



## *The Director's Editio - Celebrating the first anniversary of our centre!*

**One year and one month precisely**, as our activities effectively started on September 1, 2007, after spending half of 2006 renovating. Renovations were stopped as we needed to get down to research. Much remains to be done in this former respect, with some ceilings still cracked, floors remaining unvarnished and doors to be repainted prior to a complete change.

The present issue is about the progresses and advances we have made over the past twelve months. It coincides with the framed end of year report we have just submitted to university authorities.

“**Growth**” is clearly what comes out of this report and the present newsletter. Some colleagues directly or indirectly expressed their surprise at the rate at which we have progressed. This has not been easy. At work at 8.30 A.M. most of last year, including during the harsh winter months which in March last reached minus 20 degrees Celsius at night and a little less in the morning, we rarely finished before 6.30 P.M. and usually much longer.

The results are there, our collections have grown (see next page), our scientific partnerships with foreign institutions exceed ten and where science is concerned - our primary objective - we believe that we have understood the principle of regulating the fabrication of ancient Egyptian varnishes and thus their “complex” nature (see issue No. 3 of this newsletter) .

Advance which will weigh heavily for our state supported “*Sarcophagus Project*” - now an international project uniting scientists of six nations - which is developing every day, with a planned gathering of participants in Yerevan in the near future .

Hence this issue is also about our forthcoming projects. Planned for December 2009 in our program, our new “*Advances in Egyptology*” bulletin should appear much sooner, hopefully in December 2008! Not only in view of Egyptological contributions in preparation, but also because of the rate of our scientific advances, cannot wait longer publication. In this instance the under-

signed's first article on the uses of *Pistacia* varnishes in ancient Egypt (2007\*) is already superseded in many points, if not only because of our June botanical expedition in Israel which led us to understand and conclude many key issues.

A mention may be made about our needs, some fulfilled, many others still in the waiting. External help has been consistent, but many expensive books are still missing and our computer park is growing old under the constant pressure we put on them. Moreover, as we gather data, large flash USB keys/disc drives to constantly quickly back up our precious electronic material are necessary.

The final word goes to all of those which have supported us and are taking a declared or undeclared interest in our activities. Request for direct subscriptions of the present newsletter are coming regularly and new connections to our website from all corners of the world are made daily, with at the time of writing 2567 registered connections since November 2007- hence over a period of 10 months. To give some elements of comparison; Oxford University's Griffith Institute [of Egyptology]'s website registered on its opening in 1995, 3381 connections\*\* over six months (hence the equivalent of about 6700 connections over a year - they precisely got 8816 in 1996, as the website got known). Admittedly at the time the web was new and there were less web-surfers. Yet we do not have the means of Oxford University and our Egyptology centre was not as aged or reputed as the Griffith Institute's on the day of the opening of its website.

This bold comparison is incidentally an opportunity to salute our colleagues there - whom we believe read us - and in particular Dr. Jaromir Malek, Keeper of the [Tutankhamun] Archives - who over one year ago was the first to congratulate the undersigned for his new appointment and whose Egyptology activities have always been a major source of inspiration.

C. T. de V.



Dr. Christian Tutundjian de Vartavan (07-06-08).

\* *Pistacia* species in relation to their use as varnish and “incense” (snTr) in Pharaonic Egypt. *Bulletin of Parthian and Mixed Oriental Studies*. 2: 61-90.

\*\*<http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/12.html>

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## Our data and collections in growth...

The building up of our collections is a primary task of our centre and one controlled for a part by the undersigned and for another by Ms. A. Zakharyan, our Head Librarian and Curator of Collections. Since Ms Zakharyan's arrival into the centre, collections have been in constant expansion - particularly where the photo collection is concerned (below). The building of these tools - a very hard task - is strategic to the future development of our centre and its main specializations - the plant world of ancient Egypt, and the Near East or Africa in view of the connections of the ancient Egyptian civilizations with these areas.

Our databank and collections, constituting our working tools, are numbered from 01 to 08:

**01 - The Codex Data Bank** - incorporating finds of ancient Egyptian plant remains. The initial databank - as published in 1997\* - incorporated 4500 identifications published over a century. Although not a priority task these last decisive months, we registered **257** new identifications of ancient plant remains from recently published reports - hence a growth of **5.7%**. Many reports in our files remaining to be dissected.

**02 - The AEC Library Reservoir and Catalog.** Slightly over **1000** publications (well beyond our 500 initial target) entered our library since 12 months - hence an average rate of **2.7 publications per day** - including **700** Egyptology books and articles, and **300** botanical books and articles - mostly in electronic format and duly numbered according to our own system. This prior to the arrival of our director's paper library (still grounded in Paris) and for nearly 200 of them thanks to the decisive activity of Ms Ingeborg Waanders (Kampen - Holland) who is now a research associate with our centre and considered as a member of our team.

**03 - The Plants of Ancient Egypt Bibliography.** Presently constituted of **1608** references on a steady increase, including **480** archaeobotanical reports.

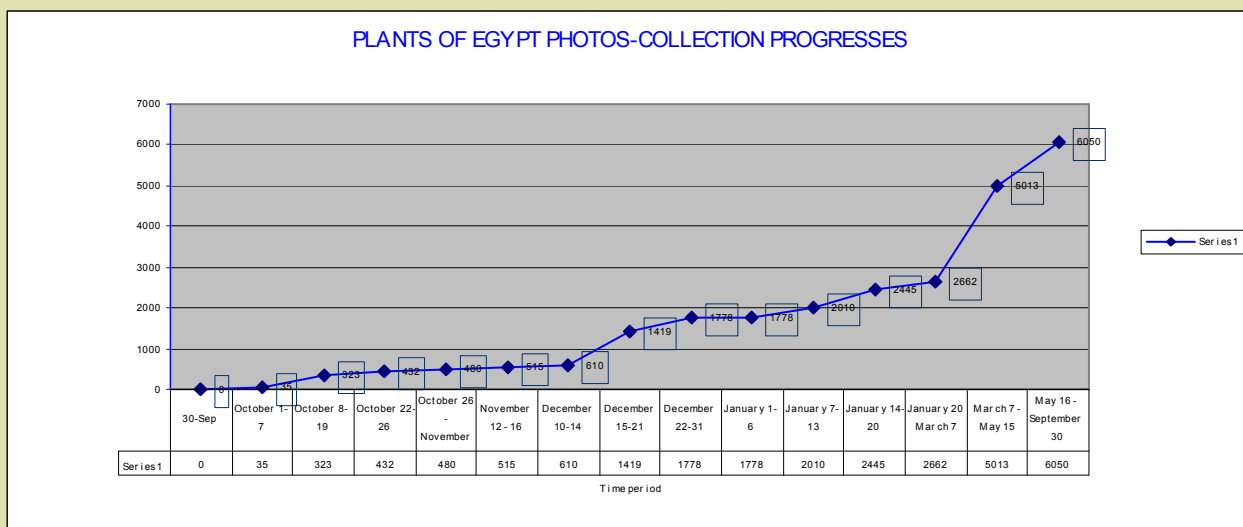
**04 - The Plants of Ancient and Modern Egypt Photo Collection.** This collection comprises at the time of writing of **6050** photographs, thanks, for a substantial fraction, to Prof. L. J. Musselman of Old Dominion University (USA) and Mrs. and Mr. Starr of Hawaii (USA) - to whom we are deeply grateful. This aside from the photographs we took during our botanical expeditions in Armenia and Israel - see next page & AEC-N 5). Note that a selection of freely usable photographs may be seen on our website.

**05 - The Flora of Ancient and Modern Egypt Listing.** This listing includes the **4000+** species of modern Egypt, as published in the new flora of Prof. Loufy Boulos - as well as the species found in ancient Egypt (around 500). The Listing records the type of photographs we have for each species and whether the species is also found in Armenia (we calculated that 25% of the modern Egyptian flora is found in Armenia). Particularly, emphasis is given on seed and fruits photographs for identification purposes.

**06 - The Reference Collection & Catalog.** Our director's reference collection - **450** species in seeds and plants - is still grounded in Paris, but in the course of the 10+ botanical expeditions led this year, **126** plants were gathered for our herbarium. This is the area where much additional work is needed during the next years. Emphasis was given this year to the collection of over 20 tree resins, including *Pistacia*, *Pinus*, *Cedrus*, *Boswellia* and *Commiphora* resin for our *Sarcophagus Project* - some very rare. Obviously where reference material lacks, the National Botanical Garden's seed and plants collection (several millions) may also be used.

**07 - The Flora of Ancient Egypt.** This major part of our research program is not only a book but also a powerful tool in the making. Still in embryonic form, it will gain more importance as time goes by.

**08 - The Plants of Ancient Egypt Iconography Collection.** This collection in the making includes already **281** photos and figures of ancient Egyptian plants and related activities figured on walls, objects, etc.... Much of this iconography will be included in the Flora of Ancient Egypt.



Progresses of AEC in collecting photographs of species found in ancient and modern Egypt from September 30, 2007, to 30 September 2008. 6050 photographs. Note that After March 7, way points were only recorded twice. Head of Project: Ms. A. Zakharyan., since November in replacement of Ms G. Grigoryan.

## Expeditions and partnerships



**Expeditions.** Botanical expeditions have been led (in Armenia) in Aghveran, around the lake of Ashtarak and its surrounding areas, Arpat, Degher, Sholboulakh and Yerevan (Tzitzernakapert and on the hills above the university). In Degher wild wheat stands were encountered and collected. Very marking were the dense undergroves of wild apple trees found at the summit of the mountains of Sholboulakh., or the wild apricot trees in a specific valley near Dekher. The long botanical expedition in Israel and Georgia has been described in AEC-Newsletter 5.

**Partnerships.** Our current projects are mainly undertaken with the following institutions :

**The Russian Institute of Egyptology - Moscow, Russia** (Edward Loring).

**Montpellier University (Egyptology) - France** (Dr. D. Meeks).

**The Jerusalem and Mount Scopus Botanical Gardens, Israel** (Dr. S. Ofek, Dr. O. Fragman-Shapir & Mrs M. Ron).

**The Augustinium Museum - Uppsala, Sweden** (Mr Geoffrey Metz - Curator, **Egyptian coll.**).

**Old Dominion University (Botany Dept.), USA** (Prof. L. J. Musselman) .

**North Carolina University, USA** (Dr. S. Gibson).

**The Wood Museum of Armenia** (Mr. Henrike Solakyan).

and the following individuals in particular (aside from Ms. I. Waanders previously mentioned and another Dutch person wishing to remain anonymous):

Mrs Antonella Pasquale, architect and conservator & Mr Danielle Masazza, Technician in Microscopy, Italy.

**Special collaboration.** Special thanks to Dr. M. Nesbitt (**Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew**) for a verification and exchange concerning the sesame found in Tutankhamun's tomb. Kew Gardens' remarkable SEPASAL database has been added among the links on our website.

« *Your are not listening to all I say! It's in his kiss* » says American-Armenian singer Cher in one of her popular songs.



Cher - All rights reserved

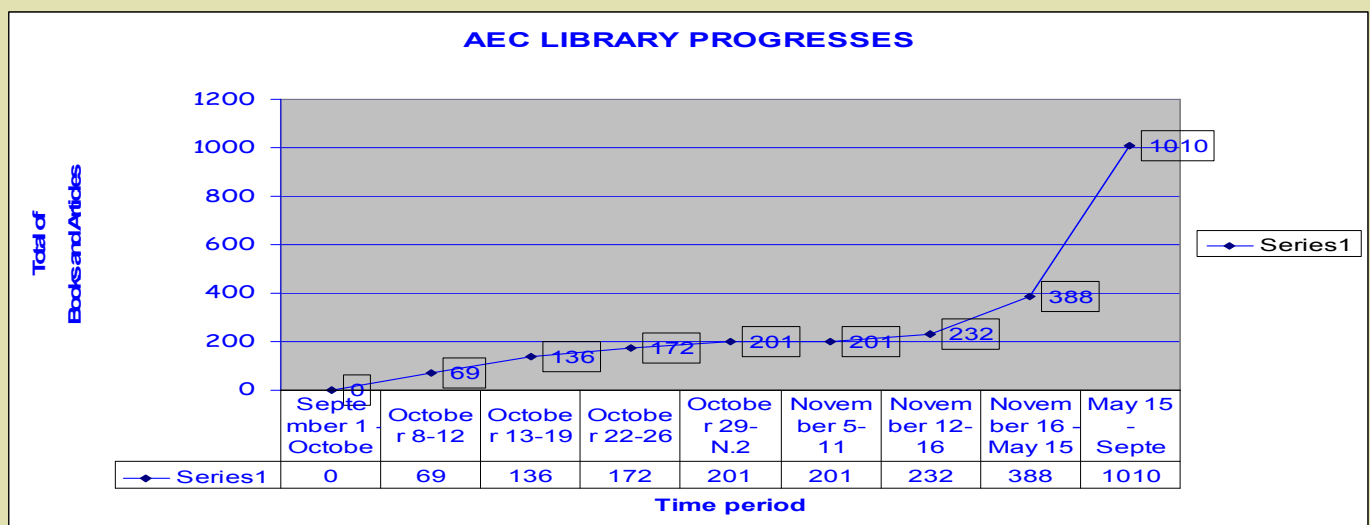
We would say « *It's in the computer* » as so far our efforts have been transformed in electronic format and tools, or in publications (published or forthcoming), so that our library looks comparatively and very deceptively empty at first glance.

Our acquisition strategy gives priority to electronic publications which, unlike paper publications, are searchable (plus less expensive and take less room)

A modern research library, we believe, is first an electronic library.

## Our forthcoming projects

As stated in the Editio, our new bulletin *Advances in Egyptology* is in the making. Scholars wishing to contribute have until May 1, 2009 (at the latest) to send their contributions either in the form of articles or short notices (one or two pages) bringing some decisive advance in a peculiar area of Egyptology. Contributions should be sent electronically to [Egyptology@ysu.am](mailto:Egyptology@ysu.am). Style of presentation is left free to authors, as long as cited information is retrievable (*op. cit.*, *idem*, *ibidem*, etc... are strictly forbidden). Scholars may include black and white figures or photographs at will, and even color photographs should the need be justified. The very nice bulletin cover may be seen on the back cover or on our website under the "Our projects" section (end of page). Each author will receive a complementary copy of the entire bulletin, but no offprint, as this is too much work for our staff. However the PDF version of each article will be made available to their respective authors, so long as they engage themselves to diffuse them in a controlled manner. Progresses made in our *Sarcophagus Project* will be the object of the next issue.



Progresses of the AEC Library in the acquisition of publications - 1010 publications collected in 12 months. The sharp increase from November corresponds to the appointment of Ms A. Zakharyan as director of the Library in replacement of Ms K. Hovhanissyan, whereas after May 15, the botanical publications (300), omitted till then, have been added to the total of Egyptology publications (700) gathered; the acquisition of which doubled thanks to the assistance of Ms I. Waanders.



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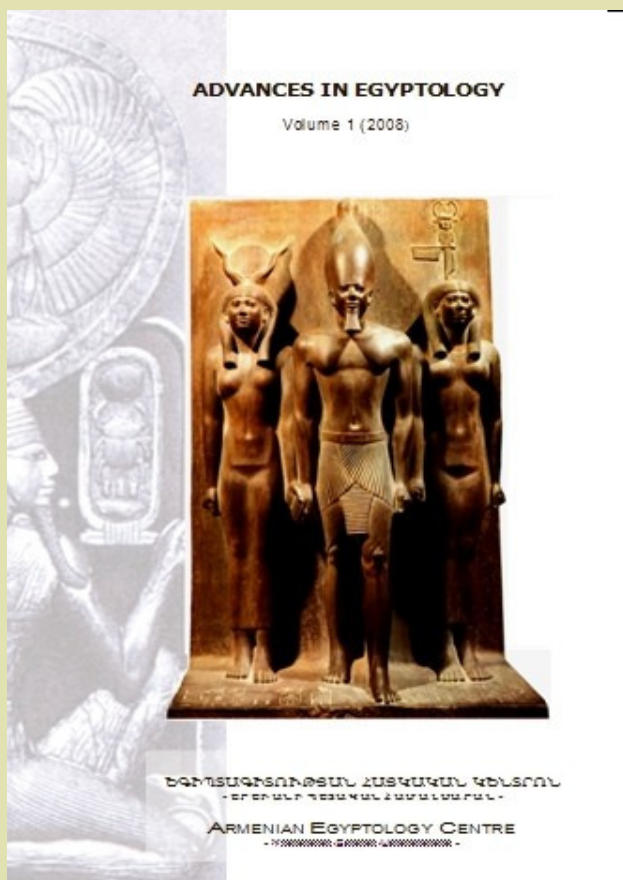
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<http://www.armenian-egyptology-centre.org>  
<http://a-egyptology.atSPACE.com>

## *Advances in Egyptology* No. 1 (2008) - **CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS!**



*Advances in Egyptology (AinE)* is the new bulletin of Egyptology of Yerevan State University's Armenian Egyptology Centre, under the general editorship of its director.

*AinE* accepts articles which clearly contribute to the advance of Egyptological knowledge and make a step forward into the unknown.

Please send contributions to [egyptology@ysu.am](mailto:egyptology@ysu.am) or by post at the above address before May 1, 2009.

Format of presentation is indifferent provided sources may be easily and precisely retrieved (*op. cit.*, *idem*, *ibidem*, etc. are forbidden). Contributions will thereafter be re-formatted according to the bulletin's presentation & standards.

Black and white photographs may be inserted at will; color photographs or plates are also accepted in reasonable numbers if justified.

The authors receive one copy of the bulletin and the PDF of their article under the agreement that diffusion of the latter, by e-mail or in print, will be made in a responsible and controlled manner.



## Mummies are not Museum "Objects" (cont. from page 1)!



«Object»: No. 25014, Vatican Museum, a 21st Dynasty mummy of a Woman (Deir el-Bahari). The body is placed among other objects which cannot be seen on the photo. (Photo J. Sherurcij - 2006)

As an Egyptologist, I cannot help thinking that considering the ancient Egyptians' conception of the after-life, considering the fact that we did not ask them whether they would be happy to see their material remains finish in a museum (something highly doubtful in view of their considerable efforts to secure their own specific - in style and content - *Place of Eternity*), I am convinced that to for a start mummies are not museum "objects" and should in any case consequently be treated "differently". I think that most people agree that mummies are not "objects" (a poll could eventually be made to sustain this assumption) and thus this is, in this difficult subject, a precious base for finding one or more solutions.

This difference in treatment could start by their "separation" from displayed objects - which is not the case in all museums - so as to express respect to what mummies effectively are: the bodies of those who have accomplished the material and spiritual civilisation we all admire.

Separation can take place within the museum - such as in the Egyptian Museum (Cairo) where the two rooms for the Royal Mummies thought and realised by Dr. Nasri Iskander are now mausoleums where one is requested to penetrate in silence - an important fact on which I had re-

cently the occasion to attract the attention of the French public\*. The creation of these rooms had in fact a lot to do with the "treatment" of mummies, as President Sadate had - in anger - the rooms closed many years following his first seeing of the Royal mummies.

Separation can also take place outside the museum - in a nearby separate place clearly expressed as "sanctuary" - the solution I personally favour if technically possible although I do not know of any such example. I also think that like in the Egyptian Museum - the bodies should be covered although living the face, hands and feet uncovered provided that these are in a good state and thus near to what they looked-like when the defunct was alive.

This separation has the advantage to be at the cross-road of traditional ways to express respects to deceased persons and that of the need which human beings have to understand their condition and history through knowledge acquisition, such as offered by museum "collections".

C. T. de V.

"Un mausolée royal pour les pharaons". *Point de Vue* 31-06-2006: 50-53. Copy of which will be soon available on our website.



« "I don't know why, but it felt somewhat sacrilegious to find an Egyptian mummy in the Vatican Museum".

Comment of web surfer on the Vatican mummy, currently visible at:

<http://www.digitalapoptosis.com/archives/italy/001559.html>

## The "Sarcophagus Project" - Follow up

We have covered much ground of Phase 1 of our project, i.e.. the collection of publications on any topic related to the reconstruction of an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus. Information has been literally pouring in thanks to those, like Ms Ingeborg Waanders of Holland - who are now doing research with us on a regular basis. In this respect Ms. Waanders was able to find and send studies which are strategic for our project. This data has strengthens our assumption that "mny" is the solvent in the complex media "snTr, mny, mmHP". We are thus now entering Phase 2 - the gathering of materials, such as resins. As the good seasons have started, a number of botanical expeditions

are planned in Armenia for this purpose - as we have calculated that 25% of the flora of Egypt is present in Armenia - but also abroad.

Our project is also now attracting considerable interest in various circles and we have just received a proposition from the Nicola family - who owns one of the best conservation laboratory in Italy (see [www.nicolarestauri.it](http://www.nicolarestauri.it)) to build a "third" sarcophagus in Amarengo. Aside from the fact that ours is a state program to be realized in Armenia, this is not technically possible, but we are looking for ways to establish a partnership with them...

## The 5000 photos of plants species of Egypt-mark exceeded !

As initially indicated on our website, the gathering of photos of those species which are found in modern Egypt or were known by the ancient Egyptians constitute one of our priority activities - as such unique collection will ease identification of ancient Egyptian plant remains.

Thanks to several partnerships with foreign institutions, no less to the sustained efforts of our Collections' Curator - Ms A. Zakharyan - we have been pleasantly surprised after computing

to see that we had gathered over 5000 photographs of plants. We have also understood that the initial 6000 photographs-mark originally cited on our website will be well below the number needed to cover the 2086 species found today in Egypt and the few hundreds species which were imported into the land of the pharaohs. This collection has however already started to give us an unprecedented overview of the plant world known by ancient Egyptians.

## Our predecessors in the study of “The Plants of Ancient Egypt”: GEORG A. SCHWEINFURTH (1836 - 1925)

Of all scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of ancient Egyptian plants, Georg August Schweinfurth is no doubt the historical figure among them as his contribution to science goes far beyond this subject, although he devoted a very substantial part of his life to the study of the plants of the pharaohs.

The life of Georg Schweinfurth is known worldwide today for his highly risked participation in the exploration of Africa in those very years when the sources of the Nile were eagerly searched. Not least for his discovery of the unknown *Uele* river, the discovery of which helped toward a final estimate of the extent of the Nile system, his discovery of many unknown plant and animal species (some now bearing his name), as well as his encounter with “cannibal” tribes such as the “Niam Niam”, or his historical discovery in the Congo forest of the Aka pygmies, discovery which finally confirmed the existence of these until then unseen African “little people”.

Schweinfurth, who was born at Riga (Latvia, then part of the Russian Empire), was educated at the universities of Heidelberg, Munich and Berlin (1856-1862), where he particularly devoted himself to botany and palaeontology. Commis-

sioned to arrange the collections brought from the Sudan by Freiherr von Barnim and Dr. Hartmann, his attention was thus directed to East Africa. In 1863, when still very young, he courageously embarked himself solo in a very carefully prepared expedition, from Suakin on the shores of the Red Sea, across the desert to Khartoum in Sudan; thus exploring a region nearly completely unknown, before returning to Europe in 1866.

This expedition and the scientific data Schweinfurth collected attracted so much attention that in 1868 Berlin's Humboldt-Stiftung entrusted him with the important scientific mission to explore the Bahr al Ghazāl (White Nile region).

The accounts of his subsequent travels and researches later appeared either in book or in various forms. Among his books, his *Travel in the Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa from 1868 to 1871* (1873) brought him fame and was translated in several languages.

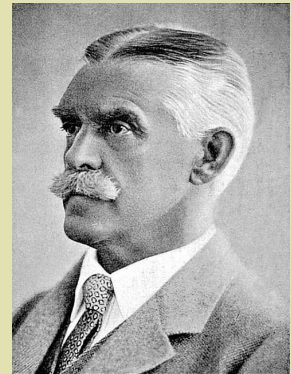
In 1873-1874 Schweinfurth accompanied Gerhard Rohlfs in his expedition into the Libyan Desert. From 1875 to 1888 he settled in Cairo, studying the botany, geology, palae-

ontology, and archaeology of Egypt and Middle Eastern regions, founding the Geographical Society of Egypt under the auspices of the khedive Ismail.

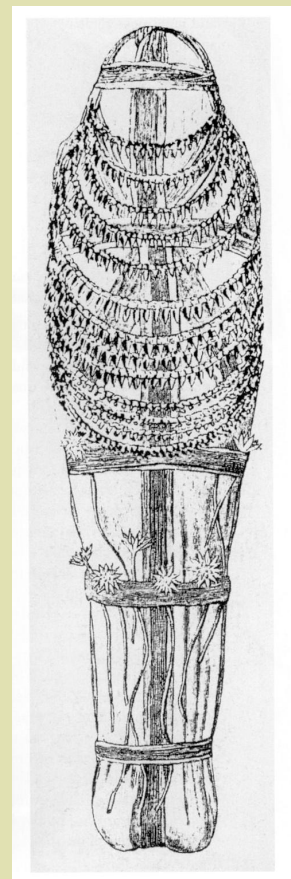
His contribution to the study of ancient Egyptian plants has been considerable – with a very lengthy list of articles on the subject published over half a century; although Schweinfurth never published a specific monograph on the subject. Resident in Egypt while many discoveries occurred – such as the discoveries of the “Royal Caches” – he was able in many instances to study the plant materials on the very spot where they were found. In the tombs, where bouquets had been deposited, or on the mummies when decorated with flower garlands, of which he made careful drawings (left) which can still be seen today in Dokki's Agricultural Museum (Cairo) with the discovered material.

Schweinfurth's academic life resulted in several hundred publications (372\*, perhaps more) in many fields of science - and was rewarded with many international decorations including the prestigious gold medal of London's *Royal Geographical Society*.

C. T. de V.



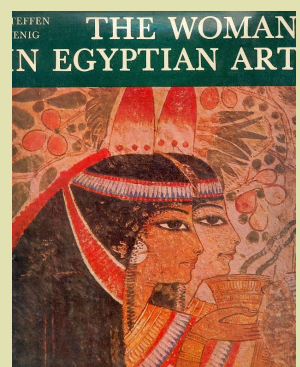
Georg Schweinfurth (1836 - 1925)



The garlands and flowers found on the mummy of Ramses III, as drawn by Schweinfurth.

### Follow up: Gifts from our sponsors- our needs and Arpag Mekhitarian!

As our center's develop, the impulse of our *Sarcophagus Project* is bringing a strong sub-specialization on ancient Egyptian painting This is an all the more welcome development that the Egyptology world has recently lost Arpak Mekhitarian (1911-2004), who although a Belgium was no less a well known Armenian, and one of the leading experts in the history of Egyptology on ancient Egyptian painting. Mr. Mekhitarian - had he lived slightly longer - would have been no doubt very happy to learn of the birth of Egyptology in Armenia, and even more that ancient Egyptian painting would take such an important place in its midst. We have added his famous book *La Peinture Égyptienne* (1954) in our wanted list (page “I want to Help” in our website), and in the meantime we are grateful to Mr. Gagik Yeghiazaryan, director of K-Partners in Yerevan, also a superior photographer and dedicated painter - who once again blesses our centre with his help by offering us the now rarer and very beautiful book *Women in ancient Egyptian art* by S. Wenig (1969). Where acknowledgments are due, events have long prevented us to thank Mr. Didier Guillonet, director of the Bagdasarov Crystals Group factory in Ashtarak for having transported from Paris to Yerevan our heavy A3 Canon printer as well as various very important documents. May they be thanked for their support and precious time.



\*KEIMER, L. Bibliographie des ouvrages de Georges Schweinfurth. *Bulletin de l'Institut. d'Égypte* 8-10 (1925-28): 1-17.



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<http://a-egyptology.atspace.com>

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## *Encaustic and the "Fayum portraits"... an introduction!*



Greco-Roman Fayum portrait of a man, still in place on its mummy, discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1911 in Hawara (Fayum; Royal Museum of Scotland, MoS 1911.210.1. Photo GNU Wikipedia).

Encaustic painting, also known as hot wax painting, involves using heated beeswax to which colored pigments are added. The paste is then applied to a surface - usually prepared wood, though canvas and other materials could also be used. This technique is said to have historically started in the Fayum - an oasis south-west of Cairo - with the famous mummy portraits developed there around 100-300 CE, but it seems that encaustic was already used during the pharaonic period to decorate a tomb. While the majority of preserved mummy portraits were painted on wooden boards or panels, some were painted directly onto the canvas or rags of the mummy wrapping (cartonnage painting). To produce the boards, pieces of imported hardwoods, including oak, lime, sycamore, cedar, cypress, fig, and citrus were cut into thin rectangular pieces and then polished.

Sometimes they were primed with plaster, traces of which are sometimes found. There are a few examples of portraits being painted over, or both sides of a board being painted, suggesting that the portraits were produced during the lifetime of their subjects. As these died, portraits were then inserted in a window-like arrangement within the mummy wrapping. Two painting techniques can be distinguished: encaustic (wax) painting and egg-based tempera. There are also examples of hybrid techniques or of variations from the main techniques. Encaustic paintings are striking because of the immediate contrast existing between the vivid and rich colors, producing an "impressionistic" effect, while the tempera ones, with a more differentiated gradation of chalky tones appear more restrained. In some cases, gold leaf was used to depict jewellery and wreaths. Accentuation and differentiation of light and shade are varied to show the location of the light source. The earlier, higher quality, portraits make more use of background coloring in this regard. The portrait of the man - here shown on the left - is a particularly fine example, showing the degree of mastery reached by painters during Greco-Roman times.

[Main source : *Wikipedia*, with modifications, where other splendid Fayum portraits can be seen]