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Contents

List of bibliographical abbreviations

ANM = *Archéologie du Nil Moyen*, Lille.

AMS = The Archaeological Map of the Sudan, ed. F. W. Hinkel and A. J. Mills, Berlin.

BAR = British Archaeological Reports, Oxford.

BASOR = *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.*

CRIPEL = *Cahier de Recherches de l'Institut de Papyrologie et l'Égyptologie de Lille*, Lille.

EtTrav = *Études et Travaux*, Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences, Warsaw.

GAMAR = *Gdańsk Archaeological Museum African Reports*, Gdańsk.

JARCE = *Journal of American Research Center in Egypt*, New York.

JEA = *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, London.

JJP = *Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, Warsaw.

Kush = *Kush, Journal of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM)* [until 1968 (vol. XV) — *Journal of the Sudan Antiquities Service*], Khartoum.

LAAA = *Annals of Archaeology and Antropology*, Liverpool.

LÄ = Lexicon der Ägyptologie, Wiesbaden.

MÄS = Münchner Ägyptologische Studien.

MDAIK = Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo.

MDASP = Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project.

OINE = Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition.

PAM = *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean.* Reports, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, Warsaw University, Warsaw.

POr = *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, Warszawa.

PSB = Polski Słownik Biograficzny, Kraków.

Rd'E = *Revue d'Égypte.*

ROM = Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

SARS = Sudan Archaeological Research Society.

SASOP = Sudan Antiquities Service Occasional Papers, Khartoum.

SDRS = Southern Dongola Reach Survey.

SJE = Scandinavian Joint Expedition Publications.

SKCO = Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients, Wiesbaden.

SNR = *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum.

SSEA = Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, Canada.

ZÄS = *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, Leipzig.

The Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project at the Fourth Nile Cataract: Salvage archaeology in the Context of Major Development Projects in Africa

Claudia Näser & Cornelia Kleinitz

This contribution is partial and partisan. It expressly reflects the authors' understanding of the conditions and processes which characterized the latter part of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDSAP) and determined the trajectory it eventually took – finally leading to the abortion of the project before its completion.

The archaeology of the region at and above the Fourth Nile Cataract had remained little known until long existing plans to build a dam at the cataract became concrete again in the late 1980s. In 1989 and 1990 missions by the Sudanese Antiquities Service evaluated the archaeological potential of the region and recommended the appropriate steps to be taken (e.g. Grzymski, this volume; Leclant 1990).[1] After a lengthy interval a few national and international archaeological missions started exploring the prospective reservoir area of the Hamdab, later Merowe, Dam. When the dam finally began to be constructed, an urgent international call was issued by the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) in 2003 and a meeting was held at the British Museum, in order to attract more missions to the area and to coordinate their concessions (e.g. Ahmed 2003). Subsequently, about a dozen national and international missions became involved. Among them were colleagues with a long-standing record in the Sudan, but also several "newcomers". Interestingly, some well-established missions with large-scale projects elsewhere in Sudan did not follow the call to the Fourth Cataract. The agreed aim of those teams that had found themselves together under the umbrella of MDSAP was to retrieve as much information as possible from the Fourth Cataract before the final flooding. The results were certainly worth the effort. Thousands of archaeological sites were recorded in the following years and knowledge of the prehistory and history of the region multiplied.

In spite of various problems MDASP seemed to progress well until early 2006. In February of that year our mission, the Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.), set out for its third field season in Dar al-Manasir in the centre of the Fourth Cataract. After two successful campaigns in the previous years, H.U.N.E. had planned a long season of excavation work. Only three days after our arrival, we were informed by our local hosts on Us island that a committee of the Manasir people had decided upon the expulsion of all archaeologists from their land and asked us to stop all of our activities. Another three days later, after extensive discussions, we left and spent the remainder of the season on Mograt island, about 100 km upstream, well outside Manasir territory and the projected reservoir area.

At that point, late in the 2005/2006 season, H.U.N.E. was one of four international missions expelled. At the subsequent Fourth Cataract conference in Cologne in July 2006, we all were assured by NCAM that the problem had been solved and that the missions could return for their next campaigns. This time, however, the Manasir (re)acted more quickly. Towards Christmas 2006, not long after the arrival of the missions for the next season, the SARS team was asked to leave Dar al-Manasir. Subsequently, all other missions were expelled. Ironically, only H.U.N.E. escaped a renewed expulsion. After talks with members of the Manasir Higher Council in Khartoum we received their permission to work, provided we kept a low

[1] The initial feasibility studies were under the auspicies of UNESCO and apparently received some funding from the World Bank. Neither organisation played any further role in the archaeological salvage project.

profile. The only – but highly worrying – request of the committee was that we leave all finds behind. After consultation with NCAM, we ostensibly complied with this demand, handing over sacks with processed pottery to a local representative of the Manasir Council upon our departure.

At the next Fourth Cataract conference in Lille in June 2007, we again were assured by NCAM that the situation was going to be solved by the following 2007/08 season – the *final* season before the flooding. However, of the several missions attempting to resume work in Dar al-Manasir, none succeeded. H.U.N.E. also had to abort another campaign within days after our arrival, although we initially had received permission to work by both the Manasir Higher Council in Khartoum and a local committee on Shirri island.

In order to make sense of what happened at the Fourth Cataract, it is first useful to introduce the main stakeholders and consider their diverging positions. The decision to expel the archaeologists came from the Manasir, the ethnic group most affected by the Merowe Dam.[2] The ultimate decision regarding the expulsion was taken by the Higher Council of the Manasir in Khartoum. In all cases known to us, its vote was respected by the local people and the local committees in the Fourth Cataract – even when they differed in opinion.

When our mission was first expelled in 2006, we sought contact with the committee of our area and met with its members in the village of Salamat, opposite Shirri island, on the market day following the request for our departure. During the talk, we were given three reasons for the decision to ask us to leave: First, in a way that seemed quite naive to us, the Manasir hoped that a prevention of the archaeological work would delay the flooding; secondly, they hoped to raise national and international publicity for their situation; and thirdly, they would not exclude an armed conflict with the Sudanese authorities and did not want to be held responsible for involving foreigners in their struggle. Indeed, subsequently several people died in shootings in the Fourth Cataract region when they staged protests against the conditions of their resettlement and compensation (Askouri 2007, 79–81).

At a closer look, the reasons given by the Manasir are not implausible, when taking into account the informational basis on which they acted. The objectives of the archaeological work were alien to the local population, and its cause, the Dam, threatened their very existence. Moreover, the Dams Implementation Unit (DIU) – often seen as an adversary by the local population – had time and again associated itself with the archaeological salvage project in newspaper reports, radio broadcasts and on their homepage (Fig. 1).[3] In view of this, it should come as no surprise that the perceptions and interests of the Manasir differed drastically from those of the archaeologists. Potential negative consequences of this discrepancy, however, were not sufficiently taken into account by the salvage missions active in the area.

It was only during the second wave of expulsion in late 2006 and early 2007 that a further argument by the Manasir came into play. Suddenly, the dismissal of the archaeologists was connected to the failure of the Sudanese authorities "to honour an undertaking that the archaeological treasures salvaged from the reservoir area would not be removed to distant museums" in Khartoum or Merowe, but be displayed in a museum which was to be built in the Manasir area instead.[4] This "local preservation" argument has become dominant in the debate since then, although it clearly postdates the first expulsions, thus making it all the more interesting for closer analysis.

To repeat, when H.U.N.E. was asked to leave in February 2006, at no point was any interest in a local museum or a transfer of the finds to Manasir representatives voiced. On the contrary, the activities of the archaeologists in the region only mattered in the way that the Manasir had deduced from them – and the information disseminated by the DIU – that the archaeological heritage rated highly on the agenda of the responsible administrative bodies. On the ground, our daily encounters with local people dur-

[2] The Manasir make up about 67% of the altogether 70,000 displaced people (for these figures see Askouri 2007, 79, 85: note 28 and Failer/Mutaz/El Tayeb 2006, 73).

[3] See www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/archaeological.html.

[4] See www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?page=imprimable&id_article=20457 and Hildyard 2008, 30.

ing three H.U.N.E. survey seasons showed that the concept of archaeological work was altogether alien and meaningless to most of them, as were almost all pre-Islamic monuments and archaeological sites in the vicinity of their villages. Thus, the "local preservation" argument certainly does not have its roots in the local discourse and a longstanding association and engagement with the archaeological sites of the region. Instead, it only emerged from the full-on confrontation with the work of the MDASP missions and the connected western concept of the intrinsic value of cultural heritage.[5]

At this point, a further protagonist came into play: the British NGO The Corner House, a globally active advocacy group.[6] The Corner House advised the London-based Leadership Office of the Hamdab Dam Affected People (LOHAP) – among other things about the expulsion of the archaeologists.[7] Its representative Nicholas Hildyard portrays them as profiteers of the dam and by-standers to human rights violations, accusing them of:

- having neglected the plea for help of the affected communities
- having refused to use their influence to improve the Dam project

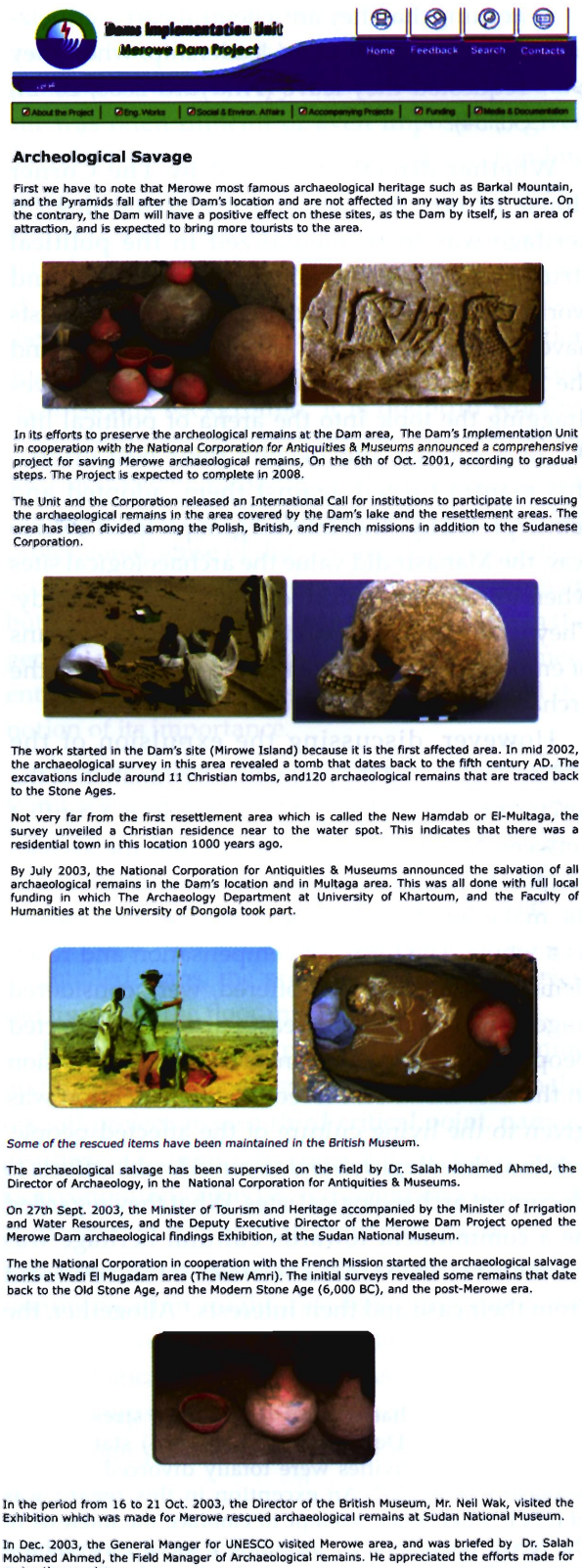

***Fig. 1** The presentation of the archaeological salvage campaign at the Fourth Nile Cataract on the homepage of the Dams Implementation Unit (source: www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/archaeological.html)*

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5 The conflict started to be irrational when the expelled missions were requested to leave their finds behind. Quite likely, these objects – in the case of H.U.N.E. only processed pottery – will be lost forever. This, it would seem, should also have been clear to those locally making this request, as they were then directly burdened with the objects, probably not knowing what to do with them and where to put them. Given this situation, it is extremely unlikely that any of these objects will ever turn up again or even be integrated into a museum display. Thus, the advocacy of local preservation of cultural heritage can take forms which may lead to the withdrawal of objects from academic research and public presentation and their eventual loss or destruction.

6 See www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/.

7 In winter 2006/7, Manasir representatives in the Fourth Cataract area referred to The Corner House when they asked the archaeologists to leave. Consequently, Claudia Näser got in contact with the representative of The Corner House working on the case, Nicholas Hildyard. In several telephone calls she tried to convince Mr. Hildyard that the explusion of the archaeologists would not meet the desired ends. In turn Mr. Hildyard suggested that the archaeologists should abandon their work and join the fight of the Manasir by directing their funds and energy towards making their case public. This, Mr. Hildyard argued, would be appreciated by the Manasir so that in consequence they would allow the archaeologists in again.

- arguing that they are a neutral party- criticizing the communities' leadership, when they requested they leave (Hildyard 2008, 20–21, 30, 34).

Whether directly triggered by The Corner House or not, the fact that the archaeological heritage was instrumentalized in the political struggle by the Manasir is an interesting and worrying development. For decades archaeologists have preached the value of cultural heritage and the importance of its preservation – themselves dragging the topic into the arena of political life. All of a sudden and despite their best efforts, this mantra turned against them, adopted and reinterpreted by other interest groups. In an inverse way, the Manasir did value the archaeological sites when preventing their documentation and study: They used them as a political weapon, as a means of empowerment, only not in the way that we, the archaeologists, would have wished them to do.

However, discussing the expulsion of the archaeologists and the premature termination of the rescue missions in Dar al Manasir only as a conflict between Manasir representatives and the archaeologists bypasses the actual problem, which lies in the make-up of the Merowe Dam building project as a whole. The terms of compensation and resettlement, which the DIU offered, were considered hugely inadequate by at least parts of the affected people – which evoked considerable social tension in the first instance. Moreover, little attention was given to the living culture of the affected people, while archaeologists went to considerable efforts to document archaeological sites. What they regarded as a commitment towards cultural heritage was perceived by the Manasir as irrelevant and divorced from their case and their interests.[8] Altogether, the Merowe Dam project lacked a proper environmental impact assessment and a proper cultural resource management programme which should have formed the basis not only for the archaeological work, but also for all other operations relating to the rescue of cultural heritage, past and present.[9] The existing, sketchy, EIA report was drafted by Lahmeyer International, who at the same time acted as the general technical consultant for the project. Thus, not only its content but also its genesis was widely criticized.[10] Moreover, it was not officially available to the public and remained largely inconsequential with regard to CRM measures on the ground. Finally, none of the expatriate investors and contractors of the Merowe Dam project took any responsibility for humanitarian, environmental or cultural consequences, although several European companies were requested to do so or withdraw from the project by representatives of the affected people and western advocacy groups.[11]

By way of contrast, it is worth looking at the policy guidelines that the World Bank attaches to similar projects (e.g. Goodland/Webb 1987; Taboroff/Cook 1993)[12] and at the recommendations developed by the World Commission on Dams in that respect

[8] Indeed, archaeologists themselves stressed this separation. E.g., Derek Welsby (2008, 15) stated: "our archaeological activities were totally divorced from the Manasir's struggle". An exception in this regard was H.U.N.E.'s deliberate attempt to embrace the interests of the recent population by including a social geographical survey, which focused on the recent cultural landscape and the cultural traditions of the Manasir in our concession area. One aspect of the project was to make all its data quickly and easily accessible for the wider public and the Manasir themselves. Thus, its results are presented on the internet, via the gateway www2.hu-berlin.de/daralmanasir/. Moreover, several encyclopaedic topics were published as Wikipedia and Wikisource articles.

[9] For a general introduction to that instrument and its application see Arazi 2009. Interestingly, a paper on a CRM strategy for the Fourth Cataract was presented by Kabbashi Hussein Gisema at the 10th International Conference of Nubian Studies in Rome in 2002. It is a rather insubstantial contribution and has never appeared again in the context of MDASP, though it was finally published in the conference proceedings in 2006.

[10] For a critical expert review of the report by Eawag, the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, see www.eawag.ch/medien/bulletin/archiv/2006/20060323/Independent-Review-20060323-Short.pdf.

[11] See Hildyard 2008 and [DOC] Update on the Merowe/Hamadab Dam Project, Sudan on www.business-humanrights.org/Search/SearchResults?SearchableText=merowe&sort_on=publication&batch_size=10&batch_start=2. In consequence, the German-based human rights organisation European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights filed a complaint against two executive employees of Lahmeyer International for the violation of human rights; see www.ecchr.de/lahmeyer-fall.html.

[12] See also World Bank Operational Policy Statement 4.11: Physical Cultural Resources (web. worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECYS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0'contentMDK:20970737~menu PK:64701637~page PK:64709096~piPK:64709108~the SitePK:502184,00html).

(World Commission on Dams 2000; Brandt/Hassan 2000). According to them, independent and exhaustive environmental impact assessments need to be carried out and an appropriate proportion of the budget of a development project is to be reserved for resulting protection components that also comprise cultural resource management programmes, which in turn include salvage archaeology. This does not only mean that salvage archaeology has to be financed by the developer, but also that it forms an integral part of the time schedule and the resource allocation of development projects. Now, it could be argued that these are mere ideals, which for many reasons do not translate well into the reality of development projects on the African continent. Indeed, there are many instances where cultural heritage and archaeological sites are "rescued" only through the efforts of a few individuals or isolated teams, with little or no funding, and little support by governments, investors and contractors. But there are also examples to the contrary. CRM success stories include:

- the Baardheere Dam Project in Somalia (Brandt in: Brandt/Hassan 2000)
- the Volta Basin Research Project in Ghana (Posnansky in: Brandt/Hassan 2000)- and most recently the Chad
- Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project (Lavachery/MacEachern/ Bouimon 2005; Lavachery *et al.* 2005).

The latter is especially interesting as – like the Merowe Dam – it was undertaken without the involvement of the World Bank or related agencies. The project is devoted to the exploitation of oil fields in Chad and the delivery of this oil by pipeline to the Cameroonian Atlantic coast, more than 1000 km to the west. The Chad-Cameroon pipeline project is a joint venture of multinational oil companies led by Exxon. In this case, the investors commissioned and financed a CRM programme, which included a complete cycle of archaeological salvage with a pre-construction survey covering 100% of the pipeline route, excavations at about 10% of the recovered sites and all further work up to the final publications. In stark contrast to the polluter-pays principle, MDASP from the very beginning was impeded by a lack of funding from the developer side. At least all the foreign missions had to fund their own work, which not only put an additional strain on the already very condensed time schedule, but was often difficult or even impossible, given the reluctance of many western academic funding bodies to support "non-research" salvage projects.[13] In this respect it should be noted that not only the actual fieldwork in the Fourth Cataract was affected by this – what still looms over most missions is the question of how the extensive post-excavation analyses and final publication will be financed. Against this background, it is doubtful whether the scientific results of MDASP will ever be made fully accessible. Moreover, by withholding financial support the developers not only traded on the professional sense of duty of the archaeologists in order to economise on the overall project budget, but by denying archaeology an integral place in the general project set-up, they also reduced it to a mere enthusiasts' endeavour and severely damaged the notion of its importance.

Another issue closely related to the previous point was the lack of infrastructural support for MDSAP. This not only concerned the most basic facilities, such as free entry visas, storage space or accommodation in Khartoum, but also all information vital to the archaeological work, such as detailed maps, the projected lake level or even the timing of the flooding.

From the lack of a proper CRM programme and the insufficient integration of MDASP into the overall project arose a third critical point, namely insufficient community consultation. Integrating local communities has proven an important element of successful CRM work in other parts of the world (e.g. King 2003). A proper and timely process of communication might also have prevented the disastrous reaction of the Manasir towards the archaeological salvage project. As it was, however, local groups were not actively incorporated in the salvage project or consulted about what they

[13] In the later part of MDASP, the Packard Humanities Institute, a private American foundation, generously funded several of the missions working at the Fourth Cataract. Without this investment, at least some of the missions would have found it immensely difficult to continue their work due to the lack of funding.

would have wished to be documented about their homeland and their culture.[14]

Taking these points together, at least as seen by the international participants, MDASP had the character of an *ad hoc* structure, which could not live up to its manifold potentials. As time progressed, the archaeologists only had the choice to either accept this situation or to let the archaeology of the Fourth Cataract drown without prior documentation.

It may be premature and cynical to draw "lessons" from the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project – but in view of recent developments, they should be drawn. We would say that on the ground, much was achieved. But it is also true that due to the lack of funding, other deficiencies and the premature end of MDASP, large tracts of the region remain unexplored and many archaeological sites are now lost without prior documentation.

On an analytical level, the case of the Fourth Cataract is an excellent example illustrating the intricate web of interests surrounding salvage archaeology in the context of major development projects today. Unforeseeably, the conflicts arising from these, sometimes diametrically opposed, interests reached an unprecedented level, which may have serious consequences for the preservation and study of archaeological heritage. The case of the Fourth Cataract severely erodes the notion of archaeological salvage and the preservation of cultural heritage as unquestionable parts of development projects – both on the part of local populations and on the part of the developers. It thus sets an example that may have negative effects for future rescue projects in the Sudan and beyond. In view of global development, we can expect that the case of the Fourth Cataract will not remain an isolated incident. Increasingly, the rescue of archaeological sites and monuments figures on the agenda of contested development projects, and also in other parts of the world. Different stakeholders instrumentalize the topic and – while archaeological salvage projects become more and more common – even governance and advocacy groups are starting to discuss their legitimacy. Though archaeology and archaeologists are not in the position to reconcile the sometimes adverse interests of different stakeholders, they may again become trapped in an impasse between the requests and restrictions put on them by the involved and affected parties.

At least two things seem clear: Archaeological salvage projects must be closely integrated into the overall development project set-up and based on proper CRM programmes and they must be designed multidimensionally, taking into account local complexities and needs. The case of the Fourth Cataract impressively illustrates that the engagement with recent populations and living cultural traditions must be in balance with archaeological studies, and that securing adequate conditions for human life and human rights must have priority over the preservation of archaeological sites. Archaeology – in its practices as in its ethics – is intricately linked to other issues, other stakeholders and other values at stake. Sooner or later, archaeologists worldwide may find it impossible to continue their job without acknowledging that they are part of a globalizing world with globalizing conflicts and globalizing strategies to promote a wide range of hardly reconcilable interests. They will need to develop their own strategies to address these challenges.

A foreseeable refutation to that recognition might be that it is easy and inconsequential to take a moral stand in such an abstract way. So what can archaeologists actually do? On the one hand, we might start by promoting the application of *existing* policy guidelines and procedural recommendations as developed by the World Bank and the World Commission on Dams. We could also study the experiences from previous projects of similar nature and draw general attention to them.[15] Other approaches we could embrace are bottom-up initiatives from within the archaeological community. One such initiative is the 2007 "Call of Nouakchott for Preventive Archaeology in Africa", which among other things urges the proper incorporation of archaeology within the framework of general impact assessment studies.[16] Supporting

[14] Particularly on the latter point see Schmidt (forthcoming).

[15] See e.g. Hassan 2007 on the International Nubia Campaign.

[16] The "Call of Nouakchott" was issued by the Maurita-

such schemes will in most cases not bring short-term results. But does the fact that progress is slow mean that we should not work for it? In the long run archaeology may only be able to keep its justification and the objects of its study, when we move in that direction and find new and more integrative definitions of our scientific best practice.

In the Sudanese Nile valley, further dams are planned for the near future.[17] If there was another international call – without funding and infrastructural support attached – would and could the archaeological community follow it, after the experience of the Fourth Cataract? Or will we be spared this decision, because local communities will deny archaeologists access to their territory from the start, or because the new projects will even more drastically reduce or altogether exclude the archaeological component, in order to avoid conflicts similar to that of the Fourth Cataract from the very beginning?

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[17] These include Sabaloka Dam at the Sixth Cataract, Dagash and al-Shireik Dams at the Fifth Cataract, Kajbar Dam at the Third Cataract and Dal Dam at the Second Cataract. For an official statement in this respect see www.diu.gov.sd/en/other_projects.htm.

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