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Noij, F.F.J.M.

INTER-SECTION

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I

INTER-SECTION
17 September 2015
Volume I

www.inter-section.nl

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"LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE STUDIES" AND ARCHAEOLOGY:
A REEVALUATION OF THE KADESH INSCRIPTIONS OF RAMESSES II

Fenno F.J.M. Noij

Abstract
This paper analyses the Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II (ca. 1279-1213 BC) through the sociolinguistic concept "Linguistic Landscapes". The inscriptions contain an account of the battle of Kadesh (located in modern-day Syria), which, despite the negative long-term consequences it had for the Egyptians, was used as the inspiration for the decoration of five temples.
Previous studies have focused little on their purpose, and often interpreted them as being either propagandistic or apotropaic (i.e. meant to ward of evil). This study uses the location of the texts within the temple to reinterpret their possible function. It shows that the inscriptions were placed in different locations within the temples, including on the inside. This influences the potential audience for the texts, since only a limited amount of individuals were allowed within the temple.
The spatial distribution brings about a new interpretation of the function of the Kadesh inscriptions: the worshipped god was thought of as being present in the temple, and would have been able to read the text. This leads to the hypothesis that the texts served as a reaffirmation of the bond between the pharaoh and the gods, who worked together to maintain order in Egypt.

Keywords
Egyptian temple reliefs, Linguistic Landscapes, New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt, spatial analysis, visibility studies

E-mail Address: ffjmnoij@hotmail.com
LinkedIn: nl.linkedin.com/in/ffjmnoij
Academia: leidenuniv.academia.edu/ffjmnoij

Introduction

The placing of written texts in a landscape is a common occurrence in both modern and ancient societies. These texts do not only contain a large amount of historically relevant information, but their presence also influences the perception of the space which surrounds them.

This paper will study the relationship by using a concept from the field of Sociolinguistics, "Linguistic Landscapes". This will be applied to a case-study of the Kadesh Inscriptions, which were placed on the walls of several Egyptian temples during the reign of Ramesses II (ca. 1279-1213 BCE).

Linguistic Landscapes

Linguistic Landscapes (LL) were first introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997), who defined it as follows:

> *"The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a territory, region or urban agglomeration"*
> (Landry and Bourhis 1997, 25).

Although various definitions have since been proposed (Coulmas 2009, 15), they all share the framework in which written texts are placed in a certain space. LL-studies (LLS) focus on the relation between these two. Written texts have a speci-

fic purpose, and the way they are placed in an area shows the way this area is used and perceived by those inhabiting it. Written texts are therefore not merely sources of information, but become a part of the material culture within the landscape. This creates a reciprocal relationship between the two: the presence of the texts influences the perception of the landscape, but the location of the text within the landscape also influences the perception of the texts. LLS can be used to gain a better understanding of this relationship.

To be able to fully use LLS, however, it is necessary to understand the nature of language. Language is fundamentally communicative, and written texts are equally so. The function of the texts can therefore be determined by looking at several factors: the transmitter(s), the message, the way it is communicated, and the (possible) receiver(s) [1]. For LLS, these can be converted into four questions: "who wrote or commissioned the text?", "what does the text say?", "how was the text portrayed?", and "who could read the text?".

Most LLS have focused on modern rather than ancient societies (Pavlenko 2010, 133). This paper will attempt to use its framework in a historical setting, namely on the Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II.

The Kadesh Inscriptions

"The Kadesh Inscriptions" refers to a series of texts and reliefs placed on the walls of several temples during Ramesses II's reign. They depict and describe the battle of Kadesh (located in modern-day Syria), which was fought in the fifth year of his reign against the Hittites. The battle probably ended in a close "Pyrrhic" victory for Ramesses, since he had to abandon his campaign in the aftermath of the battle (Bryce 2005, 239; van Dijk 2000, 298; Kitchen 1999, 55). Despite this, Ramesses used the battle as the inspiration for the inscriptions.

The Kadesh Inscriptions encompass two different, co-existing texts, which are known as the Poem and the Bulletin. They complement each other in regard to the narrative concerning the battle, but differ in literary style (Lichtheim 1976, 58). In addition to these texts, reliefs were also placed on the walls of the temple. They depict scenes of the battle as well as offers brought before the pharaoh and the gods (Kitchen 1996, 18-23).

The Poem is known as such because it contains extensive sections which are written in a poetic style[2] . It describes the battle from the moment that the army of Ramesses is moving towards Kadesh. It is then ambushed and Ramesses is surrounded by Hittite forces. A description of the events of the battle, especially the exploits of Ramesses, follows. He calls upon Amun in an extensive prayer to help him, which comes and helps secure victory. The remainder of the army praises Ramesses for his great deeds but he chastises them for failing him.

The Bulletin primarily describes the events before the battle, where two local Bedouins tell Ramesses the Hittites are far away. The Egyptians immediately move to Kadesh, but as soon as they arrive, two captured scouts reveal that Ramesses has been ambushed. The Bulletin then briefly describes the battle and the fact that Ramesses is victorious with the help of the gods. It is written in a factual style.

The reliefs depict different episodes from the battle, and are filled with smaller captions describing the scenes. The Bulletin is often incorporated into the reliefs, while the Poem is always found separated from the reliefs.

Earlier interpretations

Previous studies of the Kadesh Inscriptions have had little focus on their purpose, and instead concentrated on their historical-, linguistic- and literary relevance. These studies usually offer one of the following two suggested functions: the first states that the texts are propaganda, used by Ramesses to show his military exploits and to portray him as the hero who saves Egypt (this interpretation is mentioned by Eyre (1996, 416), Goedicke (1985), Kitchen (1999, 47), Murnane (1995, 209) and Spalinger (2002, 356)); the second states that they are apotropaic in nature (i.e. meant to ward off evil) and were meant to protect the temple (mentioned by Von Der Way (1984, 36-9) regarding the Kadesh Inscriptions and by Hornung (1992, 119; 156-7), Shafer (1997, 5-6) and Wilkinson (1994, 67; 2000, 46) regarding temple reliefs in general).

However, none of these studies has emphasized the importance of the spatial distribution of the texts when interpreting the function, while their placement has a large influence on who is able to read them.

Spatial distribution

The Kadesh Inscriptions were placed on various temple complexes which were either built or extended by Ramesses II. It can still be found on the following temples: Luxor, Karnak, Abu Simbel, the Ramesseum and Ramesses' temple at Abydos. The

location of the texts and reliefs in these temples is diverse: at Luxor, the inscriptions covered the outer face of the pylon, as well as the outer face of the walls of the temple complex (Porter and Moss 1972, 304-5; 334-5). At the Ramesseum, they were engraved on both the outer- and inner face of the first and second pylon, and some possible fragments have been identified on the inner face of the walls of the second court (Porter and Moss 1972, 433-5). At Karnak, they have been identified on the outside of the southern wall of the Hypostyle hall (part of which was located inside the Cachette Court), and the outside of the western wall between pylons VIII and X (Porter and Moss 1972, 57-8; 179). At Abydos, the reliefs covered the entire outer face of the walls (Porter and Moss 1970, 39-41), but was not placed on the pylons. At Abu Simbel, the inscriptions are found on the northern wall of the Great Hall (Porter and Moss 1975, 103-4), one of the inner rooms of the complex. Abu Simbel is unique in that only the Bulletin has been found here, while the other temples have both the Bulletin and the Poem placed on their walls[3]. See figure 1 for plans of the temples with these locations.

The Poem has also been attested on a number of hieratic papyrus scrolls, namely the papyri Raifé and Sallier III (which are two parts of the same scroll) and Chester-Beatty III (Kuentz 1928; Kitchen 1979, 2). The former papyri appear to have been written at least sixty years after the battle (Lichtheim 1976, 72).

Accessibility

Egyptians saw their temples as mansions of the gods who were worshipped there (Shafer 1997, 3; Wilkinson 2000, 25) and who were physically present in the form of a statue in the inner sanctum (Bell 1997, 133-4; Teeter 2011, 44). The god's presence was vital in the preservation of the order of the world (*ma'at*), since without divine help, forces of chaos (*isfet*) would disrupt it (Shafer 1997, 1). Since the temple served as a divine residence, it was not a place anybody could enter. Egyptian temples were divided into three "zones" (Shafer 1997, 5-7) of accessibility (see figure 2): the first zone surrounded the main building of the temple. This outer area was usually enclosed by an (undecorated) mudbrick wall (Wilkinson 2000, 56) and access to it was not restricted. The second zone was an open court, which could be entered by passing through the pylons. Normally, only priests could enter this area, but the rest of the population were occasionally allowed to enter it (Bell 1997, 135; Teeter 2011, 52; Wilkinson 2000, 62). The third zone was the roofed part of the temple, which only the ritually cleansed pharaoh and most senior priests could enter. It was inside these rooms that the god resided.

The possible audience for the inscriptions was heavily influenced by these limitations in accessibility. Texts on the outside of the temple, especially those on the pylons, could be easily observed by everyone in Egypt. Those placed in the open court could only be seen during special occasions (although priests could always enter this area), and those in the roofed rooms were only visible to the senior priests and the pharaoh himself.

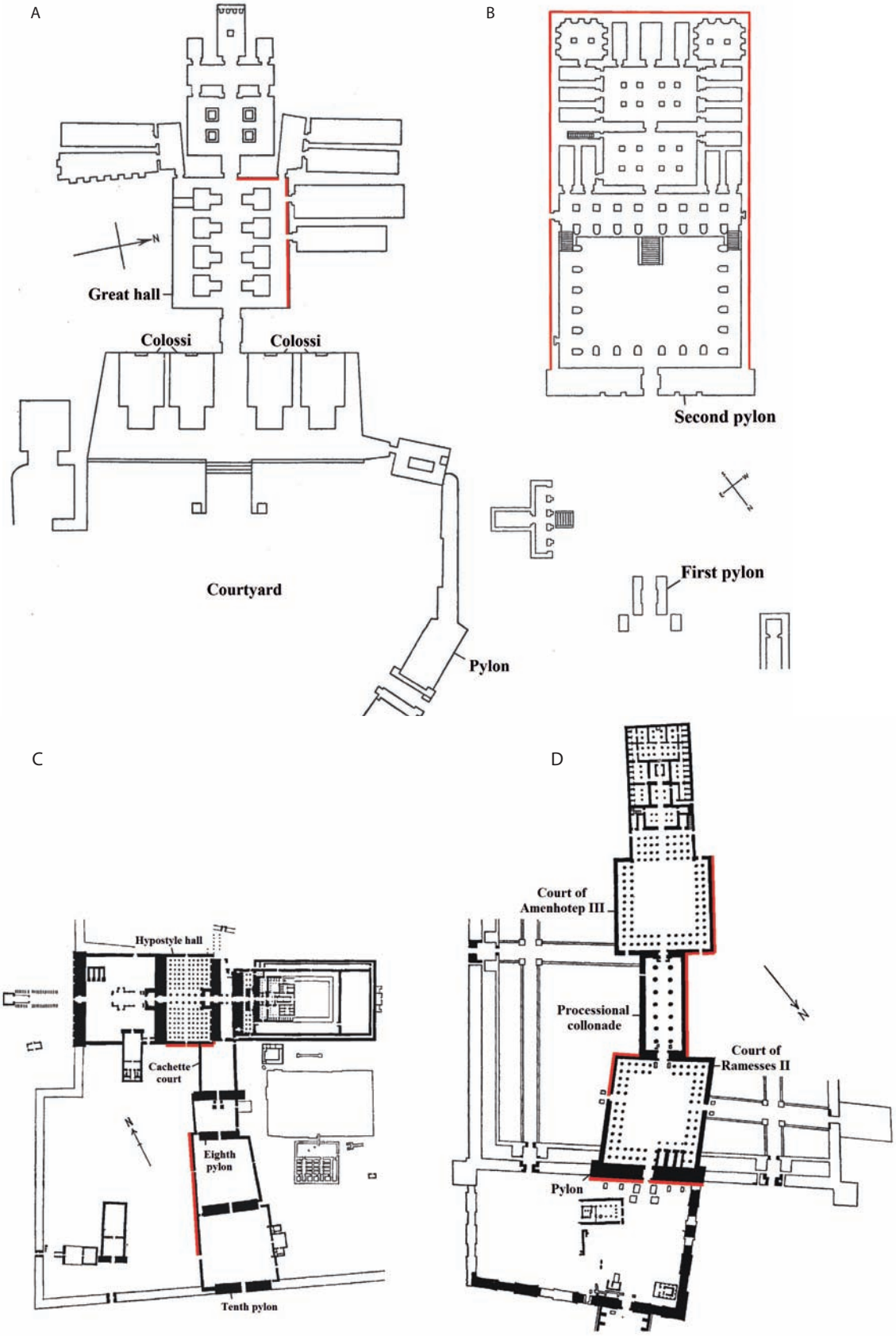
Implications of the spatial distribution

The position of the Kadesh Inscriptions within the LL of the temples suggests that the texts could only be observed by a limited amount of individuals. This is especially clear in Abu Simbel, where the texts were placed in the inner rooms, and at the Ramesseum, where they were located in the open courts. Earlier interpretations should be evaluated with regard to this information.

Interpretations of the texts as propaganda often imply that it was meant to influence the opinion of the population regarding Ramesses II. Their placement, as discussed above, is not ideally suited for this purpose. Furthermore, most Egyptians were illiterate, which means that it is highly unlikely that the monumental inscriptions, even if they could be observed, were understood by most individuals (Goedicke 1985, 79; Bard 2008, 30-32)[4]. The depictions in the reliefs might have served as propaganda, but to what extent the people of Egypt understood that they concerned Ramesses II and the battle is unclear.

Apotropaism is a prominent function of Egyptian magic, and was used to keep evil forces away through spells and symbols (Szpakowska 2011, 74-6; Teeter 2011, 167-9). To do this, they were placed on the outer face of objects. Since some of the Kadesh Inscriptions were placed on the inside of the temple, they cannot have functioned as apotropaic defence, since the evil forces were not supposed to have entered these locations. Furthermore, the symbols and spells associated with apotropaism are not present in either the texts or the reliefs, nor do the texts mention this function.

While neither the propagandistic nor the apotropaic function can be completely discounted, an alternative hypothesis is needed. By applying LLS, we can state that the supposed recipient was able to read the texts both in- and outside the temple. Only a limited amount of individuals was allo-


A
Great hall
Colossi
Colossi
Courtyard
Pylon
B
Second pylon
First pylon
C
Hypostyle hall
Cachette court
Eighth pylon
Tenth pylon
D
Court of Amenhotep III
Processional collonade
Court of Ramesses II
Pylon

E

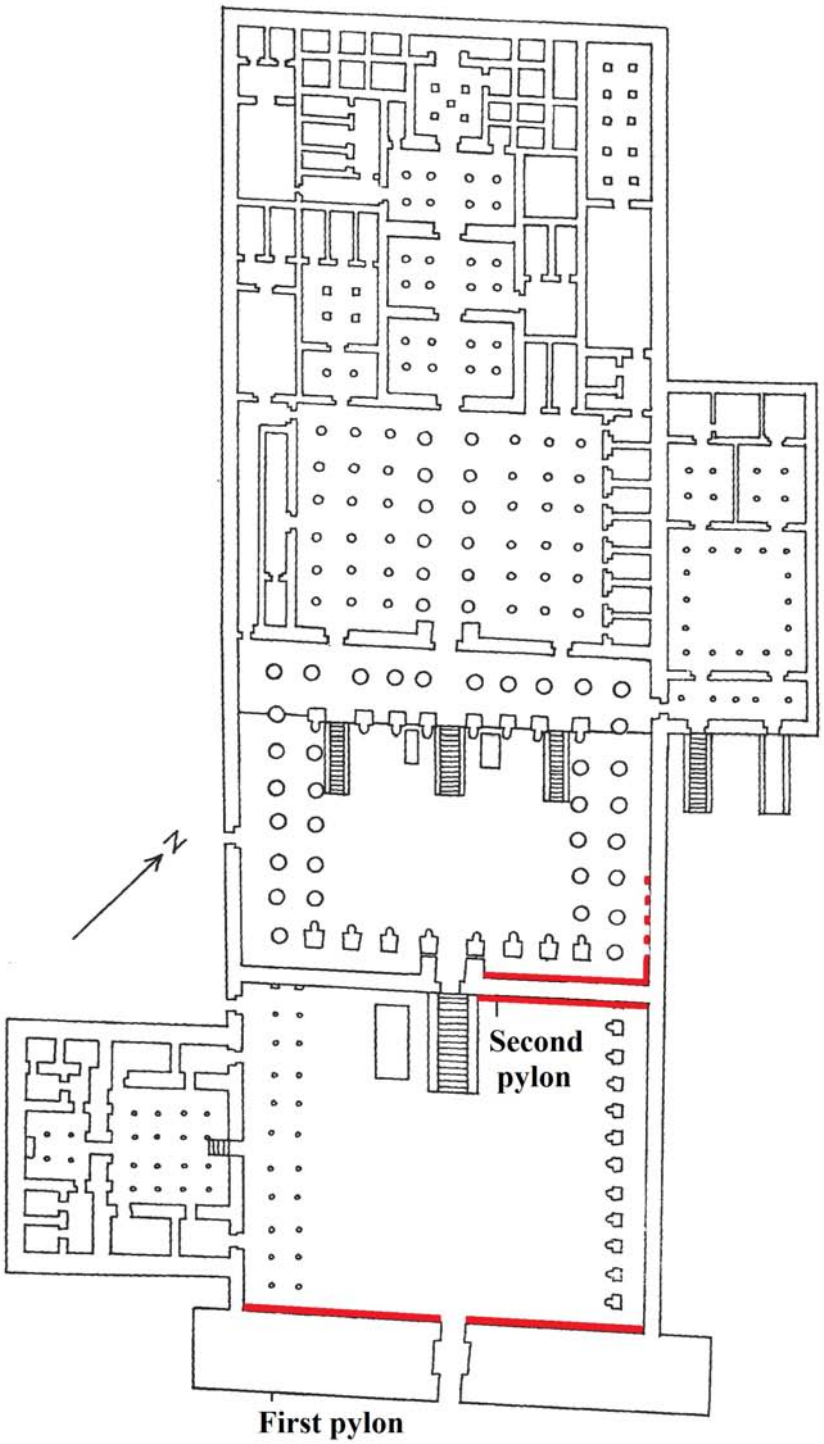


Figure 1. (Left and right page) Plans of the temples with the locations (cf. Kitchen 1979, 125-8; Porter and Moss 1970, 1972; 1975) of the Kadesh Inscriptions marked in red. A dotted line indicates that the extent of the inscriptions is unknown due to damage.
Left:1a: Abu Simbel, 1b: Abydos, 1c: Karnak,1d: Luxor
Right:1e: Ramesseum

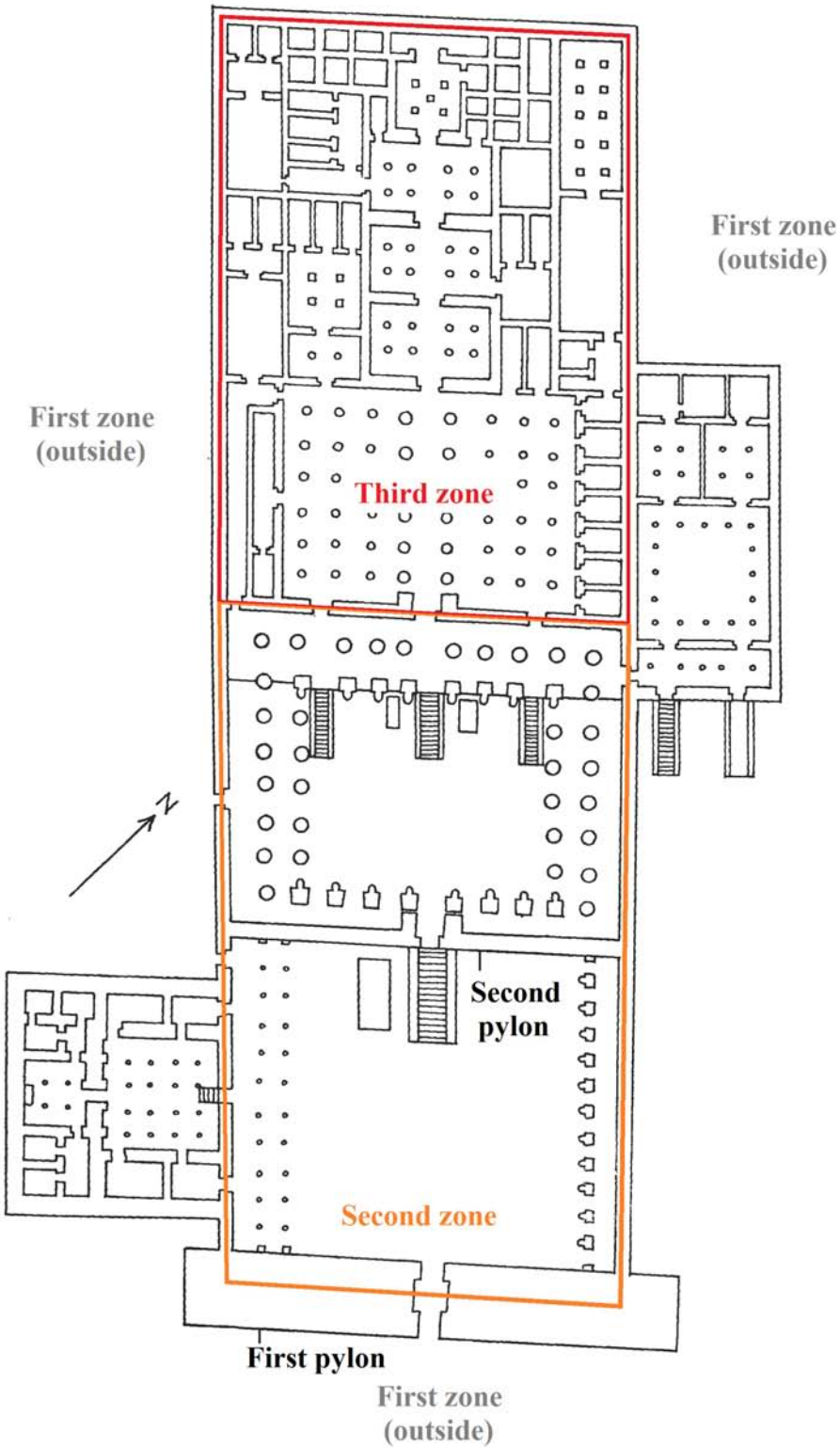


Figure 2. Plan of the Ramesseum with the different zones identified in and around the temple (after Porter and Moss 1972, plan XLI).

wed inside the temple, of whom most were priests. However, the temple also served as a divine residence, and gods were thought of as being present there. This would enable them to read the texts. Amun and the deified Ramesses were the main gods in the temples where the Kadesh Inscriptions have been found (Bell 1997, 179; Haeny 1997, 115-7), so it is likely that they were (among) the supposed recipients. They both served as divine protectors of the state, and the task of the pharaoh was to aid the gods in the preservation of *ma'at* (Baines 1995, 11-2; Bell 1997, 138; Hornung 1992, 141). The inscriptions not only show that Ramesses is maintaining *ma'at*, but also stress the importance of the help of Amun through the prayer and the offers made in the reliefs. The inscriptions, therefore, become an expression of the bond between the pharaoh and the gods, wherein Ramesses shows he is still honouring the bond and is asking Amun to do the same. This would mean that the Kadesh Inscriptions invoked a kind of reciprocity[5] and functioned as "reaffirmation texts". In this way, they were part of a ritual vital for the continuation of the Egyptian state.

This does not mean that the possibility that the Kadesh Inscriptions served multiple purposes should be disregarded. It is indeed very likely that the reliefs in accessible areas were also meant to impress the human observers. The fact that the Poem was also found on papyrus implies that it circulated as a literary text as well (Spalinger 2002).

It should also be noted that they were part of a larger tradition of temple reliefs. It could be argued that similar texts had similar functions, and were thus meant as affirmations that the pharaoh is maintaining stability. Erecting and enlarging temples might have served a similar purpose, since Ramesses mentions building temples in his prayer to Amun, showing that this too was part of the reciprocal bond. LLS should be applied to these temple reliefs to test this hypothesis.

Conclusion

By studying the Kadesh Inscriptions through the framework of Linguistic Landscapes, it becomes clear that their placement made it impossible for them to be observed by the general population and that they were meant for the god who resided in the temple. Here, they were supposed to show the continued devotion of the pharaoh to the preservation of *ma'at*, and were meant to ask the god's help with this. The texts were meant as a "reaffirmation" of this bond between the pharaoh and the gods. The continuous creation of these texts, and their placement on temple walls, might even have been part of this reaffirmation ritual, thereby preserving the stability of Egypt.

This study shows that the application of LLS in archaeological research grants a deeper understanding of the use of space and of the texts placed within it. The texts are not merely seen as sources of information, but have a purpose and become part of the material culture. This makes LLS a valuable tool for archaeologists, since it enables them to study the interrelationship between the texts and their location. This, in turn, grants a better understanding into the way ancient societies perceived the space around them.

Nevertheless, this type of study does have several limitations, such as its overreliance on the sense of sight and the lack of data that historical studies can provide (Coulmas 2009, 15). These limitations should be studied in depth to gain a proper theoretical framework of the applicability of Linguistic Landscape Studies in archaeology.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Miguel John Versluys, the editorial board of Inter-Section and the peer reviewer for the help and feedback I received while writing this paper, as well as Dr. Christian Greco, the supervisor of my Bachelor thesis, from which this paper is derived. Finally, my thanks go to the Griffith Institute for their permission to use the plans of the temples as published by Porter and Moss.

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[1] These factors are loosely based on the SMCR-model of Communication as described by Berlo (1960).

[2] Older studies (Breasted 1903; Kuentz 1928; Gardiner 1960) stated that there was no poetic aspect to the text, but later translations (including Davies (1997), Kitchen (1996), and Lichtheim (1976)) include the poetic parts in metric form.

[3] This is attested by all the Porter and Moss sources mentioned above, as well as Kitchen (1979, 125-7) and Kuentz (1928, III).

[4] Even those who were capable of reading the texts did not always fully grasp the linguistic complexity of them, since the copyist of the papyrus Raifé-Sallier III made several mistakes (Spalinger 2002).

[5] The fact that the speeches in the Poem invoke reciprocity has already been noted by Morschauer (1985)

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