

*June 2008*

## UNESCO Cairo Office Culture Unit Newsletter

*Spotlight*

### Birth of a New Museum



### Foundation Stone for the Wadi Halfa Museum

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### **CULTLINK Handicrafts project: 29<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March, CULTLINK Partners' meeting Damascus, Syria:**

Gérard de Puymège went to Damascus from February 29 to March 2, to represent the UNESCO's Mediterranean Programme (*Network of Handicrafts of the Mediterranean*) in the preparatory meeting for the implementation of the project "CULTLINK, Arts and Crafts, a Gateway to Dialogue and Diversity", financed by a grant from the European Commission. The leader of this project is the *Chambre des Beaux Arts de la Méditerranée* (France), and its partners, the Faculty of Fine Arts of *Tishreen University* (Syria), *APE Women Empowerment and Crafts Development Association* (Egypt), the *Europe of Cultures Forum* (Greece) and the *UNESCO Mediterranean Programme*. The project aims at bringing together crafts people and cultural organizations from France, Syria, Egypt and Greece, within the context of implementing the UNESCO Universal Convention for Cultural Diversity through best practices in their specific fields of action. This objective will be attained through the following three main activities:



- A workshop on cultural diversity and local development best practices in arts and crafts, to be held in Damascus on 5-9 October 2008, within the framework of Damascus Arab Capital of Culture.
- An exhibition of selected arts and crafts "Damascus 2008, capital of Mediterranean Arts and crafts", to be held during the same period.
- The production of a CD ROM in Arabic and English presenting the best practices and workshop results.

### **Meeting on the Guidelines for Enhancing Quality Education through Textbooks and Learning Resources, March 17-19 Doha Qatar:**

This meeting constitutes the second phase of implementation of the UNESCO-ISESCO Activity "Guidelines for Promoting Peace and Intercultural Understanding through Curricula, Textbooks and Learning Materials". The activity was launched by the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education UNESCO HQ.

The drafting group meeting was attended by several professors, textbook authors from Europe and the Arab World, and Ms. Gehanne Abdel-Malek from UNESCO Cairo Office. They have reiterated and emphasized on quality development, research-training and advocacy to create a knowledge-based society on peace building processes, while fostering the development of values, skills attitudes and behaviors. They have also stressed on anticipating changes and the transformation from a culture of war towards a culture of peace.

The working groups' outcome was very enriching and diversified. The first draft for the "Guidelines for Enhancing Quality Education

through Textbooks and Learning Resources" will be reviewed by textbook evaluators, creators and authors. The expected time frame for the publication of this guidebook is by year end 2008.



### **The Image of the Other in Arab-Islamic and European Textbooks" May 6-7, Paris:**

The first meeting of Experts chosen to write the guidebook for history textbooks authors on the image of Arab-Islamic culture in European History textbooks and the image of Europe in Arab History textbooks was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on May 6 and 7. The Experts chosen by the partners in the project are, for the Arab world: Dr. Fawzia Al Ashmawi, from Egypt, Dr. Nour Eddin Dougui, from Tunisia, and Dr. Ridwan Al-Sayyid from Lebanon, who, unfortunately could not attend, and for Europe: Dr. David Thurfjell, from Sweden, Dr. Michael Riley, from the UK, and Dr. Wolfram Reiss from Austria. The meeting was organized by UNESCO's Mediterranean Programme (UNESCO Office in Cairo) and our colleagues from the Education Sector at Headquarters (EDU/BAS/IQE).

Preparatory documents on the topic and a draft table of contents of the guidebook were discussed by the Experts. The guidebook intends to provide general guidelines in order to deal with controversial issues, to avoid misunderstandings, misinterpretations and negative stereotypes, focusing on the best practices identified in European and Arab countries. It intends to be a positive contribution to intercultural dialogue and the promotion of a culture of peace among school children. It should be ready for translation and publication in five languages (Arabic, English, German, Spanish and French) by the end of 2008.

## Ongoing activities:

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### Development of Local Community in Abu Sir Village (Egypt):

Within the framework of the activity Handicrafts for the poorest youth in Egypt, a workshop for training underprivileged young ladies from the village of Abu Sir, next to the World Heritage Site of the Memphis area pyramids, has been launched, together with the NGO *Egyptian Endurance Riders Association*, which is very active in social and educational activities in the area.

Some 25 young students are regularly trained in palm tree crafts and have started to sell their products. By year end of 2008, the trained young ladies should become self-sustainable through their craft and will be able to generate a variety of products for consumer sales.

UNESCO Cairo Office is proud to contribute and open up a window to a sustainable income generating activity for the poorest youth.

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### Preservation of the Egyptian Traditional Festivals:

Thanks to a grant from the European Commission, a survey of Egypt's main traditional festivals has been launched by the UNESCO's Mediterranean Programme (*Network of Traditional Festivals of the Mediterranean*) in cooperation with the NGO *Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions*.

The activity, developed within the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, aims at recording and mapping those festivals, to promote the most interesting at the cultural tourism level, to the benefit of local communities, and to include them in the Network of Traditional Festivals of the Mediterranean. Traditional festivals are major living expression of a threatened intangible heritage and popular traditions, celebrating nature's life cycles, religious beliefs, major historical events or myths of origins expressing the living nature of a community. They are eminently relevant to strengthen links, cultural cooperation as well as dialogue between cultures.

On the occasion, a Festival of festivals in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture who has agreed to host it in one of the most prestigious palaces in Cairo, the Amir Taz Palace, will be held on 28-30 November 2008.

A brochure and CD Rom on traditional Egyptian festivals will also be published and disseminated.

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### The Sahara of Peoples and Cultures in Sudan and at trans-border level (Eastern Desert- Sudan-Egypt/Gebel Ouenat- Sudan, Libya-Egypt):

Within the frame of this activity the steps which will be taken regarding the Gebel Ouenat is to prepare a report with an assessment of the specific natural and cultural values of the area a comprehensive overview of the existing and planned desert parks in the Sahara; a comparative evaluation of the criteria for the inscription of Jebel Ouenat on the World Heritage List; regarding the Development of the Eastern Desert (Sudanese side), a concept proposal will be prepared for the promotion of this area at the planned Wadi Halfa Museum.

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## Museums as knowledge gateways for Nubian culture

The activity is meant to encourage development of synergies in the field of tangible and intangible Nubian heritage among Nubia Museums both in Egypt and Sudan, in particular the Nubia Museum of Aswan, the Sudan National Museum and the planned Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa.

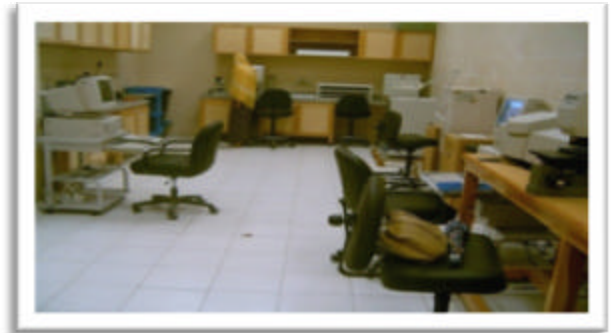
*See Special edition*

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## The International Campaign for the establishment of the Nubia Museum of Aswan and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo:

### Υ Aswan 17-19 May: Enhancing the conservation labs at the Nubia Museum of Aswan.

*The conservation labs of the Nubia Museum of Aswan are among the best equipped in Egypt. An expert mission was undertaken in order to assess the state of the machines and prepare, in cooperation with the museum staff, the Supreme Council of Antiquities and UNESCO Cairo Office, a proposal to reinforce the role of the lab as a conservation center serving all Upper Egypt and a training center able to interact on international level.*



Υ **Producing promotional material CDs** on Philae, Abu Simble, Kalabsha, and the Nubia Campaigns are under preparation.

Υ **Documentation Center in the Nubia Museum of Aswan:** follow up on the acquisition of the documents and rare books and preparation phase for their digitalization.

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## Preparation of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Egypt and Sudan's appeals to UNESCO to Save the Monuments of Nubia:

On 6 April 1959 the Egyptian Government made an official request to UNESCO for an international appeal to be launched to save the monuments of Nubia. On 24 October of the same year the same request was done by the Sudanese Government. This was the first of the great salvage programs that became the dominant feature of archaeology in the second half of the twentieth century, and in many ways it set the pattern for those which followed. Today Lower Nubia can be considered undoubtedly the best-known archeological region in Africa. **The Nubia Museum of Aswan will host the Fiftieth Anniversary of these appeals** with the organization of the International Conference "Lower Nubia: Revisiting memory of the past, envisaging perspectives for the future". The Conference will be organized by UNESCO Cairo Office in Cooperation with the Egyptian and Sudanese Authorities in February 2009.

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## Conservation versus Development in Zabid (Yemen):

A mission from UNESCO Cairo Office to Zabid on 12 - 15 May to follow up on the developments in the city and within the local community after the first mission of May 2007. The mission was formed of Costanza De Simone and Hossam Mahdy who met with the different stakeholders at local and national levels.



The findings of the mission were positive regarding the activities of architectural and urban conservation, the implementation of the master plan of Zabid and the activities of the local civil society for conservation and development in the city.

In such context support will be given to the Society of Manuscripts of Zabid in particular regarding the preservation of the private collections recently discovered by the Society, training and networking with other institutions in the world holding this kind of manuscripts like Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. Support will also be given to the society of the Old Souk.



### Handicrafts of Yemen:

UNESCO Cairo Office decided to support the impressive efforts to revive the old Souk by granting the newly formed Society of the Old Souk of Zabid with two annual grants. It was agreed that the team of the SFD-GTZ programme will follow up and offer technical assistance to guarantee the effectiveness of the two grants.

The revival of the old souk should contribute to the two initiatives: "conservation versus development" and "revitalization of traditional crafts" (Mission 12-16 May 2008).

### Preservation of the Archaeological Sites of As-Sawda/ Jawf in the Republic of Yemen:

The third Catalogue entitled "**Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley**" was produced in both English and Arabic last June 2008 and co-financed by the UNESCO and the Social Fund for Development in Yemen. This volume is the third of a collection displaying the epigraphic and archaeological artifacts collected from the Jawf sites and now preserved at the National Museum of Sana'a.

Throughout the four chapters, this catalogue has developed for the first time a typological and chronological analysis based on sampling the eye, bas relief, high relief stelae and stelae with incised face elements.

It is worthy noting that a large number of objects have been obtained by the Yemeni GOAM and Ministry of Culture from illegal excavations and kept at the National Museum of Sana'a to prevent them from being smuggled out of the country. So, our joint cooperation is much needed to put an end to the ongoing plundering and smuggling of these archaeological sites to save the history of the cultural heritage of Yemen.



### Illicit traffic of Objects in Yemen:

During the same mission of 12-16 May several stakeholders were also met regarding the organization of the workshop on the illicit traffic of objects, to be held in Sana'a at the end of this year. The Yemen National Commission for UNESCO will liaise with the Yemeni Ministry of Culture.

The Yemeni Social Fund for Development will be one of the main national partners in the activity. Archaeological Institutes in the country working in areas concerned with this phenomenon (French Centre for Social Science and Archaeology working in Jawf, and the German Archaeological Institute working in Marib) will also be involved.

The workshop will discuss the Yemen case. However the invitation to attend the meeting will also be extended to representative of Egypt and Sudan to discuss legal frameworks for protection of moveable cultural heritage and contribute to launching joint efficient countermeasures and steps to be taken for the restitution of stolen artifacts.



### UNESCO/ JFIT Song of Sana'a Project:

As the second phase of the *UNESCO/ JFIT Song of Sana'a Project* has already initiated earlier this year, the teaching sessions on lute playing, methodology, *inshad of Sana'ani songs and sahn* playing have started thanks to a few Yemeni elderly master musicians who have preserved the breadth of *al-Ghina as-Sana'ani* tradition and subtleties of its interpretation.

Derived from various poetic traditions dating from the 14th century, teaching of this genre constitutes an integral part of social events, such as the most common daily afternoon gathering of friends and colleagues the magyal which proved to be the most effective media for artists that permit for more inspirational and musical creativity aura rather than the formal academic sessions. In the meantime, old recorded song tapes and traditional instruments have been purchased to update the inventory and contribute to the teaching of these traditional instruments.

## Projects in the Pipeline

- ✔ **The Dashur World heritage Site** (Mobilization of Cultural Heritage for Community Development), within the UNDP/Spain MDG Achievement Fund.
- ✔ **SOS Mediterranean:** Cultural Heritage as a Universal Language
- ✔ **SECOND PHASE OF THE SALVAGE OF THE TOMB OF AMENOPHIS III**



The Royal tomb of Amenophis III, one of the greatest kings of New Kingdom Egypt, who ruled the Empire around 1500 B.C., is located on the western branch of the Valley of the Kings.



The wall paintings in the tomb are a remarkable example of the Eighteenth Dynasty wall paintings in the area of Ancient Thebes and its Necropolis which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979. However, the quality of these paintings has been compromised by precarious conditions. As the wall paintings are striking testimony to Egyptian Civilization at its height, the completion of their conservation is essential to properly enhance the site.

The tomb walls are decorated with elaborate paintings and images of kings and deities in the shaft chamber, the antechamber and on the pillars in the burial chamber. The painting technique reveals one of the most exquisite works among the royal tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty. In particular, the detailed representations of hieroglyphs, and the costume of the kings and deities in some rooms correspond to one of the highest standards of Ancient Egyptian Art.

Further, important religious texts and images of the Book of Amduat cover the four walls of a room, which still wait for proper documentation and evaluation in terms of Egyptology. However, the tomb of Amenophis III has suffered from severe problems of deterioration since its discovery in 1799. The main factors are bats' excrement, detachment of plaster layer, and geological fractures. Unless urgent scientific investigation, conservation, and preservation works are undertaken, further deterioration of the wall paintings would cause an incalculable cultural loss for humanity.

Therefore, a comprehensive project was schemed out to organize intensive conservation work of the wall paintings and to carry out scientific researches in the form of structural and environmental investigations.



Due to its great historical and aesthetic values, the project was chosen as the object of the prestigious funding of the Japanese Fund-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage.

The "Conservation of the Wall Paintings of the Royal Tomb of Amenophis III" project was started in March 2001 until March 2004 and implemented by UNESCO, Culture Sector, and Division of Cultural Heritage. After the signature of the operational plan, the Institute of Egyptology of Waseda University, directed by Prof. Dr. Sakuji Yoshimura, in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, Arab Republic of Egypt, as well as the international experts designated by UNESCO have carried out the conservation work.

*The second phase will start in the coming autumn and will be executed by UNESCO Cairo office and implemented by the same team. It will consist in the completion of the conservation work of the entire wall paintings (which will also serve as a high level training for Egyptian wall painting conservators) and fixing and stabilizing the instability part of the walls and pillars of the underground chambers.*

## Who is Who in UNESCO Cairo's Culture Unit

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## ***UNESCO Cairo Office is currently raising funds for the following activities:***

### **“A Bridge on the Nile”**

The project proposal “A Bridge on the Nile” aims to ensure a follow-up in supporting the Memorandum of Understanding between Egypt and Sudan in the field of cultural heritage, in particular regarding the Nubian area, and to enhance cooperation among the Nubian communities of both countries in the preservation of their intangible heritage. Several activities are already successfully ongoing.

### **Qasr Ibrim: Rescuing Heritage, Historic Landscape and Identity**

The target of the project is to preserve this important and beautiful archaeological site on the Lake Nasser (Aswan), which is the only surviving site in the Egyptian Nubia still in its original location, now an island threatened by the waves of the lake.

### **Preserving the Yemeni Manuscript Heritage**

Yemen’s cultural heritage stands out with an expressive written legacy consisting of thousands of manuscripts which have shaped the thinking, the history as well as the traditions of the whole people of Yemen. Three cities, Sana’a, Zabid and Tarim have seen the constitution of intellectual schools and have left us unique manuscripts libraries which are still to be explored, besides medicine, mathematics and illuminated documents. Some specimens date back to the beginnings of Islam (the oldest known manuscript of the Quran, for instance, is preserved in the Great mosque of Sana’a). Unfortunately, due to the absence of appropriate means of preservation, tutoring and to a deficient popularization of knowledge, the preservation and transmission of this heritage is today in danger.

### **Preserving Traditional Techniques; A Stone Carving School for the Restoring of Yashbak Palace, Cairo.**

The Italian-Egyptian Centre for Restoration and Archaeology (CIERA – Cantiere Scuola) is a work site school operating on a 7.500 square meters area under the umbrella of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. The architectonic survey of the monumental building of Yashbak Palace has been completed and a preliminary study for its recovering started. UNESCO Mediterranean Programme is cooperating by establishing a stone carving school for traditional work that would contribute to the restoration of the Palace.

The experience gained with the precedent programs (such as the recovery of the Sama’Khana, the restoration of Sunqur Sa’di and it’s Mausoleum and the Mevlevi convent) and the organization of the labs used for the works of architecture and restoration allow proposing ***a formation programme for a group of specialized Stone Carvers to use their expertise*** to restore the structural architectural material and decorative element of the building.

The area offers an extraordinary range of different styles and includes architectural, historical and artistic remains and testimonies covering the period from VII to XIX centuries.

### **Preservation of the Egyptian Traditional Storytellers’ Instruments and Tools.**

The UNESCO Regional Office for Science in the Arab States, within the framework of the “Museum to Museum / Museum Partnership Programme”, has launched in cooperation with the International Storytelling Center (Tennessee) and the International Council of Museums-Committee for Conservation-Wood, Furniture and Lacquer (ICOM-CC-Wood, Furniture and Lacquer), the first phase of a project concerning the preservation of the endangered cultural assets of the traditional Egyptian storyteller’s heritage and its instruments and tools, consisting in the evaluation of the existing collections.

Several traditional musical instruments used to accompany the traditional storytellers, poets and singers. Those instruments are mostly made of wood. There are several sorts of instruments including string instruments such as Rababa and Samsmiyya, wind instrument such as Salamiyyah, Zummarah, Mizmar, Arghul and Nay and percussion instruments such as Tablah and Tambourine.

**The aim of the project**, having reviewed the existing collections and evaluated the on hand conservation facilities of the museum, ***is to launch a conservation process for the safeguarding of those cultural assets, instruments and tools.***

**Street & Shadow Puppets:** Within the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a project for the protection and promotion of traditional Egyptian street puppetry (Aragoz and Khayall Al Zill) is currently under preparation with the NGO Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions and its affiliated puppet troupe the Wamda Group. The project aims at collecting all available information on this age-old art threatened to disappear and to train a new generation of puppet performers and puppet craftspeople in Kharazatly House. The house, which belongs to the Ministry of Culture, is currently under the management of the NGO and the troupe. Safeguarding intangible heritage is one of the main current priorities of UNESCO in the cultural domain, extending the notion of World heritage or Heritage common to the whole of humanity to their particularly fragile forms of heritage: the oral and intangible ones.



## SPECIAL EDITION

### Inauguration of the first stone of the Wadi Halfa Museum



Wadi Halfa is a town in the northern Sudanese State. It lies on the east bank of the Nile River, 10 km. below the second cataract, just south of the Egyptian border and only 35 km. south of Abu Simbel, the most visited archaeological site in the world. It is Northern Sudan's most important trading point, the gateway between Egypt and Sudan, and the point of departure of the historic railway built by Kirchner, that goes all the way down to Khartoum. The history of the place is a fascinating one, due to its strategic position for trade with Egypt (cotton, wheat, livestock, etc.) and also as a military outpost.

The modern town, now drowned under the waters of the lake created by the construction of the High Dam, was founded in the nineteenth century and is chiefly known as the Headquarters of the British led forces seeking to defeat the forces of the *Mahdi*.

During world War Two, Wadi Halfa was also a communications post for allied forces in Africa. A Museum was built as a cultural focal point for the local inhabitants. Its contents (to be now relocated in the future Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa), were transferred to the National Museum of Khartoum prior to the flooding of the city.

The new city of Wadi Halfa consists in fact of a series of collected villages built in traditional Nubian style. The total population is about 15,000, and consist mainly in the descendants of those local Nubian inhabitants who refused to be transferred to other locations when the city was flooded. The traditional mud brick architecture, the great beauty of the site on the shores of Lake Nasser (or Lake Nuba, as it is called in Sudan), and the well kept traditions of the local Nubian population are great assets in order to bring the city back to its early important position, now as a cultural and tourism focal point for the whole area, which is extremely rich in natural and cultural heritage (the northern Sudanese deserts, traditional Nubian villages, archaeological sites...).

The idea of creating a new Museum in Wadi Halfa emerged during the UNESCO mission to Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia, from Khartoum to Aswan, in 2005, which led to the signature of a Protocol of Cooperation for Heritage protection between Egypt and Sudan.

The new museum will be dedicated to Nubian culture and History. It is conceived in close cooperation with the Nubia Museum of Aswan, which it will complement by displaying archaeological artifacts from Sudanese Nubia, which are missing in the Aswan Nubia Museum and the creation of the an interactive Nubian Village for the preservation of the Intangible Heritage. Therefore, the Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa will be a community-based museum and a regional cultural centre, as well as the starting point for visits of deserts and sites in the area. To be built in traditional style, it



will include on its grounds special buildings dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Nubian intangible heritage (Nubian language, poetry and songs, music, handicrafts, traditional cuisine, etc.). The Sudanese government has provided a large piece of land, in a particularly spectacular area facing the lake, for the construction of the Museum.

On Tuesday April 22, the first stone of the future Museum was laid by the Governor of Wadi Halfa. The event took place, in front of a huge number of Wadi Halfan citizens and personalities like the Director of the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum representing the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museum in Sudan.

Associations of Nubians from Khartoum were also present in particular to be mentioned is the Nubian Language Society. Many personalities from Aswan who joined UNESCO Cairo team in the travel to the place. The group from Aswan, including the Mayor of the city, the Director of the Nubia Museum, the football team and the Folk Group from Toskhe, the representative of TRAVCO Company, Aswan Branch, was led by the active Sudanese consul in Aswan who played a significant role in creating this moment of great integration among Nubians of this border area .

After the ceremony, meetings were held with the donors and the Governor, in order to discuss all necessary related issues (scenario and plan of the Museum, access, sanitary measures, etc.).

The creation of the Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa is a major step in the cooperation between Egypt and Sudan, in the preservation and promotion of Nubia in a holistic vision on both sides of the border and for the sustainable economic development of Northern Sudan through community-based eco-cultural tourism. In line, with the UN Millennium Development Goals, it will reconnect people with their own history from which they were divorced due to development reasons.



**On the road to Wadi Halfa: Abdel Rahman Ali, Director of Sudan National Museum of Khartoum and Ossama Abdel Wareth, Director of Nubia Museum of Aswan**