

## INTRODUCTION

The international congress *Egyptian Archives / Egyptological Archives* was held at the University of Milan between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of September, 2008. It was organized by the Chair of Egyptology with the generous sponsorship and financial aid of *Ars libri ltd.*, Boston; Dr Gabriella Robiglio, patron of the Egyptological Library and Archives of the University of Milan; Dr Giuseppe Fassina, in memory of his beloved wife, the Papyrologist Giuseppina Cernuschi Fassina.

In addition, we also received support from the *Associazione Lombarda Archeologica*, and in particular from the non-profit Association *Per-megiat - per la tutela e la valorizzazione di Biblioteche sull'antico Egitto*.

In the first session of the congress, devoted to the Egyptian Archives, most of the speakers were members of the *Association Internationale pour l'Étude du Droit de l'Égypte ancienne* -AIDEA. During one meeting of the Board of Administrators of this Association, a couple of years ago in Paris, I suggested that we continue in Milan the series of lectures on Egyptian archives opened in Paris in 2005 by Willy Clarysse. I also suggested we organize them in a congress. These ideas were accepted and actively encouraged by Bernadette Menu, President of the Association. In this way, the first part of the Milanese congress could be included in the series of international conferences regularly organized or patronised by AIDEA.

The second session was centred on Egyptological Archives, a topic that constitutes one of the main research paths of the Milanese Chair of Egyptology. The interesting lectures presented by a great number of internationally renowned scholars will be published in the forthcoming first issue of EDAL - *Egyptian and Egyptological Documents, Archives &*

*Libraries*, the new Annual of the Egyptological Archives and Library of the University of Milan.

The present volume, edited by Christian Orsenigo and myself, collects fifteen contributions, some of them open to debate, about the grouping of documents that we call archives, but were not necessarily considered in the same way by the ancient Egyptians. Some others deal with different aspects of the true archives that Egypt left during almost four millennia of history, from the Third millennium BC down to the Coptic and Islamic periods. For the texts submitted, and the intellectual stimuli arising from them, we would like to take this opportunity to especially thank all the authors as well as the scholars and the public that took part in the debate and discussions during the congress.

In her opening speech, Maryvonne CHARTIER-RAYMOND resumes the activities and the lectures organized by the AIDEA on the Egyptian archives in the last four years, and illustrates the future projects of the Association.

Christopher J. EYRE's wide-ranging contribution, provocatively entitled *On the inefficiency of bureaucracy*, discusses among many important points of reflection, that: "The evidence about writing administrative texts is huge, both in picture and writing. In contrast there is remarkably little about consulting texts to gain useful information" and that: "A bureaucrat may have no specific reference use in view for a particular text. He may not expect it ever to be read, or even to be accessible to anybody else, but by writing it he is asserting and performing his function."

Alexandra PHILIP-STÉPHAN analyzes a number of texts alluding to judicial procedures, spanning over more than a millennium from the Old to the end of the New Kingdom, to illustrate the notions of "judicial archive" and "memory of the crime." For the documentation dating back to the Middle Kingdom, Katalin Anna KÓTHAY resumes and appraises the long history of the studies on the «archives» of Lahun, and suggests some new research paths.

A group of contributions deal with the New Kingdom evidence. Schafik ALLAM suggests that every community, like that of Deir el-Medineh, preserved its archives, keeping not only official texts, but also acts regarding private matters. Arlette DAVID, starting from a detailed study of the documents related to the succession of Naunakhte, probably kept in private archives in Deir el-Medineh, looks into the wills' language and formulae in the Ramesside Period. Christian ORSENIGO and myself write the history of the discovery of the tomb of Mose, renowned for its juridical inscription. The

discovery was made in Saqqarah at the end of the Nineteenth Century by Victor Loret, whose notes, drawings and photographs are mostly kept in the Egyptological Archives of the University of Milan. Marcella TRAPANI singles out the terminology related to archives in New Kingdom texts, and Alessandro ROCCATI illustrates the historical, social and linguistic background of the «archives» of Deir el-Medina and of the Near-Eastern site of Ugarit, both dating back, for the largest part, to the Thirteenth century BC.

The archives of the Ptolemaic Period are very important, for quantity and quality of information they have brought, as shown by a series of significant contributions in this volume. Gilles GORRE illustrates the role of the scribes of the temples, who continued to keep their position even when the Macedonian rulers arrived in Egypt in the Third century BC. He studies in particular the case of a family of scribes working in the Amon temple in Thebes for five generations, analyzing the papyri and the epigraphic material. Stéphanie WACKENIER looks into the role of the *basilicogrammatei* going through the archives of four of them, who exercised their functions in the First century BC. Marie-Pierre CHAUFRAY goes into the Demotic and Greek documentation found in the temple of Soknopaiou Nêsos, that provides information on the daily life of the temple in its religious, intellectual, administrative, and economic aspects.

Other archives are known in Egypt from the Roman Period. Barbara ANAGNOSTOU-CANAS, in a rich and documented contribution, states that the conservation of official documents and of private acts was a permanent concern of the Roman administration. Therefore, the governors of the Province were very active in ensuring the public archives were kept in good order. Marie DREW-BEAR illustrates the very precise and well-dated archives of Hermoupolis Magna under Gallien, in the Third century AD. The critical edition of these documents, now kept in the Austrian National Library, will shed a new light on the administrative, social and political life of this town in a period of crisis.

Fayza HAIKAL closes the volume searching in the «archives» of the Egyptian collective memory. She makes an amazing presentation of religious hymns of different denominations and periods, from Pharaonic to Islamic, showing that similar forms and rhythms appear to be used to invoke God and beg for his protection over the millennia.

And finally, I would like to warmly thank again Elmar Seibel, President of *Ars libri*, and all the supporters mentioned earlier in this paper, who, with their amazing contribution, make our Congress a success.

Very special thanks to Laura Marucchi, who has contributed to its organization, helped by some enthusiastic students of Egyptology, also present to assist the participants during the conference days.

I am extremely grateful to Christian Orsenigo, for his accuracy in the editing of the present volume, and his constant contribution to the Chair of Egyptology in the past ten years.

It is a pleasure to thank Dr Massimo Zanella, Councillor for Culture of Lombardy Region (*Assessore alle Culture, Identità e Autonomie della Regione Lombardia*) for his precious support and for having accepted to open the congress, as well as Dr Fabio Betti, from the Councillor's particular secretariat, who has been one of my best students of Egyptology at the School of Specialization in Archaeology of the University of Milan.

I also need to thank the Authorities of the *Università degli Studi di Milano*, and first of all its Rector, Prof. Enrico Decleva, together with Prof. Elio Franzini, Dean of the *Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia*, Prof. Giuseppe Zanetto, Director of the *Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità*, and Prof. Isabella Gualandri, Director of the "Quaderni di ACME", who has accepted to include the present volume in the Collection.

Many thanks also to Dr Marilena Jerrobino, from the *Istituto Editoriale Universitario Cisalpino*, who has followed the editing and printing of this book with her usual kindness and skill.

A very special thought for Prof. Sergio Donadoni, the Doyen of the Italian Egyptologists, and for Dr Anna Maria Donadoni Roveri, former Superintendent of the Egyptian Antiquities at the Turin Museum, who have honoured us with their active presence during the Congress, and have promised to enrich the collections of the University of Milan with part of their precious Egyptological archives. For their generosity, they deserve our deeper and most sincere gratitude.

*Patrizia Piacentini*