

UNESCO's First Salvage Campaign - Nubian Monuments

Exhibit Plan

1- Planning & Building the Dam (Al-Sadd al- 'Āli)

The Aswan High Dam would add more fertile acres for Egypt's food production, and to sell this excess electricity to neighboring countries to obtain needed capital. Work on the Aswan High Dam began in 1960. Built by Soviet engineers, paid for entirely by the USSR, it began operating in 1964 and was completed in 1971. Lake Nasser was filled by 1975.

2- Saving the Monuments

May 6, 1955 Egypt & UNESCO created the Document & Study Centre. In 1956-64 a special mission was sent by the Institut Geographique National in Paris to make a photogrammetric survey by air. These photos were later used to re-assemble the monuments moved from the flood area and provide the only record of the lost monuments. Egypt formally requested UNESCO aid for the Nubia Campaign April 6, 1959. Ten were moved, thousands lost.

3- The Temples of Abu Simbel, the Major Project

First discovered by Swiss traveler and adventurer John Lewis Burkhardt in 1813 buried in sand, in 1914 Egypt issued its first stamp depicting Rameses' temple. Under UN auspices Swedish engineers moved Abu Simbel along with the mountain that contained them, numbering each stone 1963-68.

4- The Temples of Philae

Built under Ptolemy XIII in the 4th Century BCE, these were among the youngest monuments to be saved. Philae was saved by an Italian team lead by Condotta Mazzi Estero SPA. Work began 1971 and was completed 1979.

5- Sudanese Nubia and Others

Wadi es Sebu'a & The "Drowning Sphinx" and the site of Faras Church was moved 4 kms to the west. Although the larger temple was saved, a smaller "Temple of Horus" built by Amenophis III was lost. Besides the better known temples there were Kalabsha, Dakka, Dendura, Qertassi and others, stretching along the Nile from Egypt into the Sudan. Not all appear on stamps.

The Government of the United Arab Republic offered, as grants, in return to countries which contribute to the Nubian campaign. The objects include statues, sarcophagi, alabaster jars and vases, statuettes in faience, wood sculptures, etc., from the Luxor, Karnak, Giza and Aswan sites. Also offered 50% of excavation finds in the area to be flooded, and Egypt has generously modified its antiquity laws for excavations elsewhere.

Some of the firms involved in the project were Hochtief of Essen (West Germany), Vattenbyggnadsbyran (Sweden), Grande Travaux de Marseille (France), Impregilo of Milan (Italy), Skanska (Sweden) and Sentab (Sweden). Languages spoken were English, German, Italian, Swedish, French & Danish along with Arabic.

