

Rescue in Nubia

5.- Spanish presence in the Nile Valley

In 1960, Spain was just emerging from a period of international isolation that had started after the Civil War. The Nubian rescue campaign was a great opportunity to confirm the opening of a new era in the field of cultural solidarity with the Arab world, an area where the government could work comfortably. In spite of a total lack of tradition in Egyptology, Spain was one of the main international donors, contributing 325,000 dollars to the rescue of Abu Simbel and 200,000 dollars for Philae. The country also took an active part in archaeological excavations.

The Spanish archaeological mission in Nubia included a group of prestigious archaeologists headed by Martín Almagro Basch, director of the National Archaeological Museum.

From 1960 to 1965 the Spanish group excavated several sites on both sides of the Egyptian-Sudanese border. The first of those sites was the Byzantine fortress of Cheikh Daud, 200 kilometres south of Aswan. In 1962, the Spanish mission obtained a new licence to work in the Masmara region, south of Aniba, where they spent two years excavating several necropolises and documenting the graffiti and inscriptions they found in the area. In 1963 a licence was granted for the study and documentation of all the reliefs and inscriptions from Korosko to Ibrim. In Sudan, from 1961 to 1964 Spain carried out excavations at several necropolises in the Argin region, near the second cataract, as well as in the islands of Qasr Iko and Abkanarti.



Nubian rescue campaign



Satbahetep tomb

The mission's work paved the way to Egyptological research in Spain, which continued with the first permanent archaeological mission in Herakleopolis Magna. Spanish cooperation also resulted in an exceptional reward in 1968, when Egypt donated the Debod Temple to Spain.