As disciplines, the history and philosophy of science (HPS) and the history of Egyptology very rarely overlap. But they should. When they do, those books stand out in the literature, and, I think, historians and Egyptologists should take notice. This is especially true of William Carruthers’s *Flooded Pasts: UNESCO, Nubia, and the Recolonization of Archaeology*. *Flooded Pasts* is a critical investigation of the process of building the Aswan High Dam in the 1950s to 1970s and is at once historical and political history, as well as a meta-analysis of the practice of archaeology and history in Egypt, by mostly Western groups.

Carruthers takes an eye-catching photo of “#girlboss” archaeologist Wafaa Refaat in the 1960s from the Egyptian magazine *Cairo Scene* as a point of exploration to introduce the main point of his book, which is to raise “questions about the end(s) of colonialism itself, and about the status of archaeology as a ‘postcolonial’ discipline” (pp. 5-6). Throughout the book, as though to emphasize the fact that Egyptian archaeology and Egyptology have never been fully decolonized, he uses words like “salvage” and “rescue” to talk about the mission to move the site of Abu Simbel, specifically. These words are imbued with colonial residue. Flinders Petrie and Amelia Edwards, arguably the founders of British Egyptology as an institutional discipline, used these words and attitudes as they worked to save monuments from destruction—both from time and Egyptians. Carruthers clearly states that UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), founded in Paris in 1945 by mostly Allied powers from World War II, was a colonial operation within Egypt during this endeavor. Their goal, starting in the late 1950s, was to support the building of the Aswan High Dam by removing (salvaging) important sites in southern Egypt and northern Sudan that would be flooded by the dam’s subsequent reservoir, and thereby destroyed.

Carruthers begins his investigation by giving a brief history of previous archaeological surveys of the area, known historically as Nubia, and the geography of the surrounding land. None of these surveys had ever taken into context the people who
lived there. Over the years, Nubians had to uproot their lives, moving north to find dry land and work. He then focuses on the work done in post-1952 Egypt from the perspective, such as it could be done, of Egypt. Carruthers brings in the Cold War implications, the 1952 revolution that saw Gamal Abdel Nasser rise to power, and the ways Nasser navigated a new “postcolonial” Egypt within the divided world. Carruthers went into the archives and spent as much time as he could gathering information not just from UNESCO but also from the Egyptian perspective of the project. He is one of the rare Western historians of Egyptology who reads Arabic and platforms Egyptian ideas.

The book is organized chronologically as well as thematically, making it easy to follow Carruthers's multi-faceted argument. It goes as far back as the early nineteenth century, all the way up to the late 1970s. To contextualize all of the important issues, the discussion ranges from Sudan to Paris to the Tennessee valley in the United States.

As someone who is interested in site histories, I believe that this is the book that all others should be based on from now on. But it is so much more than a site history. It is cultural, archival, disciplinary, and political history. It is based in science and technology studies and HPS theory and methodology, which allows for its complexity while at the same time clearly making a main point: Egyptologists need to have a crucial discussion about the state of the discipline today, after the 1952 revolution. We cannot call Egyptology postcolonial or a decolonized discipline until we look in depth at past behaviors, as Carruthers has done here.

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