A manifesto for the study of the ancient Egyptian environment

A Manifesto for the Study of the Ancient Egyptian Environment

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The study of ancient Egypt lags behind other historical and archaeological disciplines by failing to prioritize the study of the environment. In order to generate meaningful knowledge about past societies situated along the Nile, it is necessary to pursue holistic research agendas with interdisciplinary frameworks that incorporate a broader range of specialists, including those drawn from the sciences. More robust data must be sought and assessed, including geomorphological and paleo-climatic data, and methodology must be expanded to incorporate ecological models of occupation and land-use and of human responses to environmental change. The participants of the 2017 Colloquium on Ancient Egypt and the Environment propose the following three goals for the study of ancient Egypt and, more generally, for historical inquiry.

1. Promoting Environmental Investigation in Project Development

Current study of the Egyptian environment is often haphazard and independent from other excavation and research programs. We endorse consultation and collaboration with diverse specialists at the planning stage of future projects to broaden lines of inquiry and expand the types of data generated in the field.

2. Developing New Opportunities for Scientific Sample Analysis

The primary barrier to developing the study of the Egyptian environment is the restriction on sample exportation. To address this issue we propose three courses of action: support the development of local resources for analysis within Egypt, including increased use of mobile analytical technology in the field and commitment to assist in the development of local laboratories and facilities run by trained staff; broaden our geographic scope to

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include data generated from the Nile basin in neighbouring East African countries; and support institutions and groups that formally advocate with the Ministry of Antiquities to amend restrictions on the exportation of scientific samples.

3. Creating New Resources for Spreading Environmental Data and Research

The study of the Egyptian environment must be integrated into both teaching and research programs. To promote greater literacy of environmental theory and science, we will continue to publish open-access research, data, and guides for the adoption of the study of the environment into Egyptological research. This material will be made available through the UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, and will be supplemented by the organization of additional research, data, and guides for the adoption of the study of the environment into Egyptological research. This online forum will accompany the publication of this volume, and will be supplemented by the organization of additional colloquia and meetings that will include cross-disciplinary participants.

To achieve these goals we advocate for active engagement with related historical disciplines that promote the inclusion of environmental theory and methodology in interdisciplinary research programs. It is critical that we develop collaborative affiliations that enable us to pursue a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between societies and their environments in the past, and to formulate resilient responses to future climate change.