

THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR





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Reprinted from *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Summer 1978)
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THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR

by CYRIL ALDRED

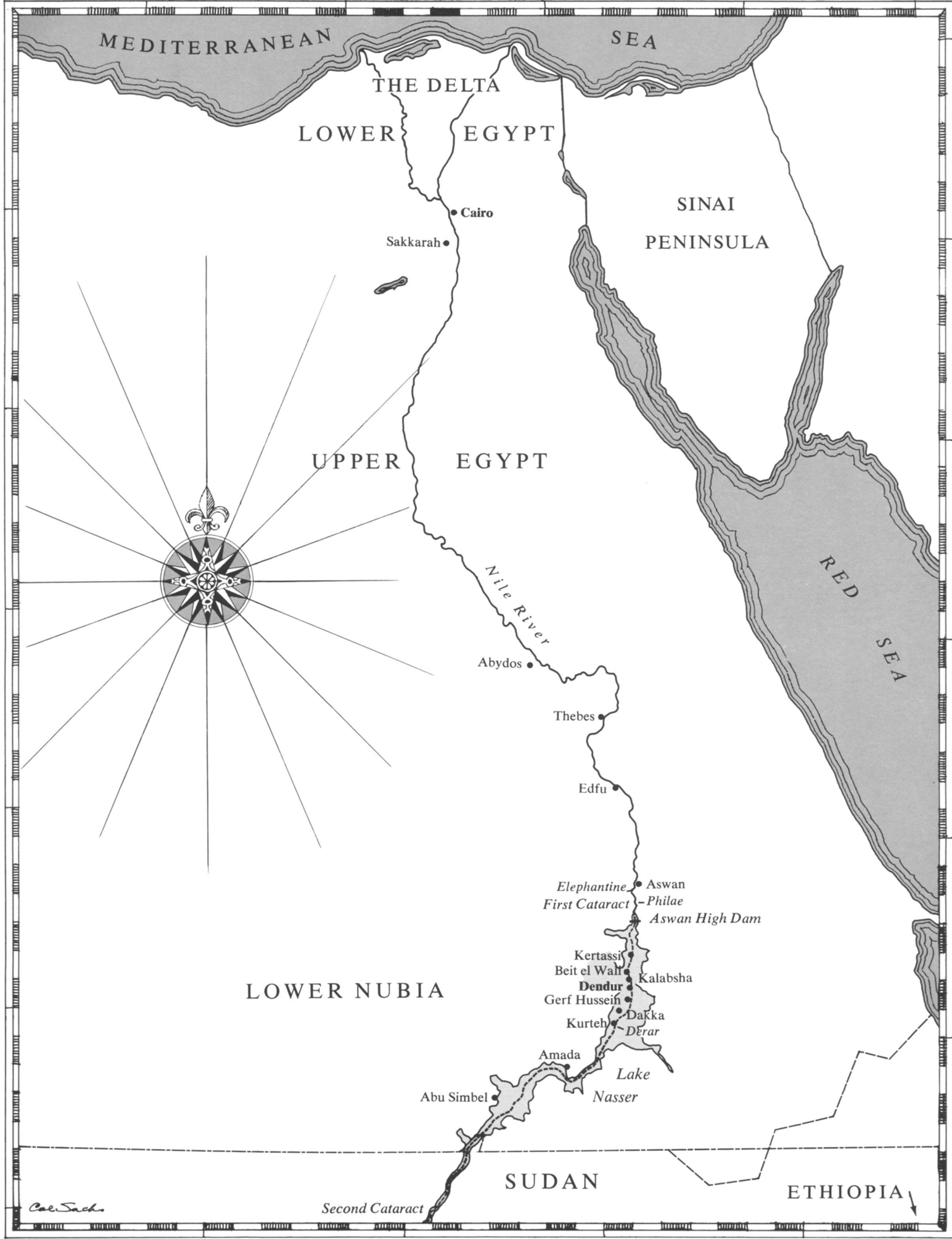


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• Abydos

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• Edfu

• Elephantine • Aswan

• First Cataract • Philae

• Aswan High Dam

• Kertassi

• Beit el Wali

• Kalabsha

• Dendur

• Gerf Hussein

• Dakka

• Kurteh

• Derar

• Amada

Lake

Nasser

• Abu Simbel

LOWER NUBIA

SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

Col. Sachs

Second Cataract



DENDUR IN NUBIA

For those who find pleasure in ruins, Nubia has always had a special appeal with its brooding temples and crumbling brick forts standing silent and desolate in an austere landscape. Nubia was off the beaten tourist track, poor, arid, and inhospitable, its inhabitants unfriendly to the earlier explorers of the nineteenth century, and its ancient sites generally remote from the centers of the sparse population. The difficulty of reaching them and exploring their sand-choked debris only acted as a spur to more adventurous spirits. It may have been pride in meeting the challenge, or a desire to break the mute loneliness of such ruins that induced many of these intrepid visitors to carve their names on the ancient stones, so that a gleaning of the graffiti is like the roll call of Egyptological explorers from Burckhardt and Belzoni to Rosellini and Wilkinson (see Figures 32, 40-43).

Among such names appears that of the novelist Amelia Edwards who visited Egypt and Nubia in 1874 and wrote what is still the best account of travel on the Nile. This is how she depicts the Nubian scene south of the frontier at Aswan:

The Nile here flows deep and broad. The rocky heights that hem it in so close on either side are still black on the one hand, golden on the other. The banks are narrower than ever. The space in some places is little wider than a towing-path. In others, there is barely room for a belt of date-palms and a slip of alluvial soil, every foot of which produces its precious growth of durra or barley. . . . Gliding along with half-filled sail, we observe how entirely the population seems to be regulated by the extent of arable soil. Where the inundation has room to spread, villages come thicker; more dusky figures are seen moving to and fro in the shade of the palms; more children race along the banks, . . . When the shelf of soil is narrowed, on the contrary, to a mere fringe of luminous green dividing the rock from the river, there is a startling absence of anything like life. Mile after mile drags its slow length along, uncheered by any sign of human habitation. When now and then a solitary native, armed with gun or spear, is seen striding along the edge of the desert, he only seems to make the general solitude more apparent. . . . All night, too, instead of the usual chorus of dogs barking furiously from village to village, we hear

1 Perhaps the monument that most haunted the dreams of visitors to Nubia in the 19th century, the larger temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel was first rediscovered in 1813 by the Swiss Arabist J. L. Burckhardt. It was then almost entirely covered by windblown sand. Four years later the party of the Italian Giovanni Belzoni penetrated to the cavernous first hall and stood awestruck before eight huge standing statues of Ramesses II. Subsequent clearances exposed the seated colossi on the façade much as David Roberts depicted them in this 1838 lithograph. From *Egypt and Nubia*, Vol. I (London, 1849). Metropolitan Museum Library, Presented by Charles Lanier



The Great Temple

2 Woodcut from a watercolor drawing of the temple of Dendur by Amelia B. Edwards in 1874. From *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London, 1888). Metropolitan Museum Library, Jacob S. Rogers Fund

3 Detail of a drawing of the entrance to the Pronaos made by Robert Hay about 1830. Reproduced by permission of The British Library Board, Additional MS. 29837, f. 4

4 Two visitors in the entrance of the Pronaos of the temple photographed by Caroline Ransom Williams, who was an Assistant Curator of the Metropolitan's Egyptian Department from 1910 to 1915

only the long-drawn wail of an occasional jackal.... Here, then, more than ever, one seems to see how entirely these lands which we call Egypt and Nubia are nothing but banks of one solitary river in the midst of a world of desert.

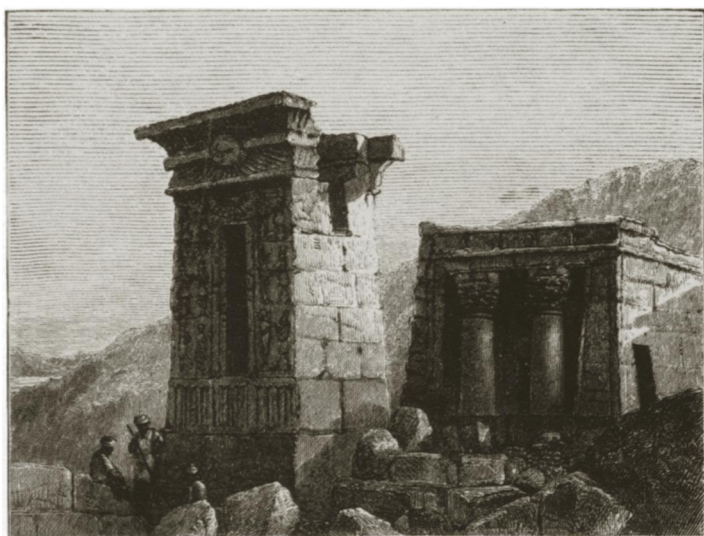
Amelia, however, was not content to describe what she saw in words. Like a well-educated Victorian miss she had received lessons from a drawing master and dutifully took her brush and easel to every site, where seated under an umbrella held by an attendant sailor, she drew the ruins in all their picturesque allure. Thus at Dendur, about fifty miles south of Aswan, her party went ashore to visit a temple of Roman date; and she writes:

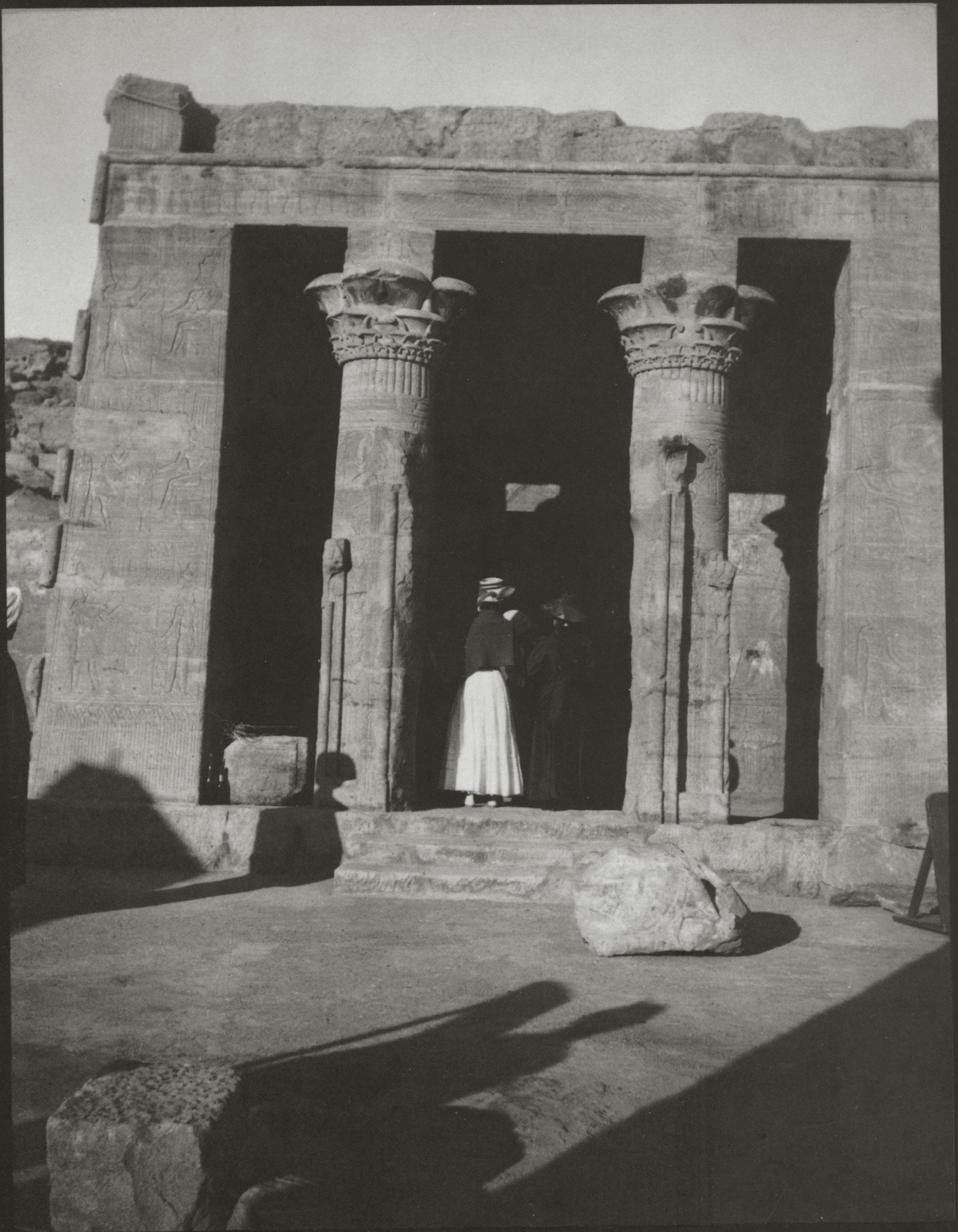
At Dendoor, when the sun is setting and a delicious gloom is stealing up the valley, we visit a tiny Temple on the western bank. It stands out above the river surrounded by a wall of enclosure, and consists of a single pylon, a portico, two little chambers, and a sanctuary! The whole thing is like an exquisite toy, so covered with sculptures, so smooth, so new-looking, so admirably built. Seeing them half by sunset, half by dusk, it matters not that these delicately-wrought bas-reliefs are of the Decadence school. The rosy half-light of an Egyptian afterglow covers a multitude of sins, and steeps the whole in an atmosphere of romance.

The woodcut of Dendur made from her watercolor drawing (Figure 2) gives no more than an impression, like the works of her contemporary David Roberts, whose paintings and lithographs of Oriental scenes (Page 1, Figures 1, 7) stimulated a popular taste for travel in the colorful Levant.

A draftsman of quite a different caliber, who did not fail to visit Dendur, was Robert Hay, once described by Norman de Garis Davies of the graphic branch of the Metropolitan's own Egyptian Expedition as "the prince of copyists." Between 1828 and 1838, Hay traveled in Egypt and Nubia with a team of artists including Frederic Catherwood, who later won fame for his paintings of Mayan sites in Middle America, and the diminutive Joseph Bonomi, the subsequent curator of Sir John Soane's Museum in London. The accurate copies that they made of the standing monuments, probably with the aid of the camera lucida, have been of inestimable use to later researchers, though the vast store of drawings, plans, copies of inscriptions, and notes reposes unpublished in the Manuscript Department of The British Library. Hay's visits to Dendur resulted in a number of careful drawings that give reliable and detailed views of the temple as it existed in the early years of the last century (Figure 3). The work of such men, however, was overtaken, though not superseded, by the photographers who followed on their heels in ever increasing numbers after the middle of the century and recorded the slow dilapidation of the monuments during the next fifty years (Figures 4, 8). By the dawn of the present century, however, Dendur was to receive the concentrated examination from which its secluded site and modest character had hitherto preserved it.

1. Miss Edwards has confused the platform upon which the Gateway stands with an enclosure wall.





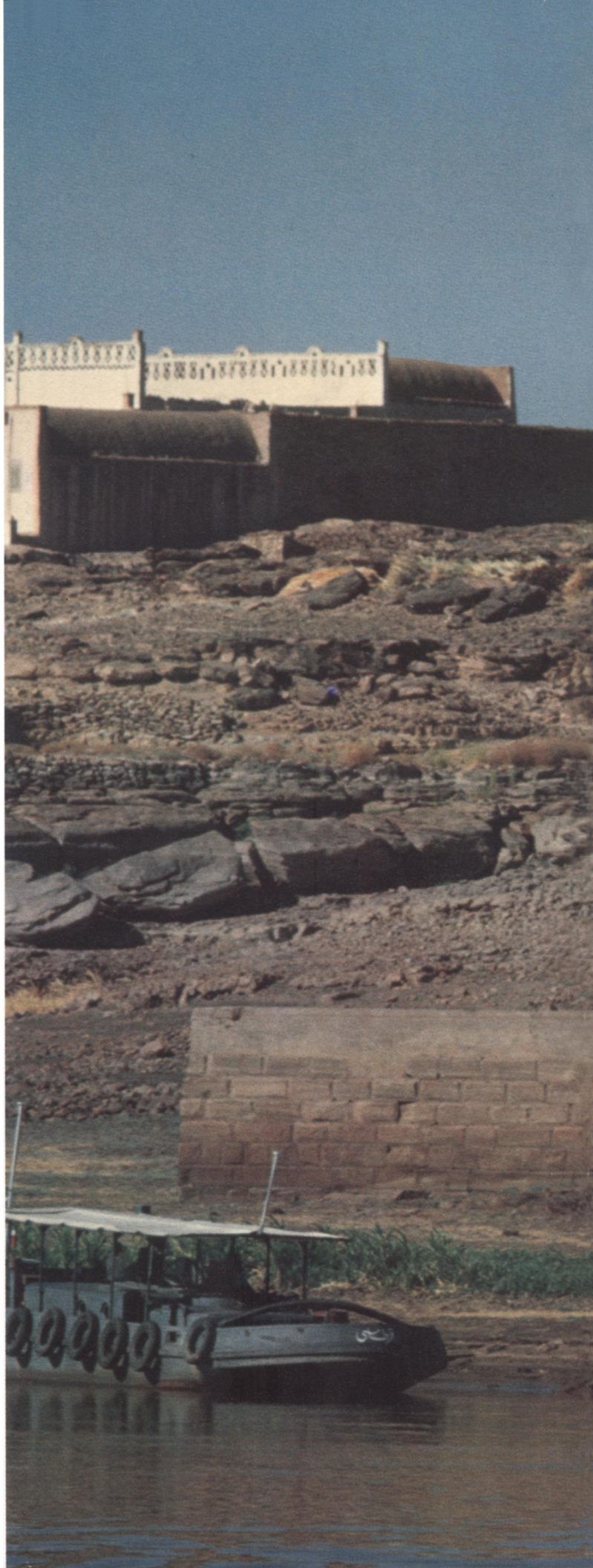


5 Modern feluccas sailing near the ancient Nilometer (restored in 1870) used to measure the height of the Nile floods, at the southeastern corner of Elephantine Island, opposite Aswan. Beyond lie some of the granite islands that form the First Cataract of the Nile



In 1898 tangible form was given to an age-old dream of controlling the waters of the Nile, which only achieved its full realization in 1971, with the opening of the High Dam, four miles above Aswan. The first phase of the initial scheme was the erection between 1898 and 1902 of a dam 130 feet high at the head of the First Cataract at Aswan. This massive granite barrage was raised a further 16½ feet between 1907 and 1912 and again during 1929 to 1933 by another 18 feet. Each heightening increased the size of the huge reservoir of water that accumulated each year behind the closed sluice gates from November onward after the inundation of the Nile. In March the store of life-giving water was drawn off for summer irrigation in Egypt until the next inundation began again in July.

6 Dendur from the northeast during the summer season, shortly before the temple was dismantled. The ladder of the recording team from the Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte stands in the Gateway. In this view the reservoir behind the old Aswan dam has been emptied, the temple has fully emerged from the water, and the platform upon which it is built is visible. A fringe of "luminous green" halfa grass has grown up along the new margin of the low Nile. In the background is the eroded sandstone hillside in which was hewn the original tomb of one or possibly both of the drowned brothers (see Figure 20)





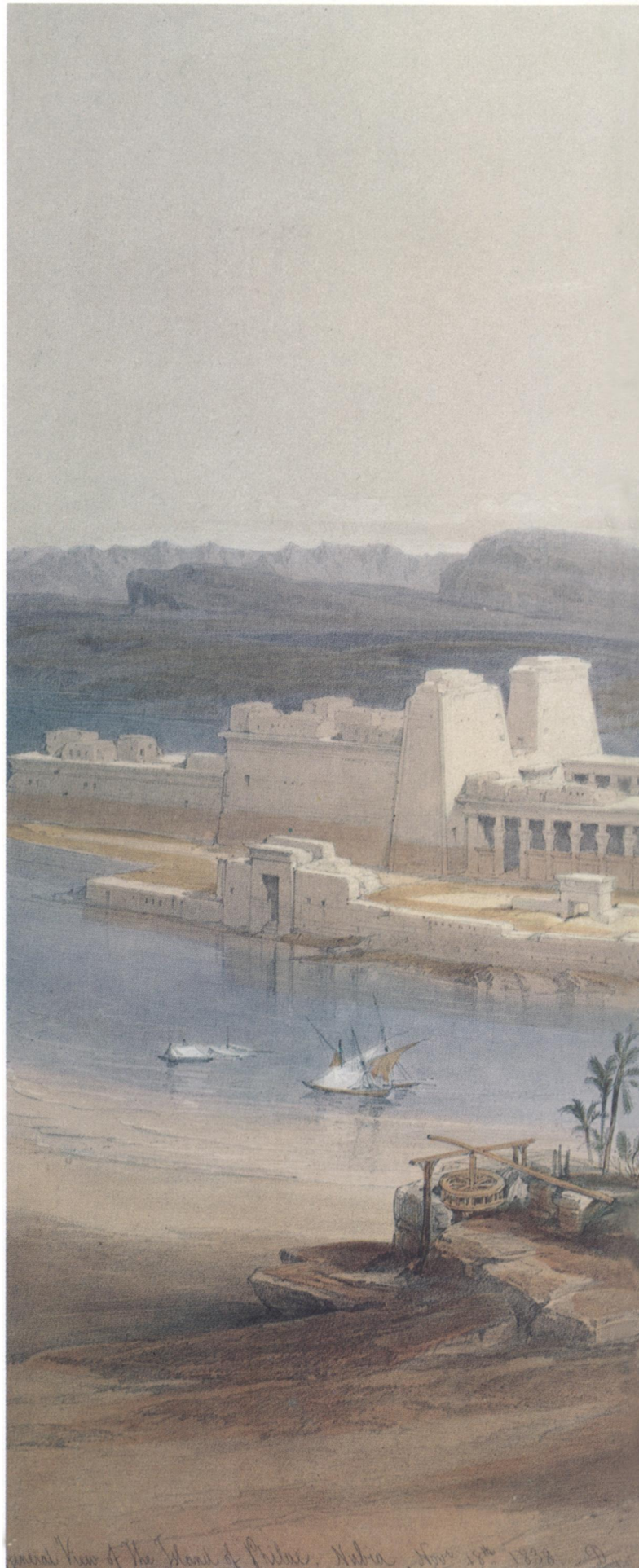
It was clear that the creation of this artificial lake was a threat to the monuments that lay to the south of Aswan, and each enlargement of its extent only increased the number of sites put at risk and the degree of damage they would suffer. In days before “conservation” had become a battle cry, great indignation was aroused by the realization that the waters would submerge for half the year the Island of Philae, “the Pearl of Egypt,” with its picturesque temples nestling among palms and carob trees (Figure 7). For the faithful Amelia Edwards in 1874,

the approach by water is quite the most beautiful. Seen from the level of a small boat, the island with its palms, its colonnades, its pylons, seems to rise out of the water like a mirage. Piled rocks frame it on either side, and purple mountains close up the distance. As the boat glides nearer between glistening boulders, those sculptured towers rise higher and ever higher against the sky. They show no signs of ruin or of age. All looks solid, stately, perfect. One forgets for the moment that anything is changed. If a sound of antique chanting were to be borne along the quiet air... we should not think it strange.

Thirty years later all the vegetation had disappeared, and the once beautiful stone was disfigured by a gray film of dead algae during its summer emergence from the muddy waters.

The dramatic loss of this historic beauty spot resulted in the necessary resources and staff being granted to the Egyptian Antiquities Service to survey and protect other threatened sites. In three separate campaigns, monuments in Nubia had their structures strengthened to withstand partial flooding and were examined by an international team of scholars who measured, photo-

7 Lithograph of the Island of Philae by David Roberts in 1838. At the time of Roberts’s visit, the island still remained in the somewhat derelict state resulting from the French occupation in 1799, when the hostile inhabitants abandoned Philae and never returned. Half a century later, its palms, carob trees, and lush vegetation had transformed the silent ruins into the picturesque “Pearl of Egypt.” From *Egypt and Nubia*, Vol. I (London, 1849). Metropolitan Museum Library, Presented by Charles Lanier









graphed, copied, and published them. Dendur was inspected in 1901 by Howard Carter (later to win acclaim for his discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun), and in 1906 by Arthur Weigall (later to earn notoriety for his invention of the “Curse of Tutankhamun”); but the most intensive study was made in 1910 by A. M. Blackman, who rapidly recorded the scenes and inscriptions and published them the following year. It is to this pioneer work that all subsequent research has been indebted.

The earlier heightenings of the Aswan dam did not, however, greatly affect the temple of Dendur. The level of the reservoir merely rose in winter to lap the quay which had been built in antiquity as part of the platform for the Gateway, but which had become high and dry as a result of the erosion by the Nile of its ancient bed over the intervening centuries (Figure 8). The raising of the height of the dam in 1933, however, flooded the temple for nine months of the year and washed away the traces of paint that had once embellished its reliefs (see Figures 9, 10, 23).

In 1961 the decision to build the High Dam to retain all the waters of the inundation in an immense artificial lake south of the First Cataract, meant that Nubia, with its ancient sites and modern villages and cultivation, would disappear from the map of Africa, drowned under 200 feet of water. The international campaign, mounted under the auspices of UNESCO, to save the monuments of Nubia and the Lower Sudan is now part of history. The most publicized of the rescues was the raising of the rock-hewn temples of Abu Simbel to a position 690 feet above their original site (Figure 13), but other conservation measures were also accomplished. As a result of these, the temples of Kalabsha (Figures 11, 12), Beit el Wali, and Kertassi, to the north of Dendur; and those of Dakka and Amada, among others, to the south, have been moved to enclaves along the western shore of Lake Nasser. Some, however, like Gerf Hussein, could not be completely salvaged; and others, including Dendur, were dismantled and offered abroad by the Egyptian Government in recognition of generous contributions to the rescue operations. In this way Dendur came to the United States, as is recounted elsewhere in this publication.

Before the temple was taken apart in 1963, the Centre de Documentation et d’Etudes sur l’Ancienne Egypte, an organization set up in collaboration with UNESCO to record fully all the monuments under sentence, spent two seasons at Dendur, their Egyptologists, architects, and photographers making a meticulous study with collated scale drawings of the temple reliefs and inscriptions that will eventually be published. As an obituary upon the Nubian life of Dendur, devotion could go no further.

8 Photograph of Dendur taken from the north about 1853 by Félix Teynard, showing the platform upon which the Gateway was built high above the eroded bed of the Nile. From *Egypte et Nubie* (Paris, 1858). Metropolitan Museum, Lila Acheson Wallace Fund, 1976.607





9 A view from the south of the temple of Dendur partially flooded

Overleaf:

10 The temple of Dendur almost completely submerged during the winter season 1961/62. For almost 30 years after the final heightening of the old Aswan dam in 1933, Dendur was flooded nine months of the year. The roofing slabs of the Pronaos show above the level of those of the Vestibule and Sanctuary. In the latter chamber much of the ceiling is missing







932. Nubie Kalabcheh extérieur du temple



11 The temple of Kalabsha as it appeared in the 1880s, when it was photographed by J. P. Sebah

12 The temple of Kalabsha rebuilt at the western end of the High Dam at Aswan by the Nubian Expedition of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1963







13 A great Nubian monument being salvaged by the UNESCO team in 1965—dismantling one of the heads of the colossi of Ramesses II that formed part of the façade of Abu Simbel. The friable Nubian sandstone had to be impregnated with plastics before it was sufficiently tough enough to withstand the thrust of the saws used to cut the temple into over a thousand 30-ton blocks for reassembly on a site 690 feet above their original position—certainly one of the major engineering feats of our time



THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS SCENE

By the time of Augustus, the region of Nubia from the First to the Second Cataract of the Nile had been for several centuries a kind of no-man's land between Egypt and the kingdom of Kush in the Sudan. Kush was the Ethiopia of the classical geographers, with its capital at Meroë, about 700 miles south of Aswan. Here flourished a native culture based on Egyptian civilization (see Figure 19), but speaking a different language and writing it in a native script, Meroitic, which is still not fully deciphered. In the fourth century B.C. both Egypt and Ethiopia began to take a renewed interest in Nubia, and a desultory struggle developed between them for dominance in the area.

During the reigns of the last native pharaohs of Egypt, a change took place in the status of their extreme southern border at Elephantine, the island in the river opposite the trading post of Syene, the modern Aswan, on the eastern bank. Elephantine was the place where the Nile had traditionally been thought to rise from subterranean caverns in an inundation that renewed the parched land with its floodwaters and fertile silt. The god Khnum, responsible for this annual miracle, was a ram-headed aspect of the Creator (Figure 15) who, with the goddesses Anukis and Satis and the universal mother-deity Hathor, was especially venerated here and also claimed sovereignty over the lands of Nubia as far south as the Island of Derar. This tract of territory, some 90 miles long, was later known by its Greek equivalent as the Dodekaschoinos.

Khnum, however, had a rival in his claim to control the Nile flood. This was Osiris (Figure 16), a Delta god whose cult had risen to great importance in the second millennium B.C. after its extension to a new seat of worship in the ancient royal city of Abydos in Upper Egypt. In origin Osiris was probably a divine king, a prehistoric pastoral chief, who when his powers began to wane was ritually drowned in the Nile and his dismembered corpse buried in various places for the greater fertility of the land. According to later beliefs enshrined in the writings of the Isis-worshiper Plutarch (flourished about 70 B.C.), Osiris was a beneficent king who brought the blessings of husbandry to mankind but was slain by his brother Seth, the god of violence, who scattered his dismembered body the length and breadth of Egypt and usurped his kingdom. Isis, the faithful wife of Osiris, gathered the various parts together and reconstructed the corpse by surgical bandaging. By her magic arts she revived the dead god and posthumously conceived by him a son, Horus, whom she bore in secrecy among the papyrus thickets of the Delta. When Horus grew to manhood, he arraigned Seth before the tribunal of the gods,

14 The brilliant Nubian sunlight picks out the details of the sunk reliefs on the exterior south wall of Dendur. The scenes are entirely concerned with the pharaoh, Augustus, making offerings to local gods and goddesses, who are standing in the lower register and seated above





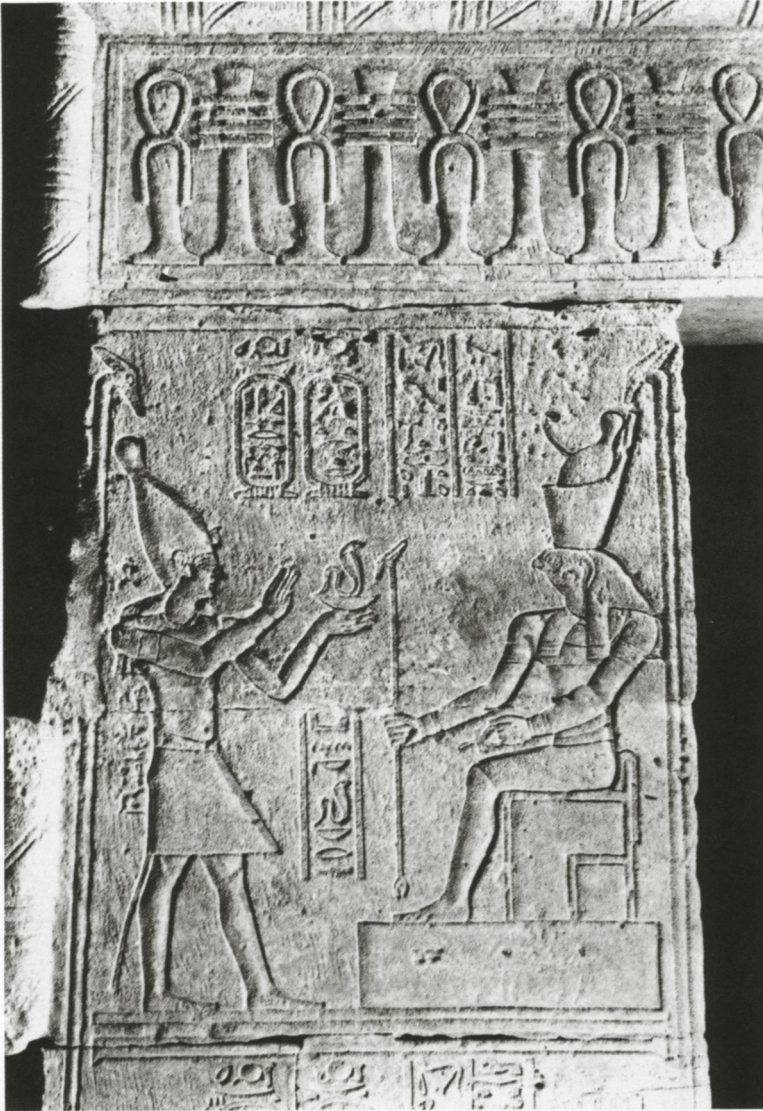
15 The pharaoh Augustus makes a libation to the ram-headed god Khnum of Elephantine. The hieroglyphs read: (behind the pharaoh) "All protection, life, and power around him like Re forever"; (above him, right-hand cartouche) "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Autocrator"; (left-hand cartouche) "The Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Caesar, living forever; (below, in front of the pharaoh) "Giving a libation to his noble father"; (above the god) "Recitation by Khnum-Re, Lord of Bigga, Noble Divine Power who presides over the Foremost of the Nomes [Elephantine]." Raised relief on the west wall of the interior of the Pronaos at Dendur

16 The pharaoh (right), wearing the triple Atef crown, pours milk from a vessel over an altar in front of Osiris and Isis. Osiris is shown in mummiform but wearing a cloak and holding the royal scepters. Isis appears as an elegant mother goddess, wearing the cow horns and disk of the supreme sky goddess and universal mother, Hathor. She holds a papyrus scepter in her left hand and the life sign in the right. Sunk relief on the rear of the south jamb of the Gateway



who awarded him his father's kingdom and banished Seth to the desert, while Osiris was appointed to rule over the dead in the Underworld.

The appeal of this religion was that it focused worship upon a god who had died like man but had also been resurrected to eternal life. It held out the promise of a similar destiny to all who could afford an Osirian burial. Each pharaoh upon death became assimilated to Osiris, while his son and successor, the living Horus, ruled in his stead. Osiris worship grew steadily in favor among the subjects of the pharaoh throughout the cen-



tures, but in its latest phases the mother Isis with her child Horus became the dominant pair in the trinity (Figures 16-18, 38); and the popularity of her cult throughout the Roman Empire paved the way for the rapid spread of Christianity.

By the fourth century B.C., Abydos was in decline and the main center of the Osiris cult had moved again, this time to the Island of Philae, 4½ miles south of Elephantine. Here the Nile was now thought to well up from caverns beneath the adjacent island of Bigga, where tradition had it that the left leg of Osiris had been buried, and where his tomb was situated. The drowned Osiris was believed to float in the Nile at each flood time when

17 Caesar Augustus, wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt, offers the uraeus of sovereignty to Horus-Protector-of-His-Father, who is seated upon the throne of Egypt and holding a life (ankh) sign and a was scepter \uparrow . The latter symbol, originally a herdsman's crook with a forked end for killing snakes, had the hieroglyphic meaning of "dominion," or "power," and as such was carried by male gods. In reliefs it often acts as the support for the sky sign \equiv , while its base rests on the earth sign \equiv . Horus-Protector-of-His-Father represents the god grown to manhood, after

having vindicated his father Osiris and inherited his kingdom. Sunk relief on the south jamb of the Pronaos façade

18 The pharaoh, wearing the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, offers incense to Isis, Mistress of Philae, who is dressed as a mother goddess and is seated upon the throne of Egypt. The offer of incense ensures that the pharaoh may be granted life forever. Behind Isis, in an adjoining scene, he offers incense and libation. Raised relief on the south wall of the interior of the Pronaos



he became "Lord of the Inundation." But it was at Philae, with the temples built by the Ptolemies, the Greek pharaohs, and their successors the Roman emperors, that the cult of Isis and the Horus-child developed to such an extent that the island became her most important shrine and a great center of pilgrimage for the entire Roman world. She assimilated a number of other deities such as Anukis, Satis, and Hathor (Figure 39); and her worship still prevailed at Philae until the sixth century A.D., long after Christianity had displaced the pagan cults elsewhere in Egypt.

During the third century B. C., Ethiopian kings made a series of excursions into the Dodekaschoinos and for a time gained control over Philae itself. They built additions to the temples there and further south, but Egyptian sway was reestablished over the region by Ptolemy VI. In 157 B.C. he renewed the grant of the Dodekaschoinos to Isis and her priests to rule on his behalf, thus extinguishing the ancient pretensions of Khnum of Elephantine, who was partly absorbed by the gods of Philae. The income from the entire area in the form of taxes and customs dues thus flowed into the temple treasury at Philae and made it possible to finance the founding or rebuilding of other temples in Lower Nubia, whether dedicated to Isis or not, and to ensure they were under the control of her priesthood. In the last reigns of the Ptolemies, however, anarchy returned to the region, and its government fell largely into the hands of local princelings.

A native Nubian living on the banks of the Nile near Dendur between 23 and 10 B.C., at the time the temple was built there, would have heard of many stirring events and witnessed some of them, assuming that he had achieved his life expectancy of about thirty years. As a child of ten he would have heard that Cleopatra, the "Serpent of Old Nile," had committed suicide to escape the indignity of being taken captive to Rome by her cold-blooded conqueror, Octavian. The latter was determined to make himself the master of Egypt *de jure* as well as *de facto*, and achieved this by putting to death the last Greek pharaoh, Ptolemy XVI ("Caesarion"), Cleopatra's son by Julius Caesar. Octavian thus became the new pharaoh in whose name all public works and state enterprises were undertaken, even though he soon returned to Rome and never visited his Egyptian domains again. Less than a year later would come the report that Thebes, 175 miles to the north, the Biblical No and the ancient capital of Upper Egypt, whose god Amun had not only been one of the great state gods of antiquity but was still the chief deity of Ethiopia to the south, had revolted against the Roman government because of its oppressive taxes. Soon afterward our Nubian would learn that the prefect, Cornelius Gallus, whom Octavian had appointed as his governor in Egypt, had put down the insurrection with brutal severity and utterly destroyed the great city, and that he was even then marching with his army to Philae to secure the southern frontier. Our native may even have caught a glimpse of Gallus as he paraded his legions in a show of force south of the First Cataract, and received envoys

from the king of Ethiopia, who agreed to accept the protection of Rome.

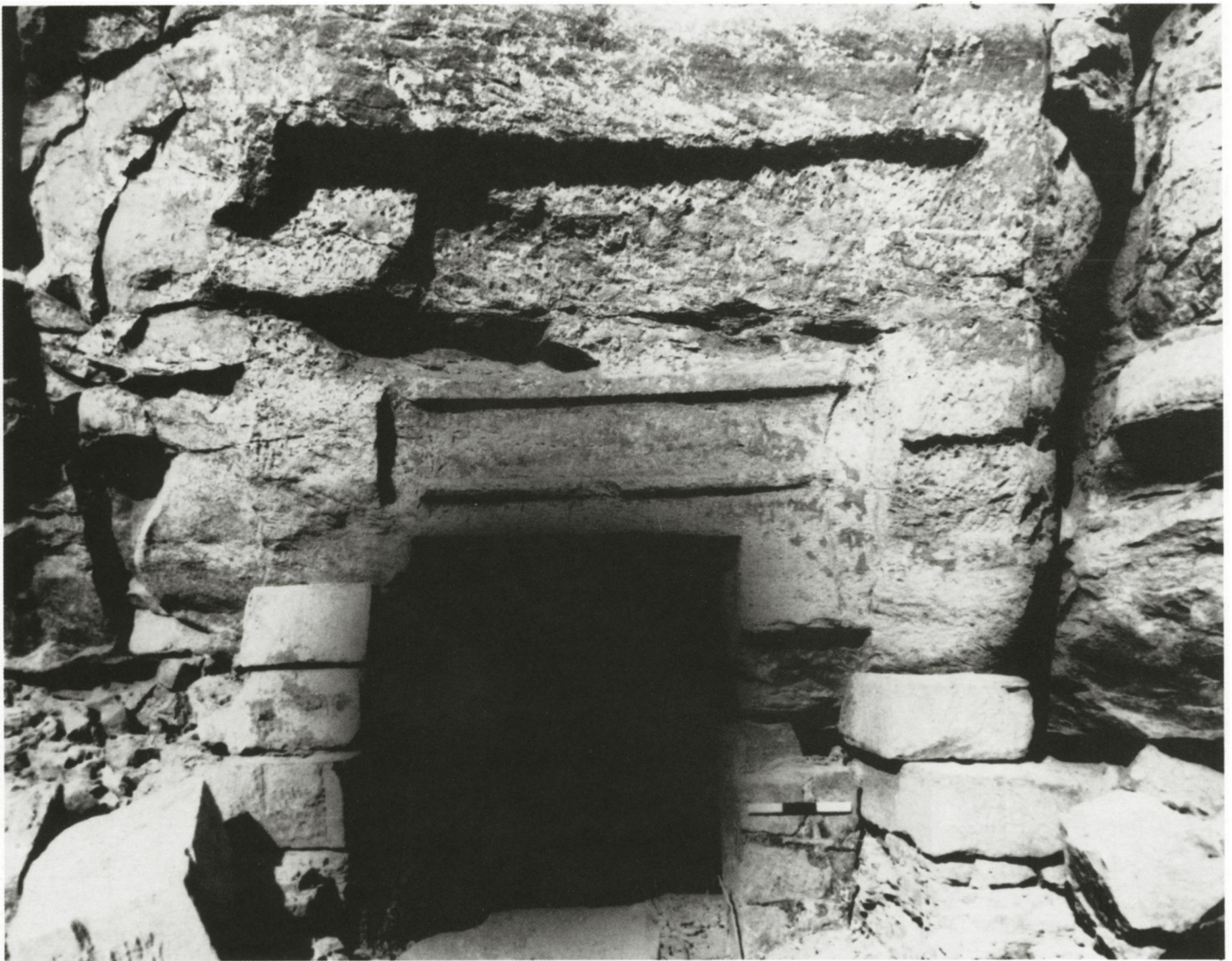
During this foray, Gallus would doubtless have come into contact with the Blemmyes, a warlike, nomadic people who roved over the deserts between the Nile and the Red Sea and made the east bank above Philae untenable for settlers. There was, however, a very long tradition of service by the Medja, the ancestors of the Blemmyes, in the Egyptian armies and police force, and the Romans continued the Ptolemaic policy of appeasing these people by admitting their god Mandulis into the pantheon and building temples to him, particularly at the important site of Kalabsha on the west bank to the north of Dendur (Figure 11). Before departing from the scene, Gallus, it seems, appointed Kuper, one of their chiefs, to rule over Nubia as the nominee of Rome.

The success of his mission, and the adulation that Gallus received as the representative of the divine pharaoh went to his head and aroused suspicions in the mind of Octavian, who had just then announced that he had taken the title of Augustus as the supreme ruler of the empire of Rome. Gallus was recalled in disgrace and committed suicide, leaving behind a high reputation as an elegiac poet.

In the following year, 25 B.C., his successor, Aelius Gallus, was ordered by Augustus to lead an army against Arabia; and for this expedition he had to denude Egypt of its garrisons, leaving only a skeleton force to guard the southern frontier. This presented a temptation that the Ethiopians found irresistible. The land of Nubia and the towns of Philae, Aswan, and Elephantine were ravaged and their populations enslaved by an Ethiopian army under the leadership of Amanirenas, a woman whom the Romans referred to by her Meroitic title of Candace ("Queen") (Figure 19). Retribution, however, was not long in coming. Aelius Gallus was replaced by Petronius, who drove the Ethiopians out of Egypt in the following year, routed them in Nubia, and invaded their territories, destroying their former capital Napata and enslaving its citizens. Though Petronius failed to reach Meroë, the Candace gave up the struggle two years later and sent delegates to negotiate. The frontier was redrawn at the southern end of the Dodekaschoinos; and by the time our Nubian had reached manhood, assuming that he had not perished in the fighting, he was living in a land that was to enjoy the Pax Romana for another three centuries.

19 An Ethiopian Candace ("Queen"), accompanied by her lion, slaughters a mass of kneeling foes. The design originates from Egyptian models of great antiquity, particularly in evidence on the pylons of New Kingdom temples; but the details, with the ample figure of the queen and her peculiar crown, are wholly Ethiopian. Sunk relief on the pylon of the Lion Temple at Naga, about 100 miles north of Khartum, 1st century B. C.





During the campaigns of 25 B.C., the Ethiopians had captured Kuper and probably put him to death. Two of his sons with the good Egyptian names of Pedesi (“He whom Isis has given”) and Pihor (“He who belongs to Horus”), who were evidently minor princes of Gerf Hussein and Kurteh to the south of Dendur, had also met their ends by drowning in the Nile, but whether during the fighting or while fleeing northward, whether independently or together is entirely unknown. What is reasonably certain is that the body of one of them, probably Pedesi, was washed ashore at Dendur and buried in a small chamber cut in the side of the western hill flanking the river (Figure 20). A small vestibule acting as a shrine was built in front of it to serve as a chapel for funerary services.

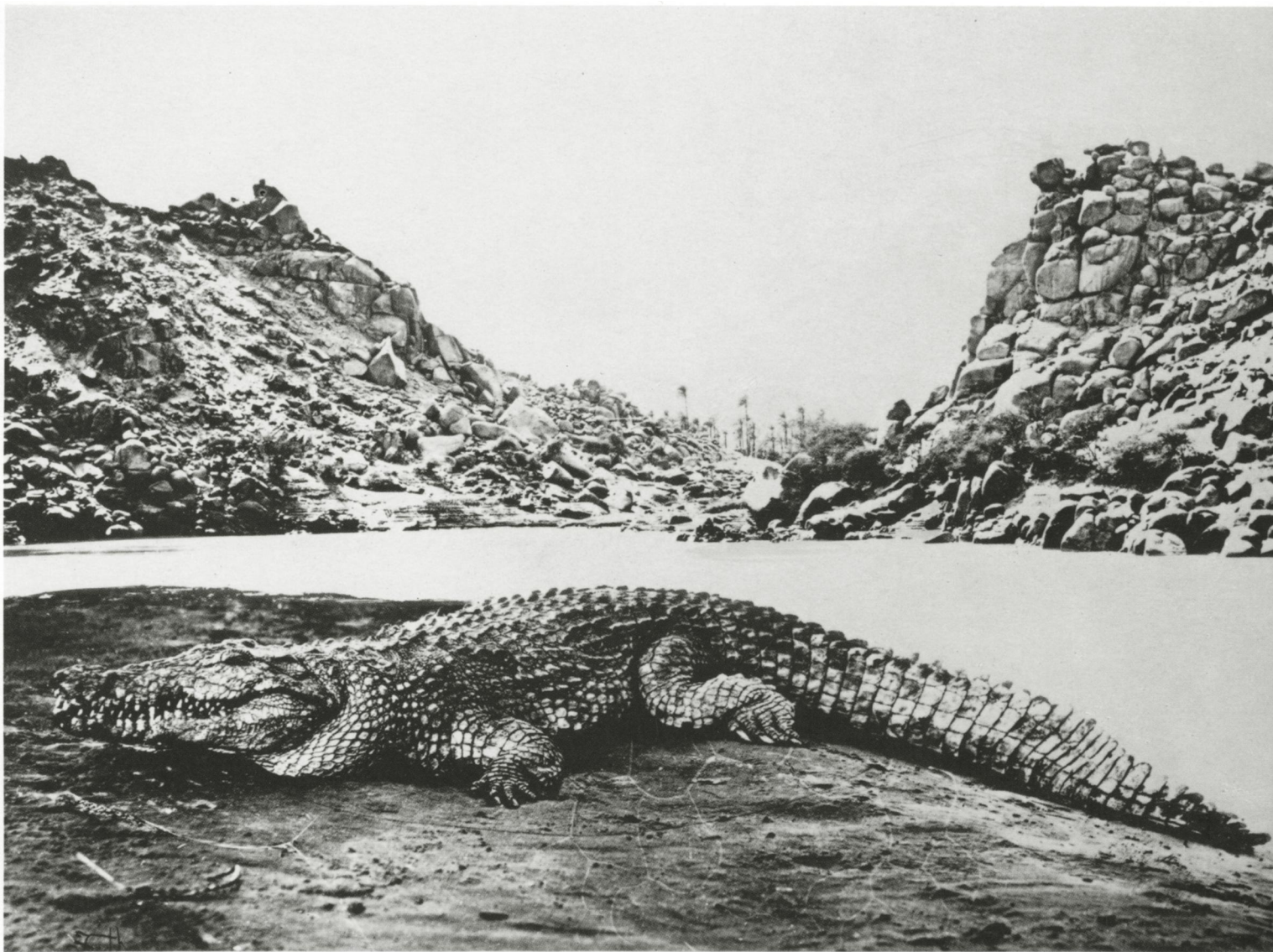
That Pedesi should have been honored in this way only conforms to a long tradition referred to by Herodotus in his *History*, Book II:

When anyone, be he Egyptian or stranger, is known to have been carried off by a crocodile or drowned by the river itself, such a one must by all means be embalmed and tended as fairly as may be and buried in a sacred coffin by the townsmen of the place where he is cast up;

nor may any of his kinsfolk or his friends touch him, but his body is deemed something more than human, and is handled and buried by the priests of the Nile themselves.

Several instances where this custom was observed have been recorded, the most notable being that of Antinous, the favorite of Hadrian, who in order to avert some evil fate from falling upon his emperor drowned himself in the Nile in 130 A.D. Hadrian erected temples to him and founded the city of Antinoë in his memory. Apotheosis by the lightning stroke of Zeus was common in the Greco-Roman world, but its equivalent in Egypt was drowning in the Nile, or assimilation to that divine power that came out of the primeval waters in the form of a crocodile. At Philae the tomb of Osiris is represented with a crocodile bearing the corpse of the god.

Pedesi appears in the temple reliefs at Dendur wearing the tall white crown with flanking plumes that is the distinguishing headgear of Osiris, and is referred to as a “beneficent spirit” (Figure 28). His brother Pihor is less prominent in the reliefs, and this subordinate role may indicate that his body was not recovered at Dendur, or it may have been devoured by a scavenging crocodile.



20 Chamber cut in the hillside behind the temple at Dendur, probably the original resting place of the coffin of Pedesi and perhaps also of the remains of Pihor. The vestibule built in front of it has disappeared, but the slot that received the end roofing slab is still visible

21 A crocodile basking on a sandbank among the islands of the First Cataract, as photographed by Francis Frith in 1857. Suchos, or Sobek, the crocodile god, was venerated or propitiated in some parts of Egypt, particularly where the Nile was impeded by sandbanks. In other places he was execrated as the manifestation of evil. The silent emergence of these powerful and deadly creatures from the swirl of water symbolized the destructive force of the Nile flood and its scavenging properties of clearing away the refuse and debris on the riverbanks each year. There is reason to believe that humans, dead or alive, who were consumed by crocodiles, were thought to undergo an apotheosis, a return to the elemental forces of creation. Crocodiles disappeared from the lower Nile after the building of the old Aswan dam. Plate from Egypt and Palestine Photographed and Described (London, 1858/59). Metropolitan Museum, David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 66.640



22 The pharaoh offers incense and water to Pedesi and Pihor, who are seated and holding was scepters and ankh signs as gods. Raised relief on the south wall of the interior of the Pronaos





THE TEMPLE VISITED

The victories of Petronius were followed by an era of peace and rehabilitation in the Dodekaschoinos. In this work, the priests of Isis played a cardinal role as the nominal governors of the region. A large temple at Kalabsha was built on an older foundation (Figure 11), and others on main sites were repaired and extended. One of the sites to receive attention between 23 and 10 B.C. was the little shrine to Prince Pedesi at Dendur, and the reason for this special recognition was not only piety but also politics. Kuper and his sons had been appointed to positions of trust and authority by Gallus, and it was only judicious that their tribe, the Blemmyes, should be aware of the value that the Romans had placed upon their loyalty. It was therefore decided to build a small temple at Dendur on virgin ground in front of the burial place of Pedesi as a memorial to the drowned brothers and to the greater glory of Isis of Philae. Fine sandstone was quarried for the building in the vicinity, and architects, masons, sculptors, and painters came from their studios on Philae to work on the site. The reliefs reflect the style of the period, with its suave, sensual modeling of the human form, its congested inscriptions, and its reduction of individual glyphs and emblems to mere decorative patterns: what in short Miss Edwards regarded as "Decadence." By Roman times temple building had long been regulated into a well-established system that was preserved in writings said to have fallen from heaven at Sakkarah in the days of Imhotep, the renowned patron of architects who had built the first great stone structure in Egypt, the Step Pyramid of King Djoser, some 2500 years earlier.

The Egyptian temple, "the house of the god," was not built for the worshiper but exclusively for the god himself. Here he lived like a great magnate on his estate, tended by his "servants" (the priests). Perhaps it would be better to say that the temple was the place not where the god lived, but where he manifested himself in the form of an image at certain times of the day as a result of worship, as he had done since the moment of his coming into existence at the creation of the world. The temple had therefore also existed since the "First Time" and enshrined in its constructional features Egyptian cosmological ideas.

The myth of creation, according to the Egyptians, was based on their experience of conditions in the Nile Valley, where every year they saw their world dissolve into a waste of waters during the inundation, followed by its reappearance first as a narrow mound of land as

23 Central panel of the ceiling of the Pronaos with a design of the goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt as flying vultures wearing their distinctive crowns. The goddess of Upper Egypt has been mistakenly given a cobra's head. They are facing the doorway into the second chamber. The rest of the ceiling was once painted blue with yellow stars symbolizing the day and night skies



the flood subsided. Perversely they interpreted this emergence as caused by the raising up of the land from the waters of Chaos. It was on these mounds of sand and alluvium that bits of vegetation and seeds carried on the flood found a resting place and began to germinate. In a short time what had been a barren hillock rising out of the watery desolation was a flourishing thicket busy with insect and bird life. This, then, was how the world began: out of the waters of Chaos, containing all the germs of living things in inchoate form, had arisen a primeval mound on which the Creator manifested himself at the First Time. The epiphany of the god was in the form of his soul as a bird, a falcon according to some beliefs, an ibis or a heron or a phoenix according to others. It was necessary that the god should protect himself from profane eyes, and around him by magic appeared a little reed or palm-leaf shelter with a fence guarded by an upright pole with a bit of cloth attached to its summit, like a flag, to show that the place was taboo.

As the work of creation progressed and other gods appeared, the holy firmament was separated from the new marshy earth by raising it aloft and supporting it on poles. Thus the temple as the abode of the god grew to its final form not as a tectonic reality but as myth made tangible in stone. This finite model of the universe is visible in every Egyptian temple. Thus the sanctuary housing the image of the god is in the form of the primeval shrine and is built at the highest point of the ground on a kind of hillock. The adjacent hypostyle hall, where the subsidiary gods of the temple reside, represents the primordial marsh with its columns rising from the water to support the ceiling in the form of the sky, which has a design of stars or constellations or flying vultures upon it (Figure 23). The fact that the temple stands in a marsh would have been evident from the design of its floor, now usually destroyed, but around the base of the walls of most temples still remain carved representations of Nile and fen godlings bringing their produce as offerings among the marsh plants (see Figure 24). Decorative panels in the reliefs, too, are often framed by sky signs supported on land signs by sky poles in the form of was scepters (see Figure 17). Such details may be traced even in so modest a building as the temple of Dendur.

24 The pharaoh leads a procession of marsh gods and field goddesses, bearing the produce of the Nile, into the temple. Dado carved in raised relief in the Pronaos





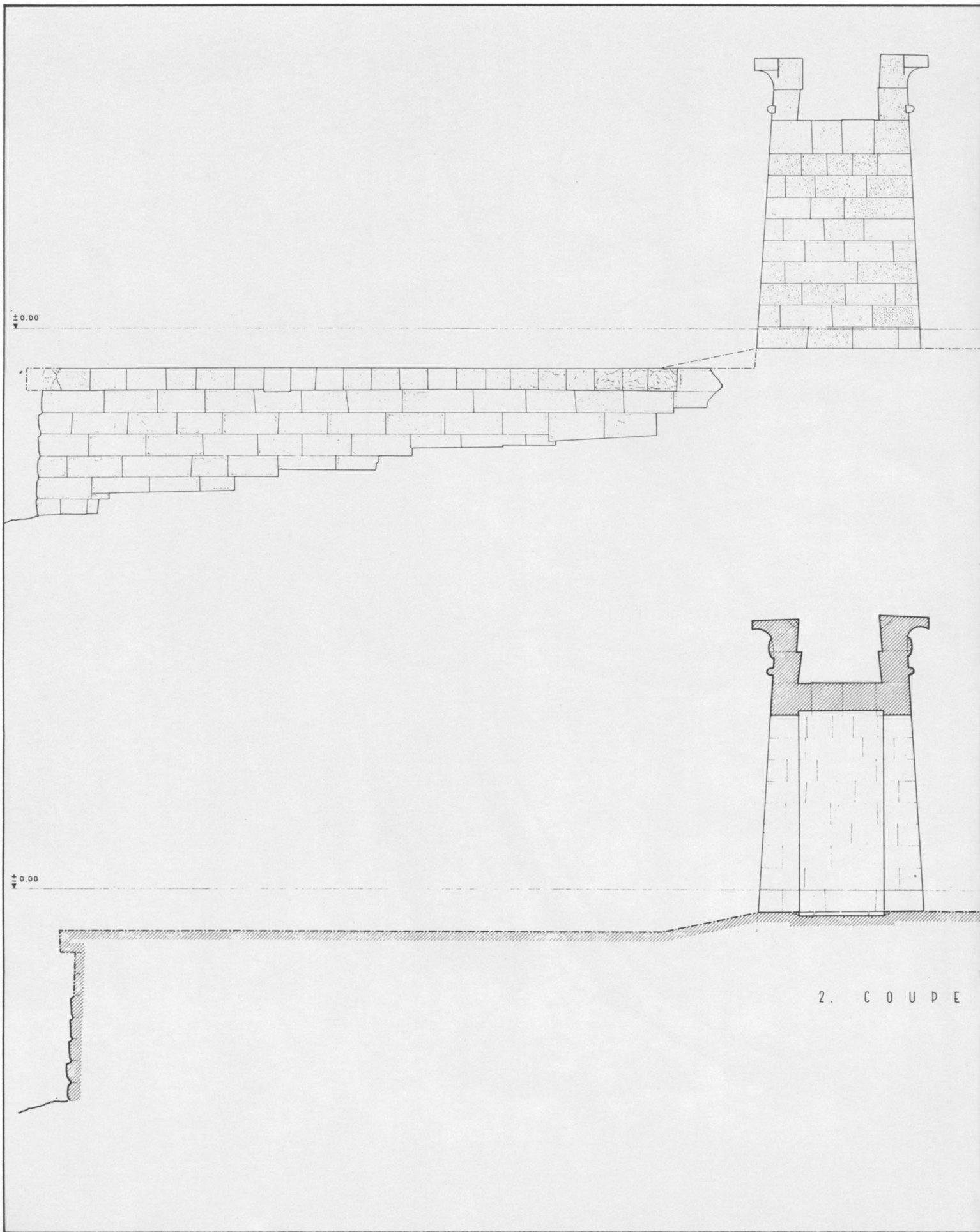
Of course some of the features of the great temples of Egypt, which often took centuries to complete, are missing in Dendur, which must have been rapidly built as a mortuary chapel in one operation. There is no colonnaded court with a pylon and flagpoles, features of the sun cult that were added to the primal temple during the solarization of Egyptian religion in the New Kingdom (about 1550 B.C.). No sphinxes watch the approach to the entrance; no statues of lions protect the thresholds, though figures of lions carved in relief will be found to guard doors in the Pronaos (Figure 25). No scenes of warfare, with the conquering pharaoh smiting a mass of disordered foes, are represented on the outer walls to drive evil away from the holy precincts (see Figure 19). No lion gargoyles lead off storm water from the roof and tame it into insignificance. All the appurtenances of a great temple are also missing, its gardens, stockyards, aviaries, wells, and workshops. There would be, however, a boundary wall that once enclosed the entire precincts, running parallel with the river on its eastern side and turning at right angles at each end to abut the hill at its western ends. This wall was doubtless built of mud brick, which, however, had disappeared by the beginning of the nineteenth century, leaving only the stone entrance Gateway standing on the quay that formed the river side of the platform on which the temple was built (Figure 8). A few priests' houses were built in the cramped area adjacent to the temple between the river's verge and the hillside, but at no time could a large staff have been accommodated. The main approach was from the river through the Gateway, which is oriented from east to west, and which we are now ready to visit.

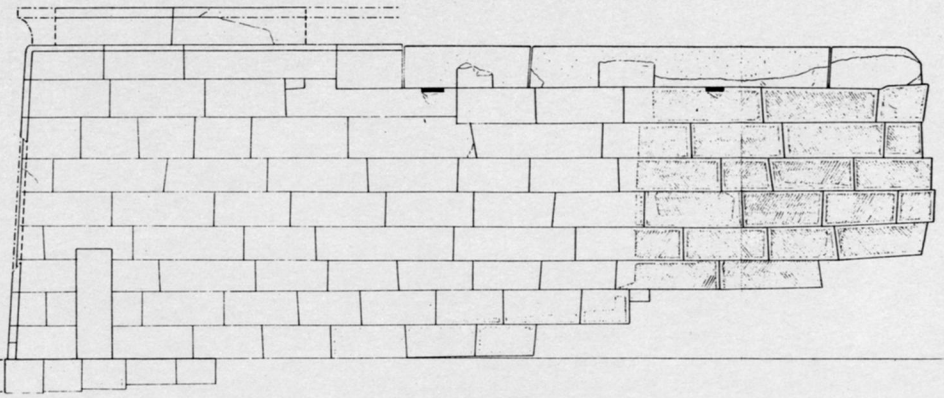
25 A lion guardian sitting at the base of the left-hand jamb of the inner doorway of the Pronaos. The reeds held in its paws have been carved in error for similarly shaped knives, which were often supplied to protective demons

Overleaf:

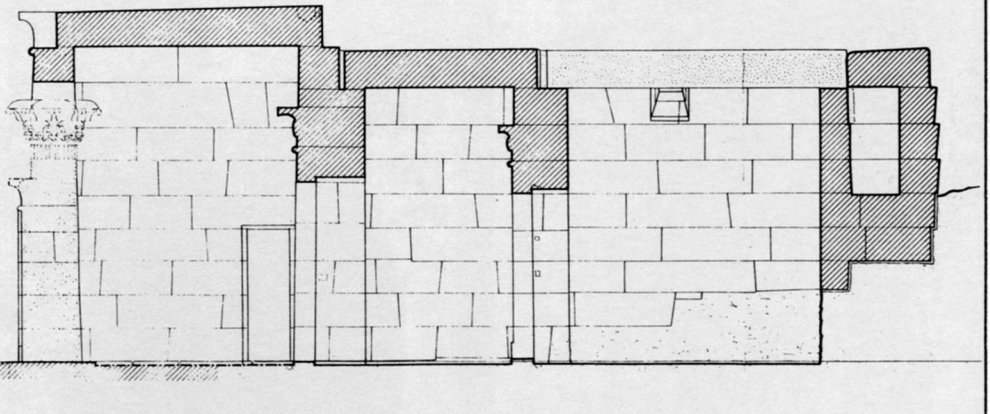
26 North elevation, cross section (looking toward the south), and plan of Dendur, drawn up by the Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte. The temple itself consists of three chambers leading one into another: the Pronaos, the Vestibule, and the Sanctuary. Visible at the far right in the cross section is the hidden chamber in the rear wall (see Figure 46)



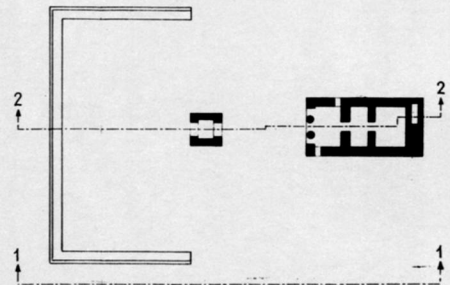




1. É L É V A T I O N F A C E N O R D



L O N G I T U D I N A L E V E R S L E S U D



H. L. Rosta
7.3.68



The entrance Gateway (Figure 27) is of the usual Egyptian pattern, neatly built of massive, well-cut blocks of stone with a cavetto cornice and torus molding below, reminders of the simple vegetable construction of prehistoric buildings with walls made of mud-daubed hurdles reinforced with bundles of reeds lashed along the edges. A winged disk representing the god Horus of Edfu is placed above the lintel, as it is in other doorways of the temple. According to the myth inscribed in the temple at Edfu, Horus flew up into the empyrean in this winged form in order to descry the lurking enemies of the sun god. The latter ordained that the winged disk should henceforth be placed as a protection over all temple doorways.

27 The temple Gateway, built of sandstone blocks, which originally penetrated the mud-brick wall enclosing the entire temple precincts. By the beginning of the last century, no traces of this wall remained. A winged disk representing the god Horus of Edfu is placed above the lintel, as it is in other doorways of the temple to ward off the forces of evil

28 The pharaoh offers a bag of eye paint to Pedesi, who is described in the inscription as "the beneficent spirit," and his brother Pihor, both wearing the circlets and bull's-tail appendages of pharaohs. Although Pedesi takes precedence over Pihor, they must be regarded as standing side by side according to the conventions of Egyptian side drawing. Sunk relief on the east face of the north jamb of the Gateway



Each face of this portal and its reveals are decorated above a dado of marsh plants with scenes showing Augustus making offerings to the gods of the temple; and in response they promise him certain rewards—sovereignty at home and abroad, peace, valor, strength, universal love, immortality, the land and its produce, and “a great Nile in its season.” This theme is repeated throughout the entire temple, carved in sunk relief on the exterior walls, where the sunlight falls strongly, and in raised relief in the interior, where the light is subdued (see Figures 14, 18, 30).

Each scene on the Gateway shows the pharaoh making offerings to a pair of divinities, among whom appear the following gods of the locality: Isis, Osiris, Horus, Harpocrates, Nephthys, and Hathor of Philae and Bigga; Khnum, Satis, and Hathor of Elephantine and Bigga; Amun of Dabod and Philae; Thoth and Tephennis of Dakka; and the Nubian gods Arsenuphis and Mandu-

29 Looking through the Gateway from the west. The masts of a felucca tied up at water level next to the platform are visible at the center. In these reliefs the pharaoh makes offerings to pairs of divinities

30 The thickness of the south jamb of the Gateway. Above, the pharaoh offers two vases of wine to Horus of Miam (the modern Aniba), who promises him “valor” in return. Below, he offers the symbols of stability, life, and power to Osiris, who appears not in his usual mummiform guise but as a crowned monarch. This illustration shows the raised relief on the thickness in shadow, and the sunk relief on the Gateway face in sunlight







lis. Included among these immortals are also the divinized Pedesi and Pihor (Figure 28).

The pharaoh stands in these scenes facing inward, an orientation that shows he is entering the temple and proceeding toward the gods in the Sanctuary, and this processional order is followed in all the exterior and interior reliefs (Figures 24, 38). As the intermediary between man and the gods, the pharaoh makes the offerings; and as he is a god himself, he is shown on the same scale as the deity. The pharaoh ruling at the time this temple was built was Augustus, and his name is therefore inscribed in some of the cartouches, although he is more commonly referred to merely by the title "Pharaoh" (Figure 31).

As pictures of the same offering scene would be somewhat monotonous, variety is given to the icons by ringing the changes on the crowns that Augustus wears. It will be found generally that the reliefs on the northern half of the building show him with the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, while in the southern half he wears the White Crown of Upper Egypt (Figures 32, 33). There

31 Reliefs in the north half of the Pronaos. The pharaoh makes offerings to the seated gods of the region, Thoth and Tephnenis (left) and to Horus (right). Above is a frieze of the Golden Horus in the form of a falcon, protecting each side of cartouches bearing the names of "Caesar" and "Autocrator" (Augustus) that alternate with those of "Pharaoh" (right)

32 Relief in the south half of the Pronaos. It shows, according to the inscription, "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Autocrator, son of the Sun God, Lord of Crowns, Caesar, living forever," wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt and consecrating sacrificed beasts to Isis of Philae. The graffiti are by 19th-century visitors (see Figures 40-43)

33 Relief in the north half of the Pronaos. Augustus (right) wears the Red Crown of Lower Egypt and consecrates sacrificed beasts to Pedesi, "son of Kuper"



34 Composite capital of clustered papyrus umbels, north column of the Pronaos façade. Above, on the abacus, are incised the eyes of Horus, flanking the life sign, symbolizing, among other things, the continuing life of the temple and the soundness and completeness of its structure. On the architrave is part of the winged disk with its description, “Horus of Edfu, the Great God, Lord of Heaven, with dappled plumage,” followed by alternating symbols for “endurance” and “welfare,” thus ensuring the future of the temple and its functions

35 Sunk relief on the shaft of the south column of the Pronaos, showing the figure of the god Heh kneeling on the glyph for “gold.” The eight Heh gods support the four corners of heaven, according to some beliefs, but the notched palm ribs that they carry and the glyphs at their base signify “millions of years of rule,” indicating the length of time the temple will last



are, however, exceptions to this general scheme of orientation, perhaps through errors or misunderstandings by the sculptors. Similarly the offerings are varied and comprise pots of water, milk, beer, and wine; eye paint, crowns, and fillets; incense, flowers, sistra, and a water clock. Most significantly the pharaoh offers a model of a field to Isis, symbolizing his grant of the lands on which her temples are built (Figure 38).

Traversing the small court beyond the Gateway brings the visitor to the temple itself, which consists of three chambers, leading one into another on rising ground along the east-west axis for a total distance of 40 feet. The first room, the Pronaos (P. 1, Figure 4), takes the place of a hypostyle hall in the larger temples, its ceiling upheld by a forest of columns. Here the columns are reduced to two, thus forming a simple kiosk, open at the front, since each of the screen walls that flanked the central entrance has now disappeared except for one fragment. Each column has a composite capital of clustered papyrus umbels, while the shaft represents a bundle of stems lashed top and bottom (Figure 34). Both are carved with sunk reliefs of men bearing offerings of animals and flowers into the temple (Figure 35). The jambs of the central doorway and its broken “lintel” were cut back when the temple was converted into a church in Christian times.

The interior of the Pronaos is the best preserved and the most interesting part of the temple. Its rear wall is pierced by a doorway on the main axis leading into the other rooms. Beneath its cavetto cornice carrying the winged disk, the lintel and jambs are decorated with reliefs of the pharaoh offering to the gods. Similarly, the walls of this chamber above the dado are covered with scenes of him offering to the gods who dwell in the Pronaos. In the upper register, below the frieze, the gods are seated on thrones; in the lower they are standing (Figures 31, 33). Among the deities worshiped appear the Osirian triad, Khnum, Thoth, Tephenis, Arsenuphis, and Pedesi and Pihor.



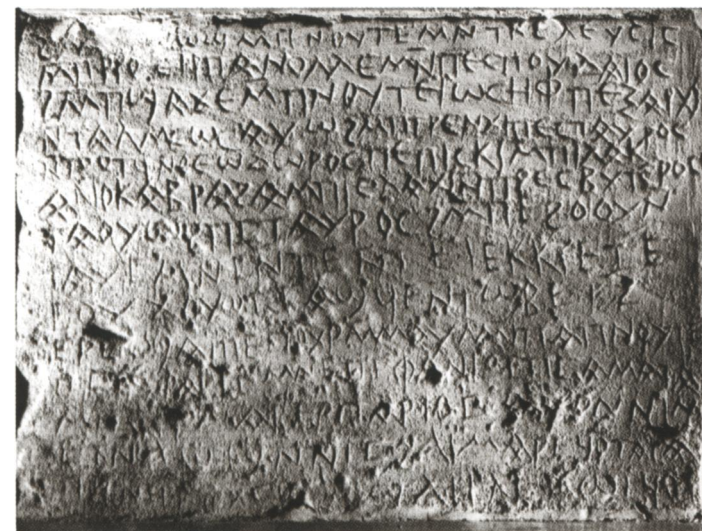
The scenes on the exterior south wall are interrupted by a doorway that leads into the Pronaos (Figure 37); and within its thickness is a Coptic inscription referring to the conversion of the temple into a church by a priest Abraham when Theodorus was bishop of Philae in 577 A.D. (Figure 36). The reliefs on the north wall have also been interrupted by a doorway that was cut as a modification after the decoration was complete and which has damaged scenes on the interior as well as the exterior (Figure 38). The sunk reliefs on the exterior walls follow closely in style and design the decoration of the Pronaos (Figures 38, 39).

The second chamber, the vestibule in the normal Egyptian temple, was probably used for storing offerings, vessels, and other furniture used in the cult. It is undecorated apart from the lintel and jambs of its western doorway that leads into the third chamber, the Sanctuary.

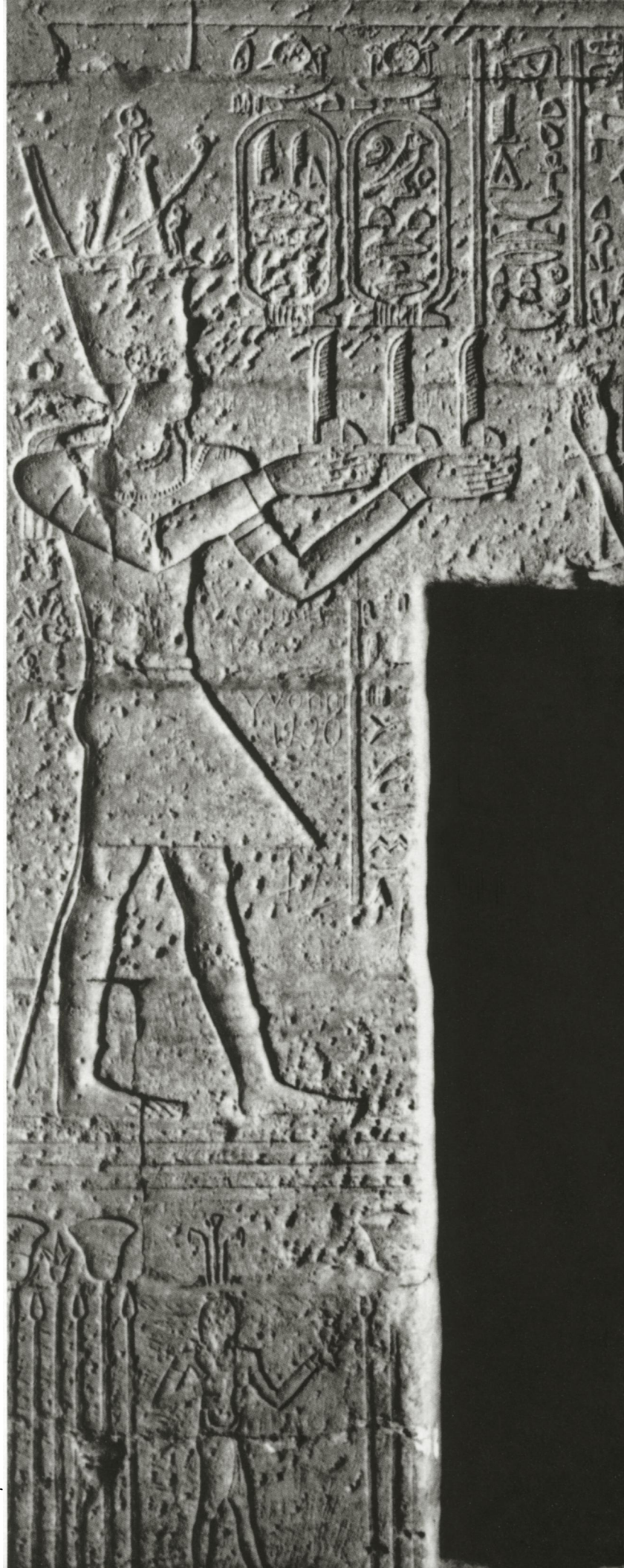
It is in the sanctuary of the Egyptian temple that the religious procession culminates. The floor rises to form the primeval mound, the ceiling is lowered to represent the simple reed shelter of the First Time, and the officiant now finds himself face to face with the god in elemental darkness. The god is present in the form of his image or his fetish; and the daily cult is concerned

36 Coptic inscription cut in a reveal of the south doorway naming "Presbyter Abraham" as responsible for altering the temple into a Christian church under the orders of the Nubian king Eirpanome and Joseph, the exarch of Kalabsha, when Theodorus was bishop of Philae in 577 A. D.

37 The elegant doorway on the exterior south wall leading into the Pronaos. The jambs are decorated with the goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt as cobras wearing the Red and White crowns and twining around the heraldic plants of Egypt. The lintel carries the winged sun disk and above it the emblem of the newborn sun, a winged scarab rolling the disk of the sun between its forelegs







38 Relief on the exterior north wall showing Augustus offering a model of a field with reeds growing on it, symbolizing the land dedicated to Isis, "Mistress of Philae and the Southern Lands." She is accompanied by her son Horus, falcon-headed and wearing the Double Crown, having been confirmed in his possession of his kingdom of Upper and Lower Egypt. The figure of Isis was partly mutilated by the later cutting of the doorway, and her arm was recarved to receive the offerings. The concealing plaster has now fallen away, exposing part of an earlier arm that held a scepter







with the unveiling, asperging, censuring, and anointing of this image and presenting to it the food offerings. It comes as something of an anticlimax, therefore, to find in Dendur that the chamber is undecorated and is lit by two louvers at the roof line. In place of the usual podium for a statue or boat shrine (see Figure 45), a stela is carved in the west wall, representing the façade of an Egyptian tabernacle with a somewhat crude relief of Pedesi and Pihor offering to Osiris and Isis (Figure 44): but at last we are confronted with the chief gods to whom the temple is dedicated, though Pedesi and Pihor are subordinate in importance.

The stela that now appears unfinished and damaged may originally have been supplemented by plaster and covered with a sheet of gold foil worked in repoussé. It would almost certainly have been covered by a veil or concealed behind doors, and there is evidence for a wooden framing that was once attached to the stonework in the line of eleven holes around the edges of the scene. The loss of this fixture is but one example of the damage that the temple has sustained in the two thousand years of its history. By the time of its consecration, it had been brightly painted. Wooden doors, perhaps covered in part with gold leaf, closed the entrances. No doubt by the time Presbyter Abraham erected a cross on the roof, it had stood pillaged and neglected for some years. The Copts covered the reliefs with a layer of plaster and reversed the orientation of the building, making the southern doorway of the Pronaos the main entrance. Abandoned after the conversion of Nubia to Islam in the thirteenth century, the temple was steadily robbed of its stone and brick by the local natives until it stood in the state of dilapidation that travelers of the nineteenth century remarked before they added their contribution by carving their names upon it.

39 Relief on the exterior north wall of Augustus (left) offering a golden collar to Hathor, "Mistress of Bigga, the Eye of the Sun God, Mistress of all the Gods." She is accompanied by Harpocrates (the child Horus), the son of Isis and Osiris, as an infant about to suck his finger. Augustus makes the offering so that Hathor may give him "the love of everybody"

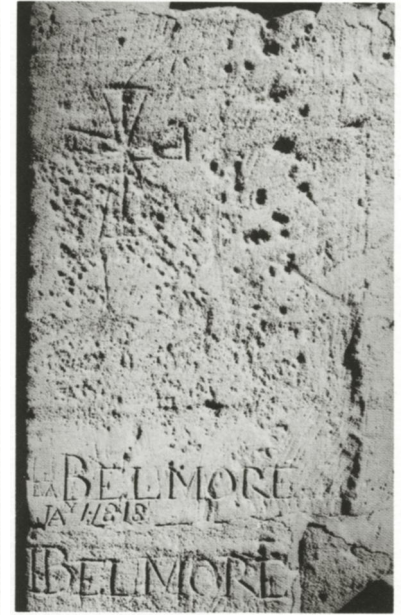
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DENDUR: THE GRAFFITI

From the moment it was built, the temple at Dendur became a vast scribbling pad on which visitors throughout the centuries have been tempted to leave their marks. As early as 10 B.C. a certain Pakhom inscribed an obscure oath in demotic before a figure of Pihor on the north wall of the Pronaos, renouncing certain dues from the priests at Dendur (Figure 41). Nearly six hundred years later Presbyter Abraham recorded the consecration of the temple as a Christian church (Figure 36). A Coptic cross (Figure 43) and several Arabic graffiti of uncertain date were added over the years, but the names that are of most interest belong to the earlier decades of the last century, when a number of venturesome travelers, many of them pioneer Egyptologists, visited Dendur, though not all of them felt constrained to make a record of the event in imperishable stone.

Among the first was Thomas Legh, an English M.P. accompanied by the American F. Bartho, who made a tour up the Nile as far as Derr in 1812/13. It was probably soon afterward that Bernardo Drovetti (1776-1852) carved his name in the Pronaos (Figure 40). Drovetti, an Italian who had taken French nationality and distinguished himself as a colonel in Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, was appointed the French consul-general in Egypt, and avidly set about collecting antiquities, aided by a number of unscrupulous agents. His three collections form the nucleus of the Egyptian departments in the museums of Paris, Berlin, and Turin.

About 1816-1818 the second Earl of Belmore and a large party of relations, friends, and retainers visited Egypt and the Holy Land aboard his yacht "Osprey" under the command of his kinsman, Captain A. L. Corry, R.N. Apparently the group stopped at Dendur on its way upstream late in 1817, when Corry added his name to the interior of the Pronaos (Figure 40). On January 1, 1818, they reached Dendur again on their return from a visit to the Second Cataract, and spent the afternoon

in the temple (part of it at least further embellishing the wall of the Pronaos [Figure 43]), while the Earl's physician, Robert Richardson, who published a laconic account of their voyage, copied "the Greek inscription recording that it had been repaired and dedicated to the Roman Hermes." Unfortunately, the inscription was in Coptic (Figure 36), and Richardson's translation was therefore wide of the mark.

Another visitor was Luther Bradish (1783-1863), who was sent to the Levant in the early years of the last century to promote American trade with the Ottoman Empire. During his travels in Egypt in 1821, he arrived at Dendereh in time to find the French cutting the famous zodiac out of the roof of the temple. He promptly returned to Cairo, where his indignant report of this outrage only provoked the intervention of Henry Salt, the British consul, who attempted to seize the zodiac for his own collection but could not prevent its export to France. When Bradish paused at Dendur to carve his name on the facade of the Pronaos (Figure 42), he surely could never have imagined that the vagary of an idle hour would one day be exhibited as a footnote to history in the city he was to serve as president of its historical society (1850-1863).

The doughty Amelia Edwards (1831-1892), who was so captivated by Dendur at sunset (see P. 6), did not carve her name there, and in fact strongly deprecated the practice, though she relented sufficiently to allow a companion to write their names in the chapel at Abu Simbel that her party discovered in 1874.

As a result of her chance visit to Egypt in 1873/74, Amelia abandoned novel writing for Egyptology, and with the help of two friends founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society), which still flourishes with public support from both sides of the Atlantic. Some of the important finds from the excavations it has promoted are in the collection of the Metropolitan.



THE MYSTERY OF DENDUR

The temple of Dendur is the largest and most impressive of the surviving monuments that commemorate human beings sanctified by drowning in the Nile. It is unique in hallowing two brothers; but it is clear that the more important of the pair was Pedesi, who alone is worshiped by the pharaoh in eleven scenes whereas Pihor is so honored on three occasions. They appear together in five scenes, Pedesi always preceding his brother. The reason for this disparity is obscure. We have already suggested that the body of Pihor may not have been recovered and buried at Dendur. Alternatively, Pedesi may have been the elder, and as heir to his father's high office was the more important. Both men, however, are represented as kings, bearing on their heads the circlet with uraeus and wearing the bull's-tail appendage of a pharaoh (Figures 28, 32). But it is doubtful whether the sons of a chieftain of a semibarbaric tribe on the southern borders of Egypt would have been regarded as the equivalent of a pharaoh, and the reason for so exalting them must be sought elsewhere.

It will be apparent from their different representations that while Pedesi wears the white crown flanked with ostrich feathers usually assumed by Osiris, Pihor carries no such distinction, yet above his head in each case appears a sun disk with double uraei (Figure 22). This emblem may be used to denote the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, and it is used in this way in the titles of Augustus in this very temple (Figures 31, 32). It could be argued, therefore, that while Pedesi is represented as a surrogate for Osiris, Pihor appears as a substitute for the pharaoh. In other words, both are mock kings; and in the Sanctuary they make offerings to Isis and Osiris like pharaohs.

We know little of the rites that the pharaoh had to observe every year to ensure that the Nile would inundate copiously at the proper time, but it seems reasonable to believe that in prehistoric days human sacrifice may have been demanded. In years of crisis, the monarch himself may have been ceremonially drowned in the manner of Osiris, whose corpse floated in the Nile flood as "Lord of the Inundation." No doubt in historic times animals or emblems were normally substituted for human beings in ways familiar to anthropologists, but the legend of sanctification by such a sacrifice persisted throughout the centuries.

There is a further feature of the Dendur temple that has not so far been mentioned but which may have a bearing on this problem. Early explorers were quick to realize that the rear wall of the Sanctuary was inordinately thick; and they were not long in uncovering a cavity hidden within it, about 9½ feet long, 6 feet high, and

2¼ feet wide, and so positioned that its distal end lies almost behind the center of the stela in the Sanctuary. Access to this chamber was at the proximal end, closed by a small pivoting block in the outer south wall of the temple (Figure 46). When this door was opened, an orifice was revealed about 2 feet across, wide enough for a man to crawl through into the chamber beyond.

Two different explanations for this chamber have been postulated: first, that it is the tomb to which the burials of the brothers were transferred from their original resting place in the hill immediately behind; and second, that it was used by a priest for delivering oracular responses to petitioners in the Sanctuary, a kind of in-built pious fraud. Against the first hypothesis is the fact that a tomb would have been securely sealed up and not closed by a door capable of being opened at will. Against the second suggestion is the fact that the chamber has no apparent air passages, and the voice would have to pass through nearly 20 inches of stone to reach the listener.

We mentioned earlier that the Egyptian temple was built exclusively for its god. The only humans allowed in the holy precincts were his ritually pure "servants," though in the case of a funerary chapel a relaxation to include descendants of the deceased might have been permitted. But while the humble petitioner might not intrude into the inner rooms of the temple, there were occasions when the god came to him. On certain feast days the god left his house to visit his domains. His image, suitably veiled or hidden in the primeval shrine, was placed on a litter and carried on the shoulders of his priests in procession (see Figure 45). As the cortege went on its circuit amid the shouts of the populace, the chanting of the temple choir, the blowing of trumpets, the beating of drums, the rattling of sistra, and the burning of incense, emotions rose to a pitch of hysteria, and in such a frenzy the moment was ripe for the god to in-

44 Stela in the Sanctuary in the form of a double shrine with a cornice of cobras bearing sun disks on their heads. Within is a relief of Pihor worshiping Isis, who is seated; below, in a partially destroyed scene, Pedesi worships Osiris, who can be recognized by his tall crown with feathers and his title in the damaged inscription

Overleaf:

45 Relief on the rear of the First Pylon of the temple of Isis at Philae, showing priests carrying a boat shrine of the goddess on a litter around her domains. They are preceded by the pharaoh wearing the White Crown and burning incense







46 The beveled block giving access to the hidden chamber seen from inside the rear wall during the reconstruction of the temple at the Metropolitan. Several courses had yet to be placed when this picture was taken. For views of the chamber in cross section and plan see Figure 26

tervene in the affairs of man by giving oracular answers to suppliants by the spasmodic movements of the litter on the shoulders of its bearers. So the morale of true believers was sustained by the presence of the god in their midst, by the evidence of his divine power, and by his concern in their everyday affairs.

At Dendur there is no place for such images of the gods within the Sanctuary, where the stela has more the appearance of the false door of a tomb. The conclusion seems inescapable, therefore, that the remains of Pedesi, and perhaps of Pihor, too, handsomely embalmed and coffined by "the priests of the Nile," lay in the cavity behind the stela and received part of the daily offerings. The evidence of the movable door, however, suggests that on feast days the chamber was opened and their coffins were taken out to be carried like the holy relics they were in procession around the temple domains, particularly those settled by their kinsfolk, the Blemmyes, on the opposite bank of the Nile.

Cyril Aldred

The writer wishes to express his indebtedness to an unpublished study of the temple made by Mr. Eric Young, a former Associate Curator of the Egyptian Department. Other works consulted include:

A. M. Blackman: *The Temple of Dendur* (Cairo, 1911)

A. B. Edwards: *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London, 1891)

J. Monnet-Saleh: "Observations sur le temple de Dendour," in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, Vol. LXVIII (1969), 1-13

DENDUR IN NEW YORK



ARTHUR ROSENBLATT, Vice-President for Architecture and Planning





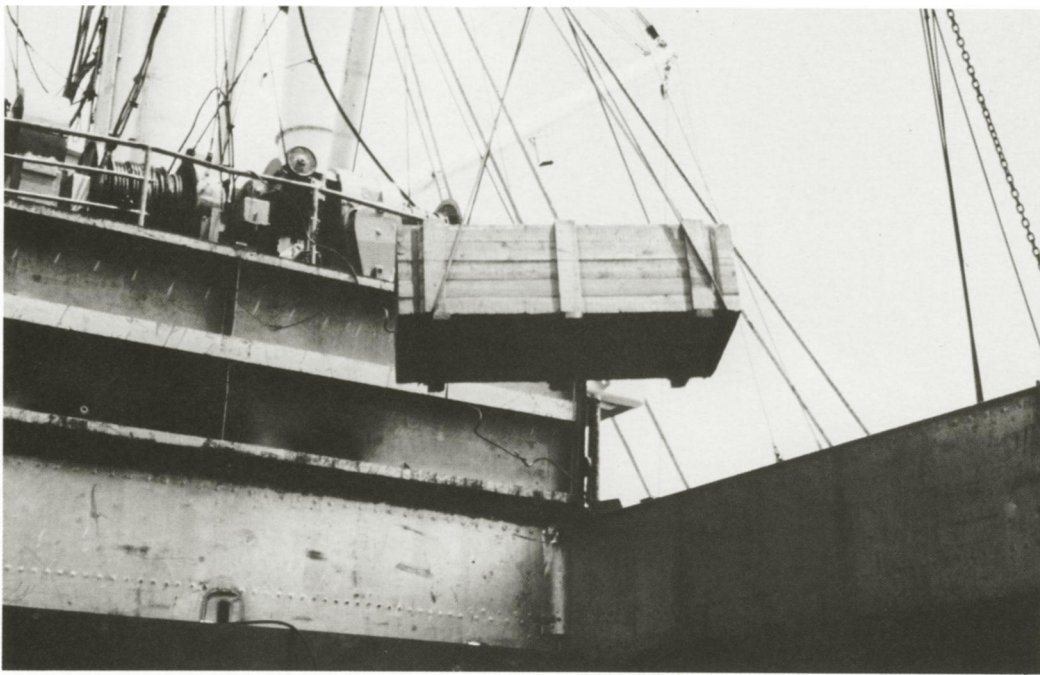
In the 1950s the decision was made to build the new High Dam at Aswan, the ancient frontier between Egypt and Nubia. To provide more fertile land and significant hydroelectric capacity for Egypt's burgeoning population, the dam would create a vast lake of about 3000 square miles. But the sacrifices would be enormous: Nubia would be flooded from the map, its people moved elsewhere, and its priceless heritage of temples, shrines, early Christian churches, and ancient sites submerged forever under the rising waters of the Nile.

To save them required a rescue operation of unbelievable scope. A special committee under the aegis of UNESCO was formed to spearhead an unprecedented world-wide appeal for help to relocate and reassemble as many Nubian monuments as possible, from the great Abu Simbel (see pp. 4, 22) to the small temple of Dendur, dedicated in the first century B.C. to two young brothers who drowned in the Nile.

Dendur was taken down in 1963 by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. Egyptian masons carefully separated the friable sandstone blocks. Complete, detailed drawings of every aspect of the dismantling process were made, indicating the course level, position, and a number for each block. Each was then marked with an incised number corresponding to that on the drawings. When this work had been completed, the blocks were floated on barges to Elephantine Island near Aswan, where they remained until 1968.

In 1965 the United Arab Republic offered Dendur to the United States for its financial assistance in saving Abu Simbel. The offer was not immediately accepted. A special commission was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to review proposals by major American museums and cities for the funding and the placement of the temple. The efforts of Dr. Henry G. Fischer, presently Lila Acheson Wallace Curator in Egyptology at the Metropolitan, and former director Thomas Hoving were successful in convincing the commission that Dendur should come to this museum. Formal acceptance of the temple was not announced until 1967. In the spring and summer of 1968, Dr. Fischer (below) traveled to Elephantine Island to plan and supervise the packing and cataloguing of the blocks. The photograph at the left shows them at Elephantine awaiting shipment to New York.



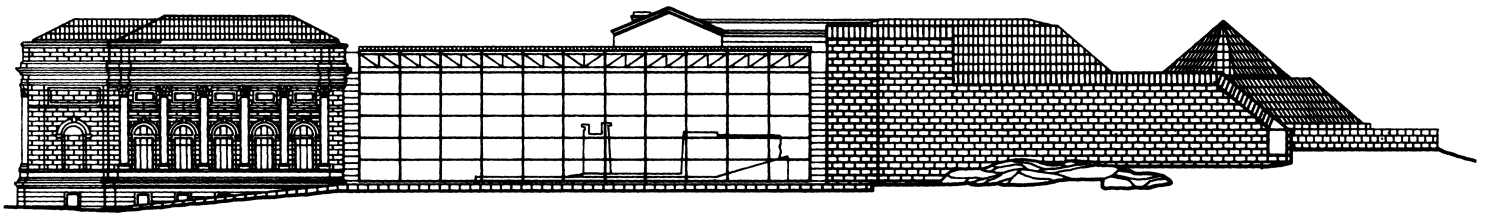




On August 21, 1968, the freighter Concordia Star docked at Pier 10 at Hamilton Avenue in Brooklyn. On board, in the lower hold, beneath Italian cheeses, canned tomatoes, and jars of maraschino cherries, was the temple of Dendur. Packed in over 640 crates and weighing over 800 tons, the blocks from the temple that formerly stood on the banks of the Nile were on the way to their final destination.

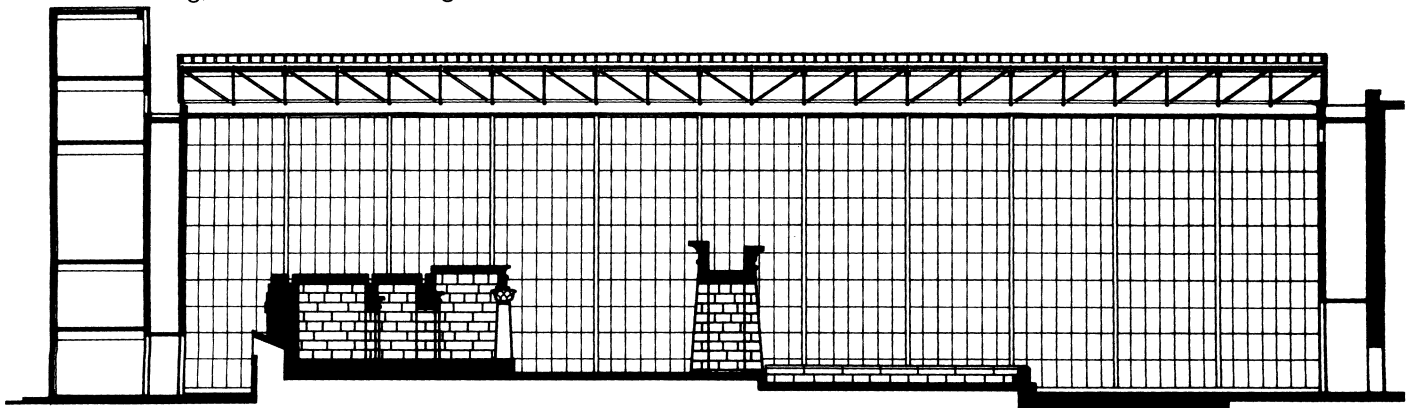
Upon their arrival at the Museum, the blocks, which were put in the charge of Eric Young, then Associate Curator of Egyptian Art, were stored in a huge inflated canvas and vinyl "air structure" put up in the south parking lot (below, left and right). Additional tests and studies of the structural and chemical properties were conducted by Pieter Meyers, the Museum's Research Chemist, and scientists at New York University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Brookhaven National Laboratory. The blocks remained in their temporary shelter until September 1974, when they were moved by truck to their new home at the north end of the Museum.





North elevation (left to right): the 1913 building by McKim, Mead and White, The Sackler Wing, the new American Wing to open in 1980, and, in the background, the Robert Lehman Wing

The Sackler Wing, cross section looking north toward Central Park



Significantly, it was the persuasiveness of the Metropolitan's proposal to put it in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment immediately contiguous to the Museum's splendid Egyptian collection that brought the temple to New York. Such an environment was necessary to prevent the deterioration and "failure" of the stones in the highly humid summer and extreme winter climates of this part of the Western Hemisphere. In addition, the proposed steel-and-glass structure designed by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates would make it possible for the temple to be seen from both inside and outside the Museum, a scheme that did much to convince skeptics that it could be successfully located indoors.

Construction had begun on the new wing to house the temple in 1974. It took longer than expected due to the complexity of the building, which would expand the Museum's facilities on four levels, providing a service

area with loading docks, employee parking, the Center for Far Eastern Studies, and a special exhibition gallery. The building was designated The Sackler Wing when additional funds for it were received from the Doctors Arthur M. Sackler, Mortimer Sackler, and Raymond R. Sackler.

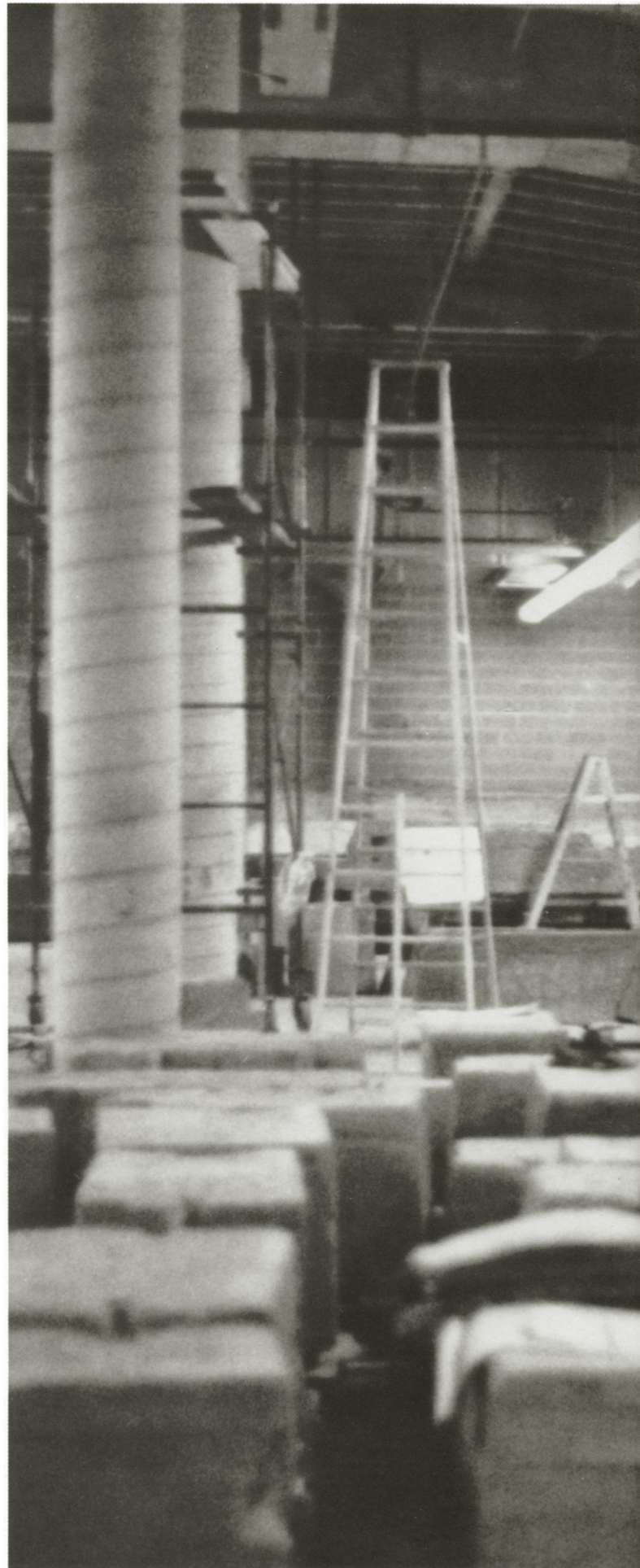
The architects' elevation of the north end of the Museum (at the left, top), demonstrating an unobstructed view of the temple from Central Park, shows the relationship of The Sackler Wing (center) to the 1913 McKim, Mead and White building and the new American Wing, scheduled to open in 1980; the pyramidal structure in the background houses the Robert Lehman Collection. Below it is a cross section of The Sackler Wing looking north toward the park. The illustration immediately below, of the initial stages of construction, shows a wall going up behind the McKim, Mead and White building.



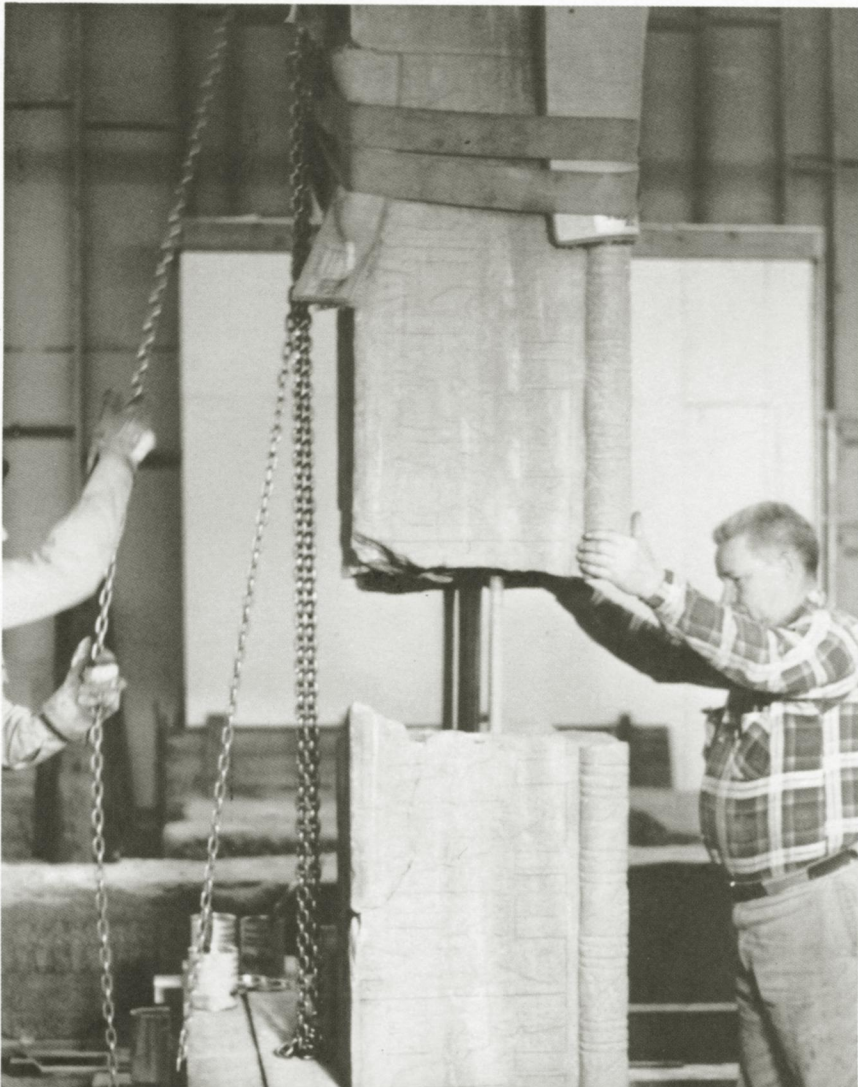


In late 1974, with the completion of the first phase of The Sackler Wing—the platform for the temple and the service area and garage below it—the service area was converted into a huge “stone shop” for the restoration and repair of the blocks. Virginia Burton, then Associate Curator of Egyptian Art, was appointed to supervise this work and the reassembly on the concrete platform.

The temporary “stone shop” provided over 30,000 square feet for the repair work, and it was possible to test reassemblies of very large sections, even whole courses, of the temple (above).





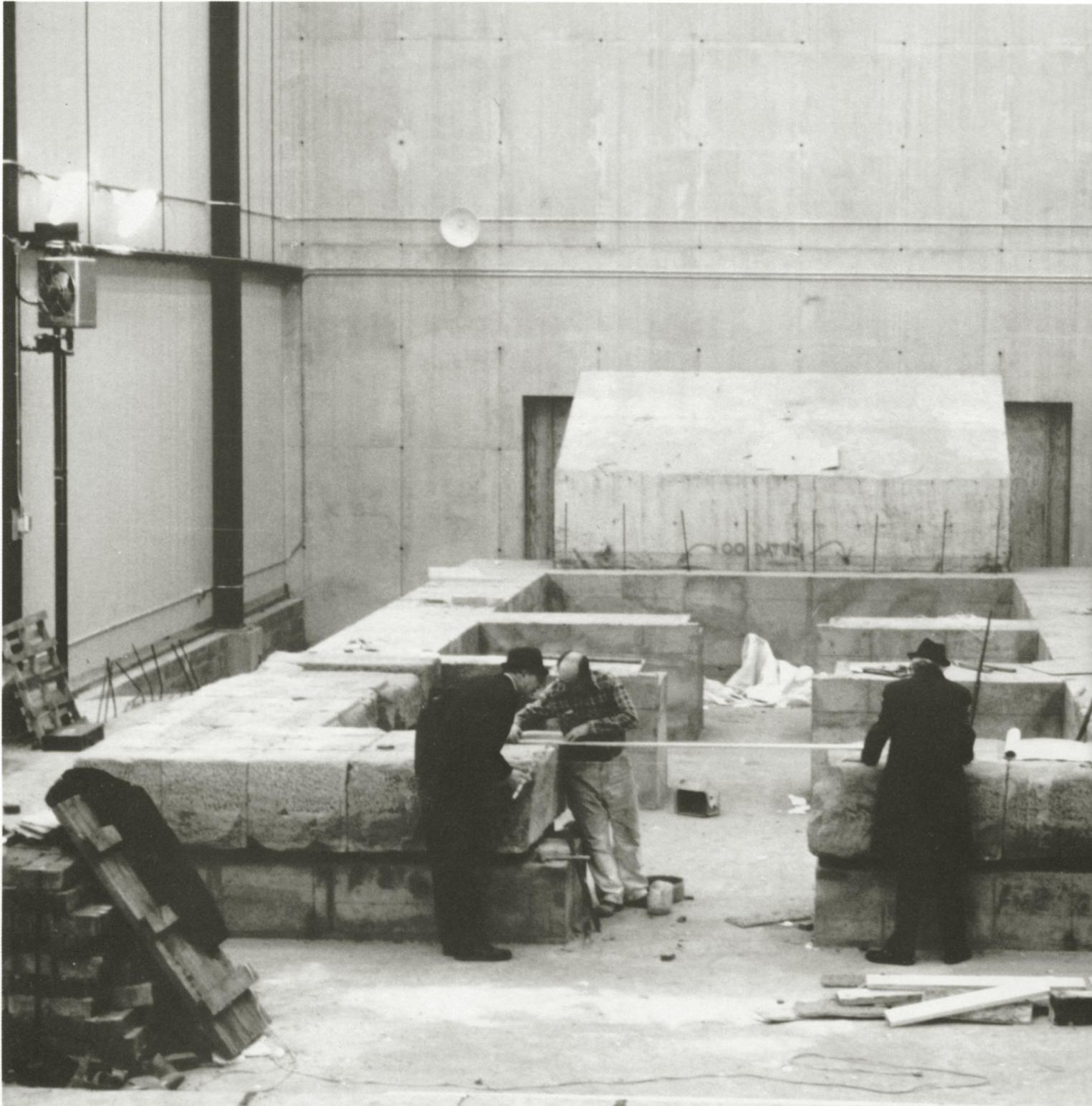


Broken stones were secured with steel rods on concealed surfaces. Eight-foot-long lintels, which may have fractured centuries ago, were joined together with rolled steel sections. Earlier repairs made in 1908 by Barsanti, under the sponsorship of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, were replaced: Barsanti's rusting metal reinforcements were removed and noncorrosive materials were

substituted. To ensure the stability of the rebuilt temple, the proposed renovations were reviewed by Dr. Hanskarl Bandel, a distinguished New York structural engineer.

Visible in the illustration below are the incised numbers noting course level and position and the ancient grooves cut to receive the "dovetail" cramps that originally locked the courses together.



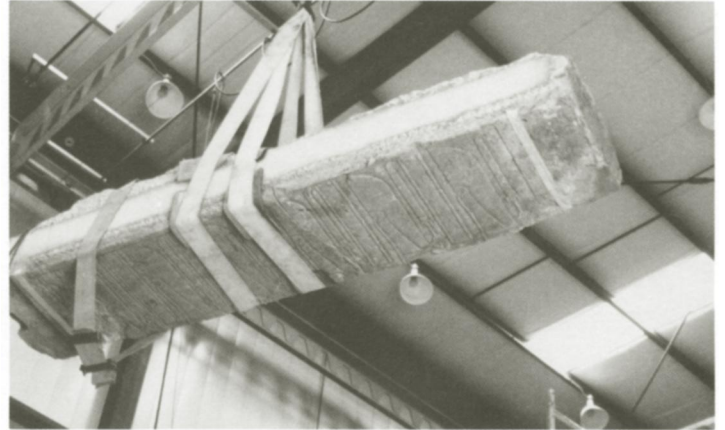
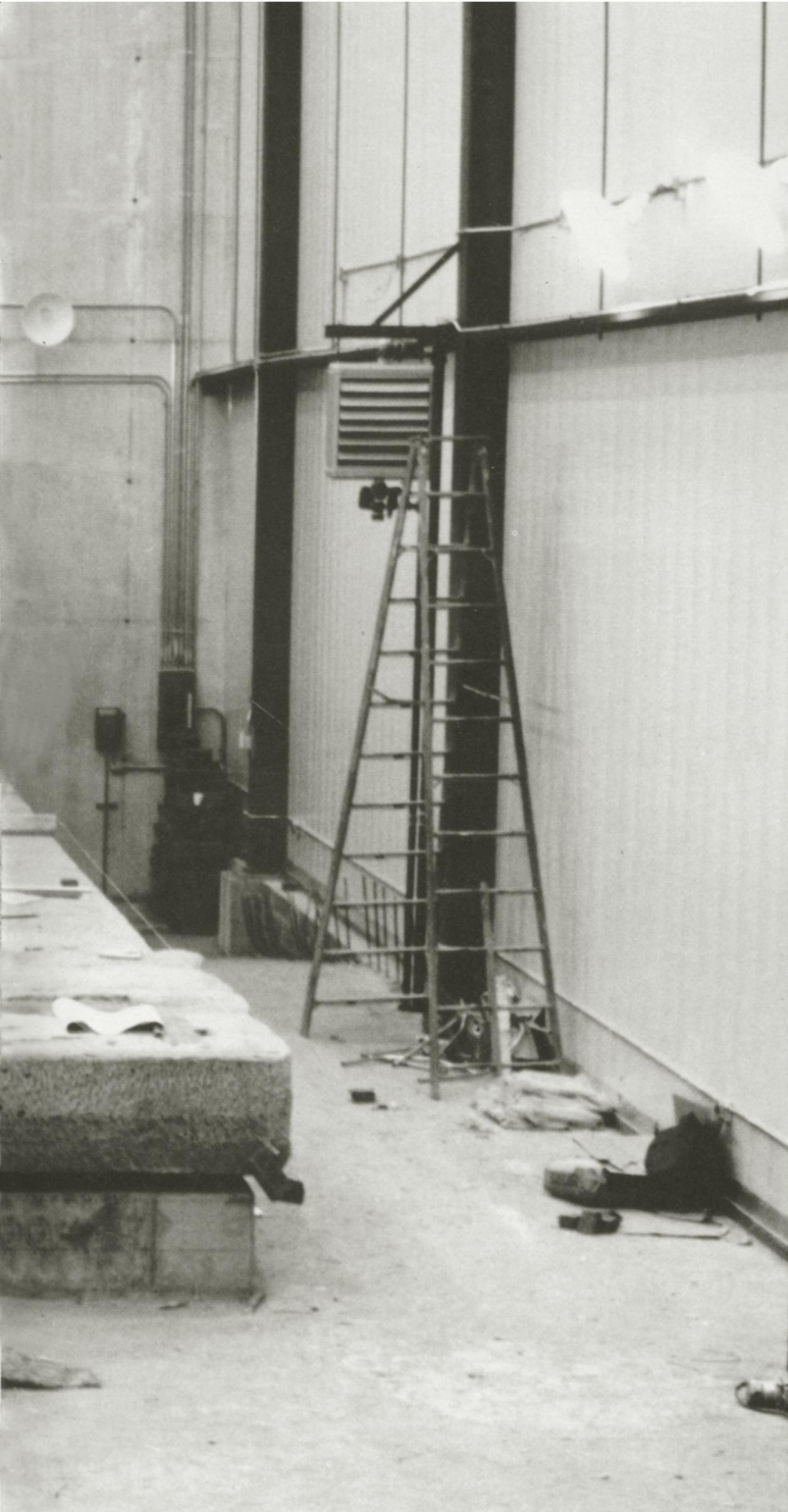


Because the final superstructure of the new wing was not complete at the time reassembly of the temple was to begin, a temporary prefabricated steel enclosure was put up. It was within this structure with its own overhead crane that the temple would actually be rebuilt.

Ed Forbes and Geoffrey Lawford, the architects who had worked on the rebuilding of the Fuentidueña Apse at The Cloisters during the early 1960s, were retained to assist Virginia Burton. Below, Forbes (right) and Lawford (left) check the critical first course with a stone mason.

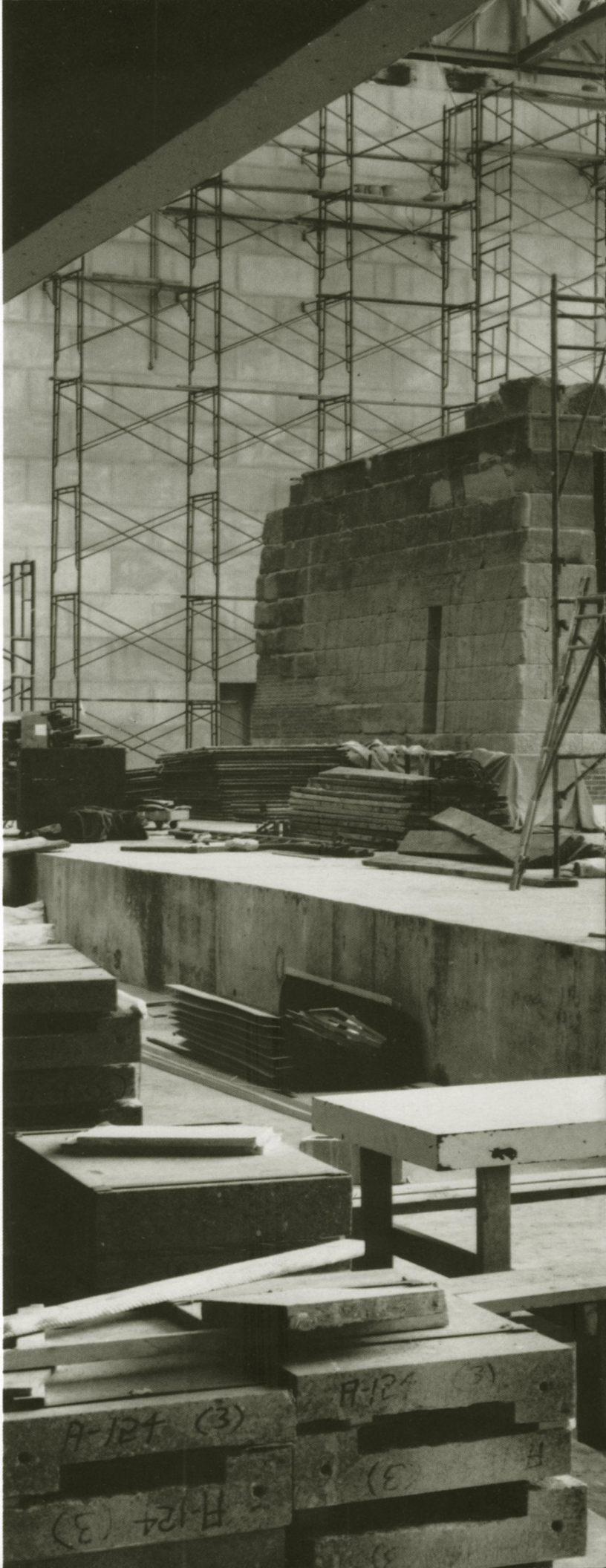
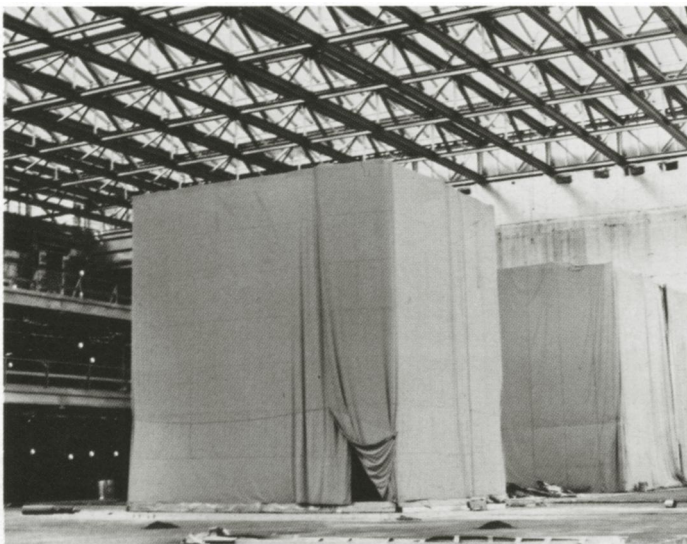
As the repairs were completed, the blocks were brought up to the platform for final assembly. From Course 0 through Course 10 (the temple roof) the stone masons were extremely careful to protect each block: hoists were specially padded and the massive pieces were cautiously guided into their proper positions.

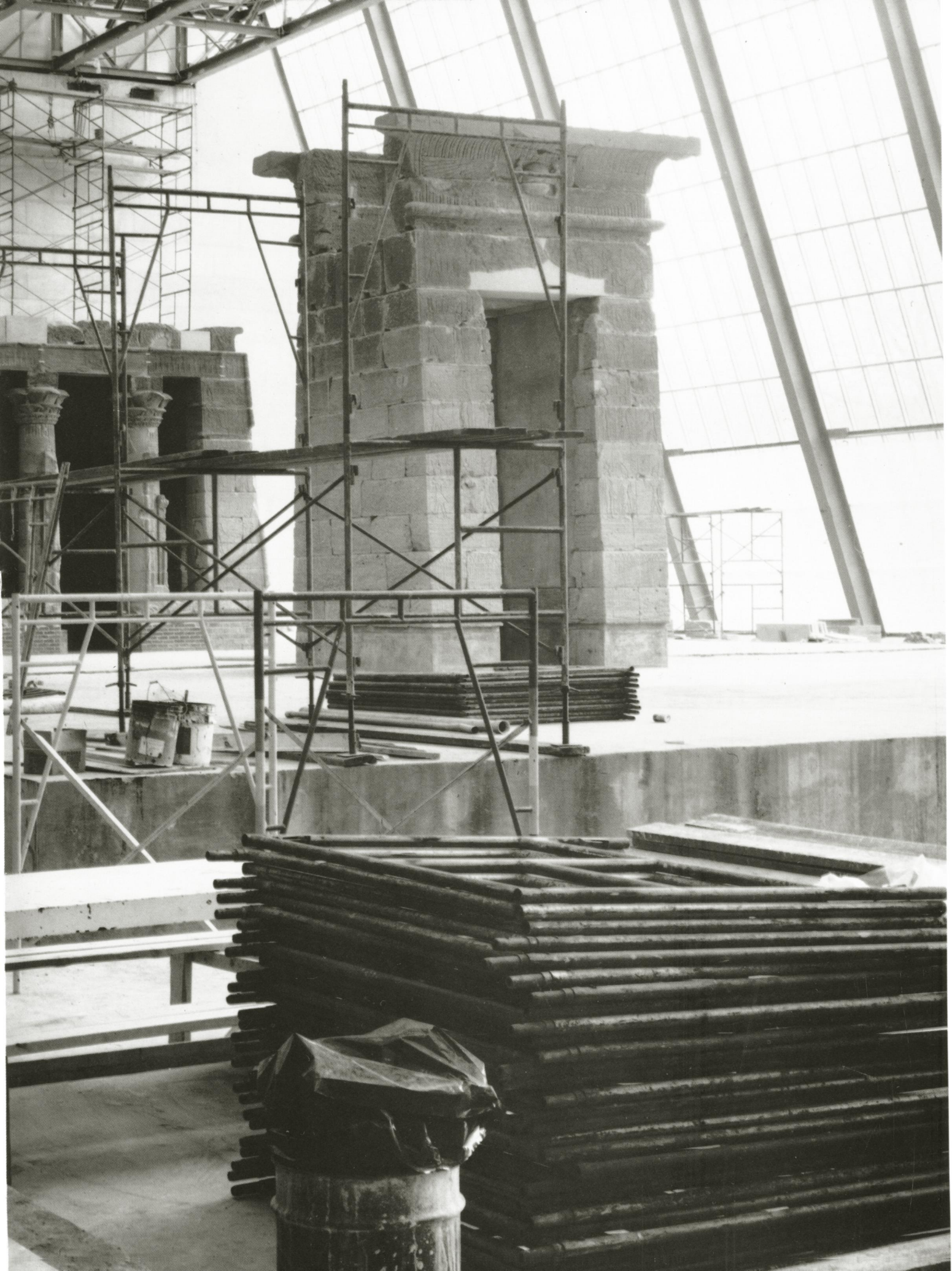
A real esprit de corps existed among the remarkable men on this job. Directly below, a group of them celebrate the placement of the final stone.



The temple's new setting in The Sackler Wing (shown here in the final months of construction) was designed to approximate the light and surroundings of the original location. The glass façade and a skylight roof will introduce controlled light, and a hung glass ceiling will eliminate shadows cast by the enclosing structure. Oriented from east to west, as it had been, the temple stands on a platform simulating the ancient quay. A reflecting pool filling the recessed area surrounding the "quay" is meant to create for the present-day visitor at least an impression of what it must have been to view Dendur on the Nile.

When the temple had been completely reassembled, it was "put under wraps," enclosed in a steel scaffold and covered with tarpaulins to protect it from the major construction going on around it.







The temple from the northeast, May 1978, shortly before work had begun on the granite base and floor. The structural framing above will be covered by the new ceiling.

Cover and Page 1: Entrance to the Pronaos and inner chambers of Dendur in 1838, lithograph by David Roberts. The blue and red paint that Roberts shows on the ceilings is only an indication of what the original decoration might have been. Few visitors to Egyptian temples today realize that they were once vivid, perhaps even garish, with bright primary colors and resplendent with gold and silver overlays and colored inlays. Only in some of the chambers of the temple of Sethos I at Abydos can an idea be gained of the brilliant coloring of the reliefs with which they were once decorated, and even there, of course, the gold,

silver, and precious inlays have long since disappeared. From *Egypt and Nubia*, Vol. II (London, 1849). Metropolitan Museum Library, Presented by Charles Lanier
Frontispiece: Looking through the doorway in the rear of the Pronaos, through the Vestibule, to the stela on the back wall of the Sanctuary

Opposite: Sunk reliefs on the exterior south wall of the temple of Dendur. Above, Caesar Augustus offers wine to the Nubian god Mandulis and to the goddess Edjo of Buto in Lower Egypt; both are seated. Below, Caesar offers a symbol of linen to standing figures of Pedesi, “son of Kuper,” and an unidentified goddess before an altar containing a libation vessel

Back cover: The columns of the entrance to the Pronaos and the inner chambers of the temple of Dendur in New York

Photograph credits: Cyril Aldred, 21; Archiv des Agyptischen Museums Berlin-West, 46-47; Manuscript Department, British Library, 6 (fig. 3); Virginia Burton, 64, 72-77; Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 16-17, 24-29, 32, 34-39, 42-43, 45, 48-52, 54-58, 60-61; Carl Frank, Photo Researchers, Inc., 8-9; Francis Frith, 33; George Gerster, Photo Researchers, Inc., 10-11, 18-19, 22-23; Metropolitan Museum of Art Photo Studio, 6 (fig. 2);

Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, 31; Photographer unknown, 62-63; Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates, 70; Arthur Rosenblatt, 78-79; Cheryl Rossum, 71; J. P. Sebah, 20; Félix Teynard, 15; Malcolm Varon, front cover, inside front cover, 1, 4-5, 12-13, 41, 44, 52-53, 78, inside back cover, back cover; Caroline Ransom Williams, 7; Eric Young, 66-67



