

## The Walking Dead II: The Making of a Cultural Geography

**Veranstalter:** The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO, Vidi Talent Scheme); Leiden University; National Museum of Antiquities (The Netherlands); Ministry of Antiquities (Egypt)

**Datum, Ort:** 29.09.2019–01.10.2019, Cairo

**Bericht von:** Huw Twiston Davies / Nico Staring, Egyptology, Leiden University

Following a workshop held last year in Leiden and recently published as *Perspectives on Lived Religion: Practices – Transmission – Landscape*<sup>1</sup>, a second conference took place at the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, Cairo, as part of the project „The Walking Dead at Saqqara: The Making of a Cultural Geography“, kindly funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO). This second conference aimed to provide a forum for exchange between Egyptian, European and North American scholars. It was organized with the generous assistance of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, through the good offices of Hisham el-Leithy, Under-Secretary of State for Documentation of Egyptian Antiquities.

The Walking Dead project seeks to understand the cultural geography of the ancient Egyptian necropolis of Saqqara (c. 1400-500 BCE), and the ways in which the religious practices at the site both shaped and were shaped by the physical environment. Senior and early-career Egyptologists presented papers. There was also time to discuss questions relating to the three perspectives of the Walking Dead project with the aim of deepening the understanding of how cultural geography can be applied to ancient Egyptian culture, and integrating the three methodologies of the project, namely religious practices, textual transmission, and landscape archaeology, to produce a fuller account of ancient Egyptian society and funerary religion.

Papers were organized into three panels of one day each, reflecting the three perspectives of the project: (1) religious practices, (2) transmission of images and texts, and (3) potential changes, in and utilization of, landscape. The division into panels followed the

thesis of the Walking Dead project, that human interaction with the environment (and vice versa) may be examined in an ancient culture through these three overlapping perspectives, which are considered three important vectors of religious agency. The papers drew on a wide variety of material covering almost the entire history and geographical extent of Egypt, highlighting the common and unique elements of the cultural geography at Saqqara.

Keynote papers were presented by distinguished Egyptian egyptologists: OLA EL-AGUIZY (Cairo) spoke about the newly-discovered tomb of general Iwrkhy, FAIZA HAIKAL (Cairo) about the motif of the „flying dead“ in ancient and more recent Egyptian culture, and HASSAN SELIM (Cairo) about the mud-seal of the first dynasty king Den as a source for reconstructing an ancient Egyptian ritual.

In panel 1, Practices, JOHN BAINES (Oxford) emphasized fear of the dead as a motivating factor in religious ritual and the need for particular efforts to communicate with the dead. ELIZABETH FROOD (Oxford) focused on the prominent place of the dead in temples to the gods and their desire to continue to take part in the temple cult activity. CHIARA SALVADOR (Oxford) examined the ways in which the living moved around temple spaces and the interpretation of the graffiti they left, JANNE ARP (Göttingen) spoke about the role of royal favor in determining the size and decoration of non-royal elite tombs, and LARA WEISS (Leiden) studied the wider social and religious networks in which tomb-owners were embedded.

In panel 2, Transmission, GABRIELE PIEKE (Mannheim) argued for the reuse of older motifs by artists working on tombs, borrowing from existing and significant local tombs. DIMITRI LABOURY (Liège) argued that these artists nevertheless adapted and reinterpreted existing scenes, never producing simple copies of older motifs. When dealing with textual traditions, older assumptions of the rigid canonicity of textual traditions give way to a more fluid history of performance under sustained examina-

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sidestone.com/books/perspectives-on-lived-religion>.

---

tion, as JOACHIM QUACK (Heidelberg) and HUW TWISTON DAVIES (Leiden) pointed out. RAMADAN HUSSEIN (Tübingen) explained that later tombs attest to the continuing redevelopment and readaptation of older textual traditions in newer settings.

In panel 3, Landscape, HANA NAVRATILOVA (Reading) discussed the use and limitations of visitors' inscriptions in understanding the life of the necropolis as it was built, adapted, reused, and abandoned over time. HENNING FRANZMEIER (Hildesheim) talked about the changes in elite burial practice created by a capital in the damp, marshy conditions of the Nile Delta. KEVIN CAHAIL (Pennsylvania) examined the influence of older and newer ceremonial routes on burial practices at South Abydos in the New Kingdom. ANDREAS EFFLAND (Hamburg) pointed out the emphasis placed on monumental construction at Abydos by the early Ramesside kings. NICO STARING (Leiden) studied the development of the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara in the 18th Dynasty.

Particularly noticeable features of the conference were the cohesiveness of the papers, which worked together to provide an unusually comprehensive view of Egyptian religion in the practice of everyday life, and the constructive and informative nature of the discussions.

### Conference Overview:

H.E. Ambassador Maged Mosleh (Head of International Organisations, Ministry of Antiquities), and Laurens Westhoff (Ambassador of the Netherlands to the Arab Republic of Egypt): Welcome and opening addresses

Lara Weiss (Principal Investigator of the Walking Dead project, Leiden University / Rijksmuseum van Oudheden): Introduction

#### *Panel 1: Practices*

John Baines (University of Oxford): How to take the dead to the cemetery and keep them from walking where they are not welcome

Elizabeth Frood (University of Oxford): The greatest dead inhabit temple complexes and walk among structures and between complexes

Chiara Salvador (University of Oxford): „Socializing“ the sacred space: an analysis of graffiti and appeals to the living as social acts in Karnak

Janne Arp (Georg August University, Göttingen): Figurations in the study of Egyptian religion: the case of Amarna

Lara Weiss (Leiden University / Rijksmuseum van Oudheden): Reconsidering the gift

#### *Panel 2: Transmission*

Prof. Dr. Ola El-Aguizy (University of Cairo): The newly discovered tomb of the army general Iwrkhy (Keynote)

Gabriele Pieke (Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, Mannheim): Remembering forward – on the transmission of pictorial representations in non-royal tomb decoration up to the New Kingdom

Joachim Quack (University of Heidelberg): Establishing communication channels: remarks on the transmission of the Ritual of Opening the Mouth as a (not only) funerary text

Dimitri Laboury (University of Liège): Image transmission and artistic creation in a cultural geography perspective

Ramadan Hussein (University of Tübingen): Coping with a tradition: three Saite text compositions from Saqqara

Huw Twiston Davies (Leiden University): The Book of the Dead (at Saqqara): text, performance, and lived religion

#### *Panel 3: Landscape*

Prof. Dr. Hassan Selim (Ain Shams University): The mud seal of king Den from the tomb of Hemaka (Cairo Museum JE 70100) (Keynote)

Prof. Dr. Faiza Haikal (American University in Cairo): The flying dead (Keynote)

Hana Navratilova (University of Reading): Pyramid life in secondary epigraphy – cultural biography and regimes of historicity

Henning Franzmeier (Roemer und Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim): Living, dying and getting buried in Pi-Ramesses: utilizing limited

space in the Nile Delta

Kevin Cahail (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology): Between town and temple: exploring the influences of royal, religious and social institutions on funerary landscape at South Abydos during the New Kingdom

Andreas Effland (University of Hamburg): Reinventing resurrection: early Ramesside „renaissance“ at Abydos

Nico Staring (Leiden University): Biography of a necropolis: Saqqara in the eighteenth dynasty

Tagungsbericht *The Walking Dead II: The Making of a Cultural Geography*. 29.09.2019–01.10.2019, Cairo, in: H-Soz-Kult 31.10.2019.