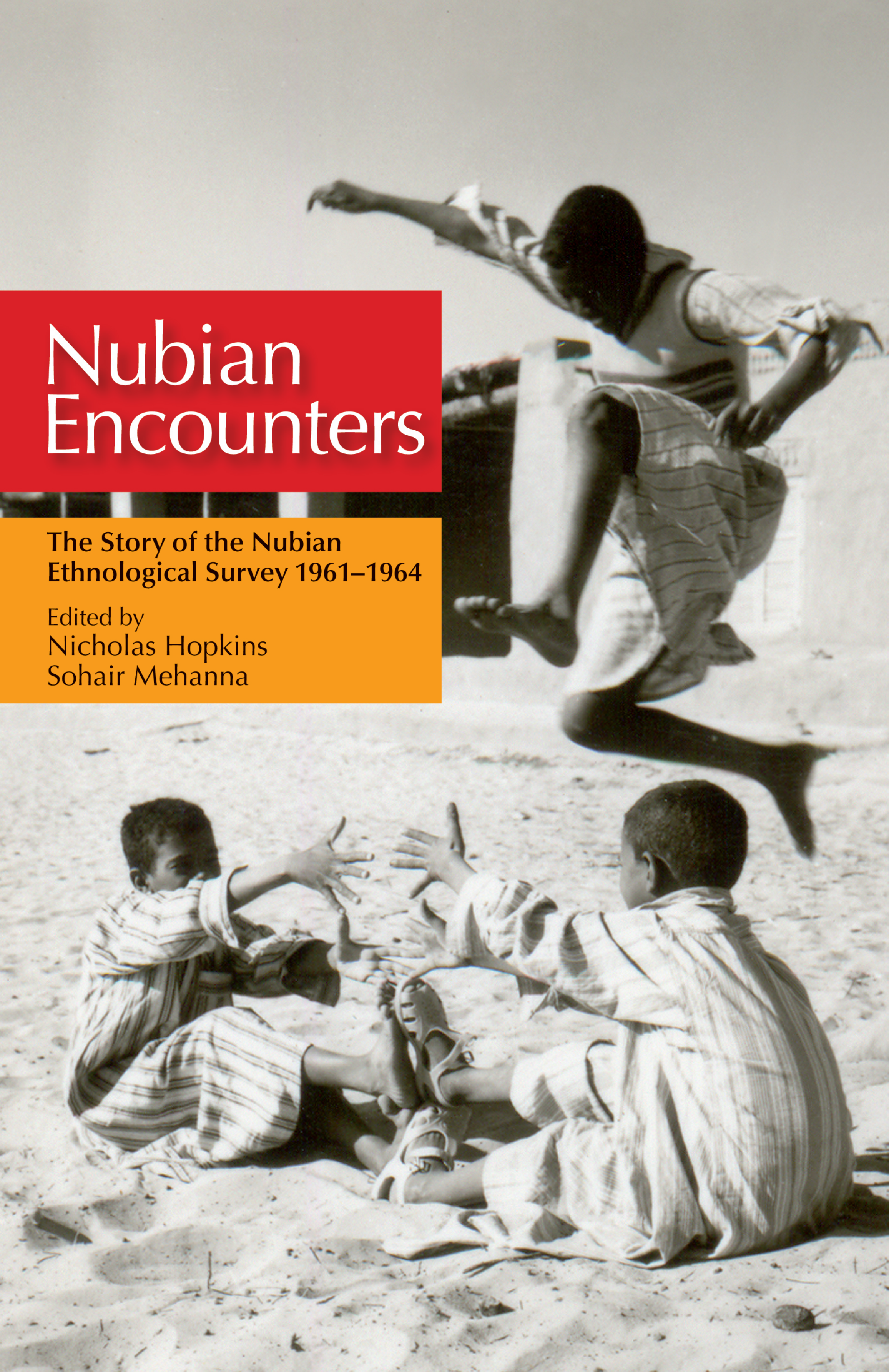

Nubian Encounters

The Story of the Nubian Ethnological Survey 1961–1964

Edited by
Nicholas Hopkins
Sohair Mehanna

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In recognition of the imagination
of Laila El-Hamamsy and Robert Fernea

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Preface

The Goal

This book describes an encounter between the Nubian people of Upper Egypt and a team of anthropologists and other social researchers. This encounter occurred on the eve of the transfer of the Nubian inhabitants of the Nile Valley south of Aswan to a resettlement area near Kom Ombo north of Aswan. Many of the anthropologists were affiliated to the "Nubian Ethnological Survey," managed through the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo, with financial support from the Ford Foundation. The anthropologists were not the only group to make a hurried visit to Old Nubia in this twilight period; there were many archaeologists, artists, tourists, and others. But the anthropologists sought out an extended encounter with the people of the remaining villages along the Nile, and later with the post-resettlement population, with the goal of describing and analyzing their social and cultural circumstances.

In this book we recreate the encounters between the Nubian population of the southern Egyptian Nile Valley on the one hand and the anthropologists and other social researchers on the other. These anthropologists were themselves varied by nationality and achievement within the profession. There were Americans, Europeans, and Egyptians with degrees in anthropology, in addition to postgraduate students—mostly Egyptians—some of whom in turn went on to earn further degrees in anthropology. The team members saw themselves as social scientists systematically collecting information for use in constructing a formal account of Nubian society and culture. Moreover, they believed that the information they

would collect and process would be of use to the Egyptian authorities responsible for the move. The Egyptian authorities were in effect a third party hovering over this interaction. The team members were thus in the classic position of applied anthropologists between a government and a people, between a client and an object. With one exception the researchers were outsiders to Nubia, whether from Cairo or California. Many of the young Egyptian researchers saw Nubia as a frontier, a part of the Egyptian homeland that should be explored and explained to the rest of the nation. Almost all the researchers saw their involvement as a step on their career paths, whether in social science or not. They approached the field situation with enthusiasm and imagination.

The Nubians who were in touch with the researchers were not just objects of research, butterflies to be pinned down in a new vocabulary, but partners, active participants in the process. Such a remark is common and unsurprising for anthropology, but it bears mention here. The Nubians instructed the anthropologists about what was important in their life and how to behave and interact. Some were cooperative in this unexpected joint project while others were hostile or reticent, although even their reticence was part of the picture—reflecting resentment at their loss of habitat. Two generations later, Nubians remain actively involved in constructions of their history and pre-dam life, and in efforts to articulate the relationship between themselves and other Egyptians. The roots of this dialogue are deep but their interpretations now predominate.

The research process involved three key roles—the 'senior' researchers who as team leaders set the scientific agenda, the research assistants who did much of the actual interviewing and recording, and their Nubian interlocutors who also put their stamp on the process. We intend to give, as much as possible in this reconstruction, each of these roles their due. There were of course systematic linkages between these roles, reflecting not only the status differences but also the ability to communicate across various language and culture barriers. The web of encounters was intricate, as the Egyptian research assistants often had to mediate between the Nubians and the American team leaders.

The focus of the research was not just on life in the villages of Old Nubia, but on the Nubians as a people. From the beginning the task had been defined to include Nubian migrants as part of Nubian society. One could not comprehend life in the depopulated villages without understanding the income that came from the migration of many Nubians to the cities. A number of these migrants were contacted and interviewed, and their accounts

serve as a counterpoint to the village life and its local transformations. People moved back and forth and money flowed.

The social situation was a complex one. It ranged from the ministerial level in Cairo to domestic life in the villages of Old Nubia. It involved the chairman of the Joint Committee for Nubian Resettlement, an undersecretary at the Ministry of Social Affairs, the director of the Social Research Center (SRC) at the American University in Cairo, and the Ford Foundation representative in Cairo. The research structure included the director of the project and a number of 'senior' colleagues (they were mostly in their thirties, but were the ones with advanced degrees and prior experience) who recruited, trained, and supervised a larger number of research assistants, mainly Egyptians from the northern cities. It included collegial relationships with researchers concerned with parallel topics such as linguistics, archaeology, or the situation of Sudanese Nubians, as well as with others doing anthropological research in Egyptian Nubia. The field researchers were of course in contact with significant individuals among the Nubians ('key informants') and in turn with broader elements of the Nubian population. Through them the researchers attempted to reconstruct a picture of the economic and social life of the last days of Nubia to serve as a baseline for future development.

This book is also an account of the encounter between the Nubians and their changing ecological circumstances as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, and thus with the Egyptian government that accepted responsibility for their transfer to new homes. Through the work of the anthropologists we present a picture of Nubian life in the last phase before the move. The book then follows the process through to the early moments of the resettlement situation in Kom Ombo, amplified by the study of the older resettlement in Dar al-Salam. This was a momentous change in the relationship between the Nubians and their social environment, even more perhaps than the changing relationship with the physical environment.

Examining this material in the early twenty-first century also highlights an encounter of a different kind, with an anthropology of a previous generation, which can now seem innocent and straightforward. At the time of this research effort, the focus was on the structural-functional analysis of bounded communities. Marxism, post-modernism, and other trends still lay ahead. Our presentation here can thus also be read as a contribution to the history of anthropology, certainly in Egypt and also more generally.

In short, there were encounters of various kinds—primarily between the research team and the objects of their research, the Nubians, who also

became participants and partners in the process. Other encounters played out between researchers at different stages in their careers; researchers and government officials of various types; the team and their various sponsors; and the past and the present. The explicit and implicit dialogue between these interlocutors provides the framework for this book.

This complex research project extended over several years and involved dozens of researchers and other participants. We have tried to give voice to multiple points of view and to reflect how they evolved over the project lifetime, from the early explorations of the project director to the final evaluations of one of the research assistants, who had become a professional collaborator. By reprinting scholarly works by the various participants, we restore the voice of the researchers.

The Process

In the spring of 2007, a group of faculty at the SRC noted that the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Nubian Ethnological Survey (NES) was approaching. They agreed to establish a record and an archive of the NES carried out by the SRC in the early 1960s. This group included Sohair Mehanna, Reem Saad, and Susan Watts; they invited Nicholas Hopkins to join. Mehanna was the only member of the original team still working at the SRC. Watts had already undertaken a preliminary collection of material in the SRC files. It was decided to pursue this, and also to collect other published and unpublished material, and above all to interview as many members of the original team as possible. The work began with a small budget granted by Hoda Rashad, director of the SRC. It has been continuing since then.

There were two causes for our concern. One was the longstanding feeling that the accomplishments of the SRC in the 1960s were fast being forgotten. Researchers would approach the SRC to find out what data the Center retained, and it was not easy to provide them with a satisfactory answer. The other was the successive deaths of two of the key figures, Fikri Abdul Wahab in 2004 and Hussein Fahim in 2007, threatening the collective memory in another way. Thus our determination to salvage the record of the NES and to make it available to a wide audience of scholars and citizens. We hope that an examination of this record will inspire a future generation of researchers to pursue and develop the issues raised in the twentieth century.

Over a two-year period the team collected proposals, reports, and other documentation; gathered and inventoried photos; tracked down obscure and missing publications; and sought out members of the original team both in Cairo and elsewhere for interviews. Most of the interviews were face to

face, but some were over the telephone. The first interview was with Robert Fernea in Oregon in July 2007; the latest to date was in Cairo in June 2009. Almost everyone we approached did their best to remember events that took place nearly fifty years earlier, but memories are faulty and there are always additional questions to ask. Some recollections were tape recorded, while others were the subject of extensive note-taking. A list of interviews is given in an appendix, and the notes or transcripts are part of our archive.

The documentary record was scattered and incomplete. Of course we drew heavily from the published record. We found some material in the SRC files, although less than we had hoped. The papers of the late Charles Callender fortuitously ended up in the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and we were able to consult that material, and to copy a significant amount from that archive for our own records. We are also grateful to Professor Thayer (Ted) Scudder of the California Institute of Technology for forwarding to us some of his files from the project, including a record of the interviews he and his assistants conducted in 1962, but also many drafts and other documents he had received from Hussein Fahim extending into the 1970s. The Ford Foundation, which provided the funding for the NES through the SRC, also made their files available to us. The record of these collections can be found in the appendix. The door is still open for other donations.

This material will be made available through the archives of the American University in Cairo. The story of the NES is a chapter in Egyptian history, in the history of the social sciences in Egypt, and also in the history of anthropology in general. It showcases the joys and frustrations of cross-cultural fieldwork, and raises questions of interpretation. The study is also a chapter in Nubian history, since the project was to observe and record aspects of Nubian life before and after the great resettlement of 1963–64. Moreover, it is an excellent example of cooperation among people of many different backgrounds, from the researchers who took the lead to the assistants they recruited and trained, and to the Nubians, experts on their own life, who guided them in the research.

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First of all, we owe a great debt of gratitude to those who provided us with interview material on their experience with the Nubian project in the 1960s. Their names are given in an appendix.

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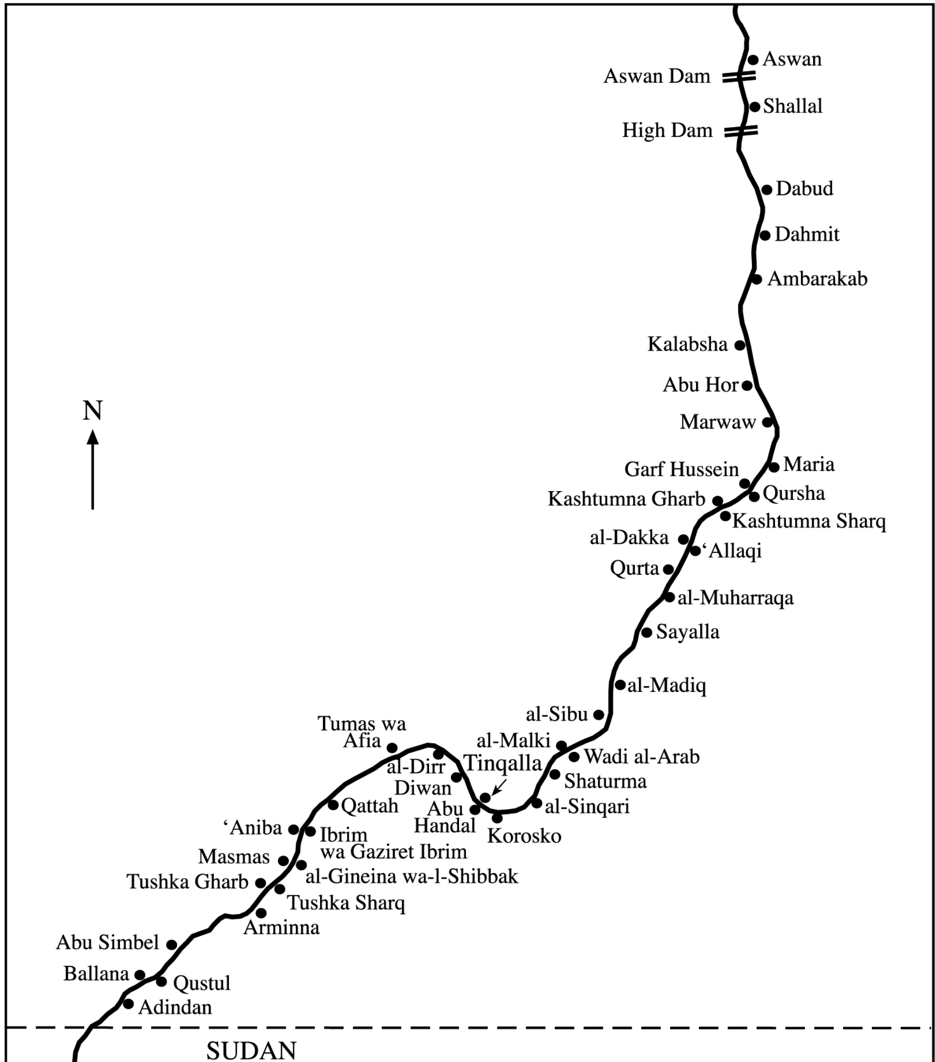
The Nubian Ethnological Survey
History and Methods

Nicholas S. Hopkins and Sohair R. Mehanna



Map 1: Districts of Egyptian Nubia in 1960. Based on a map in "Tahjir ahali al-Nubah," Cairo: Ministry of Social Affairs, 1964.

1 Nubian Resettlement and Anthropology

> Not one of the benefits of the Dam can be realized without the success of such complex social adjustments as are involved in relocation, the building of new communities, or the establishment of new industries.[1]

The construction of the Aswan High Dam was a major step forward in Egypt's development, following the establishment of the republic in 1952. A massive project, it transformed the ecology of the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Sudan. However, it did have a downside, namely that the population resident in the submergence area behind the dam was forced to leave. To ensure the roughly 100,000 affected people did not become victims of the broader plan, the Egyptian and Sudanese governments committed themselves to a planned and progressive initiative that would see the residents, collectively known as Nubians, resettled in an environment more conducive to development, although it was recognized that there would be a sense of loss. The overall plan required engineering expertise to build the dam and related works, but it was also a social experiment, transforming the lives of the displaced Nubians and bringing them into a different relationship with the Egyptian state and the world economy. *Nubian Encounters* approaches this development process through an examination of the efforts of social scientists affiliated with the American University in Cairo's Social Research Center (SRC) to record Nubian culture before the relocation, track the transfer, provide advice to those responsible for the resettlement, and offer a baseline for future research.

We retrace the efforts of a remarkable and talented team of Egyptian and western anthropologists and related scholars working between 1960 and 1975 as the Nubian Ethnological Survey and with the cooperation of many individual Nubians to record and understand a way of life that seemed doomed to disappear. The work was a mixture of 'salvage anthropology' and 'development anthropology,' also reflecting the structural-functionalism of the day. The team argued that the Nubian experience should not be allowed to disappear and that the lessons of that variant for social theory should be recorded. The understanding of the specificities of the Nubian case was intended to facilitate the process of resettlement as administrators and others were apprised. The research was intended both to document social organization and cultural functioning and to help grasp the processes of social change which the Nubian population was undergoing. Through the recorded results of the research team, a picture of the resettlement process emerges. Just as the resettlement was a major event in the social history of rural Egypt, so the effort to understand and record was a significant chapter in the history of anthropology and related social sciences in Egyptian intellectual life.

Our book consists of five parts: these introductory remarks to set the background, a detailed account of the research process itself, a discussion of the follow-up efforts to the project until the present, and a selection of published and unpublished material displaying the research results. The bibliography is intended to be comprehensive for the NES authors, but only selective for other related works then and since. *Nubian Encounters* focuses on the resettlement issue and does not deal with the thorny questions of Nubian history and origins.

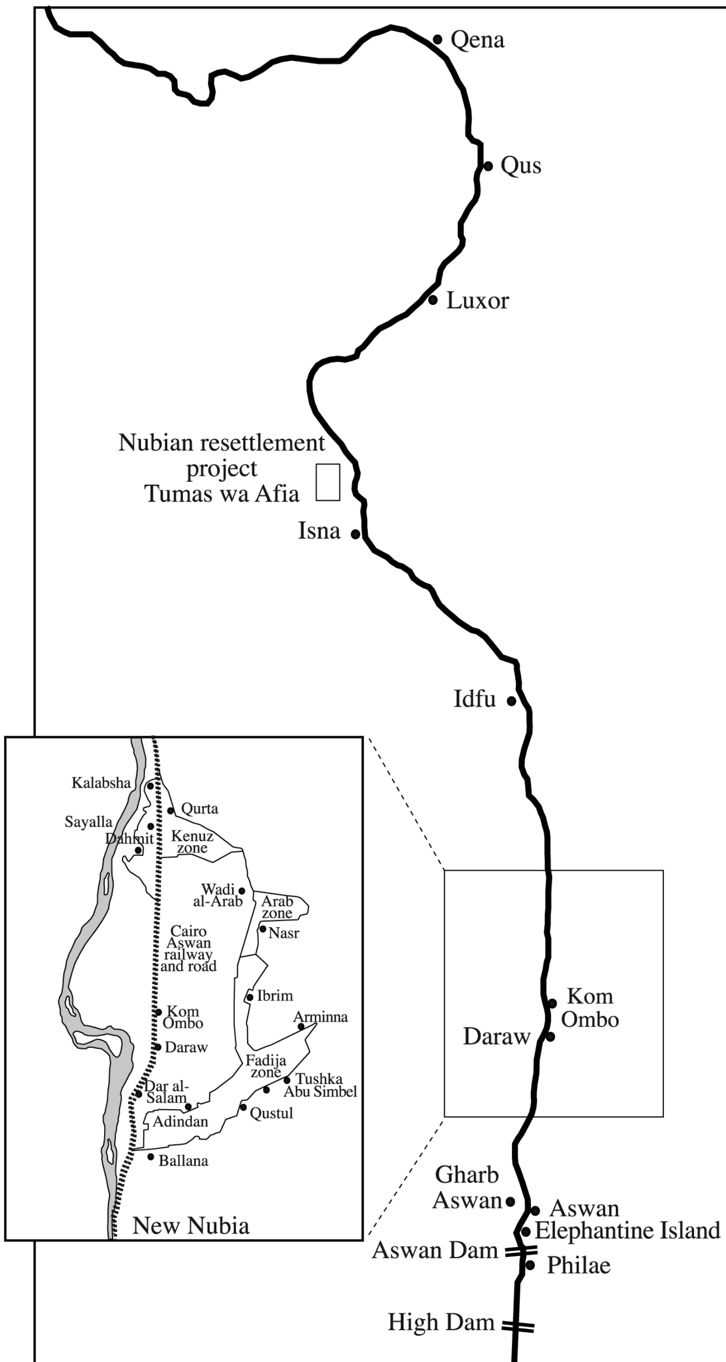
From early on the team members were conscious of an audience that would include the Nubians themselves, as well as Egyptians in general. Some of the writing was directly aimed at a Nubian audience: Nubians were invited to the 1964 "Symposium on Contemporary Nubia" that culminated the fieldwork period, and Fernea's ethnographic essay in *Nubians in Egypt* was drafted with the Nubian audience in mind. Although by now the fieldwork situation is distinctly in the past, almost half a century ago, and few of its agents and participants are still alive, the data presented in the publications on the Nubians, including those in this volume, are a record of research results that is available to Nubians, Egyptians, and scholars. One goal of this volume is to guide readers to those research results and make them more useful by explaining the processes that led to them.

The Aswan High Dam and Its Implications

The goal to control the waters of the Nile for the benefit of the land and people of Egypt is ancient. The headwaters of the Nile are far to the south of Egypt; the rainfall in these areas is seasonal, and consequently the river has a period of high water and one of low water. About 80 percent of the water flow derives from the Ethiopian highlands (Blue Nile) and the remaining 20 percent from the Lake Victoria basin supplemented by the rainfall in the southern Sudan (White Nile). Traditional Egyptian agriculture was based on the flood, which crested in August and September of each year.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, efforts were made to regularize the flow of waters in the Nile, with the goal of modernizing Egyptian agriculture. Along with many other engineering projects in Egypt and the Sudan, this included establishing a dam at the first cataract near Aswan. The old Aswan dam was completed in 1902 and was then raised in 1912 and again in 1933. The dam was not intended for year-round storage of water, but to retain the flood waters of the Nile and to release them slowly so that irrigation water in Egypt downstream of the dam would be available for a longer period. This would effectively mitigate both excessively high Nile floods and very low ones, evening out the supply of water so that crops would be more predictable. But the retention of water behind the dam also meant that the cultivatable land upstream would periodically be submerged. With the construction of the dam and the two raisings, the flooding in the valley reached farther and farther south. The original dam produced a seasonal lake one hundred kilometers long, the first elevation one of 150 kilometers, and after the second elevation the flooding extended 290 kilometers—reaching nearly into the Sudan. After the second elevation, the high water mark was maintained at the 121 meter contour. The Nubians living in the valley were forced to adjust to this variation either by moving farther up the sides of the valley or to a new location altogether. They also had to modify the agricultural methods they had been practicing because of the loss of their best land. Those who rebuilt often constructed elaborate houses with their compensation money.[2]

The lake would rise in the early part of the winter and then gradually recede during the spring as the water was drawn down for agriculture north of the dam. Thus the water would be lowest in the early summer. Egyptian Nubia would then feel a rise in the water as the annual flood from upstream entered the valley. The dam was generally left open during the first part of the flood when most of the silt was carried, allowing it to pass downstream rather than accumulating behind the dam. The sluices were then closed



Map 2: Upper Egypt showing New Nubia and other Nubian locations. Various sources.

until drawdown was needed. However, much of the variation in the lake level was controlled by the irrigation engineers at the dam who were trying to maximize the use of water in agriculture. They also sometimes varied the water level to ensure electricity generation at the dam. From a farmer's point of view, then, the water level was unpredictable, and unreliable for farming.

In northern Nubia farmers could try a fodder or quick-growing crop like melon in the summer, but even then there was a danger that water levels might rise unexpectedly. They also transferred soil from the riverbed to create small irrigated plots above flood level. In southern Nubia the growing season was longer and conditions approximated those of the pre-dam situation (see below, El Zein on Adindan). There were also several pump schemes where year-round agriculture was possible. One such scheme was in place at Ballana.

A proposal for a much grander Aswan High Dam was first published in 1948 (Waterbury 1979). The proposal foresaw year-round storage—and thus a permanent lake. After 1952, the new republican regime took the decision to pursue the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Preliminary planning, both engineering and with respect to the Nubian population, was soon under way. After Sudanese independence in 1956, a new agreement on the partition of the Nile waters was signed between the two countries on November 8, 1959 (Nile Water Agreement). This agreement between Egypt and the Sudan stipulated that the water would be divided according to a ratio of three parts for Egypt and one part for the Sudan, calculated on the flow at Aswan. It enabled construction to commence on January 9, 1960. The flow of the river was blocked and the lake began to fill in summer 1964; the dam was considered operational in 1970, inaugurated officially in January 1971; and the lake was considered full in 1975. The lake flooded the entire Nile Valley south of the dam, and well into the Sudan, a total distance of about five hundred kilometers. It raised the water level at least fifty meters, to a contour level between 170 meters and 175 meters, with a maximum level of 182 meters, and produced an entirely new ecology (see Balal et al. 2008).

On the eve of an agreement on the High Dam between the Egyptian and Sudanese governments, the Egyptian government first approached UNESCO on April 6, 1959, requesting its help in saving the monuments of Nubia; a few months later the Sudanese government followed suit (Mokhtar 1988). UNESCO made its first general appeal on March 8, 1960, and the outcome was the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia (1960–80) which "resulted in the excavation and recording of hundreds of

sites, the recovery of thousands of objects, and the salvage and relocation of a number of important temples to higher ground."[3] Many countries and institutions with a history of involvement in Egyptology joined in the program, and UNESCO played a coordinating role (Säve-Söderbergh 1987). In 1982 this led to another international campaign, to establish the Nubia Museum in Aswan. No comparable appeal was made either to save the displaced Nubian people from loss or to record their culture before it was swept under the flood.

The Nubian residents, equally divided between Egypt and the Sudan, were forced to evacuate the area entirely. The Egyptian Nubians were resettled in prepared settlements in the Kom Ombo region, about fifty kilometers north of Aswan. Meanwhile, the Sudanese Nubians were mostly transferred to a new irrigation project at Khashm al-Girba, farther to the south and close to the Ethiopian–Eritrean border. In effect the Egyptian and Sudanese Nubians were asked to abandon their homeland in the interest of greater prosperity for their countries as a whole.[4]

The Egyptian government had begun making preparations for a possible move as early as 1956. The main responsibility for the resettlement of the Nubians fell to the Ministry of Social Affairs and in 1956 the Permanent Council for National Production Development analyzed the repercussions the High Dam project would have on the people of Nubia. A year later there were studies related to housing projects and social assistance. And in 1960 there was an overall social survey of Nubia carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which represented the first effort to identify the Nubians who would be eligible for resettlement in the first stage of the migration operation. These studies were largely statistical in nature and were designed to help in planning (Abdul Wahab 1964:1–2 [see below]; see also Fahim 1983:32–34).

The Committee for the Investigation of Nubian Demands was formed, also in 1960, as planning for relocation continued. Nubian leaders asked for and received assurances that the Nubian villages would be moved as units, and each village would retain its old name preceded by the word 'new' (el Abd 1979:101). In 1961, the Joint Committee for Nubian Migration was formed under the chairmanship of the undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs and composed of representatives from other concerned ministries (Serageldin 1982). The committee was tasked with organizing the resettlement of the Nubians. Overall responsibility for Nubian resettlement was assigned to the governor of Aswan. The Nubians were moved between October 18, 1963 and June 27, 1964, mostly toward the end of that period (see

Wizaret al-Shu'un al-Ijtima'iya 1964). Local leaders, members of the Arab Socialist Union, teachers, and Nubian boy scouts all helped with the move.

Naturally there weren't only resettlement implications but interlocking agricultural ones as well. Sayyid Marei, the powerful minister of agriculture at the time, took an interest in the study because of its implications for new land resettlement in Tahrir Province and elsewhere,[5] but when he was removed from his post, there was no more follow-up from this ministry. Marei was dismissed on October 2, 1961 amid bureaucratic infighting and also real problems such as an infestation of cotton worms, the breakup with Syria, and debates over reclaimed land (Springborg 1982:158). The interest that Marei had taken in the project, implicitly on behalf of the Egyptian government, was a significant factor in persuading the Ford Foundation to offer the grant, since it indicated that this was more than just a bunch of anthropologists at AUC.[6] Marei's early involvement notwithstanding, the research team fell under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, headed during this period by Dr. Hekmet Abou Zeid.

In 1966 the Ministry of Land Reform took over responsibility for the New Nubia project, and the Egyptian Authority for the Utilization and Development of Reclaimed Land (EAUDRL) was soon established through a presidential decree. Its main function was to boost soil fertility and productivity levels in reclaimed areas, and provide settlers with a number of community services to improve social conditions and raise living standards for farmers (el Abd 1979:95). EAUDRL's mandate covered many newly reclaimed and resettled areas including the Nubian colonies. The Ministry of Social Affairs was no longer responsible; their job had been the move and that had been achieved. The handover reflected the intention to move from the social to the technical.

Nubia and the Nubians before the Move

During much of its course, roughly from Khartoum to Aswan, the Nile flows through desert, and the population is limited to a fairly narrow strip of land on one or both banks. Southward of Aswan, and continuing until Dongola in the Sudan, the settled people belong to various 'Nubian' groups. They are now known collectively as Nubian, although that term has also been used to refer to only one of the groups. The Nubians are historically and linguistically distinct from the Arabic-speaking populations to the north and south, and also from the nomads of the surrounding deserts.

Egyptian Nubia stretched from Aswan to the Sudanese border, a distance of about 320 kilometers. At the time of resettlement in the early

1960s, there were an estimated 50,000 Nubians living in the Egyptian submergence zone. Settlement was strung out along the banks of the Nile at a level high enough to avoid the flood. Altogether there were forty *nahia*s, or districts, of which seventeen were Kenuzi, five were Arabic-speaking, and eighteen were Fadija, according to the language spoken.[7] These districts in turn consisted of a dozen or more *naga*'s or village settlements, which were the actual unit of co-residence, while the district was more of a political unit. The Fadija district of al-Dirr for instance had 1,075 residents in twelve settlements (Hohenwart-Gerlachstein 1965:49), and the Kenuzi district of Dahmit had 1,055 residents in twenty-four settlements (Callender n.d.). The Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs recognized 536 *naga*'s between the dam site and the Sudanese border in 1962 (Scudder 1966:104). The 1960 census records 560 settlements divided among forty districts.[8]

The residents actually living in Nubia formed only part of the total Nubian population, as there had been heavy emigration, more or less permanent, since at least the nineteenth century. In the 1960s it was estimated that there were as many Nubians living outside Nubia as inside; the migrants tended to be the adult males so that the resident population was mostly female. However, the urban female population was growing as families reunited. Callender estimated that 80 percent of the people from Dahmit lived elsewhere (Callender and el Guindi 1971:4), an estimate that includes many women. Nubians had migrated to Cairo and other northern Egyptian towns at least from the nineteenth century, and were well known as doormen, concierges, messengers, cooks, and other household help. Their distinctiveness and character traits (honesty, reliability) encouraged a certain fascination with their original populations.[9] As the ability of the Nubian land to support the population diminished, the reliance on remittances from the urban offshoots increased. The effects of the transfer were thus felt not only by the resident population, but also on the Nubian colonies in the urban areas. The 1960s in particular saw a lot of coming and going as Nubians maneuvered to qualify for compensation and to help their relatives prepare for the move. The administration, of course, wanted to know how many people would actually make the move. The numbers were important to all.

Entirely Muslim, the Nubians spoke three different languages—Kenzi (Matoki) in the north, Arabic in a small pocket in the center, and Fadija (Mahas) in the south. The name 'Nubian' is sometimes used to refer only to the last of these groups, at other times to all together. In Old Nubia, Matoki and Mahas had about the same number of speakers; Arabic speakers

were fewer. The Nubian languages belong to the East Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan phylum and are thus related to other languages spoken farther south in the Sudan. The geographical distribution of related languages can provide clues to cultural history, but the pattern here represents an unsolved historical puzzle. In Egypt, the northernmost group is the Kenuz, and the southern group is the Mahas or Fadija. The Fadija speakers in the Sudan are an extension of the Egyptian population, situated around Wadi Halfa. Farther south, they give way to more speakers of Kenzi, here known as Dongolawi. Both Matoki and Mahas contain extensive borrowings from Arabic (Rouchdy 1991).

Although the languages provide a mark of distinction, culturally there was more of a continuum. Some of the traits that anthropologists identify as specifically Nubian are in fact found in the neighboring groups (for example, the belief in *mushahra*, see Callender and el Guindi 1971:13). Others are no longer relevant, for instance the fact that Nubians remained Christian for many centuries after Egypt became predominantly Muslim. Issues of religion, social organization, and family structure are not clear markers. Although Nubians are generally considered to be darker-skinned than other Egyptians, this is not always the case. In fact many people of lighter skin color have also settled among and been assimilated into Nubian society (Hungarians, Bosnians, Kurds, and the like, mostly resulting from Ottoman military garrisons), as have black slaves from southern Sudan.There were some differences in social status—small groups of socially stigmatized ex-slaves from southern Sudan lived among the Nubians and had been Nubianized; some ‘Ababda had drifted in from the Eastern Desert attracted by pasture for their flocks and the chance to share in the caravan trade;[1] a group of outsiders from the north, the *kushaf*, historically had held dominant social positions, especially in the Fadija area from al-Dirr upstream. Kinship organization (lineages) and Sufi brotherhoods provided other forms of social organization. There were wealth differences produced by varying kinds of migration experience and levels of involvement in trade and transport. Apparently isolated, the Nubian population was always open to influences from elsewhere.

Nubian social organization fits within the broader Middle Eastern pattern. Kinship is patrilineal, marriage is frequently patrilocal, and there is a durable preference for marriage with cousins. Most relations in the local community are also with kin, whether patrilateral or matrilateral. There is a marked social segregation between male and female spheres. Leadership tends to be informal and reflects seniority as well as personal characteristics.

The work of the Nubian Ethnological Survey (NES) did not overthrow these generalizations, but it did specify their workings in particular cases, as the reprinted selections make clear.

There has been something of a tendency to essentialize the Nubians, to consider them as a homogeneous group.[11] This is overstating the case. Although there are features which may characterize the Nubians in general, there are also many specific circumstances that have created unique histories and geographies for different communities. Each district, for instance, has its distinctive geographical setting—the amount of available farmland, position in a trade network, role in state administration—and these have their effects, most visible in pre-1964 labor migration patterns. As mentioned above, status distinctions are not absent, reflecting previous slave status and patterns of inward migration (Hohenwart 1965; Fogel 1997). "Taken as a whole, Nubia very likely represents a wide variety of economic and social behaviors which may be as differentiated as the linguistic bases distinguishing the three regions of Nubia" (Geiser 1967:174).

These considerations aside, Nubians have long been considered a specific and distinct population, as noted by pioneering western travelers including early nineteenth-century travelers Burckhardt (1987) and Lane (2000). Certainly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries a separate Nubian identity has become widely recognized, affirmed by Nubians and accepted by others (Fernea 1973; Fogel 1997). This has generally been a 'Nubian' identity rather than one linked to the speech communities. The identity includes both people in the homeland and the very extensive migrant population in Egyptian and Sudanese cities. One of the apparent paradoxes of the 1964 relocation is that a unique Nubian identity has been, if anything, reinforced. Nubian distinctiveness in contemporary Egypt gives rise to debate: there is both the assertion of identity and a continuing discussion about whether it matters or should matter. Recent publications on the Nubians constantly return to this theme (Poeschke 1996; Jennings 2009; Fogel 1997; and Smith 2006).

The Anthropology of the Day

The NES was conceived and conducted within a framework of the anthropology of the late 1950s and 1960s. Anthropology has changed considerably since that time. Accordingly, it is important to recall what that anthropology was in order to appreciate the choices made in the study. This was an anthropology focused on studies in tribes and villages, with an emphasis on the bounded community. It was strongly influenced by

British structural-functionalism as represented by Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski, and their followers. The so-called 'culture and personality' school, prevalent in the US, shared the same assumptions about the unit of study. Other approaches in anthropology, such as the structuralism proposed by Lévi-Strauss, the political economy trend associated with the popularity of Marxism in the 1970s, social constructionism, and postmodernism had still not been conceived.

Until the 1960s it was rare for American anthropologists to be interested in the peoples of Africa or Asia. Thus it is not surprising that most of the Americans who worked on the NES had previously worked with American Indian groups or had shown some interest in them.[12] The American Indian groups were mostly relatively small populations who had been in lengthy contact with Euro–American society. The main research issues included the effort to reconstruct a pre-contact situation and to understand the process of cultural assimilation. The scant linguistic and archaeological evidence was brought to bear on questions of origins and cultural history. After the 1960s American Indians ceased to be the center of interest for American anthropology, and the theoretical focus also shifted.

In the early twentieth-century, most anthropologists, whether American or European, were interested in 'primitive' people, seen as remnants of earlier stages of civilization—pygmoid groups, hunters and gatherers, and the like. The study of such groups was understood to reveal the broader history of the human experience.[13] Subsequently, the focus shifted to the study of a group's 'culture.' Beginning in the 1930s, British and British-trained anthropologists began to analyze the contemporary life of African and similar peoples, and to develop theories—which we can collect under the heading of functionalist or structural-functionalist—to interpret and analyze them (Kuper 1973). By the 1960s these theories were one of the dominant trends in anthropology (or 'social' anthropology) and efforts at cultural history or historical reconstruction of the movements of peoples fell out of favor. Another main theme, reflecting the popularity of Freudian psychology in the 1930s and 1940s, was the study of the links between personality and culture.

By the 1950s and 1960s interest in 'primitive remnants' taken as silent witnesses to the past of humanity or as a possible 'missing link' in human social evolution had given way to a concern for each culture as a unique way of life whose preservation was important for the future of humankind (see, for example, Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, 1934). Thus emerged the concept of salvage anthropology, based on the urgency of preserving a record of a culture about to disappear. Built into the notion of salvage anthropology

is the understanding that it is the task of scholars to record the way of life of a people unable to speak for themselves. In some interpretations of salvage anthropology the concern is with oral literature, music, and so on—the so-called 'intangible heritage'—as well as with folk art and other artifacts. More complicated is the recording of a social organization together with its associated set of values.

The notion of salvage is based on the idea that a 'culture' is not only unique, but is a bounded entity, distinct in its language and practices, and consisting of isolable traits. According to the functionalist premise, even a change in part of the culture would have ramifications for other parts. This was the situation in the 1960s at the time of the NES. Such a usage is no longer dominant in anthropology, where researchers prefer the notion of 'culture' as a set of open-ended and meaningful stratagems, to 'a culture,' with its implications of a self-contained system. Meanwhile, the effort to record the past gave way to a concern to shape the future, in other words, to what has become known as development anthropology.

Although anthropologists have always sought practical applications for their knowledge, practice has usually been a minor concern in the evolution of the field. 'Pure' research has always been more highly regarded than 'applied.' The real push for an applied anthropology emerged from the concerns of the Second World War, and later evolved toward a concern with 'development.' When the NES got under way, there was relatively little large-scale involvement in development, let alone in the resettlement issues the Nubians were facing. The first major study was the Kariba Dam research from the Zambezi basin in southern Africa, and the publications were only just coming out when the Nubian project began (Colson 1960; Scudder 1962). Since then there have been numerous studies, including the Nubian one, and understanding is much more systematized.

Meanwhile Egyptian social science was emerging. Sociology was formally taught at Cairo University from 1925, and anthropology from the early 1930s. The sociology taught was close to philosophy and focused on questions of national identity (Zayed 1995; Roussillon 1999), whereas the anthropology was in many ways close to folklore (see Galal 1937). Beginning in the 1930s a desire for social reform called a different kind of social science into being ('Uways 1989). The 1952 revolution led to optimism that a younger generation of Egyptians could take their society in hand and refashion it for the modern era. As in many similar countries, this produced an attitude that favored trying to understand the existing social and cultural patterns so that they could be transformed. Although many Egyptians remained interested