

SALVAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

Article Particulars: Received: 24.03.2018 Accepted: 19.04.2018 Published: 28.08.2018

K. SURESHKUMAR

Assistant Professor of History

Adhiparasakthi College of Education, Kalavai, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Archaeology is the scientific study of an inquiry by analyzing the material remains of ancient human occupations. It embraces the whole range of ancient culture -architecture, epigraphy, sculpture and paintings, ceramics, industry, institution, and history branch of archaeology devoted to studying artifacts and features on sites which are imminently threatened by development in the form of the construction of dams, buildings, highways, etc. Threats to archaeological remains occur in the form of road-building, road improvement, the new building of houses, offices, and industrial complexes, the flooding of valleys for reservoirs, and improved farming techniques involving the use of deep plowing. The Nagarjunasagar Dam is the tallest masonry dam in the world. The excavated remains of the Buddhist civilization were reconstructed and preserved at a museum on the island situated in the midst of the man-made Nagarjunasagar Lake.

Keywords: Salvage Archaeology

Introduction

Archaeology is the scientific study of an inquiry by analyzing the material remains of ancient human occupations. It embraces the whole range of ancient culture -architecture, epigraphy, sculpture and paintings, ceramics, industry, institution, and history. Thus it is an empirical discipline concerned with the recovery, systematic description and study of old artifacts. It helps us look back into the past and see where we came from-and how we have made our way from the Stone Age to the space age.

Archaeology deals with the material remain both of the historical past (which has contemporary written records) and the prehistoric past. Relic hunting is unscientific and so is not archaeology. Amateurs may also involve in digging and supplementing the professionals. But the former must have scientific training under professional guidance and supervision otherwise it will result in unwilling destruction bordering on vandalism so field seminars, conferences, and discussions are the pre-requisites of archaeology.

What is "salvage" or "rescue" archaeology?

The branch of archaeology devoted to studying artifacts and features on sites which are imminently threatened by development in the form of the construction of dams, buildings, highways, etc. Threats to archaeological remains occur in the form of road-building, road improvement, a new building of houses, offices, and industrial complexes, the flooding of valleys for reservoirs, and improved farming techniques involving the use of deep plowing. The rescue, or salvage, archaeologist, is concerned with the retrieval of as much information as possible about the archaeological sites before they are damaged or destroyed. Salvage archaeology is the location, recording (usually through excavation), and collection of archaeological data from a site in advance of highway construction, drainage projects, or urban development. In the US, the first major program of salvage archaeology was undertaken in the 1930s, ahead of the construction and dam building done by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Rescue Archaeology

Rescue archaeology occurs on sites about to be destroyed but, on occasion, may include in site preservation of any finds or protective measures taken to preserve an unexcavated site

beneath a building. Urban areas with many overlaid years of habitation are often candidates for rescue archaeology.

Salvage Archaeology in the World and India

Egyptian Government Relocate the Temples of Abu Simbel

The largest Abu Simbel temple is dedicated to Ramses II.

Re

Nile River flooding had often threatened towns along the river's banks, but in the mid-1960s, many of the ancient monuments of Egypt were subject to a new, man-made threat: The government's decision to build a new, higher dam upriver, the Aswan High Dam, which would cause a rise in the water levels at nearby Lake Nasser high enough to flood the monument-dotted plains permanently. In an unprecedented, international effort, the government moved the Abu Simbel temples to a new location on higher ground, not far from the original site. The temples, originally built at the direction of King Ramses II, draw more visitors each year than any site in Egypt, except the pyramids at Giza.

Historical Background

In approximately 1244 B.C., Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II directed the construction of two major sandstone temples in the southern part of Egypt, on the banks of the Nile River near the second cataract. Over the next 20 years, the temples were carved into an existing sandstone mountain. When completed, they stood approximately 100 feet tall. The largest temple is dedicated to the sun gods and Ramses himself, and the smaller to his favorite wife, Queen Nefertari. The temples contained massive paintings and carved walls depicting Ramses II's exploits against Egypt's enemies. The large temple is guarded by giant statues of Ramses, while the smaller temple features large carved statues of Ramses and his queen.

Aswan High Dam

The regions along the Nile River were frequently ravaged by heavy flooding, despite periodic attempts to reroute or dam the river. In the mid-1950s, Egyptian authorities decided to build a new dam upriver, approximately four miles south of the existing one, which was no longer able to contain the river's flow. The new Aswan High Dam would cause the waters in Lake Nasser to rise, flooding the areas along the river and submerging the priceless ancient monuments located there. The government, with and upon the assistance of international experts and donors, developed a plan to relocate the Nubian Monuments, including the Abu Simbel temples, to higher ground.

A panorama of Aswan Dam

Relocation Process

From 1964-1968, the temples were dismantled and moved to their current location, which is on ground 213 feet higher than the previous site. The temples were measured and cut into massive 20-ton blocks, each of which was numbered and moved to the new site. The stone segments were then reassembled to recreate the original temples, down to the drawings and carvings on the walls and the temples' orientation. They face the east so that twice a year, in February and October, sunlight streams into the interior of the temple and illuminates the statues of the sun gods, Re-Horakhty and Amon-Re, to whom the temple is dedicated, as well as a statue of King Ramses II.

New Site

The temples are thus now on a high plateau; the entire complex, known as the Nubian Monuments, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. The temples sit 650 feet back from the river's new path. The original sandstone statues grace the outside of the temples and the

interior rooms look as they did at their initial site. The temples are now on a solid platform of cement and steel and surrounded by a hollow, manufactured stone mountain. Thousands of tourists visit each day, traveling on special flights or dedicated convoys from Aswan, the nearest city.

He Buddhist archaeological sites there were submerged and had to be later dug up and transferred to higher land on the hill, which had become an island.

The region declined after the death of Rudrapurusa, the last Ikshvaku king. Excavations began in 1927, and the first finds were made by English archaeologists in 1928. The excavations were continuous until 1931. They unearthed the ruins of stupas and chaityas in 1926 at what was once an immense center for Buddhist learning in ancient India. This was expanded in 1954 to include the whole valley, unearthing more than 100 further relics dating from the stone age to the 16th century.

The great stupa at Nagarjunakonda belongs to the class of uncased stupas, its brickwork being plastered over and the stupa decorated by a large garland-ornament.[4] The original stupa was renovated by the Ikshvaku princess Chamtisiri in the 3rd century AD when Ayaka-pillars of stone were erected. The outer railing, if any, was of wood, its uprights erected over a brick plinth. The stupa, 32.3 m in diameter, rose to a height of 18 m with a 4 m wide circumambulatory. The media stood 1.5 m and the Ayaka-platforms were rectangular offsets measuring 6.7 by 1.5 m.[5]

Panoramic View of the Buddha Statue and other Monuments

An archaeological catastrophe struck in 1960 when an irrigation dam was constructed across the nearby submerging the original site under the waters of a reservoir. In advance of the flooding, several monuments were dug up and relocated to the top of Nagarjuna's Hill, where a museum was built in 1966. Other monuments were relocated to the mainland, east of the flooded area. Dedicated archaeologists managed to recover almost all of the relics.

Nagarjunasagar Dam

The Nagarjunasagar Dam is the tallest masonry dam in the world. The excavated remains of the Buddhist civilization were reconstructed and preserved at a museum on the island situated in the midst of the man-made Nagarjunasagar Lake. The site has a 14th-century fort, medieval temples and a museum constructed like a Buddhist vihara. The museum houses a collection of relics of Buddhist culture and art. These include a small tooth and an ear-ring believed to be that of Gautama Buddha. The main stupa of Nagarjunakonda named Mahachaitya is believed to contain the sacred relics of the Buddha. A partly ruined monolithic statue of the Buddha is the main attraction at the museum. It also houses historic finds in the form of tools from Palaeolithic and Neolithic times, as well as friezes, coins.

Conclusion

The history teacher must imbibe the importance of our cultural heritage and the preservation of the archaeological resources to the present and future generations. And the government also takes significant efforts to preserve our archaeological resources. Law should be the implementation to save our archaeological resources. This will obtain our cultural heritage.

References

1. Gerard. Scharfenberger- Salvage archaeology at the early Eighteen Century
2. American anthropologist- Vol 59 issue 2
3. Gordon C. Baldwin- The story of salvage archaeology
4. A guide for salvage archaeology-Fred Wendorf
5. <http://www.archaeologywordsmith.com/lookup.php?terms=salvage>
6. <https://classroom.synonym.com/did-egyptian-government-relocate-temples-abu-simbel-6930.html>
7. <http://www.templeadvisor.com/temples-in-india/buddhist-temples/nagarjunakonda-maha-stupa>
8. <http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Nagarjunakonda>
9. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagarjuna_Konda