The German Archaeological Institute Cairo is a department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), a division of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

In cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities and other international partners, the department researches all Egyptian periods from the prehistoric age to modern times. The main focus of research is on settlement and landscape archaeology, the design and function of ritual spaces, on living environments and on the reconstruction of cultural competence and experience. Further key topics are the relationship between continuity, transformation, and innovation as well as the perception of ancient Egypt and its role in the construction of cultural identities, both in Egypt and in Europe.

The DAI Cairo maintains the second largest archaeological library in Egypt as well as important archives and its own editorial office. It regularly organizes conferences and lectures that are open to the public. The institute also promotes the qualification of Egyptian scholars by granting scholarships and running courses and it encourages contact and exchange between Egyptian and German researchers within the frame of its projects and events.

Director: Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer
Scientific Director: Dr. Daniel Polz
History

German research in the field of Egyptian archaeology was inaugurated by the Royal Prussian expedition to Egypt and Ethiopia/Sudan between 1842 and 1845, sent by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and headed by Karl Richard Lepsius. By 1859, the expedition’s findings had been published in twelve monumental illustrated volumes, which made numerous inscriptions and wall reliefs accessible in excellent quality.

In 1897, the Prussian Academy of Sciences and Humanities initiated a project directed by Adolf Erman to create a comprehensive dictionary of the Ancient Egyptian language. In this context, the newly born discipline of Egyptology aimed to establish a research base in Egypt, such as Germany already had in the Kaiserlich Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Rome. Finally, in 1899, Erman effected Ludwig Borchardt’s posting as scientific attaché to the Consulate General in Cairo and in 1907 the foundation of the Kaiserlich Deutsches Archäologisches Institut für Ägyptische Altertumskunde. In 1929, this institute became part of the DAI, which already had departments not only in Rome but also in Athens and Istanbul.

The department in Cairo was closed in 1939 and parts of its property, including the library, were confiscated. In 1957, the DAI was able to re-open its department in Cairo, which then moved to its current premises in Sharia Abu el Feda. For the first time, the department received a budget for archaeological excavations and field studies, which allowed it to support research projects were also started at Abu Mina, Elephantine, Thebes, and Cairo. In the 1970s the institute commenced a number of new projects, including those at Abydos, Cairo, Dahshur, Merimde, and Saqqara, and in the 1980s, Buto and Maadi. In 2007 the DAI Cairo celebrated its 100th anniversary and in 2010 the 200th anniversary of Karl Richard Lepsius’ birthday.

Since 1957, the DAI Cairo premises are situated at 31, Sharia Abu el Feda in Cairo-Zamalek, in a 1930’s villa.
Current Projects

The research projects of the institute cover all eras of ancient Egyptian culture, from Prehistory through to the Late Period, as well as the Graeco-Roman Period, Late Antiquity, and Islamic Period up to the modern era. In cooperation with the Ministry of State for Antiquities and international partners, the institute undertakes numerous activities in Egypt, the most important of which are named in the following.

- **Abu Mina**, where the relics of St. Menas were venerated, was, in terms of surface area, the largest pilgrimage centre of the ancient world. The largest churches of the Near East once stood in this urban site. The crypt church with the relics of the saint was built in the 6th century as a tetraconch church, an ambitious building type with apses in all four directions. In addition, the site incorporated various pilgrim’s hostels for both the rich and poor, a religious healing centre working with incubation rites, and baths. All this was located in the centre of the town, which could be reached from a northern gate via a 600 m long colonnaded street.

- **Abydos**: Predynastic cemetery U and royal tombs of the 1st and 2nd Dynasties (ca. 1300–2700 BCE) at Umm el-Qaab

- **AEgArOn** (in cooperation with the UCLA): The project Ancient Egyptian Architecture Online publishes plans and data of pharaonic buildings on the Internet. Selected structures from all peri-
ods, regions, and areas of life of ancient Egyptian culture have been re-drawn according to newly developed standards, both in their actual state and as reconstructions. All plans can be downloaded or can be compared and studied in detail online. The source data is based on publications and archives, and has been checked against the original structure wherever possible. The drawings are supplemented by a critical commentary naming the sources, their authors, inconsistencies, open questions, etc. The project addresses the interested public, fellow experts, and specialists.

- **Architectural elements** of the Egyptian Late Period: Technology and development

- **Archive of the department:** Digitization and study of the institute’s archive material such as the academic legacy of Max Meyerhof, Ludwig Keimer, and Ahmed Fakhry.

- **Aswan – Geoarchaeological survey** Gharb Aswan und Abu al-Rish

- **Aswan – Historic Islamic necropolis:** The historic Islamic necropolis of Aswan (8th–12th century CE) is the most significant ensemble of early Islamic tombs in Egypt. Alongside simple tombs, it is particularly characterised by a large number of domed mausoleums. The site still serves as a burial place and a place of worship of Islamic holy men. Since 2006, the entire site has been studied and documented in terms of history, building archaeology and ethnography in cooperation with the Ministry. In addition, a concept for the preservation of historical monuments was devised to protect and preserve the complex that is being threatened by deterioration and modern building projects. Since 2009, individual, heavily damaged mausoleums are being secured and restored.

- **Aswan – Rock inscriptions:** The rock landscape at the first cataract is abundant in inscriptions from pharaonic times. Outstanding texts give accounts of military campaigns or the transportation of enormous monuments. Most of the inscriptions – several thousands – give the names and titles of the officials who worked in the administration of the town and temple, in the quar-
ries, and the army. They enable a reconstruction of administrative structures and ritual activities in the region. In cooperation with the Ministry of State for Antiquities, the inscriptions are collected, deciphered and published in a georeferenced database. Thus, the preservation of the monuments is ensured. By training the German-Egyptian team in fieldwork and analysis, a centre of excellence for Egyptian epigraphy is being developed.

• **Dahshur**: This necropolis is located ca. 30 km south of Cairo. It is dominated by the stone pyramids of king Sneferu, the Red Pyramid, and the Bent Pyramid (4th Dynasty, ca. 2600 BCE), which are situated in the desert. The mud brick pyramids of the Middle Kingdom (12th Dynasty, ca. 1900–1800 BCE) were built closer to the floodplain. The DAI Cairo has been working at Dah-
shur since 1975 and examined the pyramid complexes of Amenemhat III, the Red Pyramid, and the Bent Pyramid. Furthermore, comprehensive research on the cemeteries of the high officials and priests was conducted. Current work focuses on the study of the valley temples, causeways, pyramid towns, and workmen’s settlements. A landscape-archaeology project is collecting data for reconstructing the ancient landscape and environment (funding: German Research Foundation, excellence cluster TOPOI, Berlin. Cooperation with the FU Berlin).

• **Dra’ Abu el-Naga, Western Thebes**: Since 1991 the necropolis of Dra’ Abu el-Naga has been archaeologically investigated. Its finds and features cover a period from the 2nd millennium BCE to the 8th century CE. The social spectrum comprises royal and elite tombs as well as modest mat burials. The collected data sheds light on the change of tomb architecture, funerary equipment, and ritual practice, and thus reveals the development of a necropolis. A research focus lies on exploring the tombs of the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1800–1550 BCE). The mud brick pyramid of king Nubkheperre-Intef of the 17th Dynasty, discovered in 2001, has been restored and partly reconstructed. The site will be made accessible for visitors once the archaeological research is completed.

• **Early copper metallurgy in Sinai** and the copper supply of Predynastic Egypt

• **Elephantine**: Border-town and trading post on the southern border of Egypt (German-Swiss cooperation)

• **Fayum Survey Project – The Themistou Meris**: An archaeological survey in the north-western part of the Fayum Oasis

• **History of the DAI Cairo** within the context of German political interests from 1881 to 1966

• **Industrial architecture in Egypt** in the 19th and 20th centuries: Starting in 2009, the survey project addresses an important and hitherto
neglected part of Egypt’s architectural heritage. Historical industrial buildings throughout Egypt are being studied through site visits and photographic documentation, by collecting information about their construction history, builders, and companies, by architectural surveys of selected buildings, and the evaluation of archive material. The project aims at tracing the development of Egyptian industrial architecture within a local and global context. It examines questions concerning building typologies, building techniques, and the transfer of technologies, and thereby studies the role of important protagonists (architects, engineers, companies).

- **Maadi**: Settlement of the 4th millennium BCE on the southern outskirts of Cairo
- **Michigan-Papyri**: A collection of Greek papyri in the Egyptian Museum is being restored, catalogued, and transcribed.
- **The cult of Osiris at Abydos**: Ritual studies at the mythical burial place of the god Osiris
- **Pharan** (Sinai): Early Christian episcopal city which was fortified and included several churches
- **Regional survey Kafr esh-Sheikh**: Landscape archaeology and settlement networks in the northern central Delta of the Nile.
Residential architecture and culture of the Cairene upper class between the late 18th and the late 19th centuries

Saqqara: The tomb of king Ninetjer (2nd Dynasty, ca. 2750 BCE) and its later phases of use

Siwa – The Temple of the Oracle: Examination and structural reinforcement of the monument complex of Aghurmi und Umm Ubayda

Tell el-Fara‘in/Buto: The settlement mound of Buto (Tell el-Fara‘in) allows the tracing of cultural, socio-economic, and political processes in Egypt from the early 4th millennium until the Old Kingdom. The excavations revealed not only Buto’s earliest occupation – a village of the Lower Egyptian Maadi culture based on agriculture and fishing – but also the increasing influence of the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture during the second half of the 4th millennium that finally led to the coalescence of both cultures and the emergence of the early Egyptian state. The development of administrative structures and control during the 1st and 2nd Dynasties is reflected by a large palace-like building, which seems to have served the organization of the region’s agricultural production.

Wadi Sura: A prehistoric rock art station and its landscape context in the Gilf Kebir

Western Thebes: Tombs of officials, Coptic monastery Deir el-Bachit

Western Thebes, Kôm el-Hetan: Excavation and conservation of the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III (18th Dynasty, ca. 1350 BCE)

Kôm el-Hetan: The northern colossus and fragments of its socle were re-erected in its original position in front of the temple’s second pylon in 2012
Facilities

Library

The core of the institute’s library is the collection of the Egyptologist Ludwig Keimer (1892–1957), which was bought for the re-opening of the institute in 1957.

The library currently comprises approximately 33,000 titles in nearly 42,000 volumes and subscribes to ca. 300 journals and series. The focus of the collection lies on the material and written culture of Egypt from prehistoric until modern times, and is supplemented by literature on neighbouring regions. The highlight of the library is a magnificent collection of early travel literature.

The library is accessible to scholars as well as students. They are requested to give prior notification of their visit, e.g. by email. The books are ordered by subject groups and can be accessed freely by hand, but cannot be lent out. Copies can only be made in exceptional cases (a charge will be made).

ZENON, the DAI’s central online catalogue includes the complete collection of the Cairo library and is accessible via http://opac.dainst.org.

Archive

The archive of the Cairo department mainly comprises the academic legacy of Ludwig Keimer, which includes a part of the records of his friend Max Meyerhof (1874–1945).

Further scientific archive material along with former files of the institute itself (in so far as it is not kept at the DAI headquarters in Berlin) are currently being digitized.

The archive is open to academic users by prior arrangement.

bibliothek@kairo.dainst.org

The department owns a splendid collection of early travel literature

OPENING HOURS:
Sunday: 9.00 am–4.00 pm
Monday to Thursday: 9.00 am–1.00 pm
www.dainst.org/department/bibliothek-cairo
bibliothek@kairo.dainst.org
Photo Archive

The photo archive of the DAI Cairo is focused on the documentation of the department’s research since its re-opening in 1957.

There are approximately 240,000 photographs in different formats as well as digital pictures. The archive also includes approximately 10,000 pictures taken in Egyptian museums and magazines. In addition, the department owns approximately 6,000 glass plates and large format pictures.

Primarily, this archive is used for publications on the institute’s own projects and for those published by the Cairo department. Beyond this, the institute is happy to support colleagues in their research for other publications whenever possible.

Editorial Office

One of the central tasks of the DAI Cairo is the high-quality publication of research results. This is carried out in various formats; the languages of publication are German, English, and French.

Since 1930, the annual *Mitteilungen des DAI Kairo* offer an international platform for contributions on the archaeology and cultural history of Egypt. Reports on the institute’s ongoing research projects are regularly published here, but the journal also welcomes external contributions. The quality of all articles is ensured by a peer review procedure.

The DAIK monographic series publish important works on the archaeology and history of Egypt. Since 1958, three sub-series of monographs on Egyptian, Coptic, and Islamic Studies are published in the *Abhandlungen* of the DAI Cairo. The series *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen*, which was started in 1970, focuses on the archaeological work of the department. The series *Sonderbriefe des DAIK* was founded in 1975. Since 1990, the journal *Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens* is published in cooperation with the Institute of Egyptology of the University of Heidelberg. In 2012, the first volume of the new series *Menschen – Reisen – Forschungen* was issued, which focuses on the history of Egyptology and early travellers.

Since 1957, approximately 250 volumes have been published.
In order to undertake its work, the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo depends on support from third parties and donations. It is extremely grateful to funding institutions and to private sponsors for their help.

We would particularly like to mention the following:
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You too can support the work of DAI Cairo with your donations:

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