

The Nubian Publication Project

CARL E. DEVRIES

The Nubian publication project has continued steadily, with no startling discoveries emanating from the subterranean chambers of Oriental Institute Nubiology, but with some certainties reached with respect to the identification of several previously problematic types of objects and with definite strides taken in the direction of our publication goal.

An invitation from the National Museum in Warsaw to participate in an international colloquium on Nubian archaeology in June, 1972, provided an opportunity to learn of the latest activities in the area and to share information provided from our excavations and research. A brief progress report of our project was made in those sessions; this will appear in the publication of the proceedings of that colloquium. Inquiries concerning the treatment of old dessicated leather met with negative responses, though we spoke with both archaeologists and museum technicians.

The earlier symposium on Nubian archaeology, held in Cairo in 1971 under the auspices of the Institut d'Égypte, had again raised the question of the use of the pottery form often referred to as a clepsydra. Since we have a number of Nubian specimens of this device, it was imperative that a sure answer be provided for this question. Intensive digging in the library confirmed the fact that it was in-

deed a "water-dipper" and that it was used to move liquids from one container to another. The results have been published in popular form in *The Old Bottle Magazine* and in a more technical article in the double issue of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* dedicated to the memory of Dr. Keith C. Seele.

Communication with the physical science departments on the campus revealed that a number of specialists in those fields were not only interested in archaeology but were quite enthusiastic about helping us with identification of physical materials. For some years we have been debating the function of certain A-Group objects, with suggestions ranging from lamps to grinders. Since some of these artifacts of uncertain use had an apparent residue of a black substance adhering to their recessed upper surface, Dr. Philip E. Eaton was able to make several analyses of the black material and to conclude that the probabilities of identification lay in the direction of a lamp or censer, for the material was essentially carbon and probably was produced by burning. These objects were discussed in an illustrated paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held at the State University of New York at Binghamton in the autumn of 1972.

In late spring of 1972 we were awarded a one-year grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to finance the cleaning and mounting of the textile specimens which came mostly from Meroitic and X-Group Nubia, a project element discussed in last year's annual report. Although Mrs. Thurman, Curator of Textiles at the Art Institute, has been able to devote only limited time to our textiles, most of the textile samples have now been washed, but very few of them have been mounted. We are happy to announce that the grant has been extended for another year, which should give ample time to complete the cleaning and to continue the mounting.

The photographic section of the prospective publication has been going very well. Mrs. Ursula Schneider has finished the essential photography of Cemeteries W and L, the two large A-Group cemeteries (ca. 3200-2300 B.C.) and of Cemeteries T and K, the two outstanding C-Group burial places (ca. 2300-1500 B.C.) from the same season. We are now well under way with work on the objects from the good-sized Meroitic cemetery south of Ballana, Cemetery B, which also dates from the last season of excavation. Most of the material from the season of 1962/63 remains to be photographed for publication, but

within the coming year much of the photography should be completed.

Before leaving for some months' work in Egypt on an independent project relating to his doctoral research, Mr. Bruce B. Williams submitted the analysis of the C-Group cemeteries which he undertook last year. His study relates primarily to the ceramic evidence from the sites of that period and will be of considerable help in the writing of the chapter on C-Group pottery.

With a large number of objects of various kinds and periods yet to be studied and analyzed, the actual writing of parts of the publication lies in the future, but we hope to have some chapters of the final publication in rough written form by this time next year.