

## Editorial

— Tine Bagh

**A**fter two years of CIPEG annual meetings online it was a great pleasure to meet again in person as part of the ICOM 26th General Conference in Prague 20-28 August 2022 with the general theme 'the power of museums'. CIPEG's first meeting slot in the conference centre was an introductory meeting with the theme 'The Power of Egyptian and Sudanese Collections', leaning on the main theme. All committees had been advised to collaborate with other committees due to the fact that there were not enough rooms in the centre where it would be possible to hold hybrid meetings, i.e., online as well as in-person. This was wished for to make it possible for many members to participate even if they were not able to travel to Prague. We could also learn from each other and broaden our perspectives, and CIPEG had a fruitful collaboration with ICMAH, the committee for archaeological and historical collections. Our common themes were 'The Power and Challenges of Historical and Archaeological Museums to Connect the Communities' and 'The Scattered African Collection & The Global Community'.

The CIPEG programme in Prague outside of the Conference Centre was well organised by Pavel Onderka including a sunset visit to the Karlštejn Castle and a lovely boat trip on the Vltava River. On the day for 'Off-Site meetings' CIPEG spent the morning in the Náprstek Museum (Museum of Asian, African and Native American Cultures). We were introduced to the Museum and its Egyptian and Nubian collections and we attended live streamed information about the

Egyptian collections in Ukraine by Mykola Tarasenko. The afternoon session took place in the National Museum with a tour of the museum and a meeting about the current situation in the museums in Sudan. On the last day we were invited by the Czech Institute of Egyptology to hear about their projects in Egypt and a Young CIPEG meeting with the theme 'Egyptian Collections in the Context of World Cultures Museums' took place in the Náprstek Museum and was streamed as well. After the conference an excursion was arranged to Kynžvart chateau with the collection that the chancellor Metternich received from Muhammad Ali Pasha.

The most important issue of the ICOM General Conference was the approval of [the new Museum Definition](#).

### CIPEG Board 2022-2025

The CIPEG General Assembly took place online on November 17th and the results of the CIPEG elections were announced. An extended voting period was necessary to elect the last ordinary board member.

**Chairperson** : Tine Bagh

**Secretary** : Daniela Picchi

**Treasurer** : Lara Weiss

**Ordinary board members** :

- Dina Faltings
- Heba Khairy
- Melanie Pitkin
- Tarek Sayed Tawfik
- Keiko Tazawa
- Emily Teeter

### CIPEG 2023

Museum Matters II, the panel discussion series powered by CIPEG, will take place online on 15 April 2023 with the theme *Human remains: (how) do we display ancient Egyptian mummified remains in our museums?* The programme of the panel discussion will be announced in the beginning of 2023.

The Annual CIPEG Meeting 2023 is planned to be in Luxor in October or November. Before the meeting visits to museums in and around Cairo will also be arranged. More details about the meeting will be announced in the beginning of 2023. ■

> [cipeg.icom.museum](https://cipeg.icom.museum)

> [Facebook](#)

*CIPEG in Prague at the Náprstek Museum.*



## Egyptian collections in the Czech Republic

### A short history

— Pavel Onderka

The earliest Egyptian antiquities appeared in the Czech Lands during the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (r. 1576–1612), who moved the imperial capital to Prague. The antiquities formed parts of *kunstkammers* of the emperor, as well as of his courtiers. However, it was only at the end of the 18th century that firm interests in the land of the Nile became deeply rooted in the Czech Lands. In 1818, Franz Wilhelm Sieber organized in Prague the first Egyptian (selling) exhibition from objects he

assembled during his visit to Egypt. In the same year, the Patriotic Museum in Bohemia, the later National Museum, was established and in the decades to come accessioned a number of exhibits from Sieber's exhibition. In 1828, Muhammad Ali Pasha donated to the Austrian chancellor, Prince Metternich, a substantial collection of Egyptian antiquities including the famous Metternich Stela (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City) and two New Kingdom coffins. The collection has been kept at the

Metternichs' chateau Kynžvart (Königswart) in Western Bohemia.

While during the first half of the 19th century, the travels to Egypt were almost exclusively reserved for the members of the nobility, during its second half the scope of people who travelled to Egypt and collected Egyptian antiquities in the Czech Lands widened. The most important group among these travellers were rich, usually German-speaking entrepreneurs from the border areas generally known as

*Coffin of a woman from Akhmin (Náprstek Museum, Inv.no. P 6185).*



*Shabti of Khabekhenet discovered in the tomb of his father Sennedjem at Deir el-Medina from the Archduke Josef Ferdinand collection (Náprstek Museum, Inv.no. P 6125).*



Sudetenland. Their collections, as a rule, centred around a mummy in a coffin and included shabtis, scarabs, faience amulets, bronze statuettes, and other minor objects. The collection of L. V. Holzmaister, kept in the Municipal Museum in Moravská Třebová, may serve as a good example.

Members of the imperial family, including Archdukes Franz Ferdinand d'Este and Josef Ferdinand von Toskana-Österreich, who both resided in the Czech Lands, contributed with their own collections. Archduke Josef Ferdinand brought an astonishing set of 300 antiquities from his visit to Egypt in 1903. After the creation of independent Czechoslovakia, members of the new country's diplomatic corps, including ambassadors Cyril Dušek, Jaroslav Šejnoha, and Vladimír Hellmuth-Brauner – created with the help of professional Egyptologists a number of private collections that were later donated or sold to the National Museum.

In 1925, Ambassador Dušek, arranged for Jaroslav Černý to join the works of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo at Deir el-Medina. Thanks to Černý's cooperation, the National Museum in Prague received a generous donation of antiquities from the French Institute's share on finds at Deir el-Medina and the so-called Eastern Cemetery in 1937. At about the same time, the Egyptologists František Lexa and Ludwig Keimer donated their private collections to the National Museum too. In the 1930s, Jaroslav Černý created a representative collection of hieratic ostraca from Deir el-Medina and demotic ostraca from Naga el-Mesheikh for the Oriental Institute in Prague (later transferred

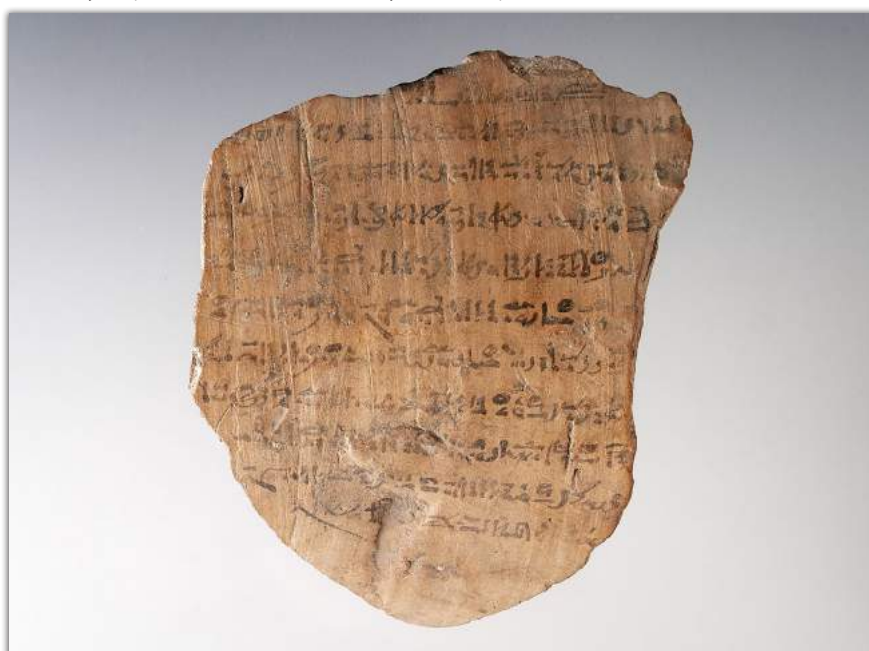
to the Náprstek Museum, branch of the National Museum). Černý created his own modest Egyptian collection, which after his emigration to the United Kingdom, remained with his family in Prague, who eventually donated it to the National Museum.

Following the end of the World War II, most Egyptian collections, especially those located in former Sudetenland, were transferred to the Náprstek Museum in Prague after they were nationalised based on the post-war Beneš decrees. The year 1958 witnessed the creation of the Czechoslovak (later Czech) Institute of Egyptology, that actively participated in the UNESCO Campaign to Save the Monuments of Lower Nubia. The Czechoslovak share was deposited in the Náprstek Museum. In 1969, the Ancient Near East and Africa Department was established in the Náprstek Museum to look after the objects coming from excavations in Nubia and Egypt, and to house all

Egyptian antiquities kept in different departments of the National Museum.

Following the end of the UNESCO Campaign, the Czechoslovak Institute's team turned their full attention to Abusir. Between 1974 and 1987 the Náprstek Museum received the Czechoslovak share from the division of finds at Abusir, namely from the mastaba of Ptahshepses, the Djedkare's Family Cemetery, the funerary complexes of Queen Khentkaus II and King Raneferef, and the shaft tomb of Udjahorresnet. Currently, the Ancient Near East and Africa Collections keeps some 15,000 inventory numbers coming from North Africa and the Near East, including some 5,000 inventory numbers from Egypt and Nubia. ■

*Ostracon Prague 1816 with the letter pertaining to a family quarrel between Lady Takhentyshepse and her husband Merymaat (Náprstek Museum, Inv.no. P 2027).*



## Egyptian Collection at the Buchlov Castle

— Pavel Onderka

In 1842, a group of Czech noblemen, including Bedřich Všemír Berchtold (Friedrich Graf Berchtold, Freiherr von Ungarschitz 1781–1876) and Josef Wratislaw von Mitrowitz (1818–1869) set out for a journey to Egypt. Bedřich Všemír's desire to visit the land on the Nile might have been sparked by the stories told by his older stepbrother Leopold von Berchtold, who travelled through Africa, including Egypt, in the 1790s. Leopold had shown great interest in the history of the land of the Nile and even attempted to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs. For this purpose, he collected a large number of books dedicated to the topic.

The company landed in Alexandria at the beginning of 1842, travelled to Cairo, where they spent over a month and then set out for a Nile cruise. They sailed upstream visiting ancient monuments, observing customs and manners of contemporary Egyptians, and enjoying the beauties of the land on the Nile. They reached as far south as Wadi Halfa, located at the present-day border of Egypt and Sudan, and then sailed

*Wooden coffin of Nefersobek, son of Psamtek (Late Period, probably Mendes; courtesy of the Buchlov castle).*



downstream back to Cairo. The initial part of the trip (from the Czech Lands to Alexandria) is well documented in notes of Bedřich Všemír Berchtold. The Nile cruise is described in detail in the travelogue by Josef Wratislaw titled as "Nilfahrt". Papers of both noblemen, connected by family-ties, once formed part of the archive kept at the Buchlov Castle, the seat of the House of Berchtold located in South-Eastern Moravia. After 1945, the family archive was moved to the Moravian Land Archive in Brno.

Besides unforgettable memories, Josef Wratislaw brought back home a set of Egyptian antiquities, which he later donated to his sister Ludmila Wratislaw von Mitrowitz, who married Bedřich Všemír's nephew Sigismund I Berchtold. The collection has been kept at the Buchlov Castle ever since. The most remarkable piece of the collection is a bulk coffin with the mummy of Lady Nefersobek, daughter of the *wep-netjerwy*-priest Psamtek of Mendes, dated to the turn of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. The collection further includes a big quartzite shabti prepared for the High Priest of Memphis, Pahemnetjer, who served the office during the reign of Ramses



*Josef Wratislaw von Mitrowitz in his Arabic dress (courtesy of the Buchlov castle).*

II, a lid of a canopic jar in the form of a human head, and a statuette of Osiris.

Beside genuine Egyptian antiquities, the Buchlov Castle's collection includes several copies and imitations of Egyptian antiquities in the form of carved tables. One of them represents another copy of the pectoral of Pyay (other copies of a lost original are kept in various collections across Europe, namely in Paris, London and Vienna). Another Egypt-related group of objects in the castle collections are artefacts connected with Freemasonry, as several Counts of Berchtold joined the fraternal organisation. ■

*Egyptian and pseudo-Egyptian objects in the collection of the Buchlov castle, including the shabti of High Priest of Memphis, Pahemnetjer (courtesy of the Buchlov castle).*



*The study of the Egyptian antiquities kept at the Buchlov Castle and relevant archival material are supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (2019-2023/18.III.c, National Museum, 0002327).*

## Howard Carter's House Restored

— Tom Hardwick

To coincide with the centenary of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in November 2022, the American Research Center in Egypt undertook a year-long restoration and renovation of Howard Carter's house on the Theban West Bank.

Financially secure in Lord Carnarvon's employment, Howard Carter built his mudbrick house in 1910. While Carter claimed to have designed it himself, he likely received advice, if not more, from his friend the architect George Somers Clarke, who wrote a pioneering study of mudbrick architecture and built a mudbrick house for himself at El Kab. Carter spent most winters and excavation "seasons" at Carter House each year until his death in 1939. Carter House later became a resthouse for antiquities inspectors. It was converted into a museum in 2009.

*Carter House, exterior and study in the 1930s © Peggy Joy Egyptology Library.*



The 2009 conversion was unsympathetic and inaccurate, with many rooms incorrectly identified, incongruous furniture, and English-only interpretation minimally relevant to the house. A garden planted around the house (which stood in the low desert in Carter's time) was routinely overirrigated. Rising water damaged the mudbrick.

The latest renovation introduced drainage and replaced the lawn near the house with an arid zone, keeping the ground dry. Bilingual English/Arabic interpretation panels provide a map of the West Bank, a timeline of Carter's life and the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, and information on archaeological dig houses and Qurna and its residents.

Inside the house, paint scrapes identified the original drab olive colour of much of the woodwork, which Carter paired with a mud plaster finish on the wall. Since none of Carter's furniture and fittings survives, replacements suitable to the period and nature of the house were sought. We were kindly given *carte blanche* to take objects from the storerooms of the University of Chicago's Epigraphic Survey, including beds, biscuit tins and photographic paraphernalia. Chicago House staff were also instrumental in working out the use of the darkroom suite, an innovation which allowed Carter to develop negatives and produce contact prints.

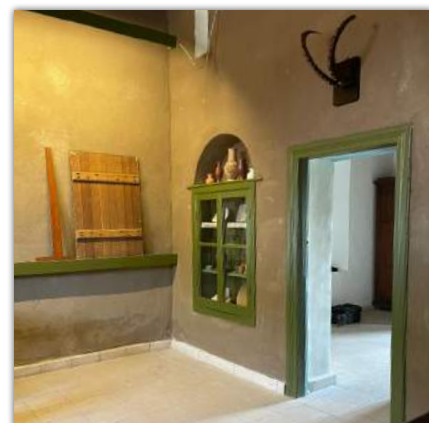
Our project relied heavily on local craftsmanship and expertise, too, in kitting out cupboards in the study with replicas of ancient objects. Ahmed Abdelfattah produced wonderful copies of reliefs excavated or collected by Carter, while Keli Alberts of Chicago House exquisitely replicated ostraca from Carter's work in the Valley of

the Kings. Abu Gad, one of the site guards, supplied clothes and cooking implements for the kitchen, and took us on a tour of junk shops – contributing to a lively but short-lived boom on the West Bank in battered pots and pans!

In addition to the usual suspects present at the reopening (i.e. Ministry representatives, ambassadors various, the current Lord and Lady Carnarvon), it is very satisfying to report that descendants of Morcos Pasha Hanna, the Minister for Public Works who denied Carter access to the tomb in 1924 were present, as was a descendant of Salah Bey Hamdi, who unwrapped Tutankhamun's mummy, and Ahmed Gerigar, descendant of Carter's *rais* Ahmed Gerigar.

It is hoped that the renovation will not only preserve Carter House for the foreseeable future but also make it a more welcoming site for visitors. ■

*Colour photos of the same in 2022 © N. Warner / T. Hardwick.*



## Hieroglyphs: unlocking ancient Egypt

— Ilona Regulski, *The British Museum*

The decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822 is often seen as the most ingenious achievement of Egyptology, transforming our understanding of ancient Egypt and the origins of civilisations. We could only glimpse into the hidden world of ancient Egypt until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 provided the key to decoding hieroglyphs, allowing us to read this ancient script. The breakthrough expanded our understanding of human history by some 3,000 years.

*Hieroglyphs: unlocking ancient Egypt* celebrates the bicentenary of this ground-breaking feat and takes the visitor through the trials and hard work that preceded, and the revelations that followed. The exhibition charts the race to decipherment, from initial efforts by medieval Arab travellers and Renaissance scholars in Europe to more focussed progress by French philologist Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) and England’s polymath Thomas Young (1773–1829). Although their work overlapped in significant ways, they differed in method and opinion, with each attracting supporters and detractors as their goal drew near.

*Limestone sherd (ostrakon) inscribed with a hymn to a goddess, possibly Seshat, in hieratic. Thebes, 19th Dynasty, 1295–1186 BCE. British Museum EA41542.*



The results of the 1822 breakthrough proved staggering. Hieroglyphs were not just beautiful picture-like symbols, they represented a living, spoken language. From romantic poetry and international treaties, to shopping lists and tax returns, the ancient handwritings reveal stories that are exceptionally varied. As well as an unshakeable belief in the power of the pharaohs and the promise of the afterlife, ancient Egyptians enjoyed good food, writing letters and criticising society. Using inscriptions on the very objects that Champollion and other scholars studied, this immersive exhibition will help the visitor to unlock one of the world’s oldest civilisations.

The Rosetta Stone, with its decree written in hieroglyphs, demotic and the known language of ancient Greek, is at the heart of the show. Redisplaying the Stone here allows us to tell a more complete story of its discovery and how it came to the British Museum. Visitors can learn about its significance and legacy alongside other objects and copies of inscriptions that unlocked the mystery of the scripts and language of ancient Egypt. The interpretation also



*Limestone ancestor bust of Muteminet, sistrum-player of Amun, Mut and Khons. Thebes, 19th Dynasty, 1295–1186 BCE. British Museum EA1198.*

draws upon new research; regarding the text tradition of the decree inscribed on the Rosetta Stone; the way we analyse manuscripts today and how we share our collection intellectually with communities in Egypt. Voices of Egyptian experts are dotted across the exhibition alongside perceptions of young citizens of Rashid.

The exhibition runs from 13 October 2022 to 19 February 2023. ■

The British Museum

**Hieroglyphs  
unlocking  
ancient Egypt**

13 October 2022  
– 19 February 2023

Supported by bp

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## Reconstructing the biography of Egyptian coffins

### Current research work of the Swiss Coffin Project

— Alexandra Küffer, Head of the Swiss Coffin Project,  
c/o KULTURAMA – Museum of Human Evolution, Zürich

**A**lmost every canton of Switzerland has at least one museum owning Egyptian artefacts. There are over 30,000 objects housed in more than forty museums throughout the entire country. Although many collections include coffins (some even with their corresponding mummies), the majority of these items is largely unknown. That is why the Swiss Coffin Project was initiated in 2004 as an independent, privately funded research project with the objective of making Egyptian burial equipment in Swiss museums accessible to a wider public as well as to specialists.

In 2007, the volume «Unter dem Schutz der Himmelsgöttin» (Under the protection of the sky goddess)

*The coffin set of Lady Ta-hai is one of the most remarkable ensembles in Swiss museums. All parts belonging to her burial equipment will be presented together for the first time in the publication.*  
© Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Basel. Photo: Swiss Coffin Project.



was published, presenting a selection of coffins (with their mummies) and mummy masks from sixteen Swiss public collections. The research work was continued in the following years; meanwhile, thirty museums are involved in the project, so that an expanded and updated edition of the above-mentioned volume is planned. In addition to intact coffins and mummy masks, this new edition will also feature coffin fragments as well as mummy coverings (bead-nets/cartonnages/shrouds) and portraits. The studied material dates from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman Period.

The publication, scheduled to appear in 2024, is conceived as a scientific cross-media publication combining

*The coffin floor of an anonymous man was the first Ancient Egyptian object in the collections of the History Museum in Bern. Until now, it has never been studied.*  
© Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern. Photo: Swiss Coffin Project.



print and online resources. While the objects will be presented in a concise version in print, each item will be provided with a QR-code that allows access to its entire documentation, including a comprehensive description of every piece and its cultural-historical background, a detailed photographic documentation and drawings of all representations as well as copies of the hieroglyphic inscriptions with their transcription and translation. As in previous publications of the Swiss Coffin Project, a special focus will be placed on the provenances and the acquisition histories. Even though the publication is in German, abstracts will be given in French, Italian, English and Arabic.

To provide further information about the project, the website [www.swiss-coffin-project.ch](http://www.swiss-coffin-project.ch) has been set up. A blog documents the team's activities and offers insights into the current research work. We are looking forward to your interest and your feedback! ■

*The face part of a coffin lid belongs to the little-known Egyptian collection of the History Museum in Vevey.* © Musée historique, Vevey. Photo: Swiss Coffin Project.

