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**DFG-Projekt "Digitalisierung und Erschließung des Nachlasses des
Ägyptologen Adolf Erman (1854-1937)"**

Brief von Alan Henderson Gardiner an Adolf Erman

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(9 Lansdowne Road,
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13 Aug. 20

Dear Professor Eрман

It has taken me some days to recover from the surprise which your letter caused me, and I must avow that its whole trend and tone have contributed more than anything that I have read for a long time to make me despair of the resumption of really cordial relations between English and German scholars. Seeing that until recently I was Honorary Secretary of the Egypt Exploration Society, the responsibility for my having applied for and obtained the concession of El-Amarna must largely rest upon my shoulders. In point of fact the idea did not originate with me, but since others wished it and since, on careful consideration, I could see no real objection to it, it was not opposed by me; and latterly, when an important question of principle arose in connection with it between M. Lacau and myself, as described in the last number of the Journal, I became a warm advocate of our application. There are two standpoints implied in your letter which simply amaze me: the one is that you seem to conceive it possible that within some measurable length of time the concession of El-Amarna might have been renewed to the D. O. G., and the other is that a concession freely conferred by the Egyptian Government constitutes or has ever constituted a permanent right of occupation or possession, the withdrawal of which can be qualified with so harsh and censorious a word as "Raub". With the second standpoint I shall not deal at all, but shall merely refer to the plain meaning of the word concession. In connection with the first point I am forced, with extreme reluctance, to put to you a question that I would much rather have left unasked: do you really imagine that the French Director of the Service of Antiquities, who has seen one-sixth of his own country overrun and devastated by the German armies would willingly countenance the resumption of German excavations in Egypt, so long as he could possibly prevent it? And do you think it likely that the British, who stood shoulder to shoulder with the French in defending Egypt against Turkish and German invaders, would be disposed in this matter to adopt the German point of view in preference to the French? Had all scholars been internationalists, had they stood entirely aloof from the actions of their Governments, then I can conceive that their work might have had some just title to special consideration; but everywhere, as you know as well as I, the Professors, with a few signal exceptions, have been the most extreme of chauvinists, and it is difficult to understand how, under these circumstances, they can have expected Science to retain its sacrosanct international aspect, especially when it is question, not merely of interchanging

or recognizing purely intellectual property, but rather of the acquisition of valuable objects for national museums.

At all events the presupposition which lay at the base of my advocacy of our El-Amarna application was my conviction that simply and solely on account of the war the concession formerly granted to the D. O. G. had irretrievably lapsed, and that the site was therefore free to be competed for by excavating societies and museums. I will particularly ask you to note what I know from M. Luce to be a fact, namely, that prior to our own application for El-Amarna there were before the Archaeological Committee in Cairo no less than four separate applications for that site representing three different countries. Under these circumstances it became simply a matter of scientific expediency as to which applicant should obtain the site. If the Egypt Exploration Society has insisted strongly upon its superior claim, it is not because we claim to excavate with greater skill than anyone else, though in this respect I think we hold a high standard, but because as regards publication our record is beyond reproach and because (with Professor Petrie) we stand almost alone in this respect.

You appear to attach great importance to the fact that no hint was given to you that the site of El-Amarna was being competed for by ourselves or by anyone else. As a matter of fact it was quite uncertain until within a few weeks of my leaving England whether the concession would be granted to us or to Professor Reisner, the other principal applicant. Having had occasion recently to write to both Sethe and Junker I have in each case mentioned the fact of our having obtained the site; but I did not feel disposed to write to Birchardt without his first writing to me, nor indeed do I know where he is to be found.

If you wish it I am prepared to publish in the Journal both your letter and my reply to it. But I make this offer with great reluctance, as I cannot imagine that your letter could have any other effect than to harden opinion among all English-speaking scholars, and I have an extreme repugnance to being made the instrument of prolonging a hostility which I deplore from the bottom of my heart. With best greetings, yours very truly,

Alan Gardiner