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## Préface

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# Preface

Inaugurated in Poitiers in 1999, the international conferences of Isis studies are now well established within the scholarly field. After Lyon (2002), Leiden (2005) and Liège (2008), the 2011 conference took place at the port-city of Boulogne-sur-Mer. The sea was a major vehicle for the dissemination of the Isiac family and especially Isis has always been strongly associated with *l'élément marin*. There were more reasons, however, why Boulogne-sur-Mer provided a most appropriate context for the Vth international conference of Isis studies. Not only was Boulogne an important port-city in the Roman era, it is also the birthplace of Auguste Mariette. Born in Boulogne in 1821, this founding figure of Egyptology played an important role in the study and preservation of the heritage of Egypt in the 19th century; and certainly not at the Nile alone.

The great French Egyptologist Jean Leclant, *père des études isiaques*, died one month prior to the conference at a venerable age. How proud he would have been to participate in an Isis conference in the north of France and especially at the Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale (ULCO). It was through the find of an ushabti at the site of Blendecques, near Saint-Omer and only about fifty miles from Boulogne, that Leclant began his investigations in this field, now already more than half a century ago. In this volume, Laurent Bricault presents a fitting and personal *in memoriam*.

At the Vth international conference of Isis studies a group of invited scholars reflected on the relationships between the cults of Isis and power (*pouvoir*). The choice for his theme was instigated by discussions at previous Isis conferences and current debates within the field; as will be explained and elaborated upon in the Introduction article by the two editors.

The conference would not have been possible without the support of several institutions to whom we would like to express our sincere gratitude. We are grateful to the *région Nord/Pas-de-Calais* who continues to care deeply about cultural initiatives big (as the Louvre in Lens) and small. The *département du Pas-de-Calais*, the *Communauté d'Agglomération du Boulonnais* and the *Ville de Boulogne-sur-Mer* all played an important role in providing the excellent facilities during the conference. The ULCO and in particular the research group HLLI-CRHAEL (*Histoire, Langues, Littératures et Interculturel, Centre de Recherches en Histoire Atlantique et Littorale*) kindly put their facilities and staff at our disposal.

Gratitude is also due to Brill publishers and the *Religions in the Graeco-Roman world* (RGRW) board for their willingness to publish this book in the series that presents its ideal scholarly and intellectual context; and especially to Frederick Naerebout who did much more for this book than one can reasonably expect from a series editor.

*Laurent Bricault, Jean-Louis Podvin & Miguel John Versluys*