

FOREWORD

The interests of the Hapsburg monarchy in the Orient were substantial and they demand our attention in the perspective of Austrian and central European history. Sources from the whole former Hapsburg monarchy present converging tendencies and prove the scholarly relevance of studying the Austrian relationship to the Orient in general and to Egypt in particular. Political and economic relations fostered cultural interest, which, however, grew independently as well, and presented a specific branch of the so-called phenomenon of Orientalism and Egyptomania. Both in Prague and in Vienna the study of these various Austro-Oriental relations has a long tradition, together with the study of history of Oriental Studies and Egyptology.

Starting at this point, the authors analysed various stages of Austrian politics and economic and cultural interests. A common point has been the Austrian participation at the idea of the Suez Canal, represented with the influence of the person of Alois von Negrelli, and the presence of a large Austrian community, which formed a significant and active part of the European minority in 19th century Egypt. Some studies, however, opted for a no less interesting topic of cultural relations, focusing especially on the importance of Oriental inspiration in Austrian art and cultural life.

The symposium proved to be a really useful meeting of Czech and Austrian colleagues following complementary research interests. In addition, both Austrian and Czech scholars expressed a wish to find a way to continue collaboration in the respect of this field of study, i.e. history of Austrian interests in the Orient in historical perspective.

In this place the organising committee would like to express special thanks to the AKTION programme for the long-standing support of bilateral research activities in the aforementioned field, and in addition, to Czech Institute of Egyptology and its project, Czech National Centre for Egyptology, which enabled to host the symposium in Prague and to publish its proceedings. The Prague participants would like to express their thanks to their Viennese colleagues for coming and enabling thus this research and experience exchange. The Austrian partner of the project, Dr. Johanna Holaubek has been the *spiritus rector* of this cooperation since its very beginnings. We all owe her sincere thanks.

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