

The Nubian Project

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The most significant happening in the course of the Nubian study during the past year has been the loss of its devoted and enthusiastic director, Dr. Keith C. Seele. Dr. Seele's dedication to the Nubian project was well-known to all who are acquainted with this work; one may hope that the project may continue to completion in a double portion of the spirit of its inceptor.

In the last project report it was stated that the extensive photographic program had not yet begun. Since then, Dr. Seele initiated this part of the project, with Mrs. Ursula W. Schneider efficiently handling the actual photographic work. This program has been enlarged and intensified, and it is expected that during the coming months a more selective process will be inaugurated, with publication its immediate and definite goal. This is a very important phase of the project, and we are confident of excellent results.

A specialized branch of the Nubian finds is the large number of textile pieces, mostly from Meroitic and X-Group times. The task of cleaning and mounting these specimens was begun by Miss Louisa Bellinger and later was taken up by Mrs. Christa C. Mayer-Thurman, Curator of Textiles at the Art Institute of Chicago. With the wholehearted cooperation of Dr. Gustavus F. Swift, a tentative schedule for treating the textiles was set up, so that during the past few months Mrs. Thurman has been able to spend more time at this arduous task. The growing pile of cleaned samples is offset by the large amount of material which remains to be treated, but the progress is good and the prognosis is excellent, for Mrs. Thurman has also happily agreed to write the section on textiles for the final publication. A financial encouragement to this fundless project came in the form of support for the conservation of the textiles, an award of a grant of \$5,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. Since this must be matched by the Oriental Institute, prospective underwriters of the textile project may contact the Director of the Oriental Institute.

A discussion of the physical remains excavated in the Nubian cemeteries is the province of Mr. Duane D. Burnor, of the University of Michigan, who served as physical anthropolo-

gist on the expedition in 1963/64. We may need to secure the services of other specialists as the work advances.

The overall project has also benefited from the volunteer help of several graduate students. Mr. Bruce B. Williams has had a keen interest in the C-Group period, particularly in the pottery and its relations to chronology. Miss Doris E. Weil began work on computerizing the object cards; suffering a delay due to illness, she now hopes to resume work this summer.

With the responsibility for the publication currently resting on the writer, I have been attempting to swim with the flood of new literature, chart the course of the prospective volumes, and keep the project moving. A recent invitation to participate in an international conference on Nubian archeology at the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw should provide opportunity for sharing the most recent developments in the field and enable me to consult with European conservation specialists who may be able to advise us on the treatment of Nubian objects, such as items made of leather, which require individualized care.