NORTHEAST AFRICA SERIES
Vol. XI No. 2
(Egypt)

THE EGYPTIAN NUBIANS

Some Information on Their Ethnography and Resettlement

by Alan W. Horton

March 1964

At the end of January 1964, there occurred in Aswan, a remarkable gathering of public officials, scholars, and researchers. Over a period of three days this group of more than 60 persons (some of them distinguished) sat on hard chairs and listened attentively to the presentation of some 20 academic papers on contemporary Egyptian Nubia, the first fruits of a first-class research project launched in 1961 by the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo—with the help of the almost ubiquitous Ford Foundation.

The project, which is called the Nubian Ethnographic Survey, is under the over-all supervision of Dr. Laila Shukry El-Hamamsy, Director of the Social Research Center, and is the brain child of Dr. Robert A. Fernea, an anthropologist who has been director of the project since its beginnings and who organized and chaired the Aswan symposium. As anyone concerned about the preservation of Abu Simbel and other antiquities knows, all of Egyptian Nubia, as well as a large part of Sudanese Nubia, is soon to be covered by the lake created by the United Arab Republic's new High Dam. Dr. El-Hamamsy and Dr. Fernea were able to make a pointed and effective comparison between the funds available for a crash program in archaeology and the lack of funds for contemporary information on the people themselves. The basic aims of the project have been to write the ethnographic and social record of Egyptian Nubia and to gather information that might assist in the resettlement of some 50,000 persons. In its final form, the project necessarily included studies of the urban extensions of Egyptian Nubia and the fascinating intricacies of labor migration.

The papers presented at the symposium set forth first and tentative results only. Most of them presented preliminary findings from social and ethnographic data that is still undergoing analysis; a few were reports from persons in the arduous midst of field research; four dealt

with historical aspects of Nubia. Each paper was discussed and criticized for theory and content by those attending the symposium, and each paper and related discussion added its bit to an understanding of the total Nubian complexity.

Most of what follows has been abstracted from the papers and the discussions concerning them. A list of papers is annexed to this Report.[1] Other information has come from conversations with those at the symposium and from several visits to the resettlement area surrounding Kom Ombo.

* * * * *

Egyptian Nubia stretches along the Nile for a distance of 310 kilometers from the Aswan Dam south to the Sudanese frontier. Seen from the air, it is a thin green ribbon laid out across a desert and eaten away in places by rocky hill or sand dune; it is difficult to distinguish from Sudanese Nubia, its natural and cultural extension across the border. Because there is almost no rainfall, the Nile is everything. Nothing grows without the help of the river—and the non-green places are those to which Nile water cannot reach or over which Nile water has no mastery. On the east bank, the desert hills reach out toward the river and sometimes come flush against the river's edge. On the west bank, the encroachment is of a different kind, a slow creeping of dunes that can occasionally destroy a house or a crop.

In Pharaonic times, Nubia was sparsely populated because the only ways of getting water onto the land were by seasonal inundation when the Nile was in flood and by shadouf, an awkward and inefficient hand-operated lever; neither of these systems was enough to exploit the arable land more than spottily. The introduction in late Roman times of the ox-drawn water wheel, or saqia, permitted the spread of agriculture (in which the principal crops were wheat, sorghum, and date palms), and there emerged the pattern of settlement that was to remain until the building of the first dam at Aswan in 1903.

The history of language in Nubia is little known, and there are few archaeologist-linguist scholars qualified to throw light on the matter. Even the present distribution of languages, let alone the identification of inscriptions and of languages associated with extinct cultures,

---

[1] The Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo plans to publish the papers in due course.

is difficult to explain. Two dialects of one Nubian language are unaccountably separated by an intrusive cousin language spoken in an area many river miles long—and also by a less puzzling and smaller intrusion of Arabic-speakers. For the first 145 kilometers south from Aswan, the dialect spoken is Kenūzi and the people call themselves Kenūz. Then comes a 38-kilometer reach of Arabic-speakers who, though some are now settled at the river's edge, are clearly of a Bedouin tradition and have cultural affiliations with Arabic-speaking tribes in the Sudan. The next reach, a long one stretching 125 kilometers to the border and some 300 kilometers beyond, is occupied by Nubians who speak Mahāsi, a language of several mutually intelligible dialects which is sometimes called Fadīja. The last Nubian reach of about 350 kilometers is inhabited by persons who speak Dongolāwi and call themselves Danagla. The literature shows some confusion concerning which Nubian tongues should be called dialects and which should be called languages; the best way to avoid the confusion is to say that, despite the obvious kinship of all Nubian speech, Mahāsi-speakers cannot communicate with either Kenūz or Danagla except by way of Arabic. The Kenūz, however, can communicate directly with at least some of the Danagla, and probably with all of them.

Exactly when Nubian-speakers came to inhabit present-day Nubia is not clear, but it is known that a Nubian language was being spoken in the eighth century of our era because inscriptions in Old Nubian have been found. As a written language, Old Nubian did not survive the fall of the Christian Kingdom of Dongola in the 14th century and gave way to Arabic as Nubia gradually became Islamized. But though they lost their alphabet, the Nubians have clung to their Nubian speech in a remarkable way, as the similarity of eighth-century inscriptions and modern Mahāsi attests.

If only because of the river, there has always been a close relation between Nubia and Egypt. There are references to Nubians in Lower Egypt in Pharaonic times, in the ninth and tenth centuries of our era, and in the second half of the 16th century.[2] From the 17th century on, the literature indicates that Nubians came to Egypt as labor migrants

[2] These and other similar references are indirectly from Rolf Herzog's Die Nubier; Untersuchungen und Beobachtungen Zur Gruppengliederung, Gesellshaftsform und Wirtschaftsweise (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957). Dr. Herzog, who presented a paper at the symposium, pioneered Nubian research by making the first systematic investigation of the area's culture and ethnic origins.

—as they do now. It may be that they did not then come downriver in the same numbers or proportion as today, but certainly the system of supplementing the meager economy of Nubia by sending men to work in Egypt is not a new one.

The essence of labor migration is that it is circular. Labor migrants leave for areas of greater economic opportunity, but then, after months or years, they return home. While they are away, they keep in touch with their homeland in various ways. There are always some, however, who lose touch and who, despite their intentions to the contrary, never make it back, and these must be classified as emigrants rather than as migrants. Today Egyptian cities have large colonies of Nubian labor migrants and large groups of Nubian emigrants; the former constitute colonies in the sense that they are organized, but little is known about the latter.

Both labor migration and emigration presumably increased in 1903 as a result of the building of the Aswan Dam and certainly increased further in both 1913 and 1933 when the dam was heightened. In 1903 the damage to the crop area was relatively little; the lowest Kenūz lands were inundated for most of the year, but saqia land remained largely untouched. In 1913, however, the water, rising higher, covered saqia lands to the middle of the Arabic-speaking reach as well as lower lands farther upstream. Only minor quantities of subsistence crops could be harvested during the few months of low water in the Kenūz area. When the dam was heightened again in 1933, only the two southernmost omdiyahs (there are 39 such administrative divisions in Egyptian Nubia) were able to retain a sizable amount of saqia cultivation. Two other southern omdiyahs, for which the government built retaining walls and installed pump schemes, ended up with as much agricultural land as before—but, being new land, it had to be handled differently. Now in 1964 the experience is even more traumatic because all inhabitants of Egyptian Nubia are to be moved out to camps north of the new High Dam, and in Sudanese Nubia most Mahāsi-speakers are likewise being moved to resettlement areas on the Atbara River near Kassala. Hence any Nubian of seventy years or so can scarcely be blamed for believing that the world is against him; nothing drastic has happened to him that has not been in the direction of less land, sudden poverty, and homelessness.

The economy of present-day Nubia is like a bad dream. The basic fact is that Nubian land has not been able to support the Nubian population—and this was probably so before 1903, though to a lesser degree. Both Egypt and the Sudan have served as population escape

valves, but the more successful economy of Egypt has been the chief source of additional income—and given their present technology, the Nubians residing in Nubia must have income from outside in order to survive. This fact can be demonstrated to those who are acquainted with the Middle East by comparing Nubia with the near-subsistence situations of Lower and Upper Egypt: in Lower Egypt the land resource per capita is about 0.64 acres and in Upper Egypt about 0.47 acres, whereas in Egyptian Nubia the most optimistic figure is only about 0.28 acres (and when corrected to account for labor migrants is even less). Because there is so little land, Nubians must react sharply to ecological circumstance. It can, in fact, be shown for each omdiyah of Egyptian Nubia that there exists an inverse relation between the amount of land resource per capita and the number of labor migrants working abroad. Predictably, the Kenūz in the north with less land send out a higher proportion of migrant laborers than do the Mahāsi-speakers in the south.

The labor migration rates of Nubia are higher than any reported in the literature. They range generally from 50% to 100%, which means that in Egyptian Nubia there are few villages that have more than 50% of their adult males present at any one time and there are some villages whose adult males are all absent at some times. Imagine a New England town under similar circumstances. The mean rate of labor migration for all of Egyptian Nubia is a staggering 85%. Clearly, any society that forces (or permits) all but an average of 15% of its males to leave home is very special—and indeed this specialized economic arrangement is the salient social and economic fact of Nubian life.

In recent years, however, a considerable amount of labor migration has probably turned into emigration, though there are few statistics to prove this assumption. Observers have noted an increasing tendency for wives to join their husbands in the big cities of Egypt. One sampling of Cairo Nubians (who have so far maintained connections with their homes and cannot yet be said to have emigrated) indicates that almost two-thirds are living in households in which both husband and wife are present. In earlier times, when the principal occupation of labor migrants was domestic service, it was not too difficult to get home from time to time—other jobs (if necessary) were available when the home visit was over. But now jobs, or at least the kind of nondomestic jobs that Nubians increasingly seek, are harder to come by and harder to keep on the pattern of the old system. One Kenūz tribe of some 1,500 persons now reckons it has one-half of its membership in Alexandria, one-fourth in Cairo, and only one-fifth at home—the latter being mostly old men, widows, divorcées, and children. Of those at home, only 10%

are adult males, and there are no males between the ages of twelve and thirty-nine.

The groups mentioned in the preceding paragraph are probably not yet emigrants, though here we should leave ample margin for conflicting definitions. Still, despite the absence of statistics, it is certain that there are Nubian emigrants in considerable numbers. When does a labor migrant become an emigrant—and how often? How many emigrants retain their tribal affiliations—and to what degree? How many Nubian children brought up in the city are able to speak a Nubian dialect? How many marry Egyptians rather than their own kind? These are important questions, but most can be answered only on the basis of information that has proved impossible to obtain. There is doubtless a large twilight zone between migrant and emigrant status: if the tribe mentioned above is at all typical of the Kenūz, one suspects that a large-scale emigration is under way and that much of it is disguised in tradition-bound Kenūz minds as labor migration only.

Though the statistics reveal an inverse relation between land resource and labor migration (and would presumably do the same for land resource and emigration, if measurable), there is some land that remains uncultivated in the Kenūz area. In some instances the ownership of arable land is in dispute, but in others it is as if the ecological machine regulating the relation between land and people had got out of control—with the depopulation lever jammed in the forward position. Despite the Nubian myth that the old days were the best and that if only there were agricultural land the men would return home, the system of living that dictates the departure of a boy of twelve to earn a livelihood in the city, send back remittances, and become an urban sophisticate, is a system of apparently some appeal which may occasionally operate without an economic sanction. Perhaps one might find an economic sanction in the form of greater dependability of outside income as contrasted to the costs of maintaining irrigation systems and the uncertain farming conditions of Kenūz inundation, but there is no denying the fact that some families send their boys to the big city because (regardless of economics) they consider it the proper training for a proper life.

The interplay between Nubian economics and what is deemed proper can also be seen in the economic activities of Sa'idis (Upper Egyptians) in Nubia, chiefly because these activities reveal something about what Nubians would rather not do for themselves. By ecological coincidence, Sa'idis of Qena and Aswan Provinces are able to leave their own inundated lands for the four summer months of the Nubian growing season in order to perform seasonal labor for Nubian land-

Turning the saqia.

Collecting fuel.

VIEWS OF OLD NUBIA

Weighing the purchase.

Shadows at the river's edge.

owners. This arrangement is clearly in the economic interests of Nubian labor migrants in the cities because it permits them to keep their well-paying jobs by providing the necessary substitute man power at home. Not all Sa'idis in Nubia are seasonal workers, however, for a number work there the year around. Some are fishermen (few Nubians are interested in fishing) and some are carpenters, but the most productive are those who work as tenant farmers for Nubians owning land in government development schemes. These schemes introduced pumping techniques to open up new agricultural land after the 1933 heightening of the Aswan Dam, and it was not long before a majority of Nubian owners had agreed to a three-to-one tenant-owner relationship. (Though a tenant's share of 75% may seem high, in this case he deserves it because he takes entire responsibility and provides all equipment.) According to the Nubian myth, the Nubian who received development land should have been grateful for the opportunity to stay home. One wonders why he did not. Was it because this type of intensive irrigation agriculture was new to him? No, because his knowledge of saqia irrigation would allow him to learn quickly—the principles are the same. Did he prefer labor migration and urban living to farming? Probably, in some measure, but he could also argue that it was to his economic advantage to combine an urban wage with a quarter of the harvest from his land.

The principal source of income in any part of Nubia is the remittance. There are no statistics about this, but I would hazard a guess that remittances constitute at least 75% of the total income of the region, and in the near-landless north, excepting the areas assisted by pump schemes, the proportion is doubtless considerably higher. The balance comes from animal husbandry. Each household, which is the basic economic unit, has a certain number of sheep, goats, cows, and chickens around the family compound, and the short growing season is used largely for fodder. In the more cultivable Mahāsi-speaking areas to the the south, there is a greater dependence on subsistence crops and date palms. But throughout Nubia there is a keen awareness of the arrival time of the post boat—and especially of the first arrival after the end of the month. The post boat, which stops at each omdiyah, is the remittance-carrying link with the outside world.

There is also north-south variation in the social and political organization of Nubian life, but the cause of the variation is probably more cultural than economic. I have already said that Egyptian Nubia is administratively divided into 39 omdiyahs, or nahias. Each omdiyah has a government-appointed omda, or headman, through whom the individual Nubian conducts his business with the Egyptian government and

through whom the government deals in its relations with Nubians. Yet no omdiyah seems to be a cohesive social unit; no omdiyah coincides with any local social organization that the Nubian himself feels to be important (though the Mahāsi associations in the cities are organized on an omdiyah-wide principle). Still, even though it is not socially organized as such and though its boundaries have been arbitrarily determined by an outside government, the Nubian omdiyah appears to have some social significance. Among the Kenūz, for example, the omdiyah boundaries represent the limits of obligation toward kinfolk; even though a man is of the same tribe, he is treated like a stranger if he is from another omdiyah. Among the Mahāsi-speakers to the south, the omdiyah has almost the same kind of significance; it seems to be the arena in which the social activities important to Nubians take place—what occurs outside that arena in the next omdiyah is of almost no concern. When a Nubian is away from home, he will identify himself first as a Nubian and then as coming from a particular omdiyah, the name of which is by his way of thinking an important clue to his social identity.

Two other clues to social identity are the tribe and the village. One is an identity based on kinship and the other is an identity based on the small community in which the Nubian resides. Which of these identities does the Nubian consider most important? In the unlikely event of a conflict of loyalties, to which identity would he cling? There are no certain answers to these questions, but the evidence again suggests variation from north to south. The tribal or lineage organization of both Kenūz- and Mahāsi-speakers is based on supposed descent in the male line from a single ancestor, and in each area the lineages divide into smaller lineages, which in turn may divide into still smaller lineages. The smaller the tribal subdivision, the more likely it is that the common ancestor can actually and accurately be traced. But lineages at whatever level appear to be more important in the north; among the Kenūz the tribe (the qabila) and its subdivision (the beit, which is the word for house) are not only important political units providing collective security for members, but they also are able to act corporately with respect to religious observances, ownership of property, and even the regulation of marriage. Among the Mahāsi-speakers to the south, however, the lineage unit has no corporate functions and is little more than a security organization whose support is rarely invoked.

In the south, the village is a more important social identity than the tribe. Many corporate functions which among the Kenūz are handled by the tribe are village functions in the south. In a Mahāsi omdiyah near the Sudanese border, one of the mosques is attended by villagers from three neighboring villages, and the criterion of participation in

mosque activities is clearly territorial—whereas among the Kenūz it is just as clearly seen to be tribal. In the south, the climate of opinion is formed on an interlineage basis by the influential males of each village community; in the north, consensus is a tribal matter and may be sought among tribal members in any village of the omdiyah. In the south, the various saint's cults are territorially organized; in the north, each tribe or tribal subdivision has its saints, and the celebration of a saint's special day is an expression of solidarity among kinsfolk.

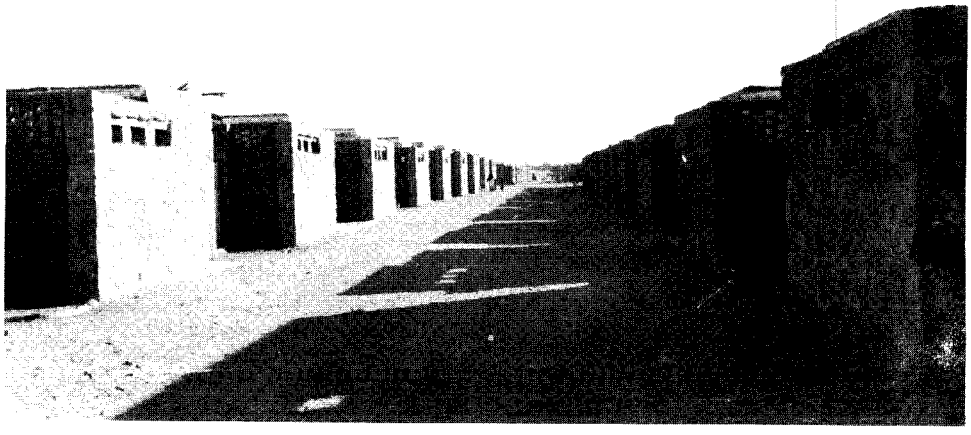
These north-south variations are reflected in the Nubian colonies of the big cities. In former times it was usually the case that the central meeting place, employment agency, and communications center for a Nubian group was a coffeehouse. Here letters were received and delivered, and here the group discussed matters of common concern and encouraged and reminded its members to send home their remittances. Here also bereaved persons received the condolences and financial contributions of relatives and friends, and in at least one instance a major reason for the establishment of an association and the furnishing of a rented headquarters was to provide an appropriate backdrop to the solemnity of such occasions. In recent years most Nubian groups have established associations, but whether coffeehouse or association headquarters, the meeting place represents the satisfactions and responsibilities of maintaining links with home—and predictably the organization of the meeting place is in some ways a reflection of Nubia. One Kenūz association, for example, though its name might indicate that it is for all those from a particular omdiyah, proves on close examination to be tribally organized and controlled. An association of Mahāsi-speakers, on the other hand, seems to have a genuinely territorial criterion for membership, within which the unrelated lineages may take special care of their own kin but have neighborly obligations as well.

* * * * *

To avoid a confusion of tenses, I have been writing until this point as if the move from Old Nubia to New Nubia had not yet taken place—whereas in fact roughly one-third of the population of Egyptian Nubia has already been installed in the new settlement near Kom Ombo. The authorities expect that the move will be complete by June of this year. Though the dam will not be in full operation until 1970, the end of the first stage, which means the completion of the upstream cofferdam and a rise of several meters over the previous high-water mark, occurs in August of this year when the floodwaters flow through the new diversion canal for the first time.

Dead animals on a still unwatered plain.

VIEWS OF
NEW NUBIA



Stone houses in long rows.

Children in front of a school.

The resettlement is being supervised by a Joint Committee for Nubian Migration under the chairmanship of a competent and perceptive undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Social Affairs. As its name implies, the committee is made up of representatives of other ministries involved in the move and in its social and economic aftermath. In an encouraging deviation from existing practice, over-all responsibility for Nubian resettlement was given to the governor of Aswan Province rather than to a Cairo ministry. This disposition of responsibility almost automatically put Nubian resettlement into a larger context, which is the decentralized and ambitious program of economic development of Aswan Province over the next few years.

For a period of some two years before the first and northernmost omdiyah was moved, the governor and the Joint Committee held monthly meetings with delegations of Nubians in an effort to answer questions and to calm fears. There was no Nubian participation in the planning process; the plan had already been worked out in considerable detail by the ministries, and the meetings were held in order to prepare Nubians for moving and to accommodate some of their desires if this was possible within the general framework of the plan. The basic function envisioned for the Nubians was that of co-operation, without which the job of the Joint Committee would be immeasurably more difficult.

The site selected for resettlement is in the shape of a crescent and some 60 kilometers in length. The mid-point of the crescent is just east of the town of Kom Ombo, an important sugar-cane and industrial center about 50 kilometers north of Aswan on the east bank. The individual villages (and here it is important to understand that a village in New Nubia is equal to an omdiyah of Old Nubia) are located in the same north-to-south order as in Old Nubia, and each village retains its old name with the adjective "New" placed in front. Thus Dabūd, the northernmost omdiyah, has become New Dabūd and is now resettled at the northern tip of the crescent. Though there are 39 omdiyahs in Old Nubia, there are only 33 villages in the resettlement area because in six cases the people from two smaller omdiyahs will live in separate sections of a single village.

The new houses of each village have been symetrically and unimaginatively arranged in blocks according to house sizes, which range from one-room to four-room compounds. This means that the different-sized families of two brothers, who used to live next to each other and had established intimate patterns of mutual assistance, may now have to make awkward arrangements with nonrelatives; it means that the old

widow who had been living separately from but near her son's wife may now have to walk a half-kilometer to help and be helped. The houses are made of stone and are considerably more sturdy and comfortable than the mud-brick houses of Old Nubia, and because there is no wood in the roofs, they are not subject to collapse from the action of termites. As in Nubia, each house has a compound made by high walls; on one side of the compound are the doors to the rooms, and in the two other corners are a privy and an enclosure for animals. Before the building program began, the Ministry of Housing built a model in Aswan for Nubians to look at, and here was one point at which the government was able to accommodate Nubian wishes by arranging for one more door to the outside and for a small kitchen area.

The total construction costs will finally run to about 13.5 million Egyptian pounds, but this includes a great deal more than the cost of dwelling units. Each village has a mosque, a guest house, a market building, a road in from the main road, and several kilometers of water pipe. Each village shares a primary school, a modern bakery, sports fields, and a public health unit. The entire area is served by four police stations, four "combined units" (these provide multiple rural services, including medical assistance), and three preparatory schools. There is also an urban administrative center (Victory City), which has urban-type social services, a central hospital, and schools at the preparatory, secondary, and teacher-training levels. The Great Pyramid at Giza needed two and a half million cubic meters of stone; the resettlement area has used three and a half million cubic meters. If construction alone could resettle 50,000 Nubians, the difficulties would be few.

Irrigated land will in due course be distributed to the head of each household, even to those who in Old Nubia had no land but did have a house at the time of the 1960 census. (There will be a second stage of housebuilding for those whose connections with Old Nubia are clear but whose residences were not being maintained in 1960.) At the moment the landscape around the new villages is bleak, a sandy, dusty wasteland backed up against the desert mountains, but water does amazing things, and in those occasional areas that now have irrigation the land is green and bright. Each head of a household receives one feddan (about one acre) upon arrival, and the plan says that he will receive the promised balance in about two years, after the irrigation works that are now under way have been completed. The amount of land that he will ultimately receive will be in keeping with the basic Agrarian Reform Law of Egypt, which applies to all land reform or development areas within the republic and which stipulates a distribution to each household of between two and five feddans depending on the size of the

family. The basic law says that every person receiving land must become a member of the local government-controlled "co-operative" society, which can require the planting of certain crops as well as assist with seed and equipment. In the instance of New Nubia, each landowner will be required to put 40% of his land to sugar cane.

Another provision of the basic law is that the owner must also be a resident manager of his new land, a provision which will force a change in the Nubian's migrant way of life—unless he can somehow get around it. The probability is that some accommodation will be made. The old men will probably be allowed to manage the farms of younger relatives drawing salaries in the cities, and they will hire local labor to do the work. What they will not be allowed to do is to reach tenancy agreements with land-hungry Upper Egyptians, as they did in the pump schemes of Old Nubia. The basic law requires also that the owner must pay the government for his new land, and here again the Nubian has been accommodated. Despite the fact that payments are to be made over a period of many years, a respectful Nubian intransigence has brought about an unwritten agreement that the government will not be pressing for any payments at all.

At one time the government said that it was resigned to providing monthly support for each household until the harvesting of the first complete crop (in two or three years). Despite statements of officials, Nubian opinion was that the support would not continue for long. The Nubians were right: officials are now saying that monthly payments will cease after the third month of residence in New Nubia. Though certainly not popular, this new government position may be understandable when one considers that vacant positions for Nubians in Kom Ombo and elsewhere in the area remain unfilled. When these jobs were first made available, after a considerable effort on the part of the Joint Committee, it was found that of the Nubians who might have taken them a few were placidly uninterested and most had already returned to their jobs in the big cities. The new government position thus recognizes that Nubian males will go on supporting their families in a traditional migratory way and that the brave new Nubian world of complete households is some years away—so in the meantime, why spend money on changing a way of life when the money would clearly fail in its purpose?

What stands out in the relations between government and Nubians is that they have been remarkably patient with each other. This mutual forbearance has shown itself in the moves from Old Nubia to the resettlement area. Nubians, for example, have had to be particularly patient about poor government timing; though the over-all plan was well con-

structed and compares favorably with similar plans elsewhere, the scheduling has been victimized by the mounting urgency of engineering deadlines at the dam site. After a period of uncertainty and worry, one omdiyah was finally informed of its moving date and then, with a notice of five days, the date was advanced by three days. Another omdiyah had its moving date put back by ten days with the promise that there would be no further delays; the housing authorities in the meantime discovered that a hurried and inefficient contractor had built some houses whose roofs showed ominous cracks, and hence an indefinite delay was announced. In this instance, the big-city migrants had already returned to help with the move, roofs and windows had been removed, some animals had been slaughtered or sold, and local merchants had stopped the import of food for the community.

The move itself is a well-organized operation. The Joint Committee has at its disposal six large boats, ten buses, and 20 big trucks. People, luggage, and animals are separated and shipped on separate boats. The animals must stay several weeks in quarantine in Aswan (which has always been the site of the quarantine station between Egypt and the Sudan), but people and luggage are expeditiously taken by bus and truck to the Kom Ombo area. In the case of at least two omdiyahs, there was further grumbling after arrival; again, a lack of good timing was the principal cause. There was water at the village pump, but not quite enough pressure to keep it flowing properly. There was some irrigated land, but the major irrigation works will not be completed for a couple of years. There was food at the co-operative, but it was expensive and not the right kind. There were public services, but some were either not quite finished or yet completely staffed.

The government has been patient as well. Indeed, the most difficult thing the government has had to do has been to maintain a general patience vis-à-vis the sometimes irrational demands and unreasoning attitudes of a people that feels itself put-upon and harassed. Feeling uncertain about the future, Nubians have naturally wanted to cling to objects representing the past. Feeling neglected, they have wanted almost parental care from the government. Every official has been asked to make a thousand exceptions, and every nonofficial visitor to the new villages can hear exaggerated tales of the heartlessness of bureaucracy. One problem faced by the government, for example, was the arrival in great numbers of city-dwelling Kenūz prior to the move from each northern omdiyah. Perhaps a few came to have a last look at Old Nubia, but most came to help their kinsfolk get ready to leave and to express feelings of solidarity. At a time when the economy of the community was grinding to a halt, these visits were as much a hindrance

as a help. In one omdiyah, each household had at least one visitor, and many households had several. A food shortage developed because few of the visitors had brought supplies from the city, the local merchants had already begun their count-down on the import of foodstuffs, and most poultry and cattle had already been sold and no vegetables were being cultivated. The government publicly cautioned the city-dwellers concerning the situation, advising them not to come unless it was absolutely necessary. When this advice had no effect whatsoever, the government was obliged, in a last-ditch effort to avoid chaotic congestion in the omdiyah, to prevent certain categories of Nubians from boarding the post boat at Aswan. Put another way, the government permitted on board only those registered as residents of the omdiyah in the census of 1960. This was perhaps a "heartless" solution, but because it was clearly the best solution available, the resentment it brought was somewhat like the anger of a child who is subconsciously grateful for the reasoning decisiveness of his parents.

The tangled mesh of relations between Nubians and the government is illustrated by the story of the animals of one Kenūz omdiyah. The Kenūz value their animals highly as nourishment and as a source of income, and Kenūz men apparently value the animals as occupiers of the women's time, on the theory that too much free time brings gossip and dispute. But at the time of moving, the Kenūz valued their animals chiefly because they owned them and because they wanted to go on owning them. The government may or may not have advised the omdiyah to slaughter its animals in anticipation of compensation—the record here is unclear—but if the government did so, it failed to get the message across adequately, as demonstrated by the fact that the price of meat on the hoof fell to a point far below reasonable compensation. Despite rumors from Aswan that animals were dying in great numbers while in quarantine, most animal-owners of the omdiyah decided to do what their hearts already urged, namely, to take the animals with them. So it was that at least half of their animals died in the quarantine station (which clearly could not cope with this animal deluge) and another fourth of their animals died after arrival in New Nubia. The government says it informed everybody that for at least two years there would be insufficient fodder in the resettlement area. Since it costs ten hard-to-find piastres for the round trip into Kom Ombo, which is now the only place where fodder can be purchased, it is to be expected that many of the remaining animals will die also. The government has stated that it will pay compensation for the animals lost at the quarantine station; the situation remains less clear with respect to the animals that were originally slaughtered in Old Nubia or died after arrival at the new home.

Despite what one may be hearing from them over the next few years, it is a fact that, with the exception of the old folk, and especially the old men, most Nubians have not been sorry to leave, which is not quite the same as saying they have been glad to leave. The city-dwellers who have families in Nubia have often expressed sorrow about the change, but the majority of those actually residing there have looked forward to new contacts of various kinds with the outside world. Some Nubian men have objected to the nearness of Upper Egyptians in the resettlement area and appear to worry about their womenfolk and their animals in this untrustworthy environment, but the women themselves have seemed to welcome the change to new and more varied surroundings. Perhaps they hope for reunion with their husbands after the new irrigation pumps make the area economically viable. As for educated young people, there is little doubt that most regard the move as a release from the bonds of tradition and isolation.

One reason for the relative equanimity with which Nubians regard the move of 1963-64 is undoubtedly that it is part of a long-term process of departure that has been going on for many years. I refer not to labor migration (which appears to be centuries old) but to the emigration of whole communities (which probably began with the completion of the Aswan Dam in 1903 and markedly increased with the heightening of 1933). The emigration to which Nubians have become accustomed has been of two kinds. The first, which was mentioned earlier in this Report, has been the gradual accretion of related families in the big cities; Nubian men have increasingly been bringing their wives and children to the north, and there must already exist an adult city-bred generation. How closely this generation keeps in touch with its origins and how it is socially structured (if indeed it has not become part of the amorphous urban mass) are matters for speculation only. The second kind of emigration has been by large groups, using compensation money to buy land for new agricultural starts. There are at least ten such communities in Upper Egypt and there are several in the Sudan. Some have been able to maintain a viable level of agricultural production; others have been forced to depend chiefly on remittances from the cities. All of them maintain their Nubian dialects and all preserve a sympathetic feeling for their places of origin, but at the same time they are distinct and separate communities. Having cut all but sympathetic connections with Old Nubia, they would now be considered outsiders by those who stayed behind.

One such community is so remarkable as to demand special mention. This is the community of Dar El-Salām, the majority and nucleus of which came from the Mahāsi-speaking omdiyah of Diwān in 1933.

Dar El-Salām is some three kilometers from the town of Daraw, a market town and camel-trading center just south of Kom Ombo. The early history of Dar El-Salām was one of economic failure; every bright agricultural dream (wheat, animals, dates, pump schemes) came a cropper —water was not only scarce and deep, but what there was soon became too saline. The immediate solution to agricultural failure was the ancient one of labor migration, but in recent years there has developed an unusual spirit of enterprise which has permitted an increasing number of men to support themselves at home. The enterprise has not been agricultural but has had a distinctly urban flavor, which is an exceptional phenomenon in the case of a rural village in a rural province. Only a little over 3% of Dar El-Salām's workers make their livings from agriculture (as compared with 54% for the UAR generally), and some 46% make their livings from typically urban pursuits in professional, managerial, and clerical categories—from which the traditional Nubian category of service occupations has been excluded. The figure of 46% in urban-type occupations for Dar El-Salām compares strikingly with Egypt generally (about 16%), with Cairo (about 37%), and with a sample of city-dwelling Nubians (about 11%). A comparison of present Dal El-Salām occupations with the occupational structure of the past reveals a patterned succession from farming through migratory service experience to various kinds of white-collar endeavor in provincial towns near the village.

The context of these remarkable changes in Dar El-Salām could be instructive to New Nubia—and to Egypt generally. Though the record has not yet been examined in detail, there are sets of facts that are suggestive. The literacy rate for the men of Dar El-Salām, for example, is about 90%; nearly 100% of Dar El-Salām's boys and girls attend school. The parents continually emphasize the value of education, and special evening seminars organized by teachers of the community help Dar El-Salām's students to pass the important yearly examinations with high marks. Almost all parents have expressed the desire that their children complete their higher educations in medicine or engineering. There is almost no parent who wants his child to enter a service profession. Beginning with an obligatory separation from agriculture, the occupational structure has so evolved that only 29% of the men can say they have had agricultural experience—and most of these are older men who are speaking of days before 1933. Some 78% of the men have had more than two years' experience in urban centers. One feels a spirit of enterprise on every side; even the women work hard at handicrafts of various kinds.

The example of Dar El-Salām has not been lost on the members

of the Joint Committee for Nubian Migration. Already they have asked the women of Dar El-Salām to teach handicrafts to new arrivals from Old Nubia. They clearly hope that an enterprising spirit like that of Dar El-Salām will pervade the resettlement area—though for the time being they would prefer the New Nubians to show agricultural rather than urban enterprise. Their major problem is how to change the way of life of the migratory Nubian male to keep him "up on the farm." The incentive—the prospect of cultivating a small plot under the supervision of a government co-operative—will probably not be a sufficient attraction, for few of the Kenūz now have much of an agricultural tradition and only a slightly higher percentage of Mahasi-speakers have supported themselves by farming in recent years. The few young men who are attracted to an agricultural life will not be the innovating, urbanized kind: they will be the slightly dull ones who might also have stayed behind in Old Nubia. The solution is to find the nonagricultural lures that will bring back the labor migrants; if these are not found, New Nubia will remain a repository for wives and children, an area in which old Nubian men direct Egyptian labor.

The best lure available would be a successful program of economic development in Aswan Province. This is soon to be attempted. Considerable industrial and agricultural planning has already been done, and funds have been allocated. Could Nubians become an important part of the labor force on the industrial as well as the agricultural front of the new venture? Some 65% of Nubian labor migrants are now engaged in service occupations. Will they be able to take a direct part in industry in the way that both the men and women of Dar El-Salām obviously could? When jobs become available, will they wish to leave their migrant big-city lives? Probably not many, but some will—and then, perhaps, a new generation of parents and schoolteachers will do as good a job in New Nubia as was done a generation ago in Dar El-Salām.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

APPENDIX

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE SYMPOSIUM ON CONTEMPORARY NUBIA JANUARY 27-29, 1964

Rolf Herzog, German Archaeological Institute, Cairo: "Valuable 19th Century Nubian Itineraries by German-speaking Travellers."

Nicholas B. Millet, American Research Center, Cairo: "Some Notes on the Linguistic Background of Modern Nubia."

Helen Jacquet-Gordon, Dutch Archaeological Expedition, Nubia: "Archaeological Backgrounds of Modern Nubia."

Bruce Trigger, Northwestern University: "Settlement in Lower Nubia: An Historical Perspective."

J. Clyde Mitchell, University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: "Some Sociological Interpretations of Labor Circulation."

*Thayer Scudder, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University: "The Economic Basis and Effects of Nubian Labor Migration."

Hassan Fathi, Higher Council of Housing Research, Ministry of Scientific Research: "Nubian Architecture."

*Abdul Fattah Eid, Ministry of Culture and National Guidance: "Views of Nubia and Its People."

*Charles Callender, University of Delaware: "Social Organization in a Kenūzi Nubian Community."

*Fadwa El-Guindi, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Ritual and the River in Dahmīt."

*Assaad Nadim, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Division of Labor in Malki."

**Mohamed Riad, Ein Shams University and Beirut Arabic University: "The Ababda Minority in Nubia."

Kawthar Abdel Rassoul, Islamic Faculty for Girls, El Azhar University: "Economic Activities of Sa'idis in Nubia."

Anna Hohenwart-Gerlachstein, Institut für Volkerkunde, Vienna: "Community Spirit Reflected in Nubian Social Life."

*Robert A. Fernea, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Integrating Factors in a Non-Corporate Community."

*Abdul Hamid El-Zein, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Saqia, Land, and Family in Adendān."

*Bahiga Haikal, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Residence Patterns in Ismailia, Ballana."

*Nawal El-Messiri Nadim, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "The Sheikh Cult in Dahmīt Life."

Herman Bell, Travelling Fellow, Oxford University: "Nubian Place Names."

*Peter Geiser, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Some Impressions of Stabilization and Urbanization Phenomena Within the Cairo Nubian Population."

*Nadia Haggag, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Family Typology Among the Nubian Community in Cairo."

Najwa Shukeiry, American University in Cairo: "A Study of Obligations on Death Occassions Among Cairo Migrants From a Southern Nubian Village."

*John Kennedy, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Some Economic Adaptations in a Previously Resettled Nubian Village."

*Mohamed Fikri Abdul Wahab, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo: "Some Problems of Nubian Migration."

Lewa Mohamed Safwat, Undersecretary, Ministry of Social Affairs and Chairman, Joint Committee for Nubian Resettlement: "Problems of Nubian Resettlement."

Hasan El-Shafei, Undersecretary, Ministry of Housing: "The Construction of the Resettlement Area."

J. Clyde Mitchell, University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: "A Summary of the Symposium."

---

*Past or present member of the Nubian Ethnographic Survey.

**Research supported in part by the Nubian Ethnographic Survey.