

## How ‘Funerary’ Are the Coffin Texts?

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The Ancient Egyptians are famous for their so-called ‘funerary literature’.<sup>1</sup> One of the most extensive bodies of such ‘literature’ are without doubt the Coffin Texts, so called, because they are mostly attested from the insides of Middle Kingdom wooden coffins. Because they are attested on coffins, obviously they are funerary literature. What sounds logical enough is not as straightforward as it seems if one also takes the contents of the texts into account. When considering emic and etic concepts within the funerary culture of the Middle Kingdom, it needs to be asked how ‘funerary’ the Coffin Texts actually are and why they were used as funerary texts, even if some of their contents are not very ‘funerary’ as such.

There can be no doubt as to the fact that in the concrete form in which they are preserved to us today, these texts were funerary. However, in my project on the non-funerary origins of selected spells from the Coffin Texts, I could identify over forty spells with likely or in my opinion sometimes secure non-funerary origins. This project was funded by the German Research Council (DFG) in the framework of a Heisenberg Fellowship,<sup>2</sup> for which I would like to thank them very much.

Those spells I selected from the entire corpus published by de Buck (see Table 5.1).<sup>3</sup> Several points need to be made here. Although of course well known to any researcher in this field, they are still of enough importance to call them to mind explicitly from time to time. Firstly and most importantly, the ‘corpus’ constituted by the edition of de Buck is an entirely artificial collection by modern scholarship. In reality, each coffin only contains a small, individual selection from the complete pool of such texts,<sup>4</sup> a pool moreover not necessar-

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1 For a detailed discussion of this concept in general see the paper by Harco Willems in this volume.

2 Reference Li 1846/1–2. The complete results will be published as a monograph. My interpretations of the content of the spells discussed here are founded in my philological analysis there.

3 De Buck, A., *The Egyptian Coffin Texts I–VII* (OIP 34, 49, 64, 67, 73, 81 and 87, Chicago, 1935–1961).

4 Lesko, L.H., *Index of the Spells on Egyptian Middle Kingdom Coffins and Related Documents* (Berkeley, 1979).

ily exhausted by the material published already. In fact, a few new texts have come to light over the years, which however I did not take into account in my systematic search for non-funerary material.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 5.1 CT spells with likely non-funerary origins

Spell number	Subject	Relevant part of the subscript	Successor in BD
30	Way into the West (in sequence with the following, otherwise not clearly non-funerary)		
31–36	Rituals for Osiris in Busiris		
37	Destruction of an enemy	Burying an execration figure from wax	
38	Bringing back a comatose person(?) from near-death		
39	Similar to 38		
40	Similar to 38		
41	Similar to 38		
81	Identification with Shu	Licking off a drawing daily early in the morning	
98	Protection from ghosts	Spitting on a louse from one's head	
99	Sending a vision?		
100	Sending a vision?	Drawing a picture on one's hand	(partially 89, but funerary, with different subscript)
101	Sending a vision?	Recite over a [louse?] from the head	
102	Sending a vision?		
103	Sending a vision?	Doing magic with a statue	
104	Dream ritual		
115–119	Building ritual	119: spell for building a tomb etc.	

5 New publications like Lapp, G., *Särge des Mittleren Reiches aus der ehemaligen Sammlung Kashaba* (ÄA 43, Wiesbaden, 1985) or Polz, D., *Für die Ewigkeit geschaffen: Die Särge des Imeni und der Geheset* (Mainz, 2007) and Polz, D. and M. Wagner, 'Dra' Abu el-Naga, Ägypten: Die Särge des Imeni und der Geheset—Textzeugen an der Schwelle zwischen Sargtexten und Totenbuch. Die Arbeiten des Jahres 2018', *DAI e-Forschungsberichte 2* (2018), 21–27 (<https://publications.dainst.org/journals/efb/2145/6528>, urn:nbn:de:0048-journals.efb-2018-2-p21-27-v6528.1) come to mind, although they seem to have mostly contained texts already attested on other coffins. At least for Imeni and Geheset, though, one has to wait for the final publication. The preliminary reports raise hopes for some new variants or filled lacunae at minimum.