

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN
NETHERWORLD BOOKS

SBL Press

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THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN
NETHERWORLD BOOKS

John Coleman Darnell and Colleen Manassa Darnell

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For Erik Hornung

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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Writings from the Ancient World is designed to provide up-to-date, readable English translations of writings recovered from the ancient Near East.

The series is intended to serve the interests of general readers, students, and educators who wish to explore the ancient Near Eastern roots of Western civilization or to compare these earliest written expressions of human thought and activity with writings from other parts of the world. It should also be useful to scholars in the humanities or social sciences who need clear, reliable translations of ancient Near Eastern materials for comparative purposes. Specialists in particular areas of the ancient Near East who need access to texts in the scripts and languages of other areas will also find these translations helpful. Given the wide range of materials translated in the series, different volumes will appeal to different interests. However, these translations make available to all readers of English the world's earliest traditions as well as valuable sources of information on daily life, history, religion, and the like in the preclassical world.

The translators of the various volumes in this series are specialists in the particular languages and have based their work on the original sources and the most recent research. In their translations they attempt to convey as much as possible of the original texts in fluent, current English. In the introductions, notes, glossaries, maps, and chronological tables, they aim to provide the essential information for an appreciation of these ancient documents.

Covering the period from the invention of writing (by 3000 BCE) down to the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca. 330 BCE), the ancient Near East comprised northeast Africa and southwest Asia. The cultures represented within these limits include especially Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Aramean, Phoenician, and Israelite. It is hoped that Writings from the Ancient World will eventually produce translations of most of the many different genres attested in these cultures: letters (official and private), myths, diplomatic documents,

hymns, law collections, monumental inscriptions, tales, and administrative records, to mention but a few.

The Society of Biblical Literature provided significant funding for the Writings from the Ancient World series. In addition, authors have benefited from working in research collections in their respective institutions and beyond. Were it not for such support, the arduous tasks of preparation, translation, editing, and publication could not have been accomplished or even undertaken. It is the hope of all who have worked on these texts or supported this work that Writings from the Ancient World will open up new horizons and deepen the humanity of all who read these volumes.

Theodore J. Lewis
The Johns Hopkins University

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PREFACE

The authors would like to offer their sincere appreciation to Theodore J. Lewis for the honor of being invited to write the present work in the series Writings from the Ancient World. The translations have their genesis in two earlier works by the authors: John Coleman Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity, Cryptographic Compositions from the Tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI, and Ramesses IX* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); and Colleen Manassa, *The Late Egyptian Underworld: Sarcophagi and Related Texts from the Nectanebid Period*, 2 vols., ÄAT 72 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2007). We are grateful to Anthony Spalinger for taking on the role of editor for this project, during which he offered a number of helpful references and comments.

The plates and figures accompanying the present work derive from a variety of sources, including line drawings by the authors. In addition to a number of plates reproduced by permission of Princeton University Press and the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, additional images are reproduced from drawings in the Natacha Rambova Archive at Yale University, donated by Edward L. Ochsenschlager in memory of Donald P. Hansen; for assistance in the transfer of this significant collection, we would like to thank Christine Lilyquist. We are especially grateful to Joshua Roberson for allowing us to reproduce his drawings of the Books of the Creation of the Solar Disk in the tombs of Ramesses VII and Ramesses IX. Alberto Urcia provided invaluable technical support during the preparation of the figures and plates, including the plans of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

Although we have restricted the number and scope of the footnotes and references in the present volume so as “not to multiply words” (following in the footsteps of Thutmose III), a perusal of the bibliography and of our earlier volumes referenced above will reveal the past and present scholars whose works have contributed in many ways to this translation

volume. Given the ubiquity of the key terms throughout the body of the text (e.g., Re appears 1,401 times, Osiris 742 times, solar disk 308 times, and Horus 241 times), we have also omitted indices from this volume. Readers wishing to locate a particular scene or gather additional information about a deity, topic, or scholar are encouraged to consult the list of figures, concordance, and glossary or search the electronic version of this volume.

We would like to thank Theodor Abt and Erik Hornung for stimulating discussions over the years about the Netherworld Books and funerary imagery in general. We have both been personally inspired by the magisterial scholarship of Erik Hornung, without whose publications on the Netherworld Books our current project would not have been possible. To him we dedicate this book. The inclusion of hundreds of figures with the translations was essential to maintain the relationship between text and image in the Netherworld Books—for making this goal possible and assisting with multiple aspects of the editing and production process, we would also like to thank SBL Press, particularly Nicole Tilford and Bob Buller.

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