

Concordance to the Sigla of Coffin Texts Manuscripts and Middle Kingdom Coffins

In connection with chapter 3, the need to quantify coffin production at different sites necessitated me to compile evidence scattered over many different publications. While I carried out this research, it gradually began to dawn upon me how active scholars have been in this domain over the past decades, but also how different their methods of documentation and referencing are. A major problem is that numerous scholars have developed their own reference systems, often leading to one source being designated by different numbers, or, conversely, one code being used in the publications to refer to a range of different coffins. Occasionally one author in one publication even uses two codes for one and the same source. The continuous need of checking and cross-checking references gave me the idea that it would be useful to provide an overview with a consistent encoding system to refer to all sources that might be relevant to, in the broad sense, the study of “Middle Kingdom” coffins.

I have thought it useful in the table below to present an overview of the various sigla that have been used. Also, I will propose a running series of unique codes for published and unpublished coffins, in the hope that confusion can be reduced to a tolerable minimum. Before presenting the table, a word of explanation is in order.

When A. DE BUCK stood before the task of documenting the sources of the Coffin Texts, he developed a format for encoding the sources. Basically, all CT sources received a code made up of two elements:

- a) an alphabetic code referring to the place of origin of the source, like “S” for Asyūt [i.e., Siut] or “BH” for Banī Ḥasan, was placed at the head of the coffin designation; and
- b) an alphanumeric code was placed after this designation, indicating the present location of the source. These latter codes are almost always composed of a number plus a location code. Thus, “C” means Cairo, or “P” Paris, and the number preceding this indicates which specific source kept at this place is meant. Accordingly, “S6P” refers to a coffin from Asyūt, and from the coffins from that site now in Paris, this is the sixth.

Although this system is used for almost all Coffin Texts sources, DE BUCK occasionally used sigla of a different type. For instance, some tombs at Thebes with burial chambers inscribed with Coffin Texts (and/or Pyramid Texts) are

referred to by their Theban Tomb number (e.g. TT311); one source is designated MC105 (for “Mentuhotep Cemetery 105”); and one coffin now in the Hermitage received the code “H.”

A. DE BUCK compiled a very extensive list of sources encoded by sigla; an easily surveyable overview is presented in LESKO, *Index*. These sigla appear in the leftmost column in the table below. In using this list, it should be borne in mind that it was DE BUCK’s aim to produce a synoptic edition of all texts that were considered “Coffin Texts.” Although these usually occur on coffins, this is by no means the only place where they appear. Other possible media are (stone) sarcophagi, walls of burial chambers, canopic boxes, funerary masks, papyri, stelae, and others. Therefore, his list also includes objects of these classes.

In 1988 I published *Chests of Life*, a book of which the purpose was not to study the Coffin Texts as such, but to develop, for the first time, a typology that would allow scholars to determine the origin and date of individual coffins. For this study, the problem of how to designate coffins immediately posed itself. Since the book as originally conceived aimed to present an overview of the typological development of coffins decorated on both the outside and inside (i.e. coffins provided with Coffin Texts and object friezes), it was self-evident to adopt the already existing system of designations introduced by de Buck. In the course of the work, however, it proved almost impossible to develop consistent typologies covering the entire insides and outsides of this group of coffins. It appeared that a clearer picture emerged by treating the outsides and the insides separately, and in analyzing the outer decoration of the coffins, it obviously became necessary also to study coffins that were only decorated on that side. At the moment this decision was taken, I already had at my disposal the core of what would become my “list 1,” which provides an overview of coffins decorated both on the inside and on the outside. I decided to keep this list in the form it already had, and to add “list 2,” for coffins only decorated on the outside. In order to distinguish coffins of the two groups, a new type of siglum was developed for this second list, in which the “present location code” was dropped. Thus, the coffins in list 2 were designated by sigla only consisting of an indication of the find place followed by a running number. This led to sigla like S1 (“Asyūt 1”). In comparing, for instance, this code with S1P, it would be immediately clear that the latter is decorated inside (and outside), whereas the former is only decorated on the outside. My reference system is provided in the second column of the table below.¹

1 Almost all these codes were listed in my *Chests of Life*, p. 19–40. However, in the appendix to *Les Textes des Sarcophages et la démocratie*, p. 229–232, I added a few additional sources,