

Gaëlle Chantrain & Jean Winand (eds.)

Time and Space at Issue in Ancient Egypt

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## Preface

This volume is a collection of papers that were presented during the international conference *Time and Space in Ancient Egypt* organised by the Université catholique de Louvain and the Université de Liège (Louvain-la-Neuve, 9–11 June 2016).

The participants were invited to examine in the broadest possible way the interactions between the expressions of time and space. They were also encouraged to look beyond their field of expertise to consider this issue in a transversal way. We were – and still are – convinced that really innovative progresses can be done by crossing methods and multiplying the perspectives on a same object.

This volume does not pretend to come with definitive solutions or conclusions, even less, with a new theory. As suggested in the title, one of our main goals was to problematize these topics by promoting interdisciplinary discussions on possible links of interconnectivity between time and space, two among the most basic modes of cultural organization.

It is of course not the first time that one takes an interest in the relations between time and space, especially in a general perspective. Indeed, the question has been for a long time a topic for discussion in different disciplines such as theoretical physics, linguistics, philosophy, cognitive sciences, sociology, and also, within Egyptology itself. However, this conference was the occasion to bring together for the first time specialists interested in this field of study.

The volume opens with a general introduction written by the editors where some manifestations of the complementarity between time and space are evocated, in domains as various as language, art and ideology in Ancient Egypt.

With a different look, external to the discipline, Jean-Marie Klinkenberg's contribution (*Avant la langue. Le temps et l'espace comme construction sémiotique*) follows and complements this introduction by proposing a highlighting general frame for the definition of time and space as semiotic concepts.

Christian Langer (*The concept of 'Frontier' in new Kingdom Egypt. A Comparative Approach to the Spatiality of Ideology*) discusses the concept of frontier as a demarcating space between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'. Through a comparison between Egyptian ideas and other forms of political thoughts, he identifies some primordial elements of the concept of 'frontier' in the entities *mꜣ.t* and *isf.t*.

Nikolaos Lazaridis (*Action and Private Space in Ancient Egyptian Narrative*) demonstrates that even a minimalist description of the spatial context of action in narrative texts incorporates a series of elements revealing the Egyptian ideology and perception of the world. As a result, the descriptions of physical space that could have been expected are replaced with references to a dynamic context made of cultural and identity elements. Time and space are thus defined in cultural rather than physical terms.

Alicia Maravelia (*Of Eternity, Everlastingness and stars : notions of Time, Space, Duration and the Firmament in the Pyramid and Coffin Texts*) presents a study on the links

between time and space in Egyptian funerary texts. According to her analysis, Egyptians were able to provide precise descriptions of some skylscapes by using cosmographic allegories. Such allegories, which abound in the funerary texts, could correspond to celestial phenomena observable at different times of the Egyptian history.

Maya Müller (*Techniques for the Simultaneous Increase and Reduction of Time and Space in Egyptian Art*) considers time and space in Egyptian art as correlated and interconnected dimensions. She explores how this was technically rendered by the Egyptian artists.

The topic of Jean-Pierre Pätznick's article (*ḥw.t ḥnt(j) skꜣ wr : La demeure de -celui qui préside à l'offrande/au sacrifice du vénérable-. L'enceinte funéraire de la vallée à Abydos ou l'intemporalité de l'espace sacré dans le rituel funéraire royal thinite*) is the funerary enclosure of the valley in Abydos. By studying two inscriptions from the time of Horus Djer, the author provides new elements of information that can contribute to a better understanding of the nature of the celebrations that were performed there.

Martin Pehal (*Culturally Reflexive Aspects of Time and Space in New Kingdom Mythological Narratives*) presents as he terms it a study about the culturally reflexive nature of mythological narratives in the New Kingdom. The author analyses this phenomenon through a description of the dynamics between the specific use of space and the simultaneous attestation of different types of temporality.

In his contribution Daniel Potter (*Deictic Motion Verbs and Divine Interaction. Placing the Individual and the Divine in Time and Space*) uses a phenomenological approach to deal with the use of deictic verbs of motion and transfer (*iy/iw* 'to come' and *šm* 'to go'), and of rotation (*ʿnn, mkḥ3, ḥ3*) in relation to the interactions between humans and the divine.

Finally, the volume ends with an article by Daniel Werning (*The Representation of Space, Time and Event Sequence in an Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Comic*). The author takes the reader on a journey through the signs of space and time in the ancient Egyptian graphic narrative "Book of Caverns," inspired by comic research, Peircean semiotics and diagrammatology.

We hope that the articles presented here will contribute to a renewed interest for this fascinating issue and that this volume, even if limited in its ambitions, will pave a promising avenue for future research.

Gaëlle Chantrain & Jean Winand