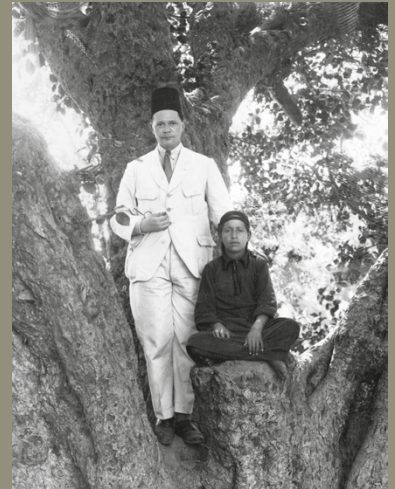
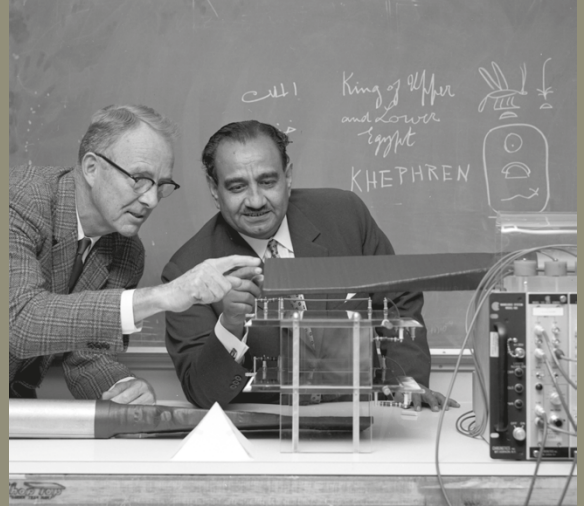


Addressing Diversity

Inclusive Histories of Egyptology



Edited by Hana Navratilova,
Thomas L. Gertzen, Marleen De Meyer,
Aidan Dodson and Andrew Bednarski

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Investigatio Orientis

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Thomas L. Gertzen,
Peter Heine,
Ludger Hiepél und
Hans Neumann

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Zaphon
Münster
2023

Cover illustrations: *top left*: Hildegard von Deines in 1959 (cf. contribution Dils, Fig. 7; Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-67639-0002 / Christa Hochneder); *top right*: Ahmed Fakhry (right) and Luis Walter Alvarez (left) (cf. contribution Tolba, Fig. 2; Photo: Marilee B. Bailey © The Regents of the University of California, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory); *bottom left*: The team of Quftis employed by Jean Capart during the third Elkab campaign (cf. contribution De Meyer et al., Fig. 3; © RMAH Inv. EGI.12234, photograph by Jean Capart, 1945–1946); *bottom right*: Ludwig Keimer and an unknown person in a sycamore tree in Old Cairo, 1929 (cf. contribution Lehnert, Fig. 1; © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-094-001-046).

Addressing Diversity: Inclusive Histories of Egyptology

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Aidan Dodson and Andrew Bednarski

Investigatio Orientis 9

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Jaromir Malek

© Griffith Institute, University of Oxford

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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An Independent Scholar and Collector: Ludwig Keimer in Egypt

On the Occasion of the 130th Birthday of this Tireless Scientist

Isolde Lehnert

The decision of the German scholar Ludwig Keimer (1892–1957) to come to Egypt was on the advice of his late mentor Georg Schweinfurth (1836–1925), the famous botanist and Africa explorer, who introduced him to natural history. He recommended Egypt as a land of infinite possibilities for a man willing to explore the world with open eyes. When Keimer finally arrived at the shores of the Nile in 1927/28 he was in his mid-thirties and had already earned three doctorates and published his monograph *Die Gartenpflanzen im Alten Ägypten*. Before his death, Schweinfurth had arranged a research stay in Lyon for Keimer with his friend Victor Loret (1849–1946), a well-known Egyptologist and naturalist with a focus on botany and zoology. From December 1926 on, Keimer spent half a year with Loret, working with him on a daily basis in addition to visiting several Egyptian collections in museums in France, the Netherlands, and in Belgium.

One of Keimer's most important contacts during this period became Jean Capart (1877–1947), director of the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth (FÉRÉ) and curator of the Egyptian collections at the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels.¹ Keimer first sent a letter to him as early as September 1926, from his home town of Haselünne. It was the beginning of a long scholarly German-French correspondence that lasted until Capart's death and even beyond, as Keimer remained in contact with the FÉRÉ until he died in 1957. The two scholars exchanged over a hundred letters, although the ratio is now unbalanced, as only 18 of Capart's letters in French are preserved, compared to 90 of Keimer in German and, from 1936 on, in French. These letters reveal many details of Keimer's early years in Egypt, which remained largely unknown until recently and, at the same time, shed some light on Capart and his Fondation.²

La Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth

The Fondation (later renamed 'Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth', AÉRE) was founded by Jean Capart in memory of Queen Élisabeth's visit to the tomb of Tutankhamun, on 18 February 1923.³ Since 1925 it published the journal

¹ For an overview of Capart's life and career, see Bruffaerts 2022, with further references.

² The correspondence is kept in the archive of the FÉRÉ at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, Folder BE/380469/2/470: Keimer, Ludwig Joseph Gustav. I would like to thank Luc Limme for the permission to use this material and Marleen De Meyer for bringing this file to my attention.

³ De Meyer et al. 2023.

Chronique d'Égypte, to which Keimer subscribed from the very first issue.

At the beginning of their correspondence Keimer introduced himself very respectfully to Capart and emphasized that it would be his pleasure if he could be of use to the Fondation. As a first sign of his support he offered to donate duplicates of Schweinfurth's articles on ancient Egypt that were in his possession, as well as his own book *Gartenpflanzen*. Additionally, if the Fondation did not happen to have a copy of *Abulfedae Descriptio Aegypti*, published in 1776, he could make his duplicate available free of charge. Furthermore, he was more than willing to write reviews and articles for the *Chronique*, for which he had enough material.⁴ Capart seemed interested, because Keimer soon talked about several projects, for example a book on the sycamore and the fig tree, and already asked if and when he could submit the manuscript to the Fondation for printing.⁵

Of particular interest is Keimer's last letter from the year 1927, as it provides a piece of the puzzle on the question of when exactly Keimer first set foot on Egyptian soil. Keimer himself mentions 1927 as well as 1928 in several of his publications, letters and even in official documents such as his curriculum vitae. In this particular letter of 9 December 1927 he asked Capart if 2,500 marks (= 15,000 French francs) would be sufficient to go to Egypt for two months, as his father had given him this sum at his free disposal. Keimer wanted to travel around the middle of January 1928, but needed to know beforehand whether one could manage with this rather small amount, even if one had only modest demands.⁶ Unfortunately, there is no reply preserved by Capart or any other correspondence from the year 1928, so this question remains unanswered for now.

But the two men had not lost contact. The next letter, dated to the end of April 1929, shows how far the collaboration between Keimer and Capart had progressed in the meantime. Keimer had settled in Cairo and they probably had met in person during Capart's stay in Egypt from January to March 1929.⁷

Keimer confirmed in April that he had already received 10 Egyptian Pounds from Henri Naus Bey (1875–1938), the Fondation's president and a successful Belgian businessman, who played a prominent role in the Egyptian sugar industry.⁸ The money was for Keimer's research on the three Egyptian species of lotus (*Nymphaea lotus*, *Nymphaea caerulea* and *Nelumbium speciosum*), and he spent it on a study trip to Damietta. This was only one of four topics for projected monographs which Keimer explained at length in this long letter. He stressed that he could write them immediately if he had the necessary funds, i.e. about 200–300

⁴ Archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE: BE/380469/2/504, Letters Keimer to Capart, 1927's.

⁵ Letter Keimer to Capart, 19.9.1927 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 9.12.1927 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁷ I thank Marleen De Meyer for this information about Capart.

⁸ Kupferschmidt 1999: 11–12.

Egyptian Pounds. His father's financial allowance covered his daily living expenses, but he would need monetary support for the drawings, photographs and purchases of antiquities as well as for the translation of the texts into French. If Capart was able to help, Keimer was willing to hand over his entire collection to the RMAH, which consisted of about 1,000 pieces of representations of Egyptian plants and other motifs made of faience and terracotta.⁹

Capart's answer was positive. He agreed to put a request to the Fondation's committee to assist Keimer in his work, but he would not be able to do anything before the next board meeting in October. In the meantime, he promised to send Keimer a first sum of 25 Egyptian Pounds and probably a second of the same amount within a few months. However, it was under two conditions, which Capart made more in Keimer's interest than in his own. First, Keimer had to give Capart a short report for Henri Naus on his lotus examining excursion to the Delta, which eventually would be published in the *Chronique*. Secondly, Keimer should continue to work on his manuscript on the sycamore and the fig tree, now the property of the Fondation which also would take care of the French translation.¹⁰

Keimer accepted under one condition. He found it embarrassing to read in every issue of the *Chronique*, that the Fondation supported him with this or that amount of money, and that he was working on this or that topic, etc. He would prefer that such a note be dropped in the future. Additionally, with regard to the promised manuscript – it would leave nothing to be desired concerning method or completeness. 'I want this work to cause a stir!', Keimer noted excitedly and added: 'Never in my life have I worked so much as in the one and a half years I have spent in Egypt. And with God's help, I have achieved results that I could never have dreamed of'. The long letter ends with a list of four articles currently in print and two others on which Keimer was still working.¹¹ – Capart, it should be noted, had only asked for a short "okay".

At the beginning of June, Capart had to remind Keimer of the required report on the excursion, which would be important to the success of their joint support plan.¹² Keimer, however, was busy writing his manuscript until the end of July and most probably did not deliver the report.¹³

⁹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 20.4.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹⁰ Letter Capart to Keimer, 20.5.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 30.5.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in German.

¹² Letter Capart to Keimer, 5.6.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹³ Letter Keimer to Capart, 7.7.1929 and 26.7.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.



Fig. 1: Keimer and an unknown person on the old sycamore tree in Old Cairo during an excursion on 7 June 1929. © DAIK.

In August 1929, Keimer had another large collection on offer, which he had put together during the previous winter. It contained about sixty pieces of Greco-Egyptian terracotta and bronzes, depicting the ‘lotus’ (*Nelumbium*) that was popular during the Greco-Alexandrian period; each piece was of a different form. The collection was photographed and Keimer planned to publish it later with Octave Guéraud (1901–1987), a colleague from the French Institute in Cairo. Keimer wanted to part with the collection for reasons of space; his room in the Hotel New York, where he lived during these early years, was filled with books and antiquities. He supposed that Capart had little or no interest in these Greco-Egyptian

artefacts; in any case, photographs would be at his disposal.¹⁴ Keimer assumed that objects concerning the history of the natural sciences of ancient Egypt would be of greater value for Brussels. He hoped to put together a representative collection in the course of time.¹⁵

In the weeks to follow Keimer sent several letters to Capart waiting for money that would enable him to travel to Luxor to work on the Theban material for his book on the sycamore. It was only in December, though, that Capart informed Keimer that the Fondation's Board had in October willingly ratified Capart's commitment to send Keimer grants for preparing his book on the sycamore, which would be published by the Fondation. Of the 100 Egyptian Pounds made available for this purpose, Capart had already sent 75 Egyptian Pounds to Keimer, the remaining 25 Egyptian Pounds were still to come, as the transfer had been delayed by the bank. There was only one topic – the problem of photographs – Capart wanted to settle personally with Keimer, after his expected arrival in Cairo around 15 January 1930.¹⁶

In the same letter, Capart congratulated Keimer on his new two-year position as *Professeur à l'École Archéologique des Guides et Dragomans d'Égypte* in Cairo.¹⁷ In fact, it had been Capart's vision to create an *École des drogmans* in Egypt, to raise awareness among Egyptian youth of their rich heritage and to train future tour guides. But the reality of the school did not at all correspond to Capart's own vision, so he had distanced himself from it and did not want to be officially associated with it.¹⁸ Nevertheless, he seemed to be pleased that Keimer had been assigned as a lecturer.¹⁹

On 4 March 1930, Keimer and Capart signed a contract valid until 31 December 1932. The Fondation would place a maximum annual sum of 100 Egyptian Pounds at Keimer's disposal, to cover the costs of producing the photographic plates necessary for his studies. The negatives would remain the property of the Fondation and would be labelled as 'Clichés Keimer' in the Fondation's archives. Keimer would receive prints of the negatives and would provide all the necessary data for their scientific classification to the Fondation. Furthermore, the Fondation would not distribute prints of the photographs, to which Keimer reserved scientific ownership, to third parties without his written authorisation.²⁰

At the end of the month, Keimer approached Capart about his large opus on the sycamore, which he anticipated might comprise three volumes. If it were too expensive for the Fondation to print, he suggested printing it elsewhere, as he had

¹⁴ Letter Keimer to Capart, 2.8.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹⁵ Letter Keimer to Capart, 24.9.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹⁶ Letter Capart to Keimer, 12.12.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

¹⁷ Keimer 1940: VIII.

¹⁸ Bruffaerts 2013: 226–227.

¹⁹ Letter Capart to Keimer, 12.12.1929 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

²⁰ Letter Keimer to Capart, 4.3.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

just received a very flattering offer. In that case, he proposed to write a popular and shorter edition for the Fondation afterwards.²¹ Whether and how Capart replied to this, is not known.

In the summer of 1930, Keimer planned to personally deliver his collection of objects depicting flowers and animals made of faience and other materials to Brussels. The agreed price of 250 Egyptian Pounds was not to be altered, even though Keimer had acquired a few more reference books for the collection.²² Without any problems Keimer got the export licence for all the objects from the Antiquities Service. Reginald Engelbach (1888–1946), who was responsible for this duty at the time, waved everything through. His ‘flora and fauna’ collection would continue to grow, as stated by a notice in the *Chronique d’Égypte*.²³

After a short stay in Switzerland, Keimer arrived in Brussels on 21 July 1930.²⁴ Four weeks later he gave a lecture about ‘L’Égyptologie et les sciences naturelles’ at the ‘Semaine égyptologique’.²⁵ After his return to Cairo, Keimer busily compiled an accurate inventory of the collection sold to Brussels. It included a description with a sketch to which one or two photographs could be added later, so that within five or six years the whole collection could be published. In response to Keimer’s request as to how much he was allowed to spend on enlarging the collection from then until his trip to Europe in the summer of 1931, Capart noted on the margin of Keimer’s letter the maximum sum of 100 Egyptian Pounds. At the end of the same letter, Keimer, who had not said much about the Dragoman School so far, expressed his dissatisfaction and criticised the fact that he did not have a fixed contract. He noted, moreover, that any other school teacher was treated and paid better than him.²⁶

From October onwards Keimer recorded his purchases for Capart on 13 pages of a small booklet, entitled ‘Achats en 1930/31’. Listed are 33 objects, some with small sketches, indicating origin, date and price. The amount spent for the period from 4 October to 10 May 1931 was almost 120 Egyptian Pounds, thus exceeding the budget.²⁷ Keimer mentioned some of his acquisitions to Capart, such as the fragment of a small stele of the New Kingdom from Tuna el-Gebel (Hermopolis Magna), which, with a depiction of eight ibises, he considered unique. In Keimer’s booklet it is listed as number 15.²⁸

²¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 23.3.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

²² Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.5.1930 and 22.5.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

²³ Letter Keimer to Capart, 14.7.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The collection’s mention in *Chronique d’Égypte*, 6.1931: 35.

²⁴ Letter Keimer to Capart, 17.7.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

²⁵ The 19 September lecture is published in *Chronique d’Égypte* 6: 305–311.

²⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.10.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

²⁷ The notebook is in DAIK-Keimer-Suppl-Diverses (Capart).

²⁸ Letter Keimer to Capart, 17.12.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

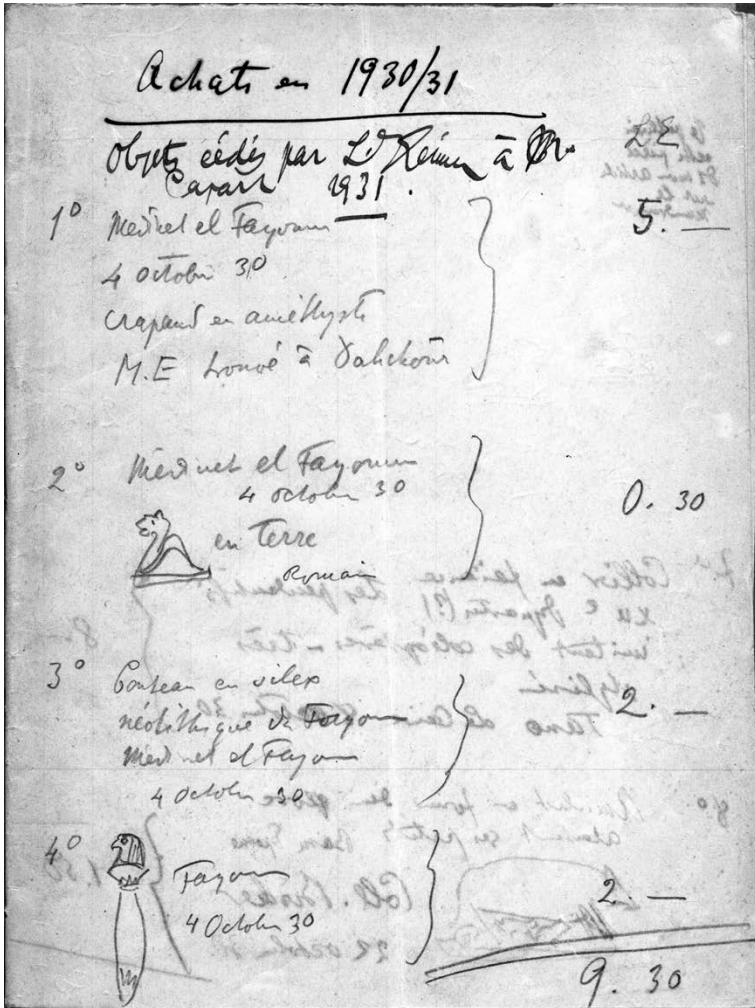


Fig. 2: The first page of Keimer's booklet, with his purchases for Capart's Fondation 1930/31. © DAIK.

At the end of October, Keimer and Capart discussed possible books to be purchased for the Dragoman School. It seems that Capart wanted to write a small, reasonably priced book about Memphis that would be ideal for tour guides. It would be comparable to his album *Thebes* which, in only 25 pages, presents a good overview of sites with little text and actual photographs.²⁹ Keimer immediately had the idea of offering this publication to the Catholic schools in Egypt, i.e. the Jesuits, as well as the Greek Patriarchate and other congregations. Thanks to

²⁹ 'Memphis' seems not to be published. *Thèbes, la gloire d'un grand passé expliquée aux enfants* came out in 1925, followed a year later by an English edition *Thebes, the glory of a great past, a little book for everybody*.

his excellent contacts at various institutions, he believed that he could complete this project, even though he might not stay at the Dragoman School much longer.³⁰

In mid-November, Keimer complained that he had been teaching at the school for seven weeks without receiving a single piaster, and thus he was not able to travel to Upper Egypt until after Christmas, when all the tourists would be there.³¹ A week later, Keimer and his Egyptian colleagues Selim Hassan (1886–1961), Sami Gabra (1892–1979) and Mahmud Ali Hamza (1890–1976) were summoned to the ministry to talk with the director general Achmaoui Bey about the school and its appropriateness.³² Selim Hassan, who was in hospital at that time, could not attend. At the end of the meeting, they were told that a new programme would be designed for the Dragoman School. Keimer had the impression that Achmaoui Bey would like to close the school, especially since a certain Mr. Hautecoeur, who was also present, called the school nonsense.³³ Under these circumstances, it was not thought appropriate for Achmaoui Bey to buy 300–400 copies of Capart's *Thebes* for the school, as Keimer had suggested. So there was no money for the financially strapped Fondation, as Keimer's efforts with the Catholic schools had also not shown any success so far.³⁴

From January 1931 on, Keimer bought three newspapers daily (*La Bourse Égyptienne*, *Le Journal du Caire*, *Le Réveil*), read them carefully and sent his selection of news on Egyptological matters, such as discoveries and excavations, weekly to Capart. However, he quickly fell behind in this task, as he was working on twelve articles at the same time and was often interrupted by requests of all kinds.³⁵ Keimer suffered from being overworked and struggled once again with money problems. His pay at the Dragoman School was by the hour and he earned nothing when he was absent due to illness, which was the case in February 1931. Keimer still felt weak in March because he had not been able to eat for twelve days, as he wrote to Capart. As he noted, the only good thing from this ordeal was that he had become significantly leaner, and at least his father sent him some money to make ends meet.³⁶

In the course of just a few years in Cairo, Keimer had become the point of contact for several museums and private collectors, for example Achille Groppi (1890–1949), the owner of the famous Café Groppi in downtown Cairo. Keimer

³⁰ Letter Keimer to Capart, 24.10.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

³¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 14.11.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

³² Keimer's spelling of the name Achmaoui Bey is likely to correspond to the English Ashmawi or Ashmawy. The author could not find any further details about the person.

³³ Monsieur Hautecoeur was apparently a European official, but no further details are given.

³⁴ Letter Keimer to Capart, 27.11.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

³⁵ Letter Keimer to Capart, 11.2.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

³⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 24.2.1931 and 6.3.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

advised him not only on his purchases of antiquities, and accompanied him on trips through Egypt, but was also on friendly terms with him.³⁷ Not all of his contacts, however, were fruitful to his efforts. In early 1931, he received a request from Dr Willem Dirk van Wijngaarden (1893–1980), whom he had known since the end of the First World War, when they were both the only students of Egyptology in Berlin.³⁸ Van Wijngaarden, keeper of antiquities at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden, wanted to purchase some antiquities, including painted ostraca. Keimer submitted several proposals, reserved a few selected objects with the antique dealers, and even put 40–50 Egyptian Pounds forward, but the deal did not materialise, as van Wijngaarden stopped replying.³⁹

Yet something else happened that year. On 6 March 1931, Keimer wrote to Capart that he had just received a letter from the German University in Prague, in reply to his application for habilitation for the entire field of Egyptology, which he had submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy six months earlier on 20 September 1930.⁴⁰ Keimer was notified that the Ministry would probably accept his habilitation and that he should be present for the necessary procedure at the university in the first days of June 1931. Therefore, Keimer had to leave Cairo at the end of May, first to Prague, then continue to Germany, and further on to Brussels to deliver his harvest of antiquities, and back to Cairo. But how to finance the trip? As he had already spent the amount of 120 Egyptian Pounds sent by Capart in November of the previous year, Keimer cautiously inquired whether he could get 50 Egyptian Pounds, half of his annual subsidy now, before Capart's departure for America at the end of April.⁴¹ But since Capart did not respond, Keimer had to find another solution. Meanwhile, a second letter from the university, dated 6 May 1931, informed Keimer about the final dates. The colloquium for habilitation was set to take place on 11 June, followed by the trial lecture on 18 June. Keimer was there on time and everything went well. The dean of the university wrote to Keimer on 8 July that the faculty was to grant him the *venia legendi* for the entire field of Egyptology, but only after approval by the Ministry of Education and Popular Culture. No one could have imagined that this procedure was to take an incredible seven years. An enquiry by the dean at the ministry in September 1934 as to the reason for the delay in confirmation revealed that the acquisition of Czechoslovak citizenship was mandatory by now.⁴² At the same time Keimer confided in a letter to Capart that the German University in Prague no longer wanted

³⁷ Loeben and Wiese 2008: 50. In DAIK-Keimer-Konv 115, which deals with ancient Egyptian glass, there is correspondence between Groppi and Keimer from 1937 and 1946.

³⁸ Keimer 1955b: 43.

³⁹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 19.3.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴⁰ Letter Keimer to Capart, 6.3.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. Oerter 2010a: 52, with the date of application.

⁴¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 6.3.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴² Oerter 2010b: 77.

to tolerate *Reichsdeutsche* professors after the latest events in Germany, without giving any further details.⁴³ The Czechoslovak Minister in Cairo had therefore advised him to acquire Czech citizenship and Keimer would certainly follow this advice.⁴⁴ In April 1936, Keimer submitted his application for naturalisation and could already count on an acceptance. Then finally, on 27 January 1938 the ministry approved Keimer's *venia legendi*.⁴⁵

Keimer spent August and September 1931 at his parents' house in Haselünne. He used the time to send Capart a short report and the long-requested exposé for his monograph on the sycamore tree, which he had been working on for 13 years. The enormously extensive material also contained studies by Schweinfurth, some of which dated back to 1863. Wilhelm Spiegelberg (1870–1930) had examined the philological, archaeological and religious-historical material around 1929 and negotiated with Pierre Jouguet (1869–1949), then director of the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo, about a publication.⁴⁶ That was probably the 'flattering offer' Keimer had mentioned to Capart one year before, in March 1930.⁴⁷ Jouguet was not averse to the idea, but had to withdraw his commitment to print it, as the entire work would comprise two volumes of text and two volumes of plates. Now Keimer decided to make his great opus ready for publishing within a year and offer it to the Fondation, which already had subsidised the project with a grant of 100 Egyptian Pounds in 1930. Overly optimistic, Keimer wrote at the end of the half-page exposé that the Fondation could already consider the whole material as its own property.⁴⁸

Some time later, Keimer travelled to Prague again. On Saturday, 19 September 1931, he wrote a letter to Capart, using the stationery of the luxurious Hotel Imperial, situated in the middle of Prague's Old Town, to announce his departure to Egypt the very next day via Budapest, Belgrade, Niš, Thessaloniki, and Athens.⁴⁹ That same day, Capart was typing a two-page letter to inform Keimer of serious changes at the Fondation that would affect their contract. Capart explained that the Belgian government's budget was in a very difficult situation due to the so-called Hoover moratorium: the declaration by US President Herbert C. Hoover on 20 June 1931 that suspended intergovernmental payment obligations for one year because of the Great Depression. As a result of the negotiations which had taken

⁴³ Keimer generally alludes to the drastic political changes in Nazi Germany after the seizure of power in 1933, which increasingly affected all areas of life, including the universities.

⁴⁴ Letter Keimer to Capart, 20.9.1934 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴⁵ For the whole story see Oerter 2010a: 47–74 (here 52–58) and Oerter 2010b: 75–88, with all documents of Keimer's personal file in the archive of the university in Prague.

⁴⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 6.9.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴⁷ See letter Keimer to Capart, 23.3.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴⁸ Letter Keimer to Capart, 6.9.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁴⁹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 19.9.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

place on those days at the Belgian Ministry of Science and Arts, the scientific institutions' funding would be sharply reduced. The situation would also have serious repercussions on the budget of the Fondation. At the end of his detailed explanations, Capart proposed to suspend Keimer's contract for one year, to help the Fondation navigate the crisis. He added that the sale of publications which the Fondation still had in stock, especially the small album *Thebes* would be helpful.⁵⁰

In his reply after his arrival in Cairo, Keimer agreed without any ifs, ands, or buts to the one-year suspension and promised to do his best in order to interest schools and other institutions in the album. The financial crisis, however, was also clearly felt in Egypt, where the Egyptian Pound had fallen in value by a quarter to a fifth of its value. This had consequences for Keimer too, who had considered leaving the Dragoman School, because, in his opinion it had no future. He changed his mind when it was converted into a regular government school, which had a very positive financial impact that he desperately needed under the given circumstances.⁵¹ Capart appreciated Keimer's understanding of the situation.⁵²

Although the contract with the Fondation was on hold during 1932, Keimer continued to buy antiquities, which he offered to Capart without any obligations. As he remarked to Capart, he would always buy small Egyptian antiquities, especially of animals and plants.⁵³ In fact, there has been a collection of objects, referred to by Keimer himself as the *Collection Keimer*, as evidenced by photographs and drawings in various boxes; the so-called 'Konvolute' of the Keimer Archive in the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Three boxes from this archive, on the Egyptian lotus, contain small dossiers with illustrations of the objects, giving measurements and describing comparative pieces. Some of these objects Keimer bought from dealers, others from collections such as that of the Swiss merchant André Bircher (1839–1926) in Cairo. Occasionally, Keimer acted only as a middleman and noted the name of the new owner.⁵⁴

This also explains Keimer's request to Capart in a letter, asking for the promised photographs of the objects he had brought to Brussels in July 1930 and August 1931. Collective photographs would suffice so that he would not lose track of them.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Letter Capart to Keimer, 19.9.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁵¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 3.10.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁵² Letter Capart to Keimer, 18.12.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁵³ Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.1.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁵⁴ Examples are in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 89 to 91.

⁵⁵ Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.1.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.



Fig. 3: A piece from the *Collection Keimer*: Harpocrates, sitting on a lotus flower or fruit capsule. © DAIK.

In mid-January, Keimer complained again about the Dragoman School, however, it was for the last time, as his job was terminated at the end of 1931, though his salary was still outstanding for four months of lectures. While his colleagues there got their money on time, he, as a foreigner, had to wait until the Minister of Finance had approved it – and that could take months. Fortunately, on 1 February, he received part of his salary for the work on the *Catalogue Général* of the Antiquities Service – another of his side jobs.

As Capart was about to leave for America, Keimer repeated a request he had already submitted three times, as he pointed out: perhaps Capart might find a way for him to spend three to four months at the Metropolitan Museum, examining all objects of interest for natural history. At the end of the letter, he offered Capart his collection of insect-shaped amulets, on which he had spent 25 Egyptian Pounds the previous year, and which had grown to 60 pieces in the meantime.

Payment could be postponed until summer 1933.⁵⁶ Apparently Capart responded positively at the end of February 1932, as Keimer's next letter of early May 1932 demonstrates. Keimer confirmed to Capart that he would reserve the collection, which already comprised more than 100 pieces. He estimated that it would take about two years to publish the material. In the meantime, he would send Capart 50 plates of the many photographs he had taken of the objects.⁵⁷

Two weeks later, Keimer replied to Capart's inquiry about when he would come to Europe in the summer: 'To be honest, I prefer to stay in Egypt! The conditions in Europe, especially in Germany, are such that you don't feel like going there'. But that was only one reason. The other was a new job at the Musée Agricole, which demanded, from the end of 1931, Keimer's time and work. This made it impossible for him to travel to Europe before autumn.⁵⁸

In early July, Capart expressed his delight at Keimer's progress at the Musée Agricole, but was deeply disappointed on Keimer's photographic plates, which had arrived in the meantime. The pictures were, in general, of very poor quality, not having had the necessary exposure time, and required manipulation and considerable retouching. Some plates reproduced pieces that had since entered the Fondation's collections and could easily have been photographed in their own workshop at no cost. Others were devoted to classical archaeological monuments that were of no interest to the Fondation's archives. Worse still, some of them also reproduced illustrations from works of the Fondation itself. Capart was extremely annoyed by this, because he did not see how to convince the Fondation's Committee that the photographs were worth a grant of 100 Egyptian Pounds. He hoped that this shipment, which barely justified the shipping costs from Cairo to Brussels, was only a small part of the photographic material Keimer had intended for the Fondation, and that Keimer would soon send plates whose acquisition would correspond to the efforts the Fondation had made for him.⁵⁹

Two weeks later, Keimer reacted to this disaster by announcing that he had delivered the day before 60 very interesting photographic plates to Lehnert and Landrock for dispatch. They show depictions of the goddess in the sycamore on the previously unpublished coffins of the Amun priests; each time in a varied representation. He had studied all those coffins on the third floor of the Egyptian Museum, one day a week for seven months, to compile a catalogue of the scenes that interested him. The heavy coffins made of sycamore wood had to be placed in such a way that they could be photographed and finally, with the help of electric

⁵⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 17.1.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁵⁷ Letter Keimer to Capart, 7.5.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE, with Keimer's thanks for Capart's letter of 20 February 1932, which has not been preserved in FERE.

⁵⁸ Letter Keimer to Capart, 19.5.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in German.

⁵⁹ Letter Capart to Keimer, 7.7.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

light, the photographer took pictures of the relevant scenes of 60 coffins. It had cost – not only – Keimer a lot of sweat and hard work.⁶⁰ While on holiday in Germany, Keimer asked Capart at the end of September whether the photo plates had arrived and, above all, whether they were satisfactory. If so, more would be sent at the end of the year.⁶¹ There was, however, no reply from Capart.

Instead, a month later, Keimer received a report from the Fondation's secretary Marcelle Werbrouck (1889–1959), who listed the payments of the Fondation with Keimer's services in detail in a sort of cost-benefit calculation. The first point dealt with the photographic plates, for which Keimer was to be subsidised annually with a maximum of 100 Egyptian Pounds according to the 1930 contract. Accordingly, Keimer had received this sum in 1930, 60 Egyptian Pounds the following year and only 40 Egyptian Pounds in 1932, which was credited to the previous year as the contract was suspended due to the financial crisis.

To justify these grants Keimer had submitted 125 plates in 1930, devoted for the most part to sycamore, lotus, mounted bouquets and nothing in 1931. In 1932 Keimer had sent 90 plates, divided in 51 pictures of the details of the sycamore scene on the coffins of the priests of Amun, 63 pictures of other subjects, of which 24 were returned to Keimer because they were of no interest to the Egyptological section of the Fondation. Werbrouck then concluded that there was no need to renew Keimer's contract.

The next point concerned the manuscript on the sycamore tree which, according to the agreement, was to be the property of the Fondation. Keimer was given 25 Egyptian Pounds twice, to facilitate the excursions necessary for the preparation of this work. He had written a short note on the sycamore for the *Chronique* but since that date, there had been no further mention of the manuscript in his correspondence. Therefore, it would be preferable for the Fondation to relinquish its rights to the manuscript.

The third point referred to Keimer's 'flora and fauna' collection, which was accepted by the Fondation. A first batch of 81 pieces cost 700 francs, the second series of 48 pieces cost 445 francs. Noting that the collection did not constitute a whole, as it was compiled at random, it would be appropriate to stop the purchase of pieces provided by Keimer.⁶²

This scathing verdict on his work was followed less than two weeks later by a letter from Capart. He argued that due to a tight budget, the Fondation would have to cut back and cancel all expenditure aimed at enriching the photo archive. As a result, it was decided to let the three-year contract with Keimer expire on 31 December 1932. Capart regretted having to inform Keimer of this decision, but on the other hand, Keimer's situation in Egypt had also changed, as he had been of-

⁶⁰ Letter Keimer to Capart, 26.7.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁶¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 20.9.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁶² Letter Werbrouck to Keimer, 25.10.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

ferred new opportunities that were not available during the time the Fondation supported him. Furthermore, Capart declared on behalf of the Fondation to renounce all rights to the manuscript of Keimer's book on the sycamore, despite the financial contributions made by the Fondation.⁶³

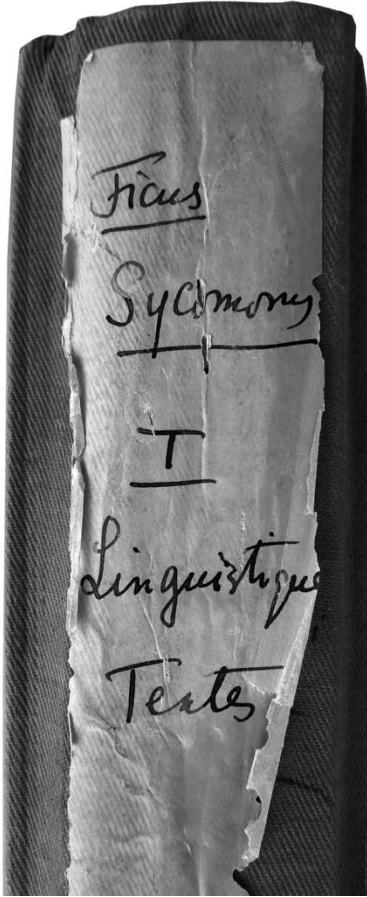


Fig. 4: The spine of the first of Keimer's three oversize volumes about the sycamore tree. © DAIK.

This proved to be the deathblow for Keimer's sycamore book. His great opus was never printed. It was not until December 1956 that he was able to publish at least a short article in the *Egypt Travel Magazine*.⁶⁴ His entire corpus of notes, photographs, drawings, newspaper clippings and herbarium specimens fill three oversized volumes which he had bound together using the registration forms of the Olympia & New York Hotel.⁶⁵

⁶³ Letter Capart to Keimer, 4.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁶⁴ Keimer 1956. From March 1955 until February 1957, Keimer published more than a dozen articles in the French, English and Arabic editions of the magazine.

⁶⁵ These are the DAIK-Keimer-Konv 93 GF to 95 GF.

After Keimer had received both letters he replied to Capart expressing his full understanding that the Fondation was not able to renew the contract in these difficult times. He thanked him from his heart for his great support, adding that indeed, Capart was right to do so. He also informed him that he now had a position at the Musée Agricole, though poorly paid. Even worse for Keimer, the Egyptian Pound had lost almost one third of its value, meaning there was little material benefit from his position. Also the Museum was making very little progress. ‘What a pity you can’t organise it!’, Keimer closed in his letter to Capart.⁶⁶

Le Musée Agricole Fouad I^{er}

Around 1930, King Fuad (1868–1936) had the idea of establishing an agricultural museum in Cairo as one of the first of its kind, second only to the Royal Agricultural Museum in Budapest. The palace of Princess Fatima (1853–1920), daughter of Khedive Ismail, in Doqqi was chosen to house the museum, and preparations started in November of the same year.⁶⁷

In March 1930, Capart accompanied King Albert I (1875–1934) and Queen Élisabeth (1876–1965) of Belgium on their trip to Egypt.⁶⁸ The official programme offered many opportunities to talk to King Fuad, to discuss existing scientific institutions as well as new projects, such as the Agricultural Museum, which should demonstrate the development of Egypt’s agriculture in all its aspects from the pharaonic era to the present day. In this context Capart recommended Keimer in a letter to the king as an Egyptologist specialised in this field.⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards, on Tuesday, 6 May, Keimer was invited to his first audience at the royal court, introduced by the German envoy Eberhard von Stohrer (1883–1953). From the very first moment Keimer was impressed by the king’s interest and his profound knowledge and vision of the project. His Majesty was also pleased with the scholar, who seemed to have the necessary passion for the project, and commissioned him accordingly.⁷⁰ Two days later Keimer wrote a letter of gratitude to Capart, who had smoothed his path, and reiterated the King’s words to him at the end of the audience: ‘Keep working! Have *le feu sacré!*’.⁷¹

A lot of patience was also necessary, one might add. Keimer was nervous, especially when he heard in October that the new Director of the Museum had

⁶⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 21.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in German.

⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agricultural_Museum,_Egypt (last access 15.1.2022).

⁶⁸ Bruffaerts 2006.

⁶⁹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.4.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁷⁰ Keimer 1936: 600 in his obituary of King Fuad, in DAIK-Keimer-Kei 68.

⁷¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.5.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE, which also gives the date of the audience. The original quote is in German: ‘Arbeiten Sie weiter! Haben Sie le feu sacré!’

already arrived, and asked influential people for advice on what he should do.⁷² Finally, on 1 December, Keimer had another audience at the royal court and presented King Fuad his latest publications. His Majesty repeated his promise to take care of him and arranged for Keimer's biographical data to be written down. However, Keimer still believed that nothing would be done for him, and noted: 'I am not made for such things!'.⁷³ Time proved him wrong. One year later, in December 1931, Keimer was mentioned in the *Journal du Caire* as visiting the Museum and supervising the ongoing work, while his official nomination by the Minister of Agriculture was recorded in several Egyptian newspapers only in mid-July 1932. He was employed as an expert to organise the Historical Section of the Agricultural Museum where the related pharaonic antiquities would be housed.⁷⁴

Keimer used a small notebook as diary and documented his work daily, from 16 March until 2 September 1932. Everything is written in French, except for one sentence in German on 30 July: 'Habe heute meinen Vertrag unterzeichnet' (Signed my contract today).⁷⁵ The short entries prove that he was also simultaneously employed at the Egyptian Museum to examine plant materials from tombs and excavations, and to edit their entries in the *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*. In this capacity, he was employed for three months, from January or February 1932 onward.⁷⁶

In both jobs Keimer was supported by Pierre Lacau (1873–1963), director of the Antiquities Service, with whom he got on well. Lacau also decided which objects from the Egyptian Museum could be given to the Agricultural Museum; furthermore, he checked Keimer's purchases for authenticity, condition, value and price – and only rarely objected.

Keimer threw himself into the work with great zeal and followed a strict schedule assigning three days per week to each museum.⁷⁷ Particularly in the Agricultural Museum, Keimer faced a variety of tasks related to the documentation of different subjects, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, plant cultivation, hunting, fishing, beekeeping (apiary), etc., which were to be presented as comprehensively and completely as possible.

For purchases, he used his reliable contacts with Cairo's antiquities dealers, such as the Khawam Brothers, Phocion Jean Tano, Elie Albert Abemayor, Gré-

⁷² Letter Keimer to Capart, 8.10.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁷³ Letter Keimer to Capart, 17.12.1930 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in German.

⁷⁴ Two newspaper cuttings, 14.12.1931 and 15.7.1932 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 9,1. Keimer 1940: VIII, stating 'nommé, en 1931'.

⁷⁵ The diary, with 25 leaves, is kept in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 2,1.

⁷⁶ Letter Keimer to Capart, 3.10.1931 and 17.1.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. But Keimer 1940: VIII, stating '1931–1932'.

⁷⁷ Letter Keimer to Capart, 21.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

goire Loukianoff, Ismail Abdallah el-Shaer, Maurice Nahman and Ralph Huntington Blanchard. During his frequent sojourns in Luxor, he dealt with Sayed Molattam, Mohareb Todros and others, and he visited ongoing excavations.⁷⁸ He also travelled to Alexandria either to study reference pieces in the Graeco-Roman Museum, or to acquire objects, which he described, classified and had photographed. He designed a concept for the installation of the objects in the Museum, ordered showcases and drew up a list of necessary reference books for its library, and, last but not least, published some articles.

In 1932 Keimer was assigned almost all the large rooms in the centre of the first floor of the main palace for the Historical Section. His overall plan was approved by the first Director of the Museum, the Hungarian Alois de Paikert (1866–1948) who was hired in January 1931.⁷⁹ Keimer heard from his friend Max Meyerhof (1874–1945), however, that the Director was not satisfied with the overall situation. During a visit, he had confided to Meyerhof that he still knew very little about the bureaucratic procedures of work and management in Egyptian institutions, and that the ministry refused to provide him with a European assistant.⁸⁰ This was a bad omen.

Very quickly, problems arose. In May 1932 Keimer complained to Capart that he had not yet received a piaster's pay and that neither the Hungarian Director nor the Egyptian Assistant Director lived up to their jobs, so that even the King was worried.⁸¹ Behind the scenes, the Egyptian government began looking for another Hungarian director in the summer of that same year.⁸² Until November there was hardly any progress in the Museum. Keimer's section was still devoid of furniture and showcases to store or present acquired objects, and there was no approved budget for further purchases or commissions for drawings or travel expenses. Furthermore, Keimer's one-year contract was scheduled to end on 15 March 1933. If it was not extended, all his work would have been in vain.⁸³

Again, Keimer's worries proved to be unfounded, but his hopes that things would change for the better quickly evaporated into thin air when the new Hungarian Director arrived in February 1933. Dr Ivan Nagy (1877–1947) who, like his predecessor had previously headed the Royal Agricultural Museum in Budapest, told Keimer immediately that he had little interest in the Historical Section, as he was in charge of creating an agricultural museum which should be very similar to the one in Budapest. Consequently, Nagy took all of the rooms which had been assigned to Keimer and obliged him to move the objects into a small

⁷⁸ According to invoices in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folders 5–7. For detailed information about the antiquity dealers in Egypt see Hagen and Ryholt 2016: *passim*.

⁷⁹ Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,1.

⁸⁰ Letter Keimer to Capart, 4.2.1931 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁸¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 19.5.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁸² Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,1.

⁸³ Letter Keimer to Capart, 21.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

depot room and Keimer's office. Both rooms were soon completely crammed full. After a complaint by Keimer, the Minister of Agriculture decided in May 1934 to move the depot temporarily to a new location, which was arranged accordingly in June and July. His Excellency further promised to have a special pavilion built for the Historical Section.⁸⁴

Good news came in August 1934, when Keimer – to his own surprise – was able to sell his large collection on insects to the museum for 400 Egyptian Pounds.⁸⁵ He was quite astonished that the Egyptian government agreed to the acquisition, given their tight budget. The collection comprised about 500 amulets and other objects in the shape of insects, made of faience, stone and metal. Two years earlier, Keimer had made an offer to Capart, who, after seeing the collection with his own eyes, recommended in November 1932 that it be offered first to the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels.⁸⁶ A bit later, Keimer advised Capart not to buy the collection, as he worried that he might find the price to be too steep, although justified in Keimer's opinion from the sums he had paid for it, starting in 1929.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, he kept Capart up to date and sent offprints of his published articles about the objects.⁸⁸

This particular collection was very close to Keimer's heart, as can be seen by the fact that some years later he even published a special monograph of his series of articles about insects, which had been printed between 1931 and 1937 in the *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*. He devoted the monograph *Insectes de l'Égypte ancienne*, published in 1938, to King Fuad, who in his opinion had contributed magnificently to the discovery of ancient Egypt and to the glory of modern Egypt. Only 67 copies were printed, of which 13 were sent to the Fondation according to Keimer's shipping list. In the preface, he thanked Capart and several other colleagues and friends for their support.⁸⁹ In January 1939, Capart praised Keimer's opus as an exceptionally valuable contribution to the natural history of pharaonic Egypt and added that the Fondation was pleased to have been able to make a small contribution to Keimer's research.⁹⁰

In September 1934, Keimer wrote enthusiastically to Capart that he was certain that the collection he had put together for the Historical Section would become the richest and most beautiful in the world. There was also hope that he

⁸⁴ Report Keimer to Zouflicar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,1.

⁸⁵ The price is given in a newspaper clip, dated 28.8.1934, in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 9,1.

⁸⁶ Letter Capart to Keimer, 4.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁸⁷ Letter Keimer to Capart, 21.11.1932 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁸⁸ Letter Keimer to Capart, 25.7.1933 and 14.9.1933 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁸⁹ Keimer 1938: V–VIII, who kept two copies for himself, number 49 (DAIK-Keimer-Kei 64) and number 44 (in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 58, Folder 6) with the attached shipping list.

⁹⁰ Short note in *Chronique d'Égypte* 14 (1939): 116.

would get about 20 to 25 rooms for the exhibition of his collections.⁹¹ When the Minister of Agriculture, Kamel Bey Ibrahim, visited the Historical Section in December, he was quite irritated to find the objects stacked on top of each other and assured Keimer that a special pavilion would be built close to the main building for the Historical Section only. Things, however, turned out differently. One year later, in December 1935, Keimer learned purely by chance that the project was cancelled due to the resistance of the Minister of Finance.⁹²

In the meantime, the inauguration of the museum had been set for February 1936, still under Director Nagy, whose contract would expire at the end of the same month. His Order No. 46 of 5 January 1936 concerned the relocation of Keimer's complete collection to the building of the 'Industry Agricole' section, i.e. to one of the two new buildings erected between 1934 and 1935.⁹³ Keimer, however, was unable to implement this order due to a lack of suitable showcases. When the Under Secretary of State inspected the premises the very next day, he told Keimer that it would suffice if he could temporarily bring some of the Section's objects to the main palace where three rooms on the second floor had been chosen for the purpose.⁹⁴

Keimer followed the order, as the official catalogue of the Musée Agricole from 1936 attests. The main palace contained the agricultural plants, the items related to the irrigation and the Historical Section. Three rooms, numbered 28 to 30, presented a collection of objects showing agricultural, hunting, fishing and gardening implements, etc., from different periods of antiquity. In addition, there were collections of flowers, seeds, household utensils, skeletons of domestic animals, animal mummies, petrified objects, paintings, etc.⁹⁵

Already in March 1936 the next relocation of the Section took place under the new Director Mohammed Bey Zoulficar, formerly *Directeur des parcs et jardins à l'administration du Tanzim*.⁹⁶ He decided to move the Historical Section to another new building, the so-called 'Cinema Palace' where the available rooms again were not at all adequate. This prompted Keimer to comment that the Section will never have suitable premises, as his proposals were ignored.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Letter Keimer to Capart, 20.9.1934 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE.

⁹² Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,1.

⁹³ According to the (very rare) official catalogue of the museum, Ministère 1936: 1.

⁹⁴ Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,1.

⁹⁵ Ministère 1936: 1; 12–13.

⁹⁶ Article in *Journal d'Égypte*, 11.3.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164, Folder 9,1.

⁹⁷ Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164, Folder 8,1.



Fig. 5: An exhibition room, Section des fruits, in the catalogue of the Agricultural Museum 1936. © DAIK.

Shortly after the new Director took office, Keimer informed him about his activities to date and provided accountability reports explaining his work comprehensively, including how the collection should be documented and indexed. This had been a matter of dispute between Keimer and the former Director Nagy, who had rejected a scientifically kept journal d'entrée as well as a systematic card catalogue. Only Lacau's intervention with the Ministry of Agriculture, who threatened that the Egyptian Museum would no longer provide any objects, succeeded in remedying the situation. As a result, from 17 May 1935 on, Keimer was able to proceed with his inventorying, which was based more or less on the system of the Egyptian Museum. The entry journal contained the number of each object in the section as well as the number from the Egyptian Museum when the objects were transferred from it. Furthermore, the provenance was given as well as dimensions; a short description was added, and at least one photograph was taken. The objects were listed according to their entry in the Historical Section. The flash cards for the card catalogue contained the same remarks as the entry journal, but were classified according to 31 different categories. In this work Keimer was assisted by Albert Cassis Effendi and later on by Abdel Raouf Mohamed Tantawy Effendi who also labelled the objects.

In July 1936 Keimer reported the current figures to the new Director as follows: due to several moves of the Section only 163 objects were listed in the entry

journal and classified. A large number of photographs were taken, of which 1,800 photographs were already pasted onto the cards, 260 contained all necessary information.⁹⁸ In November 1,000 objects were registered in the inventory book and the card catalogue contained about 2,100 cards. Keimer estimated that the inventory and classification of all objects in the Historical Section – counting at that time between 5,000 and 6,000 pieces – could be completed within two and a half years if someone devoted every work day to this task.⁹⁹

1936 proved to be the year in which the Ministry of Finance extended Keimer's contract for the last time, by another year, until 15 March 1937. A newspaper article addressing Keimer as a technical expert even stated his monthly salary of 58 Egyptian Pounds, on which Keimer commented indignantly, since this information was repeated in all Arabic-language newspapers.¹⁰⁰

At the beginning of the year, Keimer submitted a paper of four pages to the Director and the Ministry, with demands for the Historical Section and his own post. Firstly, he underlined the importance of the Section, which should continue to be under the supervision of the Antiquities Service. He pleaded for an independent budget, as more modern sections had previously been favoured in that way, and again for the construction of a separate building. Sufficient staff would be essential, especially a European preparator who at the moment was missing after more than a year. In addition to repairs and restorations, this person should also be able to label the objects in Arabic, French and English.

With regard to himself, Keimer requested a monthly sum to cover daily transportation. At that point in time, he had spent almost every day, or at least three times per week, 20 to 25 piasters to go by taxi from the Agricultural Museum to the Egyptian Museum and back. He believed it crucial to study the collection, consult the experts and to use the Egyptian Museum's library. Furthermore, he asked for authorisation to travel for two weeks to the Natural History Museum of Lyon, which possessed a unique collection of objects related to agriculture, hunting and the natural history of ancient Egypt. There he wanted to refine his ideas on how to preserve, repair, arrange and exhibit such antiquities. Although Keimer had proposed to take charge of this mission during his annual leave to Europe, which would significantly reduce expenses, the ministry rejected his request without further explanation. Last, but not least, he wanted to have a three-year contract equivalent to the one granted to European scholars working as assistant curators at the Egyptian Museum, or a similar position in the Antiquities Service, with a minimum salary of 75 Egyptian Pounds per month.

However, all of these requests were in vain, and Keimer summarized his experiences as follows: among the six Directors and Assistant Directors he got to

⁹⁸ Report Keimer to Zoulficar, 9.7.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164, Folder 8,1.

⁹⁹ Letter Keimer to Zoulficar, 22.11.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164, Folder 8,1.

¹⁰⁰ Two articles in *La Patrie*, dated 22. and 24.1.1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164, Folder 9,1.

know at the Museum, there was not a single one who took care, if only superficially, of the Historical Section; the two Hungarian Directors, in fact, worked to impede him. Three ministers (Hafez Hassan Pacha, Mohamed Allam Pacha and Aly Bey Menzalawi) promised on several occasions to improve his situation by placing him on the same footing as his colleagues at the Egyptian Museum. As for the Historical Section itself, with its more than 5,000 objects the largest one in the museum, it remained crammed into a few rooms which could barely suffice as store rooms.¹⁰¹

Over several years Keimer had done everything in his power for the maintenance and improvement of the Historical Section. Now he resigned from his post in a letter dated 14 February 1937, which was confirmed a month later by the Under Secretary of State Ibrahim Fahmy.¹⁰²



Fig. 6: A portrait of Keimer on the front page of the newspaper *Journal d'Égypte* of 18 January 1938 on occasion of his interview about the Musée Agricole. © DAIK.

One year later, when the Museum was officially inaugurated on 16 January 1938 by King Faruk (1920–1965), Keimer was invited to guide the king through the Historical Section. According to the Egyptian press His Majesty spent quite some time in it, following Keimer's explanations with interest. Keimer, however,

¹⁰¹ Keimer to Director, January 1936 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,2.

¹⁰² Both letters in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 8,2.

knew better, as his comment in one of the newspaper articles shows. The sovereign Faruk had not honoured him with an award, as a loyal and faithful servant of the great King Fuad, as he had done so for the other French and Egyptians working there. For Keimer this was a clear sign that he no longer had any support in the royal palace.¹⁰³ There was, however, more to come.

Wartime

The years during World War II were hard times for Keimer. While the majority of German residents in Egypt supported the German National Socialist Party, Keimer was known for his strong anti-Nazi sentiments. He had given up his German nationality and become a Czechoslovak citizen due to his Chair at the German University in Prague. After Hitler's occupation of the Czech part of what was then Czechoslovakia, Keimer was detained by the British military. His first internment lasted only some hours thanks to the intervention of Jan Masaryk (1886–1948), Foreign Minister of the Czechoslovak government in exile.¹⁰⁴

Unfortunately, he was not able to assist when Keimer was interned for the second time on 12 January 1940. This time his internment would last two and a half years. For Keimer it was a horrible situation, as Nazis and anti-Nazis were kept together in the same camp, in the German school in Cairo's Bulaq district. Mistreatment, menace and even death threats were recorded, in particular against Keimer who continually protested against his detention, claiming his Czechoslovak nationality. Even a year later, after Keimer had been sent into another facility nearby, the terror and hatred did not stop, as Professor Christo Avierino attested in his official report as president of the *Commission Médicale Mixte du Caire*, installed according to the international convention of the Red Cross in Geneva.¹⁰⁵

However, it was not until 1 May 1942 that the efforts of his influential friends bore fruit and Keimer was finally released.¹⁰⁶ Not all his supporters are known by name, but one was the Egyptologist Walter Bryan Emery (1903–1971), who was with British Intelligence in Egypt, another one was Sir Walter Smart (1883–1962), then Oriental counsellor at the British embassy in Cairo.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Several newspaper clips from 17./18.1.1938 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 164 GF, Folder 3. For an overview of the changes in the museum in recent years, see Moore 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Letter Drioton to Capart, 18.1.1940 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE (Folder Drioton). Drioton acted as intermediary with the Czechoslovak Legation according to his letter 22.11.1945 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 3,1.

¹⁰⁵ Letter Avierino to the Czechoslovak Legation in Cairo, 25.3.1946 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 3,1.

¹⁰⁶ Keimer notes both internment dates in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 62, Folder 3,1 about the rhino: before his internment there were three black rhinos in the Zoological Garden at Giza, after his internment only one was left, which also died at the end of 1942.

¹⁰⁷ Bothmer 2003: 4 (Emery); Cooper 1989: 208 (Smart).

Although a free man, Keimer felt utterly depressed and frightened because he continued to receive hate mail, one threatening that he would be hanged.¹⁰⁸ To his great relief, the apartment on 17, Sharia el-Hawayati, Bab el-Luq, containing his library and collections had not been touched during his internment, and he was able to continue with his studies. In April 1943, he spent some time in Luxor according to a note in a book, and there are vague hints that he tried in 1944 to find a job in America, but to no avail.¹⁰⁹

Life after the war remained difficult for Keimer. Towards the end of 1945, Keimer had to prove that he was not a Nazi and had been unjustly interned, as evidenced by correspondence from his friends Étienne Drioton (1889–1961), Adolph Schwarzenberg (1890–1950) and Georg Steindorff (1861–1951) to the Czechoslovak Minister in Cairo.¹¹⁰ One letter of recommendation from Capart clearly indicates that Keimer's Czechoslovak citizenship was at stake. Capart insisted that he knew this esteemed and erudite scholar for twenty years and that he was happy to have brought Keimer to the kind attention of King Fuad in 1930. Furthermore, he explained that the death of the sovereign had unfortunately deprived Keimer of this powerful support and thus exposed him to serious trouble during the war. Capart also pointed out that he had been aware for quite some time that Keimer had no chances of a career in Egyptology in Germany. He claimed this because, firstly Keimer was a Catholic, which would have made him unpopular among the Egyptologists of the Berlin School. Secondly, he would have been overlooked because of his anti-Prussian, and later anti-Nazi sentiments, that he displayed on all occasions. Capart underlined that Keimer had lost his parents as well as all property in Germany and finally asked: 'And now you want to withdraw his Czech nationality, which he had chosen and received before the war, for the scientific benefit of your country?'¹¹¹ Capart could not believe it and yet it was to happen. Keimer lost his Czech nationality and became in 1951 a naturalized Egyptian citizen.

On Christmas Eve 1945 Keimer was in a sentimental mood. In a letter to Capart he discussed a controversial reading of a hieroglyph, but then he confessed that he had no more ideas. Instead he was dominated by fear (which he wrote in capital letters): 'Fear of those viper-men who write nasty anonymous letters all

¹⁰⁸ Letter Avierino to the Czechoslovak Legation in Cairo, 25.3.1946 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 3,1.

¹⁰⁹ The note with Keimer's signature, date (8.4.1943) and place of purchase is in a book of H. Newland, *West Africa*, London 1922, in the DAIK-Library (signature Afr Newl).

¹¹⁰ The letters of recommendation for Keimer from Drioton (22.11.1945), Schwarzenberg (25.11.1945), Steindorff (2.12.1945) are in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 3,1 but only as copies. The originals are lost.

¹¹¹ Letter Capart to the Czechoslovak Minister in Cairo, 2.11.1945 in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 3,1. A draft of this letter with the same date is in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in French.

the time, who phone me to threaten me. We know the names well of these sad individuals – but what can we do?’ He ended with the words: ‘Noël – Et in terra Pax hominibus! Unfortunately, there are individuals with whom peace is impossible, as it is impossible to tame a crocodile, a viper, to live in peace with the Nazis, etc.’¹¹²

As far as Keimer’s collecting activity was concerned, it looked meagre in those years, for there is little evidence of it. In May 1946, Keimer sold a collection to the Coptic Museum in Cairo, which consisted of more than 150 fragments of wooden panels. The remarkable ensemble had been unearthed in a necropolis in Middle Egypt and dated to the 6th and 7th centuries.¹¹³ During this period, Keimer at least published some articles, including one on early travelogues in his library, which was a huge collection that was subsequently discussed in the Egyptian press.¹¹⁴

The Desert Institute and the Bisharin

Around 1948/49 Keimer expanded his activities into the field of ethnography. Apparently, this was an unfinished task of Schweinfurth that Keimer felt obliged to fulfil.¹¹⁵ He began his research on the Bedja tribes who dwelled in Upper Egypt and the Sudan in the area between the Nile and the Red Sea. The two northern tribes of the Bedja, namely the Ababde and Bisharin, were probably the only ones which had long and sometimes close contact with the ancient Egyptian culture. Keimer also included the Nubians in his studies, but focused mainly on the Bisharin tribe, who lived near Aswan. In 1952/53, he undertook a trip to Sudan.

His main supporters in Aswan were two experienced men, Ali Karar Ahmed, Sheikh of the Bisharin and Ababde tribes since 1934 and his older cousin, Karar Khairallah. Both became Keimer’s business partners in the trading of ethnographic objects, which provided the basis for several collections in Egypt and abroad.

In 1952, Rolf Herzog (1919–2006), a German ethnologist and economic anthropologist with a research focus on nomads in North Africa, accompanied Keimer for a day to the Bisharin camp in Aswan. Built around 1870 or 1875 on the outskirts of the city, it consisted of tents and simple houses. Herzog witnessed how familiar Keimer was with both his interviewees and how skilfully he conducted his interviews. He presented them with a drawing or a photograph of some utilitarian object and awaited their explanation. Many of the drawings came from the English draughtsman, Egyptologist and museum curator Joseph Bonomi

¹¹² Letter Keimer to Capart, 24.12.1945 in the archives of the RMAH, AÉRÉ-EGKE. The original quote is in French.

¹¹³ Published by Auber de Lapierre and Jeudy 2018: 9, 80–113.

¹¹⁴ Keimer 1949 and Lehnert 2013. Press articles in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 5–6.

¹¹⁵ Herzog 1985: 166.

(1796–1878), whose granddaughter had left them to Keimer's disposal.¹¹⁶ Then other tribal members were consulted and Keimer noted down all given information, including expressions written down in Arabic or in Bedawi, the language of the Bisharin. He also documented everyday activities with photographs, such as the preparation of coffee or the care of the Bisharin's elaborate hairstyles. Keimer behaved much more considerately than other visitors to the camp, who saw the visit as just another sight to see, or even worse as a kind of human zoo. As a consequence of the latter, the Egyptian government banned foreigners from entering the camp in 1955, also at the request of many Bisharin who felt harassed by the tourists.¹¹⁷

From March 1950 on, Keimer gave a series of lectures about his studies at the renowned Institut d'Égypte where he had become a full member in February 1937. From 7 April 1951, he was member of the Presidium as Assistant Secretary General and, in 1954, was elected one of its Vice-Presidents.¹¹⁸ The lectures were published in various issues of the Institute's bulletin, from volume 32 to 35, which in 1954 were bound together as a monograph entitled *Notes prises chez les Bišarīn et les Nubiens d'Assouan: parties I à VI*, containing 18 independent studies. Only 50 or 57 copies of the book were printed.¹¹⁹ However, the studies were never presented in a completed form, as neither the announced bibliography, including Schweinfurth's field studies on the Bisharin and Ababde, appeared, nor the results of Keimer's Sudan trip. He only gave a lecture at the Institut d'Égypte on 8 February 1954, postponing the publication until later, and prepared a resume for an article in the Egyptian magazine *Images*.¹²⁰

Keimer's Bisharin *Notes* covers a wide variety of topics, and presents a focus on the life of the tribes' people. He wrote about the doum palm, vegetable staples, food, cosmetics, shields and swords, superstitions and, last but not least, an essay on Fakiyya, an emancipated Bisharin woman. This was not a typical subject for Keimer, as sociological questions remained largely alien to him. He was not an ethnologist and would never have described himself as such. He always searched for similarities or differences between the Bisharin and the ancient Egyptians. In

¹¹⁶ The photographs, kept in five oversize volumes, are in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 160 GF to 163a.

¹¹⁷ Herzog 1985: 165–168, who was in 1958–1964 employed at the German Archaeological Institute Cairo.

¹¹⁸ Herzog 1985: 166; Keimer 1940: VIII, with a note concerning the dates in his own hand copy in DAIK-Keimer-Kei 160.

¹¹⁹ Keimer 1954. He notes on the title page of his hand copy (in DAIK-Keimer-Kei 172), 57 copies, an attached advertisement by the publisher notes 50 copies. Keimer's extensive and partly unpublished material on the Bisharin is in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 168 GF to 174.

¹²⁰ Keimer 1954: 57 (concerning the bibliography and Schweinfurth's material). Herzog 1985: 166 (concerning the Sudan trip). The article by Boctor 1954 is in DAIK-Keimer-Kei 130, including Keimer's manuscript.

the tradition of the older generation of ethnologists, Keimer traced material culture, i.e. objects that show a clear relationship between ancient Egypt and the living tribes, ignoring evidence for cultural change in a broader context, as pointed out by Herzog.¹²¹

One of Keimer's first collections, including objects from the Bisharin, went to the Institut Fouad I^{er} du Désert in Heliopolis which was officially opened on 30 December 1950.¹²² Keimer became a member in May of the same year¹²³ and corresponded with the Institute's Director, Dr Mohamed Metwalli, Professor of Geography at Fouad I University, who had completed his doctorate on the Egyptian oases.¹²⁴ He offered Keimer a part-time job in the Institute's fifth section, dedicated to ethnography, and charged him with organising a collection of various objects used by the desert dwellers, especially the Bisharin in Upper Egypt and Nubia.¹²⁵ The pieces for the opening exhibition were chosen by Keimer who was also responsible for the exhibition's descriptive labels. Temporary exhibitions were to follow.



Fig. 7: Keimer's medal of merit from the Desert Institute, given to him in April 1951. © DAIK.

In April 1951, Keimer was honoured for his efforts with the Institute's medal of merit.¹²⁶ One side of it shows the late King Fuad I, who, by 1927, had already considered establishing an institute focused on the desert and its inhabitants from

¹²¹ Herzog 1985: 165–167.

¹²² In 1952 The Fouad I Desert Institute was renamed Desert Research Institute, in 1990 Desert Research Center, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Research_Center_\(Egypt\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Research_Center_(Egypt)) (accessed January 2, 2022).

¹²³ Keimer 1940: VIII, with a note in his own hand copy in DAIK-Keimer-Kei 160.

¹²⁴ Article in *La Bourse Égyptienne*, 10.3.1951: 5 (transcription of his name Mitwalli).

¹²⁵ The correspondence is in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 146, Folder 3.

¹²⁶ The medal as well as the letter dating 12.4.1951 are in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 146, Folder 4.

different perspectives. The preparations began in 1932, but the task was only completed in 1950 by his son King Faruk, whose portrait is also reproduced on the medal. The reverse depicts the magnificent, newly erected building in Sharia Sultan Hussein. Later on, the Institute moved to another building, a former palace in Sharia Mathaf el-Matariya which, however, seemed to have been rather unsuitable for the presentation of ethnographic objects.

Around 1951/52 Keimer compiled another, smaller collection, chiefly of Bisharin objects acquired in Upper Egypt. It was bought by the Geographical Institute of Cairo University in Giza (Midan el-Ramah) for a permanent exhibition. The Institut d'Égypte also received a similar collection.¹²⁷

Collections in Rotterdam and Basel

In 1950, Christiaan Nooteboom (1906–1967), director of the Museum voor Landen Volkenkunde in Rotterdam, today the Wereldmuseum, contacted Keimer. He expressed his interest in a collection of Bisharin and Ababde objects, as this region was hardly represented in his museum.¹²⁸ Keimer agreed and a year later shipped a collection to Rotterdam; a total of 245 items of material culture from different areas of daily life.¹²⁹ Together with the first shipment, Keimer also sent him the offprints of the first part of his *Notes*. Parts two and three followed after their publication in March 1952, and he also announced that he would duly deliver parts five and six.¹³⁰ A catalogue of the ethnographic collection was compiled by Madame Van der Sleesen-Dolk. Keimer reviewed the text in June 1955, as he had promised her.¹³¹ The catalogue of 44 pages was published in 1957, and included 83 black and white illustrations. They displayed various items, such as wooden needles, wooden combs, as well as various kinds of jewellery, such as finger rings and necklaces with strings, in addition to household objects, such as calabashes, baskets in different designs, headrests, pipes, and a selection of weapons, including daggers, swords and spears.¹³²

It seems that the museum in Rotterdam was planning a special exhibition of the collection, for which they borrowed another 10 objects together with a series of photographs from the Museum of Ethnology in Basel.¹³³

The Museum für Völkerkunde, today the Museum der Kulturen in Basel also

¹²⁷ Herzog 1961: 255; Herzog 1985: 166.

¹²⁸ Sleesen-Dolk 1957: 3–5.

¹²⁹ The inventory numbers are WM-32224 to 32490. I would like to thank Dr. Sarah Johnson, Curator for the Middle East and North Africa collections at the Wereldmuseum, for this information (email July 21, 2021).

¹³⁰ Letter Keimer to museum, 18.3.1952 in the archive of the Wereldmuseum, which received only five offprints according to Dr. Johnson.

¹³¹ Letter Keimer to Bühler, 9.6.1955 and 17.6.1955 in MKB, collection records III_0701.

¹³² Sleesen-Dolk 1957: *passim*.

¹³³ Letter Keimer to Bühler, 9.6.1955 and 17.6.1955, letter Bühler to Keimer, 11.6.1955 and 23.6.1955 in MKB, collection records III_0701.

possessed a collection from Keimer. The so-called ‘Bega collection’ comprises 1,258 objects which were received between 1954 and 1956 as a donation from the C.L. Burckhardt-Reinhart Foundation. The accompanying records contain a catalogue of the Keimer Collection (811 objects), with notes, a photo album, a notebook as well as considerable correspondence.¹³⁴

Keimer provided the necessary description and context of the acquired objects for the museum’s guidebook, which was edited by Alfred Bühler (1900–1981), Professor of Ethnology and Director of the museum since 1950.¹³⁵ The photographs had been taken by a Greek photographer on site. This was not an easy task and would not have been possible without Keimer’s close relationship with the sheikhs, as most Bisharin considered it to be devil’s work, because they thought that photography took away their souls.¹³⁶

The correspondence between Keimer and Bühler covers the period from March 1954 until January 1957. Over the course of time, the two became friends and visited each other. They discussed ethnological questions of the objects and their backgrounds, as well as private matters. Their letters also mention delivery difficulties and delayed payments on the part of the foundation, which was financed from the profits of the Burckhardt-Reinhart family business in Alexandria, which was active in the cotton trade. However, after the Egyptian revolution in July 1952, foreign companies were increasingly restricted in the cotton trade and were later nationalised by the Egyptian state. At least matters concerning the collection, in the end, went well. On 12 April 1957 the special exhibition ‘Beduinen aus Nordostafrika – Burckhardt-Sammlung, zur Erinnerung an Scheich Ibrahim’, was opened to the public for half a year.

The title was suggested by Keimer, in commemoration of the famous Swiss traveller Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817), as a kinsman of the founder’s family had generously paid for the collection. Keimer would have liked to attend the opening in person, as is evident from his last letter to his friend Alfred Bühler, but his failing health obviously would not permit travel.¹³⁷ He had, however, visited both the Basel and Rotterdam collections two years earlier, in April and May 1955.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Inventory parts 1954 III_0701, 1955 III_0717, 1956 III_0739 with an addendum 1961 III_0807 (a leather box from Ludwig Keimer). I would like to thank Ursula Regehr, Curator at the Museum der Kulturen Basel, Abteilung Afrika, for her great support (email July 7, 2021).

¹³⁵ Bühler 1957.

¹³⁶ Letter Keimer to Bühler, 19.7.1954 and 17.10.1954 in MKB, collection records III_0701.

¹³⁷ Letter Keimer to Bühler, 18.1.1957 in MKB, collection records III_0701.

¹³⁸ Keimer 1955b: 44–45.

A library and a medal

Over three decades Keimer had built up an extensive library, which in the 1950s was one of the largest private collections on ancient and contemporary Egypt worldwide. It was the work of a bibliophile scholar par excellence, who procured books through every conceivable channel. In 1955 the library was featured in the magazine *Images*.¹³⁹ The author spoke of 18,000 volumes, which probably included duplicates used in exchanges with colleagues and academic institutions. Keimer's entire flat was filled with books, even the bedroom. The collection was divided into six subject areas, indexed by a catalogue and supplemented by 200 boxes containing 100,000 notes. It had cost Keimer around 30,000 Egyptian Pounds, which he had paid to publishers, booksellers, antiquarian bookshops and other suppliers. The library was an inexhaustible source of research and study for himself and numerous visitors. It also became his retirement fund, as he had never held a stable academic position. When Keimer developed health problems in the mid-1950s that increasingly kept him from his work, it was time to act.

Apparently, Keimer maintained very good relations with Dutch Egyptologists, since, as early as April 1953, he had expressed his intention to bequest his library to The Netherlands, which can be seen in files held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague's National Archives.¹⁴⁰ This offer was very timely, as there had been discussions about setting up a Dutch institute for Egyptological and Arabic studies in Cairo for some time. One of the biggest obstacles to doing so was the question of financing such an institute. The acquisition of a library would be a more than fitting start and could become the focal point for a Dutch-Egyptian cultural centre in Cairo. On 6 July 1954, the Dutch State Department proposed to nominate Keimer for a medal.¹⁴¹ A photograph of the award ceremony is reproduced in an article by Keimer on 'Animals of Egypt', with the caption: 'H.E. the Dutch Minister handing to Professor Louis Keimer the badge of Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau conferred on him by H.M. the Queen of Holland for services rendered to Egyptology'.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Anonymous [J.M.] 1955, in DAIK-Keimer-Konv 157, Folder 5,1.

¹⁴⁰ Letter Cnoop Koopmans to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9.6.1954 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_12153_0019. I would like to thank the Nationaal Archief in Den Haag for permission to use this material.

¹⁴¹ Mentioned in a letter by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Education, 6.7.1954 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_12153_0018.

¹⁴² Keimer 1955a: 8.



Fig. 8: In 1954 Keimer was awarded the badge of Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau for services rendered to Egyptology. © DAIK.

Sometime later, on 19 September 1954, Keimer wrote his will (in French), a copy of which was kept in the safe of the Dutch Embassy in Cairo. In it, he bequeathed the entire contents of his flat to the Royal Legation of the Netherlands in Cairo, namely his huge library, including his scientific notes and those of Schweinfurth, his photographs and objects of ethnographic and artistic value, as well as everything that would be in the flat at the moment of his death.¹⁴³

Three months later, in December 1954, Keimer was willing to hand over the library immediately in exchange for a monthly annuity of 120 Egyptian Pounds, under the condition that he would still have free access to it. As his health continued to deteriorate, Keimer urged for the library to be purchased in this way, as it was his only asset.¹⁴⁴ To push the matter, the Dutch Ambassador in Cairo, W. Cnoop Koopmans, sought opinions from several Egyptologists. Van Wijngaarden, then Director of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, for example, supported the cause and stressed that Keimer wished to see his library in the hands

¹⁴³ Typescript (with the wrong year of birth, 1893 instead of 1892) in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_13153_0014.

¹⁴⁴ Letter Cnoop Koopmans to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 8.12.1954 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_13153_0011-0013.

of the Netherlands, as he had emphasised several times in letters and conversations, including during his latest trip to Europe in the spring of 1955.¹⁴⁵

However, the matter did not move forward in 1956 either, although the authorities involved discussed the possibility of a purchase in extenso. The financial question was not the only thing that slowed down the process. The plan to set up a Dutch institute in Cairo, in which the library would be housed, had also made no progress. Without the Institute, the library would have to be transported to the Netherlands, and it was feared that the Egyptian government would not grant permission for its export. As Keimer was an Egyptian citizen and had no descendants, there was also the risk that the library could be confiscated by the Egyptian State after his death.¹⁴⁶

Unfortunately, Keimer ran out of time. He was seriously ill and had to be treated in a hospital for a while. Besides the Netherlands there were also other parties interested in this unique library, such as the American University in Cairo, the Oriental Department of the (French) University in Beirut, the Vatican, as well as a Swiss and an American group. But Keimer obviously found it difficult to part with his books. After long negotiations, he unexpectedly sold the library on 29 May 1957 to the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, which had just been re-founded after World War II.¹⁴⁷

It seems that the Institute, represented by its Director Hanns Stock (1908–1966), was the only one to react quickly enough and respond to Keimer's ever-changing demands. He received a one-time payment of 6,000 Egyptian Pounds (equivalent to 72,000 DM at the time) as well as a monthly annuity of 200 Egyptian Pounds and, outside of the contract, the promise of a maximum of 20,000 DM in case Keimer needed medical treatment or a stay at a health resort in Germany or elsewhere in Europe.¹⁴⁸

Unfortunately, Louis Joseph Gustave Keimer, Dr. phil., Dr. iuris utriusque, Dr. rerum politicarum, was no longer able to attend the official reopening of the Institute on 16 November, where most of his library had already been set up. He passed away three months earlier, on 16 August 1957.

¹⁴⁵ Letter Wijngaarden to Cnoop Koopmans, 15.12.1955 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_13153_0008.

¹⁴⁶ Letter Cnoop Koopmans to the Minister of the Foreign Office, 4.6.1957 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_13153_0002. A summary of the events in the memorandum, 17.1.1958 in NL_HaNa_2.05.118_13153_0001.

¹⁴⁷ Letter Stock to *Zentraldirektion des DAI Berlin*, 4.6.1957 in D-DAI-KAI-1-II-101.

¹⁴⁸ Letter Stock to Keimer, 29.5.1957 in D-DAI-KAI-1-II-101.

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Isolde Lehnert

- Fig. 1: Keimer and an unknown person on the old sycamore tree in Old Cairo during an excursion on 7 June 1929. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-094-001-046.
- Fig. 2: The first page of Keimer's booklet, with his purchases for Capart's Fondation 1930/31. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-DIV-008-002.
- Fig. 3: A piece from the *Collection Keimer*: Harpocrates, sitting on a lotus flower or fruit capsule. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-090-004-022.
- Fig. 4: The spine of the first of Keimer's three oversize volumes about the sycamore tree. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-093-001-001.
- Fig. 5: An exhibition room, Section des fruits, in the catalogue of the Agricultural Museum 1936. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-164-004-018.
- Fig. 6: A portrait of Keimer on the front page of the newspaper *Journal d'Égypte* of 18 January 1938 on occasion of his interview about the Musée Agricole. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-164-003-011.
- Fig. 7: Keimer's medal of merit from the Desert Institute, given to him in April 1951. © DAIK. DAIK-KEI-146-004-001.
- Fig. 8: In 1954 Keimer was awarded the badge of Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau for services rendered to Egyptology. © DAIK. In Keimer 1955a: 8.

Vincent Oeters

- Fig. 1: Frans Jonckheere (1903–1956) (after Steuer 1959, n.p.).
- Fig. 2: The alleged mummy of Butehamun before Jonckheere's autopsy. © RMAH Inv. EGI.11995.
- Fig. 3: Dedication by Jonckheere to his teacher Baudouin van de Walle (private collection of the author).
- Fig. 4: Tobie Félix Jonckheere (1878–1958) (after Lurquin et al. 1948, n.p.).

Thomas L. Gertzen

- Fig. 1: Ludwig Julius Christian Stern. From Jacobs 1912; courtesy of the Department for Celtology at Bonn University.
- Fig. 2: The Adreaneum Gymnasium in Hildesheim, 1896. © AKG Images 5400096; Foto, 1896 (Römmmler & Jonas, Dresden). Berlin, Sammlung Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte.
- Fig. 3: The Egyptologist Georg Ebers (1837–1898). Postcard, private possession of the author.
- Fig. 4: Encoded Script. From Zauzich 2006.
- Fig. 5: Coptic Letter by Ⲡ ⲗⲟⲩⲁⲟⲟⲩⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲥⲧⲉⲣⲛ to Georg Ebers. © Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst, München.