



# PERSPECTIVES ON LIVED RELIGION

Practices - Transmission - Landscape

edited by

N. Staring, H. Twiston Davies and L. Weiss



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# Perspectives on Lived Religion

Practices – Transmission – Landscape

Nico Staring, Huw Twiston Davies  
and Lara Weiss

The current volume addresses lived religion in and beyond ancient Egypt. It challenges the idea that ancient religions were essentially static.<sup>1</sup> The subtitle of the book reflects three methodological lenses through which ancient daily life activities can be examined in the material, archaeological, and textual evidence from ancient cultures: ‘practices’, ‘transmission’, and ‘landscape’. These research perspectives stem from the core aspects of the research project, ‘The Walking Dead at Saqqara: The Making of a Cultural Geography’, kindly funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).<sup>2</sup> This project studies the cultural geography of Saqqara, the necropolis of the ancient Egyptian city of Memphis, and its development (see chapters 4, 7 and 13).<sup>3</sup> Saqqara was a centre of major political and religious importance throughout Pharaonic history. Kings and non-royal individuals were buried there from the earliest times onward. Although Egyptian kings were buried elsewhere, Saqqara remained an important cultic area from the New Kingdom to the Late Period (c. 1500-332 BCE),<sup>4</sup> and monumental tombs, funerary temples, and shrines continued to be built there. Having served as a memorial site for non-royal individuals and kings, as well as a centre for the worship of various gods for millennia, Saqqara not only provides chronological depth, but also the necessary thematic breadth, to study the ways in which religion changed and affected the physical environment and contemporary society and how, in turn, contemporary society, and the restrictions and possibilities offered by the environment shaped the site’s cultural geography. With a nod to the successful American TV series, the title ‘The Walking Dead’ emphasises the fact that Saqqara was not exclusively a burial site for the deceased, but also a place for interaction with the living.<sup>5</sup> This volume presents a comparative confrontation of the ‘Walking Dead’ approach with other disciplines and an enlargement upon its perspectives. The volume

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1 On the lived ancient religion approach see also Albrecht et al. 2018, 568-593; Rüpke 2012.

2 The project ‘The Walking Dead at Saqqara: The Making of a Cultural Geography’ has kindly been granted as dossier no. 016.Vidi.174.032 within the Vidi-talent scheme and is hosted at Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) from 1 November 2017 to 31 October 2022.

3 See Weiss 2018 for a project description.

4 The dates used throughout this book are taken from Krauss/Hornung/Warburton 2005, unless stated otherwise.

5 Compare e.g. Gordon 1984.

includes chapters by specialists not only from the field of Egyptology, but across a broader span of time and space, in order to test, criticise, and contextualise methods, as well as the project's first results.

### What is Cultural Geography?

Cultural geography has its roots as a field of study in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century study of religious geography,<sup>6</sup> and the development of “natural theology”.<sup>7</sup> The crystallisation of “cultural geography” as a concept in contemporary thought may be traced to the work of Carl Sauer, who defined a “cultural landscape” as the refashioning of a natural landscape by a cultural group.<sup>8</sup> This definition was not reached in a void, but rather represented a reversal of the position dominant prior to this point, that environment shaped religious practice, in a rather simple, deterministic manner.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most influential early codification of a purely *geographical* geography of religion was established by Paul Fickeler,<sup>10</sup> which emphasised the ways in which religion and environment act on one another, rather than one influencing the other in a purely linear manner.<sup>11</sup> More recently, cultural geographers have defined their field as examining

“patterns and interactions of human culture, both material and non-material, in relation to the natural environment and the human organization of space”,<sup>12</sup>

or as a method of examining the ways in which the

“life world and its dwellers create and ‘reshape’ each other in one continuous movement, weaving individual life cycles into long-term histories”.<sup>13</sup>

Central to the study of cultural geography, and specifically the geography of religion, is the observation that sacred spaces

“are not merely discovered, or founded, or constructed; it is claimed, owned, and operated by people advancing specific interests”.<sup>14</sup>

This means that the construction of a cultural geography relies on human action and interaction in terms of shaping and controlling the landscape, but also on human adaptation to the existing space.<sup>15</sup> The “geography of religions” approach within the broader topic of “cultural geography” has tended to focus on religion and “its relationships with various elements of its human and physical settings”.<sup>16</sup>

### Cultural Geography and the Walking Dead

This volume offers perspectives on the ways in which religion in different places and time periods changed and affected physical environments, and how, in turn, restrictions and possibilities offered by the environment could shape a site's cultural geography. The papers assembled here examine these processes in the Mediterranean and in South Asia from the Bronze Age to the Medieval period, and offer a fruitful perspective on modern China. The starting point for the selection of papers is the observation that religion should not be perceived as essentially static. The archaeological and textual evidence discussed in this volume should dispel this notion immediately. Individuals and groups continuously shaped their environment and their agency was shaped by their environment in turn.<sup>17</sup> Various ancient and modern cult places, temples, royal and non-royal tombs and access roads to various archaeological sites of religious significance reflect the continuous change in traditions over the course of time. The tangible results of these processes of religious appropriation by individuals and groups are conceptualised as ‘cultural geography’, acknowledging the mutual relationship between religion and its environment.<sup>18</sup> The hypothesis of the ‘Walking Dead’ project is that human interaction with the environment and vice versa can be examined in an ancient culture from three perspectives, namely by studying individual and group practices such as offerings, by analysing various media through the examination of the transmission of texts and images, and by studying spatial features of the landscape, which together form a cultural geography. In

6 Park 1994, 7-14.

7 Glacken 1967, 35; quoted in Park 1994, 1. See also Park 1994, 12-14.

8 Sauer 1925, 476.

9 See Büttner 1974.

10 Park 1994, 16-17; Büttner 1980, 96; Fickeler 1947.

11 Park 1994, 16-17.

12 Cosgrove 1994, 111.

13 Kolen/Renes 2015, 21.

14 Kong 2001, 213-218; Chidester/Linethal 1995, 15.

15 Kong 2001, 213; Smith 1978, 88.

16 Park 1994, 18-19; Stump 1986, 1. Since the mid-1970s, interest in the geography of religions has increased, with the publication of themed issues of journals and the establishment, in 1976, of an International Working Group on the Geography of Belief Systems (Park 1994, 19-20). It has become a “well-established field of study, the focus of professional specialty groups, scholarly conferences, an online journal, and a growing academic literature” (Stump 2008, 20; contra Park 1994, 21; for a more recent summary, see Kong 2001).

17 E.g. Kolen/Renes 2015.

18 E.g. Park 1994; Cooper 1992; Kong 1990; Büttner 1974.



the ‘Walking Dead’ project these three perspectives are examined as the three main vectors by which religious agency can be traced in the archaeological record, adding a spatial perspective to the lived ancient religion approach.<sup>19</sup> These three vectors have informed the structure of the present volume.

## Religious Practices

Barry Kemp has provided a useful selection of material evidence in order “to explore the tangle of piety and self-interest”<sup>20</sup> which motivated the various religious practices performed in Egypt in different time periods, in an article on ancient Egyptian religiosity. In Kemp’s view, religious expressions, where they can be detected, were highly formalised and often motivated by self-interest. Since religion “did not serve as a guide to living” and since in its formal style it was “removed from the emotional and practical life of most Egyptians”,<sup>21</sup> Kemp concluded that Egyptian society “was, in practice, largely secular”.<sup>22</sup> Implicit in such definitions of religion are protestant notions that religious action should be motivated by pure piety. This rather narrow definition is surely inapplicable to the ancient Egyptian data, from which it is not possible to determine the degree of piety felt by particular individuals or groups.<sup>23</sup> The analysis of actual practices, seeking to identify religious practices in the material record, is of greater value than seeking to define their limits too narrowly.<sup>24</sup> For this purpose, religion can be defined here loosely, as being found in all material and textual evidence that relates to practices and beliefs dealing with gods, deified individuals, spirits, demons, and ancestors. This analytical focus on religious practices rather than beliefs in ancient and Medieval contexts reflects not only archaeological thought but also contemporary sociological data. Studies of contemporary Chinese religion face comparable challenges to the study of ancient religious practices: deeply-rooted protestant views of religion “continue to cause great confusion” and impede in a comprehensive understanding (see also chapter 15).<sup>25</sup> Anna Sun shows that

“in the World Values Survey, 93.3 per cent of the Chinese respondents answered ‘No’ to the question ‘Do you belong to a religious denomination?’ and 89.7 per cent answered ‘Never’ to the question of ‘How

often do you attend religious services?’ But if we focus on everyday religious practices in China, we find that 67 per cent of people have performed ‘ancestral rites to the gravesite of a deceased family member in the past year’”.<sup>26</sup>

In contemporary Chinese society, group membership of institutional religion may not be very relevant in day-to-day practice. However, this does not mean that Chinese people do not perform what would be considered, by Western scholars, to be religious practices. Chinese people perform a series of practices in which categories set by different religious traditions are highly fluid and overlap.<sup>27</sup> This situation can find parallels in ancient Egypt, where various gods and ancestors could be adored in different contexts and situations.<sup>28</sup> In the present volume this conception of religion, as a repertoire of various elements to choose from more or less freely,<sup>29</sup> is nicely illustrated by Richard Bussmann, who critically assesses interpretations of Egyptian votives, and reveals the implicit assumptions of modern scholars (pp. 73-84). Bussmann challenges intuitive interpretations of meaning based on iconography or texts, which neglect alternative interpretations. With fresh methodological insight he demonstrates that the selection of a crocodile votive may depend on a variety of intended meanings, including the strength and power of the animal, whether to provide protection or virility, rebirth and rejuvenation, the commemoration of having been saved from a crocodile, or nothing, in the sense that the votive was simply to hand. Whereas in some cases one or other interpretation may be more plausible depending on the surrounding evidence, scholars should also allow for broader interpretations and perhaps sometimes not being able to find a clear-cut solution at all.<sup>30</sup>

Mattias Brand demonstrates that a similar variety of practices can be found in cemetery contexts. Brand discusses the burials in Roman Kellis, and demonstrates that a clear distinction between Christian and pagan is not always possible (pp. 85-95). Symbols such as crosses were used widely at that time, and funerary customs like body orientation often depended on practical matters rather than the religion of the deceased. Identity was and remains complex, and daily life practices can rarely be assigned to fixed categories.<sup>31</sup>

This phenomenon is also illustrated by Miriam Müller and her study of domestic religious practices at the city of Avaris in the Delta, an ancient trade hub in which the

19 Term Rüpke 2012 and see also Albrecht et al. 2018, 568-593.

20 Initiated by Kemp 1995, 26.

21 Kemp 1995, 50.

22 Kemp 1995, 50.

23 E.g. Weiss 2012, 190-192, with references.

24 Compare e.g. Geertz 1968, 1.

25 Sun 2016, 51.

26 Sun 2016, 51.

27 Sun 2016, 66.

28 E.g. Luiselli 2011; Stevens 2006.

29 Swidler 1986, 273, cf. Sun 2016, 66.

30 Compare also Raja/Weiss 2015.

31 Notably Rebillard 2012.

material culture was characterised by a vivid blend of both Levantine and Egyptian styles. The mix of cultures is reflected in Near Eastern practices, such as the installation of ancestor houses attached to typical Egyptian houses (pp. 27-38), apparently reflecting a belief that the deceased were not impure.<sup>32</sup> The construction of the physical fabric of shared ancestry, visible to everyone at Avaris, shows how migration and the settlement of new groups in the eastern Nile Delta established new traditions.

Whereas the previous chapters show an apparent high degree of flexibility in daily life practices Julia Budka's study shows that at the same time Egyptian institutionalised temple religion was far more formalised than has been previously assumed (pp. 15-25). Although in general the power of Egyptian administration did not allow exhaustive control,<sup>33</sup> the temple of the god Osiris at Abydos was able to restrict access to its sacred area.<sup>34</sup> This has become even clearer following recent excavations that unearthed the large quantities of votive pottery dating to Twenty-Fifth Dynasty Egypt (c. 747-664 BCE) placed in a highly organised manner by priests. Budka's findings emphasise that earlier texts should perhaps be taken more literally, since already on Middle Kingdom (c. 1980-1760 BCE) stelae placed along the processional route to the temple the area is referred to as a restricted area.<sup>35</sup>

Returning to Kemp's "tangle of piety and self-interest",<sup>36</sup> religion cannot be viewed outside its social context. Religion and society are two sides of the same coin, and the example from contemporary China referred to above shows that people may not consider their practices to be what scholars identify as religious behaviour (pp. 243-247). As to the monumental tombs of New Kingdom Saqqara, they certainly reflected the high status of their owners,<sup>37</sup> as do the numerous limestone reliefs, statues, and smaller objects from that site. These allow insight into the world of the higher echelons of Egyptian society at that period. In the *Prosopographia Memphitica* project, Anne Herzberg analyses prosopographical data from Saqqara in order to detect personal networks in the Memphite necropolis (pp. 39-57). By means of Social Network Analysis, Herzberg

maps all identifiable social classes of the Memphite society in a database, which allows not only the detection of individual persons, but also the reconstruction of their networks in terms of both social and genealogical affiliations as well as their professional backgrounds. With a similar interest, Lara Weiss (pp. 59-71) analyses the appearances of named individuals, other than the tomb owners themselves, in tomb reliefs, and discusses the question of the potential advantages gained by means of representation. The chapters by Herzberg and Weiss both demonstrate that social and spiritual capital was gained by lower ranking individuals through their representation in the tombs of higher ranking members of the Egyptian elite. An approach centred on the tomb owner thus conceals not only the practices of individuals and groups in those monuments, but also the life history of tombs in later generations.

## Transmission

'Transmission' refers to the process by which a text or image is copied and recopied across time by different individuals or groups. As a subject of study, its origins lie in the 'textual' or 'lower' criticism, as initially practised chiefly on Classical and Biblical texts in and after the Nineteenth Century. This methodology targeted the cataloguing of copying errors through the so-called 'common-error' method. The purpose of this is both to resolve such errors on the basis of what the original text ought to say, and to discover which of the surviving manuscripts were copied based on each other. The overall aim of this model of 'textual criticism', then, is the reconstruction of an 'original' text, 'as close as possible' to the recension of the text first written down by the author.<sup>38</sup>

This method has not been without its critics. In the early Twentieth Century, the French medievalist Joseph Bédier noted that the diagram illustrating the hierarchy of manuscripts, the stemma codicum, almost always divided into only two branches, or manuscript traditions,<sup>39</sup> suggesting the exercise was of limited utility. More recently, at the end of the 1980s, Bernard Cerquiglini, in his book *Éloge de la variante*, argued that variant copies of a given text, previously said to be 'erroneous', were in fact valid and valuable expressions of their copyists, and ought not be dismissed as merely a result of incompetent copying. This view is often summarised with the now well-known quotation from this book:

"l'écriture médiévale ne produit pas des variants, elle est variance."<sup>40</sup>

32 On the traditional Egyptian perspective cf. e.g. Meeks 1975, 430-452.

33 E.g. Moreno Garcia 2013a.

34 See also Kucharek 2006, 57 with references.

35 Cf. e.g. a stela now in the Cairo Museum (JE 35256): "As for anyone who shall be found within these stelae, except for a priest about his duties, he shall be burnt. Moreover, as for any official who shall cause a tomb to be made for himself within this holy place, he shall be reported and this law applied to him and to the necropolis-guard as (is the case) today. But as for everywhere outside this holy place, (it is) an area where people may make tombs for themselves and where one may be buried", translated by Leahy 1989, 43.

36 Kemp 1995, 26.

37 For example, on the High Priests of Memphis: Raedler 2011, 135, but this applies also to tomb owners of other professions.

38 See e.g. Trovato 2014, 52-58; West 1973, 32-37; Maas 1958, 1-3.

39 Bédier 1913.

40 Cerquiglini 1989, 111.

Since the 1990s, this approach has been known as “material” or “new philology”. This perspective is less concerned with the reconstruction of a single, authorial ‘original text’, than it is with examining how and why texts were copied, edited, and adapted, and the contexts in which manuscripts emerged and diverged from earlier sources. Egyptological textual criticism has, since the 1970s, focussed chiefly on the examination of the textual traditions of religious texts, centred mainly on the ‘Tübingen School’.<sup>41</sup> Dedicated studies have examined specific corpora, such as the solar litanies,<sup>42</sup> the Book of the Two Ways,<sup>43</sup> and the Book of Gates.<sup>44</sup> These studies, although acknowledging the possibility of a more ‘open’ transmission,<sup>45</sup> in which texts are not readily assembled into a stemma, have nevertheless principally aimed at providing compositional dates, and clear recensions for these texts.<sup>46</sup>

Since the early 2000s, approaches drawn from material philology have grown in influence within Egyptology, most predominantly in the study of Egyptian literary texts.<sup>47</sup> Willems was among the first Egyptologists to engage with material philology in his study of the texts on Middle Kingdom coffins.<sup>48</sup> However, Egyptological engagement with material philology remained limited for a number of years.<sup>49</sup> It was Parkinson who perhaps most clearly summarised the objections to traditional textual criticism, noting its “immense value”,<sup>50</sup> but criticising an excessive application of the method, which can “sometimes almost negate the search for meaning”, and becomes at times “a means of avoiding questions” about the source and potential purpose of textual variation, charging textual critics with an excessive disregard for the processes of copying of individual manuscripts.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, prior attempts at textual criticism within Egyptology have not

always resulted in the production of stemmata,<sup>52</sup> and some more recent studies have been conducted from a material-philological perspective.<sup>53</sup>

Working within the broader theoretical frame of ‘material philology’, the chapters on transmission in this volume discuss the ways in which texts and images were adopted, adapted, altered and recontextualised by people across long periods of time. The chapters cover a wide cross-section of material, both from Egypt and from other cultures, and through a number of perspectives. Nevertheless, the papers share methodological approaches, and emphasise the importance of human actors as the agents of transmission, as well as broader, living, and often oral, contexts which are now partly or wholly inaccessible to the scholar.

Examining transmission at Saqqara, Huw Twiston Davies (pp. 97-129) examines the ‘harpists’ songs’ of the New Kingdom at this site. His contribution problematises the oral context of these song-texts, and asks what kind of ritual context such songs might have had, and whether such a context actually existed, or whether the ‘songs’ are a purely written genre, a kind of scene-caption. Twiston Davies emphasises the complex relationship between these scenes at Thebes and Saqqara, the difficulties of interpretation that arise over their meaning, and discusses the extent to which they reflect ancient Egyptian ritual practices.

Examining the transmission of images, Burkhard Backes (pp. 131-145) discusses the scene of a weeping cow found on two coffins of the early Middle Kingdom. This appears to anticipate ritual scenes found in the New Kingdom, involving the cutting off of a calf’s foot. Backes also emphasises the apparent links between the scene on the coffins and early Middle Kingdom royal ritual. Mobilising material from the Coffin Texts as broader context for the motif on the two coffins, Backes suggests that the representation of the weeping cow may allude to the myth of Isis cutting off the hands of Horus, in which the deceased is understood to be both, or either, party, drawing on Willems’s notion of the ‘embalmer embalmed’.<sup>54</sup> Backes emphasises the different forms that transmission can take: transmission between royal and non-royal contexts, transmission of motifs between broader iconic compositions, the transmission of an idea in different forms of representation, the transmission of an idea between text and image, and the transmission of iconic and textual elements between mythological and ritual contexts.

Lucía Díaz-Iglesias Llanos focuses on the transmission of the Book of the Dead within the tomb of Djehuty (TT 11)

41 See e.g. Westendorf 1974. For a summary article on the application of textual criticism in Egyptology, see Backes 2011.

42 Schenkel 1978.

43 Backes 2005.

44 Zeidler 1999.

45 For the distinction between ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ copying in Egyptology, see Schenkel 1986, 459-460, but also Parkinson 2002, 50-55.

46 Perhaps the most exhaustive exposition of the methodological approach of the ‘Tübingen School’ is to be found in Ziedler 1999, 11-59. Note that these have by no means been the only aims of the school, and that other genres of text have also been examined, for both of which see Burkard 1977.

47 Definitions of ‘literary’ and ‘non-literary’ within Egyptology, as more broadly, have been somewhat vexed. In this regard, the perspectives offered in Loprieno 1996, 5-94, and Moers 1999 are a useful starting point; but see also Parkinson 2002, 3-42.

48 Willems 1996.

49 Quirke 2004, 29-31.

50 Parkinson 2009, 262.

51 Parkinson 2009, 262-263.

52 E.g. Quack 1994, 18-32.

53 E.g. Hussein 2013; Hagen 2012.

54 Willems 1997, 343-372.

at Thebes (pp. 147-164). Analysing the 42 Book of the Dead spells found in the burial chamber of this tomb by content, textual sequence, layout and closest parallels, Díaz-Iglesias Llanos emphasises the role of individual copyists in the production of the text in the tomb, examining the process of copying, and emphasising the ‘productive’ editorial activity of the copyists, as well as the limitations and opportunities afforded them within the physical space in which the texts were copied.

Looking at textual transmission in a non-Egyptological context, Peter Bisschop describes processes of textual transformation and transmission which illuminate the variability which can be inherent in ‘anonymous’ texts.<sup>55</sup> Bisschop discusses the reappropriation of text in Indian purāṇas, and the systematic reworking of textual manuals dedicated to the cults of Viṣṇu and Śiva into the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, a text dedicated to the worship of the Sun (here referred to as Sūrya) (pp. 165-172). Bisschop notes the continuous expansion and editing of this text down to the beginning of the modern era, and the ways in which the text adapts older forms for the new religion. Bisschop emphasises the interrelation between texts, suggesting the use of the term ‘transtextuality’, on the basis of the work of Gérard Genette,<sup>56</sup> to emphasise the close relationship of concepts and expressions between different religious corpora.

## Landscape

Studies focused on landscape are numerous in archaeology. It is therefore surprisingly difficult to find a clear and satisfactory definition of what is meant by this “fuzzy and ambiguous”<sup>57</sup> term. Traditionally, scholars have struggled in particular with the dichotomy between nature and culture in defining what a landscape is, who dwells in it, and who is responsible for its construction. Because of the difficulty of defining the term, it might be useful to start with a very brief historic outline of ‘landscape’.

At its origins, the term landscape denoted a communal, collective work. The English word derives from Dutch *landschap* or German *Landschaft*. In its early, Sixteenth Century usage, ‘lantschap’ indicated “an area carved out by axe and plough, which belongs to the people who have carved it out”.<sup>58</sup> It was “an area of cultural identity based on tribal and/or blood ties”. In today’s popular usage of the word, landscape signifies the specific arrangement or pattern of “things on the land”, and refers to “the *look* or the *style* of the land”,<sup>59</sup> by which is meant the social or

cultural significance of the observed order or make-up. For geographers, landscape is understood as a built morphology. To them, landscape refers to the shape and structure of a place.<sup>60</sup> Landscape also refers to a form of representation, a usage heavily influenced by the genre of landscape painting.<sup>61</sup> This view of landscape has been adopted in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018), in which two definitions are presented for landscape: (1) “a picture of natural inland scenery”, and (2) “a portion of land that the eye can see in one glance”. The landscape, then, is conceptualised as the backdrop to human action. This view, drawing on 1960s environmental archaeology, is not how landscape is understood in the context of the studies presented in this volume.

Landscape is related to, but not identical with nature. This view is perhaps best articulated by cultural geographer Donald Meinig, who argues that

“[T]he idea of landscape (...) begins with a naive acceptance of the intricate intimate intermingling of physical, biological, and cultural features which any glance around us displays. Landscape is, first of all, the unity we see, the impressions of our senses rather than the logic of the sciences.”

Landscape can be found all around us. Yet while the landscape may be contemporary to its dwellers, glimpses of older landscapes always remain visible, and these potentially continue to be meaningful. The past endures, and therefore, as Tim Ingold has noted, “the landscape is never complete: neither ‘built’ nor ‘unbuilt’, it is perpetually under construction.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, landscape has an important temporal aspect.<sup>63</sup>

In the proceedings of the first international conference on Landscape Archaeology, published in 2012, the editors note that in today’s scholarship there are, essentially, two approaches to the topic. The first, “landscape as territory” definition, is used by processual archaeologists, earth scientists, and most historical geographers. Post-processual archaeologists, new cultural geographers and anthropologists, on the other hand, “favour a more abstract definition of landscape, based on how it is perceived by the observer.”<sup>64</sup> The papers published in the landscape section of the present volume adhere to the second of these perspectives.

Alexis den Doncker addresses the temporal aspect of landscape in his paper (pp. 173-189). In doing so, the

55 For this term, see Barton 2013.

56 Genette 1997.

57 Michaels 2006.

58 Olwig 1993, 311.

59 Meinig 1979.

60 Mitchell 2005, 49

61 Antrop 2007, 23-26; Cosgrove 1985.

62 Ingold 1993, 162.

63 The aspect of temporality has been explored in-depth in Kolen 2005.

64 Kluiving/Guttman-Bond 2012, 11-30.

Theban necropolis is viewed as an iconographic archive. The tombs built by numerous generations of high-ranking officials in the western Theban mountain remained accessible long after their death. The iconographic programmes of their tombs represented a rich record of powerful images, each imbued with magical efficacy. These images could potentially establish a relationship with the living images of gods, who were thought to have fashioned the overall agency of the Theban sacred necropolis. While the tomb-images remained accessible, the reception or appropriation by later generations need not have been in line with the intentions of their creators. The case study of Theban Tomb (TT) 93, for example, shows various patterns of reception and appropriation. The patterns observed reflect the “shifting agencies” or “multi-functionality of monuments”. The meaning and functionality of images evolve continually with the passage of time.

Johannes Auenmüller examines the ways in which rock inscriptions on the southern borders of Egypt were used by the pharaonic state and its representatives to inscribe themselves upon the landscape (pp. 191-206). In so doing, they perpetuated their presence and, perhaps more importantly, perpetuated their claim over the land. The sites bearing rock inscriptions can be said to represent ‘epigraphically appropriated’ places, and ‘social landscapes’. This latter term refers to the individuals represented by the inscriptions sometimes embedding themselves within older social networks. The author refrains from drawing all-encompassing generalisations regarding the overall function or agency of the studied rock inscriptions. Instead, he convincingly argues that, above all, it is the topographical and site-specific context which allows us to understand the texts on rocks in space and place.

Nico Staring argues in his paper for a biography-of-landscape approach to the study of space in an ancient Egyptian necropolis (pp. 207-223). As an underlying premise, his approach conceptualises the history of any landscape as a life-history. In that view, life in a necropolis is “lived among that which was made before”. The landscape is conceived of as a palimpsest. Choices made by individuals dwelling in the landscape are made in negotiation with the material remains of the past. The necropolis at Saqqara serves as an example of such a palimpsest site, where the development of the landscape can be examined over a period of several millennia. The paper first situates the necropolis in its broader context, outlining the spatial relationship to the urban centre

of Memphis. Processional routes used during religious festivals connected the city with the necropolis site and beyond. Guided by the concept of ‘embodied movement’, the development in terms of tomb building within one section of the larger necropolis is then used to illustrate how a focus not on individual tombs, but on the necropolis space as a whole, may lead to new insights into the actual use of the site through time.

The landscape as an arena for display of power is explored by Elizabeth Cecil (p. 225-241). Cecil’s study incorporates political ecology, temple architecture, and landscape design to examine how power was materialised by reshaping the land according to the will of those in power. The case-studies in the paper are from the ‘kingdoms’ of Champa in Central Vietnam, Zhenla in Southern Laos, and Taruma on Java, referred to here as “archipelagos of power”. To analyse the mechanics of the political manipulations of landscape, when viewed as a process, Cecil introduces three phases of architectural intervention in the landscape: participation, amplification, and mastery. These stages take the transformation from the initial claim to landscape, through intensification and structural interventions, to culmination in monumental redevelopment.

## Synthesis

The papers in this volume cover a variety of time periods and geographical areas. They demonstrate the effectiveness of the ‘Walking Dead’ model, of three detectable vectors of agency, in illuminating how the cultural geography of a given site was shaped over time. Changes at religious sites come about through the practices, creativity, adaptation, and intervention in the landscape of individuals and groups. The ‘Walking Dead’ approach enables scholars to perceive the human element in the ‘processes of becoming’ which form a site’s life history. Individuals and groups developed their own interpretation of religion and religious practices. This observation has been theorised as *lived religion* in Religious Studies. The fluid nature of these appropriations may be constrained in institutional cults. Nevertheless, the identification and interpretation of the scope for mutability in religious traditions necessitates a clear analysis. This is vital because religion was and is not monolithic. People manoeuvred within different options, so that past choices interacted with future ones in fluid ways.

