

November 2007 to March 2008

UNESCO Cairo Office Culture Unit Newsletter

Spotlight

Safeguarding Egyptian Traditional Festivals



The UNESCO Mediterranean Programme (UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States) and the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions have won a grant from the European Union of fifty thousand Euros in order to “Safeguard Egyptian Traditional Festivals”.



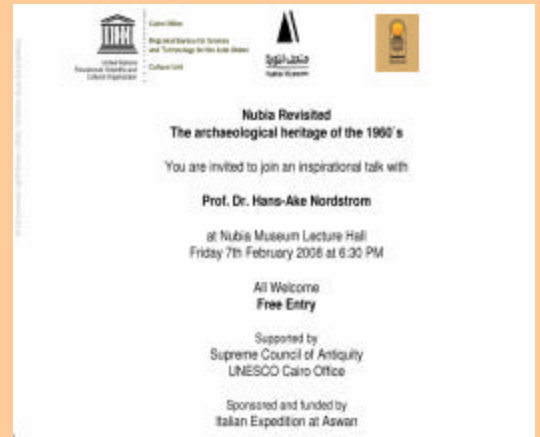
The activity will contribute to dialogue and understanding in the Mediterranean and raise awareness of the local communities concerned on the value of their intangible heritage. The action follows the creation of the *Network of Traditional Festivals of the Mediterranean* “Festivals of the Sun”.



Nubia revisited” The archaeological heritage of the 1960’s

On 14 of February, UCO in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Nubia Museum has organized, an inspirational talk with Prof. Hans Ake Nordstrom, member of the Joint Scandinavian Expedition to Nubia during the UNESCO Salvage Campaign in the sixties , on “ Nubia revisited: The archaeological heritage of the 1960’s”.

The event, which drew the attention of both locals and foreign scholars working in the area, has been a good opportunity for launching the idea of an International Conference on the topic, to be organized next year on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO appeal. This would be the first of this kind to take place in Nubia and will serve not only to revive memories of the past but also to envisage the perspective for the future of the area.



"The Image of the Other in Arab-Islamic and European Textbooks"

The organizers of the Project with the European experts met in Alexandria January 27-28, 2008. It allowed for European experts to set up a draft table of contents of the guidebook, to be submitted to Arab experts when they will have been chosen, and for organizers to agree on the text of a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed between them and for experts and organizers to agree on the terms of the consultants' contracts.

The timeframe for the production of the guidebook has been set likewise:

The first will take place on May 6-7, 2008 At UNESCO headquarters in Paris to finalize the work plan.

The second will take place early autumn, the draft of the project being the progress report.

The third and final meeting will be held in December 2008, to propose the final text of the Guidebook.



Opening of the Christian Gallery at the National Museum of Khartoum

50 years after its creation, the Christian Gallery of Khartoum National Museum has changed its display. The new gallery today arranged in a thematic organization shows more clearly the history of Christianity in Nubia. Numerous important and beautiful pieces kept until now in the storerooms are displayed to the visitors for the first time. The Sudanese authorities opened the gallery on February 14, 2008.



Ongoing activities

Sana'a Symposium on Illicit Traffic of Cultural Objects

Yemen's cultural heritage is currently threatened by the development of international looting. Recent shocking examples in Maarib and Jawf governorate confirm the vast scale of the thefts and the existence of active international networks for the illicit expatriation of objects and their sale in various parts of the world. The symposium, to be held in 2008 in Sana'a will raise awareness of all stakeholders in the protection of cultural heritage about the existing legal frameworks for the protection of moveable cultural heritage and contribute to launching efficient countermeasures and steps to be taken for the restitution of stolen artifacts.



Development versus Conservation in Zabid

The city and fortress of Zabid (Yemen), a World Heritage Site in Danger, has been the object of many UNESCO missions during the last 10 years. UNESCO Cairo Office has launched a process of permanent consultation and cooperation with the local community in order to raise its awareness and associate it directly to the salvage and promotion of its city. Monitoring centers have been established. Workshops will be held in 2008/9 on benefits to be derived locally from the inscription of the World Heritage List and on sustainable development through cultural activities. Awareness material to be published.

Museums as knowledge gateways for Nubian culture

Museums are one of the main instruments to keep record of the culture of Nubia and transmit it to new generations. Although Nubia is today divided between Egypt and Sudan, its Heritage should be presented as a whole to keep the identity of the area. This will be done by developing synergies between the Nubia Museum in Aswan and the National Museum of Khartoum, which will share training in the field of conservation, seminars, exhibitions and educational material. The cooperation between the two museums also includes the creation of the future Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa situated in Sudan, at the Egyptian border and only 30 km south of the world famous site of Abu Simbel.

This museum will complement the Nubia Museum of Aswan by presenting Sudanese Nubia artifacts as well as the living Nubian culture, still striving in Sudan.



Development of Local Community in Abu Sir Village

The training workshop for Palm Tree crafts has started February 2008 in Abu Sir village. It focuses on job creation and on enhancing social development through capacity building. With a shared responsibility in principles and priorities between the community and stakeholders it also strives to promote awareness to traditional cultural heritage. We currently orient and assess the working team; we train apprentices on weaving, sewing, carpentry and most of all, on introducing traditional folk designs to the project. Results are expected to be obvious after six months and the project should prove to be totally independent one year from the starting date.

Inventory of Handicrafts of Yemen

Currently neglected and little known, Yemeni handicrafts should play an important role in the sustainable cultural and economic development of Yemen. This project aims at making an inventory and mapping of the main traditional crafts surviving in the country and to assess the most endangered ones, in order to be able to support them in the future. Results will be disseminated through a brochure and a CD Rom.

Egyptians, especially the younger generations, are threatened to lose their traditional cultural identity in favor of an "international culture" conveyed by the early stages of globalization. This project aims at contributing to the survival and promotion of some major elements of this intangible heritage: traditional festivals, street puppet theatre and storytellers' instruments and tools through inventories, conservation of objects, workshops and publications.

Promoting Intangible Heritage in Egypt

Follow-up of the Sahara of Peoples and Cultures in Sudan and at trans-border level (Sudan, Libya, Egypt)

This project is part of the *Sahara of Peoples and Cultures* Programme (CLT/WHC/CEP/TOU). An action plan has been established in 2007 as a result of a symposium held in Khartoum. It is to be developed in cooperation with the Science (Ecology) unit at UNESCO Cairo Office. A detailed programme for the development of the Sudanese Eastern Desert in Sudan, including identification of cultural and natural heritage, evaluation of its state of conservation, evaluation of existing and possible infrastructure for eco-cultural tourism (including creation of eco-cultural routes) is under preparation. In addition, further steps will be taken regarding the Gebel Ouenat area.

Handicrafts are one of the strongest expressions of the common Mediterranean identity. They are also a proven driving force for sustainable development in the area. Albeit, in most countries, they are threatened to disappear or to degenerate following ill advised mass tourism policies. There is an urgent need for the protection and promotion of high quality production. Within the Network of Handicrafts of the Mediterranean (UNESCO Mediterranean Programme), a website has been created in cooperation with CULTNAT. A meeting of Mediterranean craftspeople and concerned NGOs will be held in 2008 in order to launch new activities, especially master courses and international exchanges in various crafts.

Handicrafts of the Mediterranean

Other on going activities

- Anthropological survey of the Nubian Communities of Wadi Halfa area.
- Producing of the CDs for the promotion of the Nubian area (International Campaign for the Establishment of the Nubia Museum of Aswan and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo).
- Termination of the Course on History and Archeology of Egypt for the staff of the NMEC (International Campaign for the Establishment of the Nubia Museum of Aswan and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo).
- Wrapping up of the WEB site of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan. Activity supported by the CI Unit of UCO.
- Raising awareness and fund raising activities for the preservation of the island and archaeological site of Qasr Ibrim.
- The inventory of Sana'a Song
- The preservation of the archaeological site of Jawf

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 Agency**: cultural heritage as a universal language
- **Digitalization of the Documentation Center on Nubia at the Nubia Museum of Aswan**

A follow up on the future preservation of the archaeological site of Nuri (Sudanese Nubia)

Following the signature, of the MoU between Egypt and Sudan in the field of cultural heritage in 2005, one of the sites chosen for such cooperation was Nuri. In this context UCO helped the Sudanese authorities in fund raising for the preservation of the site. ISAD, an Italian Institute for restoration located in Rome, accepted to support the Sudanese authorities in the preservation of this complex archaeological site.

From November 9 to 14, 2007 a mission of ISAD to Khartoum was undertaken in view to finalize administration issues on the concession to be granted to the Institute for the work at the site.

The activities for capacity building to be linked to the project are priorities. With the support of the Italian Embassy in Khartoum a 2 years scholarship to Italy will be granted to a Sudanese architect to be fully involved in the future in the preservation of the site.

Conference organized by The Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO at the League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo on December 12-13, 2007 **The Image of Arab-Islamic Culture in European Textbooks “Spain as a case study”**

The study was carried out under the umbrella of the Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO, within the framework of the Participation Programme of UNESCO in the biennium 2004-2005.

It is a follow up of the 2004 conference “The Image of Arabo-Islamic Culture in European History Textbooks” organized by UNESCO Cairo Office, Culture Unit.

The objective of the Conference is to create a network of researchers and to establish a concrete activity to be carried in collaboration with the European Union from the North and the League of Arab States from the South.

The Conference was attended by 20 participants and was dedicated to a presentation of ongoing activities, efforts and recommendations in the various national entities.

Agenda missions

March:

- * Damascus, Syria, 29th February to 2nd March, CULT LINK Partners’ meeting: **“Arts and Crafts, a gateway for Dialogue and Diversity”** UNESCO Cairo Office (Mediterranean Programme) is a partner in this project which is funded by the European Union.
- * Doha, Qatar, 17-19 March, This Meeting constitutes the second phase of implementation of the 2006-2007 UNESCO-ISESCO Activity **“Guidelines for Promoting Peace and Intercultural Understanding through Curricula, Textbooks and Learning Materials.”**
- * Yemen 23 to 26 March 2008 (Follow-up on Development Versus Conservation in Zabid; preparation phase of the symposium on illicit traffic of artifacts; preparation of the workplan for the handicrafts project).

April:

- * Aswan and Wadi Halfa, 18-24 April, 2008 (Wadi Halfa Museum Project)

Who is Who in Culture

Mr. Gérard de Puymège, Senior Programme Specialist for Culture and Coordinator of the Mediterranean Programme

Ms. Costanza De Simone, Expert in Culture Heritage

Ms. Gehanne Abdel Malek, Research Assistant

Ms. Hoda Abdel Meguid, Programme Assistant (Song of Sana’a and Jawf Projects)

Ms. Amal Gad, Programme Assistant

Publications 2006-2007



This brochure presents the *Preservation of the endangered cultural assets of the traditional Egyptian storyteller's heritage and its instruments and tools*, which consisted in the evaluation and survey of the existing collections.

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.**

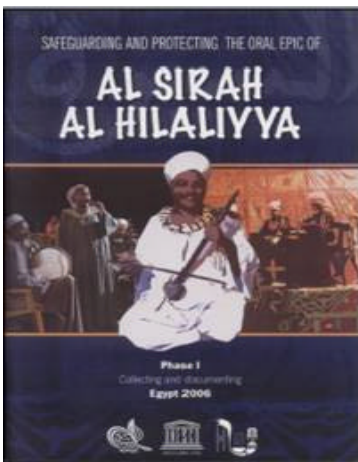
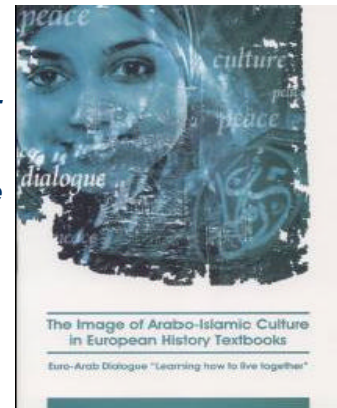
The project's first phase has been funded by a grant from the US Contribution of \$30,000 and **successfully completed** as described in the brochure.

The conservation priorities and recommendations are based only on the objects surveyed and may not represent the conservation priorities for the museums' themselves. In the conducted survey and assessment, objects considered in greatest need of stabilization to prevent further damage and deterioration were given the highest priority for conservation.

This brochure presents the origins of the project *the Image of the Other in European and Arab-Islamic Textbooks*

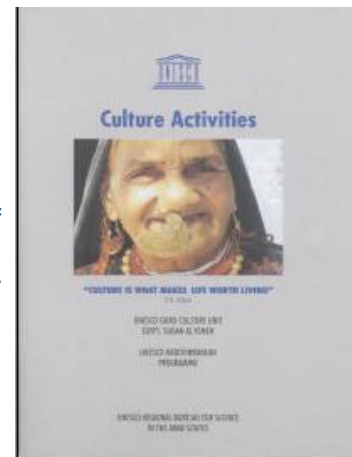
Texts by Amr Moussa, Amr Ezzat Salama, Mohamed Jamil Abdulrazzak, Jan Henningsson, Mostafa El Halougi and Gérard de Puymège. It also presents the resolutions of the Conference on *The Image of the Arabo-Islamic Culture in European History Textbooks held at the Headquarters of the League of Arab States, in Cairo, on December 12-14, 2004.*

The project is now preparing a guidebook on the image of the other for European and Arab History textbooks authors.



The Egyptian traditional epic *Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya* was proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, on November 7, 2003. Following this proclamation, an ambitious project was conceived whose actions were oriented towards the main goals of safeguarding, revitalizing and protecting *Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya* through the collection, documentation, classification and archiving of its content, which goes back to almost a thousand years ago. The language technique of *Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya* employs a highly stylized kind of verse language and its performers enact it in a theatrical fashion, making different vocal sounds, changing their voices to suit the personalities of the various characters and employing hands, facial expressions and body motions to act out some difficult parts.

UCO Culture activities have expanded within the framework of UNESCO's decentralization policy. The Cairo Culture Unit was launched in July 2003 at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States. Simultaneously the UNESCO Mediterranean Programme was decentralized from Paris to Cairo. In a world threatened by ill effects of globalization and standardization, protection of cultural diversity and dialogue is our principal current priority, with special emphasis on the tangible and intangible heritage. Our projects are led in collaboration with major governmental and non-governmental organizations. Discover our actions in Egypt, Sudan and Yemen, the three countries our Office covers in the field of culture, as well as the UNESCO Mediterranean Programme.





“HANDICRAFTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, A DRIVING FORCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY” CAIRO, 25-27 FEBRUARY 2006, a film on CD by Asmaa El Bakry.

The three days exhibitions and shows was inaugurated at the Souk El Fustat by H.E. Zohair Garanna, Minister of Tourism

The Network of Handicrafts of the Mediterranean was launched in Tunis, it is being developed in close collaboration between the Mediterranean Programme (UNESCO Cairo Office) and the Unit for Crafts and Design at UNESCO’s Headquarters.

The meeting was the first event organized by the Network. It focused on the theme of handicrafts as a driving force for a sustainable economy, and featured roundtables, an international exhibition and cultural events linked to the topic.

CD on the whole event currently available at UNESCO Cairo Office.



Development of handicrafts for the poorest youth in Egypt

Egyptian handicrafts, which are innumerable and often very specific although little known outside the country, can become a major driving force for a sustainable economy within the national struggle against poverty. Workshops for training the poorest youth were held in Gamaleya for the teaching of Khayameya and Silver/Gold appliqué. Training material has been printed in Arabic language for the teaching of the poorest youth. Traditional designs have also been illustrated in the booklets.

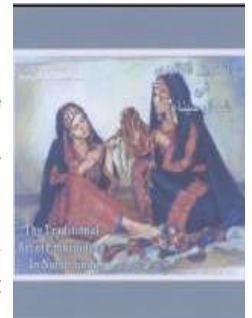


The project **Women as custodians and artists of Egyptian Handicrafts** was carried out in cooperation with the Egyptian *National Council for Women*. It endeavors to preserve a specific form of intangible heritage, with its historical and artistic significance, through the revival, preservation and



safekeeping of traditional embroidery techniques and designs.

Three CD’s were completed: the first covers the Traditional Art of Embroidery related specifically to Siwa Oasis, the second and third CDs cover the Art of Tally Embroidery in Upper Egypt as well as in North Sinai.



Within the framework of the UNESCO Project for the Safeguarding and Preservation of al-Jawf Sites and Artifacts, the following publications were prepared:

Catalogue II, titled “Sana’a National Museum: Collection of Epigraphic and Archaeological Artefacts from al-Jawf sites”: It was prepared by UNESCO experts in 2007, in English and Arabic, and distributed to concerned authorities, universities and research institutes in Yemen. It features a choice of the 130 most representative objects rescued from As-Sawda excavations and stored now at the Sana’a National Museum (65 inscriptions and 65 artefacts including bronze statue recently restored by the Louvre Museum experts).

Catalogue III, titled “Funerary Steles from Al-Jawf sites to the Sana’a National Museum” is to be published soon. This study is prepared in English and Arabic by UNESCO’s experts and publication costs will be covered by the Social Fund for Development in Yemen. It is almost ready for publishing by end of March 2008. This volume represents the third part of the collection of epigraphic and archaeological artifacts from Al-Jawf held by Sana’a National Museum gathered by local citizens through illegal excavations from the old sites of Khirbat Hamdân, old Haram, but fortunately enough acquired by the Yemeni authorities (GOAMM/ Ministry of Culture) and thus saved from smuggling. This new collection is composed of 440 funerary steles dated from between the seventh and the first century BC.