

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This volume presents the papers of the Fifth International Congress for Young Egyptologists (ICYE), which took place in Vienna from September 15th to 19th, 2015. The conference was hosted jointly by the University of Vienna, the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

The conference series started in 2003, when the First International Congress for Young Egyptologists was held in Siena under the topic “Water in Ancient Egypt”. Since then conferences in Lisbon (2006 – “Erotica, Eroticism and Sexuality in Ancient Egypt”), Budapest (2009 – “Commerce and Economy in Ancient Egypt”), and Sofia (2012 – “Cult and Belief in Ancient Egypt”) have taken place. The idea behind this series is to give young scholars the opportunity to present their research publicly and that very often for the first time. However, it is not only to practice how to present before an international audience, but also to receive input from other colleagues, to discuss problems we all face researching Egypt’s past and to get in touch with other young Egyptologists from all over the world. The great number of abstracts we received, the high number of participants, and the discussions after the presentations show that conferences like the ICYE are highly welcomed among young researchers. Thus, we are glad that our colleagues from Leiden will maintain this tradition and will organise the next ICYE.

During the conference 33 papers and five posters were presented. With the overall topic “Tradition and Transformation in Ancient Egypt” we tried to invite scholars working in different fields to discuss (dis)continuity of traditions and consequent cultural transformation. The main aim was to stimulate research and an exchange of ideas and to build bridges for a variety of disciplines within Egyptology. The first impression given by the ancient Egyptian culture is that of continuity and long-lasting stability. In fact, we can observe many different kinds of transformation processes alongside an unbroken tradition. These changes are visible in all areas of society: politics, art, language, economy, religion, etc. This volume gives an insight into the research presented and the results of various discussions afterwards.

In the record of more than three thousand years, Egyptian culture was not sealed and static but had to be learned and transmitted and to be of social

importance to its members. It must be emphasised that *culture*, including physical adaptations, ideas, beliefs and behaviours, is always subjected to changes in time. These transformations may be of slow, fast or even abrupt character and the particular impact on the society may vary from slight to very strong. In some cases, it is difficult to pinpoint certain events or developments that led to discernible changes in the past.

In the study of ancient cultures and civilizations, the questions about what remains and what is changing are always of great importance. It is the attempt to get a deeper understanding of the life and thinking of our ancestors. Tradition refers to the persistence in a given area over a period of time in individual attributes, artefact types, technologies or language and script as well as to cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions. Cultural tradition is extremely important for the formation of a cultural identity, which is why the examination of tradition is always an essential part of historical and cultural studies.

Cultural changes are dynamic processes and can be caused by developments in technology, political and religious ideas or substantial experiences with diverse societies or environmental factors. In connection with profound transformations, external influences must be stressed. For instance, there were times when new ethnic groups joined the Egyptian community and in some cases assimilated into the society and actually became carriers of the Egyptian cultural tradition – in other cases they did not.

At certain times, foreigners were even at the top of the society. For example, in the middle of the 2nd Millennium BC, after the Middle Kingdom, the Hyksos settled in the eastern Nile Delta and ruled in Egypt for about a century. The Hyksos (*ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt*, “rulers of foreign lands”) must be seen as a foreign dynasty which was rooted in a population of Near Eastern origin. They brought to some degree their own customs and practices to Egypt but they also adopted indigenous elements. This resulted in a very special cultural mix in the eastern Nile Delta.

Another example is the Libyan Period, in which foreigners again were able to seize power in Egypt. The common assumption that the Libyans were Egyptianised is deceptive. The nature and provenance of the extant evidence tends to obscure the

retention of their ethnic identity, but this is apparent in the persistence of Libyan names and titles in Egypt. As a matter of fact, the Libyan rule influenced diverse aspects of society such as the political structure, language and script, as well as the sphere of the afterlife.

Change can only rarely be studied in isolation or on the basis of a single type of evidence. One seeks to understand transformation in ancient Egypt by asking a series of essential questions: what is the nature of a particular change, when and where did it come about, through what agency, for what purpose, which parts of Egyptian society did it affect, and how lasting were its consequences. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to involve as many different cultural aspects as possible. Only in the connection of known historical events with examinations of the development of material culture and the consideration of sociocultural factors can tradition and transformation of ancient Egyptian society be understood.

In Egypt, especially religious traditions are observable over a long period of time. The ancient Egyptian belief in the afterlife takes precedence over almost all aspects of life and living. Some religious ideas and rites can be even traced over centuries, for example, the Osiris myth or the custom of mummification. Of course, details within the procedure of rituals changed or ideological variants emerged over time, but nevertheless many traditions have been preserved. Although many archaeologists have found plenty of aspects of continuity in certain classes of material culture, one needs to evaluate the meaning of this continuity.

In this regard, the purposeful return to specific traditions is a point of interest. For example, the revitalisation of certain forms or motifs that had not been employed for several decades or centuries. The reasons for this kind of revival are manifold and to some extent rather complex. Sometimes it can be seen as an orientation to the past after a time of political or social crisis. One prominent example is the archaism of the Egyptian Late Period, when past styles and models were back in use. However, *archaism* was a continuum and is detectable as early as the Old Kingdom. The intention behind this phenomenon was, among others, to legitimise political sovereignty or to increase authority and thus maintain the striving for power.

The concept of cultural continuity is often used in different contexts and does not necessarily imply the same meaning. For this reason, it is crucial for each study dealing with cultural aspects to describe

exactly what is meant with continuity and discontinuity. It is only when this issue is clarified that a further step can be taken to ask about the respective connections and mechanisms.

In the Fifth International Congress for Young Egyptologists we tried to answer some questions about tradition and transformation in ancient Egypt by means of case studies from different epochs and places as well as various methodological approaches. The conference started with the keynote lecture by Manfred Bietak, Professor emeritus of Egyptology at the University of Vienna, about “The Hyksos Enigma”. He presented the new ERC-funded project, in which he and his team will try to solve the mystery of the Hyksos, and explore why they came to Egypt, what their cultural influence was and why they disappeared. This time period is extremely affected by transformation as well as innovation, and provides us with a great amount of material culture and physical remains useful for a study of the impact of western Asiatic people on the culture of Egypt.

The study of the archaeological record gives us the opportunity to examine developments in past societies and to analyse changes in different aspects of ancient life. One very important research field is the classification of pottery and the attempt to identify its function and circumstances of production. In this context, Katarína Arias Kytarová focused on miniaturised beer jars from the Old Kingdom cemeteries at Abusir. She explored the development of their shape and the spatial distribution and occurrence in comparison with the full-sized originals, from which she was able to demonstrate a transformation in cultic perception. In another paper she investigated, together with Lucie Jirásková and Martin Odler, model and miniature vessels from burial chambers in the Giza cemeteries. Their study shows the development and functional meaning of diverse materials used for small-size vessels. A similar approach was taken by Keita Takenouchi in his contribution to stone vessel production in the early state. Through his case study from Abu Roash a change of the role and social meaning of stone vessels during the Proto-Dynastic and Early Dynastic Periods may be demonstrated. He pointed out that stone vessels functioned as political media for regional integration in the Early Dynastic society.

Johannes Auenmüller presented technological objects, dating to the Late Period, from the Qubbet el-Hawa necropolis. These unparalleled objects stem from a local bronze casting workshop and

provide a detailed insight into the production and technology of these artefacts. It is a matter of a unique collection of objects that illustrate the conceptual design and workmanship of casting moulds.

A contribution to the development of temple towns in Nubia was made by Jördis Vieth, who investigated the transformation process of these towns in the course of the New Kingdom. Besides questions of settlement typology, she tried to shed light on the relationship of the inhabitants of the towns and their hinterland, which changed during this time.

The Egyptian state as a whole also went through times of great change. One very good example is the Amarna Period in which there was a strong religious rethinking. Under the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten a campaign of erasure was conducted against certain words and images, especially the name and figure of the god Amun. Alice McClymont dealt with the execution of this campaign and the ideological impact of this action. Another example of a crucial turning point in Egyptian history is the formation of the Egyptian state itself. This very complex historical process is a much-debated topic, and E. Christiana Köhler, Head of Department of Egyptology at the University of Vienna, gave another keynote lecture on “An Archaeology of Cultures and Peoples? Investigating the Origins of Egyptian Civilization in the 21st Century CE”. She explained the environment, material evidence and culture of the Early Dynastic Period and focused on the different approaches in modern research. Paolo Medici, on the other hand, contributed a methodological approach that uses both theory and archaeological data in order to develop an improved theory about the state’s formation.

Raúl Sánchez Casado examined the development of the title *hm-k3*, one of the most representative officials of the funerary cult, from the Old to the Middle Kingdoms. He observed a reduction in the number of officials and the disappearance of hierarchical positions, which points to a drastic change in the structure and organisation of the office. Furthermore, he observed an alteration in the spelling of the title *hm-k3* which could be more than a mere change in the graphic conventions.

Especially in linguistic questions transformations are very often detectable. Language change can be observed as variation in a language’s phonetic, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and other features. The variation in language is continuous and multifaceted. Gaëlle Chantraine works on semantic problems and presented several cases of lexemes undergoing

one or several semantic changes. Two markers were especially emphasised: change of gender and of classifier. Roman Gundacker focused on a group of compound nouns (‘Ältere Komposita’) and demonstrated his evaluation of the preconditions for these special nouns which are different from all other nouns with respect to certain morphological characteristics. Besides that he provided some thoughts on the circumstances of creation, application and elimination of ‘Ältere Komposita’.

During the First Millennium BC numerous transformations took place due to the clear dominance of foreigners in Egypt. Nenad Marković and Mina Ilić explored the tension between tradition and transformation in regard to the Apis cult under Cambyses II and Darius I. The worship of the Apis sacred bull, a herald of the creator-king-god Ptah, transformed into the underworld-king-god Osiris after natural death, emerged as one of the most important religious institutions at Memphis. The authors investigated the main characteristics of the Persian patronage of the divine Apis bulls with connection to the political reality in Egypt.

Throughout the whole Egyptian tradition the Osiris myth, in which the god is murdered by his brother Seth, played a very special role in religion. Angelo Colonna attempted to answer the question of the location of the burial by means of iconographic evidence because the literary sources do not make specific reference to it. The focus of his contribution relied on the iconic form and symbolic structure of the images of Osiris’ tomb and the development through artistic elaboration. Another prevalent feature in Egyptian religious perception is that of Nun, a watery primeval matter. There are several explanations of the Egyptian cosmogony but they all have one thing in common – Nun. Cloé Caron reappraised the evolution of the conception of the primeval matter. While the image of the creator god profoundly shifted during the Middle and New Kingdoms, the Nun remains the recurrent element of the Egyptian cosmogonic vision. In this regard, the relationship of Nun and the creator god was highlighted.

The Book of the Dead developed from a tradition of funerary manuscripts dating back to the Egyptian Old Kingdom. An interesting figure in the Book of the Dead is Medjed, a bell-shaped creature with human legs and eyes, occasionally adorned with a red strip of cloth. It is probably to be identified with one of the demons mentioned in the Spell 17. Ilaria Cariddi tried to evaluate this curious figure and contributed an investigation of the visual concept of the

netherworld through an examination of 21st to 22nd Dynasties' Books of the Dead. Closely linked to the Egyptian conception of an afterlife is the idea of the soul. The ancient Egyptians believed that the human soul was made up of five parts, among which the *b3* played a crucial role. Emanuele Casini presented his analysis of the non-royal *b3*, including both the concept and its visual rendering over time. From the mid 18th Dynasty onwards, he is represented as a human-headed bird. Casini suggested that the *b3* possessed two different forms from the Middle Kingdom onwards, the avian and the human, but was not depicted then.

There are many examples of fascinating illustrations that changed in the art of ancient Egypt or occurred just for a certain time period. The study by Inmaculada Vivas Sáinz dealt with the question of innovation and new pictorial resources in New Kingdom art. She focussed on the frontal poses of animals depicted in private Theban tombs. It seems that some Egyptian painters tried to break with the tradition, producing works with a greater liberty regarding expression and inspiration. It is difficult to tell, if the appearance of animal frontal depictions developed independently within the Theban workshops or was influenced by foreign artists. Remaining in the sphere of the New Kingdom, Uroš Matić worked on depictions of foreign women and children in battle scenes. He noticed the absence of violence against foreign women and children as well as the absence of violence committed by them in visual and written culture. These attestations thus

contrast markedly with battle scenes dated to the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period. Another iconographical subject was provided by Elena Panaite, who demonstrated the evolution of Libyans' identity markers in Egyptian iconography. She focused on the major changes in the representation of the Tjehenu during the New Kingdom and discussed the question of whether the identity markers contribute to a better understanding of the historical events, underlying the ideological conceptions.

Ian Shaw, Head of Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester (United Kingdom), rounded off the conference with his presentation on the topic "Technological Transformations: Chariots, Fridges and Ballistic Missiles". The focus of his lecture lay on technological achievements for the military enforcement of claims to power, as well as innovations for the Egyptian daily life.

The success of the conference would not have been possible without the financial support of the University of Vienna, the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OREA, Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology), the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and the Austrian Research Association. We also want to express our gratitude to the scientific committee (Manfred Bietak, Lubica Hudáková, Peter Janósi, Gerald Moers, Vera Müller, Helmut Satzinger, Ian Shaw) and our colleagues, who helped us with the organisation (Benedikt Fuchs, Eva Grabler, Kristina Hutter, Irene Kaplan, Claudia Mally, Doris Teply).

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