

# Oriental Societies & societal self-assertion

Associations, Funds and Societies for the Archaeological Exploration  
of the 'Ancient Near East'



– Abstracts –

A–Z

DFG Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe 2615

Rethinking – Governance  
in the Ancient Near East



## **Oriental Societies and Hittite studies in Victorian England: Tracing the history of an entangled relationship**

*Silvia Alaura (Rome)*

This paper examines the entangled relationships between nascent Hittite studies and the Oriental societies in Victorian England, specifically the *Palestine Exploration Fund*, the *Egypt Exploration Society*, and the *Society for Biblical Archaeology*. It also investigates how Archibald Henry Sayce, one of the leading scholars in Hittite studies, also tried to induce a non-Oriental society, such as the *Hellenic Society*, to conduct archaeological investigations in Anatolia. In addition, the article seeks to shed light on the relationship and interdependence of these societies with other learned institutions such as British clubs, and in particular *The Athenaeum Club* of London. Furthermore, special attention is paid to Western missionary enterprises (such as religious colleges and archaeological schools) involved in research on the Hittites in Ottoman Turkey, in order to elucidate possible agendas either competing against or complementing those of the Oriental Societies. Archive material, in particular the correspondence between the various scholars involved, is used to clarify lesser known aspects and events.

**Case studies in popularizing the Ancient Near East in the Netherlands:  
The Sichem Committee, Ex Oriente Lux**

*Sebastiaan Berntsen (Leiden)*

The first half of the twentieth century was a formative period for oriental studies in the Netherlands. There was a keen interest in ancient Near Eastern studies from both the Dutch public and academia; these studies were taught at several Dutch universities. Leiden University, with its long tradition in theology, bible studies and Semitic languages, was regarded as the premier centre for Assyriology and Egyptology. When professor Franz Böhl came to Leiden to fill the recently established chair of Assyriology, he brought with him the ardent wish to establish a Dutch archaeological expedition in the Near East, specifically at Sichem (Tell Balata, Palestine). Böhl lectured extensively to promote the Sichem Committee and raise funds. His many lectures, often mentioned in Dutch newspapers, have greatly promoted Ancient Near Eastern studies to the general public.

In 1933, het Voorzatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux" was founded by Arie Kampman and fellow students, some of whom went on to fulfil long-term functions with EOL, NINO, Leiden publishing house Brill, and Dutch universities. Until Kampman's death EOL and NINO were intimately intertwined. Today, nearly every Dutch scholar in oriental studies has ties to Ex Oriente Lux and/or NINO.

The speaker will give an account of these initiatives and their results.



## **Rise and Fall of the Società Asiatica Italiana**

*Marco Bonechi (Rome)*

This paper retraces the history of the Società Asiatica Italiana (SAI), from its foundation in Florence in 1886, with the impetus of Angelo De Gubernatis, to its demise in Rome at the beginning of the 1940s. This is a little-known subject that has never been examined in depth, usually being dealt with incidentally in studies devoted to outstanding individual Italian scholars. The rise and fall of the SAI will be evaluated as an emulation of similar, earlier initiatives in British, French and German cultural areas, such as the Asiatick Society (founded in Calcutta in 1784), the Société Asiatique (Paris, 1822), the Royal Asiatic Society (London, 1823), the American Oriental Society (Boston, 1842), and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (Leipzig, 1845). Furthermore, the paper will focus on the internal development of the SAI and on its journal (*Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana*) against the background of the stunted progress of pioneering Oriental Studies in Italy.

## Fundraising for Amarna: Evidence from the EES archive

*Stephanie Boonstra (London)*

The Egypt Exploration Society has been organizing and supporting fieldwork in Egypt and Sudan since its founding in 1882. Unlike other international archaeological institutes, the EES has not regularly received government grants for much of this work and thus has had to rely on various means of crowdfunding to conduct this research. The costly 1930s excavations at Amarna provide an interesting case study to demonstrate the ways in which the Society and its dig directors raised funds for excavations in a period shortly after Egypt gained partial political independence from Britain but Europe still remained a key political power in Egypt, in part evidenced through the 'soft diplomacy' of archaeology. These fundraising methods included extravagant public exhibitions in London, spreads in popular British newspapers, appeals to the EES committee and members, donations from museums and collections desiring display worthy artefacts, and even a melted down 'crock of gold'. This paper will provide evidence for this multifaceted crowdfunding using the EES Tell el-Amarna dig notebooks and correspondence, EES committee minutes, photographs and documentation from the exhibition held at the Wellcome collection, film footage, finds distribution lists, and a popular memoir from one of the foreign archaeologists on site.



## **The Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth in Brussels: Neutral little Belgium as the nucleus of Egyptology in the 1920–1940s.**

*Jean-Michel Bruffaerts (Bruxelles)*

*Marleen De Meyer (Leuven & Cairo)*

*Jan Vandersmissen (Ghent)*

When Jean Capart baptized the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth (FÉREÉ) in 1923 in Brussels, it was a relative latecomer in the world of Oriental Societies. Moreover, the scope and aims of the FÉREÉ were somewhat different from those of other such organisations: it was not primarily created to finance excavations or acquire antiquities for the Royal Museums of Art and History, but rather to help the development of Egyptology in Belgium in its broadest sense for both professionals and laymen alike. Making good use of his connections with industrialists and other wealthy patrons of his time, both in Belgium and abroad, Capart managed to finance the FÉREÉ mainly with private funding. It soon established itself as an active and vibrant organisation, organizing lectures, conferences, and exhibitions; building a richly furnished Egyptological library and photographic collection; prolifically publishing and creating its own bulletin (*Chronique d'Égypte*, 1925); and undertaking study trips and excavations in Egypt. This was noted by colleagues, and Brussels was quickly coined as the ideal place to form the nucleus of international Egyptological research. A small country geographically located in the heart of Europe, Belgium was both convenient and non-threatening for the larger national powers surrounding it. In this paper the place of the FÉREÉ amidst the other Oriental Societies is evaluated, its networks of support and influence are mapped, and ultimately also its role as model for other societies is discussed.



## **The Many Faces of the Palestine Exploration Fund:**

### **Hidden and not-so hidden agendas at work in a learned society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

*Felicity Cobbing (London)*

The Palestine Exploration Fund was founded to much fanfare in June 1865. The highly schizophrenic nature of the new society was apparent from the outset with diverse personal, religious, ideological, political, and academic interests reflected in its membership. The opening speech of the Bishop of London lays many of these seeming contradictions on the table. Surely, with so many competing agendas, the new society was bound to fail? And yet, over 150 years later, it survives, and in its own modest way, continues to flourish. This paper will examine some of these numerous agendas, and the mechanisms by which the PEF managed, on the whole, to retain its good name and reputation throughout, despite the challenges it has faced.



## **The Assyrian Exploration Fund and the early exploration of ancient Mesopotamia**

*Stefania Ermidoro (Venice)*

This paper investigates the so-called Society for exploring the ruins of Assyria and Babylonia with especial reference to Biblical Illustration, also known as The Assyrian Exploration Fund. Established in 1853 as a private association that aimed to secure the continuation of the archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia, the Society had some of the most influential men in England amongst its main contributors, including Prince Albert. Although it had a rather short and somewhat troubled life, The Assyrian Exploration Fund played a relevant role in the early years of the rediscovery of ancient Assyria. On the basis of archival materials, the paper will shed light on the Society's (often conflicting) relationship with the British Museum and with some of the pioneers of Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology. It will also investigate the main achievements of those who had been sent to Mesopotamia on the Society's behalf, the reaction of those who had remained in England, as well as the echo of these events in the contemporary press: the aim, thus, is to describe how the Society overall fitted into the cultural climate of Victorian England.



## **Jews excavating in Egypt?**

### **An Archaeological Endeavour of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens**

*Thomas L. Gertzen (Berlin)*

In the mid-1920s representatives of the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, an association of Jewish intellectuals combating anti-Semitism in Germany since 1893, considered sponsoring an archaeological expedition to the Sinai Peninsula. Inspired by the works of the Muenster theologian Hubert Grimme, the activists aimed to provide scholarship with paper squeezes of so called Sinaitic inscriptions, which British archaeologist William Mathew Flinders Petrie had documented during an expedition, conducted under the auspices of the Egypt Exploration Fund, to Serabit el Chadim in 1904/05.

Seeking the guidance and expertise of archaeologists and Egyptologists, the CV contacted the Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptische Gesellschaft (~ Near Eastern Egyptian Society) and also approached Ludwig Borchardt, then director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Borchardt was not only the foremost representative of German archaeology in Egypt; he himself was Jewish; thus, he seemed to be a prime candidate for leading the expedition. The Central Association also planned that a film team accompany the expedition to document this attempt to pursue research on the earliest history of Judaism, given the role of Sinai in the Exodus.

Although the plans never came to fruition, they provide a unique case study, highlighting the various agendas of the institutions, diplomats, and scholars involved, against the background of increasing anti-Semitism, not only in German society during the interwar period, but also as manifest in Orientalist research.



## **Hungarian archaeological presence (and absence) in Egypt before World War I**

*Katalin Kóthay (Budapest)*

In contrast to the common concern of many European oriental societies to finance excavations in Egypt and the Near East was the case of Hungary in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918). Such societies were established in Hungary only in the twentieth century, but mostly following World War I, with the aim of enhancing economic relations with the Orient and research into oriental civilisations, with particular emphasis on the eastern roots and eastern relations of the Hungarian people. These societies, then, were mostly concerned with areas and issues related to Hungarian history (Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, Asia). Ancient Egypt and the Near Eastern were outside this primary concern. Research of these ancient civilizations in Hungary followed main European models, but with considerably less financial support and, consequently, excavations being almost non-existent. The only Hungarian archaeological expedition in Egypt, in 1907, was initiated and funded by a businessman, Fülöp Back. This paper discusses the history of this expedition in its broader cultural, ideological, historical, and political setting, focussing on issues such as the main channels of the dissemination of knowledge on ancient Egypt and the Near East, interaction of private initiatives and the role of the state, and understanding the circumstances of the failures to establish permanent Hungarian archaeological presence in Egypt and the Near East.

## **Babylon Society as a Japanese Private Association in the Early Twentieth Century**

*Reiko Maejima (Vienna)*

Assyriology was not active at the Japanese state institutions, where there was no tradition of biblical studies. In the Taisho era of the 1910s, when Japan had become economically prosperous, private academic activities flourished along with the growing momentum of democracy. Among them was the "Babylonian Society", a private society dedicated to the study of Assyriology. Its founder Keigo Harada, a lawyer, stated his original theory that the Japanese came from Babylonia. On hearing the news of the discovery of the Code Hammurabi, he argued that it is the Japanese who should decipher the Babylonian laws that lead to the unique laws of Japan. He wrote his statement in the Founding Prospectus and sent it to his relatives. More than 70 members, including lawyers and people in business, joined since the foundation of the society.

The paper aims to examine the background and role of the members and guests of the Babylon Society with a prosopographic method. First, we divide them into three groups; 1. research group, 2. finance group, and 3. guests from the academic institution. Second, we examine the background and role of three examples; 1. Syunzo Kobayashi, a lawyer from the research group, 2. Sanji Muto, a businessperson from the finance group, and 3. Katsuhiko Kakei, a professor of law at Tokyo Imperial University. In conclusion, it argues that a sense of urgency in the Triple Intervention after the Russo-Japanese War led lawyers and business people to sympathize with Harada's theory.

## **Die Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft als frühes Beispiel einer Public Private Partnership**

*Olaf Matthes (Hamburg)*

Die 1898 gegründete Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft verfolgte von Anfang Forschungsprojekte, die zum Teil Ausmaße annahmen, die bis dahin als undenkbar angesehen worden waren. Die damit verbundenen Großgrabungen vor allem in Mesopotamien sollten neue Erkenntnisse und museale Objekte zu den dortigen alten Hochkulturen liefern und die Leistungsfähigkeit der eigenen Wissenschaft unter Beweis stellen. Derartige Unterfangen waren jedoch enorm kostspielig und erreichten finanzielle Dimensionen, wie sie bis dahin in Deutschland kaum vorstellbar waren.

Im Zentrum des Beitrags wird die Frage stehen, wie es der DOG gelang, die Großgrabungen in Babylon und Assur sowie die zahlreichen kleineren Projekte zu finanzieren. Wie konnten Partner gewonnen werden und wer waren sie? Dabei zeigte sich von Anfang an, dass die DOG nicht allein auf ein finanzstarkes Bürgertum setzte, sondern ebenso auf Staat und Monarchie.

The German Oriental Society, founded in 1898, pursued research projects from the very beginning, some of which assumed proportions that had previously been considered unthinkable. The associated large-scale excavations, especially in Mesopotamia, were intended to provide new insights and museum objects on the ancient advanced civilisations there and to prove the efficiency of its own science. However, such undertakings were enormously costly and reached financial dimensions that were hardly imaginable in Germany until then.

This article will focus on the question of how the DOG managed to finance the large-scale excavations in Babylon and Assur as well as the numerous smaller projects. How were partners found and who were they? From the very beginning, it became clear that the DOG did not rely solely on a financially strong middle class, but also on the state and the monarchy.

## **Bohemian absences**

*Hana Navratilova (Reading/Oxford)*

In the early 1900s, the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts (est. 1890) withdrew from co-financing of an Austro-Hungarian archaeological excavation in Egypt, to be replaced largely by a private initiative from Hungary and Egypt. This was a specific incident, but it reflected a larger context. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bohemia, learned societies with a strong 'Oriental' interest were conspicuous by their absence, although the notable Orientalist Josef von Hammer-Purgstall praised the earlier Learned Society of Bohemia as a model of an academy. Oriental studies interest was largely driven by individuals, with limited links to select national institutions.

It might be argued that this was because Bohemia itself had no particular share in the framework of Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) foreign politics. However, the local nationalist factor also needs to be taken into account. Next to the learned societies, other elements of the public discourse in Bohemia complement the locally oriented picture: the role of the museums as national 'Wissensorte' and specific realms of memory was mainly to promote the national revival, which was reflected equally strongly in the arts.

Individuals were attempting to break the impasse of a restricted institutional encouragement and the limits of the national(ist) provincial interest; arguably the most successful example, Alois Musil, did so in a geopolitical framework of the Austro-Hungarian international activities. However, he transferred his project to Czechoslovakia after 1918, sparking a temporary Oriental studies boom in a new legislative and constitutional framework.

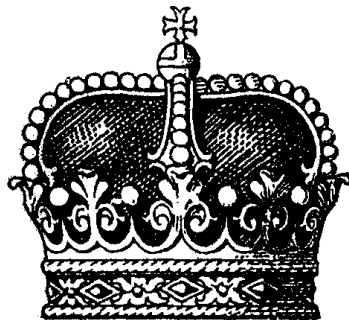
## **Between passion for antiquities and science - European aristocracy and archaeology**

*Lars Petersen (Karlsruhe)*

Enthusiasm for ancient cultures has been evident in European aristocrats since the 18th century. Associated were the Grand Tour to the Mediterranean countries and the passion for collecting classical art. This led to a growing interest in the new discipline of archaeology. In the late 19th century and beginning 20th century, members of the European aristocracy sponsored excavations. The most prominent example is the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who initiated the excavations in Baalbek and attended the discovery of a temple pediment on Corfu. In his exile, Wilhelm II devoted himself to his own research on the Gorgo and its origins.

But other noblemen like Prince Johann Georg of Saxony or Princess Viktoria of Baden, later Queen of Sweden, travelled to Egypt and the Near East, visited excavation sites, drew and photographed ancient ruins, bought antiquities and published detailed travel reports. They were members of Oriental societies, supported projects in archaeology and donated their private collections to public museums. The enthusiasm for ancient cultures culminated in the Swedish Crown Prince Gustav Adolf, who studied archaeology and took part in several excavations.

But what influence did the European nobility have on archaeology before and after World War I? Who among them was a layman who acquired a few "antique" souvenirs on a trip to Egypt, but went hunting along the Nile? Or did the noblemen even have scientific ambitions that led to their own archaeological research and publications? Using selected examples of the European high nobility, I will discuss what role they played in archaeology



## **“The Aryan Orient”: The Research Institute for East and Orient in Vienna 1916–1923**

*Peter Rohrbacher (Vienna)*

This lecture is dedicated to the Research Institute for the East and the Orient (“Forschungsinstitut für Osten und Orient”) which was founded in Vienna in 1916 in the middle of the First World War. The institute focused on applied research with the aim of using the results for the post-war world economy. The private institute was financed by notable figures from business and industry in the Habsburg Monarchy. Its members included banks, major industrialists and economic institutions. From an academic point of view, it maintained close ties with the University of Vienna, and renowned German Oriental societies.

Extensive expeditions to the “Orient” were planned. However, due to the protracted course of the war, the Institute became increasingly occupied with research in prison camps of the Habsburg Monarchy. Many members of the Institute belonged to the so-called Viennese School of Mythology, a school of thought that had formed around the Latvian-born Indologist Leopold von Schroeder. They shared a German-national worldview, which is why their myth research produced a very specific image of the Orient. By the term Orient they understood the Aryan-populated part of Asia (and North Africa) to the exclusion of Islam.

In order to fathom the origins of such an “Aryan Orient”, the focus was placed on the myths from Elam and the Caucasus. Like the Panbabylonists, the Viennese mythologists advocated an astral interpretation of the myths. However, they distinguished themselves from Panbabylonism, since they did not consider “Old Semitic” but “Aryan” groups to be the founders of the astral theory. Accordingly, some of them postulated a Panelamism.

## **The Netherlands Institute for the Near East: the early years**

*Willemijn Waal (Leiden)*

In 1939 the Netherlands Institute for the Near East was founded in Leiden by the private society Ex Oriente Lux. Organizer Arie Kampman brought together established scholars in the field, such as his own Doktorvater Prof. Franz Böhl (Assyriology) and found sympathetic financiers. He kept relations with many established scholars over the world. The Institute soon became an indispensable organisation and a pivot of oriental studies in the Netherlands. In principle the Institute, its library and publications served the academic community, while EOL catered to the broader public, but there was much overlap. The speaker will focus on the earlier years of the Institute, especially during World War II. Leiden University was closed, but NINO as a private institution was able to continue many of its activities. The NINO archives give unique glimpses into life under the German occupation as well as into the development of the budding Institute.

## **Overview of societies and initiatives in the Netherlands in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

*Carolien van Zoest (Leiden)*

As Heinrich Heine famously remarked, in the Netherlands everything happens 50 years later than in other countries. Does this also apply to oriental studies in the Netherlands? The speaker will present an overview, mention the persons and organisations involved, and put them in perspective.





**Keynote Lecture:**

Aus Anlass eines Workshops zum Thema:

## **Oriental Societies & societal self-assertion**

Associations, Funds and Societies for the Archaeological Exploration  
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laden

das Institut für Altorientalistik der Freien Universität Berlin und die DFG-Kollegforschergruppe 2615 –  
Rethinking Oriental Despotism

zu dem öffentlichen Online-Abendvortrag (Keynote-lecture)

# **Europa und der Orient**

## **Bürgerliche Gelehrsamkeit und imperiales Sendungsbewusstsein im langen 19. Jahrhundert**

von PD. Dr. Christoph Jahr

(Humboldt Universität Berlin)

ein.

Der Vortrag wird **am 23. Februar 2022 um 18:00 Uhr** online gehalten.

Eine gesonderte Anmeldung für die Zusendung des erforderlichen Zugangslinks wird unter:

<https://eveeno.com/175797262> erbeten.