

**Between the Living, the Dead and the Gods:
Writing as a Tool for Communication with the Underworld
in Some Ancient Civilizations**

The publications related to the aforementioned problem, which are often very valuable and even of fundamental importance for the chosen topic (broader, comparative), are of a contributing character. They are devoted to testimonies usually from one cultural area. This study is supposed to be as comprehensive as possible, using the current findings of other researchers, but it is significantly supplemented by the results of author's own research.

The main body of the dissertation consists of three parts complemented by illustrative material. It is preceded by an introduction discussing methodology and previous research of other scholars. Part I provides comprehensive presentation, discussion and analysis of the ancient Egyptian letters to the dead. Part II discusses Chinese letters to the Underworld bureaucracy known as *gaodishu*. Part III shortly reviews other cases of similar religious customs throughout Mediterranean and Europe. That includes *tabulae defixiones*, some custom recorded by classical writers among Celts and runic inscriptions from Denmark.

Descriptions of cases of living people's communication with the Underworld by means of writing based on the literature of the subject and own research, takes also into account, the cultural context of each of them. The emphasis here is on the precision of presentation based primarily on source texts.

Egypt is the starting point because of the relatively small number of texts and because these are the oldest texts in the discussed transmissions addressed to the deceased. In presenting the main topic of dissertation Egyptian short stories and inscriptions that relate to some degree to communication of people with the underworld (such as "Setne", "Si-Osire", "Dream Stele" and "Famine Stele") are also included. As early as 1928 A.H. Gardiner and K. Sethe presented first eight ancient Egyptian texts for which there is no doubt that they are the letters of living people to the dead. These scholars identified and defined the category of the "letters to the dead" in the Egyptian epistolary for the first time.

The same methodology is used for the remaining part of the dissertation concerning other cultural areas. The thesis ends with conclusions concerning the titular problem, past scholarship and analysis of sources in comparative perspective revealing some universal mechanisms of treatment of the deceased and the attempts of communication with the "other side".