Assessing the Impact of the Aswan High Dam on Archaeological Monuments in Egypt

By Miss Kelly A. Neher (Dr. Steven Derfler, faculty sponsor), Department of Art, University of Wisconsin - River Falls, 410 South Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

Research Abstract

During the 1950s, the Egyptian government proposed an idea of rapid population increase and economic instability. While understanding political pressures, President Nasser began constructing a seven-year independently produced project of social reform to manage the nation's resources, energy, and economic development. In 1902, the Suez运河 was opened to the public accommodating the Aswan High Dam. Through the years, the dam has been used for agricultural, hydroelectric, and water storage purposes. The Aswan High Dam was constructed in stages, beginning in 1960 and completed in 1970. The dam is controlled by Egypt and the United States government and has been a significant factor in Egypt's economy. However, the construction of the dam has had significant impacts on the surrounding region, including archaeological sites and monuments. The Aswan High Dam has caused significant damage to archaeological sites, monuments, and the landscape. It is essential to assess the impact of the Aswan High Dam on archaeological monuments in Egypt to ensure that these cultural heritage sites are preserved and protected for future generations.

Nile River: Mother of Egypt

In the center of Africa, the nurturing veins of the Nile River creep across the mountains and plateaus, gently traversing the 4,200 mile journey to the Mediterranean Sea. The river meanders through Egypt, decorating the fertile valley of the Nile Delta, and was responsible for many of Egypt's greatest achievements. The Nile Valley is home to the cradle of civilization, the beginnings of humanity as we know it. Here we find the end of a hunter-gatherer society and the transition to an agricultural-based society. The Nile Valley is also home to the ancient Egyptian civilization, which flourished for thousands of years and left a lasting impact on the world. The Nile River was a vital source of water, food, and resources for the ancient Egyptians, allowing them to grow crops and build cities. The river's annual flooding cycle was crucial for agriculture, depositing rich silt along the banks, which supported the growth of crops. The Nile River also provided a source of transportation and trade, connecting the ancient Egyptians with other civilizations.

Historical Setting

Over many hundreds of years, the river has served as a vital source of water and wealth. Egypt was occupied by foreign forces throughout the ancient and modern eras, including the Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman empires. The Egyptians have always been dependent on the Nile River for their survival, as it provided them with water, food, and resources. The river was central to the economy and agriculture of ancient Egypt, and its annual flooding cycle was crucial for agriculture. The Nile River was also a vital source of transportation and trade, connecting the ancient Egyptians with other civilizations. The river was the lifeblood of ancient Egypt, and its importance can be seen in the many monuments and artifacts that have been created along its banks.

The Aswan High Dam: Scar of Egypt

Just after the Nasser Revolution, the United States announced its plans to build a similar dam in Egypt with $770 million for the construction of a High Dam across each of the Sudans. The World Bank was also actively providing a $100 million loan for the Nubian dam project. Egypt was suffering from a severe water crisis, and the Aswan High Dam was seen as a solution to this problem. The dam was built to store water for irrigation and hydroelectric power, and it was seen as a symbol of the country's progress and development.

Constructions of the Aswan High Dam began in 1960 after the signing of the Nile Waters Agreement between Egypt and northern Sudan. The construction of the dam involved the excavation of a large reservoir area, which was flooded with water from the Nile River. The dam was completed in 1970, and it has been a significant factor in Egypt's economy ever since. The Aswan High Dam has caused significant damage to archaeological sites, monuments, and the landscape. It is essential to assess the impact of the Aswan High Dam on archaeological monuments in Egypt to ensure that these cultural heritage sites are preserved and protected for future generations.

In January of 2005, I stood on the edge of the great dam at Aswan and peered out over the serene blue waters of Lake Nasser. Instead of feeling a sense of wonder and amazement, I felt deep sorrow. The lake, so calm, possessed such a deceiving facade. A sign near the water's edge states, "The construction of the High Dam is a challenge to all nations." The dam, and consequently the lake it created, has presented a challenge that nature and humanism cannot afford to lose.