

7. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Structuring Religion

Leuven, 28. September - 1. Oktober 2005

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René Preys

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Inhalt

Preface.....	VII
<i>Petra Andrásy</i>	
Builders' Graffiti and Administrative Aspects of Pyramid and Temple Building in Ancient Egypt	1
<i>Julia Budka</i>	
The Ramesside Temple in the Asasif. Observations on its construction and function, based on the result of the Austrian Excavations	17
<i>David Depraetere - Mark Depauw</i>	
The Limestone Quarries in the Wâdî Nakhla at Dayr al-Barshā Qualitative Stone Material for Temple Building	47
<i>Thierry De Putter - Christina Karlshausen</i>	
À Thèbes avec Gaston Bachelard: regards nouveaux sur une évidente nécessité. La pierre dans le temple thébain du Nouvel Empire	63
<i>Jitse H.F. Dijkstra</i>	
Structuring Graffiti: The case of the Temple of Isis at Aswan	77
<i>Ulrike Fauerbach</i>	
The Creation of an Egyptian Capital	95
<i>András Gulyás</i>	
The Solar Hymn of Suty and Hor and the Temple of Luxor: A Comparison of God-concepts	113
<i>Rolf Gundlach</i>	
Der Obelisk Thutmosis' I in Karnak und seine Bedeutung für den Tempel des Amun-Re	133
<i>Heidi Jauhiainen</i>	
Religious Buildings at Deir el-Medina.....	151
<i>Kirsten Konrad</i>	
Palast und Tempel. Zur Terminologie altägyptischer Palast und Tempelarchitektur	163

Erika Meyer-Dietrich

Der Tempel als Körper

Das Verhältnis zwischen architektonischer und religiöser Praxis 173

Ludwig D. Morenz

Hathor in Gebelein

Vom archaischen Höhenheiligtum zur Konzeption des Sakralbezirkes

als zweites Dendera unter Menthu-hotep (II.) 191

René Preys

Orientation et Théologie

La Demeure d'Ihy versus la Demeure de la Purification dans le temple de Dendera 211

Joachim Friedrich Quack

Die Theologisierung der bürokratischen Norm

Zur Baubeschreibung in Edfu im Vergleich zum Buch vom Tempel 221

Christophe Thiers

Observations sur le financement des chantiers de construction

des temples à l'époque ptolémaïque 231

Martina Ullmann

Überlegungen zur kultischen Strukturierung Nubiens im Neuen Reich 245

Pierre Zignani

Le temple d'Hathor à Dendera

L'architecture du temple: quand l'homme compose la perfection du divin 267

Index

Geography	289
Gods and Goddesses	290
Kings and Queens	291
Private Persons	292
Texts	292
Topics	294
Egyptian	296

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