

## **Nubian Identity in Egypt Since 1952: A History of Exclusion**

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### **Abstract**

Since the foundation of the Arab Republic of Egypt in 1952, the Nubian population of Egypt has faced continuous marginalization, both in endemic, socially instituted racism as well colonial and state-mandated displacement, and dispossession. In this paper, I draw on existing literature, interviews, and legal documents to provide an overview of the status of Nubians in Egypt from 1952 to the present day. In doing so, I argue that a) the establishment of the Egyptian nation state on the premises of Arab nationalism and ‘indigenous’ sovereignty, shaped by the hopes of the post-colonial moment, has been central to the creation and exclusion of an Egyptian ‘Nubian’ people as understood today, and b) that the displacement caused by the Aswan High Dam was an inarguable turning point in the status and lives of the Egyptian Nubian community. Lastly, I look briefly at years since 1981 to highlight the continued weaponization of ‘development’ rhetoric against Nubian populations, as well as recent, increasing mobilization for Nubian rights and its limitations.

**keywords:** Egypt, Nubia. Nationalism, Post-Colonialism, Displacement, Identity Politics

*“These are all my pages; do not tear them up  
This is my voice; do not silence it  
This is I; do not curse me  
For I have lived among you and eaten with you,  
loved your culture, and still do. I am merely  
conveying to you, with the sting of truth, some of  
my sorrows, and those of my people.”*

Idris Ali, *Epigraph to Dongola: A Novel of Nubria* (1998)

Originally published in Arabic in 1998, Idris Ali's *Dongola* follows Awad Shalali, a Nubian worker in modern Egypt, who dreams of Dongola, the capital of medieval Nubia, now lost to the flood waters of the Aswan High Dam. Ali's work is emblematic of the revivalist cult movement known as *al-Sahwa al-Nubiyya*, (the Nubian Awakening) in which Nubian writers utilized the relatively-free Egyptian literary to emphasize suppressed perspectives on Arab nationalism, the Aswan dams, and the erasure and marginalization of Nubians by the Egyptian state.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I will attempt to provide an overview of the status of Nubians in Egypt since the establishment of the republic in 1952, with a particular emphasis on how conceptions of Nubian identity have at every turn been shaped by the Egyptian nation-building project. In doing so, I will argue that:

- a) the establishment of the Egyptian nation state on the premises of Arab nationalism and 'indigenous' sovereignty, shaped by the hopes of the postcolonial moment, has been central to the creation and exclusion of an Egyptian 'Nubian' people as understood today.
- b) the displacement caused by the Aswan High Dam was a turning point in the status and lives of the Egyptian Nubian community

Focusing on the status of Nubians under Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat, I will also look briefly at years since 1981 to highlight continuing patterns of 'development' that is detrimental to Nubian populations as well as recent, increasing mobilization for Nubian rights and its limitations. Given the scant availability of primary sources from this period, I will

mostly be relying on existing secondary sources, with the exception of a few legal and speeches. Finally, it is important to note that most accessible modern sources on Egyptian Nubia (either directly quoted or used by other authors) exist in Arabic rather than in Nubian languages. Such indigenous material is primarily preserved through oral histories, which I may occasionally invoke using existing fieldwork by other scholars. Despite these limitations, I believe Arabic sources have been helpful in providing an overview of the contemporary history of Egyptian Nubians, particularly since this history has largely been shaped by otherization by Arabs.

### **Who are the Nubians?**

Nubian identity has for millennia been highly complex and fluid, with 'Nubia' an equally complex geographic designation. Most broadly, the Nubian people are descended from the ancient Nubian civilization (3700 BCE-350 CE) who have historically inhabited the land between the first cataract of the Nile at Aswan in Egypt and the third cataract at Dongola in Sudan.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars debate the designation of Nubians as an 'ethnic' group as, prior to the advent of the High Dam in 1963, people from Nubia primarily referred to themselves in terms of their tribal, family, and district origin, with one's particular village taking precedence.<sup>3</sup> Primarily, 'Nubians' comprised of three culturally and linguistically distinct groups which have persisted to this day, known as the Kenuz, Faddicha and Arabs in Egypt, and in Sudan as the Dongolese, Halfans and Mahas-Sukkot.<sup>4</sup> These categories are still nuanced, with the Kenuz

for example originally being an Arab tribal group which became “in part, Nubianized through intermarriage with Dongolawi women”.<sup>5</sup> The advent of Arab Nubians is also questionable, as the term refers to ‘Aswan Arabs’ – Arabic-speaking groups from non-Nubian villages displaced by the High Dam, “whose inclusion in Nubian culture and networks is now built on political interest, solidarity, and shared struggles”.<sup>6</sup> Thus, while the existence of Nubians far pre-dated the formation of the Egyptian state, events since 1952 have been integral to the fashioning of Egyptian Nubian identity and perhaps made stigma and exclusion defining features of the identity itself. Ferea and Rouchdy argue that “if [before resettlement] the people of Nubia felt any common identity with each other, it was based on political and economic grievances with the Egyptian government,”<sup>7</sup> which primarily lay in its series of dam-building projects, beginning in 1902 under the British and culminating with the Aswan High Dam.

For the purposes of this paper, references to ‘Nubians’ should be understood as encompassing the Kenuz, Faddica, and Arabs, as all groups have been subject to displacement and systemic exclusion. It is difficult to discern the exact number of Egyptian Nubians: the 1907 Egyptian census stated the population of lower Nubia to be 57,576, while the 1960 census placed it at 48,028.<sup>8</sup> Given that ethnic identity is not identified by the Egyptian census and the majority of Nubians are no longer concentrated around Nubian land, there are no exact numbers of the current Nubian population, though estimates place it at around 3-4 million (Minority Rights Group 2020).

Finally, while the existence of Nubians far pre-dates the establishment of Egypt and Sudan as nation states and the identity of people on the Nubian border has remained fluid,<sup>9</sup> it is important to note that governments’ different approaches as well as distinct social, political and economic conditions have led to “bifurcation in the development of Nubian culture in Egypt and Sudan”.<sup>10</sup> Sudanese Nubians occupy a relatively high position in the social hierarchy compared to Nubians in Egypt, who are the focus of this paper and continue to suffer endemic racism and discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

### **British colonization, the Egyptian condominium, and the end of monarchy**

While the construction of the Aswan High Dam and consequent process of reclamation can be seen as a turning point in the articulation of a single Nubian identity, some scholars have argued old Egyptian Nubia was lost with the construction of the old Aswan Low Dam.<sup>12</sup> Built in 1902 by the British, the dam “destroyed much of Nubian agricultural land and their traditional economic means of survival”.<sup>13</sup> The Low Dam led to a series of successive displacements when it was heightened again in 1912 and in 1933, devastating Nubian crops and houses.<sup>14</sup> These construction projects drastically shaped the fate of the Nubians in Egypt, who became increasingly fragmented as Nubian labor migration and emigration presumably increased with each successive project.<sup>15</sup> Still, the marginalization of Nubians in Egypt had a longer history during British colonization. The Nubian population was permanently and arbitrarily divided by the border division fixed in the

1899 British–Egyptian Condominium Agreement, creating the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.<sup>16</sup> Trout-Powell observes that during this period, like many words relating to race and ethnicity, the term *nūbi* (Nubian) was highly nuanced. (2003: 17) Looking at newspaper coverage of a 1894 slavery trial, Trout-Powell finds that terms Nubian, Barbari, Sudanese and even *habashī* (Ethiopian) were often conflated and used interchangeably to refer to dark-skinned people from the south. (2003: 20) Such connotations show a preoccupation with phenotypic rather than cultural difference from the ‘Arab’ Egyptian population, and to this end, the presence of Nubians and Sudanese in Egypt during the late nineteenth-century was crucial for the development of Egyptian national identity and culturally situating Egypt vis-à-vis Africa and Europe.<sup>17</sup> In her analysis of primary sources including works of fiction by Arab Egyptians and testimonies by Nubian traders and guild members from the late 1870s, Trout-Powell finds that Nubians in Egypt were treated as decidedly ‘foreign’ even if they identified as indigenous.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most important consequence of Anglo-Egyptian rule for Egypt’s Nubians was the emergence of an enduring idea that “the Sudanese benefited from crossing over into Egyptian culture, and that the civilizing hand of the Egyptian government would tame the awesome territory of the Sudan itself”.<sup>19</sup> Following independence, this notion was arguably extended to Egypt’s Nubians, whose displacement by the Aswan High Dam was seen not only as a worthwhile sacrifice for the nation, but an opportunity for their own self-improvement and integration into the modern, industrial Egyptian state:

“If the Nubian people are leaving their smaller home of Nubia for the prosperity of the republic . . . they will find stability, prosperity and a decent life in Kom Ombo.”  
– President Gamal Abdel Nasser, speaking to Nubians at Abu Simbel, Aswan.<sup>20</sup>

Many Nubians appear to have supported the construction of the High Dam, “feeling that they sacrificed their old homes for the ‘greater Egyptian good’”.<sup>21</sup> Given also the lack of popular opposition by non-Nubian Egyptians to the construction of the dam, the relative ease with which the Nasser regime was able to readily displace the Nubian population is an indication that their marginalization pre-dated the establishment of the republic. Still, the legacy of British colonization has been immensely significant, both to the extent that

- a) the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan laid the grounds for the displacement of Nubians and abuse of Nubian land in the name of national development
- b) anti-colonial sentiment led to the aggressive fashioning of an Egyptian identity rooted in Arab nationalism that essentially excluded the Nubians and further entrenched their marginal place in society.

Following the overthrow of the monarchy and Nasser’s ascent to power, Sudan voted for independence and became an autonomous country in January 1956.<sup>22</sup> Partially motivated by overriding previous colonial agreements that prioritized Egyptian water needs, Sudan signed the 1959 Nile Waters Agreement

with the then-United Arab Republic (UAR), granting Egypt the right to construct the Aswan High Dam.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, Nubia's population of roughly 100,000 was split in half, and the Egyptian government began the process of absorbing 50,000 newly declared "Egyptian" Nubians into its citizenry.<sup>24</sup> Their journey and experience and citizenship, however, was to be highly defined by similar patterns of marginalization, driven by the privileging of 'Arab' Egyptian interests.

### **1956 Onwards: Arab Nationalism and Refashioning the Nation**

While Egyptian Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism can be traced to the early 20th century, under Nasser (and in tandem with 'Arab socialism' or state capitalism) they became the central doctrines upon which the nation was built. While Egyptian Arab nationalism was built on the premise of being anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and revolutionary, it has been argued that this nationalism also reinforced historical and racial structures of oppression, where prejudice against Nubians had been long prevalent.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Arab nationalism and Arabization policies stressed the absolute superiority and primacy of the Arabic language, thereby "stigmatizing other local dialects and cultures as backward and divisive".<sup>26</sup> While the primacy of Arab identity was an increasingly popular ideological norm under Nasser, it became formalized under Sadat. In his 1971 constitution, Article 1 plainly asserted that: "Egyptian people are part of the Arab Nation and work for the realization of its comprehensive unity".<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Article 2 re-asserted the primacy of Arabic, recognizing it as the one and only official state language.<sup>28</sup> These articulations, though intangible, have had profound effects on the fashioning of Nubian identity. Given the centrality of Nubian languages to the distinctness of Nubian identity, the new emphasis on Arabic further distinguished and marginalized Nubians from wider Egyptian society. This was perhaps most evident in the education system, where students of all ages were exclusively taught in Arabic and the study of Nubian languages was not an option. Nubian activists have protested these policies as part of what they consider to be an active process of "de-Nubianization" by the Egyptian state, which has also included:

- a) settling Arab groups in the lands that Nubians claim and attempting to give these sites Arabic names
- b) providing non adequate political representation of Nubians to the Egyptian government
- c) not upholding its obligations in protecting Nubian people from acts of discrimination<sup>29</sup>

Still, as Hughes finds her conversation with Dr Ahmed Sokarno, an Egyptian Kenuzi Nubian lecturer in linguistics at the South Valley University in Aswan, language is central:

*Hughes*: "Are there other problems or difficulties with maintaining or preserving the culture?"

*Sokarno*: "They don't want us to preserve it, you know."

*Hughes*: "The government?"

*Sokarno*: "Yes, of course. There is no way to teach the Nubian language in schools, for instance. You cannot. Any language that is not taught in schools, any language that does not have a writing system, is subject to danger, to extinction."...

*Hughes*: What do you think are the main issues facing Nubians today?

*Sokarno*: Number one – the language, because part of the identity of Nubians lies in the language. Once you take this language away or remove the language, they would be in danger of losing their identity. This is important. Language is a defining factor and it plays an important role in the cultural integrity of the Nubians. If you deny people the opportunity to learn their language then it will be a problem, and our children now are not capable of using the language as perfectly as their fathers and grandfathers...

*Hughes*: Do they want to learn the language?

*Sokarno*: Before relocation, [mothers] were not interested in education. Nowadays, women are more and more interested in education, and once women learn how to write and read they do not want their children to use Nubian; they use Arabic in conversing with their children. They believe that if their children learn Nubian they will not do well in school. This is a belief among Nubian women.

Additionally, given the increasingly scant opportunities available in Nubia compared to urban centers, Arabic language acquisition has become a means of social mobility for Nubians,<sup>30</sup> which may occur at the expense of a loss of cultural or ethnic identity. The explicit Arab nationalist assertions made under Nasser and Sadat have led to a definition of Egyptian identity based on homogenization, which has become integral to how the nation views itself. For instance, the Egyptian representative to the UN Committee on the Elimination of racial Discrimination in 2001 explained to the committee that in Egypt, there is, "...full homogeneity among all the groups and communities of which the Egyptian population consists since they all speak the same language, Arabic, which is the country's official language and Arab culture predominates in all its geographical regions, both desert and coastal".<sup>31</sup>

Such erasure principally impacts (if not targets) the Nubians, who are the largest non-Arabic speaking community in Egypt.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the Egyptian census does not identify ethnic identity, which in itself "infers an 'absence of any formal boundaries between Nubians and other Egyptians'".<sup>33</sup> Rather than being active erasure, such policies perhaps mostly indicate the Egyptian government's desire to assume a single national identity and bolster nationalistic rhetoric, but the subsequent marginalization of Nubian identity is a salient and significant consequence. Still, some scholars have perceived this erasure as a conscious effort. Hughes sees that both Egyptian and Sudanese Nubians "are seen as a threat to the power and stability of the respective regimes," and it is reported that, during relocation, President Nasser took the advice of Tito, then president of Yugoslavia, who "warned that the region might otherwise seek autonomy" (2011: 131).

Furthermore, both in relation to Nubians and Copts the Egyptian government has rejected the notion of any 'indigenous' Egyptian people. During a 2007 conference hosted by the Egyptian Centre for Housing Rights (ECHR), which was the first to frame the issues facing Nubians as those affecting an indigenous people, a deputy minister from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation was the only attendee from several invited government representatives, "sending the clear message that the issue is limited to a land problem, rather than a social, political and economic problem; that is, not a problem specific to an indigenous people".<sup>34</sup> Finally, the marginalization of Nubians is evident in the extent to which Nubian culture exists and is expressed primarily through music or literature, whereas "any efforts to promote the collective rights of a people have been swiftly contained".<sup>35</sup>

The emphasis on homogenization has been persistent, as even the establishment of a Nubian Museum was decidedly established by the government as an “Egyptian” project.<sup>36</sup> Such a climate has largely shaped the articulation of Nubian identity, as well as mobilization (or lack thereof.) In addition to wider state repression and the fragmentation of the Nubian community, Janmyr finds that Arab nationalism has been central to the lack of extensive mobilization for Nubian rights prior to the 2000s.<sup>37</sup> In these ways, the years following independence were integral to determining the status of Egyptian Nubians as understood today. To this end, the rhetoric and events were quite paradoxical. At once, development considerations and the 1959 Nile Waters Agreement meant that previously unaffiliated Nubians became “Egyptians” overnight, while Arab nationalism and the practical synonymizing of ‘Egyptian-ness’ with Arab origin, culture and language further ostracized the Nubians and cemented their marginalization, which perhaps peaked with the building of the Aswan High Dam.

### **1963 - Present: Aswan High Dam, Displacement and Threats to Nubian Identity**

The construction of the Aswan High Dam may be seen as a turning point in the status of Nubians in Egypt but must also be seen (in as non-teleological a way as possible) as the apex manifestation if not culmination of government policy and the status of Nubians up to this point in time. Firstly, Nubians had not been known collectively, or referred to themselves, as ‘Nubians’ prior to their displacement in 1963, when President Nasser of Egypt spoke of relocating “the Nubian people”.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, displacement in light of the construction of the dam marked the final blow to Nubians’ relationship to their ancestral lands and traditional way of life. In 1977, anthropologist William Y. Adams wrote, “no one can say whether or not the Nubians will succeed in maintaining a separate ethnic and linguistic identity under the altered circumstances of the twentieth century.

Given the levelling influence of mass communication and of western technical civilization, their ultimate extinction as a separate people might seem inevitable – at least to western observers (1977: 664). While it can safely be seen that Nubian identity has been relatively preserved well into the twenty-first century (as will be discussed in the final section), Adams’ comments reflect the immense threat and disruption caused by the High Dam displacement.

With the exception of several villages of Old Nubia in the Nile Valley, the vast majority of the Nubian population – around 50,000 people – were relocated between 1963–1964 to 30 villages in the region of the Upper Egyptian town of Kom Ombo, now called ‘New Nubia’.<sup>39</sup> The re-location has had profound impacts on Nubians’ collective identity and social cohesion within the Nubian community. Prior to the dam, Nubians who lived in their own villages experienced a rich ceremonial life which served as “tangible demonstration of solidarity among the different local groups,” with a vast majority of rituals of great symbolic importance that separated them (and in their eyes, rendered them superior), to other Egyptians.<sup>40</sup> Such rituals, as well as the distinctness of family and kinship ties, were greatly weakened by re-location, which undermined the traditional social structures of the village and nuclear family as well as disregarded old rivalries in the face of a new, ‘modern’ life.<sup>41</sup>

Re-location and the destruction of traditional Nubian houses had a profound impact on Nubians’ sense of connection to ancestral lands and distinct identity. Still, many Nubians have resolved to preserve their distinct sense of identity in the absence of the land.

In one of Hughes' interviews, a Nubian woman named Suad reveals, "the ways the Nubians kept their heritage and their culture was through their language, because they lost their ability to read and write in Nubian, but they kept it orally, and it kept going from generation to generation through oral transmission, rather than through reading and writing. The area has degraded tremendously environmentally over the centuries, but it has certain resilience that kept it going. We pride ourselves that we are different, our traditions and culture [are] different from the Arab Islamic culture and the rest of central Sudan. In our view towards the role of women in society, for example, in the way we build our houses, in the way we treat foreigners, or people who are from outside the country or the region ..." (2011: 115). In addition to undermining cultural practices, re-location also led to a worse quality of life for many Nubians. As Gilmore observes, despite the governments' promises that they would soon feel "at home" in Kom Ombo, many longitudinal studies showed that there were "widespread indicators of chronic social and psychological breakdown." (2015: 55) Fahim's 1983 study ascribes these partially to "inadequate community consultation; the breakdown of neighborhood, family, and kinship ties; disappointment about unfulfilled government promises; feelings of cultural and environmental dislocation; and the limited economic resources and opportunities available in New Nubia, leading to increased labor migration to the north" (161). The latter point has been the particular focus of scholars: In 1964, Horton argued that labor migration rates of Nubia are "higher than any reported in the literature," ranging from 50 percent to 100 percent, wherein in some villages the adult male population can be entirely absent at one time (1964: 5).

Right after the re-settlement project, in 1964, the mean rate of labor migration for all of Egyptian Nubia was 85 percent, and remittances constituted a minimum estimated of 75 per cent of the region's total income.<sup>42</sup> This mass exodus of Nubians from their newly settled sites is primarily what led Fahim to the conclusion that the 'New Nubia' failed "in the eyes of most Nubians, to become a viable community that could provide a promising future" (1983: 111).

Beyond its limitations, the execution of the government program of re-settlement was deeply flawed. In 2011, more than 40 years on, there were still 5,000 displaced Nubians who had not been settled in 'New Nubia'.<sup>43</sup> Displacement has not only been socially and psychologically traumatic for the Nubian population, but the lack of opportunities in the settlements and consequent labor migration has further re-affirmed Nubians' economic and marginalization in Egyptian society. Such marginalization has further fueled stereotypes. For instance, at a 'Nubia Day' hosted by the American University in Cairo in 2008 dedicated to sharing Nubian culture with non-Nubians, "Nubian students handed out flyers proclaiming that 'illiteracy among Nubians is almost 0% and there are scientists among the Nubians and there are many who work in privileged jobs'".<sup>44</sup>

Today, Nubian students find themselves refuting the same stereotypes of Nubians as uneducated, poor, and unskilled that have persisted since the work of Egyptian playwrights in the 1870s,<sup>45</sup> and while the status of Nubia and of Egypt itself has undergone intense transformations since, the privileging of an 'Arab' Egyptian identity at the expense of a Nubian one has been central to the enduring nature of such stereotypes over such a long era.

### **Present Day: ‘Development’ under Sisi and Nubian Activism**

While the construction of the Aswan High Dam may be seen as a turning point, similar initiatives have persisted under President Mubarak and into the present day under President Abdel Fattah El Sisi. Allen describes a particular incident in 2014, " "In April 2014, one month before his interview on Egyptian TV, Sisi received a delegation of Nubian leaders in order to “showcase his vision for the development of Upper Egypt.” Sitting in a lavish garden, Sisi explained his plans to develop “Nubia,” and entertained suggestions from the delegates in this regard. In order to examine the history of development in Egypt’s south and west desert, it is important to highlight the experiences of those whom this development has most directly affected. As the record of Egypt’s development shows, it is not just “undeveloped” land that is an object of development, but also the very people who live on it” (2014: 4). While perhaps no project can parallel the trauma of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, I mention this example to highlight the enduring nature of the perception of Nubia as ‘undeveloped,’ wherein, as was the case in the 1960s, Nubian land is seen as prime real estate through which the Egyptian government can realize its lofty development goals, with little regard to the people who inhabit it.

However, in contrast to 1963, Nubian activists have become increasingly vocal about this history of oppression. For instance, in 2010, the ECHR submitted a petition to the UN OHCHR requesting that the Egyptian government grant Nubians international legal status as an indigenous population.<sup>46</sup> This was ultimately refused, the existence of such mobilization in an explicitly articulated frame of indigeneity had hitherto been unheard of.

Janmyr explores this topic at length, highlighting the different ways in which Nubian activist groups have approached mobilization for rights and the return to ancestral lands, between utilizing a human rights framework, indigeneity discourse, and invoking minority rights.<sup>47</sup> The latter category has been most palatable to government officials, while Nubian activists employing the human rights frame have often faced repeated accusations of serving colonial goals and trying to divide the nation.<sup>48</sup> However, Nubian activists reached an unprecedented milestone in 2014, where Article 236 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution directly referred to, if not recognized, a Nubian right to return:

“The State shall guarantee setting and implementing a plan for the comprehensive economic and urban development of border and underprivileged areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matrouh, and Nubia. This shall be made with the participation of the residents of these areas in these development projects, and they shall be given a priority in benefiting therefrom, taking into account the cultural and environmental patterns of the local community, within ten years from the date that this constitution comes into effect, as regulated by Law. The State shall work on setting and implementing projects to bring back the residents of Nubia to their original territories and develop such territories within ten years, as regulated by Law”.<sup>49</sup>

Article 263 was not only the first reference in the Egyptian constitution to ‘Nubia,’ but also “linked Nubian right of return to nation-wide development goals”.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, the Ministry of Transitional Justice formed the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Nubia in September 2014, which is tasked with addressing the goals of Article 236 and includes eight public figures and lawyers from the Nubian community as well as a number of Nubian youth activists.<sup>51</sup>

While we are currently six years into the ten-year timeframe set by the article, there have been few tangible developments in achieving its goals, and whether it has led to changes in the lived experiences and status of Egyptian Nubians is also highly up for debate. Still, the success of Nubian activists in mobilizing governmental change for the recognition of their rights as a population that has hitherto been the subject of relentless erasure and marginalization is noteworthy, even if the only change it signifies is a change among the Egyptian Nubian community's self-perception and ability to mobilize since 1963.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I attempted to provide a brief and broad overview of major factors shaping the status of Egyptian Nubians since the establishment of the republic in 1952. In attempting such a project, I have undoubtedly excluded a number of important considerations.

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For instance, the limits of Nubian attempts for mobilization, as well as the wider struggle of the Nubian people in Egypt, must of course be seen in the broader context and particularities of the authoritarian Egyptian military state, which I have unfortunately not been able to explore here. I have also refrained from framing the marginalization of Nubians in terms of anti-Blackness which, while extremely pervasive in Egypt, seemed too complex a frame to use for this paper. Still, I hope to have highlighted common threads throughout this period and shown how the privileging of Arab identity and Arabic language, influenced by the colonial moment and experience, was integral to the concomitant marginalization of Nubian identity and Nubian language. This marginalization was perhaps most evidently manifested in the traumatic experience of displacement following 1963 and continues to have reverberating effects for the Nubian population, although increasing mobilization may be a signal of hope.

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- <sup>1</sup> Gilmore, "A Minor Literature in a Major Voice": Narrating Nubian Identity in Contemporary Egypt, 52
- <sup>2</sup> Gilmore, 53
- <sup>3</sup> Fernea and Rouchdy, "Nubian culture and ethnicity." *Nubian Encounters: The Story of the Nubian Ethnological Survey 1964*, 292
- <sup>4</sup> Hughes "Displacement and Indigenous Rights: The Nubian Case", 129
- <sup>5</sup> Rouchdy, *Nubians and the Nubian language in contemporary Egypt: A case of cultural and linguistic contact*, 4
- <sup>6</sup> Agha, "Nubia Still Exists: On the Utility of the Nostalgic Space", 2
- <sup>7</sup> Fernea and Rouchdy, 292
- <sup>8</sup> Geiser "Cairo's Nubian families," 169
- <sup>9</sup> Fabos, *'Brothers' Or Others?: Propriety and Gender for Muslim Arab Sudanese in Egypt*, 30
- <sup>10</sup> Gilmore, 54
- <sup>11</sup> Kronenberg "Nubian Culture in the Sudan in the 20th Century: State of Research", 91
- <sup>12</sup> Kennedy and Frea, Initial adaptations to resettlement: a new life for Egyptian Nubians, 354
- <sup>13</sup> Hughes, "Displacement and Indigenous Rights: The Nubian Case," 129
- <sup>14</sup> Agha, 2
- <sup>15</sup> Horton, *The Egyptian Nubians: some information on their ethnography and resettlement*, 4
- <sup>16</sup> Hughes, "Displacement and Indigenous Rights: The Nubian Case," 3
- <sup>17</sup> Powell, *A different shade of colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain,*

- and the mastery of the Sudan*, 70
- <sup>18</sup> Powell, 78
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 79
- <sup>20</sup> Fahim "Egyptian Nubians: resettlement and years of coping," 36
- <sup>21</sup> Janmyr "Human rights and Nubian mobilisation in Egypt: towards recognition of indigeneity," 131
- <sup>22</sup> Allen, "Nubians and development: 1960-2014", 7
- <sup>23</sup> Abdalla, *The 1959 Nile Waters Agreement in Sudanese-Egyptian relations*, 334
- <sup>24</sup> Allen, 8
- <sup>25</sup> Janmyr, 718
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid, 722
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, 131
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 722
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 131
- <sup>32</sup> Gilmore, 54
- <sup>33</sup> Fernea 1991: 196
- <sup>34</sup> Hughes, 133
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid, 131
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid
- <sup>37</sup> Janmyr, 130
- <sup>38</sup> Hughes, 129
- <sup>39</sup> Strouhal, "Egyptian Nubians Today", 57
- <sup>40</sup> Fernea and Rouchdy, 293
- <sup>41</sup> Janmyr, 131
- <sup>42</sup> Horton, 5
- <sup>43</sup> Hughes, 124
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, 136
- <sup>45</sup> Trout-Powell
- <sup>46</sup> Janmyr, 724
- <sup>47</sup> Janmyr
- <sup>48</sup> Janmyr, 141
- <sup>49</sup> Janmyr, 412
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid