



Egypt in Early-Modern Antiquarian Imagery

CALL FOR PAPERS

Antiquitatum Thesaurus. Antiquities in European Visual Sources
from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

5 May, 2 June, 7 July 2022

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In 2022, Egyptology celebrates important historical events that number among the highlights in the exploration of the culture and civilization of the country by the Nile. In 1822, Jean-François Champollion succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphics, the hieratic and the demotic scripts, by working primarily with the Rosetta Stone. In 1922, the British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings.

The academy research project “Antiquitatum Thesaurus” would like to contribute to the international discourse and, in three half-day digital workshops in the summer semester of 2022 (5 May / 2 June / 7 July), draw attention to some central questions of the early-modern reception of Egypt, which preceded the events mentioned above.

How did contacts with the land of the pharaohs and their culture come about, and what image of it was conveyed? What role did *aegyptiaca* play in collections of antiquities, *cabinets des curiosités* or *Wunderkammern*? How were Egyptian or Egyptianising artefacts visually documented and discussed?

Before Napoleon’s great military expeditions and the subsequent scientific explorations of the country, when the number of travellers to the Levant was still manageable, the perception and understanding of Egypt far from the Nile had to rely primarily on easily portable objects. These had found their way to the other side of the Mediterranean at different times and along different routes. Finally, the study of ancient Greek and Roman authors, who transmitted their own mediated version of history and Egyptian culture, should not be underestimated.

Besides religious motivations, commercial and political activities or the desire to explore that lost or forgotten civilization, discoveries in Europe also stimulated further interest in Nilotic culture. Archaeological finds in Italy, France, Spain, German countries and Britain brought to light artefacts from the Roman imperial period. Through them people assimilated and adapted aspects of Egyptian religion, culture or aesthetics. They were collected together with artefacts from Egypt both as *curiositates* and as objects of study.

In the course of the early-modern period, a broad spectrum of antiquarian knowledge about Egypt was formed on the basis of these heterogeneous and today often not yet fully tangible foundations, and illustrated by an accompanying world of images.

The project “Antiquitatum Thesaurus” takes on the digital recording and indexing of antiquities in the graphic sources of the 17th and 18th centuries. It has begun this process with the subject area: “Egypt. On the Search of Origins”. Selected, representative illustrated printed works and drawing volumes dedicated to the material legacy of Egypt – or what was considered to be Egyptian – will be analysed. In addition to identifying the illustrated artefacts and architectural works, whether still preserved today or not, the project also aims to describe the methods of recording and conveying the mostly three-dimensional objects on paper, i.e. in a two-dimensional space. Furthermore, digital processing opens up possibilities for

Digital Workshops

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7 July 2022

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recognizing and illustrating spatial, temporal and personal chains within the transmission of knowledge and images across the widely scattered source material.

The subject areas of the three workshops include:

- **The protagonists:** A consideration of the circulation of artefacts through intermediaries, antiquarians and collectors as well as their reception and representation in drawings and printed works. Particular attention will be paid to how these figures were interconnected between c. 1600 and 1750.

- **Multifaceted Egypt:** How was the imagery or the idea of Pharaonic Egypt changed or complemented by small-scale artefacts such as amulets, jewellery and funerary objects alongside the familiar monumental evidence such as obelisks or sphinxes?

- **The history of reception:** What was the basis for the depictions of the many *aegyptiaca* in the graphic volumes of the time: direct observation or copies based on earlier publications? How exactly did the exchange of drawings and prints, descriptions etc. take place among the members of the European *république des lettres*?

We plan 20-minute talks in German or English. We kindly ask you to send an abstract relating to the aforementioned topics – alternative proposals are also welcome – of maximum 500 words in German, English, Italian or French including a short CV to: thesaurus@bbaw.de by **11 March 2022**. Please indicate the language in which you would like to speak. An answer will be given by **18 March 2022**.