



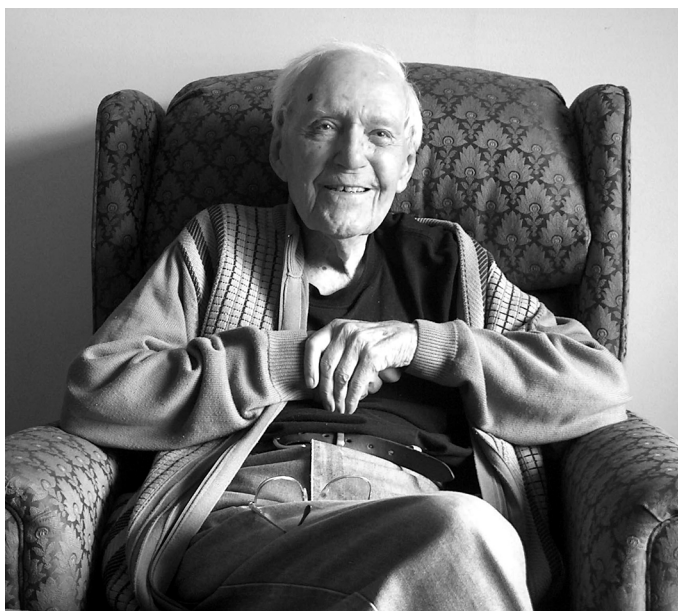
PETER LEWIS SHINNIE (1915–2007)

Peter Lewis Shinnie was born in Wimbledon, near London, on 18th January 1915, the son of a Scottish doctor. He grew up in London and was educated at Westminster, where his early interest in ancient history was happily fostered, and developed into a lifelong commitment. At the age of twelve, he had an epiphany that set his feet on the road to Africa: given a copy of H.G. Wells' *Outline of History*, he was entranced by the chapter on Egypt, and never read further. He immediately saved up the huge sum of two guineas to buy Gardiner's recently published *Egyptian Grammar*, and set about teaching himself the hieroglyphic script.

This interest developed over the next few years. As a fifteen-year-old, he was introduced to F.Ll. Griffith, who advised him not to study Egyptology because of the uncertain career prospects. Fortunately, this was advice that Peter ignored; but in the months before his entrance to Oxford, in 1934, his life took two more crucial turns. First, he spent the summer excavating at Maiden Castle under the great Mortimer Wheeler, and became deeply interested in the techniques of field excavation. Second, he became involved in political activism, and joined the Communist party, a passion that would run in tandem with his academic pursuits all through his Oxford years.

At Oxford, Peter studied Egyptology under Battiscombe Gunn, who rather disapproved of his interest in fieldwork. His extracurricular time was eventfully spent in political activities, in learning to fly as a member of the University Air Squadron, and

in small-scale excavations with the University Archaeological Society. After his finals in 1938, he was faced with a difficult choice: to excavate with H.W. Fairman at Amara West in the Sudan, or to become a full-time Communist Party organizer for three pounds a week – surprisingly, he chose the latter. Within a year, however, he returned to his first interest, archaeology, and took up a temporary post at the Ashmolean.



As a reserve officer in the University Air Squadron, Peter was called up soon after war was declared in 1939. He started the war in England, where he married Margaret Cloake in September 1940; but he carried out much of his active service in North Africa, Italy and Greece. One of his many tasks was compiling air-photo data used to spare

Italian and Greek monuments from Allied bombing.

When demobbed in 1945, Peter went straight back into archaeology: first a field season in Turkey with Leonard Woolley, and then the most critical move of all – a position with the Sudan Antiquities Service, as Assistant Commissioner for Archaeology. He arrived in Sudan in November 1946 as assistant to A.J. Arkell, whom he succeeded as Commissioner a few years later. At Amara West, he had his first major outing as excavation director, followed by investigations at Soba, Tanqasi, and Ghazali. He also carried on a vigorous publications policy as part of his remit, not only continuing the occasional papers series inaugurated by Arkell, but founding the journal *Kush* in 1953. He attracted a number of foreign researchers to work on Sudanese



Sudan Antiquities Service, 1947.

Peter Shinnie is second from the right, Commissioner Anthony J. Arkell in the middle.

topics, but – more importantly to him – began in this period his lasting practice of mentoring local students of archaeology. He was particularly pleased with two of his coups: acquiring Flinders Petrie's library for the museum, and hiring Negm el-Din Mohammed Sherif, later a Commissioner for Antiquities himself. These were happy, productive years, but Peter's post was nationalized in 1955, and he reluctantly left the Sudan.

After a brief posting as Director of Antiquities in Uganda and an expedition to Socotra, Peter's life pivoted again, this time to West Africa. In 1958, he accepted his first formal academic position, as Professor of Archaeology at the University of Ghana, Legon. For the next few years he engaged in wide-ranging archaeological explorations, not just in Ghana but in neighbouring countries, and in fostering active programs for publication and for Africanizing the syllabus at the university. In that connection, he was a prime mover in setting up the university's Institute for African Studies in 1959, and acted as its first director until 1961. In 1960, when

UNESCO appealed for archaeologists to work in Lower Nubia for the Aswan High Dam salvage campaign, Peter obtained for the University of Ghana the concession to work at Debeira West, taking with him the young history professor who would become the eminent historian, Adu Boahen. He also obtained the concession for Meroe Townsite for the University of Ghana, and led a productive survey season there; and then was able to return to Sudan in 1966 for a five-year appointment as the Professor of Archaeology in Khartoum.

In 1970, he accepted the position of Head of the Archaeology Department at the University of Calgary, bringing with him his second wife, Ama. From there, he launched further major expeditions to Meroe Townsite, jointly with Khartoum University; but Calgary also acted as a platform for his further excavations in Ghana, at the sites of Asante-manso and Daboya, as he kept a foot firmly planted on each side of Africa. After his retirement in 1980, he continued to be active in both fieldwork and publication, and in teaching and mentoring younger

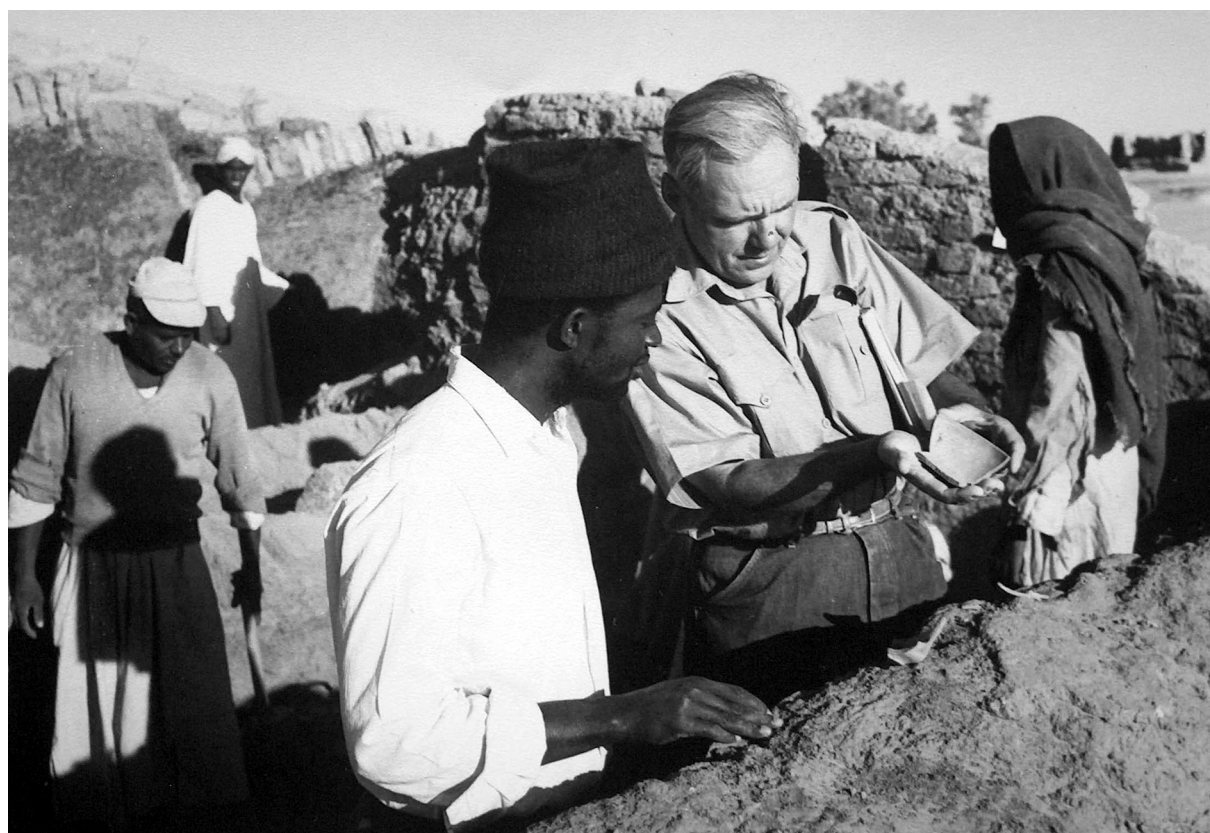


scholars, inspiring them with his own deep enthusiasm for scholarship and the discipline of archaeology. Two landmark events should be mentioned: the conferral of an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary in 1983; and in 2006, the conferral of the Order of the Two Niles, in recognition of his long and valuable service to Sudanese scholarship.

Peter Shinnie's accomplishments in archaeology are well known. He was a respected colleague and friend to many archaeologists, an affectionately regarded father figure to his students, a valued participant in countless international conferences,

and a public speaker of considerable charm and wit; but he was also a man of wide cultural interests outside archaeology. He spent his leisure time in the enjoyment of literature; of music, from his early interest in jazz, to all things classical; and of good wine, good food, and good conversation. He was an avid traveller, a political worker with a social conscience, a learner of languages, a writer of books, and the owner of an active and well-stocked mind to the day of his death at the age of 92.

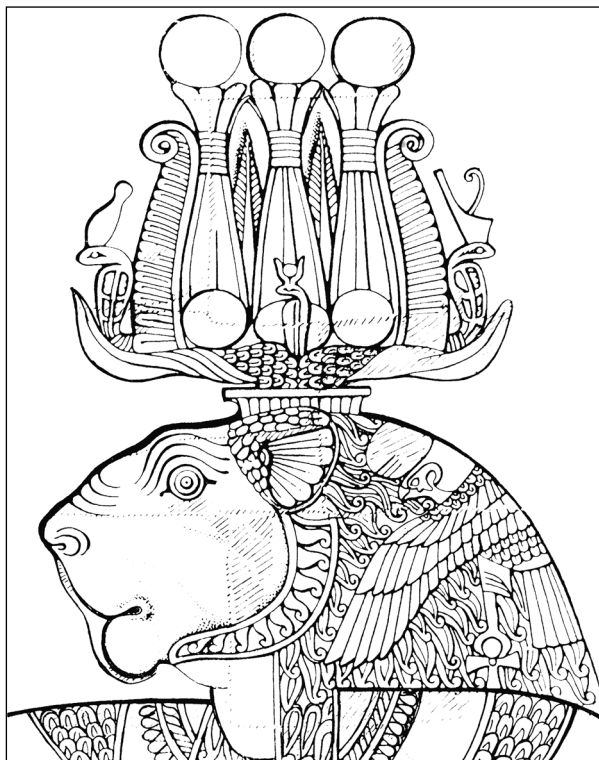
REBECCA BRADLEY
JOHN H. ROBERTSON



Debeira West, 1961.

Peter Shinnie together with Adu Boahen, later a distinguished historian and Ghanaian presidential candidate.

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Angesichts der Tatsache, daß die globalen wirtschaftlichen, ökonomischen und politischen Probleme auch zu einer Gefährdung der kulturellen Hinterlassenschaften in aller Welt führen, ist es dringend geboten, gemeinsame Anstrengungen zu unternehmen, das der gesamten Menschheit gehörende Kulturerbe für künftige Generationen zu bewahren. Eine wesentliche Rolle bei dieser Aufgabe kommt der Archäologie zu. Ihre vornehmste Verpflichtung muß sie in der heutigen Zeit darin sehen, bedrohte Kulturdenkmäler zu pflegen und für ihre Erhaltung zu wirken.

Die Sudanarchäologische Gesellschaft zu Berlin e.V. setzt sich besonders für den Erhalt des Ensembles von Sakralbauten aus meroitischer Zeit in Musawwarat es Sufra/Sudan ein, indem sie konservatorische Arbeiten unterstützt, archäologische Ausgrabungen fördert sowie Dokumentation und Publikation der Altertümer von Musawwarat ermöglicht. Wenn die Arbeit der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin Ihr Interesse geweckt hat und Sie bei uns mitarbeiten möchten, werden Sie Mitglied! Wir sind aber auch für jede andere Unterstützung dankbar. Wir freuen uns über Ihr Interesse!

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