



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Czech Institute of Egyptology

Prague, 14 November 2019

Mgr. Ondřej Vrabec
Odd. vědy FF UK

Report on the Habilitation Thesis by PhDr. F. Coppens, Ph.D., *Continuity, Discontinuity and Change. Reflections on Egyptian Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Era* (Charles University, Faculty of Arts, 2019).

The thesis submitted by Dr. Filip Coppens represents a thorough analysis of Egyptian sacred monuments of the Ptolemaic and Roman period. This particular period of the latest phase of ancient Egyptian history unquestionably belongs to the most captivating chapters in the Egyptian political and cultural history.

The work is divided into four major sections to which both an introduction and concluding remarks are attached. The four sections are aptly entitled "Setting the Stage," "Purifying and Provisioning the Temple," "Daily Cult, Feasts and Festivals," and "Kingship of God and Man," offering the reader a deep insight into various aspects of religious, cultic, and cultural life of ancient Egyptians during the very last moments of the ancient Egyptian history. Altogether fifteen studies, published in respected journals as well as monograph series were cautiously selected to illustrate the above mentioned phenomena and both the introduction and concluding remarks attest homogeneity of author's ideas and methodological approaches. As a whole, the individual chapters perfectly match the general title of the work, containing 374 pages including the bibliography (pp. 344-374) and lists of abbreviations (pp. 339-343).

Except for the first chapter ("Ptolemaic and Roman Thebes," pp. 45-70), all other chapters represent articles published in the decade following the defence and publication of author's doctoral thesis (*The Wabet. Tradition and Innovation in Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Period*, Prague 2007). It should be stressed that the individual studies are all published in renowned, mostly peer-reviewed scientific journals and monograph series, such as *The Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings* (Oxford), *Contextualizing the Sacred* (Turnhout), *Soubassementstudien* (Wiesbaden), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles), *Aegyptus et Pannonia* (Budapest), *Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen* (Wiesbaden) etc.



FACULTY OF ARTS Charles University

Czech Institute of Egyptology

As briefly mentioned above, the first section (Section I) is entitled “Setting the Stage” (pp. 43-136) and contains four chapters, focusing on the historical background of temple development during the period under discussion, as well as development of temple architecture, offering possible explanations to these changes.

In the second part (Section II) entitled “Purifying and Provisioning the Temple” (pp. 137-200), and consisting of chapters five to eight, F. Coppens concentrates on the crucial role or roles of the river Nile, with special attention given to ritual purification of the temple and its provisioning (esp. the so-called hydrological processions).

The next logical step – the ritual activity in the temple itself – represents the key topic of the third part (Section III) of the thesis entitled “Daily Cult, Feasts and Festivals” (pp. 201-244). By means of three extensive chapters (nine to eleven), the author concentrates on both daily activities and seasonal/annual festivals.

The final section “Kingship of God and Man” (Part 4), presents the reader with a detailed and very insightful analysis of the development and changes visible in temple iconography and function in connection with a changing political and cultural situation in Egypt, with important observations on the very concept of traditional Pharaonic kingship (chapters twelve to fifteen, pp. 245-334).

These four sections are framed by means of introductory and concluding remarks, representing essential, homogeneous and integral parts of the thesis, setting the topic into a wider political, cultural and historical context and highlighting the most crucial conclusions in regards the world of the ancient Egyptian temples and their impact on later religious traditions. As F. Coppens clearly concludes: “With traditional Egyptian temples eventually abandoned and deserted, the Christian period in Egypt obviously does not represent an era of complete discontinuation of past expressions of identity, but rather the next phase in an ongoing process, dating back several millennia. Not unlike the priests in the traditional temples in earlier times, the Christian clerics also combined their knowledge of local religious practices, established over generations of interaction within the same general landscape as their pagan counterparts, with the specific requirements of the Christian belief system. This ultimately resulted in the creation of innovative expressions of contemporary religious identity, which would continuously be subjected to internal and external influences and stimuli, resulting yet again in further processes of modification, assimilation and transformation, reflecting the dynamics and interaction of aspects of continuity, discontinuity and change throughout the ages.” (Coppens 2019: 338).



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University


Czech Institute of Egyptology

One of the main assets of F. Coppens' habilitation thesis is interdisciplinarity of his research which is highly innovative with solid and clearly stated methodology. In his thesis he often employs methods from other disciplines and successfully transfers and transforms them for the field of Egyptology. Though the work is primarily focused on the latest phases of the ancient Egyptian history, the research itself is not restricted to this specific period and region only (which happens very often in traditional Egyptology) and therefore his ideas can be highly regarded in various disciplines. The presented research is also likely to have impact by contributing to theoretical outcome of significant benefit to the discipline. It fills many gaps in our understanding of ancient Egyptian society and culture and provides invaluable evidence about problems with ancient Egyptian ritual and cultic landscape.

The thesis submitted by Dr. Filip Coppens consists of well-researched, solid, sound, and original scholarship which is widely accepted and appreciated internationally and certainly reflects the current standards in Egyptology. All chapters, either individually or as a whole, constitute a major breakthrough in our understanding of the cultural and religious landscape of Egypt in the latest phase of its history. The volume is remarkable for its clarity and well-defined methodology and results. Coherence and originality go hand in hand in this manuscript.

To sum up, Dr. Filip Coppens' habilitation thesis *Continuity, Discontinuity and Change. Reflections on Egyptian Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Era* (Prague 2019) is highly original and innovative, and meets—in my opinion—all the requirements to enable him to commence the habilitation process. Therefore, **I would like to recommend Dr. Filip Coppens to the Faculty of Arts, Charles University as a candidate for the above mentioned procedure.**

Závěr: **Doporučuji bez výhrad.**


doc. PhDr. Jana Mynářová, Ph.D.
Czech Institute of Egyptology