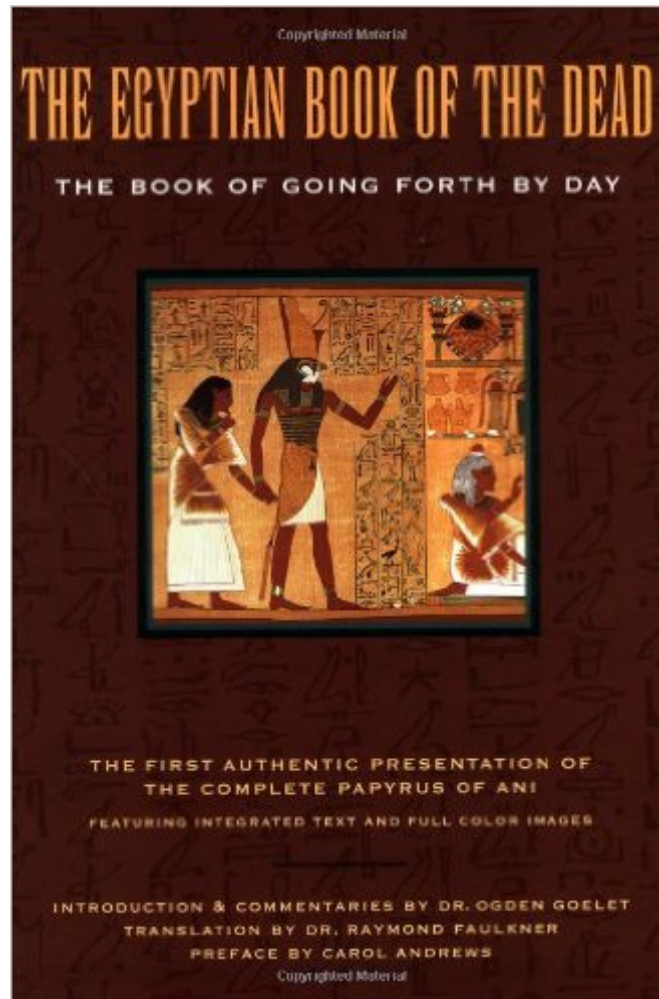


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The Egyptian Book Of The Dead: The Book Of Going Forth By Day



Synopsis

For millennia, the culture and philosophy of the ancient Egyptians have fascinated artists, historians, and spiritual seekers throughout the world. Now, with this deluxe edition, the legendary 3,500-year-old Papyrus of Ani—the most beautiful of the ornately illustrated Egyptian funerary scrolls ever discovered—has been restored in its original sequences of text and artwork, using the latest advances in computer-imaging technology. Four exquisitely illustrated gatefold spreads and an acclaimed translation by two noted Egyptologists showcase the Papyrus's elaborately bordered images and convey its intended sense of motion and meaning in a way that other books on the subject cannot begin to match. For both lay readers and scholars interested in a wide range of topics—from mysticism and philosophy to anthropology and astronomy—this sumptuous and accessible new volume will be an essential acquisition.??Also check out www.bookofdead.com and www.studio31.com/botd.html for more information about this book.

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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'. The unusual verbal imagery is a property of the original work, and this translation does not attempt to 'interpret' these expressions for us, but leaves their ambiguities for our own minds to resolve, in my opinion making the text that much more interactive. The commentaries at the end of the book do a good job of explaining how all this fits into the ancient Egyptian culture. The 'spells' meant to give power to the dead in the next life reveal what the ancient Egyptians valued in this one: truthfulness, 'effectiveness'/getting the job done, good food (and beer), and a safe and loving home (exemplified by the field of reeds). The basic values expressed in the text make these mysterious ancient people seem like people who could live next door today. My only complaint is that the binding has proven not to be very secure; while I have not actually lost any pages from the book, some are loose and I fear that at some point soon, a few of them will fly out when someone opens the text. (My copy is about a year old.) Also note that the book is oversized, so you need more than a foot in height between your bookshelves in order to store it upright. I would recommend this book for any coffee-table, because of its visual impact and beauty. I would also recommend it for anyone seriously interested in Egyptology, because of the excellent translations it contains. I recommend it for people who, like me, are new to Egyptology, because of the commentary it contains. Definitely worth the 20-odd bucks they charge for it--just don't manhandle the book spine.

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, Le Page Renouf. 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. (The papyrus has, inevitably, deteriorated since it was unrolled. The few modern reproductions of images from it which I have seen were a letdown after the early descriptions. James Wasserman's Preface, which mentions this problem, refers to photographs in an Egyptological series, which I have not seen.) That first edition was always rare and expensive, and hardly ever available today, and then at a very high price indeed. It was followed in 1895 by a popular edition, prepared by Budge, containing the text in a hieroglyphic transcription, interlinear transliterations and translations, a more polished translation, and an elaborate introduction and other apparatus, including supplementary material from roughly contemporary texts, and some black and white line-drawing versions of the illustrations. This latter edition has been reissued for decades by Dover Publications, and at first glance it looks like a wonderful bargain. The arrangement looks promising, and the hieroglyphic font was a brilliant example of nineteenth-century design. Unhappily, Budge was not only writing in the nineteenth century, he was already behind the times even then. His transliteration is utterly obsolete, and his smooth translation misleading (although the interlinear translation is sometimes helpful figuring out the original word order when comparing translations by others). His introduction and commentary are full of errors (or then-current misconceptions), and he devotes a lot of space to almost-forgotten controversies (useful to the serious student, a waste of time to most readers). I enjoy looking at it, but have never trusted it. Budge went on to edit a "complete" Book of the Dead, the hieroglyphic text of which is still cited, and a translation of that text, still (or recently) in print (under the Arkana and other imprints) and also misleading. (There are also other editions of the 1895 version of the

Papyrus of Ani, with less lavish layout.) For anyone who has longed for the color plates of Budge's original edition, and dreamed of a modern translation of what it says, this edition will meet most demands. It does not (alas!) have a modern transliteration, but that is its only real lack. It contains a limited, but useful, commentary. There are translations, based on critically edited versions of those "Chapters" found in the Papyrus of Ani, on the same pages as the facsimiles. Like Budge's popular edition, it also contains translations of important material from other copies of the collection from the same period (known in the scholarly literature as "The Theban Recension"). The translations are based on those by the late Raymond Faulkner, which also appear, with other material, in another "Book of the Dead" translation. So, if you are looking for an outstanding example of Egyptian funerary literature and art from the New Kingdom, you will probably want this book. If you are looking for a general introduction to ancient Egypt, a reference work, or comprehensive anthology of ancient Egyptian literature, try something else. (You will probably want to return to this if what you find there interests you, but that is another matter.)

This book is an outstanding translation and presentation of the books that make up the Papyrus of Ani. Faulkner is far superior to Budge, and this book proves it out. In addition to the beautiful pictures and fine translations, the commentaries in the back, along with the explanations of the vignettes contained in the papyrus are well worth the money. A must for anyone interested in Ancient Egypt and their culture.

The Papyrus of Ani is a beauty by itself, and this wonderful translation of its texts only further enhances this splendor. I cannot compare it to works translated by Wallis Budge, being that I have never undertaken any because of his reputation as a somewhat out-of-date translator. However, all criticisms aside, this piece of literature makes one better understand the at times complicated mythology of Ancient Egypt and perhaps a better understanding of the Egyptians themselves, for they made their gods as human in quality as they. The chapters not illustrated are reproduced in the back of the book in their entirety, and I doubt that a more complete copy of the Book of the Dead exists in the scholarly realm. The plates are breath-taking, though I must admit I am somewhat against the computer restoration of some of the images, as I believe they are most beautiful in their natural, albeit blemished, form. It's rather like seeing a restoration of the limestone bust of Nefertiti; it loses something in the translation, something that says for having passed through the Amenti of time, they are still this beautiful.

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