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The History of the Study of Ancient Egyptian Religion and its Future¹

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The non-Egyptian, Classical authors such as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch and others already demonstrated great interest in Ancient Egyptian Religion (AER) and have preserved some useful information. In the European tradition until the nineteenth century there was already a great deal of discussion about Egyptian mysteries and gods alongside the riddle of the hieroglyphs. After the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822, Jean François Champollion immediately began to study AER from the authentic hieroglyphic sources in his *Pantheon Egyptien*.

The study of AER is not only one of the most fascinating but also one of the most delicate tasks of Egyptology. Erik Hornung wrote: "If we remove the gods from the world of the Egyptians, all that remains is a dark uninhabited shell that would not repay study."² Egypt without its gods or its religion is unthinkable. However, I cannot agree with Siegfried Morenz and some other students of religion who think that AER is the foundation and origin of Egyptian culture in all its respects. I do not believe that religion is the foundation and origin of culture but rather a function of culture, and as such interacts with other functions of culture.³

Over the last two hundred years, great efforts have been made by scholars who nowadays call themselves Egyptologists to understand ancient Egyptian culture in all its aspects and to reach its core by studying and publishing archaeological, iconographic and textual material relating to Ancient Egypt. This may be compared with the progress that has been made in the fields of natural sciences over the last two centuries. The study and publication of Ancient Egyptian sources is an ongoing process. New discoveries are made every year, and also tiny bits and pieces relating to AER are brought to light. That is important because the material of an ancient religion such as that of Ancient Egypt is always too limited or too little when compared with the huge mass of material about modern religions. A great effort has been made to publish the Egyptian temples, their decoration and the texts from Ramesside, Greco-Roman and other periods. Funerary texts and representations have also been published: Book of the Dead, Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, *Jenseitsführer* and so on. Enormous progress has also been made in the publication and description of the religious data.

Some of the older Egyptologists from the nineteenth century did not restrict themselves to what I shall call the archaeological, literary and artistic preliminaries of the study of AER. They tried not only to give a description but also an explanation of religious phenomena, for example Heinrich Brugsch, Gaston Maspero and Archibald Sayce.

Although since Champollion's time numerous books have been written with general titles such as "Egyptian Religion," I doubt whether much actual progress has been made in the theory formation of AER or as Hornung has put it: "We are still far away from a reliable morphology in Egyptian religion such as Erman's for Egyptian language and Schäfer's for Egyptian art."⁴ One problem with all these books on AER is that they were often written by scholars, Egyptologists, whose main interest and specialisations were language, archaeology, art or history but not specifically AER in itself, although they wrote on that subject.

On the other hand, books on AER were also written by scholars, orientalist or theologians who were interested in religion as such, but not specifically in AER in itself. The title of a book of Le Page Renouf dating from 1880 speaks volumes: *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (singular!) *as illustrated by the Religion of Ancient Egypt*. A profound analysis of the religious data has to take into account political, historical, literary and other factors. The German school of Kees, Sethe and Erman has become famous for this. The downside was that AER was not only well described, but also explained, i.e. explained away into political, historical or literary factors. Scholars who explain something away into something else or who reduce religious phenomena I shall call reductionists.⁵

Adolf Erman seems to be a typical reductionist. According to oral tradition, at the end of a fascinating lecture on AER, Erman is supposed to have said: "Aber quatsch ist es doch, meine Herren (but it's nonsense all the same, gentlemen)." In his autobiography, Erman writes that the one thing he liked most about his study of AER was its poetic fantasy, but poetry is a literary and not a religious category. However, Erman was a great scholar and not just a reductionist who reduced AER to nonsense and poetry. Erman writes in his biography that the other thing he liked most about AER was not theology but what he called "the real religion of the people."⁶ This illustrates not just the positivistic and reductionist scholar firmly rooted in the nineteenth century, but also the liberal Protestant Christian that Erman was, who called religion real as soon as he found feelings of dependence or what the liberal Protestant German theologian Friedrich Scheiermacher called "schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl." At least Erman knew his own limitations. Erman, who knew the Ancient Egyptian language and culture so well, as well as his own predilections and limitations, has probably produced the only book on AER written before the Second World War that still can be profitably consulted.

Ancient Egypt with all its temples and tombs has always been an interesting country and culture for those who are interested in the origin and growth of religion and philosophy, demonstrated recently by Jan Assmann in his *Moses the Egyptian* and by others in publications of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Not only Egyptologists but also scientists of religion, sometimes called religious historians or, to use the German word "Religionswissenschaftler," studied AER. They were orientalist and theologians by training, who more or less specialized in Egyptian and other ancient religions. I say more or less because a weak point in their studies is sometimes the specific literary, artistic and historical preliminaries of AER. Cornelis Petrus Tiele, who was the first to occupy the newly founded chair for the History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Leyden in 1877, wrote hundreds and hundreds of pages on AER in a comparative study of ancient religions. The original Dutch edition appeared in 1872, the English translation in 1882.⁷ However, the historical and comparative study of the religions of mankind

was for Tiele only the foundation of what he termed the study of religion as such. Tiele's evolutionism is striking. Evolutionism, however, is not only to be found in scientists of religion, but also in Egyptologists, for example Erman, Amelineau, Maspero, Moret and many others of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The American theologian and Egyptologist James Henry Breasted wrote many widely read books with telling titles, I'll mention just two—*The Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (1912) and *The Dawn of Conscience*.

The Norwegian scholar Willem Brede Kristensen, who succeeded Tiele to the chair of the History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at the university of Leyden in 1902, reacted strongly against the evolutionism in the study of the history of religions and the AER. His object of study was "the faith of the believer." Kristensen published his books and articles often in Dutch and only much later were they translated into English, and then only in part and posthumously. This meant that his direct influence on Egyptology was limited. Kristensen worked through his pupils – Gerardus van der Leeuw, Ardiaan de Buck, Claas Jouco Bleeker and several others who occupied chairs and posts in Faculties of Theology at Dutch universities. Egyptologists of this and the previous generation know the ideas of Kristensen best through the Dutch scholar Henri Frankfort and his books *Ancient Egyptian Religion* and *Kingship and the Gods*. Frankfort was not a direct pupil of Kristensen because he was not a theologian but an archaeologist by training.⁸

From Kristensen at the beginning of the twentieth century to Gerardus van der Leeuw, Helmut Brunner, Eberhard Otto, Etienne Drioton, François Daumas and Siegfried Morenz in the nineteen-sixties it was held, sometimes in discussion with Erman, Sethe and Kees, that religion should not be explained away into historical, political, social and economic factors as the reductionists did, but rather that religion is *sui generis*, that human beings are religious by nature and that the metaphysical is real. Shortly before his premature death, Morenz produced the study *Die Heraufkunft des Transzendenten Gottes in Ägypten* (1964). He was seeking the transcendent God of the monotheistic religions behind the scenes of Ancient Egyptian history. Those students of AER who are often theologians are not reductionists—we shall call them religionists. In the river of the study of AER one can discern two main streams between 1822 and about 1970—the reductionist stream and the religionist stream. It would be going too far here to evaluate the individual contributions to the progress of the study of AER of Lanzone, Bonnet, Moret, Vandier, Blackman, Fairman and several others of previous generations, let alone all the contributions of our own generation.

The reductionist, sometimes called positivist, approach to the study of AER has largely been abandoned. Nowadays it is accepted that we should respect the phenomena of AER as such. Herewith I am not saying that we should give up the critical and analytical attitude a scholar should have. It is not necessary for a student of AER to be religious himself or to be able to grasp the truth intuitively. Intuition should be under rational control. The results of scholarship and also of the study of AER should be accessible to general human understanding and not only to religious persons. It does not matter whether the student belongs to a particular religion or to none. As a human being he can study, understand and explain AER, or parts of it. Religion is a part of human culture. Here I have already begun to criticize the religionist stream in the study of AER. Religionism and the school of Kristensen have made valuable contributions to the understanding of AER, but we have passed that stage now.

Since the 1970s, the empirical and anthropological studies of AER by Hornung, Assmann, Goyon, Derchain, Sauneron, Yoyotte, Leclant, Baines and others have become the mainstream of the study of AER. The so-called facts, the textual, iconographic and archaeological material, have been made more accessible, and described, classified, studied and explained as never before. By explain I do not mean explaining something away as something else, nor intuitive understanding or *Verstehen*, but

rather the rational clarification of the basic structures of AER. A glance in one of Assmann's books is enough to demonstrate that great progress has been made in the control of empirical data and theory formation. Of course, our generation still had the theoretical problems inherited from the former generation. Hornung did not want to join Morenz in perverting our science into theology, as he writes in his book *Conceptions of God*. But in Christian and evolutionist terms he was still writing about the monotheistic religion of Akhnaton as if it anticipated Western modes of thinking. We have already noted that the religionist Siegfried Morenz sought the transcendent God behind the scenes of Egyptian history, but in our time Jan Assmann has found a new religion of a transcendent God or a "pantheistisch-transzendenten Weltgott der Ramessidenzeit" in a huge mass of material. Notwithstanding the stupefying mass of material that Assmann always supplies in his publications on AER, we might wonder about the extent to which such an ancient Egyptian god has been upgraded into an interesting forerunner of the one God of the modern monotheistic religion.⁹ But if we look again at the aforementioned book by Le Page Renouf, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of Ancient Egypt* it is very easy to spot the progress that indeed has been made in the second of the two centuries of the study of AER.

We have not yet established a sufficiently lucid morphology or terminology in the study of AER. A precise and neutral anthropological terminology needs to be developed. We can often not work without using the old terminology of former generations of scholars, but it cannot be stressed enough that the terms we use should be defined if necessary and where possible. For example, what do we mean by the word "magic" or by the word "myth," both commonly used in comparative religion or anthropology, when we use them in our descriptions of AER? What we need is a grammar of AER. Derchain, Winter and others have already made a start with the grammar of the Egyptian temples. I agree with John Baines that religion is a mode of discourse. When a system of symbols or a way of understanding man, world and the invisible is accepted and promoted by a community it ceases to be a strictly personal philosophy or personal expression of art and begins to affect social behaviour and becomes a religion. AER is a function of human culture that interacts with other functions of culture. If that is indeed the case then it becomes important to try to circumscribe or even to define religion as much as possible. In the history of the science of religion many different definitions of religion have been given. It is well known that one scientist of religion discussed some fifty definitions of religion and rejected them all before at last giving his own definition. I cannot and do not want to try to do that here but, of course, it was and is important to know what we consider to be the precise object of our ongoing studies. Not to mention how interesting it would be to know what the result of two hundred years of study of AER is, and to have a minimal definition in a few words.

Happily, I do not have to reinvent the wheel or provide that minimal definition of AER here. Jan Assmann has in fact already found it in an Egyptian text. He draws attention to the fact that the Ancient Egyptians themselves give a definition of religion in a text that is rendered in several versions.¹⁰ I think that this definition of AER is acceptable and useful for those who study AER in the twenty-first century. I quote a version of the Book of the Dead, Chapter 126 in which it is written, in this instance of baboons but in other instances of the pharaohs, that the ideal or true performers of religion

raise up truth to the Lord-of-All
 judge poor and rich
 propitiate the gods with the breath of their mouths
 give god's offerings to the gods

(give) mortuary offerings to the dead
live on truth and feed on truth
whose hearts have no lies
who detect falsehood.

Religion in the broader sense includes morality or ethics – detesting wrong-doing and creating righteousness by judging poor and rich alike. Religion in a narrower sense is – not to neglect, but rather maintain the relationship with the gods and glorified dead. In short, religion is to raise up *ma-at* to the Lord of All. A long time before this Egyptian definition of religion was found it was recognized that *ma-at* is a key word in AER. Several studies have been devoted to the goddess Maat and the word *ma-at* denoting a cosmic social and moral reality in the world of the Ancient Egyptians.

Problems such as pharaonism versus local religions should be studied anew. Several monographs on gods and goddess have been published during the last decades, ranging from good compilations of material to highly speculative contributions, but we need even more monographs. The field of funerary religion is enormous. Conceptions of life and death, and conceptions of the soul should be studied anew because so much new material has become available in this generation through careful excavations or funerary texts in reliable editions, translation and exegesis. I shall only mention here the progress made by Hornung and others in the study of the *Jenseitsführer*.

The discussion on myth and magic should continue and will continue. In recent years progress has been made in the study of temples, temple ritual and symbolism, but we still know too little about what was going on. At the beginning of the lecture I mentioned that many books have been written with the title 'Egyptian Religion.' There are far fewer books which can be called History of AER. Therefore, the questions about the historical development and end of AER need to be studied and the more difficult question of the origin of AER should not be excluded.

In the ongoing study of AER in the twenty-first century, contributions by scientists of religion or Religionswissenschaftler, anthropologists and Egyptologists specialized in archaeology, history, philology, art, literature, museology, and site management and conservation will be most welcome, but the main contributions in this time of ongoing specialization must come from those who are prepared to specialize in AER itself. They should be able to handle textual, iconographic, archaeological and other material pertaining to the study of AER. They should have not only practical, but also theoretical knowledge of more than one religion. These students of AER will have to learn the often misunderstood and still imperfectly known language or system of symbols for the communications of AER and they will have to decode more and more of its contents.

Notes:

- 1 E. Hornung, *Einführung in die Ägyptologie*, Darmstadt 1967, 1973⁴, 55-73. J. Yoyotte, Religion de l'Égypte ancienne. In: *Problèmes et méthodes d'histoire des religions*, Paris 1968, 77-85. L.H. Lesko, History of Study of Egyptian Religion, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by M. Eliadi, New York-London 1987, IV, 65-69. K. Koch, Das Wesen altägyptischer Religion im Spiegel ägyptologischer Forschung, *Berichte aus den Sitzungen der Joachim Jungius Gesellschaft*, Jhrg., 7 (1989), Hamburg 1989. E. Hermesen, Perspektiven zum Verstehen der altägyptischen Religion, *Discussions in Egyptology* 34 (1996), 5-16.
- 2 E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, London 1983, 251.
- 3 S. Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, Stuttgart 1960, Chapter 1: Der religiöse Ursprung der ägyptischen Kultur. Th.P. van Baaren, Science of Religion as a Systematic Discipline. Some Introductory Remarks. In: *Religion, Culture and Methodology. Papers of the Groningen Working-group for the Study of Fundamental Problems and Methods of Science of Religion*, ed. by Th.P. van Baaren and H.J.W. Drijvers, The Hague-Paris 1973, 35-56.
- 4 E. Hornung, *Einführung*, 1973⁴, 55.
- 5 For the terms reductionists and religionists see J.G. Platvoet, The Science of Religion in Dutch Duplex Ordo Theology, *Numen* 45(1998), 115-162 and J.G. Platvoet, From Consonance to Autonomy. The Science of Religion in the Netherlands. *Methods and Theory in the Study of Religion* 10 (1998), 334-351.
- 6 A. Ermann, *Mein Werden und mein Wirken*, Leipzig 1929, 280. He called AER the problem child (das Schmerzenskind) of egyptology!
- 7 C. P. Tiele, *Comparative History of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Religions*, London 1882. On Tiele see L. Leertouwer, C.P. Tiel's Strategy of Conquest. In: *Leiden Oriental Connections 1850-1940*, ed. by W. Otterspeer, Leiden 1989, 153-167.
- 8 D. Hoens, A Short Survey of the History of the Study of Egyptian Religion in the Netherlands. In: *Studies in Egyptian Religion Dedicated to Jan Zandee*, ed. by M. Heerma van Voss (= Suppl. to *Numen* 43), Leiden 1982, 11-27. H. te Velde, Franfort and Religious Symbols, *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 27(1985), 111-112. H. te Velde, Kulturkritik und Religionsreform im Alten Ägypten nach Gerardus van der Leeuw. In: *Religionswissenschaft und Kulturkritik*, ed. by H.G. Kippenberg and B. Luchesi, Marburg 1991, 93-100.
- 9 J. Assmann, *Ägypten. Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur*, Stuttgart 1984, 258ff, see also Hermesen, Perspektiven, 12.
- 10 J. Assmann, *Ägypten. Theologie und Frömmigkeit*, 11ff and already J. Assmann, *Der König als Sonnenpriester*, Glückstadt 1970, 22.

Response to H. te Velde

Paul John Frandsen

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Herman te Velde's keynote lecture seems to be the only one of the millennium lectures that succeeds in doing what the organizers of the Congress had in mind. Within the limitations given, it attempts to take stock of the development of research in Egyptian religion and to suggest a strategy for future research. There are many things in the paper that I would like to discuss, but the time limitations imposed on the members of the panel entails extreme brevity.

Te Velde is critical of reductionist, or positivist, approaches to the study of religion, and argues that scholarship should be rational rather than intuitive. One cannot but agree with his ranking of those two concepts, but I find that his own attitude comes very close to the positivist stance, because it implies a rigid separation of subject—i.e. *me*—and the subject matter. The researcher is always present, and rationality consists of an awareness of one's own social and scientific situation; that is, of all, or as many as possible, of the biases inherent in one's existence as a westerner of the twenty-first century. Let me be a little more polemic. I do not believe, of course, that one has to be "religious oneself," as te Velde puts it, in order to grasp the essentials and intricacies of Egyptian religion, but provided one is well aware of the need for a rational approach in the sense just mentioned, it does help to have some familiarity with religious experience. This may be called a form of what te Velde has dubbed "religionism," but even as a non-believer, I do consider that it is useful.

Referring to the well-known concept of *Grammaire du temple* in Ptolemaic studies, te Velde calls for the development of "a lucid morphology or terminology in the study of Ancient Egyptian religion." A *Grammar of Ancient Egyptian Religion*! There can be little doubt that this is something that everyone would find useful. But, realistically, is there any chance that the students of Egyptian religion should fare better in this matter than have the students of the Egyptian language in their attempts to define categories such as tense, aspect, narrative, and indicative? Is there any reason to believe that students of ancient Egyptian religion should be more successful than their colleagues in *Religionswissenschaft*, when it comes to an agreement on the precise implications of terms such as "myth" and "magic"?

In a sense, however, the point is well taken. What we need more than anything else is progress in our understanding of the words chosen by the Egyptians. It is our rather crude understanding of “even” the most basic notions and terms that is the most serious obstacle to an improved insight in the “workings” or the “nature” of Egyptian religion—as well as language. The meaning of the word “*imn*” may serve to illustrate the point. What does it mean to be hidden? And is the meaning the same in the various corpora of texts (*PT*, *CT*, *BD*) and in all periods. I know I am exaggerating when I say that disagreement over the implications in the meaning of this word is the sole reason for a major divergence of opinion over the nature of god, whether there was a transcendental god or not, at any given time. But *imn* is, in fact, the term that some scholars take to mean hidden in a transcendental sense, whereas others would render it as “latent,” i.e. using it of god as having a latent, pre-existential existence.

What should we do in the future? Progress has indeed been made in minor, specialized fora, such as the Crossroad(s) Symposia for linguists, the Deir al-Medina study group in Leiden, and other similar gatherings. Students of ancient Egyptian religion might do something similar. What I have in mind is not just—or only—symposia where the participants read their papers and have a general discussion, although this is very useful indeed. What I suggest is, rather, workshops, where the participants read Egyptian texts together in a joint effort completely devoted to the analysis and “deconstruction” of selected texts.

Response to H. te Velde

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Our colleague Herman te Velde has just demonstrated how much the study of ancient Egyptian religion has been part of the general development of the academic subject, "studies in religious sciences" more conveniently termed, "Religionswissenschaften," in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, the development of tools and methods of research in ancient Egyptian religion was not isolated within the study of Egyptology, but mirrored the mental history of western civilization.

But we might equally use another filter for looking at ancient Egyptian religion. Beginning with Champollion and following him we have the generation of collectors of material. We might mention, apart from Champollion, names like Rosellini, Lepsius, Brugsch, and Dümichen, who organized expeditions but this as a rule did not include excavations. They studied and carefully copied all that was extant and accessible. While today, and after hundred years of excavation campaigns, our archaeological documentation spreads over the whole period of ancient Egyptian history, the majority of visible temples at the time of Brugsch and Dümichen dated from the Greco-Roman Period. In the "Hieroglyphish-demotisches Wörterbuch" from Heinrich Brugsch, for example, the greater part of its entries are taken from the temples of this late period.

Then, in the second half of the nineteenth century we have the beginning of more or less systematic excavations. One of its highlights was the discovery of the Pyramid Texts in 1880 by Auguste Mariette and Gaston Maspero. With these Pyramid Texts the great days of philology were initiated within Egyptology, and eminent philologists like Adolf Erman and Kurt Sethe were at hand at this very moment. They initiated the idea of the so-called "Berliner Wörterbuch," which in its concept from the start was far more international than the name suggests. It is characteristic of the scholarly methods of the time around 1900—methods which Herman te Velde termed "reductionistic"—that research concentrated on the Pyramid Texts, the reason being that these were judged to be the oldest evidence for Egyptian religion, and "oldest" in the understanding of that time meant "most authentic."

This opinion provided the guideline also for work on the "Berliner Wörterbuch." Originally it was intended to completely omit all inscriptions on the walls of the temples of the Greco-Roman Period. It took several years until the decision was taken to include, after all, the vast textual material available on these later temples. At that time the board lacked a staff member ready to do this job, and that was the only reason why Adolf Erman approached the undergraduate student Hermann Junker suggesting that he should leave aside his nearly completed thesis on a subject in Coptology, and instead make himself familiar with the religious texts of the Greco-Roman Period. Junker followed this advice and in the course of this participation in the project he prepared and wrote single handed some 13,000 "Wörterbuchzettel,"—slips of paper with five or six lines of hieroglyphic texts together with their translation.

In the mid-thirties Hermann Junker began editing the inscriptions of Philae, a temple complex which he, together with Heinrich Schaefer, had registered some 25 years earlier for the Berliner Wörterbuch. The manuscript was ready for print in 1939 at Cairo when the Second World War began, and the Service des Antiquités carefully preserved it together with the precious set of drawings which were also ready to go to press. We must be grateful to the Service des Antiquités that it returned this manuscript to the author in 1955, so that he was able to publish it in 1958 entitled "Der große Pylon von Philae."

Leaving apart a number of smaller temples, like Dakke, Debod, or Biggeh, this was the first extensive publication of religious temple texts including translation. Hermann Junker wanted to offer such a preliminary translation to his colleagues knowing all too well that it would require a long list of amendments or "Berichtigungslisten," as they are generally termed. But he also knew that the peculiar Late Egyptian style of writing hieroglyphs, especially in religious texts, would, without this help, most likely discourage many colleagues, who were not so familiar with the system. This facilitation of access by offering a translation was made even more "consumer friendly," so to speak, in the next volume, when an Egyptological transliteration was added as well. In an advanced and improved form this method has also been adopted in recent major editions by, for instance, Sylvie Cauville and Dieter Kurth, just to mention two outstanding examples.

With the basic tools of these editions and translations, the comments and interpretations of such texts by historians of religion gain in substance, which should prove fruitful especially in two ways: firstly, looking backwards, it is no more doubtful today, that late texts of better quality are genuine works of theology and not just copies of misunderstood older traditional texts. At the same time the late texts are more outspoken, and thus open new ways for better interpretation of the often very brief inscriptions on earlier temples.

Secondly, looking forward, scholars of ancient Egyptian religion in the twenty-first century will have to try and find the route from Edfu further on to Nag Hammadi. In other words, research in the history of religion in ancient Egypt cannot restrict itself to ancient Egypt. It will have to lead out of ancient Egypt into the religious world of Gnosis, in as much as Gnostic texts of the Hellenistic period are documented on the one hand by Greek and Latin texts, and on the other hand by Coptic sources, for which the village of Nag Hammadi has become a symbol. I am personally convinced that there lies a large reservoir of research potential on this route.

I have talked a little longer about the great tasks for us in the late period, but great tasks also wait for scholars of religion in other periods of Egyptology. Here also it will be necessary to go beyond the borderlines of Egypt.

I just mention Buto as an example for the problems of interpreting recent prehistoric excavations. Buto clearly shows intensive connections with the Near East (certainly not only restricted to the exchange of goods) even in this early period.

The findings resulting from the excavations in the Eastern Delta by Manfred Bietak and Edgar Pusch have made us even more aware of very close interconnections comprising the whole eastern Mediterranean. They will keep scholars of ancient Egyptian religion busy for quite some time to come.

But the same applies to the question of contacts with Central Africa, starting as early as prehistoric rock drawings and is to be found again in the excavations in the north of Sudan, with the culture of Meroe as trade centers for goods and ideas.

All traits so far seem to indicate that the early cultures may no longer be looked upon as isolated in their development and identity, and that contacts were restricted only to the highest governmental level. Rather they were—if I may use this modern term—globally interlinked in a broad stream of exchange and mutual influence. In this respect I can only underline the suggestion of Herman te Velde that in the future we will need more and more students of religion who are really at home in more than one religious region and civilization.