

Editorial Note

I am delighted to present *Aegyptiaca*, an open-access journal dedicated to the documentation and research of the history of reception of ancient Egypt. This Journal is set up by the department of Egyptology, University of Heidelberg and it is part of “Propylaeum, Virtual Library Classical Studies” funded by the “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft”, the Heidelberg University Library and Bavarian State Library among others.

This periodical is devoted to assembling the academic research into the different aspects of the history of reception of ancient Egypt done in numerous disciplines and with regard to different periods. In order to intensify the exchange of ideas between scholars with various academic affiliations and moulding the research field the Journal tries to focus on Egypt as a cultural effect in the sense of Aby Warburg’s “Nachleben der Antike” or Jan Assmann’s concept of “mnemohistory”.

Aegyptiaca is open to the different approaches as this diversity is grounded in the topic itself. The Western concept of ancient Egypt has not emerged as a coherent discussion about ancient Egypt and therefore it is treated in many different scientific disciplines: art and literary history, the history of philosophy and religion, archaeology and many more have contributed to this research. Various discussions made Egypt a topic: Hieroglyphs in the context of the language, the relationship of monotheism and polytheism or idolatry in the context of religion, symbolic knowledge and revelation in the history of Hermeticism, the quest for the best medicine and spiritual treasures in the context of alchemy to name but a few. Many of these discussions have been interwoven and overlapped as Egypt was used as an argument in these different contexts and not as a topic in its own right. A coherent discussion focused primarily on understanding ancient Egyptian culture only emerged with scientific Egyptology in the nineteenth century, maybe with regard to art and aesthetics within the eighteenth century. As a result of this, the research field is widely fragmented nowadays. Since the 1960s when Erik Iversen, Siegfried Morenz and Jurgis Baltrusaitis opened up the research field, nobody has tried to write a book with the aim to cover the whole range of the history of reception of Ancient Egypt, at least nobody with a proper scientific approach. The scope has always been limited either to a special problem or with regard to an age, mostly to both. The only attempt to give an account of the wider range of the research is a good example of the problems involved: in the year 2000 a conference took place in London entitled *Encounters with Ancient*

Egypt. The resulting eight volumes published in 2003 are a stunning and very useful collection of articles and topics. They offer a good insight into the variety of topics but do not present an overview. There is neither a general introduction, just introductory remarks, nor is there a general index, a discussion of the research field and the research history. And there are many gaps with regard to the topics covered – this is inevitable in general but becomes a serious problem when there is no overview classifying the different articles as part of a bigger story. We still lack an overview and even more importantly, so far there is not a clearly recognizable research community or a periodical. The *Encounters* are proof that the discussion about the history of reception is in danger of being treated as a bunch of loosely connected topics and detailed studies.

Aegyptiaca tries to change this situation by offering a discussion forum for the scholarly research and a reliable information tool for everybody interested in this topic. The necessity of this periodical seems to be indicated by the increasing research into the history of reception of ancient Egypt within the last decades both in publications and in conferences. The time seems to be ripe for this Journal.

This first issue of *Aegyptiaca* features a good mixture of papers. Jan Assmann outlines his concept of “mnemohistory”, the methodical basis for a good part of the research nowadays and illustrates the relevance by giving a case study of “Egyptian Mysteries and Secret Societies in the Age of Enlightenment”. As the history of reception of ancient Egypt is not only part of intellectual history but likewise is dealing with objects, artworks and architecture, Miguel John Versluys adds an important perspective on the material culture in his paper “Exploring Aegyptiaca and their material agency throughout global history”. By having a look at authors from antiquity to Athanasius Kircher, Joachim Friedrich Quack considers why and in which way some aspects of Egyptian astral concepts, especially the names of the decans, have been a subject for the history of reception and why on the other hand others have not been. Anke Napp traces back the importance ascribed to Pharaoh Sesostri in art and literature, an image that has a long tradition with significant impact and changed during the ages and within the different cultural settings. Chris Elliott explores “Mummy Paper”, a case of reception that seems strange at first glance but offers a fascinating insight into history of civilization as well, in “Bandages, Bitumen, Bodies and Business - Egyptian mummies as raw materials”. We have arrived the present with Frederic Krueger analysing the immensely powerful image of Egypt in modern times popular culture in his paper “The Stargate

Simulacrum: Ancient Egypt, Ancient Aliens, and Postmodern Dynamics of Occulture”. Reviews of new publications round out the Journal.

Aegyptiaca will be published biannually in English language and will accept German and French articles as well. All articles will be subject to a “double blind peer-review”. On behalf of all the people having contributed invaluable help to realise this Journal I want to invite you to peruse *Aegyptiaca*, join the conversation, and contribute your research, critiques, and suggestions.

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