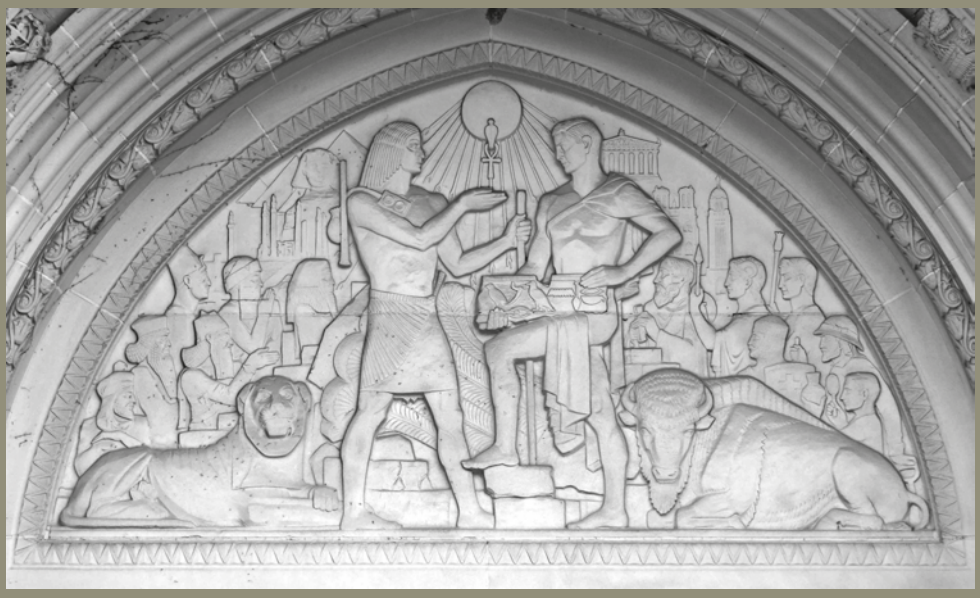
Pyramids and Progress. Belgian Expansionism and the Making of Egyptology, 1830–1952

De Meyer, M.J.C.; Vandersmissen, J.; Verbruggen, C.; Claes, W.; Delvaux, L.; Bruwier, M.-C.; ... ; Bednarski, A.

Investigatio Orientis 4

Towards a History of Egyptology

Proceedings of the Egyptological Section of the 8th ESHS Conference in London, 2018



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Page 1: The tomb of Auguste Mariette and the Egyptological pantheon in the garden of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, © Aidan Dosdon 2017.

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Belgian expansionism and the making of Egyptology, 1830–1952

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In the wake of the growing interest in the history of Egyptology as a research discipline in its own right, a substantial grant was recently awarded to a consortium of five Belgian institutions to take the first steps towards the study of the development of Egyptology in Belgium.[1] As the project 'Pyramids and Progress. Belgian Expansionism and the Making of Egyptology, 1830–1952' (abbreviated as P&P)[2] has only just been launched, this contribution merely aims to present its framework and objectives, rather than any results. Central to the project is the premise that Belgian Egyptology did not develop in a vacuum, but was strongly tied to the specific socio-economic and political relations between Belgium and Egypt during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For this reason, the project takes an interdisciplinary approach and draws heavily on thus far unpublished archival material. The long list of authors on this paper intentionally reflects the multifaceted approach to a topic that no single specialist can master.[3]

Setting the stage: expansionism and Egyptology

The term expansion, as borrowed from the technical vocabulary of steam engines, refers to the force of compressed steam in a cylinder that pushes the piston forwards. The analogy is recurrent in Belgian political discourse during the colonial era: as a small, neutral country with a large population, but lacking important natural resources or an extensive internal market, Belgium could only survive by spreading outside. Expansionism should not be confused with imperialism and is not limited to colonialism (Stengers 1972; Viaene 2008).

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[1] EOS Project 30885993 is generously funded for four years (2018–21) by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) and the *Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique* – FNRS. The five institutions involved are KU Leuven (PI), Ghent University, *Université libre de Bruxelles*, the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, and the Royal Museum of Mariemont. The project has an online presence at www.pyramidsandprogress.be.

[2] The title 'Pyramids and Progress' is borrowed from Ward 1900, which claims to explain how colonial Britain restored Egypt to the glory of its pharaonic past by technological innovations.

[3] The authors listed here are the senior researchers on the project; junior researchers are Athena Van der Perre, Dorian Vanhulle, Gert Huskens, Vincent Oeters, and Hans Blomme; archivists are Noortje Lambrichts and Sophie Urbain.

It can take several forms: export of industrial goods; the conquest of natural resources; the creation of networks of influence; the establishment of trading posts and multinational corporations; but also the export of a political and scientific model and the formation and training of foreign elites. Already formulated under King Leopold I (1790–1865, r. 1831–65) (ARSOM-KAOW 1965; Ansiaux 2006), the doctrine was refined and generalised under Leopold II (1835–1909, r. 1865–1909) (Vandersmissen 2009) and was embodied in the International Congress of Global Economic Expansion held in Mons in 1905, as well as in the creation of journals (*L'Expansion belge*, 1908) and specialised societies (the *Société royale d'études et d'expansion*). While the concept was widely used in the industrialised countries of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, the specific form it took in Belgium deserves to be studied from an entangled perspective (Werner and Zimmermann 2006). It is imperative to recognise, understand, and investigate in detail the origins of this important evolution, its components, driving forces, and broader effects. P&P addresses the notion of how Belgian expansionism took a specific form with regard to Egypt, setting the stage for, and closely interacting, with the development of Egyptology as a scientific discipline.

Although Egyptology has always cherished its own past, attempts at tracing the intellectual evolution of the discipline against the background of broader cultural developments are rare, and instead, the focus has often been on accounts of early travellers and scholars, the period of the great discoveries, (auto)biographies of Egyptologists (for various references, see Bierbrier 2012), and the effects of pharaonic visual culture on the west (Egyptomania; for Belgium in particular, see for example Warmenbol 2012). Thompson 2015–18 provides an encompassing history of Egyptology, but mainly based on individual life histories of Egyptologists, with only limited attention on the socio-political context; the latter is addressed more in depth in Reid 2002, 2015.

P&P specifically aims to study the development of Belgian Egyptology in the context of expansionist policies, and situates itself among research initiatives elsewhere in Europe that have recently begun to reveal the complex relations between politics, industry and commerce, and the emergence and growth of Egyptology. This interest is particularly manifest in the German-speaking world and Britain, but smaller countries are also participating in the debate. Pioneering studies (such as Bickel et al. 2013, Gertzen 2015, Schneider and Raulwing 2013, Voss 2013, 2017a, 2017b, Voss and Raue 2016) have, for example, addressed the growth of German Egyptology during the Imperial Period (1871–1918), and the influence of National Socialism in the Third Reich and of Marxism in the German Democratic Republic. These initiatives focussed not only on the fate of individual Egyptologists, but also on their ideas and how these impacted the field of Egyptology. In the United Kingdom, colonial British policies towards Egyptian archaeology are studied, including their effects on the emergence of an indigenous Egyptian Egyptology (Quirke 2010, 2013; Carruthers 2015).

Also of recent date are some attempts to understand the origins of conceptual models within Egyptology, and the continued impact of these models today, for example how the influential hypothesis of a 'democratisation of the afterlife' can be linked to ultra-right-wing and Nazi ideas, or how certain current hypotheses about the evolution of Egyptian religion are rooted in British colonial anthropology (Willems 2013, 2014: 124–35). The relation between Austrian economic influence in Egypt and the emergence of Egyptology has already been considered in Navrátilová 2003, and more recently in Navrátilová and Jůnová Macková 2020/21, while the Russian context is sketched in Loktionov 2017. This overview by no means aims to be exhaustive, but it clearly shows a rise of interest in the development of the discipline on a broader scale. Moreover, a first general introduction to the disciplinary history of Egyptology has only just appeared (Gertzen 2017).

For Belgium, no encompassing study has yet been undertaken of how Egyptology developed within its specific national climate, despite the fact that very distinct sets of circumstances steered it into directions that clearly set it apart from the great European nations in Egyptology: France, Germany and Britain. Almost from its inception, the highly industrialised Belgian state, strongly stimulated by the later king Leopold II, developed an interest in Egypt. This led to various expansionist initiatives, which brought not only royalty, but also diplomats, industrialists, and engineers to that country: many fell under the spell of ancient Egypt. The most tangible result was the emergence of private collections, and some amateurs beginning to familiarise themselves with Egyptological literature as well.

Blomme 1909 is an early account that sketches the various ways in which Egyptology manifested itself in Belgium during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The turning point towards Egyptology as a scientific discipline came with Jean Capart (1877–1947), who obtained a PhD in Law in 1898 as no Egyptological education was yet available in Belgium (Bruffaerts 2013). However, he went on to study with some of the great Egyptologists of his day (Pieter Boeser [1858–1935] in Leiden, Alfred Wiedemann [1856–1936] in Bonn, Gaston Maspero [1846–1916] in Paris, and William Flinders Petrie [1853–1942] in London) and he would soon succeed to place Belgium on the map as a centre of Egyptology. He was the first curator of the Egyptian department of the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels, of which he vastly expanded the collection; he occupied the first Belgian lectureship in Egyptology at the University of Liège; and he created an extensive network with Egyptologists abroad. Due to his contacts with the royal family and others at the forefront of the national elite, he created the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* (FÉRÉ), initiated the first Belgian excavations in Egypt, founded a monograph series and a journal, and between the wars effectively turned Brussels into an international centre of Egyptological research (Bruffaerts 2013). Capart's efforts led to a growing Egyptological community in Belgium.

Although there is ample literature on the relationship between the elite and the intelligentsia in this period (Verbruggen 2009; Laqua 2013), the impact of this on the development of Belgian Egyptology is largely unexplored. This is to a large extent due to the fact that current research is based on a rather limited selection of sources, but vast amounts of unstudied documentation are looming in archives in Belgium and abroad, the most important ones being those at the RMAH and the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Bruwier 1987–88, 1989–90), both partners of P&P.

The above outline shows that a new direction in the study of the history of Egyptology has recently begun to assert itself, and that the impetus is currently on a country-wide approach, which is also in evidence in the articles in this volume. This is in fact an essential first step before a more encompassing history of Egyptology worldwide is possible. In Belgium some recent initiatives already showed growing interest in the history of Egyptology: in 2012 the Belgian Embassy in Cairo organised a conference celebrating 'A century of Belgian Egyptological research in Egypt' (Bavay et al. 2012). In 2015–16 the exhibition 'Djehoetihotep. Honderd jaar opgravingen in Egypte / 100 années de fouilles en Egypte', hosted at the RMAH and organised by KU Leuven, showcased the history of research at the Middle Egypt site of Deir el-Bersha (De Meyer and Cortebeeck 2015). And in 2016 the Jean Capart Foundation was created under the aegis of the King Baudouin Foundation, with a scientific committee consisting of many of the present authors (www.jeancapart.org).

Objectives and research questions

The general research objective is to disclose from a Belgian perspective how political, economic and scientific networks and interactions between 1830 and 1952 gave shape to the discipline of Egyptology. These two dates are not chosen arbitrarily: during this period, the new Belgian state, created in 1830, came to pursue expansionist policies in a playing field that was increasingly dominated by the opportunities created by the British occupation of Egypt, which only ended with the revolution of 1952. Six specific research questions are addressed.

1. Transnational networks at Work: which role did Egypt play in Belgian expansionism?

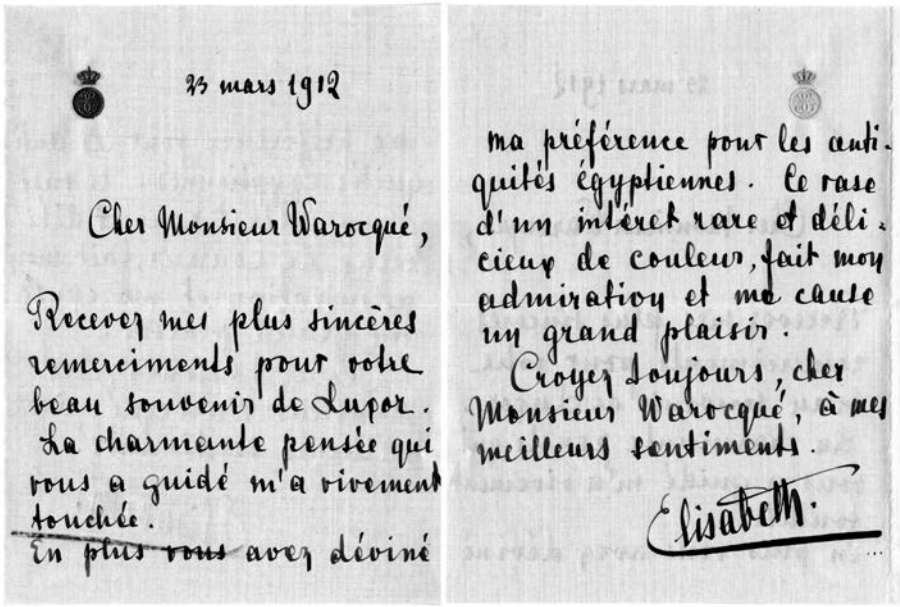
Most studies on Belgian expansionism deal primarily with the colonial enterprise in the Congo Free State, similar attempts in the Mediterranean, Asia, and elsewhere (Duchesne 1965; 1988), and industrial enterprises in China and Tsarist Russia (Peeters and Wilson 1999). It is our hypothesis that Egypt became a testground for the implementation by Belgian cosmopolitan elites of a financial and industrial expansionist policy, which would later be successfully applied in Central Africa, particularly in the period around the takeover of the Congo Free State by the Belgian government (1908).

To reassess the role of Egypt in Belgian foreign policies, one must address the ideological, political, and economic motives of Belgian expansionism. P&P aims to answer the important question of how, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Egypt captivated cosmopolitan elites in Belgium both by its unique heritage and its promising geopolitical and economic potential in an emerging world economy. The key issue is to understand how Egypt, seen by many as the cradle of civilisation, was turned through a systematic uncovering of its rich past into a privileged field of action for Belgian entrepreneurs, diplomats and intellectuals impressed by pharaonic culture. Today, Egyptology is often considered merely an exotic *Orchideenfach*, but it was far more prominent in the mind of the educated elite and politicians back then. This is well illustrated by the fact that, when Germany had taken Alsace-Lorraine from France in 1871, it immediately established a chair in Egyptology in Strasbourg. Egyptology mattered.

In our study of Belgian expansionism related to Egypt, the concept of interconnectedness between ancient heritage and the promising potential of developing modernity is fundamental. To understand the ideas and actions of an Egyptophile like King Leopold II, study cannot be limited to his journeys to Egypt (Defrance 2018), which aroused his fascination for pyramids and temples and encouraged him to acquire a collection of antiquities now partly on display in the RMAH (Van Rinsveld 2016). It is essential also to address the ways in which he familiarised himself with modern infrastructure works (the Nile Barrage; irrigation facilities; the Suez Canal) and to search for connections with transnational networks of politicians, financiers and industrialists involved in these operations, like de Lesseps and his business circle. This approach also applies to key persons in relations between Belgium and Egypt during later periods, both outside (e.g. Baron Edouard Empain [1852–1929], Raoul Warocqué [1890–1917], King Albert I [1875–1934, r. 1909–34] and Queen Elisabeth [1876–1965]) and within (e.g. Jean Capart) Egyptology (fig. 6). P&P will develop alternatives for the classic diffusionist approach of expansionism, in which transfers between centre and periphery play a central role (Headrick 1988), while remaining essentially bipolar and Eurocentric. Our approach instead favours a transnational avenue of analysis to capture all relevant entangled cross-boundary exchanges and transfers, and fully understand the complexity of Belgian involvement in a much wider international web of relations.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century expansionism operated through these transnational networks. P&P therefore investigates the construction of exotic and cosmopolitan worldviews, paired with innovative technologies and strategic knowledge. Focusing on networks of ‘experts’ (Van der Vleuten and Kaijser 2006; Rodogno et al. 2013) as vectors for materialising the ideology of Western dominance in Egypt (Andersen 2011), P&P will identify key ‘linking agents’ in technology transfer and industrial development, and in the circulation of knowledge relating to Egyptology. We hypothesize that an upward social mobility

connected these non-state actors (Verbruggen et al. 2012) with royalty, politicians, diplomats, the *haute finance,* and industrialists, who were passionate about world-transforming innovations (Vandersmissen 2012).


23 mars 1912

Cher Monsieur Warocqué,

Recevez mes plus sincères remerciements pour votre beau souvenir de Luxor. La charmante pensée qui vous a guidé m'a vivement touchée. En plus vous avez deviné ma préférence pour les antiquités égyptiennes. Ce vase d'un intérêt rare et délicieux de couleur, fait mon admiration et me cause un grand plaisir.

Croyez toujours, cher Monsieur Warocqué, à mes meilleurs sentiments.

Elisabeth.

Figure 6: Letter of Queen Elisabeth to Raoul Warocqué concerning the gift of an Egyptian vase from Luxor, 23 March 1912.

The Belgo-Egyptian reality is a test case for investigating transnational exchanges, transfers, and the circulation of ideas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. P&P will answer the question how and to what extent these networks, dominated by the emblematic characters of 'the Egyptologist' and 'the Orientalist', initially amateurs of the 'exotic' who gradually transformed into scholars of academic status, but also by emerging centres of elite sociability like museums, learned societies, colonial institutes, and clubs of industrialists, all shared field knowledge generated in Egypt. It will also address the issue of how their interaction with the Egyptian population and their cultural production defined a specific form of self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging to a superior civilisation (Bancel et al. 2014). Addressing the emergence of Egyptology, P&P investigates also how the social networks, particularly inside Egypt with archaeologists and antiquities dealers, enabled these people and institutional actors to acquire antiquities (Hagen and Ryholt 2016).

2. Belgian expansionism into Egypt prior to 1882: who were the major stakeholders and to what extent did they influence interest in ancient Egypt?

Although Belgian goods were being shipped to Egypt as early as 1834, and a consul general was appointed in Alexandria in 1837, it was the Duke of Brabant, the future King Leopold II, who played a decisive role in making Egypt a key economic partner for Belgian entrepreneurs. The correspondence and princely travel notes he made on his trips to Egypt during 1854–55 and 1862–63, which have so far been studied only superficially, emphasize his personal motivations (Van Rinsveld 1991, 2016, Defrance 2018). They raise important questions about the tension field between the admiration ancient Egypt inspired in his wider entourage, stimulating an urge to accumulate historical knowledge and collect archaeological objects, and the broader quest for investment opportunities.

A good example is Baron Jean-Baptiste Nothomb (1805–1881) who, after being appointed as the Belgian government's spokesperson in Egypt, visited archaeological sites throughout the country. By the mid-nineteenth century there was, moreover, a regular flow of Belgian visitors to Egypt, including artists: P&P will make a transversal study of the personalities and networks surrounding Leopold II who were involved in this tension field.

Leopold's travel notes require a new critical study, paying attention to his evolving expansionist discourse on the subject of Egypt. This must be investigated in confrontation with the views held by his advisors and collaborators: palace staff such as Ferdinand Jolly (1825–1893), whose unpublished travelogue has never been studied; diplomats such as Consul Stephanos Tsitsinias (Zizinia; 1794–1868) (Warmenbol 2018); the Egyptian khedives with whom projects were negotiated; and entrepreneurs such as the Antwerp shipping company Spilliaert-Caymax, and the *Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez*.

The fascination for Egypt's past in the royal entourage led to art traders supplying antiquities to the royal collections, people such as Dr. Hippolyte Stacquez (1809–1866), who accompanied Leopold II during his stay in Egypt in 1862–63, and published about Egypt's monuments (Stacquez 1865), and artists like Bernhard Fiedler (1816–1904), who drew Egyptian landscapes commissioned by Leopold II. When Leopold launched a series of operations leading to the creation of the Congo Free State in 1885, Belgian attention for Egypt increased, mobilising local networks of informants and diplomats, reflecting the country's growing geopolitical importance as a gateway into Africa. P&P will address the question of how Belgo-Egyptian affairs during this period became entangled with the broad spectrum of Leopold II's actions related to the 'Scramble for Africa', in particular via explorers mobilised by Egyptian authorities to expand the southern province of Equatoria, such as Samuel Baker (1821–1893), Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) and Mehmed Emin Pasha (1840–1892) (Moore-Harell 2010).

The above clearly shows that, while interest in Egypt and its antiquities grew during the nineteenth century, particularly among those involved in the expanding economic and political ties between Belgium and Egypt, this did not yet result in the creation of Egyptological units in museums and universities. For example, Egyptian antiquities were acquired by Antoine Schayes (1808–1859), curator of the collections at the *Porte de Hal* in Brussels, but for his private pleasure, and by Albert d'Otreppe de Bouvette (1787–1875) for the *Institut Archéologique Liégeois*, but not for the local museum or university. Leopold II's collection was never shown to the public and soon relegated to storage in the royal stables (Warmenbol 2012).

Figure 7: The Imbaba railway bridge at Cairo, constructed by Baume & Marpent.

3. Industrialists at work: measuring the impact of Belgian entrepreneurship on the development of Egyptology under British colonial rule (1882–1914)

In 1882, the British instituted in Egypt the so-called 'Veiled Protectorate' (Daly 1998: 239–51). During this period of frenetic planning and development of transport and communication infrastructure in Egypt, Belgian companies succeeded in obtaining important contracts. Thus, the *Société Anonyme des Usines et Fonderies de Baume & Marpent* became from 1893 engaged in the construction of metal structures, such as for the Nile bridges (e.g. the Imbaba railway bridge

[fig. 7]; Haoudy 2010). Their archives, which are preserved partly at the Ecomusée de Bois-du-Luc and partly at the Royal Museum of Mariemont, will be analysed within P&P. A fundamental question is how the complex entanglements of Belgians in the industrialisation and modernisation of Egypt functioned through a decomposition of its constituent parts:

- transportation (*Société des Tramways du Caire* [1895]; *Société des Chemins de Fer de la Basse Égypte* [1896]; *Société anonyme (SA) des Tramways d'Alexandrie* [1897]; Fayoum Light Railways Company [1902]).
- land speculation and agricultural development (*SA agricole et industrielle d'Égypte* [1895]; *SA agricole du Nil* [1904]; *SA Kafr el Darwar* [1907]; *SA Gharbieh Land Company* [1905]).
- finances (*Banque Sino-belge*, Egyptian branch; *La Caisse hypothécaire d'Égypte* [1903]; *Société générale égyptienne pour l'Agriculture et le Commerce* [1905]).
- real estate (*Compagnie immobilière d'Égypte* [1900], *Société égyptienne des Terrains du Caire et de sa Banlieue* [1906]).
- construction *(Société des Travaux publics au Caire* [1905]; *The Cairo Electric Railways and Heliopolis Oasis Company* [1906]).
- building material (*SA Briqueteries mécaniques d'Égypte; SA Ciments d'Égypte*).
- brewing (*SA belge de la Brasserie d'Alexandrie*; *SA de la Brasserie des Pyramides*).
- sugar (*Société générale des Sucreries et de la Raffinerie d'Égypte*).

This objective aims to identify which Belgians operated within transnational networks and succeeded in building strong industrial and financial positions in Egyptian society. Examples include Jean Eid (1883–1949; consul); Ernest (1841–1918) and Léon (1871–1950) Rolin (financers); Edmond van Eetvelde (1852–1925; diplomat and businessman); and Jean Jadot (1909–2009; engineer and manager). The industrialist and financer Edouard Empain (1852–1929), urged on by Leopold II, undertook projects on a previously unimaginable scale (Simar 2012). The most spectacular was the creation of Heliopolis, a completely new city at the edge of the desert outside Cairo (Van Loo and Bruwier 2010).

This economically-motivated interest in Egypt did not fail to have consequences for Egyptology. Soon after the turn of the century, an institutional embedding for it emerged in Belgium, with Jean Capart being appointed both as curator of the Egyptian collection at the RMAH and lecturer in Egyptology at the University of Liège. In 1907, Empain employed him to initiate the first Belgian excavations in Egypt, at Heliopolis (Bruffaerts 2010, 2013), and he financed the acquisition of the Old Kingdom tomb chapel of Neferirtenef for the RMAH (Duchesne 1982; Bruffaerts 2005) (fig. 8). The Belgian state and wealthy entrepreneurs supported his museum financially.

Figure 8: The excavation of the mastaba of Neferirtenef at Saqqara supervised by Jean Capart in January 1906.

While the British, to whom Cairo became a cosmopolitan hub between Britain and India, dominated administration, finance, and engineering in Egypt, the French directed the Ministry of Public Works and led the Antiquities Service, importing French practices to Egypt in, for example, the restoration of monuments (the so-called 'Conservation Movement': Fahmy 2016). Belgian expansionism exploited connections with both colonial powers, and did so also to the benefit of Egyptology. British Egyptology, epitomised by Petrie, was initially not institutionalised, and developed a funding policy that derived its support from a patchwork of institutional and private donors, including mass subscriptions from the middle classes; but the French, dominating the Antiquities Service and also having a state-funded archaeological institute in Cairo, pulled many of the strings in Egyptian archaeology.

This is the setting in which Capart became involved with British and French Egyptology. Lasting bonds emerged with the British archaeologist Flinders Petrie and his British School of Archaeology in Egypt (BSAE) and Egyptian Research Account (ERA), the Egypt Exploration Fund/Society (EEF/S), and the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology. Capart supported their excavations financially in exchange for allotments of finds, acquiring vast amounts of contexted archaeological artefacts in the process. P&P will explore these relationships between Capart, industrialists, the royal court, and Egyptological colleagues abroad. By mapping

financial flows and transfers of antiquities through social network analysis, a better understanding will be reached of how capital affected scientific performances and roles.

Figure 9: The FÉRÉ team in 1923. Standing (from left to right): Marcel Hombert, Jean Capart, Arpag Mekhitarian and S. Miasnikoff; sitting (from left to right): Suzanne Berger, Marcelle Werbrouck and Claire Préaux.

4. Belgian Egyptology at its height: scrutinizing the role of expansionism in the elaboration of an Egyptological infrastructure (1914–52)

Expansionist policies in the changed international climate after the First World War led to a strengthened institutional position of Egyptology in Belgium. Although the revolutionary period of 1919 led to the abolition of the British protectorate and the establishment of the Egyptian monarchy in 1922, Egypt acquired

only partial autonomy, with the economic power of Britons and other Europeans remaining high, and the British military occupation largely continued. Despite the pressure of British competitors already before the First World War (De Ryck 1991), Belgian businesses in Egypt continued to develop activities between the wars, with major initiatives in the banking sector like the transformation of the Egyptian branch of the *Banque belge pour l'Étranger* into the *Banque belge et internationale en Égypte* in 1929. Also, during the Second World War the Belgian community in Cairo remained influential, although not without its own internal struggles (Pierret 2003). P&P will investigate how a new generation of bankers, industrialists, and diplomats teamed up with Egyptologists and were confronted with the new political and economic situation of Egypt in the world.

Following the opening of the burial chamber of Tutankhamun in 1923, attended by both Queen Elisabeth and Capart, the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* (fig. 9) was created under the presidency of the Belgian industrialist Henri Naus (1875–1938) (Kupferschmidt 1999; Bruffaerts 1998). The FÉRÉ, which still exists today under the modified name of *Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* (AÉRÉ), was among the most active Egyptological associations during the interwar period: it created an exceptional Egyptological library, as well as the journal *Chronique d'Égypte* and the monograph series *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca*. In 1937, it initiated the still-ongoing Belgian excavations at the site of Elkab. Capart also trained a group of young Egyptologists (for example, Baudouin van de Walle [1901–1988], Marcelle Werbrouck [1889–1959: Bruffaerts 2018], and the Egyptian Ahmed Fakhry [1905–1973]) and hosted in Brussels a series of meetings that were effectively the first international congresses of Egyptology (Bruffaerts 2013).

New professorships in Egyptology were created as well, Jozef Vergote (1910–1992) being appointed at Leuven just before the Second World War. Unlike other Belgian Egyptologists at the time, he was not primarily interested in art and archaeology, but rather in language. At the *Université libre de Bruxelles* (ULB), historian and Egyptologist Jacques Pirenne (1891–1972) was instrumental in the development of the study of ancient Egypt there, with the creation of the *Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientale* in 1931. In the same period, papyrology began to flourish, with Willy Peremans (1907–1986) at Leuven and Marcel Hombert (1900–1992) at ULB (1925).

After the First World War, geopolitical currents had a hand in the expansion of Belgian Egyptology to North America. The Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), created early in the War to provide support to Belgium and France under German occupation, was transformed afterwards into the CRB Educational Foundation, favouring education initiatives and exchange between Belgian and American scholars (Huistra and Wils 2016; Bertrams 2015). At the invitation of this foundation, Jean Capart toured the USA between 18 October 1924 and 15 February 1925 as Visiting Professor, giving lectures at 44 universities, museums, and

various other institutions across the country (Capart 1928; De Meyer 2020).

The contacts he built up with Belgian and American politicians and captains of industry during this and other visits in the late 1920s and early 1930s, contributed to his appointment in 1932 as part-time Advisory Curator of Egyptology at the Brooklyn Museum, a position made possible due to the newly bequeathed Wilbour Fund (Bothmer and Keith 1970: 3–5). He remained in this capacity until 1937, after which he focused his attention on his new excavations at the site of Elkab in Upper Egypt. Capart was then granted the title of Honorary Advisory Curator at the Brooklyn Museum, but would never return there. The outbreak of the Second World War kept him in Europe, and while he had every intention of returning to the USA after the war, his death on 16 June 1947 prevented any such return. Nevertheless, during the 1930s, Capart left a permanent mark on the creation of an important Egyptological collection in the USA. Other major achievements during his time there were the publication of Wilbour's letters written in Egypt between 1880 and 1891 (Capart 1936), and the acquisition of the important Wilbour Papyrus, which was published by Gardiner during 1941–52.

5. Putting Belgium on the map: Belgian Egyptology in the international intellectual climate

While the previous sections have focused on investigating which persons, institutions, and firms were involved in the making of Belgian Egyptology, the actual content of the Egyptological research is addressed as well. The work of Belgian Egyptologists is considered in the context of developing dialogues in international Egyptology and the humanities and social sciences in general. The mapping of trans- and interdisciplinary influences is important, as Egyptologists have a poor tradition in making explicit the theoretical frameworks underlying their interpretations. Yet it is obvious that their work (often unconsciously) imposes templates on the pharaonic evidence that were developed in the social sciences (including archaeology), the history of religion, or art history of their time. This issue is only beginning to attract the attention it deserves.

Between the wars, Belgium, and Brussels in particular, came to occupy an increasingly central place in global Egyptology. Because of international scholarly networks, ideas developed elsewhere must have penetrated Egyptology at home. A transfer of ideas in the opposite direction is also likely, particularly in the domains of art and material culture that attracted most interest in Belgium. A central focus of P&P is, therefore, to uncover the interpersonal contacts and social networks between Belgian and international scholars, and to compare the theoretical bias of the scholars involved.

Western thinking about ancient cultures was long dominated by classical sources, an approach still prevalent in the nineteenth century. However, colonialism confronted the western world with so-called 'primitive' cultures, and soon after Charles Darwin (1809–1882) formulated his seminal ideas about biological

evolution, the derived approach of social Darwinism was applied, and often misapplied, to the interpretation of 'exotic' societies. One of the first full-fledged expressions of this, Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), perceived a unilinear development from 'savage', through 'barbarian', to 'civilised' societies, a classificatory model argued to be applicable on a worldwide scale, and it often explained cultural differences from racially determined predispositions. This model was continually expanded, leading to, among other works, Frazer's monumental *The Golden Bough* (1890), an anthropological work in which Egypt ranks as a 'civilisation', although not yet quite of the standing of that of the Greeks and Romans. In the French-speaking world, elements of the model were integrated in the ideas of structural functionalist sociologists like Émile Durkheim (1858–1917; e.g. Durkheim 1912). His theories on the history of religions, as well as those formulated by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1922), muted the racist elements of the earlier British anthropologists, but are generally in agreement with many other elements of evolutionist thinking. Through the writings of van der Leeuw (1933), this thinking had a deep indirect impact on Egyptology (Willems 2013).

While one only rarely comes across overt references to these theorists in the writings of Egyptologists, they quite clearly adopted similar mental templates. Thus, Petrie often explained changes in society in evolutionary and racial terms (Sheppard 2010; Challis 2014; see also Janssen in this volume). Some such theories were unwittingly transmitted within the discipline until quite recently (e.g. Willems 2013), and recognising them is therefore of direct relevance to understanding the intellectual development of Egyptology. On a different note, political currents also impacted on thinking in Egyptology: for example, the Russian revolution stirred deep concerns among the elite, to whom most Egyptologists belonged. Their negative perceptions of such 'popular' movements, particularly among German scholars between the wars, provided a potential template for interpreting Egypt's political collapse during the First Intermediate Period (Willems 2014: 124–35).

It is likely that Belgian Egyptological writings of the period were also unconsciously inspired by such theories. For example, Capart was well acquainted with, and influenced by, the French Egyptologist Alexandre Moret (1868–1938: Bruwier 2000), who for a time taught at the ULB and made use of the ideas of Émile Durkheim and the latter's nephew, Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). Another example is Jozef Vergote, who in the 1930s received part of his training in Berlin, where he is likely to have become influenced by lines of thinking that were current there at the time. A photo showing him sitting in a classroom in Berlin in 1937 with a large portrait of Hitler on the wall, does not leave much to the imagination about the atmosphere within which he studied (Clarysse 2008: 5). Examples such as this suggest that it will be highly rewarding to place Belgian Egyptology of the period in the broader context of developments in the humanities and the social sciences.

6. Reconstructing archaeological excavations based on archival records in Belgium and Brooklyn

With the first Belgian excavation in Egypt taking place only in 1907, and the long-term archaeological mission to Elkab only starting in 1937, the RMAH originally fed its Egyptian collection largely by subscription to the British-based excavations of the EEF/S, BSAE and ERA. This was common practice at the time, and led to a wide dispersal of finds to collections all over the world. The British project 'Artefacts of Excavation' (2014–17) has given the first impetus to trace and structure this dispersed mass of objects by publishing online the archives of the Petrie Museum and the EEF/S.[4] However, this one-sided British documentation needs to be supplemented by similar archives on the receiving ends, which for the purposes of P&P are principally at the RMAH in Belgium and at the Brooklyn Museum in the USA (cf. Bagh 2011 for similar work at the museum in Copenhagen). Only a combination of the various archives can give the best possible result to reconstruct archaeological find histories of now dispersed artefacts. These large-scale British excavations produced contexted artefacts, which due to their dispersal have to an extent lost their meaning. By tracing assemblages and linking them to the original excavation reports, the scientific importance of what are now essentially orphaned museum artefacts will be valorised.

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[4] Stevenson 2014, 2019; <http://egyptartefacts.griffith.ox.ac.uk/>.

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