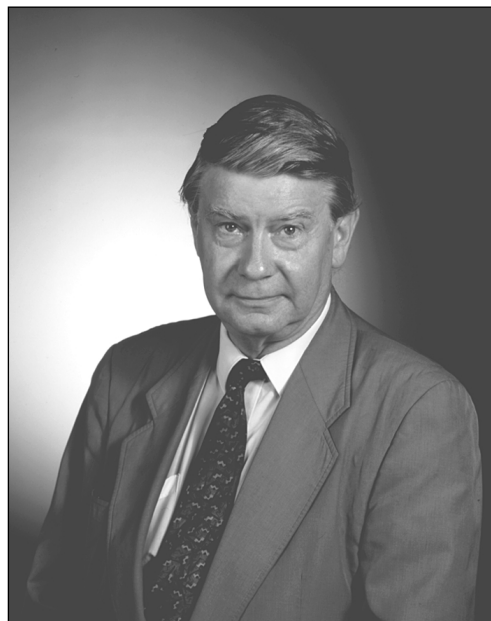




## NICHOLAS B. MILLET (1934-2004)

Dr. Nicholas Byram Millet, or simply Nick as he was known to his friends and colleagues, was born June 28, 1934 in Richmond, New Hampshire, a son of an American diplomat Charles S. Millet and Frances Williamson Millet. Although his formative years were spent abroad and apparently his first spoken language was Chinese, Nick remained very much a New Englander at heart. He was a descendant of Thomas Millet, a Puritan minister from Surrey who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635 and whose ancestor, one Henry Milett (with a double “t”) was buried in Perivale in Middlesex in 1505. Henry, in turn, might have descended from one Adam Milet, listed as a witness at the trial of Joan of Arc. Much of this information was gathered by Nick, whose hobbies included genealogy, heraldry, sailing and collecting Japanese sword-guards. His growing up as a diplomat’s son in China, Chile and Australia exposed him to many different cultures and inspired his fertile mind which eventually made Nick a great teacher and, when in the right mood, a great raconteur. There is something of a paradox, and a mystery as well, that when still a young boy living in Canton Nick developed interest in Ancient Egypt rather than China; and he pursued this interest in a thorough and methodical way by obtaining his B.A. and his Master’s degrees at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. At the same time he spent his summers first as a volunteer and later as assistant in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts working alongside such famous Egyptologists as W.K. Simpson, B.V. Bothmer and Dows Dunham. From 1960 until 1963 Nick was the director of the newly established American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), and after its re-organization became ARCE’s Director of Excavations until 1965. It was during his tenure in Cairo that he was able to organize his largest archaeological project, the excavations at Gebel Adda in Egyptian Nubia. The site produced an astonishing array of finds from the Meroitic until Ottoman peri-



ods. Because the Gebel Adda team was international in its composition and therefore some of the documentation was dispersed throughout the world, Nick unfortunately never published a final report; and he was too much of a perfectionist to publish an incomplete report. He returned to Nubia for one season in 1976 conducting a preliminary surface reconnaissance between Dongola and Fakrinkotti. His only other, and last field project was the study of the Middle Kingdom town and pyramid at Lahun. While Nick maintained his Egyptological interests throughout his entire life, his real passion was the study of Meroitic language. In fact, the history and language of Meroitic Nubia were the subject of his doctoral dissertation which he defended at the Yale University in 1968. After teaching for two years at Harvard, Nick accepted an offer from the Royal Ontario Museum and the University of Toronto and in 1970 became a museum curator and a university professor in Toronto where he remained until his

death. Nick’s demeanour, impeccable manners and a quiet sense of humour were appreciated by all his students, colleagues and museum visitors. His knowledge and his appearance made him the epitome of a museum curator and on quite a few occasions when movies were filmed in Toronto actors used Nick as a role model! Even his personal Egyptological library served as a prop in one of Richard Burton’s films.

Although American-born Nick spent his entire professional life in Canada and was thus greatly pleased, and slightly amused, when an eminent French philologist described him in an article on Meroitic language as “le grand meroïtisant canadien”. He proudly placed this phrase on his office door. For the students of ancient Nubia and Sudan, Nick Millet will indeed be always associated with the study and decipherment of Meroitic. This great scholar and a gentleman died in Toronto on 19 May 2004.

*KRZYSZTOF GRZYMSKI  
Toronto, 23. September 2004*