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Program

Sixth NINO Annual Meeting

*Heritage and politics in the Middle East: historical  
perspectives*

At the University of Groningen

with

keynote lectures

by Naseem Raad (American University of Beirut) and Daniel Soliman (National Museum of Antiquities)

&

photo exhibit

*A New industry in an Ancient Land: Archeology, tourism and cultural diplomacy in the Holy Lands* – from the historical [Frank Scholten photographic collection](#)

Thursday 30 January 2025, 09:30 - 18:00

Venue

University of Groningen, Faculty of Arts, Marie Loke Hall [Oude Kijk in Het Jatstraat 26, 9712 EK Groningen](#)

Building 1313.0034

Drinks 18:00-20:00 at [Jurwerker](#)



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9:30 – 9:50 coffee & tea

9:50 Welcome

10:00-10:45 Keynote

**Daniel Soliman**

Curator collection Egypt & Nubia, National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden

### **Securing the gift: Dutch diplomatic efforts to acquire Egyptian and Nubian heritage**

The Dutch National Museum of Antiquities, founded in 1818, holds one of the largest collection of Egyptian and Nubian archaeological material outside of Egypt. While the majority of the collection was acquired through the antiquities market, some objects were given to the collection by the Egyptian state. Indeed, the text labels for such objects in the museum's galleries mention that Egypt had donated them, but the history of the transference of some such objects is far more complex. They can be gleaned from undocumented accounts that are orally transmitted within the museum space, and from the museum's correspondence kept in the archives of the museum and the Dutch National Archive. Two case studies will be discussed. First, archival documents illustrate that the objects from the Bab el-Gasus tomb donated by Egypt to the collection in 1893 were obtained by the museum after the Netherlands had actively pursued to acquire them. Letters demonstrate that Willem Pleyte, then director of the museum, sought to secure a group of antiquities from Bab el-Gasus in an effort to consolidate the position of the museum, and by extension, of Dutch Egyptology, as prominent players on par with those in major European countries. The correspondence kept in the archives outlines the contact between the museum, the Dutch ministries of internal and foreign affairs and the Dutch consul-general in Egypt with the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs and the Egyptian antiquities service. The second case concerns the so-called temple of Taffeh in the museum. The well-known narrative around this building highlights the relocation of the temple during the UNESCO campaign to salvage the monuments of Nubia in the 1960ies, that the Netherlands contributed to the project, and that the Egyptian state donated the temple to the people of the Netherlands as a token of gratitude. However, oral accounts and archived correspondence paint a picture of a complicated political



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situation and the competing interests of European states, which negotiated with the Egyptian government for the acquisition of archaeological finds. Through the efforts of the Dutch ministry of culture, recreation and social work, the Dutch embassy in Egypt and the diplomatic connections of archaeologist Bryan Emery, the temple eventually went to Leiden. These two cases illustrate the entanglement of archaeology and cultural diplomacy between the Netherlands and Egypt. In addition, they challenge the way in which the narrative of the Egyptian state donation is reiterated.

10:45-11:30 Keynote

**Naseem N. Raad**

Lecturer Department of History and Archaeology, American University of Beirut

**Heritage Politics and Perception in Lebanon and the Middle East: The Intersection of Imperialism, Economic Policy, Archaeology, and Identity**

The complex history of archaeological exploration in the Near East since the 19th century in many ways mirrors the contemporary geopolitical relationships between European states and emerging Arab countries. Once the romantic pastime of diplomats and adventurers acting with little legal restriction, Near Eastern archaeology has now become a more controlled and formal scientific discipline at numerous local and international institutes. Cultural heritage has also served an important role in early modern state formation, particularly in the establishment of national identities. This paper explores this multifaceted history with a focus on Lebanon by disentangling the many geopolitical and socioeconomic variables that have led to the current state of heritage management in the country. It serves to break down the nuanced social, economic, and political webs that largely dictate the study and management of cultural heritage in Lebanon through case studies from the Beirut Port Project and the Sidon Archaeology Digitization Project.

11:30-11:45 Anita Keizers (Middle Eastern Library, Leiden University)

The Middle Eastern Library: the new home of the NINO collection

11:45-12:00 Karène Sanchez-Summer (University of Groningen)

Introduction to the photo exhibition and guided tour



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## 12:00-13:00 Lunch break

(Syrian/Yemeni vegetarian lunch with vegan options; lunch is reserved for speakers and participants who registered before January 13, 2025)

## Posters in the Exhibition Hall

- Luna Beerden (Leiden University), “Illuminating the Past: Digitizing the Photographic Collections of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East”
- Yağmur Koyuncu (University College London), “What does intellectual decolonisation mean for Egyptology?”

## 13:00-15:00 Heritage and Politics Session

### 13:00-13:30 Pinar Özgüner (University of Zielona Góra)

#### **Archaeology as a Means of Creating Soft Power: The Case of Gaziantep**

This research presents the changes in the use and management of archaeological heritage in Türkiye, focusing specifically on Gaziantep, located in southeastern Anatolia and bordering Syria, during the early years of the Turkish Republic and in modern times. Over the past century, there has been a global shift towards integrating archaeological sites into tourism activities as part of economic policies, a trend that also has local impacts. Gaziantep has been home to prominent Bronze and Iron Age sites such as the Zincirli (Ancient Sam'al), Karkamış and Yesemek Stone Quarry. These sites, which define the protohistory of the region, were subject to research as early as the 19th century. Beginning in the early 2000s, new research projects were initiated at these sites by Turkish and international teams. Furthermore, the site of Zeugma has gained prominence as a new archaeological research area and as a major catalyst for promoting tourism in Gaziantep, featuring a museum dedicated to mosaics from the site. In line with the growing popularity of World Heritage Site nominations, a new phase of archaeological work has begun at the Yesemek Stone Quarry. This new phase of archaeological projects in these centers also represents a new era for the use of archaeological heritage in cultural diplomacy. Thus, I examine how the current local municipality integrates this new phase of archaeological research as a



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means of creating urban soft power to create income and overcome social and political crises in the region.

13:30-14:00 Hatem Eltablawy and Hossam Hegazi (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Cairo)

### **Egyptian Rulers and the Journey of Heritage Preservation: From the Old Kingdom to the Modern Era**

This research paper discusses the role of Egyptian rulers in preserving heritage and cultural identity since the end of the Old Kingdom. Following the death of King Pepi II, the country entered a period of decline marked by thefts and famines. However, writers like Ipuwer emerged to defend Egyptian heritage, while rulers from the southern regions undertook restoration efforts for monuments and temples as part of their commitment to preserving identity .

The study examines the efforts of rulers such as Thutmose IV, who removed sand from the Sphinx to enhance his authority, and Ramses IX, who formed a committee to investigate the thefts from the tombs of Thebes. It also highlights the role of Ptolemy I Soter, who brought the body of Alexander the Great for burial in Egypt, emphasizing the significance of Egyptian heritage even among foreign rulers. Additionally, the paper explores the figure of a priest in the late period named Panjem, who undertook the restoration of monuments and the reburial of his ancestors. The research also underscores the contributions of contemporary Egyptian leaders, such as the current president, in promoting cultural identity through the establishment of new museums, including the Grand Egyptian Museum, set to open soon. This study affirms that preserving archaeological sites and historical monuments has become an integral part of building national identity, as these efforts have shaped the collective memory of the Egyptian people. By linking heritage to national policies, this research highlights the interrelationship between history and politics and its impact on Egyptian identity .

14:00-14:30 Omar Ghaly (Leiden University)

### **The Jesuit, The Hieroglyphs and the Author That Never Was: Arabic sources in Athanasius Kircher's Obeliscus Pamphilius**

Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) has been nicknamed The Last Man That Knew Everything and has published on a wide range of topics. One of his long-lasting obsessions was ancient Egypt.



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He has published a number of volumes on the language, history and culture of ancient Egypt. Kircher was well known for claiming to have deciphered the hieroglyphic script, a claim that has been met with derision by later scholars such as Champollion and Erman. The following paper presents the results of a MA-thesis in Egyptology, conducted at Leiden University under supervision of dr. Ben Haring and with dr. Martin Baasten acting as a second reader. It examines the role Arabic sources play in *Obeliscus Pamphilius*, Kircher's most focussed work on ancient Egypt. Kircher operates before the traditional birth of Egyptology, dated either to the Napoleonic expedition or the decipherment of hieroglyphic writing by Champollion. Stolzenberg, in a monograph dedicated to the study of Kircher's Egyptology, places him at the confluence of two intellectual traditions, being that of erudition, consisting of antiquarian research and philology, and occult philosophy, being the wisdom transmitted to us by a range of wise, pagan men from antiquity. The employment of Arabic sources by Kircher is used to lend authority to his interpretations. The underlying assumption is that Arabic authors were closer to the source. This paper will contextualise Kircher's quotations of Arabic sources as well as casting strong doubts on the authenticity of some of these. By doing this it sheds light on the entanglement of the study of oriental languages and the start of Egyptology as a discipline.

14:30-15:00 Kemal Baran (Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED) / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (SMB))

### **Archival Politics, Local Actors, and Objects on the Move: Zincirli/Sa'mal Excavations in the Ottoman Sources**

This paper explores the politics of archaeology and heritage in the Middle East through a case study of the Zincirli/Sam'al excavations. Sponsored by the German Oriental Committee, Zincirli Höyük (ancient Sam'al) was excavated intermittently between 1888 and 1902 by German archaeologists such as Felix von Luschan and Robert Koldewey, with participation from Ottoman officials and labor provided by local communities. Artifacts unearthed from these excavations are now housed in the Vorderasiatische Museum and the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. The excavations were made possible through extensive diplomatic interactions between German and Ottoman counterparts. Based on documents in the Ottoman archives, this paper addresses the following questions: 1- How do the Zincirli/Sam'al excavations appear in Ottoman sources? 2- Who were the local actors involved, and what roles did they play? 3- What were the dynamics between the German archaeologists, Ottoman officials, and local communities? 4- How did the Germans navigate Ottoman bureaucracy? In answering these questions, this paper seeks to shift the perspective, offering a narrative of the history of archaeology based on Ottoman sources.



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Additionally, this paper problematizes how modern archival politics shape research into the history of archaeology and heritage in the Middle East, amplifying certain voices while diminishing others.

### 15:00-15:30 Tea

### 15:30-17:00 Lightning session

#### 15:30-15:50

- Mayada Madbouly (University of Groningen), “How do museum collections tell postcolonial (hi)stories?”
- William Figueroa (University of Groningen), “Heritage Diplomacy at the Beijing Palace Museum: The 2024 Glories of Ancient Persia Exhibit”
- Audrey Crabbé (University of Groningen), “Ploughing through pathologies: Traction-related bone deformations in cattle as indicators of changes in political economies in Bronze and Iron Age Anatolia”
- Lauren van Kruijssen (Leiden University), “*Il faut cultiver notre jardin!*: insights into the correspondence between Sir Alan H. Gardiner and Prof. Dr. Adriaan de Buck”

#### 15:50-16:00 Q&A

#### 16:00-16:20

- Online: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz (Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, Netherlands Institute for the Near East), “Egyptology and the Foreign Archaeological Institutes in Egypt”
- Daan Nijssen (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), “International Relations in the Near East during the Neo-Assyrian Period (ca. 1000-609 BCE)”
- Nolke Tasma (Leiden University), “Aramaic Epigraphy in the Roman Near East and the Parthian Commonwealth: Imperial Elites and Local Realities”



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- Elena Cantero Ros (University of Groningen), “The Wall Paintings of Gadara of the Decapolis (Umm Qais, Jordan)”

16:20-16:30 Q&A

16:30-16:45

- Online: Marleen De Meyer (Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo), “The Arabic Excavation Archive from Quft in Upper Egypt”
- Marcel van Tuinen (University of Groningen), “Contextual clues on the range of human-bird interactions at Middle-Late Bronze Age Alalakh (modern Turkey)”
- Marlena Whiting (University of Groningen), “Anchored Heritage in Byzantine Petra”
- Clinton Briar (University of Leicester), “An Appropriation of An: A Theography of the Mesopotamian Sky-Deity An/Anu(m) from the Uruk IV to the Old Babylonian Period”

16:45-17:15 Q&A, final discussion

17:15-17:45 Announcements thesis prize winners by Miriam Müller + final notes

18:00-20:00 Drinks and snacks at the Uurwerker nearby.