Notes and News

THE UNESCO CAMPAIGN FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE SITES AND MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT NUBIA

The construction of the High Dam south of Aswan presents a challenge to Egyptologists without precedent, for we are faced with the fact that a large area of the Nile Valley rich in the relics of Egypt's ancient history will in a few years be totally destroyed. When the waters of the Nile are banked up by the High Dam, they will reach, between Aswan and Akasha in the Sudan, a height of about 600 ft. above sea-level, forming a great reservoir over 270 miles long and in some places 16 miles wide. All the great temples of Nubia, the Christian churches, the fortresses, the cemeteries and other ancient sites will be submerged and finally obliterated. The gigantic task of saving the temples and of recording and excavating the ancient settlements and cemeteries in the short time before the completion of the High Dam project in 1965 is beyond the present resources of both the United Arab Republic and the Republic of the Sudan. Consequently, both governments appealed to UNESCO, asking it in its turn to appeal to the nations of the world and their scientific institutions to assist in the preservation of this part of civilization which is indeed a heritage of humanity as a whole. This request was accepted by UNESCO, and on 8 March, 1960, the appeal was formally made public by the Director-General of UNESCO in Paris.

Already the response by governments, institutions and individuals has been most encouraging, and a Consultative Committee formed by the government of the United Arab Republic in co-operation with UNESCO has just completed its first session in Cairo, to organize and co-ordinate the various offers of assistance which, in one form or another, have come from all parts of the world. The answers to the appeal have been such that, during the coming winter, work on the various projects recommended by the UNESCO Committee of Experts in October 1959 will be in full swing.

With regard to the excavation of town sites and cemeteries, the situation in Egyptian Nubia is not as perilous as in the threatened area of the northern Sudan. With the building of the original Aswan Dam in the early 1900s, and its heightening between 1929–34, the Egyptian governments at that time organized what was known as the Archaeological Survey of Nubia. The first part of that work was undertaken by the late Dr George Reisner, and the second part, between 1929 and 1934, was completed under my direction. We excavated and recorded, so far as our knowledge carried us, all the ancient sites, all the cemeteries, settlements and fortresses in the threatened area; but of course we left alone sites which were high above the level to which the top of the new reservoir would reach. It is these sites on the higher levels of the valley which must now be excavated and recorded, and it is satisfactory to report that in consequence of the UNESCO appeal, concessions to excavate all the most important of these sites have been granted to expeditions coming from Egypt, U.S.A., Italy, Germany, U.S.S.R., Spain, Poland, France and Great Britain, who will commence work in the autumn of this year. In addition a ' sondage ' expedition to explore the areas between the individual concessions is being organized by the Egyptian Antiquities Service. So that, in general, the question of excavation in Egyptian Nubia is already settled.

But in Sudanese Nubia the task is much greater and the problems more acute. There, very little has been done hitherto, for the area between Wadi Halfa and Akasha was not threatened by the building of the original Aswan Dam. In Upper Nubia there has been a

certain amount of excavation, but due to the lack of urgency it was very limited and never on a really large scale. Now, with the construction of the High Dam, the waters will flood the whole reach of the Nile from Halfa to Akasha, so that a new archaeological survey is being organized by the Sudan Antiquities Service, which must explore the localities on both banks of the river for a distance of more than 90 miles. This area is of great historical importance, for it was here that the kings of the Middle Kingdom built a series of great fortress settlements, many of them still unexcavated. The Egypt Exploration Society is at present engaged on the complete excavation of Buhen, the largest of these fortresses, and it is to be hoped that other foreign missions will soon undertake similar work.

Apart from the excavation of all ancient sites in Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia, there remains the necessity for a comprehensive prehistoric survey which would also record the rock drawings and graffiti. Offers of help, financial and technical, have been made for this purpose, but as yet no detailed plan for its organization has been made.

But by far the greatest task facing the archaeologist in Nubia is the preservation of the temples, particularly those of Abu Simbel and Philae. With regard to the latter, the matter is not so urgent, for it will not be affected until the High Dam project has reached an advanced stage. Abu Simbel, on the other hand, will be damaged by the rising water when the first stage of the construction is completed—this should happen in little more than two years time. Already French engineers are carrying out the preliminary survey for the construction of the earth dam that will protect the temples. The cost of this earth dam cannot be estimated until this survey is completed, but it is certain that the cost will be very great, and we can only hope that the money for this great project will be forthcoming from international sources. In the meantime, the Egyptian Department of Antiquities have already started work on the transfer of the smaller temples of Debod and Taffeh, which are in immediate danger.

At the present time, the British contribution towards this great archaeological campaign is directed to the excavation by the Egypt Exploration Society of the important sites of Buhen in Sudanese Nubia and Ibrim in Egyptian Nubia. At the request of UNESCO, a national committee has been formed under the Presidency of His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, and it is hoped that through its efforts to obtain further financial support, the scope of the work of the Egypt Exploration Society may be considerably widened in both Egypt and the Sudan.

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RADIO-CARBON DATES FROM WINDMILL HILL

The British Museum Research Laboratory has now completed the radio-carbon dating of charcoal samples collected from three separate layers during the 1957–8 excavations at the Neolithic camp on Windmill Hill (*WAM*, LVII (1959), 149–62; ANTIQUITY, 128 (1958), 268–9). As explained below, each date refers to the contents of a layer which had accumulated over a considerable period of time.

Occupation surface sealed beneath the bank of the Outer Ditch (Cuttings V and VI): 2950 ± 150 B.C. (BM 73). The charcoal occurred as surface scatter, together with a small quantity from a hearth. Two, or possibly three, phases of occupation could be detected.

Primary silt in the ditches of the camp: 2570 ± 150 B.C. (BM 74). The term ' primary silt ' refers to the loose chalk rubble, occasionally interspersed with fallen turves or thin streaks of rainwash. As no large deposits of charcoal were found, the sample was made up of small amounts occurring at various levels in the primary silts of two cuttings in the Outer Ditch (IV and V) and one in the Middle Ditch (XII). There is reason to believe that these silts were all forming at the same time.

Late Neolithic surface in the Outer Ditch (Cutting V): 1540 ± 150 B.C. (BM 75). The