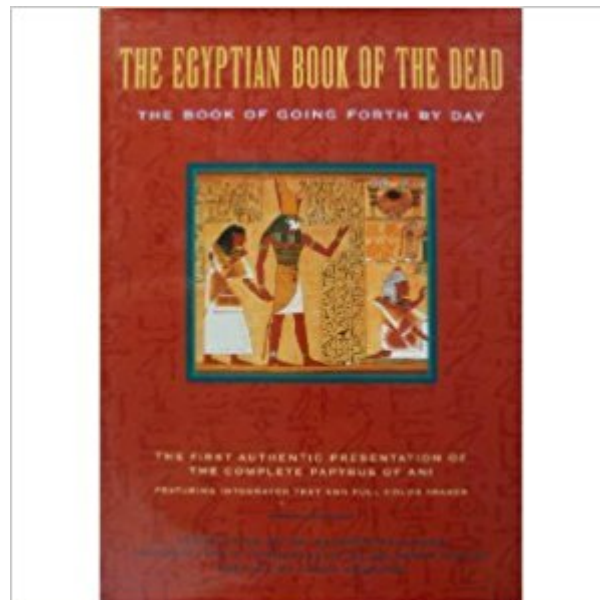


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Egyptian Book Of The Dead



Synopsis

The ancient purpose of the funerary papyrus known as Book of the Dead of Ani was to guide the Egyptian soul to the afterlife, and the iconic text of the ancient culture is presented here for the first time as a single volume. The original is 78 feet in total length and 3,500 years old; this presentation contains the original facsimile edition from 1890. The hieroglyphic text and vignettes are juxtaposed with the English translation of each chapter on the same page that the Egyptian text occurs. The power, wisdom, and spiritual vision offered in its pages goes back to the spiritual and cultural roots of humanity. This beautiful artifact will be a prized possession for those interested in the world of ancient Egypt and in the beginnings of civilization itself. --This text refers to an alternate Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I come with my heart bearing truth, and there are no lies in it..." This is a visually and poetically beautiful book. The images from the papyrus are well imaged, the computerized restorations of the artwork were not (to me) obvious and did not detract from its beauty. The translation is lyrical, and while not matched word for word with the original, the content is odd enough that I think it must be fairly close--no modern mind would make up this stuff. The papyrus text itself is clearly legible for anyone who wants to get obsessive about it (also sells some books that allow you to learn middle Egyptian--from which I gather that the word order in the language is very different from that in English. A word for word translation would therefore be very difficult to understand). For someone

with little familiarity with Middle Egyptian culture, the stories are a little difficult to understand on the first reading, but, inexplicably, they make more and more sense on re-reading. For example, the various afterlife characters have multiple 'epithets'--nicknames or titles--that can be difficult to keep straight, and there are references to stories that everyone in ancient Egypt probably knew but we today do not. (eg: 'He who is on his mound' probably evokes the Egyptian tale of the beginning of the world--a mound rising out of a primordial ocean, upon which a falcon alighted--I'm guessing the expression refers to either Horus or Amun). Reading the text more than once allows you to pick up on some of the nicknames and blurring-together (syncretism) of the characters of the Egyptian pantheon, which reduces the sense of 'having walked into the movie halfway through'.

It would hardly seem necessary to add another review, but it seems it would be helpful to make a few things clear. "The Book of the Dead" is not, as some reviewers seem to think, a (not very good) encyclopedia of Egyptian life. Nor is it a compendium of mythology (the narrative content is remarkably small). Nor is it (an early but durable misconception) "the Egyptian Bible". The name applies to a number of collections of spells, prayers, hymns, and instructions (the contents varying from copy to copy, and over time), which were included in tombs. They were intended to assist the deceased in achieving a happy existence (and avoiding destruction) in the afterlife. The contents are, in this context, quite utilitarian. To the Egyptians it was "Coming Forth by Day" (as a glorified spirit), and those who could afford it commissioned beautifully executed copies as essential equipment for their long-term future. Many copies, including the Papyrus of Ani, included numerous illustrations (some exquisite) of major and minor gods, the intended owner and his family, and scenes of the (very earthly) Next World. The collection emerged from earlier bodies of tomb and coffin literature during the New Kingdom, and versions continued to be produced into Roman times. This particular edition reproduces (beautifully) the color edition of the New Kingdom "Papyrus of Ani" published by the British Museum in 1890. That version was edited by E.A.W. Budge -- who had purchased the scroll in Egypt -- in collaboration with another Victorian-era Egyptologist, Lepsius. This modern presentation is actually an improvement, since computer manipulation has allowed the rejoining of material which Budge arbitrarily separated when preparing the brittle papyrus for shipment by pasting sections on wooden blocks.

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