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The conception of the body and its parts in the

Oracular Amuletic Decrees and beyond

The text corpus of the so-called Oracular Amuletic Decrees (OAD) has been known since its first publication in 1960 by I.E.S. Edwards (Edwards 1960). Since then, further texts could be assigned to this corpus (Quack 1994, 5-8; Bohleke 1997; Fischer-Elfert 2015, 82-95, 203-219, 250-252; Koenig 2018). The texts, which were primarily but not exclusively made for children, contain spells or promises from various gods for the protection of the amulet owner. These spells detail dangers as well as potentially dangerous situations from which the amulet owner is to be protected. The contribution focusses on body protection, which presupposes a concept of the body and its parts as a vulnerable, object-like entity without its own perspective for action. In this respect, the texts show an extremely rich vocabulary for describing the body on the one hand and for designating possible dangers to which a body can be exposed on the other. An analysis of this vocabulary as well as its use serves as the basis for the following considerations: What conception underlies the description of the body in the OAD? To what extent do these texts draw on medical knowledge about the body and its functions? What is the relationship between the description of the body in the OAD and anatomical lists from religious or funerary contexts? In addition, fundamental questions arise: What perspectives does such an analysis offer and what are its limits? How reliable are the findings with regard to further interpretations? The study is based on a complete reworking of the Oracular Amuletic Decrees, which is part of my work in the project “Structures and Transformations of the Vocabulary of the Egyptian Language” at the Academy of Sciences in Leipzig.

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