

Khonsuemheb's Ghost: The Tomb That Had Been Forgotten

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A priest meets a dead man whose neglected tomb has left him restless. Surviving Egyptian pottery fragments preserve a ghost story in which listening and care matter as much as fear.

STATUS	Ancient ghost story preserved on dated ostraca; literary encounter
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Thebes and Deir el-Medina, Egypt
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Ancient stories
STORY HISTORY	Surviving ostrakon dated 1292-1077 BCE

THE ACCOUNT

The spirit has a name and a grievance. In the surviving tale, the priest Khonsuemheb encounters a dead man who has been forgotten, deprived of offerings and left with a ruined tomb. A fragment preserves the priest's appeal for the spirit to appear and his offer to provide a proper burial and coffin. The encounter opens a conversation across the boundary of death, with the living asked to repair what neglect has damaged.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

This story survives in pieces written on ostraca, fragments of pottery or stone used as writing surfaces. Turin's Museo Egizio dates its clay fragment S. 6619 to 1292-1077 BCE and records its excavation at Deir el-Medina in 1905. The Global Egyptian Museum provides a translation of a Vienna fragment; the Louvre also holds part of the tale. These are genuine ancient witnesses to a literary story. They do not establish that a historical ghost appeared.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

The apparition asks for attention before it offers terror. That gives the tale an intimacy unlike a simple monster encounter: a dead person still has a history, a place and unmet needs. Its fragmented survival is fittingly poignant. The modern reader, too, encounters a voice that must be pieced together from things nearly lost.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Hieratic ostrakon bearing an excerpt of the Ghost Story

Museo Egizio

https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/en-GB/material/S_6619

Ostrakon 3722a

Global Egyptian Museum

<https://globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=4888>

Ostrakon du revenant

Musée du Louvre

<https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002434>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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