



PROCEEDINGS OF THE XI INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF EGYPTOLOGISTS

Florence, Italy 23-30 August 2015

MUSEO EGIZIO FIRENZE
Florence Egyptian Museum

edited by
Gloria Rosati and Maria Cristina Guidotti



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**INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF EGYPTOLOGISTS XI**

Florence, Italy 23 - 30 August 2015

**MUSEO EGIZIO FIRENZE
FLORENCE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM**



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Proceedings of the XI International Congress of Egyptologists

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The transmission of the *Book of the Twelve Caverns*

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Abstract

The *Book of the Twelve Caverns* (also known as *Spell of the Twelve Caves*, *Grüftebuch* or *Book of the Crypts*) is a religious composition which belongs to the *Books of the Netherworld*. It is a cosmographic text in the form of a litany of deities who inhabited the regions of the caverns of the Underworld that were crossed by the sun god in his nightly journey. In the past it was considered part of the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (chapter 168 in Naville's *Book of the Dead* edition), but for several decades it has been recognized as an independent text.

Its texts and/or images were depicted in different media (papyri, reliefs, mummy wrappings, stelae, etc.) since the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period. Furthermore, the context of use of the book was not only funerary – to assist the deceased in crossing through this mythical topography and to benefit him/her in many diverse ways – but also non-funerary, as a temple text related to some rituals.

The aim of this article is to focus on the transmission of the texts and vignettes through more than 1000 years, employing the textual criticism based on a new synoptic edition made by the author as part of his PhD thesis. Unlike the case with many of the *Books of the Netherworld*, it is the first time this methodology is being applied to this composition.

Keywords

Book of the Twelve Caverns; BD 168; textual criticism; transmission.

The *Book of the Twelve Caverns*¹ (henceforth *BTC*) is a religious composition which belongs to the *Books of the Netherworld* as other well-known texts such as the *Book of the Hidden Chamber* (*Amduat*), the *Book of Caverns* or the *Book of Gates*. Traditionally it was considered a part of the *Book of Going Forth by Day* or *Book of the Dead*, as its spell 168, following Naville's numbering (Naville 1886). However, for several decades it has been recognized as an independent text,² referred to by different names: *Spell of the Twelve Crypts* (Assmann 1989: 148), *Spruch von den zwölf Grüften/Spell of the Twelve Caves* (Hornung 1997: 55; Hornung 1999: 54), *Grüftebuch* (von Lieven 2002: 49; Müller-Roth and Weber 2010), and *Book of the Twelve Caverns* (Méndez Rodríguez 2016).

The *BTC* is a cosmographic text which depicts a part of the universe created in the Egyptian imaginary. In this case it refers to the twelve caverns or crypts of the Underworld crossed by the sun god in his nightly journey. These twelve regions, related also by its number to the twelve hours of the night, were inhabited by many supernatural beings with peculiar features.

The total number of sources found until now containing the *BTC* has reached 30.³ Texts and images of the composition were depicted in different media (papyri, reliefs, mummy wrappings, stelae, etc.) and adapted to those in different ways. The chronology of the sources extends from the New Kingdom – more specifically from the middle of the 18th Dynasty – to the Ptolemaic Period, which means that the composition was in use for at least 1300 years. Their geographical distribution points out that it was spread to many theological centres and

places in Upper and Lower Egypt: Tanis, Memphis-Heliopolis, Saqqara, Hermopolis, Abydos, Dendara, Thebes and Edfu.

The litany consists of a list showing each of the groups of deities who inhabited each cavern. Offerings were made to all of these gods and goddesses in order to receive in exchange different benefits that would depend on the context of use of the composition.

It is mostly attested in funerary sources (26 of the total 30). In this context its objective was to provide the deceased with information about part of the Beyond by a list of the names and appearance of the gods who lived there. In order to pass through these caverns of the Underworld an offering had to be made to these deities. Additionally, this offering action also had other purposes: e.g. to obtain food provisions and other goods for the Netherworld; to achieve or restore certain abilities (such as moving freely, listening, sexual strength, making rituals or agricultural activities, having control over the heart or the beings of the Netherworld, knowing the mysteries of the Underworld, fighting enemies, etc.); to achieve a different condition or status: *b3 iqr*, *3h iqr*, *m3^c-hrw*; to possess a granted place in the necropolis, etc.

Additionally, the composition had also a non-funerary use developing different rituals in temples. In this sense, it has been found as part of the ritual called *Confirmation du pouvoir royal au nouvel an* (Goyon 1972: 30, 75–7; 1974: XIII–XIVA) and in the *Book of Hours* (Faulkner 1958: 22–3, 49*–52*). The general function of the deities is to be present in these liturgies to guarantee the right achievement of the aims of each of these ceremonies.

This article deals specifically with some features in the current state of the research on the book's transmission developed through a synoptic edition, transcription, and also on an iconographic typology of the composition. All this information provides the basis for a diachronic analysis of texts and vignettes.

The methodology used is textual criticism. It is based on classical philology that has had its own development during some decades in the field of Egyptology (Kahl 1999: 38–43; Backes 2011: 452–3). Its aim is to study the history of a text through the comparison of all the different versions, emphasizing especially the differences between them. The

¹ The topic of this article has been developed in detail by the author in his PhD thesis: Méndez Rodríguez 2016.

² Despite the inclusion of the *BTC* in Naville's work (Naville 1886), he changed his opinion later suggesting that the *BTC* was not a part of the *Book of Going Forth by Day* but a book similar to the *Book of the Hidden Chamber* (*Amduat*) (Naville 1904: 10). However, this article passed unnoticed in terms of the egyptological historiography. It was Piankoff and Jaquet-Gordon's publication (1974) that helped to spread this conception.

³ For a general perspective on the sources: Müller-Roth and Weber 2010, Méndez Rodríguez 2012. The most complete updated version: Méndez Rodríguez 2016.

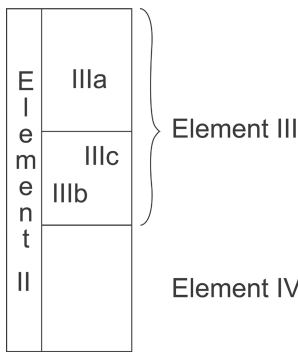


FIGURE 1: ARRANGEMENT OF ELEMENTS II, III AND IV IN FUNERARY PAPYRI (E.G. PLONDON BM EA 10478).

application of this method to the *BTC* required the search for as much evidence as could be found to compare the sources.

In this sense it is important to have a general view of the different parts into which the book was organized, known as ‘Elements’ by Alexandre Piankoff (Figure 1; Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon 1974).

Element I is a general introductory text to the composition. In a funerary context it is placed next to a vignette of the deceased (and his wife or her husband), standing in front of the deities, making an offering, or with an adoration gesture.

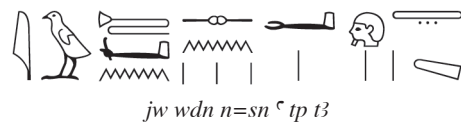
Element II is a group of brief introductory texts placed before the start of each cavern. These texts are divided into two different parts: in the first one, the cavern is identified by its number (e.g. ‘Gods of the 8th cavern’, ‘Gods of the 9th cavern’...); and in the second part, a specific denomination or epithets related to the cavern were written (e.g. for the 12th cavern: ‘she [the cavern] who covers the Tired One, who conceals what is hidden’). These texts, which suppose a physical separation between these caverns, were not included in all sources, in fact they appear in less than half of them.

Element III is composed of different types of content related to the cavern deities: the gods’ names (Element IIIa), their vignettes (Element IIIb) and the number of the components of each group of divinities (Element IIIc). Element IIIa was sometimes extended in some funerary sources with a specific phrase explaining what is granted to the deceased by the deities. Element IIIb, or vignettes, comprise one of the most noticeable features of this composition. In order to achieve a study in depth, a detailed iconographic typology was created in order to organize the differences between them: from simple variations to more complex changes.

Element IIIc was not included at all times. When it appeared it was expressed according to one of the following possibilities:

- Option A: a number placed next to a vignette when the source was illustrated (Figure 2; Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon 1974: pls. 10–6, 19–32).
- Option B: a developed iconographic version including the representation of all members, as occurs for example in the Osireion of Abydos (Murray 1989 [1904]: pls. II–V).
- Option C: a number appearing before the name of the deities, as they were written in the papyri of temple context (Goyon 1974: XIII; Faulkner 1958: 50*–52*), mummy wrappings and stelae (Kamal 1905: pls. VII, XV).
- Option D: this is a mixed type which includes not only the number before the god’s name but also a developed iconographic vignette with all the members, as in the temple of Hathor in Dendara⁴ (Cauville 1997a: 195–6, 198 (E3); 292–5 (W1); 1997b: 88–90, 94–5, 117 –9, 123–4 (E3); 148, 159, 170–1 (W1)).

Finally, Element IV are the offering formulae to the gods and the benefit that was received in return. In these texts two different parts can be easily distinguished. The first one is the offering formula⁵ itself:



A portion (of the offering) is offered to them on earth

The second part is the specific offering text that changes along the composition. They consist of the benefit received in exchange for the offering given to the gods. Each cavern has its own texts generally applying to the groups of deities of that specific cavern only. A total of 100 different offering texts has been attested. Not all of them were written in all sources but only some of them were selected.

Therefore, textual criticism has been applied to the three main parts of the composition: the text itself (but with a different approach to Elements I, II, IIIa, and IV); the vignettes (Element IIIb); and the numbers of the groups of deities (Element IIIc). Obviously, the procedure was adapted when used on these two last aspects.

However, some limitations to the methodology stand out at this point. The first is the impossibility of rebuilding the original archetype due to the fact that only part of the composition has been preserved. In an unknown period of time, maybe between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the New Kingdom, the first seven caverns of the book were lost and no master copy survived to transmit that information. Thus, all *BTC* sources only include the last five caverns, from the eighth to the twelfth. However, in some sources generally related to rituals in temples, the composition was artificially rebuilt in a schematic way. It could be thought that this was done in order to enhance its effectiveness, as in the Osireion of Abydos.

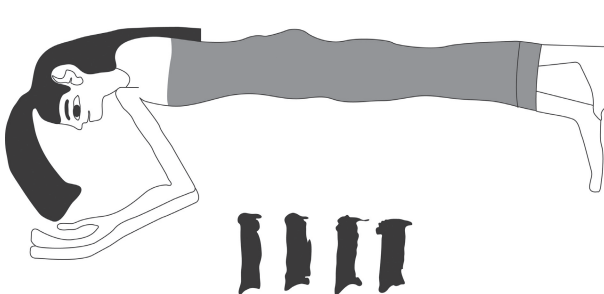


FIGURE 2: ELEMENT IIIc IN PLONDON BM EA 10478 (DRAWING: D. M. MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ).

⁴ The *BTC* is depicted in two of the six Osirian chapels: the third Eastern chapel (E3) and the first Western chapel (W1) (von Lieven 2012: 252–3, 259; Méndez Rodríguez 2017).

⁵ This offering formula was not exclusively used in the *BTC*. Other compositions as the *Book of the Hidden Chamber* (Amduat) and the *Book of Gates* contain it (Wente 1982: 162, 168).

The second deficiency is the poor preservation condition of many of the sources. For the vast majority of them, unfortunately, only one or a few fragments have been preserved. No more than 5 from the total of 30 contain the composition more or less entirely. Thus there are only a few sources from which a general and full view can be obtained.

Another limitation arises when adapting the composition to the different types of surfaces or media. For different reasons only a small selection of the book was reproduced in some of them, working as a *pars pro toto*.

Finally, a fourth methodology difficulty was the selection of the information included in each kind of source. Some of them present the iconography (Element IIIb) or the numbers of deities (Element IIIc), but others omit one or both of these features. Only a few contain a full reproduction of the whole composition, and, for this reason, it has been necessary to work with different elements depending on the source.

The *BTC* text itself has different features that should be commented on. The funerary text on Element I, which is the introduction of the composition, has only been found to date in two sources,⁶ so a *tertium comparationis* in the methodology of the textual criticism is not possible. Therefore it cannot be determined which one was closest to the master copy. At least the identification of the text in pBarcelona E-615 has been useful in terms of discovering that this funerary introduction was not conceived as a specific text created exclusively for one document. In a similar way, only one example “only one attestation of some offering texts has been found, which gives no information about the relationship with other sources. This is the case in 23 of the 100 offering texts.

The study and comparison of all textual versions has permitted the identification of different kinds of processes by which the texts were affected. These are divergences that can be organized following the terminology of textual criticism in digressions and differences (Jürgens 1995: 10). Digressions found are mistakes (omissions, corruptions, transpositions, combinations of different texts, divisions, dittographies, haplographies, morphological and phonetic mistakes, changes in gender and number, etc.) as well as text additions. Differences found in the composition are alternative lexical uses, different grammatical constructions

⁶ pLondon BM EA 10478 and pBarcelona E-615. For a general comparison of both texts cf. Méndez Rodríguez 2015: 75–81.

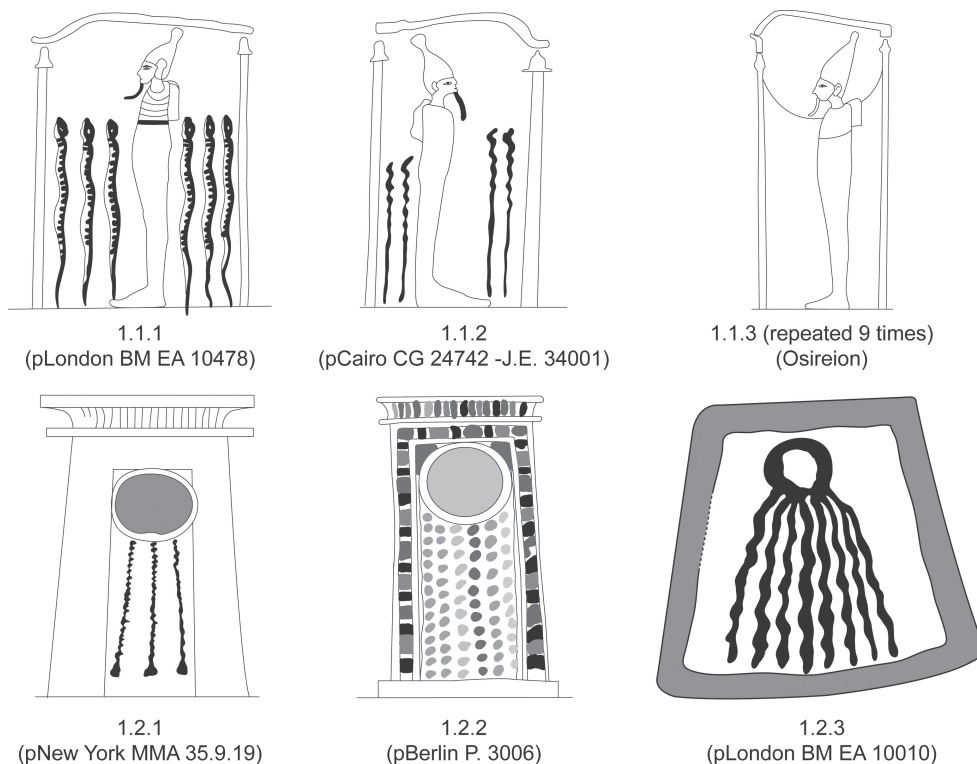


FIGURE 3: EXAMPLES OF ICONOGRAPHIC TYPOLOGY OF THE 1ST GROUP OF THE 9TH CAVERN (DRAWING: D. M. MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ).

(changes in the verb form, use of direct or indirect genitive), and modifications of the gods' names.

The textual criticism methodology has been adapted to the vignettes (Element IIIb) considering that the *BTC* contains not just one vignette but a series of them (up to 65 groups of gods), each with a specific iconography that could evolve independently. For this reason, a typology for each of the vignettes has been developed enabling the study of the transmission in this field. This typology shows the wide range of differences between the illustrations and distinguishes them by assigning a three-digit code separated by dots: the first one is the number of the group of gods, the second is the iconographic variant (a substantial and in-depth change); and the third one refers to a sub-typology or sub-variant (slight modification) (Figure 3).

The iconographic typology presents a total of 10 variants and 108 sub-variants. One of the peculiarities of the methodology application to the vignettes is that it allows perceiving connections between sources that would have had a close master copy in common. The complication is to know which source derives from which one, because the older attested sources would not necessarily be closer to the archetype than the later ones. In this sense, the divergences could be considered usually more as differences, and not digressions, following the terminology of the textual criticism.

As with the iconography, the comparison of the numbers related to the groups of deities (Element IIIc) shows divergences between sources and allows the grouping of them (Figure 4). Deviations in this case could be also understood as digressions. This is because the most repeated number in all sources could be the one closest to the archetype, but obviously this does not necessarily have to be the case.

	teO	pC I	pBM I	pPr	pV	mBM I	mS	steC I	steC II	teDe	pBM IV	pBr
Group 1	1	1	0	/	/	/	0	-	-	-	/	0
Group 2	13	13	0	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	14	14
Group 3	14	14	0	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	24
Group 4	4	4	4	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	4
Group 5	1	1	1	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	/	{1}
Group 6	8	8	4	/	8	/	/	-	-	-	/	8
Group 7	11	11	0	/	11	/	/	-	-	-	/	11
Group 8	14	14	0	/	14	/	/	-	-	-	/	14
Group 9	4	4	0	/	0	/	/	-	-	-	/	4

FIGURE 4. COMPARISON OF THE NUMBERS RELATED TO THE GROUP OF GODS (ELEMENT IIIc) OF THE 12TH CAVERN
 LEGEND: 0, OMITTED; /, DESTROYED; -, DOCUMENT FINISHED BEFORE THIS POINT; {}, RECONSTRUCTED ON THE BASIS OF THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE.

The study of all the evidence permits the production of a *stemma*, or transmission tree of the history of the composition and the relationship between sources. Through this analysis some general considerations can be explained about the textual and iconographic tradition.

The archetype α would contain a full version of the book with a division in twelve caverns. At some undetermined moment between the date of composition and the 18th Dynasty, seven of its twelve parts were irreversibly lost. It could be supposed that the composition was considered as cosmographical knowledge restricted to priests and for this reason not many copies were produced at that time. The damaged model β is the only one copied and transmitted afterwards. Because of this loss, some sources intended to present themselves as a complete version, but only artificially, by way of texts and vignettes copied from other parts of the book, or in a very simple style at odds with the the rest of it.⁷ This shows a high degree of canonicity in the composition (von Lieven 2016: 64). The introduction of new texts and images for the lost deities (Element IIIa and IIIb) was unthinkable. Instead, standardized or repetitive vignettes and general texts (e.g. the first part of Element II) could be employed to confer an impression of completeness.

The next important phase in the history of the book would involve at least three changes. The first one involved the textual extension of the deities' names (Element IIIa) that were frequently used in many funerary sources.

Example: 1st group of the 8th Cavern
 Normal version (pCairo CG 24742 (J.E. 34001)):
ḥꜣy(w) ḥꜣ(yw)=sn
 'Those (masc.) who carry the ones (masc.) who are upon them.'

Extended version (pLondon BM EA 10478):
ḥꜣy(w) ḥꜣ(yw)=sn r pt m-ḥꜣt wiꜣ n(y) rꜥ d=sn mꜣꜣ wsir rꜥ m wbn=f
 'Those (masc.) who carry the ones (masc.) who are upon them to heaven before the barque of Re. May they grant that the Osiris [of NN] may see Re at his rising.'

⁷ E.g. the Osireion of Abydos and the chapels of the Temple of Hathor in Dendara (pNew York Brooklyn 47.218.50, pLondon BM EA 10569 and pBarcelona E-615).

The second modification would be the inclusion of an introductory text (Element I) for a funerary context at least in the 19th Dynasty.⁸ The ritual instructions detailed in this text, which include the insertion of the book in a wooden statuette of the deceased, were supposedly put into practice during the reign of Amenhotep II.⁹ Therefore, this text (or a similar version of it) may be thought to have been inserted at least since that moment.

The third change involves the omission of the division in caverns (Element II). Nevertheless, this will continue in some sources until the end of the history of the composition.

Also, similarly and almost in the same documents, the numbers of each group of gods (Element IIIc) are also omitted. The inclusion or elimination of both features identifies the two main versions of the composition: I and II (Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon 1974: 42). Thus, version II omits the mythical geographical context where the gods dwelled. Without other explicit information it cannot be determined whether copyists or users of this version were aware that the litany of deities corresponded to the cavern-gods.

It seems that archetype α would be a version I, including at least the names (Element IIIa, in an unextended version) and representation of the deities (Element IIIb) organized in groups and caverns (i.e. with Element II). This would represent the main body of knowledge contained within this cosmographical book. This part seems to be the most canonized, and to which some additions were made in order to adapt it to different uses (as for some rituals in temples, or as funerary equipment).

Despite the high degree of canonicity in the composition, some additions seem to have been produced during its history. One clear example is the group 5-bis of the 11th Cavern. Its vignette (Figure 5) and name (*šꜣwt ḥꜣp(wt)* 'The mysterious ones (fem.) who conceal') were composed and added during a specific moment, since only a few sources, very close between them in the transmission process, contain them.

The offering texts (Element IV) are perhaps the most important case of diachronic text production. These were not all composed from the beginning, but were progressively created when the book was adapted for different temple rituals or funerary use. The attestation of some texts only once in certain sources, and the apparently specific adaptation to their context, support this idea. For example, the king acts

⁸ For the introductory text, cf. Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon (1974: 45-6); Méndez Rodríguez (2015: 77-8; 2016: I 345-6, II 8-11).

⁹ pCairo CG 24742 (J.E. 34001) was found inside a statuette (CGC 24619, J.E. 32475) in Amenhotep II's tomb (KV 35) by Victor Loret in 1898. Although this could be considered the oldest preserved funerary papyrus destined for a king, Parkinson and Quirke (1995: 53) bear in mind the later reuse of the tomb as a cachette: 'Only one papyrus survives from an Eighteenth Dynasty royal tomb (that of Amenhotep II), but this may date to the Twenty-first Dynasty when the royal mummies were reburied'. Although the first option would be the most probable a specific study of the manuscript is being undertaken to solve this dichotomy.



FIGURE 5: GROUP 5-BIS OF THE 11TH CAVERN (PNEW YORK MMA 35.919) (DRAWING: D. M. MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ).

as beneficiary or ritualist in the *Book of Hours* and the rituals of confirmation of the royal power and those performed in the Osireion (Faulkner 1958: 23, 52*; Goyon 1972: 75, 77; 1974: XIII–XVA; Murray 1989 [1904]: pls. II–V). In one of the Osirian chapels of Dendara (W1) an offering text alludes to the annihilation of all Osiris's enemies by decapitation (Cauville 1997a: 295; 1997b: X 171; 1997c: 159). This form of explicit violence is absent from all other offering texts and from the whole composition. It should be understood as an insertion within the protective and apotropaic decorative programme of the chapels against any evil that might threaten Osiris during the Khoiak ceremonies that sought his resurrection.

In conclusion, this general view of the transmission of the *BTC* points to a general reproductive tradition resulting from its canonized character, which involves the vignettes (Element IIIb) and some texts (Elements II and IIIa). However, certain details prove that its tradition was not merely reproductive but that some texts were added, or created, in order to adapt the composition for different uses and contexts.

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