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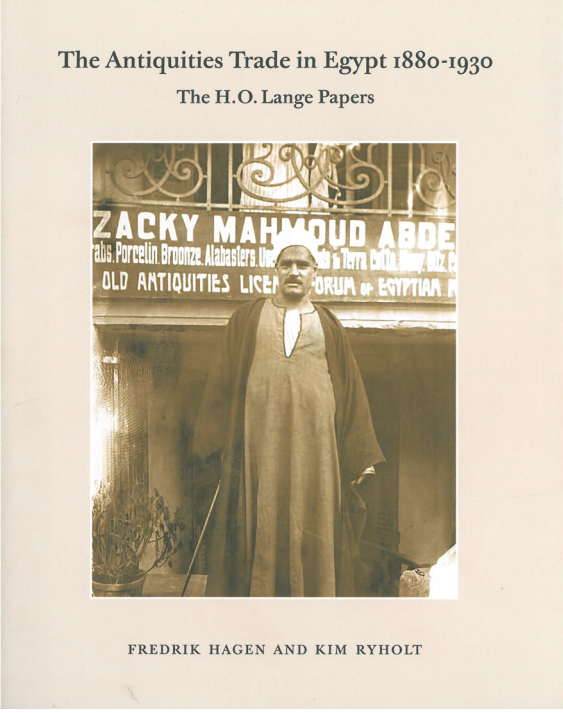
Book Review

Fredrik Hagen and Kim Ryholt: The Antiquities Trade in Egypt 1880-1930. The H.O. Lange Papers (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters), 335p., ISBN 978-87-7304-400-1

by Sebastian Willert



The Danish Egyptologist Hans Osterfeld Lange (1863–1943) travelled to Egypt twice, together with his wife Joanna. During their stay in the winters of 1899–1900 and 1929–1930 both tried to purchase antiquities for various clients in Denmark. What remains of their visits are not only Egyptian objects in Danish museums, but also personal documents such as correspondence, travel diaries and photographs. The Egyptologists Fredrik Hagen and Kim Ryholt used this material for their valuable study on the antiquities trade in Egypt between 1880 and 1930. The authors took advantage of the opportunity to focus not so much on the acquisition of a single museum or collection, but rather on an analysis of the actions of a buying individual within a trading network. Therefore, Hagen and Ryholt tried to decode a "system of acquisition" (p. 12) tracing the general attributes of the legal and illegal antiquities trade in Egypt.

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The work is based on extensive sources including the correspondence of H. O. Lange in the department for manuscripts of the Royal Library, Copenhagen; the diaries of his travels to Egypt; two photo albums consisting of 300 photographs from the first and 241 photographs from the second trip (as well as some others); notebooks from the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection; Lange's personal collection of antiquities and supplementary material.

The study is structured in six parts. After a brief preface, introduction and a sketch of the material and scope, including an outline of the archival material (pp. 7–21), the book's first thematical segment presents the antiquities trade in Egypt (pp. 22–163). The authors not only address the geography of the trade in antiquities with its hubs in Cairo and Luxor, but also the different types of dealers and especially the infrastructure of the market, as well as the ways and means that were established to circumvent the laws regulating the export of antiquities. In addition, Hagen and Ryholt examine the role of Joanna Lange, both in the acquisition of antiquities for Danish institutions and for the Langes' private collection. Her significance for the material provided is noteworthy: not only was she a more accomplished photographer (p. 28), but due to her language skills in Arabic she was also essential in negotiating with Arab dealers (p. 27).

The sub-chapter "A Tale of Two Heads" (pp. 152–156) includes a case study of what Lange considered to be the most valuable purchases and their export to Denmark. In a historical twist, these very objects would later turn out to be likely counterfeits. The chapter ends with "The Aftermath" (p. 162) and a brief description of the market's development up to the 1980s.

The second thematic section is dedicated to "The Hunt for Papyri" (pp. 164–182). This includes the realisation of Lange's long-cherished desire to form a collection of papyri, including the creation of the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and the Papyrus Haniensis Collection in Copenhagen. The final part of the book is dedicated to "The Antiquities Dealers" (pp. 183–274). This incorporates the biographies of more than 250 – Egyptian and foreign – dealers and sellers of antiquities who were active in Egypt between 1880 and 1930. The authors denote the list to be incomplete, but it is undoubtedly an important complementary reference work to existent publications.[1]

The study is completed with six appendices: Extracts of the 1912 law governing the sale and export of Egyptian antiquities (pp. 278–283); Licenses issued by the Egyptian Antiquities Service (p. 284); Antiquities dealers mentioned in the Baedeker guides to Egypt (pp. 285–287); Organisation and salaries of the Antiquities Service (pp. 288–290); an extract of a story published in 1922 named "*Haj* Hamid and the Brigand" (pp. 291–295); H. O. Lange's background and autobiographical presentation (pp. 296–299); and finally a List of Figures, an extensive Bibliography, General Index and Index of objects plus an Index of ostraca and papyri.

1 M. L. Bierbrier, *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (4th Revised Edition, London 2012) and Stephen Quirke, *Hidden hands: Egyptian workforces in Petrie excavation archives, 1880–1924* (London 2010).

Although Hagen and Ryholt mention that they were not able to include further material from European and American museums, which play a "vital role" (p. 7) within the antiquities trade in Egypt, they were able to give a detailed account of Lange's visits, his network and his activities as an agent for the Danish Royal Museum.

In another review of Hagen and Ryholt's publication, Ursula Kampmann touches upon the illegal antiquity trade in Egypt and asks the lapidary question: "Who could imagine any business on earth without a few bad apples?"[2] Furthermore, she states that it was "baffling to read that all sorts of traders and collectors could obtain an excavation license fully legally."[3] With this approach, Kampmann presents a rather narrow reading of the Egyptian antiquity market as analysed by Hagen and Ryholt. She highlights the fact that half of the excavated antiquities during official excavations had to be sent to the Egyptian Museum, but she omits to name the complex – legal, but above all, illegal – layers of the antiquity market, besides the Egyptian Museum's demonstrable lack of interest in small objects (p. 123). However, this part of the study supplied by Hagen and Ryholt is highly relevant: on the one hand, the authors point to the numerous licensed antique dealers and centres of trade before 1912, as well as to the role of the Egyptian Antiquity Service as an antiquity dealership (pp. 45et seqq.). But on the other hand, at any time there were nevertheless ways and means to circumvent or simply ignore the restrictions and prohibitions established by the State. Boxes prepared for export – possibly containing antiquities – should have been inspected for their contents, but buyers used their network to circumvent the inspection. In consequence, they illegally exported antiquities (p. 135). With the introduction of the Antiquities Law in 1912 (pp. 137; 278–283), however, the situation changed abruptly, and numerous dealers lost their licenses. The export of antiquities was also banned. Nevertheless, Hagen and Ryholt describe several occasions when the antiquity law was violated (pp. 76; 93; 98–99; 144) as well as the limited impact it had (p. 145). Most stunningly, Lange even reported how an antiquities dealer advised him to illegally export antiquities: "by breaking it into several pieces (…) ensuring that the authorities would not recognise it as a complete statue. When the pieces had been exported they could then be reunited and the statue restored" (p. 277). As a consequence, this reviewer would argue that the antiquities trade often took place in secrecy because dealers operated outside the law as a matter of course (p. 11) – not merely because of *a few bad apples*.

Above all, the role of consular agents and their conduct in the market is revealing with regard to their diplomatic immunity. They were involved in licensed archaeological excavations but simultaneously organising illicit digs or buying antiquities illegally (pp. 162 and 276). Despite the antiquity law this system changed only in 1949 when the system of consular agents was abolished "and it was no longer possible to offer protection to

2 See Ursula Kampmann, *Antiquities Trade in Egypt* (Translated by Christina Schlögl) URL: http://www.coinsweekly.com/en/News/Antiquities-trade-in-Egypt/4?&id=4585. Date of access: 2 March 2018.

3 Ibid.

antiquities dealers or conduct large-scale excavations under the protection of diplomatic immunity (…)" (p. 33).

It is instructive to learn how the protagonist Lange, who was a man of strict moral principles himself – e.g. launching campaigns against alcohol consumption as a Christian activist – seemed to have had less ethical concerns about buying illegally excavated antiquities. Although he was aware of the loss of information caused by illicit excavations, demonstrating his awareness of provenance (p. 53 fn. 183), he adopted a pragmatic position in highlighting the potential value of the object – outside the excavation context – for Egyptology (pp. 131 and 133).

The authors also point out that Lange's material would be of value for further research. For example, they could not go into the wider context of Lange's social network in Egypt and analyse it, apart from the antiquity dealers and those interested in antiquities. More research would be desirable concerning Lange's contacts with Ludwig Borchardt and other leading Egyptologists as well as prominent figures like Thomas Mann, for example. The authors emphasise the extent to which prospective buyers of antiquities were able to draw on a comprehensive network of both Egyptian and foreign dealers. Further information on the connections between Lange and the German *Papyruskartell* would also be of interest in this context. Regarding the almost thirty-year absence of Lange from the events in Egypt between his journeys, it would have been constructive to learn more about his attempts to maintain links with his contacts and his commitment to the establishment of an international foundation under French leadership with German collaboration in 1919.[4]

The authors used the fascinating archival material to effectively present a buyer's actions within the antiquities market, its different actors and its legal, but also illegal layers. Even without being able to include more extensive material from European and American museums, Hagen and Ryholt succeeded in outlining a comprehensive picture of the complexities of the antiquity trade in Egypt between 1880 and 1930. The book is enriching, not only for Egyptologists, and forms a valuable basis for further work.[5]

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4 For Pierre Lacau's devastating answer to Lange's suggestion see Bénédicte Savoy, ed., *Nofretete. Eine deutsch-französische Affäre 1912–1931* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2011), 48–50.

5 Such as Fredrik Norland Hagen/Kim Ryholt, The Antiquities Trade in Egypt During the Time of Rudolf Mosse, in Jan Helmbold-Doyé/Thomas L. Gertzen (eds.), *Mosse im Museum. Die Stiftungstätigkeit des Berliner Verlegers Rudof Mosse (1843–1920) für das Ägyptische Museum Berlin* (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2017), 59–74.