Dear friends,

We have now passed the midway point between the last Congress and the next, to be held in Luxor in November 2019 (see next page) and this is therefore an appropriate moment to take stock of the recent activities of the International Association which are described on the following pages.

Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, the glorious setting for the opening and closing ceremonies at the XIth International Congress, August 2015.

During the opening session at the beginning of the last Congress, in Florence in 2015, I noted that in the seven years that had elapsed since the last event - almost double the four that had become customary - a great deal had changed in the world, with numerous consequences for our subject. Perhaps most obviously Egypt had undergone a revolution in 2011, and remained in state of transition. An economic crisis had hit the world, with repercussions for the funding that keep our subject alive; and globally the digital revolution was transforming the way information - the principle currency for academic researchers including Egyptologists - is gathered and shared, presenting great challenges but also opportunities for us all. Against this backdrop it was wonderful to see, in the papers presented over the following days, the immense variety and depth of research being undertaken by hundreds of specialists around the world. It was particularly fascinating to see the variety of new technologies and techniques that were being used to aggregate, analyze and share Egyptological information, alongside ancient inscriptions and more modern, but nonetheless historical, archival documents created by our predecessors. So many ways, old and new, of setting down and communicating information…

These wider phenomena which we observed in 2015 are still evolving. And as they do so it is perhaps more important than ever that we have an International Association of Egyptologists, and an International Congress to provide a forum for discussions, to share ideas and experiences, and as a potential breeding ground for the kinds of collaborations that are ever-more necessary when funding remains in short supply, but ever more possible while technology provides more opportunities for cooperation than ever before.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2018.

Dr Chris Naunton, President, IAE
Statement against the sale of the statue of Sekhemka

During his address to the opening ceremony of the XIth Congress, the Minister of Antiquities raised the issue of the sale at auction by Northampton Borough Council, UK, of a fine Old Kingdom statue of a non-royal individual named Sekhemka. The Egyptian government and many in the Egyptological and archaeological communities had signaled their opposition to the sale, and in September 2015 the International Association also voiced its objections in a statement posted online (available here https://goo.gl/g4FExx). The trade in antiquities, and the threat it poses to the security of sites and monuments in Egypt remains a cause of grave concern, and the Association is committed to doing everything it can to raising awareness of the issues, and to supporting our colleagues within the Ministry of Antiquities in their efforts to prevent its damaging effects.

An image of the statue of Sekhemka, presented at the opening ceremony of the XIth International Congress by the then-Minister of Antiquities, Prof Dr Mamdouh Eldamaty

XIIth International Congress of Egyptologists, Luxor, 9 – 14 November 2019

Those who were present at the opening ceremony in Florence will know that the then-Minister of Antiquities of Egypt, Prof Dr Mamdouh Eldamaty, announced that the next Congress would take place in Luxor in 2019. We are delighted now to confirm that the next event will take place in Luxor, from 9 to 14 November 2019. Provisionally, it has been agreed that the main theme of the Congress should be ‘Thebes and Upper Egypt through the ages’.

It has become the custom that every other Congress should be held in Egypt, and many of you will know that it was the intention that the XIth event should take place there however due to complications arising from the political situation there at the time this was not possible. We are delighted therefore that the Minister committed his support to hosting the event next time. Prof Dr Mamdouh’s successor as Minister, Dr Khaled el-Enany – to whom we offer our congratulations and good wishes in his role – has taken over responsibility for the next ICE. An organizing committee, led by Prof Dr Ola el-Aguizy of Cairo University, has been established to oversee preparations. Further details will be posted to the IAE website in due course.

Online Egyptological Bibliography

The IAE founded with the primary task of being a supervisory and funding body for Annual Egyptological Bibliography (now the Online Egyptological Bibliography, the OEB). The project, now based at Oxford University in collaboration with the University of Munich, was under the supervision of Prof Dr John Baines from 2009 to 2017. He has provided a report on recent activities and the current situation which is available at https://goo.gl/YGWZs6.

The Bibliography is an indispensable resource for our subject, but the task of incorporating new publications, maintaining and updating records, and making them available online, is very substantial and requires considerable support. Members of the Association who are unable to access the bibliography through their institutions can opt to gain access through their subscription to the IAE; in this way the IAE passes on a proportion of subscription fees received each year to support the cost of running the Bibliography. In addition, when funds have been available, the Association has also provided one-off grants to extend the support it can offer. A grant of €10,000 was made in August 2015, immediately prior to the Congress, and further grants of €5,000 were made in November 2016 and December 2017. These grants have been extremely valuable in the updating process.
Professor John Baines reports on the ongoing work of the Online Egyptological Bibliography (OEB) during a keynote lecture at the XIth International Congress

Statement opposing proposed changes to US government policy

In February 2017 the Council of the Association issued a statement opposing the following proposed changes to US government policy, on the grounds that they might potentially be damaging to our subject:

1) The Executive Order issued by the President of the United States on 27 January, which prevents nationals from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, all predominantly Muslim countries, from entering the US.

2) The proposal to eliminate the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and to reduce support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Many of the great advances in our subject have been made by scholars in the United States. The continuation of this work depends on financial support, much of which up to now has been provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Any reduction in the support the US government provides to these funds threatens the vital, ongoing work of Egyptologists in the US, which would have a significant impact on the progress of Egyptology worldwide. As such, the International Association of Egyptologists opposes the proposed reduction in support for these funds in the strongest possible terms.

The full text of the statement was posted to the Association’s website in February 2017 and is available here: https://goo.gl/MkHeedd.

Statement opposing the closure of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) as an independent entity

NINO has been one of the most prestigious and important departments for the study of ancient Egypt and the Near East since its foundation in 1939. Countless scholars have carried out their research and teaching there, and many more students, some of whom are now among the leading international experts, have enjoyed the privilege of using one of the foremost Egyptological research libraries in the world, and the largest in the Low Countries. Thousands of scientific monographs and articles, many published in the Institute’s own series, have arisen from the research undertaken there. Altogether NINO has made an enormous and vital contribution to our understanding of the ancient past, and the development of some of the most significant complex societies in the history of mankind.

The dispersal of its assets and the loss of its expert staff would drastically reduce the possibility of the vital connections between scholars and their material being made, and consequently the likelihood of first-rate research being undertaken. If the University of Leiden is
to maintain its status as an outstanding contributor to international scholarship in the study of ancient Egypt and the Near East, it is vital that NINO is allowed to continue to thrive as an independent institute. Its loss would be a tragedy for Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern studies. Furthermore, its closure in times of acute danger to the cultural heritage of certain parts of the Near East implies a disregard and ignorance towards the needs of national and international students and scholars in their efforts to research and protect this heritage.

The International Association of Egyptologists opposes, and urges a reconsideration of, the proposed closure of NINO in the strongest possible terms.

The full text of the statement was posted to the Association’s website in June 2017 and is available here: https://goo.gl/k3hfMz.

Finances and Membership

At the beginning of December 2017 the Association had 331 fully paid-up members, including 314 ‘professional’ and ‘student’ members and 12 ‘associates’. This compares with a total 670 (668 and 2) in August 2015 (ICE Florence). It is clear that many members join during the year in which the Congress is held as they would otherwise be ineligible to present the results of their work at the event, and this is entirely understandable. As with any membership organization, and particularly one like the IAE which depends so heavily on subscriptions to continue its work, we would like to increase membership numbers. In order to do this we must incentivize more people to join, or at least to renew their subscriptions in the years in between Congresses.

As anyone who has worked for such an organization knows this is never easy. But we must do everything we can to improve numbers, and the Association’s financial position, and the contribution it makes to the field of Egyptology.

We need more Egyptologists to ‘buy into’ what the International Association has to offer and in order for that to happen we will need to show more clearly the good work that it does, in advocating for Egyptological causes (e.g. by opposing the sale of the statue of Sekhemka), and by supporting the ICE, and OEB, and potentially other projects in future.

We are also currently reviewing the eligibility criteria for membership of the Association, and a working party composed of members of the IAE Council has been established to look into the issue. As part of this process we will inevitably have to consider how we define ‘professional Egyptologist’, and how we can be as inclusive as possible, so as to recognize the great diversity of backgrounds and approaches among practicing Egyptologists, while also ensuring that all those with professional membership are bound to uphold certain standards in their work. A few thoughts on ‘How should we define ‘Egyptologist’? have already been provided by the President, Dr Naunton, here: https://goo.gl/1S8iGh. We will of course announce any changes that are made in due course.

TO BECOME A MEMBER of the International Association of Egyptologists, or to renew your subscription, please visit:

http://www.iae-egyptology.org/

Thanks

Thanks for assistance in producing this newsletter are owed to Prof Dr Laure Pantalacci, Vice-President of the IAE, Prof Dr Ursula Verhoeven, Secretary General, and Assistant Secretary Dr Silke Roth, for their continuing hard work, support and encouragement. Thanks also to Prof Dr John Baines for supplying the reports on the OEB.