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THE REPORT ABOUT THE DISPUTE  
OF A MAN WITH HIS BA  
By Hans Goedicke  
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Papyrus Berlin 3024 has evoked a number of studies because of the unusual nature of its contents, and views differ concerning its intent and purpose. The Report about the Dispute of a Man with His Ba is presented by the author as another attempt towards the "ultimate goal of appreciating and understanding the ancient Egyptians." The book is divided into two parts, the first being a discussion of the literary form and significance of the papyrus and the second a commentary upon the text with a translation. Plates of the papyrus and a transcription are supplied, and there are several indexes: a general index, an index of Egyptian words discussed, and a list of passages of other works cited.

The precise date of this papyrus is still unresolved. Since Erman's edition it has generally been assigned to the First Intermediate Period, but in this present study Goedicke proposes a slightly later date for its composition. He suggests that Papyrus 3024 has geographical and temporal affinities with the "Eloquent Peasant," which is usually dated to the Heracleopolitan Period. But the occurrence of the words m3'-hrw and rk with reference to Nebkaure indicates that the king can only serve as a terminus post quem for the latter work. Further, affinities between the "Instructions for King Merikare" and Papyrus 3024 are also given.

From this Goedicke concludes that one person might have been the author of all three, though none of these texts retains the name of the man who composed them. If there were one author, who might he

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be? Relying upon later Egyptian tradition, Goedicke suggests Hty (Akhtoy), who among Hordedef, Imhotep, and Neferi, was remembered as "their best." Since Hty is considered the author of the "Instructions of King Amenemhat I," he probably lived during the first part of the Twelfth Dynasty. This, then, is the proposed date of Papyrus Berlin 3024, as well as the other literary works.

Concerning the specific nature and intent of the text, there has been even less agreement than with regard to its date. In his study, Goedicke stresses the literary aspect of this text as the product of imagination or speculation and views the text as a treatise on a "primary human problem." The text has been described as a dialogue, but it is not a dialogue in the strict sense, for the words of the ba are only quoted as indirect speech. It is the report of a dispute. Yet it is not truly a report, for no one is specifically addressed unless it be the reader (or hearer). Goedicke considers it an artistic product presenting a "deliberation about a philosophical or human question" which is hedonism versus idealism. In contrast to didactic literature, Papyrus Berlin 3024 not only investigates the problem but attempts a solution: life, though it may be disagreeable, is preferable to death.

The disputants are a man and his ba (sometimes translated as "soul"). The man is presented as a "seeker" (shty) while the ba, according to this study, is portrayed as a hedonist. A lengthy discussion concerning the origin and early development of the ba-concept is given. With regard to its presumed derivation from a bird, it is stated, "To derive the spiritual concept of the ba from the jabiru-bird....is like deducing the Holy Ghost from the dove." Goedicke considers the modern confusion concerning the ba a result of "two diametrically opposed concepts of the ba," one an immanent and the other a transcendent view of a person's ba. "The clash of these two attitudes is the topic of the 'Report about the Dispute of the Man with his Ba.'"

With regard to the structure of the text, it is divided into three sections which are followed by the brief conclusion or "solution." The introduction of the papyrus is lost. The first section is a legal dispute in which the gods are invoked as witnesses, but not as a jury; the accusations of the

ba prompt a reply by the man. In the second section the two exchange views without any external agent; the ba presents some proposals for existence upon earth, but his attitude is considered "ignorance" by the man, who looks forward to shedding his body and entering the spiritual realm.

In the last section, each presents his respective attitude using different literary forms. The ba's argument is stated in prose and the man's in poetry. The ba uses two allegories, the first use of such in secular Egyptian literature. The first allegory illustrates the actions of the man and the consequences to the man alone. The second attempts to show the futility of the man's attitude and stresses the impression his views make upon his "partner," who is the ba. The man's position is presented in four poems of different length. Goedicke draws attention to the fact that the first consists of eight lines, the second sixteen, the third six, and the last three lines. The first poem is retrospective, and the second is stated in the present but postulated as a basis for the future. Both the second and third poems are linked by the repetition of the word "today." The fourth poem is prospective in nature, though brief in form. Finally, there is the concluding statement, in prose, in which the proposals of the ba are accepted by the man.

Goedicke thinks that the author sympathized with the position held by the man, who holds some lofty ideas. However, it is the simple argument of the ba, concentrating upon man's responsibility to society, which is the basis of the compromise between the two disputants. Perhaps this was an attempt to show that the idealistic position held by the man was untenable. If this text were written by Hty during the early part of the Twelfth Dynasty (and most likely under official auspices if he were the author of the other works also), one would not expect the royal patron to encourage suicide; one would, however, expect him to stress man's obligation to society. Concerning the question of suicide: the man only contemplates the next world; there is a difference between someone bemoaning "I wish I were dead" and openly declaring intent to kill oneself. The clue to understanding the solution or compromise probably lies in the final statement, which is translated by Goedicke, "Therefore, let us make a harbor for the occasion."

The words dmī n sp ("harbor for the occasion") have been translated in various ways. Goedicke connects dmī with the West, the place of the dead, as used in line 38. Perhaps the words mean "to come to an agreement" or "to be reconciled" and thus it would seem that the man accepts his position in life until some external force ends it.