Permeable Records, Flooded Land: Archival Thinking and UNESCO's Nubian Campaign in Egypt and Sudan

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Abstract

This article discusses architectural and archaeological archives of newly independent Egypt and Sudan created during UNESCO's International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, which took place in the contiguous border regions of Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia from 1960 until 1980 in response to the building of the Aswan High Dam. Contingency in these archives demonstrates the necessity of acknowledging the (post-) colonial social and historical conditions within which these records and connected forms of knowledge came into existence.

UNESCO's campaign sought to record the ancient remains that would be submerged by the High Dam's floodwaters. During the campaign, UNESCO set up 'documentation centres' that helped to codify the conceptual borders of the knowledge about Nubian architecture/archaeology that might be recorded, producing specially devised index cards for that purpose in Egypt (concentrating on the documentation of monuments) and Sudan (centring archaeological sites). This practice was often purposefully forgetful of contemporary Nubia, whose material traces were themselves soon to be flooded.

Nevertheless, such practices allowed other, unauthorised, histories of Nubia to become visible, subverting this archival knowledge. In the archive, not only are histories of local involvement with the campaign visible, but also the Nubian settlements that would soon be submerged. It is both possible and ethically imperative, therefore, to use these "permeable" archives to acknowledge these erased Nubian histories.

Keywords

Archaeology, Architecture, Archives, Nubia, (Post-) Colonialism, UNESCO.

Word Count

8894 words

UNESCO's Nubian campaign, which took place from 1960 until 1980 in the contiguous border regions of Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia, has become known for two major events. First, for its role in the gestation of a particular legal technology, the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Secondly, for the undertaking of archaeological survey on both sides of the Nubian border, and for the technologically aided movement and preservation of a number of ancient temples located in the two regions, most notably those at Abu Simbel and Philae.[1] Yet the campaign, whose major impetus was the construction of the Aswan High Dam and the subsequent flooding of Nubia's ancient remains by that structure's floodwaters, also possessed another technological crux: the archive. It is to that archival technology that I turn in this article.

Archival technology made Nubia's past at the same time as the High Dam helped to make Nubia's present a central crux of the postcolonial "revolution" that had, since the 1950s, been taking shape under the presidency of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.[2] And that technology played the same role, too, as Sudan, which gained independence in 1956, sought ways to deal with the flooding of the part of Nubia that sat on its side of the region's border. In doing so, though, those utilising that technology never quite obtained the control over the past that they sought. In an act deriving from earlier, colonial practice, the archiving of various forms of documentation was meant to coalesce around certain visions of Nubia's past that would help to provide an (ancient) historical basis for the two, newly independent nations of Egypt and Sudan. Yet other associations—not least ones relating to contemporary Nubia—have consistently become entangled with the documentation that participants in the Nubian campaign produced.

In this article, I explain why this slippage has occurred. I emphasize the archival impetus of the Nubian campaign and illustrate how that impetus and its representation of the region's architectural and archaeological past was, and continues to be, far less cohesive than UNESCO and the work's participants often like to admit. I then explore what such contingencies can demonstrate about the histories and social associations that the representations of Nubia predominant during UNESCO's campaign elided, especially in relation to the High Dam's other major impact: the forced migration of the Nubian population to the north (in Egypt) and south (in Sudan). The Nubian campaign ignored the people who lived in the region, even as, until their forced migration, they lived their lives around the ancient remains located there.[3] In this article, I suggest the necessity of thinking through the archival slippage visible in the Nubian campaign's documentation in order to make this separation significantly less stark.

The imbrication of architectural and archaeological archives with colonial rule ultimately led to the disaggregation of Nubians from the knowledge that such archives might be used to produce. As with all archives, however, this process was also unstable, creating (pun intended) permeable records of flooded land that consistently revealed the social arenas which the creators of those documents had hoped to avoid: in particular, the minutiae of the Nubian life that was in the process of disappearing. As I argue, this instability positions these same archives as offering potential recuperative possibilities for Nubians today, whose dispersion across two countries and a global diaspora has not impeded increasing calls for a right to return to a now-flooded homeland. Such possibilities, though, are dependent not only upon Nubian interest in engaging with these archives, but also on the permission of the institutions who control them. In this article, I suggest why that permission should be forthcoming.

On the Archive and its Recuperative Potentials

My perspective here is not entirely original. Egypt, for instance, has recently provided fertile ground for the study of ways in which documentation and archival technology have constituted certain visions and practices related to the past, particularly in the country's colonial era. Christina Riggs has shown how archaeological photography and archival practice have intersected in a way that has enabled photographs to become used as emblematic depictions of discovery and objective fact. For example, she demonstrates how the multiple lives of a particular photographic negative held in archives connected to the Egyptologist Howard Carter illustrate the genealogical complexity behind such representations of scientific success. Providing a micro-history that echoes Ann Laura Stoler's suggestion to 'explore the [archival] grain with care and read along it first',[4] Riggs shows how the mutability of this negative cautions against writing a straightforward and assured history of photography's place in the archaeological archive.[5] By doing so, she also echoes Stoler's caution against accepting 'the notion [in colonial studies] that "granting epistemic warrant is a covert way of distributing power"' without thinking about 'how that warrant was granted, how firmly entrenched, and how much debate accompanied that process',[6] or thinking about 'the assumption that colonial statecraft was always intent on accumulating more knowledge rather than on a selective winnowing and reduction of it'.[7] These, too, are the sorts of processes that interest me here, although particularly in relation to the ways in which they began to overlap with the making of the postcolonial nation-states coalescing in Egypt and Sudan.

As Todd Shepard discusses, the relationship of archival practices with the post-war "era of decolonization" and the foundation of newly sovereign nation-states was—and continues to be—contentious.[8] In the case of Egypt, for example, Omnia El Shakry notes that the situation is no different, and the historian Ibrahim ʿAbduh has described the period of Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency as possessing a 'history without documents'.[9] El Shakry also suggests, though, that reimagining decolonization 'as an ongoing process and series of struggles' including figures 'bypassed in or excised from traditional archives' provides one way of attending to this situation.[10] Below, I argue that the archives of the Nubian campaign offer one example of how El Shakry's suggestion might play out. After discussing what, exactly, those archives constitute, I demonstrate how the material within them allows the possibility of attending to the work of the substantial unacknowledged number of people in Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia involved with and impacted by the Nubian campaign. Ironically, these people are in fact highly visible within the campaign's records. Following El Shakry, then, the ability to use these archives to understand how, exactly, the wider process of social disaggregation from the work occurred constitutes vital decolonial history.

In this aim, El Shakry echoes the work of the literary scholar Rita Felski, whose recent work on what Paul Ricoeur termed 'the hermeneutics of suspicion' examines what Felski terms *The Limits of Critique* in an attempt to create a scholarly space for the understanding of what might broadly be termed "affective" phenomena: 'empathy and sympathy, recognition and identification, enchantment and absorption, shock and the sublime, the pleasures of fandom and connoisseurship as they shape how and why people read'. By centring these phenomena, Felski hopes to overcome the 'stultifying division between naive, emotional reading and rigorous, critical reading' that she argues has developed in literary studies in particular.[11] I propose, however, that Felski's work obtains equally well to the frustrations and possibilities of imagining 'the vexed archives of decolonization'.[12] From the remains of the archival negative, new sorts of archival positive might be developed.

Beyond nodding to Riggs, there is a reason for this photographic pun. As I argue below, from aging archival images devoted to the purposes of UNESCO's Nubian campaign, so images devoted to a new aim entirely might come into being; Felski's work constitutes a methodological intervention that enables the reimagining of archives putatively geared towards another purpose entirely. By so doing—and particularly in relation to the lives of the Nubians themselves—that intervention helps to write the lived history of decolonization that the nation-state and its allies did not want to visualize, or perhaps even comprehend. Explicitly influenced by the work of Bruno Latour, Felski's concentration on the relationship between humans and the things with which they associate (texts, images, and ideas, for example) shows how previously unimagined connections and phenomena—the connection of local populations to ancient structures, for instance—can become imaginable.[13]

Working with the archives of the Nubian campaign in this vein, I show how 'rather than [only being encountered in a way that leads to …] an unravelling of manifest meaning', so those archives, and particularly the photographs within them, might be imbricated in 'a form of making rather than unmaking'.[14] I argue that this process of making highlights the lives of the Nubian population whom UNESCO's campaign ignored, in addition to their relationship not only with that work, but also with the ancient remains to which that work was devoted. The archive can become a recuperative tool. Why, though, might such recuperation be necessary? In Egypt and Sudan, archival practices have long constituted tense (post-) colonial sovereignties, disaggregating various groups of people from the knowledge that such records helped to create.

Archiving Egypt

Egypt's past in particular had long been subject to such acts of dispossession. From Napoleon's Egyptian campaign and its *Description de l'Égypte* onwards, the genealogy of attempts to gather and index the material of that past is wide-ranging.[15] As disciplines like archaeology and Egyptology coalesced around such study, so archival thinking seemed to increase its grip on the practitioners involved with that work. Enmeshed within the world of what Lorraine Daston has termed 'the sciences of the archive', so, too, did those practitioners display varying levels of sovereign hubris. Such sciences, Daston argues, extend around 'practices of collection, collation, and preservation conceived as an intrinsically collective undertaking—and one that extends into both past and future'.[16] In Egypt (as the imbrication of that practice with the Napoleonic campaign makes plain), such archival community was also entangled with the realities of imperial rule, instantiating issues of sovereignty as central to the archive and foreshadowing the later ways in which Nubians were dispossessed from records relating to the place where they lived.

Unsurprisingly, then, such issues were current in the years immediately preceding the Nubian campaign. In the 1920s, as Egyptian nationalists sought to end British control over the country (and as, in 1922, Britain issued a declaration of nominal Egyptian independence), the American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted planned to create a new antiquities museum and research institute in Cairo, backed (like his own Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago) by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. As Jeffrey Abt relates, central to this institute was to be a library 'over two stories high',[17] a place which 'conformed with Breasted's scholarly priorities for Egyptology which de-emphasized excavation in favor of epigraphy, interpretation, and publication'. Alongside other projects, the institute would produce 'an architectural survey of ancient Egyptian buildings, a general handbook of Egyptian

archaeology "such as we possess for Greece and Rome", [and] a history of the development of Egyptian hieroglyphs'.[18] Breasted's proposed research institute had Daston's collection and collation of documentation at its heart, a veritable archival outpost.

Breasted, though, conceived of his new institute as a place 'designed to serve the needs of visiting scholars and western researchers and museums', the collective whom he presumed to have the most need of the establishment. Colonial habit died hard and, ultimately, this and a series of other arrogant presuppositions led to the project's failure. Breasted's plans stated that an international commission dominated by foreign Egyptologists was to control the institution, since he perceived Egyptians to be lacking the know-how to run it. When Breasted presented his plans to Egypt's King Fuʾad in early 1926, then, they were turned down. Ahmad Ziwar, the country's Prime Minister, is reported to have said that 'the conditions are absolutely unacceptable, they infringe upon the sovereignty of Egypt!'[19] Breasted wanted to instantiate documentation at the centre of Egypt's past. Unlike certain of his predecessors, however, he could not afford to ignore Egyptian interests in the process of doing so. Sovereignty—in this instance figured through the ownership of, and ability to control, documentary information—mattered.

UNESCO's Nubian campaign rested on this archival genealogy due to the role played in the work by the Centre de Documentation sur l'Égypte Ancienne. That institution was established in 1955 as a collaboration between UNESCO and Egypt's Department of Antiquities. Commonly known as the 'Documentation Centre' (but hereafter referred to as CEDAE), it would quickly become connected to the work in Nubia. Initially proposed in the period just after the Egyptian Free Officers' coup of 1952, the organization, however, drew from earlier sources. The centre was the initiative of Alexandre Stoppelaere, a Belgian artist who had once worked as a conservator for Egypt's pre-coup—and French-run—antiquities department.[20] His 'Centre de Documentation Archeologique et Artistique', imagined as early as 1947, would make an exhaustive photographic survey of the paintings and sculptures of the tombs located on the West bank of the Nile in Luxor in order to make those records available to archaeologists, artists, and the wider public. Stoppelaere argued that this work was necessary due to the destruction caused by atmospheric agents and poorly executed restoration work. But 'above all', he noted, documentation would counter systematic looting, hinting at (although never making explicit) a long-standing and widely circulating trope that suggested that inhabitants of villages surrounding—and, in some cases, on top of—the tombs were antiquity thieves.[21]

Stoppelaere's proposed institution constituted Egypt's colonial-era antiquities world *in excelsis*, separating the Theban tombs from the inhabitants who lived amongst them through the constitution of a particular form of knowledge. And at the heart of the proposed institution was to be a systematized '*fichier archeologique*': an archaeological card catalogue that made such knowledge material. The cards within this catalogue were to be of a standard size, organized according to various themes, and further organized by colour according to what the cards contained: photographs, plans and copies of the texts located on tomb walls, '*notices techniques*' (presumably tomb measurements), and bibliographic details. Alongside this card catalogue would be a photography studio, a dark room, a drawing office, an office for archaeological and epigraphic study, and printing facilities.[22] Not only did Stoppelaere's project draw on the practices of colonial-era antiquities work in Egypt. It also embedded its judgments about what knowledge—architectural, epigraphic—should be valued within the archive's protective disciplinary embrace. Nubia, however, would enable this combination of purposes to reach new heights.

Documenting Egyptian Nubia

Egyptian officials were enthusiastic about Stoppelaere's project, not least because it would help direct attention towards the High Dam's consequences. Mustafa Amer, a geographer and administrator who was appointed as the first Egyptian Director of the Department of Antiquities in early 1953, backed the plan, telling UNESCO that he wanted the advice of a foreign expert on the institution's organization.[23] That decision made, Christiane Desroches Noblecourt, an Egyptologist at the Louvre, was employed to consult on the project. Starting her work in Cairo in late 1954, Noblecourt was in Egypt as plans for the construction of the Aswan High Dam began to coalesce. Reporting to Luther Evans, UNESCO's Director-General, Noblecourt described how, at one meeting of the Department's Conseil Superieur des Antiquités, a new topic had 'seemed to impose' ('*paraît s'imposer*') itself: Nubia. Given Egypt's decision to build the Aswan High Dam, Mustafa Amer had raised the necessity of saving the ancient temples located throughout the region in the presence of Kamal al-Din Hussein, Egypt's Minister of Education. Amer spoke with '*le vif sentiment de ses responsibilités devant l'Histoire*' ('the sentiment of one who knew his responsibility to history'), suggesting that the nascent institution's efforts be directed towards recording the temples at Abu Simbel. Noblecourt agreed, not least because the temples were without a '*publication scientifique complete*'.[24] Archival science would come to the rescue.

That decision made, CEDAE seemed to turn the colonial status quo in regard to Egyptian antiquities around. On the face of it, a French Egyptological consultant now assisted Egypt in its aims. Simultaneously, though (and even beyond Noblecourt's somewhat patrician praise of Amer), this apparent moment of change was not quite so simple, especially because Egypt itself possessed ulterior motives in supporting the new institution. In April 1955, Kamal al-Din Hussein wrote a government memo discussing CEDAE. Such memos were idealized and standardized pieces of paper, their authority constituted through the succinct messages that they were meant to convey.[25] By writing one, Hussein indicated not only his investment in the project, but also the investment of his government, which was particularly interested in the possibilities that CEDAE presented for constituting a certain type of Egyptian past. Hussein stated that the new institution could be 'a source for equipping them [Egyptians] with the history of human civilization', noting that Egypt constituted an example of a 'universal civilization' ('*ḥaḍāra ʿālamiyya*'), the sort of rhetoric promoted by UNESCO. He also, though, drew on contemporary discourse surrounding the reform of Egypt's peasantry in order to stress that the institution could be 'a means of educating sons of the country', a statement which at least partially nodded to the rhetoric surrounding Luxor antiquity thieves noted earlier.[26]

With CEDAE, colonial-era habit died hard, especially when mobilized together with concerns about the post-coup nation's sovereign property. Hussein noted that 'many antiquities were exported outside Egypt without registration'. And that concern explained why, in Arabic, the proposed institution was to be called the Markaz Tasjil al-Athar al-Misriyya (the Centre for Registering (*tasjīl*) Egyptian Antiquities).[27] Relatively recently, Law No. 215 of October 1951 had finally given Egypt's Minister of Education power to decide whether excavating missions could export antiquities from the country.[28] And in CEDAE's early years, the Department of Antiquities sought to control Egypt's antiquity trade further. In 1957—and in the face of opposition from Cairene antiquity dealers made plain in an article in the magazine *Akhir Saʿa*—the Department prepared legislation attempting to curb the trade, which had flourished until the Suez war; interviewed in the same piece, the dealer Philip Mitry indicated that first Americans, then Germans, represented the business' most

enthusiastic customers.[29] The legislation, formulated in the wake of a controversy surrounding an alleged American antiquities smuggler, Charles Muses, suggested that the Department of Antiquities would itself now be responsible for selling ancient objects that came to market, establishing sovereignty over Egypt's past firmly within the state's institutional remit.[30] Establishing CEDAE constituted a different step in the same process of state ownership.

Prompted by the construction of the High Dam, this move also prefigured official attempts, discussed further below, to refashion Nubia and Nubian social life as indivisible with the geographies and social norms of Egypt more generally.[31] In her report on the proposed workings of the new institution, Noblecourt had herself suggested that archaeological missions working in Egypt would have to send the new centre copies of their notes. Those missions working in Nubia, though, would not only have to send the institution copies of any publications that they produced, but also hand over their field notes as and when they were ready; a practice for which the Department of Antiquities said it would provide subventions. Those notes, which would become the institution's property, would also have to be produced in agreement with the techniques and documentary formats used by CEDAE itself.[32] By agreeing to the creation of CEDAE, the Egyptian government could ultimately hope to gain control over and shape Nubia's past in Egypt's image. A colonial concern around antiquities looting was translated into a postcolonial one about the sovereign property of the state.

<Figure 1>

The records used by CEDAE, meanwhile, indicated how such property might be defined: Stoppelaere's card catalogue made a triumphant return, this time stored inside a building purposefully designed for its study [Figure 1]. Combined with photographs taken by CEDAE's personnel, the cards [Figure 2] continued to emphasize a notion of ancient Egyptian history centred on architectural and artistic appreciation, in addition to the recording of hieroglyphic inscriptions. Alongside a photograph of the 'subject' at hand, a record of the number of the negative relating to it, and an indication where on a plan that negative related to, the cards contained descriptive information about that subject: the name of the 'site', the 'monument' located there, its material, and its date; information that "restored" such monuments in documentary shape. Stoppelaere's value judgments returned in card form. CEDAE, as attuned to the archive and its sovereign possibilities as any other such project in Egypt had ever been, was primed to produce knowledge that pleased some groups, but ignored others entirely.

<Figure 2>

Archiving Sudan, Archaeologically

Where CEDAE went, meanwhile, others followed; or at least appeared to. As preparations for archaeological work in Sudanese Nubia gathered pace, CEDAE seemed to become the model for another archival institution. In 1959, at the request of the Sudanese government, UNESCO had employed an American archaeologist, William Y. Adams, to analyse aerial photos of the Sudanese side of the Nubian border and estimate the amount of archaeological work that would be necessary in the region.[33] Adams would stay in Sudan until 1966, employed through UNESCO as an expert at the Sudan Antiquities Service in order to oversee archaeological survey work and the numerous foreign missions who came into the country to excavate Nubian sites. As part of this work, Adams (working with his wife, Nettie) set up

another ‘documentation center’ in Wadi Halfa Museum, which, since ‘it had not functioned as one for a long time’, doubled as a field office. As Adams relates:

> Apart from the offices of the Sudan's only inspector of antiquities and his clerk, Gamal, the museum was used solely for equipment storage. We took over one of its largest rooms for our documentation center, as we liked to call it, and here we installed our site files, our aerial mosaics (mounted on the wall), and our stereographic and drafting equipment. Another room was fitted with shelves to accommodate our archaeological finds, and a third eventually became our darkroom.[34]

<Figure 3>

Under Adams, Sudan received its own version of CEDAE. Rather than that institution’s concentration on architecture and epigraphy, however, for Adams the priority seems to have been the translation of information into a particular form of archaeological data: the Sudanese ‘documentation center’ concentrated on the archaeological sites surveyed and excavated by Adams and others during the campaign. Given his role as an archaeological consultant and his background in archaeological survey, this concentration was perhaps inevitable. In a polemic that was, to all outward appearances, quite mild, Adams later wrote that ‘I brought the familiar orientations of the anthropologist and the prehistorian to a field that had previously been wholly dominated by Egyptologists’.[35] But such diffidence obscured a way of doing things that was self-consciously different from the methods of CEDAE, creating a form of archaeological archival sovereignty over the past. Adams notes that ‘as the foreign expeditions left, one by one, at the end of their seasons, we got from them as much documentation as they would give us in regard to their work and entered their sites into our files along with our own’.[36] Processed in this way, the information collated within this Sudanese documentation centre constituted an attempt to shape the newly independent country’s past in a particular sort of image, entangling Sudanese sovereignty with a certain form of archaeological knowledge derived, in particular, from survey work in the United States.[37]

<Figure 4>

There was little time for architectural description in (the soon-to-be-flooded) Wadi Halfa. Site register cards from the time of the campaign suggest that the priority was to systematize knowledge within the newly independent nation-state’s archaeological bounds. For example, the card [Figure 3] for a site in the district of Argin places the site—given the code by its Spanish excavators of SAX—within a registration system developed for Sudanese Nubia: SAX became 6-B-1.[38] Meanwhile, key archaeological details like ‘Type Site’ are recorded, along with 6-B-1’s ‘Excav.[ation] Record’ and published bibliography. The card is itself tied to a larger ‘Site Register’, which indexes the site alongside others in the vicinity and details of the aerial photos to which it is connected [Figure 4]. And such descriptions are themselves tied to cards recording details of the objects found at sites [Figure 5]. The concentration on the site’s place within a series of maps [Figure 3] is similar to that of CEDAE. But the difference in interest to the Egyptian documentation centre, and the connected difference in conceptualization to what a past for newly independent Sudan might constitute, is clear. As discussed below, however, the vagaries of such information would later continue to tie these two institutions together through the way in which they both privilege specific forms of access to knowledge.

<Figure 5>

Ethnographic Illogic

Privileged knowledge developed in other ways, too. The archival knowledge constituted on behalf of UNESCO was to be kept separate from the forms of documentary knowledge accumulated about the Nubians themselves, disaggregating past from present and future, and constituting a temporal and epistemological break that never quite settled. This break appears consistent with contemporary coverage of the Nubian migration enforced by the High Dam's construction: enmeshed within discourses of social and technological development, the Nubians became symbolic of national postcolonial futures, not pasts, and stories about their migration emphasized the progressive nature of the act [Figure 6]. Yet as initial plans for the campaign had taken shape, Tharwat Okasha, Egypt's Minister of Culture, had told J. K. Van der Haagen, head of UNESCO's Division of Museums and Historic Monuments, that ethnographic attention should be paid to the Nubians. At least initially (and at least on the part of one minister), there was no lack of desire for this doomed population to be left out of the international organization's equation. UNESCO's Jean Thomas, however, objected that Okasha's suggestion was 'illogical' ('*illogique*'), because his organization's interest in Nubia related to monuments and not men ('*puisqu'il s'agit des monuments et non pas des hommes*').[39] Making that statement, Thomas made distinct two categories of (architectural/archaeological and ethnographic) knowledge. He also paved the way for an institutional definition of heritage that would not embrace less monumental concerns until UNESCO promulgated its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

<Figure 6>

As a result of this disaggregation of monuments and people, the forms of ethnographic work that took place as the High Dam was built employed a particular form of documentation unrelated to ancient remains. In Egypt, for instance, the Ford Foundation funded the Nubian Ethnological Survey (based at the American University in Cairo) from 1961 until 1964, the year when the first phase of the High Dam was completed and the Egyptian government moved the Nubian population to the newly constructed area of New Nubia (al-Nuba al-Jadida). New Nubia, located just north of Aswan at the town of Kom Ombo, was a self-consciously modern planned settlement and a symbol of what the nation could achieve, firmly placing Egypt's Nubians within the state's reach as a cohesive community. The Nubian Ethnological Survey echoed this conception. As a retrospective volume discussing the work makes clear, that survey was inevitably 'conceived and conducted within a framework of the anthropology of the late 1950s and 1960s … with an emphasis on the bounded community … [and] strongly influenced by British structural-functionalism'.[40] The Nubian Ethnological Survey also had a strong applied element, influenced by development-thinking and by contemporary attempts to remake Egyptian society more generally. 'The [Egyptian-American] team argued that the Nubian experience should not be allowed to disappear and that the lessons of that variant for social theory should be recorded'. Simultaneously, the survey 'was intended to facilitate the process of resettlement as administrators and others were apprised'.[41]

In Sudan, too, work on documenting the life of the Nubian population was to a great extent directed towards facilitating the process of resettlement. Hassan Dafalla, the government official in charge of Wadi Halfa district, oversaw the migration of Sudan's Nubian population

to the area of Khashm El Girba on the Atbara river in the country's east, where a major irrigation scheme was underway connected to the construction of another new dam.[42] Early in this process, during January 1960, 'a ministerial decision was taken directing the Department of Statistics to carry out a series of social and economic surveys in the affected area'. As Dafalla noted, 'the object was to collect information which would be useful for the emigration and the resettlement of the displaced inhabitants'. Thus, the surveys collected statistical information about 'population, dwelling houses, furniture, household equipment and baggage in Halfa town; livestock in the town; furniture and livestock in the area (a sample), and sample surveys of income and expenditure and diet'.[43] Dafalla himself simultaneously 'appointed seven committees for the enumeration of date and fruit trees in the area, presided over by administrative officers experienced in fieldwork'.[44] Articulating with the wider statistical concerns of the Sudanese government,[45] such survey work documented a present separated from the past, creating a temporal boundary which never quite stabilised.

Indeed, other work made clear that this temporal break was not quite so straightforward—and emphasizes that criticism of UNESCO's campaign for ignoring the Nubian population is not simply built on an anachronistic view of what such an event might have been. Again from 1961 until 1964 (and overlapping with Dafalla's work), the Sudan Antiquities Service employed two German anthropologists, Andreas and Waltraud Kronenberg, to document the Sudanese Nubian population. The Kronenbergs followed a method that made use of 'the traditional ethnographic and the structural-functional approach', to a great extent echoing Egypt's Nubian Ethnological Survey in the emphasis 'on the study of dynamics in a changing society'.[46] Simultaneously, however, the Kronenbergs concerned themselves with 'anthropological analysis … considered in the light of a people's past as revealed by historical and archaeological evidence'.[47] As the Kronenbergs seemed to acknowledge, the past, present, and future of Nubians could not be subdivided for the postcolonial era, even as another related publication on *Nubische Märchen* (Nubian Fairytales) seemed to reduce Nubian life to the status of the compilation of folkloric stories,[48] and even, too, as their ethnographic work often attended to this temporal jumble using the racial category of "survivals".[49] And it is this sort of temporal contradiction that would increasingly come to haunt the archives of UNESCO's Nubian campaign. Much as any sort of clean break between the colonial and postcolonial "periods" was non-existent, so, too, did archives of Nubia come to display their own temporal contingencies. A science of the archive might well conceive of a 'collective undertaking … that extends into both past and future'. But such collectives also conceive of the past and future as realms that they can control.

Slippage, Archival and Social

It is in respect to this very permeability, however, that I argue that the sort of imaginative and recuperative work outlined by El Shakry and Felski becomes not only possible, but also necessary. As has become clear, the archives of UNESCO's Nubian campaign have revealed from their beginning associations much wider than the ones that their creators claimed they possessed. Such records were never simply about archaeology or ancient architecture, even as institutions like CEDAE and the Sudanese Department of Antiquities suggested that they might be. Consequently, through the additional associations that they hold, these same archives call into question the purity of the knowledge that, following Daston, they claim to collate and preserve. Through their existence, these archives create something else entirely: Felski's 'form of making rather than unmaking' given material form.

This process is not, as it currently stands, positive. The archival work of the Nubian campaign was primed to produce significant problems in terms of who might obtain access to the records that had been created, and did so. For instance, when they finished their work in Sudan, William and Nettie Adams 'still hadn't put a line on paper in the way of our final report'. They also worried that 'at the time there was no prospect that anyone else would ever write those reports, or that the Sudan would have the financial resources to publish them'. Given that situation, Thabit Hassan Thabit, Director of the Sudan Antiquities Service, 'invited me to take with me all the documentation from the digs—every field note, map, photograph, site register card, and artifact card—leaving in Khartoum only the artifacts themselves'. Consequently, Adams took 'the whole documentation center' to 'my attic office in Kentucky'.

In retrospect, this act represents an astonishing transfer of sovereignty, donating the records of a past already enfolded within a certain form of knowledge to an international representative of that knowledge's definition. Later, events became perhaps more astonishing still. As Adams noted in 2009, 'only in the past year has it [the documentation center] been transferred to the Sudan Archaeological Research Society in the British Museum, which in the intervening years has published all the long-delayed reports'.[50] The archives of Sudanese Nubia's past sit in the midst of a much wider set of social and political associations than their origins might suggest. Far from pure, those archives are indicative of any number of tense sovereignties as knowledge putatively created in and for the post-colony has been physically moved both to the former imperial metropole and to the country, the United States, that took on a new, quasi-imperial role in the second half of the twentieth century. As claims of archaeological expertise remain embedded within certain spaces, so it has proven impossible to separate those spaces from the archives that their citizens helped create.

CEDAE, meanwhile, suffers issues surrounding access in a different way. The material produced at the institution has become ever more securitized. CEDAE no longer exists in its own building, but instead has been moved to a room in an office of Egypt's now-Ministry of Antiquities in Cairo. Entering that room requires not only permission from the relevant authorities, but also the payment of a sum in Egyptian pounds. The implication—in a state which has increasingly been asserting physical and intellectual ownership over antiquities, and whose security apparatus also carefully controls who can access archives—is that the cards are sensitive, containers of privileged information (as, too, is other material held by the institution, access to which is equally restricted). Architecture and epigraphy, much as they had done when CEDAE was founded, continue to be linked to demands of sovereignty and security. As Egypt's post-2011 (and especially post-2013) history has resulted in increased securitization, it seems unlikely that this situation will change any time soon.

Coupled with the increasing outspokenness of Nubians themselves, this situation constitutes an issue of ethical urgency. Who is the arbiter of the archives of the place where Nubians once lived? This question has historical underpinnings dating from long before UNESCO's Nubian campaign. Since the time of the construction of the original Aswan Dam at the turn of the twentieth century (and its heightening both from 1907 until 1912 and from 1929 until 1933), Nubians have been embroiled in a process of imperial and state-backed irrigation engineering that has led at various points to the flooding of their land and forced movement of their settlements, in addition to a process of economic migration in which they have travelled to cities like Cairo and Alexandria to work as servants. A population actually comprised of several ethnically and culturally distinct groups whose settlements spread across a region straddling the border of British-controlled/occupied Egypt and the Anglo-

Egyptian Sudan, the Nubians long ago seemed to lose the possibility of speaking for themselves in the face of official policies, even as they were occasionally organised into committees with exactly that job.[51] This process of dispossession was only heightened by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Unsurprisingly, the High Dam helped lead to the official solidifying of Nubian identity as the two newly independent nation-states that the dam's floodwaters would impact decided how to deal with the mass Nubian migration that those floodwaters would necessitate. Equally unsurprisingly, however, that official action was never entirely successful.

As a result, and as Maja Janmyr notes when discussing Egypt, what it means to be "Nubian" is complex, even as Egypt and Sudan might like to suggest that the opposite is the case. Nubians have become 'dispersed both abroad and across Egypt; they live in larger cities and in more than 50 different Nubian villages, most of which do not remain in their original locations; and importantly, some Nubians may not self-describe as Nubian, but rather as Egyptian, Egyptian-Nubian or any other label of self-identification'.[52] Despite this diversity, however, since the turn of the millennium Nubian activists have increasingly mobilized within Egypt's contested political space, using discussions around the country's 2014 constitution to demand not only 'the right to return to the land of Nubia' but also that Nubians should 'be consulted in the decision-making process for development of their land'.[53] A similar struggle has been taking place in Sudan,[54] where the decision to force Nubians to migrate to Khashm El Girba had in fact already caused large-scale demonstrations in Wadi Halfa in 1960.[55] Ironically, during the migration caused by the construction of the High Dam, development—aided by functionalist ethnographic documentation projects—came to be seen as 'a right [fuelled by Nasserist rhetoric] that today remains unfulfilled and therefore constitutes the basis of a discourse that is being appropriated to justify return'.[56] And through its imbrication with that migration and its material separation of Nubia's past from Nubians themselves, UNESCO's campaign and its archival technology have played a clear—and ethically dubious—role. When accessible, though, such archives offer a means of reconnecting past, present, and future, a temporal reconstruction that perhaps offers some form, however piecemeal, of positive outcome. By way of conclusion, I therefore suggest that thinking through the archive can help to enable ways of addressing the ethical issues that UNESCO's Nubian campaign is entangled with.

Conclusion: Archiving Nubia, Ancient or Otherwise

<Figure 7>

Thinking through Nubian archives, 'making rather than unmaking' can have positive effects. Take the records contained on the first floor of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo (DAIK). Inside a large filing cabinet [Figure 7] sits the photographic documentation of various pieces of work carried out by, or in collaboration with, the DAIK: archaeological and architectural research undertaken over many decades. In one of the drawers of the cabinet are records related to work carried out at the site of Kalabsha during the Nubian campaign. Kalabsha was the location of a temple dedicated to Mandulis, built during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus. Working from 1961 until 1963, a team led by personnel from the Federal Republic of Germany took the structure apart, reassembling it around 50 km to the north on an island ("New Kalabsha") located just south of the High Dam, where it formed part of a cluster of other relocated temples [Figure 8]. The DAIK was involved in the work as one of the institutions who made up that mission, the others being the Federal Republic of Germany's Foreign Ministry, the Deutsche Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Treuhand-

Gesellschaft (the Ministry's agent), and the German engineering firm Hochtief.[57] And as befitting a representative of such a 'science of the archive', the archaeological institution saw fit to keep at least some of the records of the work at Kalabsha for future reference.

<Figure 8>

Indeed, the physical act of viewing those records embeds them within the conceptual space outlined by Daston. Pulling the filing cabinet draw outwards, one flicks through photo after photo of the Mandulis temple's evolution from cohesive structure to piecemeal collection of blocks, and then views the edifice reassembled in "complete" form again. The sense is of a puzzle being completed in front of the eyes, an objective record of how a group of people, as Daston might have it, collected, collated, and preserved Kalabsha's Mandulis temple—and made sure that others within this self-defining collective of scientists could later check to see how they had done so. Coupled with a publication that provides a warts-and-all (but nevertheless teleological) account of the work at the site, the photos present a way of checking how that group triumphed over considerable practical adversity. G R H Wright's *Kalabsha: The Preserving of the Temple* indicates that it is 'a detailed recital of the technical difficulties [at the site] and the measures adopted to deal with them', simultaneously noting that 'it is hoped to render the lessons learned …widely accessible for reference' (notably incorporating some archival material within the publication as it does so). The archived photos only further this reference model, the past of the past preserved for similar endeavours in the future, especially when viewed in relation to Wright's book: 'attention to ancient monuments becomes ever increasingly a normal concern for society', as he puts it.[58] Through viewing and handling images of what happened at Kalabsha and thinking through those images in terms of the wider textual assemblage within which they sit, the (archaeological) science of the archive lives.

<Figure 9>

The DAIK's photos, though, also possess other associations. In particular, those photos reveal that the Nubian campaign never took place removed from wider forms of social life, despite UNESCO's best efforts. Never foregrounded, but always present, Nubian life courses through the photos of the work at Kalabsha. In particular, the contemporary settlement next to the site—which lent the site its name and was left, after the temple's removal, to be submerged by the High Dam's floodwaters—stands as a fixed point of reference in regards to the process of structural disassembly as it took place. The science of the archive comes undone as life itself courses through its boundaries. In one photo [Figure 9], for instance, a group of (unnamed) men are pictured at work deconstructing the temple, waiting for a crane to lift the next block from the structure. The focus is on them and the action in which they are involved. Yet, to the rear, uncentred and assumed to be of secondary importance, stands part of the settlement of Kalabsha itself, its presence a reminder that the temple was never removed from its context as successfully as publications describing the work might suggest. In another image [Figure 10], the connection of settlement with process is again abundantly clear. Captioned as depicting the '*Verlegungsarbeit*' ('transfer work') that took place at the site from 1962 until 1963, the photograph again centres the temple itself, describing the structure's geographical location 'fifty kilometres south of Aswan' and noting that it (rather obviously) is submerged; still a function, at the time, of the Nile's annual flood. But behind the centred structure again lies the settlement of Kalabsha itself, obscured and distant, but nevertheless visible.

<Figure 10>

Contemporary life was always present as the Nubian campaign took place. That presence leads to questions about how that life worked in relation to structures like the Mandulis temple, in addition to how the people living such lives remember the campaign, its processes, and its wider political and social associations—and whether discussing such questions might provide a form of ethical recuperation. This question is given extra force by the photos of Kalabsha because within them, too, it is possible to see the local labour required to take the Mandulis temple apart (for, as the DAIK's archival images make clear, that structure was located *at* the settlement of Kalabsha, not simply adjacent to it). Who of this labour force survives, and what do they remember? Can asking such questions constitute a recuperative act to balance out the issues of dispossession that the Nubian campaign's archival impetus created? True to the tropes of such images, this human presence—whether Nubian or more broadly Egyptian is not entirely clear—remains nameless, as the image discussed above emphasizes. Nevertheless, that labour force is present, active, and presumably sometimes young enough to be both alive and able to remember the event. In one photo <Figure 11>, a man (a teenager?), cigarette in mouth, chisels away at the structure. What does he remember of the work, and what might the villagers who watched the work in progress from their privileged vantage point <Figure 12> recall? Perhaps, decades later, there is no way to answer these questions. I would suggest, though, that the social permeability of the archive provides one way to jog the memory and—subject, of course, to anyone wanting to give answers—might be asked to do so.

<Figure 11>

Archives conceal, but they also recall, allowing 'making rather than unmaking'. Perhaps it is time Nubia's archives allowed for this process, particularly in the face of shifting definitions of heritage. No longer does the monumental and material concept of heritage promoted during UNESCO's campaign (and as part of the 1972 World Heritage Convention) hold the sway that it once did. The promulgation of the organisation's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage established that earlier definitions of the concept could no longer survive the criticism levelled against them. And the more recent "decolonial turn" (itself a product of work started in the 1980s) has only amplified the feeling that heritage needs to be reassembled so that communities like the Nubians are able to give the concept the meaning they desire: if, indeed, they find the concept of any use at all. In the Nubian case, the archive might well prove itself useful in the process of achieving such change, despite the original uses to which the institution found itself put. The question is whether the organisations who control such archives prove able to construct the porous openings necessary for this recuperative process to take place.

<Figure 12>

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[5] Christina Riggs, 'Photography and Antiquity in the Archive, or How Howard Carter Moved the Road to the Valley of the Kings', *History of Photography* 40.3 (2016): 267–82.
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[11] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 180.
[12] El Shakry, '"History without Documents"'.
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[14] Ibid., 12.
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[18] Ibid., 183.
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[25] Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule (1917–1967)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 41–42.
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[29] 'Bi-Munasaba Qadiyat al-ʿAlim al-Amriki al-ladhi Saraqa Athar Misr' ['On the Case of the American Scholar Who Stole Egyptian Antiquities'], *Akhir Saʿa* , August 7, 1957: 24–25. For Mitry, see Fredrik Hagen and Kim Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade in Egypt 1880–1930* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2016), 240.
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[35] Ibid., 149.
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[50] Adams, *The Road from Frijoles Canyon*, 189.
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[55] Abdalla, 'The Choice of Khashm al-Girba Area'.
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[57] G R H Wright, *Kalabsha: The Preserving of the Temple* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1972), 23.

[58] Ibid., 9.