "What is writing? What are its places of storage?
 Compare it to its like, Overflowing One!"

352 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:
 "Writing is a sea. Its reeds are a shore.
 Penetrate therein, little one!

353
 Hurry to the shore!
 Count the dikes in it!
 It is a myriad.
 Do not be weak with regard to it (the sea)

354
 until its lord permits that you swim in it,
 and he prepares explicit permission (?) in your presence.

355 This line is not a complete sentence, but rather the heading to the following verses. Here there begins an extremely complicated comparison. The Disciple works like a farmer on the fields of Thoth, that is, he dedicates himself to the script. The writings are his harvest. His plow is the scribal brush or pen and the scribal palette. This palette contains the two cups for the black and the red ink as well as the brush. The cereal seed is compared with the ink in the two basins. Just as the farmer carefully guards his cereal seed in a granary, so does the scribe watch over his ink. Here are the apparent parallels:

Thoth = field-owner or employer

Disciple = farmer, that is, the scribe who works on the field and writes texts

Work tools = plow, that is, the palette and brush

Harvest = grain, that is, the ink

The following descriptions evoke the impression that the author had a specific picture in his mind, rather like a vignette from the Book of the Dead. The seven reeds may refer to the unique headdress of Seshat, which can have indeed seven rosettes sometimes explained as reeds.



Figure 17. The headdress of Seshat.

As in many other traditions, seven is a magical number in Egypt with numerous possible interpretations. The "seven fields" may allude to the "Fields of Thoth" in the Underworld, *Book of Thoth*, p. 213. "He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands" is a well-attested epithet of Thoth in Late Period Egypt.

356 As noted in our comment on line 352, while the script was just compared with the sea, now the script or the papyrus to be inscribed is compared with a field. The farmer cultivates the field with the quarter of the seed left over from the previous year.

357 The cereal seed or seed-corn, held in reserve from the harvest of the previous year, must be well guarded. The author of the Book of Thoth means that the scribal knowledge which has been acquired must be carefully preserved so that it can bring further fruit. At the same time the author may allude here obliquely to the black and red ink in the depressions or basins of the scribal palette. The Master may also be referring to the hidden nature of the sacred books, the "seed-corn."

358 This difficult line exhibits substantial variants in the manuscripts. In L01, at least, the "red" and the "black" probably designate the most common colors of ink. Is the author emphasizing the difficulty of mastering the scribal

355

The **seven** reeds which resemble the plow
in the **seven** fields of 'He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands.'

356

The farmer who stands up, he is with them as a herdsman,
while he plants the field-portions with his $\frac{1}{4}$ of barley.

357

As for his seed-corn which is in these storerooms,
they are marked off and surrounded by a thick wall.

358

B02: The second body/story thereof which acts for them as
master,

they have assigned reeds (?) which [they] cannot reach.

L01: The second body/story thereof which has acted for them as
the masters of
the fields of reeds (?).

Another version: they are the Red and Black which cannot be
reached.

craft, here represented by the red and black ink? Is the "second body/story" the scribal master? In the comparison with the scribal palette the depression for the scribal brush is probably meant. The statement regarding the fact that these reeds or brushes "cannot be reached" may signify that an untrained person cannot use them.

359 The storerooms overflowing with coal may allude to the depressions of the palette for the black ink. The meaning of the image is further glossed by "a (scribe's) hand which works." In any case, the coal evidently refers again to the carbon black of ink, while the working hand is the hand of the scribe employed in writing.

360 He who is not used to the heat (= the hard work of the scribe) will burn his fingers. The Master warns the Disciple against approaching the sacred scrolls without proper preparation.

361 The topic shifts to the reckoning of the distribution of the "harvest," that is, the result of the scribe's efforts. The passage offers several hardly translatable wordplays and thought associations. "Seeing" is the name of a divine assistant of Thoth; he carries the scribal tools of the deity. This line apparently provides the Disciple with the sacred name of the scribal palette.

362 It is unclear who is speaking to the Master or Thoth (= "me"). The subject is the offering ("harvest-tax") due the gods from the scribal priest. Is the "he" the god Seeing (Egyptian Iry), the assistant of Thoth? Still, it is difficult to understand just who is speaking to whom and what the statement truly means. Who is being wronged? Is it Seeing, Thoth, or the Disciple? One may think that the Disciple desires to declare his inability to pay the harvest-tax. However, the use of an expression for "speaking" otherwise only introducing the speech of a god argues against this interpretation.

363 In this line (much improved by Quack) it becomes clear that Thoth is describing a mythological event in which Ptah has a role. Thoth attempts to encourage the Disciple by alluding to this event. Throughout this column there is a play on the sound "ges." Thus, ges is the word for "half" while the term for "scribal palette" is geset. There is certainly a pronounced Memphite or Ptah-centered coloring in the Book of Thoth. This is especially visible in line 404, where the hymn to Imhotep is recited in the Temple of Ptah. In the line here the Master apparently is referring to the initial creation of the world

359

As for these storerooms,
they are overflowing with coal:
their meaning, a hand which works.

360

As for the one who has ascended to them,
without his having experienced heat,
their roasting burns his fingers.

361

The good reckoning (?) which is in the hands of Seeing,
its true name is the scribal palette.

362

He speaks to me: 'I am wronged.
I cannot put down the harvest-tax.
Another will also not bring it from me.'

363

Since Regnal Year 1 of Ptah-teny,
he is half in Nun,
without his having inundated me.

by Ptah. Nun is the primeval flood. It is, admittedly, difficult to see how this line, which does not even seem to form a complete sentence, relates to the scribal craft. Of course, keeping track of the harvest yields and taxes is an essential scribal duty, while the "Regal Year 1" raises the topic of annals, again, a core activity of scribes.

364 Qesep is also uncertain, although in the spoken Egyptian of this period there was little phonetic distinction between qes and ges, and thus it continues the ges sound play. The Master is probably conveying esoteric knowledge in the form of epithets to the Disciple. "Cultivating" the fields denotes scribal activity.

365 Although the syntax is unclear, the Master seems to emphasize the rich return of scribal activity.

366 Once more, the successful scribe receives a bounty from his scribal activity.

367 The Disciple queries the Master about the actual technique of holding the scribal brush or pen.

368 This descriptions agrees well with artistic representations of the position of the writing hand in Egypt.



Figure 18. The hand of Thoth holding a writing brush.

369 "One-tenth" and "one-twentieth" may refer to the offering customarily made by the scribe to Thoth before beginning to write. However, these two terms may conceivably also be an otherwise unknown cryptic designation of a scribal implement. The translation "ink-holder" is also not secure. "Great of Five" is a common title of Thoth.

370 Admonitions to the scribe to be facile with his implements.

371 The Master plays on the double meaning of the Egyptian word used here for "praises" and "(hieroglyphic) signs."

364

As for the one who has ordered it to cultivate his fields,
(he is) Qesep in his select names.

365

Great are the plants in these high-fields
(and) great the abundance of fruits.

366

The one who reaps them is the one who gives the harvest-tax;
High is their harvest for their cultivator."

367 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"Let one say to me the work of the fist,
the hand which labors on the divine writings."

368 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:
"Your three fingers, place the brush between them.
Your two fingers, let them make a grasping.

369

Place the one-tenth and one-twentieth for the Great of Five,
Thoth, between them (the fingers),
the ink-holder (?) being before your fingers.

370

Be good with your hand!
Write with your fingers!
As for movement and staying-still,
make a steering!

371

Every type of free movement (is) their (the fingers') share.
Excellence (in) writing (means) the collection of the signs,
they being quick.

372 The Master encourages the Disciple to be industrious. The "craftsman" is a higher level of scribe in the Book of Thoth.

373 The Disciple now asks several questions about the scribal brush, which has the figurative name "Excellent of Love."

374 The Master answers with a more specific term, "at-reed." It probably denotes here the reed pen employed for writing. There is a sound play at the end of this line between ta men, "land is moored," and tem, "to touch." "To moor" can stand figuratively for "to die" in Egyptian. Does this line refer to the liminal character of reeds which are between the water and the land?

375 The Disciple wishes to acquire scribal knowledge that he may become productive. "The words which give birth to prophets" probably represent the hieroglyphs themselves. The vivid, almost erotic imagery is striking. One might compare the sexual imagery found in the Hermetic Asclepius, B. Copenhagen, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English Translation with notes and introduction* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 78 and 234; see also R. van den Broek, "Sexuality and Sexual Symbolism in Hermetic and Gnostic Thought and Practice (Second-Fourth Centuries)," in W. Hanegraaff and J. Kripal (eds.), *Hidden Intercourse. Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), pp. 8–11.

376 The Disciple continues to employ highly symbolic language in expressing his desire for scribal knowledge. There are puns here between the Egyptian for "well" and "nurse." The word rendered "unites with" may also be translated "nurses" or "rejoices." Again, the entire section is based on the imagery of nursing and giving birth.

377 Once more, there are wordplays in this and the previous line on "nurse," "vulva," and "well." The words for "vulva" and "nurse" in Egyptian are similar in sound.

378 We return here to the image of nursing, a very prominent theme in the Book of Thoth (e.g., line 340).

372
As for every scribe,
their rapid approach (to papyrus) means
their becoming a craftsman quickly.
Do not turn away!"

373 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"What is its nature?

What is the shape of the papyrus plant, 'Excellent of Love?'"

374 (MASTER)
So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:
"They have named it the at-reed,
namely, the at-reed of life,
which the land of mooring (= death) will touch."

375 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"Let one command for me the words which give birth to
prophets
that I may cause that they become pregnant in my flesh.

376
Open for me the well/nurse which unites with the wise ones
that I may drink from its/her sweet water.

377
The vulva/nurse who is as a nurse for the learned one,
may I enter into her doorposts.

378
Behold, my mouth is open.
May one give to it milk
that she may make her place before my mouth,
I being thirsty."

379–381 The Master now offers a sort of “Instruction” to the Disciple. It is in the fashion of traditional Egyptian wisdom literature. In this line we find support for Quack’s argument that the Master is not actually the god Thoth in the Book of Thoth, since the speaker refers to Thoth in the third person. Nevertheless, we ourselves do not think it so strange for a god to refer to him or herself in the third person. Moreover, given the complexity of the manuscript tradition of the Book of Thoth such inconsistencies in the composition would not be surprising. Of course, it must also be remembered that here a priest is presumably playing the role of Thoth, a situation which would encourage such discrepancies of person.

382 Instead of “prophet,” perhaps translate “clever” or “wise man” as suggested by Quack.

385 If correctly understood, this statement would be unusual. It warns the Disciple not to permit an incompetent man to be a Demotic scribe.

386 This obscure line contains several insecurely translated words. “Resolve” is especially uncertain.

379 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:
“Come that I instruct you concerning ... the writing
which Thoth gave into the hand of his disciple.

380

Write, o little one!
Take counsel with the wise man!
Do not go forth ...!

381

Ask the one greater than yourself!
Desire to listen to the voice of the wise man!
Do not ...

382

Do not be greedy with regard to a prophet.
Take a magical book of protection (?)!
Do not be weak of heart with regard to reaching its end (i.e.,
the end of the teaching).

383

Take thought for tomorrow!
Be worried with regard to its like (the day after tomorrow?)!
Say to me every delay(?) of yours.

384

Be steady and serious!
Be constant with regard to the teaching ...

385

Do not let an incompetent man (?) become a servant of the Demotic script ...

386

Resolve all types of difficult passages,
they being varied in form,
without there ...

387 The Master advises the Disciple to be industrious and active.

388 The word rendered "bandages/principles" is not certain. It may be an error for *metere*, "teaching(s)." Still, "principles" is a reasonable designation of the four admonitions in the next line.

389 The Master declares that when you must punish or take vengeance, you should do so properly. The four "principles" advocate the fear of god, rectitude, incorruptibility, and discretion.

390 Discretion is a valued virtue in Pharaonic Egyptian wisdom texts.

391 The Disciple begins his speech with suitably symbolic language regarding the character of the teachings of the Master. The "children" are the sacred books. This is a veritable prayer to Thoth.

392 The Disciple praises the Master as a "craftsman" responsible for "shaping" him. Instead of "go away," it is also possible to translate "stand." The B04 manuscript offers an entirely different version.

393 As a "farmer" the Master waters the land (=the Disciple). Nekheb denotes "fresh" or "virgin" land, that is, a potentially fertile field.

394 Again, the Disciple describes the Master as the craftsman who forms him.

387
Be abundant in looking! Be abundant in acting!
Be abundant in hearing! [...]

388
Come, let me cause you to know them,
namely, the four bandages/principles of life ...
... to bind with them.

389
Set your heart upon god! Adhere to the law!
Make revenge! Go in maat!

390
Be small of wrath! Be thoughtful! Be a good man!
Do not reveal that which you have heard!"

391 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"O may your teaching be eternally young,
O foremost one of the House of Documents (Thoth)!
Begin with the children of your teaching!"

392
You have been for me a craftsman.
You have diminished my trouble
so that I may go away upon my limbs (?)./
B04: so that you have power over my limbs.

393
You have been for me a farmer,
I being like unto a field, I being dry.
You have made me a nekheb-field.

394
They have given me to you, I being worthy.
You have opened me as a statue of you.
[You have acted for me as] an animating woodcarver (?).

395 The Disciple alludes to the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony performed on mummies and statues. Through ritual and spells the priest thereby activated these hitherto inanimate objects; see the note on line 339.

396 The Disciple enumerates the benefits which he has received from the Master. Instead of "haste," perhaps render "old age."

397-399 The Disciple achieves respect, honor, and companionship through the effective spells or knowledge of the Master.

400 In this difficult line the Disciple vividly expresses the close relationship between himself and the Master.

401-402 The Disciple draws on the craftsman and statue imagery employed earlier in the text.

403 The Disciple asserts his dedication to the Master and his teaching.

395

You have split for me my tongue.

You have opened for me the way.

You have given to me the manner of going-and-coming.

396

You have lessened hatred of me.

You have brought love of me.

You have caused that my praise make haste.

397

You have caused that I achieve old age, I being (still) young.

I have sent off those older than I through your effective magic.

398

You have given me status, although I am but a youth,
so that I am sitting while the great ones stand.

399

You caused that I be abundant in nurses, when I was alone.

You made for me a troop of youths.

400

The flame of your mouth has revealed to me sustenance.

The beneficent power of your body has flowed over me.

401

Your beneficent power has hurried for me.

You have acted for me, so that I am a living image eternally.

402

I will stand as a statue

I will be for you a monument,

I being as an image, O foremost one of . . .

403

I will have power over your papyrus roll.

I will worship your teaching.

I will protect your beautiful name.

404 Here the Disciple begins to recite a hymn addressed to Imhotep, a divinized seer especially revered in the Memphite region. Nanefherhotep is a form of the rejuvenated Osiris. He is already mentioned in line 2 of the Book of Thoth. As the patron of craftsmen, Ptah is a fitting deity to be emphasized in the hymn in view of the craftsman imagery just employed (see the note to 401-402).

405 The Disciple vows to perform commemorative rites in honor of the god (Imhotep). The ba-soul is the spirit or personality of the deceased. The rendering "his divine heart" is uncertain.

406 Hetep-ti-nesut, literally translated "An-offering-(which)-the-king-gives" designates the standard Egyptian funerary offering presented to the deceased. Instead of "altar," perhaps render "Shai" (= Seshat, the divine personification of writing).

407 In this difficult line, the Disciple invokes Imhotep, who seems to be called here "a craftsman of Isten (= Thoth)." The "Heart of Re" is an epithet of Thoth, who is understood as the intellect of the sun-god. Instead of "one who lives," translate possibly "image"; the word is ankh.

408 Presumably, the father is "Thoth" himself.

409 The Disciple may address Imhotep as the epitome of a scribe. The "son of the Vizier" would be the son of "Thoth" (= the Vizier).

410 The Disciple is the "heir" of Thoth or Imhotep and thus justly lays claim to the teaching of the Master.

411 The Disciple asserts himself as the "rightful son" of Imhotep or Thoth himself. One thinks here of the registration of the child Merib, the son of Ahwere and Naneferkaptah, in Setne I, 3/8, Ritner, in Simpson (ed.), *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 455 (using his alternative translation): "They caused that he (Merib) be inscribed in the documents of the House of Life."

404 (HYMN TO IMHOTEP)

I will praise god for you, o Foremost One of the Temple of Ptah (= Imhotep),
in the festival of Imhotep before Osiris-Nanefherhotep.

405

I will cause your name to live beside the living ba-soul.
I will divinize your ba-soul before the ba-soul of his divine heart.

406

A hetep-ti-nesut-offering to your ka before the altar,
a worshipping of your name before the sacred images.

407

Come you, o one who lives as a craftsman of Isten,
praised one of the Heart of Re,
may he cause that you recite (?).

408

I will praise god for you.
I will cause that your name be rejuvenated.
I will cause that your ba-soul enter before my father.

409

I am with you as an heir,
like a son of the Vizier ('land of fathers').
Your teaching will act as a nursemaid to me.

410

You have captured me through the raising of the hand of the one who created me.
I have become an heir of your divine instructions.

411

After I have become a son,
let them cause that my name be established.
Let me enter among the nobles.

412 The "divine ba-souls" are the sacred books, while the "wise ones who-are-in-the-primeval-time" would be the ancient authors of those books. We adopt here several readings of Quack.

413 The Disciple often expresses the wish to be one of the "assistants" of the Master (presumably Thoth or Imhotep). An alternative rendering of the line is "I will take control of the knowledge of my image as a monument and I will become one with the assistants."

414 This uncertainly rendered line may mean that the Disciple has concluded the section of the hymn and has entered "the darkness," which probably refers to the Chamber of Darkness (= the House of Life). In the Book of Thoth "fighting with the ba-souls" signifies the work of writing the sacred scrolls (= the ba-souls of Re).

415 The Disciple hopes to approach and enter the House of Life, that is, the temple scriptorium. Seshat is the divine personification of writing.

416 This is a continuation of the previous thought. There is a pun between "going-and-coming," pronounced shai at this time, and the name of the goddess, Shai (= Seshat), in the preceding line.

417 The word rendered "hurry to" has the eye determinative and may rather mean here "look to." This is probably an intentional ambiguity; the two verbs sounded alike in Ancient Egyptian. The Hedenu plant is the scribal reed or brush. "The foremost one under the wings" may be the seer Imhotep. Instead of "(hieroglyphic) signs," perhaps translate "praises."

418 This may well allude to Thoth, the ibis, who is also often shown in the underworld judgment scenes as a small baboon seated upon the central support of the scale. Of course, in the famous Book of the Dead vignette of Chapter 125, Thoth is generally also present as a recorder at the Judgment before Osiris, Faulkner and Andrews, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 29-34.

419 The Disciple seems to assert that he wishes to witness (or "has witnessed?") the "joining" of the baboon with the snake. This line raises several questions. Who is here the snake? Is this Osiris as the judge of the underworld? What is the significance of "joined?" Is this an allusion to a word spelled with a combination of the hieroglyphic signs for the baboon and a snake (that is, "joined")? Or does the line refer to a mythological event?

412
Let **them** place me upon the path of the divine ba-souls,
the **wise ones** who-are-in-the-primeval-time.

413
I will exercise self-control as a wise one.
I will be like unto a statue,
and I will become one with the assistants.

(END OF HYMN)

414
I have made the end of the funerary offering (?)
through pronouncing my name in the darkness,
while I fight with the ba-souls.

415
May one open for me the paths of going to the House of Life.
I will spread myself out on my belly before Shai (= Seshat).

416
May one open for me the way of going-and-coming.
Let me show the path with my own feet.

417
Let me hurry to (or 'look to') the love of the great god,
the Lord of Hedenu.
Let me hurry to the (hieroglyphic) signs of the foremost one
under the wings (of Thoth).

418
Let me hurry to (or 'look to') the Ibis who is at the top of his
brush (?),
he who has ordered the earth with his measuring-scale plates
(or 'palette'?)

419
Let me see the baboon who has joined with the snake,
he who has judged the earth with his scale.

420 The Disciple apparently describes his actual entry to the Chamber of Darkness (= House of Life). The idea may be that the Disciple leaves the Chamber of Darkness as a true servant of Thoth, having been properly initiated. He draws on astronomical imagery (note the use of "eclipse" in association with the Chamber of Darkness). Isten is an epithet of Thoth.

421 Again, the Disciple asserts his desire to know the nature of the "ibises" of Thoth, which may mean here the hieroglyphs or sacred writings. Instead of "character of all the ibises," perhaps "light of all the ibises."

422 This line evidently continues the astronomical imagery. Sothis is the "Dog Star" which plays a great role in Egyptian theology. However, the translation "Sothis" is uncertain.

423 Here the Disciple moves from the heavens to the Nile itself, and exclaims that he has also been (or wishes to be) immersed in its sacred waters. The term rendered "nurses" can also mean "(water) sources," an evident wordplay.

424 Egyptian authors employ the expression "My heart said to me" to describe a person's internal dialogue. The Disciple directly announces that he has been talking, figuratively of course, about the Chamber of Darkness (= House of Life). The force of "so shall you say about it 'the Chamber of Darkness'" is "so shall you call it, namely, 'the Chamber of Darkness.'" Instead of "explore" (from *djar*), translate possibly "limit" or "boundary." Quack has offered comments on this difficult last clause.

425 The Disciple vows to worship Thoth, the lord of the Hedenu-plant (that is, the scribal brush), and Seshat, the personification of writing.

426 The "great, great, great one" is Thoth, this being parallel to the Classical Hermes Trismegistos, "thrice-great one." The turtle here designates Apophis, the underworld enemy of the sun-god, Re. Apophis tries to prevent Re from completing his underworld journey in his solar bark. Thoth helps to defeat this dangerous opponent of Re.

427 In this obscure line the Disciple apparently refers to the seer Imhotep. Hesperet is the sacred locality of Thoth located at Hermopolis. Two manuscripts insert a line here which is not in our main Berlin manuscript (B02): "And I will ... the offerings to the Lord of Writing ... the wise ones." In this inserted line, the "Lord of Writing" is certainly Thoth.

420
May I proceed from the eclipse as a servant of Isten.
I will make a glorification of the secrets of Thoth.

421
May I enter therein, namely, the character (?) of all the ibises,
that I betake myself to the place of the servants of Thoth.

422
May I see heaven.
May Sothis (?) reveal ...
the four corners of the earth to its length.

423
May the storm flood turn me back,
which overflows from it (the sky)
to the secrets of their sources.

424
My heart said to me:
'So shall you say about it, "the Chamber of Darkness."
Learn how to explore it!'

425
And may I go to make praise before the Lord of the Hedenu-plant (= Thoth),
and kiss the earth for Shai (= Seshat).

426
And I shall raise my hand to the great, great, great one,
and jubilate for the ibis who tramples the turtle.

427
And I shall worship him as the one who understands the Great
of Strength (= Imhotep),
and adore him, the one who announces (= Imhotep) the Fore-
most One of Hesperet (= Thoth).

428 The Disciple represents himself as a lector priest carrying the sacred papyrus rolls in the procession.

429 The translation of this line is uncertain. We believe that "the chamber which speaks" is the Chamber of Darkness, that is, the House of Life. The sacred writings are able to "speak" through the hieroglyphs or script which comprise them.

430 The Disciple wishes to see both the most important members of the scribal establishment and the least important, that is, presumably, the assistants who do not speak at all. One may daringly suggest that the least important "disciples" could figuratively be the "silent" determinatives written between the "sound signs" or "phonograms" in the hieroglyphic script. The manuscript B04 provides an alternate end of the line.

431 The physical space of the Chamber of Darkness symbolically represents the underworld itself.

432 The feminine entity in this line is probably Seshat, the personification of writing.

433 The Disciple wishes to become a crew member of the Bark of Re, the sun-god.

434 This problematic line again expresses the Disciple's desire to become an "apprentice" in the Chamber of Darkness. There are substantial variants of the line in the manuscripts. Translated here is the B02 version. The rendering "The Book of the Star" is insecure.

428

And I shall bow the shoulder under the papyrus roll of the great god,
and go as the possessor of wealth of the Vizier ('land of father' = Thoth).

429

Let me go into it, namely, the chamber which speaks,
and you (Imhotep or Thoth?) should cause that
I discover the form of the ones who are in it.

430

Let me see great and small,
and the disciples who shut their mouths between them.
Alternate end of line in B04: "while the disciples serve the masters among them."

431

May I see the Chamber of Darkness,
having entered into the form of it,
namely, the excellent limb of the underworld.

432

My heart said to me: 'Associate with her,
namely, the excellent one who is in the excellent chamber.'

433

Let me pray (?) to his majesty,
my voice being loud.
Let me open my hand to grab hold of the Bark of Re.

434

May I give praise to his sacred image as an apprentice of darkness.
May I recite before him the Book of the Star (?).

435 The weapons are the brush and other scribal equipment.

436 The neshyt tool is probably also a scribal utensil. Shai is Seshat, the personification of writing. However, she is also associated with other activities, such as temple building foundation ceremonies, and perhaps this tool is connected with that ritual. It is even conceivable that neshyt refers to the seven-pointed "rosette" upon the head of Seshat (see the comment on line 355). We cannot identify "the ones who are in their heaps." Could this be in some way an obscure designation of the hieroglyphs themselves?

437 This line seems to continue the aggressive thoughts of the previous ones. The second portion of the line is ambiguous. Perhaps translate: "There is not (even) forgetting a few of them." "To be full of ba-soul" means perhaps "to be powerful/fearsome."

438 The Master himself instructs the Disciple to be aggressive in the pursuit of knowledge. The identity of "the lord of the Ba-souls of Re" is unclear; it may be the Master or Thoth himself.

439 Here the Master begins to describe the actions of a creator-deity. Later in this section (line 444) the Master speaks about the creation of the hieroglyphic signs themselves. However, it is uncertain precisely what these ten vultures of Upper Egypt signify. Are they an aspect of the sacred writings, the Ba-souls of Re? Are they the hieroglyphs? Still, these vultures seem to have a distinct existence apart from these Ba-souls of Re. The vultures and their nestlings play a big role in the so-called "Vulture List," wherein each Egyptian nome (= "administrative district") is equated with a vulture and her nestling (lines 646–688).

440 The identity of these nine vultures of Lower Egypt is not known.

441 The creator-deity is described here in phrases often associated with ascriptions of scribal excellence; particularly notable is "his fingers were excellent for him."

442 The "road of the divine spirits" is probably the scribal path. Instead of "led," translate perhaps "went."

435

May I arm myself with them, my weapons,
that I may fight in the Chamber of Darkness.

436

May I take hold of the neshyt-copper tool of Shai (= Seshat),
which opens up what is hidden,
the ones who are in their heaps.

437

May I be full of ba-soul after them.
May I bring away their end.
There is not (even) a small book of protection for them."

438 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:

"Be murderous against these ones,
o you who love knowledge, in the darkness.
The lord of the Ba-souls of Re is the messenger of prophecy.

439

He made the forms of the vultures of Upper Egypt: ten,
he giving praise to god for the teaching.

440

He created nine female vultures of Lower Egypt together with
their nine nestlings,
they making adoration to the Ba-souls of Re.

441

He directed his heart.
His fingers were excellent for him.
The crypts of his ears were opened.

442

His oudjat-eye saw before the road.
He led upon the road of the divine spirits.

443 This line is only preserved in the L01 manuscript.

444 This fascinating line obviously deals with the creation of the hieroglyphs, which are conceived as living creatures answerable to their creator.

445 The "speech" is perhaps the sound values of the hieroglyphic signs.

446 This problematic line may once more refer to the sound value of the signs. Instead of "restrain," perhaps translate "flee" (reading wel).

447 The "vizier" is Thoth himself. The cries and barking may again denote the sound values of the hieroglyphic signs.

448 In this very difficult line the Master may emphasize that the creator-deity understood the speech (here "report") of animals (= the hieroglyphs), but is the "me" Thoth? The Egyptians generally divided up the animal kingdom into "beasts," "birds," "fish," and "reptiles (or 'crawling things')," see M. Smith, "Sonnenauge, Demotischer Mythos vom," in W. Helck and W. Westendorf (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden, 1984), vol. 5, col. 1085 (where the addition of "humans" results in a classification of "all creatures on earth").

449 As Quack has remarked, here the Disciple in the Book of Thoth may directly address the reader, who is understood to be an aspiring scribal student. Perhaps, however, the Master is addressing the Disciple. The "enchantments of the Lords (?) of Offerings" (compare lines 3 and 43) are probably the hieroglyphs.

450 At this point a new designation appears, probably of the Master or Thoth himself. While the donkey is, of course, not unimportant in Egyptian theology, we can find no parallel for this name. The donkey is generally equated with Seth and thus tends to have a negative significance. Still, this is not necessarily always the case.

451 This obscure line obviously deals with the interpretation of complicated passages in the sacred writings.

452 This is the path leading to the House of Life.

443
... path of their writings (?) ...

444
The signs revealed their forms.
He called to them.
They answered to him.

445
He knew the form of speech of the baboons and the ibises.

446
He went about truly in the path of the dog.
He did not restrain their barkings.

447
He understood the barking of these
and these cries of the Vizier (= Thoth).

448
He made the report of the wild beasts one by one ...
He understood them.
He brought them before me."

449 (DISCIPLE)
O The-one-who-loves-knowledge, "Stand up!
Capture them, the enchantments of the Lords (?) of Offerings
... the fools (?)."

450 (MASTER)
He-created-the-thoughts-of-the-donkey
"... every path-finder of the stall.

451
He opened the path of (?) the one who praised ...
the most difficult of the difficult passages.

452
Proclaim the path before him!
Go upon the way of ...!

453 This is an evident reference to the Chamber of Darkness.

454 The Disciple is to proceed to the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness). As elsewhere the author employs hunting and netting imagery to describe the act of writing or "capturing" knowledge.

455 As already mentioned (comment to 450), "He-created-the-thoughts" is probably another designation of the Master or Thoth. The "way of the dog" is apparently a name for this path to the House of Life (see the comment on 17).

456 While this list possibly refers to actual sacred animals, the author may again intend a reference to the hieroglyphs themselves, which are able to give voice (i.e., "prophesy" or "proclaim") by means of their sound values. C. Cannuyer, *La Girafe dans l'Égypte ancienne et le verbe* 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏. *Étude de lexicographie et de symbolique animalière*, Acta Orientalia Belgica Subsidia 4 (Brussels, 2010), argues that the verb *ser* never means "to prophesy," but only "to announce, proclaim." In *Girafe*, pp. 538–542, he specifically discusses the Book of Thoth examples of *ser*. We have maintained here the rendering of *ser*, as "to prophesy," but certainly agree that in some of these cases, one may also translate "to announce" or "to proclaim."

457 At this point the author deals in the next few lines with "real" physical objects associated with the House of Life, namely, a "lock," "gate," and "key." This broken section may thus allude to ceremonies of opening or entering the House of Life.

458 The symbolism is evident enough, but the force of this line escapes us. The author may describe the significance of the House of Life in figurative terms.

459 Perhaps the initiate must handle or be shown various sacred textiles kept in the House of Life.

460–461 We cannot understand these next two lines. The Disciple may be mentioning diverse objects at the entryway of the House of Life. Quack has proposed "pylons of copper," which is reasonable in view of the following lines.

453

Unite with the darkness!
... heart.

454

He will go to the House of Life.
He will hunt in the ... magicians."

455 (MASTER)

He-created-the-thoughts, he said:

"The way of the dog ...,
the places of going to the House of Life are they.

456

These dogs, these jackals, these baboons,
these snakes which prophesy with their mouths ...

457

The lock of faience ...
these lions and jubilating baboons ...

458

The life which grows in the scarab,
the star which rises [in the east (?)] ...

459

The sy-cloth-fringe which stands in the chapel
... life ... House of Life of the ba-souls (?) is it.

460

The one who has given birth,
if it happens that ...
That is his ...

461

These pylons (?) of copper ... these are ... at their mouths.

462-463 This and the next line clearly belong together. The Disciple is concerned with these initial obstacles to his entry into the House of Life. The gate or keepers associated with the House of Life may question the approaching initiate in the fashion of the New Kingdom Underworld gates or gatekeepers who interrogate the deceased.

464 It is admittedly strange that both "He-created-the-thoughts" and "He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back," are the Master or Thoth himself, but we tend nevertheless to think that this is the case. The Master probably provides here the name or identity of the gatekeeper.

465 Seshat is the personification of writing. Instead of "approach" one may also translate "see." This is a deliberate play on words; compare the comment on 417.

466 The Master commands the Disciple to carry out certain scribal rituals or activities. Or is this perhaps an unmarked speech of the Disciple?

467-468 The Master may be examining the Disciple. However, there may be in this entire section a problem in the designations of speakers, since both 464 and 467 only name the Master. The Oudjat-eye is the whole or uninjured eye of Horus, a very important symbol in Egyptian religion.

469 The entire passage is too fragmentary to recover the meaning with certainty. This is admittedly an odd statement from the mouth of the Master, particularly if he is in fact Thoth.

470 In this broken passage the Master (or Disciple?) evidently first asks about and then invokes the gatekeepers at the main entrance of the House of Life. Again, there may be a problem in the designation of speakers.

471 The "children" are probably the sacred papyri.

472 The Demotic sign can mean both "hieroglyphic signs" and "Two Lands" (= Egypt), almost certainly an intentional wordplay.

473-479 These lines are lost. The witnesses are fragmentary at this point, and the text is difficult to reconstruct here.

462
A gate of investigation (?) is that which waits for them ...

463
A key of questioning is that which opens them,
its beams protect ..."

464 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he
said:

"The servant of the jackals is the one who is on ...

465
... gate with freedom (?).
May you approach Seshat before ...

466
O wise one of Re, enchant for me ...

467 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, [he
said:] ...

468
"May you reveal for me the Oudjat-eye ...

469
I come in your form ...

470
Who is the one who stands at the gates ...

471
O guardian of the child[ren ...]

472
O Overseer of the Treasury of the hieroglyphic signs/Two
Lands ...

Ca. 8 lines missing

480 The "herdsmen" would designate the scribes. Compare line 64.

481 This fragmentary line again illustrates the author's interest in the physical entrances and openings of the House of Life. This subject evidently fascinated Graeco-Roman priestly scribes, as it is also treated in other compositions.

482 The Master perhaps asks the Disciple about the gatekeeper of the House of Life.

483 The Disciple asserts his right to entry.

484 The Master continues to question the Disciple about the process of entering the House of Life and also emphasizes the "underworldly" (= "United Darkness") aspects of the institution. The "United Darkness" is the "darkness beyond the horizon, before the creation and outside the created world," Wilson, *Lexikon*, p. 1092.

485 The Disciple again offers his credentials. The jackals and the ibises are, of course, sacred animals of Thoth.

486 It is naturally expected that the Disciple seeking entry to the House of Life present a gift to the gatekeepers or other dignitaries associated with it.

487 The translation is not certain, but the Disciple evidently gives as his present the appropriate demeanor of an apprentice. In place of "which knows not silence" translate perhaps "which is continuously silent."

480
O guardian (?) of the herdsmen who are upon [...] taste.

481
Be praised (?), o walls, o doors before ... the gods."

482 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:
"Who (?) ...
he being as a servant."

483 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"I am the one who opens the chapel (?) ...
to say the (hieroglyphic) signs of the path before him."

484 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:
"[What is this journey(?)] which you made to the House of Life
in the United Darkness?"

485 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"The elders of the jackals are the ones who opened the ways for
me.
The excellent ibises are the ones who sent me."

486 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:
"What is the gift which you [have given] to them?
(A thing) which they wanted ..."

487 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"A heart which is open,
hands pleasing,
a sweet tongue which knows not silence."

488 The Master poses detailed questions testing the knowledge of the Disciple.

489 Once more, the Disciple mentions the sacred animals so prominent in the Book of Thoth. The last phrase, "some males (?) who listen," is an insecure translation.

490 This destroyed line refers to "libation" areas for purification, fitting for the sacred locality of the House of Life.

491 Here the Disciple seems to question the Master regarding the situation or nature of the gatekeepers. He perhaps tells the Master (and thus the reader!) that he can trust them.

492 The Master acknowledges that the Disciple has performed appropriate actions, but wishes to test him further.

493 The reply of the Disciple answers the questions of the Master. They are clearly contradictory in nature, since spirits or ghosts have no bones, while the donkey has no "heart," that is, "brain," according to Ancient Egyptian notions. Thus does the Disciple cleverly display his right to entry into the House of Life (even if it is difficult for us now to follow his reasoning).

488 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"What doorkeeper is the one who has made your report (= announced you)?

What butler is the one who has received your gift?"

489 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"Some vultures, some snakes,
some sacred animals, some males (?) who listen."

490 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"A place of libation (?) ..."

491 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"What is the protection in which they (= the doorkeepers?) are?
It is worthwhile that you entrust yourself to them."

492 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"You have praised!
You have recited!
What is your form?
What is the leather and skin?"

493 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"Bone of a spirit,
heart of a donkey,
noble image of the heart and tongue."

494 The Master continues this line of questioning.

495 The Disciple answers with imperatives, which presumably are the correct reply to the Master's questions. The idea of "protection" was already mentioned in line 491. The "necropolis" is probably here a designation of the House of Life.

496-497 The Master now undertakes to provide deeper instruction to the Disciple, who has proven himself worthy. If the Disciple is ignorant of this material, he will surely suffer ("be hard-pressed") if he attempts to enter the House of Life. The "divine shrine" would once more be a designation of the House of Life. The "affairs" are probably the subjects to be learned by the Disciple.

498 The danger is that the Disciple will enter the House of Life as a "fool." The "prophets" would be the priests of the House of Life.

499 Both the "land of the divine word" and the "landing place" are again figurative names of the House of Life itself.

500 The "great goddess" is evidently the divine personification of writing, Seshat, who plays a role at this stage of initiation of the Disciple.

494 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"You have brought your life into balance.

You have risen (?) to your (proper) place.

Every form of yours, let it be caused that I learn it!"

495 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"Consider the protection!

Think about the necropolis!

Take counsel with regard to drawing near to the place!"

496 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"Come, let me instruct you before you are hard-pressed, before you have entered into the divine shrine!

497

... [Do not] neglect your affairs!

You should finish them! Draw near ... !

Desire to listen (?)!

498

... [Do not] proceed to the place,

while your heart is empty!

[Do not go] among prophets,

while you are a fool.

499

[Do not?] enter in the land of the divine word,

the landing place, the

500

... the great goddess will choose place by place (?).

Will you deliver it (to) your bones?"

501 The Disciple may be subjected to a sort of symbolic mortification (?) of the flesh (if the translation is correct). Does he experience a figurative death and rebirth, as famously described in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, p. 99? In any case, the following broken lines resonate with physical images suggesting that the initiate is undergoing the embalming process.

502 We have tentatively understood this line to be the beginning of a distinct section, and thus restore "The Beginning of." Instead of "entranceway," perhaps translate "thickness" (of a gate). Similarly, we translate "Book of Excellence" and take this to refer to the following section. It is, however, by no means certain.

503-505 The Disciple clearly describes his condition as a mummy, a reborn individual.

506 The Master queries the Disciple about the nature or identity of his instructor. "He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands" is an epithet of Thoth. This section recalls the passage about the teacher and father in lines 285-286.

507 The author resorts again to the imagery of netting (compare, for example, lines 245-247, 255, 264, 268, and 280). Shentait is the aspect of Isis as widow, which reinforces the Osirian undertones of this section. Here the author seems to merge Shai (= Seshat) with Isis. Mehen is a protective snake that surrounds the sun-god on his bark during his dangerous journey.

508 The Master speaks about writing as a kind of medicine. The art of mummification can indeed be understood as a type of medicine; "doctor" in Egyptian is one title of the embalmer. He also continues to employ the netting imagery. The force of "sesame" is unclear to us.

501 (DISCIPLE)

[The-one-who-loves-knowledge,] he said:

"The prophets have beaten me.

They have consumed my heart and the fat of my flesh.

502

[The Beginning of] the teaching of the entranceway of my limb, ...

The Book of Excellence of my strength (= the teaching).

503

my flesh ... greatness/nature of my flesh. ...

504

Behold, the intestines which give fat to the limbs

... mouths.

505

Behold, I stand up,

I being like unto a mummy,

I being as a living snake."

506 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"Is it (through) the initiation/teaching of the father

or He-who-understands-prophecy

or He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands?"

507 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"The nets of Shentait-Shai have caught me.

The net of Mehen (?) has trapped [me.]"

508 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"What is the taste of the medicine of writing?

What is their net of sesame (?)?"

509 The Disciple confirms that he has firm knowledge of such “prescriptions.” Again, the author is here concerned with embalming.

510 The Disciple begins to recite three statements figuratively praising the power of the magic and writings of Thoth. The “Vizier” is a designation of Thoth. The point of this line is that the salt used in mummification is not as effective as the hieroglyphic writings of Thoth. Of course, the recitation of written spells would have comprised part of the process of mummification and burial.

511 Once more, the Disciple praises Thoth (=“Reckoner-of-Hearts”). The word translated “hippopotamus” is actually written as the like-sounding one for “child.” The word used for “Reckoner,” *ip*, would also have sounded much like the name of a prominent hippopotamus goddess Ipet, Leitz, *Lexikon* 1, p. 218. The point is that the “prophets” or adherents of Thoth are just as fearsome or powerful as a raging hippopotamus.

512 “She-who-loves-enchancements” is probably the goddess Seshat. In this line the Disciple declares that the sacred writings or the act of writing are even more alluring than the act of sex.

513 The Master now questions the Disciple about his knowledge or experience of the sacred (underworld?) landscape. This may symbolically represent the physical space of the House of Life. This landscape resembles that found in Egyptian underworld books.

514 The Master continues his description and queries about this sacred landscape. The various rivers and canals may denote the obstacles to the goal of scribal mastery. Once more, the author draws heavily on Egyptian underworld tradition.

515 Of course, the image of the ferryman is prominent in Egypt, where the main thoroughfare is the Nile River itself. The “ferryman” here may be the “teacher/master” or simply a denizen of this divine landscape.

516 Naturally, the Disciple asserts that his knowledge and experience qualify him for entry into the House of Life. The fishing and trapping imagery may symbolically designate the activity of writing (= capturing the living hieroglyphs). Instead of “boat,” translate perhaps “taste.”

509 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

“I have made a test of every medicine which dries out (the body).

I have seen every implement which stops (the process of decay).

510

Behold, salt **does not** circulate through the limbs like the hieroglyphic signs of the Vizier (= Thoth).

511

A raging hippopotamus does not **tread upon** clay like the prophets of the Reckoner-of-Hearts (= Thoth).

512

The mystery of the bedroom does not ensnare like She-who-loves-enchancements (= Seshat).”

513 (MASTER)

So he said, namely, The-one-of-Heseret, he said:

“There are three seas to be crossed between them, the corridors of this land.

514

Have you made a river-crossing in their ferries?
Have you crossed their canals?

515

Have you given the fare to their ferryman?
Have you taken their aqat-boat?”

516 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

“I have entered into their boat.

I have caught their fish.

I have trapped the fattest of their exotic/migratory birds (?).”

517 By means of this rather obscurely phrased statement the Master in effect asks the Disciple to confirm that he has indeed performed the "cult-ritual" associated with initiation into the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness).

518 The Master demands more specific details about the Disciple's experience. The somewhat awkward phrase "As for that which you have done" may be a gloss (that is, an explanation inserted into the text) or a heading to the following section.

519 The god Shu, "Air," is often represented in a kneeling position and lifting up the sky (= the goddess Nut). The "Arms of Shu" are especially significant in such underworld books as the Amduat. Shu lifts up the solar bark of the sun-god at the end of its journey beneath the earth in the conclusion of the Amduat. Through his help, the sunrise can thus begin. The Disciple here maintains that he has been a member of the crew of the solar bark.

520 This statement is also probably set in the past. The Disciple confirms his right to enter the House of Life on the basis of his experience. The "Ferry of the Snake" continues this underworldly symbolism, but also probably alludes to scribal activity, the "snake" representing the hieroglyphs themselves. The Egyptian phrase, Tjay teref, which we translate "container of the hieroglyphic sign," is almost certainly the same as that found in a New Kingdom composition which has been rendered "container for papyrus rolls," see Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir*, p. 364. This may indeed be an explanation of the more obscure phrase, "Ferry of the Snake," in the Book of Thoth. "The rudder of the field-dwellers" may designate the brush.

521 The Disciple figuratively declares that he has practiced writing for a period of years.

522 The "excellent spirits" are the sacred writings, as are the ba-souls. The idea is that the Disciple has struggled to learn to understand the sacred texts.

523 Once more, this probably alludes to the hieroglyphs, conceived as birds. Instead of "ate," translate perhaps "bound."

517 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"It will be necessary to perform (the cult ceremony) and to recite the ritual of the Chamber of Darkness.

518
As for that which you have done:
Have you rowed over their rivers?
What are their nature and their forms?"

519 (DISCIPLE)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
"I have rowed in the circuits (?) of the sea,
the assistants being as those who are in the bark,
which is in the Arms of Shu.

520
I entered into the Ferry of the Snake,
the container of the hieroglyphic sign!
My fingers grasped the rudder of the field-dwellers!

521
I spent three years (?)
while I was rowing therein,
while I was fishing in its pools.

522
I entered into the ferry of the excellent spirits.
I took up fighting with their ba-souls.

523
I ate up their birds.
I swallowed their falcons.
My heart has been united with their natures.

524 At this point the Disciple recounts that various sacred animals of Thoth have each given to him a utensil, undoubtedly symbolic of different kinds of scribal equipment. The baboon is especially emblematic of Thoth.

525 The "jackal/dog" is associated with Thoth. The significance of the "block of limestone" is unclear, although the word for "block," *shu*, can also mean an uninscribed "sheet of papyrus." Perhaps compare the figure of a "net" employed by the sculptor discussed by H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue im Stein. Studien zum altägyptischen Mundöffnungsritual* (Heidelberg, 1998), p. 17.

526 While the ibis is naturally sacred to Thoth, we do not know the precise import of the "trap of cattle-leather."

527 In this line the connection with writing is clear.

528 The Disciple probably asserts that he has trapped with the implements provided, that is, he has engaged with the activity of writing. Could the "squares" refer to the square spacing format regularly employed for the hieroglyphs? One is also tempted to understand the "squares" as the designation of "hunting grounds," although we have no other example of such a usage.

529 In these obscure lines the Disciple evidently narrates his difficult journey over a period of years in a great watery region. This is presumably part of the same underworldly locality mentioned earlier in the previous columns. He has suffered tribulations but succeeds in reaching his goal, "the landing place of life" (534). The entire section is probably a parable for the Disciple's path towards scribal mastery and initiation into the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness).

530-533 This is a particularly perplexing passage with several unread words. An obstacle prevents the Disciple from reaching the sailors in order to question them. Do these sailors represent, for example, priestly scribal teachers? Is the "captain" the sun-god Re as the head of the crew of the solar bark or Thoth himself? The translation of the last phrase in 532, "that which brought me back to the secret shore/bank" is especially uncertain.

524
A baboon gave to me a spear of 60 cubits.
He said to me:
'It is their wooden-post of trapping.'

525
A jackal/dog gave to me a block of limestone.
He said to me:
'It is their trapping-net.'

526
An ibis gave to me a trap of cattle-leather,
its mast-post being of the leather of a lion.

527
A dog gave to me a band of hieroglyphic writing.
He said to me:
'It is their hunting-net.'

528
My limbs trapped for them (these sacred animals) (with) the
wooden-post (?).
My heart captured for them (with) nets.
My tongue hunted in their squares.

529
I continued sailing day and night.
I made a sailing for 20 years
because of the greatness of the pools.

530
I rowed in a canal in its ...
I not being able to reach the end of the entire sea.

531
I was not able to reach them, and the ... of his ...
so as to question the sailors who row in it (?).

530-533 This is a particularly perplexing passage with several unread words. An obstacle prevents the Disciple from reaching the sailors in order to question them. Do these sailors represent, for example, priestly scribal teachers? Is the "captain" the sun-god Re as the head of the crew of the solar bark or Thoth himself? The translation of the last phrase in 532, "that which brought me back to the secret shore/bank" is especially uncertain.

534 Here the translation is more secure, and the line probably does mean that the Disciple ultimately reached his goal, "the landing place of life." As mentioned, we identify this with the House of Life.

535-536 The Disciple is able to explore the sacred locality. The denizens may represent the various kinds of hieroglyphs. Pesy, "to cook, boil," perhaps has the sense here of "to boil/bubble up." The translation "canal of life" is uncertain. Nevertheless, the notion of a marshy region giving birth to various kinds of birds almost certainly alludes to the devising and writing of the hieroglyphic signs.

537 The Disciple proudly proclaims the time he has spent acquiring his scribal knowledge. Unclear is the significance of both the donkey and the "Stall of the Dancer." Instead of "stall," translate perhaps "cell" or "court." "Path of writing" is a fine reading of Quack.

538 The "Field of Trouble" is the papyrus or, perhaps, a particular location in the House of Life. The Disciple then addresses the Master directly. The act of writing is understood as a sort of fighting.

539 The Master questions the ability of the Disciple to carry the lance, here probably the scribal brush.

532
They made for me a shout (?) of the name of its captain (= Re or Thoth).

I became weak in the canal,
that which brought me back to the secret shore/bank.

533
I capsized (?),
without my having been able to reach them.

534
As soon as I moored at the landing place of life,
the excellent green field,

535
I discovered the people, the sacred animals,
the birds, the reptiles,
while the vegetation ... grew,

536
while a canal of life boiled up around it,
it giving birth to every type of young bird therein.

537
I completed years amounting to 20 years.
A donkey said to me in the Stall of the Dancer:
"This is the path of writing!"

538
Behold, I am standing in the Field of Trouble.
I am knocking on the door to you.
Will you not reveal to me the manner of their fighting?"

539 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he
said:
"These lances of 60 cubits, it is very difficult to carry them.
Are you great enough/of the sort for their (kind of) fighting (??)"

540 The Disciple confirms that he can bear this burden, thanks to the help he has received.

541 The Master appears now to describe the entrance of the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness). Green represents "fertility," of course, and the Master emphasizes the creative or productive aspects of the scriptorium.

542 The Disciple asserts he has entered this sacred locality, the "Quarry of Turquoise" (= the entrance to the House of Life or the blank papyrus). The word for "stone," *shu*, in line 541, can also mean "shadow (of a corpse or ghost)," and there may be a play with the "shade" and "spirits" in this line 542.

543 This "Quarry of Turquoise" seems to designate the approach to the House of Life. The phrase "cause the knowing of its manner" is insecurely translated.

544 The Master asks for specifics.

545-546 The "Hall of the Two Truths" is where the heart of the deceased is weighed and judged in the Underworld. The 42 ba-souls are the sacred spirits associated with this Hall. Once more, in the Book of Thoth the House of Life is symbolically equated with such important underworldly places. Given that Osiris played a key role in the House of Life (as is clear from P. Salt 825, see p. 5), this mention of the Hall of the Two Truths is not surprising. "42" is a sacred number in Egypt, representing, for example, the ideal number of nomes (administrative districts) in Egypt. There are also, traditionally, 42 "sacred books" in the House of Life.

547 The Master asks about the forms of the "sacred animals" mentioned in the previous line. Presumably the question about the "opening of the mouth" is intended to encourage the Disciple to speak.

540 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"A sympathetic confidant gave to me the way of carrying it, so that they are light."

541 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"Have they completed (?) the gate of green stone which creates every stone from it?"

542 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"I entered into it, the Quarry of Turquoise which forms a shade for the spirits,

543

it revealing the Chamber of Darkness.

Myriads of its myriads cause the knowing of its manner (?)."

544 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"What is after it? What is within it?

... who are in its middle?"

545 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"There are 42 ba-souls in it,

who command myriads of myriads.

546

Here are the choicest of the sacred animals ...

who are at the place of the Hall of the Two Truths."

547 (MASTER)

He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:

"What is their form? Reveal their shapes!




For what is the opening of the mouth? Come to hear them!"

548 The Disciple displays his knowledge of these mysterious underworldly creatures.

549 The "Lord of Protection" may be Osiris. The Disciple describes the sacred ba-souls. "Brilliant of Appearances" probably also designates Osiris.

550 The force of this line is obscure. Do these two sacred ba-souls aid the dying?

551 This ba-soul clearly has the form of an underworld being.

552 This is a very complicated and difficult line. We believe that the columns are supporting an image (or images?) of the cobra goddess Udjat. She is the Lower Egyptian pendant to the Upper Egyptian vulture goddess Nekhbet. Of course, the figure of the vulture is prominent in this section of the Book of Thoth. Udjat (= Oudjat) can be identified with the Eye of Re, H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1952), p. 853. At the same time, the author is almost certainly alluding to the similar **sounding** Oudjat-eye of Horus, which came to be conflated with the Eye of Re, **Bonnet**, *Reallexikon*, p. 855. Thoth is often shown carrying an oudjat-eye. The "orderer of the hieroglyphic signs" is perhaps the "chief" vulture who embraces these sacred ba-souls or even Thoth himself. Instead of "(hieroglyphic) signs," translate perhaps "the Two Lands" (the Demotic sign or group is similar for both phrases). The "Two Lands" can be written  in the Late Period, where the cobras are actually spitting poison, *Wb.* 5, 217 and also with the two oudjat-eyes , *ibid.* and the two **ouadj-stems** of papyrus (Gardiner number M13)  (see C. Leitz, *Die Tempelinschriften der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Quellentexte zur ägyptischen Religion 1 [Münster, 2004], p. 189, from which these writings are taken). Ouadj is also the designation of a column (and a columned hall in a temple), *Wb.* 1, 264/8–9 and 269/6–9), and the author thus is deliberately alluding to the nine "columns" at the beginning of 552. This line is certainly one of the most esoteric lines in the entire Book of Thoth, wherein the author plays on the multiple ways in which the term for "Two Lands" can be written and the connection with the identical sounding term for "(hieroglyphic) signs."

553 The "nestlings" seem to represent the various sacred books or even the hieroglyphs. "Hunting" and "trapping" in the Book of Thoth may denote the act of writing. Earlier in the Book of Thoth the Master is called: "He-hunted-the-Ba-souls" (see line 240).

548 (DISCIPLE)

The one who loves knowledge, he said:

"I will reveal the name(s) and their nature (?).

They are more mysterious than the nights.

549

There are **seven** of them who announce the Lord of Protection (= Osiris),

they being as protection for the one Brilliant of Appearances.

550

Another **two** of them give the foot on a path of death, while they prepare the ones upon earth.

551

Another is the foremost of them, he being as a lamp which is lit, while he interprets their language.

552

The last **nine** are columns, carrying an (image of the goddess) Udjat, she spitting out the orderer of the hieroglyphic signs,

553

while a noble vulture (= Nekhbet) is the one who embraces them, who bears all the nestlings which they have hunted (or 'to be hunted').

554 All of these young birds are different in appearance.

555 The author may be describing actual decoration within the House of Life.

556 The Disciple again begins to recount his personal experience of initiation into the domain of the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness). One wonders whether the author is describing statues of "the vulture and her nestlings" placed between the columns (note line 552 and the "Vulture List" beginning in line 646). The "Darkness" probably refers back to the Chamber of Darkness, that is, the House of Life. The translation "being brave" is not certain.

557 The Disciple is able to read the ancient hieroglyphs in the House of Life.

558-559 The Disciple clearly means Seshat, the personification of writing. Seshat is very prominent in temple foundation ceremonies. The relationship between Seshat and the vulture mother is unclear. In some passages the vulture seems to represent Seshat, but elsewhere the vulture apparently is a distinct entity. In this passage Seshat seems to be superior to the vulture who has given birth to the children (= the sacred ba-souls). The sequence is: Seshat-vulture mother-vulture nestlings. Possibly render "the one who gave birth to herself" (i.e., was self-created). This would be then an epithet of Seshat.

560-562 The Disciple evokes the sacred landscape, which is evidently much like the marshes, lakes, and seas depicted in the previous columns. The sea resembles the Ocean (= Nun) surrounding the earth according to Egyptian belief. "Nine" is a sacred number in Egypt (most notably associated with the nine major gods of the Ennead). The Disciple portrays the marsh lands with its lake as symbolic of a papyrus (= lake) bordered by reeds, which provide the pens or brushes that "give birth to new words." The Egyptians considered ichneumons sacred to the sun-god.

554

I saw their ... their changeable nature.
They are not similar in manner.

555

She works some nestlings with gold and turquoise,
others with real lapis lazuli.

556

The hall:

(I) found the vulture and her nestlings between the columns,
she being brave in Darkness to ...

557

I went to it. I looked in it (the Chamber of Darkness).
I interpreted the hieroglyphic signs which came into being earlier.

558

I found She-who-is-wise.
She is the one who first founded (the Chamber of Darkness/
writing),
she acting as a Lamp of Prophecy (= Seshat),

559

[she] making forms (?),
she giving orders to them,
she gives orders (to) the one who gave birth to them.

560

I revealed a sea, which was protecting the Two Lands,
while its circumference was growing with turquoise,

561

while nine boats fare north and south within it,
while their ba-souls are their creations,

562

and while their reeds give birth to new words,
while nurses and their wet-nurses are ichneumons.

563-564 The Disciple continues to recount his initiation into the House of Life, here understood as a "Storeroom of Life." Of course, this is a fitting image, since the sacred books are stored in the House of Life and related library. With regard to the lamp, compare line 319: "His beloved (= the Disciple) is in total darkness. (But) the teaching will light for him a torch." The author of the Book of Thoth has also earlier employed (line 354) the image of swimming in the sense of immersing oneself in scribal training. The translation is not secure.

565-566 The identity of the six rowers, presumably in the underworld solar bark, is not explicit (the description seems a bit too vague and not elevated enough for the usual divine crew of Isis, Thoth, Sia and the others). They are probably praising the sun-god in their own secret language, as do the sacred baboons, a well-attested motif in Egyptian underworld literature. The six rowers evidently are closely associated with the 42 sacred ba-souls, who themselves are connected with their Mistress, here understood to be perhaps the "Two Lands," that is, Egypt. The "Two Lands" may also be a play on the word for "hieroglyphic signs"; both words sound very similar in Egyptian (cf. the note on line 245). The six rowers are obviously benevolent deities; do they symbolize the lector priests of the House of Life?

567-569 The six rowers take care of those who have drowned in the sacred lake, even though they have no Book of the Dead. The passage probably alludes to the Ancient Egyptian tradition that those drowning in the Nile are deified or blessed.

570-571 These six rowers are friendly beings, but their prayers or chanting are extremely difficult to comprehend, as is appropriate for compositions of the House of Life.

563

I took a lamp in my hand
in order to learn the interior of the land (?) before it (the sea).

564

I journeyed within its interior.
I reached a Storeroom of Life.
It commands swimming,
without it having ordered it (explicitly?).

565

I found six rowers sitting,
they being complete,
they worshipping in a mode of speech,

566

they being joined of heart
with the ones of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt (i.e., the 42 sacred ba-souls),
the Two Lands, which are their mistress.

567

See, they have no enemies.
They do not hide themselves,
while they fish for creatures which are drowned,

568

they beautifying a corpse which has no Book (of the Dead),
they eradicating evils by means of their recitations,

569

they rescuing a man from his fate,
his death standing behind him.

570

Great is the praise of the one who has caused that they take
these ...

They are the ones who have come, sweet of love.

570-571 These six rowers are friendly beings, but their prayers or chanting are extremely difficult to comprehend, as is appropriate for compositions of the House of Life.

572-575 The Disciple has nevertheless acquired the secret knowledge of the prayers or utterances of the six rowers. "She-who-is-in-the-heaven" may be Seshat or another related goddess. Pe is the sacred locality of Buto in the Delta particularly associated with the goddess Oudjat (or Wadjet). It is known as a center of cult and myth and thus is fittingly in this section of the Book of Thoth. The phrase, "Four Corners of Nun (= the primeval ocean)," denotes the known universe. "Total" in 575 may introduce a heading or subheading. Still, the narrative resumes in 576.

576 The Disciple again emphasizes his personal knowledge of or acquaintance with these deeply sacred deities and places. This is a climax of the Disciple's experience within the House of Life (= the storeroom).

577 The Disciple offers here his clearest declaration that he has reached the goal of initiation into the House of Life. Isten is an epithet of Thoth. The "Support of Life" presumably refers here to the core teachings of Thoth, as represented in the sacred books of the House of Life.

578 Thoth is naturally a master of magic.

579 Hu and Sia, close allies of Thoth, have already appeared in line 70.

571

Painful are their utterances.

Difficult are their words,

their explanations being too varied to write (?).

572

They themselves (?) are the ones who resolve the utterances.

They belong to me. I have said them. I have explained them.

573

As soon as I opened them (papyri?),

and I knew how to praise them,

my heart spoke to me its desire with them,

574

until I discovered she-who-is-in-the-heaven,

who has deliberated in Pe, through the rituals.

575 (HEADING?)

Total, one by one, all their good things (= the rituals or result thereof)

which came from the Four Corners of Nun.

576

She tarried,

while I sat upon the storeroom (= House of Life) with them,

while their magic enchants my heart.

577

I found her/them [at] the Support of Life

which Isten established,

who gave it to the ones of the House of Life.

578

The (visible) evidence of the deeds of magic,

which are behind him (= Thoth) as sole guard.

579

The ... office of Hu (Divine Utterance) and Sia (Divine Insight)

... to reckon.

581 Horus Khentikhtai is a form of Horus based in the city of Athribis in Lower Egypt. He is an aggressive protector of Osiris, among other things, see P. Vernus, "Chentechtai," in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden, 1975), vol. 1, cols. 923–26.

582–594 In this fragmentary section the Disciple apparently journeys in dangerous regions. The locality is populated with a variety of snakes in different forms. The uraeus snake is, of course, well-known, but it is difficult to discern the identity of the other snakes. The snakes seem to be related to the other sacred animals, such as vultures and bulls, who dwell in the Field of Turquoise. It may be that these animals represent the hieroglyphs, which, of course, include many variants of such creatures. The "Field of Turquoise" may be a figurative term for the "papyrus."

580
... deeds (?) the wet-nurse
... therein.

581
[Horus] Khentikhtai knows the ones who did ...
... their excellence.

582
[I] drew near to the papyrus ...
... who carried off their end.

583
[It happened] thereafter that I entered ...
... glow.

584
And the one who smells them
brings them to ...

585
I draw near so as to burn their bones ...
... to boil their flesh.

586
I hurried to the snake so as to give ...
their hearts in their mouths, one by one.

587
They are (each) in a (different) form.
Numerous are ... (?).
Their nature is exalted (?).

588
I entered into them.
I saw their nature (?) ...

589
I found a uraeus snake,
it being with them ...

582-594 In this fragmentary section the Disciple apparently journeys in dangerous regions. The locality is populated with a variety of snakes in different forms. The uraeus snake is, of course, well-known, but it is difficult to discern the identity of the other snakes. The snakes seem to be related to the other sacred animals, such as vultures and bulls, who dwell in the Field of Turquoise. It may be that these animals represent the hieroglyphs, which, of course, include many variants of such creatures. The "Field of Turquoise" may be a figurative term for the "papyrus."

595 Or "she being like the vulture who bears ..."

600 This entire passage is much destroyed. The Disciple is probably undergoing an experience associated with the primeval waters, the Nun. Water purification naturally plays a large role in Egyptian cult, and water from the temple sacred lake was likely utilized in ceremonies of the House of Life.

602-603 The Disciple may taste certain food as part of the initiation process. Wormwood (also called *Artemisia*) is used in Egyptian medicine, R. Germer, *Handbuch der altägyptischen Heilpflanzen*, Philippika 21 (Wiesbaden), pp. 110-11. In 603 the sense of "sharp" may be "eager."

590

It bearing hissings in a ... Field of Turquoise,

591

while its children number hundreds ...

592

Fifty change from form to form ...

593

Some bulls among them in some ...

594

Some snakes sit ...

595

See, the vulture who bears ...

596

Delay among them, O one who has caused ...

597

Myriads of myriads ...

598

They bowing ...

599

... therein. I established the ... the ... which ...

600

[I turned] my face (?) to the waters, these which fill ...
Their flood [seized (?) me] there.

601

Millions of children, hundreds of thousands of forms,
... he nursing.

602

I ate some wormwood leaves (?) ...
I spit (?) them out and turned back (?)
... to eat them again.

602-603 The Disciple may taste certain food as part of the initiation process. Wormwood (also called *Artemesia*) is used in Egyptian medicine, R. Germer, *Handbuch der altägyptischen Heilpflanzen*, Philippika 21 (Wiesbaden), pp. 110-11. In 603 the sense of "sharp" may be "eager."

604 Other texts also mention the "gods of the House of Life"; statues of these probably lined the path walked by the Disciple.

605 The "children" may be the sacred books themselves (the "children" of Thoth). Throughout the Book of Thoth very prominent is such imagery of fishing and fowling, which we understand to symbolize scribal activity.

606 The "dogs" are the assistants of Thoth (see the note to line 17), and the "field of vegetation" may be the papyrus itself.

607 The Disciple wishes to join these assistants or the more advanced scribal priests.

608 Here the Disciple asserts his knowledge and thus qualifications for initiation. We do not know the precise significance of the number "18" here (although nine is a sacred number for the Egyptians, found, for example, in the group of nine gods designated the Ennead). The notation "refrain" probably indicates that this line was repeated.

609 The beginning of this line is almost hopelessly obscure. The Disciple either praises the baboons, sacred animals of Thoth, or perhaps joins in their glorification of their master, Thoth, or the sun-god, Re.

610 The Master again queries the Disciple, presumably with regard to his process of initiation or training.

611 This is a very difficult line; the translation of several words is uncertain.

603
My heart was sharp (=eager?) to know ...
and my fingers to taste their nature.

604
I wished to kiss the earth for the gods of the House of Life
and place myself upon the path of their forms.

605
May the children carry out for me my wish of fishing as a fisherman,
and my heart open my limbs (with?) their nets.

606
May one place me among the rowers,
the dogs which are in the ... in the field of vegetation, excellent of love.

607
It is worthwhile to place me among them,
the spirits excellent of health.

608
I have placed taste in my mouth
so as to hurry into the ... (?) 18 Refrain

609
Bring me (?) ... I have caused you to stand (?)
... praising the jubilating baboons."

610 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:
"Have you journeyed ...

611
so as to kill the one standing opposite you.
The points (?) ...

612–617 This list of animals is reminiscent of Shenute's (?) list of hieroglyphs in his sermon against them, D. Young, "A Monastic Invective against Egyptian Hieroglyphs," in D. Young (ed.), *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky* (Beacon Hill, 1981), p. 354. The Master may be asking the Disciple about his knowledge of hieroglyphs, see Jasnow "Caught in the Web of Words," *JARCE* 47 (2011), p. 298. If so, the animals mentioned here would figuratively represent the hieroglyphs. The image of the fly seems to be positive here; one may compare its use as an amulet or image on reward jewelry, S. Binder, *The Gold of Honour in New Kingdom Egypt*, The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Studies 8 (Oxford, 2008), pp. 52–55.

618 The author of the Book of Thoth once more conceives writing and reading as aggressive activities.

619–620 Here the Disciple again asserts his knowledge of sacred rites.

621 The "red hippopotamus" is Seth, here destroyed by a dog as a scribe (see Jasnow, "Caught in the Web of Words," *JARCE* 47 [2011], p. 316). Since the lector priest would read the sacred ritual texts directed against such deities as Seth and Apophis, the line yields reasonable sense.

622 The Ash-animal also probably represents Seth.

612

Have you looked to the chapel of the lion which is under ...

613

these dogs, these jackals, these bulls which ...

614

these male snakes, these female snakes, the totality of these wo[rms] ...

615

these swords, these lances, the totality of these wea[pons] ...

616

these flies which are as a shade, while the chapels (?) ...

617

Have you honored the quail which is in the nest(?),
which makes its sustenance through the sending forth of fire?"

618 (DISCIPLE)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:

"I have crossed through these battlefields.

I have caused that you say to me their creations.

[I have] come(?) to fight in them on account of them.

619

I looked at the flies, as they cut the ...,
while the vultures were sharp against the ...

620

I have observed the vulture in its covert in the thicket (?),
as it slaughters the snake upon the ...

621

I have seen the dog which is as a scribe(?) ... ,
as he makes a slaughter of the red hippopotamus ...

622

I have seen the face of the Ash-animal,
while ... bringing away ... as a ...(?).

623 This image refers to Horus spearing the turtle, often shown, for example, in the Temple of Edfu. The turtle is the enemy of the sun-god in the underworld and is thus identified with Apophis.

624 Again, the falcon (= Horus) triumphs over the oryx, equated with Seth.

625 The hippopotamus is yet another enemy of the sun-god, representing Seth. Gemhes is the Egyptian for "falcon image," symbolizing Horus once more.

626 The translation "diadems" is plausible, but uncertain.

627 The meaning of this line is unclear to us. The theme of protection (an idea closely associated with the vulture) is continued from the previous line.

628 We render "copper of strength," as Quack suggests.

629 "She-who-is-wise" is almost certainly Seshat, but the significance of the "14 writings" is unclear, although 14 is one-third of 42. The sun-god is associated with 14 names or kas in magical texts, e.g., A. Klasens, *A Magical Statue Base (Socle Béhague) in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* (Leiden, 1952), p. 108.

630 The female deity is probably Seshat. The Disciple confirms his personal experience of her cult. We read, following Quack, per-shena, "House of the Storeroom" (= the Thirteenth Upper Egyptian Nome), comparing C. Peust, *Die Toponyme vorarabischen Ursprungs im modernen Ägypten: ein Katalog*, Göttinger Miszellen Beiheft 8 (Göttingen, 2010), p. 95. See also C. Leitz, *Geographisch-osirianische Prozessionen aus Philae, Dendera und Athribis. Soubassementstudien II*, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 8 (Wiesbaden, 2012), p. 165.

623

[I have seen] ... gone down with his spear,
while he (= Horus) impales the turtle upon the sandbank.

624

[I have greeted] the falcon which is variegated of plumage,
he exulting over the body of an oryx.

625

[I] have worshipped ... the gemhes-falcon,
while he spears the red hippopotamus.

626

I saw the diadems (?) [on the head] of the King of Upper and
Lower Egypt
being as the protection of the royal cult images.

627

The vulture protected ... brushes
so as to cause the earth to overflow with its work.

628

I have seen the copper of strength,
while it splits [heads,]
while it is covered with the blood of the enemies.

629

I have seen the 14 writings of She-who-is-wise, ...
made on account of the scarab ...

630

I greeted her (= She-who-is-wise) at the House of the Store-
room,
she pressing her doorkeeper for barley,
she ordering it for the gods of the King of Upper and Lower
Egypt.

631 The royal imagery continues.

632 The Disciple returns to the physical details of the House of Life itself. One wonders whether the previous lines dealt with the royal cult within the House of Life. "Copper of strength" was just mentioned in line 628, and a "key of questioning" in line 463.

633 "Female divine falcon" is an epithet of Hathor, for example, but here probably refers to Seshat.

634 The "them" presumably refers to the ba-souls. In other words, the Disciple has witnessed the assigning of the 42 sacred scrolls to each of the 42 nomes (= administrative districts of Egypt).

635 These sacred ba-souls are protected by snakes, a common Egyptian motif.

636 The Disciple (there is a minor textual correction here) asks these snakes about the sacred ba-souls, that is, the sacred scrolls.

637-638 Naturally, these sacred ba-souls or scrolls are intimately associated with the House of Life. Again, there are 42 nomes (administrative districts) and traditionally, therefore, 42 sacred scrolls, according to Clement of Alexandria, the Church Father writing in the second-third century A.D., see G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 58-59.

639-640 Here the Disciple looks to the following section (beginning in line 646) which we call the "Vulture List," wherein each of these nomes is identified with a specific vulture and its nestlings. The Disciple even questions these 42 vultures within the House of Life. On this section, see now C. Leitz, "Die Geierweibchen des Thothbuches in den 42 Gauen Ägyptens," *Revue d'Égyptologie* 63 (2012), pp. 137-86 (cited in the following as "Geierweibchen"). In fact, the "42" is an ideal number, only 39 nomes seem to be named, Leitz, "Geierweibchen," p. 138.

631
She has caused to eat the young female servant of the White Crown and the young female servant of the Red Crown therefrom upon the head ... the palace-façade.

632
I have seen She-of-the-Chapel-of ...
as she closes the House of Life with a key of iron.

633
I have worshipped the female divine falcon
while she gives orders to the ba-souls,
while the scribe of the shrine writes near (?) [her.]

634
See! A kite, an ibis, and a falcon
assign them (the ba-souls) to the (Two) Lands, one by one.

635
Some snakes provide their protection as guards,
some uraei are with them as gatekeepers.

636
[I] asked the gatekeepers about (?) the Ba-souls of Re,
the guardians about their nature.

637
They say to me:
"There are 42 sacred places in the House of Life,
they grow ...

638
42 vultures give birth between them,
while their nestlings ... eight (?)'

639
I queried regarding the vultures and their names.
The nestlings said to me [their] songs,

639–640 Here the Disciple looks to the following section (beginning in line 646) which we call the “Vulture List,” wherein each of these nomes is identified with a specific vulture and its nestlings. The Disciple even questions these 42 vultures within the House of Life. On this section, see now C. Leitz, “Die Geierweibchen des Thothbuches in den 42 Gauen Ägyptens,” *Revue d’Égyptologie* 63 (2012), pp. 137–86 (cited in the following as “Geierweibchen”). In fact, the “42” is an ideal number, only 39 nomes seem to be named, Leitz, “Geierweibchen,” p. 138.

641–643 This supreme vulture is seated upon a grand throne. Perhaps the vulture has by her a sort of scroll of life. One may compare a passage in the Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Third Intermediate Period (from ca. 1080–750 B.C.): “those two great living baboons who rest on the right and left of Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep and who are those who issue a book of death and life,” I. E. S. Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Fourth Series (London, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 1–2.

644–645 Now the Master requests the Disciple to prove his knowledge of these 42 sacred scrolls associated with the 42 nomes. The “mistress” is Seshat. The “them” would refer to these 42 sacred scrolls, which are conceived of as vultures or ba-souls.

646 The bow refers to the symbol of this nome. The following list accords with the traditional sequence of nomes or administrative units of Egypt. We have added the nome symbol after the designation, although the connection between the statement in the Book of Thoth and the symbol is not always evident. The cities mentioned are the capitals of the nome.

647 The scale refers to the symbol of this nome.

640
while a vulture embraces them (the nestlings),
she being in desire for the protection/right places.

641
The lion is seated at her throne,
he being established at her side.

642
She says: ‘He makes a slaughter among the ones whom he will
slay ...’

643
She opens and he closes the gift of the festival book/day-journal ...”

644 (MASTER)
He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back, he said:
“Inasmuch as you have an abundance of desire ...


645
Would you lead us through them
that we might know them,
and that we might praise our mistress,
who founded ...?”

646 (DISCIPLE)
(VULTURE LIST)
The-one-who-loves-knowledge, he said:
“A vulture who draws a bow,
while her nestling ...
It is Elephantine. (= U. E. Nome 1)



647
A vulture ... a scale ...
while her nestling of gold is by her.
It is Edfu. (= U. E. Nome 2)



648 There is a possible connection between the “lake” and the sign used for writing the Egyptian name of Hierakonpolis ; see Leitz, “Geierweibchen,” p. 141, who proposed the restoration of either Hierakonpolis or El Kab. In our first edition we restored “Esna.”

649 We had in our first edition tentatively proposed the town of “Armant” and posited a relationship between the “pillar” sign used to write “Armant” in Egyptian and the notion of “support” in this line. However, Leitz, “Geierweibchen,” p. 142, has very aptly suggested that “Thebes” be read here. The Egyptians wrote the name of this famous city with the so-called was-scepter, and, as Wilson, *Lexikon*, p. 199, writes, this “probably was used to show a prop of heaven, denoting the idea of might.”

650 Coptos is a city just north of Luxor.

651 The crocodile is used in the symbol of this nome.

652 The sistrum can appear in the symbol of this nome.

653 We associate this statement with the sufferings of Osiris, whose chief temple is in Abydos. See also Leitz, “Geierweibchen,” p. 145, on this line.

654 We follow Quack here, but the translation remains unclear. Does this line refer to the “two fossil belemnites (?)” Gardiner R22 (A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*, 3rd edition [London, 1957], p. 503) used to write the Egyptian name of Akhmim? Leitz, “Geierweibchen,” p. 147, suggests “two wet-nurses (?) opposite (?) a female vulture, while her nestling [...] ...”

648

A vulture who ... lake
who casts fire in the surrounding of her nestling.
It is Hierakonpolis. (= U. E. Nome 3)



649

A vulture with her nestlings
carrying the supports of the heaven.
It is Thebes. (= U. E. Nome 4)



650

A vulture ... her nestling ...
It is Coptos. (= U. E. Nome 5)



651

A vulture ... upon a crocodile,
while her nestling dances upon him/before her.
It is Dendera. (= U. E. Nome 6)



652

A nestling ... vulture ...
a fair sistrum ...
It is Hu. (= U. E. Nome 7)



653

A vulture ... her hand (?) at her mouth,
while she experiences suffering/is silent on account of her nestling.
It is Abydos. (= U. E. Nome 8)



654

Two wombs, they being before a vulture,
while her nestling ...
It is Akhmim. (= U. E. Nome 9)



655 The bull perhaps represents Seth; the Horus-Seth myth plays a large role in this nome.

656 The significance of this imagery is uncertain.

657 The finger here refers to the two fingers used in writing the name of the local falcon god and in the symbol of the nome itself.

658 We adopt here Quack's interpretation of this line. He relates it to another mythical tradition associated with Assiut, wherein a dog eats and then spits out what it has swallowed. See also Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 150-51.

659 This line clearly refers to the tree which is part of the nome symbol. See here the remarks of Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 152-54.

660 This line may refer to the Ogdoad, the group of eight deities associated with Hermopolis, the city of Thoth. Again, see Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 154-55.

661 Writings of the name or symbol of this nome do indeed represent a falcon standing on top of an oryx. In the Book of Thoth a vulture is substituted for the falcon.

655

A vulture who eats of a bull,
while her nestling rejoices in its ...
It is Kom Ishqaw. (= U. E. Nome 10)



656

A vulture who adorns her wing ... head
... her nestling ...
It is Hypselis. (= U. E. Nome 11)



657

A vulture whose finger/claw is extended,
while her nestling ...
It is el-Atawla. (= U. E. Nome 12)



658

A vulture, whose nestling is behind her,
while he vomits out that which he has eaten.
It is Assiut. (= U. E. Nome 13)



659

Vultures who are in an acacia-tree,
while their nestlings are in the river ...
It is Cusae. (= U. E. Nome 14)



660

Eight (?) vultures together with their nine nestlings.
They caused one of them to fly away ...
It is Hermopolis. (= U. E. Nome 15)



661

A vulture and her nestling,
they exulting over the body of an oryx.
It is Hebenu. (= U. E. Nome 16)



662 The recumbent dog is part of the nome symbol.

663 The symbol of this nome is a falcon with outstretched wings. We adopt Quack's reading "Hardai."

664 This is the nome of Oxyrhynchus. On this line, see Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 159–60.

665 The local god of this nome was Bebon, often represented as a dog or baboon. He can be identified with Seth, a fact which may explain the donkey in this line.

666 This line seems to offer a sound play between "to establish" (Egyptian men) and the name of the capital, **Semen**-Hor.

667 The sorrow of the vulture may reflect the grief of Hathor as Isis, mourning for Osiris. However, Leitz observes that the central myth of this nome is the decapitation of the head of Hathor or Isis, and this may better explain the line in the Book of Thoth, "Geierweibchen," pp. 162–63.

668 The themes of building and creation admirably suit Memphis (the nome "White Wall") and its patron god Ptah. On this line, see also Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 163–64.

669 There is word play here between "forget" and the Egyptian name of Letopolis, Sekhem, which can also mean "forget."

662

A vulture biting a dog,
while her nestling grabs hold of it.
It is Sako. (= U. E. Nome 17)



663

A vulture who spreads out its wings with her nestling,
while they protect their father.
It is Hardai. (= U. E. Nome 18)



664

A vulture [on] a horse,
while her nestling ...
It is Wabab. (= U. E. Nome 19)



665

18 vultures who cut a donkey,
[while a] phoenix (?) ... their nestling
It is Herakleopolis. (= U. E. Nome 20)



666

A vulture who gives birth to a nestling
so as to establish ...
It is Semen-Hor. (= U. E. Nome 21)



667

A vulture who is grieved with sorrow,
while her nestling ... trouble/replace ... her face.
It is Atfih. (= U. E. Nome 22)



668

A vulture who builds the heaven,
while her nestling establishes (?) the earth before her.
It is Memphis. (= L. E. Nome 1)



669

A vulture who makes the remainder of the praise,
while they forget her [nestling ...].
It is Letopolis. (= L. E. Nome 2)



670 The reading and interpretation of this line are problematic. See Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 167–68.

671 A very insecurely read line. The determinative indicates that the nestling is under something which has to do with the wind or air.

672 This line refers to the arrows incorporated into the nome symbol.

673 This line alludes to the 7,000 year reign of Re, which is based on the hieratic spelling of the Egyptian name for the city of Xoïs.

674 A boat is in the emblem of this nome.

675 The references to fishing also yield sense since there is again a boat in the emblem of this nome.

676 The reference to purity or purification is plausible for Busiris ("The-House-of-Osiris"), which was one of the main burial places of the god.

677 The significance of this line is unclear, but see Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 172–73.

670
A vulture who is united with her nestling,
while they bring ...
It is Kom el-Hisn. (= L. E. Nome 3)



671
A vulture ...
her nestling is under ...
It is ... (= L. E. Nome 4?)



672
A vulture with a bow,
while her nestling draws the cord for
[It is Sais.] (= L. E. Nome 5)



673
A vulture of 7,000 years ...,
while her two nestlings suckle ...
[It is Xoïs.] (= L. E. Nome 6)



674
A vulture upon a boat,
while her nestling steers.
[It is] (= L. E. Nome 7)



675
A vulture and her nestling
who are casting nets ...
[It is Pithom.] (= L. E. Nome 8)



676
A vulture who is establishing purity
It is Busiris. (= L. E. Nome 9)



677
A vulture who places her tail ... outside
... her nestling ...
It is Athribis. (= L. E. Nome 10)



678 This nome is called Heseb, "the Slaughtered (Bull)," Wilson, *Lexikon*, p. 678, which may explain the aggressive or negative character of the line.

679 The nest imagery is suitable, given the motherly connotations of the name of this nome: "Calf-and-Divine-Cow." See also Leitz, "Geierweibchen," pp. 175–77.

680 The significance of this line is not certain, although there is a "Fish-pond" district in the nome.

681 The significance of this line is unclear. The word between "gives" and "knowledge" has apparently the copper determinative. Could this be a weapon, i.e., a "lance of knowledge," or similar? Leitz, "Geierweibchen," p. 179, suggests Sile rather than Herakleopolis Parva.

682 This line may refer to Thoth as the "eldest." The symbol of this nome is an ibis, and Thoth is the main god of the locality.

683 The significance of this broken line is unclear.

684 There may be a sound play between meh, "nest," and the alternative name of this nome, Waset-mehtet, "Northern-Waset."

685 There may be a sound play here between bes, "torch," and the name of the capital city of the Nome, Bubastis.

678

A vulture who causes evil to reach his [...] on account of ...
while her nestling ...

[It is Horbeit (?).] (= L. E. Nome 11)



679

A vulture who is in her nest of papyrus and hay ...,
while her ... her nestlings ...

[It is Sebennytyos.] (= L. E. Nome 12)



680

A vulture who hunts fish,
giving food [to] her nestling ...

[It is Heliopolis.] (= L. E. Nome 13)



681

A vulture who gives (?) ... knowledge for her nestling

[It is Herakleopolis Parva (?).] (= L. E. Nome 14)



682

A vulture who nourishes the eldest of the nestlings,
while she causes/gives ...

[It is Hermopolis Parva.] (= L. E. Nome 15)



683

A vulture who cuts a ...
while her mouth ... her nestling ...

[It is Mendes.] (= L. E. Nome 16)



684

A vulture who finds (?) her nest
... she ... place (?)

[It is Tell el-Balamun.] (= L. E. Nome 17)



685

A vulture who grabs a torch in her hand ...
her nestling, while he ...

[It is Bubastis.] (= L. E. Nome 18)



686 The nurse imagery of this line fits the name of the nome: "Royal Child-north." Leitz has observed that "Buto" is a better restoration than "Tanis," as we had suggested in *Book of Thoth*, pp. 348-49, "Geierweibchen," p. 183.

687 A sacred falcon image is the symbol of this nome.

688 The Disciple concludes his impressive list of the vultures and their nestlings. However, the significance of the "grove of barley," if that is the correct translation, is obscure. It may refer figuratively to the location of these divine vultures within the sacred space of the House of Life.

689 The Disciple then describes the close relationship between the king and Shentait (= Isis) and Shai (= Seshat), here probably designating a single deity, Shentait-Shai. This goddess has already appeared in line 507. Instead of "eldest son," read perhaps "eldest brother," as Quack suggests. The previous vultures are all understood, reasonably enough, as aspects of this goddess, Shentait-Shai (= Isis-Seshat).

690 The king epitomizes the "wise one" who drinks in knowledge from this goddess.

691 The "donkey" may not indicate here "Seth," although it usually does in Egyptian religious texts. There is a word play between "sacred animal," aa, and "donkey," aa. We have already met a character, "He-created-the-thoughts-of-the-donkey," earlier in the Book of Thoth (line 450). The sacred animal is almost certainly Thoth.

692 The ibis is, of course, a more obvious symbol of Thoth. The Disciple praises the god. Once more there is a word play between "ibis," heb, and "sent off," heb. This is a much beloved word play in Egyptian religious texts.

693 Evidently another line praising Thoth. Instead of "The one who prophesied for his father and mother" we may translate "The one who was knowledgeable for his father and mother," as Quack suggests. The scribe apparently had two manuscripts with differing texts. "Grandfather" is "father of the father" in Egyptian.

694 The "Enchanter" is probably again Thoth, while his "children" are presumably his sacred writings. The phrase "he has become (literally, 'he has made/acted as') the greatest of the ones greater than he" is a good example of Egyptian hyperbole (a popular stylistic device of Egyptian authors).

686

A vulture who is as a nurse
... nestling ... his father.
[It is Buto.] (= L. E. Nome 19)



687

A vulture who is resting in the bed (lit. 'place of sleeping') between them,
namely, the two feathers of the gemhes-falcon, the ...
[It is Persopdu.] (= L. E. Nome 20)



688 (END OF VULTURE LIST)

Total of the vultures and their nestlings
in their particulars in the grove (?) of barley ...

689

The king (= Horus), the eldest son of Shentait-Shai,
they are the vulture and her nestling.

690

The Breast of Knowledge (= Seshat) which suckles the wise ones
is that which belongs to them as nurse ...

691

The sacred animal who first understood the donkey
is the one who leads before him (Thoth?).

692

The divine ibis ... who sent off the elders
is the one who is as the great one of the great ones.

693

He is indeed the one who prophesied for his father and mother:
another version: grandfather, he making something ...

694

The Enchanter has said to me his children.
He has become the greatest of the ones greater than he."

Glossary

Amduat

One of the most famous of Egyptian underworld “books” preserved chiefly in the tombs of the New Kingdom pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings. In Egyptian Amduat means “What-is-in-the-Underworld,” and the composition minutely describes through text and image the journey of the sun-god in his bark in the underworld during the twelve hours of the night.

Aqat-boat

The name of a type of boat employed in the marshy landscape traveled by the Disciple. (515)

“Arms of Shu”

Shu is the god of air and light. His arms sustain the heavens, and lift up the solar bark. (519)

Ash-animal

An unidentified animal, possibly identified with Seth in the Book of Thoth. (622)

“At-reed”

This is probably a designation of the scribal reed brush or pen in the Book of Thoth. (374)

Ba

According to Mark Smith, the ba is “‘what is immanent,’ i.e. visible manifestation” (*Traversing Eternity*, p. 4). With regard to the deceased, the ba is that part of the deceased which is able to be mobile, and able to exercise such bodily functions as eating and drinking. It could assume human form; it is usually shown as a bird with a human head. The term has a wide application in Egyptian thought, and does not always refer to the deceased. The bas or the Ba-souls of Re are a desig-

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nation of the “sacred books” of Thoth. They may also denote the hieroglyphs themselves in the Book of Thoth. (Passim)

Ba-souls of Re

This is the designation for the “sacred books” of Ancient Egypt. In Egyptian iconography the ba-soul is represented as a human-headed bird. The number of “sacred books” was traditionally 42, one for each of the nomes or administrative units in Egypt. These sacred books may be considered as emanations or manifestations of the creator solar god, Re. (242, 438, 440, 636)

Bark of Re

The sun-god Re journeys through the heavens and the underworld in his solar bark. (433)

“Binder”

An epithet of Seshat in the Book of Thoth. (281)

Book of Annals

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (336)

Book of the Dead

The standard collection of funerary texts from the New Kingdom through the Ptolemaic Period which would be placed with the deceased in the tomb. The composition helped the deceased to overcome the many dangers in the afterlife and become a blessed spirit. (568)

Book of the Djed-Pillar (?)

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. The djed-pillar is a symbol of Osiris. (336)

The Book of Excellence

The possible title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (502)

Book of Flood

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (336)

Book of Honoring their Father who is Powerful

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (337)

Book of Insight

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (336)

Book of Interpretation

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (336)

Book of the Mother of the Signs

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (337)

Book of Order

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (337)

Book of Power

The title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (336)

Book of the Star (?)

A possible title of a sacred book in the Book of Thoth. (434)

Canal of life

A place situated among the “underworld” seas or lakes, described by the Disciple. (536)

Chamber of Darkness

The designation of the House of Life in the Book of Thoth. In the Book of Thoth it seems to represent both the physical House of Life here on earth and also the underworld or divine world. (passim)

Chapel of the ba-souls

A probable designation of the temple library or the House of Life itself. (330, 331)

Craftsman

In the Book of Thoth "craftsman" denotes a high position within the priestly scribal system. (47 [?], 306, 309, 314, 317, 372, 392, 407)

Enchanter

A probable designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (694)

Ennead

A group of nine gods prominent in Egyptian theology. The Ennead of Heliopolis (a city near modern Cairo, where the sun-god was venerated) comprises: Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Nut, Geb, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. Occasionally reference is made to the "Two Enneads" or the "Great" and "Small" Enneads. (58)

"Excellent of Love"

In the Book of Thoth a designation of the scribal brush or reed. (373, 606[?])

Female divine falcon

Designation of Seshat in the Book of Thoth. (633)

Ferry of the Snake

The Disciple claims to have entered the "Ferry of the Snake," which may denote a container of the papyrus roll or scribal utensils. It is probably also symbolically understood to be the Bark of Re. (520)

Field of the Reptiles

In the Book of Thoth this seems to designate the papyrus, the "reptiles" representing the hieroglyphs. (72)

Field of Trouble

Designation of the papyrus in the Book of Thoth. (538)

Field of Turquoise

Designation of the papyrus in the Book of Thoth. (590)

(The)-first-of-his-hourly-service

Possible designation of the "best educated" of the priestly scribes in the Book of Thoth. (312)

Forecourt

The approach leading to the entrance or front of an Egyptian temple. (71)

Foremost One of the Temple of Hseret

A probable epithet of Thoth. (299, 427)

Foremost One of the Temple of Ptah

A probable epithet of Imhotep. (404)

Foremost One under the Wings (of Thoth)

A probable epithet of Imhotep. (417)

Four Corners of Nun

Nun is the primeval ocean whence comes all life. The "Four Corners" of Nun represent the entirety of the universe. (575)

Gemhes-falcon

Gemhes means "sacred falcon image" in Egyptian (Wilson, *Lexikon*, p. 1100) and represents Horus of Edfu in the Book of Thoth. (625, 687)

"Great Mother of Writing"

A probable designation of Seshat in the Book of Thoth. (332)

"Great of Five"

A well-known epithet of Thoth. The original significance of the "five" is not certain, but in the Book of Thoth it may represent the five fingers of the hand employed in writing. (369)

Great of Strength

A possible designation of Imhotep in the Book of Thoth. (427)

"Hall of the Two Truths"

The locality in the underworld where the judgment of the deceased took place. (546)

"He-created-the-thoughts"

A designation of the Master, probably Thoth, in the Book of Thoth. (455)

"He-created-the-thoughts-of-the-donkey"

A designation of the Master, probably Thoth, in the Book of Thoth. (450)

"He-has-judged, namely, the-one-who-is-upon-his-back"

A designation of the Master, probably Thoth, in the Book of Thoth. (464, 467, 482, 484, 486, 488, 490, 492, 494, 496, 506, 508, 517, 539, 541, 544, 547, 610, 644)

"He-hunted-the-Ba-souls"

A designation of the Master, probably Thoth, in the Book of Thoth. (240, 246, 267, 309)

"He-who-understands-the-body"

Probably a designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (311)

"He-who-understands-prophecy"

Probably a designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (506)

"He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands"

A common designation of Thoth in the Graeco-Roman Period. (355, 506)

Hearing

In the Book of Thoth "Hearing" is a divine personification and assistant of Thoth. (70)

Heart of Re

An epithet of Thoth. (296, 301, 407)

Hedenu

A designation of the brush or pen. The "Lord of Hedenu" is Thoth. (325, 417, 425)

Heka

Egyptian god of magic.

Heseret

Designation of a sacred locality near Hermopolis, the main cult center of Thoth. (299; see also "Foremost One of the Temple of Heseret" and "The-one-of-Heseret")

hetep-ti-nesut-offering

In Egyptian "An-offering-(which)-the-king-gives." This is the most common designation of a funerary offering. (406)

Horus

Important falcon god, particularly associated with kingship. He is the son of Osiris and Isis. (316, 623, 629)

Horus Khentikhtai

Horus of Athribis, a city in Lower Egypt. This is a localized form of Horus. (581)

House of Books

A designation of the library associated with the House of Life. (305)

House of Documents

A designation of the House of Life (or the library) in the Book of Thoth. (391)

House of Life

The temple scriptorium and cult center. (25, 47, 50, 55, 74, 415, 454, 455, 459, 484, 576, 577, 604, 632, 637)

Hu

The divine personification of "(authoritative) utterance" of the creator deity. (70, 579, 652)

Imhotep

The divinized architect of Pharaoh Djoser (Third Dynasty). He is the epitome of a seer or wise man and enjoyed a vigorous cult in the Graeco-Roman Period. (404, 427, 429)

Iry

"Seeing." In the Book of Thoth this divine personification is an assistant of Thoth. (70, 361) See also "Hearing."

Isis

One of the great goddesses of Egypt, wife of Osiris and mother of Horus. In the Book of Thoth she occurs in a phrase "Isis who traverses eternity," which may be the title of a book. (52[?], 320)

Isten

A designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (245, 303, 407, 420, 577)

Istes

A designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (14)

Ka

This is a fundamental notion for the Ancient Egyptians. It is generally understood as an aspect of the deceased, but in fact has a much wider application: The ka "was conceived of as performing a variety of roles at different periods of a person's existence: double, vital force, essence, guardian angel, and even conscience," M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, p. 5. (406)

Khnum

Ram-headed creator god with chief cult center in Elephantine and Esna. In the Book of Thoth a plurality of Khnum-gods is mentioned. (47, 77, 266)

Khonsu

This is a moon god, particularly venerated in Thebes (modern Luxor) as the son of Amun and Mut. He can be identified or merged with Thoth.

Lake of Fire

A locality in the Underworld which has both a positive aspect (as the place of regeneration) and a negative aspect (as a place of punishment).

Lamp of Prophecy

A designation of a goddess, probably Seshat, in the Book of Thoth. (558)

Land of father(s) (= vizier= Thoth)

This is probably an unorthographic spelling of the Egyptian word for the title "Vizier" in the Book of Thoth, used an epithet of Thoth. (297, 409, 428, 447, 510)

Landing place of life

A place situated among the "underworld" seas or lakes, described by the Disciple. (534)

Late Period

Egyptologists generally refer to the period between 664 BC to 450 AD as the Late Period.

Lector priest

The designation of the priest responsible for reading the sacred texts in cult ceremonies. (241; see the comment to 428)

Letopolis

A city sacred to Horus in Lower Egypt. (326, 669)

Lord of Protection

A probable designation of Osiris in the Book of Thoth. (549)

Lords of Offerings

In the Book of Thoth this seems to designate various deities especially associated with Thoth. (3, 9, 43, 241, 449)

Maat

The divine personification of truth and world order, a fundamental concept in Ancient Egypt. (389)

Mehen

A protective snake which surrounds the sun-god in his bark. (507)

Myth of the Sun's Eye

A tale best preserved in a Demotic text of the Roman Period, but dating back at least to the New Kingdom. The Eye of the Sun becomes enraged and departs for Nubia. Thoth (in the form of a monkey) is dispatched to bring her back to Egypt. With his eloquence and cleverness, he achieves this goal. The Eye of the Sun is generally represented as a lioness, and identified with a variety of goddesses, e.g., Tefnut, Hathor, Bastet, Mut, and Sothis. (see 346–48)

Nehemetawy

The relatively minor goddess who is the wife or companion of Thoth.

Nekheb-field

A designation of a kind of “fresh” or “virgin” land. (393)

Nehyt-book

A possible designation of a type of amuletic or magical book in the Book of Thoth. (227)

Neshyt-copper tool

A possible designation of a kind of metal scribal tool. (436)

New Year

The New Year in Ancient Egypt was closely associated with the rising of the star Sirius (=Egyptian Sothis), which preceded the Nile Inundation. (343)

Nun

The primeval ocean (as a deity) whence came all life. (73, 363, 575, 600 [?])

Ogdoad

Group of eight primeval deities associated with Hermopolis, the main cult center of Thoth.

The-one-of-Heseret

A designation of the Master, probably Thoth, in the Book of Thoth. (341, 352, 368, 374, 379, 438, 513)

The-one-who-loves-knowledge

The designation of the Disciple in the Book of Thoth. (20, 28, 35, 41, 70, 73, 217, 245, 255, 268, 278, 339, 351, 367, 373, 375, 391, 449, 483, 485, 487, 489, 491, 493, 495, 501, 507, 509, 516, 519, 540, 542, 545, 548, 618, 646)

The-one-who-praises-knowledge

The designation of the Master in the Book of Thoth. (25, 30, 40, 42, 43, 74, 285)

Ones-of-the-House-of-Life

A probable designation of the writings in the House of Life (or the staff thereof). (50, 577)

Opening of the Mouth Ceremony

A ceremony performed upon the mummy in order "to reanimate the deceased's body and restore his mental and physical faculties. The same ceremony was performed over statues and other inanimate objects, as well as the bodies of those who died," M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, p. 16.

Osiris

The Egyptian god of the dead and the underworld. The rites celebrated in the House of Life (= Chamber of Darkness) are closely associated with Osiris, and he is thus a key figure in the Book of Thoth, even if he is not often explicitly named. (2, 404, 549; see the remarks on 274, 336, 419, 653, 667, 676)

Osiris-Naneferhotep

This is a youthful or rejuvenated form of Osiris, mentioned twice in the Book of Thoth. (2, 404)

Oudjat-eye

"The-sound-one." This is the Eye of Horus, often identified with the moon. Injured by Seth, the eye was restored to health by Thoth. (442, 468, 552)

Overflowing One

Possibly a designation of Thoth. (351)

Overseer of Learning

A master teacher. (286, 311)

Pe

A religious center in Lower Egypt, identified with Buto. The cobra goddess Udjat (or Wadjet) is the main deity of this locality, but Horus was also worshipped there. (574)

"The powerful one"

In the Book of Thoth this seems to designate a female deity such as Seshat, Sothis, Mut, or Tefnut. The goddess may in the Book of Thoth be herself identified with a sacred door or gate. (341, 343)

The powerful one of the Great Mother of Writing

Possibly the designation of a door or gate to the House of Life. The "Great Mother of Writing" would be the goddess, Seshat. (332)

Prophet

In the Book of Thoth this designates a priestly scribe of elite or advanced standing. (14, 287, 309, 375, 382, 498, 501, 511)

Ptah

Creator god of Memphis. (404)

Ptah-teny

"The Risen Ptah." This designates the creator god Ptah (whose main cult center is in Memphis) as the primeval mound at the beginning of creation. (363)

Qesep

A designation of uncertain meaning in the Book of Thoth. (364)

Quarry of Turquoise

A possible designation of the papyrus in the Book of Thoth. (542)

Re

The sun-god and creator deity. Thoth is a close associate of Re. The sacred books, traditionally reckoned at 42, are called the "Ba-souls of Re." (242, 296, 301, 407, 433, 438, 440, 636)

Reckoner-of-Hearts

A designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (511)

Red Crown

Literally, "The Red One." This is the crown associated with Lower Egypt. (631)

Sea of (the) Circuit

In the Book of Thoth this may designate the "ocean" which surrounds the earth or a similar mythological body of water. (329)

Seeing

A designation of the divine personification of seeing. The Egyptian is Iry. This deity is an assistant of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (70, 361)

Sefekhabwy

("She-who-loosens-the-two-horns") is an epithet of the goddess Seshat. (4)

Select of Speech

Possibly a designation of Thoth. (339)

Seshat

The divine personification of writing. Represented as a goddess, she is an important figure in the Book of Thoth. She is not explicitly named, but appears under epithets, e.g., Shai and Sefekhabwy.

Seshem-figures

An uncertain designation, possibly of sacred figurines in the Book of Thoth. (228)

Seth

The brother of Osiris, whom he murders. He then contends with Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, for the title of king, which had been held by Osiris. Seth is identified with a very strange unidentified animal, with attributes of a donkey and a pig.

Shai

("She-who-has-initiated") is an epithet of Seshat, the divine personification of writing. (3, 17, 226, 303, 415, 425, 436, 507, 689)

She-who-is-in-the-heaven

An epithet of Seshat (but possibly another goddess) in the Book of Thoth. (574)

She-who-is-wise

A possible designation of Seshat in the Book of Thoth. (558, 629–630)

She-who-loves-enchantments

An epithet of Seshat in the Book of Thoth. (512)

Shentait

A designation of Isis (or Seshat) in the Book of Thoth. (507, 689)

Sia

Divine personification of insight. (70, 579)

Sothis

This is the Egyptian designation of the star Sirius. The rising of Sirius marks the beginning of the Nile inundation. (see the remark on 340)

Stall of the Dancer

A designation of uncertain significance in the Book of Thoth. (537)

Storeroom of Life

Probable designation of the House of Life in the Book of Thoth. (564)

Support of Life

Probable designation of the core teachings of the House of Life or of the House of Life itself. (577)

Tefnut

A fearsome goddess, often represented as a lioness, who can be identified with the Eye of the Sun in the Myth of the Sun's Eye. (see the remark on 346)

Teshepes-oil

Teshepes is the name of a fragrant plant or tree substance used in Egyptian cult. It may be a kind of resin, oil, although some suggest it is "cinnamon," Wilson, *Lexikon*, p. 1124. (324)

Thoth

The Egyptian god of writing and wisdom.

Trismegistos ("Thrice-great One")

This is the classical designation of Thoth, as Hermes, who became a very important figure of wisdom in Late Antiquity, Mediaeval, and Early Modern (somewhat mystical) intellectual traditions. The nature of his connection with the authentic Egyptian Thoth is subject to scholarly debate. (see the note on 426)

Turtle

In the Book of Thoth the turtle represents Apophis, the enemy of the sun-god. (426, 623)

Two Lands

The land of Egypt was traditionally divided up into two main sections. Lower Egypt comprised the area from the Delta to about modern Cairo. Upper Egypt comprised the area from about modern Cairo through modern Assuan. (355, 472[?], 506, 560, 566, 634 [?])

Uraeus snake

This is the protective cobra snake represented on the forehead of gods and kings. (589)

Vizier

A designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. This would have been a very archaic title in the Graeco-Roman Period, and it is written unorthographically as "land of father(s)" in the Book of Thoth. (297, 409, 428, 447, 510)

Wen-yema

A designation of either Imhotep or Thoth himself in the Book of Thoth. (1, 14, 75, 302)

White Crown

Literally, "The White One." This is the crown associated with Upper Egypt. (631)

Wise-One

Designation of Thoth in the Book of Thoth. (242)

Wise ones who-are-in-the-primeval-time

Possible designation of the authors of the ancient sacred books. (412)

Suggestions for Further Reading

Egyptian History and Culture

- For a general overview of Egyptian history, see Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- The interested reader will find reliable information and bibliography on many important Egyptological topics in Donald Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Alan Lloyd (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010).
- A good treatment of the Ptolemaic Period is Michel Chauveau, *Egypt in the Age of Cleopatra: History and Society Under the Ptolemies* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).
- A very recent analysis of the cultural interaction between Egypt and Greece (a subject very relevant to the Book of Thoth) is Ian Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- A concise fine introduction to the Roman Period is Livia Capponi, *Roman Egypt* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011).
- For the later period of the history of Roman Egypt, but still covering the period of the composition of the Book of Thoth, see Roger Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

The Book of Thoth

- The first edition of the composition is: Richard Jasnow and Karl-Theodor Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth. A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005).
- There have been several reviews of this volume: Kevin van Bladel, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2006.05.19. <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2006/2006-05-19.html>
- Friedhelm Hoffmann, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 65 (2008), cols. 86–92.

Holger Kockelmann, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008), pp. 178–80.

Joachim Quack, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 101 (2006), cols. 610–15.

Ghislaine Widmer, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 70 (2011), pp. 113–16.

– Since the publication there have naturally appeared various articles and extensive discussions on aspects of the Book of Thoth:

Richard Jasnow, “On Sothis and the So-called Clepsydra (?) in the Book of Thoth (B02, 3/16–4/11).” In Hermann Knuf, Christian Leitz, and Daniel von Recklinghausen (eds.), *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*. *Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta* 194 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 237–43.

—, “‘Caught in the Web of Words’ – Remarks on the Imagery of Writing and Hieroglyphs in the Book of Thoth.” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 47 (2011), pp. 297–317.

— and Karl-Theodor Zauzich, “A Book of Thoth?” In Christopher Eyre (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists. Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995*. *Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta* 82 (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1998), pp. 607–18.

Alexander Jones and Marco Perale, “Greek Astronomical Tables in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection (with associated fragments from other collections).” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 58/2 (2012), pp. 308–43.

Christian Leitz, “Die Geierweibchen des Thothbuches in den 42 Gauen Ägyptens.” *Revue d'Égyptologie* 63 (2012), pp. 137–86.

Joachim Quack, “Die Initiation zum Schreiberberuf im Alten Ägypten.” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 36 (2007), pp. 249–95.

—, “Ein ägyptischer Dialog über die Schreibkunst und das arkane Wissen.” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 9 (2007), pp. 259–94.

—, *Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur*. Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte 3. Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 3. Second edition (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), pp. 160–68 (detailed discussion of the Book of Thoth).

—. "Geographie als Struktur in Literatur und Religion." In F. Adrom, K. Schlüter, and A. Schlüter (eds.), *Altägyptische Welt-sichten: Akten des Symposiums zur historischen Topographie und Toponymie Altägyptens vom 12.–14. Mai 2006 in München*. Ägypten und Altes Testament 68 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), pp. 131–57. A translation of the Vulture List is offered, *ibid.*, pp. 151–53.

Thomas Schneider, "Knowledge and Knowledgeable Persons in Ancient Egypt: Queries and Arguments about an Unsettled Issue." In Leo Perdue (ed.), *Scribes, Sages, and Seers. The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World*. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 219 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008), pp. 41–42.

Martin Andreas Stadler, *Einführung in die ägyptische Religion Ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit nach den demotischen religiösen Texten*. Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 7 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), pp. 177–87.

Hieroglyphs and Demotic

- For a general introduction to the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, see James Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- An English translation of Karl-Theodor Zauzich's popular overview of the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system is available: *Hieroglyphs without Mystery: An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Writing*. Translated by Ann Macy Roth (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).
- Those interested in Demotic should obtain the introductory teaching grammar of Janet Johnson, *Thus Wrote Onchsheshonqy: An Introductory Grammar of Demotic*. Third Edition. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 45 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2000). This is available as a free download from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago at <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/>.

- A valuable presentation of the entire field of Demotic is Mark Depauw, *A Companion to Demotic Studies*. Papyrologica Bruxellensia 28 (Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1997).

Scribes and Scribal Training

- Richard Parkinson and Stephen Quirke, *Papyrus* (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Press, 1995) is an excellent introduction to the subject.
- Many fine discussions are also in Werner Forman and Stephen Quirke, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

House of Life

- Still fundamental is the antiquated article of Alan Gardiner, "The House of Life," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938), pp. 157–79.
- A more recent discussion, although still based on Gardiner, is Katarina Nordh, *Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Curses and Blessings: Conceptual Background and Transmission*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Boreas 26 (Stockholm and Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1996), pp. 193–216.

Hermetica

- A first-rate introduction to the subject is Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).
- On the later history of the Hermetica, see now: Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007); Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Excellent translations of the Classical Hermetica are in Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with notes and introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Egyptian Religion

- A new synthesis of Egyptian Religion is Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- On religion in the later periods of Egyptian history, see David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- On Thoth still useful is Patrick Boylan, *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt. A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1922).
- The most recent scholarly monograph on Thoth is in German: Martin Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir*. Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
- Those interested in funerary and underworld religion in Graeco-Roman Period Egypt now have a magnificent English anthology in Mark Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Concordance

A Concordance Between the Consecutive Line Numbering and the Papyri Witnesses in Jasnow and Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth*

This concordance will enable the reader to equate the line numbering used in this publication with the corresponding lines in the papyri published in our scholarly edition. It is not practical to list every such correspondence or all witnesses, but the following should be sufficient to allow the interested (and determined) reader to track down the transliteration, translation, and commentary relating to our translations. By using the list of "Locations of Transliterations and Translations with Commentary of the Papyri," *Book of Thoth*, pp. XIII-XIV, which is organized according to our designations of the individual witnesses (e.g., B07, F01, etc.), the reader should have little trouble finding the passage of interest. As emphasized in the introductory remarks, there is a considerable number of new fragments and shifting of the location of text passages as found in the first edition. We will publish these in Volume 3, along with additional remarks and corrections to our first edition.

"A New Translation" Designations of Main Papyri in *Book of Thoth*

1-21	B07
22-31	F01; L02
32-76	B06
77-86	V02
GAP	GAP
201-269	V01
270-278	V04; C04.1
279-282	V04; F10
283-284	C04.2
285-323	B01
324-339	B02, col. 3

340–355	B02, col. 4
356–371	B02, col. 5
372–387	B02, col. 6; L01, col. 4
388–403	B02, col. 7; L01, col. 4
404–419	B02, col. 8
420–436	B02, col. 9
437–453	B02, col. 10
454–472	B02, col. 11; L01, col. 7
GAP	GAP (N.b. B02, col. 12 basically lost)
480–482	L01, col. 8; B02, col. 13
483–503	B03, B02, cols. 13–14; B04, col. 5
504–519	B03; L01, col. 9
520–539	L01, col. 9; B02, col. 15; B04, col. 6
540–558	B04, col. 7
559–576	B04, col. 8
577–598	B04, col. 9; L01.11, col. 11; B11
599–622	L01 (L01 (V.T.), x+4/1); B11
623–646	L01 (L01 (V.T.), col. x+1)
647–670	L01 (L01 (V.T.), col. x+2)
671–694	L01 (L01 (V.T.), col. x+3)

Textual Notes on Specific Lines

As mentioned in our introductory remarks, we have omitted much of the standard scholarly apparatus in this popular edition. However, we have benefited greatly from the reviews and comments of other Demoticists, and wish here to indicate where we owe a significant debt to the remarks of other scholars, particularly Joachim Quack. Even if we do not agree with some of these comments, almost all raise very valid points which have compelled us to rethink a translation. Again, we do not attempt here to indicate every instance where we have adopted the readings or translation of another scholar, but only those of special significance in our opinion.


13	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 289
22	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 290
25–26	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 290
28–29	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 290
31	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 290
33	Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
34	Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
40–41	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 291; Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
48	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 292
52	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 292
55	Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
56	Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
57	Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 91
245	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 266
254	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 267
266–268	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 269
270	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 277
302–304	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), pp. 277–78
306	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 278; Hoffmann, <i>BibOr</i> 65 (2008), col. 90
312	Quack, <i>SAK</i> 36 (2007), p. 278

- 346 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279
 347 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279; Kockelmann, *JAOS* 128.1 (2008), pp. 179–80
 356 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 361 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279
 362 Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 363 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279
 365 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 279
 379 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 261
 394 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 280
 397 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 280
 411 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 280
 412 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 281
 417 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 281; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 429 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 281
 430 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 281
 433 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 442 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 447 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 250
 448 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 450 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 452 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 455 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 457 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 282
 463 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283
 464 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283
 468 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284
 466–468 Quack, *Afr* 9 (2007), p. 277
 484 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284
 487 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284
 491 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 504 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285

- 506 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 507 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 510 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 250
 511 Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 91
 516 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 519 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 520 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 523 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285
 528 Quack, *Afr* 9 (2007), p. 280
 529 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 285; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 91
 534 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286
 536 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286
 537 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 91
 543 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283
 544 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283
 545 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 90
 547 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 283
 556–557 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284
 558 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 284
 560 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286
 563 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286
 567 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 286
 576 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 581 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 294
 602 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 607 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 622 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 623 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287; Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 91
 625 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 626 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 628 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 630 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287

- 635 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 646–686 Leitz, *RdE* 63 (2012), pp. 137–186
 651 Quack, “Geographie als Struktur,” p. 151
 654 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 658 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 287
 659 Quack, “Geographie als Struktur,” p. 152
 660 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 663 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 665 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 667 Hoffmann, *BibOr* 65 (2008), col. 91
 669 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 672 Quack, “Geographie als Struktur,” p. 152
 681 Quack, “Geographie als Struktur,” p. 152
 688 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 690 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 691 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288
 692 Quack, *SAK* 36 (2007), p. 288

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Conversations in the House of Life offers a new translation of a text first published as *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth* (2005). The composition is a dialogue between a Master, perhaps the god Thoth himself, and a Disciple, named "The-one-who-loves-knowledge." Originally written in Demotic, the text dates to the Graeco-Roman Period (ca. 300 B. C. to 400 A. D.). The dialogue covers everything from how to hold the writing brush and the symbolic significance of scribal utensils to a long exposition on sacred geography. The work may be an initiation text dealing with sacred knowledge. It is closely associated with the House of Life, the temple scriptorium where the priests wrote their books.

The 2005 publication was aimed at specialists, but *Conversations in the House of Life* is intended for the general reader. The revised translation reflects recent advances in our understanding of the text. The explanatory essays, commentary, and glossary help the reader explore the fascinating universe of the Book of Thoth. As a document of Late Period Egyptian thought it is of importance to all those interested in Graeco-Roman Period intellectual history; students of the Classical Hermetica will find the Book of Thoth especially intriguing. The express goal of *Conversations in the House of Life* is to make this challenging Ancient Egyptian composition accessible to the widest possible audience.

