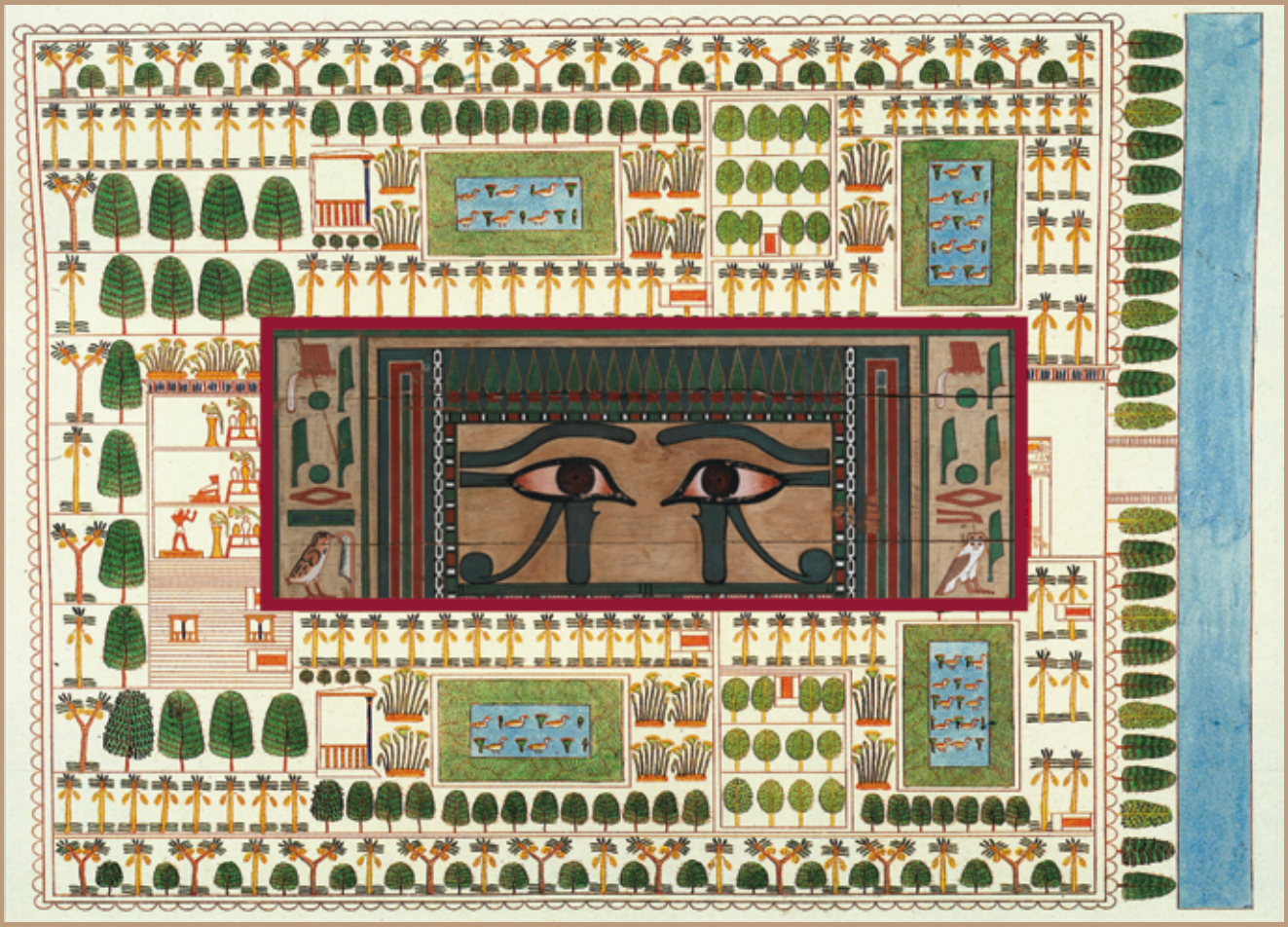
Environment and Religion in Ancient and Coptic Egypt:

Sensing the Cosmos through the Eyes of the Divine

Edited by

Alicia Maravelia & Nadine Guilhou



Archaeopress Egyptology 30

Environment and Religion in Ancient and Coptic Egypt: Sensing the Cosmos through the Eyes of the Divine

Proceedings of the 1st Egyptological Conference of the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, Co–Organized with the Writing & Scripts Centre of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Institute of Coptic Studies (University of Alexandria), at the People's University of Athens, under the High Auspices of His Eminence Mgr Damianos, Archbishop of Sinai

Athens: Wednesday 1st, Thursday 2nd & Friday 3rd February 2017

Edited by

Alicia Maravelia & Nadine Guilhou

Archaeopress Egyptology 30

Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-639-4
ISBN 978-1-78969-640-0 (e-Pdf)

© Archaeopress, the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, the Editors and the Individual Authors 2020

Front Cover: Synthesis based on a garden's depiction from a NK tomb (TT 96, after Rosellini 1834: Pl. LXIX), and detail from a MK coffin (MET 15.2.2a-b: belonging to Khnūm–Nakht; open access image and courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), elaborated by the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology.
Back Cover: Detail from the astronomical ceiling of the Hypostyle Hall of the Temple of Hathor at Dendarah (Sōthis, Sah, Canopus, & c.); photo by the Principal Editor (Dr Dr Alicia Maravelia, January 2020). © Hellenic Institute of Egyptology 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Environment & Religion in Ancient & Coptic Egypt: Sensing the Cosmos through the Eyes of the Divine

Prof. Dr Mosalam Shaltout (1946-2015)

In Memoriam

Honorary Organizing Committee [HOC]

His Eminence Mgr Damianos: *Archbishop of Sinai, Faran & Raïthō, Abbot of St Catherine Monastery*

His Grace Mgr Paulos: *Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Egyptians of Hellas*

His Excellency Mr Farīd Monīb: *Ambassador of Egypt in Hellas, Egyptian Embassy, EG*

His Excellency Mr Andreas Zaïmis: *Former Minister of Hellas, Association BibAlex Friends, GR*

Local Organizing Committee [LOC]

Dr Dr Alicia Maravelia: *Hellenic Institute of Egyptology & Peoples' University of Athens, GR*

Mrs Sophia Tsourinaki: *Hellenic Institute of Egyptology & S.E.N. Heritage Looms, GR*

Mrs Antigoni Maniati: *Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, GR*

Dr Evi Batra: *Hellenic Open University & Association of Greek Women Scientists, GR*

Dr Nikolaos Fyssas: *Mount Sinai Foundation, GR*

Environment & Religion in Ancient & Coptic Egypt: Sensing the Cosmos through the Eyes of the Divine

1st Egyptological Conference of the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, Co–Organized with the Writing & Scripts Centre of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Institute of Coptic Studies of the University of Alexandria, at the People's University of Athens, under the High Auspices of His Eminence Mgr Damianos, Archbishop of Sinai

Athens: Wednesday 1st, Thursday 2nd & Friday 3rd February 2017

Scientific Organizing Committee [SOC]

Dr Dr Alicia Maravelia: *Hellenic Institute of Egyptology & Peoples' University of Athens, GR*
Dr Nadine Guilhou: *Université de Montpellier III & Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, FR–GR*
Dr Dr Nils Billing: *Uppsala University, Uppsala, SE*
Dr Themis G. Dallas: *I.A.K.A. Department, University of Thessaly, GR*
Dr Ahmed Mansour: *Writing & Scripts Centre, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, EG*
Dr Azza Ezzat: *Writing & Scripts Centre, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, EG*
Dr Pauline Norris: *Independent Researcher, Newtown, Powys, UK*
Mr John Wyatt: *Independent Researcher, Ornithologist & Zoologist, Chesham, Bucks, UK*
Prof. Dr Sherin Sadek: *Faculty of Letters, ʿAin Shams University, Cairo, EG*
Dr Tatjana A. Sherkova: *Centre for Egyptological Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, RU*
Dr Hab. Mykola Tarasenko: *A.Yu. Krymskyi Institute of Oriental Studies of the NASU, Kyiv, UA*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Co–Organizers and Sponsors VII
Blessing by His Eminence the Archbishop of Sinai Mgr DAMIANOS IX
Foreword by H.E. the Ambassador of Egypt in Athens Mr Farīd MONĪB XIII
Dedicatory Page, Theme, Honorary Organizing Committee, LOC and SOC XV
Programme of the Conference XVII
Table of Contents XXI
Authors and Affiliations XXIII
Foreword by H.E. the Former Minister of Hellas Mr Andreas ZAÏMIS XXVII
Introduction by the Principal Editor Prof. Dr Dr Alicia MARAVELIA XXXI
Introduction by the Co–Editor Dr Nadine GUILHOU XLI

PAPERS 1
Rania M. ᶜABDELWAHED: *Reflections on the Tree imA/iAm in Ancient Egypt* 3
Dalia ABU STET: *New Insights into the Significance of Exotic Plants & Animals in Ancient Egypt* 15
Dalia ABU STET: *The Use & Significance of Jasper in Ancient Egyptian Art* 31
Bernard ARQUIER: *Nūt et les Astérismes dans les Textes et le Décor du Double Sarcophage de Mésehty* 49
Mohammed AZZAZY: *Pollen Flora from Archaic & Old Kingdom Egyptian Tombs* 61
Nils BILLING: *You are not Alone: The Conceptual Background of Nūt as the Eternal Abode in Text & Iconography* 69
Themis G. DALLAS: *On the Orientations of Coptic Churches in Egypt* 85
Alexandra DIEZ DE OLIVEIRA: *The Many Faces of God Baᶜal in Ancient Egypt: Metaphors & Syncretisms* 107
Ola ʾEL-ᶜABOUDY: *Mice as Protectors in the Books of the Netherworld* 115
Wafaa ʾEL-GHANNAM: *Water–Lifting Devices in Hellenistic Egypt: A Manifestation of the Influence of the Nile* ... 127
Azza EZZAT: *The Zenet–Game (?) & its Association with Garden Pools in Ancient Egypt: A Case Study* 139
Angus GRAHAM: *The Interconnected Theban Landscape and Waterscape of Amūn–Rēᶜ* 155
Nadine GUILHOU: *Une Lecture Calendérique de la Tombe de Nakht (TT 52)* 169
Mona HAGGAG: *The Ouroboros in Helleno–Egyptian Amulets* 179
Aml MAHRAN: *The Oar: Religious and Everyday Life Usage in Ancient Egypt* 193
Ahmed MANSOUR: *The Minerals as Divine Epithets: Notes on the Use of Lapis Lazuli in Divine Epithets* 195
Ahmed MANSOUR: *Reflections on the Veneration of Dead Ancestor Kings in Sinai* 205
Alicia MARAVELIA & Mosalam SHALTOUT: *The Influence of the Solar Activity & of the Nile Flood on Egypt* 217
Alicia MARAVELIA: *The Function & Importance of Some Special Categories of Stars in the Funerary Texts, 2* 243
Alicia MARAVELIA & Markos FILIANOS: *The Kyphi/Κῦφι/KApt–Incense of the Ancient Egyptians* 257
Giselle MARQUES CAMARA: *MAat: Environmental Rhythms of the Ancient Kmt–Cosmos* 305
Pauline NORRIS: *Lettuce as an Offering to Mnw (Min)* 317
André PATRÍCIO: *The Case of the Millennial Protection: Carrying One's Amulets on One's Neck* 331
Jean–Pierre PÄTZNICK: *L'Éléphant sur le Signe des Trois Collines* 𓈎 *et Hiérakonpolis* 341
Gyula PRISKIN: *Mythological Associations of Lunar Invisibility in Ancient Egypt* 353
Detlev QUINTERN: *The Nile in Early Arabic–Islamic Maps & Sources* 367
Ashraf–Alexandre SADEK: *La Nature dans le Patrimoine Chrétien d'Égypte* 381
Sherin SADEK ʾEL-GENDI: *Les Figures des 24 Vieillards de l'Apocalypse dans l'Art Copte: Étude Comparative* 399
Daniel L. SELDEN: *Inundation & Allegory* 415
Tatjana A. SHERKOVA: *On the Mythological Image of the Eye of Horus* 429
Mykola TARASENKO: *Gliedervergottung Texts & Theogonic Ideas in Ancient Egypt* 431
Maria Helena TRINDADE LOPES & Guilherme BORGES PIRES: *Sacred Space in Ancient Egypt* 443
Sophia TSOURINAKI: *The Use of Muricidæ and Other Purple Colourants during Late Antiquity* 453
John WYATT: *Birds of the Air: An Ornithological Overview of their Roles in Religion, Art, Hieroglyphs, & c.* 475
John WYATT: *Fishes, Insects, Amphibians & Reptiles in the Art, Hieroglyphs & Religion of Ancient Egypt* 491
John WYATT: *Lilies of the Egyptian Field: The Flowers & Plants of Ancient Egypt & Sinai* 515

Alicia MARAVELIA: *Epilogue: Brief CV, Activities & Publications of the Late Prof. Dr M. Shaltout* 531
Alicia MARAVELIA: *Brief CVs & Activities of the Editors* 535

SACRED SPACE IN ANCIENT EGYPT: SOME OBSERVATIONS AND REMARKS FROM THE *GREAT HYMN TO THE NILE* AND THE *TALE OF SINŪHE*

Maria Helena TRINDADE LOPES & Guilherme BORGES PIRES

Department of History, Faculty of Social & Human Sciences, CHAM, Universidade NOVA, Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This paper intends to respond to a fundamental question: how did the ancient Egyptians sacralize the space in which they inscribed their identity and therefore recognized themselves? Our main topic will be the sacralization of space in the Nilotic civilization, more specifically the aquatic and terrestrial space(s). We shall regard the concept of *Space* in a broader sense, in which we refer the aquatic surfaces and the land–based layer and not to a particular space, such as «the house» (*pr*) or «the temple» (*r-pr*). Hence, we shall try to comprehend how the Egyptians felt and narrated their sacred space. Thus the spatial reality will be addressed, primarily in its constructive ability of building a people's identity, mainly focusing on two texts: the *Great Hymn to the Nile*, and the *Tale of Sinūhe*, concisely presenting a theoretical framework.

KEY WORDS: Ancient Egypt, Egyptians, space, identity, society, sacralization, sacredness, Nile, nature, Environment, aquatic and terrestrial spaces, *Great Hymn to the Nile*, *Tale of Sinūhe*, landscapes, temples, spatial reality.

I. INTRODUCTION.

Space is not uniformly perceived by the *homo religiosus*. Social collectives apprehend the landscape as a natural construct[1], experienced in different ways, with greater or lesser human adhesion[2]. Nevertheless, this wholeness is composed of several distinct units, differently understood by the human populations. The Egyptian civilization is no exception to this reality. Indeed, if we analyse the core connections between the Egyptian religious conceptions and its nature[3] in the light of the phenomenology of landscape, we will be forced to understand that the Nilotic people, who perceived their space as an *Element of the Sacred* (+*sr*), dealt with distinct geographic units which led to different religious and cultural approaches. In this paper we intend to briefly (re)consider and point out some topics on sacred nature, sacred space and cosmic sacredness in ancient Egypt, focusing mainly on to two texts: the *Great Hymn to the Nile* and the *Tale of Sinūhe* and concisely presenting a theoretical framework. We shall envisage the concept of *Space* (^*Aa*, +*ryt*, *Wsxt*, *Pr*) in a broader sense, in which we refer to the aquatic surfaces and the land–based layer and not to a particular space, such as *the house* (*pr*) or *the temple* (*r-pr*) **[FIG. 1 (RIGHT)]**.

By the end of the 19th century, the sociologist Durkheim, in his article "La prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines», published in the *Année Sociologique*, explained the opposition between sacred and profane[4] which was a few years later resumed by Rudolph Otto. In his fundamental work *Das Heilige*, first published in 1917, the German scholar states that the sacred (or the holy) is a complex interpretative category limited to the religious domain as such. Its main object is outside the self, being the *total otherness* (*das ganz Andere*). Otto qualified this non–rational and non–sensory feeling as *numinous*[5]. This would be observed through the reactions it causes in the human being. On the one hand, the *numinous* and therefore the *sacred* instigates a sense of terror that grows within the per-

[1] CAUQUELIN 2000: *passim*; CAUQUELIN 2007: *passim*.
[2] TILLEY 1994: 10-11.
[3] HORDEN 1972: 2.
[4] BORGEAUD 1994: 402.
[5] OTTO 1992: 13-15.

son who experiences it (*mysterium tremendum*)[6]; on the other, this repulsive component does not prevent or diminish the attraction of the subject, when faced with this non–rational existence (*mysterium fascinans*)[7]. One feels involved by this *enormous* (*majestas*)[8] in a contradictory mix of love and fear.

Following the works of Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade greatly improved the theoretical routes for addressing the sacred, introducing a new lexical apparatus for understanding the antagonism between sacred and profane. According to this scholar, the sacred is revealed in a specific historical moment. This revelation is called *hierophany*[9], thus the history of religions would correspond to a succession of *hierophanies*[10]. Given that the world of the *homo religiosus* is not homogenous, Eliade identifies the conceptual binary *sacred/profane* in the spatial reality. So, opposite to a durable and positive space, there is a harmful and chaotic one. The landscape is therefore constructed by the experience of the conflict between sacred and profane space(s)[11]. This consciousness of the space's non–homogeneity precedes every reflection concerning the world and instigates in the human being a will to establish his home in the *Centre* of it, revealed by a hierophany and subsequently founded. So the projection of this *Centre* corresponds to a creative and significant act. Subscribing Eliade's train of thought, we can say that the Egyptian territory is, for the Nilotic people, a cosmic sacredness in which the *numinous*, is permanently revealed in a juxtaposition of distinct spaces differently perceived and evaluated. Since it is a unique space, those who live in it appreciate this space and feel the need to protect it from the evil forces that threaten it. This sentiment towards the space was fixed by the Philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in his book *La poétique de l'espace*, as *topophilie*, which we can translate as «the love for the *topos*/place». This particular kind of love is defined by the author as the action of «[…] déterminer la valeur humaine des espaces de possession, des espaces défendus contre des forces adverses, des espaces aimés»[12]. This space is acknowledged as belonging to the self. This idea of Bachelard is somehow in harmony with the thesis of the non–homogeneity of space defended by Eliade, since it establishes a hierarchical space's evaluation.

II. THE RIVERINE GEOGRAPHY OF EGYPT AND THE *GREAT HYMN TO THE NILE*.

This heterogeneous appreciation of the spatial reality may relate to the Egyptian Geography. The Egyptian space is, as noted by Richards, characterized by several «dramatic transitions»[13]. In fact, should we observe the Egyptian geographic Environment, we will immediately notice two striking contrasts: one opposes the Upper to the Lower Egypt; the other expresses the *système antinomique*[14] between the *Black Land* (*Kmt*) and the *Red Land* (*_Srt*), that is, the fertile soil seasonally inundated by the Nile and the sterile regions of both the Western and the Eastern Deserts. These binomials, as part of the duality that points out all the structures of the Egyptian civilization[15], were absolutely structuring for the Nilotic people, as it has been stated by Butzer: «[…] the ancient Egyptians were vividly aware of the stark contrast between the *Red Land* of the desert upland and the *Black Land* of its seasonally inundated alluvium»[16]. We may synthesize the Geography of ancient Egypt into four dominant units: the Delta, the Nile Valley and the Western and Eastern Deserts **[FIG. 1 (LEFT)]**.

---

[6] OTTO 1992: 22.
[7] OTTO 1992: 56.
[8] OTTO 1992: 61-63.
[9] ELIADE 1977: 24.
[10] ELIADE 1992: 13.
[11] ELIADE 1992: 17.
[12] BACHELARD 1957: 26.
[13] RICHARDS 1999: 85.
[14] MATHIEU 2009: 29-30.
[15] SERVAJEAN 2013: *passim*.
[16] BUTZER 2001: 385.

FIGURE 1: On the left, map of ancient Egypt. Image by J. DEHL (2007); extracted and modified from WIKIMEDIA COMMONS. On the right, virtual games of light and shadows at the great hypostyle hall in the Temple of Karnak, where the local sacred space is interwoven with the passing of time, based on the periodic astronomical phenomena (e.g.: the Sun's apparent trajectory on the sky and the fluctuation of lights and shadows (photo and caption by Prof. Dr Alicia MARAVELIA).

These areas presented several different settings, such as mountain ranges, oases, wādis, plateaus or desert hills that together formed what we can call the *Egyptian landscape*[17]. Simultaneously, the Egyptian natural borders as well as their hinge position between the African and the Asian Continents, but also between the Tropics and the Temperate Zone, reveal themselves as kernel–guidelines for our frame of understanding this civilization[18], also in what concerns the sacred space. Indeed among the various Egyptian's words to render our modern term *sacred* (*Ax*, *smy*, *StA*, *nTry*, *xwy*, *snTry*, *twr*, & c.)[19], the one that seems to be closer to Otto's definition, as *das ganz Andere* is *Dsr*[20]. It is interesting to note that, among the various senses that this word conveys, there are also the meanings *separate* or *segregate*[21]. Somehow, the Egyptians linguistically understood the *sacred* in a similar manner to the way in which Otto and Eliade did. The *sacred* is something or some place that is apart. Not denying the constant and progressive opening of the *&Awy* to external influences, let us allow ourselves to wonder whether Egypt's geographic self–closeness, contrary to other civilizations' intrinsic openness and permeability, like the Mesopotamian one, may have contributed to the manner in which it was regarded as sacred by its people.

According to Kees, in the beginning of the Paleolithic, several climate changes occurred in Egypt which allowed the Nile to rip a valley in the landscape and therefore enabled the populations to inhabit closer to the river[22]: the silts annually carried by the Nile increase continuously the arable land. Having come from the desert to the valley in very remote times[23], the Egyptians will then regard their space as a «blessed geography»[24], which is proven by the strict connection between land, country and people. Indeed the word *Kmt* can relate to the *Black Land* but can also be translated as

[17] About this concept, see (among many others) BRUNOTTE 2002: 304-05; TILLEY 1994: *passim*.
[18] BAINES & MÁLEK 2000: 20.
[19] HOFFMEIER 1985: 1.
[20] HOFFMEIER 1985: 1.
[21] *Wb.* V: 609-11; BONNAMY 2013: 773.
[22] KEES 1978: 18-22.
[23] ĆWIEK 2014: 120.
[24] LOPES 2003: 41.

Egypt (Copt.: yhmi) as a whole or even as *the Egyptians*[25]. Thus the portion of land that was annually fructified by the Nilotic inundation is assimilated to the Egyptian political entity: the originally neutral term acquires an increasing political connotation, becoming a synonym of the Egyptian state[26].

The increasing aridity of the desert, by the end of the 4th Millennium BC, will play a significant role in the Egypt State's formation process[27]. Indeed, even if the desert is often connected to negative images (death, isolation, silence), this does not mean that the Egyptians collectively perceived the *Red Land* as an emptiness[28]. On the contrary, the emergence of the Egyptian civilization was partly due to the cultural roots brought by the various prehistoric adaptations to the desert[29]. Therefore both the *Black* and the *Red* lands were relevant landscapes, dynamically interconnected, working together in the daily task of protecting the Cosmos against the chaotic forces that continuously threatened it[30].

In this context of Egyptian «existential space», built on the particular experience of the individuals and in which the frontiers as well as the natural elements play a very significant role[31], the Nile[32], the sacred water, is a sacred space *par excellence*. This contrasts with the waters of the Mediterranean that can be considered as «profane waters», as can those of the Red Sea. This also agrees with the principle of the supremacy of fresh waters proposed by Bachelard[33]: the freshwater of the Nile is more religiously valued and appreciated than the saltwater of the seas[34].

Nevertheless it is important to mention that we do not attest a divine personification of the Egyptian waterways, qualified by Erik Hornung as a «shocking absence»[35]. The expression «gods of the Nile» refers to the existence of an ensemble of characters connected to the fecundity of that watercourse. Among them only Hᶜapy (*@apy*)[36] would assume an autonomous reality, being the divinity of the flood. In fact, with that word[37], the Egyptians designated not only the inundation's physical reality but also its divine inherence. The collective veneration is more connected to the magnificent and distinctive feature of the river, rather than to the river *per se*. Hᶜapy celebrates the Nile as a «gift»[38], being both immanent and transcendent[39]. His iconography —a nude god with breasts and adipose fat— perfectly attests what it is supposed to symbolize: fertility and abundance, the hope of a prosperous agricultural year. We can read in the the *Great Hymn to the Nile*[40]:

> *IwH SAw qmA <w>.n Ra,*
> *r sanx [awt] nbt.*
>
> *Who floods the prairie that Rēᶜ has created,*
> *in order to make live every [flock].*

---

[25] *Wb.* V: 126.
[26] POO 2005: 45.
[27] BAINES & MÁLEK 2000: 14.
[28] See LOPES 2003: 42; cf. though DU BOURGUET 1988: 41-46.
[29] BUTZER 2003: 385-86.
[30] RICHARDS 1999: 87; ĆWIEK 2014: 120.
[31] TILLEY 1994: 15-17.
[32] CLAUS 2016: 655.
[33] BACHELARD 1954: 204-12.
[34] ABULAFIA 2011: 37.
[35] HORNUNG 1986: 66.
[36] LOPES 2016: 387.
[37] Indeed, *Hapy* was not the single word that referred to the flood. It could also be mentioned, for instance, with the expression *nwy* (*Wb.* II: 221). According to Vandersleyen, in Ramesside times the word *ym* could also be related to the water that came from the inundation (VANDERSLEYEN 2002: 473-75).
[38] BONNEAU 1964: *passim*.
[39] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 1.
[40] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 21 (*I*: 5-6).

Therefore, the Creator, who sculptured Egypt via the water, maintains it through this element. The regions distant from watercourses are not forgotten[41]:

> *%sAA xAst r-wAt r mw;*
> *iAdt.f pw hAyt m pt.*
>
> *Who satisfies the mountainous country, which is distant from the water*
> *What comes down from the sky is his dew.*

From inundation or precipitation, the floodwater is permanently recognized as a symbol of life and regeneration[42]:

> *In kAw wr DfAw,*
> *qmA [nfrt nbt].*
>
> *Who brings the food, who is great in provisions,*
> *Who creates [all good things].*

The annual inundation makes the country return to its primordial state: first, the violence of the waters; then, the soil is covered with vegetation and life germinates. As stated by Sauneron and Yoyotte[43]:

> *La crue du Nil devait, aux temps historiques, ramener annuellement le pays à sa forme originelle, celle d'une immense mer d'où n'émergeaient que les villages et les digues; à peine les eaux retirées, toute la vallée uniformément enduite d'une couche terreuse, verdissait et se couvrait de toutes les formes de la vie.*

Thus, the Egyptians conceived their world creation as a replica of the sprouting Nilotic ground: the Nile is a continuously restarted *Nwn*[44]. When present and sufficient the water (and its associated spaces and environments) symbolizes not only life but, more specifically, ordered life, where *MAat* rules. The absence or insufficiency of the flood represents the chaos, just like the primeval waters (the Nūn) do. It is thus obvious the strong appeal for the flood to come at the end of the *Hymn*[45]:

> *[WAD kA iw.k, wAD kA iw.k]*
> *@apy wAD iw.k!*
>
> *[Be green then thou wilt come, be green then thou wilt come],*
> *Flood (Hᶜapy), be green then you wilt come!*

However, this Nilotic appealing quality does not prevent it from being also perceived as a fearsome and potentially dangerous river. The lack or delay of the flood introduces the social chaos[46]:

> *Wsf.f xr Dbb fnd,*
> *[xr] Hr nb nmHw.*
>
> *When it delays, then the nose is blocked,*
> *[then] everyone is poor.*

It is a condition intended to be surpassed by everyone. The famous *Famine Stela* presents a very graphic description of this tragedy, from which no one escapes, regardless social or age groups[47]. The effects of an extremely high inundation are as well catastrophic, as suggested in the *Great Hymn*[48]:

---

[41] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 22 (*I*: 7-8).
[42] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 27 (*IV*: 1-2).
[43] SAUNERON & YOYOTTE 1959: 23.
[44] SAUNERON & YOYOTTE 1959: 23-24.
[45] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 56 (*XIV*: 9-10).
[46] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 24 (*II*: 5-6).
[47] «Il lui fut mandé: ce rescrit royal est pour te faire savoir que j'étais dans l'affliction sur mon grand trône, et que ceux qui sont dans le palais étaient dans la tristesse: mon cœur était dans une très grande peine, car le Nil n'était pas venu à temps pendant une durée de sept ans. Le grain était peu abondant, les graines étaient desséchées, tout ce qu'on avait à manger était en maigre quantité, chacun était frustré de son revenu […]. L'enfant était en larmes; le jeune homme était abattu; les vieillards, leur cœur était triste […]. (Même) les courtisans étaient dans le besoin; et les temples étaient fermés, les sanctuaires étaient sous la poussière. (Bref) tout ce qui existe était dans l'affliction» (col. 1-4; see BARGUET 1953: 15).

[_ns and rxyt],
[Xdbw sw r] snm rnpt.

[Who overwhelms so that the population is diminished],
[he kills] in a catastrophic year (?).

Therefore the Nile corresponds to a landscape that congregates the binomial feature of the sacred as theorized by Otto: something towards which one feels simultaneously attracted (*mysterium fascinans*) and scared (*mysterium tremendum*)[49]. Hᶜapy is the[50]:

Nb-SfSfyt, nDm sṮy.

Master of the fright, having a sweet perfume.

At the same time, the sacred nature of the Nilotic flood seems to be also textually indicated. In an ostracon from Deir ʾel-Medinah[51], the inundation is said to come from the *tpHt Dsrt*, that is, the *sacred cave*. We attest the use of the feminine counterpart of the Egyptian word we have previously identified as being close to our modern understanding of the *sacred*.

However, not all watercourses are subjected to such a profound religious lecture. Taking advantage of the symbolical and conceptual binary developed by Eliade concerning the non–homogeneity of space, which states that the landscape is constructed by the experience of the conflict between sacred and profanes space(s)[52], we can affirm that if the Nile is noticed as the sacred watercourse, the Mediterranean Sea is perceived as a profane one. In fact, the Nilotic people will never magically appropriate the northern border of Egypt; instead its waters will be symbolically regarded as the opening to the world: the Mediterranean allows evasion, the discovery and meeting of new people and cultures[53] and the increment of well–being and resources, notably, from the Saite Period on, when Egypt became a Mediterranean power, as argued by Agut–Labordère[54].

As we have explained before, the place where the sacred is revealed corresponds to the foundation of the world and so Eliade calls it the *Centre*. Consequently, those who live on the spot and saw the Cosmos' birth feel something that can be tagged as «anthropological superiority»: to live in the Genesis' place equals living closer to the *sacred*. To the ancient Egyptians this marvelous place is Egypt. According to James Allen, the initial act introduces the spatial dimension: the non–created world has no «place», it is only chaos (*tnmw/isft*)[55]. The concept of space is also conveyed in Atūm's initial manifestation on the Primeval Mound[56]. Therefore, the non–created world has no «place» and so we can extrapolate that the foreign lands are like a non–created universe, with no space where *MAat* (the balanced order that sustains Egypt) can rule. This ideological manipulation of reality can be related to Antonio Loprieno's theory, which argues that the Egyptians regarded foreign people between *topos* and *mimēsis*, something that would have an impact in the Nilotic literature. The *topos* would correspond to an idyllic worldview; the *mimēsis* would replicate the quotidian, though, obviously filtrated by the Egyptian cultural conceptions. Hence, the Egyptian *topos* celebrates the fact that the

---

[48] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 42 (*IX*: 3-4).
[49] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 92-93.
[50] VAN DER PLAS 1986: I, 92 (*IV*: 3).
[51] We refer to *oDeM 1675*: 3. See also the paper by Prof. Dr Daniel SELDEN in the current Proceeding's Volume.
[52] ELIADE 1992: 17.
[53] LOPES 2003: 45; LOPES 2010: 80.
[54] AGUT–LABORDÈRE 2013: 986.
[55] ALLEN 1988: 25. The first term refers to the Ogdoad member connected to the pointless movement and obscure element of the initial primordial cosmic state (BONNAMY 2013: 717). The second one was rendered by Erman and Grapow as «Unrecht», being associated to the «evil», the «unfair», the «false», the «disorder», to sum up, everything which is contrary to the «maᶜatic» establishment of the cosmic order (*Wb.* I: 129).
[56] ALLEN 1988: 25.

Two Lands/&Awy are located in the cosmic *Centre*, so all foreign peoples must subject themselves to the pharaoh, since they inhabit a place contrary to the order[57].

III. ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SACRED SPACE AND THE *TALE OF SINŪHE*.

This idea of Egypt as a sacred space, superior to the foreign countries, can also be inferred from *The Story of Sinūhe* **[FIG. 2]**, «widely considered the greatest of all Middle Kingdom literary compositions»[58]. When the protagonist arrives at the island of the Great Black, in Peten in the Asiatic regions, Sinūhe feels the taste of death[59]:

> *@D.n tA, pH.n.i Ptn*
> *xn.kwi r iw n Km-Wr.*
> *#r.n ibt, As.n.f w(i),*
> *ntb.kwi, xx.i xmw Dd.n.i: «dpt m(w)t nn!».*
>
> *At dawn I reached Peten,*
> *and landed at an island of the Great Black.*
> *Thirst fell and surprised me,*
> *so that I was seared, my throat dusty. I said: «This is the taste of death!».*

The arrival into this new space is experienced in bad terms. Somehow the distance from Egypt, the sacred land, negatively affects Sinūhe, although the local inhabitants rescue him. According to Pé–rez–Accino, this movement of the main character to the East is inappropriate, since it is contrary to the Sun and consequently contrary to the pharaoh himself, which causes Sinūhe to face a symbolic death[60]. To exit the Nilotic territory, Sinūhe passes through the Egyptian territorial border, reaching the «Ruler/Prince's Wall» guarded by sentries[61]:

> *_mi.n.i Inbw-@qA,*
> *iry r xsf %ttyw.*
>
> *I touched the Ruler's Walls,*
> *made to repel the Asiatics.*

A wall thus guarantees the integrity of the political territory, where security forces operate in order to prevent the *Asiatics*, that is, foreign people who do not live according to *MAat*, from entering into Egyptian space. Although we are not able to prove the historical and effective existence of this infrastructure[62], given that we only have two written attestations, both of them being literary[63], we should underline the symbolic and religious importance of the idea of protecting and delimiting the Egyptian space to the authors of these texts. Whether real or imaginary, we are dealing here with the concept of threshold, a concept theoretically developed by Eliade. According to him, these *guardians* are gods and ghosts who forbid the entrance of not only humans but also demonic forces. The threshold shows the immediate solution to the problem of the space–continuity. The threshold is then, at the same time, a symbol and a crossover vehicle[64]. Although the historian of religion has developed this notion by observing particular spaces, such as the temple, we believe it is relevant to convene it in this context: Egyptian space in its sacred character can be understood as an im-

---

[57] LOPRIENO 1988: *passim*.
[58] ALLEN 2015: 55.
[59] ALLEN 2015: 72 (**B**: 20-23).
[60] PÉREZ–ACCINO 2009: 170-72.
[61] ALLEN 2015: 70 (**B**: 16-17).
[62] Which, according to Allen, would be «a fort built by Amūnemhāt I at the eastern end of Wādi Tumilāt, to control traffic into Egypt from East» (see ALLEN 2015: 71). The construction of such structures is attested, but they most often carry the name of the sovereign who ordered it (e.g.: *Inbw* N).
[63] The other is attested in *Neferti*: «*tw r qd Inbw-@qA, anx wDA s(nb)*» [*They will built the Sovereign's Wall, life, health and prosperity* (15a)]; see HELCK 1970: 58.
[64] ELIADE 1992: 19.

mense temple (*r-pr aA wy*; *Hwt-nTr*), the place where the Cosmos was brought into existence, hence it must be perpetually protected **[FIG. 1 (RIGHT)]**.

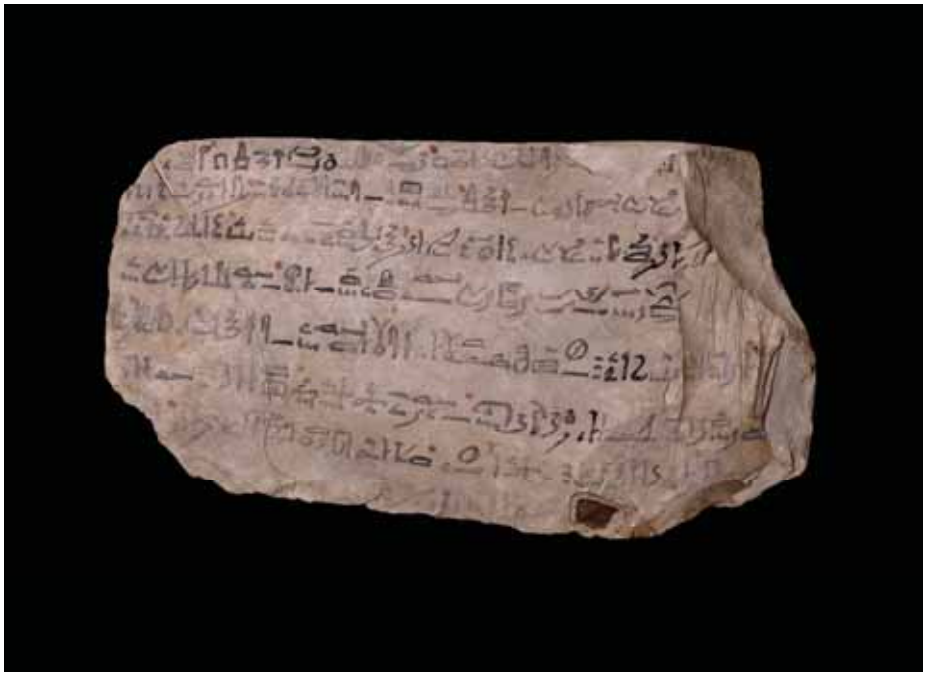


FIGURE 2: Ostracon BM EA 5629 with the final lines of the *Tale of Sinūhe*: Thebes, 19th Dynasty.
© Copyright, by the Trustees of the British Museum.

But perhaps what is more representative of the importance of the Egyptian land–base layer in this narrative is the fact that, even though Sinūhe is accepted and integrated into the local society —he even marries Ammunanši's eldest daughter— he never stops longing for home and he is very eager to be buried in Egypt. He asks the god[65]:

> *Ptr wrt rabt XAt.i*
> *m tA ms.k wi im.f?*
>
> *What is more important than interring my corpse*
> *in the land thou gavest me birth in?*

Afterwards, when he receives the royal decree that establishes his return to Egypt, he yells[66]:

> *Ir.tw nn mi n bAk,*
> *th.n ib.f r xAswt DrDryt?*
> *#r Hm nfr wAH-ib, nHm wi m-a m(w)t,*
> *iw kA.k r rdit iry.i pHwy HAw.i m Xnw?*
>
> *How was this done for a servant,*
> *whose mind went astray to strange countries?*
> *And the determination that saved me from death has to be good,*
> *for thy spirit (kA) is to let me make my body's end at home?*

Sinūhe experiences the sacredness of the Egyptian land: the place where everything begins and finishes, the most sacred space, completely different and separated from the others. In his return to Egypt, Sinūhe goes west and therefore acts in a good and proper manner[67]. Sinūhe's actions are coloured by a profound ethical dimension[68]. It looks as if this text presents us an Egyptian «moral geography», in which the *Two Lands* occupy a top axiological position.

---

[65] ALLEN 2015: 110-11 (**B**: 159-160).
[66] ALLEN 2015: 123 (**B**: 202-204).
[67] On the ancient Egyptian cosmovision and Sinūhe's quest for the heavenly goddess Nūt, see MARAVELIA 2017: 105-09.
[68] PÉREZ–ACCINO 2009: 173.

IV. EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS.

The Egyptian soil, along with the river, led the people to a specific model of space organization that is both cause and effect of the space's serializing perception in the *Two Lands*. The inner and deep oppositions of the Egyptian territory encompassed a poetry in which the country was shaped[69]. By observing the potentialities of their space and, above all, by identifying themselves to it in a reaction of t*opophilia*, the Egyptians cogitated about the sacred landscape *par excellence*, the one that saw the *Zp &py* (*First Time*) and performed as a stage to Genesis, that is, the cosmic *Centre*. Geography and human societies are hardly dissociable: the landscape and nature are active characters in the historic process[70]. Space plays then an important role in the constant shaping and reshaping of a collective worldview.

Simultaneously different and equal to all the others, the Egyptians conceived a cosmic understanding of their space. They inhabited, perceived and experienced a specific environmental context, not wandering in an immense nothingness. By living their own space, the Nilotic people clothed it with an intrinsic sacredness. It was about this very process that we tried to reflect on in this paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABULAFIA, D.: *The Great Sea: A Human History of Mediterranean,* London (Allen Lane) 2011.

AGUT–LABORDÈRE, D.: «The Saite Period: The Emergence of a Mediterranean Power», *Ancient Egyptian Administration* (García, J.C.M., ed.), Leiden–Boston 2013, 965-1027.

ALLEN, J.: *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts,* New Haven CT (Yale University) 1988.

ALLEN, J.: *Middle Egyptian Literature: Eight Literary Works of the Middle Kingdom*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 2015.

BACHELARD, G.: *L'eau et les rêves: essai sur l'imagination de la matière,* Paris (Librairie José Conti) 1954.

BACHELARD, G.: *La poétique de l'espace,* Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1957.

BAINES, J. & MÁLEK, J.: *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford (Checkmark Books) 2000.

BARGUET, P.: *La stèle de la famine à Séhel,* Cairo (IFAO) 1953.

BRUNOTTE, E.: «Landschaft», *Lexikon der Geographie in vier Bänden* 2 (Brunotte, E., ed.), Heidelberg (Spektrum Akademischer Verlag) 2002, 304-405.

BORGEAUD, P.: «Le couple sacré/profane. Genèse et fortune d'un concept "opératoire" en histoire des religions», *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 211[4], 1994, 387-418.

BONNAMY, Y.: *Dictionnaire des hiéroglyphes*, Paris (Actes Sud) 2013.

BONNEAU, D.: *La crue du Nil, divinité égyptienne à travers mille ans d'histoire (332 av. - 641 ap. J.–C.)*, Paris (Librairie C. Klincksieck) 1964.

BUTZER, K.: «Desert Environments», *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* 1 (Redford, D.B., ed.), Oxford–NY (Oxford University Press) 2001, 385-389.

CAUQUELIN, A.: *L'invention du paysage,* Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 2000.

CAUQUELIN, A: *Le site et le paysage,* Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 2007.

CLAUS, B.: art. «Nile», *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (Orlin, E., ed.), NY–London (Routledge) 2016, 655.

ĆWIEK, A.: «Red and Black World», *Proceedings of the Sixth Central European Conference of Egyptologists. Egypt 2012: Perspectives of Research (*Debowska–Ludwin, J., Jucha, M.A. & Kolodziejczyk, P., eds) Krakow (Jagellonian University) 2014, 119-133.

DU BOURGUET, P.: «Pierres d'attente dans l'Égypte antique pour le monachisme chrétien», *CdO* XX, Genève 1988, 41-46.

ELIADE, M.: *Tratado de história das religiões*, Lisboa (Edições Cosmos) 1977. [= ELIADE, M.: *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris (Payot) 1949].

ELIADE, M.: *O Sagrado e o Profano*, São Paulo (Livraria Marins Fontes Editora) 1992 [= ELIADE, M.: *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris (Gallimard) 1965].

HANNIG, R.: *Großes Handwörterbuch Deutsch–Ägyptisch (2800-950 v. Chr.)*, Mainz (P. von Zabern) [1]2000.

HANNIG, R.: *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch–Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.)*, Mainz (P. von Zabern) [5]2009.

[69] LOPES & BARATA 1997: 53-54.

[70] VAN DOMMELEN 1999: 278; LOPES 2003: 42.

HELCK, W.: *Die Prophezeiung der Nfr.tj,* Wiesbanden (O. Harrassowitz Verlag / *KÄT* 2) 1970.
HOFFMEIER, J.K.: *Sacred in the Vocabulary of Ancient Egypt: The Term +sr, with Special Reference to Dynasties I-XX,* Freiburg (Universitätsverlag) 1985.
HORDEN, P.: *Religious Conceptions and the World of Nature in Ancient Egypt* (Unpublished Thesis), Hamilton ON (McMaster University) 1972.
HORNUNG, E.: *Les dieux de l'Égypte – Le Un et le Multiple*, Monaco (Les Éditions du Rocher) 1986 [= HORNUNG, E.: *Der Eine und die Vielen*, Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft) 1971].
KEES, H.: *Ancient Egypt – A Cultural Topography,* Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1978.
LOPES, M.H.T.: «Da Leitura do Espaço à interiorização da sua Mensagem – a construção de uma Civilização», *Estudos de Egiptologia* (Lopes, M.H.T., ed), Lisboa (Associação Portuguesa de Egiptologia) 2003, 41-47.
LOPES, M.H.T.: «The Mediterranean Sea: The Language of History», *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 80, 2010, 11-16.
LOPES, M.H.T.: art. «Hapi», *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (Orlin, E., ed.), NY–London (Routledge) 2016, 387.
LOPES, M.H.T. & BARATA, F.T.: *Sentir o Espaço – Do Silêncio da Terra à Sedução do Mar,* Lisboa (Editorial Estampa) 1997.
LOPRIENO, A.: *Topos und Mimesis: Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur,* Wiesbaden (O. Harrassowitz Verlag) 1988.
MARAVELIA, A.: «Éléments astronomiques et cosmographiques dans les *Aventures de Sinūhe*: la quête éternelle de la déesse céleste et la féminisation du firmament», *The Journal of Egyptological Studies* V, 2017, 92-113.
MATHIEU, B.: «Les couleurs dans les Textes des Pyramides: Approche des systèmes chromatiques», *Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne* 2, 2009, 25-52.
PÉREZ–ACCINO, J.: «Texto Literario y Territorio Geografico: Lealtad y Espacio en Sinuhé», *Trabajos de Egiptologia* 5², 2009, 169-177.
POO, M.–C.: *Enemies of Civilization. Attitudes toward Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and China,* NY (State of New York University Press) 2005.
RICHARDS, J.: «Conceptual Landscapes in the Nile Valley», *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives (*Ashmore, W. & Knapp, A.B., eds), Oxford (Blackwell Publishers) 1999, 83-100.
SAUNERON, S. & YOYOTTE, J.: «La naissance du Monde selon l'Égypte Ancienne», *La Naissance du Monde* (Sauneron, S. *et al.*, eds) Paris 1959, 17-87.
SERVAJEAN, F.: art. «Duality», *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Dieleman, J. & Wendrich, W., eds), Los Angeles 2003 [Retrieved from the URL: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/95b9b2db, 2013 (status as of 9th July 2017)].
OTTO, R.: *O Sagrado,* Lisboa (Edições 70) 1992 [= OTTO, R.: *Das Heilige*, Breslau 1917].
TILLEY, C.: *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments,* Oxford (Berg Publishers) 1994.
VAN DER PLAS, D.: *L'Hymne de la crue du Nil* I, Leiden (Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten/*Egyptologische Uitgaven* IV) 1986.
VAN DOMMELEN, P.: «Exploring Everyday Places and Cosmologies», *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives (*Ashmore, W. & Knapp, A.B., eds), Oxford (Wiley–Blackwell) 1999, 277-285.
VANDERSLEYEN, C.: «*Ym* désignant l'eau de l'inondation», *A Tribute to Excellence* (Bács, T.A., ed.) Budapest 2002, 473-475.
Wb. = ERMAN, A. & GRAPOW, H. (eds): *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* I-V, Leipzig (J. Hinrichs) 1926-1931.

Alicia Maravelia & Nadine Guilhou (Editors):

Environment and Religion in Ancient and Coptic Egypt: Sensing the Cosmos through the Eyes of the Divine. Proceedings of the 1st Egyptological Conference, Organized by the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology and the Writing & Scripts Centre of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, at the People's University of Athens, under the High Auspices of His Eminence Mgr Damianos, Archbishop of Sinai. Athens: Wednesday 1st, Thursday 2nd & Friday 3rd February 2017.

The Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, in close collaboration with the Writing & Scripts Centre of Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the University of Alexandria, organized the aforementioned Conference concerning the ancient Egyptian religion, Coptic Christianity and Environment. Thus, the endeavour was to sense the Cosmos, through a virtual *Einfühlung*, as a manifestation of the Divine (*Nṯr*) and the manifestations (*bꜣw*) of the Divine in the environmental, cosmic and societal spheres. Egyptians were particularly pious and they considered their surroundings and the Universe itself as a creation and a direct immanence of the Divine, being also convinced that they were congenital parts of the Cosmos and adoring their divinities, who were also personifications of environmental and/or cosmic aspects and forces. There are many examples (epigraphic, textual, monumental, & c.) corroborating these relations and that ancient Egyptian piety was rooted on the bi–faceted texture of the ancient Egyptian religion, containing a solar and an astral component: the former was related to Rēᶜ, while the latter was related to Osiris. The Conference took place with participations of a pleiade of Egyptologists, Archaeologists, Archaeoastronomers, Theologians, Historians and other Scholars from more than 15 countries all over the World. In this unique Volume are published most of the contributions of the delegates who sent their papers for peer–reviewing, enriching the bibliographic resources with original and interesting articles. This publication of more than 580 pages —edited with care by Dr Dr Alicia Maravelia, with the help of Dr Nadine Guilhou—, containing 34 fresh and original papers (plus 2 abstracts) on the ancient Egyptian religion, Environment and the Cosmos, fruitfully connects many interdisciplinary approaches and Egyptology, Archaeology, Archaeoastronomy, Geography, Botany, Zoology, Ornithology, Theology and History.

Alicia Maravelia: Founder and President of the Hellenic Institute of Egyptology (2011). Professor of Egyptology (People's University of Athens and Institute's Seminar). Ex–Research Associate of CES/RAS. BSc in Physics (University of Thessaloniki, 1988); PhD in Astronomy & Astrophysics (University of Athens, 1998); PhD in Egyptology (Université de Limoges, 2004). Published >120 papers, books, monographs and reviews; organized/participated in many conferences; taught in many Summer Schools. Unique Editor in Chief for several books. Member of the Editorial Board of several peer–reviewed journals; Editor in Chief of the *JHIE*. Coordinator of the Athens Mummy Project. Received decorations and prizes.

Nadine Guilhou: Born in a small village in Occitanie (France), she studied French Literature, History of Art & Archaeology in the University Paul–Valéry, Montpellier. As student of Prof. Dr Fr. Daumas, she obtained her PhD in Egyptology. Specialized in ritual and funerary texts from the OK to the PP. She published many books and papers concerning this topic. She participated in many excavations and taught courses of Egyptology in Montpellier, Moscow and Barcelona.

ISBN 978-1-78969-639-4

9 781789 696394 >

Archaeopress Archaeology www.archaeopress.com