THE CARDIAC VIGNETS OF THE BOOK OF THE DEAD (LATE PERIOD)

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SUMMARY:
Late copies of the Book of the Dead show a high level of standardization both in the texts and in the images used to strengthen the magical power of the spells. Since the study of iconography of the Book of the Dead is still currently in progress, with this article we intend to provide an iconographical description of the vignettes that traditionally illustrate the cardiac chapters of the Book of the Dead (chapters 26-30) in order to clarify their magical function. This research was mostly developed through the study of manuscripts of the Book of the Dead conserved in the Louvre Museum, in Paris1.

INTRODUCTION

After falling out of use during the Libyan Period, the Book of the Dead was revived in the Late Period, where a significant revision of the texts took place. Besides that, a high level of standardization is also patent at the images used to illustrate the texts. Late copies of the Book of the Dead also show a greater number of illustrations than their earlier editions, which certainly aimed to grant, as much as possible, a specific image to each chapter. In fact, the images used in these documents are more closely related to the texts than the illustrations of earlier documents. Although they are an excellent source of material which helps us understanding the

1 The research here presented was only possible thanks to the collaboration of the staff from the Egyptian Antiquities Department of the Louvre Museum, who assisted me with my investigation of the manuscripts conserved at the Museum. For that reason I would like to address my special thanks to Madame Christine Ziegler and Madame Sylvie Guichard.
magical conceptions related to the reanimation of the heart in the hereafter, the vignettes that illustrate the cardiac chapters have not been the object of many studies, and for that reason much of their meaning was not plainly understood.

Malcolm Mosher defined various styles in the production of the Late Period versions of the Book of the Dead. The Style 1, with its origin in Thebes, showcases columns of hieratic text informally divided simply by an empty space. The vignettes occur wherever the texts of their corresponding spells begin, typically beside their titles. Style 2, with its origin in Memphis, shows a much more carefully thought layout: the text, also written in hieratic, is delimited by vertical double lines. The vignettes are always disposed at the top of the text, creating a continuous set of images throughout the entire book.

Style 3, which started being used after the Macedonian conquest, became a kind of national style and consists in mixed versions of the two previous major local styles. Although the Memphitic layout can be prevalent, many iconographic aspects of the Theban style were also included.

![Fig. 1. Book of the Dead of Chachamuk. Ptolemaic Period? Vignette of chapter 26. The deceased is kneeling before the ba bird. With the left hand he holds his heart, a gesture that means that he has possession of his cardiac organ. Through this image, the ba, the divine power, is connected to the possession of the heart. Louvre Museum (N 3089), Paris.](image1)

In our study we will focus our attention in the papyri produced by the inspiration of local styles, 1 and 2. In order to better understand the iconography of the cardiac vignettes, we will also use the written information provided by the cardiac chapters. However, we must keep in mind that on Theban copies of the Book of the Dead, the illustrations are mixed with the text in such a way that it can be difficult to identify a single or specific order of appearance.

![Fig. 2. Book of the Dead of Horsailet. Ptolemaic Period? Louvre Museum (N 3082), Paris.](image2)

![Fig. 3. Vignettes from the New Kingdom. Left: Book of the Dead of Nebked, Louvre Museum (N 3082), Paris. Right: Book of the Dead no 9900, British Museum, London.](image3)

1. **The vignettes of chapter 26 of the Book of the Dead**

The vignette most frequently related to chapter 26 consists in the representation of the deceased kneeling before his own ba bird. The deceased has his heart in his left hand, a codified gesture that shows that he is in the possession of his heart. With the right hand he makes a gesture of adoration dedicated to his ba bird. The divine bird
usually wears the djed sign around the neck and is usually portrayed on the top of a socle or, more rarely, on a temple. Between the bird and the deceased sometimes we see an offering table with a lotus blossom and an offering vase.

The reason for the representation of the ba bird in the context of a cardiac spell is related to the magical function of chapter 26, which is a spell that aims to give back to the deceased his vital powers and, among them, the freedom of movements required to the ba.

Nevertheless, on former editions of the Book of the Dead, especially those from the New Kingdom, the vignette of chapter 26 depicted the deceased before Anubis. This was a more literal interpretation of the meaning of the text itself, since the god is represented in a gesture of giving back the heart to the deceased, a gesture that was certainly allusive to his role in the mummification process. In the later versions of the Book of the Dead, the role performed by Anubis in former vignettes seems to have vanished, since it gave place to the representation of the deceased holding his heart before his ba. However, it is important to keep in mind this parallel in order to stress the bodily meaning of that gesture. In fact, it is the physical organ that the image intends to guarantee, and not so much the heart as conscience. This distinction is important and it is actually documented as well in chapter 26 itself:

«Mon cœur-ib m’appartient dans la maison des coeurs-ibu, mon cœur-hatti m’appartient dans la maison des coeurs-hatii.»

We will not discuss here the formal distinction between the heart ib and hatti, since the complete clarification of this topic would be very long. In short, we will take the commonly adopted distinction between the two terms which considers that the heart ib reports to the conscience, while the heart hatti seems to be identified with the cardiac organ. The text itself seems to recognize that both hearts are important in the hereafter and that they will have distinct functions in the life after death:

«J’ai de nouveau connaissance (rh) grâce à mon cœur (ib), j’ai l’usage (ajm) du viscére de mon cœur (hatti), j’ai l’usage de mes bras, j’ai l’usage de mes jambes, et j’ai la possibilité de faire ce que désire mon ka; on ne retrouvera pas prisonniers mon âme (ba) et mon corps aux portes de l’Occident.»

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6 These vignettes became common from the Late Period on, especially associated with chapter 26. Despite not being usual, it also can be associated with chapters 28 and 30.
7 See Chapter 26 of the Book of the Dead, s’il de nouveau connaissance grâce à mon cœur (...) on ne retrouvera pas prisonniers mon âme (ba) et mon corps aux portes de l’Occident, in BARQUET, Le Livre des Morts, p. 72.
9 About this distinction see SOUSA, A Simbologia do Coração no Antigo Egito, pp. 267-271.
10 See ARDMANN, Morts et au-delà dans l’Égypte Ancienne, pp. 56-57.

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As it is suggested by former vignettes that depict Anubis giving back the heart to the deceased, this gesture could be in fact symbolized by the offering of a heart amulet to the mummy, since in these depictions the organ is frequently replaced by an amulet. Mentions to the «house of hearts» in chapter 26 also seem to be related to an acquisition of hearts ib and hatti that could be given to the mummy. Funerary practices changed a lot throughout time and the amulet represented in these vignettes can be an heart amulet or a heart scarab. The interesting thing is that these amulets of the heart can in fact be considered as representations of both hearts of man: the amulet related to the heart ib is certainly the heart amulet (shaped exactly as a three-dimensional ib hieroglyph), while the heart scarab could be the amulet that allowed the deceased the control over the heart hatti. This distinction provides an important contribute to un-

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derstand the magical function of the cardiac amulets, as both hearts are frequently mistaken for one another. If our assumption is correct, the amulet of the heart ūb was believed to give back to the deceased his knowledge (tekhi) and perhaps his identity, while the amulet of the heart šašu, the heart scarab, allowed the deceased to have control (šenjem) over it bodily heart šašu. These aspects were precisely the main concern of chapter 26 which intended to «give back the heart to N. in the hereafter»

Fig. 5. Book of the Dead of Ahémès. Ptolemic Period! Vignette of chapter 27. The deceased is kneeling before the four sons of Horus. He has his heart on his left hand. Louvre Museum (N 3086), Paris.

2. The vignettes of chapter 27 of the Book of the Dead

The vignette most frequently connected with chapter 27 represents the deceased kneeling before one or more deities, seated over a temple or a maletic socle13. While with his right hand the deceased makes a gesture of praying towards the gods, with his left hand he holds his heart, a gesture that, as we have seen before, means that he owns his heart or that he has power over his heart. This kind of vignettes are more often found among Theban versions of the Book of the Dead and are rarely found on earlier versions14.

Curiously enough, the text of chapter 27 also mentions that the deceased stands before an assembly of gods and tries to persuade them not to speak against him in the court of Osiris:

Paroles dites par N.: «O vous qui enlevez les coeurs (...) salut à vous maîtres de l’éternité, organisateurs de la permanence! Ne m’ôtez pas ce cœur qui est le mien, ne critiquez pas ce visage de mon cœur!»

In certain vignettes the deceased stands before a single deity. In this case it is possible that this god may figure as his personal god or as the «great god», as it is mentioned in the text. Nevertheless, three is usually the number of gods depicted which, in fact, may be read as the plural form of the word «gods». That was the simplest way to depict the deceased before an assembly of gods. More rarely those deities may be four and, in that case, usually depict the four sons of Horus15.

The role of these gods is clearly expressed in the text:

Paroles dites par N.: «O vous qui enlevez les coeurs, vous qui dérobez les viscères du cœur, vous qui faites se manifester (epy) le cœur de l’homme dans ce qu’il a fait, alors qu’il ne se reconnaît pas par suite de ce que vous avez fait (...)!»

The gods watch over the heart of the deceased and transform it according to his own deeds. This sentence has interesting implications since it can only be understood in the light of the weighing of the heart beliefs. Without being aware of it, man could see his heart transformed due to his own deeds, exposing himself to the attack of the gods that punish and rob the heart of the sinners.

The last sentence of the text is a command addressed to the heart, by which both the power over his heart and its good testimony before the court of Osiris are guaranteed:

Obéis-moi, mon cœur! Je suis ton maître! Tant que tu seras dans mon corps, tu ne me seras pas hostile! Je suis celui qui ordonne que tu mènes dans l’empire des morts16.

Chapter 27 seems to have several «layers» that reflect different stages of the notions related to the judgement of the dead. In fact, we know that the early concerns about the judgement of the dead were connected to the possibility of an accusation that could be addressed in the court of the dead against the deceased. The first part of the text seems to reflect this concern about how to avoid that threat, while the second part seems to be an update of the text in order to fit the needs imposed by the beliefs of the weighing of the heart.

However, the most interesting part of the text is the identification made by the deceased between his heart and the heart of the «great gods»:

13 This vignette tends to be associated with chapter 27 but it can be sporadically found among other cardiac chapters.
14 About the main features of the late compositions of the Book of the Dead see BARGUET, Le Livre des Morts, pp. 6-23. See also M. Mossher, «Theban and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period», JARCE XXIX, pp. 143-172.
18 Chapter 27 of the Book of the Dead, in idem, p. 72.
That identification the deceased tried to intimidate the gods, preventing the danger of being accused of any bad deed in the court of Osiris. Also, he could easily undergo through the dangers of the weighing of the heart, since the heart of the creator is totally pure.

Fig. 6. Book of the Dead of Chachamuk. Ptolemaic Period? Vignette of chapter 28. Depicted in the traditional position that symbolizes the possession of the heart, the deceased kneels before the god of his heart. The strange shape of the heart may be an iconographical expression meaning the identification between the heart and the lower abdomen. Louvre Museum (N 3088), Paris.

Fig. 7. Book of the Dead. Ptolemaic Period? Louvre Museum (E 7716), Paris.

3. The vignettes of Chapter 28 of the Book of the Dead

Some of the vignettes of chapter 28 combine elements depicted in the previously discussed illustrations. Most commonly, they depict the deceased kneeling before a single god. Unlike the precedent vignettes, this one presents as central element a divine staff with a heart, standing between the god and the deceased. The shape of the composition that surmounts the heart held by the standard is not conventional at all: a strange appendix of two lobules is depicted over the heart, reminding the shape of the lungs united with the cardiac organ. This kind of depiction of the heart is also detected among heart amulets that were adorned with a downward border type. Curiously enough, this particular kind of objects seems to have been produced in the Late Period, the same period where these types of vignettes were drawn. Although few examples have survived, the major part of these objects is still covered by a gold leaf, which points to a solar symbolism. In the same way, the vignette underlines the solar connotations of the depiction through the red ink used in the coloration of the heart.

The significance of that representation of the heart must be necessarily connected with the presence of the god depicted in the same vignette. In Egyptian iconography, the depiction of a deity and a standard usually means that the god is hidden inside the sacred object. If this reading is correct, the figure shows the god that lives inside the totem of the heart. Unlike the previous illustrations, here the deceased doesn’t hold

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Chapter 27 of the Book of the Dead, in ibidem.

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30 About the different types of heart amulets see SOUSA, «Os amuletos de criação no Antigo Egito: Tipologia e caracterização», Caderno 15 (2005), pp. 125-130.

31 We must point out that among later copies of the Book of the Dead, the use of colour is very rare. When it happens, it must have a special significance. See M. MOSHER, «Thebaic and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period», JARCE XXXIX, p. 172.
the heart on his hand: both his arms are usually raised in adoration. This is certainly the depiction of the adoration of the inner god that lives in the «temples» of the heart.

The magical concern of the vignette seems less focused in the «presence of the heart», as the previous ones did, and seems to have instead a wider spiritual scope, since it gives a greater attention to the heart as the seat of the inner god.

Although well documented in Egyptian literature, this god of the heart is rarely depicted, especially in other contexts besides the Book of the Dead. The only depiction of a «heart god» that we know of is found in the mummy of the temple of Isis, in Philae. He is depicted as an anthropomorphic god that holds a vase with a heart on the top of his head. The god is shown in the context of the presentation of Hor-PAKHERED to an assembly of gods. This god of the heart seems to protect the young Hor-Pakhered and seems to be a personification of the heart, in the abstract meaning of seat of life, conscience and divine will.

The text of chapter 28, although very obscure, gives us some clues on how to understand the magical function of the vignette. In the text, the deceased identifies himself with the primordial flower in order to be protected against the enemies of light and cosmic order:

O lion, je suis la fleur-ounebt! Mon abomination est la salle d’abattage. Que ce viscére de mon cœur ne me soit pas enlevé par les combattants dans l’Héliopolis!  

The word ounebt simply means «flower» and it was an allusion to the mythic primordial lotus of the hermopolis cosmogony. Therefore, the ounebt flower symbolizes the power of light and the allusion to it seems to be connected to a particular kind of threat: certain heliopolitan «demons» could remove the hearts of those who were impure. By the identification with the ounebt flower the deceased aimed to guarantee a pristine purity to his heart in order to keep him safe from the attacks of the guardians of the hereafter.

For undetermined reasons, it is possible that this particular type of anatomical representation of the heart and the lungs eventually gained an iconicographic value as a symbol of the identification between the heart and the ounebt flower. The purpose of that identification was to guarantee the magical protection of the heart against the attacks of the demons of the underworld.

4. THE VIGNETTES OF CHAPTER 29 OF THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

Another specific type of vignettes consists simply in the representation of the deceased in a standing position, holding his heart in his hand. The image, depicting the possession of the heart, tries to assure the full domain of the powers of life through the possession of the heart. Although rarely depicted among latter versions of the Book of the Dead, it is usually in the vicinity of chapter 29 that it is found. This formula deals with the magical protection of the heart against a possible attack:

Formule pour empêcher que le cœur de N. ne lui soit enlevé dans l’empire des morts. Paroles dites par l’Oisir N. : «Arrière, messager de quelque dieu que ce soit! Si tu es venu pour m’enlever ce viscére de mon cœur d’homme, ce viscére de mon cœur d’homme, (à toi) qui chemines et qui obéis aux dieux des offrandes : qu’ils tombent sur leur face, et qu’ils éreintent (7) eux-mêmes dans la terreur!»

Also chapter 29 A has the same concern:

Formule pour que ne soit pas enlevé le siège de la pensée de celui qui est proclamé juste, dans l’empire des morts. Qu’il dis : «mon cœur est en ma possession, il ne me sera certainement pas enlevé! Je suis le maître des coeurs, (d) celui qui tranche les viscéres du cœur, et je vis de la vérité, étant celui qui existe par elle. Je suis Horus qui habite les coeurs, l’être intime qui habite le corps, je vis comme quelqu’un qui pense que mon cœur, il ne me sera pas enlevé; le viscére de mon cœur m’appartient, qu’il ne me soit pas courroucé (contre moi), que la terreure ne m’atteigne pas (de) ce qu’il (m’) est enlevé, tandis que je suis

23 Malcolm Mosher also refers that this chapter is rarely illustrated. See «Theban and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period», JARCE XXIX, p. 144, note 13.

In this text the possession of the heart is related to the verdict of
the court of the
hereafter. Possession of the heart is only allowed to those who were
proclaimed as the
rightful ones that lived by maat. The text says that the deceased is
Horus, the intimate
being that lives in each body. This sentence is very important as it
reveals the identity
of the inner god that lives in the heart of man. Chapter 29 A aimed to
guarantee the
possession of the heart by identifying the god of one's heart with
Horus.

5. THE VIGNETTES OF CHAPTER 30 OF THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

Although the earliest versions of chapter 30 were illustrated both by the
vignette of
the weighing of the heart and by the representation of the sacred scarab,
it became more and more strongly associated with the scarab. The
vignette of the weighing of the heart is more often associated with
chapter 125 of the Book of the
Dead. For that reason we will not study that vignette in this article.
The vignette of chapter 28 aimed to guarantee the identification between the heart of the deceased and the heart of the creator, not in the physical sense, but with the purpose of giving to the heart the light and purity of the primordial god. This magical goal is perhaps the reason why the solar scarab, the image of the rising sun, was chosen to create such an important amulet as the heart scarab. Both this amulet and the vignette of chapter 30 intended to identify the heart of the deceased with the symbol of Khepri. By the identification of his heart with the solar symbols (the flower anen, in chapter 28, or the scarab, in chapter 30), the deceased acquired purity and light that kept aside the danger of a possible attack that aimed to steal his heart from him, or even to prevent a possible accusation against his heart in the court of Osiris.

In any case, the magical purpose of these formulas is not focused on the weighing of the heart (this is the concern of chapter 125), but rather in the reanimation of the mummy, where the powers of life, such as the conscience, were awakened. Seen in this perspective, these formulas had a preparatory purpose since they gave to the deceased the purity of heart required to overcome successfully the trial of Osiris.

In conclusion, the magical purpose of the cardiac chapter of the Book of the Dead was only secondarily connected to the weighing of the heart. The main concerns were both to guarantee the possession of the heart and the subsequent reanimation of the powers of life (chapter 26, 27 and 29) and also its purity through the identification with the rising sun or the creator god (chapter 30 and 28, respectively).

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