

African Archaeology Seminar Series

Egyptian World Seminar Series

**Records of Dispossession: Archival Thinking and
UNESCO's Nubian Campaign in Egypt and Sudan**

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In this talk, Dr William Carruthers will discuss the creation of architectural and archaeological archives in newly independent Egypt and Sudan during the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, organised by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). This initiative 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 in which they were produced. UNESCO's campaign sought to record ancient remains that would be submerged by the High Dam's floodwaters. During the campaign, UNESCO set up 'documentation centres' that helped codify what knowledge about Nubian architecture/archaeology might be worth archiving, producing index cards dedicated to this purpose for Egypt (concentrating on monuments) and Sudan (centring on archaeological sites). This practice – echoed by other organisations involved in the work – was often purposefully forgetful of contemporary Nubia, whose material traces were also soon to be flooded. Nevertheless, such practices rendered visible other unauthorised histories of Nubia that subverted archival knowledge production: histories of local involvement with the campaign and now-submerged Nubian settlements.



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