# Valdemar Schmidt and the Foundation of Egyptology in Denmark

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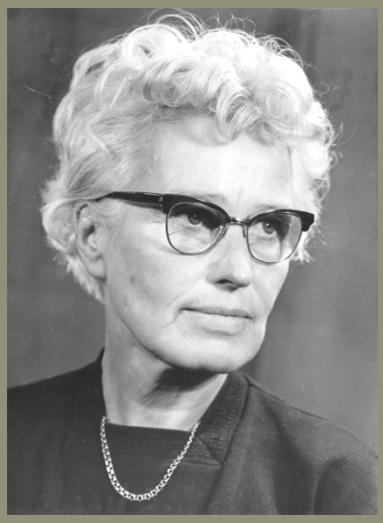
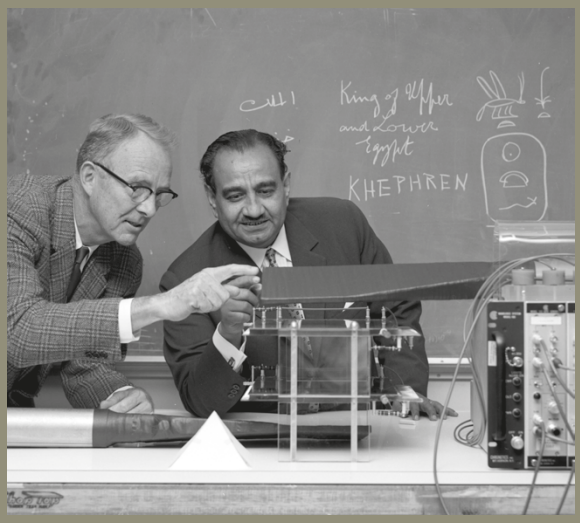
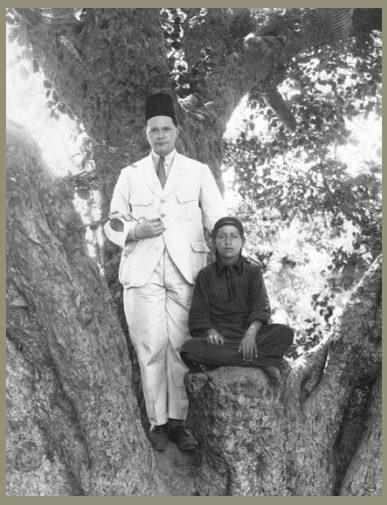
# Addressing Diversity

## Inclusive Histories of Egyptology





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Jaromir Malek



The volume is dedicated to the memory of Jaromir Malek (1943–2023).

Among his many achievements, Jaromir trailblazed an extensive use of Egyptological archives to explain the intricate histories of our discipline. He never avoided complexity, and both supported and challenged his colleagues in equal measure to make us do our best.

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# Valdemar Schmidt and the Foundation of Egyptology in Denmark

Andreas Alm

The Danish Egyptologist Valdemar Schmidt (1836–1925) was no stranger to his contemporaries within the field, and some of them were likely to run into him occasionally, either during his many visits to Egypt or at one of the various international congresses. Or perhaps they would bump into him in one of the numerous museums with Egyptian collections where he always enjoyed spending his days. Nevertheless, today his name remains unknown to most, and those who might be familiar with him most likely associate him with Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, where he is acknowledged for having laid the foundations of the Egyptian collection in 1892. However, his contribution to Danish Egyptology reaches far beyond the Glyptotek. As one of his students and the first female Egyptologist in Denmark, Maria Mogensen (1882–1932), put it in 1925:

> Professor Schmidt has brought Egyptology to Denmark. He is thus – let me call it – a pioneer, who was privileged to lay the foundation stone to the study of a new subject, in which he for many years stood as the first and only representative at home.[1]

Not only was he a pioneer in Egyptology, but he also laid the foundation stone of the study of Assyriology in Denmark. In 1874, he started to teach these two subjects as a privatdocent (non-salaried lecturer) at the University of Copenhagen. In 1883 he was appointed the temporary position of external lecturer in eastern philology, a position he would keep until he was tenured in 1916, at the age of 80. He retired in 1922 and passed away three years later.[2] In this paper, I will examine Schmidt's career and what it meant to 'bring Egyptology to Denmark', a small country in the northern outskirts of Europe, and what conditions, concerns and challenges he faced in order to place the cornerstone of what was a new discipline for the country.

## Becoming the first Egyptologist in Denmark

Johan Henrik Gamst Valdemar Schmidt was born in the small Jutish town of Hammel in Denmark on 7 January 1836. His father, Jens Christian Schmidt, had started out as a Latin teacher in the city of Horsens but eventually accepted an offer to become the parish priest in Hammel, Voldby and Søby in 1832 – a most suitable position considering he descended from a long line of parish priests.

[1] Maria Mogensen's epilogue in Schmidt 1925: 121.
[2] Bagh 2021: 191.

Eventually he became the priest of Tyrsted, just outside Horsens, where he would remain for the rest of his life. Young Valdemar spent much of his youth in Horsens where he attended school 1846–1854 and, according to himself, he was constantly top of his class.[3]

It was most likely expected of him to walk the same path in life as his father, and there was no one at the time who could have imagined he would end up having the career he eventually did. At the time of his birth, Egyptology was still in its infancy and only fourteen years had passed since hieroglyphs had received their initial decipherment by Champollion, opening an entirely new world for scholars, and diminished the earlier dependency on the classical writers in accessing the secrets of pharaonic Egypt. Whatever the expectations were, the 18-year-old Valdemar moved to Copenhagen in 1854 to commence theological studies at the university, something he remembered taking very seriously. However, in his spare time, he was constantly on the watch for alternative disciplines that could be of interest to him, and he attended the lectures of both archaeologist Jens Jacob Asmussen Worsaae (1821–1885) and art historian Niels Laurits Høyen (1798–1870).[4]

After graduating in theology in 1859, his mind was already set on something different from the priesthood, an objective he was aware would not be possible to achieve in Denmark. He therefore planned a study trip to Greece, Egypt and Palestine together with his friend Henrik Scharling, who also had graduated in theology, and as he was waiting for a reply regarding an application for a grant, he utilised the time to study Arabic, Turkish, French and Italian.[5] He was awarded a small sum of money and, with some financial support from his father, he left a rainy Danish summer in late August of 1860, to meet up with Scharling in Trieste, and together they spent the autumn traveling through Greece. In December, they boarded the steamship that would take them down to Egypt and, after celebrating Christmas in the middle of the Mediterranean, the ship finally reached Alexandria. In the early morning hours of 26 December 1860, the 24-year-old Valdemar Schmidt walked his first steps in the country that would become one of his main concerns for the next sixty-five years. He would return another thirty-three times during his lifetime.[6]

Recognizing their unique opportunity, the pair made the most of their time to truly experience Egypt and all it had to offer. They visited several of the ancient cities and temples and, after having climbed to the top of the Great Pyramid, Schmidt concluded that the Giza plateau, without competition, was the most interesting place on Earth.[7] During his stay in Cairo, he also endeavoured to visit

[3] Schmidt 1925: 41.
[4] Schmidt 1925: 44.
[5] Schmidt 1925: 45.
[6] According to the editor of his autobiography, Carl Dumreicher, in Schmidt 1925: 118.
[7] Schmidt 1863: 196.

Auguste Mariette's new museum in Bulaq as often as he could.[8] As travelogues from Egypt were becoming popular at the time[9], he decided to publish his account of the trip, titled *Reise I Graekenland, Aegypten Og Det Hellige Land* (Travel in Greece, Egypt and the Holy Land), in 1863, making it his first publication. This book, together with the architect H.C. Stilling's 1869 book *Reise i Aegypten* (Travel in Egypt) was for many Danes the first detailed introduction to Egypt.[10]

A visit to Egypt may have been a good start, but it did not make him an Egyptologist, and the possibility of becoming one in Denmark did not exist in the 1860s. Schmidt knew he would have to study somewhere else in Europe, either in Germany or France, but a lack of money was an obstacle that needed to be overcome. A solution presented itself on his way home from the trip when he stopped in Dresden to meet up with his parents, and received the news that a relative had recently died, leaving his father with a considerable sum of money as an inheritance. His father was a simple and ascetic man who always put the needs of his family first, and he promised to use the inherited capital to support his son's Egyptological studies. It is with a grateful tone Schmidt remembers his father in his autobiography, and there is no doubt that without the father's support, the life and career of the son would have turned out differently.

With his father's backing, Schmidt began to study Egyptology with Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894) in Berlin. He recalled how he met up with Brugsch a few days a week, and together they studied copies of papyri that Brugsch had obtained from London and which he was always kind enough to lend to his grateful student.[11] Brugsch seems to have been a good teacher and whenever they both were alone together, Schmidt felt he could always ask any question that was on his mind, and together they would eventually get it all sorted out. While staying in Berlin, he also took the opportunity to study Greek art with Professor Karl Friederichs, hinting it would be of good use for the study of Egypt's Hellenistic period.[12]

His time in Berlin ended in 1862, and Schmidt, according to his autobiography written sixty-seven years later, now considered himself an Egyptologist. As such he commenced a study tour through Europe, visiting the Egyptian collections in various museums in southern Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France. He spent three weeks at the Louvre, where he met Emmanuel de Rougé (1811–1872) for the first time, and whose lectures in Coptic he would later attend. After the trip, he settled in Paris, where he would live during the 1864 war between Denmark and Prussia, and he put his French-language skills to use by translating Danish

[8] Schmidt 1863: 188.
[9] Thompson 2015: 261.
[10] Holm-Rasmussen 2005: 26.
[11] Schmidt 1925: 47.
[12] Schmidt 1925: 47.

newspapers into French to counter what the Danish community in Paris considered to be Prussian disinformation regarding the war. After the war, he took off to Great Britain, Leiden, and then back to Britain again where he made the acquaintance of several scholars.[13] In 1866, he had prepared what was supposed to be his first scholarly publication about ancient Egypt and revised the manuscript together with his friend Ernest Grégoire in Paris. To print hieroglyphs was, however, an expensive enterprise and the economic factors hindered him in getting it published, a situation that would reoccur on many occasions throughout his life.[14]

Fig. 1: A young Valdemar Schmidt.

[13] Schmidt 1925: 53–55.
[14] Schmidt 1925: 56–58.

In the second half of the 1860s, Schmidt had become an experienced traveller and had already lived several years abroad. Thanks to the financial support from his father, he had been able visit Egypt, study the Egyptian (and Assyrian) languages and writing systems in Germany and France, visit several of the European museum collections and made numerous international friends and acquaintances. But could his newly acquired skills provide a future for him in Denmark? He himself had started to have doubts and realised he might have to keep the doors open to other alternatives.

**Prehistoric archaeology, geography and the Old Testament**

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the scarcity of written sources in Denmark imposed a limitation on the possibilities to study the country's pre-Christian history. A solution to the problem had been proposed by the antiquarian Christian Jürgensen Thomsen in Copenhagen who created a system by dividing prehistory into three different periods – the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages – and organizing the artefacts in his museum according to these principles, thus creating a relative chronology through comparative study.[15] Thomsen came to be regarded as the father of prehistoric archaeology, something that became both popular and necessary in Denmark, as it provided the key to study the earliest history of the country. Thomsen's student, Jens Jacob Asmussen Worsaae, expanded on the methodology and, as previously mentioned, his lectures were attended by the young Valdemar Schmidt. Schmidt was inspired and developed his own interest for the field, and in his 1863 travelogue, he could not help but compare the collections in the European museums with the ones in Denmark, and conclude that the Danish museums surpassed them all regarding the placement of material in a systematic and scientific order.[16]

To be a pioneer of something often implied being surrounded by people who were not familiar with the subject matter or to what it could contribute, and in 1867 Schmidt had started having doubts whether the Danish state would ever support his Egyptological undertakings.[17] His interest in prehistoric archaeology, his language skills and international experience were more in demand, and an invitation from the chamberlain Frederik Wolfhagen gave him the task of arranging the archaeological artefacts from Denmark at the world exhibition in Paris. He saw this as a great opportunity and instead of pulling back once he had completed his assignment, he decided to stay, take part in the exhibition and help until the event was over.[18] It became a personal success for him and, after many years abroad, he noticed how easy it was for him to communicate with the visitors, often in their

[15] Risbjerg Eskildsen 2012: 25.
[16] Schmidt 1863: 2.
[17] Schmidt 1925: 60.
[18] Schmidt 1925: 60.

native languages – a social skill that would serve him well for the rest of his career.[19] He also took it upon himself to write the official account of the Danish exhibition, working on it in the evenings, and published it in 1868 under the title *Le Danemark à l'exposition universelle de 1867: étudié principalement au point de vue de l'archéologie*.[20] His contribution was noticed in Copenhagen, and he was awarded a knighthood of Dannebrogordenen.[21]

As he still deemed a career within Egyptology improbable, he decided to play it safe and keep focusing on prehistoric archaeology, at least for the time being. The friendship with Worsaae, who he had worked together with in Paris, grew stronger the following years and together they would visit several of the archaeological congresses in Europe. At the 1868 Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology in Norwich, Schmidt proposed that the next congress should be held in Copenhagen, which was unanimously agreed upon, and he and Worsaae worked hard that year to plan for the upcoming event.[22]

Worsaae served as president and Schmidt as General Secretary at the 1869 Congress of Anthropology and Archaeology in Copenhagen. It was another personal success for him and this time he was awarded a Professor's title for his service.[23] Once again he took it upon himself to write and publish the official account of the 1869 congress, but the publication was delayed until 1875, six years after the congress took place, which became an embarrassment for Denmark and something for which he took a lot of heat for in the press.[24] The main reason for the delay was that he had been working on his dissertation as well as another book that would be published in two volumes (1872 and 1877), and which remains the main work of his career.

Despite doubts, the doctoral dissertation was finished in 1872 and titled *Indledning til Syriens historie i oldtiden efter ikke-bibelske kilder* (Introduction to the history of Syria in antiquity according to non-biblical sources). The following year he successfully defended it at the Philosophical Faculty, earning him his doctor's degree. If prehistoric archaeology had secured an alternative career path as well as allowing him to establish connections and friendships with scholars such as Worsaae, the title of his dissertation hints another of his main interests – the lands and people of the Old Testament.

He had decided to make use of new original sources that the excavations from Egypt and other locations had provided, to shed new light on ancient Syria, on matters that the Bible and the Greco-Roman authors had remained silent. For

[19] Schmidt 1925: 62.
[20] Schmidt 1868.
[21] Bornholms Tidende, 20 February 1873.
[22] Schmidt 1925: 64–65.
[23] Fædrelandet, 6 October 1869.
[24] Dagbladet (København), 3 January 1874. One of the members of the congress publicly criticised him in the newspapers.

some Egyptologists in the nineteenth century, Bible-related questions were not uncommon, as ancient Egypt was one of the biblical lands and many hoped that new discoveries in Egypt could be used to gain fresh knowledge about the Bible.[25] Schmidt, who had grown up as the son of a priest and earned himself a degree in theology, always kept an interest in the Old Testament and considered it one of the primary springboards for his scholarly inquiry. As he himself explained,

> '[i]t is through the study of the books from the Old Testament, which the author has been occupied with for many years, that has led him into the historical-geographical studies'.[26]

And to the Danish audience his dissertation demonstrated one potential use for Egyptology, as was pointed out in a newspaper article reporting on it:

> Hopefully he [Schmidt] will one day be employed by the university, as his discipline wins more and more ground every day, and studies of it become very important in many ways; for example in regards of explaining many things in Holy Scripture.[27]

The same year as he completed the dissertation, he also published the first volume of what would become the main work of his career *Assyriens og Aegyptens gamle historie eller Historisk-Geographiske undersøgelser om det Gamle Testamentes lande og folk* (The ancient history of Assyria and Egypt or Historical-Geographical studies of the lands and people of the Old Testament). Here too the biblical relevance of these countries was underlined. In 1914 he revisited the topic and published a book about the neighbours of Israel and their relationship to one another.[28] He also completed manuscripts on the topic that, due to a lack of financial support, were unfortunately never published. In an application to the Church and Education Ministry in 1877 he applied for funds to publish a book on the Old Testament prophets based on new sources, which does not seem to have been granted.[29] In 1896, his knowledge of Latin came to good use when he translated a manuscript of Egeria's pilgrimage, discovered in a monastery in Arezzo in 1884, into Danish. The manuscript provided a fourth century description of biblical lands.[30]

Apart from prehistoric archaeology and studies of the Old Testament, there was yet one other discipline that early had caught his attention and would have a significant influence on his scholarship – geography. He had been part of the

[25] Gange 2006: 1084, Gange 2013, Marchand 2009: xxiv.
[26] Schmidt, 1877a: iii.
[27] Bornholms Tidende, 20 February 1873.
[28] Schmidt 1914.
[29] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Det Kongelige Ministerium for Kirke- og Undervisningsvæsendet, 31 March 1877. Danish National Archives.
[30] Schmidt 1896.

Danish commission to the International Geographical Congress in Paris in 1875, and the following year he was one of the founding members of the Royal Danish Geographical Society. This society had an important part to play throughout his career, and he remained a lifelong board member and served as vice president during 1916–1922.[31] The society hosted on a regular basis events where he would lecture on a variety of topics, often connecting his various interests in the most creative ways. In December 1887, for example, he lectured about the annunciation to the shepherds and its significance for geographical history.[32] In March 1889, the topic concerned what recent geographic research had to say about the early stages of Jewish history, focusing on the Mesopotamian city of Ur, whence the patriarch Abraham is said to come.[33] In 1881 he lectured on the geographical knowledge of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Phoenicians and their conceptions of the world.[34] And, of course, he frequently reported on the latest discoveries that were being made in Egypt.[35]

Schmidt also contributed to the journal published by the society. In the first issue he wrote an article on the possibility that the Phoenicians had arrived in the Americas, a popular subject in the 1870s that had turned up at the first Americanist congress in Nancy 1875, which Schmidt attended (he would attend several more Americanist congresses during his career). In the article, he expressed hopes for the future, urging all countries of the world to properly record and sort their relics and antiquities and then many of the disputed questions in the 'history of geography', as well as other fields, could finally be solved.[36]

His work attracted some attention in Denmark and in 1874 he started teaching Egyptology and Assyriology as a privatdocent at the University of Copenhagen and in 1879 he was awarded annual financial support from the state for his services.[37] Egyptology had uncertain beginnings in Denmark but through Schmidt's diligent work and demonstration of its potential applications in several areas, it was finally getting some recognition.

**International cooperation and access to sources**

All scholarship requires access to sources, Egyptology and Assyriology being no exceptions. In 1877, Schmidt remarked on the pace at which new potential sources were being excavated in Egypt and elsewhere, many of which had been hitherto unexamined, and he wrote that never before had it been so easy to say or write

[31] Christiansen 2005: 10, 180.
[32] Dagblad (København), 11 December 1887.
[33] Skive Folkeblad, 3 March 1889.
[34] Fædrelandet, 6 April 1881.
[35] Nationaltidende, 1 February 1887.
[36] Schmidt 1877b: 155.
[37] Svendborgs Avis. Sydfyns Tidende, 29 December 1879.

something that no one else had previously said or written.[38] The potential was great – but only for those privileged enough to be able to get hold of the sources, which became a major concern for the Danish Egyptologist.

Something he had learned already while attending Worsaae's archaeological lectures in the 1850s was that every source, no matter how small or trivial it might seem to be on its own, could contain potential knowledge when it was put together systematically with other sources.[39] These principles of prehistoric archaeology are generally not considered to have been applied to Egyptology until Flinders Petrie's excavations in the 1880s.[40] Yet, even if Schmidt's practice of Egyptology obviously differed immensely from that of Flinders Petrie, these principles always remained the basis of his own scholarship and he made the following remarks concerning the use of sources in his dissertation:

> At first sight would really most of these appear insignificant or without great yield or content for history, but through closer examination one will find, that almost all of them contain small contributions that – no matter how vanishingly small they are on their own – when they are combined, they will cast a clear light on many conditions and many periods of time in which the real historical documents leave us in uncertainty.[41]

He underlined the necessity of making sources accessible to everyone, everywhere. Few had the financial means to travel to Egypt, or any of the European museums to see the monuments and artefacts on their own, and the solution, as Schmidt saw it, was to make everything available through publication and circulation of transcriptions and facsimiles:

> The ancient monuments with inscriptions that have been discovered in the Orient are scattered over almost the entire world; but since it cannot be expected from everyone to be able to travel around and transcribe the inscriptions that he would have use for in his studies, all enthusiasts of these studies agreed long ago that nothing would serve scholarship more than reliable publications of all the oriental inscriptions that are scattered around in public and private collections.[42]

The idea that something essential and ground-breaking would surface out of the Egyptian soil, after having been buried for thousands of years, only to be reburied in someone's private collection without even being properly documented, was a matter for worry. The circulation of publications would also help break-down any geographic restrictions and limitations for scholars, adjust inequalities within

[38] Schmidt 1877a: II.
[39] Worsaae, 1849: 156.
[40] Colla, 2007: 8, Reid, 2002: 177, Stevenson, 2019: 113–14, Dodson, 2021: 112.
[41] Schmidt, 1872a: 14.
[42] Schmidt, 1879: 1.

Egyptology, and minimise the advantage some countries had over others. If all the European governments took their responsibility, which they admittedly had done to a certain extent, and funded the publication of the inscriptions, more scholars would be able to access the sources:

> [I]t becomes more and more possible – thanks to the many faithful transcriptions of inscriptions, that are being published by the governments of Europe's cultural countries – to study the ancient oriental records in other places than in London and Paris, than in Cairo and the rest of Egypt, than in Leiden, Turin and Berlin.[43]

Schmidt decided this was a joint enterprise that he and Denmark should be part of, and he applied for funding from the government and the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters to publish the inscriptions from the Royal Antiquity collection. Comparatively few individuals in each country had the knowledge to accomplish these objectives and it was important that they all were willing to do their part for scholarship.[44] He received the funding and published transcriptions of the Royal collection in 1879, both in French and in Danish.[45] Over the years, he would also publish material from several other Danish collections.

However, even if it would be more convenient to have all source material accessible in the form of a book, this was by no means the prevailing reality. In order to keep up with the progress of Egyptology, Schmidt had to leave Denmark on an almost yearly basis to visit museums and international congresses, something he did most willingly. These perpetual travels and museum visits became another essential part of his Egyptological activities, and something he became well known for.

Both his time and money were limited, and after his promotion in 1883, time became even more constrained.[46] But since he wanted to see as much as possible, he was always able to make the most of the resources at hand, owing much to the ascetic nature inherited from his father. He travelled mostly by night which meant he could save money from not having to pay for accommodation, and he saved time to spend at the museums during the opening hours.[47] As he wrote to his student Henry Madsen (1881–1921) when he was about to start his travels in 1903: '[t]ravelling by night, visiting museums by day […] A few times I might get to a

[43] Schmidt, 1877a: II.

[44] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Det Kongelige Ministerium for Kirke- og Undervisningsvæsendet, 31 March.
1877. Danish National Archives.

[45] Schmidt 1879.

[46] In several letters he complains about how much time the University takes up and that he cannot wait to visit Egypt, the Glyptotek etc.

[47] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Henry Madsen, 5 August 1903; 24 August 1903; 30 April 1908. Royal library in Copenhagen.

bed but I do not know where'.[48] These simple ways he kept even as he aged and, according to an interview he gave in 1910, at the age of 74, he still preferred to travel third class and usually never ate anything more than some bread he had brought with him from home. Additionally, he also emphasised that he never ate anything during a museum's opening hours.[49] When he arrived at museums, he always wanted to go through them completely, from end to end, preferably not on Sundays, as there were then more visitors in the museums, making it harder to keep focus.[50] Even at times when the working environment was less pleasant, for example when the museum in Leiden was being renovated and there was no heat (the stone floors certainly did not make the situation any better), he still did what he had come for.[51]

After Flinders Petrie began his excavations for the EEF, the pace of Egyptology turned up a notch. The annual finds were usually exhibited in London before they were shipped off to subscribing institutions, and Schmidt tried to visit these exhibitions if he had opportunity to do so. This became especially urgent after the Americans became more interested in Egyptian collections and objects crossed the Atlantic Ocean, something Schmidt himself never did. In 1909, he wrote to a friend that he was on his way to see Petrie's exhibition before the objects were divided between the subscribers and remarked 'most of them are in America as usual'.[52] At this time he was also looking to purchase Egyptian objects for Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, which put him in competition with the Americans.[53]

The constant travelling and Spartan lifestyle turned him into something of a caricature of a savant, and sensational anecdotes started to form around his persona. Most of them were of course too astonishing to be true, but his colleagues and students enjoyed telling them. One story claimed that he had forgotten to cancel his daily bread delivery at the baker before he took off to Egypt, resulting in a mountain of bread rolls covering his door when he came home. Once he had met a colleague in Paris and told him he was on his way to Budapest but decided to go home to Copenhagen to check his mail first. He could sometimes arrive late for his university lectures and apologise by saying he had just arrived from Egypt.[54] There was even a song about him, written by a colleague and sung for his seventieth birthday, about how he travelled back and forth between various

[48] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Henry Madsen, 5 August 1903. Royal library in Copenhagen.
[49] Svendborg avis. Sydfyns Tidende, 7 April 1910.
[50] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Henry Madsen, 22 July 1900. Royal library in Copenhagen.
[51] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Henry Madsen, 2 February 1907. Royal library in Copenhagen.
[52] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Jens Lorenzen, 29 June 1909. Royal library in Copenhagen.
[53] Stevenson 2019: 114.
[54] Nationaltidende, 6 January 1916.

places, from Moscow to Rome, Berlin, Algiers, Cairo, London, Jerusalem and so on.[55]

Fig. 2: Valdemar Schmidt, Maria Mogensen and Mathilius Schack Elo at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.

**Valdemar Schmidt and Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek**

A well-maintained museum collection consisting of original objects and artefacts was essential in the study of ancient Egypt and to train the next generation of Egyptologists. Schmidt recalled in his autobiography how he, at the time of his first visit to Egypt, had contacted Christian Jürgensen Thomsen and asked if he would be interested in acquiring some Egyptian artefacts for his National Museum, but Thomsen was at the time in no position to spend that kind of money.[56] Schmidt was still able to make his first deal and he bought two bricks with the Ramses II's stamp, but they were lost on his way home as the ship stranded on the Netherlandish coast.[57]

Three decades later the situation had changed, and a new opportunity had presented itself. In July 1892, Danish newspapers reported that 47 crates of Egyptian

[55] Nationaltidende, 6 January 1916.
[56] Schmidt 1925: 88.
[57] Schmidt 1925: 87–88.

artefacts had arrived at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, bought by Valdemar Schmidt on behalf of the brewer, art collector and founder of the Glyptotek, Carl Jacobsen.[58] Jacobsen had put a significant sum of money at Schmidt's disposal, intended for the purchase of artefacts from Egypt, and over the course of fifty days he had managed to buy around five hundred pieces of artworks, making sure there was a great variety covering most materials and historical periods.[59]

Jacobsen had started collecting Egyptian artefacts in 1882, when he bought a mummy and coffin from the Bulaq museum, and the collection grew modestly over the next decade. He donated his collection to the Danish state in 1888 on the condition they provided a fitting building to house it.[60] Schmidt and Jacobsen had met for the first time as young men in Paris in 1866, when Schmidt had guided Jacobsen through the Egyptian collection at the Louvre.[61] Over the next decades they met several times and in 1887 Jacobsen arranged an expedition to Greece together with several Danish archaeologists and art historians, Schmidt being one of them.[62] The trip turned into a starting point for collaboration between the two men and the following year Schmidt contributed to a guidebook for the Glyptotek with a chapter about eastern sculptures.[63]

The Egyptian collection at the Glyptotek was not the first one in Denmark. There had been a few before, consisting of the Royal collection, Thorvaldsen's Museum and Museum Münterianum. The Royal collection went back to King Frederik III (r. 1648–1670) who initiated it in 1653 and included an Egyptian coffin. The collection grew and moved several times until it became a part of the National Museum in 1892.[64] Thorvalden's museum consisted of the collection made by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, who had lived several decades of his life in Rome. When he decided to return to Copenhagen in 1838, he brought with him his art collection that contained around 400 smaller Egyptian artefacts he had bought in Italy. After his death a museum building was completed to house the collection.[65] Museum Münterianum consisted of antiquities that Bishop Friederich Münter (1761–1830) had acquired in his lifetime, including a collection from Egypt in 1829.[66] Schmidt published a catalogue of this collection in 1910.[67]

[58] Bornholms Tidende, 9 July 1892.
[59] Jørgensen 2015: 44.
[60] Bagh 2021: 194.
[61] Glamann 1995: 111.
[62] Jørgensen 2008: 167.
[63] Schmidt 1888: 182–191.
[64] Bagh, 2021: 193.
[65] Bagh 2021: 193.
[66] Schmidt 1925: 56.
[67] Schmidt 1910.

Up until Jacobsen's death in early 1914, and the outbreak of World War I later that year, Schmidt would travel to Egypt on several occasions to buy artefacts for the Glyptotek and Jacobsen would brag about how his collection, compared to others, only contained the best artefacts, owing a lot to the fact that he had the best scholars to aid him, Schmidt being among them.[68] Academic Egyptologists and archaeologists played leading roles in the antiquities trade in the nineteenth century, often lending their expertise to the purchase of objects for museums and private collections.[69] However, Schmidt did not have an entirely free hand, as he had to fulfil the wishes of his client to the best of his abilities. Jacobsen had a special interest in large objects and wanted either several large ones or one gigantic – a so called 'grand monument' as Schmidt described it to his student H.O. Lange (1863–1943) – that he could place in the main hall just as had been done in the British Museum or the Louvre.[70] Schmidt would eventually acquire such a grand monument for Jacobsen. In 1910, he accompanied the archaeologist James Quibell to Saqqara, riding on a donkey at the age of 74, to have a look at some mastabas that had just been cleared of sand. He chose some reliefs that were cut out for him and brought to the Museum in Cairo for sale. The museum chose to keep some of them, and the rest was sent to Copenhagen,[71] so the result was something of a disappointment, as most of the best reliefs were retained in Cairo.[72] Schmidt also kept an eye out for smaller pieces and with the help of his friend Alexander Dingli he was able to obtain some terracotta figurines in 1894. Jacobsen had initially not been too impressed, but when an expert in Hellenistic art, Professor Theodor Schreiber from Leipzig, visited several years later, Schmidt seized the opportunity and showed him the figurines. He was astonished and explained their significance to Jacobsen who immediately found a better place for them in the museum.[73] Buying Egyptian artefacts was anything but cheap and the scarcity of money was a reoccurring subject in the letter correspondence regarding the trade, and Schmidt noticed how Jacobsen frequently complained about it.[74] Especially when both the Glyptotek and the brewery were expanding at the turn of the century, it became more difficult to spare the money.[75]

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[68] Dannebrog (København), 20 January 1899.

[69] Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 42.

[70] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to H.O. Lange, 8 March 1900. Royal library in Copenhagen; He also pointed it out in letters to his other student Henry Madsen. For example, he wrote that Jacobsen really liked Grand monuments and was willing to make sacrifices to get them in 28 May 1907. Royal library in Copenhagen.

[71] Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 50.

[72] Jørgensen 2015: 94.

[73] Schmidt 1925: 96–97.

[74] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to H.O. Lange, 24 January 1900. Royal library in Copenhagen.

[75] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to H.O. Lange, 21 June 1900. Royal library in Copenhagen.

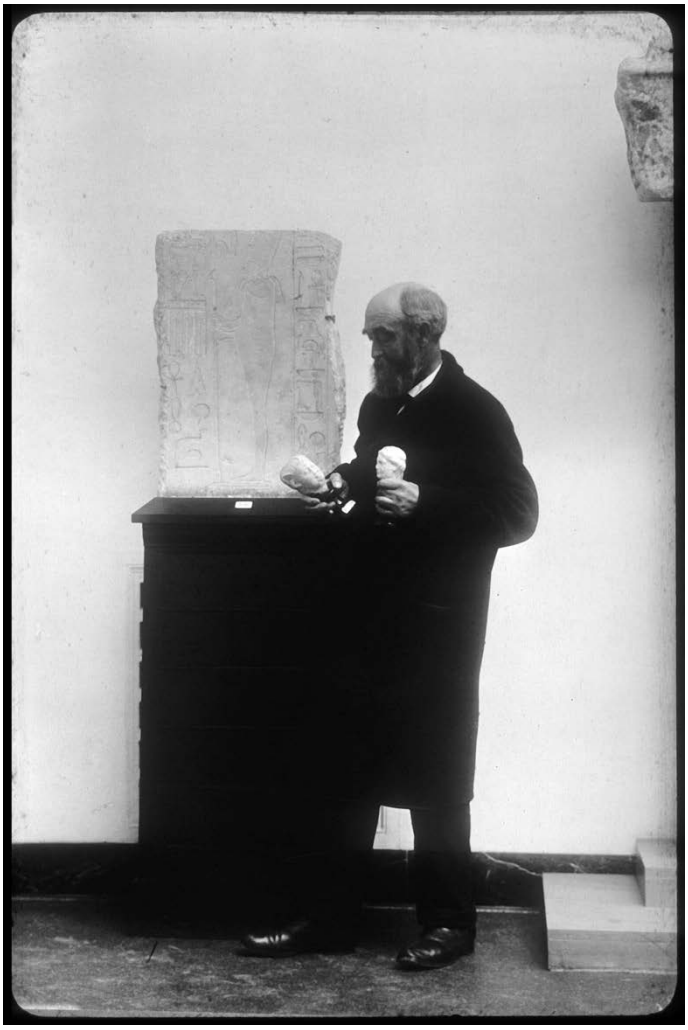

Fig. 3: Valdemar Schmidt at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.

The antiquities trade was yet another area where he was assisted by his linguistic skills, and it helped him create a network in Cairo where he got to know several of the dealers personally. He also taught his student H.O. Lange how to buy Egyptian antiquities and introduced him to all the merchants.[76]

The museum catalogue was an important tool with which to navigate the museums, so important that Schmidt even took the time in his autobiography to point

[76] Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 52.

out which museums he remembered had good catalogues.[77] He took it upon himself to work out the catalogue for the Glyptotek and even paid for some of the illustrations when money was scarce.[78] Since the catalogue was a tool for others to use, he did not mind taking criticism from the public. When he noticed how people often came up to him and asked about information from the catalogue, they always pointed out it was not supposed to be a book read from cover to cover and that important information should be repeated several times if necessary. He decided to listen to his critics and rewrite portions of the catalogue.[79]

The Glyptotek also became an important venue for his lectures and was a crucial asset in training the next generation of Egyptologists. In conformity with what he had written in the 1870s about the necessity of access to sources, but the financial barriers to travel, he made the following comment in 1919 on the value of a diverse Egyptian collection in every country:

> The science of Egyptology must have able colleagues in all countries, but if their diligence and work is going to bring plenty of fruit, they need a constant and easy access to study ancient Egyptian original works of different types. These objects cannot be too far away. In other words, if a country's scholars are to take an active part in the work to continuously spread more light on every aspect of ancient Egypt, there needs to be a good collection of ancient Egyptian art and utensils present in the country. There are now excellent renditions of multiple artefacts, not least of objects from Egypt; but this is not enough; there needs to be originals. To travel to Egypt and study ancient remains cannot be expected from everyone.[80]

Year after year he could be observed walking around in the halls of the Glyptotek, followed by a small group of students, discussing and interpreting the artefacts and monuments.[81] One newspaper wrote that he could often be found in the museum, always ready to help everyone who asked him something, no matter if it was 'a famous foreign scholar or a couple of Danish schoolchildren eager to learn'.[82] He helped everyone with great pleasure.

Towards the end of his life, he donated his Egyptological and Assyriological book collection to the Glyptotek, hoping that as soon as the library was rebuilt, they would find a place there.[83] However, his books would end up at the Egyptological and Assyriological laboratory at the University founded in the year of his

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[77] Schmidt 1925: 55, 91.
[78] Letter to Madsen, 25 November 1906. Royal library.
[79] Letter from Valdemar Schmidt to Henry Madsen, 12 November 1906. Royal library in Copenhagen.
[80] Schmidt, 1919a: ii.
[81] Berlingske Politiske og Advertissementstidende, Aften, 6 January 1916.
[82] Randers Dagblad og Folktidende, 8 January 1916.
[83] According to a testament signed 29 June 1923. Royal library. H.O. Lange was trusted

death.[84] The Glyptotek meant a great deal to him on a personal and professional level. He was proud of having been a part of it and it served him well in his effort to produce a general interest for the ancient world as well as establishing conditions to study Egyptology in Denmark.

**Mummies, sarcophagi and World War I**

Valdemar Schmidt was without a doubt a polymath who wrote and lectured on a variety of topics. That being said, there was still one thing within Egyptology that received some extra attention from him and something he spent decades researching, namely ancient Egyptian burial rites – or to be more precise – mummies and sarcophagi. This topic too, seems to have derived from his interest in prehistoric archaeology as he on several occasions in the 1870s lectured on burial rites in prehistoric Europe. For instance, his address to the 1876 International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology in Budapest tackled the problem of the origin of cremation in Europe.[85]

His interest in mummies was well known and resulted in a variety of different outlets, for example the unwrapping of one in front of an audience. In a collision between entertainment and scientific education, in the nineteenth century large crowds gathered to get charmed by charismatic performers unwrapping and dissecting mummies.[86] In 1895, The Royal Danish Geographical Society hosted one of these events where Schmidt lectured in a crowded hall and unrolled a mummy that he had bought himself near Cairo. The mummy lay stiff on a table in the middle of the room as he started with a lecture on geography. He informed the audience that no living creature had affected the crust of the earth more than humans and for that reason it was important to get to know all the different people of the world, the ancient Egyptians in this case. He continued by explaining the different periods of Egyptian history with focus on mummies and sarcophagi, teaching the audience how it was possible to decide the date of the mummy and so on. After the show was over the audience swarmed around him, hoping to get a souvenir of the mummy to take home, which seems to have been a common rite at these kinds of events.[87] He would continue to unroll mummified birds and cats in front of an audience over the following years.[88] His expertise was not only used for the purpose of entertainment or education, but also in more serious matters. In early 1912, the bailiff of Copenhagen confiscated two mummies they had discovered in an engineer's basement. As the engineer owed 700 kroner to the state, the authorities estimated that the two mummies would be enough to cover the debt,

with finding a home for his library.

[84] Bagh 2021: 198.

[85] Hampel 1877: 625.

[86] Moshenska 2014; Sheppard 2012.

[87] Moshenska 2014: 473, Nationaltidende, November 6, 1895.

[88] Korsør avis, 4 December 1901, Ringsted Folketidende, 25 September 1899.

which resulted in protests from the engineer. He explained he had previously sold another mummy to none other than Carl Jacobsen for the price of 2,000 kroner. In order to establish the value of the mummies, there was only one person in Denmark to turn to, as the newspapers reported – Valdemar Schmidt.[89]

This expertise in mummies was intended to become his main contribution and legacy to Egyptology. He had worked several decades on a grand book on the topic – his magnum opus – an atlas with photos, drawings and text covering all the mummies and sarcophagi he had stumbled upon and studied on his many travels to the museums of Egypt, Europe and Asia. It was even intended to be published in one of the world languages, French, to make it accessible to as many as possible.

There are several reasons why the work took so long to complete. First, the pace at which new discoveries were being made, starting with the discovery of royal mummies at Deir el-Bahari in 1881, forced him to continuously add material and rewrite the manuscript.[90] Second, the mummies were spread all over the world and he had to travel to all collections within a reasonable distance, which obviously took some time. Third, and that which according to himself was the main reason it had taken so long – there was the eternal lack of money.[91] He had put much of his own inherited capital into obtaining images for the book, although he had some help from his niece who often travelled with him and could make drawings of the objects he pointed out.[92] In early 1914 the manuscript was finally finished and sent off to Brussels where the printing would start in August the same year. Unfortunately, as the set date arrived, Europe and the rest of the world had slightly different concerns than mummies on their mind – The First World War had broken out, Belgium was occupied by German troops, and every attempt made by Schmidt to contact his printing house from then on was blocked.

He waited patiently for the war to be over and visited only Scandinavian collections during these years. In early 1918, however, he made the decision to prepare the material that was available to him in Denmark and publish a reduced version in Danish, intended for a lay audience with no previous knowledge. He realised the waste of time the war had caused, and that the material could be used in the meantime to educate the Danish audience. Ironically, when the book was published in 1919, the war was already over.[93] This reduced Danish version still contained more than 1,500 illustrations of sarcophagi, mummies and grave goods, together with a short description to every illustration.

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[89] Næstved Tidende. Sydsjællands Folkeblad, 23 February 1912; Lolland-Falsters Folketidende, 23 February 1912.
[90] Schmidt 1919a: iii.
[91] Schmidt 1919a: iv.
[92] Schmidt 1925: 118; Schmidt 1919a: iv.
[93] Schmidt 1919a: iv.

As a neutral nation, Denmark did not suffer the same consequences as the belligerent nations, but the cost for scholars like Schmidt, who depended on being able to cross borders and getting access to foreign museums and libraries, was still substantial. It was not only the primary sources in the museums that were being cut off from him, but also 'a few hundred' books he had used for his work over the years and which were still not available to him in Denmark.[94]

He never gave up the plans to publish the full work in French, and after the long-awaited peace finally arrived, he did what he had done throughout his entire career. At the age of 83, he once again boarded a train and travelled to the European libraries and museums with the intent to revise and update the material for his book. However, even though the war was over it had left a bitter aftertaste and the situation was still complicated. He travelled through Germany, England, Netherlands, France and Belgium immediately after the armistice and had to spend long periods waiting in police stations, passport controls and consulates, making it impossible to get as much work done, as he had been able to do before the war when he could spend entire days in the libraries and museums. The British Museum had been turned into an office complex during the war, covering up the museum objects, and when he arrived there was still no access.[95] In addition, as if things were not difficult enough, when he arrived to Warnemünde on his way home, all his notes from this trip, mostly written in French and Italian, were confiscated and he never saw them again.[96]

Throughout his entire career, Schmidt had emphasised the international character of Egyptology, the necessity of cooperation and the joint effort to break the geographical barriers and make it possible for scholars to carry out their studies everywhere. In light of this, it is nothing but a tragic irony that it in the end was the breakdown of international relations and war that hindered the publication of his magnum opus.

**Bringing Egyptology to Denmark – The legacy of Valdemar Schmidt**

In international terms, Valdemar Schmidt belongs among the minor characters in the history of Egyptology and his wider contributions could be regarded as modest at best. In Denmark, on the other hand, he made a significant contribution and is rightly credited for bringing Egyptology to the country.[97] He worked tirelessly for decades to create and cultivate an interest for the discipline and demonstrated its potential applications through his many lectures, popular books and articles. He also established the conditions requisite for the preparation of the next generation of Egyptologists through his assistance in building up and maintaining the Egyptian museum collections in the country, preparing and publishing catalogues over

[94] Schmidt 1919a: iv.
[95] Schmidt 1919a: ii.
[96] Schmidt 1925: 112.
[97] Iversen 1992: 625.

their content, and acquiring the books needed for further studies, often at his own expense.

Even though he never published a major scholarly work in an international language, the establishment of the study of Egyptology in Denmark must be considered an international process in itself. He had to leave Denmark to become an Egyptologist and already from these early days he realised that it truly was, and always needed to be, an international discipline, underlining the importance of cooperation instead of competition between scholars from all countries.

As a true polymath, he possessed a considerable range of interests, starting from his early attention to the Bible and his later introduction to prehistoric archaeology and geography. In combination with this, he had great linguistic talents, which made it possible for him to learn several ancient languages and writing systems, as well as numerous modern ones, which provided several opportunities at an early stage of his career, when Egyptology still was an uncertain road to take. During his entire career at the university in Copenhagen, he was also responsible for teaching both Egyptology and Assyriology, performing tasks that at the time were divided between at least two persons at most other universities.[98] It was not until after his retirement that the disciplines separated and became fully recognised university subjects, with H.O. Lange in Egyptology 1924 and Otto Emil Ravn in Assyriology 1926.[99]

Nevertheless, being a polymath also came with a price and as scholarship became more specialised at the end of the century it became harder to assert oneself in an academic context. His student and successor Lange, who was more philologically inclined than Schmidt ever was, thought of him as someone with enormous knowledge in multiple areas but lacking purpose and method in his scholarship, something Lange instead claimed to have learned from Adolf Erman in Berlin.[100] However, Lange's student, Egyptologist Erik Iversen (1909–2001), later asserted that Lange always tended to underestimate the influence Schmidt had on his education, and, according to Iversen, if it had not been for Valdemar Schmidt and his lectures, Lange would not have had the success with Erman as he eventually did.[101]

[98] Schmidt 1919a: iii.
[99] Flygare 2006: 30.
[100] Iversen 1992: 628; Schreiber Pedersen 2016: 383.
[101] Iversen 1992: 628.

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Fig. 1: A young Valdemar Schmidt. Photo: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, København.

Fig. 2: Valdemar Schmidt, Maria Mogensen and Mathilius Schack Elo at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. Photo: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, København.

Fig. 3: Valdemar Schmidt at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. Photo: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, København.

*Wolf B. Oerter*

Abb. 1–2: Das ungarische Städtchen Sárvár um die Jahrhundertwende und Baden bei Wien. Privatbesitz, Thomas L. Gertzen.

Abb. 3: Nathaniel Julius Reich um 1910. University of Pennsylvania: Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Nathaniel Julius Reich Collection ARC MS 20 – with special thanks to Bruce E. Nielsen and Josef Gulka, for providing high resolution-scan under strenuous archival conditions after the pandemic.

Abb. 4: Die Frontseite des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums in Wien auf einer alten Postkarte. Privatbesitz, Thomas L. Gertzen.

Abb. 5 a–c: Reichs US-amerikanischer Pass, ausgestellt am 3. Juli 1929. University of Pennsylvania: Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Nathaniel Julius Reich Collection ARC MS 20 – with special thanks to Bruce E. Nielsen and Josef Gulka, for providing high resolution-scan under strenuous archival conditions after the pandemic.

Abb. 6: Deckblatt des von Nathaniel Reich kompilierten Demotischen Wörterbuches. University of Pennsylvania: Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Nathaniel Julius Reich Collection ARC MS 20 – with special thanks to Bruce E. Nielsen and Josef Gulka, for providing high resolution-scan under strenuous archival conditions after the pandemic.

Abb. 7: Zeitungsausschnitt aus Collier's The National Weekly vom 25. Juli 1925. University of Pennsylvania: Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Nathaniel Julius Reich Collection ARC MS 20 – with special thanks to Bruce E. Nielsen and Josef Gulka, for providing high resolution-scan under strenuous archival conditions after the pandemic.