



SUMMER RETREATS, TRAVEL, AND FAMILY IN THE LIFE OF FRANTIŠEK LEXA (1876–1960), THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK EGYPTOLOGIST

Adéla Jůnová Macková¹

ABSTRACT: The study will explore the family and the family milieu of the first Czechoslovak Egyptologist František Lexa, founder and first director of the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology, expert on Egyptian philology, especially demotic languages, and mentor of two important Egyptologists, Jaroslav Černý, professor at Oxford University, and Zbyněk Žába, professor at Charles University, Prague. The study will analyse the social status of Lexa's family and the importance of his marriage in shaping his scientific life and consider the everyday routines of this scientist's household, including the claims demanded by the requirements of bringing up three children. As a specific focus, we will try to introduce the everyday life of a travelling scientist, particularly during holidays spent with family abroad, and illuminate the significance of summer retreats in shaping a scientists' familial travel experience.

KEY WORDS: Egyptology – family – habitus – daily life – holidays

František Lexa (1876–1960), founder of Egyptology in Czechoslovakia, began his career as a polymath with a preference for sciences. He graduated in mathematics and physics at the Charles-Ferdinand University. It was only later that his concomitant interest in psychology led to a study of origins of writing, and henceforward to Egyptology, with a particular concern for Demotic studies.

His career encompassed a number of years as a grammar school maths and physics teacher before embarking on a university profession. His studies in Egyptology were at first amateur, only after self-taught beginnings he continued with university classes in

¹ Contact: Adéla Jůnová Macková, Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic; e-mail: junovamackova@mua.cas.cz. The study was supported by grant project GA ČR no. 17-22085S "Habitus českých vědců v letech 1918–1968. Příklad dvou generací" ["Habitus of Czech scientists in 1918–1968. Example of two generations"].

Berlin and Strasbourg. He was appointed Professor extraordinary in Egyptology at the Charles University in Prague in 1922, established an Egyptology seminar, and several decades later co-founded the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology in Prague and Cairo in 1958.²

Lexa married Irena Kvíčalová (1877–1961), a daughter of a leading Prague Classicist Professor and politician Jan Kvíčala (1834–1908)³. The Lexa couple had four children, the eldest daughter died of meningitis as a young child.⁴ Lexa's social network contributed to an establishment of Egyptology as a university discipline in Prague, however, the present study is concerned more with the family aspect of his social world, commencing with his original family, and continuing with his own family life that transformed from that of a secondary school teacher with demanding hobbies to that of an academic with a more varied workload.

I will analyse the social status of Lexa's family and the importance of his marriage in shaping his academic and personal habitus. I am not yet addressing all the aspects of habitus in a more elaborate perspective of an interaction of the social structure and an individual response, in this phase I am mapping the elements of habitus from a participatory view. I would also like to avoid *the scholastic bias*, that is *the tendency [...] to put a scholastic mind [...] into everyone's head [...] including the scholar himself when he or she acts in everyday life [...]* (Bourdieu 2002: 32).

I will consider the everyday routines of an academic household, including the claims demanded by bringing up three children. As a specific focus, I will analyse the everyday life of a travelling academic, particularly during his research travels; I am also including leisure travel, specifically holidays spent with his family on hiking trips and in summer resorts, and shall explicate the significance of summer retreats in shaping a familial travel experience.

Lexa as a son of a provincial solicitor

František Lexa was born in Pardubice, a mid-sized town and a regional capital of Eastern Bohemia. His father Vilibald Lexa (1832–1906) was a successful local solicitor with a large clientele, he married in 1873 Eleonora Strosserová (1837–1931).⁵ The family rented an apartment on Pernštejn Square, a very good address in the centre of the town, close to the Pardubice Chateau. František was the second eldest child and had altogether six siblings.⁶

² Archive of the Academy of Sciences, Prague, henceforward A AV ČR, collection Personal files of the academicians, Personal and political observations Lexa 1952.

³ Jan Kvíčala (1834–1908), 1860 professor of classical philology at university in Prague and politician, he became one of the university professors who visited Potštejn as a summer resort and bought a house there.

⁴ A AV ČR, collection Personal files of the academicians, Personal and political observations Lexa 1952. The decease of Lexa's first daughter, is listed in Prague city archive, collection Knskripcce Praha. In 1910, Lexa is listed here with four children, the eldest born 1902. Her name was Irena, re-used later for another daughter. From a note on a family photograph it is known that she died in 1906.

⁵ Archive of the Academy of Sciences, Prague, henceforward A AV ČR, collection Personal files of the academicians, Personal and political observations Lexa 1952. The Lexa family archive (private). Official documents of birth and death. Biographical datas also viz Bareš 1984: 21–39; 2014: 629–642; Oerter 2010; Jůnová Macková – Navrátilová 2015: 89–150.

⁶ A AV ČR, collection Personal files of the academicians, Personal and political observations Lexa 1952 indicates six siblings, three died as young children, one suicide.

First ten years of František's life were spent in Pardubice. His father, however, fell seriously ill, and the family had to move to Prague, closer to medical care. Their living standard was nonetheless still high – Vilibald Lexa had considerable savings and again rented a flat on a good Prague address in Štěpánská Street.⁷ The family also owned a summer retreat in the summer resort of Potštejn, famous place where professors of Czech University in Prague spent their summer holidays (Kokešová 2008; Dragoun 2009).

The economic standing of the Vilibald Lexa's family remained strong – all offsprings had an opportunity to pursue studies of their choice. František attended a renowned grammar school (*gymnasium*) in Žitná Street in Prague. After his school leaving examination, he continued to university. He studied mathematics and physics at the Faculty of Arts, Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, but also attended classes in mathematics of Professor Wejr at the Czech Technical University. This was a professional training that was very likely to bring him a job opportunity and hence also a financial independence. However, František had broader research interests as well and indulged those attending classes in psychology and philosophy. Very important teacher for Lexa was professor of philosophy seminar Thomáš Garrigue Masaryk⁸ (later the first president of Czechoslovakia 1918–1935). Lexa was particularly influenced by Masaryk, and maintained a contact with his teacher. Second very important person for Lexa's carrier became Zdeněk Nejedlý⁹, his fellow in this seminar (politician and president of the Czechoslovak Academic of Sciences in the years following communist coup in 1948). This was to prove vital in later years.

Lexa's habitus did not include only an academic context. He was a dedicated sportsman, and a member of a number of tourist and sporting clubs. His leisure time concentrated on the resort of Potštejn, which was also a preferred resort of the Prague academia. It was a place where Lexa, according to his own comment, felt carefree and relaxed after a somewhat constrictive Pardubice/Prague cityscape. But it was also the best place for social contacts. It was also there where Lexa met Irena, daughter of the Classicist Kvíčala. They married on 8 July 1901, and both marriage banns and the wedding took place at Potštejn.

Lexa as a grammar school teacher

František Lexa obtained a paid job as a teacher immediately after leaving university, in 1899. This gave him financial independence and a social status of a working professional (and an opportunity to start his own household), although it was an entry-level assistant teacher job at a grammar school in Karlín. After two years, he went for a stint as a full teacher in Hradec Králové (already as a married man), then returned to Prague, to the Malá Strana grammar school, in 1906. Here, his students included several people with interesting careers ahead of them – including a future powerful Communist government

⁷ Prague city archive, collection Konskripcce Praha, 1886. Vilibald Lexa registered as moving to Prague with four children.

⁸ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), Czech politician, statesman, sociologist and philosopher, 1918–1935 first president of the Czechoslovak republic. He was one of the most important supporters of the Czech Oriental Institute and oriental studies.

⁹ Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962), Czech musicologist, music critic, historian and politician. In 1948–1953 he became minister of culture and education and in 1952 president of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

propaganda minister, Václav Kopecký¹⁰, who played a very important role in Lexa's life when founding a Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology.

At that time, Egyptology has already become Lexa's main hobby. His first commented short translations from ancient Egyptian were published in his schools' annual Bulletins (Lexa 1905: 7–12; 1906: 716). But they did not fail to attract attention of a university specialist in Oriental studies – Rudolf Dvořák¹¹, who had a possibility to study Egyptology with Georg Ebers¹² during one of his study stays abroad.¹³

In fact, it was Dvořák who had a say in Lexa's transfer from the provincial city of Hradec Králové back to Prague. Lexa moved back in time for the school year 1906/1907, and rented a flat in Dejvice no 257.¹⁴ Dvořák supported him in a professionalization of Lexa's Egyptological interest, being convinced that Lexa had a potential in Oriental studies. As soon as in 1907 he got a grant from the ministry of education, the grammar school commenced to provide paid leaves for Lexa, who then went for a study stay in Berlin (1907/1908), to Adolf Erman¹⁵, and then to Strasbourg (1908/1909) to study Demotic with Wilhelm Spiegelberg¹⁶. The Berlin stay was further supported by a ministerial fellowship amounting to 800 Austrian crowns¹⁷ (an equivalent of 4 780 EUR today)¹⁸. In following academic years (1908/1909, 1909/1910, and 1913/1914) there were further full paid leaves that enabled him quality research time. His study stays abroad were of course only possible because of a concomitant paid leave plus a fellowship – which allowed him to support his wife, at that time with two young children, who lived in Prague.

Due to the preserved correspondence between František Lexa and his wife Irena we can follow his stays abroad. He was quite a good correspondent, especially where his wife was concerned, hence various details of his Berlin life emerge from the letters, sent with some regularity. For example, Lexa's own life in Berlin was not luxurious – he paid for a room as a lodger and his first renting experience was not very comfortable. *In the evening, I couldn't miss noticing an odd smell. When I opened the door of my room, direct across the corridor there was a kitchen – a mature couple was doing their cooking, and six children, in a state of considerable undress, romped among potato peels, eggshells and onion scraps. I was put upon, but how to escape? In the morning, I had the bright idea – in such a mess, there are*

¹⁰ Václav Kopecký (1897–1961), Czechoslovak politician, one of the most influential communist politician after 1948, 1945–1953 minister of information, 1953–1954 minister of culture.

¹¹ Rudolf Dvořák (1860–1920), founder of Czech oriental studies, specialist in oriental philology and literature. From 1896 professor of oriental philology at Czech university in Prague.

¹² Georg Moritz Ebers (1837–1898), German Egyptologist and novelist, 1868 he was appointed professor of Egyptian language and antiquities in Jena, from 1870 in Leipzig.

¹³ Lexa recalled comments of Rudolf Dvořák: *Professor of Oriental studies Rudolf Dvořák, being acquainted with my translations, urged me to become a professional Egyptologist.* A AV ČR, fond František Lexa, folder 1, no. 16. Notes on biography for an anniversary speech, the 1950s.

¹⁴ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 1. Permanent address certificate, Prague city archive, collection Konskripcie Praha. Same address for 1910.

¹⁵ Pierre Adolphe (Adolf) Erman (1854–1937), Egyptologist at Berlin University, specialist in New Egyptian language. Lexa also studied Coptic texts with C. Schmidt in Berlin.

¹⁶ Wilhelm Spiegelberg (1870–1930), German Egyptologist, specialist in demotic script at Štrasburku university. Lexa's studies in Štrasburk viz Oerter 1986: 71–78.

¹⁷ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 20. A ministerial grant, dated 18 August 1908. A fellowship to promote further study in Egyptology; applied in April 1908, paid 1909.

¹⁸ According to <https://www.oenb.at/docroot/inflationscockpit/waehrungsrechner.html> [2 August 2018].

bound to be bedbugs. I initiated a thorough search and indeed found one behind a picture frame. Off it went onto my bed, to be killed and offered for inspection to the landlord, together with my announcement to the effect of leaving his premises immediately.¹⁹ Eventually, he lodged with two elderly ladies for 1 M 75 Pf for a day, and they also offered board: The lunch costs 1 M 10 Pf and includes a soup, some meat or fish, a salad, then roast carvery and a fruit compote, a pudding or cheese, and finally a soufflé.²⁰

Given his absences, the family care fell completely on the shoulders of Lexa's wife Irena – she was looking after two children, Milada (born 8 May 1904) and Jaroslav (born 18 October 1906), and the third child, a daughter named Irena (again, the older Irena died as a small girl in 1906) was born in December 1908, when Lexa was at Strasbourg. This meant keeping afloat a family of five. The correspondence of both Lexas is a unique resource offering an insight into their family life, from childrearing to budgeting. Generally speaking, Lexa considered his wife Irena to be his partner in life, on travels (when she could accompany him, of course) and in leisure time. It does not transpire that he would have ever considered her intellectually limited, or constrained due to her gender. However, in practical terms their roles were different, if complementary, and encompassing mutual respect. Irena did not have a career of her own, she was a housewife. And this fact dictated the tone of their communication – Lexa expected to hear family news, updates on their children, and everyday life. *Write often and a lot, but do not wait for my letters to arrive – exchanging letters takes long, and I have often little to write home about. Egyptian is not your thing and the German politics, in which Wilem [Wilhelm Spiegelberg] dabbles awfully, is probably of little interest to you.*²¹

Consequently, Lexa gave occasional report on his studies with Erman or Spiegelberg, and Irena's epistolary production encompassed her time with the children at Potštejn, including bulletins on their health, excursions, food, or amateur astronomic observations of a comet. *It is quite melancholic, without you here, my dear. Little Irene keeps saying 'Dad, where are you' then replies to herself 'We have lost Dad', and turns her head quite funnily [...]. The children are healthy and boisterous – on occasion too much. Especially the youngest is just a little too wild.*²²

However, in one respect Irena's situation certainly changed for the better. At first, she felt quite constrained by period expectations of respectability – her mother thought it unnecessary for her to go for walks in Potštejn, their garden was, after all, large enough; playing tennis or riding a bicycle were also vanities to be avoided. But in 1908/1909, it was already acceptable that a married lady was also a sportswoman. *I played tennis once, with Mula [sister Milada] [...] then we had a long cycling trip yesterday to Týniště. [...] There was more work with rearranging furniture after I had the old kitchen repainted (Mum asked for that), we moved all the pieces around.*²³

Apart from Lexa's Berlin tribulations, the family was quite comfortably off. What were the family assets at that time? When Lexa moved to Prague in 1906, he rented in Dejvice (not yet a part of Prague), which enabled a relatively smooth commute to his grammar school. In 1909, he took out a mortgage and bought an apartment block in Mánesova street, Královské Vinohrady, in a part of a town where many of the university

¹⁹ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Berlin [1908].

²⁰ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Berlin [1908].

²¹ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Štrasburk [1908].

²² A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence I. Lexová to F. Lexa, Potštejn [1909].

²³ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence I. Lexová to F. Lexa, Potštejn [1909].

professors had their homes (also not a full part of the city of Prague yet, the Greater Prague was established only in 1922).

The mansion block cost 130 000 crowns (so there must have been some money from a family inheritance) and had a garden, a garden conservatory and an inner court. It was a major undertaking and together with the children's school expenses a major drain on Lexa's budget. In 1900, his annual salary was only 1700 crowns, but in 1907 already 4260 crowns, and the sum grew further.²⁴

In 1914, when the Great War began, the Lexa family was again together in Prague. Lexa was not enlisted and continued in his teaching duties. As the wartime shortages hit, his wife and children moved out to their summer retreat in Potštejn – it was safer and it was easier to provide for the family in the country than in the city. Their correspondence echoes such practicalities as buying the provisions, particularly fats, meat, and fuel. *Was mum happy with the goose? I procured potatoes, but still not having enough of them. I am just afraid it will get really bad,*²⁵ worried Irena. And her further letter goes on – *I keep buying provisions, 25 kilos of sugar, soap, paraffin, salt and more coal (at 30 crowns). I am afraid the coal will be scarce later.*²⁶ Note the *I am afraid* chorus. Lexa lived with his mother in Prague in Štěpánská Street, and was a landlord to several tenants in their house in Mánesova Street, but the revenues were low and the family found its lifestyle very cramped, compared to their pre-war comforts. Still, no one fell seriously ill, they also avoided the Spanish flu. On the whole, they survived the war with less difficulty than many of their contemporaries. The middle class background of both Lexa and his spouse provided a necessary buffer.

Founding of the Czechoslovak republic in October 1918 opened new opportunities for Lexa. Tomáš G. Masaryk, his former professor, became the first president of the new state and was influenced by a foremost Orientalist scholar, Alois Musil²⁷, that Oriental studies were a deserving subject, worth of a systematic state support. In 1919 Lexa became an Associate Professor of Egyptology at the Charles University. But it was an unpaid position.²⁸ As the Associate Professorship did not bring any remuneration, Lexa felt he was under financial strain and much pressure. He found this to be a difficult time, when he had to juggle his earning profession – at the Grammar school, and his university teaching and research, alongside time for his family. Still, if we compare his position with that of his colleagues or own pupils, including Jaroslav Černý²⁹, Lexa's

²⁴ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1. Accounts and property. Lexa's salary tables.

²⁵ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence I. Lexová to F. Lexa, Potštejn, 8 November 1916.

²⁶ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence I. Lexová to F. Lexa, Potštejn [1917].

²⁷ Alois Musil (1868–1944), theologian, orientalist, traveller. In 1920 Alois Musil was appointed a professor at Charles University in Prague, he continued in teaching oriental studies founded by Rudolf Dvořák and became one of the most important persons for the Oriental Institute in Prague.

²⁸ Lexa was further employed as a grammar school teacher, without a proper faculty office, let alone library. For a library he obtained a grant in 1919 (4000 CZK), and another one amounting to 6000 CZK. AUK, personal file František Lexa. Still in 1923 complained to his wife in a letter about Austria providing well for Herman Junker, and planning for an expedition, whereas Prague had *little holes without proper light. ... Thus our people just will get stunted, and Czech scholarship atrophied [...]* A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Vienna [1923].

²⁹ Jaroslav Černý (1898–1970), Czech Egyptologist, student and colleague of professor Lexa, from 1946 professor of Egyptology in London and later in Oxford, specialist in epigraphy, hieratic script (Navrátilová 2010: 9–35).

situation was in fact still relatively comfortable – but that was not how he saw it. *My Associate Professorship days were very dire for me. I taught a full number of required hours at the school, had 5 hours of classes at the Faculty of Arts, not to mention my research in ancient Egyptian literature. I was also badly off financially, supporting three school-age children.*³⁰ The dire picture was, however, not completely accurate. Lexa did not teach a full number of required courses at the grammar school in every single year. He was also given paid research leave in 1919, and was allowed to work part time at his grammar school in 1919/1920 and 1920/1921.³¹

His daily routine often encompassed as much as 16 work hours for six days a week. Sundays belonged to family recreations and sports. The long vacation was usually spent in Czech or Slovak resorts. Mountaineering and long walks were Lexa's favourites. All the family took part in active recreation. Lexa was so fond of his sportsman's stories that he included a description of one such trip in notes for his 80th anniversary speech.³²

A typical trip began with Lexa buying a family train ticket to a destination from which they planned a long hiking tour with backpacks used to carry all the necessities. Then, remaining travel money for provisions was divided among the family members as everyone was responsible for their own supplies. The accommodation was in tents, duly carried in the backpack. A self-catering walking tour could be a major undertaking. In 1920, they walked through Austria, combining city stops with serious Alpine hiking; in 1921, the family spent 26 days hiking in the Šumava highlands.³³ Apart from tours, Lexa had included some library trips in his holidays during his earlier career, when they had lived outside of Prague. Altogether, a few weeks a year were allowed for full recreation.

A University Professor

In 1922, Lexa's career had a breakthrough. He was appointed the Extraordinary Professor for Egyptology at the Faculty of Arts and finally left his teaching job at the Grammar school. His university classes were mostly oriented at philology and cultural history. In 1925 he succeeded in establishing an Egyptological seminar, which obtained one room in Veleslavínova street.³⁴ In 1927, the Egyptology chair was transformed into an ordinary chair, and Lexa became a full professor. In 1934 to 1935, he was also the dean of the Faculty of Arts. Another institutional affiliation came in 1928, when he was appointed a full member of the Oriental Institute and a trustee of its cultural committee.

The early 1930s were a career apogee for Lexa, which coincided with his good financial standing. If we summarize Lexa's income in 1920s we can follow the great change of his social status – from grammar school teacher to a position of an ordinary university professor. In 1920, he had annual remuneration amounting to 10 306 CZK,

³⁰ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 16. Notes on biography for an anniversary speech.

³¹ National Archive, Prague, Ministry of Education collection, folder 119, personal file František Lexa, a personal questionnaire.

³² A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 17. Handwritten notes for the anniversary speech.

³³ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 14. Itinerary from Šumava mountains and from Austria, dating by Milada Lexová.

³⁴ The seminar of Egyptology was located in Veleslavínova Street 96, its early grants comprised 1925 – 2000 CZK plus extras amounting to 10 000 CZK and further allowances of 5000 CZK (and 10 000 CZK for furnishings). It had one room, another was allocated in 1938, Archive of the Charles University, Faculty of arts, file Egyptologický seminář.

a local allowance of 4 008 CZK and an inflation allowance 4596 CZK. This income was further expanded by various extra allowances – such as a special grant of 4130 CZK and a ministerial grant of 4300 CZK, altogether around 27 000 CZK. As an extraordinary professor in 1922, he obtained a university allowance of 3000 CZK, a ministerial grant of 5000 CZK, and a special 2000 CZK grant for a trip to Vienna and Munich. His 1922 salary thus amounted to 31 000 CZK, because it included further child benefits and other bonuses. In 1925 it was already 43 000 CZK, and in January 1926 together 49 200 CZK. As an ordinary professor he saw a pay rise to 55 000, and in 1929 to 59 000 CZK.

In the early 1930s, Lexa also built an opportunity to visit Egypt, the country he studied for years. As a university professor and a founding member of the Oriental Institute, he applied for a travel grant to visit Egypt, which he otherwise could not afford to travel to as a leisure trip of his own, for instance. His travel budget was 52 200 CZK for a four-month long trip, i.e. just a little under his annual income at that point.³⁵

His grant application specified the study stay as an important opportunity to visit Egyptian monuments in situ, analyse the collections of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and conduct a detailed survey of Egyptian architectural heritage. The Egyptian trip was a solo trip for Lexa – his wife obviously could not accompany him on a study trip at a state expense, although she did travel with him to European destinations on shorter sojourns. Irena thus resumed her role of a family mainstay and her husband's quartermaster. And Lexa was a demanding client. His wife packed a complete set of travelling clothes, but aboard his ship to Egypt he discovered various details that were immediately reported to Prague.

*As a follow up. My equipment has various small misfits. [...] However, my walking boots are a real cause for despair. When I took them off on-board ship, I found out the boots got glued to those thick woollen socks, and when I finally got the socks off, the tongue remained full of wool chaff, whilst the toe tip is all deep brown, and the inside of the heel all green. I tried to find out what was the matter and realised soon that the boots were either brushed with something really sticky, or someone dropped a sticky liquid on them. I am quite desperate, no idea what to do. The wool socks are consequently really awful, and if I use any other socks, they'll be just as awful shortly, and other shoes than these boots I cannot think of taking into the desert.*³⁶

Irena, therefore, became her husband's audience concerning his traveller's life – he gave short reports on ancient and Islamic monuments, presumably as the family had already known about them. Much more attention is spent on accommodation, food, social life or professional opportunities. Lexa's travel budget did not extend to more expensive hotels or boarding houses in Cairo, such as the Czech boarding house of the Hais family, so he stayed in a cheaper hotel Alfonso, close by. Nonetheless, he was a welcome guest of the Haises and accompanied them on several trips to Cairo environs.

His main programme, however, was that of visits to sites and work in the Egyptian museum in Cairo. *I am relatively acclimatised – for instance I am already used to the parmesan*

³⁵ Train and boat Prague/Cairo 6000 CZK, accommodation and per diem expenses in Egypt for 4 months 23 400 CZK, transport in Egypt 5500 CZK, a trip to Nubia, Aswan to Wadi Halfa 6800 CZK, travel equipment 6500 CZK photo equipment 4000 CZK. For more information about this trip see Suková 2005: 149–160. Edition of letters from Lexa's first journey to Egypt was published as a part of grant project concerning travels of scholars to the Orient in the 20th century (Jůnová Macková 2012a: 283–324).

³⁶ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Cairo, 1 January 1931. The problems with boots Lexa finally solved, he bought new ones.

cheese, without which you can't get even a chocolate gateau, and to bananas being stunningly expensive despite being cultivated everywhere, and to the olive oil. I have made a thorough visit to the Museum, now I work in the French Institute every day and learn Arabic. I was in the Old Memphis³⁷ last Sunday, and next Sunday Mr Hais is willing to take me all the way to the Fayyum oasis. The Haises are really nice people. He is a sales agent of the Budweis brewery, he is well off, owns a car, but so much work, that he is only free on Sundays. His wife is quite ill, for three months confined to their house, and her sister, a widow, is a contractual employee at our legation. Both ladies are hopelessly in love with ancient Egypt – I offered to teach them Egyptian, to repay their kindness.³⁸

Apart from the major trip to Egypt, several shorter trips to Vienna or to Munich, and to various Orientalist congresses (he had other travel grants covering some of that expense), Lexa spent most of the 1930s (as indeed already the 1920s) in Prague. Hence, the correspondence between the spouses is limited to the Egyptian trip and very few other letters. On occasion, not only the wife, but also daughter(s) accompanied Lexa, for instance Milada on a trip to Vienna in 1923.

In 1928, most probably whilst Lexa was on another trip to Vienna, his wife sent him a report on their children's holiday leisure. The daughters were certainly emancipated from most constraints their mother's generation might have still encountered. *Little Irena is at home, arrived on Monday. She will work on her photos from Ruthenia. Was too busy whilst staying at Konopiště – playing tennis and learning to drive a motorbike. Young Girska lent her the bike and apparently it went well. Jarouš [son Jaroslav] is coming tomorrow; sent ahead a postcard from Kramářova chata*³⁹. They motored up there, but no idea if they really went all the way up in a car.⁴⁰

Apart from professional travel, leisure travel evidently remained a major element in the programme of the Lexa family. Even in Lexa's absence, such as when he was in Egypt, his family went skiing etc. Together, they went for summer trips to Bulgaria. This was a favourite destination at the time, especially for lower and middle class including university teachers, as it offered seaside resorts or interesting mountaineering for much less than a similar trip to Western Europe. A seaside stay was combined with trips on foot, or later on a horse back or in a car. These vacations were also quite long – they left at the end of June and returned in early September, as the passport stamps tell.⁴¹

Was the travel the only leisure time for the Lexas? Evidently not, as there were also balls, theatre evenings, and – vaudeville. Both František and Irena were fans of the *Red Seven*, a Prague vaudeville of good repute. After all, the director of that cabaret, Jiří Červený, was Lexa's former student. Lexa also played the bagpipes, and his performances could be heard at the pub *U Fleků*, where he had regular meetings with academic and artsy friends.

The family situation was quite stabilised financially – and all three children attended grammar school and the university. The eldest daughter, Milada, studied at the Prague

³⁷ Mít Rahína, Mennefer, Memphis, approx. 30 km, from Cairo, former capital of ancient Egypt.

³⁸ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Cairo, 9 January 1931.

³⁹ Kramářova chata, built in 1928, a resort in Orlické hory.

⁴⁰ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence I. Lexová to F. Lexa, Prague [1909].

⁴¹ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 1, no. 6. Passports and Lexa bequest private papers, photographs from Bulgaria.

Arts School, and had a teaching career alongside a painting career. As an artist, she played with Egyptian topics, but only briefly in thank you cards used by her father, and in a short graphic novel. Milada lived in her parents' household and looked after them. The son, Jaroslav, was a specialist in electrical engineering and installations, and married a physician, Věra Pecková (they had four children). They moved to the Moravian city Zlín and later to Bratislava (Slovakia). The youngest daughter, Irena, went to study Egyptology in her father's seminar, but she was also a talented dancer. She analysed ancient Egyptian dances and published on the subject in 1930. The English version of her book is still cited. Her sister Milada provided illustrations for the volume (Lexová 1930; 1935; 2000; Růžová 1996: 98–99). Irena herself inspired her choreographies by ancient resources and by folk dances. She married a technician Václav Zámotný and had three children. They moved out of Prague, as her husband worked for the Baťa corporation.

The Academician

During the Second World War, Czech and Moravian universities and polytechnics were forcibly closed and Lexa, like many professors, had to take a retirement. Oriental institute was not closed, but its work was considerably restricted.⁴² Lexa spent most of the war years in his summer retreat in Potštejn, working on his *Grammaire Démotique*. He promptly returned after the war and re-established the seminar at the reopened university. His colleague and assistant professor Jaroslav Černý left for London in 1946 (Navrátilová 2018: 53–98) and Lexa therefore promoted his student Zbyněk Žába⁴³. Despite various odds, they eventually did succeed – with the backup of minister Václav Kopecký – in establishing an institute of Egyptology in 1958 as part of the Charles University, Lexa was formally its first director (Jůnová Macková 2017: 123–134).

Also in the 1950s, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was established and Lexa was one of the first academicians, appointed in 1952. The 1953 to 1956 period was a second apogee of his career, despite the complicated political environment he and Žába then had to navigate. Lexa also finished publishing his *Grammaire Démotique*, again with substantial support provided by Václav Kopecký – due to his connections Lexa got money for printing the last volumes. Ironically, this was not his best Egyptological work, but he obtained a prize for it – the Order of the Republic (Lexa 1938–1948; 1950–1951). However, maybe the best award was to see the Institute of Egyptology established. It came at a price of Lexa and Žába becoming cogs in the Communist propaganda machine that sent out a “cultural delegation” to Egypt in 1956 (Jůnová Macková 2012: 101–110). They had a full programme of political and cultural meetings. The correspondence, although censored, is quite telling. *In these three days we saw exactly nothing of ancient Egypt. We attended the celebrations of Egyptian independence.*⁴⁴ [...] of which the first one brought as 5 metres from Nasser. Today there was a military parade. We set out in the morning at 7 am, and returned for lunch at half past two. Then I rested, had

⁴² See Adéla Jůnová Macková, *Nástup nové generace orientalistů. Proměny Orientálního ústavu v letech 1938–1946 (sborník k nedožitým 60. narozeninám Aleny Míškové, 2019)*.

⁴³ Zbyněk Žába (1917–1971), Czechoslovak Egyptologist, student of František Lexa and Jaroslav Černý, assistant of Lexa at university, from 1960 director of the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology in Prague (Vachala 2017: 8–11; Jůnová Macková – Navrátilová: 2017: 12–23).

⁴⁴ Independence of Egypt in 1956 – refers to the British troops leaving the Suez Canal in 1956 (Toledano 1998: 274–276).

a bath and now I am writing frantically, as at 7.30 pm the car will take us to see Kuentz, the Egyptologist.⁴⁵ The day before yesterday we saw Keimer⁴⁶, and the day after tomorrow we will meet Selim Hasan⁴⁷.⁴⁸ These contacts, however, also helped in establishing the Institute's future position in Egypt. Lexa's further and last trip to Egypt was connected with the ceremonial opening of the Institute in Cairo in 1959, when he travelled together with the dean of the faculty of Arts Julius Dolanský. Both trips were quite short, hence correspondence from both, and especially from this second one, is quite limited.

The 1940s and 1950s were decades of change for the Lexa family. The children left home and started their own families, making Lexa a grandfather. Only Milada stayed with her parents. Again, the summer house at Potštejn provided retreat in the war years. Also, they moved from Mánesova to Sokolská street, still in Prague – Vinohrady.

Socially, Lexa reached the highest echelons of academia in the 1950s – and he attended a number of important celebratory events, as well as conferences and meetings. As a member of the Journalists' Syndicate he used the privilege to spend holidays at the Dobříš chateau, accompanied by his daughter Milada. As much as he could, he also continued his hiking and skiing sporting routine – visiting Beskydy mountains or Jánské lázně.⁴⁹

Also his Bulgarian trips resumed after the war. He was evidently fully tolerated by the communist regime, as international travel was not an easy proposition, and yet he and his wife and daughter regularly went to Bulgaria after 1948. Their hiking trips were more leisurely, given their advanced age, but still included long hikes around the Rila range with a famous monastery⁵⁰, or the Musala mountain range.⁵¹

Lexa photographed and wrote to his son, Jaroslav *We fly to Sofia on Saturday morning, there we shall stay just five days, and then take off to Varna, for three weeks by the sea. Miluše [Milada] will let you know our address. In August, we plan mountains again, so write to Sofia, as usual [...]*⁵² Postcards sent to their children's families describe their accommodation in hotels on the seaside for mainly half of the summer as well as hiking in the mountains but with the more comfortable (and more expensive) stays in country cottages or hotels and transport by hired cars as well as horses.

⁴⁵ Charles Kuentz (1895–1978), French Egyptologist, colleague of Jaroslav Cerny, director of the IFAO, later member of the CEDAE (*Centre d'Étude et de Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte*).

⁴⁶ Ludwig Keimer (1893–1957), German, Czechoslovak and Egyptian Egyptologist, member of the Prague German University in the late 1930s, see Oerter 2010: 36–95.

⁴⁷ Selim Hassan (1886–1961), first Egyptian professor of Egyptology at the Cairo university, trained in Vienna (Bierbrier 2012: 192–193).

⁴⁸ A AV ČR, collection František Lexa, folder 2, no. 27. Correspondence F. Lexa to I. Lexová, Cairo, 20 June 1956.

⁴⁹ The Lexa family archive (private). 1940s and 1950s correspondence of František and Irena Lexa with the family of their son Jaroslav.

⁵⁰ The Rila monastery, in the Rila range, was established in the 10th century.

⁵¹ Musala – 2925 m peak in the Rila range.

⁵² The Lexa family archive (private). Letters of Irena and František Lexa to their son and daughter-in-law, Praha, 30 June 1958.

Conclusion

František Lexa lived through a dynamic and dramatic changes of technology, politics and academic life. His career took off as was usual from a teacher's position, and his family life was a fairly conservative model on the outside, with a professional working husband and a professional domestic housewife; except that on the inside Irena was always his full-fledged partner. Her domesticity was not confining, although it was a one-sided career – that of a housewife and a stay at home mother. But the household was quite large, and it was a complex responsibility. She probably enjoyed her “Mrs Professor” role – it was quite clear to her, as well as to Lexa, that without her, his career would have not developed so smoothly – the domestic haven and support was important to him.

The family lived a middle class life – including a good address in Prague, and a summer house. The family routines centred round the everyday chores and children, but in a relatively well to do setting, despite Lexa's constant nagging of his superiors. It may well be that it was his strong sense of family life that made him seek a financially rewarding arrangement. In that respect he was fortunate that his connections gave him that opportunity.

What was also less typical was the strong interest in physical education and sports – the usual summer sojourns in a spa (adopted by many of the same class and professional background) were replaced by active leisure, including cycling, hiking in the Alps or the Bulgarian mountains.

The family created a working habitus where the family aspirations led the daughters to a much more emancipated life than their mother had, yet Irena seemed to take in her role as a team partner of František and as such she was satisfied. In Lexa's case his domesticity was important to him, and as such showed him as a family man who worked hard on establishing a good head start for his children, and a friendly, quite egalitarian, rapport with his wife.

Naturally, there are many further aspects of the Lexa career – changing political allegiances (or ignoring them), the technological changes of travel he accepted in his stride (from horse traps to aeroplanes), and the role of Egyptology in the interwar and cold war world, but these aspects call for a treatment of their own.

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Pl. 1 Wedding of František Lexa and Irena, b. Kvíčalová, 1901. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 2 On a trip with *Malostranské gymnázium* [*Malostranské High School*] pupils, sometime between 1905–1910. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 3 František Lexa and Irena Lexová's children on the Potštejn garden (Milada, Jaroslav, Irena). Around 1912. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 4 Charles University Rector, Josef Drachovský, and the deans of the individual faculties, 1934/1935. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 5 František Lexa's 60th birthday party. The Cech "table society", 1936. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 6 The Krokonoše mountains, en route to the Sněžka peak, 1940s.
Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 7 František Lexa and Irena Lexová in the Tatras, 1946. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 8 František Lexa, Irena Lexová and Milada Lexová at the Rila monastery, 1950s.
Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 9 Czechoslovak State Award Ceremony, František Lexa and prime-minister Antonín Zápotocký, 10 May 1952. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 10 Czechoslovak cultural delegation upon landing in Cairo, 1 June 1956.
Private archive of the Lexa family.



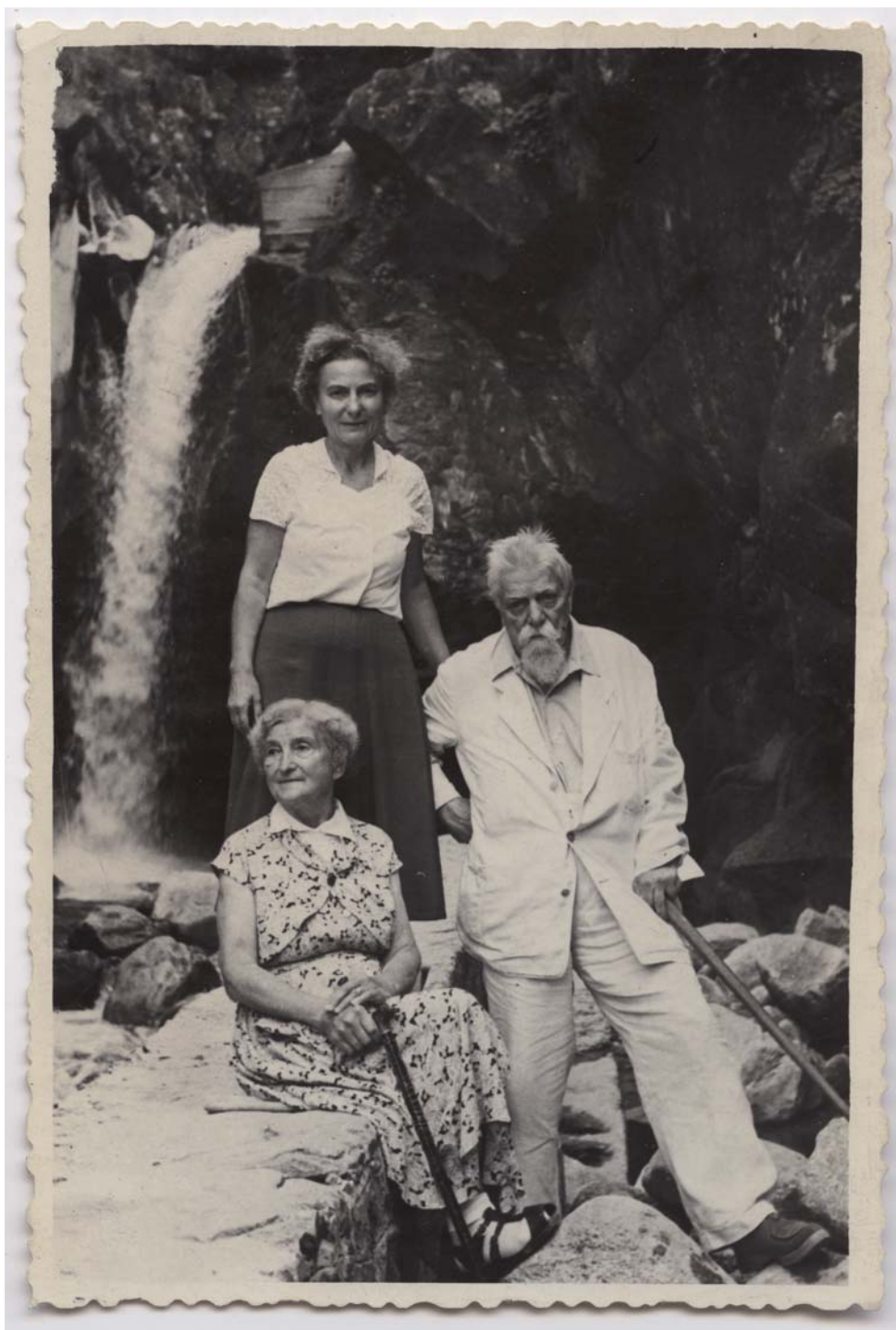
Pl. 11 František Lexa visiting the Giza pyramids, Egypt, 1956. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 12 František Lexa and Irena Lexová cross-country skiing, Christmas, 1956.
Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 13 František Lexa and Irena Lexová on a hike in the Pirin mountains (Bulgaria), in front of the Vihren Hut, 1950s. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 14 František Lexa, Irena Lexová and Milada Lexová at a waterfall in the Rodopi mountains, August 1957. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 15 The Second Representative Ball of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, František Lexa, Irena Lexová and Milada Lexová, January 1959. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 16 Portrait of František Lexa. Drawn by Milada Lexová. Private archive of the Lexa family.



Pl. 17 Irena Lexová performing an ancient Egyptian dance, undated. Private collection.