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Theodor Wiegand Gesellschaft e.V.
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Delia Schulz
Tel.: +49 228 30 20
Fax: +49 228 30 22 70
twg@wzbonn.de

Theodor Wiegand Gesellschaft
Deutsche Bank AG, Essen
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Thank you!

Not only has Syria’s cultural heritage suffered catastrophically in recent years, but also many of its experts in archaeology, cultural preservation and conservation have had to flee Syria for safety in Turkey. The two-year vocational and specialist training programme Stewards of Cultural Heritage provides them with an opportunity in Turkey to continue their academic and specialist training and their work as researchers and conservators and to acquire further skills in the areas of cultural preservation as well as education and outreach relating to cultural assets. The Stewards of Cultural Heritage programme is based at the DAI’s Istanbul Department, and financed as part of the “Zero Hour” project (”Stunde Null – Eine Zukunft für die Zeit nach der Krise”) with funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

Since October 2016, programme participants in Istanbul have acquired key competences in structural documentation, damage assessment, the preservation of monuments as well as selected archaeological and cultural historical fields, so as to be qualified for a variety of future tasks. At the same time they continue their own studies and research projects. Their projects range from creating an interactive map of natural and cultural heritage sites in the Syrian steppe to preparation of a book designed to inform Syrian children about their country’s rich cultural heritage. The results of the participants’ work will be presented in Istanbul in September 2018.

With your donation you can support Stewards of Cultural Heritage and similar programmes to impart skills and develop strategies for the preservation of cultural heritage and to make a lasting contribution to cultural preservation in Syria and beyond.
ARCHAEOLOGY WORLDWIDE

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THE COVER PHOTO

shows the archaeological site of Yeha in Ethiopia. It lies on a plateau and is surrounded by mountains up to 2400 metres high, on the slopes of which terrace farming is still practised. Throughout the region the steep mountain ranges are interspersed by several plateaus, which were partly inhabited from the 1st millennium BC onwards at the latest, and where it was possible to lay out flat fields.

The archaeological site of Yeha is being investigated by the Sanaa Branch of the DAI’s Orient Department and the Friedrich Schiller University Jena as part of an Ethiopian-German collaborative project. Since autumn 2016 the investigation has been funded as a long-term project by the DFG.

We present fascinating insights into this research in the sections The Object and Panorama.

Photo: Schnelle

Climate change – Are we living in the Anthropocene?

Climate change is one of the transformation processes that is now writing the history of the Earth. Humans have become the principal influencing factor on the planet’s geological, biological and atmospheric processes. They manipulate nature, interfere in it and change it in a more fundamental way than has ever been registered before in the history of the Earth. For this reason it has been proposed that the era beginning in 1800, or alternatively in 1950, should be termed the Anthropocene – a new, man-made period of history.

At the same time, archaeologists are discussing whether these processes in fact began much earlier. For one thing, human activity already had an impact on the environment in antiquity: deforestation, erosion and salinization of the soil are only some of the factors that can be scientifically established at an early date. And beyond that, humans also in the past reacted to changing environmental conditions: the development of an oasis economy, of irrigation and dam building is evidence of this.

The current climate change has a drastic impact on cultural heritage. The thawing of permafrost leads to the loss of organic material evidence. The expansion of deserts leads to monuments becoming buried or slowly eroded away by sand. Artificial irrigation raises the groundwater table, which in turn results in damage to ancient buildings. Variations in the sea level cause cultural landscapes to be submerged.

Complex human–environment interactions are the focus of many projects by the DAI. A central part in them is played by cooperation with partners from numerous specializations.

FIND OUT MORE IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

WATER, A RESOURCE INDISPENSABLE TO LIFE, HAS HAD A CENTRAL PART TO PLAY IN ALL PHASES OF HUMAN HISTORY.

The Water Management Working Group from the DAI’s Research Cluster 2 investigates innovations in water management.

Water, a resource indispensable to life, has had a central part to play in all phases of human history.

With a diameter of 18 metres, Bir Haddaj, a well at the oasis of Tayma, is one of the largest wells on the Arabian Peninsula. It is a vital reservoir in times of increasing aridity. Photo: Hausleiter
DEAR READERS,

Africa these days is in all the papers. There are features and commentaries about the provenance and restitution of African objects kept in European museums. Contemporary art produced in Africa is being written about. Nelson Mandela was a talking point in July when the one hundredth anniversary of his birth fell. And again and again the tragedy of refugees trying to make it over the Mediterranean to Europe is described and discussed in relation to the issue of European responsibility. Europe turns out to be closely bound up with events in Africa, not least because of the people that are escaping from there. This entanglement characterized colonial and pre-colonial history and has its roots there. And yet the pre-colonial history of Africa is largely unknown, or limited to Egypt, North Africa and early human history ("Out of Africa"). These blindspots in our knowledge have a number of causes. They are partly due to the unsatisfactory state of research. But another circumstance is that Africa’s pre-colonial history is barely touched on in academia in Germany. The archaeology of Africa is only very rarely represented at German universities. Africa is therefore the theme of this new issue of “Archaeology Worldwide”. The magazine highlights various projects conducted by the German Archaeological Institute and makes a case for focusing our interest more on Africa.

I hope you find this a highly stimulating issue to read

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Friederike Fless

President of the German Archaeological Institute

Photo: Kuckertz
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She conducted research on the tetrarchic palace of Gamzigrad in Serbia, the Crystal Palace in the Forbidden City in Beijing and recently the palaces of Mustang in Nepal. The preservation of monuments became one of her chief concerns, and she advocated it in Nepal, too. There she stressed again and again that no protection, preservation and reconstruction of monuments is possible and meaningful without thorough analysis of the history of its construction and use. Building archaeology, as she maintained, is a key discipline. Its significance is growing, indeed, in consequence of the ongoing destruction of architectural cultural heritage around the world. Yet the threat to this discipline at universities continues. In order to preserve and augment it, Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt was passionately committed to teaching it to the young generation of researchers. Supporting young architectural historians was always highly important to her, as was cooperation among colleagues. This is attested by the many conferences, colloquia and exhibitions she organized and the publications that resulted from them, as well as by her long-term and active membership of the board of the Koldewey-Gesellschaft, a scientific society.

In memory of Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt

(1963 – 2018)

“We shouldn’t continue to withdraw into our ivory tower … Only an active, self-confident defence of our approach, our objectives and the significance of building archaeology (“Bauforschung”) in the training of architects can lead to any rethinking.” With these strong words in 2002, Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt took a stance on the situation of building archaeology at German universities. She did not want to look away and take no action as the number of professorships in building archaeology gradually declined and the subject lost significance at German universities. Since being elected head of the Architecture Section at the German Archaeological Institute in 2004, she took energetic action in support of the subject she cherished. She became its most important spokesperson.

Her own path to building archaeology led from the design of new architecture to the investigation of the architecture of the past. Like most architectural historians of her generation she completed a degree in architecture. As a graduate engineer she attended the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. Her teacher, Wulf Schirmer, opened up to her the world of building archaeology. Along the way she produced a structural documentation of a late 19th century railway control tower in Konstanz and a medieval chapel in Kobern, but increasingly gravitated towards classical antiquity. She obtained her doctorate in Karlsruhe in 1997 with a thesis on housing in ancient Pergamon.

As a research fellow under Adolf Hoffmann at the BTU Cottbus she discovered classical palace architecture and made the subject her own. The imperial palaces on the Palatine in Rome became a central interest. Anybody who has stood at the foot of the Palatine, towered over by ruins more than 40 metres high, will have an idea of the enormity of the task – and the achievement – of investigating such a complex.

Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt favoured a pragmatic approach. She was sceptical of the methodological dogmatism of some schools of building archaeology. To her mind the monument, with its specific challenges, determined the method of documentation. She was interested in further perfecting these methods, but her curiosity extended still further, particularly embracing the cultural comparison of architectures. Hardly anyone at the German Archaeological Institute equalled her in embodying the idea of a research facility active worldwide.

Her early death leaves an immense gap in her many personal and professional networks worldwide, in which she was always the centre. The German Archaeological Institute has lost an exceptional researcher and a very fine person.
The German Archaeological Institute in Athens –
its architecture and history

The Athens Department has published a brochure on
the history of its building

The Athens Department, founded in 1874, was the German
Archaeological Institute’s second department abroad. Since its
founding the department has conducted fieldwork (excavations,
topographical and architectural investigations) in almost all
regions of Greece. The Institute’s responsibilities also include
work on the conservation and presentation of the ancient
monuments on archaeological sites.

Though not ancient itself, the Athens Department building is
extraordinarily significant for the history and indeed for the
general appearance of the city. A protected monument since
1972, the neoclassical building stands out markedly from its
surroundings, the modern architecture of the city centre. It is the
subject of a richly illustrated brochure brought out by the Athens
Department in August 2018. The brochure is in two parts: the first
part traces the building’s history from an architectural historian’s
perspective, while the second part contains short essays by
people with a close personal connection to the institute.

It was thanks to the excavator and businessman Heinrich
Schliemann that the Athens Department was able to move from
rented premises to a purpose-built and fairly grand house shortly
after it had been founded. Schliemann had proposed to the
institute that he would erect a building for it on land he had
acquired. The building was built in the space of just one year to
plans by the architect and archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld,
director of the Athens Department, and the architect Ernst
Ziller; it officially opened for business in 1888. In the subsequent
130 years both the building and the institute it houses have seen
eventful, change-filled times.

To reconstruct the planning, construction and use of the building,
numerous documents from various archives have been consulted
and evaluated in painstaking labour over the decades for the
brochure, creating a vivid overview of the Athens Department.

Founded in 1874, the department is situated in the centre of
Athens in Fidiou Street, named after the famous ancient Greek
sculptor Phidias. The department houses an important library
and a sizeable image archive, both going back to the period in
which it was founded.

https://www.dainst.org/location/athen

The brochure of the Athens Department is available online:
http://t1p.de/DAIAthen
THE EXHIBITION PRESENTS many gold finds and also clay vessels with decorations showing the earliest cultivated grapes. This 60 cm high jar is 8000 years old.
Photo: J. Meyer, Archaeological Museum, Frankfurt

NURIOUS GOLD OBJECTS ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE EXHIBITION like this nearly 6 cm tall figure of a lion, found in a 4000 year old grave mound.
Photo: J. Meyer, Archaeological Museum, Frankfurt

**Gold and Wine**

Temporary exhibition in Frankfurt to show Georgia’s oldest treasures from October

Georgia is guest of honour at this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair. The exhibition at the Archaeological Museum in Frankfurt presents a comprehensive picture of the early cultural development of the land in Caucas from the beginnings of agriculture approx. 8000 years ago. The earliest evidence of wine production, along with arduous gold mining and impressive wooden wagons as grave goods are only some of the highlights of the exhibition “Gold & Wine – Georgia’s Ancient Treasures”.

The Caucasus has always been a bridge between cultures. At an early stage in history Georgia was already linked with the cultures of Mesopotamia, the North Pontic steppes and the Black Sea. Busy long-distance trade and the spread of revolutionary innovations like the invention of the wheel and the cart, the domestication of mules and horses as well as viticulture make Georgia a hot spot of early globalization.

The exhibition presents the latest research results from joint German-Georgian archaeological projects on exciting developments between ca. 6000 and 1700 BC. Since 2005 the DAI’s Eurasian Department has been working at Aruchlo, one of the oldest known Neolithic settlements, approx. 50 kilometres south-west of Tbilisi. At Sakdrisi a Georgian-German team has investigated the oldest gold mine in the world. In the Bronze Age grave mound of Anaauri in eastern Georgian an impressive wooden wagon came to light in 2012. The wagon is now on display in Frankfurt along with other spectacular finds from the excavations.

The DAI’s Eurasian Department has arranged an international conference and also a varied programme of guided tours and lectures to accompany the exhibition. Among the speakers on 16 January 2019 will be the director of the Eurasian Department, Svend Hansen, who will talk about the excavations he directs at Aruchlo and the development of the early agriculturalist settlements in the southern Caucas. Admission is free.

The exhibition at the Frankfurt Archaeological Museum is the first in this form to be seen in Germany. It has been produced in collaboration with the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi and the Eurasian Department of the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin.

### WHERE AND WHEN

6 October 2018 – 10 February 2019
Frankfurt Archaeological Museum
Karmelitergasse 1
60311 Frankfurt am Main

### CATALOGUE

To accompany the exhibition a large and lavishly illustrated catalogue has been produced, containing the latest findings and detailed descriptions of the objects and archaeological sites.

... A BISON THAT WAS PAINTED MORE THAN 10,000 YEARS AGO ON THE CEILING OF THE CAVE OF ALTAMIRA IN NORTHERN SPAIN.

The cave contains nearly one thousand paintings that show bison, stags, horses and boars. The figures were scratched into the rock surface and drawn using charcoal, ochre, red hematite or manganese oxide. The cave was in use for over 5000 years until its entrance was blocked by a rock fall in around 11,000 BC. In was rediscovered by chance in the 19th century. The cave hasn’t been open to the public since 1979, so as to prevent damage to the sensitive paintings. Exact replicas were made for the German Museum in Munich and the National Museum in Madrid. They were produced using Erich and Gisela Pietsch’s photographic documentation, which was acquired by the DAI’s Madrid Department in the 1980s and today forms part of the institute’s own photographic archive. It was the first, largely complete photographic documentation to be made. The colour negatives, some of which are in a critical condition, are currently being digitalized. They will then be used to create a new replica of the Cave of Altamira.
At present no institution in Germany possesses the infrastructure and the capacity to study the archaeology of Africa in its entirety. The universities teach ethnology and regional studies, though these subjects concern the continent’s relatively recent history. The human history of Africa in the preceding 2 million years or so is studied only in a fragmentary way. While North Africa and Egypt are areas studied by Egyptology and Classical Archaeology, for large parts of the rest of the continent there is no comparable research tradition in Germany. It’s a structural gap that the German Archaeological Institute is seeking to close with various forms of scientific networking.
When the foundation stone of the later DAI was laid in 1829 with the Instituto di corrispondenza archaeologica in Rome, the focus of the institute’s research projects was initially the Mediterranean. The Imperial German Institute for Egyptian Archaeology, which existed from 1907, became the DAI’s Cairo Department on the occasion of the institute’s centenary in 1929. In the 1920s there was interest in opening other departments around the world, though Cairo was to remain the only one established on the African continent, as is still the case today. The Mediterranean orientation was dominant for a long time. It was not until the research at the DAI. Fieldwork projects in Togo, Morocco and Mozambique. In the Nile valley, too, the scope of inquiry has been widened, with Sudan and Ethiopia becoming the subject of research at the DAI. Today the DAI is involved in over thirty projects in Africa together with local partners.

THE DAI’S RESEARCH NETWORKS

Growing out of collaborations in the investigation of questions in the field of cultural studies at the DAI, various forms of joint research have arisen since 2006 that also promoted networking on a regional level. In 2009, a plan was worked out to organise and facilitate networking amongst the numerous DAI projects in Africa at a meeting in Cairo, leading in 2014 to the launch of the TransArea Network Africa (TANA).

The founding of such a network at a research institute that is already characterised by cultural and geographical competences and institutional structures may not at first sight seem to constitute a significant change. Yet TANA brings with it a very much more fundamental transformation. When the Cairo Department of the German Archaeological Institute was founded, its mission was defined as the investigation of the entire history of Egypt from prehistory to the modern era. Main interest was what contribution Egypt had made to the development of Western cultures. The department was not concerned with the question of how the cultural development of Egypt was to be understood against the background of Africa’s cultural development, or what influence Egypt, with its cultural development, may have had on north-east and north-west Africa. This Western perspective was for a long time decisive in how ancient Egyptian civilization – and not only that – was seen. The scientific debate of the past twenty years has made clear, however, just how important it is to take into account non-Western points of view as well when we are considering and appraising traditions of cultural forms of expression in Africa. TANA consequently seeks to contribute to raising awareness of diversity and of multi-perspective approaches, and to enabling changes of perspective. This includes questioning one’s own standpoint and understanding that of researchers in Africa.

Of particular interest to the network are questions with relevance to the challenges of today’s world. One central area of research to be addressed by TANA is the complex relationship between the environment, climate and civilization in a comparative approach involving different regions and periods. A notable role in this connection is played by questions of water supply and water use. This immediately brings us to the role of the Nile, the lifeline of north-east Africa, and the role of the oasis economy. The evolution and variation of forms of social and political organization are to a large extent the consequence of the arid and semi-arid natural environment and climatic conditions in Africa. Linked to this are questions revolving around trading posts as well as the organization of the flow of trade. An example of this would be a detailed investigation of the role of caravan routes. Cultural transfer and influence among the Mediterranean, Arabic and African cultural regions are of great significance. The relationship and interaction between indigenous cultures and alien populations as well as contact in border zones are central questions of the research. These links are significant not just in a north-south, but also in an east-west direction.

Some researchers have had a decisive influence on research in Africa. Along with Erwin Littmann (see Portrait on p. 71 in this issue) many other researchers should be named, among them Christian Ehret (1935–2006) and Friedrich Ludwig Rakob (1931–2007). Ehret, based at the Madrid Department, conducted research into the Islamic architecture of North Africa, while Rakob at the Rome Department studied classical architecture in Algeria and Tunisia. The founding director of the Commission for the Archaeology of Non-European Cultures, then known as the Commission for General and Comparative Archaeology, Hermann Müller-Karpe (1925–2013) initiated the systematic collection of material on this new field, starting in the 1980s. Eric Huyse, a member of the commission, produced the publication “Die archäologische Forschung in Westafrika” (Archaeological research in West Africa) as part of material on general and comparative archaeology in 1987. In the same series, Rudolf Nehren published “Die Prähistorie der Maghreblander” (The prehistory of the Maghreb countries) in 1992.

The TransArea Network Africa (TANA) brings together the numerous projects of different departments and commissions of the DAI and links them with African partner institutions. A brochure produced in 2018 presents, in German and English all current projects in Morocco and Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as South Africa. The brochure is available online at https://www.dainst.org/-/transarea-network-africa

DAI RESEARCHERS AT THE TANA WORKSHOP IN EGYPT IN MARCH 2018

Photo DAI
The cultural development of Cyrenaica, a region that is today part of Libya, and also the character of Numidia’s culture are not comprehensible if they are viewed solely from the perspective of the Greek and Roman culture of the Mediterranean. This is because connections with Egyptian culture were equally important. A culturally comparative research approach is also currently lacking for the spread of Islam and its cultural manifestations in Africa. To properly explore these and other questions, however, a common basis is required.

**A COMMON BASIS FOR JOINT RESEARCH**

The rapid development of documentation and excavation technologies in archaeology makes continuous learning necessary. That's true for both, colleagues in Africa and in Germany. It is necessary to organize systematic vocational and specialist training. This is taking place in all countries in which the DAI is active. For example, there was a new field school in Swaziland in 2017 in connection with a new research project. What happens on these courses is that junior researchers who are still studying as well as experts together receive training in very specific projects with archaeological excavation methods, prospection and documentation techniques as well as geographical information systems. Restorers and craftspeople are trained so they can work towards the preservation of their country’s monuments. Shortcomings become apparent at the junction between scientific research and practical application. The DAI is therefore also supporting a project of colleges in Berlin and Brandenburg to set up a Center of Excellence for Applied Cultural Heritage Studies in Ethiopia. There, in cooperation with the university in Mekelle, instruction is to be given in the necessary technologies for documenting landscapes and monuments as well as for conserving and restoring buildings and objects.

It is also important to be aware of the asymmetries in the history of research. Not infrequently these have resulted in scientific knowledge about the cultures of Africa being stored in archives outside Africa. The DAI and its partners are tackling this problem proactively by making knowledge about Africa openly accessible. Of course there is still a great deal of work to be done. Yet the right IT architecture already exists in the form of iDAI.world; and the digitalization of the Hinkel Archive represents an important step towards the creation of a register of monuments in Sudan. Many African states lack digital and analogue registers of monuments. The DAI is therefore also supporting the North African Heritage Archives Network (NAHAN), a project which is aimed at building up a digital platform for material from archives on North African archaeology. European and North African institutions have been working together since 2016 to ensure that archival documents are preserved long-term in digital form and are put at the disposal of all researchers.

**NETWORKING IN GERMANY AND NETWORKING IN AFRICA – THE PRIORITY PROGRAMME “ENTANGLED AFRICA”**

A research network first of all brings together different perspectives and provokes discussion and a change of viewpoint. This allows the participants to question their own assumptions and to understand researchers’ views from a different perspective.

The North African Heritage Archives Network (NAHAN) is an international association of institutions that was founded in 2016. The network has the aim of making archive material on North African archaeology accessible digitally. The DAI is providing the digital infrastructure for the project. [http://www.nahanweb.org/](http://www.nahanweb.org/)

**STUDENTS FROM THE INSTITUT NATIONAL DES SCIENCES DE L’ARCHÉOLOGIE ET DU PATRIMOINE (INSAP)** receive practical excavation experience as part of their studies in the Rif, Morocco, and are trained in processing find material.

Photo: Linstädter

**IN ESWATINI THE KAAC** carried out the first Archaeological Field School for students from the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) in August 2017 under Jörg Linstädter’s direction.

Photo: Linstädter

**AT THE SITE OF HAMADAB IN SUDAN A MEROITIC HOUSE HAS BEEN EXCAVATED IN COOPERATION WITH SHENDI UNIVERSITY.**

Photo: Wolf
The research hypothesis holds that intra-African links and contacts in the period between the drying up of the Sahara around 6000 BCE and the beginning of intensive European colonization in the 15th/16th century CE affected the continent, for example the spread of the Neolithic or the effects of Phoenician and Roman occupation on the development of North Africa in antiquity. In “Entangled Africa” Africa itself is the focus. We are investigating the web of relationships within Africa in the last 6000 years. The third thing we are looking at is the territories. Who was in contact with whom, by what means, and at what time? What part did the geographical situation, climate and environment changes as well as social upheavals play in the networks?”

Dr. Philipp von Rummel explains the change of perspective that is at the heart of “Entangled Africa”: “In earlier research projects what was investigated above all was how extra-African influences affected the continent, for example the spread of the Neolithic mode of economy from the Near East or the effects of Phoenician and Roman occupation on the development of North Africa in antiquity. In “Entangled Africa” Africa itself is the focus. We are investigating the web of relationships within Africa in the last 6000 years.”

So the researchers of “Entangled Africa” want to understand what intra-African interactions took place in the past and what processes from the African continent had an impact on neighbouring regions. So that the results of the numerous individual projects can be better understood, not only a temporal and geographical but also a methodological framework has been created.

So that the results of the numerous individual projects can be systematically described, three main questions which are being investigated in the various individual projects: “Essentially we are aiming to identify and systematically describe networks. To that end we ask ourselves three questions. Firstly, how can transregional contacts of the past be identified? This question is aimed at finding markers of transregional contacts by means of empirical research. What we mean by such markers are non-local objects and materials as well as actors that are recognizable by innovative technologies such as food production, ceramic or metal production. Secondly we would like to know what forms these interactions and contacts took. This is about the form and organization of interactions as well as the area they covered. We’re examining what mobility pattern can be discerned behind the various forms of contact: migration, interaction or trade? The third thing we are looking at is the territories. Who was in contact with whom, by what means, and at what time? What part did the geographical situation, climate and environment changes as well as social upheavals play in the networks?”

Jörg Linstädter, coordinator of “Entangled Africa”, explains the three main questions which are being investigated in the various individual projects: “Essentially we are aiming to identify and systematically describe networks. To that end we ask ourselves three questions. Firstly, how can transregional contacts of the past be identified? This question is aimed at finding markers of transregional contacts by means of empirical research. What we mean by such markers are non-local objects and materials as well as actors that are recognizable by innovative technologies such as food production, ceramic or metal production. Secondly we would like to know what forms these interactions and contacts took. This is about the form and organization of interactions as well as the area they covered. We’re examining what mobility pattern can be discerned behind the various forms of contact: migration, interaction or trade? The third thing we are looking at is the territories. Who was in contact with whom, by what means, and at what time? What part did the geographical situation, climate and environment changes as well as social upheavals play in the networks?”

The researchers taking part in “Entangled Africa” benefit from a wide range of methodological approaches and intensive knowledge transfer amongst themselves and with colleagues from the respective partner countries in Africa. And in order to guarantee a lasting effect beyond the six year term of the project, a set of far-reaching measures are planned. For instance there will be targeted support of the young generation of researchers by involving them in the research projects and giving them further training in archaeological field and laboratory methods. The close cooperation between the researchers helps networks form between young European and African researchers and thereby also supports jointly conducted projects in the future.

As well as benefiting the young generation of researchers, another key component of “Entangled Africa” consists in securing the data generated by the research and ensuring it is accessible. It is essential that all the data can be evaluated even after the conclusion of the Priority Programme and can be made available for further research projects. Planning for this is under way in cooperation with the IT section of the DAI and the appropriate digital infrastructure will be provided.

Dr. Philipp von Rummel is General Secretary of the DAI and part of the programme commission of SPP 2143.

Photo: Kuckertz

Dr. Jörg Linstädter is Scientific Director of the KAAK and coordinator of SPP 2143.

Photo: Reinecke

WHAT LIES BEHIND VISIBLE TRACKS: MIGRATION, INTERACTION OR TRADE? The question of intra-African mobility is one of the central questions of the research network.

Photo: Kimmig

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME "ENTANGLED AFRICA" centres on contacts and interactions on the African continent in the past 6000 years.

Photo: Fless

SPP 2143: "ENTANGLED AFRICA: INNER AFRICAN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RAINFOREST AND THE MEDITERRANEAN, APPROXIMATELY 6000–500 YEARS AGO"

Priority Programmes (SPP) are part of the so-called coordinated support programmes of the German Research Foundation (DFG). An SPP consists of several individual projects that are coordinated by a central agency. Consequently a Priority Programme typically features cooperation among participating researchers across multiple regions. The SPP brings together African researchers from all round Germany to investigate a particular individual theme.

http://www.entangled-africa.org

The research hypothesis holds that intra-African links and contacts had a much bigger influence on the development of human societies in Africa than previously assumed.
Old iron rusts – as the statues of Roman deities in the National Museum in Cherchell know. The marble sculptures were in a fragmented and damaged state when found by archaeologists in the late 19th century in the Roman provincial capital Caesarea Mauretaniae near the modern town of Cherchell. The sculptures had to be restored before they could go on display in the museum of Cherchell at the beginning of the 20th century.
The iron dowels inserted to hold the fragments of the statues together had rusted and expanded as time passed and began to fracture the marble. Earthquakes in the 1980s accelerated the process. When the museum of Cherchell became a national museum in 2009, it was high time for the sculptures to be restored and mounted on new plinths. All the brittle plaster additions and the iron dowels were removed. In the process, a three metre high statue of Hercules was turned upside down. It was fitted with dowels of high-grade, corrosion-resistant steel and mounted on a new base that consisted of a metal plate on ball bearings, which can absorb the impact of seismic shocks in the event of an earthquake.

All the work was carried out in close cooperation between Algerian and German experts. One of the objectives, after all, was capacity building: exchanging knowledge, learning about methods of transport and conservation, and documenting them. This was accompanied by the drawing up of a presentation plan for the museum including labelling and signage, lighting, and educational material. To this end the inhabitants of Cherchell were asked how they wanted to see the history of their city and region presented. An important place in the new exhibition will be given to the reign of the Mauretanian kings (23 BC – 40 AD), who resided at their capital Caesarea Mauretaniae for almost 65 years before the city was incorporated into the Roman Empire for the centuries that followed.
The archaeological park is complemented by a museum, which has recently been renovated as part of ongoing site measures. The on-site training is accompanied by exchange programmes for Tunisian researchers. They have the opportunity to consult current research literature at the German Archaeological Institute in Rome – literature that is largely unavailable in Tunisia. So far, over 150 short study trips to Rome have been arranged since 2012. Digital research opportunities are being created in parallel.

In 2011 after the Arab Spring, activities by the German Archaeological Institute were possible only for a time and in a few regions in Libya. Virtually everywhere, the ongoing conflicts in the land are causing damage to monuments and destruction of the rich cultural heritage. While the current situation does not permit activity in the country itself, the DAI’s Rome Department is getting involved in the form of vocational and specialist training courses for the staff of the Libyan antiquity service. Five courses altogether have provided basic training in using geo-information systems for monument protection. Four of the courses were held in Tunisia, the fifth took place in Rome. Even in difficult circumstances, therefore, solutions can be found to continue the cooperation.

The activities of the German Archaeological Institute in Tunisia and Libya are funded through the Transformation Partnerships programme and the Cultural Preservation programme of the Federal Foreign Office. The measures strengthen archaeology and monument preservation in the countries concerned: They help to preserve and maintain cultural heritage and to make it accessible to as many people as possible. Further information about this can be found on the website of the Federal Foreign Office: http://t1p.de/AA-TraFoPa

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) supports German-Tunisian cooperation by establishing a lectureship at the University in Tunis (Faculté des Sciences Humaines et Sociales). From the winter semester 2018/19 onwards a German university lecturer will contribute to the teaching of classical art and sculpture and supplement the practical training as a guest lecturer.

The North African Research Archive (NARA) will be available in the DAI’s object database, DAI/objects ARACHNE. These photos – mainly going back to Friedrich Rakob’s work – will be available online worldwide together with digitized manuscripts, excavation journals and maps on North Africa.
Global art and global archaeology?

At first sight it might appear to make no difference if we speak of world art and world archaeology or of global art and global archaeology. But as with so many terms in use today, the choice of terminology implies narratives and meanings. And thus it’s not of no consequence which term we use.

“World art” is a colonial term. It was coined to distinguish between those that had modern art and those others that had no modern art to show for themselves. The concept emerges particularly clearly in the subtitle of an influential art exhibition, “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art, that was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1984–1985. The subtitle was “Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern?” Here the very same fundamental difference between modern art and tribal art is constructed that is to be found in the concept of “world art.” The exhibition explored a phenomenon that Robert Goldwater had already described systematically in his work “Primitivism in Modern Art” from 1926 to 1932, drawing attention to the artefacts of those “others,” which had not only ancient Europe but also all Asia extend to the Far East; for archaeology implies narratives and meanings. Archaeologists were not just involved in this process through their work on “archaic” cultures worldwide, but they also reflected themselves on their relation to the world. This is particularly evident in the way the centenary of the German Archaeological Institute was celebrated in 1929. The centenary was seen as an occasion to demonstrate understanding between the nations in the period following the First World War. For that reason the Reichstag was chosen as the venue for the event and foreign minister Gustav Stresemann was chosen to give the address.

Gerhart Rodenwaldt, president of the DAI from 1926 to 1932, drew attention to the fact that archaeology had by then acquired an altered view of the world: “The field of archaeology has expanded spatially and temporally. Undreamed-of connections tie Europe with Northern Africa in the most varied epochs and extend to the Far East; for archaeology and art history, a larger arena has taken the place of Europe, one that encompasses not only ancient Europe but also all Asia and North Africa.” This point was taken up by Edmund Buchner, president of the DAI from 1980 to 1988, in his work “Wozu Weltarchäologie?” (Why world archaeology?) published in 1980, and in speeches he gave advocating the broadening of the DAI’s profile. The “Zentraldirektor” – the central self-governing body composed of academics – was at first uneasy about the idea of widening the DAI’s “classical” Mediterranean profile; and the initiative, which originated in the political sphere, was solidly opposed. Buchner therefore sought to explain the new concept of world archaeology to the archaeological community in Germany. “General and Comparative Archaeology: This is certainly a challenging programme. It means that questions that are asked of archaeology should be answered by employing a worldwide view. These questions are, for example, the history of early technology, the emergence of agriculture and herding, the history of the settlement, going up to the earliest towns,” he said. The Commission for General and Comparative Archaeology (KAVA) was founded in Bonn in 1979. In 2005 it was renamed the Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures (KAAK).

The term “world archaeology” was too reminiscent of the term “world art,” however, and it came to be used increasingly infrequently. Because of the proximity of the terms “world art” and “world archaeology”, the Council of Sciences and Humanities recommended in 2015 that the DAI should systematically use the term “global archaeology”: “[...] The DAI has set out on the path towards a global archaeology, and should continue to follow it. The Council of Sciences and Humanities supports the DAI in its convincing basic approach of comparative investigation of large regions as well as interdisciplinary investigation of cultural interactions in their historical depth. Analysing human-environment relations in diachronic evolution and in different regions, whereby the DAI can build on its own research projects, would, for instance, lend itself as a means of structuring this kind of global archaeological research.”

The concept of the global has specific implications and connotations itself, of course. It refers to complex connections, interactions and entanglements. And this also reflects what is the research reality at the DAI, which cannot be reduced to the dichotomy between European and Non-European. Evidence of these changes is provided by the TransArea Network Africa (TANA), the foundation stone of which was laid in 2009 and whose discussions have resulted in the initiative for the DFG Priority Programme “Entangled Africa”. These changes go beyond the content dimension, beyond the investigation of complex connections. More than that, the kind of research that is done has changed. It is now integrated into a global network and is cooperative in character. The colonial and post-colonial history of many countries, for example in Africa, continues to have an effect in archaeology, too. Self-evident structures, such as research infrastructure, were not able to develop everywhere. A parallel can be found once again in the problems faced by contemporary art production, where important infrastructure is likewise absent. In both spheres it is a question of collaboratively developing structures, now and in the future.
On its almost 7000 kilometre long course, the Nile shapes the landscape of the north-east of Africa. It creates a slender green and flourishing ribbon through the otherwise arid desert regions. Beyond the riparian oases at the transition to the desert both in Egypt and Sudan there are hundreds of pyramids big and small. By erecting these tombs, humans impressively shaped the Nilotic landscape themselves, beginning in the 3rd millennium BC. They deliberately altered the appearance of the natural landscape.
Visitors to Dahshur in Egypt today are overwhelmed by the grandiose desert landscape. To all appearances untouched, a good 6 square kilometres of plateau, scored by wadi gullies and covered by sand dunes, extend before the eye. The two pyramids of King Sneferu (ca. 2600 BC), the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid, stand like giant crystals in what is a picture of pristine nature.

But in actual fact the landscape of Dahshur has changed radically in the last five thousand years, partly as a result of changes in the climate, but also to a great extent because of human intervention. This makes Dahshur a place where the interaction between landscape and cultural exploitation can be archaeologically investigated in a way that is unique.

The first pyramid that was built at Dahshur, the so-called Bent Pyramid, was to be Egypt’s first pyramid to show the geometric form with flat, smooth sides. A site was selected for it that not only offered quarries with sufficient yield in the vicinity, but also the possibility of spectacular presentation of the gigantic edifice. For this reason the edge of the valley, near the inhabited fertile strip, was not chosen; instead the monument was positioned almost 1.5 kilometres into the desert, high up on the desert plateau. In consequence the pyramid can be clearly seen from every spot of the valley.

This was not enough to satisfy the architects’ ambition, however. As a geomorphological study has shown, the quarries from which the pyramid’s core masonry was extracted were cut to the east and north of the pyramid in deep and wide sections; the monument’s plot was thus cut out from the desert plateau. To heighten the visual effect on those approaching the monument, the ancient Egyptian architects also made use of the natural ground relief. In the period in question, the vegetation north of the Sahara had not yet died away, the sand dunes had not started to travel and the level of the fertile land still lay about six metres lower than today. Therefore, it was important that the pyramid be shown as a prominent symbol of the wealth of the pharaohs and the abundance of resources in the land.

**THE BENT PYRAMID AND THE RED PYRAMID AT DAHSHUR.** The Bent Pyramid was the first to be constructed without the stepped sides of older pyramids. A smooth-sided geometric form was the aim. As the ground on which it was built could not support its great weight, cracks appeared and the ancient Egyptian architects decided to complete the building in this unique bent form.

**THE SATELLITE IMAGE SHOWS THE LOCATION OF THE TWO PYRAMIDS OF DAHSHUR** at the edge of the fertile strip, not far from Cairo.

*Map: W. Bebermeier (FU Berlin)*

**Dramatic Landscaping at Dahshur**

**Landscape Design in Antiquity**
below the level of the terrain today, which has risen over the millennia owing to sedimentation of the Nile. Then the rocky plateau was deeply scored by wadi channels that are today full of sand, and it was in one such channel that the architects placed the causeway leading to the pyramid complex. Today one approaches the pyramid across a broad, shallow valley, a thick layer of blown-in and washed-in sand and gravel had been removed. Excavations established that a canal from the Nile led into an inner harbour deep in the desert. From there the visitors of antiquity ascended steeply to the pyramid’s valley temple that was constructed above the harbour. Behind it they had a view of the pyramid, still further back and higher up, set against the horizon. It is rarely possible to demonstrate, so clearly as here at the Bent Pyramid, how architects as far back as the 4th Dynasty – in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC – used and altered the landscape in order to achieve specific aesthetic effects. This aesthetic dimension of landscape archaeology is but one facet of the research potential of landscape archaeology. Not only the big monuments, but also the building sites, the daily to and fro of priests and (presumably) donkeys have etched themselves into the surface of the terrain over the centuries. These undramatic activities that characterize the realities of everyday life are not associated with big buildings and massive interventions into nature. And yet they are still identifiable today, as Arne Ramisch has seen. The forces of nature, wind and rain leave behind minutely ramified fractal structures that mark the relief of the untouched surface of the desert. By contrast, the paths humans take are linear; while they follow the features of the landscape, they generate different sorts of shapes that can still be identified today in three-dimensional terrain models.

**mutable nature and landscape**

Previously archaeologists believed intuitively that the natural landscape with its features, as it were the “virgin soil”, is there first, and cultural practices and forms are played out on it and secondarily. Today it’s clear to us that landscape and nature accompany human activity, changing continuously and perceptibly. At Dahshur we can see how recent geomorphological processes have transformed, and continue to transform, the surface of the desert; how human traces from ancient times have been buried and also placed in other contexts and constellations by these processes. The development of dunes on the western rim of the Nile valley and the encroachment of sand from the Sahara have dramatically transformed the landscape. The interaction of these natural processes with historical structures gives researchers here a unique chance to precisely date these natural processes, with their economic implications also. This contribution to the natural history of the climate and the landscape of the Nile valley is a valuable result of the research at Dahshur.

The pyramid landscape of Dahshur is one of the most spectacular places that travellers can visit in Egypt today. The integrity of an archaeological site has to be brought into harmonious accord with its exploitation in modern tourism by prudent site management. And this, too, is an essential dimension of archaeologists’ work at the site. The vast terrain means that approach roads, buildings and so forth have to be constructed – visitor activity is therefore now laying another stratum of human intervention on top of this age-old site. Realization of how landscape and culture have always been interconnected since most ancient times is the prerequisite for grasping the importance of not only ensuring the preservation of archaeological remains and architectural monuments during all modern interventions, but also protecting the authenticity of the landscape itself.

**STEPHAN SEIDLMAYER**

**PROF. DR. STEPHAN SEIDLMAYER, director of the DAI’s Cairo Department, has conducted research at Dahshur since 2001.**

Photo: Bornmann
At Meroë there are three cemeteries with more than 120 pyramid burials and numerous grave mounds. In terms of location and the exploitation of the natural landscape and the available resources, they display many parallels with the monuments of the neighbouring kingdom of Egypt. The Meroitic pyramids were sited not far from the former capital Meroë at the edge of the green Nile valley bordering the more or less inhospitable savannah. The more significant royal cemeteries were built on elevated rocky shelves, just as at Dahshur. Arrayed there in a line, they were visible from far off. But there were also constructional reasons for the choice of location. The rock plateaus provided quarries from which enough of the building material, sandstone, could be cut, and also made it possible for subterranean burial chamber to be hewn into the rock under the pyramids, as was customary with Meroitic tombs. The tombs of the Meroitic elite consisted of the above-ground, stone-built pyramid – the “gravestone” – and the underground burial chamber in which the deceased was laid. A stairway led down to a door hewn into the rock that marked the entrance to the actual grave. Lying beyond this entrance door was one or indeed several burial chamber, most of which were colourfully painted.

The big royal pyramids of Meroë reached a height of up to 30 metres. Compared to the colossal monuments from the Old Kingdom of Egypt they are therefore rather small, but looked equally impressive thanks to their number and the location. For the visitor today the pyramid cemeteries at Meroë are a picturesque ensemble. Yellow sand dunes with sporadic black-brown rocks are crowned by two big groups of dark, ruined pyramids. This attractive picture is deceptive, however. Photographs from last century reveal that an altogether different landscape existed here. In these photos the north and south cemetery of Meroë are

THE UNDERGROUND BURIAL CHAMBERS WERE SUMPTUOUSLY DECORATED. Numerous images on the walls depict the deceased on the journey to the next life, guarded by the gods or surrounded by family members.

Photos: Wolf

THE PYRAMIDS OF MEROË LOOKED EAST, FACING THE RISING SUN.

Photo: Wolf

THE PYRAMIDS OF MEROË HAVE STEEP WALLS: THE ANGLE OF INCLINATION IS 70 DEGREES.

Photo: Wagner

THE PYRAMID CEMETERIES IN SUDAN

In the last millennium before Christ the kings and queens of Meroë established a vast realm in what is today Sudan. Pyramid fields arose here, too, as in neighbouring Egypt to the north. The best preserved are the three big cemeteries for the Meroitic kings and queens as well as for the kingdom’s high-ranking officials near the modern village of Begrawiya, some 200 kilometres north of the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

PLAN OF THE THREE PYRAMID CEMETERIES NEAR THE ANCIENT CITY OF MEROË.

Map: Hinkel (DAI, Friedrich W. Hinkel archive)
situated on a small ridge. Rocks and scree are strewn on the surface. Until the 1960s the surrounding plains had a relatively dense vegetation cover with grasses and scrub. From that time sand began to collect between the pyramids; the sand dunes have grown at an alarming rate over the following five decades with the result that today dunes metres high traverse the cemetery fields and wide areas of the surrounding plains.

This wind-blow sand causes massive destruction to the ancient monuments. Every grain of sand the wind blows at the pyramids has a slightly abrasive effect on the original surface – much like a sandblaster. With the wind direction alternating between the summer and winter, the dunes move back and forth through the sandblasting vegetation. The loss of grasses and small bushes results in worsening soil erosion. Added to this, wind-borne sand from the northern Sahara can no longer be contained, which further worsens soil erosion. The sand dunes encroaching on the monuments over the past fifty years have been successively removed and sensitive surfaces have been restored and conserved. Now drifts are to be prevented by the targeted planting of shrubs. Specialists in restoration and cultural heritage are working on conserving the monuments and on a plan for presenting the site to visitors. The aim is to preserve the historical monuments in their original natural landscape and to enhance the visitor experience.

ALEXANDRA RIEDEL

DIPL.-ING. ALEXANDRA RIEDEL is a research associate at the DAI. She coordinates the Qatari Mission for the Pyramids of Sudan with Dr. Mahmoud Suliman Bashir from the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Khartoum (Sudan), and directs the conservation part of the project.

Photo: Kuckertz

THE SOUTHERN CEMETERY IS THE OLDER OF THE TWO ROYAL PYRAMID CEMETERIES. Here are found a number of small tombs and the first pyramids of Meroe. At a later date the kings and queens had themselves buried in the north cemetery.

Photo: Wolf

The Meroitic pyramids and the ancient city of Meroë situated on the Nile together form a unique ensemble highly significant in cultural history terms. Since 2011 they have been listed as UNESCO cultural heritage. An important factor in this designation is the drawing up plans for the preservation of this world heritage site and for the management of tourism there. At the invitation of Qatar Museums (QM), the German Archaeological Institute has been collaborating since 2015 on a large-scale project, the Qatari Mission for the Pyramids of Sudan. The objective of the Qatari Mission for the Pyramids of Sudan (QMPS) is the preservation of the pyramids at the world heritage site of Meroë in cooperation with specialists from various countries.


German research in Sudan has a long tradition. Starting in about 1960, ground-breaking research on the architecture and culture of the Middle Nile valley was conducted by the German archaeologist and architect Friedrich W. Hinkel, whose extensive archive on the archaeology and building archaeology of ancient Sudan has been deposited with the German Archaeological Institute. Work on the digitization of the Hinkel archive began in 2014 in a collaborative project between the Qatar Sudan Archaeological Project and the German Archaeological Institute. Digitizing the Sudan archive will create a virtual research centre in Berlin and Khartoum, which in Sudan will form the basis for further expanding the digitization of its cultural heritage.

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Photo: Kuckertz

THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND ARCHITECTS OF THE DAI HEAD OFFICE in Berlin have set themselves the task of researching, precisely documenting and preserving this unique cultural heritage site.

Photos: Hamann
The altar inscription of Wuqro is located in the Ethiopian region of Diʿamat, today south-eastern Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. The altar, however, is situated in northern Ethiopia near the modern town of Wuqro not far from the provincial capital Mekele.

The inscription, just 19 words long, is thus evidence of one of the major migratory movements of the first half of the 1st millennium BC in the eastern African region.

The inscription furthermore sheds light on the Sabaeans’ relations with the indigenous population. The inscription names not just Waʿrān’s father (Rādiʿum) but also his mother (Ṣahḥatūm). Naming the maternal line is completely unknown in inscriptions from Southern Arabia. That this is an indigenous, Ethiopian tradition, is shown also by the mother’s title: ṣahḥatūm. The ancient Ethiopian word meaning “companion” does not come from Sabaean or other Southern Arabian dialects. From this we can infer that the naming of the maternal line signifies an inclusion of the indigenous population in Sabaean power structures.

Approximately 2700 years ago a stonemason carved letters on an altar, slowly and carefully. He was working on the orders of the king who had had the altar erected in veneration of the supreme god Almaqah.

What is particularly notable about this inscription is that it was written in Sabaean, the stonemason was Sabaean, and Almaqah the chief Sabaean god. The Sabaeans lived in the south of the Arabian Peninsula in what is today Yemen. The altar, however, is situated in northern Ethiopia near the modern town of Wuqro not far from the provincial capital Mekele.

The inscription, just 19 words long, is thus evidence of one of the major migratory movements of the first half of the 1st millennium BC in the eastern African region.

HOW DID THE SABAENE STONEMASON COME TO BE IN WUQRO?

When the Sabaeans migrated from southern Arabia to south-eastern Eritrea and northern Ethiopia at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, they brought not just their language and writing with them, but also their political institutions and their deities. They founded their political, religious and administrative centre in Yeha and ruled over a territory named Diʿamat, where the migrant Sabaeans lived as well as the indigenous population. The temples were built in honour of their gods, firstly their chief god Almaqah, in which they dedicated altars and frankincense burners to the deity. In contrast to Southern Arabia, where monumental records of the deeds of the Sabaean rulers provide information about historical events of the late 8th and early 7th century BC, that type of text has been lacking for the Ethio-Sabaean area. There are merely some dozen, mainly brief royal inscriptions, which give us an insight into life in Diʿamat.

The inscription furthermore sheds light on the Sabaeans’ relations with the indigenous population. The inscription names not just Waʿrān’s father (Rādiʿum) but also his mother (Ṣahḥatūm). Naming the maternal line is completely unknown in inscriptions from Southern Arabia. That this is an indigenous, Ethiopian tradition, is shown also by the mother’s title: ṣahḥatūm. The ancient Ethiopian word meaning “companion” does not come from Sabaean or other Southern Arabian dialects. From this we can infer that the naming of the maternal line signifies an inclusion of the indigenous population in Sabaean power structures.

The altar of Wuqro is the most significant epigraphic find of recent times. The site of its discovery – called Maqāber Gaʿawa (“tomb of Gaʿawa”) by the local population – was investigated some years ago by Pawel Wolf on behalf of the DAI and the University of Jena. The excavations conducted there revealed a one-room temple, in the centre of which stands the elaborately worked altar.

The temple was built in honour of the god Almaqah by a king named Waʿrān. He had the small shrine built on completion of the Great Temple of Almaqah in Yeha, 90 kilometres away. The inscription hence tells us not only that Waʿrān may also have been the builder of the monumental temple at Yeha, but also that Yeha was the religious centre of the Sabaeans in Ethiopia.

The inscription furthermore sheds light on the Sabaeans’ relations with the indigenous population. The inscription names not just Waʿrān’s father (Rādiʿum) but also his mother (Ṣahḥatūm). Naming the maternal line is completely unknown in inscriptions from Southern Arabia. That this is an indigenous, Ethiopian tradition, is shown also by the mother’s title: ṣahḥatūm. The ancient Ethiopian word meaning “companion” does not come from Sabaean or other Southern Arabian dialects. From this we can infer that the naming of the maternal line signifies an inclusion of the indigenous population in Sabaean power structures.

And so the translation of the inscription of Wuqro illustrates how important the “little subjects” are. A mere 19 words of text shed light not just on ancient transcontinental migration, but also on the merging of two cultures. For his building projects, King Waʿrān summoned stonemasons from the Sabean capital Marib into the country; they brought their architectural knowledge and stonemasonry skills with them. The inscription shows how, in the first half of the 1st millennium BC, the administrative and religious structures of the Sabaeans absorbed indigenous practices, resulting in the Ethio-Sabaean culture. As yet we possess no written sources on how that culture came to an end around the middle of the 1st millennium BC. It is to be hoped that forthcoming archaeological investigations will bring to light further inscriptions that will be similarly illuminating as the altar inscription of Wuqro.
Viewed from space, Africa is instantly recognizable, given its enormous size. It’s virtually an island in the ocean, attached to Asia only by the Sinai. The Mediterranean separates the African continent from Europe. Does that make Africa a unified entity culturally and politically? Or does thinking in terms of land masses and calling them continents rather prevent us from perceiving diversity and interconnectedness?
DIVERSITY OF A CONTINENT

The geographical and cultural aspect

Every school atlas shows Africa divided into climate zones, which seem to mirror each other on either side of the Equator: in central Africa a rainforest zone, followed by savannah and deserts, giving way to a Mediterranean climate in North and South Africa.

This is as inadequate a description of the diversity of Africa’s landscapes as it is of their evolution. Both the climate and the natural habitats have been subject to constant change. The Sahara was not always a giant and apparently partitioning desert.

Around 6000 BC, the Sahara was a savannah landscape, before a dry climate caused the desert to return.

Along with deserts, like the Sahara and Namib, the natural habitats are characterized by savannah, oases, rainforests, high mountains with glaciers and big rivers. The continent, which accounts for more than 20 % of the land mass of the Earth, can therefore hardly be described as a geographical unity.

With its diversified geography, Africa has seen the beginnings of human evolution, a long history of inter-African relations and migrations, a variety of social, political and cultural changes as well as complex interaction with other continents.

Around 20,000 years ago, during the last glacial, the climate was cooler and drier than today. The vegetation in central Africa, with herb-rich grasslands and savannah as well as open woodland, is a reflection of the climatic conditions.

By ca. 6000 BC, woodland and tropical rainforest had proliferated as the climate had grown warmer.

The Sahara is the Earth’s biggest arid desert.

The vegetation conditions today: The Sahara is the Earth’s biggest arid desert.

© Bernhard Eitel
THE EUROCENTRIC VIEW OF AFRICA

When the classical geographer Ptolemy (born around 100 AD and died post 160 AD) described the world that was known to him, he did so by defining places and salient points in the landscape with geo-coordinates and by naming the inhabitants of particular regions. He viewed Africa from the Mediterranean. His knowledge became progressively thinner the further he got from the coasts towards the centre and the south of the continent. While in his day the coasts of the Red Sea and the Atlantic in north-west Africa were well known as a result of trade, there was very little information on the coastal areas south of the Equator. That part of Africa that lay to the south is therefore terra incognita, unknown land. He sweepingly names the people that live there Ethiopian, a term not derived from the country we know by that name today, but instead an ancient Greek word describing the dark skin colour of the native inhabitants.

Ptolemy thus sees Africa from the perspective of an inhabitant of the Roman Empire. Today one would say he had a Eurocentric view. This situation did not change substantially when North Africa was ruled no longer by the Romans, but by the Umayyads. From their dynastic base in Damascus they controlled an area that extended as far as the Iberian Peninsula between AD 661 and 750. Throughout the Middle Ages, Arab historians and geographers put together a detailed picture of African trading posts, kingdoms and an abundance of raw materials, above all gold. They viewed Africa from their perspective, too. Again there was no fundamental change, at first, when the Portuguese expanded their presence in Africa, beginning with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415.

But some events in Africa also had effects on Europe, as the example of Kankan Mansa Musa (ca. 1280–ca. 1337), shows. This legendary, tenth ruler of Mali is said to have given such rich gifts of gold on his pilgrimage to Mecca that the gold price in Egypt and Europe was destabilized for a whole year. In European historiography, little attention was paid to Arabic sources for a long time, as little indeed as was paid to the fact that Africa actually has a history. The German philosopher Hegel divides Africa into two parts. For him, North Africa was linked to other historical regions for which we possess written sources – for example the Roman Empire. It therefore had a history, in which respect it differed from the part of Africa that lacked history. This judgement and this view of Africa are still prevalent and influential in certain spheres today, and in the course of history they became associated with asymmetric power structures and systematic European colonization of Africa.
Before Africa was divided into colonies there was systematic investigation and mapping of Ptolemy’s still “unknown land.” The process began in the early 19th century with a contest of expeditions to discover and chart the last blank areas on the map of the African continent. David Livingstone and Serpa Pinto are only two of the names of men whose expeditions led into the African interior. Until that time it was above all the coastal zones that were known, from maritime traders, and increasingly also inland areas along the great rivers and not far from the coast, thanks to exploration by individual immigrants.

On the basis of this systematic mapping of the continent, a race began for dominance in Africa, culminating in and characterizing the period between 1880 and the First World War. The maps provided the principal basis on which European nations divided Africa up among themselves. The German chancellor Otto von Bismarck invited delegates to attend the Berlin Conference (or West Africa Conference, Berlin Conference) in Berlin in 1884.

When the conference in Berlin ended on 26 February 1885, Africa had been divided up following the model of European nation states. State borders had been drawn without any regard for the living spaces of African population groups or existing social and political organizational structures. Moreover, what was created was not independent states, but colonies and spheres of influence.

It was not until a long time after the Second World War that “decolonization” commenced. Eighteen colonies achieved independence together in 1960 (fourteen of them French, two British, one Belgian and one Italian). All the same, it was decided that the status quo should be maintained in terms of territory. Thus the consequences of colonial definitions of spheres of control and nation states with clear boundaries can are still readily perceptible today, as are memories of the asymmetries. The history of Africa was therefore shaped for a long time by the model of the nation state which had been exported to Africa with its compartmentalization into colonies. The diversity of social and political dynamics in African societies before colonization, on the other hand, was utterly ignored.

The Eurocentric model was countered in the 1960s deliberately by a pan-African model. This reversal of perspective is the basis for the emergence of Postcolonial Studies, a direction which since the 1980s has led to a radical revision of colonial patterns of thinking and behaving. Just how necessary this new perspective has been is shown by the models and colonial self-perceptions that are imparted in African history lessons.

**THE EXPLORATION, MAPPING AND COLONIZATION OF AFRICA**

Alexander Albert da la Roche de Serpa Pinto (1846–1900) was a Portuguese explorer of Africa, David Livingston (1813–1873) a Scottish missionary and explorer. The latter, from 1849 onwards, undertook many expeditions in Africa, and wrote an account of his travels, published in Germany as Missionsreisen und Forschungen in Südafrika (Leipzig 1858). Serpa Pinto led several Portuguese colonial expeditions in Africa in the 1870s and 1880s. He described his journeys in a book translated into several languages, and published in German under the title Wanderung quer durch Afrika (Leipzig 1881).

**POLITICAL MAP OF AFRICA FROM MARCH 1885 shows how the continent was partitioned following the Congo Conference. The European “possessions” are marked by coloured boundaries.**

**FROM SUR LES TRACES DE MON PERE**

BY MICHEL KAYOYA (1968)

The self-awareness of the “colonized”

In Berlin, in the year 1885, our continent had been carved up. Without asking anybody, they would now minister to our plight.

They came to pull us out of our centuries-long wretchedness.

(…)

That treaty of Berlin hurt me for a long time.

Every time I came across that date, I felt the same contempt.

(…)

But the worst thing was that I was taught this date. I had to learn it by heart.

For one whole lesson, we were told the names of the plenipotentiaries in Berlin, their exceptional abilities, their diplomatic skill, the motives that each of them had.

Before our immobile faces they expatiated on the consequences:
The pacification of Africa

The benefits of civilization in Africa

The bravery of the explorers

Selfless humanism

But nobody absolutely nobody referred to the insult, the shame that accompanied us everywhere.

(…)
Africa as the cradle of humankind?

If one does a quick search for images of Africa on the internet, what comes up is what tourists generally associate with the continent. It’s seen as one big safari, a land full of elephants, lions, giraffes and zebus.

It’s the “Black Africa” of the tour operators, who continue to use that term in their promotional material. The media perception of Africa, which reduces it to a place of safaris or alternatively war and crisis, overlooks the fact that the continent has a rich and complex history and material culture, which are bound up with European history in a variety of ways. Africa is where the origin of human history lies. In its attempt to clarify the origin of anatomically modern humans, Homo sapiens sapiens, science was for a long time reliant upon a limited number of finds and methods. These finds were not easy to date and the investigation of human development was restricted to the morphology of fragmentary bones and crania. New technologies have presented scientists with possibilities that have given Palaeoanthropology a new dynamic in recent decades. Ever new discoveries and analyses of old finds are changing the picture we have. A central focus of research is the question of the origin of various human forms. One of the theories on the origins of modern humans got its name in the 1980s from Out of Africa, a film of the memoir by Karen (Tania) Blixen. The “Out of Africa” theory posits that modern humans originated 200,000 years ago in eastern Africa and migrated from there in several directions.

When considering these models, we always have to bear in mind that the quantity of securely dated fossil finds is extremely small in relation to the vast geographical area of Africa and Eurasia and the no less vast time-frame of almost 2 million years. The consequence of this is, firstly, that new fossil finds constantly lead to the modification of these models, and secondly in some cases there is substantial disagreement among scientists of different disciplines about how these few finds are to be interpreted. Some researchers consider, for instance, that another migration out of Africa could have taken place 600,000 years ago. Natural science methods such as the analysis of ancient DNA contribute to a situation today in which the process of constructing theories and revising them is extremely dynamic. It is becoming more and more apparent, however, that the early representatives of the genus Homo in Africa were in fact enormously diverse. So it seems there wasn’t one “cradle of humankind” – if we wish to use that popular term – but instead a multiplicity of “cradles” that were dispersed over the whole African continent.
The Neolithic Revolution

About 11,000 years ago humans developed new cultural techniques that are still employed today. For central Europe the most significant region in this process is the Ancient Near East. It was there that almost all plant and animal species that we know in connection with food-producing and sedentary communities in Europe were domesticated, e.g. goats, pigs and sheep.

Morocco has indeed developed into an absolute hotspot in the investigation of early anatomically modern humans. Just recently Moroccan researchers and their partners from the Max Planck Institute have dated finds of Homo sapiens sapiens at the find-site Gebel Irhoud to an age of more than 300,000 years. Which means the history of the dispersal of the genus Homo in Africa has to be rewritten.

In Morocco the research is equally important for the question about the migration of modern humans to Europe, i.e. “Out of Africa II.” This is because there is no evidence as yet for the theory that early anatomically modern humans crossed the Straits of Gibraltar – a dispersal model that is plausible at first sight from geographical point of view. But the first certain evidence of anatomically modern humans on the Iberian Peninsula only date from 35,000 years before present. This suggests that they travelled across central Europe. It is astonishing, when we pore over all these pieces of mosaic, that both high mobility and constant migratory movement of early humans can be established over an unimaginably long period.
This epochal social and economic change was likened to the industrial revolution of the 19th century by Vere Gordon Childe, and termed the Neolithic Revolution in 1936. This concept of humankind’s revolutionary and irreversible switch to agriculture, animal husbandry and non-migratory communities influenced how the global process of transition to the productive mode of economy was conceptualized in European research for decades.

Today we realize that the concept of Neolithization as we know it from Europe is in fact the exception rather than the rule. The more closely the process is scrutinized by researchers worldwide, the more diversified become the ways and means by which humans secure their own survival when taking up the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals. Frequently hunting, gathering or fishing continue to be practised at the same time, and it can even happen that communities fully return to foraging as a mode of subsistence. This diversity in survival strategies is illustrated above all by human life on the African continent. The abundance of types of landscape and climate zones gives rise to a wide range of adaptation and assimilation. This is particularly true of marginal habitats like deserts and semi-deserts, in which climatic and environmental changes have highly perceptible repercussions. Here what is required above all are flexible survival strategies.

2500 YEARS OF CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The complex transition between a hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence and the emergence of food production is being investigated by Jörg Linstädter (KAAK) in southern Africa. The research region is situated in the drainage basin of the Komati River on the territory of what is today South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique.

Southern Africa in the past 2500 years was a melting pot of a variety of population groups that lived in very different social structures and practised widely differing modes of economy. Four population groups were dominant during this period: San, Khoekhoe, Bantu, and European immigrants. The traditional view among researchers is that the San were originally hunters and gatherers, and genetic analysis indicates that they were already present in southern Africa 100,000 years ago. Towards the end of the 1st millennium before the Common Era the Khoekhoe are thought to have migrated into southern Africa from the north (from the Zambezi River region) and to have brought pottery and sheep with them. In this explanatory model the Khoekhoe are considered to be a pastoral-nomadic hunter-gatherer culture. The definitive changeover to sedentary agrarian cultures is thought to have happened later when Bantu-speaking people migrated into the region. They introduced iron technology. With the arrival of European immigrants from the 16th/17th century onwards a new phase begins in the history of the region, one that is principally characterized by increasing conflict.

More recent research is causing the modification of this current model. Contacts between the main groups turn out to have been much more complex than previously assumed. For instance there are indications that the San already produced pottery before the arrival of the Khoekhoe, further that cultivated plants were known before the arrival of the Bantu, and that sections of the community took up hunting once more amid a context of agrarian cultures. Whether that occurred seasonally or year-round is not yet known. These questions are the focus of the research project. The objective behind it is to better understand the complex interplay of coexistence and mutual influence among different groups. A central role in the research is played by investigations into the evolution of forms of subsistence. Do the latter conceal complex survival strategies by a few groups – or have new identities formed here? Were these developments unilinear and to what extent were they influenced by environmental conditions?
Carthage was founded by the Phoenicians in the 9th century BC and in the further course of history it increased its influence on Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. This northward expansion brought Carthage into conflict with the Romans, who began broadening their own sphere of influence in the 4th century BC. The campaign by the Carthaginian general Hannibal, who crossed the Alps and subjected Rome to crushing defeats in Italy in the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), was deeply traumatizing for the Romans. They invoked this trauma when justifying the total destruction of Carthage, which had already been defeated in the Second Punic War. While Cato the Elder’s famous pronouncement, “In cetero censeo Carthaginem esse delendam”, was not uttered in this wording, it was Cato who brought about the final destruction of the city in 146 BC by successfully appealing to Roman fears of the danger emanating from Carthage (metus punicus). The north of Africa was consequently bound up in a complex way with developments in the Mediterranean world, which left visible traces behind.

CARTHAGE – 3000 YEARS OF URBAN HISTORY AT A GLANCE

The researcher Friedrich Rakob (DAI Rome) launched archaeological projects in North Africa in the 1970s. At Carthage his excavations opened a window on the past. The remains that can be viewed at the Quartier Didon reach down to a depth of more than eight metres. The first impression is of massive Roman walls dominating the site. But if one descends the steps on the archaeological site, which was enhanced for tourism purposes in 2017, one finds, beneath a levelling layer from the 5th century BC, buildings that researchers date to the period when the city of Carthage was founded. Construction began here, near the coast, in around 850–800 BC. As Carthage grew into an ever more important trading centre, part of a Mediterranean network, from 500 BC onwards, the entire area was laid out anew and a large square surrounded by buildings was created here. Defeat in the Second Punic War in 201 BC did
not spell the end for the city. The square was enlarged to at least 525 square metres and continued to be used for sacrifices. Then after the destruction of Carthage by the Romans in 146 BC and the founding of a Roman colony under Augustus, the area was completely remodelled. A solidly constructed public building was erected there. In the 6th century AD, it was converted into an early Christian church, which is testimony to Carthage's importance as a centre of early Christianity in North Africa.

Today Quartier Didon, a window on the past, is framed by modern housing. Land development and encroachment by the growing modern city of Tunis led to the launch of an international UNESCO campaign to “save Carthage” in 1972. In 1979, Carthage became a UNESCO world cultural heritage site. From the outset, the Federal Republic of Germany has been involved in efforts to investigate the archaeology of Carthage. It is only through such investigation that the multilayered past of this historically highly significant city can be preserved and passed on to future generations.

CARTHAGE – 1500 YEARS OF SETTLEMENT HISTORY IN THE CITY CENTRE
This was the title of a DFG funded research project that explored the urban development of ancient Carthage from its origins in Archaic Punic times to late antiquity. The project to develop the site at Rue Ibn Chabâat / Quartier Didon for tourism purposes is being directed by DR. RALF BOCKMANN. A bilingual flyer with information on the Quartier Didon and reconstruction drawings of the buildings has been produced and is also viewable online.

https://www.dainst.org/project/33930

CHERCHELL – A HELLENISTIC-ROMAN CITY IN ALGERIA

When Emperor Augustus in 29 BC implemented the plan to rebuild Carthage as the Roman Colonia Iulia Carthago, he intervened in the political affairs of North Africa in another way too, by giving Roman citizenship to Juba II and installing him as king of Mauretania in 26/25 BC. Juba II ruled for nearly 50 years. He established his capital Caesarea - present-day Cherchell - west of Algers on the site of the earlier Punic trading post and port called Iol.

Both Juba II and his spouse Cleopatra Selene had received an excellent education and were keenly interested in Graeco-Roman art and culture. They gathered the best sculptors, architects, writers and scholars round them at their new place of residence. This explains how Cherchell comes to have sculptures of exceptionally high quality and in the finest Greek marble, such as have not been found anywhere else in the region.

FEMALE PORTRAIT STATUE WITH STOLA, found in the theatre of Cherchell. Photo: Gauss
In the reign of Juba II a series of monumental building projects were undertaken: aqueduct, theatre, amphitheatre and stadium are still easily identifiable in the terrain today. The royal palace cannot be definitively localized today, but it must have occupied a large area in the centre of modern Cherchell. It is from there that many of finest artefacts in the city museum opened in 1900 under French colonial rule originate – architectural members, furniture and sculptures of superlative quality (see also Cultural Heritage, p. 18). The history of Cherchell did not end with the murder of the last Mauretanian king, Ptolemy, in 40 AD: the city became the capital of the new Roman province Mauretania Caesariensis and a short time later it too became a Roman colony, like Carthage.

Beyond Egypt and North Africa important kingdoms grew up along the Nile valley under the influence of Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. In other regions too, the pre-colonial history of Africa brought forth cultures and states that, beginning with the Nok culture from the 2nd millennium BC onward, were characterized by great dynamism. These processes can be particularly well observed in West Africa, around the interior delta of the Niger and adjacent regions to the north.
In the 11th century AD. the Mali Empire emerged from the dusty sands of the Sahel. Arabic sources from the Middle Ages onwards report in detail about this region and its trading partners in the south as well as its history. From today’s perspective it is somewhat confusing that modern states have adopted the names of historical states, though they display no continuity territorially or historically. One example is Ghana, which is named after the Empire of Ghana, although that entity in the Middle Ages lay north-west of the Senegal and the interior delta of the Niger. The origins of the Empire of Ghana probably lie in the 6th century AD, and it declined in the 11th century AD. In the 13th century the Mali Empire emerged from the conflicts at the victor. Then in the 15th century the Kingdom of Songhay gained supremacy in the region.

What can be distinguished archaeologically today is the emergence of urban centres as well as social differentiation, of which the conquest of the region in the 16th century, Great Zimbabwe, the kingdom’s stone-built capital city, had already been abandoned. There are no written sources on it. Why the Kingdom of Zimbabwe collapsed is one of the most intriguing questions in the archaeology of southern Africa. Therefore it’s essential for researchers to tap other available sources of information.

THE SETTLEMENT OF GREAT ZIMBABWE

The baobab tree is one of the symbols of Africa. It is impressive for its age and size. But recently the baobab has been making headlines for something troubling. A study has shown that old baobab trees are dying off. The causes are unknown. As old baobabs die, an important archive on landscape and vegetation history is lost.

It is now a question of extracting and building up chronological and climatic sequences that make it possible to reconstruct the past. This may in turn give some clues as to the circumstances in which the Munhumutapa Empire came into being and how it declined and fell.

THE BAOBAB AS AN ARCHIVE ON THE HISTORY OF ZIMBABWE

The baobab tree has an unusual growth structure that does not allow growth rings to be easily identified. Some researchers even doubt that the tree forms regular growth rings. The research projects by Karl-Uwe Heußner and his colleagues have been able to demonstrate, however, that baobabs certainly do form a recognizable and measurable structure.

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A pre-Islamic society of complex structure achieved prosperity here: enormous funerary monuments were constructed for high-status individuals. There are hundreds of burial mounds like these in the region, up to 80 metres in diameter and up to eight metres high.

The number of visible grave mounds has dramatically declined in recent decades owing to much intensified agriculture. While the first iron forging activities there took place 2000 years ago, some of the tumuli date from the early 2nd millennium AD. A burial mound from the 12/13th century near the modern settlement of Kael was found to contain the burial of an influential, wealthy individual – including weapons, gold and silver jewellery and the remains of six other people who were buried with him. The weapons had been arranged in the burial chamber for utmost effect: lying to the right of the deceased was a carefully positioned bundle of ten or more big, iron socketed spears, one dagger with a curved blade, and another implement. The six other occupants, buried without care, had two big spears lying on top of them, as though thrown there. On the basis of Al-Bakri’s account, we can imagine the grave was sumptuously equipped with textiles, wooden tools, gourds and other items; given the poor preservation conditions none of it has survived. For instance, only a slight discoloration indicates the vanished wooden shafts of another impressive bundle of spears that stood vertically in the centre of the burial chamber. Placed like that between the dead, these weapons represent an effective demonstration of power, the large quantity and careful workmanship underlining the material prosperity of the deceased.

A TUMULUS NEAR KAEL IN SENEGAL was found to contain the 12th/13th century burial of an influential, affluent individual. Six other people were inhumed with the deceased.

Research within the scope of a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2011 to 2015 (Project No. 159173365) dealt with the settlement and economic history in the West African Sahel during the Iron Age and Early Medieval times. https://www.dainst.org/project/60856
Egypt is the key to Africa — and also the key to the falsifications and distortions in the conceptualization of the role Africa has played in human culture. The European research tradition views Egypt as part of the Mediterranean world and part of the ancient Near East, locating Egypt “ad Africam”, i.e. on the periphery rather than in Africa, just as the ancient world placed the Greek city of Alexandria “ad Aegyptum”. To African thinkers – such as Cheikh Anta Diop and his school – Egypt is Africa, plain and simple, and through this African Egypt they construct Africa as the mother of western culture – paradoxically at the cost of pushing the continent’s wealth and diversity completely into the background behind Egypt.
This shape, the “personality” of Egypt, was analysed by the great Egyptian geographer of the Nasser period, Gamal Hamdan, in a dialectic involving the categories “Place” and (geographical) “Constellation”. The fertile river valley – often 15 kilometres wide even in supposedly narrow Upper Egypt, and flooded with a clockwork regularity much admired in the ancient world – gave the land an unmatched economic potential: its grain exports supplied half of the Mediterranean in antiquity and the Middle Ages, forming the basis of a demographic strength that predestined Egypt to be the pre-eminent power of the North African and Near Eastern region. The Egyptian Nile valley was in consequence not just a navigable corridor through the continent’s desert zone, connecting sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean, but also a centre of power and gravity, whose push and pull effects were felt both to the north and the south. The desert boundaries of Egypt in the east and west are clearly defined, though by no means so closed as one used to suppose. Recent research in the Eastern Sahara and the desert mountains between the Nile valley and the Red Sea show how intrepidly ancient Egyptian expeditions probed hundreds of kilometres deep into the deserts, in particular to find distant deposits of raw materials. The contacts with the indigenous, non-sedentary population groups of these remote spaces are only slowly beginning to become apparent and will substantially extend our understanding of the horizons of pharaonic culture. The geographical interface through to the African continent was the “narrow southern doorway” – the first cataract of the Nile near the modern city of Aswán. This region represents more than any other the interpenetration of Egypt and Africa, geographically, ethnically and historically. For half a century now this archaeologically rich area has been the subject of research projects of the Cairo Department of the German Archaeological Institute. It is an ethnic contact zone that displays the entanglement of Egyptian and Nubian population groups. In changing constellations, this still characterizes the area today. Excavations in the ancient city of Elephantine – under way since 1969 in a collaboration between the DAI and the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research in Egypt – are shedding light on various aspects of this contact zone. Nubian ceramics – beautiful, often decorated vessels – make up a small but constant percentage in the find material from the late prehistoric settlement. Purely in terms of archaeological methodology this is a lucky situation, as it makes it possible to tie the chronology of the scriptless Nubian cultures to the historical records of ancient Egypt. The city’s cemetery includes burials of Nubian people – for example a hunter who wore an amulet of a lion’s tooth about his neck; but there are also skeletons of individuals with distinctly Negroid features, such as actually characterize populations from much farther south. The mobility of human communities over vast distances, their integration into Egyptian families, the interaction and (selective) acculturation of Nubian communities are coming to light here in the environs of the ancient city in an extraordinary way. The Aswán region as a space of public communication is central to a series of epigraphic projects by the DAI in the vicinity of Aswán. A dominant role was long played here by Pharaonic Egypt, which, thanks to the invention of hieroglyphics, enjoys a monopoly in all script-based historiography. The foreign policy doctrine of the Pharaohs is proclaimed here in historical texts by the kings.
The ambiguity of ancient Egypt – a rigorously Egypt-centric world view combined with extensive geographical experience – figures prominently in a project on the history of the Nile. The quest for the sources of the Nile, which so fascinated people in classical antiquity as well as later in the 19th century, was not an issue for ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians knew that the flood of the Nile had their source in the rocky terrain of the first cataract, near Aswān. There, near the island of Biggeh, the god sat in his spring caverns, from which he emerged “at his time” to bring abundance to the Egyptian land – a complicated sacred procedure that was governed by the major deities worshipped in the state temples of the region: Satis, Khnum and Anuket, Osiris and Isis, the succouring star gods. Naturally the ancient Egyptians had always known that the Nile and its floodwaters originated far away to the south. But the particular beneficial effect and hence the genuine identity of the floodwaters of the Nile were not observable at any point upstream of Egypt’s arable land, outside the specific geographical configuration of the Egyptian Nile valley. For this reason the ancient Egyptians rightly claimed the source of the Nile’s flood for Egypt (the river without the flood was intellectually without interest).

Egypt the “place” remained the same in its decisive parameters over the millennia, but its geographical “constellation” (to use Gamal Hamdan’s terms) was subject to constant change. The geographical horizon of ancient Egypt ended at around the fifth cataract of the Nile in the south, and in the north at the Aegean islands and northern Syria. Antiquity and the Middle Ages brought about a continuous widening of horizons for Egypt – above all through its incorporation in the world of Islam and the Arabic Nation, the latter being a dominant interpretative paradigm for Gamal Hamdan (who intellectually was very much a child of the Pan-Arabism of the 1960s). This expansion of the geographical circle at the centre of which Egypt lays intensified the country’s incorporation in the continent of Africa. Few topics are discussed so frequently and so prominently in Egyptian newspapers today as the necessity of anchoring Egypt in the community of African states, especially the states of the Nile basin. The African character of Egypt is not a matter of historical interpretation. It is the geographical, economic and political basis of Egypt’s very existence.

Hundreds of commemorative inscriptions by functionaries involved in expeditions to the south lend substance to the knowledge we have of trading ventures and military campaigns. With the invention of the first African script south of Egypt – Meroitic hieroglyphs and cursive script (both derived from the Egyptian writing system) – the presence in the Aswān region of individuals and forces from the upper reaches of the Nile is tangible in writing, too. Meroitic inscriptions in the Temple of Philae, the international sanctuary of the goddess Isis, as well as inscriptions by Meroitic functionaries written in Demotic Egyptian and Greek evince the interconnectedness of the great powers on the Nile – and also the engagement of the Meroitic kingdom (situated in the region around Khartoum today) in the politics of the ancient Mediterranean world. Later, in the early and high Middle Ages, Arabic graffiti in the Coptic monastery of Deir Anba Hadra on Aswān’s west bank, document a link with the African continent, with North African pilgrims en route to Mecca leaving behind traces in the hostels that accommodated them along the way.

The reliefs by Russian sculptor Nikolai Vechkanov in the monument of Egyptian-Soviet friendship at Aswān dam show the mighty river passing through the turbines and producing electricity, and water pressure to irrigate the fields. Photo: Seidlmayer

Arabic inscriptions written in lodgings at Deir Anba Hadra are largely from pilgrims to Mecca who stayed here on their journey from North Africa to the harbours of the Red Sea. Photo: Seidlmayer

Deir Anba Hadra (in guidebooks: “Monastery of St. Simeon”) is the biggest and best preserved monastery complex from the early Middle Ages in Egypt. Photo: Seidlmayer

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Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer is director of the DAI’s Cairo Department. He was awarded the Gerda Henkel Prize in 2014 for his research in ancient studies.

Photo: Borrmann

To the ancient Egyptians, the sources of the Nile and the causes of the flooding were not a mystery. The relief in Hadrian’s gate on Philae shows the god of the Nile flood sitting in a cavern surrounded by a snake at the foot of the cataract island of Biggeh, from which he will emerge majestically “at his time”. Photo: Seidlmayer

The reliefs by Russian sculptor Nikolai Vechkanov in the monument of Egyptian-Soviet friendship at Aswān dam show the mighty river passing through the turbines and producing electricity. Photo: Seidlmayer

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Photo: Borrmann
Karl Richard Lepsius – The first German Egyptologist

An asteroid, an alphabet, several pyramids in Egypt, a street in the Steglitz district of Berlin and the German Archaeological Institute’s accommodation for researchers in Berlin all bear the name Lepsius. They commemorate Karl Richard Lepsius, the first professor of Egyptology in Germany and a man of very wide learning who had a perhaps greater influence than anyone else on ancient studies in the 19th century. Lepsius was the leader of the Prussian Expedition, designer at the Berlin Museum and of course a passionate Egyptologist. It was a sensation when Egyptian hieroglyphs were first correctly deciphered in the 1820s by the French linguist Jean-François Champollion. Much less well known is the fact that the decipherment was a few years later corrected and further developed by a linguist from Saxony, Karl Richard Lepsius. Lepsius’s lifelong passion for discovering the unknown and opening up uncharted research terrain was already displayed in his dissertation with which he concluded his studies of history, archaeology, philosophy and philology in 1833. In the dissertation he deciphered the seven Eugubine, or Iguvine, Tablets, “the only, but fairly significant document of the Umbrian language, which as yet nobody understands, though it would be exceptionally important for the ancient Italic prayers to the gods and rites, as it can probably be assumed that sacrificial formulae are recorded on them,” as he wrote to his father.

Straight away he went on to continue his scientific translation activities in Paris, where he carried on the work of the recently deceased Jean-François Champollion, who had used the Rosetta Stone to produce the first correct decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

For Lepsius this was the beginning of his work on ancient Egypt, which was to fascinate him for the rest of his life. He completed and corrected Champollion’s translation, arranged the writing system and in the process founded the methodical investigation of the ancient Egyptian language.

In 1836, Lepsius travelled to Rome for further language studies. There the Instituto di corrispondenza archeologica, forerunner of the DAI, appointed him its secretariat editor. One year later he was made extraordinary professor at the Frederick William University of Berlin (today Humboldt University) – the first chair in Egyptology in Germany was established especially for him. By virtue of this position the king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, appointed Lepsius head of a Prussian expedition to Egypt in the years 1842 to 1845. The expedition led from Alexandria and Cairo to Gizeh and as far as Meroe. Lepsius’s investigations covered the geography and ethnography as well as the art history and iconography of the sites he visited. The plentiful graphic documentation from the expedition was published in 1859 in twelve volumes. These are particularly valuable, as Lepsius recorded the monuments as they actually appeared to him – a realistic and exact document that eschewed the conventional romanticizations of the time. Since many of the buildings and decorations are today poorly preserved or indeed utterly lost, his coloured drawings of the “Monuments of Aegypt and Aethiopia” represent an important source on the state of preservation at that point in history.

The Rosetta Stone was found in Rašīd in the Nile delta in 1799 by a Napoleonic officer. The stone carries an inscription in honour of the Egyptian King Ptolemy V (c. 200 BC) in Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Demotic, and Greek. Comparison of the hieroglyphs, at that time not deciphered, with the easily intelligible Greek text made it possible for the first time to read the pictographic script of ancient Egypt. The stone has been kept in the British Museum, London, since 1802.

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At the end of his expedition, Lepsius came back to Berlin with about 1500 finds, which had been presented to the Prussian king by the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali. They formed the backbone of the collection of the new Egyptian Museum (today Neues Museum), designed by architect Friedrich August Stüler and officially opened in 1855. That same year Lepsius became vice-director of the museum, taking over as director in 1865. The layout and design of the ground-floor rooms largely reflect Lepsius’s conceptions. He insisted that the exhibits should not be presented simply in an aesthetically pleasing style, but should also give a sense of the cultural historical background of a complex period of history in a scientifically well-founded way. Visitors to the museum experienced something of the monumentality of ancient Egyptian art. The spatial design of museum interiors with an emphasis on visitor experience broke with the customs of his day and makes Lepsius’s designs seem surprisingly modern.

Lepsius’s design for the Egyptian Courtyard at the Neues Museum. Visitors to the Berlin museum were supposed to get a vivid sense of an ancient Egyptian sanctuary. The courtyard featured sixteen colourfully painted replicas of original papyrus columns. A glass ceiling admitted daylight. The columns were adorned with motifs evocative of Egyptian sanctuaries. The Egyptian Courtyard was more or less completely destroyed by a direct hit in an air raid during the Second World War.

LEPSIUS’S DESIGN FOR THE EGYPTIAN COURTYARD AT THE NEUES MUSEUM. VISTORS TO THE BERLIN MUSEUM WERE SUPPOSED TO GET A VIVID SENSE OF AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SANCTUARY. THE COURTYARD FEATURED SIXTEEN COLOURFULLY PAINTED REPLICAS OF ORIGINAL PAPYRUS COLUMNS. A GLASS CEILING ADMITTED DAYLIGHT. THE COLUMNS WERE ADORNED WITH MOTIFS EVOCATIVE OF EGYPTIAN SANCTUARIES. THE EGYPTIAN COURTYARD WAS MORE OR LESS COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY A DIRECT HIT IN AN AIR RAID DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

ENNO LITTMANN STREET IN NORTH-EAST AKSUM Commemorates the director of the German research expedition to Ethiopia in 1906.

Photo: Fless

PIECES BROUGHT BY LEPSIUS FROM EGYPT FORMED THE BASIS OF THE RENOWNED BERLIN COLLECTION. TODAY THEY CAN BE ADMIRENED IN THE EGYPTIAN DEPARTMENT OF THE NEUES MUSEUM.

Photo: dpa / picture alliance

PORTRAIT

Enno Littmann in Aksum

Street signs carrying the names of famous researchers are, of course, nothing out of the ordinary. One rusting blue street sign on a dusty road in the north Ethiopian city of Aksum – where hardly any street signs are to be found – is truly surprising, however. In big letters it bears the name of Enno Littmann, director of the German Aksum Expedition in the year 1906.

Why is the linguist and teacher Enno Littmann honoured in this way over 100 years later in distant Ethiopia?

Enno Littmann studied Protestant Theology, Oriental languages, German and English as well as Classical Philology and in 1898 passed his teaching exam in religion and Hebrew. Half a year later he was awarded his doctorate in Oriental philology at the University of Halle. In the following five years he augmented his theoretical knowledge by undertaking several journeys to Syria, Palestine and Eritrea. While in Eritrea he received a request from the German emperor, Wilhelm II, to take on the role of director of the German Aksum Expedition.

The expedition to Aksum under Enno Littmann represents a radical departure in Ethiopian studies. In the 19th century, scholarship concerning Ethiopia concentrated on the scriptures of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, one of the historically most significant religions of the country; research at that time had a philological, theological orientation and had no practical application. Preparations for the expedition had to be made without the assistance of anybody – in German academia, political life or society at large – who knew Amharic or any of the other languages spoken in the country. The search for an interpreter proved to be tricky. A passionate philologist, Littmann had a
command of Latin and Greek, English, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, New Persian as well as several Arabic and Ethiopian dialects. He solved the problem of not having a translator by pragmatism: acquiring some knowledge of the language himself and finding various people who could help him out – which is still essential practice for archaeologists working “in the field” today.

Enno Littmann left some interesting accounts in his journal – among them his description of the grand reception at the court of the Ethiopian governor in Aksum, Gebre Selassie, who made a great impression on him: “The court was filled with priests in ceremonial garb, soldiers and trumpet blowers. […] When trumpets fell silent, the priests’ chanting began: Aksum is a highly honoured site and the great of the Earth have come to us. The people of Jerusalem (= Europe) have honoured us with their visit. From afar, from Germania they have come to us.” In Aksum the members of the expedition gazed with astonishment at “several half standing or completely fallen ‘obelisks’, one of them of tremendous proportions”. These were the stelae of Aksum, up to 33 metres high, and added to the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list in 1980.

Littmann took paper cast impressions of the inscriptions on the stelae and carried out the first archaeological excavations in Aksum. He worked for three months, with the support of the governor and various specialists in Aksum and the surrounding area. In the process an impressive stock of almost 1000 photographs were taken. The excavations results were published together with many photos in a four-volume work in 1913.

While he was still in Aksum, Enno Littmann received notice of his appointment as Chair of Oriental Studies at Strasbourg. Further appointments followed at Göttingen, Bonn and Tübingen, where he then remained until his retirement in 1951. Just how important international ties between research institutes were to him is shown by his associations with Cambridge, the University of Baltimore as well as Cairo’s Arab Academy and Egyptian University, the latter institution conferring an honorary doctorate on him in 1950.

Littmann was much in demand as a scholar and tireless, too. The list of his publications contains over 500 entries. Central to his academic research were investigations into the Arabic language, while for a broader public he published a translation of One Thousand and One Nights (1928) and numerous other oriental tales.

The German Aksum Expedition directed by Enno Littmann not only marked the beginning of the archaeological investigation of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Involving as it did related disciplines like epigraphy and ethnography and having a comprehensive cultural anthropological approach, the expedition also set standards for scientists conducting fieldwork in archaeology and building archaeology – standards that are still valid today. His list of monuments can be seen as the precursor of many projects of the present day that have as their object the systematic documentation of cultural assets.

You lucky eyes, whatever you have seen, let it be as it may, how beautiful it has been!
Imagine that in 2000 years your town is excavated by a team of methodical archaeologists. What would they find? If they were lucky and the archaeological site was dry, paper would obviously be among the things they found. The remains of private correspondence and municipal archives, libraries, shopping lists, bills, receipts and much more could have survived. The paper would be fragile, however, many of the pieces torn, and the writing barely legible any more. That’s exactly what the fragments of papyri look like that papyrologist Cornelia Römer discovers at a site called Karanis in Egypt.

The Edition of Papyri, an Unparalleled Insight into the Ancient World
WHAT IS PAPYROLOGY ACTUALLY?

In Egypt’s climate, a particularly large number of pieces of papyrus with writing on them have been preserved. The papyrus reeds from which they were made grew along the River Nile. Strips of papyrus pulp were laid on top of one another and pressed together. The resultant material was used for the writing of all sorts of texts, for instance edicts – official proclamations – by Roman governors, as well as private letters, testaments and contracts. Documents of this kind were once in use throughout the Roman Empire, papyrus being a very common form of writing material in antiquity. The scrolls that were found in the famous Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum are examples of them, as are the scrolls from Qumran on the Dead Sea. Entire libraries and state archives were filled with manuscript scrolls. At the celebrated library of Alexandria in Egypt, knowledge was systematically collected using the medium of papyrus scrolls from the 3rd century BC onwards. However only a few of the papyri that have come down to us are from the libraries of the ancient world. Most of them are chance finds, surviving in graves and even in a secondary context as “waste paper”: papyrus was recycled for use in making cartonnage for mummies, for example. Many papyri are of obscure provenance, from excavations that were not properly documented, so that today the find context and thus also the cultural context can in many cases not be established.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

This is where Cornelia Römer comes in. Her work consists in analysing the find context of papyri and the context of their use, hence combining archaeology and papyrology. Located some 80 kilometres south of Cairo is the verdant oasis of Faiyum. Here lies the small ancient town of Karanis, where many papyri have been found. When they are dug up, they are in a fragmentary state and have to be carefully restored. The pieces are often fragile, and can be stained and dirty or stuck together. In the restoration process they are carefully cleaned, stabilized and conserved. Then the papyrologists begin the process of deciphering them. Experienced researchers can recognize straight away if the writing that emerges before them is from a scroll or an official document; they can quickly distinguish big easily legible lettering from cursive writing, used by people who had a lot of contracts or receipts to write. Papyrologists decipher and restore the texts, which frequently defy comprehension at first because of gaps in the text. They translate the texts and use sizeable databases to order and classify them. This is relatively easy in the case of well known historical figures or literary works, but difficult when the textual material is completely unknown. Every newly discovered and deciphered piece of papyrus forms one tessera in an extensive and ever growing mosaic.

PAPYROLOGY is the science of texts that were written on papyrus. It is a branch of classical and ancient studies that developed at the end of the 19th century at a time when thousands of papyri were coming to light in Egypt as a result of widespread and in some cases illegal excavations. Classicists came to look for ancient texts in Egypt, above all from Great Britain, also France and Germany, and somewhat later from the USA, too. Today papyrology research institutes exist and flourish in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the USA and elsewhere. Papyri that are kept and studied at these centres mostly came from the excavations of the late 19th and early 20th century, when excavation finds were divided and exported.

PAPYROLOGISTS, experts in papyrology, decipher the texts, completing them where necessary and where possible, identify them as literary or documentary, place them in their historical context and publish them.

Papyrology is not only about deciphering, reconstructing and translating texts. This critical edition is a fundamental requirement if the cultural and historical context of papyri is to be correctly identified. Through her excavation and research work at Karanis, Cornelia Römer is able to place the edited papyri into the economic and social context of Faiyum Oasis. And beyond this she is involved in training the younger generation of researchers in Egypt who learn from her how to study the preserved texts in their cultural context.

The papyri that Cornelia Römer deals with are written in various languages. When Ptolemaic kings ruled in Alexandria (305–30 BC) and afterwards when Egypt was part of the Roman world empire (30 BC–641 AD), business was conducted in Greek. Papyri written in Latin are rare, while the number written in Demotic and Coptic is larger. In Egypt the social and functional context was the decisive factor in the choice of language. So in spite of all the electronic aids that are available for the decipherment of papyri, papyrologists still need to have considerable knowledge of ancient languages to be able to understand the texts and fill in the gaps with the right words.

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PAPYRI GIVE AN INSIGHT INTO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF THE IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION AND EVERYDAY STORIES OF THE CITIZENS. Thanks to papyri, social and cultural questions can be examined in a way not possible again until the Late Middle Ages and the early modern era. We find out, for example, how a provincial governor organized the search for deserters, how the governor summoned litigants who had failed to appear at his court, and how people who had been condemned to work in the mines (metalla) were discharged once they had served out their sentence.

The edicts and letters of Roman emperors, governors and procurators of the imperial period preserved in inscriptions and on papyrus are a particularly important documentary source for all scholars of classical and ancient studies. The number of such documents is increasing constantly as a result of new inscription finds and first publications of papyri. The information transmitted by the papyri is consequently of profound significance for our understanding of what life was like in Graeco-Roman Egypt and in particular how Roman rule in this province and across the Roman Empire was structured and organized. Thanks to these documents, research can provide us with a scientifically insightful view into the circumstances of life for a broad swath of the populace. The study of inscriptions and papyri gives us insights into aspects of daily life that are not generally preserved in literature or art. Thanks to the papyri, we are able to see how the populace of ancient Egypt lived, the nature of their work, and how they were governed. The information preserved in these documents is valuable because it is written down in a way that preserves and transmits the text in a form that can be studied and analyzed.

On-site contextualization of papyri is a new approach in research. Combining papyrology and archaeology produces results that neither of the disciplines can achieve alone. Temples, public baths and houses are as much part of history as written records on papyrus. Textual evidence and archaeological evidence complement each other, and a comprehensive examination of the evidence is essential for a more vivid image of the past. The information in the papyri can be cross-referenced with information preserved in monuments or in other written records, so that the narrative provided by the papyri is enriched and made more reliable.

And to correct a number of misunderstandings. And so it's all the more important that the official pronouncements of Roman governors are being compiled and published by the DAI's Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy (AEK) as the first volume of a comprehensive corpus (entitled Corpus der Urkunden der Römischen Herrschaft, CURH), appearing in a bilingual edition with detailed commentary. Editions of this kind may seem rather quiet and unpretentious, but they do provide a great deal of time and meticulous effort. All the same they provide access to an enormous corpus of knowledge and form the basis for further scholarship in classical and ancient studies.

It’s not only at the Cairo Department that the German Archaeological Institute conducts papyrological research. The DAI’s Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy (AER) in Munich has a profound interest in papyri for what they can tell us about how imperial rule in practical terms operated. Here too the corpus of papyri found in Egypt is particularly important. They cast light on facets of the Roman imperial administration that were not carved in stone or engraved in bronze, but were written instead on perishable material or pottersheds. The information transmitted by the papyri is consequently of profound significance for our understanding of what life was like in Graeco-Roman Egypt. The papyri illustrate just how formidable the duties of a Roman administrator were: one governor from the start of the 1st century AD received 1804 petitions in two and a half days, for example. Historians can even identify measures to improve efficiency in the state administration: orders to release convicts from working in the mines have exactly the same wording for over 100 years. And they can demonstrate, on the evidence of routine correspondence from the sphere of tax authorities in Egypt, that there were largely autonomous specialist clerks or personnel to whom the prefect would delegate responsibilities and decision-making powers. That Rome’s administration acted like that was a point of great controversy among ancient historians just some decades ago. By establishing the chronology of surviving texts it has been possible to look at a bigger picture of life in antiquity and to correct a number of misunderstandings. And so it's all the more important that the official pronouncements of Roman governors are being compiled and published by the DAI’s Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy (AER) as the first volume of a comprehensive corpus (entitled Corpus der Urkunden der Römischen Herrschaft, CURH), appearing in a bilingual edition with detailed commentary. Editions of this kind may seem rather quiet and unpretentious, but they do provide a great deal of time and meticulous effort. All the same they provide access to an enormous corpus of knowledge and form the basis for further scholarship in classical and ancient studies.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATIONS

CORPUS OF DOCUMENTS OF ROMAN RULE

The edicts and letters of Roman emperors, governors and procurators of the imperial period preserved in inscriptions and on papyrus are a particularly important documentary source for all scholars of classical and ancient studies. The number of such documents is increasing constantly as a result of new inscription finds and first publications of papyri. The AER is currently working on a project to publish these documents in their entirety, in the original wording, in translation, with a detailed commentary complete with indexes. The project is entitled Corpus der Urkunden der Römischen Herrschaft (CURH). https://www.dainst.org/project/32448

TRAINING THE PAPYROLOGISTS OF THE FUTURE

On-site contextualization of papyri is a new approach in research. Combining papyrology and archaeology produces results that neither of the disciplines can achieve alone. Temples, public baths and houses are as much part of history as written records on papyrus. Textual evidence and archaeological evidence complement each other, and convey a more vivid image of the past when they are processed and evaluated in conjunction. Cornelia Römer raises awareness of this in her teaching work at university. The DAIAD lecturer teaches papyrology at Ain Shams University in Cairo and at Cairo University. She regularly takes prospective papyrologists along to excavations by the German Archaeological Institute in the Fayyum region. The students thus visit the very places where the papyri they study were found. They trace historical figures who are known from preserved texts, such as the tax collector Sokrates, who lived in Karanis in the 2nd century AD. Cornelia Römer and the students have been to the site of Sokrates’ house, which stood at an advantageous place in the small town, as appropriate given his wealth and influence. Sokrates’ social status was known from papyri and was demonstrated by the archaeological record.

Cornelia Römer is laying the foundations for future edition projects, working with Egyptian students on a volume of texts from Karanis. The texts themselves are kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. In another project, texts written on papyrus that were taken from Egypt to Germany in 1905 are being prepared for publication by young Egyptian and European researchers. Even though the artefacts are physically in Germany – in the papyrus collection of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin – they are being jointly edited with Egyptian scholars. Thus the circle is complete, made whole by a project that should be widely emulated.

WANTED POSTER FOR A SHE-ASS GONE MISSING.

Photo with the kind permission of the Cologne Papyrus Collection

THE GOVERNOR RELEASES A MAN WHO HAS SERVED OUT HIS SENTENCE TO WORK IN THE MINES.

Photo: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, S. Steiß, P 11532.

The tax collector Sokrates is known from papyri. He lived in Karanis in the 2nd century AD. 2000 years later he returns there in graphic form with papyrology students.

Photo: Römer

An Official Summons Written By A Provincial Governor as preserved in this record of court proceedings. Photo: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, P Hamb. graec. 269, http://resolver.sub.uni-hamburg.de/edoc/HAB00735 (CC BY-SA 4.0)

In another project, texts written on papyri that were taken to Munich were examined in a way not possible again until the Late Middle Ages and the early modern era. We find out, for example, how a provincial governor organized the search for deserters, how the governor summoned litigants who had failed to appear at his court, and how people who had been condemned to work in the mines (metalla) were discharged once they had served out their sentence.

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Archaeology im Yemen

40 years of the Sanaa Branch

“The land of which I humbly present Your Royal Highness with a description is still as deserving of the attention of Europeans as it was when famous in antiquity” – as the German mathematician and cartographer Cansten Niebuhr noted in his description of Arabia, published in Copenhagen in 1772. A large part of his journey, which was financed by the king of Denmark, was in territory that is today Yemen – ancient southern Arabia, a land associated with the Queen of Sheba/Saba, frankincense and great wealth in ancient scriptures. Then as now, scientific inquiry and research was very much an international undertaking; in the same spirit the foundation stone for the German Archaeological Institute was laid in Rome in 1829. After that it was still a long time – almost exactly 150 years – until a branch of the DAI was opened in the south of the Arabian Peninsula.

The DAI founded a branch in Sanaa in 1978; in 1996 the branch was attached to the Orient Department. The DAI's purpose was to investigate the diversity of Southern Arabian culture, though its research activity in Yemen goes back to a much earlier date. It began at the end of the civil war in 1969, when bilateral contacts intensified between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen). As early as 1970 the German Yemen Expedition was dispatched to appraise and document Southern Arabian cultural assets. Further DAI research trips followed in the 1970s. Since the branch opened, about 30 research projects have been conducted. Currently the focus of research lies in the area of ancient water management systems, cultural contacts among Southern Arabian societies, and innovative geodetic methods (3D reconstruction of landscapes). The sanctuary of Sirwah (8th/7th century BC) and Marib dam (6th century BC to 6th century AD) are two especially well known examples of Sabaean culture heritage. Both structures have been severely damaged in the ongoing war in Yemen, like 80 other sites. This tragedy has been unfolding largely unnoticed by the public worldwide.

Although the political situation does not permit work to be done on the ground in Yemen, contact with archaeologists in that country has not been broken off. Indeed, successes in research recently have been due to close cooperation with various international partners and with Yemeni institutions, in particular the General Organization of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM). The Sanaa Branch continues to work intensively towards protecting Yemen's ancient cultural heritage in cooperation with Yemeni partners. At present, research projects and cultural preservation activities are being coordinated from Berlin. Yemeni colleagues are being supported by means of training projects in damage documentation and consolidation measures as well as by the provision of equipment that can be of service in efforts to preserve Yemen's significant monuments.

The director of the Sanaa Branch, Iris Gerlach, is currently investigating with her team the influences of Southern Arabian culture in the region that is today Ethiopia. The Arabian Peninsula and Eastern Africa were closely connected in antiquity with intensive interaction taking place. The DAI's staff hope to be able to carry on investigating these interconnections in the Sanaa Branch again before too long.

The DAI's premises there have offices for the staff and the institute's public library, which holds some 4000 volumes and is the largest archaeological library in Yemen. This makes the institute's headquarters – located in the old town of Sanaa, inscribed as UNESCO world cultural heritage – an important meeting place for researchers from around the world.
How can the cultural richness of the region around Yeha be presented effectively to the public? The archaeologist Iris Gerlach asked herself this question eight years ago. Today, in the northern Ethiopian town of Yeha, a new archaeological museum is structurally complete and is scheduled to open in 2020. Intensive research and planning has been necessary along with a host of training programmes and other organizational measures.
The director of the Sanaa Branch, Iris Gerlach, knows this all too well. She has been investigating the unique archaeological remains in Yeha together with an interdisciplinary and international team. The small town is situated in northern Ethiopia in the Province of Tigray. With the famous stelae of Aksum, the region draws tourists from all round the world.

The German Research Foundation (DFG) recognized the significance of the DAI’s research in Yeha in 2016 when it approved funding for a long-term project. This opened up the prospect of research being conducted there for a period of up to 12 years. The objective of the research is among other things to systematically investigate the cultural contacts between Southern Arabia and the north part of the Horn of Africa in the early first millennium BC.

“From approximately the 9th century BC groups from what is today Yemen migrated to Ethiopia and Eritrea. They brought new cultural and craft techniques with them, their language and writing system, their religion and cult practices. This led to a direct acculturation process of Sabaean and African elements. What emerged was a new culture, termed Ethio-Sabaean, which remained in existence until roughly the middle of the 1st millennium BC. The merging of the two cultures and the change in the political, social and religious spheres of life can be demonstrated at a number of archaeological sites,” explains Iris Gerlach.

The political and religious centre of the newly established community named Diʿamat is Yeha, a site in the north Ethiopian province of Tigray. The plateau of Yeha, with its monumental ancient buildings and sites, is one of the major archaeological cultural landscapes in the Horn of Africa. Excavations conducted so far have yielded new research results and brought to light many finds notable enough for museum display.

Communicating findings obtained by archaeological research is a key component of the DAI’s work. This includes the presentation of the findings in a site museum. What is standard when realizing such a project is cooperation with the host country. The museum is hence being planned, financed and built jointly with Ethiopian colleagues. This also means that local craftspeople and restorers, archaeologists and museum specialists receive vocational and professional training.

The first step of the project was to select a suitable site for the museum – one that was easily accessible for visitors yet did not encroach too much on the archaeological site. The location judged most suitable lay between the inner and outer walls of the monastery compound, within which the Ethio-Sabaean temple stands today.

The choice of location had a bearing on the architectural design. “The one-storey building, 29 metres long and 7 metres wide, had to extend along the wall, close up to it, but not exceeding it in height. That was the only way to guarantee that the existing historical ensemble, consisting of the circuit walls, the church and the Great Temple, would not be dominated by the new building," explains architect Mike Schnelle, who drew up the designs for the museum.

The architectural design was then converted into a museum model that shows three adjacent exhibition rooms with the entrance area on one side and a depot with work rooms for processing finds on the other. As well as serving the exhibition, the museum also has to fulfil other functional criteria and take account of the climatic situation.

Mike Schnelle explains the interior lighting plan: “The front side of the building presents a solid facade pierced only by narrow slits. That way we attract the attention of visitors from the surrounding area to the exhibition inside. The rear facade in contrast has wide, ceiling-high windows that are responsible for indirectly lighting the museum rooms. Individual exhibition objects are highlighted by focused illumination from skylights.”

The museum in Yeha is being built between the inner and outer enclosure walls of the monastery, beside the causeway to the church and the temple. Photo: Mechelke

No History without Research

The director of the Sanaa Branch, Iris Gerlach, knows this all too well. She has been investigating the unique archaeological remains in Yeha together with an interdisciplinary and international team. The small town is situated in northern Ethiopia in the Province of Tigray. With the famous stelae of Aksum, the region draws tourists from all round the world.

The German Research Foundation (DFG) recognized the significance of the DAI’s research in Yeha in 2016 when it approved funding for a long-term project. This opened up the prospect of research being conducted there for a period of up to 12 years. The objective of the research is among other things to systematically investigate the cultural contacts between Southern Arabia and the north part of the Horn of Africa in the early first millennium BC.

“From approximately the 9th century BC groups from what is today Yemen migrated to Ethiopia and Eritrea. They brought new cultural and craft techniques with them, their language and writing system, their religion and cult practices. This led to a direct acculturation process of Sabaean and African elements. What emerged was a new culture, termed Ethio-Sabaean, which remained in existence until roughly the middle of the 1st millennium BC. The merging of the two cultures and the change in the political, social and religious spheres of life can be demonstrated at a number of archaeological sites,” explains Iris Gerlach.

The political and religious centre of the newly established community named Diʿamat is Yeha, a site in the north Ethiopian province of Tigray. The plateau of Yeha, with its monumental ancient buildings and sites, is one of the major archaeological cultural landscapes in the Horn of Africa. Excavations conducted so far have yielded new research results and brought to light many finds notable enough for museum display.

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Ethiopia is one of the poorest regions of the world. At the same time it’s a rich and fascinating cultural and natural landscape. The museum and the other monuments in Yeha will represent a new tourist attraction. Archaeology is an important factor here in regional economic development. “The museum of Yeha hasn’t been conceived just for foreign tourists, however,” Iris Gerlach point out with emphasis. “It’s for a range of indigenous visitor groups, too. School groups and students from all of Ethiopia will be able to learn about their history in the museum thanks to specific objects and models. Another target group is people living in the Yeha region, from whom some of the objects on display come. Exhibitions like this are of great significance for the cultural identity of the region’s inhabitants.” The exhibition in Yeha Museum complies with modern restoration practice, meets museological standards, and presents ongoing and future excavation finds in an up-to-date way. Two of the three exhibition rooms are dedicated to the site’s ancient history. The third room gives information about the region’s ecclesiastical history as well as indigenous traditions.

The construction phase

The foundation stone of the museum was laid in 2012. Local resources were used as far as possible in the construction of the museum. The natural stone for the museum’s walls came from quarries near Yeha. It was transported to the building site by donkey, dressed by local stonemasons and used in the construction by local builders. By involving the local population, the project in Yeha offers them a chance not only to make a living but also to improve their employment prospects on the local job market in a variety of way thanks to vocational training programmes. There is a shortage of skilled craftspeople in Ethiopia. Construction of the museum consequently promotes employment opportunities even after the building project has been finished. Currently the building fabric of the museum has been completed: the stone walls and concrete roof are finished, pre-installation of the electrics has been done, and the windows have been put in. “So there’s still a fair bit of work to do before the opening in two years’ time. But then we will be able to present local history in an appropriate setting,” says Iris Gerlach.

The museum will have a coloured concrete screed flooring...

The Authority of Research and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage in Addis Ababa and the Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau in Mekelle have been conducting research at Yeha (Ethiopia) since 2009 in collaboration with the Sanaa Branch of the German Archaeological Institute and the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. At this site, the joint Ethiopian-German project is investigating among other things the phenomenon of the migration of Southern Arabian population groups to the north part of the Horn of Africa in the early 1st millennium BC. Scientific research in Yeha is supplemented by restoration of the ancient monumental buildings, the development of tourism at the site, and the construction of a local museum. https://www.dainst.org/project/92320
190 years of the DAI

The foundation stone for the German Archaeological Institute was laid in Rome in 1829. The initial idea of a circle of befriended scholars, artists and diplomats to establish a space for studying and publicizing monuments of classical cultures, is a deeply European idea.

In 2019, 190 years after the ‘Instituto di corrispondenza archeologica’ was founded, it is time to pause and look back over what has been achieved and also reflect on what lies ahead. This will be done on 17 May next year at the meeting of the Zentraldirektion (supervisory board) and in the traditional annual report. To mark the institute’s 190th anniversary for the first time all the departments and commissions will provide an insight into the institute’s work.

When the centenary of the German Archaeological Institute was celebrated in the Reichstag in 1929, the institute was seen as an important international communicator. The centennial celebrations were intended to signal understanding among the peoples after the horrors of the First World War. Ninety years later it is important to reflect once more on the role the DAI’s work plays today in a globally connected world as a research institution operating within the area of responsibility of the Federal Foreign Office.
Climate change – Are we living in the Anthropocene?

Climate change is one of the transformation processes that is now writing the history of the Earth. Humans have become the principal influencing factor on the planet’s geological, biological and atmospheric processes. They manipulate nature, interfere in it and change it in a more fundamental way than has ever been registered before in the history of the Earth. For this reason it has been proposed that the era beginning in 1800, or alternatively in 1950, should be termed the Anthropocene – a new, man-made period of history.

At the same time, archaeologists are discussing whether these processes in fact began much earlier. For one thing, human activity already had an impact on the environment in antiquity: deforestation, erosion and salinization of the soil are only some of the factors that can be scientifically established at an early date. And beyond that, humans also in the past reacted to changing environmental conditions: the development of an oasis economy, of irrigation and dam building is evidence of this.

The current climate change has a drastic impact on cultural heritage. The thawing of permafrost leads to the loss of organic material evidence. The expansion of deserts leads to monuments becoming buried or slowly eroded away by sand. Artificial irrigation raises the groundwater table, which in turn results in damage to ancient buildings. Variations in the sea level cause cultural landscapes to be submerged.

Complex human–environment interactions are the focus of many projects by the DAI. A central part in them is played by cooperation with partners from numerous specializations.

FIND OUT MORE IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

WATER, A RESOURCE INDISPENSABLE TO LIFE, HAS HAD A CENTRAL PART TO PLAY IN ALL PHASES OF HUMAN HISTORY.

The Water Management Working Group from the DAI’s Research Cluster 2 investigates innovations in water management.
Not only has Syria’s cultural heritage suffered catastrophically in recent years, but also many of its experts in archaeology, cultural preservation and conservation have had to flee Syria for safety in Turkey. The two-year vocational and specialist training programme Stewards of Cultural Heritage provides them with an opportunity in Turkey to continue their academic and specialist training and their work as researchers and conservators and to acquire further skills in the areas of cultural preservation as well as education and outreach relating to cultural assets. The Stewards of Cultural Heritage programme is based at the DAI’s Istanbul Department, and financed as part of the “Zero Hour” project (“Stunde Null – Eine Zukunft für die Zeit nach der Krise”) with funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

Since October 2016, programme participants in Istanbul have acquired key competences in structural documentation, damage assessment, the preservation of monuments as well as selected archaeological and cultural historical fields, so as to be qualified for a variety of future tasks. At the same time they continue their own studies and research projects. Their projects range from creating an interactive map of natural and cultural heritage sites in the Syrian steppe to preparation of a book designed to inform Syrian children about their country’s rich cultural heritage. The results of the participants’ work will be presented in Istanbul in September 2018.

With your donation you can support Stewards of Cultural Heritage and similar programmes to help impart skills and develop strategies for the preservation of cultural heritage and to make a lasting contribution to cultural preservation in Syria and beyond.