



Written Assessment of the habilitation thesis by PhDr. Filip Coppens, Ph.D. on the theme Continuity, Discontinuity and Change. Reflections on Egyptian Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Era

Dr Coppens has submitted a manuscript in which fifteen previously published articles have been brought together. They appear roughly in the order of publication, although that was not author's consideration. The articles have been made uniform in style of referencing, but otherwise they have not been updated or altered in their contents. Only some illustrations have been added.

Dr Coppens has worked on the theme of the *wabet* previously, it was the topic of his PhD thesis published in 2007. The current series of studies is very close to this topic, and it can be said to form the logical continuation of that work. In the current thesis, the *wabet* is no longer seen in isolation, but as befits a more mature scholar, the topic is used as a stepping stone to address some broader themes, such as the relation between tombs and temples, both in terms of their architecture and their textual traditions. The study of Ancient Egypt is especially suited for studies of the *longue durée*, and it is satisfying to see that Coppens has worked together with a specialist in the Old Kingdom period, Dr. Hana Vymazalová, to study the textual transmission and iconographic traditions that connect this period with the Ptolemaic era. Two chapters are written with Dr. Vymazalová and two are written jointly with Dr. Jiří Janák.

The thesis starts with some general overviews of Thebes in the Graeco-Roman period. Chapter 1 describes the archaeological remains of Ptolemaic and Roman Thebes, most of which is well-known. I objected to the cursory treatment of the Christian reuse of temples. Coppens describes the reuse (e.g. on p. 65 and 71) as happening at the time of the closure of the temples, but there is no evidence for such an early conversion of the buildings, which seems to have taken place not before the sixth century. Also, despite its name, Deir el-Medina was never the site of a monastery in ancient times.

There is a separate chapter on the graffiti in the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings. This topic is highly interesting, but the treatment is especially descriptive and the analysis does not go much beyond previous work and does not bring many new insights. More could have been done with the distribution of the graffiti over the Valley and with the reasons why people would visit these tombs. There are not many Egyptian names among the visitors, it seems, which needs an explanation, and I missed a mention of the several graffiti that explicitly refer to Memnon. The mythology surrounding Memnon was important in Egyptian Thebes, and it may have been the reason why some 'tourists' went to the area. Some reflection on the nature of ancient 'tourism' and the appropriateness of this term would have been in order. Also, in the descriptions of the history of the Valley of the Kings, the important article by Jansen-Winkeln on the state-organized emptying of the tombs at the end of the New Kingdom, is missed.<sup>1</sup>

There is a strong Theban bias in the thesis, because of the richness of the architecture and material culture preserved in that part of the country. However, it is unfortunate that the occurrence of similar features elsewhere has been missed, notably the architecture of the tombs at Marina el-Alamein should have been included as examples of Lower Egyptian traditions of the *Lichthof*. Wiktor Daszewski has drawn attention to these tombs and their resemblance to the Theban architecture already in 1994.<sup>2</sup>

The second part of the thesis brings together some studies of temple reliefs, notably in the *soubassement* of the temple, that relate to the provisioning of the temple. The article on the Kom Ombo surgical instruments is excellent. The two articles on the occurrence of Hehu and Keku in the *soubassement* processions are less memorable, because the theme is of rare occurrence, and there is insufficient explanation in the texts. I feel that a discussion of the terms should take place in the context of the creation of the world, and especially the uncreated world which the Ogdoad gods symbolise. The term *kkw* cannot be translated simply as 'darkness' without further discussion, and I do not concur with Keku's association with the Nile Delta merely because of the black colour of the Nile silt (p. 177).

The third part of the thesis discusses the topics of daily cult and festivals in the temple. After a general overview of the theme of festivals (chapter 9), the offering of linen is examined in

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<sup>1</sup> Jansen-Winkeln, Karl, Die Plünderung der Königsgräber des Neuen Reiches, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 122 (1995), 62-78.

detail. This theme relates to the daily cult as well as to festivals, and the treatment of this topic is interesting and well done. It places the rituals of the wabet in its proper perspective. The precursors of the Ptolemaic rituals are also investigated as far as back as the Old Kingdom.

Finally, the thesis has a fourth part on kingship, which I consider the best. The chapters 12-15 examine different aspects of divine kingship and how this was reflected in the temple decoration. In this section the references are far more complete than in earlier chapters and there is also explicit positioning in the text against certain authors, something that has been missing in earlier parts. The fourth part is full of ideas and new insights and it is a pleasure to read.

Because of the overlapping themes of many of the contributions, there are many repetitions in the work, often in identical wording. This is inevitable in the required format of this habilitation thesis. Also, because the studies were not altered in content, for the present reader it was annoying that some of the older articles could have been easily improved in the light of recent literature. I have tried to judge the works as reflections of the time they were written, even though it is hard to ignore the knowledge of hindsight.

When seen collectively, it is satisfying to note that the more recently written chapters of the thesis are so much better in content and style than the older ones. This demonstrates a marked progression in the author's abilities and in his overview of the field. Especially because of his recent work, I can wholeheartedly recommend Dr. Coppens for being awarded the Habilitation degree.

Sincerely yours,

A black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. A blue ink scribble is visible to the right of the box.

Olaf E. Kaper, Leiden 17 November 2019

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<sup>2</sup> Daszewski, Wiktor A., The origins of Hellenistic hypogea in Alexandria. In Minas, Martina and Jürgen Zeidler (eds), *Aspekte spätägyptischer Kultur: Festschrift für Erich Winter zum 65. Geburtstag*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern 1994, 51-68.