

The mounds of the Beyond, detail from an anonymous Book of the Dead c. 1450 BC, 18th dynasty

Painted papyrus.

H.: 39 cm; W.: 94 cm to 1.22 m; D.: 1.8 cm

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The Book of the Dead was a veritable pass-key to the Beyond, supplying the deceased not only with subsistence but also with the means to overcome obstacles in his path. It contained a series of “geographic” chapters describing the Beyond; chapters 149 and 150 described fifteen (sometimes fourteen) high mounds and the guards who lived on them. Thanks to the magic of hieroglyphic signs, the deceased knows the names of all the mounds and guards, which allows him to get past them.



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