THE NUBIAN EXPERIENCE:

A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEANINGS OF ARCHITECTURE

by

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TO

MY LATE FATHER, MY MOTHER, MY SISTER

AND

TO

MY WIFE EBTESAM

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My gratitude to all who helped me accomplish this task successfully, especially the Nubians who made my research enjoyable, and without whom this research would have been impossible. The Nubians at Abu Simbel Village and the returnees at the lake shore welcomed me among them and helped me with everything.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning must be a process of discovery and recovery in response
to worthwhile questions rising out of conscious life in concrete situations.

(Maxine Greene)

What this research is

This study is about *Architecture*. It is an attempt to explore ambiguities and confusions surrounding the architectural enterprise in our own time. It is a call for a return to the architecture of everyday life, and an attempt to understand it from a point of view different from that of professionalism and institutionalized architecture. It is an effort to see anew and understand the architecture that surrounds us day and night.

This study stemmed from my personal experience and puzzlement with architecture in Egypt during the last fifteen years. As an Egyptian I was astonished by the long history of architecture in Egypt and, at the same time, puzzled by the absence of an Egyptian identity in the environment that surrounded me. As an architect, I experienced confusion by learning and practicing architecture alien to what I saw and experienced around me.

The dilemmas and questions addressed by this research were overlooked during my architectural education. During the period of my practice I was-- perhaps like many practicing architects-- deeply involved in the daily activities and problems of the profession. I did not have the luxury of time and distance to reflect upon what was taking place around me. I was confused by many contradictions, yet I was not able to understand

their meanings because of the taken for granted assumptions embedded in the architectural profession.

The aim of this study is to understand the meanings hidden behind the facades of architecture around us. My displacement from the environment of Egypt allowed me to break with the familiar context and to critically reflect on my educational and professional experiences with architecture. This critical reflection allowed me to recognize the assumptions taken for granted about architecture. These assumptions concealed and distorted important meanings of my experience with architecture. By reflecting on those assumptions, I was able to bracket them and, at the same time, discover meaningful ways to understand architecture as part of our everyday life experience.

In order to understand the meanings of architecture as part of the environment around us, I chose to research architecture as understood by people in a real life context. The context I chose for this study was Nubia. I was interested in discovering the meaning or different meanings of architecture as experienced by these people who used and lived with it.

Nubia was the region between the First and Third cataracts of the Nile south of Egypt. Due to the construction of the High Dam in 1964, Nubia was flooded by the lake water created behind the dam. As a result, the Nubians were relocated in new communities north of the dam. The Nubians who had lived for hundreds of years in vernacular villages and dwellings were relocated to new communities designed by professional architects and planners. The designed houses were different from the vernacular dwellings of old Nubia.

The twenty-five years which have passed since the dislocation of the Nubians have witnessed many changes in their way of life. The Nubians applied many changes to the units they received from the government in order to suit their way of life. The modifications made to the environment were an expression of a world view which was

different than that of the professional architects who planned and designed the displacement villages. Fifteen years after the displacement, a group of Nubians decided to leave the displacement communities and return to the lake shores and settle there. They built dwellings similar to the traditional dwellings of old Nubia before the displacement.

The goal of this study is to understand the meaning or different meanings of architecture in the midst of this cultural unrest. How do the Nubians experience the architecture produced by professional architects and planners? The displacement communities were the context of social and cultural changes of the Nubians' way of life. My interest here is to understand the relationship between the changes in architecture and changes in the Nubians' way of life after the displacement.

The vernacular architecture before the displacement enjoyed a strong and distinctive character and identity admired by many observers. The displacement communities were designed by professional architects who had a different view of the world, which was infiltrated through their design of the villages and houses. The professional architects did not take into consideration the Nubians' way of living as a basis for their design. The Nubians did not participate in the design and planning of their new villages and houses.

This conflict is experienced by many people all around the world. Architects and planners are deciding the fate of large groups of people. They very seldom understand the way of life of those for whom they design. They apply many assumptions and ideas based on stereotyped images of the people for whom they think they design. These often distorted images are produced by the institutionalized view of the architectural profession.

What this research is not

This research is not an attempt to prove a point or blame someone. Its goal is understanding architecture as lived and experienced by the people. It is an attempt to see

new possibilities for a better future based on understanding meanings hidden behind the facades of buildings and environments. It is an attempt to *de-school and re-educate* myself in order to be able to *re-define* my role as an architect in society.

This study allowed me to develop an attitude toward architecture and to see our enterprise in a new light. It was not a search for facts so much as it was a search for new meanings, and an attempt to recognize the assumptions that were then taken for granted about architecture.

The meaning of architecture can only be understood when studied through the experiences of those who live it. Believing that architecture is part of our daily life, I am interested in the meaning or different meanings of architecture as places for dwelling and environments where daily life experiences take place. I have attempted to achieve an understanding which stems from everyday life itself and not from theoretical or preconceived ideas of architectural professionalism.

PART 1

CHAPTER 1

DETACHMENT, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS

Studying in the United States enabled me to detach myself from the Egyptian context and the taken for granted environment of my everyday life experience. This detachment was an opportunity to reflect on my past experience with architecture and the situation in Egypt. I started my search in two directions. On one hand, I reflected on the housing problem in Egypt and the idea of building large scale projects and planned communities in Egypt. On the other hand, I re-examined my architectural experience and the assumptions I had taken for granted for several years about architecture. I started to question all those taken for granted assumptions about architecture and my role as an architect.

The Egyptian Context

All around the world we observe traditional ways of living being replaced by a modern way of living dependent on machines and technology. Not only are new objects replacing old objects, but also traditional ways of living are being modified and disappearing. Some view traditional ways of living as backward and undesirable. They ask, isn't it better for people to discard their traditional ways of living and live an easy, modern life? Others view traditional ways of living as more authentic and meaningful compared to alienated and less humanized modern ways of living. An important part of this dilemma is related to my field of speciality: architecture.

Reflecting on the rapidly changing everyday life environment in Egypt one experiences confusion and puzzlement. The railroad runs beside the banks of the Nile from Alexandria in the north to Aswan in the south of Egypt. On both sides of the Nile there are villages and hamlets, farmers' houses, and farm lands. The high mountains

envelop the Nile valley on both sides. The agricultural land is limited by the desert and the water supply from the Nile. It cannot be expanded because of the rough, stoney hills. Date palm trees are everywhere. The Nile valley is the most crowded part of Egypt. Fifty million Egyptians are living on 4% of Egypt's land. The rest of the country is desert; it is not suitable for human beings or beasts.

Everyday life in the villages of Egypt is changing rapidly. The *fallahat* (female peasants), wearing bright colored *gallabias* (dresses) and others wearing the customary dark colored ones, wash their bright colored containers in the water canals by the railroad. They have discarded the traditional heavy copper and steel containers, replacing them with modern plastic ones. The *fallaheen* (male peasants) talk by the new diesel water pumps, while their buffalos are sitting under the shadow of the trees most of the day. Instead of using *sakias* (the traditional water wheels) that consumed the energy of animals and the care of humans, both animals and humans are watching the machines do the work for them.

A familiar scene in many villages today is an electric wire extended from one of the houses to the bank of the water canal where a *fallaha* (a female peasant) is filling a red plastic container from the dirty waters of the canal and pouring it into a white barrel-like washing machine. After washing her cloth and cleaning the plastic container, she pulls the washing machine behind her to the house.

The villagers' dwellings are also undergoing many changes and modifications. The traditional mud houses are being replaced by modern ones built with concrete and brick. T.V. antennas are rising above all the houses of the village, while private cars park in the middle of the narrow unpaved streets.

Watching vernacular forms of buildings disappearing and being replaced by modern forms, many questions emerge. Should we keep the people in these vernacular dwellings? Shouldn't we change these environments to better planned ones where all services are provided to make their life easier? Are people to be denied technology and

modern ways of living in order to preserve their traditional culture? Are these vernacular settings more authentic and pleasant than contemporary architecture which is confused by technology and conflicting styles? Shouldn't we preserve these environments and appreciate them instead of destroying or altering them?

At the same time, the National Housing Plan estimates a shortage of 3.6 million dwelling units by the year 2000. The housing shortage causes severe social problems all around Egypt.

> In Cairo, the housing shortage has reached 299,000 dwelling units. To catch up, 56,000 units must be built every year ... Homeless families find shelter in mosques and in Cairo's vast cemeteries, which house an estimated 500,000 inhabitants in tombs.[1]

While thinking about the housing situation in Egypt, I reflected; "We have to move away from the large cities of Cairo and Alexandria, as well as other crowded urban areas of Egypt, to the desert and build new communities where people can live and have new jobs and opportunities for a better life. We live on only 4% of the area of our land and we should build new communities in the desert where we can live." I drew a map of Egypt on a piece of paper and divided it into several squares. At each intersection I drew a small circle representing a new community to be built as a solution for the housing and overcrowded problems in Egypt. A moment of hesitation and reflection brought me from the ivory tower of intellectualism to the grounds of real life.

As an architect, I was taught and practiced architecture in an atmosphere that allowed and encouraged this way of thinking. "The architect is a creator who knows what is better for the people, more than the people themselves," said one of my professors. "*People* need to be *educated* in order to understand and appreciate the ideas of architects," another professor commented. The atmosphere of my architectural education encouraged the idea of planning other people's lives as a proper way of thinking. I

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[1] Schmertz, Mildred F., Coping with Cairo: A study in urban decline, Architectural Record, May 1985, pp.91-93.

realized how mistaken I was in thinking that way, yet I had no other alternative way of thinking to follow.

During the late Seventies, the Egyptian government was building several new communities and large housing projects to accommodate the growing population and to provide more housing for the people. The so called *housing problem* was identified as a shortage in the housing supply given the increasing demand for housing units. The solutions applied by the government to solve the housing problem consisted of building more housing units to meet the growing demand. Planned new communities were perceived as an adequate solution to help solve the housing problem.

Although the idea of building new planned communities was not a new one, it was not very successful and the new communities did not attract many Egyptians. Most of those who worked there commuted from nearby towns and cities. The government was building new planned communities assuming that they were adequate solutions for our housing problem. At the same time, it was clear that these communities were not successful in attracting people from the overcrowded areas of Egypt. Should not we try to understand what was wrong with these planned communities and whether the assumption that building new, planned communities was an adequate one?

What can we do to solve the disastrous housing problem in Egypt? My concern about the housing problem in Egypt was pushing me to think in terms of sweeping solutions and grand ideas. I was puzzled by these dilemmas and questions for a long time. Maybe it was my way of thinking that misled me and directed me away from more important issues.

My Experience With Architecture

Before entering the architectural school, architecture had a mysterious image for me. I did not know what architecture was all about. I knew that architects were *those who*

build buildings and houses. They had the talent and expertise of designing and drawing buildings. They were more like artists than scientists. At school, I was introduced to the *architecture of the academy*, which was very different than what I practiced for several years after graduation. My architecture practice allowed me to realize that economic and political forces play important roles in creating the surrounding environment.

My Architectural Education

The education system in Egypt is based on an annual curriculum which students have to pass in order to qualify for the next academic year. The academic year starts in September and ends in May, during which students attend classes and studios where they are given programs for different projects as assignments. The rest of the curriculum is considered supplementary to the design activity.

In the design studios we were asked to design projects according to what we could find in data books about building requirements and standards. The data books were introduced to us in theory courses, and our design ideas were modified by criticisms and revisions of our projects by faculty members who pointed out what was wrong in our design and thinking. The final evaluation and grading of our work was made by these professors based on functional and aesthetic criteria held by them. The main emphasis was on designing projects and the production of high quality drawings and models.

It was very important to consider the views of our professors even before thinking about projects' requirements. This type of information was provided by senior students in upper classes. There were basically two different types of knowledge necessary to advance through the school of architecture: knowledge about architecture *itself*, and knowledge about the professors' preferences and way of thinking. We discovered that architectural knowledge was not fixed and that it differed from one professor to the other. Most of our professors received their degrees from foreign countries. Most of our data books-- Neufert Architects' Data and Time-Saver Standards, and magazines: Architectural Record, Progressive Architecture, L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui, and

Japanese Architecture-- were imported from foreign countries. Theories of architecture and biographies of architects which we studied were all foreign: Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies Van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius. Our first project was to design a triumphal arch using the Classical Greek orders of columns.

In this *foreign* atmosphere, our ideas of what was architecture started to develop and our language started to change. The International Style and Modern Architecture were the styles of our designs; modern technology and construction systems were to be used in our design solutions. Drawing became our language of communication because, as we were told, architects talked by drawing. The appearance of our drawings became extremely important, even more important than what these drawings contained. The drawings were evaluated according to both their content and their appearance, but good rendering and presentation always ensured a good grade.

We always talked about the *people* who would use our buildings, how they would behave and use the spaces. These *people* were hypothetical because our projects were only academic and not real projects to be built. In many projects, we were to wipe out complete neighborhoods and rebuild them using modern technology and construction systems. The people residing in these areas were to be replaced by hypothetical people made of identical middle size and middle class families. The drawing board became a world of its own that had no objections to any ideas one could draw. *People* were to behave according to our thinking.

In one of our Urban Planning classes we were asked to survey a neighborhood near Cairo in order to propose a project for developing the site. As a group of enthusiastic students, we went to the neighborhood carrying maps and cameras in order to survey the condition of the buildings and services. The neighborhood was located across the Nile from a luxurious neighborhood called *Garden City*. The whole perimeter of the neighborhood was occupied by clean, high-rise buildings overlooking the Nile and the

busy square of Giza. We never expected to see what was behind the facades of the high rise buildings.

As we penetrated through the narrow streets we discovered a completely different life than the one we had assumed from the outside. The wide, asphalt streets became narrow, mud alleys covered by animals' waste and sewage water. The concrete, plastered buildings were hiding mud dwellings occupied by peasants working in nearby farms. The peasants brought their animals from the field everyday at sunset to the houses in the middle of the city. They were living a rural way of life just a few meters away from the modern apartment buildings overlooking the Nile.

There was no water or electricity supplied to the houses. The residents were afraid that we were government employees inspecting the area for remodeling and reconstruction. They were very resentful and chased us out of the neighborhood. We reported that all the area was in a *worthless* condition and should be demolished.

Our first design decision was to tear down all the buildings except for a handful of public and new buildings. We based our project on ideal space requirements, walking distances to shopping malls and services, separation of activities, and separation of social classes based on income and economic status. At no point did we interview the people living there or consider their unique living requirements.

In history classes, we were taught different styles of architecture: Ancient Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Islamic, Gothic, Renaissance, etc. We had to memorize these styles and several examples of their buildings, their description, and drawings. These *styles* represented periods of history and places, some with which we were familiar. A short trip to the sites of these historical buildings was more than enough to create an unresolved puzzlement between the academic world in school and the reality of everyday life.

Several of the historical buildings we studied in school were occupied by families who could not find other places to live in the crowded areas of old Cairo. What we

studied about the significance of these buildings was completely different from how these buildings were used. While the historical buildings were admired in the history of architecture books, they acquired a different reality for those who were living in them.

In the midst of this educational chaos, I became interested in the work of Hassan Fathy, an Egyptian architect who advocated the need for an *Egyptian accent* in architecture and architecture for the poor using self-help and mud-construction techniques. In his book *Architecture For the Poor*, Hassan Fathy wrote:

> In modern Egypt there is no indigenous style. The signature is missing, the houses of the rich and poor alike are without character, without an Egyptian accent. The tradition is lost, and we have been cut from our past ever since Muhammed Ali cut the throat of the last Mameluke. This gap in the continuity of Egyptian tradition has been felt by many people. ... It is not yet understood that real architecture cannot exist except in a living tradition, and that architectural tradition is all but dead in Egypt today.[2]

Although he was internationally recognized and respected all around the world, his views were not encouraged in our school for unknown reasons at that time. His lectures were organized by students, but the faculty welcomed him with bitterness. For my graduation project, I wanted to design a complex for artists close to a village on the fringes of Cairo using Fathy's ideas of building with mud brick and an Egyptian accent . The idea was controversial and many professors expressed their complete rejection of my way of thinking and the philosophy behind it. Since that moment, the idea of searching for an Egyptian style in architecture has never left my mind.

During my architectural education, no one addressed the issue of designing *Egyptian architecture*. " Why should we find different styles of architecture in different places? How can we be different while using the same materials and technology? Is it important to be able to identify architecture of different countries? There is nothing called *Egyptian architecture*. Architecture confirms to function and technology," one of

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[2] Fathy, Hassan, Architecture For The Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1973, pp.19-20.

my professors said. Architectural design was always looked upon as a universal way of thinking that could be applied anywhere in the world. American, French, Japanese, and British magazines and data books were the sources of my information which provided images and examples of *good* architecture.

My Architectural Practice

After graduation, I started to participate in the architecture profession on two fronts: as a faculty member teaching architecture and as a practicing architect in offices and firms. I was a faculty member teaching in the same university where I had once studied. I started to perceive the educational setting from a different point of view. "It is very important to keep a distance between you and the students and develop an image as an educator in order for the students to obey you," said the chairman of the architectural department. I participated in teaching design studios to undergraduate students. This experience allowed me to see from a different vantage point the path which I, as a student, had gone through.

As a practicing architect, I participated in the design of several projects ranging in size from small houses to large communities. I was commissioned to prepare drawings and documents for the construction of these projects. Cost and money became very important in the design process. This reality is largely ignored in schools of architecture as irrelevant for the ideal architectural practice; students of architecture graduate without having been educated about the everyday life around them.

An ethical dilemma which we were never introduced to in school was how to deal with Egyptian bureaucracy in order to get permission for construction and building materials. The Egyptian bureaucracy was infected with an illness derived from other social illnesses. Bribery and gift offering were essential activities for getting project licenses and permissions from housing municipalities. The only alternative was to have a friend or relative in an influential position who had the power to get the work done.

All projects were to be designed twice; two sets of drawings were to be prepared. The first set of drawings was very schematic and poorly drawn. The only principle to follow was to comply with all housing codes in order to receive a construction license for the project. Sometimes an agreement was made with one of the municipality's architects, who was responsible for issuing a license for the project, to prepare what was known as the *license-drawings* and receive *fees* for his service when the license was issued. A second set of drawings was prepared in coordination with the client and specialized consultants before the construction. Building and construction codes were not usually followed in the second design. This practice was common in Egypt among architects who had to deal with the corruption in governmental agencies. The reasons for not following housing and construction codes were numerous: a) to use all the land regardless of permitted construction lines, b) to provide a variety of building functions regardless of zoning ordinances, and c) to achieve high returns from the capital investment.

The political atmosphere during the seventies and the open-door economy of free trade adopted by President Sadat created a boom in the building. The political change from a conservative economy of limited and controlled trade to an economy of free trade facilitated a rapid change in Egyptian society. A large number of projects were needed for capital investment and to meet the increasing need for housing and services.

After working for two years as a free lance architect in architectural offices, I was able to start an architectural office with other newly graduating architects. There were enough projects in the market to support this early start. Through my architectural firm I participated in the design and construction of several projects ranging in size from small individual houses, large factories, and multi-use buildings, to vacationing facilities. The design of most of these projects conformed more to economic and technological criteria than to aesthetic criteria derived from the academic world of the university.

I found myself unwillingly participating in creating the chaotic environment in Egypt. As one of many young architects who wanted to use the opportunity and achieve

fast recognition and fame, I had to conform to the rules of the professional world of architecture. While practicing architecture, I discovered strong forces which were playing a larger role in shaping buildings and environments: clients, economics, fees, building codes, available construction methods, financing, quality of construction work, prestige, etc. These were more important than any consideration of people or culture. People were seen as consumers of buildings, and architects were producing objects for trade in a market of need. The question of an Egyptian style in architecture was not asked. Whether we were doing something Egyptian or not was not important, no one had the time to think about it. Life was too demanding and every one was busy with the dilemmas of daily survival.

In Search for Egyptian Identity in Architecture

> The search for identity in the countries of the Third World borders on a search for the impossible. The obstacles and counterforces against it are gigantic, and the gap between the industrially developed nations and those which are not is increasing. While the chasm between the rich and the poor grows wider in all countries, and world destruction becomes a threat, cultural identity becomes a necessity for survival not only in the Third World, but in the entire world.[3]

Reflecting upon the history of architecture in Egypt, the dilemma became more entangled. Which era of Egyptian architecture should one consider in defining a *true* Egyptian style that reflects Egyptian identity? Egypt has a unique situation regarding the history of its architecture. One can easily identify many architectural styles in the country's long history: Ancient Egyptian, Ptolemaic, Roman, Christian, Islamic, Turkish, and contemporary architecture. Which one of these styles is Egyptian?

There remains one style that did not change much with political or economic powers and civilizations. For thousands of years the peasants of rural Egypt were

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[3] Kultermann, Udo, Cultural Identity and Human Survival, in Contemporary Third World Architecture: Search for Identity, guest curated by Theoharis David, Pratt Institute, 1983, p.11.

building houses and living a similar life to the one lived thousands of years ago by their ancestors. The pictures of Ancient Egyptian farmers drawn on the walls of ancient temples resemble the way of living that exist in Egyptian villages in the 20th Century. Cities were built and towns demolished while the small villages of Egypt remained unchanged. Is this the only *true* architectural style in Egypt? And what is Egyptian about it?

This situation is not true any more. Modern ways of life are rapidly replacing this traditional way of life. Technology and modern ways of life are reaching all parts of the world and traditional ways of living are rapidly disappearing. Recently, the face of Egyptian villages started to change with concrete and brick houses under construction, electric wires hanging between giant posts almost touching the roofs of the houses, and T.V. antennas planted over the roofs of most houses.

In the city, the architecture profession is changing with politics. The *fashions* of architecture shift between mass public housing and private villas, low-income housing and elite resorts, infrastructure improvement and new glass office buildings. Every action depends on the political atmosphere and the government's way of thinking.

> The enormous pressures to build, and the inappropriate cultural and social images being transmitted from the West, are occurring at a time when Third World countries are struggling to redefine and reestablish their national identities after long periods of foreign domination, and in some instances, lingering hegemony. The architectural *acid rain* fallout from *First World* design games and their attendant technology is the last thing these countries need.[4]

Today's architecture, like technology, is *universal*. One can find two identical buildings, one in New York and the other in Cairo, that have the same design, materials, construction system, and are even designed by the same architect. The demands of the market decide what should be built and the available financing decides what materials

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[4] David, Theoharis, guest curated, Contemporary Third World Architecture: Search for Identity, Pratt Institute, 1983, p.8.

and method of construction should be used. So, what is Egyptian about what is being built in Egypt?

I experienced confusion and puzzlement after realizing that the architectural enterprise in Egypt was imitating the styles borrowed from foreign countries without paying any attention to our long history and culture. The numerous high-rise, glass and concrete buildings that appeared on the banks of the Nile in downtown Cairo and the coast of Alexandria during the late seventies were similar to those found in architectural magazines imported from foreign countries. There was nothing distinctively Egyptian about them. Some of them were designed by foreign architects and constructed by foreign contractors. The only thing Egyptian about them was the fact that they were built on Egyptian soil.

After reflecting on my experience with architecture and the housing crisis in Egypt, I was able to recognize many biases and taken for granted assumptions embedded in the architecture profession. The most striking one was the assumption that architects know how to design for people. This assumption should be suspended and examined carefully. The chaotic and confusing environment around us is enough evidence of our failure.

In his book *Architecture without Architects*, Rudofsky commented, "There is much to learn from architecture before it became an expert's art."[5] One of the arguments commonly used to defend the status quo in the architectural profession is that in order to know what architecture is we should look at what architects do. This argument implies that architecture is only the work of the architects. This taken for granted assumption is misleading because it confines architecture to that small part of architecture produced by architects.

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[5] Rudofsky, Bernard, Architecture Without Architects, The Museum of Modern Art, Distributed by Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City, New York, 1964.

We need to expand our limited views of architecture as the product of the architectural profession and include all building forms that exist around us. Architecture has another dimension which relates it to the social and cultural world of the environment around us. People expect architects to know how to go about building and developing meaningful and livable environments.

Architecture includes all that is around us of buildings and objects found in our everyday life experience. To consider architecture only as the work of professional architects is to limit ourselves to a small portion of the environment. We should not blindly subscribe to the slogans of indoctrinated architects, rather we should recognize our need for a meaningful architecture. As architects, we need to change our attitude toward our profession, and bring it back to the experience of everyday life among those who actually live it.

In a previous study, I examined the notion of identity in architecture. I was interested in what can be called *representative architecture*, or the architecture that is identified with different parts of the world. I reflected on my experience with architecture in Egypt and at the same time shared the experiences of other architects from different parts of the world. This study allowed me to identify important meanings of architecture around us which were not clear to me before.

I discovered through my study of representative architecture of different parts of the world that there are social and cultural meanings that are more important than the form or physical aspects of this architecture. If we reflect upon our everyday life experiences, we shall discover that they take place within, or in relation to, environments which are identified as either *built* or *natural* environments. We take these environments for granted as part of our experiences. When the environment around us suddenly changes, or we encounter foreign environments for the first time, we start to think about our experience: what is it that we want and how can we achieve it. That is because we

take much of our everyday life experience in the familiar environments for granted without reflecting on it.

When we start to reflect on our everyday life experiences, we discover that the physical configuration of the environment is not as important as we were led to believe by specialists and professionals. As Rudofsky put it:

> Part of our troubles results from the tendency to ascribe to architects- or, for that matter, to all specialists- exceptional insight into problems of living when in truth, most of them are concerned with problems of business and prestige.[6]

The physical configuration of the environment around us is just one aspect of our perception and experience of the environment. Another, and more important, aspect is the taken for granted meaning of the environment which is part of our social and cultural upbringing. Other people around us, or the society, and its way of thinking and view of the world, or culture, play a more important role in how we understand and perceive the environment around us.

It is important, then, to understand architecture as part of the environment around us. It is equally important to understand it from the point of view of the people who live in it. If we, as architects, believe that we design buildings for people to use and live with, then we need to have an understanding of architecture as it is lived and experienced by the people who live with it. Part of the problem is the tendency to view architecture from classrooms and air-conditioned offices.

Instead of following the traditional method of researching architecture from the architects' point of view, I chose to look for the social and cultural meanings of architecture in the daily life experiences of community and people in order to understand their experience with architecture and environments.

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[6] ibid.

Research Approach

The approach of this study is an inter-disciplinary one. Believing that architecture is part of the everyday life experience which has meaning only in a context for the people who use and live with it, I chose an anthropological approach to study people in a real life situation, trying to understand the social and cultural meanings of architecture in their experience. What is an *anthropological approach ?* What do anthropologists do and why?[7]

> Anthropology is the study of man *as if* there were culture. It is brought into being by the invention of culture, both in general sense, as a concept, and in the specific sense, through the invention of particular culture. [8]

Anthropology is the study of people's ways of living and views of the world, which is referred to as *culture*. As Geertz described it:

> The concept of culture is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search for laws but an interpretive one in search for meaning.[9]

For anthropologists, culture is always studied in a place, yet the study of culture is more important than the place.

> Anthropologists don't study villages; they study *in* villages. You can study different things in different places, and some things you can best study in a confined localities. But that does not make the place what it is you are studying.[10]

For architects, the study of places and buildings has always been most important. This traditional approach has confined our understanding to the physical aspects of

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[7] There is not enough room in this dissertation to discuss in detail anthropology and the anthropological approach. My intention here is to highlight few important themes of the study of architecture using this approach.

[8] Wagner, Roy, The Invention of Culture, The University of Chicago press, Chicago and London, 1981, p.10.

[9] Geertz, Clifford, The Interpretation of Culture, Basic Books, Inc., Harper Torchbooks, 1973, p.5.

[10] ibid., p.22.

environments. The anthropological approach helps us widen our view and include the social and cultural meanings of places. In this way of thinking, there is the danger of slipping into *cultural determinism* which distorts our study and view. Culture should be viewed as a context not as a force. As Geertz put it:

> Culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly-- that is, thickly-- described.[11]

The study of culture usually starts with a detachment from the familiar environment and the immersion of oneself in another context. This is called the field work experience, during which the anthropologist tries to understand the natives' culture and way of living of the natives. Geertz points out the difference between the experience of the native and the researcher. He wrote:

> An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone-- a patient, a subject, in our case an informant-- might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another -- an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist-- employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims.[12]

What anthropologists do in the field is called Ethnography.

> Ethnography is a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records, and engages in the daily life of another culture and then writes accounts of this culture, emphasizing descriptive details.[13]

The first impressions of the researchers are important for later interpretations and reflections. The researchers' effort to suspend their preconceptions and see the world through the eyes of the natives whose culture they are studying allows them to, first, know about their way of living and, second, reflect upon their own culture. So, why do

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[11] ibid., p.14.

[12] Geertz, Clifford, Local Knowledge, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1983, p. 57.

[13] Marcus, George E. and Michael M. J. Fisher, Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1986, p.18.

anthropologists usually study other cultures and not their own? The promise of anthropology was:

> ... to serve as a form of cultural critique of ourselves. In using portraits of other cultural patterns to reflect self-critically on our own way, anthropology disrupts common sense and makes us examine our taken-for-granted assumptions.[14]

It is important to understand anthropology as more than stories of the exotic and strange. Anthropology is a way of learning about ourselves through the culture of others. The notion of direct involvement in the culture of others is important to architects. The anthropological approach to understanding the world from the point of view of other people is a difficult task. It is certainly incomplete and shall remain always unfinished. However, it is an effort worth pursuing in order to understand better those for whom we want to design.

Context of Study

The context of this study is Nubia. Nubia was the region between the First and Third cataracts of the Nile south of Egypt. Due to the construction of the High Dam in 1964, Nubia was flooded by the lake water created behind the dam. As a result the Nubians, who had lived for hundreds of years in vernacular villages and dwellings, were relocated to planned communities designed by professional architects and planners. The designed houses were different than the vernacular dwellings of old Nubia.

The twenty-five years which have passed since the dislocation of the Nubians have witnessed many changes in their way of life. The Nubians applied many changes to the houses which they received from the government in order to suit their way of life. The modifications made to the environment were an expression of a world view which was different than that of the professional architects who planned and designed the

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[14] ibid. p.1.

displacement villages. Fifteen years after the displacement, a group of Nubians decided to leave the displacement communities and return to the lake shores and settle there. They built dwellings similar to the traditional dwellings of old Nubia before the displacement.

The goal of this study is to understand the meaning, or different meanings, of architecture in the midst of this cultural unrest. How do the Nubians experience the architecture produced by professional architects and planners? The displacement communities were the context of social and cultural changes of the Nubians' way of life. My interest here is to understand the relationship between the changes in architecture and changes in the Nubians' way of life after the displacement.

The vernacular architecture before the displacement enjoyed a strong and distinctive character and identity admired by many observers. The displacement communities were designed by professional architects who had a different view of the world, which was infiltrated through their design of the villages and houses. The professional architects did not take into consideration the Nubians' way of living as a basis for their design. The Nubians did not participate in the design and planning of their new villages and houses. The Nubians' experience with displacement reveals many taken for granted meanings of the human experience of dwelling.

For hundreds of years, the Nubians experienced a slow peaceful life in their country between the first and third cataracts of the Nile. In 1964, they were forced to leave their villages and were relocated to new ones designed and built by the government. This sudden change in their environment affected the way they had lived for hundreds of years. How that change affected the meaning of architecture is the theme of this study.

> Externally imposed, sudden and pervasive changes, as in relocation projects, produce considerable disruptions; and the social impact is usually enormous due to the large number of people who are relocated and the accompanying scope of the change. With resettlement the centuries-long life-style of the Nubians changed drastically. The shift

> from isolated and dispersed communities threatened numerous traditions, especially those related to village and family life.[15]

The sudden change of the natural and built environment had dramatic and profound effects on the Nubians way of life. The case of Nubia provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the social and cultural meanings of architecture. The Nubians used to live in villages that had evolved over hundreds of years. The sudden displacement of the Nubians from their vernacular villages to planned communities designed and built by professional architects altered and changed their taken for granted environment and identity.

The experience of the Nubians provides an excellent setting to study the meaning or different meanings of architecture. By studying the experience of the Nubians with architecture and the sudden change from vernacular to planned communities, I am looking for an understanding of how architecture is lived and experienced by the people for whom we design. The architecture of Nubia was always admired by architects as having a strong identity apparent in its design and construction method.

My interest in the case of Nubia is concerned with the following issues: How did the Nubians experience the sudden displacement from their vernacular villages to planned communities that lacked the characteristic and identity of the old communities? How did the displacement change their sense of identity? As Fernea put it:

> The sudden and dramatic quality of the Nubians' relocation should not obscure the fact that these people are experiencing, in a more concentrated way, what minorities of people throughout the world have faced: the loss of isolation and cultural independence, which threats us all with the dreary consequences of uniformity. Traditional cultural differences, those unique variations in the conduct of human life, have for long time been subject to the irresistible pressures of conforming change; cultural diversity is everywhere rapidly being replaced by the more banal difference of economic class. The effect of mass communication, easy

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[15] Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.49.

> social contacts, and common economic involvements threatens the persistence of all distinctive traditions ...[16]

Believing that architecture reflects social and cultural meanings as well as people's view of life, I am interested in understanding how architecture reflects the social reality of people and how this social reality changes when the architecture changes. I am not researching Nubia but researching in Nubia the meaning of architecture in the midst of that cultural unrest.

[16] Fernea, Robert A., ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.5.

PART 2

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHING THE NUBIAN EXPERIENCE

Historical Background

> A river threads its way across three hundred miles of waterless desert bordered by a strip of cultivation never more than a few hundred yards wide. Along its banks 100,000 people coax some sort of living from soil on which rain never falls. Such is, or was, Nubia.[17]

The name Nubia has a Hieroglyphic origin: *nub* or *nubo* meaning gold. Nubia is the land of gold because of the availability of gold mines in the region. The pre-history of Nubia is obscure. Aside from some speculations about where the first inhabitants came from, no clear picture of how history began in this region can be drawn. The first group of inhabitants, called A-group by George Reisner who led an archaeological survey in Nubia in 1907, had resided in the area north of Wadi Halfa at Faras and Gamai, around the year 3000 B.C**.**, where their remains were found.[18] The Egyptians to the north, who were building the Great Pyramid at that time, did not consider their southern neighbors to be a threat and used that stretch of the Nile as a line of communication for business and war with the land of Cush farther to the south.

Around the year 2000 B.C., during a collapse of central control by Egyptian dynasties, another group of inhabitants, called C-group, resided in the region. There has been speculation about their culture spreading on both sides of the Nile. They were forced to move to Nubia because their grazing land was drying up. "C-group's opportunity to enter Nubia was the weakness of Egypt; but their compulsion to explore

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17 Keating, Rex, Nubian Rescue, Hawthor Books, New York, R. Hale, London, 1975, p.1.
18 See Figure 2.3: Map of Old Nubia.

and occupy was probably economic."[19] On that stretch of the Nile, they found a good opportunity to settle and change their pastoral economy to a sedentary one.

The C-group managed to settle in Nubia for 500 years during the Hyksos invasion of northern Egypt. The struggle between Theban princes and the Hyksos weakened Egyptian influence in Nubia "long enough for C-group to accommodate themselves to Egyptian cultural ideas simply because they no longer had any political fear of Egypt."[20] In other words, they were fused into the Egyptian culture.

By the year 1200 B.C., the legendary Abu Simbel temple was being built on an island in the middle of the Nile. "Four colossal figures of the self-deified King Ramses II are carved out of the solid rock on the facade of the Great Temple."[21] In the midst of several other temples it has been called "a monumental milestone in human achievement."[22] It became a symbolic achievement for ancient Egyptian pharaohs to invade Nubia and build a temple there, and the invasions were carefully documented on the walls of these temples. "Then came the astonishing turn in history: Cush conquered Egypt."[23]

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19 Greener, Leslie, High Dam Over Nubia, The Viking Press, New York, 1962, p.88.
20 ibid., p.142.
21 ibid., p.186.
22 ibid., p.192.
23 ibid., p.206.

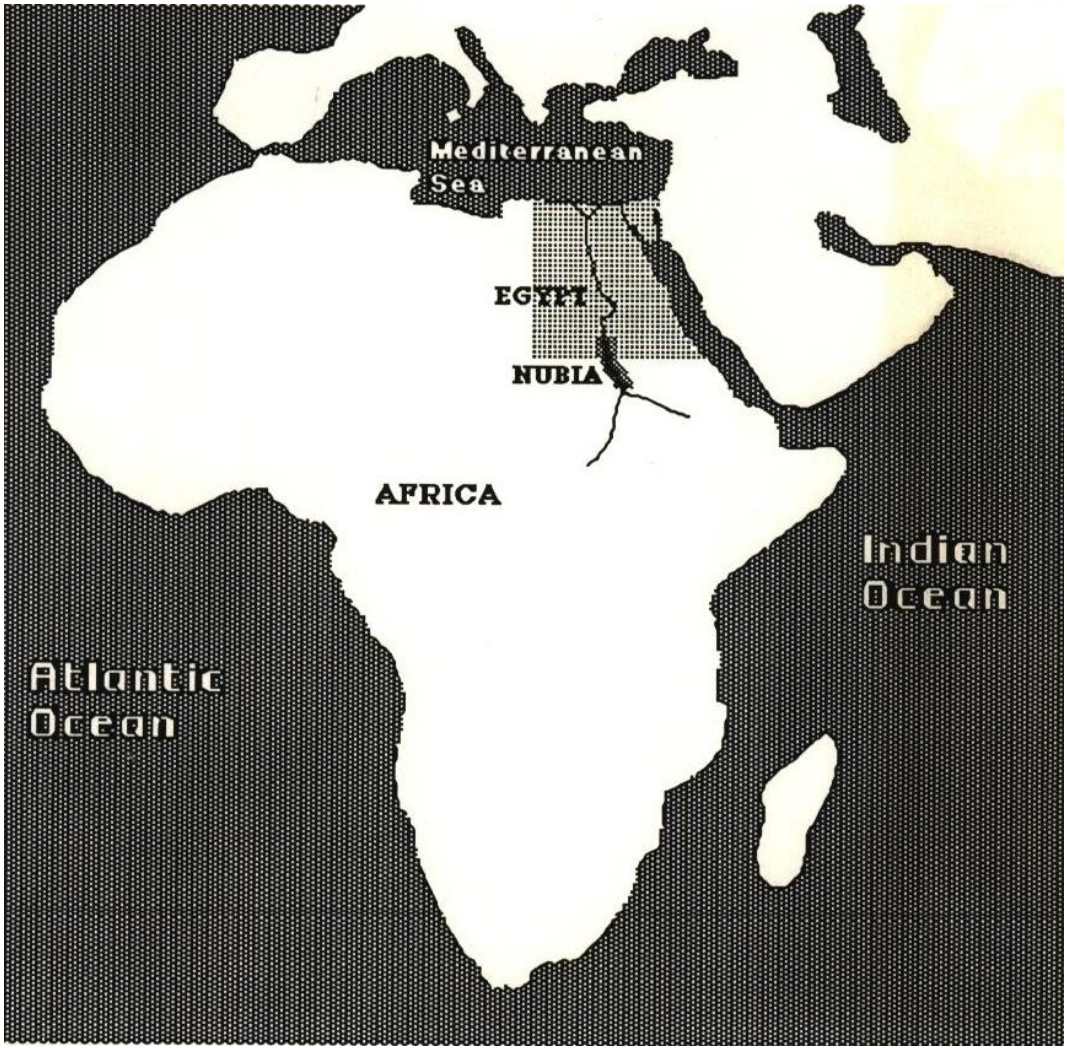

Figure 2.1: Map of Africa, Egypt, and Nubia.

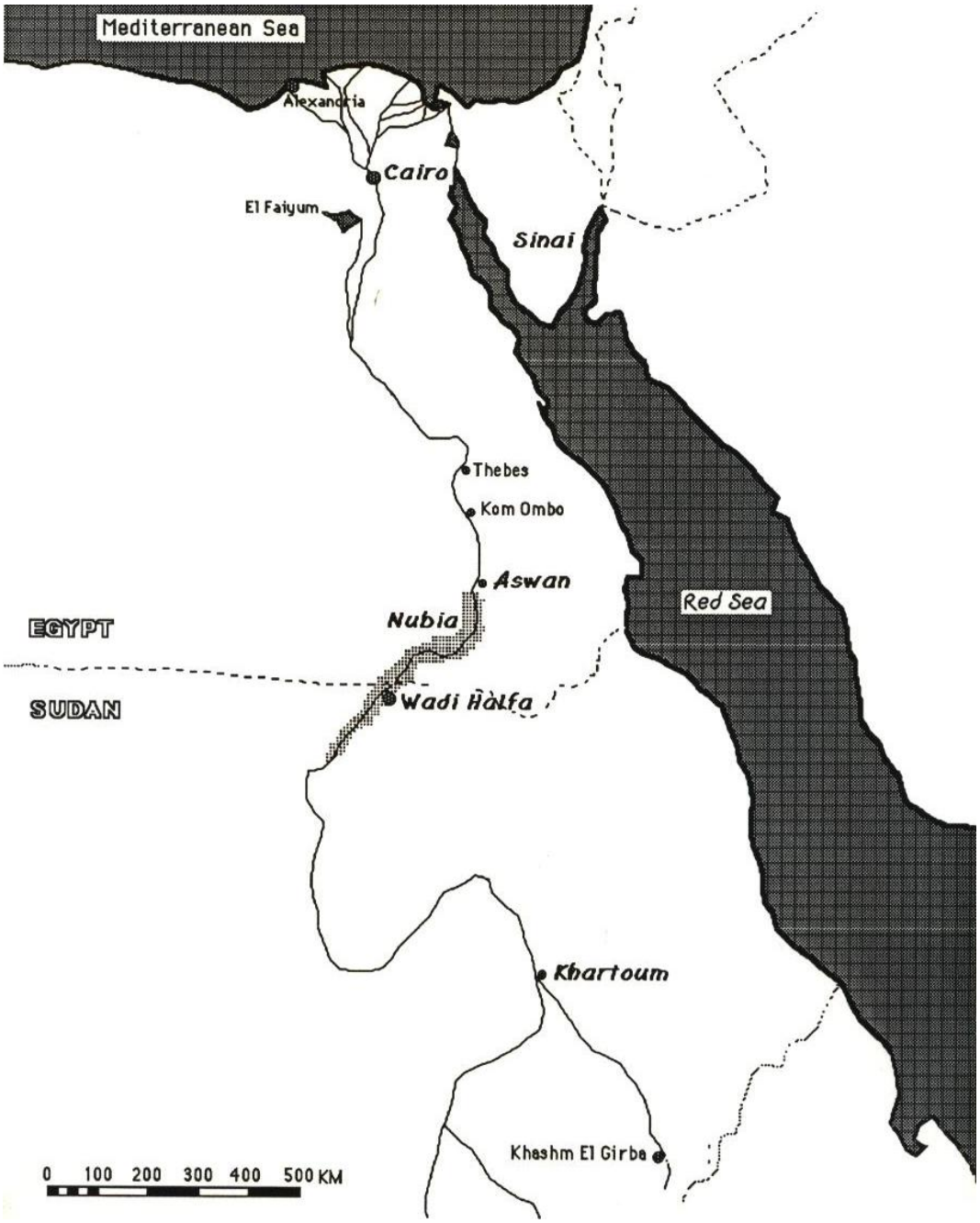

Figure 2.2: Map of Egypt and Sudan.

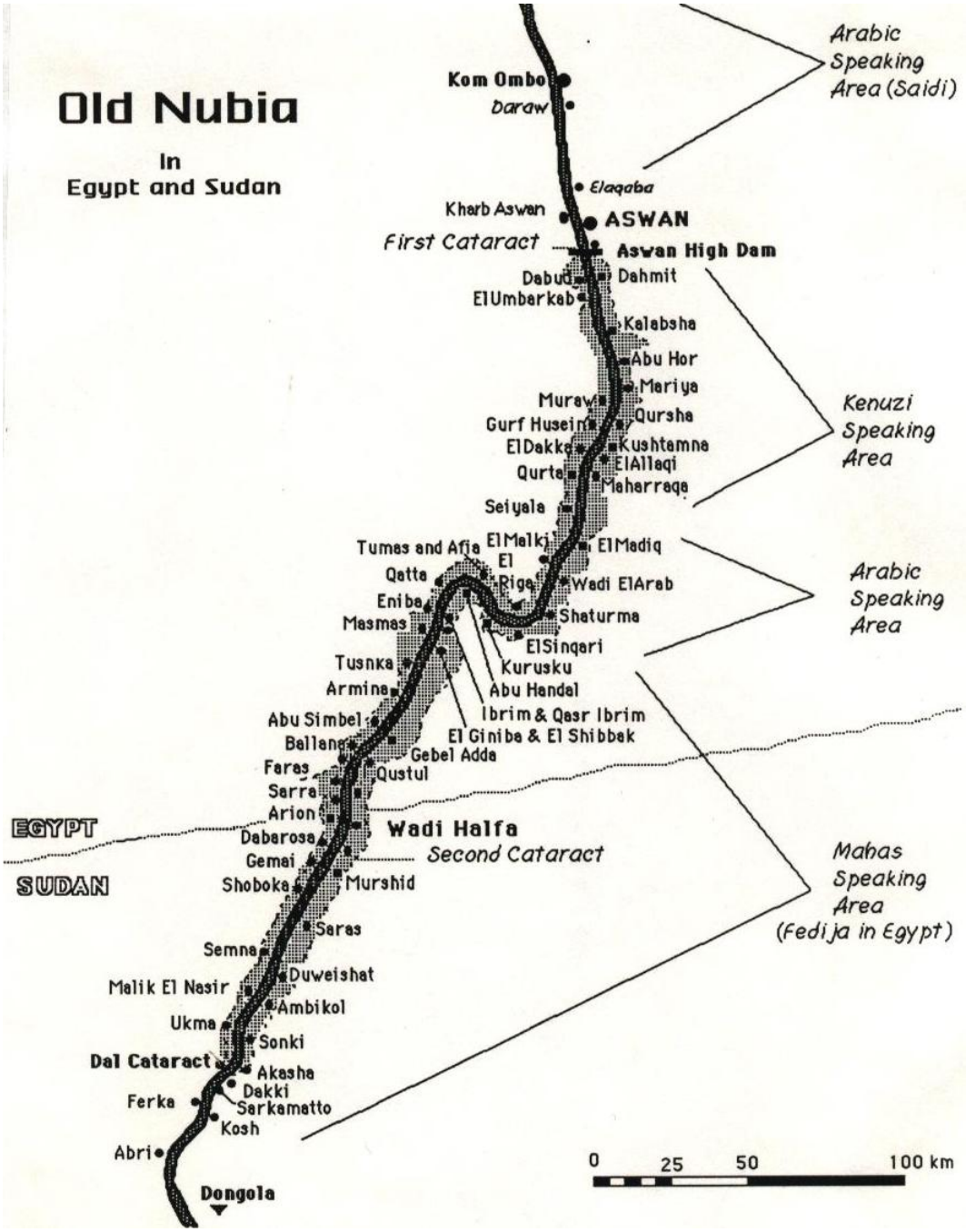

Figure 2.3: Map of Old Nubia.

Around the year 800 B.C., the kings of Cush, who resided in the Napata district near Dongola, were independent in fact, if not in name, of Egypt. They conquered Egypt and stretched their influence to the Mediterranean sea. This situation did not last long and the Assyrians ended this domination by Cush which lasted 75 years in reality and hundreds of years in myth.

A treaty between Egypt, as a Roman province, and the powerful Kingdom of Cush in 29 B.C. divided Nubia into two parts at the second cataract, with Egypt claiming domination over the Northern part. This treaty was soon broken and the whole region fell under Roman occupation. There was peace for 200 years under Roman rule which was followed by what archaeologists have labeled the X-group.

The X-group fills the gap in history between Roman rule and the Christian era. There are controversial speculations about the origin of the X-group and their culture. Travelers such as Burchardt in 1813 and St. John in 1839 have seen their remains. Professor Emery and his team in 1931 excavated their tumuli-like tombs. Archaeologists suggested that "they were pagan, worshiping the gods of Meroe and ancient Egypt; they used human and animal sacrifice; and they had little or no knowledge of writing."[24]

By the middle of the Fourth century "Egypt and Nubia were decreed Christian by the Edict of Theodosius."[25] The temples of Ancient Egypt were converted into churches and layers of paintings on the walls reflected layers of history in Nubia. The Nubian church was a branch of the Coptic Monophysite church centered in Cairo. Although the conversion of Nubia to Christianity was accomplished in 50 years, its conversion to Islam took almost 1000 years.

By the middle of the Seventh century, Amr Ibn El As, the General of Caliph Omar, invaded Egypt. His General Abdallah Ibn Saad invaded and conquered Nubia, but "instead of pressing the claim of Islam, he quickly withdrew and concluded a treaty with

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24 ibid., p.225.
25 ibid., p.226.

the Christian Nubian King that became the basis for relations between the two regions during the next six hundred years."[26] King Koleydozo agreed to exchange 442 slaves annually and the rights of passage and trade for food, horses, and cloth. "It was in the interest of Egypt to have, on its southern border, a friendly, technically independent buffer state with which it could trade."[27]

Life went on for hundreds of years under this treaty. In the Eleventh century, the Rabiaa, a nomadic tribe from Yamama in Saudi Arabia, settled near Aswan. They intermarried with the local population and adopted their language and culture. In 1171 A.D. Salah El Din ended the Fatimid rule of Egypt and sent his brother Shams Al Daulah with an army to the Nubians who seized Aswan and began to occupy Upper Egypt. The last Christian King of Nubia Kerenbes was removed in 1315 A.C. His successor Abdallah, made king in Dongola, was murdered by Kanz EL Daulah, a chieftain of the Rabiaa from Aswan.

In the Fourteenth century, the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun commented on the slow conversion of Nubia to Islam. He wrote:

> The Nubians in positions of authority, who needed to consolidate their ties with the more powerful Arab tribes occupying neighboring deserts, married their sisters to Arab Sheikhs. In giving their women to Arabs the Nubians also gave away their princedoms, since not only did the children of such marriages become Muslims according to Muslim law, but also, according to Nubian custom, titles and lands were passed from sister's brother to sister's son.[28]

By the Sixteenth century, the last Nubian church collapsed and the whole region became Muslim. The Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Sultan Selim I established a system of *Kashifs*, or tax collectors, in the region. This unfair system impoverished

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26 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.9.
27 ibid.
28 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.9.

Nubia and its inhabitants. Not only did the Nubians have to deal with the limited resources of the region but also with the foreigners who claimed large shares of it.

In 1811 A.C., ten years after Napoleon's brief occupation of Egypt, Muhammed Ali controlled Egypt and conquered Nubia, following the Mamelukes who fled to the region from Cairo. He exchanged the Old Ottoman *Kashif* system for his own tax collection system. Muhammed Ali tried to control the waters of the Nile by building several irrigation projects along the river. He was able to expand the arable land of Egypt which provided a prosperous independent period for the country.

Twenty years after the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, "a dam was completed across the Nile a few kilometers south of the town of Aswan."[29] It was then heightened in 1912 and again in 1933. The dam and its subsequent heightenings caused the flooding of northern parts of Nubia and its monuments. With both Sudan and Egypt under the military rule of Great Britain, the construction of the dam was not challenged. The Nubians quietly moved their villages up to higher ground. The most destructive moments were yet to come.

In 1952, a revolution by military officers took place in Egypt. Nubia was divided between Egypt and Sudan, with Egypt controlling the area between the First and Second cataracts. A project to construct a new dam south of the existing one "was perceived by the Revolutionary council as very promising, particularly in terms of adding new arable lands, increasing the output of the existing cultivated lands, and generating the electrical power that would promote the advanced level of industrialization Egypt has long striven to achieve."[30]

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29 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1983, p.25.
30 ibid. p.27.

By 1964, the dam was under construction and the Nubians were on their way to new settlements in both Egypt and Sudan. Nubia was to be flooded by the waters of the lake created behind the Dam.

Nubians' Origin and Languages

The origin of the people who resided in Nubia before the displacement in 1964, and their relationship to the ancient populations of Egypt and Sudan and to the Nubian Kingdom of Cush, is not clear and "has yet to be fully established by archaeologists and historians."[31] There were three main groups residing in Egyptian Nubia: *Kenuzi*, *Arab*, and *Fedija*. The *Kenuzi*, or *Beni Kanz*, came to the region in the Eleventh century. They settled around Aswan and their chieftain, *Kanz El Daulah*, became the second Muslim king in the Fourteenth century. They "occupied the territory from Aswan south along the Nile for a distance of nearly 150 Kilometers."[32] They spoke a dialect called *metouki*. Along the next 40 kilometers resided the *Arabs* in an enclave called *Wadi Al Arab*. "These Nubians identified themselves as belonging to the *Allaiqat* tribe which originated in the Nejd of northern Arabia." [33] The third and largest group resided in the southern parts of Nubia in both Egypt and Sudan. The *fedija* group resided on the last 130 kilometers of Egyptian Nubia. They were distinguished from other Nubians by their dialect called *mahas*, but they also identified with the *gaafra*, a *saidi* tribe residing in Upper Egypt.[34]

Nubians were identified according to the language they spoke. *Rotan* is a term used for all Nubian languages other than Arabic. *Kenuzi* Nubians in the north spoke *metouki*, which was identical to the language spoken by the Dongolese 100 miles to the

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31 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.13.
32 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1983, p.10.
33 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.15.
34 See Figure 2.3: Map of Old Nubia.

south. Nubians who identified themselves as the *allaiqat* tribe spoke Arabic and resided in the area between *El-Sebu* and *Korosko*. The *fedija* group spoke *mahas*, which is a controversial term used by *mahas* speakers to designate "the northern group." Also, it is used by *metouki* speakers to mean "slave-like or peasant." *Mahas* speakers in the Sudan identified themselves using the same term, *fedija*. The separation between the two groups speaking *metouki* by a third one speaking *mahas* poses a puzzle about the origin of the two groups. Fernea suggests that:

> It seems plausible that, for both commercial and political reasons, groups of Dongolese may have been stationed at Aswan, their business being to facilitate shipments of goods between Egypt and Dongola ... came caravans, assembled south of the First cataract, could avoid contact with the ancestors of the Fedija Nubians, immediately south of the Kenuz, by traveling overland.[35]

This brief historical background provides a glimpse of Nubia's past. It is important to understand the Nubian experience in historical as well as social and cultural contexts. Much of this history and context is still alive in the Nubians and their dwellings, which is the theme of this study.

35 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1973, p.14.

Field Work Experience in Nubia

What happened to the Nubians after they were relocated in the planned villages of new Nubia? How do the Nubians experience life in the new communities after all those years? What changes were there in their way of living and what part of this change was due to the planned communities designed by specialists? These were some of the questions which stemmed from studying the Nubian experience through books and references. I was interested in understanding the Nubians' experience with displacement from their point of view and their environmental experience in the midst of this cultural unrest.

Out of the Classroom and Into the field: An Exploratory Trip to Nubia

In March 1987 I made an exploratory field trip to Nubia in order to gain first hand experience of the situation. I travelled to the area called New Nubia where I visited several villages of *El-Tahjir* (the displacement) as it is called by the Nubians. I also visited the returnees' villages by the lake shores. After this exploratory trip, I was able to decide which places to select for my study. I decided to study in depth two villages: one at *El-Tahjir* and one of the returnees' villages at the lake shore.

My exploratory trip allowed me to develop a different understanding of the situation than the one I had acquired through reading books and other people's experiences. The images of Nubia as an exotic and mysterious place completely changed after this visit. Nubia became a real place where people live and conduct their daily life.

During the period between September 1987 and April 1988, I spent extended periods of time at *El-Tahjir* and the returnees' villages. I documented several buildings and kept a detailed diary of my experience. I conducted in-depth interviews with several Nubians in both *El-Tahjir* and the returnees' villages. I also met with several Nubian writers and artists who reside in Cairo and collected information from governmental agencies and Nubian organizations.

In the following account two voices are always present: my voice and the voices of my informants. My informants approved the use of a tape recorder to record the interviews as well as the documentation of their houses and the use of their real names.

By engaging my reader in the experience of the Nubians in *El-Tahjir* and the returnees' villages, I want to evoke reactions and meanings of architecture for other people in other contexts. By reflecting on the themes of the Nubians' experience, we can achieve better understanding of other experiences. The themes of the Nubians' experience are present in other contexts, especially in our rapidly changing and modern modes of living. This study was not *about* Nubia; rather it was a study about architecture *in* Nubia. My aim was to understand the meaning, or different meanings, of architecture in the changing social and cultural context of Nubia.

CHAPTER 3

EL-TAHJIR

> If you push families into rows of identical houses, then something in those families will die, especially if they are poor. The people will grow dull and dispirited like their houses, and their imagination will shrivel up.[36]

El-Tahjir is an Arabic word meaning the displacement. It is used by Nubians to refer to the villages of the displacement in new Nubia in order to differentiate them from Nubia which is still used to denote old Nubia before the displacement. The official name, New Nubia, is only used by government agencies and official bureaus. *El balad el kadim*, meaning the old country, is the name used to refer to Nubia before the displacement.

The village of Abu Simbel El-Tahjir is located in the heart of New Nubia. Before the displacement, the village was located across the Nile from the Abu Simbel temple built by King Ramses II. It enjoyed a prosperous life in old Nubia because of the availability of wide arable land and palm trees. The temple after which the village was named provided a point of attraction for tourism.

I was not planning to start my field work in Abu Simbel El-Tahjir village before my return to Egypt in September 1987. While talking about my research with colleagues and friends, they told me about their Nubian friends who could help me find a place to stay there. I contacted several Nubians and finally one of them, a graduate from my school of architecture in Cairo, suggested I go to his village and stay there with his family. I decided to use the opportunity and accepted the offer.

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36 Fathy, Hassan, Gourna: A Tale of Two Villages, Ministry of Culture, Dar El Kateb El Arabi Press, Cairo, 1969, p.46.

Getting There

The very first moments of my field work experience were very significant. I decided to go directly to the village without wasting any time. The eighteen hour train trip from Cairo to Kom Ombo was a good opportunity to reflect on research and the actual work of doing research. I thought about what I wanted to do and how much of it I would be able to achieve.

The train arrived in Kom Ombo at noon on a very hot day. The train station was a strange place for me. Men were wearing colored *gallabias* , while women were wearing black dresses and black, transparent veils called *tarhas*. I was not able to identify any one in the train station as a Nubian, and I did not know how to reach my destination: the village of Abu Simbel El-Tahjir. I approached one of the spectators and asked about the village of Abu Simbel El-Tahjir.

He looked at me and said, "Are you a new teacher?" I was carrying a hand bag, a large suit case, and a camera bag.

"No," I said, "can you tell me how to get there?"

He pointed to the taxi driver who was coming toward us at that moment. The two bags were heavy and he offered to help me carry them to where a taxi was parked.

The taxi driver was interested in having me as a customer. "Where do you want to go?" he asked.

I told him that I wanted to go to Abu Simbel village.

He said, "Get into that taxi over there. I'll be with you in a moment." He pointed to a taxi parked under the shadow of a tree outside the station.

I asked the driver, "How much does it cost to get to Abu Simbel?"

The taxi driver looked at me, at my clothes, and my luggage and said, "Five pounds." I did not know whether that was too much, too little, or just right. There were no other taxis around and I had to comply with what he asked for. He stood by the exit of

the train station recruiting other passengers. Three more young men rode the taxi and there were no more passengers leaving the train station.

The taxi driver was in his middle thirties, short, bald, and wearing a white, *gallabia*.

"Whom are you going to in Abu Simbel?" he asked me.

I said, " I am looking for Fakhri Sherif. Do you know him?"

He said, " Yes, of course. I'll take you to him."

A young man from the back seat said, " We all know each other here. It is not like Cairo where people do not know each other."

We drove on the paved road through the fields with the small, artificial water canal on our right side. I was not able to orient myself because of all the right and left turnings of the taxi but I knew that we were heading away from Kom Ombo, into the heart of New Nubia, or *El-Tahjir* villages. Finally I was there doing my field work in Nubia.

The taxi turned right leaving the asphalt road for an unpaved one. We drove between rows of small attached houses on both sides causing a huge cloud of dust to cover the houses and the faces of people sitting in front of them. The taxi stopped in front of a one story building detached from the rest of the houses. A large sign hanging over the covered porch said, "Post Office Abu Simbel El-Tahjir Village."

Fakhri, the assistant manager of the post office, was known in the village as *el Wakeel*.

He came out and greeted me saying, "*Ahlan wasahlan*. ... Muhammed told me that you were coming."

Fakhri invited me into the post office where I found a large crowd of young men in their twenties. The taxi driver handed my luggage to the young men standing by the post office to take them into the post office room.

The post office was a small building painted white and made of brick and reinforced concrete. It had a large porch raised five steps above the street level. The main door opened into a small hall where two large water jars made of red clay were located. The water jars were covered by round wooden covers, and aluminum cups, used for drinking, were placed on each one. Behind the water jars there was a small toilet and a sink. To the right of the entrance hall there was Fakhri's office. There were three windows at Fakhri's office secured with heavy metal bars. A blue paint line encircled the room and a large fan hanging from the ceiling pushed the air and created a continuous noise.

I sat on a chair beside the door looking at the pictures of presidents Sadat and Mubarak hanging side by side on the wall. I did not know what to say, what to do, or where to go. I waited for Fakhri to tell me about the next step. Several young men came into the room and I had to shake hands with each one of them in turn. The atmosphere in the post office was very friendly except for the tedious paper work Fakhri had to do for each small job.

A young man entered the room, looked at me, shook my hand, and said, "*Salamo aleekom*." He sat down on the next chair and said, "What are you up to ?"

I told him that I was an architect interested in the architecture of Nubia and how it changed after the displacement.

He looked through the window for some time and said, "*El-Tahjir* must have affected the architecture of Nubia. Do you know how?"

I replied, "This is what I am here for."

Fakhri went to the main telecommunication building, where all the telephones of the village were connected. He came back in a hurry and said, " I am sorry for keeping you all that time but we shall leave in a minute." He started to close his files and we left the post office heading to his house.

Being There

The young men in their early twenties, who were standing in front of the post office when I arrived, carried my luggage and we walked in a large group toward Fakhri's house. The crowd walked between the houses of the village lined side by side in endless rows. All the houses had *mastabas* (mud benches) added to the facade. There were two types of *mastaba*: a narrow one for sitting and a wide one for sleeping.

As we walked between the houses, women who were sitting by themselves on the *mastabas* disappeared inside their houses when the crowd approached them, while those who were accompanied by men stayed and looked at us curiously. The crowd looked like a demonstration or maybe a funeral with the young men carrying my luggage on their shoulders. I did not feel comfortable inspecting the houses with their owners sitting in front of them. Several women gathered in small circles sitting on plastic mats in the front of their houses doing housework and talking.

I was puzzled by how people greeted each other and why they used different greetings for men and women. I was using the formal Arabic greeting, *Salamo aleekom*, meaning peace be on you, for every person I met. I noticed that Fakhri was not greeting everyone the same way; for men he would say *Salamo aleekom* but for women he would say *eziokom*, meaning how are you, using the plural form even if he were greeting one woman. I noticed that women did not start greeting men; they waited for men to greet them and then replied.

I asked Fakhri, "Why do you say *eziokom* for women and *Salamo Aleekom* for men?"

After some hesitation, he replied,"This is the way it is."

The village streets were unpaved and a passing car created huge clouds of dust behind it. The streets were ten meters wide, stretching endlessly from one side of the village to the other. They were regular and followed a chess-board arrangement oriented

north-south, with numerous entrances of houses on each side. Each row of attached houses contained twenty to thirty houses. The windows were fenced with steel bars and the entrance doors were made of wood. Most of the houses were well maintained and painted with different colors. A few of them looked poor and deserted. Some of the houses were never occupied and were in a deteriorating condition.

In the middle of the unpaved street a small ditch, 50 cms deep and 50 cms wide, had been dug for the installation of a long awaited fresh water pipe. It was the talk of the village that fresh water was soon to be available in each house, and it would end the suffering of women carrying water everyday from the public water faucets located at each intersection of the village to the *maziarah* (water jars) inside the houses.

The one meter high rounded walls in the street were built to protect newly planted trees from hungry animals. Each house was responsible for the trees planted in front of its door: they had to water them and protect them from hungry animals. The project to plant trees in the streets was initiated by the youth of the village, who distributed seedlings to the residents.

"I went around the village with four hundred plants on a carriage and distributed the trees among the houses. We are going to continue that project when we receive more plants," said Khamis, a nineteen year old Nubian who had finished his education and was waiting for a job in one of the factories of Kom Ombo or Cairo.

Fakhri's House

We walked between the houses, creating a cloud of dust behind us. I was completely disoriented until we reached the house where the leaders of the crowd had entered. It was Fakhri's house, one of the houses built by the government in 1964. We entered through the first door to the right of the entrance door into the *madiafa*, which is used to entertain and receive guests. It was a clean room, plastered, painted and decorated

with several paintings and pictures. One of them was a framed document with the names of many people, written on the occasion of Fakhri's wedding. It was a record that those people participated in the wedding with gifts or wedding presents. The *madiafa* was furnished with four *angareebs* (string beds) covered with cloth covers and pillows. They were placed against the walls and used for sitting and sleeping. The ceiling was made of five wooden beams covered with woven *gareed* (palm tree leaves) and a mud mixture. There were three windows overlooking the street, covered with white curtains. A fluorescent lamp was hanging from the ceiling. The electricity had been down since 9:00 am the day before my arrival, and no one knew when it would return.

Fakhri changed his clothes and wore a white, clean *gallabia*. The young men were wearing white *gallabias* over long pants. There is a distinction between two types of *gallabias*: the traditional *gallabia* and what they call the Saudi one. The Saudi *gallabia* is more prestigious and carries a social status statement. It has a small raised collar and buttons on the chest. It is usually made of white or very light colored fabric. The traditional *gallabia* does not have a collar or buttons and it can be of any colored fabric. It is worn by the old generation and the *saidis* of Upper Egypt, who work for the Nubians as migrant laborers on the agriculture land. The older generation usually wear the traditional Nubian dress called *arragi,* a short dress reaching the knee made of very light fabric, at home and the *saidi gallabia* when they go to the fields. The young men do not wear the old generation's costumes and prefer to wear these Saudi *gallabias* or the other costumes of the urban Egyptians. Fakhri wears a shirt and pants at work and changes his clothes as soon as he returns home. He wears the traditional *gallabia* when he is not at work. The costume he wears at work is a symbol of authority and officialdom.

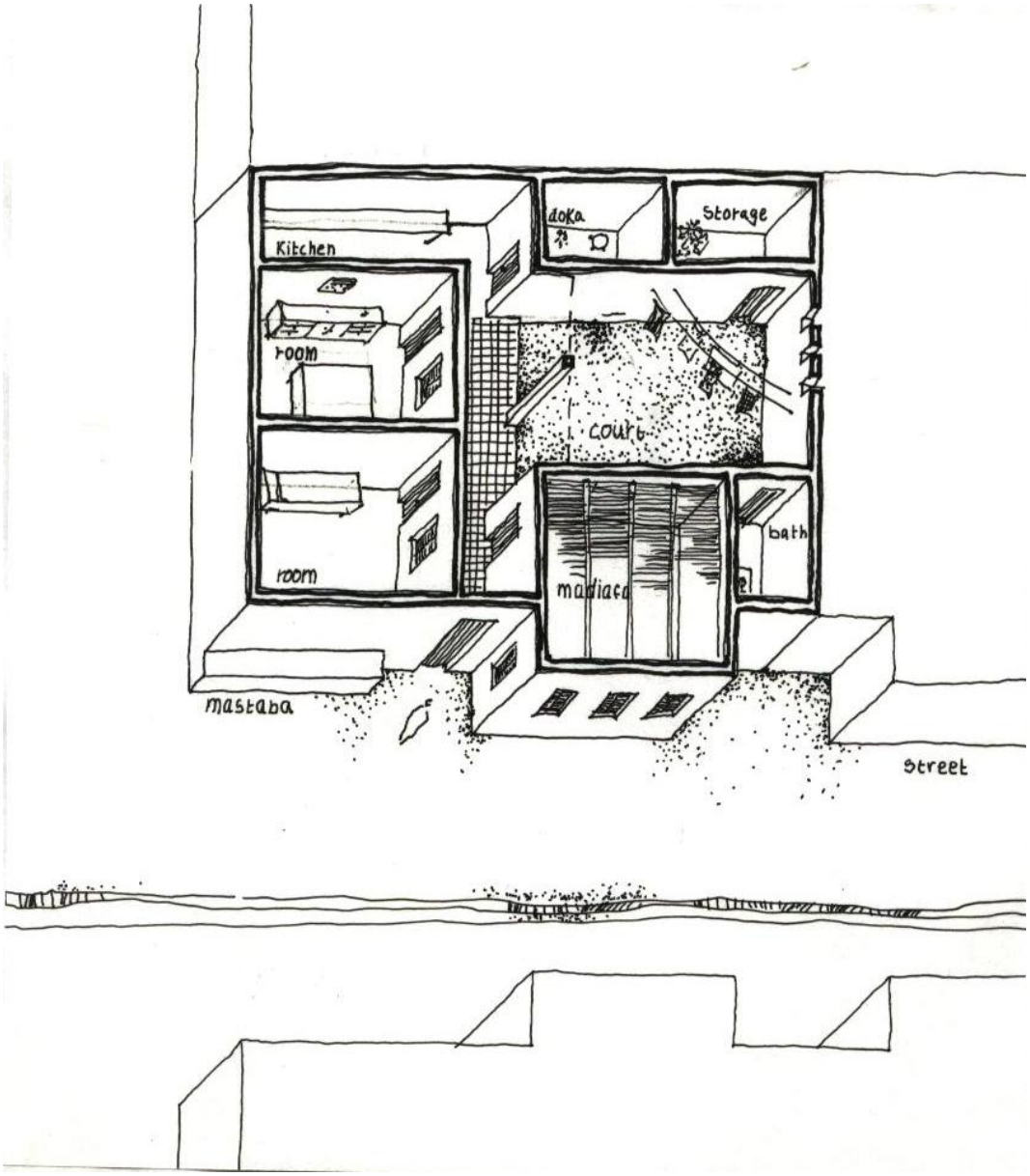

Figure 3.1: Fakhri's House at Abu Simbel El-Tahjir.

Fakhri's house consisted of three rooms that were accessible from the entrance corridor: a *madiafa*, which was located to the right of the entrance door, his father's bedroom to the left of the entrance door, and Fakhri's bedroom, the second room to the left. There was also a 7 by 7 meters courtyard which was surrounded by a wall 4 meters high, a kitchen at the end of the corridor, a bathroom which was located behind the *madiafa* and accessible from the courtyard, and a storage room.

"When they gave us the house the *madiafa* was open to the sky. The first thing we did was to cover the *madiafa* with this *gareed*. We also moved the toilet, behind the *madiafa*, in order to have more room in the courtyard," said Fakhri.

Fakhri's house had no water supply. A large metal water container located in the courtyard was used for washing. A *maziarah* located at the end of the entrance corridor near the kitchen was used for drinking. There was also a water container inside the toilet with a small water cup for washing after using the toilet.

Am Sherif, Fakhri's father, came into the *madiafa* and greeted me. He was a tall, slim man in his late fifties. His right hand was disfigured because of the use of the *faas*, a traditional agriculture tool made of a flat, metal plate attached to a thick wooden stick for tilling the soil. The *fas* left a large alcove in the bones of his hand between his index and thumb. He shook my hand and sat on the sofa beside me.

He asked me, "What are you here for?"

I told him that I was interested in the architecture of Nubia before and after the displacement. He looked at me, lighted a cigarette, and said:

> The village was called *Farrig* because it was the location from where the seven brothers who founded Nubia first lived. They later dispersed and started the rest of Nubia. *El Balad El Kadim* was 36 Kilometers long made of side by side *najas* overlooking the Nile. The temple's name is mistakenly pronounced *abu sembel*. The right pronunciation is *ab sambal*. *Ab* is a *Rotan* word meaning disappeared, and *sambal* is the name of the Nubian person who helped the British troops discover the temple. The temple was covered by sand when Sambal felt a rock under his foot and after digging to see what it was, the head of the greatest statue appeared. Sambal was scared and he ran into the desert. He

was never seen again. He disappeared. That is why the temple is called *ab sambal*.

We did not believe it at all in the beginning. We did not think that the displacement was possible until our neighboring villages were being evacuated.

We have changed very much here. When we first came here we used to lose our belongings. We used to leave our crops in the field as we used to do in *El Balad El Kadim*. The *saidis* used to come and ask us, "Are not you afraid to lose your stuff?" We used to say, "God is the protector." We lost many things: our animals, our crops, and our clothes. The old houses of Nubia had 10 or 11 rooms and each son used to get married and live with his father, but now each one has to build a house for himself.

There was not enough land for agriculture in *El Balad El Kadim*. We used to have small lots of land to cultivate. Now each one has two feddans. Half of the land is cultivated with sugar cane which we must grow in order to sell to the sugar factory at Kom Ombo and the rest is whatever we chose.

A woman's voice shouted from outside the *madiafa*, "Fakhri ..... Lunch."

Fakhri went inside the house and came back with a large aluminum tray covered with a *gareed* plate. Khamis hurried and put a table in front of where I was sitting, on which Fakhri put the lunch tray. Am Sherif left the room as soon as the lunch tray arrived. Fakhri uncovered the lunch tray, on which where several china plates filled with beans, fried corned beef, fried potatoes, rice, bread, and *Shaddi*-- the traditional Nubian bread. Each one pulled up a chair and sat around the table. A large aluminum cup filled with cold water and a couple of glasses were brought with the tray.

There were no knives or forks to eat with, but five spoons were placed beside the rice plate. Although I was very hungry by that time, I did not know how to start eating. I waited for some time watching my companions eating so that I could imitate them.

Fakhri said, "*Itfadalu*."

The left hand is never used in eating. One has to cut a piece of bread using the right hand only, or assist the right hand with the left. The piece of bread is folded and dipped into the near side of the plate and raised to the mouth. The left hand follows underneath the right hand to prevent any drops from spilling on one's clothes. Only when eating rice is the spoon used. I observed how they were eating and imitated them. In the

beginning it was very difficult to eat as fast as they did but, step by step, I was able to learn how to eat like them.

Lunch was over and the large tray was covered with the *gareed* plate and taken into the house. After lunch we sat in the *madiafa* talking about a party they were planning to hold at the end of the week. They were supposed to have a party earlier in the month to celebrate the Sixth of October[37] but it was postponed until this week. They were going to rehearse the songs and the plays during the evening at the village's theater.

While we were talking about the party, Fakhri brought the tea tray. The offering of tea is an important feature of entertaining guests. Tea is prepared in an aluminum pot and brought on a clean tray with empty glasses, a sugar container, and a milk container. Milk and sugar are poured in the glasses before the tea. Each one was asked about the amount of sugar he wanted.

"It is much better to pour the tea over the milk. It tastes better this way," said Khamis.

Am Sherif came to the *madiafa* and said, "We are going to help a friend to build his house. This might be of interest to you. You can come if you want."

I said, "Of course, I will come." I was very enthusiastic about the suggestion and wanted to go immediately. The young men were busy arranging for the party and continued their discussion for some time.

We waited until the men had done talking and then followed Am Sherif who was working with his fellows on the roof of one of the houses on the edge of the village. The house was located in what is known as *the self-help quarter*, where people claim lots of land and build new houses. I was surprised to learn that the houses of the self-help quarter were being built using the traditional construction system called *galous*.[38]

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37 The Sixth of October is a national day in Egypt commemorating the Egyptian victory in the Middle East war in 1973.

38 Galous refers both to the construction system and to the mud mixture used for building the walls.

The walls of the house were all built and the rooms well defined. There were several men working on the roof of one of the rooms while others prepared tea in the courtyard. Several men were cleaning branches of palm tree leaves and carrying them to the roof where the other men were working. The owner of the house was the one preparing tea and distributing cigarettes. He was wearing an *arragi* and a white turban around his head.

I climbed the ladder to the roof in order to observe closely what the men were doing. They were squatting side by side on a steel bar across the width of the room, weaving palm tree leaves together with steel wires. The roof started to form as a large mat was built in place. There were several men standing and chatting with those who were working on the roof.

The house occupied an area of four hundred square meters. It had a front entrance facing east and a back entrance opening on a back street. Unlike the small courtyard at Fakhri's house, the large courtyard in the middle of the house was spacious. There were four rooms along the south side of the courtyard, a *mandara* to the right of the front entrance with three windows overlooking the front street, a storage room, a kitchen, and a toilet occupying the west side of the courtyard. The entrance gate was built and decorated with red brick.

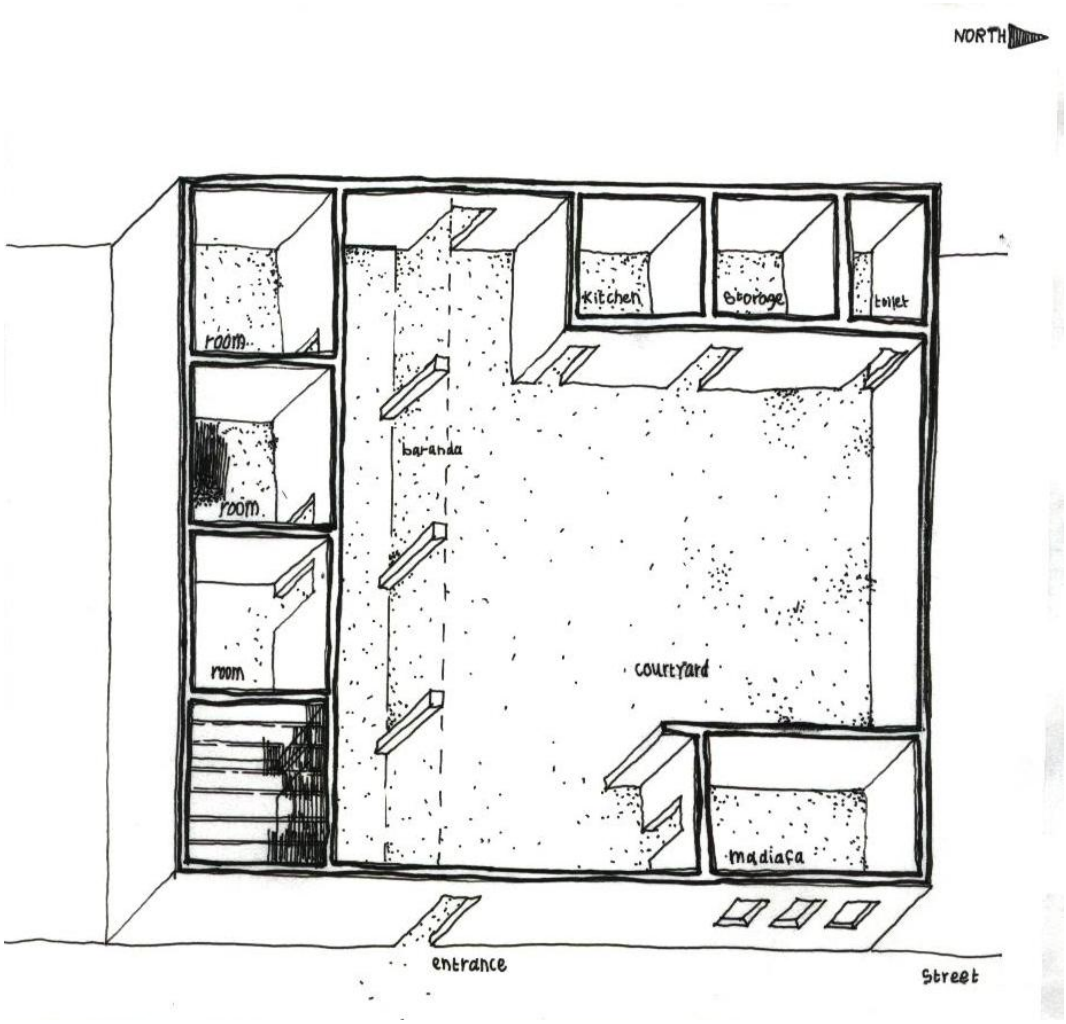

Figure 3.2: A House at the Self-help Quarter.

We left the self-help quarter behind us and headed back to the village on our way to the village theater to attend the rehearsal for the party. The streets and houses of the village were identified by numbers. The streets were numbered from east to west starting with Forty-Fourth street and ending with Fifty-Eighth street.[39] We reached the main street where many of the village services were located: a mosque, an elementary school, a preparatory school, and a secondary school. We entered The Nubian House which was built a few years after the displacement as an example of the old Nubian houses before the displacement. All the village participated in the construction of the house either by helping in the actual building or in the decoration. Across the street from The Nubian House was The Women's Center built by the Ministry of Social Affairs to assist women in working and selling their hand-made crafts. Inside the center women were making carpets ,using noals (traditional wooden weaving machines), and other artifacts: jewelry, necklaces and men's hats.

The Agriculture Society, a government agency that takes care of the agricultural problems of the farmers and provides them with seeds and chemical fertilizers for their crops, was located by the paved road across the street from the elementary school. It also monitors the planting of sugar cane on half of all the agriculture land. Each farmer owns two feddans and has to plant one feddan with sugar cane; the other feddan is for his personal use. The crop is delivered to the sugar factory in Kom Ombo through the Agriculture Society where "it finally reaches its burial place," as Am Sherif put it.

The engineer at the Agriculture Society was in his middle thirties. For him life at *El-Tahjir* was much better than in old Nubia:

> Farmers are raising crops and have reliable income while their children go to school and receive proper education. They go to the hospital when they get sick and buy ready made bread from the government bakery. They are now close to all the urban areas where they benefit from their services while in the past they were isolated from the rest of the country.

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39 See Figure 3.3: Map of Abu Simbel village.

We went to The Village Theater where the rehearsal for the party was about to take place. The village theater had a large stage open to a sand-covered courtyard surrounded by high walls on all sides. There were two iron doors, one at each side of the theater, used to enter the courtyard. The rehearsal took place in the courtyard in the front of the stage and in the music room behind it. At the meeting room of the theater there were wall magazines with several articles written in Arabic about *El-Tahjir* and Nubia before the displacement.

Many changes have befallen the organization of village parties in the last few years. Women used to participate in parties and marriage festivals by dancing and singing. The young men were very upset with the interference of the conservative Muslims of the village who prohibited young women and girls from participating in any parties or festivals.

Khamis said, "Teachers at school punish those girls who participate in a public party by giving them bad grades, that's why they do not participate in our parties any more."

A group of Muslim conservatives, including both Nubians and non-Nubians, consider singing and dancing *irreligious* activities that should be banned from the village. For them, women should be veiled and secluded from any contact with men. Their strong influence is felt through the public schools controlled by the government, where most of them work as school teachers. The influence of Muslim conservative groups is strong on many levels; what is happening in the village of Abu Simbel is an example of the situation all around Egypt.

After the rehearsal we went to The Youth Center across from the theater. They spread several plastic mats on the soccer field in front of the Center. Many young men joined us and they talked in Rotana about the party. They were enthusiastic about their party and about how to solve the administrative problems with which they had to deal. The party was recognized as a public gathering and had to be officially approved and

permitted. Preparations had to be made to invite singers from other villages and to rent loud speakers and music equipment from Aswan.

Zakaria, who was living permanently in Cairo and was visiting the village at that time, was helping in the preparations for the party. I admired his mastery of the language and was surprised when he told me that he did not speak the language properly.

Zakaria said, "I am not speaking very well and nor do all those other guys. For the old people we don't speak Rotana at all. They think we speak a completely different language."

Am Gamal Bata is one of the famous figures of the village. He heads the Agriculture Cooperative society of the village, which aims at buying land at the lake shores in order to rebuild old Nubia. He owns the coffee shop of the village, which he runs with the help of his sons, Hisham and Sabri. A few feet from where we were sitting at the Youth Center, the old men of the village were meeting to discuss the purchase of land at the lake shores. The young think that the old people live in an illusion and that it is impossible to rebuild old Nubia again.

"They are too romantic. It is all gone and our life is different now," said Hisham.

In order to go back to Fakhri's house we had to walk between the bodies of men, women, and children sleeping in the street, but no one moved at our appearance. Although women used to hide quickly at our appearance during the day time, they were not offended by us during the night time. The sleeping bodies were clearly visible under the faded light of the street corner lamps. Darkness covered the people, the streets, and the village and there were other rules of conduct during the night.

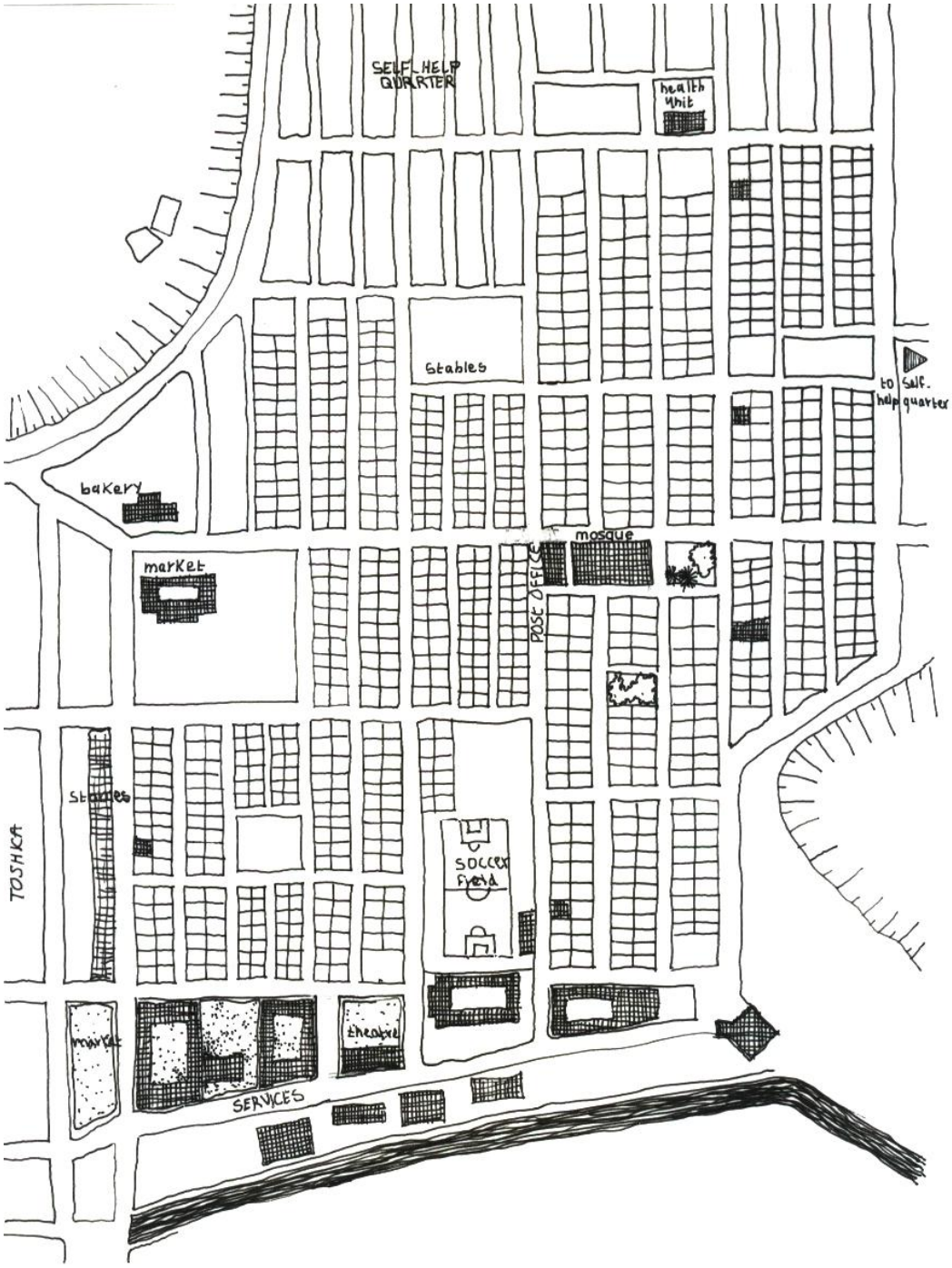

Figure 3.4: Map of Abu Simbel village.

Daily Life in the Village

Days start early at Fakhri's house with Am Sherif's departure to the field by daybreak. He wakes up before dawn every day and prepares himself for a long exhausting day. Because his land is far from the village, he has to go on the back of his *rakoba* (donkey) pulling his buffalo behind him. He has two feddans: one planted with sugar cane and the other with vegetables for his family use.

" The young do not want to be farmers. They want to work in the sugar factory in Kom Ombo or go to Cairo," Am Sherif said.

He returns home at noon where he eats lunch and prepares himself for the afternoon trip to the field. "We cannot leave our animals in the field; they can be stolen," he commented.

The situation of animals was a problem for the Nubians when they arrived in the villages of *El-Tahjir*. The houses of *El-Tahjir* were designed with stables for animals inside the courtyard. The Nubians did not like this arrangement because they were not used to keeping animals inside their houses. In *el balad el kadim*, the animals were always kept at the farms in shelters made of palm tree branches and *gareed*. To keep an animal inside the house was considered unhealthy and unacceptable.

Unlike the *saidis* of Upper Egypt or the farmers of the Delta, the Nubians did not keep their animals inside their houses. The image of the Egyptian farmer who kept his animals inside the house dominated the thinking of the designers of *El-Tahjir* houses. The stables provided inside the houses, according to the original designs of the houses, were later removed by the Nubians in order to enlarge the courtyard, and shelters for the animals were built on a vacant hill in the middle of the village. Those who were living near this part of the village benefited from having their animals outside the houses, yet close by, where they could oversee them all the time. For those who were living far from

the animals' shelter, it was a problem to keep their animals away from them, and they were forced to keep them inside their houses.

Before the displacement, the Nubians were able to keep their animals at the farms and never feared they would be stolen or lost.

"In the past we had *aman*," said Am Sherif .

Aman is an Arabic word which means peacefulness, security, and safety. After experiencing the loss of their belongings and animals, the Nubians' feeling of *aman* was lost.

Fakhri wakes up at 7:00 a.m. every day. After breakfast he changes his clothes and leaves for his job at the post office. His official work starts at 8:00 a.m. with the tedious work of filling forms and sorting the mail. Paper work consumes most of his time at the post office.

"For each transaction I have to fill at least six forms. It is an official work," he commented.

The post office, located amidst the houses in the center of the village beside the telecommunication building, is the meeting place for the young men of the village. Most of them are waiting for a letter or a phone call from a relative or a friend informing them about a job in *el madinah*, or the city. Some of them are college and university students who come to the village during the summer vacation. They spend their time hanging around the post office and the coffee shop. In the afternoon they play soccer on the field across the Youth Center. They don't think of themselves as farmers and don't like to participate in any farming activities.

Fakhri's mother starts her day after the departure of Am Sherif. She sweeps the courtyard and the corridor. She takes the garbage to a close by empty lot of land near the end of the street. She prepares *doka*, the traditional Nubian bread, in the *doka* room by the kitchen. She spends the morning cleaning the house, baking, and cooking. She speaks Arabic with a strong accent.

"In *el balad el kadim* I used to go to the field and help my husband. Our land was close to the house and it was safe then," said Fakhri's mother.

Most of the village houses are furnished with modern pieces of furniture: wooden beds, cabinets, tables, etc. There is a common appliance found in every house in the village: a fan. All houses and public buildings have fans to circulate air in the rooms. The fan is very important, especially in the hot summer days when heat is transferred through the walls and concrete ceilings of houses and buildings into the rooms, which become unbearable. The T.V. set is another appliance found in every house in the village. Life virtually stops during the evening soap opera broadcasted from Cairo. Men, women, and children halt whatever they are doing and sit in front of the T.V. sets watching the 7:15 pm soap opera.

In the evening, the village streets have a different life. Women sit outside their houses or sleep on the large *mastabas*. They chat loudly with each other and the street is transformed into a large social space. Men gather at the coffee shop near the village market playing dominos and backgammon. During the night the village has a completely different form. All the houses look alike, especially because the faded colors of the facades can not be seen at that time. Most of the street lamps are broken and the alleys are completely in the dark. Because the rooms inside the houses are extremely hot and the courtyards are small and lacking appropriate cross ventilation, the houses are deserted and the inhabitants go outside and sleep in the streets. Men, women, and children sleep on plastic mats spread in the middle of the streets until early morning. Others sleep on the large *mastabas* they built in front of their houses. The streets look like a large sleeping space.

The *Souq*

The *souq*, or market, is held once a week at each village of *El-Tahjir*. The Souq is held every Sunday. Most of the vendors are *saidis* and the customers are mostly Nubian

women. Women at the *souq* do not cover their heads as they do when they meet a stranger in the street.

My companion Zakaria said," This is my first time to come to the *souq* since I was a kid. The *souq* is for women only. Men are not supposed to be seen here."

The *saidi* vendors, wearing colored *gallabias*, were sitting on the ground in front of their merchandise waiting for their Nubian customers to search through the merchandise and buy what they wanted. They were lined in parallel rows selling different items of goods displayed over plastic mats spread on the ground. Women came to the *souq* to buy many of the items not available at the village stores during the week.

The vacant piece of land used for the Sunday *souq* is 30 by 30 meters. It is located by the paved road leading to Kom Ombo, between the villages of Abu Simbel and Toshka. The two villages, which were miles apart before the displacement, became separated by a narrow street, 10 meters wide. The *souq*, which is held in the vacant land between the two villages, forces the residents of both villages to meet and interact. It is one of the many shared services between the two villages.

The language spoken in the *souq* is Arabic. Every one complies with this rule, including women who speak Arabic to the vendors and *Rotana* among themselves. Not only are the women exposed to strangers but they also have to speak another language in the *souq*.

Am Sherif commented, " They speak Arabic in the *souq*! It is not a Nubian place."

The Souq is a new phenomenon in the daily life of the Nubian villages. Before the displacement, merchants, who were usually *kenuzi* Nubians, used boats filled with goods and merchandise at commercial ports as floating markets to travel between the Nubian villages. They used to sell their goods for credit to the residents of the villages along the Nile and collect their credit at the harvest season when the date crop was harvested. They would pay the balance, or the difference between the value of the crop and the debt, to

their customers in currency. Although it was usually very little, the amount of money which the Nubians received from the merchants used to last until the next harvesting season. This system of goods exchange allowed for a different social and cultural interaction to take place than the one found in the *souq* under the new impersonal currency system.

Am Samal

In our conversation, Fakhri mentioned Am Samal as one of the most knowledgeable persons about Nubia. Am Samal was a song writer and a composer. He lived in one of the government houses across from the *souq*. He was 55 years old, large, and heavy smoker. He was the one responsible for the construction of the Nubian House by the paved road. As he put it:

> I built *el Bait el Noubi* here in the village as a museum, a Nubian museum. We used to have parties every month or two so we could collect money for the project with no need for charity from the outside. We wanted to make the Nubian House a museum for tourists and to let the world understand that we are still here. The house has been transformed into a workshop, but this is not what it was intended for. I wanted to make it a museum so that we could tell the world to come and see how we used to live instinctively.
>
> We are called Nubians but in fact we are three societies. There is an Arab society called *Allaiqat*, a *Kenuzi* society, and finally a *Nubian* society. We call them *Allaiqat*, *Metouki*, and *Fedija*. The *Fedija* are the siblings of the kings who used to live in the Nubian mountains and later came down to the valley of the Nile. They were the guardians of the Nile. The Nubian is proud and respects himself even when he does not have any money. The Kenuzi are less than us. They are the siblings of *Kanz Al Kenuz*, who was a military leader. That's why they are more inclined to violence. They keep rifles in their houses and their music is very rough. Arab *el Allaiqat* can be anything! They can be Arabs, *saidis*, Nubians, or anything. When they are with Arabs they say we are Arabs, with Nubians they would be Nubians, and so on.
>
> My house was made of mud. The mud had to be mixed carefully and left for some time to ferment. That made it stronger and resistant to any rain. Mud made the houses warm in winter and cool in summer. That was because it did not transfer the heat. All our houses in *el balad el kadim* were made of mud.
>
> There are many differences between life here and life in *el balad el kadim*. Many aspects of our life have changed, some were changed by our choice while others were forced on us.

> Some people come and say, "We brought you electricity and made you concrete houses. You should appreciate those things and forget about the past." We don't respond. But I would hope that these people who brought us electricity and concrete houses understand that they brought us misfortune. Those who made us concrete houses brought us sickness and many other problems. They say that they gave us progress and housed us in concrete houses. They don't understand us.
>
> I will always consider myself a migrant. This is not my home and that is not my land. I don't know about the feelings of other people, but I can speak about myself. The new generation, who have not seen *el balad el kadim*, and who are raised and accustomed to the environment here are different than us. But I who lived and experienced life there, never, after a hundred years, if I live here, I will always consider myself a migrant. I understand this very well. It is my belief. It is not easy to forget your home, your people, and your family.

The Self-Help Quarter

The self-help quarter refers to the south-western part of the village. After walking through the narrow streets of the village heading west, the atmosphere started to change from crowdedness and uniformity to openness and variety. The regular, narrow, and perpendicular streets became wide and irregular. The large houses were lined side by side without following a rigid layout. They were easily identified by their various colored windows and entrances. Each house occupied a large area of land and the facade of each house was four times longer than the facade of the typical government houses of the village. The self-help quarter is where anyone can claim a piece of land and build a house. It is not controlled by any laws or regulations from the government.

On our way I noticed the site of an unfinished house. I stopped and asked my companions Zakaria and Khamis to help me survey it. The walls were one meter high, and the layout of the house was easily understood from the walls. There was a large courtyard at the east side surrounded by rooms on three sides. The walls were built using the *galous* system and the fresh mud layers were visible on the walls.

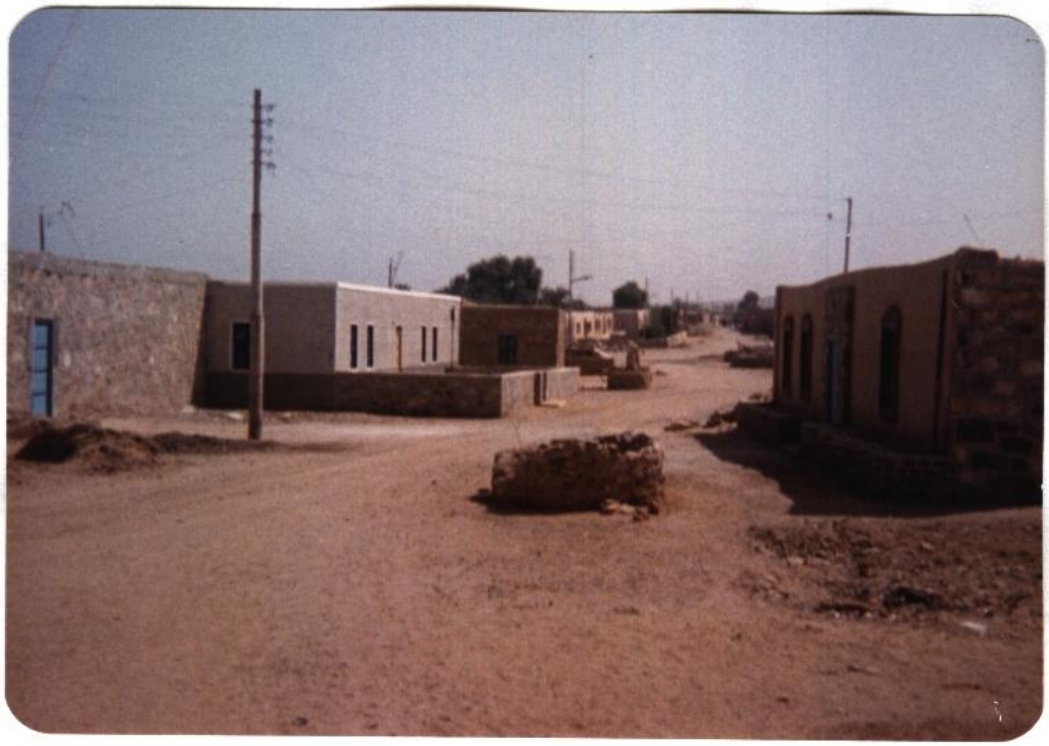

Figure 3.5: The Self-Help Quarter.

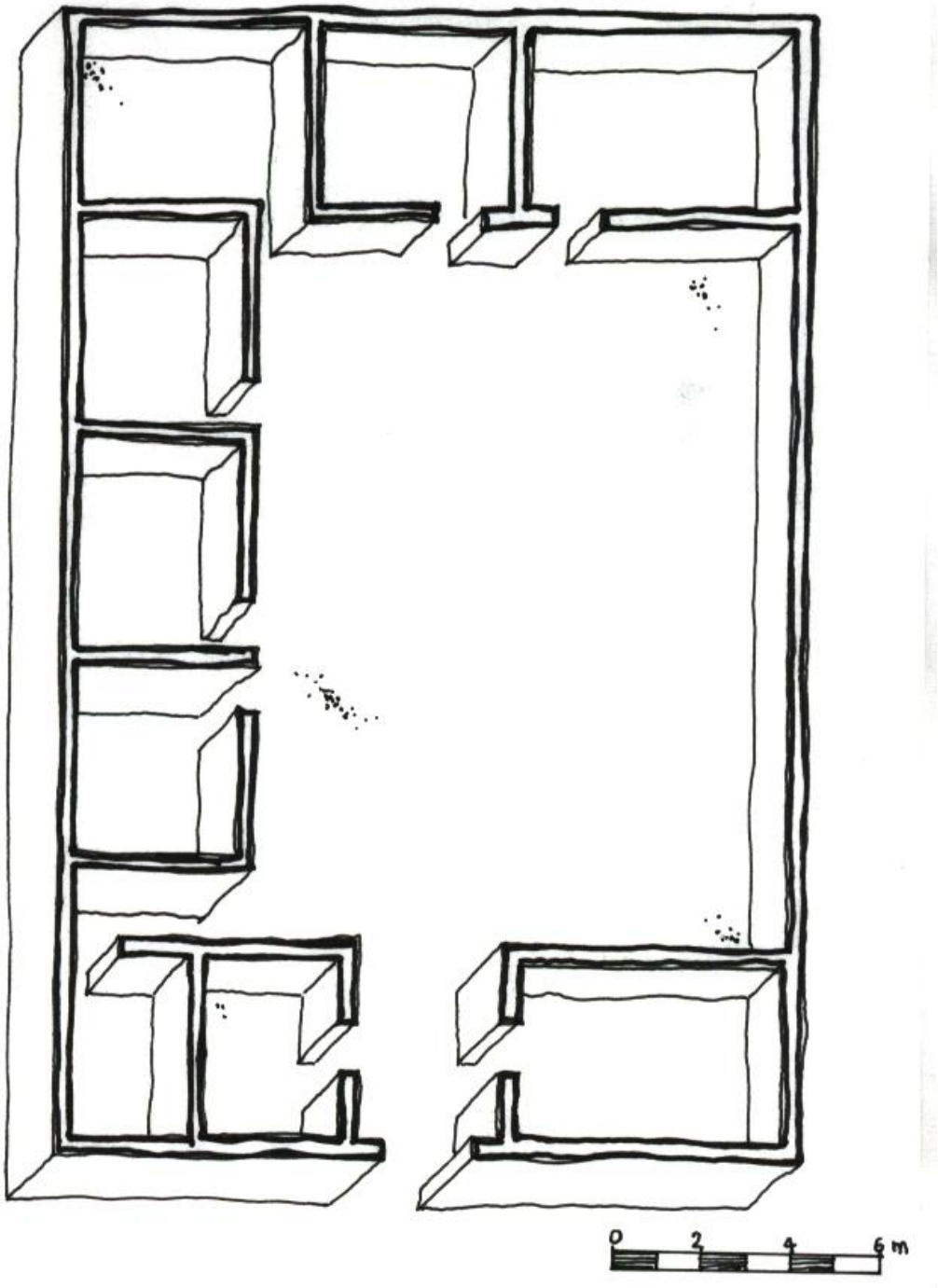

Figure 3.6: The Unfinished House at the Self-Help Quarter.

Across the street, several completed houses were lined side by side. They were painted with bright colors, and their entrances were decorated with mud reliefs, china plates, and red brick. At the end of the street was Am Sidi's house, which looked like a castle with its high, plastered, mud walls. There was a long *mastaba* on the facade, and a large shaded area outside the house furnished with wooden *angareebs*. Am Sidi was waiting for us by the house. We entered through the wooden door into another world.

Am Sidi's house was built around a large courtyard, occupying one thousand square meters-- more than the area occupied by four government houses. The entrance door led to a small hall called *dahleez*, 4 by 4 meters. On both sides of the *dahleez* there was a *madiafa* used to entertain guests and relatives. The *madiafa* on the left side was used as a family room, where the T.V. set was located. The *madiafa* to the right was larger and closed most of the time and reserved for guests.

The entrance hall opened into a large courtyard. The courtyard, 20 by 20 meters, was covered with sand. The traces of a broom were visible on the clean sand. The empty courtyard was completely different from the courtyards of the government houses which were very small and crowded with pieces of furniture and water barrels. It provided a private and protected space inside the house. Although the walls of this courtyard were four meters high, one did not feel crowded because of the large open space around. The rooms were cool and the courtyard offered an excellent place for sitting.

Occupying the east side of the courtyard was a *diwani*, a bridal hall, which was one of the few bridal halls built in the village after the displacement. The *diwani* consisted of a small courtyard, a closed room, a toilet, and a large three sided room decorated with valuable belongings of the family. A *maziarah* of two water jars was located inside the *diwani's* courtyard.

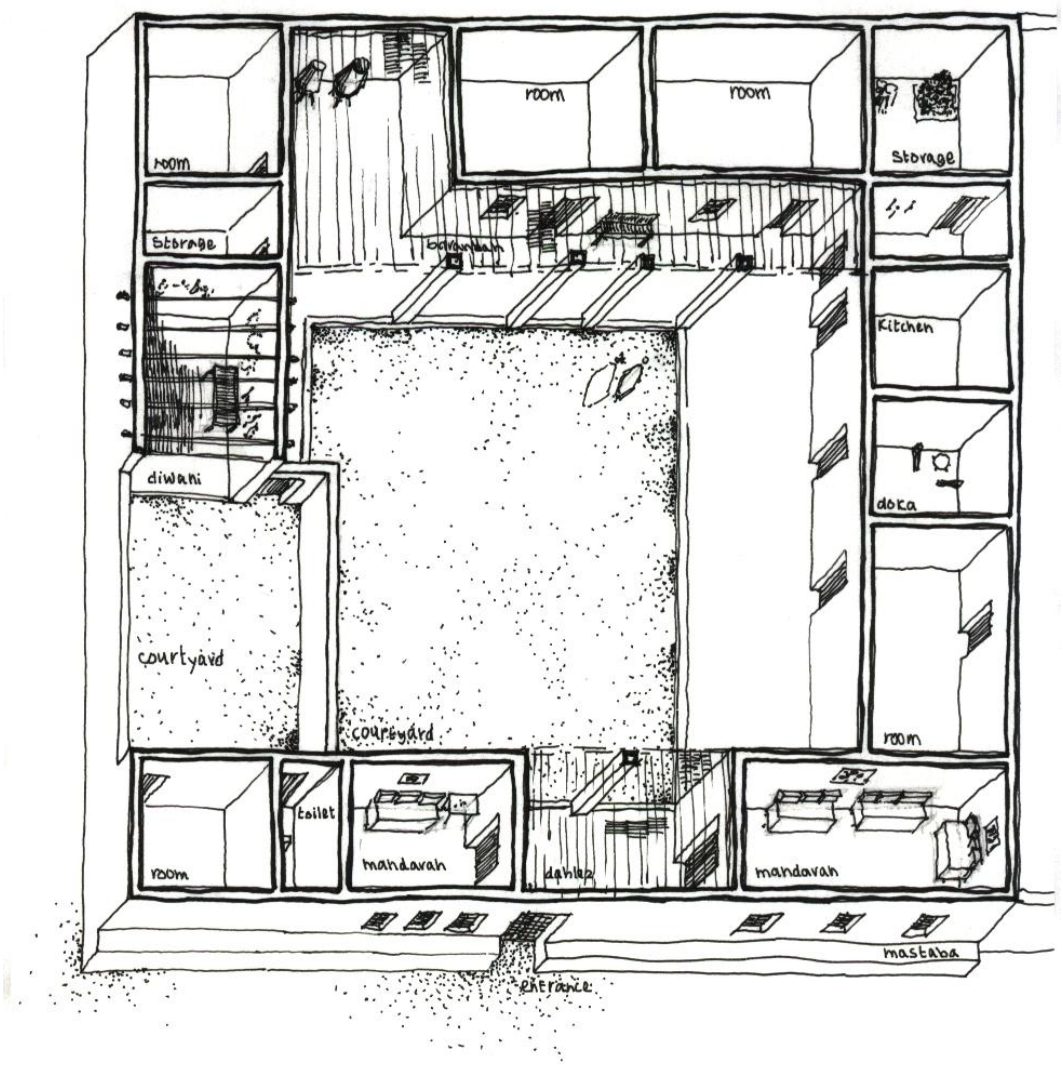

Figure 3.7: Am Sidi's House.

Across the main courtyard from the entrance hall there were several rooms used for sleeping and storage. To the right there was a kitchen, a *doka* room for bread baking , and a room leading to a backyard, where Am Sidi raised his animals under the protection of a big, nasty dog.

Across the street from Am Sidi's house was a public *maziarah*,where several water jars were placed for the passersby to drink. Beside the *maziarah* there was a tree that offered a very peaceful place for sitting. Beside the tree there was a public water faucet used by those who did not have water supply in their houses to fill their water jars. Instead of going to the Nile bank to fill the water jars as they used to do in *el balad el kadim*, women go to the public faucets, located in several spots around the village, to fill their water jars and take them to their houses where they fill the large water jars of the *maziarah* to be used for drinking.

Across from Am Sidi's house there was a house under construction. Am Abdel Rahim Dongolawi, the builder of the house, was squatting on the edge of the front wall wearing an *arragi* and a turban. Beside the house an assistant was preparing a mud mixture, using a *fas,* while another one was pouring water on the mixture. After pouring enough water to allow easy turning of the mixture, two men carried a wooden board and placed it beside the mixture then poured part of the mixture on the board. They took it to where Am Abdel Rahim was standing. They poured the mixture beside the wall and went back for another load. An assistant standing beside the wall took part of the mud mixture, formed a large ball, and threw it to Am Abdel Rahim who was squatting on the edge of the wall. Am Abdel Rahim carefully placed the ball of mud mixture over the wall and worked it with his hands to fit with the rest.

Using only his bare hands and eyes Abdel Rahim was able to make the layer perfectly straight, overlapping the previous layer. He made sure that the wall rose straight from the ground up. He used no instruments but his hands and eyes. He then moved back half a step and prepared himself to receive another ball of the mud mixture from his

assistant by the wall. He repeated the same procedure until a layer of the house was completed. After finishing one layer, Am Abdel Rahim and his assistants were to let it dry for three or four days. During that time they would move to another house for which they would make a new *sarrega*, or mud layer, between 13 and 17 cm thick.

There were no windows in any part of the house except the *madiafa*. The making of openings for windows did not interrupt the layer making process. At a place where a window was needed, Am Abdel Rahim stopped the layer and put some weeds. He proceeded with the layer making until he reached the end of the window then put more weeds. When making the next layer, he made sure that he started and stopped at the same places to put weeds. On the lintel, he placed a wooden beam and continue with the layer making. The part of the wall blocking the window would be punched out when the wall was dry. The openings for doors were carefully made and reinforced by making end columns for the wall.

Am Abdel Rahim was responsible for making only the walls. The roof and the rest of the house were the responsibility of the owner. During the construction of the walls, the owner was responsible for providing the necessary water for construction. The owner and his family provided the builders with tea and cigarettes. In general they followed up on the work and facilitated any difficulties for the builder.

Am Abdel Rahim greeted us by saying, "I will join you in a while."

I sat under the tree with Am Sidi watching Am Abdel Rahim and his assistants working.

Am Sidi said:

> I built my house the same way and it was Abdel Rahim who built it for me. I still keep my other house in the village but rarely go there. I feel much better here away from the crowd. People have more money now but they are worried for no obvious reason. They fight with each other and do not respect each other any more. It is hard to believe how things have changed so fast now.

Figure 3.8: Am Abdel Rahim Dongolawi, a vernacular builder.

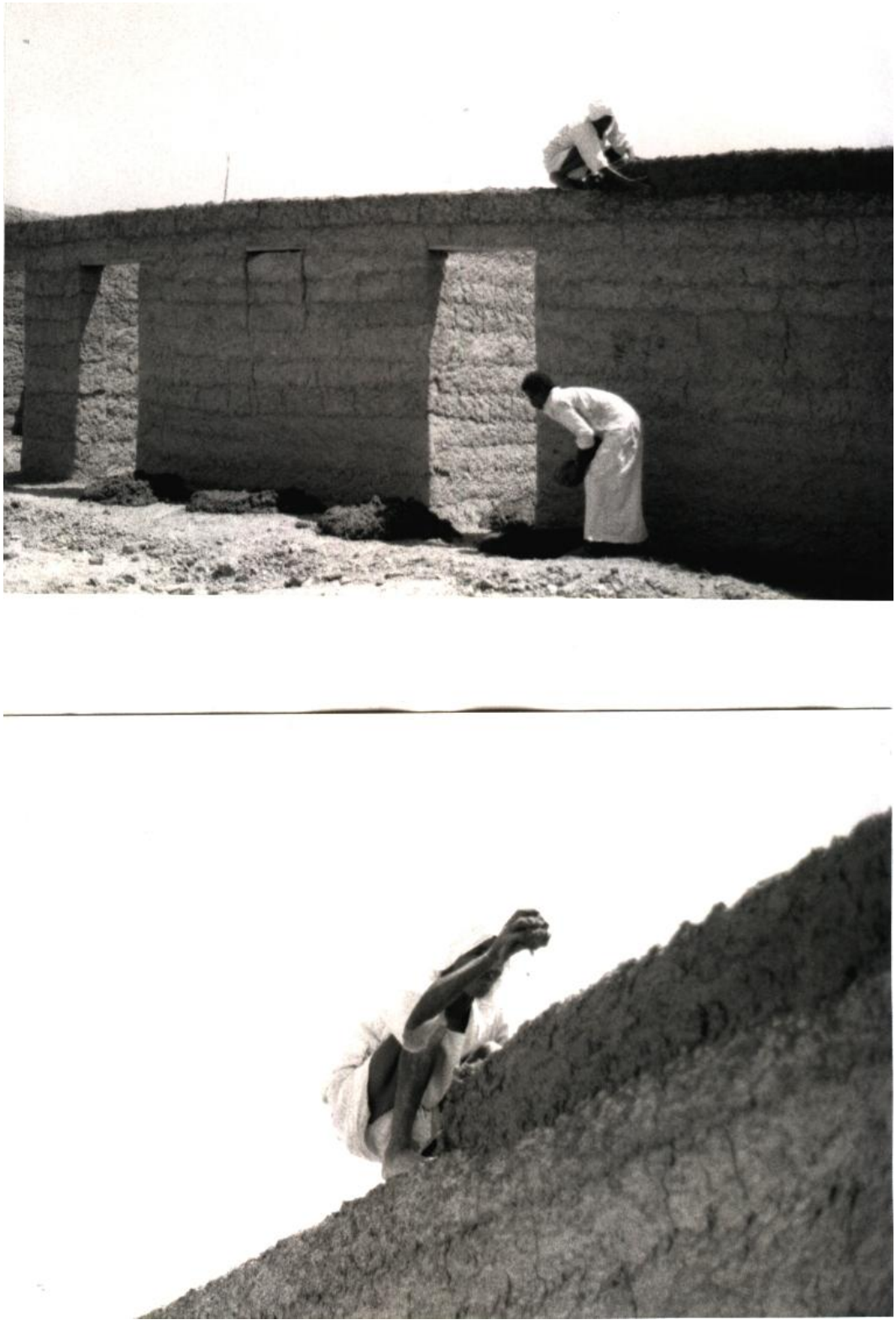

Figure 3.9: Building a House in the Self-Help Quarter.

Am Abdel Rahim Dongolawi: A vernacular builder

As soon as he finished working, Abdel Rahim came and joined us. His rough hands and dark skin reflected the type of work he was doing. He has been a farmer and a builder since 1949. The two feddans given to him by the government were not enough to support his family.

> I worked with some builders for three or four years until I learned the craft. In *el balad el kadim* we did not have stone or concrete, we used *galous* as we have here. The mixture was made of mud like this one. The houses were strong and stood firmly until we left. They were sixty or seventy years old and never cracked.
>
> *Galous* is much better than brick wall because you can tear down any part of it without affecting the rest of the wall. You cannot do that to the brick wall because it would collapse. You can take off two or three meters from the *galous* without affecting the upper part. It holds itself and does not fell down. The making of an opening in the *galous* is easy too.The advantages of the mud houses are many. Beside being warm in winter and cool in summer, they are psychologically comfortable.
>
> The construction of the house starts from the foundation of course. Before digging the foundation and pouring the mixture of stones and mud, one starts by laying out the rooms. One has to slaughter an animal before pouring the foundation. Also when placing the entrance gate lintel one has to slaughter an animal and say it is a *karama*
>
> The foundation is made of stone. The earth is dug 50 cm below ground level. A mixture of stone and mud is poured into it and then we start building the wall over it. We do not use any wires to build with *galous*, except at the foundation. But if you build with stone you have to use wires all the time until you are done. It requires a lot of expertise to be able to build with *galous*. It is very difficult.
>
> The builder decides the layout or the design of the house. The owner makes an agreement with the builder: how much would the meter cost, the area of the house, whether he wants a *diwani*, a *mandarah*, and so on. This is called *tafseel*, the tailoring of the house. The owner says what he wants to have and the builder lays out the rooms. The owner of the house would say; "I want a room here and another one there, a *mandarah* here, and a *diwani* there." If the builder thought that there was something wrong in what the owner said, then he had to tell him what would be better. The builder would say; "No, better put the loggia this way so that the sun would not enter, it is better opposite to the sun." He has to express his opinion to the owner of the house, if they agree then it is all right but if the owner does not agree and wants his own thing then the builder has to comply with his view. The *tafseel* is made by the builder after the agreement and the owner pays the builder part of the money in advance.

> The rooms always have to be opposite the sun. The *barandah*, or loggia, is shaded by a roof. It has to be open in the direction opposite to the sun, otherwise it would receive the hot wind. It has to be always in the shade. There are no windows in any part of the house except the facade; the *mandarah*, the rooms beside it, and the rooms overlooking the courtyard are opposite to the wind. The windows have to be opposite to the wind so that they receive the wind coming from the north. There are small openings near the roof to allow the wind to go out.
>
> There are four persons working with me here. The one who tilts the mud mixes is called *aggan*. He takes care of tilling the mud mixture. These two are called the *carriage-people*. They carry the wooden car on which they move the mixture and give it another round of mixing then pour it under the wall where I am working. The last one who is called the *monawel* or *tabban* is standing beside the wall handing me the mixture. I sense the mixture with my hands. If I think it is too hard I tell the *aggan* to tilt the mixture more. I build a *sarrega* and let it dry for two, three, or four days and then add another one. I work on two or three houses at the same time, one *sarrega* at that house and while it dries out, I make another *sarrega* at the other house, and so on.

The Party

The party was the talk of the village for several days, especially at the Youth Center where the young men gathered every night to discuss the preparations for the party. At sunset on the day of the party, the theater was filled with children, young women, and men. There were very elderly people sitting by the back wall of the courtyard. Most of the crowd were women in their black *gallabias* and head scarfs.

The courtyard of the theater was covered with clean sand on which people sat. It was divided into two parts with wooden benches and pieces of cloth, in order to separate the men from women. Children were seated by the stage occupying the front rows, with men to their right and women to their left. The stage was one meter above the ground, with a background made of a large cloth on which pictures of *gareed* plates were drawn. There were two iron doors-- one on each side of courtyard wall-- one used by men and the other by women to enter the courtyard. There was a third door which allowed access to the backstage, the rooms, and the library behind the stage.

The organizers managed to rent loudspeakers from an electric shop in Kom Ombo. Even those who did not attend the party were able to hear at home. They also rented electric guitars and several musical instruments from a music shop in Aswan. The loud speakers were set to the loudest level, which distorted the voices of the singers. They placed strong lights around the theater, to resemble those at concerts held in the city. The tickets for the party were available only two days beforehand and cost ten piasters each. Tickets had to be issued to comply with the rules of the Youth Center's policies monitored by the governmental agency at Aswan. I sat on the only wooden bench in the theater located at the far end of the men's side near the door. Am Gamal, the owner of the coffee shop, who was sitting beside me said:

> This is not the way we used to have our parties in the past. There was nothing like fences and walls around a party. Parties were held in the center of the *naja* and every one was allowed to participate and attend.

After several complaints from the audience and shouting and yelling for the party to start, the events started half an hour late. Every one was anxious to see the show because it was the first to be held in a long time. The curtain opened and Zakaria, who was responsible for introducing the singers and the actors, announced the beginning of the long awaited party. The first singer was from a neighboring village. He stood on the stage carrying an *ouod*, a musical instrument, and behind him stood several men in two rows.

The singers were greeted by men of the village by what they call *noqut*. This *nokout* took place while the singer was performing his song. It was offered by a man who climbed the stage raising his right hand and dancing around the singer while pointing at him. The audience enjoyed the show, especially children who were interested in these new activities which they were attending for the first time. Many of the children were only visiting and were to return home to their families living in Cairo or Alexandria.

Suddenly the place was transformed into a complete chaos by stones being thrown from outside the theater. Children and women were screaming, while men tried to

control the situation by shouting at them to sit down and not panic. Fakhri encouraged the singer, who was performing at that time, to continue singing to hold the attention of the audience.

The theater became a battle ground and the whole audience formed a large circle with children in the middle surrounded by women and an outer circle of men around them. The place was covered with a large cloud of dust caused by the moving back and forth of the crowd. No one paid much attention to the barrier placed between men and women. The large circle of human beings covered all the theater and the show stopped while stones continued to pour into the theater. Several men collected stones and started to throw them back over the wall at the attackers, who were not visible from inside the theater. The theater became a trap for those who were inside. It was a scene of panic and fear.

I was anxious to know what was taking place around me. Several men came and stood around me while the young men went outside the theater to chase the attackers. As a guest in the village, they were afraid that I would get hurt by a stone and disgrace the whole village. It was a completely unexpected attack. But who were the attackers? And why did they attack such a peaceful party?

"It is the Toshkans," said Am Gamal, "they want to spoil our party but we will not give them a chance. They are jealous because we did not allow them to participate in the party. They hate to see us better than them. They envy us."

I was surprised to know that the Toshkans would attempt to carry out such an attack on their neighbors.

"We were not neighbors in the past. They are different people from us. They are Kenuzi but we are Nubians," explained Am Gamal.

The stone throwing stopped and the crowd started to settle down. No one was hurt by the stones. Several people wanted to leave the theater but were not permitted. The doors were closed and guarded by men to prevent anyone from going outside. The crowd

sat down on the floor but in a different formation than in the beginning of the party; children were sitting by the stage forming half a circle with women surrounding them while the men stood around facing the wall of the theater fully prepared to defend against any attack.

The party continued with more singing and performing for a few minuets in an uncomfortable atmosphere. After a short period of peace, stones started to pour into the theater but did not cause as much trouble as before. A number of young men carrying thick wooden sticks, who were protecting the theater from the outside, chased the attackers who fled the scene. When everything settled down, I found that I was surrounded by all the important men of the village, who were trying to distract my attention and talking about other topics showing no sign of fear or anxiety.

The second half of the party was composed of three parts. The first play, which involved all women characters, was performed by men who wore women's costumes because the religious conservatives forbade women and girls from performing in the party or being seen on stage. The play revolved around a social habit of staying a long time at sick people's houses causing them trouble rather than joy. The second part was a comedian who made several jokes about those who go to the city for the first time. The third part was a contest of questions. One of the questions was,"What is *door* in *Rotana*?' The question was not very easy for the large crowd to answer. Only one woman was able to answer it correctly. The party ended and the crowd dispersed into the dark alleys of the village. The only topic of conversation was *the Toshkans* and what to do about them.

At the Youth Center there was a meeting to talk about Toshka and the Toshkans, and how to take revenge on them. Several suggestions were discussed aimed at stopping all relationships with them. The two villages were separated by street 48, which is eight meters wide. Zakaria suggested that they "build a wall between the two villages to *physically* separate them." According to the plan of the villages, those two villages, like many other villages at *El-Tahjir*, share many services. One of the suggestions was to

prohibit their access to the services in Abu Simbel. Fakhri proposed that they send the Toshkans a letter announcing the boycott. The meeting ended with no definite agreement on what was the proper action to take against the people of Toshka.

Am Dosoki

Am Ibrahim Dosoki is 55 years old; he is an artist who is well known in the village as a painter. He lives in a 3-room house across the street from the post office with his wife and daughters. His house is clean and very organized.He is the artist who designs the wedding documents hanging in most of the village's *mandarahs*. He was very elaborate and summed up beautifully many problems of the new villages.

> I was a teacher in Nubia before the displacement. I used to teach in Aswan and go back to Nubia in the summer vacation.
>
> This is not a Nubian house. The Nubian house had specific characteristics which do not exist here. The house was for the whole family. It was called *beit el eila*, or the family's house. It was large, spacious, and built to change with the family. If one of the single men or women wanted to get married they could add more rooms to the house.
>
> One of the most important advantages of the old Nubian house was the *diwani*. It consisted of a large hall to receive and entertain guests, a living room for the owner of the the house, a toilet, and a *maziarah*. *It was an independent house within the large house*. The *diwani* was used for the family members' weddings. For example, if one of the sons got married he stayed in the *diwani* until he could afford to have his own house. It was an important part of the house. We don't have it any more.
>
> The houses were independent from one another. Every four or five houses formed one block. The back of the house was free. Here, with the houses lined side by side and back to back, neighbors can hear one another through the ventilation openings. People resent being heard by their neighbors. That's why the openings are blocked and not used.
>
> Definitely, the relationships between people were affected by the small houses. For example, wedding parties were usually held inside the houses. The house was large enough to host all the people of the *naja*. They used to gather inside the courtyard and celebrate. The small size of the houses affected this custom. Today, it is impossible to have a celebration inside the house. They have to go outside the house to the squares and the streets and celebrate. This is something they are not used to. In the past every thing was done inside the house. There is no space inside the house. Unlike the old days, they are forced to use the houses of the neighbors on the wedding days. I used to do everything inside my house; today it is too small so I ask for help from my neighbors and their

houses. But are these neighbors going to help me or not? I mean are they going to help me *willingly* ?

In the past there were known tribes. All the members of the same tribe were neighbors forming one large family. When they relocated us, the members of the same family were not all relocated together. They were distributed according to the size of the family. They never took into consideration the issue of families. They only made sure that each block had the same size of houses. For example, all the houses in street number 55 were 2-room units, street 51 were 3-room units, after two or three streets there were 4-room units, and after four or five streets there were 3-room units, and so on.

They distributed the houses according to the number of individuals in the family. For example a family composed of one person was assigned a 1-room unit, two persons were assigned 2-room unit, more than three persons were assigned 3-room unit, and families of six persons or more, irrelevant of its size, were assigned 4-room unit. In order to distribute the units of one street they had to match the families together. For example, I used to live in a particular naja at the beginning of Abu Simbel. My family deserved a 2-room unit while the rest of the *naja* deserved 4-room units. I was assigned a house very far from the rest of my large family. My adjacent neighbor is from a different *naja*. We became neighbors only because we were both assigned 2-room units.

The old *najas* were based on family relationships. Each *naja* was distinguished from the others. For example, our neighboring *naja* was called Gassab then Abu Ghazalah, and so on. The *najas* were mostly members of the same family. Today we do not have this thing. My neighbor is not my relative. It all depended on the number of rooms in the houses which we were both assigned.

My neighbor in the past was my brother. Because of the displacement I deserved a 2-room unit while my brother who had six persons in his family deserved a 4-room unit. When they relocated us they put me at the beginning of the village because of the 2-room houses available at that part and put him very far from me at the end of the village because the 4-room units were there. That changed the composition of the family and of course affected our relationships. Because of the size of my house I am forced to ask my neighbor, whom I might not have any relation with, to use his house in the event of a wedding.

Kom Ombo

At Fakhri's house a taxi was waiting for us and all the group went together to Kom Ombo. We drove through the city streets watching people, shops, and buildings. Young men and women were walking in the streets hand in hand. The bright lights, crowded streets, cars, shops, and people were different than the village. It was a different world a few kilometers away from the village. The young men prefered the life of Kom

Ombo to the life of the village. We stopped at a sweet shop where they bought some *fateer*, a traditional sweetened bread, and headed back to the village where we sat on the floor of the *madiafa at Fakhri's* house eating the *fateer* and talking about the city.

CHAPTER 4

THE RETURN

For years following the dislocation of the Egyptian Nubians to the Kom Ombo region, the Nubians were seen as adapting and adjusting to the new environment. They were expected to integrate into Egyptian society within a few years. Instead, there was resentment within *El-Tahjir* villages about the rapid deterioration of many social and cultural values.

In February 1975, the Egyptian government announced plans for development of the dam's lake and settlements which agitated the feelings of estrangement and dissatisfaction with conditions at *El-Tahjir* villages. Nubian writers expressed the desire of many Nubians to return to Nubia after living for more than a decade as "strangers in a foreign land."[40]

The government plans for the High Dam lake development did not include the Nubians, the historical inhabitants of that part of the world. Instead, it encouraged fishermen from the coastal cities of Egypt as well as farmers from other parts of the country to work on government sponsored large scale agriculture projects.The Nubians perceived the plans as an attempt to take away their legitimate right to the land. Since the proposed projects were to be implemented in Nubia and the Nubians considered themselves to be the owners of the land, they felt that they should be the first beneficiaries of these projects.

Hussein Fahim, an observer of ongoing changes of Nubian society at that time, argued that the desire to return to the lake shores, and the "resettlement illness" in general, were "actually an outcome of the limited resources of new Nubia."[41] He wrote:

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40 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.119.
41 ibid., p.120.

> My assessment of the situation in 1977 indicates that, after nearly fourteen years since relocation in 1963, most Nubians were still filled with a sense of belonging to their homeland, and expressed a desire to return. Nonetheless, while this desire to return reflects a troubled state of mind and indicates difficulties among the Nubians to feel at home in Kom Ombo, I view, contrary to a common belief in government circles, the return to the lake not as a mere *sentimental move* by *elderly people* but as a new political and economic coping strategy that would allow the Nubians to break out of confinement in the Kom Ombo area, where economic options and opportunities for growth and progress have reached their optimum.[42]

The Egyptian government succeeded in recruiting support from the United Nations Development Program through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for research and studies of lake development potential. As soon as the government announced its plans for the lake region development, "news began to spread, and the Nubians responded immediately by requesting that a government authority investigate the possibility of their returning to the lake region."[43] The Nubians used their long established political tactic of presenting hundreds of petitions to the government through the support of Nubian representatives in government offices and finally through Nubian organizations in Cairo and Alexandria to make their voice heard by officialdom. The government was sympathetic but not supportive of their demands. "The government was not ready to consider a Nubian exodus to the lake shores,"[44] Fahim wrote.

In response to this governmental negligence, the Nubians formed a Nubian funded and managed agriculture cooperative to promote the idea of return to the lake shores. A Nubian fact-finding mission headed to the lake region in order to investigate the area and its potential. They also successfully engaged high governmental officials in their efforts and gained the blessings and support of Osman Ahmed Osman, a wealthy Egyptian contractor and a respected figure in the government, who became the Honorary Chairman of a government committee for the reconstruction of Nubia. The Sadat Agriculture Cooperative Society was proclaimed and licensed to operate. These political

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42 ibid., p.119.
43 ibid., p.120.
44 ibid., p.121.

maneuvers gained the Nubians support and encouragement from high officials and an assurance that the lake projects were not to go ahead without Nubian participation.

A new opportunity for the Nubians arose when the governments of Egypt and Sudan started a new alliance focusing on the Sudanese-Egyptian borders and the High Dam lake shores as an area suitable for joint projects.

> In 1977, the Egyptian and Sudanese Parliaments met to discuss the economic and cultural integration of the two countries. Among the proposals presented was a joint project for the development of the lake shores behind the dam.[45]

This opportunity coincided with the Nubians' interest in actualizing their long awaited dream to rebuild their lost Nubia. In 1978, a Nubian delegation met with President Sadat who instructed his ministers to facilitate the Nubians' demands. Sadat, who identified with the Nubians because of his family's origin in north Sudan, was supportive of the Nubians' cause. Yet on the official level his feelings were not shared and nothing was accomplished from negotiations with the government, which was more concerned with problems of transportation, construction materials, and cost. The Nubians decided to take the matter into their own hands and act accordingly.

Getting There

I was introduced to another researcher interested in Nubia after my return from *El-Tahjir* villages. We met several times and decided to go together to the returnees' villages by the lake shores. We arrived at Aswan and went to the Security Department where we met an officer who was to facilitate our access and stay in the returnees' communities. He gave us a hand written message addressed to a junior officer at Abu Simbel city to facilitate our stay there.

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45 ibid., pp.123-124.

Next morning we took the bus from Aswan heading south to the city of Abu Simbel. The bus crossed the Nile over the old Aswan Dam to the west bank toward the desert road. The Nile basin was visible because of the very low level of water. The High Dam was visible on the horizon as well as the Russian-Egyptian Friendship Landmark built during the construction of the dam representing Russian-Egyptian relations at that time.

We stopped at several mandatory police check points controlled by army soldiers who were using empty barrels to block the road. After checking every car or bus they removed the barrel and let the car pass. A soldier boarded our bus, which was filled with tourists who were going to visit the temple and return to Aswan on the afternoon bus. The soldier checked the identification documents of every person in the bus.

The bus went through the check points located at major intersections, four or five of them along the desert road. On all sides the desert spread to the horizon; remnants of dead camels were scattered around. A caravan of camels-- on its way from Sudan to be sold and slaughtered in Aswan-- was crossing the desert as far as possible from the main road, and a half truck searching the desert was collecting remnants of dead camel bones to sell to the sugar factory in Kom Ombo which used them in sugar purification.

The bus turned east toward the city of Abu Simbel. The road which left the Nile at Aswan was about to rejoin it again. On the way I saw the villages of El Salam and El Shohada which were built as fishing settlements by the government, but the Nubians came and occupied them. I was more interested in the villages on the other side of the Nile which were built by the Nubians themselves. Along the road there were several new projects under construction. The city airport, located on the main road, was busy day and night with planes carrying tourists from Cairo and Aswan.

The Temple

The returnees' communities were located on the east side of the Nile across from the legendary Abu Simbel temple. Around the temple, a small town had developed with

an airport to transfer tourists back and forth from Aswan and Cairo. The city was composed mainly of government employees, construction workers, tourist guides, and artifacts merchants. The rest of the population are Nubians from different villages of *El-Tahjir*. The town was divided into two parts: Abu Simbel temple on one side and the rest of the town on the other side.

The town had a first class hotel which was vacant most of the time. The reasons for this were administrative and bureaucratic in nature. While there were six to nine airplanes arriving at Abu Simbel every day, the tourists were transferred by bus to the temple where they stayed two or three hours. They were then transferred back to the airport to take their plane back to Aswan or Cairo. When the plane was in the air above Abu Simbel, tourist guides received a message from the airport that tourists were coming. They rushed to the temple to guide the tourists. The tourists did not get a chance to see the town except from the windows of their buses roaring up and down the road from and to the airport. Very few tourists arrived at the city by taxis or public buses and spent any time in the town away from the temple. All the activities of the town were aimed at serving the temple.

We arrived at Abu Simbel town at noon and headed to the police station located on the main road to the temple. We asked about officer Mahmoud who was informed about our arrival by his superior in Aswan. Mahmoud, a police Lieutenant, was the highest rank in the town and very influential because of his affiliation. He was 28 years old, married and a father of two children.

He invited us to the police station saying, "There is not much to do here, it is a very quite town."

We discovered that we had to spend the night in town because the boat which crosses the Nile to the returnees' villages was to depart early next day. Officer Mahmoud arranged for us to spend the night with the engineers who worked for a construction

company on a large irrigation project in the returnees' villages. There were three engineers living at the rest house furnished by the company .

" It is a misfortune to be isolated in this remote place hundreds of miles away from our families and friends and to live in this part of the world where even T.V. broadcast is not received," said one of the engineers.

As if it were not enough to deal with physical obstacles, every one in town discouraged us from going to the returnees' communities on the east side of the Nile. Ali, one of the engineers, said:

> What do you want to go there for? There is absolutely nothing on the other side of the Nile. I've been there before and can tell you all about it. There are some mud houses and that's all. Only six or eight persons live there. Water is polluted and food is not available. What else do you want to know?
>
> There are hundreds of scorpions and *toreshas,* the killer snakes. Be very careful of your steps and don't sleep or sit anywhere. Take as much food as you can from here so you do not starve to death.

The engineers were very surprised at what we were doing and at our determination to go to the returnees' villages. "It is just desert; there is absolutely nothing there to see except five or six families." They discouraged us from going and tried very hard to change our minds. Officer Mahmoud was also very negative about our intentions.

"Why do you want to go there. There is nothing there except scorpions and *toresha*," he said.

Officer Mahmoud introduced us to Hussein Mukhtar, a Nubian who worked for the Ministry of Information at Abu Simbel town. He was thirty years old, married and had one child. Hussein Mukhtar had a different attitude toward the villages of the returnees. He said:

> The houses are like the houses of *el balad el kadim*. There are some houses built according to the Sudanese type. You will see them when you go there

He invited us to have tea at his house. "I will also invite Am Hassan Shifa who lives at Qustul to come and meet you," he said. Hussein described the houses of the returnees saying:

> There are two villages in the east, Adendan and Qustul, which are thirty kilometers apart. There are two types of houses there: houses built using the old Nubian style and others built using a Sudanese style of Wadi Halfa. The roofing system is also different than the roofing system we used to have in *El balad el kadim*. In the past we used to have the roof made of palm tree leaves that are woven together side by side. In those houses, as you will see, they use the Sudanese type. They cover the roofs with a mesh of leaves and then cover the roof with ready made mats made of palm tree leaves.

We were sitting in the *mandarah* of Hussein's house, a large room furnished with three mattresses placed on the floor against the walls. Awaiting the arrival of Am Hassan Shifa, Hussein played some music on his *kisr*, a traditional Nubian musical instrument. The *kisr* has five wires attached to an aluminum plate covered with animal skin. While Hussein was explaining the use of the *kisr* to us, Am Hassan Shifa and his son Adam called Hussein from outside the house announcing their arrival.

Am Hassan greeted us and sat on the mattress opposite me. He was seventy three years old and very lively. He moved faster than his forty year old son Adam. He was wearing a white *gallabia* and turban. He was silent in the beginning and did not say anything until we started to talk about the history of Abu Simbel temple. He said:

> The temple was the house of King Ramses and later he built a house for his wife Queen Nefertari. He was fond of her. His name was not Ramses as you think. His name was *Ara Massi*, a Nubian word which means the one who came with the miracle. In those days people had to marry their sisters and they were not allowed to marry strangers. He was the first to stop people from marrying their sisters and allowed them to marry strangers. Ramses had no sisters and his father wanted him to get married in order to be able to inherit the throne.
>
> Ramses saw Nefertari the most beautiful woman of all times, who was an ordinary person from the public. It was never heard of before that any king had married an ordinary woman from the public. Ramses saw her and he fell in love with her. He told his father that he wanted to marry her. Because it was forbidden for kings to marry from the public, Ramses' father had to arrange for a big change. He gave the throne to his son and announced the four laws written on the mountain beside the temple. The laws stated that: first, no one is allowed to marry his sister, second, no one

> is allowed to steal, third, no one is allowed to lie, and fourth, no one is allowed to oppose the new laws and make troubles. It was a miracle to change the custom of marrying sisters. That's why they called him the one who brought the miracle.

We asked Am Hassan if we could go to the east side of the Nile with him in order to see the houses and villages of the returnees.

He said,"You can come and stay with me as long as you wish. I have two houses there and you will be with me all the time."

We arranged with Am Hassan to meet in the morning to go to Qustul and Adendan on the east shore of the lake.

Am Hassan told us the story of his arrival to the lake shores:

> We arrived on October 19, 1979. The Nile was 120 meters deep. Today it is only 35 meters deep. I was one of the first group to arrive here. We took the boat from Aswan and landed by the shores of Qustul. We chose that site because it was where our old villages were located. We knew it from the mountains around it. We put up our tents and started to explore the place. Scorpions and snakes were every where. We had to fight them and killed hundreds of them.

Crossing the Nile to The Villages

On the morning of our departure to Adendan and Qustul , around 11:30, we left in the engineer's car from in front of the police station to go to the ferry. We met a Nubian engineer who was responsible for the east bank agricultural projects. He did not cross the Nile with us because he was busy with his administrative responsibilities in the town. The car drove us down the steep hill to the ferry port. On the way, we had to stop at a military check-point before getting into the ferry. We were asked to present our identification documents by a soldier who wrote some notes about us in his notebook. It was known by that time that we were important visitors coming through the police officer. We did not expect the soldier to prevent us from crossing, but I was not comfortable about the situation. As if we were leaving Egypt and going to another country, the soldier handed us our papers and permitted us to proceed.

The ferry was a huge boat provided by the construction company responsible for the agricultural projects on the east bank in order to facilitate transportation for its

employees. We went down to the ferry and put our luggage on the second level awaiting Am Hassan's arrival. A huge gasoline tank needed for the water pump at Adendan was brought onto the ferry.

I sat down looking at the Nile and the water of the lake wondering how all this water could be available and the lake shores not be cultivated. The water of the lake did not look like fresh water because of the oil spilling from the ferry and other fishing boats nearby. The water of the lake was receding every day and if not enough water came from Africa soon, Egypt was going to be affected badly.

I saw Am Hassan coming down the hill carrying a large box accompanied by another person who was carrying a large bag. I hurried with Amr to help the old man moving all his stuff to the ferry. Everyone in the ferry knew Am Hassan and greeted him with respect and admiration. He was carrying a small aluminum can in which he placed a small plant of red pepper he wanted to plant in Qustul. I sat with him on the deck of the boat where there were several army soldiers going to their stations by the Egyptian-Sudanese borders. Am Hassan said:

> All history started here in Nubia. We are the beginning of history. Nubia was the center of the world during the time of the Pharaohs. They built the Karnak of Luxor at the middle of Egypt. *Karnak* in Rotana means a meeting place. We say that someone has a *karnak* in his house. The Pyramids of Giza were at the last part of Egypt because the Nile used to cover all the northern parts. They were built to impress the newcomers with the power and wealth of this country.

We were contemplating the magnificent scene in front of us. The lake spread beyond the horizon and the reflection of the sun's rays on its surface made it difficult to look directly at it.

"This is where our old villages were. We are now exactly above it," said Am Hassan.

I stood up to see the place around us. The scene had not changed much since we left Abu Simbel; mountains enveloped the place from both sides and the huge lake extended south and north to the horizon. The strong sun rays reflected on the surface of

the water and the unlimited view of water and desert was breathtaking. The cool breeze of air was competing with the strong sun rays and created perfect weather.

The boat started to get closer to the shore and the mountains started to get higher and bigger. The boat docked on the rough shore in one of the Nile enclaves. There were skeletons of burned boats on an island close to the shore.

Am Hassan looked at them sadly and said,"These are the same boats that moved us from here to Kom Ombo. They are burned now. This is God's revenge on them."

It was around 1:00 p.m. when we arrived at the east shore of the lake. The sun was very strong and the ferry left us on the shore and headed back to the city of Abu Simbel. There was absolutely nothing except some steel bars and a few cement bags and lime paper bags on shore. They were needed for the construction of the new school at Adendan. Am Hassan took us to see the burnt boats, and then we went back to look for the jeep that was supposed to pick us up. It was 2:30 p.m. when a jeep appeared.

"*Salamo Aleekom ... Marhaba*," said Muhammed Taieb, the car driver, shaking our hands and helping us load our luggage in the car.

He was a young, handsome Nubian in his early thirties. He had settled with his wife and children in Qustul the Return since 1982. The truck was full of water containers filled from the Nile that were being transported to the villages. There were also several pieces of fresh caught fish.

The car headed to the desert away from the Nile. There were no identifiable roads. There were small depressions scattered everywhere. These depressions were made by the large fish that used to mate there when the Nile water covered the place. We drove for fifteen minutes leaving the lake shore behind us and headed toward the villages. The flat land around us was surrounded by the high mountains. It was perfect land for a large agriculture project.

Figure 4.1: The High Dam Lake.

Figure 4.2: Arrival at the Returnees Villages.

Being There

The houses of Adendan started to appear on the horizon. As we came close to the houses, we were able to identify the entrance doors and the farm land in front of them. The houses were lined together with their entrances facing west toward the Nile. A few meters north of the houses was a large shelter for the water pump used to pump water from an underground well to the agriculture land. The water canals coming from the pump and heading to the village were all dry because the pump had been broken for several days.

The truck stopped in front of one of the houses and we were invited to enter by Am Ramadan Katta. Ramadan Katta was fifty years old, a teacher at Adendan El-Tahjir. Several men joined us who were all around fifty years old. One of them was very old and silent all the time. They arranged the furniture piled in the *mandarah* to welcome us. Am Ramadan Katta said:

> These houses were built by Sudanese builders whom we brought from Sudan. The houses of Qustul are large, 1000 square meters each, but the houses here at Adendan are small; each house has four rooms. These houses are built using mud and the traditional *toaf* system which the Sudanese builders are familiar with. The houses are grouped together in groups of five. We arranged with the government so that we would build the houses and then be reimbursed for them. A house here costs 3000 pounds while a house at Kom Ombo costs more than 20,000 pounds.
>
> Here, our health is much better. The weather is excellent and we are very happy here. We never had hospitals before the displacement and we never needed to take any one to a hospital. At *El-Tahjir* each village has a health clinic filled with patients. This is because of the change of the weather and psychological dissatisfaction. At *El-Tahjir* people get sick easily with many new diseases.
>
> The Nubians are people who like peace and dislike aggressiveness. There were no incidents of murder or crime in the long history of Nubia . At *El-Tahjir* the farmer has to sleep in the field with a gun or a rifle. They have too many problems over there. You cannot leave your cattle outside the house. In old Nubia we used to leave the animals away by the Nile in the fields. In *El-Tahjir*, people have to keep their animals inside their houses.
>
> At *El-Tahjir* we lived far from the Nile and this is something that affected the people very much. They have electricity and T.V. but they are

> not in peace nor happy. *El aman* is lost there. We entered a society of murder and revenge which affected us a lot. The youth carry knifes and weapons all the time. At school the young learn terrible stuff. They learn how to cheat and steal.
>
> Those who built us the houses of Kom Ombo never understood our conditions. Do you know that at *El-Tahjir* you can hear your neighbor in the toilet. The animals are kept inside the houses because if they are left outside they can be stolen. It is very crowded there.
>
> At *El-Tahjir* each one is closing his door on himself. There are many things that are disappearing and vanishing from our life. The reason for our return is to preserve the remainings of our heritage. We saw several problems at *El-Tahjir*. The young need special care to bring them back to our traditions. We do not like what is going on there.

"For that reason we are here: to make the roots for others to follow," Am Gamal, who was silent until this moment, commented. He was sitting on a chair watching us without saying a word. He was suspicious of our intentions. I was very interested in him especially since he was the oldest man in Adendan. Am Ramadan continued:

> People used to say that we are crazy to leave the good life at *El-Tahjir* and come here to the wilderness, to leave the refrigerators, T.V.'s, and telephones and come here to the desert. But I have to suffer for others to be comfortable. I am very comfortable here emotionally and psychologically. In these large houses I can receive guests. I have several toilets. The house is large. The courtyard is large and I have several rooms. More than anything, we are at peace here.

Am Hassan announced that it was time to start our trip to Qustul where we were to stay at his house. We walked around Adendan and the fields for a quick tour and then took the car heading to Qustul. Qustul was the first village to be built at the Return. The distance between Adendan and Qustul was five to six kilometers which we crossed in thirty minuets by jeep. We were driving by night under the moon light which made everything visible. Muhammed, the car driver, was very familiar with the area which looked extremely confusing to me.

Arrival at Qustul

We arrived at Qustul which looked very mysterious under the moon light. The car stopped in front of a small wooden door in a large mud wall. We got out of the car and took our luggage inside the house. We had to cross the large courtyard in order to reach

the *mandarah* on the other side of the house. We put down our luggage and Am Hassan brought a gas lamp from the house to light up the room. We took chairs and went to sit outside under the moon light with Am Hassan in the front yard which was accessible through a door beside the *mandarah*.

The *mandarah* was a large room, 12 by 18 feet, with one door leading to the north entrance of the house. It was located at the north-west corner of the house. It had four small windows, three of them on the north wall and the fourth one on the west wall. The floor was covered with clean sand and the walls were plastered with mud. During the night, rays of moonlight penetrated through the roof made of palm tree leaves. While it was very cold outside during the night, it was very comfortable inside the *mandarah* . There were two *angareebs* on which we slept, a table used for eating, and a couple of small tables which we used to put our things on.

During our first morning, we were confused on how to go about our morning activities. Am Hassan told us that there was a toilet outside the house in the front garden. We washed our faces using the *abreek and sania* (a water container and a tray) which Am Hassan placed by the door of the *mandarah* . We took turns pouring water for each other. It was difficult to adapt to the sudden change of our daily routines.

Am Hassan went to the house and came back to the *mandarah* with the tea tray. He put the tray on the table in the middle of the room and we sat around it talking. Am Hassan said:

> We chose this site because it is higher than the agricultural land. There is not enough water now to irrigate all the land. When they started the irrigation projects we told them not to put the pumps there. We told them that the water would recede and the pumps would dry up. They did not believe us and said, "These are engineers who are deciding that." Today the pumps are in the middle of the desert, two kilometers away from the Nile.

Am Hassan went to the house and came back with a large aluminum tray. We took a table from the *mandarah* to the front garden of the house where we sat down around the breakfast table and continued talking about Nubia.

They said that the dam was going to flood the area with water. They said that they were going to give us compensation. We were not convinced. There was no fair compensation for our lost things. We were not able to oppose this because it was the government who decided. Some people did not believe that it could possibly happen but those who were aware of the situation knew that it was going to happen. We were flooded three times before the displacement. When they said that they were going to relocate us some people said, "it is impossible. What are they going to build anyway, something that reaches the sky?" These were the first reactions to the rumors.

They first sent some engineers and military people to ask the people whether they wanted to be moved north or south of the dam. The majority wanted to remain south of the dam while some wanted to move north of the dam. Why not? We were isolated in that place. We were divided among ourselves. The government then sent the administrative people to issue identification documents. There were two types of identification documents: one for each person and the other for each family. At that time, we did not understand the difference between them. There were several sons in our house and all of them were married and had children. They issued identification documents for the persons living in the house. Those who did not say that they were living with their parents were allocated separate houses while others who said to the survey people that they were living with their parents were crammed in the same house with their parents. Three, four, or five sons were crammed in the same house because they did not clarify that they were married at the time of the survey. They did not understand that it could hurt them until we reached *El-Tahjir* villages. How can all of us possibly live together in the small houses of *El-Tahjir*? I had my children, my brother had his children and all of us were crammed together in one house. That was our first shock with displacement.

If they only understood us. My son was engaged and he had to get married before he went to the army. He was counted as living with me. We were never told by those officials, who were responsible for the surveys, about these troubles that we might face. They only wanted to get the information from us. So they put me with all my children in one house.

The first shock was the house and then the land. When we reached the new villages, some got houses without land and others got neither. We reached the land which they said was ready for cultivation and it was a disaster. There was no sign of life there. It was hard to irrigate because the source of water was lower than the land. There were supervisors whom we tried to contact. Their reply was, "It is not our business." We spent five years in empty arguments.

It is more than twenty years now since the displacement and we are not settled yet. Some people have not received any land until today. They also did not give the elderly any land saying that they were too old to cultivate it. My mother was too old; she was eighty years old, and she was denied land. But I was there and could have cultivated her land. When they asked who was the head of the family we told them that it was our mother because our father was dead. We were all shocked by the unfair distribution of land.

> Those who received land were sad and those who did not were mad. We used to have small pieces of land here and there. They said they were going to give us land with the *mughtaribeen*, those who were living in the city at the time of the displacement. They made special laws for the *mughtaribeen*. But, who are the *mughtaribeen*, are not they Nubians, and don't they live in Egypt, in Aswan, Cairo, or Alexandria? So why should there be more than one law? We tried to convince them that we were the ones living there and that we should get the land and start cultivation. They moved everything to the *mughtaribeen*: the houses, the lands, and everything. They were very strict on this issue and never wanted to give us the land to work. At the same time we saw that the people of the Suez Canal region, who were dislocated in 1967, were treated better than us. They were given furnished apartments and when they returned to their homes they kept them. We are the doomed people of Egypt.
>
> They prohibited us from taking any thing to *El-Tahjir*. The houses were covered with palm tree trunks which we could have taken with us. It was not allowed. We were not allowed to take anything except one box. They moved us in the burned boats you saw on the bank of the Nile. Did you see how God takes revenge on anything related to our displacement?

After breakfast, Am Hassan led us to the fields around Qustul. We walked west toward the Nile away from the houses. The fields around Qustul were not cultivated because of the lack of water due to the drought in Africa which affected the water level in the Nile. The Nile was four kilometers away from the fields and the underground water was too deep. Am Hassan stopped and pointed to a spot in the middle of the fields and said:

> This is where I put up my tent when I first arrived here. I prepared my tent at Adendan El-Tahjir and brought it here with me. We were six men and Ramadan Katta, the one you saw in Adendan, was one of us. It was October 19, 1978 when I put up my tent made of wood and cloth. I lived in it for several months. I had to raise it above the ground on empty barrels because snakes and scorpions were attacking us. I planted palm trees and colocynth trees in this place. Now the water is very far from where it used to be and the pump has stopped. It is very difficult to irrigate the land and keep the plants alive. We are here for ten years now and we are still suffering from the lack of water.

We went to the government fields, which were dry. There were a couple of new tractors never used before, rusting in the desert. We walked by the dry 600 feddans of the government farm project. Am Hassan looked at them and said:

> They put the pumps in the wrong place. We told them that it was not the right spot because the Nile could get lower than the pumps. They did not take us seriously. Now the pumps are standing two kilometers away from the water. We told them that they should use floating pumps.

> They never listened.Today they are implementing new floating pumps after losing all that money and time. They never listen.

Am Hassan was very angry with the government employees who did not consider the Nubians' opinion and relied more on decisions coming from their superiors in Cairo. The expensive irrigation system was standing in the middle of the desert announcing the failure of the project. The land was dry and the water was too far to reach the fields.

We headed back to the village which looked much different by daylight. Am Hassan stopped at one of the houses and knocked at the door. We entered to find a large crowd gathering in the courtyard of the house. They were a group of Nubians who worked for a construction company at Cairo and visiting visiting the returnees' villages. The owner of the house, Am Ahmed Hassan, came to welcome us.

He said: "*Marhaba*, *Marhaba*. I know that you are staying at Am Hassan's house. You should come again when the guests leave so that we can spend some time together." He was very busy entertaining the large crowd of guests.

Qustul The Return

We left the crowd of Nubians at Am Ahmed Hassan's house and walked through the streets of the village. Contrary to the common image of hot arid zone architecture, the streets were very wide; the distance between the houses was about 30 meters. The wide streets allowed the air to penetrate throughout the houses and created good ventilation. The houses were far from each other and one could not hear any noise coming from the next house. The village was planned by the returnees who asked the Sudanese builders to arrange the houses in rows oriented east-west. There were 23 houses in Qustul arranged in four rows. Each house was 25 by 40 meters, 1000 square meters.[46]

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46 See Figure 4.3: Map of Qustul The Return.

The village was located two kilometers from the Nile which is to the north-west. All the front entrances of the houses were oriented toward the Nile. The streets were very wide and each house opened onto front and back streets and sometimes onto three streets. Every two houses were grouped together and had one shared wall. The returnees revived the traditional arrangement of spaces of old Nubian villages before the displacement and used it in planning their villages on the lake shores. The Nile-desert axis, east-west, was used to orient the houses, which were lined together in rows facing the Nile. Except for the absence of palm trees and agriculture fields, the setting resembled that of the old villages before the displacement. Because of the low level of the lake, the water had receded several hundred meters from where it was when the returnees first arrived.

The village did not have any clear, identifiable boundaries. The planning of the village allowed for extension in all directions. Several vacant lots for houses were marked on the ground and several houses were not completed. The village was divided into two parts: houses of the eastern part were built using the Sudanese style, while houses of the western part were built using the Nubian style. The houses were built by Sudanese builders whom the Returnees hired from Wadi Halfa to build the houses using the traditional *galous* system of construction. The Nubians were able to reach an agreement with the government which allowed them to finance the construction of the houses and then be reimbursed by the government.

Am Hassan's House: A Nubian Style House

Am Hassan's house was built using the Nubian style. It was one of the first houses built in the village. The house occupied an area of 1000 square meters, 25 by 40 meters. All the houses were built using the *galous* system of construction. The mud layers were clearly visible on the side walls of the houses.

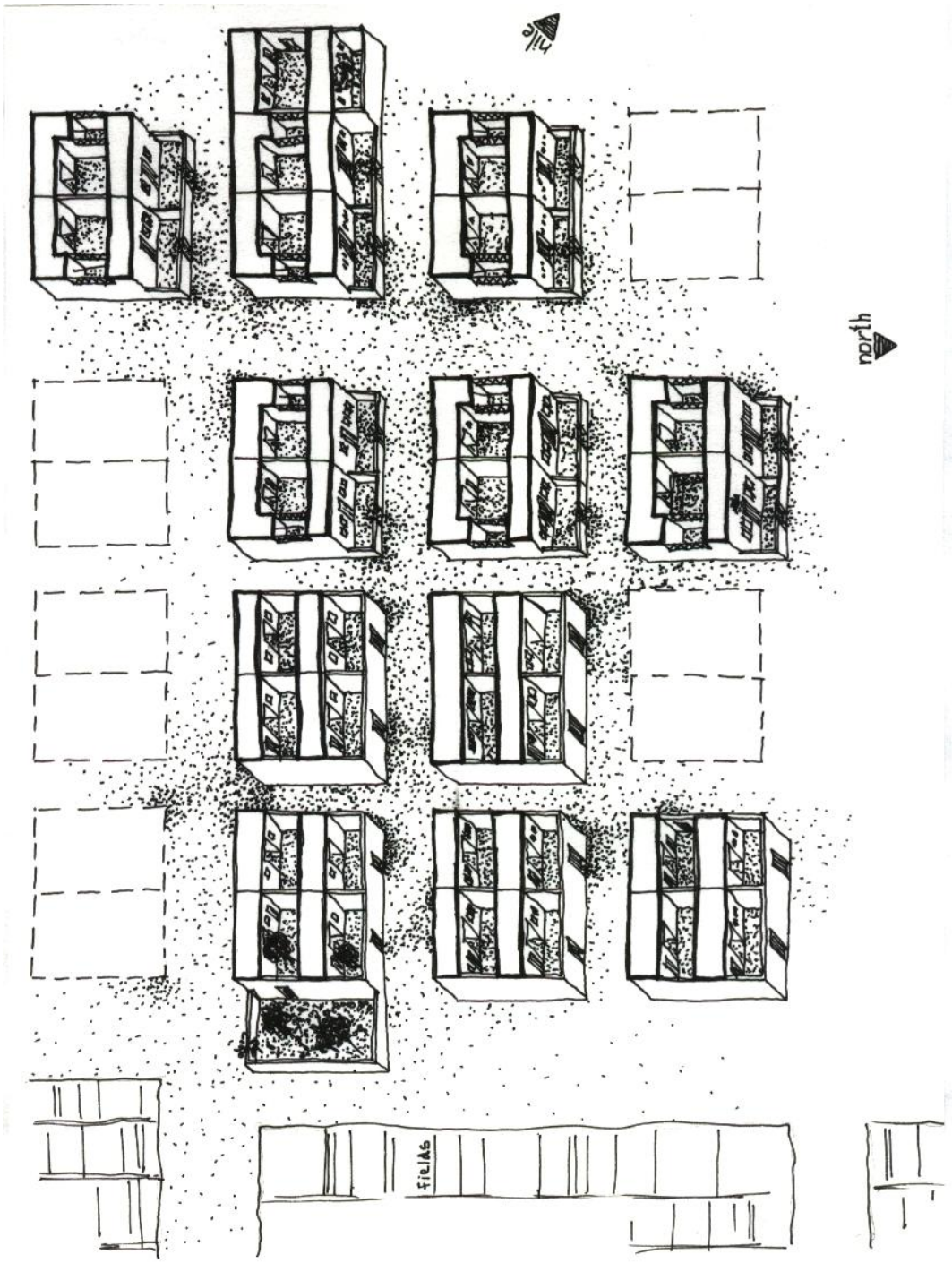

Figure 4.3: Map of Qustul The Return.

Figure 4.4: Houses of Qustul The Return.

> We brought builders from Sudan who built these houses. We told them about the arrangement of the houses that we wanted. We started with 16 houses. Today we have more than 20 houses. We did not have palm tree to make the roofs so they made the roofs using ready made mats of palm tree leaves called *abrash* which we brought from Sudan. Each mat cost 7 piasters and each room needed 12 mats. The roof then is covered by a mixture of mud and *tebn*.

The house had two entrances: one from the south, or the back, and the other from the north, or the front of the house. The north entrance was considered the main entrance of the house through which strangers and male guests entered. The south entrance was for *ahl el bait*, or people of the house, female guests, relatives, and close neighbors. In the front of the house there was a small area planted with vegetables. In the far corner of the front garden there was a small toilet for guests. The garden was surrounded by a one meter high wall made of *galous*. In the middle of the garden there was a path leading to the entrance door. The facade of the house had three windows on each side of the entrance door. There were no drawings on the wall left without plastering.

"I'll decorate it later with horizontal lines and china plates," said Am Hassan.

The main entrance opened onto a small uncovered *dahleez* (entrance hall). In the *dahleez* there were two empty barrels used to store water for house use. Two *mandarahs,* one on each side of the *dahleez,* were used to receive and entertain guests. The *mandarah* on the right, which we used for sleeping, was 4 by 7 meters and furnished with two *angareebs* and several tables. It had three windows in the north wall and one window in the west wall, from which the Nile was visible.

The *dahleez* opened onto a large courtyard, which was very clean and well maintained. There were two newly planted lime trees at the side of the courtyard. The courtyard was very different from the courtyards of *El-Tahjir* houses which were less than one fourth the size of this court. The courtyard occupied 400 square meters, 20 by 20 meters.

Unlike the small courtyards of *El-Tahjir* houses, the courtyard of Am Hassan's house was large enough to be used for sitting and sleeping. The next house had a similar

courtyard which meant that the two courtyards provided enough space between the houses to prevent overhearing of sounds. The large courtyard was experienced more as an open space than a closed space.

On the north wall of the courtyard there was a *mastaba*, a low sitting bench made of mud. On the south side of the courtyard there were several rooms and the back entrance of the house. The rooms were used for different activities: a kitchen, a bedroom, a storage room, and a room for raising pigeons. The temporary toilet was located at the corner between the east wall and the storage room. In front of the rooms, facing north, was a *barandah*, a shaded area or loggia, used for sitting. The back entrance of the house was 3 by 3 meters. There was a *maziarah* of three water jars on the right side of the entrance.

A *diwani* occupied the west wall of the courtyard. The entrance to the *diwani* , which was not visible from the main entrance or the courtyard, opened onto a small courtyard 5 by 5 meters. The courtyard of the *diwani* had a small door in the west wall which opened onto the side street.The *diwani 's* room was 14 meters long and 4 meters wide. The room was to be covered by palm tree trunks and leaves stored in the main courtyard. There was a toilet and a small room used during winter time for sleeping. The *diwani* was used temporarily for raising chicken and rabbits.

Am Ahmed Hassan's House: A Sudanese Style House

The other type of house introduced by the Sudanese builders is called the Sudanese style. Many Nubians are married to Sudanese women and maintain strong ties with Sudanese families.

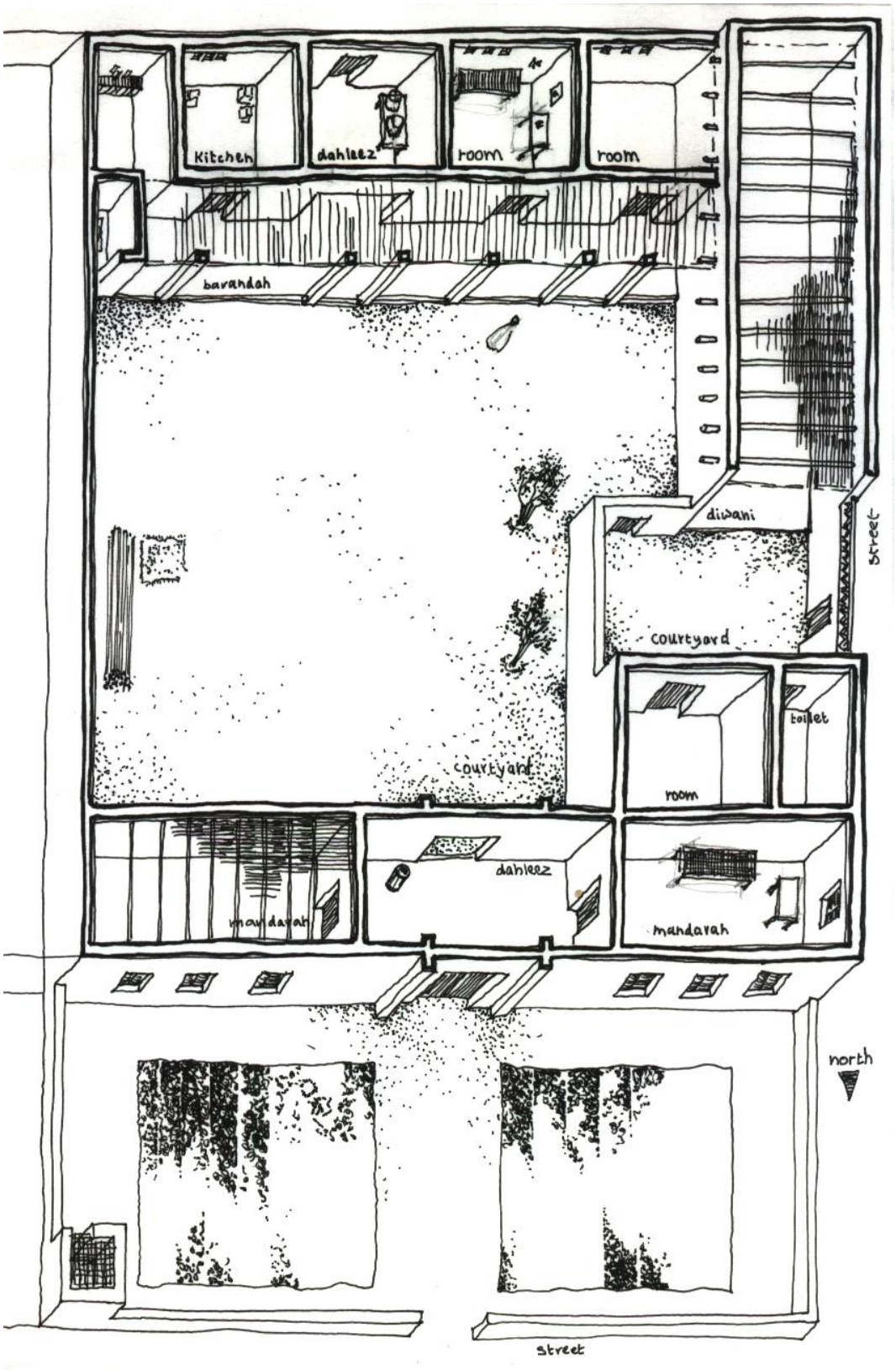

Figure 4.5: Am Hassan's House.

Figure 4.6: The Courtyard of Am Hassan's House.

Am Ahmed's house was built using the Sudanese style imported by the Sudanese builders. The house occupied 1000 square meters, the same as the Nubian style houses. It was divided into two independent parts, the front and the back parts, each having its own courtyard. The front courtyard was planted with *karkadeh* and colocynth trees. There was a toilet for guests at the far north-east corner of the front courtyard. The two *mandarahs* opened onto a covered space between them which led to the second part of the house. This space between the two *mandarahs* resembled the *dahleez* in the Nubian style but was also used as *barandah* for sitting.

The second part of the house was made of a large courtyard with a row of rooms occupying the south wall. The back courtyard was larger than the front one and occupied an area of 600 square meters, 25 by 12 meters. Three of the rooms were used for sleeping and storage. There was a *dahleez* in the middle which opened to the back street in the south. A *maziarah* of two water jars was located in the east wall of the *dahleez*. To the left, there was a toilet in the far south-east corner of the courtyard and a kitchen with a *doka* room.The courtyard opened through a door in the east wall onto a large garden cultivated with *karkadeh*, colocynth, and red peepers.

The house was built using the *galous* system of construction and plastered with mud mixture. Aside from the windows of both *mandarahs* opening to the front courtyard, there were no windows opening to the outside. There were only small openings below the ceiling of the *barandah* for ventilation. The openings were always in the south walls in order to allow the north winds to penetrate through the rooms.

The two parts of the house were completely independent from each other. While the front house was used to entertain and receive guests, the back house was used only by *ahl el bait*, or people of the house. The Sudanese type did not have a *diwani* like the Nubian type. The orientation of the two courtyards allowed the privileged north wind to penetrate through the rooms.

Sadat's House: A Place for History

When the returnees finished the first phase of the construction of the village, they invited President Sadat to visit the village. The late president had issued orders to facilitate all their needs and allowed their goal of return. The Nubians were very grateful to the late president for helping them to return to the lake shores and build their villages.

Sadat's visit to the village was an important event in the history of the village which the returnees tried to preserve. When president Sadat visited the village, the returnees arranged for a wedding ceremony to take place. The wedding took place in the *diwani* of one of the houses overlooking the Nile and the agriculture fields. The president witnessed the wedding and signed the wedding log, which was part of the wedding ceremony. After this event, the house was named after the president and used as a school to teach the children of the returnees.

The house was built using the Nubian style. The *diwani* was located on the east wall of the courtyard. It was decorated with drawings and paintings on the walls. The events that took place during Sadat's visit were remembered through the *diwani* and the house. The *mandarah* is used as an administrative office, while the students' benches fill the large *dahleez*. Two rooms on the south wall are modified and used as a service center for the village where cooking oil and gas for lamps are sold.

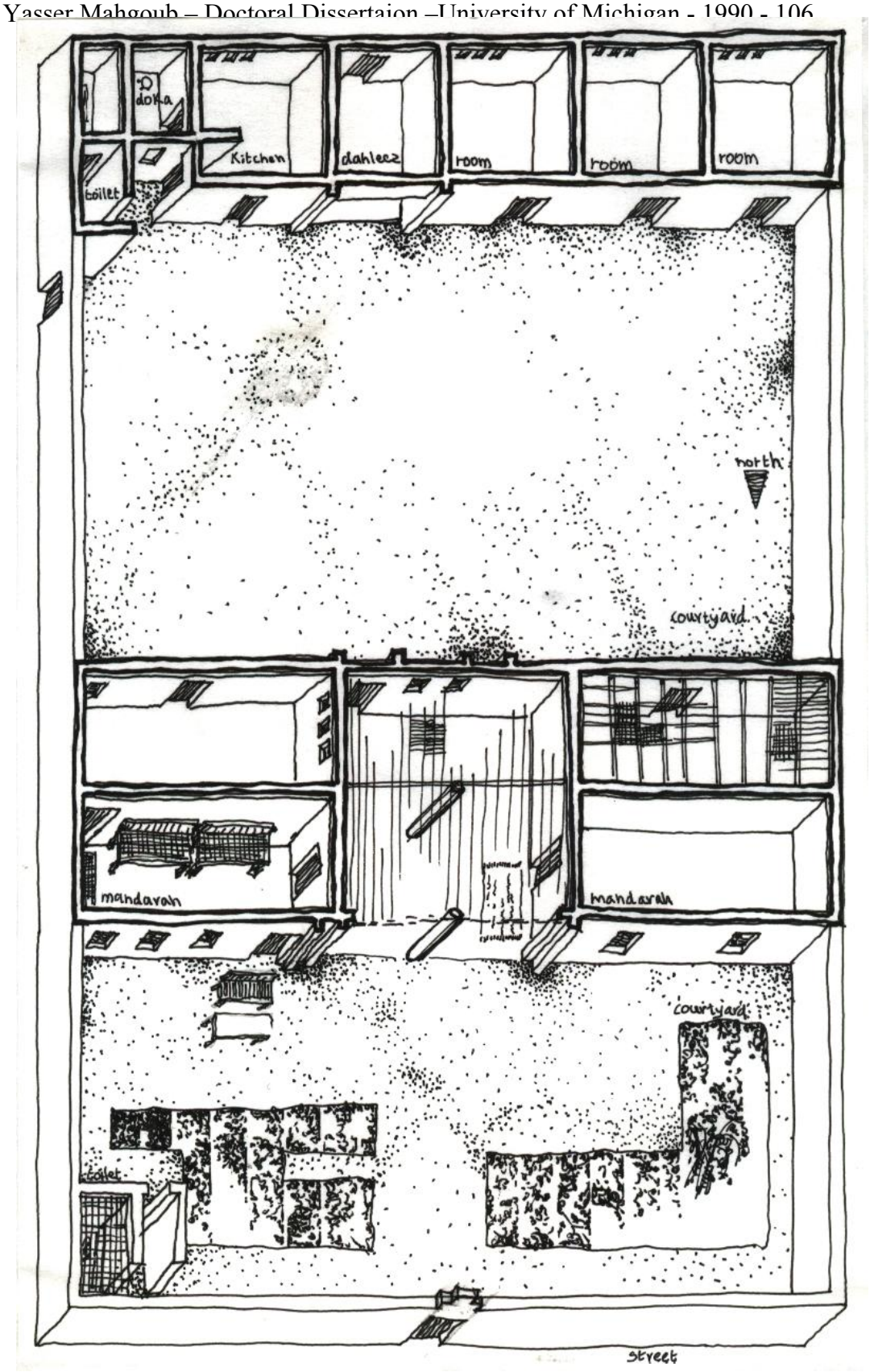

Figure 4.7: Am Ahmed Hassan's House.

Figure 4.8: The Courtyards of Am Ahmed Hassan's House.

Adendan The Return

Adendan was more like a working camp than a village. Unlike Qustul, where many men live with their wives, all the population of Adendan was male. There were no women living in Adendan. Most of the men were over fifty years old. Their families were living in the villages of New Nubia. Most of them were educated and had permanent jobs at *El-Tahjir*. Some of them were farmers or merchants who left their lands and business at *El-Tahjir* villages. There was a handful of young men who did not enjoy the style of life at Adendan. The old men had an image which they wanted to achieve, while the young had other dreams to live in the city.

The houses of Adendan were arranged in four rows of five houses facing the Nile, or west.[47] Most of the houses were not occupied but all of them were owned by members of The Sadat Organization. A school, financed by the government, was under construction east of the houses. The construction process was very slow because all the materials, reinforced concrete and asbestos, had to be imported from Aswan.

The small lots of agriculture land across from the houses were irrigated by a small canal running in front of the houses. The water was pumped from a near by well. The water pump and the well were administered by government employees who controlled the amount of water and the maintenance of the machine. The water of the well was not suitable for drinking because it contained high levels of iron and minerals. Drinking water was brought from the Nile and stored in *maziarah* inside the houses.

47 See Figure 5.10: Map of Adendan The Return.

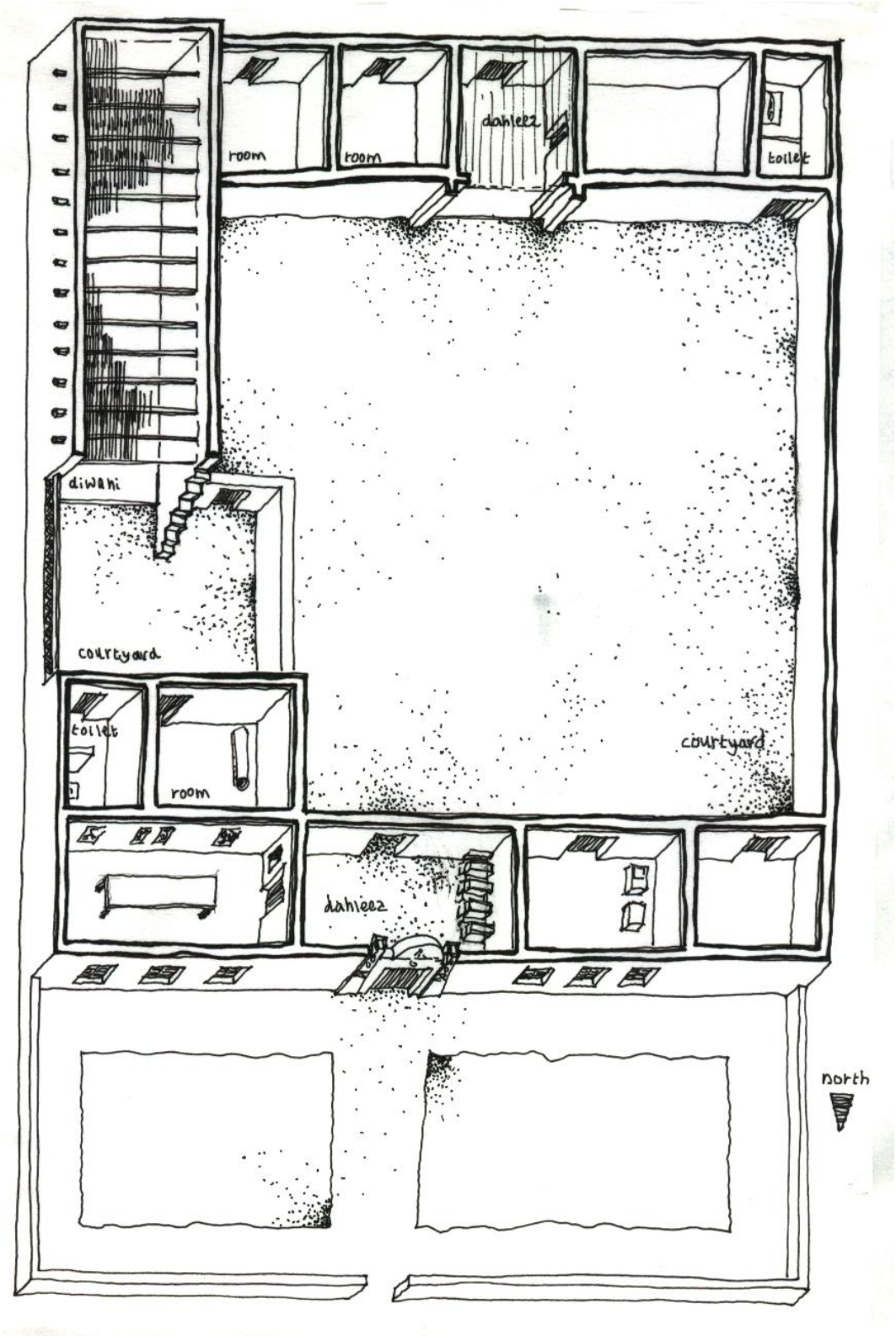

Figure 4.9: Sadat's House at Qustul.

As we approached the village, we saw Am Gamal Shifa working in the field across from the houses. Am Gamal left the field and came to greet us.

He said, "*Ahlan Wasahlan. Etfadaloo*. Come to my house and I'll make you some turkish coffee."

We followed him to the house located in the middle of the first group of houses across from the fields.

Am Gamal Shifa was 85 years old, the oldest man in the returnees' villages. He lived by himself, cultivating his land, and had built two houses at Qustul by himself. He left his family at *El-Tahjir* and came to the returnees' communities. Am Gamal said:

> I was a merchant in *el balad el kadim*. I used to sell coal. I also cultivated my father's land when we went to *El-Tahjir* in 1964. The land was very limited. They gave me two feddans and after filing a petition they gave me a third one, thirty kilometers away from my first land. How could I possibly take care of both lots at the same time?
>
> After I settled in *El-Tahjir*, my children started to get married and have their own children. One day I was thinking about what was going on. I had five daughters, five sons, my wife, and myself. Twelve persons living in one house! It was inconceivable that they all succeed in school. One of them might not succeed and need work. The most honorable work is agriculture. The land gives you back as much as you work. The more you serve it, the more money you shall get from it.
>
> I left *El-Tahjir* for several reasons. First, I am convinced that those among whom justice is lost are doomed. There are too many problems among people at *El-Tahjir.* They fight with each other all the time. There is jealousy, envy, and hatred among them. Each person wants to be better than his brother. Envy is planted in their hearts.
>
> We were thinking about these areas for a long time. I made a tent from plastic bags and rugs, with a frame from wood and came here. I put up the tent the same day and slept in it. On the first day I was afraid of scorpions and snakes, so I placed the bed on empty barrels above the ground. Why do I do that? I am doing this for the future of my children. Where would they go in the future. The agriculture land at *El-Tahjir* is the same. It is even being demolished with more and more buildings built on it. Instead of staying with my children in that tight place, we now have two places where we can live. Although I am old, I work here and at Qustul in order to have more land. Some of my children will come here and others will go there. If they don't want to work by themselves they can rent it and have more income. I do not want them to come here now. I want them to live their lives and when they get tired they can come here and find a house, palm trees, land, and so on.

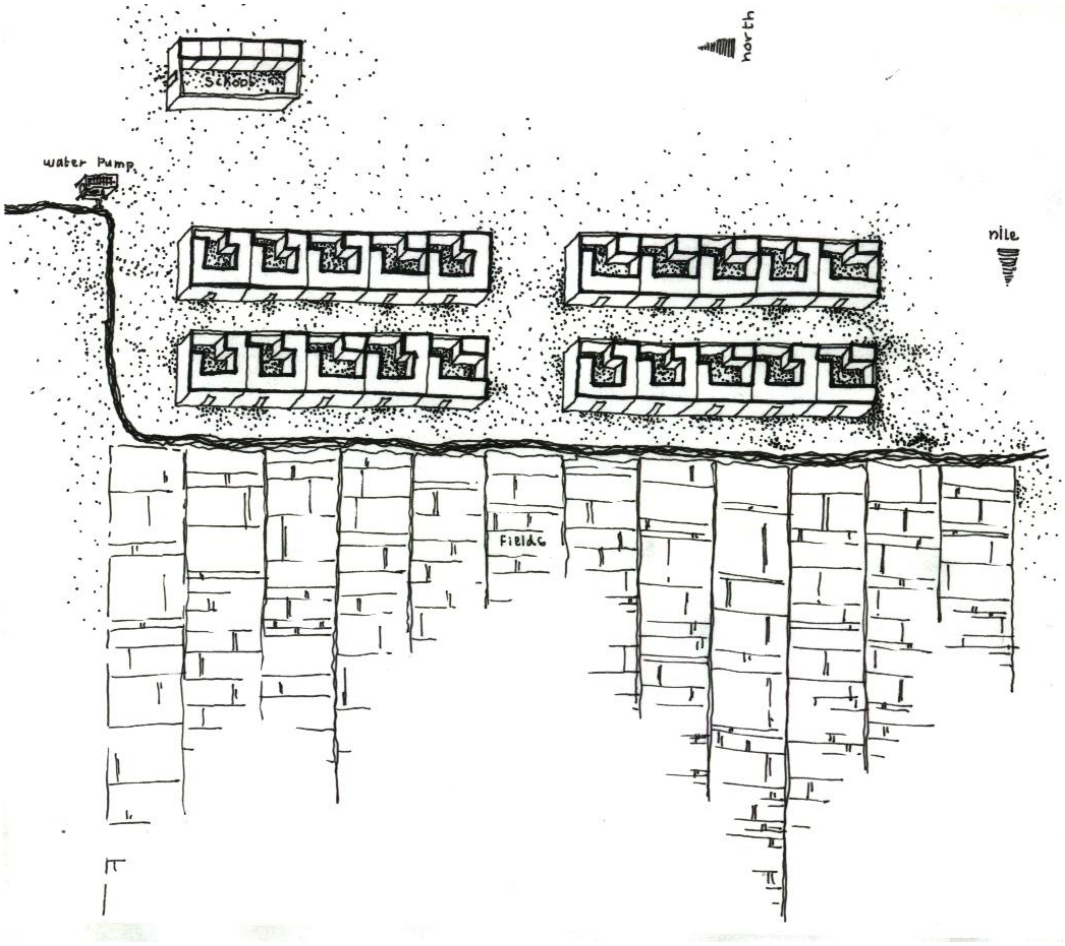

Figure 4.10: Map of Adendan The Return.

Figure 4.11: Houses of Adendan.

Am Gamal's house was one of the houses built by the Sudanese builders. It was different from the houses of Qustul. He took us around the house explaining its parts and how it was built. He said:

> These houses were built by the Sudanese builders whom we hired from Sudan for this purpose. They stand on the edge of the wall and build backwards. The builder, squatting on the edge of the wall, is handed mud mixture by his assistants standing on the ground. He puts the mud on the edge of the wall and shapes it with his two hands. He takes a step backwards and puts more mud. He does not use any instruments but his hands and brain.
>
> In Rotana a house is called *nog,* which means the collection of the rooms. The most important thing about the house is living in it. It is where you go after work and from where you go to work. We used to say that he who does not have a house is worthless. When you have a guest where would you receive him? Where can you invite a man to sleep?
>
> This is called *mandarah*, which is a room for guests. This is *dahleez* or entrance. This is a *barandah* and that room is where the bread is baked, it is called *dewi-nog,* meaning the place for baking. There is a very small parapet around it to prevent the ashes from spreading in the room. Cooking is done at the opposite corner of the *doka*. This is called *kerri-nog* meaning a storage room for seeds, onions, etc. This is called *orsi-nog*, where the sheep can be kept. The cattle and donkeys are kept outside the house in separate stables. They need a larger area. This is a toilet and that is the courtyard. I don't have a *diwani* here. I did not build a *diwani* because it needs a large space. More important for me was the *barandah.* It is very pleasant to sit here during the summer. You can close the house door and sleep on a bed beside the *maziarah*. The *maziarah* is usually placed here to make the air cooler. When that house is furnished and properly arranged, the windows of the *mandarah* instaled, and so forth, it will be fantastic. After I finish my agriculture, I shall do all these things. These days are the season for agriculture. I cannot waste my time doing that now. I can fix the house any time but agriculture cannot wait. No one will ask me where I sleep but the season will not wait for me.
>
> I built a house in Qustul by myself using a very interesting method. I use two pieces of wood; each piece is two meters long, and the distance between them is 35 cm, or any width I want. I place the two plates and fix them tightly using a steel end. I mix the mud with water and fill between the two wooden pieces. I let it dry for 10 to 15 minutes then I take off the wooden sides and the steel ends. It is as strong as a reinforced concrete wall. I move the wooden sides to another part and do the same thing again. This is what I did and this is what I taught others here to do.

Figure 4.12: Am Gamal Shifa.

> There are no T.V.'s here or people to talk to. From work I come back home and listen to the radio. I go all around the world with my radio listening to the news. After praying I eat my dinner and go to sleep. I wake up at 2:00 a.m. and make a cup of tea. By that time the Dawn-prayer is due. I pray and take my *koraik* and *toriah* and go to work. I go into the fields and look around for any weeds. If I leave them, they would spread all over the place and the land would not produce. Whenever the land is clean its production is guaranteed and profitable. When I look at the land I feel happy because my work is progressing. In Summer I put on rubber shoes because of the scorpions. I am very happy here. I have a son and my wife in Qustul. They send me bread everyday and I cook and make tea for myself. I like it here and I am very happy, no crowding or noise.
>
> I came here because this is where I was born. I will live for a few days and then die. Those who are after me shall have their shares. It is very important that you work for the future of your children. If I don't work, the young will not work either. Although I am too old, I go to where I can find animal dung, fill a container, carry it on my shoulder, and bring it to my plants as fertilizer. The young people do not want to do that. They wait for a tractor or a car to bring them the dung. I am giving the young a good example to follow. My plants are growing and producing while their plants are still young. I am the old man doing better work than the young people. I have to work in order to survive. We can never preserve our customs but we can give some example to the young people.
>
> Most people here are bachelors; there are no women or kids, no family life. There are not many opportunities for work here. Without food no one will come. After ten or twenty years this area will not be very crowded. There will be more people but it will not be overcrowded. Those who will return will be mainly school drop outs and government employees tired of their jobs and looking for something else. There are many educated people who want to have a higher income and they will try to come here and start their own business. This is how this area will be developed.

Our old customs will never return. We went somewhere and our way of life has changed. We entered a different world and became seduced by its way of living. We cannot go back to our old way of life. But, in general, we will be much better here than *El-Tahjir*.

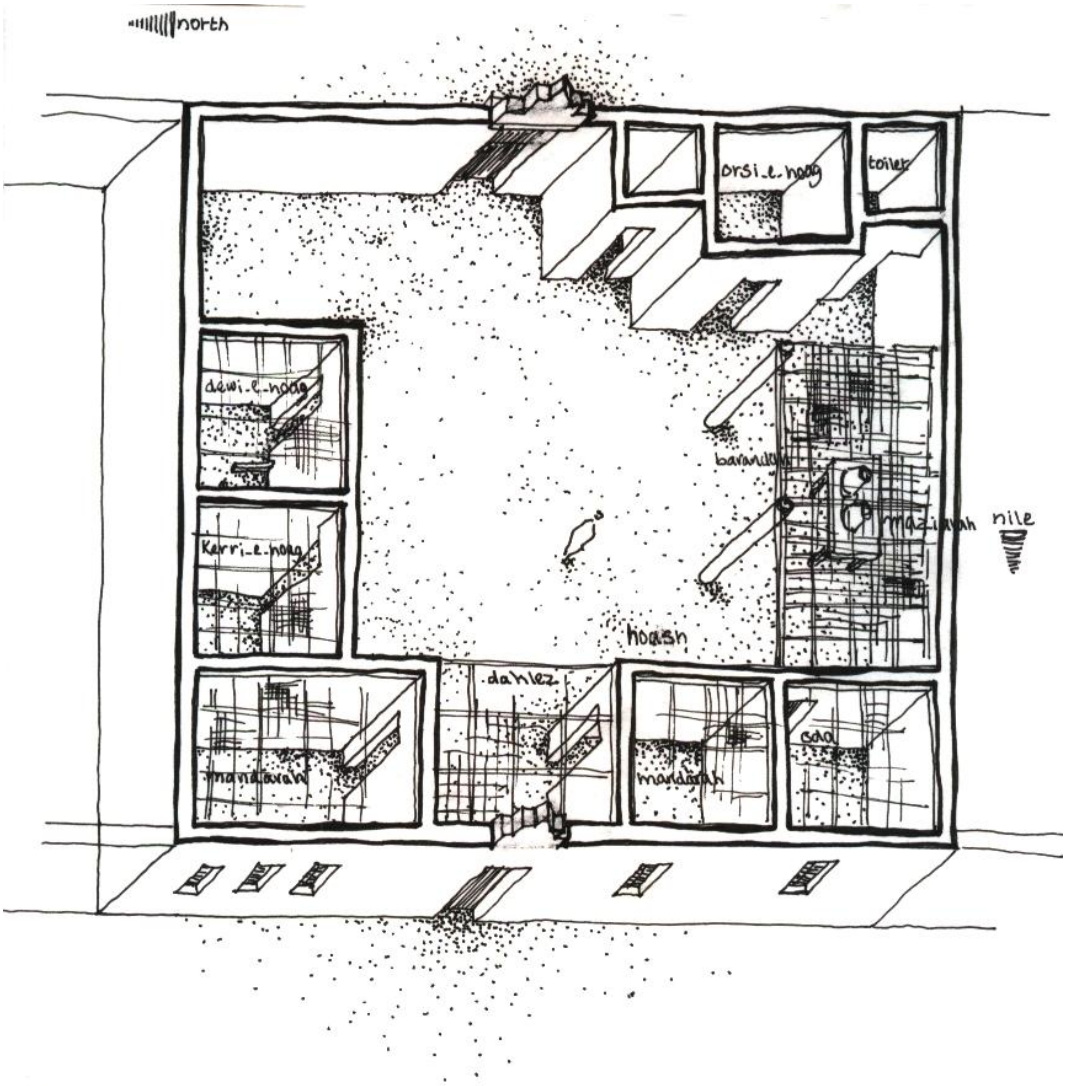

Figure 4.13: Am Gamal's House at Adendan.

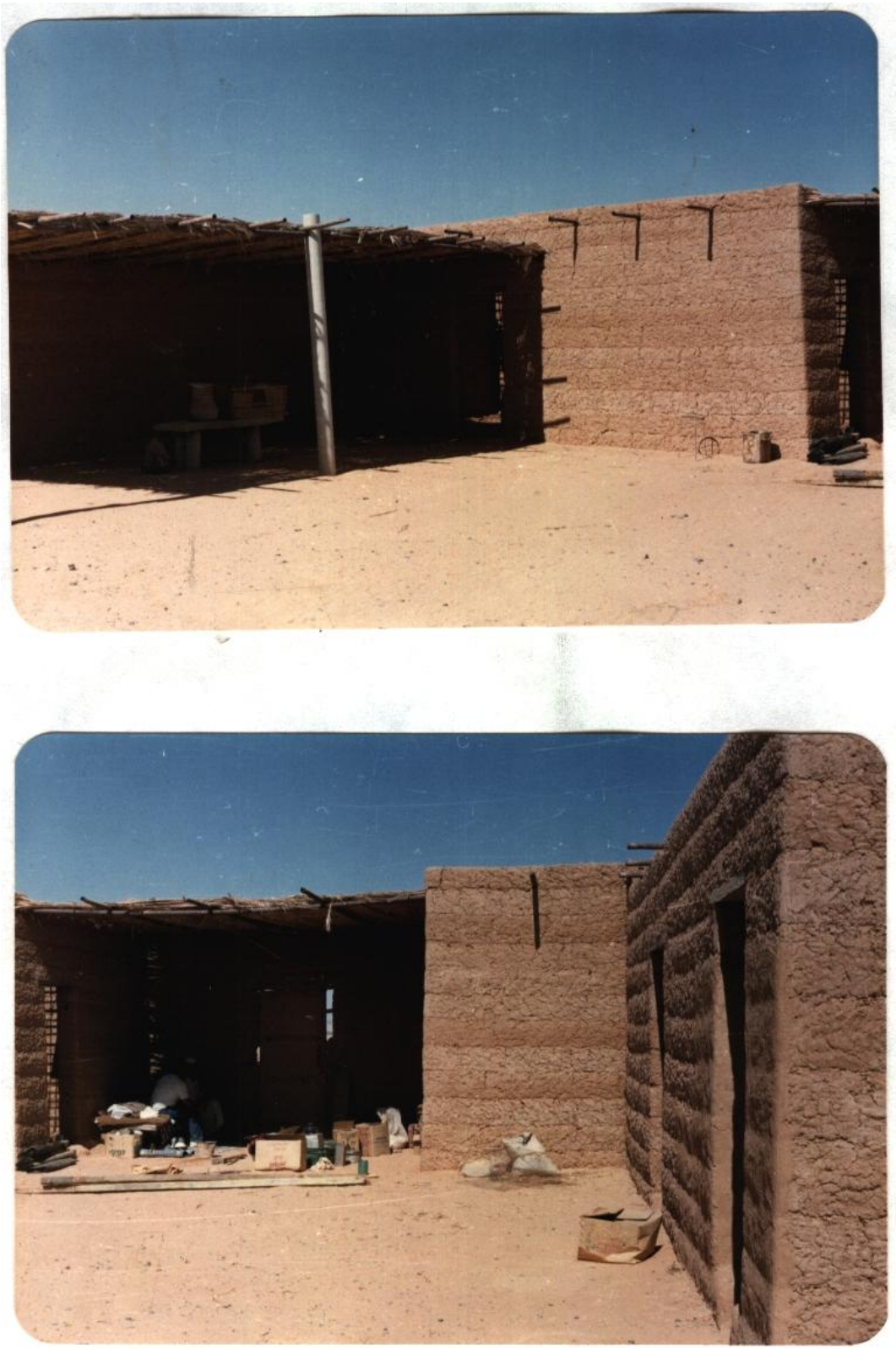

Figure 4.14: The Courtyard of Am Gamal's House.

The Site of Old Qustul

Because of the low water level, in the lake, the Nile has receded and the sites of the old Nubia villages reappeared from under the water. Muhammed Taieb drove us to a spot close to the Nile. Approaching the Nile, we noticed several stones and broken pieces of ceramic water containers scattered on the ground. Am Hassan approached one of the stones and bent down to read the name engraved on the stone. Several other stones with names and dates engraved on them were scattered around the place.

"That was the highest point in the village where we had our cemetery," said Am Hassan.

Descending the hill toward the Nile we were actually walking through the streets of old Qustul. Remnants of old houses were clearly visible and easily identifiable. Stone stairs, toilet seats made of two pieces of stones, and small pieces of stone used as foundation for the mud walls allowed us to envision the layout of the village and the houses. The layout of the houses resembled the layout of Am Hassan's house. Am Hassan pulled a piece of palm tree trunk from under the water of the Nile.

The unexpected adventure in the heart of old Nubia was an unforgettable experience. I stood by the Nile bank looking at the water of the Nile which would reach Cairo few days later, after being polluted by the cities and factories. On the way, I washed my face and drank from the water, thinking of that mysterious liquid which made life possible for millions of people living down the stream.

Going Back to Abu Simbel

We left the villages of the returnees behind on our way to Abu Simbel town. We waited for the ferry to arrive from Abu Simbel town. The ferry arrived to the lake shore where several returnees Nubians were filling their plastic water containers with the water of the Nile.

I was standing in front of the ferry thinking about my experience at the returnees' villages. "It was a remarkable experience," I thought.

"You should come again when all this land is cultivated with palm trees and vegetables," said Am Gamal.

The surrounding environment was very pleasant and peaceful. The mountains enveloped the place from all sides. The lake extended north and south. Several fishermen boats were seen near the shores.

The ferry reached the port near the unfinished concrete and stone hotel at Abu Simbel town. We climbed the sandy hill from the ferry deck to the military check point of Abu Simbel city.

At the military check point, the soldier did not respect us as he did when we were riding the engineer's car. He asked us to open our luggage and present our identification documents. He started to ask us questions about the purpose of our visiting the returnees' villages and where we stayed there.

"They smuggle drugs and weapons across the desert and you have to understand that I am doing my duty here," said the soldier.

Figure 4.15: The Site of Old Qustul.

My field work experience in both *El Tahjir* and the returnees' communities allowed me to identify several themes of the Nubians' experience with displacement. In the following chapters I shall discuss these themes in more detail. My contact with the reality of everyday life of Nubians in the remote villages of the return and the villages of new Nubia was intrinsic in developing this understanding.

PART 3

CHAPTER 5

NUBIA BEFORE THE DISPLACEMENT

The Setting in Old Nubia

To be able to develop a meaningful understanding of the Nubians' experience, it is important to understand the setting as a whole, or the context, in Nubia before the displacement.

The Nile, the desert, and the date palm trees were the elements that made up the natural setting of old Nubia. Travelers through Nubia could not escape the overwhelming atmosphere of the place. Greener, who travelled through Nubia in 1962, recalled Gadsby's description of Nubia in 1846 and noticed that the atmosphere had not changed during that time. In his account, Gadsby wrote:

> Nothing in the world can equal the sweetness of the mornings and evenings in Nubia. The very act of breathing is a luxury, as though the lungs were enjoying a holiday. ... I could see to read by moonlight, when the moon was only in the first quarter. The air was calm, the leaves of the trees motionless and the river rolling down its bed without a ripple. There was no need to call "silence!" for all nature seemed in a trance. If the stillness were in any way interrupted, it was only by some large fish leaping up and causing a splash, or some startled pelican, screaming and moving its position, and then all was again hushed into repose. ... To say it is charming would express but little. It is literally enchanting; it is inexpressible.[1]

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[1] Greener, Leslie, High Dam Over Nubia, The Viking Press:New York, 1962, p.56.

The climate did not differ much across the area. Winter months were cold with a steadily blowing north wind, while the summer heat poured from the south-west. As Am Samal, who lived in old Nubia before the displacement, described it:

> In *el balad el kadim*, the weather was hot, and we had to adapt our life accordingly. The environment was always the first thing. We were very attached to the Nile and the palm trees. There were many palm trees that provided a shaded area and cool weather. It was the Nile, the palm trees, the agriculture land, the farms, and lastly the houses. The houses were always above the level of the Nile to avoid the hot, dusty winds of spring.

Laying partially in Egypt and partially in Sudan, Nubia stretched south to Dongola between the Third and Fourth cataract.[1] The desert enveloped the place from both sides, leaving a narrow strip of arable land upon which Nubia's economy depended. The Nile was the only source of water in the area. As Am Samal said:

> We were living in an isolated area. The villages were far from each other and the only means of transportation were animals or, in most cases, boats on the Nile. The safest and easiest way was *el bahr* (the Nile).

The story of the creation of the Nile told by mothers to their children in old Nubia reflected the importance of the Nile as a life giver. Elizabeth Fernea, who travelled in Nubia before the displacement, documented the story in her book *A View of the Nile*. She wrote:

> Once upon a time a great and good prince was beset by evil enemies. He had no recourse but to try to escape, and so, taking his sword, he fled north from caves and rocks deep in Africa. He began to run very fast, trilling his sword behind him. He turned this way and that, to avoid his enemies who were close behind him, and wherever he ran, wherever his sword touched the ground, the earth opened and a silver river flowed to protect him. When he reached the Mediterranean sea, he disappeared. Many people have waited for the return of the good prince; but he has never been seen again. The river still remains. It is the Nile.[2]

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[1] See Figure 2.3: Map Of Old Nubia.

[2] Fernea, Elizabeth, A View of the Nile, Doubleday & Co. Press, Garden City, New York, 1970, p.255.

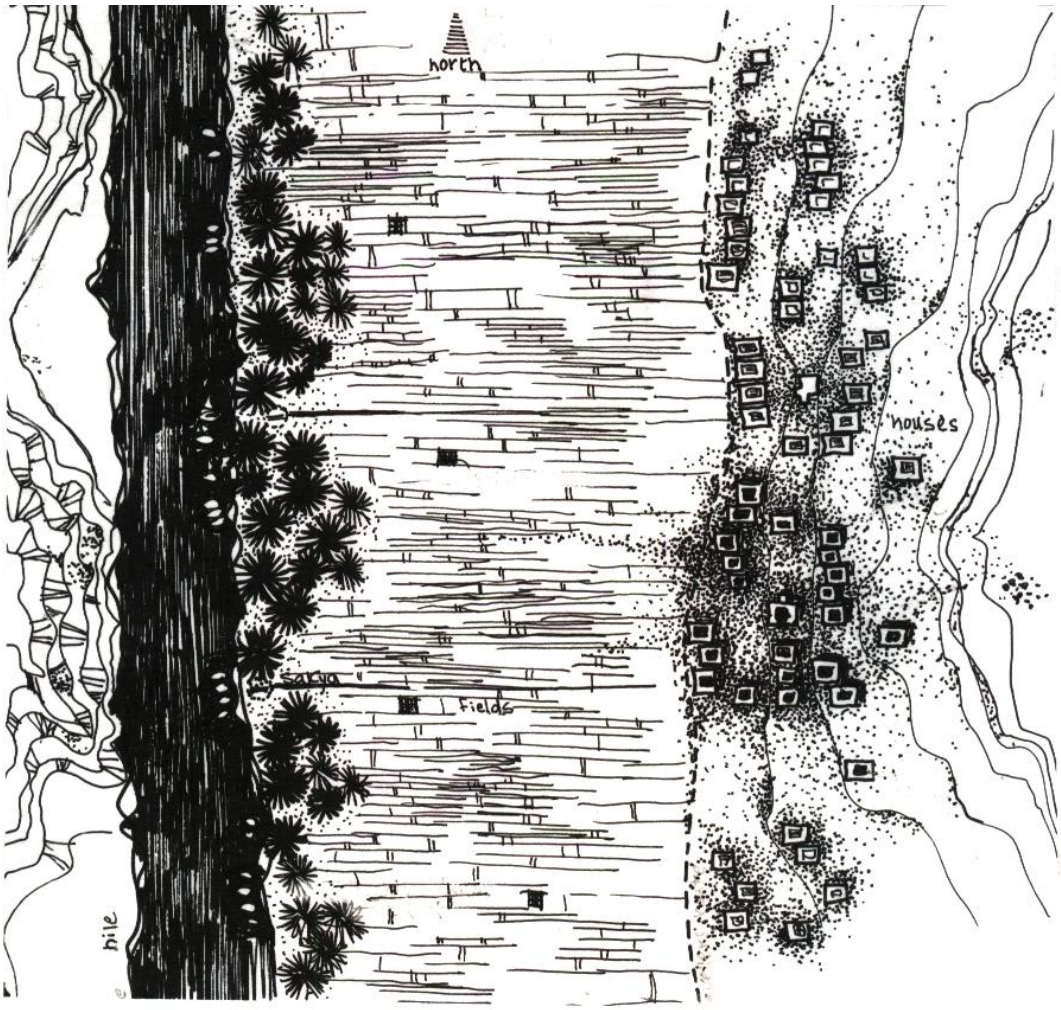

Figure 5.1: The Setting of Old Nubia.

The Nile was central to life in Nubia. As much as it was a life giver, it was also the source of danger with its yearly flooding. It was the highway between Nubian villages. Traders and merchants used their boats to travel between the villages selling food and merchandise to the Nubians. It was not surprising to find that the Nubians had a mythical relationship with the Nile. *Malayket el bahr* (angels of the Nile) and *dogir* (evil beings of the Nile) were two supernatural beings believed to reside in underwater castles.[1]

> Even more than most other peoples along its banks, the Nubians were forced into an intimate relationship with an important Nile, the source of their life substance. With such close dependence upon the river, it is not surprising that they evolved close spiritual relations with it.[2]

To speak of Nubia is to speak of the Nile without which Nubia, and all Egypt for that matter, would not have existed. Am Samal explained:

> The Nile is called *bahr* (sea) but this is an Arabic name. The Kenuzi call him *gassi* and that is the correct name. We call the tears *man gassi*. The Nile had a profound effect in shaping the Nubians' personality. We used to be happy with the flooding. In spite of the damages it caused, no one was as happy as the Nubians with the yearly flooding. It used to bring prosperity and fortune.

Beside its importance as the only transportation route that connected Nubia to Egypt in the north and Sudan in the south, the Nile, as the only source of water, was considered the life giver of the whole region. This strong relationship was manifested in the different ceremonies-- marriage, birth, circumcision, and death-- which usually involved drinking and bathing in the Nile. The story of the wedding ceremony told by Am Samal reveals this aspect of the Nubians' relationship with the Nile. He said:

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[1] For more about spirits of the Nile see El-Guindi, Fadwa, The Angels in the Nile: A Theme in Nubian Ritual in Kennedy John G., ed., Nubian Ceremonial Life: Studies in Islamic Syncretism and Cultural Change, The University of California Press and The American University in Cairo Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York, and Cairo, 1978, pp.104-124.

[2] Kennedy, John G., ed., Nubian Ceremonial Life: Studies in Islamic Syncretism and Cultural Change, The University of California Press and The American University in Cairo Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York, and Cairo, 1978, p.104.

> On the wedding day we used to take the groom in a procession for a tour between the houses before going to the Nile. The distance between the houses and the Nile was about one to two kilometers. The groom and all the men would bathe in the Nile before the groom put on his new clothes. That was to wish him happiness and good future. They then took him to the bride's house. For seven days after the marriage the groom had to bath in the Nile very early in the morning, before people start to go out of their houses. The groom, accompanied by one or two men, and the bride, accompanied by two girls, go very early in the morning to the Nile. They would wash their faces seven times and on their way back home they picked up a bundle of green leaves from the shore and hung it on the right side of the *diwani's* entrance. People would know from the number of these bundles how many days remained for the couple to be seen. After seven days they had to go to the groom's house. At sunset, they would start a fire in front of the house. The bride and the groom had to jump seven times over that fire on which they threw some salt.

The *sebu*, a celebration one week after birth, involved the bathing of the new born in the waters of the Nile, resembling the Christian baptism. Am Samal described this celebration saying:

> In the case of birth or circumcision they used to take the child at the seventh day after birth to the Nile. They would prepare some honey mixture, a small candle, and a small piece of wood. They would make a small boat out of dried palm tree leaves. They would place the candle on the small boat using the honey mixture and light it. They pushed the boat on the surface of the Nile. The boat would sail with the stream. They washed the face of the child with water from the Nile to assure him *baraka*, or blessing.

It was well known to Muslim Nubians that these were Christian traditions that had been kept over the years in their culture. In general all ceremonies and festivities involved a visit to the Nile and bathing in its water.

Date palm trees were an important part of the Nubian setting before the displacement. Thousands of date palm trees lined up along the Nile banks. The Nubians were very knowledgeable about the different kinds of palm trees and the use of their products. Dates were a basic item in the Nubian diet and a symbolic element in all ceremonies.[1] As Am Samal put it:

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[1] Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.12.

> Everything was made of palm trees. Plates were made of dried palm tree leaves which were woven and colored. The dates were stored in large containers made of clay. The dates that didn't seem to be very good were collected and shipped to the city to be sold there. What was left was fermented in ceramic containers for two or three months to make *araki balah*, an alcoholic drink, and they made vinegar out of it. Many, many things were made from the palm trees.

Part of the Nubian heritage is the story of how people first settled there, which illustrates how the palm trees were perceived. As Am Gamal told it:

> People used to complain to their priest that the travellers did not stay in the villages for a long time and didn't want to settle there. The priest suggested that they plant a palm tree for each newcomer. The new settler, finding his tree growing in the period of his stay, would not leave the village. He would stay to look after his tree. We used to make everything from palm trees: plates, roofs, etc. The palm tree pleases the heart. The palm tree is respected, no one should urinate towards a palm tree. It is like a religion for us. Mary gave birth beside a palm tree and after she gave birth, the palm tree dropped dates for her to eat. When a woman gives birth, we make her eat plenty of dates.

The date crop exported to urban parts of Egypt was the only source of income for many families in Nubia. *Kenuzi* merchants selling merchandise by boats used to stop at villages along the Nile and sell goods to its inhabitants using a barter trade system. Dates were exchanged for other commodities: cloth, soap, tea, sugar, etc. Merchants in boats used to keep a record of debts. At harvest time, the farmers paid their debts with their crop, and the merchants would give them the rest of their crop value in currency. Money was rarely used in old Nubia, and the amount received from merchants supported the families until the next harvesting season.

Palm trees were usually shared by three persons. The first person was the one who owned the tree seedling. He was usually a merchant working away from the village or someone who did not own land and wanted to use other people's land for growing his trees. The second person was the land owner who agreed to the use of his land for growing the tree. Finally, the third person was usually a woman who watered the tree until it grew up. The shares were divided equally among the three owners. After several generations of divided inheritance a large number of people had shares in one tree. Individuals who

resided away from the village used to travel long distances to collect their shares. This allowed for social interaction and visits with ancestors' villages to collect shares of palm trees.

Agricultural land separated the houses from the Nile. It varied in width from a few meters to sometimes a couple of kilometers. Am Samal said:

> In *el balad el kadim* there was the Nile, the palm trees, then there were 2 or 3 kilometers of farm lands and then the houses. On the farm land we used to cultivate our vegetables and keep our animals.

Especially after the construction of the Aswan Dam and its heightening, the arable land was not enough to support the economy in most of the northern region of Nubia where the *kenuzi* group resided. In the south, where more arable land was available, the land was plentiful and fertile. There were huts to keep the animals in the middle of the fields. It was a safe place and there was no fear of losing the animals. It is important to understand why life in old Nubia was perceived as peaceful and safe. As Am Gamal put it:

> There were no incidents of stealing or robberies in the old country. It was not possible to commit a robbery or steal an animal. If you stole an animal you had to walk miles before you could sell it to someone who did not know it was mine. Of course you could not sell it in the same village because each person knew which animals belonged to whom.

Means of social punishment limited undesirable conducts. The most effective punishment in an isolated environment such as old Nubia was social boycott. The criminal was never put in prison or physically punished, but rather the punishment was more social and psychological. If someone committed a crime, the whole village agreed to boycott him and his family: his wife was not allowed to visit or talk with other women, his children were not allowed to play with other children, and he himself was not allowed to sit with other men of the village.

Ownership of land was important in determining a person's status in his community; *landlessness*, as Fahim suggested, was considered a misfortune. Those who did not own land had to find other means of support.

> As a result of limited arable lands and dependency on the water level in this part of the Nile valley, labor migration became a means of coping with the finite economic resources in Nubia.[1]

Because of the limited resources, labor migration was a phenomenon all around Nubia. Men used to migrate looking for work in urban areas in Egypt and Sudan. This phenomenon "resulted in a population that was made up mostly of women, old men, and children."[2] It also resulted in a society of working women who took care of the land and the children while men were working in the city.

Meaning of Home

> In *Rotana*, *nog* means house which means the circle or area over which I have control. It is the small kingdom, and I am the owner of that kingdom or territory.

Am Samal's statement reflects an important theme of the meaning of home in old Nubia. Control, in that sense, involved the ability to direct actions and predict expected events which took place in the house.

While *nog* referred to the physical house, it also referred to another set of relations between the individual and other persons and groups in the society. As Fernea described it:

> The Fedija refer to all units of family membership as *nog(s)*. A man's first *nog* is his household, the group of people for whom he is economically and socially responsible, including his wife, or wives, and children, as well as any other relatives who live in his house and are dependent on him for support ... only with marriage does one acquire the *nog*, or responsibility of an adult; the nog is the primary group that pays a man respect and is obedient to him.[3]

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[1] ibid.

[2] ibid. p.13.

[3] Fernea, Robert A., ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.20.

A similar concept is used in other parts of the Middle East to denote one's family and kin. A person is said to be from *bait folan*; *bait* means house and *folan* is the name of the family or person. It means that the person is a member of that family. The individual does not necessarily reside with the family in the same house. This affiliation with a *bait* provides the member with a sense of identity and belonging. Usually the members of one house support each other in times of need even if they are distant relatives.

The immediate *nog* are those people for whom one feels responsible. At the same time, one belongs to a *nog* and is supported by its members. Marriage indicates the start of a new *nog* composed of a man and his wife, where the man is responsible for the household. The second *nog* , as Fernea describes it, "is composed of those relatives with whom one still divides the products of land and trees, no matter how small the shares may have become. Therefore, most men have two, largely overlapping *nogs*: the *nog* of one's father, wherein most of house hold's property is shared, and the *nog* of one's mother."[1]

In sum, the concept of *nog* had a social and economic importance for family life in old Nubia. This kinship system is important in understanding the use of space and the right of access to different parts of the house. Fernea illustrated this idea in his discussion of the relationship between men and women in old Nubia. He wrote:

> Although in Nubian society social segregation of males and females is not nearly so rigorously practiced as in many other traditional Arab settings, men do not ordinarily venture into the private quarters of a house unless they are the brothers, fathers, or husbands of the women of the house, or are kinsmen who through family tradition have long been intimates of the household.[2]

Kinship relations were different among the three Nubian groups. In the north, *kenuzi* and Arab Nubians maintained a kinship system similar to that of Arab tribes found elsewhere in the Middle East. "Tribal groups were distributed over a number of villages,

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[1] ibid.

[2] ibid.

divided into maximal lineages, subdivided into secondary lineages, and finally separated into individual families-- all reckoned on the basis of descent from a common ancestor."[1] Political, economical, religious, and marital affairs were organized around this lineage.

The Social Organization of Space

The *nog* was never an independent entity in old Nubia. Usually houses were clustered in groups, each three or four houses forming one compound.

> The largest *nog* includes a large number of smaller *nogs* spread over a number of villages and districts and is defined as these men who bear the same family name.[2]

The inhabitants of these houses were usually members of an extended family. The head of the family who started the compound built his house on a piece of land overlooking his agriculture land. He built a house and later his son, after getting married, built another house beside his father's house. The compound spread around the head of the family's house which later was given to the youngest son of the family.

> As different observers of Nubian culture recorded, the inhabitants of each *naja* were members of some extended families who shared a common ancestor. It was custom for members of a family to build their houses adjacent to each other in order to have help nearby in case of need. One observer of the *kenuzi* village noted that hospitality for a guest was not restricted to one household. The construction of a new house or nuptial room was an occasion for neighbors to manifest their affinity and solidarity. Men and women worked together according to their abilities and skills; the owner of the house provided food, tea and cigarettes for the workers.[3]

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[1] Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.20.

[2] ibid. p.21.

[3] Fahim, Hussein M, The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A Case Study in Developmental Change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p.22.

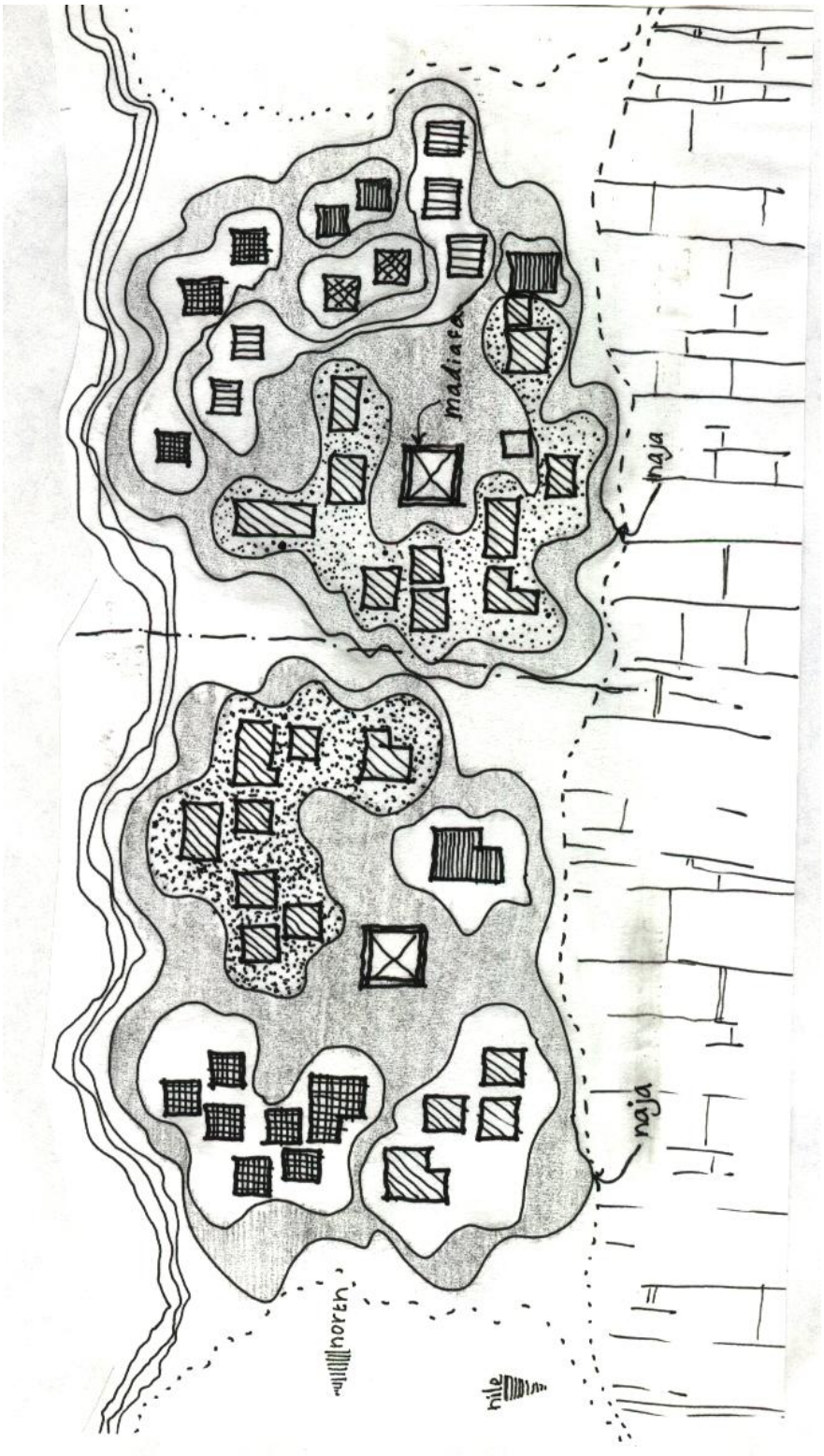

Figure 5.2: Example of a *naja.*

Families which had economic ties together through marriage used to cluster together and form a *naja*. The *naja* usually carried the name of the head of the largest family in the compound. Am Gamal described this arrangement, saying:

> Each *naja* was made of 30 to 40 persons. Each house had a name so that you knew from which house a person came. Each tribe was a group that had a name, for example ours is *bait Shifa*. The name was held by everyone in the house, male or female. The name was important. You could be asked, "From where are you? And from which house are you?" Knowing from which part you were and to which house you belonged, I could say that I knew you. I knew the house and its people. If you made a mistake I could complain to your people. The family used to reside beside each other. They were united and supported each other. When one of my family deviated from the right way of doing things we all brought him back. When I wanted to complain about someone I complained to his family. Everyone would try not to make himself small by doing wrong things and letting people complain to his family.

The house was always related to a *naja*, a compound, and the *naja* in turn was related to a *nahia* or district of old Nubia. There were 40 *nahias* in Egyptian Nubia, which enclosed more than 500 *najas*. Finally, the individual identified with one of the three linguistic groups in Nubia: *kenuzi*, Arabs, and *fedija*. The spatial organization and relationships of the *najas* were important in establishing a sense of identity for the Nubians

> Residence based on kinship bonds not only determined the nature of interpersonal relationships among the inhabitants of each *naja*, but it also encouraged the development of patterns of economic and social duties. The residence pattern, for instance, encouraged the system of purchase on credit among the members of the *naja*. It was customary for each Nubian to use one room in his house as a variety store, and people took their commodities on credit until remittances were received or crops were sold.[1]

The house adhered to two types of orientations. First there was spatial orientation based on the natural environment which surrounded the house. The house entrance always faced the Nile. Second there was the *social orientation* which was related to cultural understandings of self, others, identity, history, and language. Each house was related to the rest of the village either by kin ties or by shared economic resources. The *naja* was a

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[1] Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.21.

large family to which all the houses belonged. This *social atmosphere* is important in understanding the meaning of houses in old Nubia.

History of the Nubian Dwelling

Although the history of Nubia goes back thousands of years, little is known about the Nubian houses or how the Nubians lived through that history. Probably the situation in Nubia was similar to the rest of Egypt, where people lived in mud houses while their Pharaohs and kings were buried in stone graves. The temples and graves of rulers survived the long, destructive history while the weak, mud dwellings of everyday life were demolished.

There are conflicting accounts of the history of the round stone core ruins of Batn El Haggar region. Greener asserts that they are graves of the C-group inhabitants of Nubia from 2000 B.C. to 500 B.C. He wrote:

> The graves had a character of their own: a neatly built circular wall of stone. The body was placed in the center of a small hole in the earth, and then the circle was filled with sand so that it looked like a gigantic circular cake.[1]

Wenzel noticed that additions were made to some of these ruins. She wrote:

> Those on the declivity of the hills had been made of mud over a round stone core, their ruins forming small enclosures, often no more than eight feet across, which were still used as pews for goats but not as modern living quarters.[2]

No remains of Nubian dwellings dating before the middle ages have been found. This later period coincided with the Christian era in Nubia, between A.D. 500 and A.D.

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[1] Greener, Leslie, High Dam Over Nubia, The Viking Press:New York, 1962, pp.86-87.

[2] Wenzel, Marian, House Decoration In Nubia, University of Toronto Press: Toronto and Buffalo, 1972, pp.17-18. See Figure 5.3.

1500. The "houses were maze-like warrens with virtually no courts."[1] Access to one room was through another room and the houses were packed together with shared walls in between.[2]

Later types of these houses had three new features. First, the rooms were individually accessible, but not from a clear common courtyard as found in later Nubian houses. Second, a room with a private entrance resembling the later bridal hall was used. Finally, there were fewer walls shared between the houses. These types of houses coincided with the slow conversion of Nubia to Islam.

Compared to these houses, the Nubian huts were small and "consisted of modest, rectangular two-room units, part for sleeping and part for storing dried food in tall mud jars."[3] These huts, as Wenzel noticed, were "incorporated into newer, larger structures, in which a central court had been added and enclosed by other larger rooms, and their pattern was copied and enlarged for the new rooms."[4] The later Nubian dwellings had these huts as their nucleus. The courtyards were an additional feature as a response to changes in cultural and religious beliefs.

Twentieth century travelers through Nubia commented on the architecture of the dwellings. Hassan Fathy, a well known Egyptian architect, travelled in Nubia among a group of artists and writers in 1964. He wrote:

> As we visited the first few villages in the Kenuzi area, we immediately realized that we were face to face with a most dramatic and significant human experiment. It was a new world for all of us, whole villages of houses, spacious, lovely, clean and harmonious. There was nothing like them in Egypt. Each village seemed to come from some dream country, perhaps from a Haggar hidden in the heart of the Great Sahara,

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[1] ibid. p.16.

[2] See Figure 5.4.

[3] ibid. p.18.

[4] ibid.

> whose architecture has been preserved intact in the memory of the Nubians... Here stood house after house, tall, easy, roofed cleanly with brick vault. Each house was decorated individually and exquisitely around the doorway with claustra-work-mouldings and tracery in mud.[1]

Due to the construction of the First Aswan Dam in 1902 and its successive heightenings in 1912 and 1933, the northern parts of Nubia, where the *kenuzi* group resided, were flooded. The *kenuzi* were forced to move their villages to higher ground. They rebuilt their houses using the barrel-vaulted roof system, a construction method that inspired and fascinated many architects.[2]

> The Nile we were traveling was, of course, that part which had been raised by the present dam. So that it was wider than normal, and its rocky banks were the peaks of the desert that formerly fringed the natural stream. The villages we saw clustered white and clean were all fairly new, being built when the inhabitants moved from their old homes now under the water.[3]

Although the barrel-vaulted roof dated back to Ancient Egyptian times and the remains of the X-group, it was not popular with the Nubians as a construction method, especially for houses. Travelers through Nubia did not mention the use of this system of roofing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was popular in Daraw, 20 miles north of Aswan, while it had disappeared from the rest of the region. "At the moment when the rising water forced the population to leave their houses and to build new ones on higher

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[1] Hassan Fathy, Notes on Nubian Architecture, in Contemporary Egyptian Nubia: a Symposium of the Social Research Center of The American University in Cairo edited by Fernea, Robert A., Human Relations Area Files, Inc. New Haven: Connecticut, 1966, p.73.

[2] See Fathy, Hassan, Architecture For The Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1973.

[3] Greener, Leslie, High Dam Over Nubia, The Viking Press:New York, 1962, p.44.

levels, this type of construction suddenly reappeared,"[1] wrote Jaritz. The know-how was drawn from Daraw and the ancient construction system was revived.

The barrel-vaulted roofs of the *kenuzi* villages were a phenomenon of cultural exchange and revival of an old method due to an urgent need for houses. On the other hand, *fedija* Nubians, who were not affected by the First Aswan Dam and its heightenings, used flat roofs made of palm tree trunks, leaves, and a mixture of mud and animal dung. The architecture of houses in the Arab area is little known, "but they seem to not have been greatly different from those in the northern and southern regions."[2]

Nubians who resided in the *kenuzi* area were forced to move their villages to higher ground after the flooding caused by the first Aswan Dam and its successive heightenings. They adopted the barrel-vaulted roof system and received help from builders in Daraw for the construction of their villages. The topography of the new sites made it difficult for them to maintain the old east-west orientation of the houses and the customary entrance from the direction of the Nile. With the slope of the banks in mind, the houses were arranged in rows accessible from alleys perpendicular to the Nile. The houses were oriented north-south with entrances from the south or the east.

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[1] Jaritz, Horst, Notes on Nubian Architecture, in Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, edited by Fernea, Robert A. ed., University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.50.

[2] ibid. p.51.

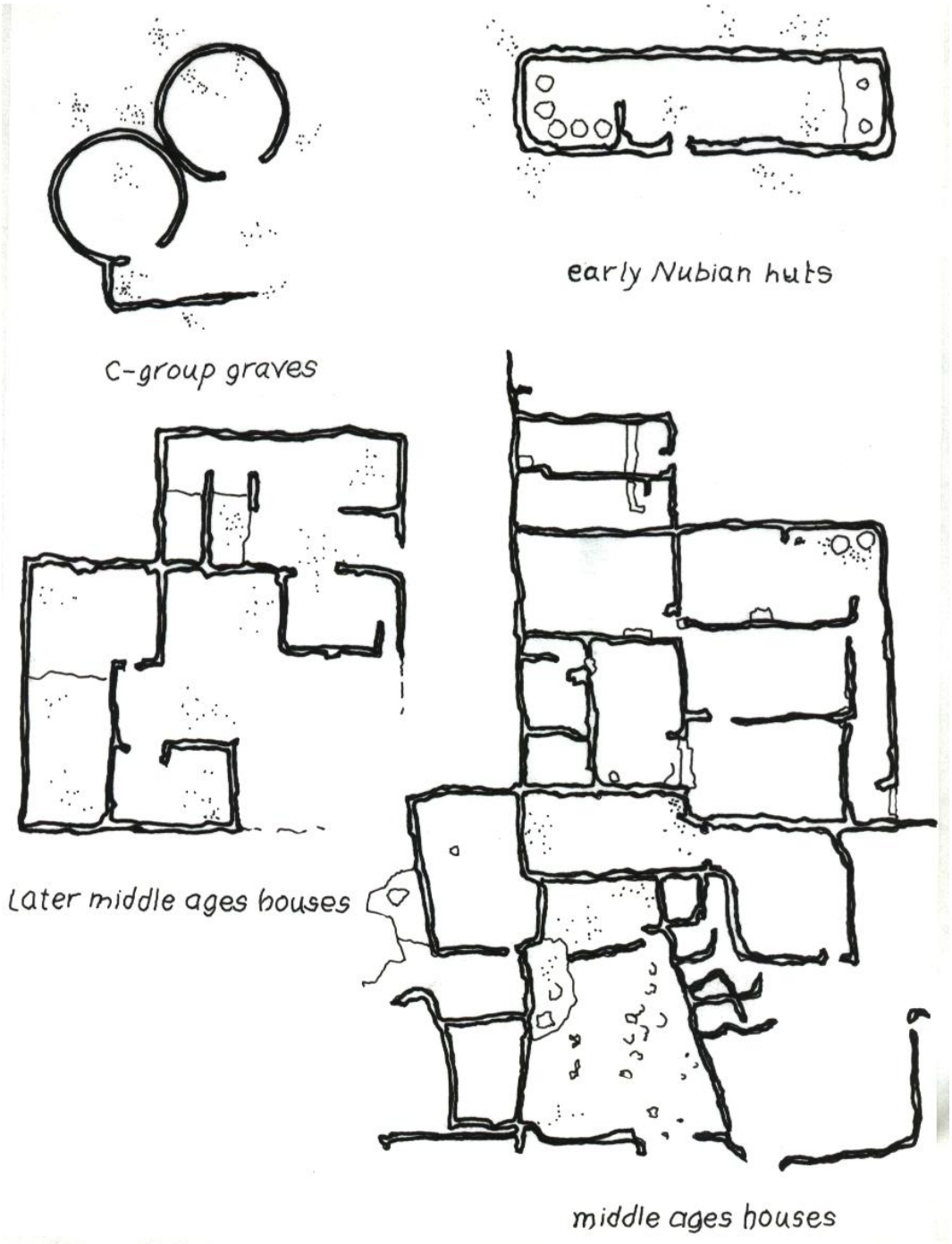

Figure 5.3: Historical Nubian Dwellings.

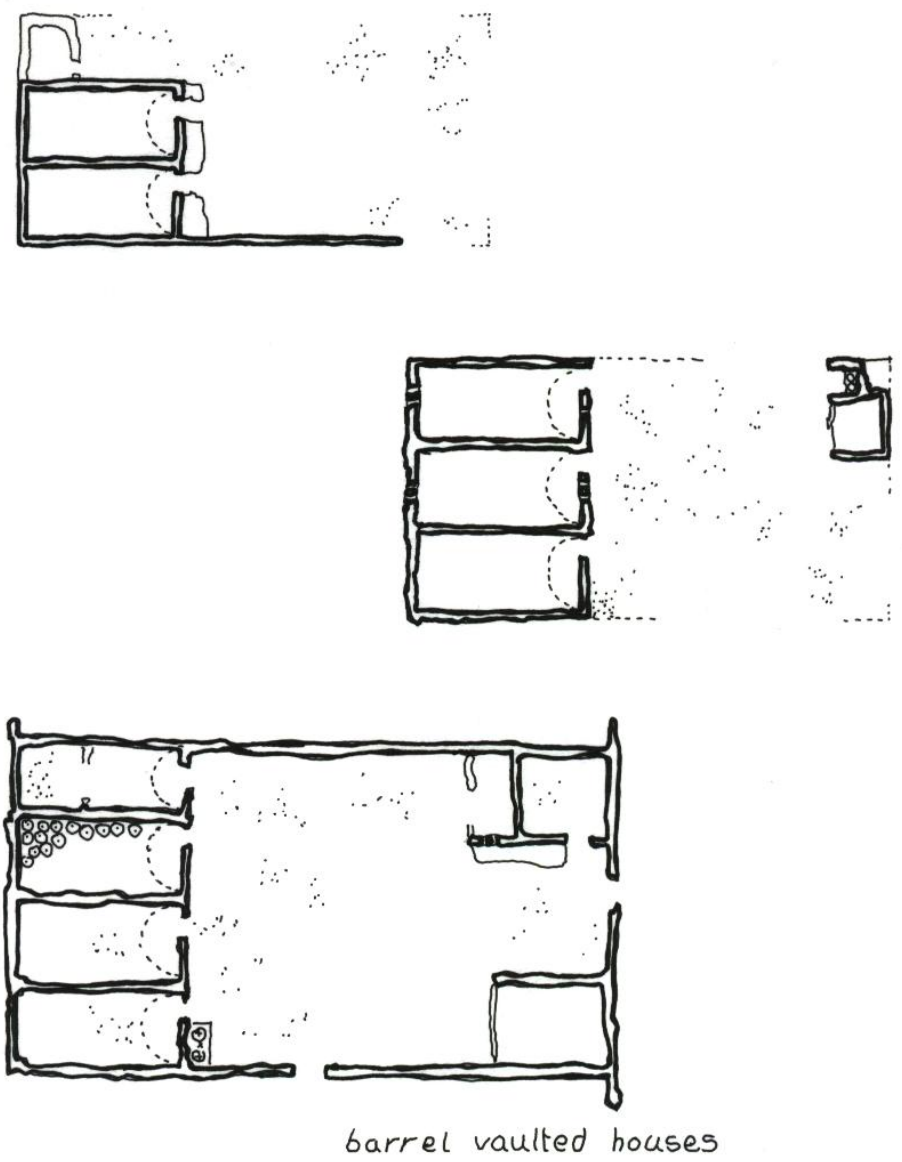

Figure 5.4: Barrel Vaulted Nubian Dwellings.

Meaning of Parts of the House

The architecture of the Nubian house was admired by all outsiders who visited Nubia before the displacement. In her book *A View of the Nile*, Elizabeth Fernea wrote:

> It was a nice house. Everything seemed neat, orderly and well-planned, though obviously not planned for us, but for some other mode of living with which we were not at all familiar. Different things took place in these rooms, different schedules had been organized.[48]

The houses were built as far as possible from the Nile in order to use the flat land on the banks of the Nile for agriculture. Although it was integrated with other houses from the same *naja*, the house was a world by itself. From the outside the house looked like a castle. The high, solid mud walls with their simple relief and lack of windows concealed a world of places and events. The house was not perceived as rooms, rather it was a collection of spaces where events and activities took place: eating, sleeping, cooking, entertaining guests, weddings, birth, and living in general. Each part of the house was a story of interwoven meanings and actions. The house is understood only when it is described as a place where social and cultural events take place.

In the following account I shall describe the old Nubian dwelling from a social and cultural perspective. Because the house is an integrated part of the social and cultural world of the community, it reflects the world view which the community holds. We understand more about the house when we view it from a social and cultural perspective. We do not only know more but we understand differently what we see.

Bawabah: The Entrance gate

Approaching the house from the Nile one could only see high, clean mud walls. The front wall was usually facing the Nile. In the middle of the wall there was the *bawabah,* or entrance gate, which was about 1.2 by 2.4 meters, with three windows on each side. These were the windows of the guest room, called *mandarah*, the only room in

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48 Fernea, Elizabeth, A View of the Nile, Doubleday & Co. Press, Garden City, New York. 1970, p.139.

the house that had openings to the outside. It was not that there was no interesting view outside to overlook-- on the contrary, the scene was magnificent and moving-- but the house revolved around the inside rather than the outside.

The importance of the *bawabah* was expressed during the construction of the house. During the construction of the house no major ceremonies took place except on two occasions. First, after laying out the rooms on the ground and excavating the soil for foundations, an animal was slaughtered to celebrate the actual starting of the construction. The second ceremony took place when the level of the entrance gate lintel was reached. While putting the lintel in place, an animal was slaughtered and the whole village gathered to celebrate this important occasion. The completion of the gate announced the beginning of a new family.

Special attention was given to the gate by the family members who decorated and maintained it. The gate was usually decorated with china plates which were brought from the city by working migrants. They were commonly placed above the gate in the form of a triangle. As Am Samal described it:

> When you are about to enter a Nubian house you find just before the entrance that there are three china plates above the gate: two plates opposite each other and a third one above them.

The china plates of the entrance gate carried an important message from the *nog's* residents to the world outside.

> It is symbolic.The plates above the door mean that the man of the house is alive. ... If he were to die tomorrow, his women would break the plates.[49]

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49 ibid., p.138.

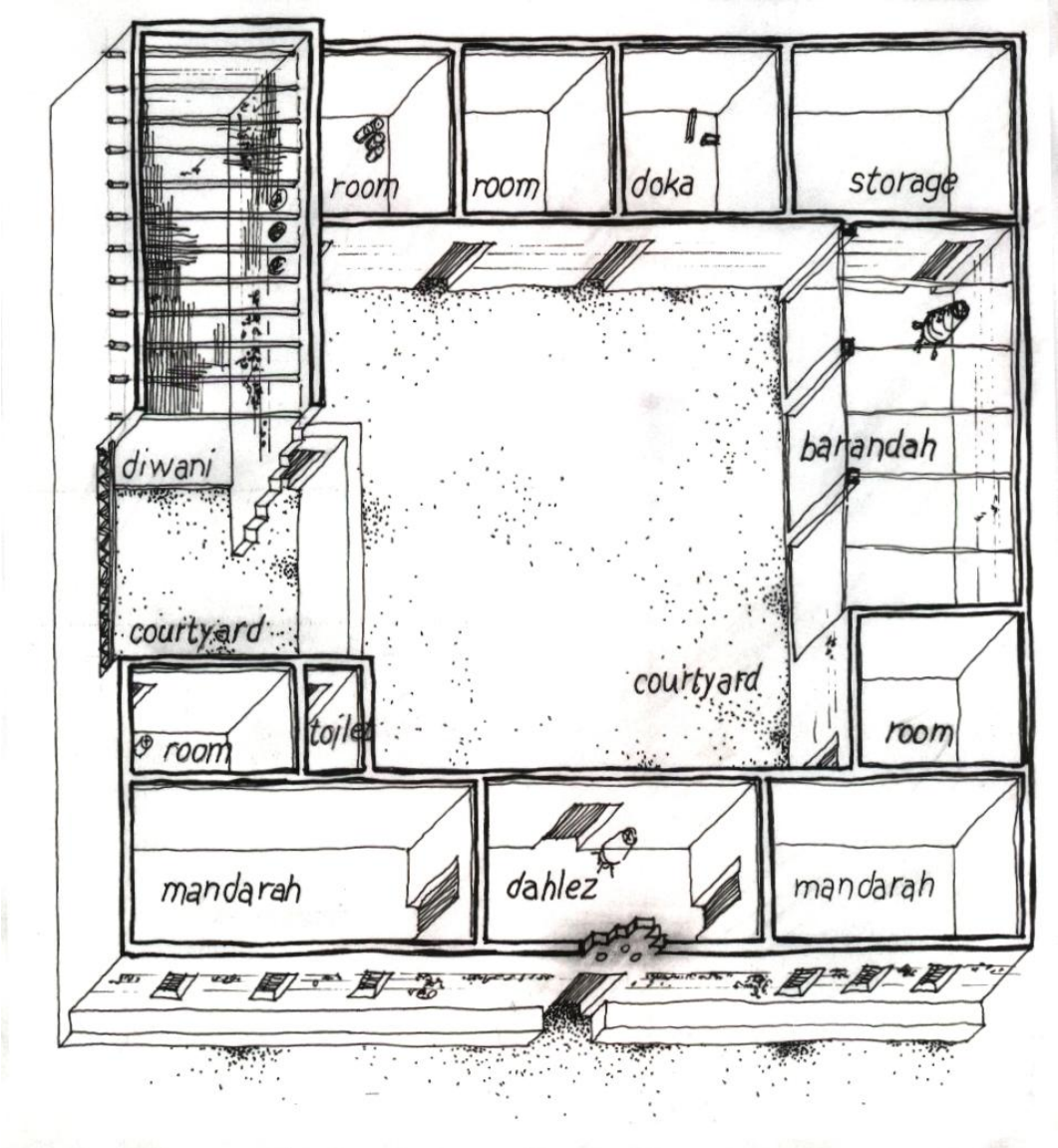

Figure 5.5: The Old Nubian Dwelling.

It also protected the residents of the house from the harm of the evil eye of strangers. By distracting the attention of the strangers to these decorations and objects, the plates and decorations protected the inhabitants of the house from the evil eye. As Am Dosoki put it:

> People also used ceramic plates for decorating the entrance gate. They used to put ceramic plates with the drawings especially on the entrance wall and the exterior facades. The plates were placed to protect them from the evil eye. By placing many plates on the door, they wanted the strangers who were entering the house to look at the plates so that if any one of them had an evil eye he would not harm the owners of the house. The china plates were usually brought from Egypt or Sudan.

Dahleez **: The Entrance hall**

The entrance hall, or *dahleez*, was a transitional area "which served as a middle ground between the public and private spheres of the house."[50] Because the gate had no doors, it allowed the *dahleez* to be integrated with the public sphere outside, but the strong emphasis placed on the gate suggested that whatever was behind it belonged to the private sphere of the house. Once inside the *dahleez*, the guest had to consider himself inside the house. Am Samal said:

> The entrance hall was always open. It had no door or if there was a door it was always open. Then there was a door which led to the courtyard and the rest of the rooms. When you receive a guest and he does not find you, he can stay in the shade until you arrive. In the *dahleez* there is water and a toilet. If the guest is coming from a far place he can perform the ablution and pray. There were two *zeers* (water containers) at the entrance hall.

Mandarah **: The Guests' room**

Receiving guests was an important part of life in old Nubia. Due to the isolation of the villages and the difficult long roads they had to travel, expecting a guest was something each home had to be prepared for. Am Samal described it as:

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50 Fernea, Robert A., ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.51.

> Everyone had arrangements to receive guests at any time. The guest was welcomed everywhere in Nubia because the environment forced us to be always ready to receive guests.

The guest was highly valued and it was an honor to have guests in the house. On both sides of the *dahleez* there was a large, spacious room called *mandarah* used by men and women to entertain their guests. This room was the residence of guests coming from distant places. The *mandarah* was furnished with *angareebs*, wooden benches made of palm tree wood and leaves, used for sitting and sleeping with pillows against the walls. It was decorated with plates made of palm tree leaves, pictures, and mats.

***Mastaba* : The sitting bench**

The *mastaba* was a low clay bench running along the front wall of the house. It was common to see a group of neighbors sitting together on the *mastabas* of any house. Tea with milk, a favorite Nubian beverage, was usually served to the group by the owner of the house. The *mastabas* were used by either men or women to entertain neighbors and relatives.

***Hoash* : The Courtyard**

The *hoash* , or courtyard, was a large open area inside the house surrounded by rooms on all sides. All the family's daily activities took place in this part of the house. It was a private space where the inhabitants were protected from the hot weather outside as well as the intrusion of strangers. The courtyard was neither an inner-space nor an outer-space. Its large area suggested that one was going out of the house, yet because it was surrounded by private rooms for family use, it was considered a private, inside part of the house. Directly open onto the large courtyard, there were several rooms used for sleeping and storing the date crop while it dried. Eating took place in any part of the house, in the courtyard or the *mandarah* if there were guests in the house.

The courtyard was perceived as the extension area for the family. As Am Dosoki put it:

> When you had a large house and you had a son who wanted to get married he could take one of the rooms. If there were no rooms available, you could build him a room in the courtyard for him and his bride.

When carefully studying the examples of the historical development of the Nubian dwelling one finds that the court is a fairly new part of the house.[51] There were no courts used in the dwellings dated before the introduction of Islam. The available examples of Christian and Middle Ages Nubian houses suggested that the houses were "maze-like warrens of rooms with virtually no courts."[52] Wenzel, who studied the decoration of the Nubian house before the displacement, wrote:

> It would be useful to establish when Nubian houses gained their present ample proportions, allowing decoration to expand, and in particular, when they acquired courtyards. Burckhardt, writing in 1813 and Henry Light, writing in 1818, noticed some houses with courtyards in Egyptian Nubia, at Ibrim and Derr, as well as in a few other unspecified villages, and also south of Nubia, around Berber and Damer. There the houses consisting of a large yard divided into an inner and outer court, not unlike Mahas Nubian houses today. ... Walled houses with courtyards in North Africa are often due to conversion to Islam and to the Muslim habit of keeping women from strangers' eyes. Egyptian Nubia, Dongola and Berber, where courtyards were noticed in the nineteenth century, were nearer regions of strong Islamic power than was Nubia of the Mahas, Egyptian Nubia being near Cairo, while Dongola and Berber were near the pilgrim route from Mecca which passed through Berber and continued Eastwards to the Red Sea.[53]

Diwani : The bridal hall

Travellers through Nubia always admired the clean, small villages and houses. Greener[54], a traveller through Nubia in 1964, wrote:

> The village was sweet to see. We were right against it. White and pink and brown houses were set at random on the rocky slopes, joined by walls and crooked steps and stairways. For ornament, dinner plates, saucers and even souptureen lids were fixed into the walls...The inner rooms were reached by crossing a small courtyard behind the guests room

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51 See Figure 5.3.

52 Wenzel, Marian, House Decoration in Nubia, Art and Society Series, Duckworth, London, 1972, p.16.

53 ibid., p.20.

54 Greener, Leslie, High Dam Over Nubia, The Viking Press:New York, 1962 p.45-48.

> in the facade. The room the woman showed us, lit only by the open door, was like an art-gift store. For a moment I was so astonished that I asked if it was indeed a shop. But no; this was the custom in Nubia. The married bedroom contains everything the couple treasures, on display like a museum. The walls were covered with flag-shaped fans in strong colors, woven mats in colored straw and cotton, sometimes four deep, and the round shield-shaped things of basketry.

Whenever a discussion starts about the Nubian house-- or Nubia in general-- the first thing that a Nubian talks about is the *diwani*. For Am Dongolawi the *diwani* is a *house within the house*, as he put it. He described it saying:

> There was something called the *diwani*, where the wedding ceremonies were held. It was 18 meters long. There was something called the *diwani-norka* where the youth used to gather on the wedding day. The *diwani* was made for the bride and her groom so they could be in private there. It was a house within the house.

The *diwani* was where the bride and the groom resided for an extended period of time after marriage. It was furnished with *angareebs* and decorated with plates and mats. It was the best maintained and decorated part of the house and usually occupied a large area. It was rightly considered an independent house within the large house. As Am Gamal put it:

> The *diwani* is a very old style. If you had a daughter who was getting married, what would you do with her? You could not kick her and her groom out. They would live in the *diwani* where they had a sitting room and a bedroom. The bride and groom would stay there depending on the groom's financial conditions. They might stay there for a year or two or they could leave the next day. In any case, it was the groom who came to the bride's house.

The *diwani* was a very important element in marriage arrangements in old Nubia. The groom was considered a guest at the bride's house. As Am Samal put it:

> But if you have an important guest, one who is coming from a very far place, you take him to the *diwani* . That is where the important guests stay. That's why when there is a groom in the house he stays in the *diwani* and not in the *mandarah*. That is because he is important. The groom always goes to the bride's house. He is a guest there, an important guest. That is why you find them entertaining the groom in the *diwani* . And the *diwani* is made the same way the *mandarah* is made. It has its own toilet and a *hasel* , or closed room, so that if it is cold they can sleep inside. The facade of the *diwani* is always oriented toward the Nile to receive the cool breeze.

A marriage arrangement would start with an agreement between two families to marry the son of one family to the daughter of another. The agreement between the two families was announced to the whole village by slaughtering an animal and inviting the whole village for dinner. After the two families agreed upon all the arrangements for sharing the marriage expenses, the groom would send the bride what was called *shelah*, a carriage which contained several gifts for the bride. The marriage day was announced to the village by a ceremonial march of the bride's mother carrying a wooden incense container called *ajol.* Whoever saw or heard about that march was to consider himself or herself invited to the festival. It was an occasion for all the village to gather and celebrate.

The marriage ceremony took place at the bride's house where the bride sat in the *diwani* with her female friends, and the groom, who arrived after a walk between the houses and a ceremonial shower in the Nile with his friends, sat in the *mandarah* with his male friends. The dancing and singing was performed in the courtyard. The groom, usually accompanied by two friends called *yawer* to make him feel confident, entered the *diwani* carrying a sword in his hand with which he would hit the bride on the forehead. It was a symbolic action to assure her obedience and faithfulness. He was left with the bride alone in the *diwani*. He would then sit beside the bride and try to talk to her. Part of the ceremony involved the refusal of the bride to talk to her groom until he offered her an acceptable amount of money. It was the test of the bride's cleverness to force her groom to pay the highest amount of money without causing him to feel bored.

The newly married couple would stay for seven days in the *diwani* of the bride's house concealed from the rest of the village. During this period they would go early in the morning to the Nile. They washed their faces seven times and bathed in the water of the Nile. On their way back they picked up a bundle of green vegetable and hung it on the right side of the *diwani's* entrance. They repeat this process for seven days and people of the *naja* would know how many days they have spent in the *diwani* by the number of

green bundles hanging on the entrance. On the seventh day they went out for the first time to visit the groom's mother. Before going out of the house they had to cross over a scent jar seven times while reciting verses of the Koran to protect them from the evil eye. This would be the first time the groom's mother saw her son's bride after marriage.

The couple would reside in the *diwani* for forty days after marriage or until the groom could afford to build a new house. They might stay for one year or until they had their first child. During her stay with her mother, the bride learned how to serve her husband and to take care of his needs. Accounts differed on how long the newly married stayed in the *diwani* of the bride's house. One condition forced them to leave and that was if there was another bride in the house who wanted to get married. In this situation the senior couple had to move either to a new home or, depending on the financial situation, to the groom's father's house. It was common that if the groom was not able to afford the expenses of his household, he would migrate to the city looking for a job and leave his bride behind him in the village.

The *diwani* was composed of several parts. From the main courtyard of the house, one could see the *diwani's* door located in a position not visible from the entrance hall or *dahleez*. The edges of the *diwani's* walls were decorated with brick motifs called *araies*, or dolls. They resembled small children hand in hand all around the *diwani*. They were like a crown on the wall's edge and could be seen from outside the house. The door led to a small court, 6 by 8 meters, surrounded by rooms from two sides. The small courtyard led to a room which had only three sides while the fourth side was open to the courtyard. The *diwani* was usually located on the east side of the house so that the open wall was facing north, or *bahri*, to allow the privileged wind to enter the room. The *diwani* contained a *maziarah*, two water jars filled by water from the Nile, which was an important element in that compound. On the opposite side of the *diwani* room there was a room called *diwani-hasel*, a closed room used as a bedroom during winter season, and a toilet.

The Kitchen

The kitchen was an important part of the house where preparation of meals and cooking took place. The kitchen usually contained an oven and a place to make the Nubian bread called *doka* . This was the name of the bread and also the oven on which the *doka* was made. The oven was a flat rounded plate made of clay, about 60 cm in diameter placed over three ceramic cans.

> A kitchen with a clay oven was also essential. Baking bread, the most important item in the Nubian diet, constituted an important part of women's daily activities. It was the custom to serve fresh hot bread to guests as a gesture of hospitality. Different kinds of bread were baked for different occasions. For example, *shaddi* was baked especially for the preparation of *fatta*, a symbolic meal composed of bread dipped in lamb soup and covered with rice and pieces of meat. Serving of this dish was an essential part of almost all Nubian religious and social ceremonies.[55]

If it was not part of the kitchen, the *doka*, where baking took place, was placed in a special room.

There were several rooms used for storing food and house items. A loggia, or *barandah*, occupied the southern or western part of the courtyard facing the privileged wind direction. It was where the sitting and drinking of tea took place.

In the courtyard, there were usually big jars for drinking water called *maziarah*, which the women of the house filled every day with water from the Nile. The *maziarah* was considered an important part of the Nubian house. The water jars were made of dried clay and were raised above the ground. Finally, a toilet, an essential part of the house, was accessible from courtyard.

> ... the only real windows of the house were those of the guest room and the entrance hall, which were screened but glassless. In each room, however, were rectangular openings placed high on the walls, vertical slits intended for ventilation only. Light entered the rooms from the doors opened onto the courtyard, doors that were made of wood and equipped

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55 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, pp.20-21.

> with a wooden lock moved by a wooden key, an old Islamic form of lock.[56]

The doors were made of *sabras* wood and decorated in harmony with the rest of the entrance gate decorations. The door lock carried a message to the visitors of the house which was conveyed by the position of the door lock called *dabbah* and *sokkata*. If the lock was open and the key was in, it meant that the people of the house were inside and it was possible to knock and enter. If the lock was in the middle position and the key was in, then it meant that there was no one inside but neighbors and guests could wait for the owners of the house in the shaded area of the *dahleez*. If the lock was closed and the key was out, then it meant that the people of the house were away and would not be back soon.

Parts of the old Nubian house were connected to the social and cultural world around them. Their meanings were derived from the world view which the Nubian had at that time. A song about the house reflected how the house was perceived. Am Samal said:

> There was a song about the house that we used to sing in the past about a man who went to Cairo. We used to call it *el madinah,* or the city. People used to go to Cairo to sell their date crops. The trip used to last from one to one and a half month. The man who was living in the village had a water wheel and a cottage in front of it. He was a respectable person in the village and people used to visit him in that cottage. His wife was sad that he left the good, peaceful life and was lost in the city. She was sad because she used to enjoy the status of her husband as the head of the village. She used to think of her husband as sitting in the *diwani* at breakfast time before going to the field. She sang for him to come back from the city. She said:
>
> Remember where you were before going to the city
> Your place in the *diwani* overlooking the Nile is awaiting you
> Come back to your *diwani* and live as you used to be

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56 Fernea, Robert A., ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.51.

Building a House in Old Nubia

The construction of a house in old Nubia was regarded as an opportunity for the whole *naja* to participate and show their support. The event was usually associated with the formation of a new family. Ezz El-Din[57], who travelled in Nubia in 1964, described the event as a happy one which symbolized the community spirit of Nubians. All the village shared in the construction of the new house, men and women alike; some were digging, some brought mud and stone, while others prepared palm leaves for the roof. Everyone participated either to fulfill an obligation to the owners who had helped them build their houses or to assure their help when needed. This community spirit was reflected in all aspects of life in Nubia and building a house was only one of them. Am Samal reflected:

> If I have a daughter who wants to get married, I talk to my friends Sabri, Fakhri, Muhammed, and tell them to come and have dinner with me. After dinner we make a *sarrega* together. With progress, people started to specialize in building because they found it easier to go to the city to work instead of staying in the village to work on the land. Six or seven men in one house were too many for farming the land so three or four of them went to the city and sent money to those who stayed behind. So the men were not enough and some were specialized as builders and it became a profession exactly like what we have here today.

The *sarrega*, or one layer of mud mixture, was about 15 to 20 cm high . Each wall contained 15 to 20 *sarregas*. The builder would start with one *sarrega* and let it dry for 3 or 4 days. He would then go back and add another layer. Because it took several months to build a house using this method, events and celebrations which took place during the house construction tied the house to the history of the *naja* and the individual. This tied the person and the building to the history of the *naja* and allowed for an identification with the community as a whole. A sense of belonging was made possible by the building process. Am Gamal commented:

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57 Ezz El-Din, Ismail, 20 Days in Nubia, El-Gomhoria Book: Cairo.

> They used to invite each other to build a house. They would ferment the mud, mix it with water, and till it several times. The fermentation process required three to four days. On a particular day they would all go to build the house. Some of them were experts who used to climb the walls and put the mud while the others handed them the mixture. No one was paid money to do that. It was an exchanged favour. I help you and you help me.

During the construction of the walls, the owner was to provide food, water, tea, and construction materials for the builders. The involvement of the owner in the construction process and the participation of the whole family in bringing water and food to the workers allowed them to develop a sense of ownership and belonging toward the house. It was not something that appeared suddenly; they participated in its formation and helped bring it into existence.

The making of the roof was another event of social participation in making the house. As Am Dosoki described it:

> The builder was responsible for the walls only. When they finished building the walls and were about to start roofing the house, the owner would make lunch for twenty or thirty persons to work on roofing the house. The owner of the house did not hire people to roof the house for him or pay any money. He would make some tea and biscuits and invite all the village to come and help him. It was a big joy for them to sit together and make the ceiling for him. For several hours a large number of people worked together; some climbed the roof and weaved palm tree leaves to make the roof, others supplied them with cleaned leaves, and others cut and cleaned up the leaves. Work which might have taken one or two persons a week or a month to finish was done in several hours because of the large number of people who worked at the same time. Everyone knew how to do it and by cooperation and sharing of time, it did not cost them anything.

But who decided how the house would be arranged, how many rooms there would be, and what the house would look like? Am Sidi answered this question saying:

> There was a known builder in *el balad el kadim* who would measure and knew how to do the job and put the *sarrega*. People used to tell him what they wanted, but most of the time the builder was to say what was better to do and what was right.

The owner had an image in his mind of what he wanted the house to look like. The builder was to capture this image from what the owner said. They both were to agree on the best arrangement and use of land. The builder was to proceed with the building of

the house. Disagreements seldom happened because they both shared the same view and understanding of what a house should be.

Nubians used the available material in the region to build their houses: sand, mud, stone, and palm tree trunks. A mixture of mud was used to construct the walls to about 3.5 meters in height. The mixture of gravel, sand, Nile mud, animal dung, and straw had to be prepared two or three days in advance. It was "poured into wall forms (boards about half a meter in height, fixed by means of poles on both sides at the width of the desired wall) by the rammed-earth technique."[58] After two days , when the mud was dry, the next layer was poured. In north Nubia, where mud was rare, stone blocks replaced this mixture and a mixture of mud and sand was used as a mortar between the layers.

Roof construction differed in the *kenuzi* area from the rest of Nubia. Flat roofs were common in the *fedija* and Arab areas where palm tree trunks were available. Palm tree trunks were used as rafters "covered by mats of palm leaves placed in the opposite direction and finally by a layer of tin."[59] The walls were then heightened with another half a meter of mud-parapet. As Am Dongolawi described it:

> After finishing the walls they make the roof of the house with palm tree trunks. They cover it with palm tree reeds and plaster the roof and the walls with mortar made of mud. People who want to have engravings and decorations can make their own or they can apply a lime mix after the house is finished.

Where wood was scarce, or non-existent, barrel-vaulted roofs replaced the flat roofs for some rooms. An excellent account of this construction method was provided by Jaritz:

> The two side walls of a room were built to a height where they served as the vault's impost; the one end wall rose to a height that usually was at least slightly greater than the arch's apex. When these walls were completed, the masons started outlining, roughly, with mud, the vault's

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58 Jaritz, Horst, Notes on Nubian Architecture, in Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People edited by Robert A. Fernea, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.52.

59 ibid.

> parabolic form against the end wall. They then began laying brick by brick against the supporting end wall until, after five or six courses, the inclined arch closed for the first time. Standing on a couple of planks across the side walls (which could be about nine feet apart), the masons continued the arching brick laying until the vault reached the front of the room, without the need of scaffolding, centering, or drawing. All the work was controlled by the eye and the experience of the individual mason.[60]

This barrel-vaulted roof was used by the Kenuzi in their new villages which they built after the flooding of their original villages by the First Aswan Dam in order to overcome the lack of wood in the steeped rocky areas to which they had moved. Some of the barrel vaults were built with stone blocks using the same principles.

Painting and Decorating the House

Painting and decorating the house was more common in northern than in southern Nubia. In the south, Jaritz pointed out, very little wall painting was employed to decorate the house. Mud-made relief work, simply, even austerely colored, was more common. Nature, he argued, "provided a colorful and beautiful background for life-- in palm groves, the orchards of mangoes and lemons, the flowering acacia trees, the green fields, and the golden sand. In the north, only rocks and sand were left, but to replace natural beauty, the arts of wall painting, house decoration, and colored mud relief suddenly flowered in the area. Motifs became considerably more varied and rich in detail, and the colorful houses stood on the dull and barren rocks almost as a challenge, as though the people responded to the hostile world of nature by creating another and more beautiful world of their own invention."[61]

Am Dosoki commented on the paintings on the facades saying:

> The paintings on the facade of the house were adopted from the drawings on the ancient Egyptian temples. The paintings were always made of repetitive objects: a palm tree, birds, fish, etc, the things which were available around us. Sometimes they drew a palm tree and a bird beside it. Most of the drawings were made directly on the walls; they did not have paintings. In *el balad el kadim*, they used to plaster the wall and

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60 ibid., p.50.

61 ibid.

> then draw on it with lime or mud. The difference between the *kenuzi* and the *fedija* was minor regarding the decoration of the house. In the *kenuzi* part they depended on the variety of colors, especially bright colors: red, yellow, blue, and green. The *fedija*, on the other hand, used the natural colors which were taken from the mountain rocks. There were persons known in the village: Muhammed Hetta and Alento, to whom people went when they needed to decorate their homes. They asked them to do drawings on the walls, the *maziarah*, the *diwani*, the exterior gate, etc.

Wenzel, who studied house decoration in Nubia, was surprised to find that mud relief decorations were not derived from ancient tradition. She wrote:

> It became clear to us that the striking mud relief decoration originated only in the mid 1920's. The technique was said to have been invented by one man. He was Ahmed Batoul, a Nubian from Wadi el-Arab or Ballanah in Upper Egypt. When he began working, he held an insignificant job. He was a builder's assistant, who smoothed the surface of the newly built houses, putting on a layer of fine mud to conceal the underlying rough-mud building structure, called *galous*. He thought up the decoration as a special finishing touch to enhance the plates that the women were putting up over the doors. Initially people laughed at him for doing women's work, but as more and more people wanted him to do this decoration, others copied him, and finally he was able to employ as his assistant the builder for whom he first worked. ... But whatever the true course of events, it is certain that most of the people between Wadi Halfa and the Egyptian border believed that it was Ahmed Batoul who had invented mud relief, and he gained great prestige as its originator. What decoration there had been before his time, the people could only with difficulty recall.[62]

Decorating and painting the house was customarily the women's job, which was given as a gift during the wedding ceremony. Sometimes it was done by a talented woman employed for the job. They used china plates, wooden plates, or big shells to decorate the facades of the houses. All these decorations were meant to divert the attention of the visitor to the house and prevent the newly born and the inhabitants of the house from the harm of the evil eye. The cross was also used to decorate the large mud jars used for storing food. This custom "was recognized as a survival of Christian custom,

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62 Wenzel, Marian, House Decoration In Nubia, University of Toronto Press: Toronto and Buffalo, 1972, p.5.

and caused some embarrassment to the men, who were more devoutly Muslim than the women,"[63] who insisted on having a cross on the lids of their pots.

> The shapes of wild animals used to decorate the house were chosen according to the different 'powers' they possessed to protect and divert the evil eye away from the house and the inhabitants.

The scorpion owned a death-dealing sting which was enough to counter the powers of evil. The fox had cunning and enjoyed easy childbirth; he therefore served as a birth amulet. The horns of goats, bovines and wild antelopes protected the animal through its life, and so the horns were believed to have the power to protect houses where they were hung up after the animal had been killed. The pigeon may have acquired some protective power as the result of its past association with the Christian cross; the cross was still the most powerful protective symbol in Nubia.

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63 ibid., p.30.

CHAPTER 6

THE DISPLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

> The prosperity which shall cover the Nubians is enormous because it shall bring all the children of Nubia together on a correct foundation to build a strong, healthy society.
>
> From President Nasser's speech addressed to the Nubians in 1960

The above passage reflects the attitudes and ways of thinking which dominated the administration throughout the preparation of the displacement scheme. The displacement was considered a step in the right direction to bring the Nubians closer by relocating them near populated areas in Egypt. The new life awaiting the Nubians was viewed as progressive and prosperous.

Political Atmosphere in Egypt Before the Displacement

In 1952 a revolution by young officers took place which transformed Egypt from a monarchy to a republican state. The revolutionary government under the leadership of President Nasser established, through its administration, several goals for economic and social life in order to raise the Egyptians' standard of living. These goals included: social equality, economic independence, and industrialization of the country. They considered several technological and large scale projects as instruments to achieve these goals. The High Dam was one of the most important projects because it would control the water of the Nile, expand arable land, and produce the electricity essential for industrialization.

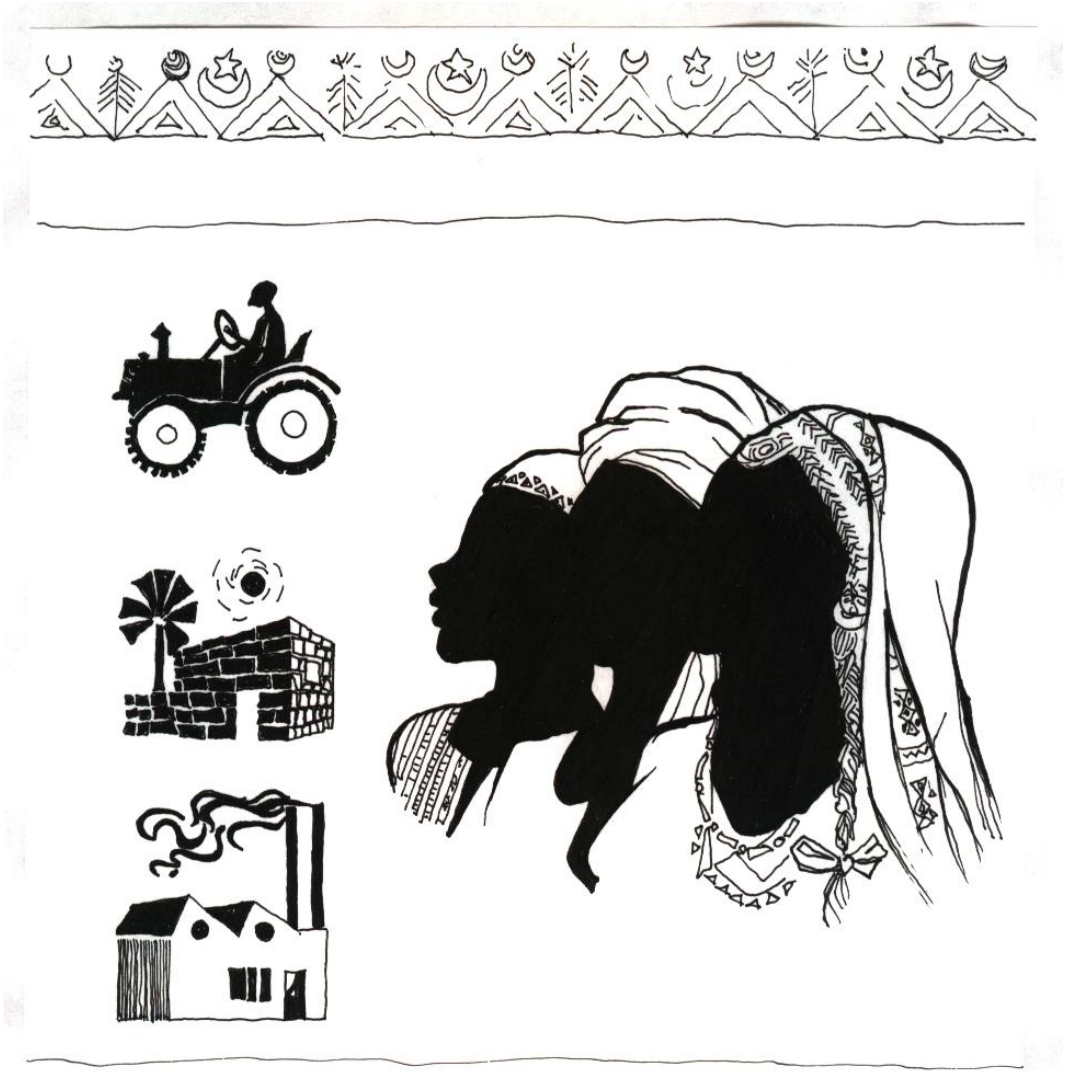

Figure 6.1: The government's mage of the displacement on the cover page of the Ministry of Social Affairs' Report on Nubia.

The High Dam was to be constructed 15 kilometers south of the First Aswan Dam. The 3.6 kilometer long dam was to be built on the Nile basin, 85 meters above the sea level, and 111 meters in height, reaching a level of 196 meters above sea level. The maximum water level behind the dam would be 182 meters above sea level and the lake to be created behind it would be 500 kilometers long and 10 kilometers in average width.

The High Dam project, as with all dams, was a controversial one. Aside from major changes to the environment of the region, the project was too expensive to be supported by the weak economy of Egypt. The world bank and the U.S.A. were originally going to finance the project, but a controversy concerning arms deals between Egypt and Czechoslovakia, an Eastern Block country, discouraged the Western financiers and they finally withdrew. As a result, the project became more than just a technological project of economic necessity to control the water of the Nile and cultivate and reclaim more arable land for Egypt. The High Dam project became a symbol of independence and national pride.

It was not the first time that an Egyptian leadership had tried to control the Nile to achieve maximum use of its water. As Herodotus, the Greek historian, said, "Egypt is the gift of the Nile." Control of the water of the Nile had been a dream of all Egyptian leaders since Ancient Egypt. Some of that control was achieved by Muhammed Ali Pasha's projects and by the construction of the Aswan Dam in 1902.

The publicity and controversy over the dam amplified its importance and "any critical discussions of the dam's potential dangers to the environment were often taken as an act of national treason."[64] All voices were silenced in favor of the project's construction. The nationalization of the Suez Canal and the 1956 war were part of the consequences of the dam controversy.

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64 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.29.

Archaeological and Anthropological Studies of Nubia

The lake to be created behind the dam was expected to cover important monuments and temples of Ancient Egypt. World wide attention and concern resulted in numerous archaeological surveys conducted by several nations and international agencies to survey Nubia in a final effort to discover its monuments and treasures. The legendary Abu Simbel temple was to be moved to higher grounds away from its original site. As numerous archaeological surveys took place, many of the secrets of Nubia were unveiled. Fahim wrote:

> UNESCO became involved and launched an international campaign to dismantle and remove the antiquities in Egyptian Nubia, with various countries assuming the responsibility for their removal and restoration. This international appeal for subscription to save the threatened artifacts, which dated back to the Upper Paleolithic era (17,000 to 12,000 B.C.), met with an enthusiastic response from several countries.[65]

A major ethnographic study was conducted by the American University in Cairo under the leadership of Robert Fernea who was doing anthropological research in Egypt at that time. With a grant from the Ford Foundation, he managed, with the aid of many research assistants from the American University in Cairo, to conduct a full ethnographic survey of Nubia. He published two major works on Nubia as well as papers and field reports. His wife Elizabeth Fernea published a book entitled *A View of the Nile* about her experience in Nubia. Yet, most of these efforts were not utilized in planning the displacement scheme. As Fahim put it:

> In 1964, during the relocation process, some prelimenary reports on the pre-resettlement studies of Egyptian Nubia were presented and discussed at an international symposium in Aswan. While these papers presented interesting and valuable information on the Nubian culture, it was too late to use this knowledge in relocation planning.[66]

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65 ibid., p.33.

66 ibid., p.viii.

The Displacement Scheme

As soon as it became evident from the preliminary studies of the dam project that the inundation of all the villages and settlements of Nubia was unavoidable, the Ministry of Social Affairs in Egypt conducted a full demographic survey in order to provide statistics about Nubia for planners and decision makers who were to develop a displacement scheme.

> During 1956-57, the Permanent Council for National Production and Development carried out physical and aerial surveys to determine the potential flooded area and the number and location of villages to be affected. The study reported, among other things, the impossibility of resettling the Nubian people on the lake shore. Consequently it recommended resettling the Nubians in a new site.[67]

The first scheme to resettle the Nubians followed the displacement scheme used during the construction of the First Aswan Dam project in 1933. At that time, the Nubians whose villages were flooded by the dam were compensated with money and were left to decide their own fate. Some of them chose to leave the region and settle somewhere else in Egypt, while others decided to rebuild their houses on higher ground. In the High Dam case this solution was difficult and the high cost of resettling the Nubians in new villages, beyond the expected 182-meter water level of the lake, discouraged the Council for National Development from pursuing this solution. This scheme was declared not feasible and another scheme to relocate the Nubians in the Kom Ombo valley was initiated.

The proposed displacement scheme to relocate the Egyptian Nubians in new villages east of Kom Ombo was controversial. Yet the Egyptian Nubians were not relocated as far from their original place as the Sudanese Nubians who were relocated in

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67 Fahim, Hussein M., The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A Case Study in Developmental Change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p.40.

Khashm el-Girba south of Sudan, hundreds of miles from their original villages.[68] A water agreement between Egypt and Sudan in 1959 established the benefits and responsibilities of each country toward the project and the Nubians. The border between the two countries divided Nubia into two parts.

> The two Nubian groups, in Egypt and Sudan, to whom the border dividing the Nubian valley into two halves was a political line rather than a cultural boundary, became separated and experienced totally new lives under different resettlement schemes. Egyptian Nubians were relocated in the Kom Ombo region, a new site still in the same Aswan region, while their Sudanese fellows were taken to an area about eight hundred kilometers away from their homeland and situated in a rather unfamiliar climatic, ecological, and cultural environment. This is the Khashm el-Girba area, in Kassala province near the Sudanese-Ethiopian border.[69]

The Ministry of Social Affairs carried out a substantial survey to obtain demographic information about the Nubians, to be presented to the planners and designers of the dislocation scheme. In 1963, a report published by The Ministry of Social Affairs stated that all the heads of the families in the *nahias* expressed their desire to be displaced north of the dam; 96% of all the families living in the *nahias* expressed this desire. While the majority of the villages preferred to be relocated north of the dam, the *nahias* of Sialah and Sinqary preferred to be relocated south of the dam. As for the preferred compensation system, the report stated that 97% of the heads of the families preferred material compensation while 3% of the families preferred currency compensation. The report also pointed to the phenomenon of labor migration and migrant families who maintained their houses in the villages while living in the urban areas of Egypt. According to the report, one third of the houses belonged to Nubians living outside Nubia.[70] The resettlement scheme took into account the resettling of both the

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[68] See Dafalla, Hassan, The Nubian Exodus, Khartoum University Press, Khartoum, 1975.

[69] Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, pp.30-31.

[70] See Figure 6.2: Relocation Sites in Egypt and Sudan.

residents and the *mughtaribeen* (migrant Nubians) at the time of the survey. Priority was given to those who were actually living in Nubia at the time of the survey. As Fahim put it:

> In brief, the resettlement plan included two stages: first, resettling the inhabitants of Nubia; and second, providing housing and social services for the *mughtaribeen* group, those Nubian emigrants who were already settled outside Nubia and wished to join their families in the new site.[71]

Policies of the Displacement

> The government policy consisted of an integrated and coordinated approach involving technical, social, and economic measures. This approach reflected clearly some basic ideological principles of post-revolution Egypt.[72]

The survey to collect demographic data about Nubia was part of an effort by several governmental agencies to carry through the dislocation scheme in the targeted time period. A national organization called The National Organization for the Displacement of Nubia Project was formed as an intermediary between different ministries and agencies involved in the project. The Ministry of Housing and Development was assigned to prepare the planning and designing of the villages and houses. The project was faced with several difficulties from the very beginning. The designated area for the project formed half a circle around land owned by the Wadi Kom Ombo Company and covered an area of 35,000 feddans. The land was all desert with no roads or water sources. There were no available means of transportation in order to conduct adequate field studies or surveys. To overcome all these difficulties the Ministry decided to prepare and design the project in its main center in Cairo.

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71 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.35.

72 ibid., p.48.

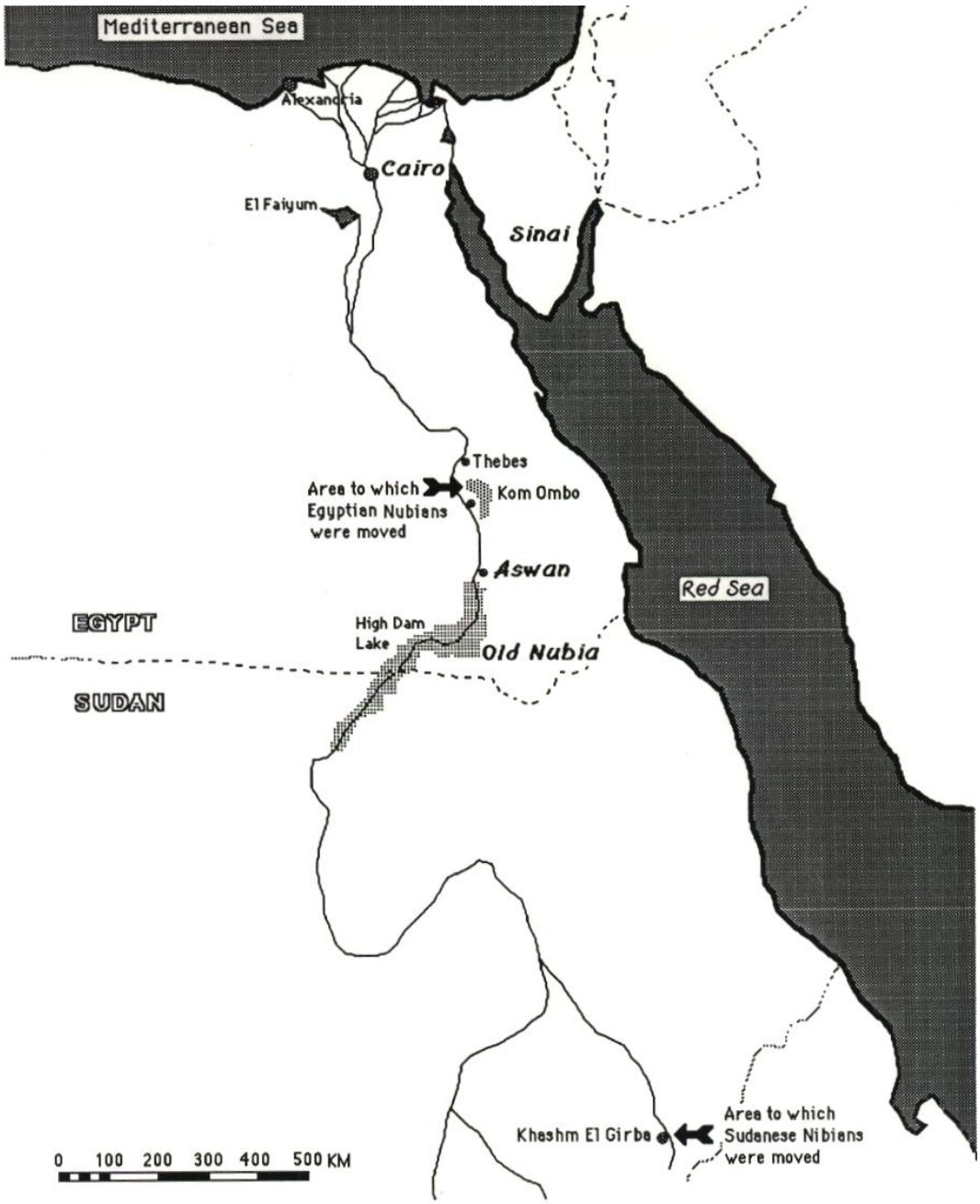

Figure 6.2: Relocation Sites in Egypt and Sudan.

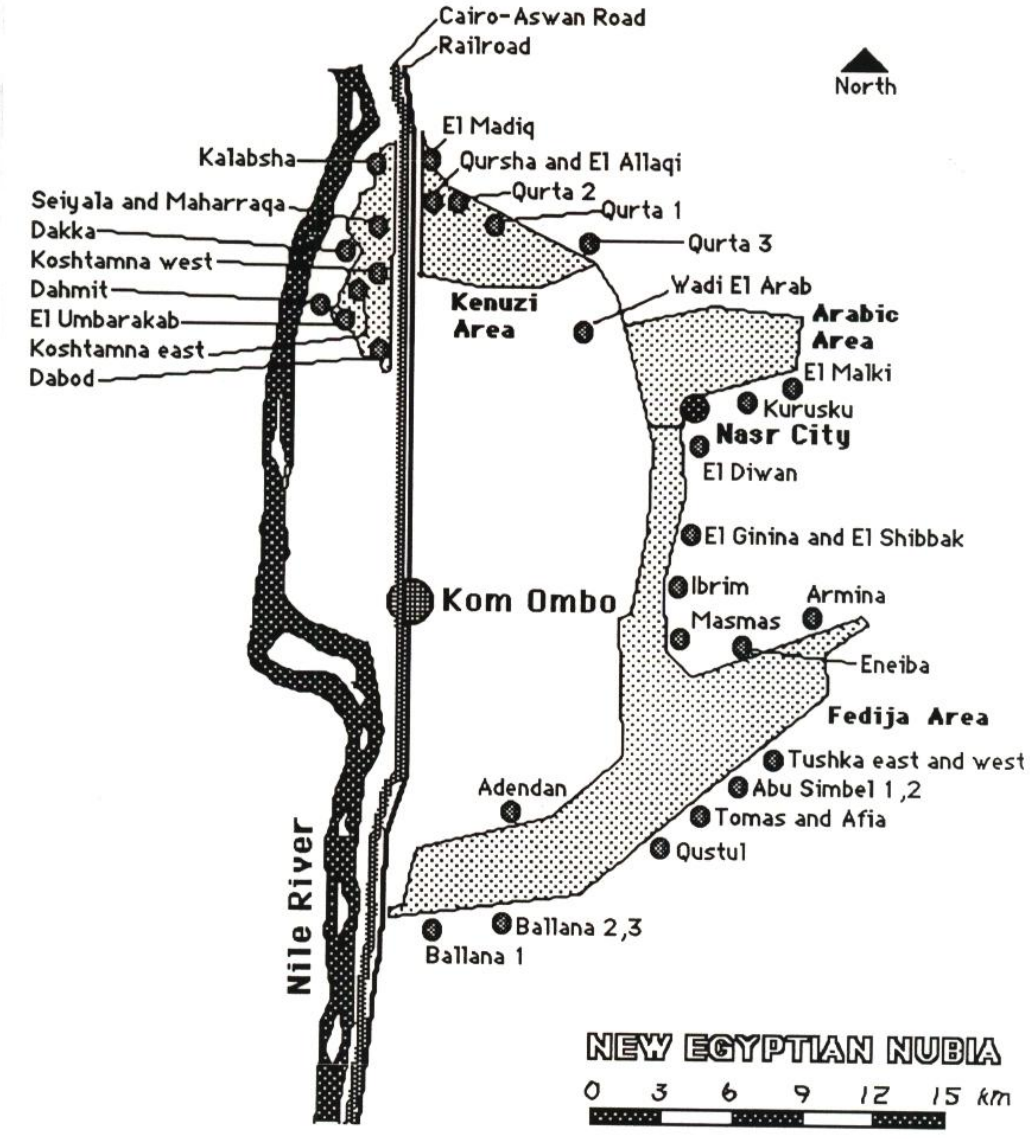

Figure 6.3: Map of New Nubia.

A main strategy of the project's design was to assure equality among the families by providing the same house design to families which had the same number of family members. Another goal was to use locally available construction materials in order to finish the project as fast as possible and minimize the construction cost. Since the project was considered by the government as a *service project*, the goal was to build the project with the minimum possible cost. The preliminary study of the project concluded that 30 villages were required to accommodate all the *najas* and *nahias* of Egyptian Nubia, which would contain 16,000 independent houses to accommodate those who were actually living in Nubia at the time of the survey. For those who were working outside Nubia at the time of the survey, another 7880 houses were to be built later as a second stage.

To maintain the features of old Nubia, the planning committee decided to keep the same arrangement of villages by locating *kenuzi* villages in the northern part, Arab villages in the middle, and *fedija* villages in the south.[73] The names of the old villages were used for the new villages. To introduce a hierarchical system of organization, central villages which contained service buildings-- a large mosque, police station, health unit, preparatory school, and an agriculture cooperative-- were to serve as capitals for each group. An administrative capital for all the new villages was built in a central location. The capital was named Nasser City. Finally, the district was to be included as one of the regional districts of Aswan's provinces.

By March 1962, only 18 months before the deadline to relocate the *kenuzi* villages, the construction work had not started. All construction materials were to be imported from other parts of Egypt. In order to comply with the deadlines, the construction organization decided to build villages close to each other, contrary to the planning scheme which suggested that the location of each village be close to its

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[73] See Figure 6.3: Map of New Nubia.

allocated agriculture land. Villages were built on both sides of the existing Aswan-Cairo highway.

A prefabricated construction method was suggested for the construction of the houses-- especially because the plans were appropriate for that type of construction-- but was later disqualified because the sites of the villages were far from available factories at that time and the time allowed for construction was too short. Another reason for not accepting the prefabricated method was its high cost which was 160% more than the traditional method of construction recommended for the project.

The construction method recommended for the project by the planning committee was to build the walls with cut lime stone from nearby mines and use reinforced concrete roofs cast in place, using the bearing walls technique. The traditional mud construction system of Nubian houses before the displacement was not considered.

Planning of New Nubia Villages

The National Organization for the Dislocation of Nubians established a set of recommendations for planning and designing the new villages. These guidelines stated that the houses should be *identical* using only three prototypes of design. The prototypes were designed according to the number of rooms in each type.

The large-house consisted of 4-rooms, a *madiafa*, a courtyard, a kitchen, a stable, and a toilet. This type was to be used by large families which had seven or more members. The medium-house consisted of 3-rooms, a *madiafa*, a courtyard, a kitchen, a stable, and a toilet. This type was to be used by families of five to seven members. Finally, the small-house consisted of 2-rooms, a *madiafa*, a courtyard, a kitchen, a stable, and a toilet. The small-house was to be used by families of less than five members.

A fourth type was later added at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs to accommodate small families of two members and single widows and bachelors. This 1-room type house contained one room, a courtyard, a kitchen and a toilet.

The idea behind this scheme was to provide equality among the Nubian families. The only deciding factor for assigning the houses was the number of family members.The recommendations of the committee contained other guidelines concerning the construction of the houses. All the buildings were to have one floor, with 3 meter high wall, of cut lime stone blocks from nearby mines. The roofs were to be insulated using a heat insulation system consisting of different types of hollow blocks depending on the construction company.

The openings for doors and windows in all the rooms were to be oriented North to bring the favorite wind into the rooms, and small high openings were to be made on the opposite side in order to create cross ventilation. It was recommended that each house contain a courtyard, a stable for animals, and a toilet.

The houses were allowed only one facade to reduce the street to the lowest possible area. For the two largest types of houses it was recommended that the design include two entrances: one for the inhabitants and their visitors and the other for the animals. Each house was to have a separate *madiafa* to entertain and receive guests. The *madiafa* was not covered but left for the Nubians to cover it the way they wished.

These recommendations and guidelines were presented to the housing and planning committee so they could use them in developing the plan for the villages and the design of the houses. The planning of the villages did not adhere to these recommendations but followed other technological and economic considerations.

In order to save as much construction material as possible and use less of the land area allocated for housing and, at the same time, minimize the outside walls exposed to direct sun, the houses were organized in groups as rows *back-to-back*. The streets were oriented north-south in order to minimize their exposure to the sun and to

allow the rows of rooms inside the houses to be oriented North. By using the *back-to-back* arrangement only half of the houses were oriented to the desired north direction while the other half were oriented South.

The types of houses were grouped together in blocks and separated from each other by streets and alleys. The design of the large type was altered and the back alleys, which were intended to separate the animals' entrances from the people's entrances, were omitted and both types of entrances were placed on the same side of the house.

The heat insulating construction system proposed for the project was replaced by non-insulating flat, concrete roofs which were cheaper than the hollow block roofs recommended by the guidelines. The flat, reinforced, and concrete roofs were not insulated and allowed the heat to penetrate into the rooms, where poor ventilation trapped the heat inside.

The Displacement Experience

In *el balad el kadim* (old Nubia) news about the displacement was disregarded as false rumors and empty talk. It was not possible for the Nubians to conceive the idea that they could be removed and that all their *najas*, houses, and land be covered forever by the waters of the lake. As Am Samal put it:

> We did not believe it at all. We did not think that the displacement was possible until the neighboring villages were being evacuated.

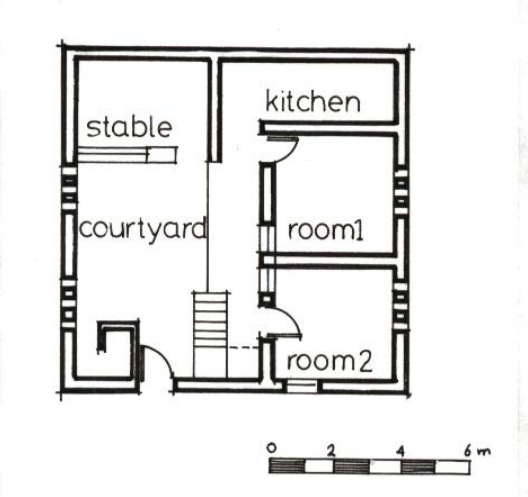

Figure 6.4: Type 2-room House.

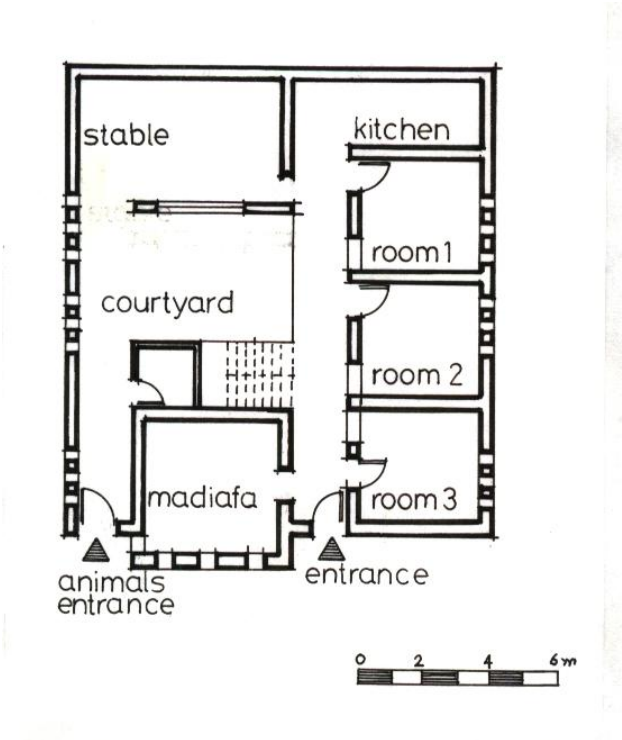

Figure 6.5: Type 3-room House.

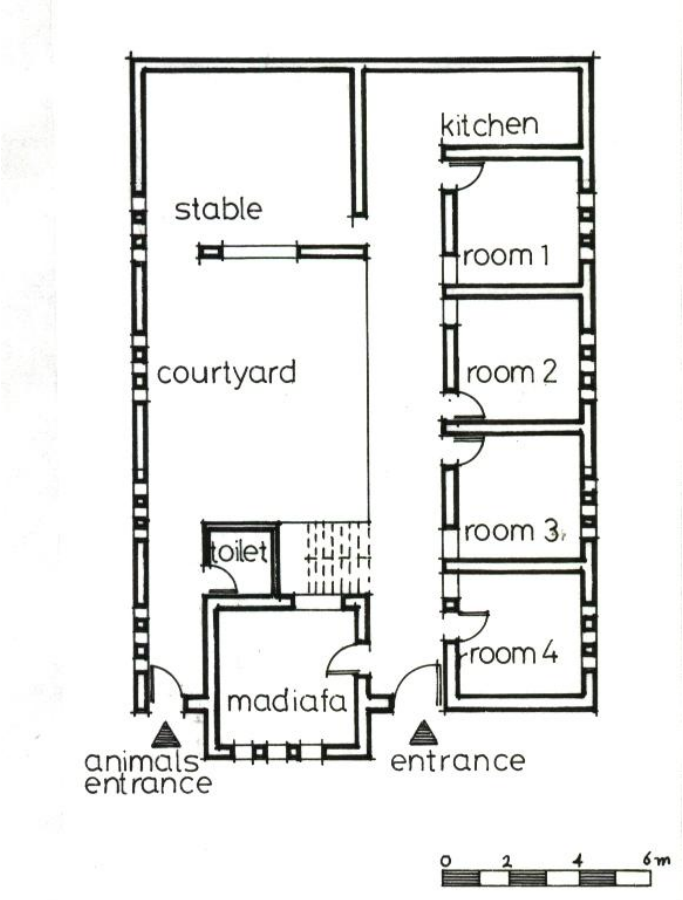

Figure 6.6: Type 4-room House.

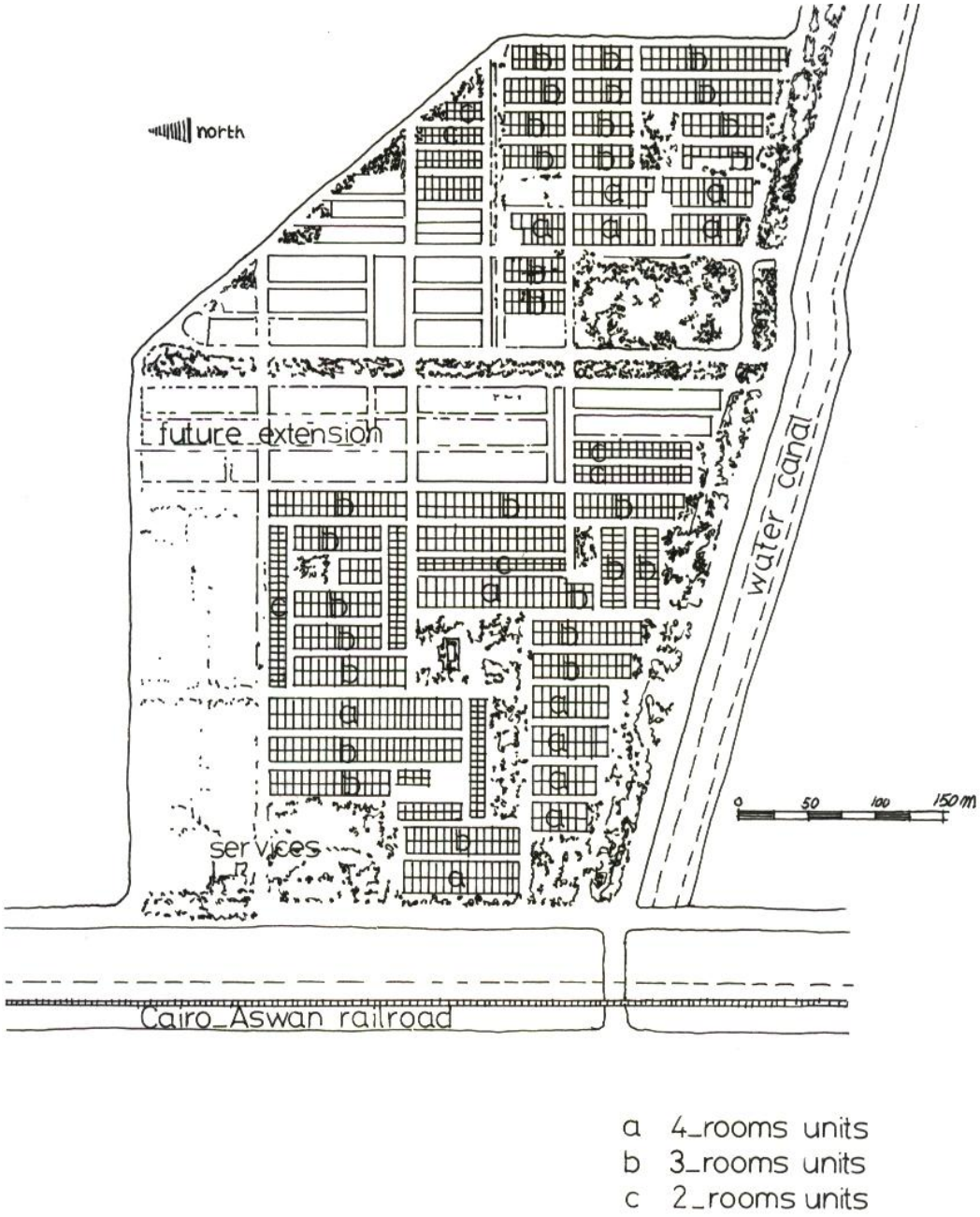

Figure 6.7: Example of Village Planning.

Attitudes, mixed with hopes and dreams, toward the displacement varied. People who enjoyed economic stability were not enthusiastic about moving. Among them were the few prosperous farmers, shopkeepers, boat owners, and government employees. Age and sex were also important in determining people's attitude toward the displacement. Young people tended to be optimistic, and men looked forward to a more exciting life and a broader range of economic and social opportunities. Women anticipated speedy marriages or more frequent reunions with their husbands. Am Gamal reflected:

> At *El-Tahjir* some people were sad while others were happy. Confusion. There were three groups: the first group was sad to leave their land, the second was happy to see a new country, and the third group was confused and wondered about the future.

All the Nubians looked forward with enthusiasm to an increase in social services which the government promised would accompany resettlement. Am Samal recalled:

> Before the High Dam we used to make songs about the new houses. We used to envision the new houses and sing that we would be sitting on the balconies singing and playing music like we used to do in Cairo, Boulak, and Abdeen, that we would be enjoying the electricity, the light, and so on. We came here with these visions.

The displacement day was an unforgettable experience for all the Nubians. Am Samal commented:

> The displacement day was horrible, strange emotions of all types. A person who had been living for fifty years was leaving his land, his house, and his fruitful palm trees. He was walking, deranged, talking to himself, hallucinating incomprehensible words, perplexed, not knowing what to do. A young man was happy for no obvious reason. A child was crying and another one playing. When we were going down to the containers-- because we came here in containers, the same ones used to transport sheep and camels were used to transfer human beings-- a little child was hugging his dog and crying. He insisted on taking his dog with him but that was forbidden. No one was allowed to take anything. It was like the *judgement day*.

The attitudes of the Nubians and the administration were different. The governmental employees viewed it as a task to be accomplished and were rushed by deadlines and bureaucratic restrictions. Am Samal continued:

> The officer was standing on the shore while the women, each having her two or three *falka*-- in which we use to bake the *doka*-- were

> trying to get into the boat. The women were afraid to put their *falka* in the wooden boxes because they would break easily. So each woman was carrying her *falka*. These things did not have a material value but they had emotional value for the women who were carrying them. If the people who were responsible for the displacement understood people's emotions, they would have put a blanket on the floor to put those *falkas* on and wrote the names of the women on them. That would have been a very big thing. The officer was standing on the shore shouting at the women, "Give me this thing, and give me that thing," and smashing them to the ground. Piles and piles of broken *mawageer* and things were smashing. He was shouting, " You are going to a house that has every thing."

Attitudes of the Administration

> It is important to consider the general attitudes of the administrators as well as the Nubians to be able to understand how the environment emerged as a whole in the atmosphere that presided at that time. As an overall generalization of the situation, the government was viewed as an entity of itself. One has a different personality as a government employee than his normal one outside the office. Bureaucracy alienated people from government including government employees.[74]

The planning and designing of the villages of Nubia reflected several assumptions and stereotyped images of the Nubians' way of life by the designers living in Cairo. Technological considerations dominated the concerns of the designers and many of the fundamental design recommendations by the displacement organization were sacrificed in favour of cheaper and faster schemes.

> Nevertheless, government policy toward Nubian resettlement was unilateral in nature, i.e., there was no actual Nubian participation in plan formulation. ... The Nubian voice was always heard, but seldom taken account of except in cases where it was possible to accommodate Nubian desires easily within the general framework of the government.... Administrators, belonging to different subcultures, see Nubians in terms of stereotypes involving backwardness and stupidity.... On the basis of this implicit assumptions, they think that Nubians must accept with gratitude what is offered to them.[75]

The superior attitude held by the displacement officials resulted in ignorance of the value of the Nubians' participation in planning and designing of the villages and houses. For example, it was mentioned in the Ministry of Social Affairs' report on the

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74 Fahim, Hussein M., The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A Case Study in Developmental Change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p.60.

75 ibid., p.46.

displacement of Nubians that the Nubians were consulted during the designing of the houses and that a full-scale model was built in order for delegates and Nubian representatives to see it and comment on it. Yet the houses that were produced were not acceptable for the Nubians, which meant that either these delegates were shown a different model than the one used to build the new houses or that they did not communicate all their disagreement to the officials, who were not interested in listening to what they considered to be the *uneducated* Nubians.

> In general, members of the Egyptian bureaucracy believed in their superiority to the common people. On the other hand, fear and suspicion of the government and its officials is a basic orientation among Egyptians, particularly in rural areas.[76]

The design decisions were flowing in one direction, from top to bottom, and the views of the Nubians were not seriously considered. As Am Gamal put it:

> When they came to ask us whether we wanted to go to Kom Ombo or to the mountains, they had their hidden agenda which was different from what we were being told. They cheated us.They said that they were going to do this and that. They took two or three representatives and bribed them to say that everything was perfect.

The design of the villages reflected the stereotyped image of Nubians as farmers and rural people which was held by the designers. For example, a stable inside the house was a typical design feature of all rural housing in Upper Egypt. This arrangement was not acceptable for the Nubians, who were not used to having animals inside their houses. The underlying assumption was the typicality of people's needs, wants, and ways of living which encouraged the designers to use typical designs of houses used in other rural areas in Egypt.

The types of houses were named after how many bedrooms they contained, following the assumption that houses were mainly used for sleeping. Services were

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76 Fahim, Hussein M., The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A Case Study in Developmental Change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p.45.

provided according to the number of rooms in each house. The houses were mainly designed as *sleeping shelters* not as places for living.

The designers and planners did not have an understanding of other disciplines which would have enabled them to learn about the Nubians' culture, and they did not have the means to communicate with other architects knowledgeable about Nubia. They also did not use the available studies about Nubian life in general.

> In the Nubian situation, we also find that the Nubians' image of the government is that of control and imposition. They viewed the administration who served in old Nubia as either inexperienced or expelled by the government. Nubians had very little contact with government officials or other citizens due to geographical isolation and apparent culture distinctions. Because of their past experience, Nubians hardly trusted the administrators' promises and plans.[77]

Lack of knowledge about the Nubians and their way of living contributed to the lack of understanding and the production of unsuitable designs for the houses. The designers and planners of the project did not search for knowledge useful in the design of the villages other than empirical knowledge of basic needs and technological considerations.

The houses and villages of old Nubia were documented in several publications. These documents were not utilized for the production and design of the new houses at any stage. The main concerns were economic constraints, time schedules, systems of construction, and availability of materials.[78] For example, the *diwani* as a basic element in the Nubian house was ignored in the government design. The goal was not to provide a similar place for the Nubians as the one in which they used to live but rather to change and modify their life and make them live a better life in a modern environment.

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[77] ibid., p.46.

[78] See Ata-Allah, Hani Louis, An Analytical Study of Nubians Modifications of the Displacement Houses at Kom Ombo, Masters Thesis presented to The College of Fine Arts, Cairo, 1982.

The design and construction system of the new houses was an imposition of strange meanings and different views of life. These were a reflection of the social, political, economical, and cultural situation in Cairo, where decisions were taken on the people who were to be *housed* in the new location.

Problems of Village Planning and House Design

The differences between the environment of old Nubia and the environment of New Nubia created several problems for the Nubians. Aside from the problem of incomplete houses and inadequate services, no source of drinking water was available and the villages were very far from the Nile. Am Samal recalled his experience saying:

> It was like the judgement day. Houses were under construction, 60 to 70 per cent of the houses were not built. They were only marked on the ground. When we arrived, drinking water was not available. There was a movable tank that used to come and pour the water in a basin from which we drank. At the end of this street there was a large basin for water where those who were working in the construction of the houses, the *saidis*, used for bathing. We had to drink from that basin. A whole generation of children had diarrhea. Ninety per cent of the small children of *El-Tahjir* year died from the heat of the sun and the polluted water. There was a day in 1969 or 1970 where the first grade classes were empty. A whole generation disappeared.

A feeling of estrangement and alienation dominated the Nubians' perception of the new environment. For them, these were strange houses and villages which they had no other choice but to live in. Reflecting on the environment in *el Tahjir* villages, Am Gamal said:

> I felt like going into a prison. The houses were very small like a needle's eye. What could we do? It was like asking a prisoner what type of prison did he like. We were in a prison.

The location of the villages being far from the Nile changed the Nubians' relationship with the river which was considered the only source of water and a life giver for the whole region. More important than the houses was Nubians' relationship with the

land which was significantly altered by the new planning of the villages. Am Sherif commented:

> At *el balad el kadim* there was the Nile and the palm trees then there were 2 or 3 kilometers of farm lands and then the houses. In the farm land we used to cultivate our vegetables and raise our animals. No one would take some body else's animals. The animals were tied down in there stables. There were 2 to 3 kilometers between us and them. My *fas* and farming tools were left there, and may be some of my clothes too. Nothing would happen to them. No one would come even close to them.

The Nubians had a direct relationship with their agriculture land which they were able to see all the time from their houses. The setting allowed for a continuous and direct relationship with the natural environment. At the new villages, the agriculture land was located far from the villages and their relationship with the farm land was altered. The land became a place for work and lost its meaning as part of the environment. It became alienated both physically and emotionally. Women were not able to participate in cultivating the land because it was located far from the houses. Men did not feel safe and secure in their land.

> In order to accomodate large numbers of people and reduce building costs, the new Nubian villages were arranged around strait, western-style streets, with houses sharing adjoining walls. The shift from small dispersed hamlets to large, almost contingeous villages resulted in far more contact among strangers and more noise, activity, and congestion than the Nubians were accustomed to.[79]

The new villages were built using four types of houses. These houses were allocated to the Nubians according to the size of the family regardless of their relationship to each other. Owners of farm land were sometimes allocated houses smaller than those allocated to those who were working for them. The houses were grouped in different parts of the villages depending on their size. Relatives and brothers, who were neighbors in old Nubia, were allocated houses far from each other. The pattern of

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79 Fahim, Hussein M., The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A Case Study in Developmental Change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p.59.

residence based on extended family was not possible to observe. As Am Samal commented:

> As soon as we came here we found that it was all planned by the government. Any family of 4 persons or more was assigned a 4-room unit, families of 3 or 4 were assigned 3-room unit, families of 2 to 3 persons were assigned 2-room units, and bachelors and widows were assigned 1-room units. We had no say in that at all.

The houses were allocated according to the size of the family at the time of displacement. Fernea, who observed the Nubians' initial adaptation to the new environment, wrote:

> In Old Nubia, neighborhoods were formed largely by natural groupings of close kin. In New Nubia the assignment of houses ignored the existing social and kin groups and was based only on the size of the household unit recorded in the 1961 census.[80]

This strategy also caused several problems when the young generation grew up and wanted to marry. As Am Dosoki put it:

> In *el balad el kadim* when you had a large house and you had a son who wanted to get married he could get any room. If there were no rooms available, you build him a room in the courtyard. That was the case then. Now it is different.

The Nubians who were not residing in their villages at the time of the displacement were not assigned houses in the new villages. They became known as *el mughtaribeen*, or the migrants. Those who were actually living there were the only ones allocated houses in the new villages. Different Nubian ethnic groups which were not neighbors before the displacement became neighbors because of the planning scheme which located their villages close to each other. They shared services and were forced to be in contact with each other which created problems especially for villages which belonged to two different groups.

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[80] Fernea, A. Robert, and John G, Kennedy, Initial Adaptation to Resettlement: A new life for Egyptian Nubians, Current Anthropology, Vol.7, No. 3, June 1966, p. 349-354.

The houses were designed with a stable for the animals which created a problem for the Nubians. The Nubians used to keep their animals in the agriculture land and not bring them into their houses. Some managed to build stables across from their houses to keep their animals.

The houses were designed as final products following the views of the architects in Cairo. They were designed using four design prototypes which resulted in a repetitive and monotonous lay out. The perception of the new houses and villages was difficult for those who lived their lives in a different environment. Am Samal reflected:

> All the houses looked alike. They were arranged in rows. All the doors looked alike and you could not distinguish one from the other. Especially the elderly almost went crazy. The houses looked alike, the doors were similar, the facades of the houses were similar. The elderly used to mistake their houses and enter other people's houses or mistake the alley and enter another alley for almost a year a year after the displacement. Most of them put signs to be able to identify their houses. A man put a flag over his house. We made some changes and modifications. For example, when I enter this alley I know that my house is painted blue and the windows are dark blue and so on.

The small courtyards were no longer the focus of life. They did not allow family activities and ceremonies to take place inside the house. The Nubians were forced to use the public streets as an extension to their houses. The small area of the displacement houses, compared to the houses of old Nubia, prohibited the Nubians from conducting marriage and birth ceremonies inside the houses.[81] As Am Gamal put it:

> Most Nubians were used to living in large spacious houses. The old house was about the area of four of these houses. Some houses occupied half a feddan.

There were some features from the old Nubian house that were integrated in the design of the new house: the ventilation openings, the hangers from the ceiling, and the court. There were several problems with the use of these elements. First the ventilation openings opened onto other houses so people were able to hear each other and that

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[81] The larger type of houses, 4-rooms house, was one fourth the size of the old Nubian house.

caused disturbance and loss of privacy. The hangers were no longer needed since the furniture changed and they started to use closets to store their clothes.

The architects did not understand how the house functioned and how it supported certain social practices and patterns. The *diwani*, for example, was looked at as an excess and a luxury. It was never fully accounted for as an important element that allowed for the newly married couple to start their independent life.

Changes Made to the Environment

As soon as they reached the new villages, the Nubians started to apply changes to the houses and environment around them. The Nubians applied changes to the houses in order to make them suit their cultural and social values. In his report on the *Initial Adaptations to Resettlement*, Fernea wrote:

> Among the most obvious transformations wrought by the Nubians in the new resettlement project is in the appearance and even the structure of the mass-produced dwellings. There is scarcely a neighborhood in New Nubia in which some houses have not been radically altered through the mounting of china plates above the doors, as in Old Nubia, and by plastering the exterior with mud to create a facade upon which traditional Nubian designs may be painted. *Mastabas*, the low clay benches running along the front of all Old Nubian houses, have also been added by many people. Frequently, one man sets a standard soon emulated by owners of other homes along the same street.[82]

Changes were also applied in order to make the houses easily identifiable; plastering the walls with mud mixture and decorating the facades were some of the techniques used. The low exterior walls of the houses were heightened by adding several layers of stone to them. The *madiafas* were covered with palm tree reeds and mud mixture. The small courtyards were enlarged by placing the toilet behind the *madiafa*, in place of the animals' entrance and building a stable outside the house. Ventilation

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82 Fernea, A. Robert, and John G, Kennedy, Initial Adaptation to Resettlement: A new life for Egyptian Nubians, Current Anthropology, Vol.7, No. 3, June 1966, p. 349-354.

openings between neighboring houses were blocked in order to prevent sounds from transmitting between houses. The entrance gates were decorated with brick work and drawings. *Mastabas*, a low sitting bench made of brick and sand, were added to the facades of the houses. There were two types of *mastabas*: a small one for sitting and a large one for sleeping. Because of the small area of the court inside the houses, the Nubians expanded their houses in the only possible direction, the street. The street became part of the houses and was used for sitting and sleeping.

While they were applying changes to the surrounding environment, the Nubians were undergoing changes in their way of life that were less observable than the changes they applied to the physical environment. Twenty five years after the displacement, the Nubians were still changing the surrounding environment while experiencing change in their way of living.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES IN NUBIA

While I was walking in the streets of Abu Simbel village, an old woman, standing in the middle of the street, asked me, "What are you doing here?"

I replied, "I am here to see the houses."

She looked at me and said, "The houses changed the people very much." Her remark was shocking and surprising.

"How did the houses change the people?" I asked her.

She said, "The houses changed people very much. In the past, people were good to each other. Now, they are locking themselves inside their houses and do not care about each other."

As Fahim commented:

> Resettlement has not only taken Nubians to a different physical environment but also has placed them in new socio-cultural conditions. This has resulted in the development of new devices on the part of the Nubians to cope with the implications of that change. It has also resulted in social change, the direction of which is as yet unidentified and unpredictable.[83]

Change is part of our everyday life whose influence we do not realize until we reflect on our past experiences. Because change sometimes occurs over a long period of time, we tend to take its stages for granted and not realize how or when it happens, or that it actually happens at all.

In the Nubian experience, many changes took place after the displacement. First, the environment was changed when the displacement took place in 1964. The Nubians were displaced from their vernacular villages to the planned villages of *El-Tahjir*.

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[83] Fahim, Hussein M., The Resettlement of Egyptian Nubians: A case study in developmental change, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968. p.85.

Second, the 25 years since the displacement witnessed changes of many social and cultural aspects of their life. These changes should not be understood as results of the sudden change of the environment. The complexity of the situation should not be overlooked.

In this chapter, I shall discuss some of the social and cultural changes that were experienced by the Nubians. I shall discuss the themes of these changes and attempt to understand their relationship to the sudden change of architecture and the environment. The change in the environment, which brought the Nubians closer together, altered their values and way of living.

Loss of *el Aman*

Am Gamal commented:

> One thing did not exist at *El-Tahjir: el aman*. What is *el aman*? If you leave your stuff somewhere in the street no one would go close to it until you go back and take it. At *El-Tahjir* if you tie your cattle in the field and go home you don't find it when you go back. Your life is threatened all the time. If you receive money you would be scared to walk in the street with it. Your life is always threatened. If you leave your house for a week you would find it robbed.This is not a way of life, this is not how we used to live in the past. We have changed after we went to Kom Ombo.

This theme was the strongest theme of change expressed by all the old people in all the villages which I visited. All of them felt, as Am Gamal said, that *el aman* was lost. What is *el aman* and how is its loss felt by the Nubians?

El aman is an Arabic word that means peace, security, and safety. It is derived from *amn* or being secure and safe. *Amanah* means honesty, trust, and peacefulness. For the Nubians *el aman* was a concept of social peacefulness which they lost after moving to Kom Ombo.

The isolation of old Nubia allowed for a different way life than the one found at *El-Tahjir* villages. As Am Gamal put it:

> In the past all the country was connected until the cataract. A traveller would travel a long time in our language, the Arab's language, the *Basharia's* language, the *Ababdah's* language, and finally the *Kenuzi's* language. So if you lost a cattle you would go to the neighboring village and ask them if someone had passed with your cattle. If you learn that he had passed one or two days before, you would take the boat and catch him.

The loss of isolation and the new contact with the *saidis,* another ethnic group, resulted in the loss of *aman* (peace) which the Nubians enjoyed for hundreds of years.

> When we came here and started our farming we used to go down and find that the animal's food was stolen. If you leave your *gallabia* and go to do some work with the water canal you come back and find them stolen. What should we do? If I want to go there I don't carry more than one pound. I go there with the worst clothes. I know that if I leave anything there I would not find it again.

The feeling of loss of *el aman* forced the Nubians to change their relationship with animals and houses. Many of them who were not able to build stables for their animals near their houses were forced to keep the animals inside the house. Am Samal commented:

> We have completely changed because the environment forced us to change our way of living. We used to keep our animals in the agricultural land and find everything as we left it in the morning. We used to have places for the sheep and the ducks in the back of our houses so that the wind would not bring their smell inside our houses. At *El-Tahjir*, if you sleep beside your cattle, you wake up and find them stolen. Today we cannot keep them away. I am a farmer and my life is the village and farming. I need to raise a cattle or a bull. I brought the animals inside the house. So, it is myself, my children, my buffalo, my cattle, the ducks, the chicken, etc. All of us in one place inside the house. Diseases and terrible things happen. That, of course, was not the case in the past at all. I have to have a cow and a buffalo. But, because I don't have *aman*, I brought them inside the house. The Minister of Health is screaming in Cairo for better health habits. What can we do?

The loss of *el aman* was also felt in aspects related to the whole community. The Nubians attribute the loss of *el aman* to their contact with other ethnic groups, especially the *saidis* of Upper Egypt. They do not trust the *saidis* who were farm workers for the Nubians before the displacement. They believe that the *saidis* are stealing their animals and belongings. As Am Gamal put it:

> At *El-Tahjir* there were other people who were not originally living with us. Many *saidis* from all over Upper Egypt came to our area

> looking for land to rent. They came with their customs. They taught us stealing. In the past everything was safe. Today you have to lock up your closet and your house because you are afraid that they can be robbed. If there are strangers living with us and I lost a water container, how would I know who stole it? In the past the merchants used to come from Aswan by boats. They used to leave the merchandise, sugar, tea, and oil at the port. The sailor would ask anyone to go and tell the merchant that his stuff was left at the port to come and pick it up. No one would go near his stuff. There was trust between people.

For the Nubian, *el aman* was a quality of life which they valued highly. As an ethnic minority, they were always viewed by other Egyptians as being very honest and trustworthy. These qualities of their personalities were a reflection of their way of life in the villages of old Nubia. For the older people, it is inconceivable to live in an environment where *el aman* is lost. As Am Gamal put it, "How can we live in that continuously threatened life?"

Loss of Community Spirit

In his book *The Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun wrote:

> It is clear that it is in the nature of human beings to enter into close contact and to associate with each other, even though they may not have a common descent.[84]

This contact and association keeps a group of people together as one unit. Group feeling encourages people to support each other and maintain their solidarity and support. In the case of Nubia, group feeling, or community spirit, has changed at *El-Tahjir*. As Am Samal put it, "That which tied us together is lost." This statement reveals an important change of the Nubians' view of life.

Am Samal continued:

> The ties were much stronger in the past. If there was a death in one of the houses and I had a wedding, I had to postpone it for 40 days. I had to take into account the other man's feelings. I had to postpone it until he

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[84] Ibn Khaldun, Abdel Rahman, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, 1969, p.292.

> came and said do it. Today you find two houses opposite to each other where one has a wedding and the other has a funeral. People don't respect each other's feelings any more.

The recognition of other people's feelings and the sharing of community affairs was observed in the past. As they became more independent from each other, the affairs of the community became less shared than before. In the *naja* , it was an obligation to postpone any marriages or festivities as a way of showing respect for other people's feelings.

> Those who did not have enough money used to catch fish from the Nile. Once you cook fish in the house the smell spreads far in the area. If there was a pregnant woman in the area she would smell the fish. We had to give the pregnant woman that food before we could eat it. That is because when she smells the food she can get sick. My mother used to tell me to take some food and give it to a pregnant woman in the village. This is of course aside from the neighbors whom we had to invite to eat with us. We used to sit down and eat together. Today this is very rare. I can be watching my neighbor coming and I close the door and go inside to eat. I am independent in my house and he is independent with a house. If my brother was living beside me I wouldn't care about him.

The change of meaning of neighbors was due to the distribution of houses after the displacement which forced non-relatives and strangers to be neighbors. The meaning of neighbor changed from one of mutual support to one of mistrust. Group feeling was also lost on the level of neighboring villages. As the story of the party reflects, neighboring villages experienced the same loss of community spirit. Am Samal said:

> I don't know who steals my stuff, maybe it is my neighbor. I don't trust my neighbor anymore.

Each person knew how the other thought and was sensitive to their feelings. This loss of community feeling and sharing of what one has with others regardless of its value is understood from people's attitudes toward each other and their confinement to their houses.

> There were many ceremonies that took place inside the house; wedding, circumcision, seventh day of birth, etc. In the month of Ramadan no one stayed at home. All the men gathered outside the houses to eat together. There were about 20 men in each street who would sit in the street and eat together. Today we send food to the *madiafa* but we don't go. It is not like before. Everyone wants to stay at home and eat with his children alone.

In the past each house was an integrated part of the whole society. Today each house is more independent from the immediate society and, at the same time, dependent on an alien remote society. Since the houses are more independent, they provide an opportunity for people to isolate themselves and limit their interaction and need for other people. The irony is that as the houses became smaller and closer to each other, people became more distant and isolated from each other.

Deterioration of Language

Language is a very vulnerable part of culture. In the case of Nubia, language was affected and modified by the Nubians' dislocation. It is undergoing many changes. According to the older people, the young do not speak the language at all. Except for old women, all the Nubians speak both Arabic and *Rotana*. Most of them speak Arabic more fluently. They also use many Arabic and Egyptian words instead of their language. As Am Samal put it:

> With progress we have electricity and the T.V. Our language is deteriorating because of T.V., radio, and use of other languages. The young generation do not speak our language any more. I write songs and they always come and ask me about the meaning of words.

The Nubian language is a spoken language only and usually Arabic or English letters are used to illustrate its pronunciation. The education system in Egypt is based on Arabic, and the Nubian language is only taught by mothers at home. Because children learn the Nubian language from their mothers at home, most of the words for things in the house and activities inside the house are kept alive. The rest of the language is rapidly being forgotten and replaced by Egyptian-Arabic. Am Samal commented:

> When you look at the woman who was born in *el balad el kadim* and came here with us, she speaks Arabic fluently. The young children in the streets are singing Arabic songs. We forgot the songs we used to sing when we were young and the games we used to play. Our games were genuinely Nubian. Now we speak Arabic and imitate what we listen to on the radio.

Mothers, the bearers of language, have become more exposed to the outside world and use more Arabic than before especially in public spaces. Women have become bilingual and the language they teach their children is greatly affected by the introduction of new words and terms. The youth, who seem to be speaking the language, are not speaking the language correctly according to the criticisms of the elderly. Children learn the language from their mothers at home before they are exposed to the world outside. Most of the vocabulary used inside the house is Nubian while the vocabulary of the outside world is Arabic. The exposure of women to the public sphere, especially the market, where Arabic is the dominating language, forces them to speak Arabic in the *souq* and other public places. As Am Samal put it:

> It will not be more than 10 or 20 years before the language disappears. It will disappear with the cultural waves aimed at us. If we can record our heritage away from the bureaucracy of the government which slows everything down with no understanding of what they, the bureaucrats, are doing, we would be doing a great thing to the Nubian heritage. The problem of our language is that it has no letters. A whole society, with its language, manners, customs, and culture, is vanishing. There are many things to be recorded: customs, principles of living, and language.

The Nubians are forced to use new words and terms that do not exist in their language. They adopt or modify Arabic terms and use them as part of their language. They use tape recorders to exchange messages and poems. The Nubian language is deteriorating rapidly, especially because it is a spoken language and not a written language. If the language, the carrier of culture, is to be altered then the whole culture is also affected.

Change of Women's Role in Society

Women are experiencing a different life than they used to have in the past. In old Nubia, women participated in many activities beside the house. They helped men cultivate the land and raised birds and sheep inside the houses. They were essential

partners in growing palm trees. The palm trees were also used by women to produce artifacts and household items. Labor migration of men to the city forced women to take responsibility of land and crop.

> The sudden vacuum created in the lives of the women has been of even more widespread importance. The daily round of work completely absorbed their energies in Old Nubia, but in the new communities, with no need to carry water long distances from the river, less work to do in the fields and for their animals, and houses a fraction of the size of their old ones to care for , Nubian women suddenly have many hours of unaccustomed leisure. Most of the traditional handicrafts cannot be pursued due to lack of raw materials, and the government handicraft program has not reached all the women.[85]

After the displacement, the agriculture land was located far from the village which did not allow women easy and safe access to the land in order to continue their participation. The absence of palm trees prohibited them from producing artifacts and household items. The small area of the houses did not allow women to raise sheep or birds. On the other hand, women enjoyed a new social status as owners of the new houses. The displacement scheme gave those who were present in Nubia at the time of the survey the right of ownership to the houses. Because most of the men were absent in the city, women were considered owners of the houses. The ownership of land and houses allowed women to become more influential in family decisions. Women became more interested in education and worked as secretaries, nurses, and teachers. The government sponsored Centers for Women to provide opportunities for them to produce artifacts.

From the men's point of view, the status of women has changed after the displacement. For Am Gamal:

> In the past the woman used to go to the field carrying a food tray in one hand and a large basket made of palm leaves filled with dung from the house. She would give the food tray to her husband and fertilize the plants with the dung. She would then fill the basket with green leaves for the

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85 Fernea, A. Robert, and John G, Kennedy, Initial Adaptation to Resettlement: A new life for Egyptian Nubians, Current Anthropology, Vol.7, No. 3, June 1966, p.349-354.

> animals. That is how work was done in the past. Now women are wearing dresses from Paris and London and put colors on their faces while going to the *souq*.

Women used to participate in the economic life of old Nubia by helping the men farm the lands. In many cases where men migrated to the cities women took care of the land and palm trees. They used to raise animals and birds which provided milk, eggs, and other essentials for the household. Because of the availability of palm tree leaves and other material, the handicrafts produced by women were known all around the country. The Nubian woman was responsible for decorating the house after the exterior plastering was made by the men. In general the house was seen as more a place of women than men. As Muhammed, a middle aged man, put it:

> Women are not productive as before. In the past they had more responsibilities toward the house. They had to bring water from the Nile, prepare the flour for baking the bread, help men farm the land, and take care of the children. Now they use many electric machines at home and they want more. They even do not have time for the traditional crafts they used to make at home.

Immediately following the displacement, women became engaged in many activities such as remodeling the houses and plastering the interior rooms. They were not allowed to work in the fields because of the social contact with the *saidis*. In the beginning, they baked the traditional Nubian bread at home and did not buy bread from the government bakeries because the cost of the commercial bread was too high. It was not suitable for *fatta*, the traditional food served in ceremonial occasions, and they preferred the taste of the Nubian bread.

Today, twenty five years after the displacement, women's daily activities have changed with the introduction of T.V. and home appliances in their life and the change of their standards of living. Instead of baking the traditional Nubian bread, women buy ready made subsidized bread from the public bakery. It is easier and cheaper to buy bread from the public bakery instead of baking it at home. Although the traditional oven is available at each house, women do not have enough time to use it. Most of the family members, especially children, watch T.V. for long periods. There is a soap opera each

day at 7:30 pm and it is watched by everyone in the village. Everyone stops what they are doing and the whole family sits in front of the T.V. to watch it. T.V. programs end around midnight. The young educated women seek work at factories or governmental bureaus in Aswan and Kom Ombo.[86]

Change of Costumes

The costume used by men in old Nubia was called *arragi*. It was a white dress which reached the knees and had sleeves that reached the elbows. It was made of a very light cotton material. They used to cover their heads with a turban made of a white piece of cloth tied around the head. It was a very comfortable costume especially in the hot summer days. The *arragi* was rarely used by the Nubians at *El-Tahjir* villages. They wore a *gallabia*, another costume used by many ethnic groups in Egypt.

There are two types of *gallabias*, the *saidi gallabia* which is worn by the older people, and the Saudi *gallabia* which is usually worn by the young generation. There is a third type of costume similar to that found in urban areas around Egypt which is a shirt and trousers. Government employees and teachers wear this urban costume at work and change to the comfortable *gallabia* as soon as they return to their homes. Most of the older people wear the *saidi* gallabia while working at the farm and change to the *arragi* when they return home.

Women used to wear a dress called *girgar*, a black dress made of translucent material with colored dresses underneath it. As Am Samal put it:

> The Nubian women used to wear the *girgar*. It was a seven meter long dress to the feet with two meter tail which she had to drag behind her. There, in old Nubia, the land was sandy so when she walked her traces

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86 I was not able to collect more information about the displacement experience from the women's point of view because of my situation as a single, male researcher. I relied on the views expressed by men.

> would be erased by the tail. Women used to walk bare foot so if she left traces one could look at her traces and know who she was. They don't wear it anymore.

Many young women who work as teachers and government employees wear a two-piece dress and wear the transparent *girgar* over colorful dresses when they go out after work. Many of the young women cover their heads with head scarves.

For the young generation, the Saudi *gallabia* reflects the image of prosperity and way of life they are trying to achieve. Their dislike of farming is evident in this costume which, unlike the *girgar,* restricts body movement. Many of them are interested in acquiring jobs in the Arabian Gulf area where many of their fellow Nubians are already working. The urban costume conveys the image of professionalism and clerical work. Those who work in government offices and public services wear the urban costume at work and the *gallabia* after work. The costume worn by different groups reflects their attitudes, images and sense of identity.

Change in Ceremonies and Customs

The ceremonies accompanying different events-- birth, death, and marriage-- are all part of the daily experience of the individual and society. They are inherited from past generations and observed by the community as a whole. Changes to these ceremonies are not easily accepted and those who attempt the change are considered to be either ignorant or arrogant. As Am Samal put it:

> In 1958 I returned to the village to get married. I was never able to see my wife before our marriage. Today once two persons are engaged they can go to the movies or the theater alone. That never happened in the past; it was impossible.

In Nubia, arrangements for marriages were very common when the bride and the groom were children. These arrangements were not always observed. The engagement was formalized by reciting the *Fatiha*, the first verse of the Koran, after which the father of the bride slaughtered an animal for the celebration. Preparations for the wedding itself

took place in both the bride's and the groom's houses. If there was not one already, a *diwani* or marriage room was built in the bride's house in which the couple resided for 40 days after marriage. The *diwani* was painted and decorated by the bride's friends. Samiha Al Katsha described these decorations in some detail. She wrote:

> For the walls they usually used a brown-red water-soluble paint made from hand-ground local clay. They hung colorful mat plates and rolled *bursh* mats around the room; mirrors, hanging bowls called *shallags*, pictures, and Evil-Eye charms completed the decorations.[87]

Hassan Fathy noticed that:

> The Nubian *mahr*, or dowry of the bride, is fixed at the sum of fifteen Egyptian pounds in some areas. The cost of the construction of the customary nuptial room, which the parents of the bride have to build for the occasion, is also fifteen Egyptian pounds. Thus it is not unlikely that the cost of construction of this nuptial room helped determine the *mahr* in order to facilitate the provision of the marriage requisites.[88]

Noqut, or gift offering to the bride and the groom,was a custom of great importance in the marriage arrangements and ceremonies. It served as a means to mobilize the community's resources and to participate in the wedding ceremonies by supporting the new couple with material assets to start their new life. Friends, relatives, and neighbors offered the couple gifts and services. The significant *noqut* was given in the wedding ceremony when the bride's father and the groom's father each in turn announced ceremonially to the invited public the shares of *sakias*, for example, which they would give to the married couple. These *noquts* of gifts and inheritance were the capital of the new *nog*. If the sum of the *noqut* was not enough for the groom to start a

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87 Al-Katsha, Samiha, Changes in Nubian Wedding Ceremonials, in Nubian Ceremonial Life: Studies in Islamic Syncretism and Cultural Change, edited by Kennedy John G., The University of California Press and The American University in Cairo Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York, and Cairo, 1987, p.178.

88 Fathy, Hassan, Notes on Nubian Architecture, in Contemporary Egyptian Nubia: a Symposium of the Social Research Center of The American University in Cairo edited by Fernea, Robert A., Human Relations Area Files, Inc. New Haven: Connecticut, 1966, p.76.

new *nog*, he was then forced to go to the city and find a job for several years to provide enough income for his family.

Through the *noqut*, the new couple was given the financial support needed to start their new *nog*. The *noqut* was recorded in a book, for the groom in turn had to give *noqut* to newly wedded couples according to what he had received from their families at his wedding. The bride also had an obligation to give as much *noqut* as she had received in different forms: mats, jewelries, or plates.

The traditional marriage ceremonies have been simplified and changed. As observed by Fernea:

> At many marriage ceremonies after resettlement, a number of elements typical in Egyptian cities were introduced while a number of Nubian customs were dropped or simplified. For example, in at least two districts the bride is no longer isolated from men with her head covered but, wearing modern wedding dress, is put on public view on a raised decorated platform beside the groom. The cost of weddings has risen sharply because of introduction of Egyptian *shabka* (groom's engagement gifts to the bride). Also, many urban items, such as fancy bedroom furniture, are now often thought necessary for the newly married couple, so the previously fixed marriage payment (*mahr*) has also risen and become economically more important in some districts.[89]

The old Nubian house allowed for the formation of new families and social continuity. The house was arranged to accommodate the new couple for an extended period of time until they could afford their own dwelling. Financial support was possible through the gift giving which allowed the new couple to start their new life. While residing with her family, the bride was independent in the *diwani*, which gave the new couple the privacy they wanted. This situation changed in New Nubia because of the limitations imposed by the small government houses. The *diwani* was ignored as a basic element of the house. It is not possible for the newly married couple to stay with their family after wedding. They have to find a new place to live. As a result, many of the

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89 Fernea, A. Robert, and John G, Kennedy, Initial Adaptation to Resettlement: A new life for Egyptian Nubians, Current Anthropology, Vol.7, No. 3, June 1966, p.353.

young men are hesitant to get married at a young age and prefer to wait until they can afford the cost and obligations of marriage. They want to have their own houses first and then look for a bride. Am Gamal commented:

> The groom used to pay five pounds and some jewelry. Because people were not all wealthy, the jewelry was sometimes borrowed from neighbors and returned after the wedding. So, in some circumstances, the groom used to marry the bride who was wearing the neighbors' jewelry! Now this is all changed. There is something called closet, drawers, mirror, and so forth, which the groom has to buy before marriage. We have no name in *Rotana* for these things, we use the Arabic names. Now, instead of a T.V., they want a colored T.V. Soon they will be asking for an air-conditioner. In the past, it was just a small mat made of palm trees and that was it.

Death ceremonies were also simplified. As Am Gamal put it:

> When we first moved to *El-Tahjir* the funerals used to last for three continuous days. I told them that three days is a long time for the deceased family. It is enough to come in the morning and leave by sun set. In the beginning, the mourning used to last for fifteen days and later it became three days, and that was still too long. It is too expensive to offer tea and food and so forth for all the guests who came every day. One day was more than enough. The first day of mourning is the right of the neighbors to express their support by taking care of the guests who come to the family.

Generational Differences in Perception of Life

The Nubians experience sharp differences between the older and the younger generations which are living together in the villages of New Nubia. While the two generations, representing two different views of life, are living in the same villages, they are in fact living in two different worlds. There is very little contact and exchange between them to allow for any integration of their views. They are affiliated with different groups, have different interests, and engage in different activities. The old do not like what the young are doing. They prefer to isolate themselves and watch the changing world around them from a distance. The young, one the other hand, do not

accept the views of the old but they do not express their dislike and resentment because of their social obligations.

The differences between perceptions of life are related to age groups and to experiential groups: those who experienced the displacement as opposed to those who were born and raised in New Nubia. The differences between life views cross the boundaries of age and sex. Identification by the individual with one group reflects his or her shared view with that group. For example, those who identify with one group share their perception of life, goals, hopes, and sense of identity. At the same time, they resent the other group's view of life and see it as being distorted and unreal.

Before the displacement, the community as a whole had a view of life which was shared by the individuals and transmitted from generation to generation. This life view was slowly changing with time. The alteration of their way of life, as a result of the displacement experience, had a profound effect on their shared view of life. There were generational differences in the anticipations and expectations before the displacement.

As Fernea suggested, age was important in determining the attitudes toward the impending resettlement. While the older people complained about the inadequacy of the new houses and "that in the government houses, in contrast to their traditional houses, animals and toilets would be compressed within the living space and the voices of the neighbors would be heard through the walls," the young people were optimistic and "felt that the new stone and cement houses would have the advantage of permanency over traditional Nubian mud-brick structures, and they anticipated other eventual improvements such as electrification and plumbing."[90]

The old generation, which experienced the dislocation, has a different perception than the young generation, which was born and raised in New Nubia. Their memories of life in old Nubia are still alive. They talk very romantically about old Nubia where there

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90 ibid., p.352.

were no problems and where life was easy, quiet, peaceful, and genuine. They make constant comparisons between the two lives: before and after the displacement. They remember the experience of moving from their old houses and their trip to the new houses as being very traumatic and painful.

The young generation, on the other hand, has a different attitude toward their history and present situation. They think that everything they see around them is normal. They think about old Nubia as a distant past and criticize the older people for romanticizing the past. Most of them want to go to the city and fulfill their dreams of having a job and living a better life. Since education is free in Egypt, most of them are graduates from colleges and universities and are waiting for an opportunity to be employed in the city. They refuse to work on the farms with their fathers, because they consider farming to be an undesirable way of life.

The old generation refuses to participate in the social life of the village. Most of them prefer to stay at home, distancing themselves from the daily life of the village. As Am Samal put it:

> The elderly are more inclined to retreat to their houses. They cannot perceive the fast progress and change. After sunset and *Esha*-prayer they run to their homes and remain there. The generation which saw old Nubia and lived there are more respectable for the old but the young generation which was born and raised here after 1964 are not. They cannot articulate their rejection because they would not be heard. It is not a problem of one person, it is a problem of the whole generation.

There are several cooperative agriculture organizations to buy land at the lake shores. The young do not participate in this activity; they have their own dreams to go to the city instead of going back to old Nubia. The young are more active and participate in many social activities, such as sports, games, and music concerts or parties. They try to use modern musical instruments and equipment, such as loud speakers in their parties and even modern musical notes and rhythms.

The young do not agree with the older people in their view of old Nubia and the style of life there, but they do not show their disagreement in public. They listen to the

stories of old Nubia as a nice and entertaining cultural heritage. They think of old Nubia as a very poor and isolated place. Their dream is to go to the city, find a job, and settle there until they grow old then come back to the village. They like the lifestyle of the city: the movies, shops, stores, clubs, etc. As Am Gamal commented:

> Today the young do not respect the opinion of the elderly. They disregard them as coming from an obsolete era. They don't take their opinion as the right one. This is very dangerous because the elderly are the ones who have the right view and they are experienced enough to make the right judgements.

The old generation continues to be dissatisfied with the government houses of new Nubia. They compare them to the houses of old Nubia and the way of life they used to have there. They are the ones who attempt to build the old style houses at the self-help quarter and participate in the cooperative building activities of roofing. Young people think about the houses differently. They prefer the new style of houses which, for them, conveys a desirable social status, rather than the houses of their fathers, which are considered backward and obsolete.

The young use many Arabic words-- from the Egyptian dialect-- when they speak their *Rotana*, and most of the them speak Arabic more fluently than their native language. The old generation think that the young do not speak the Nubian language at all. As Am Samal stated it:

> The young generation's language, manners, and customs are rapidly changing. They are not here with us at all. The environment, T.V.s, radios, movies, and videos, are shaping them. For example, when they go to the market they have to speak Arabic because they don't know whether the merchant is Saidi, Nubian, or what. The young generation do not speak our language any more. If you ask them what is door in the Nubian language they would not know. They would say *bab* which is an Arabic word. They are not Nubians any more.

Another aspect of difference between the young and the old is the change of traditional costumes of old Nubians. The young generation wear the Saudi *gallabia* which symbolizes wealth and higher social status, and it disassociates them from being involved in farming activities.

There is a silent disagreement and struggle between the two generations. As Am Samal tells:

> I cannot take the fast changing rhythm of life. Everything is changing so rapidly: customs, manners, buildings, generosity, *aman*, etc. That is why I retreat and isolate myself and stay home most of the time.

Cultural Exchange

While I expected that the Nubians could have been influenced by the new cultural context of Upper Egyptian villages, towns, and other ethnic groups, I never expected that they had influenced other groups by introducing them to new cultural norms, values, and customs.

When the Nubians settled in their new villages, they had to make contact with another ethnic group called the *saidis* who lived in the villages of Upper Egypt. There were major differences between the two groups before the displacement and their perceptions of each other. In old Nubia, the Nubians considered the *saidis* to be their labor force because the *saidis* often traveled to old Nubia looking for land to rent. The Nubians disliked doing manual work in the farms and used to rent their lands to the *saidis* and share the income while they travelled to the cities looking for jobs. Although they shared their lands with the *saidis,* they never allowed them to live among them and the *saidis* usually settled by the fringes of the Nubian villages.

When the Nubians were displaced to Kom Ombo, they suddenly found themselves in the midst of the *saidis* and disliked the idea of being among those whom they considered to be less civilized people. They perceived their displacement as misfortune for them and a benefit for the *saidis*. As Am Samal put it:

> We influenced the Saidi society very much but, unfortunately, we were influenced by them too. We were influenced by bad manners which we never wanted.

After the displacement, the Nubians suffered from the loss of their animals and belongings. They attributed these losses to the *saidis* whom they did not trust. They were forced to change their custom of leaving the animals in the field and search for a solution to the problem.

To solve this problem, some Nubians were forced to bring their animals inside their houses while the others built stables close to their houses so they could observe their animals all the time. The *saidis* started to imitate the Nubians and built stables for their animals outside the houses. As Am Samal put it:

> As you see on T.V. the way *they* live in the countryside where animals, chicken, sheep, and women making bread all in one space. They used to have this way of life down there. Now they don't. They build stables for their animals the same way we do. They applied our own way of keeping animals in a separate place.

The Nubians do not think they changed just some of the *saidis* bad habits; they believe that they changed their way of living as a whole. The *saidis* are known to keep their animals inside their houses because of the high value they attach to them. Since the cattle and buffalo are the household's most valuable property around which the family life revolves, they are usually kept in the middle of the house under the supervision of the whole family. This relationship is usually criticized as being a filthy and dirty way of living. All attempts by planners to separate the *saidis* from their animals in the design of the new villages failed because this relationship was not understood. It was never considered in terms of their environment and sense of security.

There are many differences between the houses of the two groups. The *saidis* usually store wood and fuel on the roofs of their houses, which is dangerous in case of fire, and can destroy whole villages in a few hours. The Nubians never store anything on the roofs of their houses except dates, which they use to dry on the roof. Am Samal commented:

> When you go down to the neighboring communities and look at their houses you find that if a person is rich enough, he builds a concrete house similar to the ones we have here. If he is not rich enough then he

> adopts the customs which we brought with us. For example, they used to store dry fuel and sugar cane over their houses. Today they make their ceiling from palm tree leaves exactly like us.

The Nubians consider the *saidis* to be very dirty people. The Nubians are used to having at least one toilet inside their houses-- sometimes three or four for separate use. The toilet is a pit in the ground with two pieces of stone that have an opening between them used as a toilet seat. When the pit is filled they cover it with sand and dig a new one. The toilets are usually without ceilings which provides good ventilation and allows the sun's rays to clean the toilet. The *saidis*, on the other hand, are not used to having toilets inside their houses. They usually go to the banks of the Nile to urinate. The Nubians resented this unclean behavior and taught the *saidis* how to have toilets inside their houses. Am Samal said:

> They never knew anything about being clean. When we first came here, 90% of the houses did not have toilets. Today most of them who have contact with us have toilets.

The Nubians also believe that they have changed the *saidis* attitudes toward kin and relatives. The *saidis* are known to have feuds among families which last for years and result in the death of many persons over the years. This acute problem of revenge is widespread in most of Upper Egypt. The *saidis* usually stress their family ties and relationship to strong families as a way of protecting themselves from being attacked by others. Am Samal commented:

> They used to stress their *ezwa* (kin ties). Why would I need to stress my *ezwa* for? First of all because I am scared and afraid of others. I do not need *ezwa* if I am in peace. I do not need to say that this is my brother, this is my cousin, this is my other cousin, and so on. When we sit together as kin others will be careful not to harm me. They have to account for all my relatives who are going to seek revenge for me. *Ezwa* was here until we came and then disappeared. They now have what we used to call *fakih*, a person who is knowledgeable about life. The *fakih* is an educated, experienced person who has his respectable word among the people. Today they have *agaweed* or persons who interfere to solve conflicts between fighting people, the same way we had *fakih* .

Many Nubians used to work as servants and cooks for rich Egyptian and European families in Egyptian cities. They adopted many food habits from this contact.

They transferred these habits from the city to their villages. These habits distinguished them from the *saidis* who were accustomed to different food habits. The Nubians transferred their food habits to the *saidis*. As Am Sherif said:

> When we first came here the *saidis* had a custom of slaughtering an animal for the weddings and boiling the meat in large containers. They used to make *fatta* and eat with their hands. They would bring the boiled meat in sockets and give each person a piece in his hands. Today they prepare rice, salad, and vegetables and put them in separate plates and cover them with a *gareed* plate the same way we do. They never had this before; they learned it from us.

The Nubians have a custom of offering tea to their guests that is different than the *saidis*. While the *saidis* offer the tea already poured in cups and sweetened with much sugar, the Nubians offer the tea in a tea pot with clean, empty glasses, sugar in a sugar container, and milk that is either powder or liquid. They insist that tea must be poured over milk because that makes it taste better. Everyone is asked the amount of sugar he wants before the tea is poured. The *saidis* did not adopt this custom from the Nubians.

The Nubians mistrust of the *saidis* is evident in their dislike of the beggars who used to ask for money in the Nubian villages. Am Samal recalled:

> Something very strange used to happen when we first came here. There were people who used to come and knock at the doors begging. There were too many of them. This was ended because they never found a Nubian doing this thing down there in their villages. I also think they were checking the suitable houses to rob.

For the Nubians, the most unwanted attitude which they learned from the *saidis* was selfishness. As Am Samal put it:

> We influenced the *saidi* society very much but, unfortunately, we were influenced by them too. We were influenced by bad manners which we never wanted. One of the bad attitudes we learned from them is selfishness. In *el balad el kadim* a person who had a feddan of land and a water wheel was not able to cultivate all the land by himself. It was too much work for one person to cultivate the land, plant the seeds, and irrigate it. So Muhammed, Osman, myself, and so on go and help him with the water wheel, seeds, cultivating the land, etc. This attitude has disappeared. If I am in trouble my neighbor does not ask about me or try to help me. The thing that tied us together has disappeared. I have my own life and he has his. I irrigate my land and do my own work and do not care about my neighbor. That is the bad thing we have learned from them: the

> *saidis*. While they benefited too much from us, we only learned bad stuff from them.

Change of Economic and Political Life

The economic and political life of the Nubians witnessed dramatic changes after the displacement. Am Gamal commented:

> Our life in old Nubia was different than our life in *El-Tahjir* area. Anything was enough to sustain our life. When we went to *El-Tahjir* every one wanted to buy meat, milk, and so on with money. We did not have money before the displacement. We used to exchange things for things; sugar, crops, dates, tea, etc. Currency was very rare. We used to have what the nations are doing now: goods in exchange for goods. We also used to buy goods for credit until the harvesting season.

Before the displacement, the arable land was limited to a narrow strip on both sides of the Nile. "The main crops were millet and dates; vegetables were cultivated on a very small scale and fruits were scarce."[91] The *sakia* (water wheel) was introduced to the region during the Roman times. The construction of a *sakia* required "a concentration of wealth often beyond the means of those owning the adjacent land; the wooden piles that had to be driven into the muddy shore of the Nile, the complex wheels that dipped an endless chain of clay buckets into the water, the platform on which a pair of cows turned the mechanism, and the hollow logs that carried the water to the farm land."[92] Each part was owned separately by individuals who in turn shared the production of the land.

The strategy of shared investments was also applied to other economic resources. A palm tree, for example, was owned by three individuals: the owner of the land, a woman who watered the seedling, and the owner of the palm shoot. Cows were also shared, yet they were considered *risky business*, since they were subject to death and

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91 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping , University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City, 1983, p.12.

92 Fernea, Robert A. ed., Nubians in Egypt: Peaceful People, University of Texas Press; Austin and London, 1973, p.18.

sickness. A cow was shared by several co-owners and a person who sheltered and fed it and was "entitled to its milk."[93] As Am Gamal recalled:

> We used to go to the animal merchant and ask him to buy a cattle for us. He would go and buy one for five hundred or six hundred pounds. We would take care of the animal until it was good to be sold in the market. We would then share the profit with the merchant. That was what we used to do if we could not afford to buy a cattle ourselves. Today, if I am planting sugar cane, I can apply to the government for a cattle. For each feddan of sugar cane, I can get a cow. The government would deduct from the value of my crop part of the cost. I share only because I cannot afford to buy it alone, but if I could I would not share.

The system of shared ownership was the principle by which the migrant Nubians maintained their social relationships with their families and villages despite the limited resources of the environment. By allowing those migrants to invest in the economy of their villages, the system of shared ownership allowed individuals to maintain ties with their kin and family hundreds of miles away. For those who were staying in the village, the system of shared ownership allowed poor individuals to share part of the limited resources either through capital or labor.

There was no permanent market place in the villages of old Nubia. There were boats in the Nile which travelled between the villages and sold goods to the inhabitants. The merchants gave them goods on credit and collected the debts in the form of dates at harvesting time and gave the inhabitants the balance in small amounts of money which lasted until the next season.

The weekly market based on currency exchange is a new phenomenon in the life of the village. Most of the merchants are *saidis* not Nubians. The language spoken in the market is Arabic. The market is the ground of contact between the Nubians and the *saidis* who come as merchants. It is usually shared with other villages, as in Abu Simbel, which made it the ground of contact with other Nubian groups from neighboring villages.

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93 ibid., p.19.

The cost of living in the villages is becoming more expensive because of the villages' dependence on the government subsidized basic food items which come from other parts of Egypt. As Am Gamal put it:

> At Kom Ombo if I see you buying meat then I also shall buy some for myself. The kilo of meat costs six pounds. We are six or seven persons at home. What could one kilo of meat do to us? The egg costs ten piasters. I need five or six eggs for breakfast, that means sixty piasters everyday for eggs!

Nubians prefer clerical work and dislike farming. They run the taxi and bus transportation systems between villages. They hire *saidis* to work in their land and share the crop with them. The young generation are not interested in cultivating the land. They prefer to work in the city as clerical or governmental employees. Many of the Nubians live in the village and work in the cities.

The intervention of the government in economic life is made possible through the administration of sugar cane cultivation and the agriculture societies supplying pesticides and fertilizing materials to the Nubians. As Am Gamal put it:

> All The production of sugar cane at *El-Tahjir* has to go to the sugar factory in Kom Ombo. Each one has to plant one feddan with sugar cane. Its *grave* is the sugar factory at Kom Ombo. That is a guaranteed income. Both the farmers and the government benefit from that.

Many families at *El-Tahjir* who have relatives working in gulf countries became much wealthier than the rest of the village. An unbalanced income and attempts to show off the new economic status resulted in jealousy and envy between residents of the same village. As Am Samal put it:

> I used to go to the dancing rounds but now when it became like fighting and hopping rounds I don't go. It became a show! Women who are married to men working in Saudi Arabia are receiving thousands of pounds worth of gold which they wear while dancing. It became a show of wealth and gold.

The economic status is reflected in the choice of house style and construction. Many of those who receive money from their relatives invest it in modifying their houses or building new houses using modern construction systems. They introduce new furniture

and appliances. They decorate and paint their houses using modern features and materials to express their economic status. As Am Gamal put it:

> There are those who went to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or other places and have some extra money who can do more than the rest. In the past we were all equal and no one tried to be different.

The Nubians were very proud that for sixty five years the police station at old Nubia did not report many crimes. They had their system of social control and considered reporting their affairs to the police a shameful act. Any dispute was solved by a *maglis arab*. As Am Gamal put it:

> We had a system of *maglis arab* to solve any problems between people. If a disagreement occurred between two persons, they went to the elderly of the village who were experienced enough with life. They would invite them to a house. In that *maglis* there would be three or four elderly who listened to both sides of the dispute. They would decide who was wrong and who was right. The two persons had to accept the decision because it was made by those who were older than them. We never used to go to the police station or the court.

This system of conflict solving had disappeared. Instead of relying on the traditional methods of conflict solving, the Nubians report their conflicts to the police station and rely on official intervention for solution. As Am Samal described it:

> Any problem inside the family was solved by the *sheikh* of the tribe. He was an honest, respected, and decent person who was responsible for solving the problems. If an *aeil* (an irresponsible person) made a mistake they went and complained to his *sheikh* who decided whether he should pay a fine or be punished physically. In that way they were able to contain any dispute. But, things are changing rapidly at *El-Tahjir*. A month ago my wife and our neighbor had a fight. Our neighbors called the police and we had to go to the police station. No one was killed in order for them to call the police! We never had things like that in the past. In order to complain to the *omda* (village head) there had to be a killing. For 65 years a single murder was not reported to the police station in Eniba. Today, there is a murder every day.

Change of residency pattern affected the political structure of the community. The *naja* based residency allowed political leadership to develop with kinship relations. Residency patterns based on number of family members and the separation of extended family members weakened the importance of kinship relationships as a political power. The tribal structure was replaced by a governmental system of leadership. The *omda* and

the *sheikh*, important political figures of the past, became less influential in the political life. Several Nubians became Representatives in the Egyptian Parliament, which gave the Nubians more power as an ethnic group.

The Nubians are more dependent on governmental agencies and services. They have to cultivate and sell certain types of crops according to the general policies of the government. They depend on the government for their basic food: bread, flour, oil, etc. This basic food is subsidized all around Egypt and is not available most of the time.

The Nubians also depend on the government for their water supply. Because the Nile is now too far from the land, they have to wait for water from the artificial canal and the irrigation projects. In general, the Nubians have lost their independence with the displacement and have become dependent on the government to conduct their daily life.

Influence of Modernization and Technology

"We want to modernize our houses but not our values," said a Nubian leader.[94]

After long years of isolation, the Nubians were brought closer to modernization and urban ways of life. The influence of technology and modernization on the Nubians is evident at many levels.

At the returnees' communities radios and tape recorders are important means of communication with the outside world. Because *Rotana* is only a spoken language, tape recorders are used to exchange recorded messages and letters. Television and radio sets are common features in any Nubian house. While some Nubians consider the T.V. an important communication device, others consider it a *devil at home*. As Am Gamal put it:

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94 Fernea, A. Robert, and John G, Kennedy, Initial Adaptation to Resettlement: A new life for Egyptian Nubians, Current Anthropology, Vol.7, No. 3, June 1966, p.349-354.

> The *televizion* [T.V.] is a devil at home. It is seducing us as the devil did to Adam at heaven. We stay late until midnight watching it and after that we are tired all day and awake all night.

Easy and rapid contact with other villages and cities became possible using taxis and buses run mostly by Nubians. The simplification of many traditional Nubian ceremonies was due to the availability of this rapid communication. As Fernea put it:

> In New Nubia the trend is clearly for *azas* (mourning ceremonies) to be held for one day only. Guests are served only a cup of tea, and distance no longer makes it necessary for anyone to remain overnight.[95]

The Nubians sense of place, time, and rhythm of life has been greatly affected by the availability of easy communication and transportation systems. Many men and women commute to work or shop in other villages and cities. It is common for the young generation to spend the evening in Kom Ombo and go back to the village at night. The Nubians are no longer isolated from the rest of the Egyptian community.

Telephones are becoming an important feature in Nubian houses. They allow new patterns of communication between people and news travel faster. Young men and women have conversations over the telephone. The availability of cheap electricity allows Nubians to have many home appliances. Many houses have electricity before they have a water supply. The concrete roofs transfer too much heat which makes electric fans an essential feature of all houses. Refrigerators and gas ovens are found in all kitchens.

The tradition of baking bread inside the house was affected by the availability of government bakeries in the villages. The kitchen usually contained an oven and a place to make the Nubian bread called *doka*, which is baked over a clay rounded flat plate that is placed over three ceramic cans. In New Nubia this ceramic plate is replaced by a metal plate to speed up the baking of the bread. Nubians can easily distinguish between the tastes of metal and clay baked bread for the former is not as good as the later. Also,

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95 ibid.

women are buying ready made bread from the government bakery at the market so they can have more time to watch TV.

***Museumization* and *Touristification* of Nubia**

If the Nubians are to persist in more than name they must perpetuate the basic values and norms which underlie that part of Nubian culture which is unique. These basic values and traditions are products of village life, however much they may have been modified by the urban experiences of migrants. Clearly, New Nubia is no longer a collection of villages but is more closely akin to a large, homogeneous suburbia. Can village values be sustained under such conditions? It seems unlikely.[96]

A long awaited project called The Nubian Cultural Museum is under construction near Aswan. It is designed and built by a governmental bureau called The Arab Bureau at Cairo. The new museum is a four- story concrete structure surrounding a small model of a Nubian house made of mud brick. The museum is to house Nubian artifacts and monuments. As a cultural and historical project to preserve the culture of Nubia, it has a profound effect on Nubian culture itself. As soon as news about the museum spread in the city of Aswan, the price of Nubian artifacts rose shapely. It was common to see Nubians and members of other tribes who resided around Nubia selling gold and silver jewelry, personal belongings, and other items to merchants in the tourist district at Aswan. The merchants, who knew about the coming Nubian museum, were interested in possessing as many pieces as possible. As one merchant put it, "The museum people are looking for Nubian items, and the price of these items will be very high."

On top of a hill overlooking the city of Aswan, a *Nubian style house* was built by Abdallah Hassan, a Nubian from Ballanah, as a tourists' attraction. The project was opened in 1988 after long delays because of financial problems. The house, designed by the owner, was an attempt to produce the Nubians' version of a Nubian museum. In the

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96 ibid.

courtyard, Nubian artifacts were sold. A *diwani* was furnished with *angareebs* and its walls covered with plates made of palm tree leaves and drawings. The gate was decorated with colorful drawings and reliefs. The traditional Nubian food was served in the shaded courtyard overlooking the Nile.

In an isolated location overlooking the Nile south of Aswan, a luxurious hotel was built using another *Nubian style* developed by professional architects. The hotel did not resemble any of the former buildings, yet it was *thought to be* built using the Nubian style. At the Gift Shop of the hotel, Nubian artifacts were sold for ten times their price in other places.

Is the Nubian culture vanishing? Is *entropy* an appropriate term to describe what is happening to that culture? Am Gamal said:

> Our old customs will never return. We went somewhere and our way of life had changed. We entered a different world and became seduced by its way of living. We cannot go back to our old way of life.

PART 4

CHAPTER 8

THE NUBIAN EXPERIENCE

As in more familiar exercises in close reading, one can start anywhere in a culture's repertoire of forms and end up anywhere else.

Clifford Geertz[97]

The Nubian Experience in Three Contexts

The Nile, as the only source of water in old Nubia, was considered a life giver for the whole region. Its presence was taken for granted as part of the natural environment. The relationship between the Nubians and the Nile was direct and strong. The Nile was always visible from the houses and the agricultural land. Its water was highly valued and preserved in the *maziarahs* inside the house. The guests were always offered a drink from the Nile's water. The Nile was the only means of communication with the outside world. Almost all ceremonies involved visiting and bathing in its water. The entrances of the houses were always oriented toward the Nile. It was the strong axis around which everything revolved.

The Nile has disappeared from Nubia after the displacement. Drinking water is available from public faucets at street intersections. Instead of going to the Nile, women go to nearby faucets and fill their water containers. Agriculture is no longer dependent on the yearly flooding. There is a constant supply of water all year long which facilitates more productivity and year long production. The Nile is no longer part of the environment of Nubia; its effect is not experienced or felt.

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97 Geertz, Clifford, Deep Play, in Interpretive Social Science, edited by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1979, p.222.

The returnees' villages have been built overlooking the Nile. While they are located much farther from the Nile than the old villages, the arrangement of the houses adheres to the existence of the Nile. All the houses are oriented toward the Nile and their main entrances are all from the direction of the Nile. While the water used for irrigation does not come from the Nile, and drinking water is brought by jeep, the returnees' relationship with the Nile is direct and strong. Their life is affected by its flooding and lack of water. It has become a central part of their life once more.

Date palm trees were another important feature of life in old Nubia. The Nubians used the wood of these trees in building their houses. Dates were the main crop which they used as capital for exchange. Date palm trees were very important in the Nubians' economic life. The trees were shared by several people through inheritance as well as through the importing and planting of new palm trees. Pieces of furniture, such as the *angareeb*, used for sleeping and sitting, were made of palm tree wood and leaves. Sleeping mats, plates used to offer dates and many objects used for decoration were made of palm tree leaves.

The disappearance of palm trees after the displacement has affected many social and economic patterns. Date palm trees require care and a continuous supply of water to grow. They need several years to produce. Usually, it was the women who took care of growing the date palm trees, and they shared a third of their products. This activity has diminished after the displacement especially because seedlings are not available and the agricultural land is far from the houses.

Sugar cane has replaced date palm trees as the main economic crop. Yet it does not have the same meaning as date palm trees. While sugar cane provides a reliable source of income, the Nubians have become dependent on the government, the ultimate collector of the crop. Half of the two-feddan lots assigned to the Nubians have to be planted with sugar cane and the crop has to be given to the sugar factory at Kom Ombo. The government sponsored agricultural societies provide the farmers with seeds,

chemical fertilizers, and pesticides. Unlike date palm trees, sugar cane is not used to produce any other products and its residuals are not useful except to feed animals.

The first crop which the returnees are trying to grow are date palm trees. They have brought several seedlings from Sudan and planted them by the agricultural fields. Their trials to cultivate date palm trees expresses their experience of missing these trees as part of the environment for several years.

In old Nubia, the agriculture fields were always seen from the houses. They occupied the area between the houses and the Nile. In New Nubia, on the other hand, the agricultural fields are far from the houses and are not seen as part of the environment. They have become a remote entity and a detached part of the natural environment. For the returnees, it is very important to have their agricultural land close to their houses.

The relationship between the Nubians and the agricultural fields, as the place of work and the source of food and income, influenced other aspects of their life. Because of the limited areas available for cultivation, labor migration was a phenomenon all around Nubia. Yet, as the Nubians insisted, "stealing was not heard of." They experienced security and safety in old Nubia while, as Am Gamal suggested, a major loss after the displacement was "the loss of *el aman*."

The Nubians were not used to keeping their animals inside the houses. The animals were always kept in small huts in the agricultural fields. The isolation and long distances between villages did not allow easy access or exit from villages. Besides, people were known to each other and neighboring *najas* were usually relatives. With the agricultural fields always in sight, stealing animals or crops was very difficult. In New Nubia, the agricultural fields are far from the houses, and because the houses are side by side, and non-related groups are living close to each other, the security and safety enjoyed in the past has disappeared. Animals have become problematic especially because keeping them inside the house is not a Nubian custom. Yet, they have to be continuously under supervision because they can be stolen and sold in any nearby town.

In the large houses of the returnees' villages, I experienced the strong and direct relationship with nature which the Nubians had enjoyed in their old houses. The sun is always present and its rays are strongly felt. The moon lights the streets during the night. Thousands of stars glow in the dark, endless sky. The house protects the inhabitants from the heat and dusty winds of the desert. The large courtyards provide a private arena for experiencing nature.

In the displacement villages, the electric lights and television sets have washed away the sparkling lights of the stars. The moon is not strong enough to compete with the street lights. The small houses force people to sleep outside, especially since the heat penetrates through their thin walls and concrete roofs. The small courtyards do not allow enough space for sleeping or socializing. The houses do not provide a protective shelter and force people to go out to the streets.

The old Nubian house was not only a shelter, it was a way of life and a view of the world. The large courtyard connected the inhabitants inside the house with nature outside. It was not an empty space for lighting and ventilation; rather, it was a central space around which all other activities were conducted. It was always kept clean and empty. There were special rooms used for storage. The courtyard was not an extra space inside the house; it was an important part that gave different meanings to the inhabitants' experience.

The houses of New Nubia were designed around small courtyards which do not provide the same experience as the old courtyards. Not only are the new courtyards much smaller than the old courtyards, their orientation does not permit the privilege winds to penetrate through the house. Surrounded by walls from all sides, the new courtyards are more like *uncovered* rooms than open courtyards. The lack of adequate space inside the house forces the inhabitants to use the streets for sleeping and socializing. In the houses built by the Nubians in the self-help quarters and the returnees' villages, the large courtyards are an important feature in the houses' design.

The area of the old Nubian house was much larger than the houses of the displacement. The old Nubian house occupied an area of more than one thousand square meters. The house had two entrances: a main entrance from the direction of the Nile and a secondary entrance for *ahl el bait*, or people of the house. It contained several rooms for the inhabitants and their guests. The large area of the house allowed for the future extension of the family. There was always an extra space where a new couple could stay.

The displacement houses were designed as *final products*; every part of the house was assumed to serve a specific function. There is no space for extension inside or outside the house. The custom of residing with one's family after marriage is not possible. The newly married couples are forced to leave the family house after marriage and find a new house. This new obligation is an overburden to many new couples and forces many couples to postpone their marriage.

An important part of the house that facilitated the starting of a new family was absent in the design of the displacement houses. The *diwani* (bridal hall) was considered by the designers of the displacement to be a luxury not needed in the new communities. The *diwani* was the residence quarter for the newly married couple. It was, as Am Dongloawi put it, "a house within the house." The newly married couple used to reside in the *diwani* for an extended period of time depending upon their financial circumstances. The groom resided in the *diwani* of the brides' house until he was able to build a new house or until a new bride from the same house wanted to get married. The *diwani* facilitated a starting place for newly married couples without any financial burden, and the coexistence of several families in one house facilitated the survival of traditions and way of life.

The construction of a new house in old Nubia was regarded as an event in the life of the *naja*. The system of construction, *galous*, required a long time to build a house. Several houses were usually built at the same time. The participation of the owner and his family was essential for the construction of the house. They provided water and mud for

the walls, as well as food and tea for the workers. The house *grew* under the care of the family. The house was part of their history and the history of the *naja*. This facilitated, as Am Dosoki put it, "a *malakia wigdania*", or psychological ownership, of the house. The construction system of the old Nubian house was known to all the Nubians. While they preferred to hire a builder to build a new house for them,they were able to do repairs and modifications themselves. The participation of neighbors and friends in the construction of the house, especially the making of the roof, was important. It reflected the highly valued community spirit and mutual support.

The displacement scheme minimized the participation of the Nubians in the design and construction process. The construction system was a sophisticated and foreign one. The houses were given to the Nubians in their final forms. The returnees, on the other hand, are part of the history making of their communities which allows them to develop a sense of belonging to their villages.

The location of a new house in old Nubia was usually selected so the owner could be close to relatives and friends. The son usually built his house close to his father's house. The community grew around a common ancestor's house and carried his name or the name of a special event in the history of the community. This allowed the inhabitants of each *naja* to identify with the community as a whole. The location of each house had a social and cultural meaning for the inhabitants.

The assignment of the displacement houses was based on the number of family members. Because the houses were grouped together according to their types, families who used to live together were assigned houses far from each other. Neighboring no longer carries a social or historical meaning; it is based on the number of family members and not on social relationships. The social meaning of neighboring was suddenly altered.

The Nubians applied many changes to the houses after they received them from the government: 1) they covered the roofless guest rooms, *madiafas*, 2) they moved the toilets to another location in order to enlarge the courtyard, 3) they raised and plastered

the exterior wall, 4) they closed the ventilation openings to the neighboring houses, 5) they decorated the entrance gates by adding bricks and drawings, and 6) they added *mastabas* to the houses.

These modifications reflected the Nubians dissatisfaction with many aspects of the displacement houses. The design of the displacement houses violated the privacy of the inhabitants. Voices from the neighbors' toilet were heard through the ventilation opening. The close proximity of the houses allowed visual exposure of private activities inside the houses. Odors were transmitted through the small courtyards and trapped in the poorly ventilated rooms. There was no control over what was transmitted to others.

The small area of the houses forced the inhabitants to use streets as extensions to their houses. They built small *mastabas* for sitting and large ones for sleeping. The streets became socializing spaces. The possession of parts of the street by building fences and shades reduced their width. The experience of the village was transformed from openness and spaciousness to closeness and crowdedness.

One of the most important changes made to the houses after the displacement was the plastering and coloring of the exterior walls. The displacement houses were built using three designs following a rigid planning arrangement. The houses were arranged in long rows following a chess-board street layout. The Nubians used to mistake their houses and enter other houses. Especially the elderly were not able to remember their houses easily. By decorating their houses and coloring the walls, they are able to identify them.

Although the houses of old Nubia were similar, the fact that they were built over a long period of time and the participation of the people in their creation made each house unique and different. While they were all built using similar construction methods, materials, and arrangements, they embodied different histories and stories. Each house reflected its inhabitants' history, preferences, and uniqueness. The expression of identity was important for the inhabitants' sense of belonging to the community.

The returnees' communities are also meaningful through the history of their making. The adventure stories of the returnees and their struggle to build their houses the way they wanted reflects the meaning of their houses. The visit of President Sadat to the villages is preserved in the house converted to a school carrying his name. The returnees' villages are not a resurrection of the old Nubian villages; they embody *new* meanings and history.

The three Nubian groups spread along the Nile over hundreds of kilometers used to live in different *nahias* separated by agriculture fields, bends in the Nile, or desert land. They spoke different languages and had different identities. It was not enough to say that one was a Nubian; the *nahia* was important in knowing who one was. The three Nubian groups came in close contact after the displacement. Some of the villages which were kilometers apart were relocated close to each other. The mixing of Nubian groups reflected the stereotypical view of Nubians which was held by the planning team. Many of the villages made of different Nubian groups were given shared services. The daily contact between the historically distant groups created many problems and disagreements.

The community solidarity found in the returnees' communities is absent in the displacement villages. The returnees have a shared view and goals which they are striving to achieve. This shared view of the world does not exist in the displacement villages. The old generation of Nubians who experienced life in old Nubia have a different history and view of the world than the young generation who were born and raised in the displacement villages. The exposure to new images and ways of living through the media as well as direct contact with other societies minimizes the shared view of the world and creates generational and cultural differences. The *return to the lost land* is not the dream of all the Nubians. The young generation are not interested in living in isolation from the style of life they view as desirable. They don't consider it possible to revive the old lifestyle. The returnees' villages are not attracting young people. The

handful of youth residing at the returnees' villages want to leave as soon as possible. The elderly are more attracted to the idea of the return and the revival of their old way of life. Their return is not only a statement of dissatisfaction with what is happening in the displacement villages; it is also a statement of their ownership of place.

Agriculture is not attractive to the young generation who want to acquire jobs in the city. The costume they wear, the *Saudi gallabia,* reflects the way of life they want to have. The village life is a transitional period in their life. Education is highly valued all around Nubia as it was even before the displacement. Nubian men and women, who have finished their education, are awaiting jobs in factories or governmental agencies. They prefer clerical work in governmental agencies. They rent their land to *saidi* farmers. Many Nubians commute everyday to nearby factories and government agencies in Kom Ombo and Aswan. The available transportation system of taxis and mini-busses, run mostly by Nubians, makes possible easy and direct contact with life in the city. The rhythm of life is much faster in the villages of the displacement than in old Nubia.

The elderly who were not able to absorb that change retreated and avoided participation in village activities. The relationship between old and young has changed. The old don't enjoy the leadership position, which they used to have in the past. They are no longer the bearers of wisdom or guidance. Their views are considered backward. At the returnees' communities, Am Gamal is hoping to be an example for the young who do not want to stay but want to go to *the city*.

The Nubian identity is no longer derived from a sense of belonging to a specific place. It does not mean speaking a different language or wearing a costume. The Nubians are no longer inhabitants of a specific part of the Earth. The experience of the Nubians living in urban areas and cities -- many of whom are living outside Egypt-- is completely different than those living in the displacement villages or the returnees' communities. The Nubian Associations in Cairo and Alexandria are very active. They provide support and

services to their members. Each Nubian village has an association with a headquarter in Cairo and Alexandria.

In old Nubia, the relationship between the Nubians and the environment around them was direct and strong. The environment reflected their social and cultural understanding of the world. The individual found self-actualization in the surrounding environment. The slow, monotonous rhythm of life in old Nubia, and the isolation it enjoyed, suddenly changed after the displacement. The Nubians have become subject to intervention by new images and ways of life. They have come in contact with urban and industrial societies as well as other ethnic groups. Television antennas placed on houses' roofs are transmitting images of urban ways of life.

Themes From the Nubian Experience

The Taken for Granted Everyday Life Experience

Everyday life experience *is* taken for granted. The environment in old Nubia was taken for granted without much reflection. It influenced many aspects of the Nubians' way of life, and it was always there as the background of their everyday life experiences. The Nile and its yearly flooding, date palm trees, agriculture land, mountains and desert sand, animals' shelters in the fields, the *sakias*, merchants boats in the Nile, neighboring *najas*, and the large spacious houses of old Nubia were all features of a familiar and taken for granted environment. They were not reflected upon as influencing and shaping the Nubians' everyday life experience.

The displacement experience interrupted the familiar and taken for granted world in old Nubia. The sudden dislocation from the familiar environment and the relocation in a *ready-made and imposed* environment, different than the old one, interrupted many aspects of their way of living.

The Nubians' experience of the sudden change in their surrounding environment is different from our everyday life experience in two aspects. First, it was *sudden*. The environment was completely replaced by another one. Second, it was *forced*. The change was involuntary and not by their own choice. The Nubians were not able to stay in their old villages which were inundated by the water of the lake.

In our everyday life experience, we encounter change in the surrounding environment. Some changes happen by our own choice while others are forced upon us. It takes us months or years to realize the extent of that change, let alone its influence on our way of living and everyday life experiences. Change in the surrounding environment usually comes slowly. We do not realize its effect until we reflect upon our past experiences. We usually choose to make changes in our surrounding environment, sometimes to the extent of changing the whole environment by moving from place to place or migrating to another country. We are not always *free to choose* these radical changes, as in the case of wars or political upheaval. Yet, the fact that they are our *selection* gives these changes a different meaning.

To understand the importance of what we take for granted, we need to experience its absence. This is one of the thrusts of this research. We take too much for granted in the world we live in, and only when these aspects of our experiences are taken away or altered do we start to recognize and understand their importance. The case of Nubia is an example of what happens when we take the familiar, taken for granted environment that we have around us and replace it with a different environment. Only at this moment do we start to understand the imbedded and the taken for granted meanings of the familiar world around us.

The Nubians, on the other hand, experienced sudden and forced change of the environment around them. This forced and sudden change magnified many aspects of the environmental experience that usually passed unnoticed in their slowly changing environment. Familiarity with the surrounding environment is what allows it to be taken

for granted. Only when this environment is suddenly changed do we notice how much we took for granted and how much of it was passed unnoticed.

This phenomenon is happening all around the world in both urban and rural settings, yet at different paces. Instead of moving people to new planned communities, modern ways of life are slowly altering and replacing traditional ones. Modern constructed houses are being built over traditional ones. Housing and planning regulations are being imposed on traditional settings. Many of the traditional ways of living around us will soon disappear.

The setting in old Nubia had developed over hundreds of years. It embodied many pieces of information known to everyone in the society. That type of knowledge made the environment meaningful in the Nubians' everyday life experience. Knowing about the Nile, palm trees, and agriculture fields; knowing when the house was built, its story, and its spaces; knowing who lived in the next house or *naja*, their relationship, and story were important pieces of information.

Expectation and anticipation of what might happen and how to react to it was also important. The yearly flooding of the Nile, the seasonal sand storms from the desert, and the harvesting of the date crop were events of great importance which created a rhythm of life in old Nubia. The sudden and uncontrolled change of the familiar environment created a feeling of insecurity. The lack of meaning in the new environment created an experience of alienation and estrangement.

The Dialectic Relationship With the Environment

> We shape our buildings and they shape us.
>
> (Sir Winston Churchill)

When the familiar and taken for granted environment of old Nubia was suddenly changed and replaced by another one designed by professional architects and planners according to a different world view, the Nubians' way of life changed. Yet, the Nubians

applied modifications and changes to the surrounding environment in order to create a sense of belonging and identification with it.

The relationship between the Nubians and the environment was dialectical. When they applied modifications and changes to the environment at *El-Tahjir*, the Nubians were changing the meaning of the environment from a *given* to an *acquired* one. They were investing meaning in the environment around them. At the same time, the new environment was changing their way of living. For example, the distribution of houses according to the number of family members regardless of their pattern of residence in the old *najas* influenced many established social relationships between extended families and neighbors. The disappearance of the *diwani* put a greater financial burden on newly married couples.

It is important to understand the relationship between people and the environment as a dialectical one; people change the environment and the environment changes them. They change the environment in order to suit their way of living and view of the world.

The relationship with the natural environment was dialectical in nature and influenced all the changes in lifestyle and developments that the society went through. The old environment was acquired and pursued, unlike the environment in New Nubia which was given by the government with no participation from the Nubians in the design or even the decision of displacement in general. The new environment was designed by planners and architects who had a distorted image of the Nubian people and their way of life. Beside misunderstanding the people for whom they were designing, the architects transferred through their design ways of life alien to the people and culture of Nubia.

The Social and Cultural Meanings of Architecture

The environment around us embodies social and cultural meanings. These meanings relate the individuals to the society and environment around them. As part of the environment around us, architecture embodies parts of these meanings; most of them are taken for granted as part of the everyday life experience. When this situation is

suddenly altered we become aware of the taken for granted part of our existence in the world.

Before the displacement, the Nile, date palm trees, desert, and nature were more than elements of the environment. The relationship between the Nubians and these elements of the natural-environment was strong and important. Visiting the Nile was part of all ceremonies and festivals. The sharing of palm trees facilitated contact between individuals and strengthened their social relations. The desert land was a social and cultural barrier between the Nubians and their neighbors.

The construction of a new *nog* was an opportunity for people to show their support and community spirit. Each house embodied layers of history which tied it with the rest of the community. The layers of *galous* were the layers of the community's history. The parts of the house were part of the Nubians' way of life. The *diwani* facilitated the starting of new families by providing a temporary home for newly married couples. Future continuation and extension of the family was planned for at the construction of a new house. The *mandarah* was always ready to receive and accommodate guests. It was always accessible to strangers and guests. The *hoash*, or courtyard, was a direct contact between self and nature. Its size facilitated the expansion of the family and the accommodation of several families around one courtyard. It was the center of life where most of the daily activities took place.

The *nog* was part of several *nogs* which formed a large extended *nog*. The location of a new *nog* was always selected to be close to other family members especially one's father. A *naja* was composed of several extended family *nogs* who shared a common ancestor or event. Space carried social meanings in terms of *who* lived where and how people related to the rest of the community. Social orientation was as important as spatial orientation. Space was meaningful in terms of one's past, present, and future orientation. The community shared these meanings as part of its values and goals. Solidarity and community spirit were possible because of these shared meanings.

The displacement interrupted this pattern of relating oneself to the surrounding environment. The new environment was different than the one upon which most of these meanings were based. The distribution of houses based on number of family members regardless of their social relationships resulted in a different pattern of residence. Neighborship became an imposed rather than a chosen relationship. Support from one's neighbor was not expected at all times. At the same time, the spatial proximity of the houses did not allow for enough privacy. The size of the house and the absence of the *diwani* put large pressures on newly married couples to look for new houses as soon as they married.

The absence of *el aman* at *El-Tahjir* villages is an important theme of the Nubians' experience. Security and safety of one's belongings and self is intrinsic for a peaceful coexistence with the surrounding environment. The isolation of the Nubian villages was not the only reason for the existence of *aman* in old Nubia. It was a result of a shared understanding of the environment as well as shared goals and values of the community. When that shared world of the community was shattered, their sense of *aman*, or peaceful coexistence, was lost.

The Meaning of Home

For the Nubians *nog* was more than a physical object. " A person without a home is dead," said Am Gamal. Feeling at home was not questioned by the Nubians before the displacement. The loss of these homes was a traumatic experience for many Nubians.

Familiarity with the house, its history, and knowledge about its parts and surroundings facilitated a sense of belonging and attachment to the house. Ownership of the house was not only physical, it was a psychological. The theme of control was important in transforming the house into a home. It ensured safety and security through privacy, which was achieved by controlling what was communicated to others as well as controlling access and boundaries. The meanings communicated by different parts of the house, rooms, furniture, and decorations, were all understood by the inhabitants.

While the Nubians were housed in the displacement villages, many of them became *homeless*. The sudden change of home disrupted their way of living and their feeling of being at home. Home is more than a shelter or a house. Its meaning is tied with place and history. Home is a reflection of self and a world view.

Architecture is a reflection of world view and way of living

Architecture of everyday life, where our experiences take place, embodies a world view and suggests a way of living. Architecture reflects the ideas, images and values of those who *make* it and the society which hosts it.

At the self-help quarters of the displacement villages, many Nubians are building new houses using the traditional design and construction system of old Nubia, while the youth are building housing using the stone and concrete system of construction and *modern* house design. The images of *ideal house* held by the two groups are different. The elderly maintain an image of the *ideal house* which is similar to the *nogs* of old Nubia, while the young hold an image of the ideal house which is similar to the houses of *el madinah*, or the city.

The houses of old Nubia reflected the Nubians' world view and way of living. The displacement villages designed and built by professional architects reflected another world view based on their beliefs and social class. The design of the displacement villages did not respect the Nubians' way of living and view of the world. This forced many changes on the Nubians' way of living and everyday life experience.

These themes of the Nubians' experience with displacement are not different from what other human beings experience everyday. They are clear and easier to identify because of the sudden change of the environment which the Nubians experienced after the displacement. If we reflect upon our experiences, we shall see those same themes.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

> Research is an attempt to explore new territories and to add them to the map of knowledge that we maintain and revise constantly. The researcher is the traveller. After numerous adventures and hardships, doubts, anxieties and excitements, he returns to explain to the people back home what he has seen and how it fits into what everybody already knows.
>
> John Habraken

From the Nubian Experience to Our Own Experience

If we contemplate the world around us, we shall see many familiar objects and spaces that make up the environment: a room, a building, other buildings, streets, neighborhoods, towns, countries, etc. What is the relationship between the environment around us and the way in which we as human beings think and live in the world? There are numerous answers to this question, and each one of us probably *has* a unique answer! Some of us will stress the *effect* of shapes, colors, volumes, designs, and locations of these objects on the way we behave and act in the world. Others will be more concerned about the existence of other people around us and our *relationship* to them and their relationships to each other. Some of us will argue that the environment around us does not have much to do with how we experience the world as compared to our own physical or psychological condition, such as our health, our personal relationships, or our occupation.

Most probably, questions about how people live and experience the environment are not addressed to those who ask them. These question are usually about *other people* whom we study and research. How much of what we study is relevant to our own situation? What can we learn from this study of the Nubian experience about our own

way of living and experience of the world? As architects, planners, policy makers, researchers and specialists concerned with the environment around us, we need to think about our own experience as much as other people's experiences. What is it that we want to know and why? How do we go about knowing it? Our questions embody many taken for granted assumptions that we need to recognize in order to understand meaningfully the world around us.

"We are condemned to meaning," said Merleau-Ponty.[98] We are continuously perceiving and making meaning of the world around us. This is usually taken for granted as part of our everyday life experience. We only recognize that it is taken for granted when the world around us is suddenly changed and altered. Familiarity is an important part of our experience in the world. We do not usually think about the numerous pieces of information and details of the surrounding environment that we know and can tell others once we are asked. Giving directions or describing something to someone reveals to us the familiar and taken for granted knowledge that we have of the world around us. As part of the world around us, architecture has meaning derived from everyday life experience. The meaning of architecture is part of the background against which our experiences take place.

What is Architecture?

> Architecture is a word. Architecture is the kind of word subject to too many interpretations on so many different levels that it has utterly no meaning out of context. Apart from its use as a figure of speech, Architecture is worthless.[99]

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98 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Phenomenology of Perception, translated from the French by Colin Smith, Routledge & Kegan Paul, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1962, p.xix.
99 Muschamp, Herbert, File Under Architecture, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1974, p.1.

The word *architecture* is used to denote two different things: there is *architecture* which means all the buildings and dwellings around us, and there is *architecture* which is limited to those buildings designed and supervised by professional architects. Tracing the origin of the word architecture, Paul Oliver wrote:

> *Architect* derives from the Greek *arkitekton, arki* -(or arch) meaning chief, superior or leader, and *tekton*- builder: making *chief builder*.[100]

By adopting this definition one can argue that architecture is made by the architect who "conceives the building, prepares the plans and supervises the work involved, rather than one who is himself concerned directly with its construction."[101] There are two assumptions imbedded in this argument. First, it is assumed that there is a specialized knowledge acquired by architects through their education and training. This architectural knowledge covers all aspects of the design and construction of buildings.

> Through the centuries, only a fraction of the built environment has ever been affected by the architectural profession. Its summons come from clients who had need for special buildings, buildings with a disposition and refinement of form that was out of the ordinary, and who could afford to pay for them.[102]

Second, it is assumed that all *architecture* is designed and built by specialized architects. If we take architecture to mean all the buildings and objects which surround us, then architecture of the architects comprises-- to the dismay of the architects-- a very small portion of the architecture around the world. As Rapoport put it:

> In most of the world their influence is precisely nil, five percent of all buildings being designed by architects. Most buildings are built by the people or by tradesmen.[103]

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100 Oliver, Paul, ed., Shelter and Society, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, Washington, 1969, p.11.
101 ibid.
102 Kostof, Spiro, ed., The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1977, p.3.
103 Rapoport, Amos, House Form and Culture, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J, 1969, p.2.

Another part of our troubles resulted, as Rudofsky put it, "from the tendency to ascribe to architects-- or, for that matter to all specialists-- exceptional insight into problems of living when, in truth, most of them are concerned with problems of business and prestige."[104]

Historians, educators, theorists, practitioners, and critics of architecture are feeding the profession with more and more jargon that helps to widen the gap between architecture and society. As Henry Russel Hitchcock observed, "Theorists writing about architecture generally stress that it is a practical art providing shelter and serving various human needs."[105] This narrow view of architecture stresses the functional aspect of buildings and ignores more important meanings of the spaces we live in.

While some theoreticians view architecture as a product, others view it as a process. *Product-oriented* theoreticians stress artistic qualities of forms and spaces in an attempt to relate these qualities to some abstract aesthetic ideas, borrowed from other disciplines, about forms and objects. On the other hand, *process-oriented* theoreticians assume the product to be an expression of intentions implied or expressed by the designer. They stress what the architect thinks about or wants others to think about while designing these buildings. Theory books contain many pictures of buildings either to stress their artistic qualities or as illustrations of the architect's way of thinking. Confusion and puzzlement about the nature and goals of architecture are the themes of architectural theory.

> In the two short centuries since architecture has become a well-defined profession of its own, its identity has afforded endless controversy. Is it an art practiced by and for the sake of individuals, or a commercial enterprise geared to the needs of the market and the

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104 Rudofsky, Bernard, Architecture Without Architects, The Museum of Modern Art. Distributed by Doubleday & Company, Inc, Garden City, New York, 1964.
105 Oliver, Paul, ed., Shelter and Society, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, Washington, 1969, p.7.

> generation of profit, or a communal undertaking dedicated to the service of society?[106]

At the same time, architectural history is mostly about monumental buildings. Attention is devoted primarily to those buildings handed down to us, and too much romanticism is involved in their study.

> Books on the history of architecture are seldom concerned with other than monumental buildings. Until quite recently, the 'History' of the school books was the history of kings and queens, princes and emperors, popes and prelates, the story of the battles, conflicts and conquests, political maneuver and dynastic domination ... architecture history is still largely about the edifices that housed the principal actors in formal history.[107]

Architectural history and theory, the spine of architectural education, aim at producing generations of loyal practitioners. Architectural education introduces to the newcomers images of architecture and buildings as produced by other architects. The ways of thinking of famous architects are introduced as models to be followed by young architects. Their famous slogans are praised and architectural theory provides the necessary jargon. Aside from the technical knowledge, students of architecture are *tuned* by the profession they want to join.

Architecture was used by the rulers and powerful class of a dynasty as a means to show their wealth and power. To achieve their goals, the ruling regimes appointed those who had acquired the knowledge needed for building special buildings. Traditionally, therefore, as Kostof suggested:

> Architects have been associated with the rich and the powerful. Their services were required by the state and the church, the wealthier classes, administrative bodies, and affluent business concerns such as guilds and corporations. ... They were not workmen but rulers of workmen, as Plato puts it, they contributed knowledge, not craftsmanship.[108]

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106 Saint, Andrew, The Image of the Architect, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1983, p.6.
107 Oliver, Paul, ed., Shelter and Society, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, Washington, 1969, p.7.
108 Kostof, Spiro, ed., The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1977, p.3.

This was the first distinction between *architect* and *builder*; the *builder* was directly involved in the activities of building while the *architect* was the one who designed and supervised the construction of buildings. This separation of responsibilities and specialization of knowledge led to the establishment of architecture as a profession.

The Architectural Profession

> When searching for the essence of an important aspect of our civilization we should not only consider what is being done, but above all *who* does it and *why*.[109]

The profession of architecture, like other professions, has developed since the early nineteenth century. As Spyer put it:

> Initially a formal method of training was established, with set examinations, usually after a group of practitioners has been set up to further the interests of the profession by enforcing minimum standards of attainment. As the profession grows in strength, with the recognition of its set standards as a sort of guarantee, it is enabled to remove competition in fee-charging and eventually to reach a closed-shop situation by some means of legal recognition.[110]

When institutionalized, both in practice and education, the profession started to assume its *role* as well as the role of its members in society. The profession holds fast to its existence, and to control of the activities of its members, by feeding more jargon into the language which is the substance of its communication. On the other hand, practitioners of architecture assume some role in the society in order to appropriate their services. The highly praised slogans of *building for people* and *serving society* are popular among architects and, at the same time, conceal other drastic views of *the public as uneducated and ignorant.*

According to the fashions and styles fought over by professional critics and architects, buildings, the end products of institutionalized architecture, are evaluated, given awards, and published in professional magazines. One wonders whether architects

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109 Habraken, N. J., Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing, translated from the Dutch by B. Valkenburg Ariba, The Architectural Press, London, 1972, p.11.
110 Spyer, Geoffrey, Architect and Community, Peter Owen, London, 1971, p.135.

are designing buildings mainly to please other architects. If the public does not appreciate what architects produce then they, the public, are to be blamed for not understanding the value of architects' work. This attitude, held by many architects, is similar to the attitude of officialdom and governmental agencies. Blinded by bureaucracy, they think of the public as immature and ignorant. As Muschamp suggests:

> Politicians are at least as notorious as architects in failing to comprehend how an idea that looked good on paper will fail to make it on the street.[111]

Both institutionalized architecture and bureaucracy hold attitudes that alienate them from the public they claim to be serving. Architectural education and practice are interested in the objects of architecture. Buildings are produced as complete fixed end products which are *filled* with people after their completion. Many of the great examples of architecture failed to perform their purposes and were rejected by the public for which they were produced.

In his book *House Form and Culture*, Amos Rapoport comments:

> It is possible, first of all, to distinguish between buildings belonging to grand design tradition and those of folk tradition. We may say that monuments-- buildings of grand design tradition-- are built to impress either the populace with the power of the patron, or a peer group of designers and cognoscenti with the cleverness of the designer and good taste of the patron. The folk tradition, on the other hand, is the direct and unself-conscious translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values-- as well as the desires, dreams, and passions of a people. It is the world view writ small, the *ideal* environment of a people expressed in buildings and settlements, with no designer, artist, or architect with an axe to grind. The folk tradition is much more closely related to the culture of the majority and life as it is really lived than is the grand design tradition, which represents the culture of the elite.[112]

Rapoport points to the role of the peasant owner as a participant in the design process. He argues that everyone in the society of the vernacular "knows the building types and even how to build them, the expertise of the tradesman being a matter of

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111 Muschamp, Herbert, File Under Architecture, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1974, p.29.

112 Rapoport, Amos, House Form and Culture, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J, 1969, p.2.

degree."[113] When a tradesman builds a farmhouse for a peasant, they both know the type in question, the form or model, and even the materials. There is a shared understanding of what a house is as part of a shared image and view of the world. He calls this approach to building *a tradition* and argues that "as long as the tradition is alive, this shared and accepted image operates, when tradition goes, the picture changes."[114] Rapoport argues:

> Without tradition, there can no longer be reliance on the accepted norms, and there is a beginning of institutionalization. The introduction of pattern books is the first step in this process.[115]

Rapoport attributes the loss of this tradition in our modern time to three causes: 1) the specialization and differentiation of building types; 2) the loss of a common, shared value system, image of the world, and goals shared by designers and the public; and 3) the premium that modern western culture puts on originality, modernity, and technology.

Hassan Fathy also holds a view of architecture as a tradition. In his book, *Gurna*, Hassan Fathy wrote:

> It is not yet understood that real architecture cannot exist except in a living tradition, and that architectural tradition is all but dead in Egypt today. ... Tradition embodies the conclusions of many generations' practical experiment with the same problem. ... [It] is the social analogy of personal habit.[116]

For Hassan Fathy, architectural tradition is one the oldest traditions and a gap in continuity of this tradition has created the chaos and ugliness of architecture today. Believing with Dante that what we call modern is nothing but what is unworthy of remaining to become old, Fathy expresses his strong resentment of works by architects in Egypt that are copied from fashionable European work in order to flatter the client and impress the public. His concern is directed at the infiltration of these examples "through the cheap suburbs and into the village, where it will slowly poison the genuine

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113 ibid., p.4.
114 ibid.
115 ibid., p.6.
116 Fathy, Hassan, GOURNA: A Tale of Two Villages, Ministry of Culture, Dar El Kateb El Arabi Press, Cairo, 1969, pp.32-37.

tradition"[117] which he believes still exists in the villages and rural parts of Egypt. While Rapoport argues for the revival of a building tradition, which was lost in the process of institutionalization and professionalization of architecture, Fathy argues for the protection of this tradition.

The view of architecture as a product of specialists' work limits its scope to those buildings designed and built by professional architects and engineers. We need to expand our view of architecture to include all the built environment around us, where our everyday life experiences take place. At the same time, we need to recognize that architecture has social and cultural meanings intrinsic to our understanding of its importance in our everyday life experience. Architecture *is* part of the surrounding environment.

To understand architecture as part of the surrounding environment we need to examine the context where it exists. The context is important in understanding how this architecture came into existence and the intentions behind making it. Architecture is part of a social reality of a group of people who live and experience it. An understanding of the relationship between people and architecture can be achieved only through understanding the everyday life experiences of those who live with the architecture. The views and intentions of those who design the buildings are as important as the views of those who live and experience architecture as part of their everyday life experience.

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[117] ibid., p.21.

The Environmental Experience

> When we look at the everyday reality of home and school and workplace, we can scarcely imagine ourselves taking moral positions like those taken by a Hamlet or a Dr. Rieux. One reason has to do with the overwhelming ordinariness of the lives we live. Another is our tendency to perceive our everyday reality as a given-- objectively defined, impervious to change. Taking it for granted, we do not realize that that reality, like all others, is an interpreted one. It presents itself to us as it does because we have learned to understand it in standard ways.[118]

Everyday life experiences take place in different places: work, home, school, movies, shopping malls, markets, hotels, factories, forests, sea shores, streets, alleys, cities, towns, villages, etc. We do different things in different places: sleep, eat, socialize, etc. These places are usually described as the *familiar, ordinary, or normal* places. The environment made up of these places is the background of our everyday life experience.

Our existence in an environment is an intrinsic part of our everyday life experience. The environment is everything around us that is either natural or made by human beings. The environment also includes other people with whom we live and among whom our experiences take place.

The natural environment is the earth and all that can be found on it. It is the mountains, rocks, caves, deserts, forests, fields, and hills. It is the rivers, seas, oceans, and lakes. It is the plants, trees, insects, animals, and beasts. It is the sky and all that comes from it. It is the sun, moon, stars, and planets. It is also the wind, rain, storms, snow, and heat. It is the light and dark, day and night, and summer and winter. It is everything that human beings did not make.

The built environment, on the other hand, is everything made or modified by human beings. It is the outcome of our interaction with the natural environment. It is how we added to, modified or changed the natural environment. It is the buildings, streets,

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118 Greene, Maxine, Landscapes of Learning, Teachers College Press, Teacher College, Columbia University, New York and London, 1978, p.44.

houses, bridges, villages, towns, cities, factories, schools, and all other objects produced by human beings. It is the furniture, paintings, and statues we have in our houses. It is everything made or modified by human activities. It is all that we as human beings have made since the dawn of human civilization.

The separation between natural and built environments is artificial because we are always conscious of the natural environment which is always present amidst the built environment. In spite of the opposition implied in the terms *natural* and *built* environments, the two are not completely separate. We cannot study one without recognizing the other. The natural environment is always present around or within the built environment. The sun rays penetrating through the windows into a room are announcing the presence of the natural environment. The sound of thunder, winds blowing, and rain falling outside the built environment keeps us aware of the presence of the natural environment. On the other hand, the built environment is always *built* within the natural environment, on or under ground, within or above trees, and overlooking rivers or seas. The natural and built environments are experienced simultaneously at any given time.

The word *environment* means "the circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded." It also means "the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community."[119] An important part of the environment is the human-environment which is other people among whom we live, our society, and the culture in which we were raised. These are important in our experience of the world around us. The human-environment is the third dimension of our experience in the world. It is the beliefs, customs, religions, ethics, traditions, and teachings of the society. It is the language we speak or read. It is family and social relationships. In sum,

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119 Webster's, Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc., Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1985.

it is our way of life and our view of the world expressed in our everyday life from its minor details to its global principles.

Change of Attitudes Toward Architecture

In the architectural enterprise, people are usually viewed as *invisible*. Architectural magazines and books contain pictures of buildings without any human beings in them. Hypothetical people are thought of as having the same needs and wants; information about the people can be found in data books and in stereotyped images of different groups. This attitude is similar to the attitude of officialdom and bureaucracy towards the public.

On the phenomenon of *invisibility*, Peter Grenell commented:

> People become invisible in the housing process to the extent that officialdom either does not see them at all or sees them only in terms of quantities of stereotyped human beings. This blindness is the result of a genuine desire to improve the living conditions of as many people as possible, a fixed idea of what constitutes *good* housing, a recognition of severe limits on public and private commercial sector resources to attain these goals, an emphasis on standardization of design and production efficiency, and a consequent discounting of the role of the dweller in the provision of housing. The latter is based on assumptions that public participation is inefficient and time consuming, that people *don't know what they want*, or simply that trained technicians *know better* about laymen's needs than they do.[120]

The attitude of viewing people as hypothetical standardized objects is also popular in architectural education. Since the end products -- drawings or models in architectural education and buildings in architectural practice-- dominate architectural thinking, an aspect of place making is ignored. Turner, who experienced working with people in Peru, commented,

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120 Grenell, Peter, Planning for invisible people: Some consequences of Bureaucratic values and practices, in Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of Housing Process, edited by John F. C. Turner, The Macmillan Company, N.Y., New York, Collier-Macmillan Limited, London, 1972, p.97.

> As I came to realize the perverse nature of the premises on which professionalism and the institutionalization of services are based, I began to understand how and why the established system is so often counter-productive and so rarely enjoyable. When the house becomes a commodity supplied through paternalistic agencies, there is no room for the enjoyment of the process itself. To the professional trapped by the institutional frameworks, or isolated by his own secretiveness, all measures of value are invested in the material end product.[121]

As he observed, the process of building a house and the events that accompanied its construction were occasions of celebration that brought family and friends together. Once confronted with local realities and the people who live them, Turner points out:

> The creative specialist or open-minded professional is bound to change his or her attitude. We architects are deaf and even blind to the obvious differences between our own language and that of our clients. The certified professional makes a fool of himself, and often does a great deal of harm to other people, by assuming that he knows more than the 'uneducated' by virtue of his schooling. All that second- and third- hand information and intellectual exercising does for him, however, is to reduce his ability to listen and learn about situations significantly different than his own social and economic experience- with consequences which can be tragic when he has the power to impose his solutions on those who are not strong enough to resist.[122]

The notion of providing housing by governmental agencies or large organizations has drastic pitfalls. These organizations have the political and economic power to impose alien ideas on others under the nicely stated slogans of *better life* and *the benefit of the people*. As Turner put it:

> Building carried out by a large and hierarchically organized agency, whether public or commercial, provides little room for dialogue between people. All decisions are vertical and all operations are carried out by more-or-less unchallengeable order. When people are building for themselves, on the other hand, or when the builders are building for the users, there is plenty of room for genuine relationships between the people brought together by the activity and, therefore, for creativity, pride, and satisfaction from the work itself. Of course, there is plenty of ground for conflict and hate as well as love, but these are the matrix of life which is denied by the impersonality of authoritarianism.[123]

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[121] Turner, John F. C., ed., The Reeducation of a Professional, in Freedom to Build: Dweeler Control of Housing Process, edited by John F. C. Turner, The Macmillan Company, N.Y., New York, Collier-Macmillan Limited, London, p.133.
[122] ibid., p.146-147.
[123] ibid., p.145.

We need to change the notion that people are passive, object like *things* and begin to think of them as active meaning makers and include them in our thinking about architecture. We need to change our attitudes toward the people for whom we design. Instead of viewing people as ignorant and in need of education, we should think about ourselves as trying to help them achieve what they want. Understanding their way of living is intrinsic to building meaningful, human environments.

> Many of the problems facing us in creating a human environment have to do with attitudes, assumptions and institutions and are not phenomena which happened in a process of natural evolution. It follows that we may well be able to solve the problems by evolving new attitudes and by thinking afresh about many of the assumptions on which our present society is based.[124]

The involvement of people in the design and building of their homes is necessary for any attempt to make a meaningful environment. The relationship between architects and people should be one of equality and mutual benefit. Understanding the social and cultural differences between those who design and those who are designed for should be stressed.

To be able to build *with* people, we need to understand their view of the world through their everyday life experience. We need to establish a rapport with the people for whom we want to design. We should consider and respect other people's way of life and not try to impose our ideas while designing for them. People have the right to participate in the design and construction of their places of living. Architects should be aware of the influence of the political, economical, and technological factors that affect their design decisions and give shape to the architecture they produce.

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[124] Spyer, Geoffrey, Architect and Community, Peter Owen, London, 1971, p.15.

The Role of Architects in Society

The institutionalized role of architects as decision makers, and people as decision receivers, contributes to the alienation of people from their surrounding environment. The powerful group in the society decides through the architectural enterprise what is to be presented to the public in terms of buildings and environments. As politicians, architects are not favored by people in the street.

> ... the role of the specialist is often questioned by the so-called man in the street. In his often inarticulate comments about *these bloody architects and planners* there is the same edge of fear combined with distrust that is characteristic of his attitude towards politicians. Probably the reasons are similar because the nature of their influence on him is similar: planners and architects as well as politicians are attempting to plan *his* life and surroundings in some measure and in a way over which he has limited control, whatever the political regime.[125]

The institutionalized character of the profession serves its inherited interests and its middle-class practitioners' view of the society, stressing values and ways of living that are not necessarily shared by the society as a whole. At the same time, as Spyer argues:

> A vast amount of work that they do involves planning and building for people of a different social class, with different backgrounds, education and outlook. To apply middle-class standards indiscriminately in the hope that everyone will either want them or will gradually achieve them anyhow, is to be extremely presumptuous, even arrogant. This problem largely explains or at least illustrates the gulf between those who are *done to* and those who are *doing*.[126]

The role adopted by an architect reflects an attitude of thinking and acting; the *egoist* architect role model is attitudinally described as the *I-give-them-what-I-want* approach to practice, while the *pragmatist* is attitudinally described as the *I-give-them-what-they-want* approach to practice.[127] Along with these paternalistic and entrepreneurial approaches, there is the *facilitator* approach, attitudinally described as *I-*

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125 Spyer, Geoffrey, Architect and Community, Peter Owen, London, 1971, p.134.
126 ibid., p.150.
127 Garrott, Jay G., Interpreting value systems milieus, in The Role of the Architect in Society, edited by Peter G. Burgess, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1983, p.24.

give-them-what-we-can approach, which "explicitly accentuates the necessity for the establishment of effective interpersonal human exchange techniques- communication- between all the people who will have control over and affected by design process and product."[128]

On the role of specialists, Paulo Freire wrote:

> It's important that technicians overcome the distorted vision of their speciality, which transforms specialization into specialism, brutally forcing them into a narrow view of problems.[129]

Architects are, first of all, citizens who participate in the everyday life of their communities. By virtue of their speciality, they have a different view of situations and problems facing the communities. They can develop a critical awareness of the origin of society's problems and the implications of proposed solutions. With other specialists, anthropologists and sociologists, who are concerned with the everyday life of people, they can be more effective in solving the pressing problems of their societies.

Architects have a social and cultural responsibility toward the environments in which they live. In order to help create a meaningful environment they need to develop an understanding of the context of their work. They need to understand, among other things, the social and cultural meanings of their work to the people. As Rapoport suggests, architecture should be *culturally responsive*. The relationship between architects and people should be based on an understanding of people's way of living and view of the world. This understanding can be achieved by working with anthropologists and sociologists.

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128 ibid., p.25-26.

129 Freire, Paulo, The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation, translated by Donaldo Macedo, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc. Massachusetts, 1985, p.25.

Reflections on the Egyptian Context

> Research in Egypt or elsewhere continues to document more disappointments than success with planned settlement. Indeed, the failure rate for all types of government-sponsored land-settlement projects in new lands has been discouragingly high throughout the world. Planners must seriously consider the implications of this record. Because settlement programs possess a utopian appeal, reflect certain social goals at the national level, and present a tempting opportunity to design something from scratch, planners continue to advocate ambitious new settlement programs without sufficiently considering a variety of other less spectacular but perhaps more realistic alternatives.[130]

The idea of building new planned communities should be re-examined and other alternatives should be considered. The involvement of people in policy making and decision taking should be maximized. The intervention of the government in the housing process should be minimized.

> The trouble is that under the present system, where things are done by the state *for* and *to* the people, when the sense of responsibility and participation is suppressed, society becomes apathetic and a great load of responsibility devolves on the state. The situation gets steadily worse, with people less and less able to help themselves and more and more dependent on an increasingly bureaucratic authority. Political manipulation becomes increasingly possible for and even profitable to the powerful few. Inevitably, proposals for radical change in the form of administration of building and social programmes will involve politics.[131]

Housing in Egypt is always thought of as *a problem* that requires *a solution*. Every year the government states the number of housing units under construction and the remaining number needed in order to meet the needs of the growing population. New ministers of housing usually stress the severity of the problem and state their goals in terms of how many housing units they want to build during their terms. Conferences and numerous meetings are held every year to discuss *the problem* and search for alternative solutions.

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130 Fahim, Hussein M., Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and years of coping, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake city, 1983, p.154.

131 Spyer, Geoffrey, Architect and Community, Peter Owen, London, 1971, p.132-133.

> The moment that housing, a universal human activity, becomes defined as a problem, a housing problems industry is born, with an army of experts, bureaucrats and researchers, whose existence is a guarantee that the problem won't go away.[132]

The so called housing problem in Egypt is usually described in terms of a shortage of housing units. The number of units is usually in the millions and is always increasing from one government to the next. A classification system based on economic class is used to designate the number of units needed for each income group. The classification system includes four categories: low-income housing units, middle-income housing units, upper-middle-income housing units, and luxury units. The upper-middle and luxury units are usually left to the private sector while the government takes the responsibility of low-income --sometimes called limited-income -- and middle-income housing units.

It is difficult to believe that only before World War II housing was not considered a problem in Egypt. As Milad Hanna, an Egyptian engineer, put it:

> There was no sense of a housing problem in Egypt before World War II. In both the rural and urban areas there were enough houses to meet the demand. As a matter of fact, there were a small number of vacant flats available for rent, enabling people to change their residence from time to time to meet their changing needs.[133]

The interference of the government in the housing market disturbed the relationship between owners and occupants. By enforcing laws and regulations manipulating the relationship between owner and occupant, the government became a third party in the housing enterprise. The rent freeze enforced by the government in 1941, as a reaction to the shortage of construction materials due to the war, followed by consecutive rent reduction laws, disturbed the relationship between owners and occupants which was based on supply and demand and created an atmosphere of

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132 Colin Ward in his forward to Turner, John F. C., Housing By People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments, Pantheon Books, New York, 1976.

133 Hanna, Milad M., Real Estate Rights In Urban Egypt, in Property, Social Structure, and Law in the Modern Middle East, edited by Ann Elizabeth Maner, State University of New York Press, 1985. p.190.

ambiguity and confusion. The housing enterprise came to a halt, and the government started to interfere in different ways taking the responsibility of providing housing for the public.

The continuous interference of the government in the housing enterprise has resulted in a situation where everyone is waiting for new regulations to appear or changes of previous legislations to be enforced. The chaotic situation has drastic effects on Egyptians because it disturbs an important aspect of their existence.

When a government, anywhere in the world, does not set up a plan to satisfy the basic needs of its people, they have to seek ways and means to satisfy their basic needs. They do things their own way according to their means.[134]

The internal migrants to the city and the rapidly growing population are finding solutions in illegal money paid outside rent contracts, informal housing on the outskirts of the cities, and the phenomenon of living in cemeteries around Cairo. On one hand, many of the historical buildings in Cairo, especially mosques, are occupied by families of migrant workers or those whose old houses collapsed. On the other hand, private investors are finding different means to avoid applying housing laws on their investments. They use their money to avoid the application of housing legislations on their properties and use bribery and favoritism to go through governmental bureaucracy and legal procedures.

The classification system adopted by the government does not account for the changing social patterns and needs of the population. After the late seventies, *infitah* (open-door policy) and the phenomenon of labor migration to other middle eastern countries, the income-based classification system of social groups has become meaningless. Education and opportunities to work in rich oil countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, has changed the economic status of many Egyptians while their

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[134] ibid., p.206.

social values have remained unchanged. Others, who have not had the opportunity to raise their income-- i.e. government employees-- suffer problems of degradation in their social status. As many Egyptians put it, "Today, the social pyramid is upside down."

Many social beliefs are changing rapidly, especially for young Egyptians who do not see any hope. Their pressing need for housing is reflected in frustrations and fear of the uncertain future. Secret marriages take place between the young who cannot afford to start a family because of the housing crisis, a major stumbling block in their marriage arrangements. Parents try to buy housing units for their young children, while many legal suits are filed by owners who are trying to evacuate the second or third generation of the original occupants in order to be able to give the units to their sons and daughters.

The chaos apparent in today's housing enterprise in Egypt has an historical and social background which is intrinsic to any understanding of the situation in Egypt. Although the government still assumes control over the housing enterprise, it is time to realize that the *housing problem* in Egypt has been created and nurtured by the interference of the government itself.

Architecture in Egypt reflects the crisis in identity characteristic of our time. It reflects contradictions and confusions in our social and cultural realities. We should not try to impose identity on architecture. Architecture reflects the identity of the time and the way of thinking of the society.

> It is, therefore, not just the use of appropriate materials or local building techniques, or the re-evaluation of traditional devices for cooling and ventilation which have to be preserved, it is the identity of a people which has to be reestablished in order to overcome the exploitation and the cultural neocolonialism which plays such a great role in contemporary Third World economics. [135]

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135 Kultermann, Udo, Cultural Identity and Human Survival, in Contemporary Third World Architecture: Search for Identity, guest curated by Theoharis David, Pratt Institute, 1983, p.13.

Identity is a process of self understanding and self actualization. It relates the past to the future through a changing present. The question should not be about what we are but what we want to be.

> There is no immediate hope for solutions of even the most urgent problems in the Third World architecture. It will probably take generations to overcome the existing obstacles which, beyond the physical, remain in the old line of colonial thinking.[136]

Generalized and borrowed models of planning and design which are blindly applied are doing more harm than good to societies and cultures of Third World countries. In all aspects of life, imitating foreign ways of living is a constant threat to Third World ways of living. It is not that people should be denied access to technology and easier ways of life. I certainly would hope that every human being can have the opportunity to live the best possible life. However, as we all might know, technology and modern ways of life are applied and adopted all around the world without sufficient knowledge of how they work. Most of the Third World countries are introduced to technological innovations from the western world. These innovations were not part of their life. This situations could result in all countries adopting a more western way of life and the world becoming more homogenized and unified. The disappearance of distinctive and unique cultures and ways of living from the face of the earth is not beneficial for the human species as a whole. On the contrary, we can enjoy life more by having these distinct cultures around us.

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[136] ibid., p.13.

Epilogue

> The decision where to end an investigation, to pronounce that our understanding of a given phenomenon is adequate, is as much a matter of selection as the decision where to begin it.[137]

While doing this study, I was able to identify several research topics and areas of study related to the issues raised by this research. First, the way of thinking of professional architects and planners who designed the villages and houses of New Nubia during the sixties reflected many political and economic ideologies popular at that time. A more in depth study of how the political atmosphere in Egypt during the fifties and sixties influenced the way of thinking of the architects and planners of the displacement villages is needed. The forces of cultural change that were set in motion by decisions made by architects and planners during the sixties would be better understood if the intentions and ways of thinking of those who took the decisions were clarified. Change was probably inevitable, but the specific nature of that change had to do with the specifics of the design and planning of the villages and houses of the displacement.

Secondly, the experience of Nubian women with displacement was different than Nubian men in many respects. This study pointed out some changes in the status of women after the displacement. I was not able to research in depth the experience of Nubian women because of my status as a single, male researcher. A female researcher would have a better chance to research the experience of women with the displacement, their views of change of their status and way of living, and their relationship with the surrounding environment.

Thirdly, the generational difference in perception of life was a strong theme which affected many aspects of life in both the displacement and returnees' communities. The fact that most of the returnees are elderly people and that young Nubians are not

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137 Giddens, Anthony, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writing of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p.139.

interested in going back to the lake shores is very critical. If the efforts of Nubians to return to the lake shores and rebuild their villages are to continue, the participation of young Nubians in this effort is essential.

Finally, a study of the experience of Sudanese Nubians, who were displaced in Khashm El-Girba near the Sudanese-Ethiopian borders, is also needed. A comparative study between the displacement experiences of Egyptian and Sudanese Nubians and the impact of different displacement schemes on the experience of these two groups would constitute a very fruitful study.

The usefulness of this research for the Nubians was always a troubling question for me, especially when asked by the Nubians themselves. While this research was not of direct benefit for the Nubians, I hope that it helped making their voices heard and their views understood.

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC AND NUBIAN WORDS

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC AND NUBIAN WORDS

Abonenga	uncle, father's side
Abonenganto	son
Abreah	beverage made of thin pieces of bread in a mixture of lemon, cold water, and sugar
Agada	necklace
Agol	an object used to announce the wedding to the village
Ahl	family
Ahlan Wasahlan	welcome
Ain	mother
Ainga	brother
Aise	hot noon
Aissi	sister
Allelah Wakkeh	a children's game
Aman	peace or safety
Amanah	honesty
Anainbes	aunt, mother's side
Aneing	aunt, father's side
Angareeb	a wooden bench used for sitting and also as bed
Anna	grandmother
Anngi	uncle, mother's side
Anno	grandfather
Aoa	night
Aoatoo	dark night
Aragid	musical instrument
Aro	20
Arragi	men's dress
Askari	guest
Askari Nog	guests room, (mandarah)
Asleen Kabed	*Kabed* with honey

Aza	mourning
Bab	door
Bahr	sea
Bahri	north direction
Balad	country
Balah	dates
Bambagga	roof or ceiling
Baraka	blessing
Barandah	loggia
Bawabah	gate
Beit	house, home
Borrow	girl
Borsh	mat
Dahleez	entrance hall
Dambag f Kassir	plastering the ceiling
Dambag	roof or ceiling
Damira	Nile
Dewi Nog	kitchen
Diga	5
Dima	10
Diwani	bridal hall
Doka	Nubian traditional bread and baking plate
Dorat Miah	toilet
Dore	1000
Doro	up
Doxid	ceiling system by palm leaves
Edwo	8
Eila	family
El-Dioerja	movement of the hand while making the bread
El-Tahjir	the displacement
Elle	wheat
Emil	100
Erki	village
Eskale	water wheel
Etter	*kabed* and *ganti*
Fa	agricultural land

Fab	father
Fagon	Summer
Fallah	male peasant
Fallaha	female peasant
Farraig	Abu Simbel
Fas	agricultural tool
Fatita	a children's game played with 5 stones one is thrown into the air while the rest are picked up from the floor
Fedija	people of the five fields
Fodromeh	a children's game
Gainnekachor	settlement of dispute
Gainnekrato	reconciliation
Gallabia	a dress
Galous	system of wall construction
Gareed	palm tree leaves
Gesrkaddeh	a children's game
Girgar	women's dress
Gofad	ceramic container for scents
Gorgo	6
Gotta	water container
Handakeh	a children's game
Heitah f kassir	plastering the wall
Heitah	wall
Hoshinto	courtyard
Ie, Ile, Iee	I
Innas	daughter
Ir	you
Kabed	thick bread
Kaf El-Kainna	door
Kalo	East, right
Karaj	*jareed* plate
Karri	dawry
Kassir	plastering
Keea	water lifting instrument (*shadoof*)
Kerage	Sunday, also 2
Kimso	4

Kochi	dawn
Konti	deep reed plate for grains
Koroda	7
Kortad	dread, leaves of beans
Madeed	breakfast food
Madinah	city
Mareh	corn
Mas	boy
Mas	good
Masin	good person
Maskagna	greeting for a single person meaning "how are you?"
Maskagro	greeting for a group of men
Masmas	a good person
Matto	North, down, going down, Egypt
Matto	up, south, coming from above
Mattoki	people from the south or up
Morossi	lack of water
Nakhl	date palm trees
Nog f Gonyoz	building the house
Nog f Gonyoz	building the house
Nog	house
Nowain Kabed	*Kabed* with shortening
Ograse baile	visible day time
Ograse	day time
Olawair	hanger for stuff
Ombo	water
Oro	West, left
Ortogo Koda	stable for sheep inside the house
Oskoda	9
Ouod	musical instrument
Owo	2
Rotana	Nubian language
Saba Binook	a children's game
Sallaba	medium thickness bread
Samteh	Saturday, also 1
Sardhan	a long, colored head cover for the bride's mother

Sarrega	a layer of galous
Seirga	greeting meaning "peace may be on you"
Serea	reply of greeting meaning "fine"
Shaddi	thin bread
Shaghalh	builder
Sharia	noodles
Shawer	large reed plate
Shibbak	window
Shita	Winter
Tab	a children's game
Tannas	daughter
Tannga	my son
Taoo	down
Tare	he
Televizion	T.V.
Tho	good person
Thomas	the good boy
Tino	South, up, coming from above, Sudan, ancestors
To	boy, son
Tokkad	cover
Tortoreh	a children's game similar to hide and seek
Tosko	3
Tossi	flooding
Trik Trak	a children's game
Wassi	ventalation opening
Weeah	Kabed with dried okra
Wera	1

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