A LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM PARALLEL FOR THE *INCIPIT* OF BOOK OF THE DEAD CHAPTER 22

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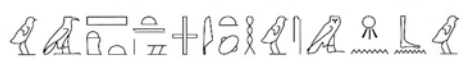
In 1963 Jacques Vandier published 'a curious funerary monument of the Middle Kingdom' consisting of four rectangular limestone slabs which he tentatively interpreted and reconstructed as a kind of model serdab (Louvre Inv. no. E 25485; Plate 1 and Figure 1).[1] These slabs are inscribed for the *imy-r mšʿ* and *iry-ʿt* Amenysonb and his household, who probably lived somewhere in the vicinity of Atfîh on the east bank of the Nile opposite the Fayum[2] at the end of the Twelfth or during the Thirteenth Dynasty. Apart from the offering formulae and the names and titles which accompany the representations of Amenysonb *cum suis*, there are two more substantial texts, and these were subsequently published by Vandier in 1968.[3] The first of these is inscribed on Vandier's 'Panneau D'; it is a ritual text known from seven further copies ranging in date from the Twelfth to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. This text has been discussed several times[4] and the earliest version of it was included by De Buck in his edition of the Coffin Texts.[5]

The second spell is not known from other sources, but it is clearly related to the funerary literature of the Middle and New Kingdom; in fact, its title *r n ḥsf rrk*, 'Spell for warding off the *rrk*-snake', occurs in several spells both in the Coffin Texts and in the Book of the Dead, as has been pointed out by Vandier.[6] This spell has been almost completely ignored in the literature, the only exception being the pioneering study by J.F. Borghouts which deals with both texts inscribed on the Louvre monument.[7] The snake spell consists of ten vertical columns inscribed on the front of Vandier's putative serdab ('Panneau A'), a slab which is dominated in the centre by a niche with a depth of about 6.5 cm (Plate 1). The first eight columns are inscribed to the right of the niche, while the two remaining columns are written on the jambs of the niche itself.

There is, however, yet another line of text which, although of considerable interest, was not mentioned at all in either of Vandier's articles. It is inscribed horizontally, from right to left, on the lintel of the niche (Figure 1, line 11), reading:



wbn.n=(i) m swḥ.t imy.t t3 št3w
I have risen from the egg which is in the mysterious land.

Borghouts interpreted this text as the concluding sentence of the *rrk*-spell, i.e. as the continuation of the texts on the jambs of the niche.[8] According to him, this last line is 'grammatically connected with' the preceding lines 'by the pluperfect form *wbn.n(=i)*'; it 'bridges cols. 9 and 10; the three, then, border the "entry" to the box'. That there is a connection between the text on the lintel and the niche seems probable, but for this it is not necessary to connect this text with the preceding *rrk*-spell; in fact, such a link seems unlikely to me. The end of the snake spell is extremely obscure. The last two signs of col. 10 are , which Borghouts connects with the text on the lintel, translating them as '... the attacker (?) shall arrive after <I> have emerged from the egg which is in the land of the mysterious one'. Quite apart from the questionable translation of the group ,[9] the continuation appears to be stylistically at odds with the preceding spell, which consists almost entirely of short sentences in the second person singular addressed to the snake, ordering its disappearance or claiming its defeat, as is so often the case in snake charms. By contrast, the line of text on the lintel is the only one using the first person singular. I would prefer, therefore, to take it as a separate text,[10] and this would seem to be corroborated by the fact that this text is actually known from another source: it is the *incipit* of Book of the Dead Chapter 22, a 'Spell for giving the deceased's mouth (back) to him in the necropolis'.

The occurrence of this line from BD 22 on a Middle Kingdom monument is remarkable since this chapter is not found in the Coffin Texts. The earliest source for it is provided by the hieratic texts on the coffin of Queen Mentuhotep seen and copied in facsimile in Thebes by Sir John Gardner Wilkinson in 1832—a remarkable achievement even by present-day standards—but now lost.[11] The exact date of this coffin has been the subject of debate ever since Goodwin first drew attention to it.[12] Goodwin dated it to Dynasty 11 on account of the name Mentuhotep and in this he was followed by Budge, Birch, and Griffith. In a famous article published in 1947 Winlock[13] assigned Queen Mentuhotep and her husband King Djehuty to Dynasty 17, and this date appears to have been accepted by most scholars. More recently, however, a Dynasty 13 date has been proposed first by von Falck, Klie and Schulz,[14] then in more detail by Vandersleyen;[15] this date has now convincingly been narrowed down to the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty by Christina Geisen.[16] Vandier assigned the Louvre relief slabs to the end of

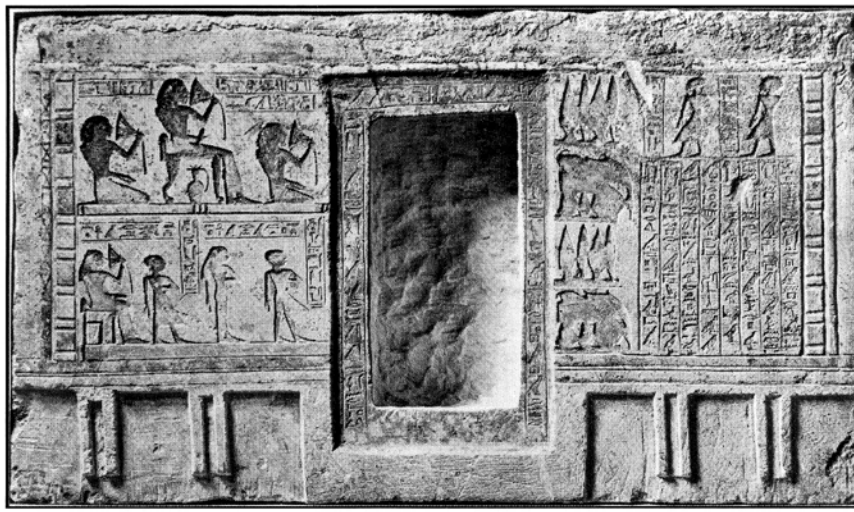


Plate 1. Louvre E 25485 Side A. After *Revue du Louvre* 13 (1963) 3.

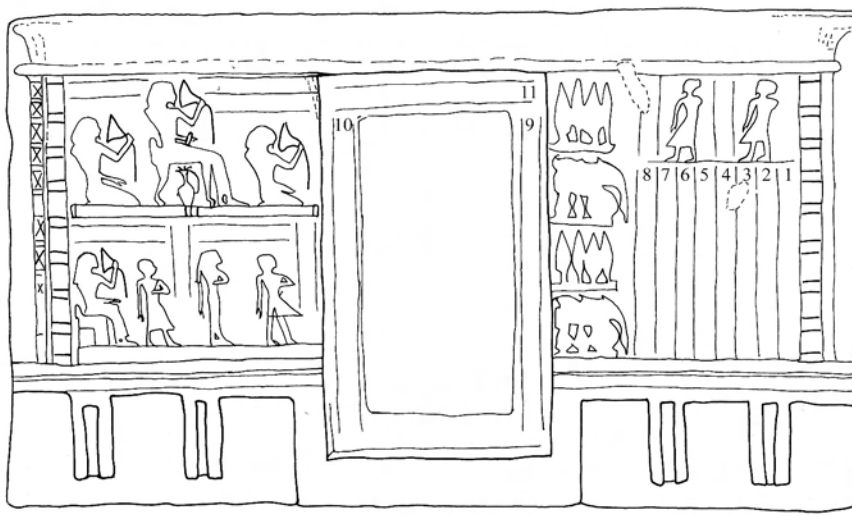


Figure 1. Louvre E 25485 Side A.

Dynasty 12 or to Dynasty 13 on account of the large number of small figures of relatives of the owner depicted on them and the forms of their personal names;[17] details in the offering formulae such as the phrases *di=f prt-ḫrw* and *n kȝ n* and the writing of the name of Osiris without determinative tend to confirm this date.[18] The form of the monument too, although consisting in its present form of four loose slabs, resembles the so-called 'stèles-chapelles' of Dynasty 13.[19] It would seem, then, that the Louvre monument is contemporary with, or perhaps even slightly earlier[20] than the coffin of Queen Mentuhotep. If so, it provides the earliest attestation of the *incipit* of BD 22.

The connection between this line of text and the niche or doorway above which it is inscribed, although probable, is difficult to establish with certainty. It seems likely that the niche once contained a (wooden?) statuette of the deceased, perhaps in the form of a mummy, but since no trace of it remains we can only speculate. Small rectangular niches or doorways both with and without figures in the round of the owner are not uncommon on Middle Kingdom stelae, and in some cases[21] these are associated with the "Opening the face" (*wn ḥr*) formula, which in its basic form begins with the words "Opened is the face (sight) of N that he may see the Lord of the Horizon when he traverses the sky. May he grant that N appear as the Great God, the lord of the imperishable stars, the lord of eternity". As Angelika Lohwasser has shown,[22] the *wn ḥr* formula refers to the resurrection of the deceased, who awakes from the sleep of death and opens his eyes to see the light of the sun. He has been enabled to do so because the ritual of Opening the Mouth has been performed for him and he appears as the Great God, i.e. Osiris. In Chapter 22 of the Book of the Dead the line of text found on the Louvre slab is used to introduce a spell which has a similar meaning and also refers to the Opening of the Mouth ritual: the deceased has risen from the egg (*swḥt*, which also means 'coffin') which is in the mysterious land (the underworld or the tomb), his mouth has been given back to him 'so that he can speak to the gods of the underworld with it' and he has become Osiris (*ink Wsir nb Rȝ-sṭȝw*). I would suggest, therefore, that the text on the lintel of the niche of the Louvre monument has a function comparable to that of the *wn ḥr* formula: as a newly resurrected man the owner appears in the doorway of his tomb to see the sun and begin his renewed existence in the hereafter.

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1 J. Vandier, "Un curieux monument funéraire du Moyen Empire" in: *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 13 (1963) 1–10. Vandier's reconstruction remains problematical, as he was very well aware himself, and in the present Egyptian galleries of the Louvre the slabs are shown separately again. Panel A is

exceptional in that it is the only one to have a scene in raised relief on the reverse. The area surrounding this scene has been left rough. This treatment is reminiscent of the Middle Kingdom stela of Sirē in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (E. 3921), where the reverse has a small area carved with a figure of the owner in high relief in a doorway, whereas the rest of the back has been left rough. A.N. Dakin, "The Stela of Sirē at Oxford" in: *JEA* 24 (1938) 190–97, plausibly suggested that "perhaps the likeliest explanation is that the stela was let into the thickness of a wall in such a way that the whole of the front was visible on one side while only the inscribed panel of the back showed through a hole on the other side. In such a case there might be no need to trim the edges or smooth down the rest of the back" (*JEA* 24, 190 n. 5). This explanation may very well apply to the Louvre slab as well.

2 The alleged provenance of the monument is the Fayum, and one of the offering formulae mentions 'Hathor Mistress of Atfîh'.

3 J. Vandier, "Deux textes religieux du Moyen Empire" in: W. Helck (ed.), *Festschrift für Siegfried Schott zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden, 1968) 121–24.

4 E. Naville, *ASAE* 10 (1910) 191–92; E. Naville, *ASAE* 16 (1916) 187–90; E. Naville, *REA* 1 (1927) 31–44; H. Kees, *ZÄS* 57 (1922) 92–120; E. Stavnik, *RdE* 2 (1934) 165–71; H. Altenmüller, *MDAIK* 22 (1967) 9–18; H. Altenmüller, *MDAIK* 23 (1968) 1–8; H. Goedicke, *JARCE* 8 (1969–1970) 11–27; W. Barta, *RdE* 25 (1973) 84–91; J.F. Borghouts, in: *Fs. Westendorf*, vol. 2 (1984) 711–16 (see note 7 below).

5 Spell 607 (CT VI, 219–220).

6 Vandier, in: *Fs. Schott*, 123 n. 9; cp. Borghouts, in: *Fs. Westendorf*, vol. 2 (1984) 706 nn. 24–25.

7 J.F. Borghouts, "The Victorious Eyes: A Structural Analysis of Two Egyptian Mythologizing Texts of the Middle Kingdom" in: *Studien zu Sprache und Religion Ägyptens* [*Fs. Westendorf*], Bd. 2: *Religion* (Göttingen, 1984) 703–16.

8 Borghouts in: *Fs. Westendorf*, 706 n. 23.

9 As an alternative, one might consider 'the end (of the snake? of the spell?) has come', taking not as a defective writing of the prospective form *iw-y* (Borghouts, in: *Fs. Westendorf*, 706 n. 22), but as a stative (old perfective). If the end of the spell is meant, the group would amount to a colophon, in which case it would provide a further argument for separating the lintel text from the snake spell. It has to be admitted, however, that no parallel for an abbreviated colophon of this type can be cited; cp. G. Lenzo Marchese, "Les colophons dans la littérature égyptienne" in: *BIFAO* 104 (2004) 359–76.

10 The fact that Vandier excludes this line from his publication of the texts probably means that he, too, considered it as a separate entity.

11 Wilkinson's tracings (now in the British Museum, BM 10553) were published by E.A. Wallis Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British*

Museum I (London, 1910) pls. XXXIX–XLVIII. BD 22 is on pl. XLVI, ll. 17–19; for its position on the back of the coffin, see Budge, *Hieratic Papyri in the BM*, XXII and L.H. Lesko, *Index of the Spells on Egyptian Middle Kingdom Coffins and Related Documents* (Berkeley, 1979) 105. The texts have recently been published in full: C. Geisen, *Die Totentexte des verschollenen Sarges der Königin Mentuhotep aus der 13. Dynastie. Ein Textzeuge aus der Übergangszeit von den Sargtexten zum Totenbuch I*, Studien zum Altägyptischen Totenbuch 8 (Wiesbaden, 2004); BD 22 is on pp. 39–40 (pls. IV, ll. 17–19), with transliteration and translation on p. 89.

12 C.W. Goodwin, "On a Text of the Book of [the] Dead belonging to the Old Kingdom" in: *ZÄS* 4 (1866) 53–56.

13 H.E. Winlock, "The Tombs of the Kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty at Thebes" in: *JEA* 10 (1924) 217–77.

14 M. von Falck / S. Klie / A. Schulz, "Neufunde ergänzen Königsnamen eines Herrschers der 2. Zwischenzeit" in: *GM* 87 (1985) 15–19.

15 C. Vandersleyen, "Rahotep, Sébekemsaf I^{er} et Djéhouty, rois de la 13^{e} dynastie" in: *RdE* 44 (1993) 189–91.

16 C. Geisen, "Zur zeitlichen Einordnung des Königs Djehuti an das Ende der 13. Dynastie" in: *SAK* 32 (2004), 149–57; C. Geisen, *Die Totentexte des verschollenen Sarges*, 2–3.

17 Vandier, in: *Revue du Louvre* 13 (1963) 9–10.

18 C.J.C. Bennett, "Growth of the *ḥtp-di-nsw* formula in the Middle Kingdom" in: *JEA* 27 (1941) 77–82.

19 G. Lapp, "Die Stelenkapelle des *Kmz* aus der 13. Dynastie" in: *MDAIK* 50 (1994) 231–52.

20 In his article in the *Fs. Schott*, Vandier narrows the date of the monument down to the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th Dynasty; see also Vandier, *Les antiquités égyptiennes au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, ^{5}1973) 19.

21 A. Lohwasser, *Die Formel "Öffnen des Gesichts"* (Vienna, 1991) 37: Basel Inv. No. III5002 with mummified figure in niche, and Vienna Inv. No. 156 with three mummified figures in niches and a large openwork ankh-sign; in the case of BM EA 101 and Vienna Inv. No. 109, the stelae themselves have the form of a doorway. In later times, too, the formula is associated with doorways; in the tomb of Puyemre (TT 39) it is inscribed next to a representation of a false door: A. Hermann, *Die Stelen der thebanischen Felsgräber der 18. Dynastie* (Glückstadt, 1940) 73 fig. 11; in the tomb of Ibi (TT 36) it is found on the lintel of the actual doorway leading to the first pillared hall: K. Kuhlmann / W. Schenkel, *Das Grab des Ibi*, Theben Nr. 36, I (Mainz, 1983) pl. 17.

22 Kuhlmann / Schenkel, *Grab des Ibi*, 34–35.