Anet Crespo

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Nile River

The Nile River is a river that flows in Northeastern Africa. The Nile River is known for its length as the longest river in the world. The Nile River passes through eleven countries, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan, and Egypt (Pedersen). The Nile River supplies these countries with water and fertile soil. The Nile River floods during season and helps out with the harvesting of the crops that are grown beside it, too much flooding though, can cause serious damage to the crops. In order to know when the Nile River would flood the Ancient Egyptians measured the depth systematically. In a land with so little rainfall, this flooding was essential for the well-being of the crops.

One of the first forms of measurement of Nile River depth was the nilometer, this was very similar to sticking a ruler inside a glass of water and measuring. They had “…a vertical column submerged in the waters of the river, with marked intervals indicating depth of the water.” (Kaushik). This was a very simple but rather effective technique for measuring the depth of the river. Later on they got a little more complex and began building “…a flight of stairs leading down into the water, with depth markings along the walls” (Kaushik). The communities that lived by the Nile River suffered for some time when the river would not flood because of the lack of rainfall in Africa.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Egyptians decided to start building what was known as the Old Aswan Dam or the Aswan Low Dam. This dam was completely built by 1902, but had to be raised twice before they decided to build the Aswan High Dam. These dams were built with the idea of being able to control the river floods and generating hydroelectricity. The construction of these dams developed a whole new aspect to irrigation. Before the construction of the dams the yearly floods were sort of unpredictable, some years it would be just the perfect amount to make great fertile soil, but sometimes it was too much and would wipe out the whole field. Sometimes it did not flood and therefore still ruined the crops by draught. The dams primary purpose was to help regulate the floods (egitalloyd.com). The Old dam was the first attempt at something so great in the whole world, it had it mistakes and was later on of no use, only used to control tailwater for the High Dam. The High Dam provided many benefits for the community. It efficiently controlled the dangerous floods and the droughts. The High Dam also provided a significant increase in farmland. The High Dam also provided great hydroelectricity, “When the dam first reached peak output it produced around half of Egypt’s entire electricity production and allowed most Egyptian villages to use electricity for the first time” (egitalloyd.com). The Aswan High Dam became a large part of the Egyptian population and is till today very important.

Recently the Nile River suffered a catastrophic event. Due to high amounts of heavy rain, this eminent water supply has turned brown due to all the soil that has been swept into the waterway. This massive flood has called to action of filtering the water for almost all of Egypt. Not only did it ruin the Nile but “…the floods caused power outages, displaced hundreds of people, and swept away dozens of cars…” (Associated Press). This is a great disaster because the government is not doing much about it, and many people are dependent on the river’s water and hydroelectricity.

The Nile River is very popular and most people know about it. When I encountered the Nile Gauge Readings chart in the Egyptian Gazette I was intrigued. The chart is big and catches everyone’s attention, therefore it caught mine. The chart does not explain what form of measurement they use to calculate the numbers provided, it just states the different places where they measure from. It totals up to eleven different measurements. Some of the measurements vary greatly from the others, which is crazy to me. This chart is meant to provide all the measurements for the whole month in the last issue of the month, but every week posts the readings for that particular week. The Nile Gauge Readings chart seems to be a complicated and therefore it was very hard to research much on it. In order to find typed information on other weeks I decided to go through the already completed weeks listed on the github website, when I looked through these markdown text and looked for “Nile Gauge Readings” many of these weeks did not have a chart at all. I understand filling out this chart is definitely a pain because of the many numbers associated so I decided to look for at least one that was complete. I found a complete chart on the 23rd of September in page 5. This chart because it was later in the month it had much more data than mine. This chart also had a different structure, it actually had comparison right next to each other of the levels of the water in 1905 and in 1904.

In most regions where the water level was measured it is seen that the differences in the numbers are minimal, some fluctuate by one, but not too much. By this data it can be assumed that the Nile River was rather predictable over the years and that is why people knew when the floods were soon coming. Comparing my chart from May to this chart from September the measurements are lower except in the “Assouan Reservoir” where the measurements were actually higher for the month of May.

Overall the Nile River was something very interesting to research about, although not many things were available, especially for the early 20th century. I made this paper more about the history of the Nile River in general and incorporated as much information as I could on the Nile Gauge Readings from the Egyptian Gazette. Overall I believe translating the newspaper in the microfilm to actual readable and researchable text is a great first step in learning about how life was back then.

Works Cited

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