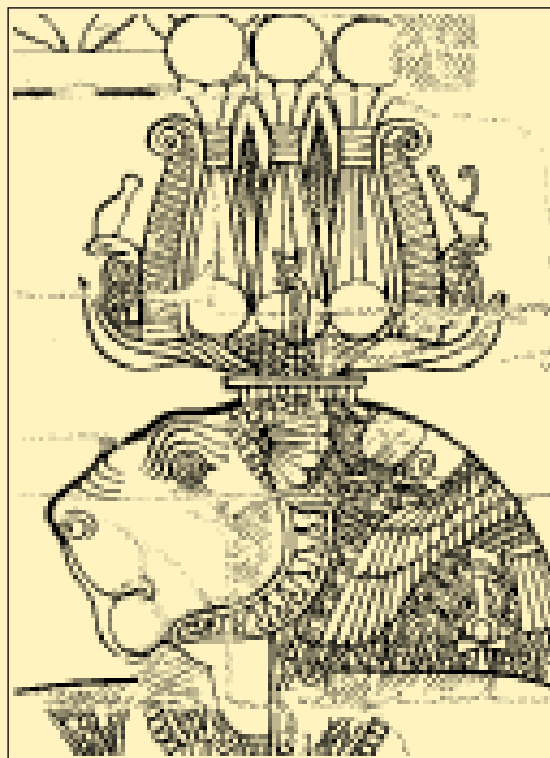


MITTEILUNGEN DER
SUDANARCHÄOLOGISCHEN GESELLSCHAFT
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THE NUBIAN GALLERY OF THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, TORONTO

In January 1992 the Royal Ontario Museum opened its new Nubian Gallery, the first such permanent gallery in North America. The origins of the Nubian collection in Toronto can be traced back to the beginning of this century when the founder of the museum CHARLES T. CURRELLELY purchased in Aswan several ceramic vessels. These painted pots of Meroitic period are virtually the only unprovenanced objects in the Toronto collection; all other objects were acquired from controlled excavations and are thus well provenanced. Although CURRELLELY was primarily interested in ancient Egypt, having worked with Petrie and Naville, he nevertheless had the foresight to support research in Nubia.

CURRELLELY had never excavated in Nubia himself, but it was presumably at his instigation that SIR EDMUND WALKER, a Toronto banker as well as the first chairman of the Royal Ontario Museum, financially supported John Garstang's excavations at Meroe (1910 – 1914). It was only natural that Canada, a member of the Commonwealth, would be associated with British egyptology. Thus, through its support for the Egypt Exploration Society excavations at Sesebi (Upper Nubia) a selection of the New Kingdom and X-Group objects from that site enriched the Royal Ontario Museum's collection. Another British expedition, sent and directed by SIR HENRY WELLCOME, excavated a large cemetery at Jebel Moya, a most interesting site located south of Khartoum, outside of Nubia proper. Several hundred objects such as figurines, potsherds, grinding stones and others were given to the Toronto museum in 1947. Three years later another interesting collection from central Sudan enriched our museum. This comprised 111 artefacts of the "Early Khartoum" culture from Debono and ARKELL's 1944 – 1945 excavations near the Civil Hospital in Khartoum. The only acquisition from the non-British excavation was that of ten Napatan shawabtis from Nuri.

Thousands of those shawabtis were found by REISNER during his 1916 – 1918 excavations and in 1926 the government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan represented by the Commissioner of Archaeology, donated ten of them to the Royal Ontario Museum.

The famous UNESCO-sponsored campaign to study and salvage ancient sites in Lower Nubia about to be permanently inundated by man-made Lake Nasser resulted in an unprecedented international archaeological operation. Canada, a young country with few professional egyptologists, did not send an expedition to Nubia. However, continuing in the old tradition of cooperation with the Egypt Exploration Society, the Royal Ontario Museum delegated Weimar-born WINIFRED NEEDLER, then curator of the Near Eastern Department, to join WALTER B. EMERY at his excavations at Buhen. As a result a selection of 16 objects from the Middle Kingdom fortress and from the Old Kingdom town were donated to the Toronto museum. Additionally the Egypt Exploration Society also donated 27 objects from the Late Meroitic and X-Group cemeteries at Qasr Ibrim in return for this museum's contribution to the Society's fieldwork. The University of Toronto sent its egyptologist, PROFESSOR R. J. WILLIAMS, to participate in the University of Chicago Oriental Institute excavations at Semna South. A small share of the finds, comprising two copper bowls and five ceramic vessels was assigned to the University of Toronto which in turn passed this gift to the Royal Ontario Museum. However, the bulk of the Nubian collection in Toronto is formed by the material from Gebel Adda, a site excavated by N. B. MILLET on behalf of the American Research Center in Egypt and the National Geographic Society. Several thousand objects assigned to the excavator arrived in Toronto following MILLET's appointment to the Egyptian Department of the Royal Ontario Museum in

1970. In light of the museum's limited activity in the field its Nubian collection is surprisingly strong. This led to the creation of a separate gallery devoted to the civilizations of ancient Nubia and Sudan as well as to the direct involvement in field work. A rapid surface survey in the Dongola Reach (1984 – 1986) was followed by excavations at Hambukol, a settlement site near Old Dongola, and a detailed regional study of the surrounding Letti Basin. Some artefacts from this project generously donated by the Sudanese authorities enriched the museum and are on display in the Nubian Gallery.

The January 1992 opening of the Egyptian and Nubian Galleries at the Royal Ontario Museum was very well received by the media and general public. The two galleries are physically separate but adjacent to each other. The visitor to the Nubian Gallery may proceed directly from predynastic Egypt, bypassing the Egyptian Gallery, or alternatively, may enter Nubia from the Late and Graeco-Roman Egypt area. In the latter case a model of the Philae temple separates the Egyptian and Nubian galleries reflecting thus the geographical border between the two lands. The Nubian Gallery is rather modest in size, but covers all the periods of Nubian history from „Early Khartoum“ until modern times. Following an introduction to the land and the people there is a chronologically arranged display of artefacts. Nubians were renowned for artistry in ceramic production and decoration. The Nubians clearly used pottery not only for its functional value but also as a means of cultural expression. The distinctive characteristics of Nubian pottery of various periods also allowed archaeologists to distinguish different periods and cultures of ancient Nubia. Therefore, our display was intended to show to a visitor not only the beauty of the Nubian ceramics, but also its use in archaeological research. Other achievements of the Nubian people were also emphasized in display; e.g. separate cases were devoted to the Meroitic writing and Meroitic iron working, the latter based on the discoveries made by the University of Khartoum/University of Calgary expedition to Meroe. The last case in the chronological display contains those examples of ethnographic material that show continuity of certain traditions in Nubian life, such as e.g. basketry. Apart from this somewhat traditionally arranged display, there is a separate unit placed in a niche, showing various aspects of daily life in a Nubian town. Most of the objects come from Gebel Adda and are grouped in such classes as

“trade”, “agriculture”, “jewellery”, “popular beliefs”, etc.

Our Nubian Gallery seems to be very popular with the public and particularly so with school groups and the African-Canadian community. Canada is a land of immigrants and there are several hundred Nubians living in Toronto. The Nubian community participates in the museum's public programmes such as presentations of traditional customs or popular music. The ongoing interest in ancient Nubia was further fortified by the „Gold of Meroe“ exhibition organized by the Berlin and Munich museums and which was shown in Toronto from April until September 1994. A small changing display area devoted to current research allows us to continually update our Nubian Gallery. Although the Nubian Gallery in the Royal Ontario Museum is modest in size and our collection is not as rich as the one in Boston, we certainly believe that it is worthy of a visit. The members of the Sudanarchäologische Gesellschaft zu Berlin are most welcome. •

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