

7. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Structuring Religion

Leuven, 28. September - 1. Oktober 2005

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René Preys

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Preface

During the sixth ‘Tempeltagung’, Horst Beinlich and Rolf Gundlach approached me with the request to organize the seventh meeting in the series at Leuven University. I gladly accepted the opportunity to host this prestigious gathering at my institution, and express my gratitude for the trust placed in us.

The topic chosen for the symposium was “structuring religion”. This title requires some explanation. My initial proposal was to focus entirely on the technicalities of Egyptian temple building, i.e. procuring and transporting building material, architectural design, the organization of work, and the practical execution of building and decoration projects. The idea was stirred by the Dayr al-Barsha project, which not only concerns Old and Middle Kingdom tombs, but also the publication of dozens of limestone quarries, including a large group dating to the time of Nectanebo I, which provide a wealth of archaeological and textual information on work procedures. But it was soon realized that these practicalities couldn’t be altogether dissociated from the religious life for which the temples were intended in the first place. When an architect designs a temple, he knows the purpose of the various rooms in the building, and his technical work shapes sacred space. The intricacies of the ‘grammaire du temple’ show that, already at the design stage, work must to a large extent have been determined by a concern to translate religious ideas in stone. In this way, temples not only reflect theological ideas, but, to an extent, help in structuring them at the same time. Also, as Joachim Quack’s paper shows, the ‘bureaucracy of temple building’ could be expressed in theological terms in Egyptian religious documents. The papers collected in this volume show that the various sides of how building a temple structures religion, were well represented in the communications.

The meeting was prepared by René Preys and myself, and was hosted by the Faculty of Arts of Leuven University. I express my gratitude to the Faculty of Arts and to the publishing house Peeters for financial and logistic support in the preparation of the conference. Also, I express my recognition to René Preys for editing the present volume.

Orp-le-Grand, May 2008

Harco Willems