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# Between Aswan and Khartoum

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## **New CU Exhibition: “Between Aswan and Khartoum”**

The temporary exhibition ‘Between Aswan and Khartoum: Czech Archaeological Explorations between the Nile Cataracts’ (13.10.2015 – 11.11.2015; Carolinum, Ovocný trh 3, Praha 1; open daily 10am – 6pm, FREE entrance) focuses on the Czech and Czechoslovakian excavations in the area of Nubia, located in what is today northern Sudan and southern Egypt along the river Nile. Having lived in Egypt, I thought I knew a lot about its ancient history and the surrounding ancient civilisations. This exhibition proved me wrong as it provides a refreshing perspective for those fascinated by this time and region.

The exhibition focuses on the development of the Czech Institute of Egyptology in parallel to explaining the finds of many rescue operations in the area. I personally found the focus on Czech Egyptology really interesting as it enabled me to explore the work of this world renowned university department of Charles University in Prague.

The Czech Institute of Egyptology, at that time Czechoslovakian Institute of Egyptology, was founded at Charles University in 1958. In 1960 Czechoslovakian Egyptologists, as part of an international UNESCO rescue effort, were involved in saving a large part of Nubian Cultural Heritage which was to be destroyed as a result of building of a new dam across the Nile at Aswan (formerly spelled Assuan). Aswan had previously been the site of the earliest large archaeological rescue operation in the world when the first, smaller dam was built here in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As part of the UNESCO rescue effort between 1961 and 1965, the Czechoslovakian team documented the area around the Southern Temple of Tafa and the Roman fortress of Quertassi. The UNESCO rescue effort at Aswan finished in 1980 but another was initiated in 2009 for Central Sudan. In this rescue effort, Czech teams made extensive surveys in the previously unexplored region of Jebel Sabaloka bringing to light a dense network of Mesolithic and Neolithic Settlements. Although there are no artefacts on display, there are many beautiful photographs which document the discoveries made by the Czech and Czechoslovakian teams. The text of the exhibition is both in Czech and English and is well illustrated by timelines. The language of the exhibition is academic, however still accessible as definitions are given. It is worth spending a few minutes watching the film on the 1961 to 1965 expedition as well as having a look at the reconstruction of a mobile base tent as used by the archaeologists during the 1960s UNESCO rescue effort. At the end of the exhibition there is also a seating area with many books which allow visitors to explore an even wider range of artefacts from the area between the Nile Cataracts.

I would highly recommend the exhibition to anyone who is interested in archaeology or Egypt. For me, it was a very enlightening experience as I learnt a lot about Nubian culture as well as the history of Czech and Czechoslovakian Egyptology. The detailed descriptions and unusual focus mean that this exhibition is a true experience and well worth visiting.

**Margot Abbott** studies Anthropology at Durham University and here at the Faculty of Education. Margot's interests are in the arts, entrepreneurship and exploring. Whilst in Prague she hopes to learn the language, make the most of her travel pass and meet new people from all over Europe and the world. She looks forward to sharing her experiences, via the iForum, with you.