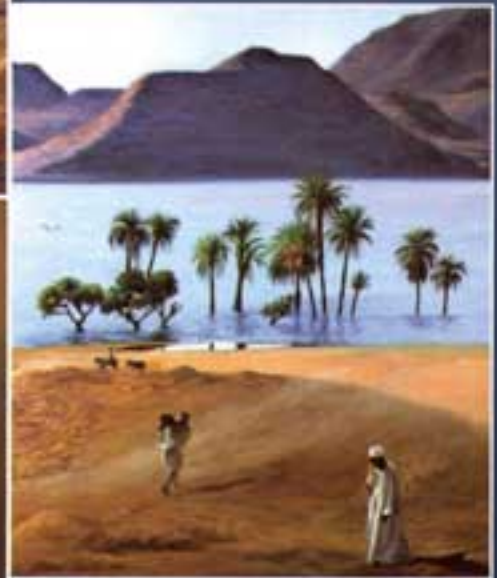


# *Searching for Nubia*



Text & Artwork  
**Farid Fadel**

# SEARCHING FOR NUBIA

Text & Artwork

FARID FADEL

برعاية





## Searching for Nubia

As a child growing up in the sixties, Nubia seemed so far away - almost like fairyland, way beyond the known world! There was news about a great salvage mission in the south. The name Abu Simbel was now known to every household; we were hearing it on the radio and TV (pretty much a novelty in Egypt then) and it made headlines across the world....

It was even on a memorial postage stamp in my humble collection as a second grader.

My artistic interest in Nubia, however, is relatively recent. Hisham, I remember, was the first Nubian young man I painted from life specifically for an exhibition at the Toledo museum of Art in Ohio, in the fall of 1997.

His dark skin tones had posed a challenge then, till I acquired more experience through painting his brother "Amr Abdalla" over a dozen times. One of the live drawings I made of Amr was featured on

the invitation card of my next Toledo exhibition in the year 2000.

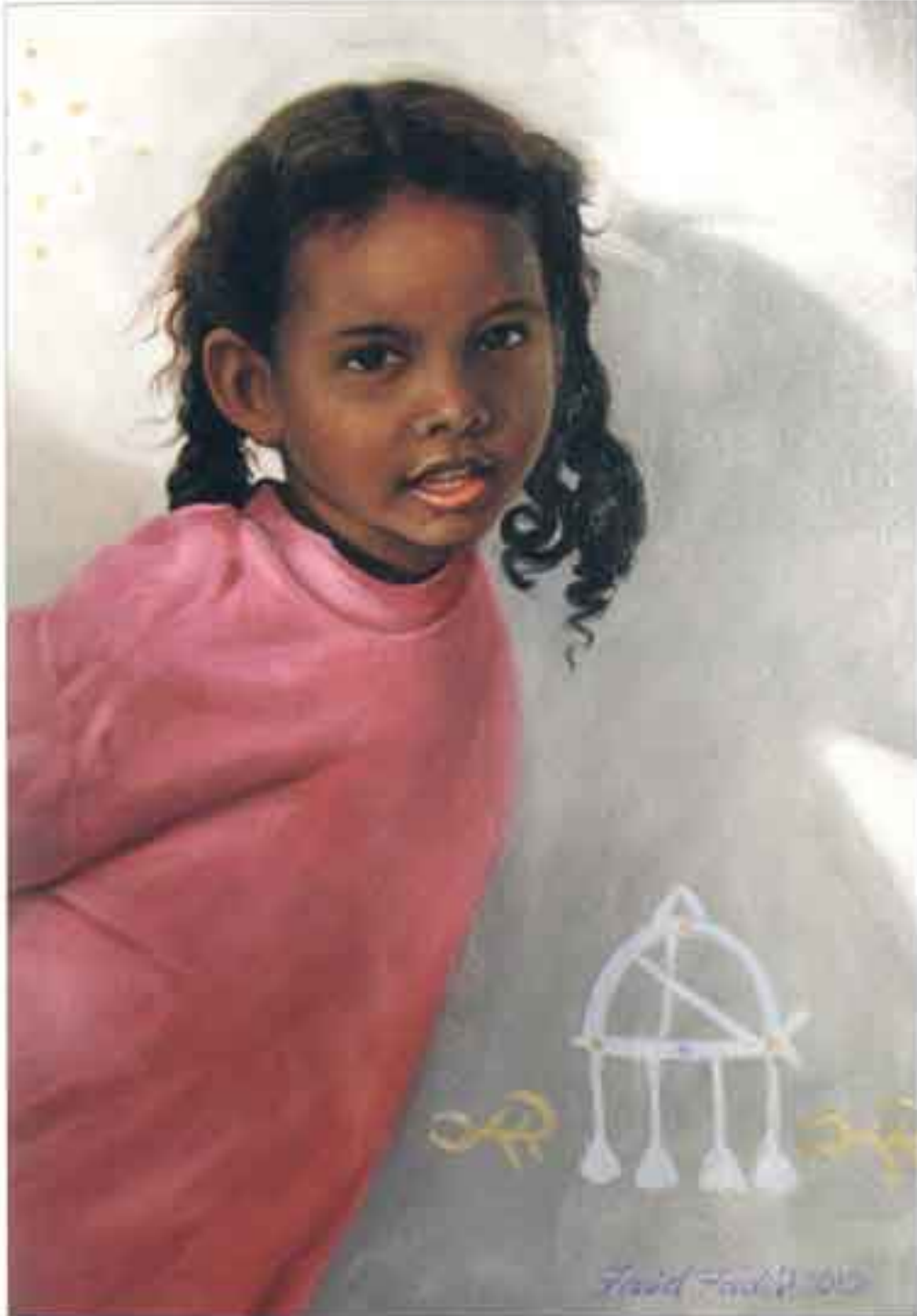


Amr Abdalla  
30X40 cm, Drawing

عمرو عبد الله  
٣٠X٤٠ سم، زيت على قماش

In the same year I went on a Nile Cruise to Aswan where I left the guided tour to search for more inspiration in some curious Nubian village near Aswan.

One of the highlights was attending the "Henna"



night of a Nubian wedding and engaging in the festivities of dance, traditional singing and generous Nubian hospitality. A gush of inspiration came over me, culminating in a rich body of work, which I showed in Cairo in 2001, under the title "Dreams of the South".

These are some words that I wrote down by way of introduction to that exhibition:

"Nubia stands for peace and beauty... the intertwining of a wonderful landscape with pacifist pride.

I wish I could have seen its intact grandeur of times gone by, before the Nile water covered both ancient living villages and tombs of the ancestors alike. Paradoxically, loss of the latter has broken the hearts of those left behind far more than their grief over their submerged houses."

Aya - Abu Simbel  
50X61 cm, Oil on canvas

آية - أبو سمبل  
٦١X٥٠ سم، زيت على قماش



### ***What do I see in Nubia?***

Graceful, proud people going about their daily activities, unconscious of their captivating charm. Sailboats crossing each other whispering soft love poems in the ears of their passengers. Whether at twilight, dusk or the early hours of dawn, their haunting magic holds us in a trance.

Colors always changing, majestic formations unfold before our eyes as we witness huge elephantine rocks bathing playfully day and night in the deep blue of an overflowing river.

Sky and water embrace, squeezing gently some mountains blushing in pink, a border of palm trees swaying and swinging and a breeze gently caressing some quiet white plastered houses.

We walk the narrow winding lanes of a closely-knit community that continues to meet its fate with matchless serenity.

Still, their dream is reality treasured deep down in their hearts.

Unwillingly yielding to a new harsh existence, yet unchanged by its cruelty, I discovered that the Nubian smile conquers all, for underneath that dark shining countenance is a unique treasure of civilization.

Many years passed by with the Nubian theme recurring here and there in many of my paintings till in the spring of 2009 I decided to join a Lake Nasser cruise. I was under the impression that such a trip was more suited for retired people with much less sightseeing to do than the regular Luxor - Aswan cruise.

Nevertheless, the excitement of seeing Abu Simbel for the first time in addition to many Nubian temples was well worth taking the risk. The day before taking off, I was lucky to be received by Dr.

Tharwat Okasha, former minister of culture at the time of the building of the high dam.

Sipping espresso at his elegant villa in Maadi, he went back reminiscing of the time of the UNESCO rescue campaign.

I could see on his face the excitement of gathering the efforts of the whole world to excavate, record and save a prime world heritage site in such a short time.

Never before have the governments and institutions of the developed world unanimously united their efforts for a single noble goal. Dr. Okasha told me of his meetings with president Nasser who didn't have much hope that the west would lend a hand, especially after the 1956 war, but against all the odds, a mountain of political conflict seemed to melt when it came to the gigantic task of saving Abu Simbel and the Nubian monuments for the



Egret Song  
50X61 cm, Oil on canvas

أغنية أبو قردان  
٦١X٥٠ سم، زيت على قماش



coming generations. What a great lesson - culture knows no barriers, and may allow enemies to move hand in hand toward a common goal.

I had arrived in Abu Simbel by noon and immediately hopped in a car to take me to the temple. I remember the first glance I had at the smiling face of the seated king. The sun was bidding farewell to the façade as I went inside under the statue of Re Harakhte towering over the gate.

'Awad', the proud Nubian guard who held the Ankh- shaped temple key, was smiling as I beheld the huge Osiride statues flanking the main hall.

At the very end was the holy of holies with statues of the four gods. The angle of the temple axis into the rock allows the rays of the rising sun to fill that room twice a year, once in February, and another time in October.

Every six months huge crowds gather from the

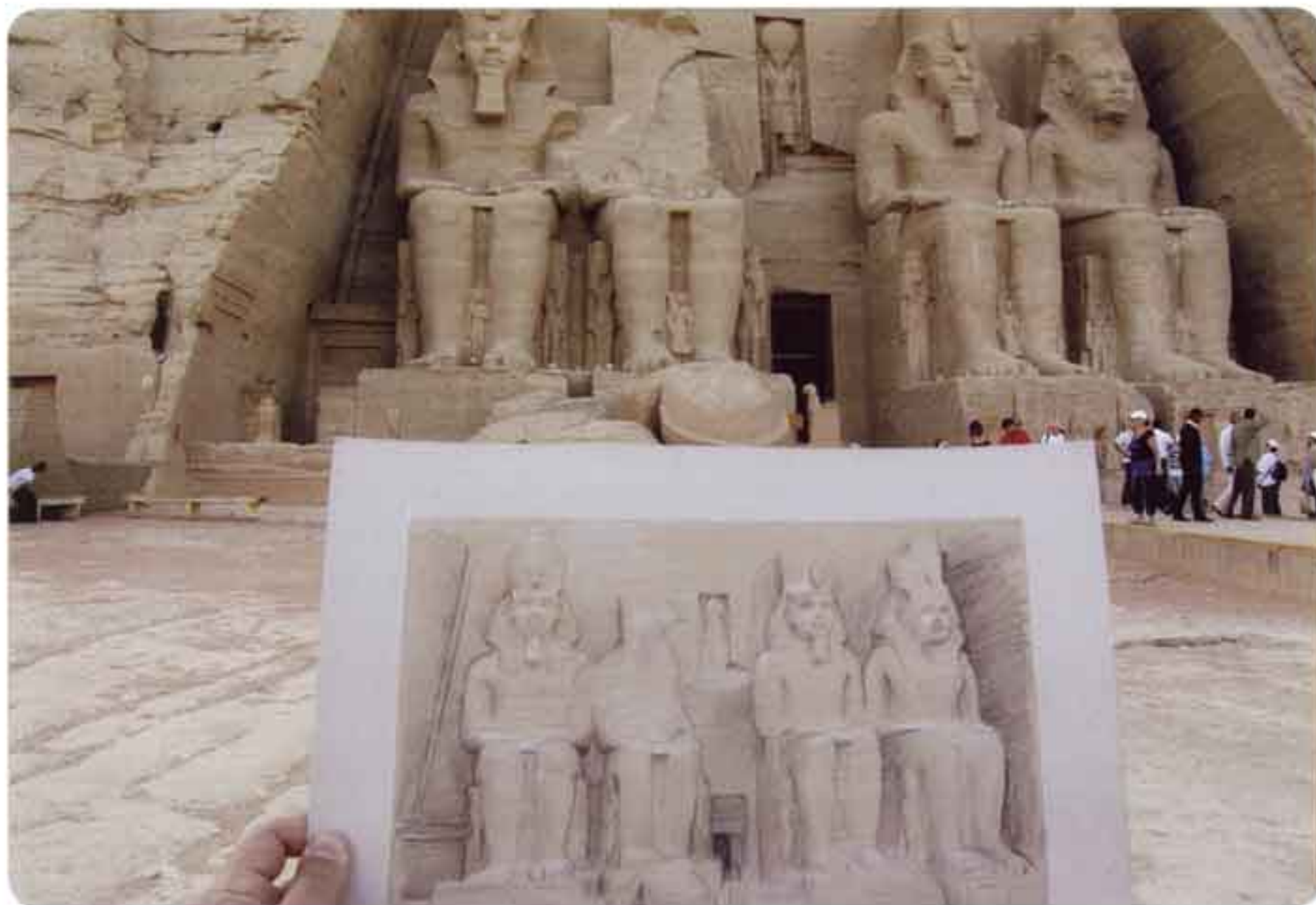
night before to reserve their place in the queue for viewing such a unique phenomenon.

For his beloved, King Ramesses II dedicated an impressive temple also cut in the rock and built for the worship of the goddess Hathor, whose image is carved on the pillars on both sides of the main hall.

I asked for a chair and sat down to record her peaceful features as the last rays of the sun lit her cheek which I hurried to model quickly in red and brown pencils.

As the temples closed down at sunset, I went out, only to come back again a few minutes later for the sound and light show. I have to say I liked it better than the ones at Karnak and the Pyramids of Giza. Early next morning, the boat disembarked slowly allowing the guests on deck to take one final look on the two temple façades at the first kiss of the sun.







After breakfast we kept sailing down-stream for a couple of hours till our first stop at Qasr Ibrim. What is now a small rock island to one side of the lake was once a major center for trade, with impressive fortifications, temples, churches, a cathedral and many houses.

Because of its high position above the water, this is the only archeological site in Nubia that remains in its original position. Visitors as yet are not allowed on the island, but birds are! We were watching as two kites were busy finishing off a prey.

I went down to the cabin and sat in the roomy balcony watching an occasional fishing boat here and there till after lunch we arrived at the second stop, namely new Amada.

It felt strange to walk on Nubian soil at a site that had witnessed so many historical events. In many ways, the temple of Amada is unique.

First and foremost, it is the oldest existing temple in Nubia built by Tuthmosis III and his descendants during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

Second, the temple was moved only 2.6 km away from its original location, keeping its same orientation to the Nile. Last, but not least, the back part of the temple has been rescued by an ingenious feat of engineering using French technology. It was lifted as one block by means of a hydraulic pump system and transported on 3 railway tracks up hill at the rate of 25 meters per day. Do you believe that? Well, the temple, like many others in Nubia, was used as a church during the Christian era, with a layer of plaster covering the Pharaonic images (paradoxically preserving them), and a mud brick dome that appears in 19<sup>th</sup> Century photos of Amada, thus giving it a more picturesque exterior.

Indeed the temple looks quite bland on the outside but the colored bas-reliefs in its many rooms redeem the visit.

A few meters down the road we come to the temple of Derr, with a row of reclining camels right in front of the entrance. Built by Ramesses II to celebrate his first jubilee (30 years of reign) this temple follows the same structure and decorative pattern of his great temple at Abu Simbel, but on a much reduced scale. To me one of the most attractive images is the one depicting the king under the sacred tree "Ished" surrounded by its beautiful foliage and paying tribute to Ptah and Sekhmet. I later did a watercolor of this picture, which is on display at the exhibition.

Now, one can take a camel, a donkey carriage or walk to the next site: namely the rock-cut tomb of Pennut, a high official under Ramesses III. Unfortunately there is not much to see inside as many images were stolen in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. Nevertheless, the two that remain are very beautiful.

In fact the tomb has been placed at the foot of a dark hill that reminds one of the mud-brick pyramid

of Dahshur! On our way back to the boat we were met by peddlers who tried to sell us souvenirs and were at the same time carrying real baby crocodiles for fun. I happily took two of them in my arms for a photo, after making sure their mouths were sealed with a metal band.



Wadi El Sebua under water  
55X75 cm, Waterclors

وادي السبوعة تحت الماء  
٧٥X٥٥ سم، ألوان مائية





Back to our boat, it's time to sit, relax and enjoy some tea as we watch a glorious sunset over the rough mountains.

The next morning I awake to the sound of a rooster; I pulled the curtain, and behold our boat and two others had embarked next to a little island with some miniature rural life. It seemed both surreal and a bit out of place especially that it was not a Nubian community but some fishermen from Upper Egypt. The view from the top was fantastic.

I couldn't help but pull out my paper and pencils and start a drawing.

It was of the temple of Dakka on a hill bathed in the pastel palette of the early morning.

This was our third stop and indeed a very important one. I walked toward the temple of Wady Al-Sebua which was also built by Ramesses II under the supervision of the viceroy of Kush, Setau.

The temple takes its name after the avenue of lion sphinxes preceding the pylon. Standing there, I beheld a most amazing landscape: in the foreground the profiles of the Sphinxes, then the desert, followed by the shimmering water of the lake, behind which stand the picturesque mountains of Nubia against the clear morning skies. I was awe struck, speechless and inspired.

Originally, the temple was partly rock-cut and partly free standing. The latter part had 3 pylons and a much longer avenue with more sphinxes on either side. I had seen an early watercolor painting of the long avenue starting at the Nile and extending all the way to the pylons.

The temple has many curious features about it, the four falcon-headed sphinxes wearing the double crown, the colossus of Ramesses II wearing a Nubian wig with his daughter Bint Anat standing by his side, the large court with Osirid Pillars. The sanctuary still bears an image of St. Peter holding



Camel Man - Wadi El Sebua  
50X61 cm, Oil on canvas

جمال من وادي السبوعة  
٦١X٥٠ سم، زيت على قماش



the key dating from the Christian era when the temple was used as a church. Indeed, photos taken before the sixties show a double arched gate to the sanctuary from Christian times which was removed during the dismantling to allow easier access by tourists to the inner section.

Once again I take a camel uphill to the next temple, namely "Dakka". The pylon dating from the Roman period is huge, much bigger than I thought when I was sketching it earlier this morning. The temple, I was told, was built by the Meriottic king Arkamani in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C and later decorated by the Ptolemies and the Romans.

It was dedicated to the god Thoth of Pnubs, his consort, the lioness god Tenut, and their son Arsenuphis. Many visitors flock to the Roman side chapel to see the interesting depiction of Thoth as a baboon adoring Tenut who is shown as a lioness above which is a scene of two ibises on pedestals decorated with crouching lions.



El - Dakka | معبد الدك



New Amada | موقع عمدا الجديدة





Handokay Game  
60X80 cm, Oil on canvas

لعبة الهندوكيه  
٨٠X٦٠ سم، زيت على قماش





Maharraqa Panorama  
50X100 cm, Oil on canvas

بانوراما معبد المحرق  
١٠٠X٥٠ سم، زيت على قماش

The last temple on the list for this stop is the temple of Maharraqa. This unfinished temple was built during the rule of Caesar Augustus by some local priests and was dedicated to the worship of Serapis (a hybrid god of Ptolemaic period combining features of Osiris, Apis and the Greek god Zeus).

I was impressed by the 15 columns that give this one big room a majestic feel, but was also disappointed at the lack of wall decorations.

At one corner there was a spiral stone staircase that leads to the roof; a unique feature only found in this

temple. Back to the boat; it was time to enjoy some very long relaxed sailing all the way to the stop of the Aswan port, which we reached after dark.

Together with many guests we enjoyed an evening of Nubian dance and music just before going to bed.

Our final stop was the area of new Kalabsha right by the High Dam. Coming to the temple of Kalabsha by way of water is reminiscent of ancient times when it stood near Bab Kalabsha, an impressive massive rock formation on the Nile some 40 km south of its present location. This temple was built during the rule of Emperor Augustus (27 B.C. to 14 A. D) and was dedicated to the god Mandulis, a Nubian form of Horus. With a total height of 74 meters, this is the largest free standing Temple in Nubia, second only to Philae. Once inside the court you can easily compare it to the great temples of Upper Egypt. Some of the floral carvings on the column capitals have a modern feel about them.

Next to the Kalabsha temple is the elegant kiosk of Qertassi. This one room building was dedicated to the goddess Hathor, whose image we find on two capitals facing the entrance. Beautifully set, high above the waters of the lake, this well proportioned structure reminds me of the bed of Trajan in Philae, but here it is more delicate; almost feminine. At the writing of these words, I'm working on a small painting of Qertassi which is almost finished except for a camel that I'll paint on one side of the lonely structure.

Just behind the kiosk stands the part of Gerf Hussein temple which could be saved, while the rock-cut portion is now lost forever. I was fascinated by Florence Nightingale's description of her visit to Gerf Hussein with almost the whole village accompanying her inside the dark rooms of the temple. To her, the black Osiride statues in the flickering light of torches looked so frightening that it felt like being lost in a haunted forest. Very few photographs still exist of that part of the temple





but I managed somehow to paint its image to keep it for future generations. The good news is, the colossus of Ramesses II adorning the central hall of the Nubia museum comes from Gerf Hussein.

Its unusual proportions and enigmatic smile will certainly leave an impression on all who see it.

Our last visit on that final stop is the rock-cut temple of "Beit Al-Wali" which in Arabic can mean house of the hermit or house of the governor if we use a stronger "A". Most scholars are in favor of the first interpretation, implying that some godly man had probably occupied the temple's interior at some time.

This relatively small temple was built by Ramesses II and dedicated to Amun-Ra. Its plan is quite simple:



Gerft Hussien Template  
35X50 cm, Oil on canvas

معبد جرف حسين  
٥٠X٢٥ سم، زيت على قماش



Isis  
28X38 cm, Drawing

إيزيس  
٢٨×٣٨ سم. رسم

a long forecourt, a vestibule and a sanctuary. To me, this temple is worth visiting just for the vivid and harmonious colors of its bas-reliefs. With this final stop, our Lake Nasser Cruise comes to an end, but one can extend the visit to include more Nubian experiences all over the Aswan area.

Traveling up the Nile may have not always been as luxurious as the trip I took on the lake but it was by no means less exciting.

Victorian artist-traveler Edward Lear went on a "Dehabeyia" all the way to Wadi Halfa passing through all of lower Nubia. Of his amazing experience he writes, "Nubia delighted me; it isn't a bit like Egypt, except that there is a river in both. Sad, stern, uncompromising landscape – dark





ashy-purple lines of hills – piles of granite rocks – fringes of palm – is ever and anon astonishing ruins of oldest temples: above all wonderful – Aboo Simbel which took my breath away. The second cataract also is very interesting”.

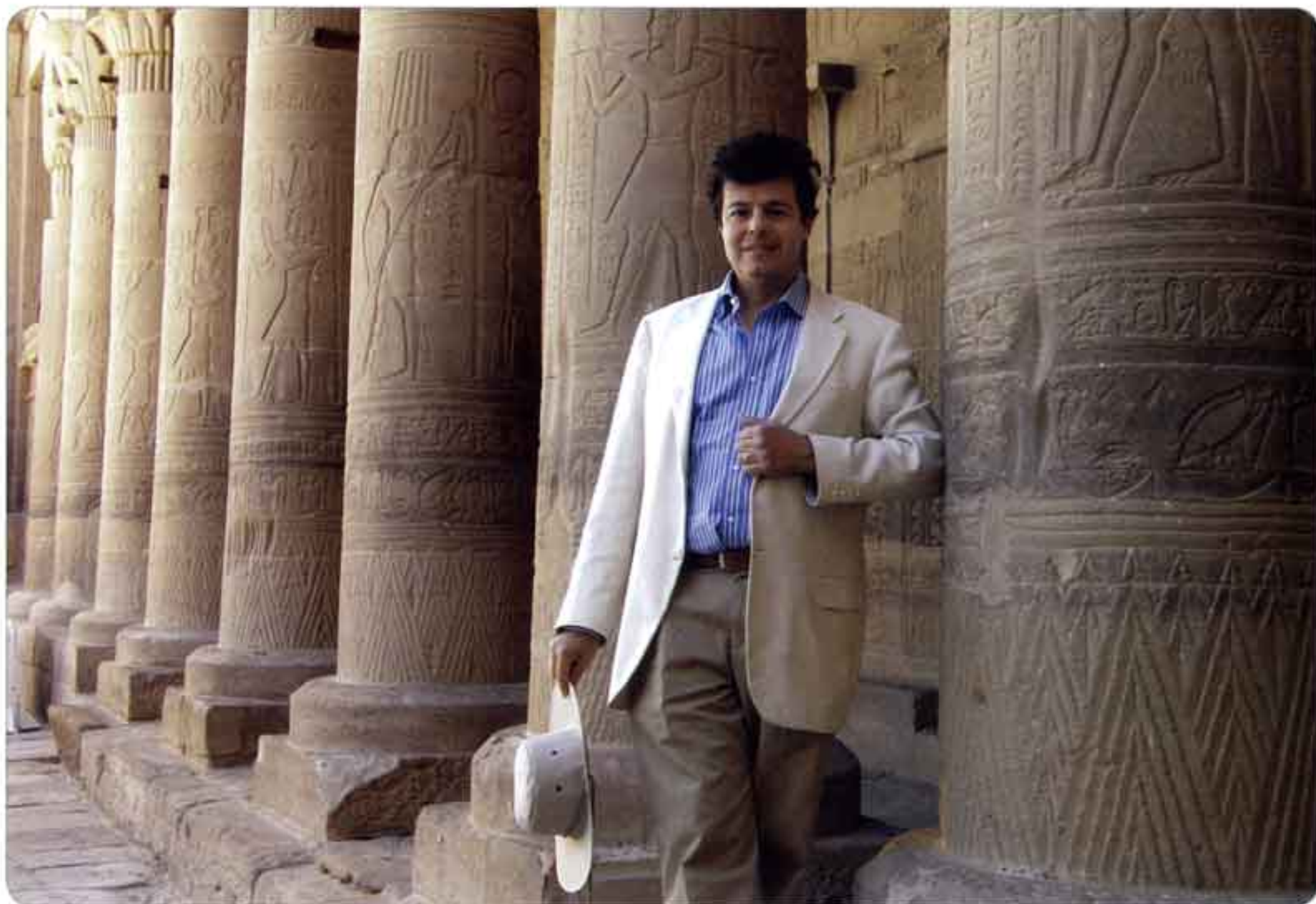
To visit Nubia in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was the option of taking a Nile steamer which cost 3.4 L.E. per person in 1<sup>st</sup> class and only 1.7 L.E. in 2<sup>nd</sup>. It took off from Shellal in Aswan and disembarked in Wadi Halfa. One could also use the mail-steamer, stopping at most of the villages and therefore taking much longer than the regular tourist Nile steamer. In tour guide books, a description of the Nubian temples and villages is given, including some that have traveled abroad, like the temple of Dandur which stands now in a large hall at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. I cannot begin to imagine such trips more than 50 years ago! The narrow river must have allowed tourists to better appreciate the arid landscape, the variety of Nubian houses and the fascinating riverbank lined by palm

tree groves. Now all of this is under the water of the lake, which has inspired a painting, entitled “Nubia is breathing under the water”, a title I’m borrowing from Mr. Haggag Addol with permission.



Kiosk of Trajan at Philae  
21X29 cm, Drawing

مقصورة تراجان بمعبد فيلة  
٢٩X٢٩ سم، رسم





## History of Nubia

The land of Nubia extends from the first to the fourth cataract and is divided into lower Nubia in Egypt (between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cataracts) and Upper Nubia in Sudan (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> cataract).

Its strategic importance comes from the fact that it is the only continuously inhabited corridor between the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa, which in many ways has shaped its history. Its name may come from the ancient Egyptian word "Nub", meaning gold, since it was extensively mined in the northeastern part of Nubia, as well as the area of Batn El-Hagar south of Halfa. Although no political entity exists today under the name "Nubia", yet what marks the boundaries of the land is the common language and the Nile. History tells us however that Nubia had enjoyed many episodes of political power under the kingdoms in Kerma, Napata, the Meroitic kingdoms and later the Christian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria and Alwa .

In the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty some Nubian kings even ruled over Egypt and managed to chase away the Assyrians and restore unity to the land.

In spite of the inhospitable landscape in lower Nubia, this part has enjoyed at least 3 major archeological campaigns during the last century.

The building of the Aswan Dam (1902) and the High Dam (1960s) has prompted some serious surveys over a restricted timetable just to save what could be saved before the inevitable flooding of Nile water. No doubt this has helped archeologists everywhere to collect a great body of information on Nubia and write many books in a relatively short period of time. Names like Reisner, Emery and Säve – Söderbergh will ever remain engraved in the honor-plate of the rediscovery of Nubia.



Kamar  
60X80 cm, Watercolors

قمر  
٨٠X٦٠ سم، ألوان مائية



Nubian Beauty  
30X40 cm, Watercolors

غادة من النوبة  
٤٠X٣٠ سم، ألوان مائية





### ***Nubia in prehistory :-***

Nomadic life was prevalent in the late Paleolithic period (C. 25000 BC) where men moved around in small groups searching for food through hunting and fishing in addition to feeding on some wild vegetation.

Prehistoric archeology has revealed a much "wetter" existence then in the western desert of Egypt, which was much greener and enjoyed a lot of rain and wild life as indicated by cave paintings in the area.

Signs of settling by the Nile came with the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods in the form of pottery and handmade ceramics, in addition to some primitive agricultural tools. The first wide-spread indigenous Nubian culture, the A – group, developed between 3500 – 3000 BC, with many similarities in lifestyle with the Naqada settlements in Upper Egypt and predynastic "Maadi" in the north. The semi-nomadic life of A-group people allowed some settling near

the river bank followed by moving back to the edge of the floodplain during the annual inundation. Their graves consisted of rounded pits in the ground in which the body was fitted in the foetal position buried with some pottery like in Naqada. This simple way of living continued in Nubia while in Egypt a more sophisticated culture was rising with the rule of King Menas and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> dynasty. With the unification of Egypt came interest in controlling trade routes to Africa, so perhaps the abrupt ending of A group activities was due to the repeated military campaigns during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> dynasties. Upon their dispersion, A Group people seem to have assumed a more nomadic lifestyle.

There was a growing interest in trade expeditions during the rule of the 6th dynasty. When I visited the Tombs of the Nobles in Aswan, I came across the name of prince "Herkhuf" who tells of several expeditions that he made to the land of "Iam" to bring back exotic goods, spices, ivory, panther

Two landscapes from Aswan  
watercolors and pencils

منظرين طبيعيين من أسوان  
ألوان مائية وأقلام ملونة





skin and worked wood .On his fourth trip he boasts bringing to the young king Pepi II a unique gift, namely a Denga (a dwarf), who could dance for the earth god and the people of the eastern horizon.

The king in turn sent a message ordering extreme precautions for a safe arrival of the dwarf to his court, and considered him the most precious gift of all!

With the decline of the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Egypt lost its control over Nubia which was now occupied by a people known as “C-group” in lower Nubia and “Kerma culture” in upper Nubia. The C-Group people were peaceful herdsman who must have been forced to leave the desert and settle by the Nile due to drought and scarcity of pastures.

The Kerma people on the other hand were more organized and soon became a Kushite Kingdom that threatened the southern frontiers of Egypt.

This prompted kings of the middle kingdom to build

over 12 fortresses at the area of the second cataract for protection and control over trade routes.

Dominion over lower Nubia allowed the reopening of gold mines at Wadi Al Allaqi and Wadi Gabgaba, and the nearby fortress of Quban became a center for gold processing and storage.

The local C-Group people were suppressed by the occupying Egyptians, but they were there all the time as indicated by the pottery they left behind.

Further south, the Kushites in Kerma had developed the earliest urbanized community in tropical Africa.

With a king as its head, the Kerma kingdom occupied one of the most fertile stretches of land south of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cataract. They were skilled in making silver and gold jewelry in addition to ceramics and faience and they also left some huge brick buildings .Their burial traditions were very different

from the Egyptians. In addition to jewelry, food and weapons surrounding the body of the king, human sacrifices were buried as well including servants, harem and children to accompany the ruler into the afterlife!

With the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos during the second intermediate period (1782 – 1570 BC), the Kushites seized the forts at the second cataract and spread their control over lower Nubia as far north as the first cataract. With Hyksos ruling over lower and middle Egypt, the Theban princes maintained control only over Thebes during the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

### **Nubia during the New Kingdom (1570 – 1070 BC)**

Though it was king Kamose who started the uprising against the Hyksos, it is during the rule of king Ahmose I, founder of the new kingdom that Egypt finally got rid of them. Then he and his son Amenhotep I pushed southward to capture and restore the second cataract fortifications

especially the fortress at Buhen. During the early stages of the Egyptian reconquest of Nubia, the Kushites seem to have offered little resistance. By the second year of king Thutmose I's rule, a major campaign succeeded finally in breaking the power of the Kushites at Kerma. With their army defeated and the king killed, the town was sacked, with destruction everywhere, thus marking the end of the kerma period, and the beginning of Egyptianization of Kush.

Tuthmosis III, who also reached the 4<sup>th</sup> cataract decided to establish a new town "Napata" at "Gebel Barkal". The latter was a flat-topped rocky mountain standing alone in the desert. It was believed to be the dwelling place of the local form of the god Amen-Re, and several temples were built there in his honor.

Egypt held a firm grip over Nubia for the next 400 years. A viceroy was chosen by the king and was assisted by two deputies, one for Wawat (lower







A look to the future  
30X40 cm, Oil on wood

نظرة إلى المستقبل  
٣٠×٤٠ سم، زيت على خشب



A look to the past  
30X40 cm, Oil on wood

نظرة إلى الماضي  
٣٠X٤٠ سم، زيت على خشب



Nubia) with his headquarters at Aniba, and one for Kush (upper Nubia) at Amara. Now with the trade routes completely secured and the gold mines extensively worked, Nubia witnessed a period of unprecedented affluence. During the reign of Tuthmosis III gold production in Wawat was three times as much as that worked from mines in Kush, thus explaining the exhaustion of many goldmines in lower Nubia. In addition to trade and mining activities, the temple of Amada was also built by Tuthmosis III and finished by his son Amenhotep II.

In Soleb, a wonderful temple was erected by king Amenhotep III and in Sedeinga he built a temple in honor of his wife, Queen Tiye.

The very long rule of king Ramesses II (67 years) allowed him to build many temples in lower Nubia, the most famous of which are the two temples in Abu Simbel which made headlines all over the world during the UNESCO campaign in the

1960s. It is also the temple featured on the back of the Egyptian one pound note. Other temples by Ramesses II are at Beit al Wali, Gerf Hussein, Wadi al Sebua and Derr.

The golden age was coming to an end. Civil disturbances in Egypt weakened its grip on Nubia. The three centuries which followed the collapse of Egyptian authority constitute one of the least known periods of Nubian history. The population of lower Nubia was shrinking rapidly, whether due to slave trade and human exploitation or drought caused by repeated low floods of the Nile, no one knows exactly. This depopulation continued well into the Kushite rule of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty and the Ptolemaic period but was partially recovered under the Romans.

### **The Napatan period (760 – 593 BC).**

Nubia saw a new sunrise by the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC whereby the Kushite Kings from Napata were able to advance northward into Egypt not as foreign

invaders but as saviors of a terrible and chaotic situation created by discord and rivalry between Egyptian princes. King Kashta was able to advance till Aswan and his son king Piye (previously known as Piankhy) managed to capture Thebes and advance to chase away the army of prince Tefnakht who was his main adversary. After taking Memphis, Piye was now officially king over Egypt but was too trusting to believe the oath sworn by local princes of the Delta to stay loyal to his rule. He returned back to Napata without leaving a Kushite viceroy, a situation which allowed Tefnakht to take power over lower and middle Egypt again for 10 more years, followed by his son who ruled for 6 years. It was only when Shabako came to power that Thebes and Memphis came back under Kushite rule. Sixteen years later Shabako was succeeded by his brother Shabitqo who appointed a third brother Taharqo general of the army who fought the Assyrians and succeeded his brother on the throne.

Now king Taharqo learned from his father's

mistakes and decided to rule Egypt from the delta to achieve better control, and to avert the attempts of the Assyrians to invade Egypt's eastern borders. Taharqo was also a great builder. He left us a colonnade in the first court of the temple at Karnak, and in Nubia he constructed many temples all in the same style, at Gebel Barkal, Kawa, Tabo and Sanam.

Unfortunately, the Assyrians attacked again and again till during the reign of Tanutamani, Taharqo's successor, they sacked Thebes, looted its temples and killed many people. The Napatan king Tanutamani withdrew to the south, never to return back to Thebes and this marked the end of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty and the Kushite rule over Egypt. It is interesting to note that the Egyptianization trend of early 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty Nubian rulers does not follow the policy of acculturation forced by new kingdom rulers, but is rather an expression of fascination with the Egyptian way of life. In that respect we may call it an early phenomenon of Egyptomania.





### **The kingdom of Meroe (593 BC – AD 350)**

By the end of the rule of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty, there was a decline in Egyptianization of the Kushites as they retreated to the south. By the sixth century B.C. a new civilization had dawned at Meroe, south east of Napata in a fertile stretch of land rich in minerals and pastures and strategically located on the trade route. The Meroitic culture is the product of mixed African and Graeco-Roman influences with minimal Egyptian input. Even their pyramids were designed with a sharp acute angle at the apex and a distinctive gate at the entrance. In royal pyramids the body was mummified and was accompanied by some gold jewelry but no shabti figures, on the contrary some retainer sacrifices were found but on a smaller scale than in the kerma culture. The Meroitic temples at "Nega" south of Meroe display a strong Graeco-Roman and some Egyptian influences in their structural details. I was given a beautiful book by Dr. Dietrich Wildung in Berlin on the royal city of Naga that show in detail the restoration work done there by the mission of the

Egyptian museum in Berlin. In 1993 an exhibition of the "Gold in Meroe" was held in New York City. Experts of ancient languages are still working on deciphering the Meroitic language with some partial success in the alphabetic structure.

In 525 B.C king Cambyses led a great Persian army to invade Nubia after conquering Egypt but the mission failed and many of his soldiers died of hunger. It is surprising that the relation between Ptolemaic Egypt and Meroe was good since after one unsuccessful Greek campaign, we find thriving trade routes to the south bringing back ivory, spices, animals and slaves. The region called Dodecastainos (from Aswan to Maharraqa) was under Ptolemaic rule. Nubian and Ptolemaic kings collaborated in building some temples, for example the temple of Dakka was started by king Ergamenes (Arqamani) and completed by Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-205 B.C.). The temple of Debod was erected by king Adikhalamani and later enlarged by Ptolemy VI.

## **Nubia and the Romans**

The Greek historian "Strabo" describes how the Meroites launched an attack on lower Nubia, now a Roman protectorate, and sacked Philae, Elephantine and Aswan, where they destroyed the statues of Emperor Augustus. The Romans quickly retaliated by sending a punitive campaign under Gaius Petronius, prefect of Egypt, who defeated the Meroitic army and destroyed Napata. At the fortress in Ibrim, 400 Roman troops were stationed but the frontier between Meroe and Roman Egypt was established at Maharraqa, leaving Dodecastainos under Roman control. With peace now established with the Romans, the Kingdom of Meroe had reached its peak of civilization (as indicated by archeological finds) during the first century A.D.

Now a new threat was coming out of the desert in lower Nubia; a ruthless and fierce nomadic people known as the Blemmyes. They claimed to be the sole masters of the regions south of the

first cataract and even went to attack cities under Roman control in Upper Egypt.

Unable to defeat them, Emperor Diocletian decided to withdraw his troops and have them replaced by the "Nobads", a nomadic Libyan tribe, which was a natural enemy to the Blemmyes. The one thing the two tribes had in common, however was their devotion to the worship of Isis in Philae.





### **The Bellana Culture**

After the fall of Meroitic Kingdom in the south, Upper Nubia seems to have been inhabited by some African tribes who left no traces of civilization behind.

Not so was the case in lower Nubia, where archeological finds of expeditions headed by Reisner after the building of Aswan Dam proved that in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. some obscure civilization occupied lower Nubia and was referred to as group X. In the 1930's however, Dr. Walter Emery's excavations of the tumuli at Qustol and Ballana revealed some valuable information on this semi-nomadic culture. They could have descended from the Blemmyes and mixed with some African tribes ... no one knows. Many of their traditions can be traced back to the Kerma culture as in the use of tumulus graves, bed-burials and retainer-sacrifices. One of their tombs measured up to 77 meters in diameter and contained the richest treasure of grave goods ever found in Nubia with

a beautiful silver crown inlaid with precious stones that is on display today at the Nubia Museum in Aswan.

### **Christianity in Nubia**

Nubia turned to Christianity much later than the rest of Egypt. In fact when Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity the official state religion in 394 A.D. the Nobatae and Blemmyes tribes were still very loyal to their pagan practices and the worship of Isis. They even went on to attack the Romans at Philae when the emperor ordered the closing of the temple there. In Abyssinia however, the kingdom of Axum had become Christian by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. So for the following 150 years pagan Nubia was sandwiched between 2 Christian powers to the north and to the south. It was the mission sent by Emperor Justinian to Nubia in 543 that marks the official conversion to Christianity, although some monks and Christian merchants had spread the faith much earlier than the mid-sixth century.

Three separate Christian kingdoms had come into being by the seventh century, Nobatia in the north with its capital Panchoras (Faras), Makuria between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cataracts with its capital at Old Dongola, and Alwa in the southeast with its capital Soba which was situated on the Blue Nile, not too far from present day Khartoum.

Makuria was the only kingdom to adopt the Dyophysite doctrine but later adhered to the Coptic Monophysite faith like the Copts of Egypt.

In art, however, the Byzantine influence was very strong as revealed by the 169 frescoes found in the Faras cathedral, and now divided between the museums in Warsaw and Khartoum.

The Christian era lasted for about 800 years in Nubia, where the land enjoyed prosperity and growth both politically and culturally. The unprecedented political consolidation was the result of the shared religion.

### **Nubia and Islam**

When the Arabs conquered Egypt in 641 A.D. they sent a campaign to Nubia led by Abdulla Ibn Saad, governor of Egypt who was faced with fierce resistance from the Nubians. Ibn Saad led his army towards Dongola but there were such heavy losses on both sides that he and the king of Nubia decided to sign a treaty known as "El-Bakt" which means "half" in Nubian. It was not a treaty of surrender but of mutual respect whereby the Nubians would send an annual tribute of 360 slaves to the Arab Governor in exchange for a valuable gift of barley, wheat, lentils, cloth, horses and wine. It also entailed ensuring safety for Arab traders in Nubia and the protection of their mosques, but they could not cross beyond the second cataract without permission.

Except for a few lapses, both sides respected the Bakt treaty which stayed in effect for over six hundred years. Not only did it protect Christianity against early extinction in Nubia, but also ensured





a steady flow of grain and goods even in years of drought.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century some Arabs from the tribes of Kahtan, Rabeea and Koraysh bought some pieces of land from local Nubians just south of Aswan. The Christian king of Nubia objected to the Abbasid Caliph on the pretext that slaves don't have the right to sell since they don't own the land, but the Nubians claimed they were free and the transaction was legal. From then on there was a slow infiltration of Moslems into lower Nubia which reached a climax during the Fatimid rule where the men of Beni Rabeea used the system of maternal inheritance in Nubia to their advantage. They married Nubian women so their children had the right to inherit the land.

During the reign of El-Hakem, mutiny was declared by a rebel prince known as "Abu Rakwa" who led a great army and threatened the rule of El-Hakem. At the end, however, he was defeated and fled to

Nubia where he was arrested by "Abu Makarem" prince of Beni Rabeea and was handed over to El-Hakem who in turn bestowed upon the prince the title "Kanz El-Dawla" (i.e. treasure of the state) which may be the origin of the name Konooz given to Nubians living between Aswan and El-Madeeg.

In 1174, Turan Shah, the brother of Salah Eldin attacked lower Nubia to suppress a revolt by Kanz El-Dawla, a supporter of Fatimids who were now replaced by Ayyubids in Egypt. Turan Shah managed to kill the prince and disperse Beni Kenz into lower Nubia. He went further south, captured the fortified town of Qasr Ibrim but after that peace between the Ayyubids and Nubia set in quickly.

In the meantime a new threat was coming from the desert; the Arabized Demdem and Zagawa tribes who had converted to Islam. In addition to sporadic attacks by such tribes, there was also some internal dissension and repeated conflicts with the Mamlukes who had come to power in



Egypt. In 1315, the last Christian king of Nubia was imprisoned and replaced by a Muslim, Abdollah Ibn Sanbu. The latter was killed by Kanz Al Dawla "Shogaa Eldin" who was eventually recognized as king of Nubia by the Mamluk Sultan "El-Nasser Mohamed" in 1323. This marked the final fall of the Christian kingdom of Makuria and the beginning of the rule of Beni Kenz who stayed in power till the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517.

The girl and the jar  
40X50 cm, Oil on canvas

الفتاة واليلاص  
٥٠X٤٠ سم، زيت على قماش







Nubian Dance  
60X80 cm, Oil on canvas

رقصة النوبة  
٨٠X٦٠ سم، زيت على قماش

البحث عن النوبة



Sherifa | شريفة



Nubian youngman | شاب نوبي



Amir | أمير





## Egyptian Nubia from Mohamed Ali to the High Dam

Modern history of Egyptian Nubia starts with Mohamed Ali becoming the "Wali" of Egypt in 1805. The Ottomans until then had installed a few garrisons in Aswan, Qasr Ibrim and the Island of Sai, but the Mamlukes took advantage as usual of the poor Ottoman control and continued to fight each other for power. This prompted a strong military campaign led by Mohammed Ali himself in 1815 to gain control over Nubia and chase away the runaway Mamluks.

Trade and travel routes were reestablished and European travelers were encouraged to sail up and down the Nile using the information already collected by the Napoleonic expedition.

Upon the recommendation of Ludwig Burckhardt, an expedition was planned to lower Nubia by Giovanni Belzoni who succeeded to remove the

huge heaps of sand blocking the entrance of the great temple of Abu Simbel and explore the interior for the first time in 1817. By the mid nineteenth century, Nubia and Sudan were annexed to Egypt and were therefore regarded as provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It was at that time that ladies like Florence Nightingale, Lady Lucy Duff Gordon and more notably the novelist Amelia Edwards all journeyed up the Nile and wrote some exquisite comments and memoirs that were published in Europe, thus attracting more tourism to the south in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The situation did not stay quiet for long, as in 1895 the assassination of the British General Gordon in Khartoum by the Mahdi followers (known as Darawish) triggered a punitive attack by an army of Egyptian troops led by British officers with Lord Kitchener as chief commander. This particular military upheaval created a situation of unrest in lower Nubia which triggered the beginning of gradual migration to the north in search for peace and bread-winning.

## Nubia and the Dams

The decision to build the Aswan Dam (between 1898 and 1902) came to meet the increased food demand of the growing Egyptian population and to ensure better control of flood water. The growing British cotton industry in Egypt needed a more predictable and steady irrigation of the cotton fields which was to benefit much from the Aswan Dam. Designed by the British engineer Sir William Willcocks, the dam's inauguration took place on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1902, where the Khedive Abbas Helmy II turned a key thus opening five gates through which came the gushing water. At 30 meters high and close to 2 km long, it was the largest dam in the world at that time. This project met some opposition by archeologists who feared for the temples at Philae, which were eventually submerged under the backup water most of the year. With the successive heightenings of the dam in 1912 and 1933 more Nubian Villages were drowned and more temples submerged and many Nubians had to build their houses on higher levels or leave altogether and find somewhere else



Feluka ride-Wadi Halfa  
40X50 cm, Oil on canvas

رحلة بوادي حلفا  
٥٠X٤٠ سم، زيت على قماش





to live. The second heightening in particular was quite devastating as the compensations given to the Nubians by the government of Ismail Sedky Pasha were disproportionately low and unjust.

"The Shamandoura", a pioneer all-Nubian novel by Mohamed Khalil Kassem, discusses the reaction of Nubians in remote villages to the threat of flooding their land at that time.

It was also in the early 1930s that Dr.Walter Emery led a wide -coverage survey of archeological sites in Nubia which yielded many invaluable findings.

With the increased demand for water to expand the agricultural land, president Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the start of a huge national project, the building of the High Dam. With the west turning its back on him after the 1956 war, Nasser sought the help of the Soviets who provided him assistance with a credit system and 2000 engineers and technicians but the 30,000 strong labor force consisted solely of Egyptians .

This was going to be the final devastating deluge of all lower Nubia extending 150 km into the Sudan. Seeing the endangered monuments, Dr.Tharwat Okasha , Minister of Culture, pleaded with UNESCO for help. In 1960 a universal appeal to save Abu Simbel and the rest of the Nubian temples was met with unprecedented enthusiasm, and the work was carried out successfully over the following four years.

At the same pace, the ministry of housing was working quickly on substitute housing projects in Kom Ombo where the uprooted Nubians were to be relocated in villages carrying the same old names. By June 1964, all the Nubian villages of Egypt had been emptied of their inhabitants and livestock and the people moved to new houses north of Aswan. The Sudanese villages around Wadi Halfa were also moved to a new location known as Khashm El-Gerba. By the mid 1970s, repeated Nile flood waters had accumulated season after season and the precious land of Nubia was lost forever.



Awad - Abu Simbel  
35X45 cm, Oil on canvas

عم عوض - أبو سمبل  
٤٥X٣٥ سم، ألوان جواش



Portrait of a Nubian girl  
40X50 cm, Oil on canvas

بورتريه لفتاة نوبية  
٥٠X٤٠ سم، زيت على قماش





## Life in Original Nubia

### (Before the uprooting & last migration of 1964)

It took me sometime to decide on the word "Original" as I had never seen it attached to Nubia before in any of the references that I consulted. Moved by the nostalgia of their submerged homeland many Nubians are trying very hard to preserve their unique heritage through all possible venues. They talk to their children in Nubian and tell them stories of their homeland. They meet regularly at their many clubs and societies where they keep in touch, discuss their affairs and find ways to help and support the less fortunate ones. They are diligent in keeping up with all social events; weddings, paying condolences, births and coming home from pilgrimage. I have attended several such events where I witnessed an amazing atmosphere of love and social coherence rarely encountered elsewhere these days.

In a way, what the Nubians are doing now in Cairo, Alexandria and other relocation places is a reflection of their lifestyle in "Original Nubia".

One of the main goals of this collection of paintings is to capture the essence of Nubian spirit in pictorial form. I was fortunate to meet and interview some prominent Nubian figures ranging from authors and musicians to businessmen and political activists, and in every case I posed the same question: what is it about Nubia that still stays in your heart?.... their many answers boiled down to a handful of images and feelings. The first thing everyone agreed on was peacefulness and the grand sense of space. Secondly, security and lack of crime. Thirdly, the unbelievable sense of benevolence and social cooperation that leaves absolutely no

one in need. Lastly, a strong belief in religious tolerance and accepting the other, leaving no room for fanaticism or segregation. Based on the above-mentioned points, one can easily paint a picture of a Utopia that is too good to be true. Egyptian Nubia extended from the Shellal in the north to Adendan in the south, occupying 350 km on the banks of the river Nile. Each village consisted of a strand of Nogoua (pl. of Naga) with a north-south orientation, being occupied by members of one or two families. This may well explain the social solidarity readily expressed in village life.



Miss Nubia  
60X80 cm, Oil on canvas

ملكة جمال النوبة  
٨٠X٦٠ سم، زيت على قماش



## **The Nubian House (Its Architecture & Decoration)**

Nubian houses tend to reflect the kind and open personalities of their inhabitants. Traditionally, the plan of the house is a rectangle with the main façade facing the Nile, and a back entrance for women and sheep facing the mountains. The “Madyafa” is the sitting room for guests by the main door, but once you get to the open court, some 3 or 4 bedrooms may face you, while right across is the “Mandara” with 5 arched gateways separating it from the court.

This “Mandara” is a big hall fitted with palm-reed beds and floor mats and is mainly used by the family members to rest or lie down after coming home from laboring in the fields.

The oven is kept in a small room to one side, and somewhere near the gate is the “Mazyara” where water is kept in large pottery vessels to cool off.

It is not unusual for anyone to come in unannounced for a quick drink of water and leave immediately... Most houses use locally prepared mud bricks as their main building element but some wealthy families may use stone for the outer wall. In the Kenouz villages of the north they use mud bricks also for building their characteristic vaulted roofs, which are either cylindrical or dome-shaped. In the Fedija areas, however, roofs are made of palm trunks cut in half as the south enjoyed some very rich palm groves.

The gates were always beautifully decorated with geometrical patterns, and the walls ornamented with built-in brickwork of primitive designs in triangular or zigzag lines. It was customary to have the exterior decorated by a talented girl from the village who would paint primitive designs of birds, flower potts, palm trees, fish and some geometrical

shapes using white plaster for painting. In the Wadi Halfa area, a tradition of more sophisticated house decoration in bas-relief was introduced by "Ahmed Batool" of Ballana who traveled south and left some amazing examples of his work, which are unfortunately lost forever under the water of Lake Nasser.

Nubian villages in the Aswan area still have some good examples of typical architecture. Tourists are usually taken into houses at "Gharb Sohail" and "Gharb Aswan", where they sit in the open court while tour guides educate them about Nubian traditions.

There is also an exemplary Nubian cultural house known as "Eskalay" at Abu Simbel where one can try Nubian cooking and music in an authentic atmosphere.

The legendary Egyptian Architect "Hasan Fathy" was greatly inspired by the simplicity and functionality of the Nubian house. During his repeated trips to old Nubia he got in touch with local master builders who shared their skills with him in brick making from local material at minimal cost. Dr. Fathy designed "El-Gourna" village at Luxor and the buildings at "Baris Oasis" after the simple but elegant Nubian model.

### **Nubian Marriage Ceremonies**

Marriage can be singled out as the most momentous occasion in the life of a Nubian man or woman. Rich in festivities and reciprocated favor, it reflects many important aspects of Nubian communal life. To keep the land and sakyas within the family, marriage agreements between first cousins often took place while the principals were still infants, but











the wedding had to wait till they were teenagers.... The first step of the actual formalization of such union was called "Firgar", whereby the boy's relatives will visit the girl's house for reciting the Fatihah (the first sura of Quran) thus making the initial agreement of both parties to the marriage. It was customary for the bride's father to sacrifice an animal to celebrate the public announcement of the engagement.

To this feast, all members of the villages of both bride and groom are invited, and it was considered shameful not to show up on such an occasion.

Two weeks before the wedding, the official celebration would start, and all women in the village would lend a hand. Some bring sugar, tea, loaves of bread, or perhaps lend cups and utensils for cooking, while young girls help bring water, or assist in baking and cooking; the exchange of gifts on such occasions is known as "Karray" and similar gestures will be expected by the giving party in future occasions.

The evening before the wedding is known as "Kofferay dibbi", a party similar to the night of henna in Egypt. At the groom's house, his friends will gather around him and apply henna liberally to his hands and feet, where he becomes the object of affection and teasing. The meticulous rubbing of henna to his body is said to be an act of purification and protection against the evil eye. After that the groom sits like a Sultan with a "Wezir" on either side (two of his close friends will do) carrying his whip and sword. Friends and relatives will then come to pay the "Noqoot", which are sums of money given to the groom's father or brother and registered in a book for reciprocation in future occasions. At the same time very close relatives may stand and announce out loud the bestowing of land, a share in a Sakya, part of a house or a number of palm trees on the groom, while every one listens and the gift is written down in the same book. After that everyone engages in dancing and entertainment. At the same time, the bride is celebrated by her sisters and friend at her house where she is treated to an

elaborate henna toilet that includes the drawing of beautiful patterns on her hands, legs and feet. While sweets and popcorn go around, all girls will engage in dancing and singing to entertain and tease the bride. Some older women may give the bride some selected old pieces of gold or silver.

Next morning, the groom and his friends will pay a visit to the Nile, where he takes off his clothes and goes bathing in the nude while his friends shout, laugh and cheer him on. When he is done, he puts on a new white galabeya, a silk koftan, a scarf and a big white turban and heads home on a donkey or camel where the local sheikh will recite some Quran verses. Now the procession of the groom will head towards the bride's house to sign the marriage contract "Akd". The village Maazoun will ask for the consent of the bride and groom and officially registers the union. The groom then presents gold and silver gifts to his bride in the form of gold earrings, necklaces and pendants.



Nubian Bride  
60X80 cm, Oil on canvas

عروس نوبية  
٨٠X٦٠ سم، زيت على قماش





Ankle bracelets however may only be presented the next morning ,as foot jewelry is considered more intimate.

The groom also offers his bride a bag of new clothes, while the bride will be responsible for buying the china wear, kitchen wear and all the decorated palm plates that will adorn the walls of their bedroom. At that point women will celebrate by loolooing (sending loud high-pitched belly laughs) and everyone engages in music and dance while dinner is served at the bride's house. Only then is the groom allowed to see the face of his bride in the company of both mothers, and everyone returns again to the celebration festivities.

At the early hours of the morning bride and groom are finally alone, where they act the ritual of opening the mouth! He talks to her but she refuses to answer back, so he entices her with money. He tries to make her laugh, but she controls herself to force him to pay her some more. This seduction

bargaining game continues till she finally speaks or laughs, then he stops giving her more money. The next morning her friends would ask her how much she was paid before she succumbed to his seduction, and it was a subject of laughter and teasing amongst girls.

Breakfast was presented to the couple at the bride's house the next morning, and it consisted of milk, sweet noodles and butter.

For the next seven days neither the bride nor the groom would leave the "diwani" room and for the following month they may pay visits to the relatives, till they both move to live at the groom's father's house till their new house is ready.



Nubian Zaffa  
70X100 cm, Oil on canvas

زفة نوبية  
١٠٠X٧٠ سم. زيت على قماش





El-Kaf Dance  
70X100 cm, Oil on canvas

رقصة الكف

١٠٠X٧٠ سم، زيت على قماش





## Nubian Economy & Agriculture

In recent history lower Nubia has lost its status as a major trade route. It can no longer boast a rich gold mining activity like in Pharaonic times. This has left it with two main resources; its agriculture and the Nubian migrant labor.

Because of the encroachment of rocky plateaus and desert dunes on the Nile, the arable land has always been narrow. It extended like a green ribbon along the riverbanks, sometimes disappearing altogether to come back in small pockets and occasional small-sized plains. Before the building of the Aswan dam, locally cultivated crops were sufficient for feeding the Nubians and their livestock. With the repeated heightening of the dam and the rising of water, some villages lost their agricultural land, which was submerged most of the year except for two months in the summer. Migrant male workforce in Cairo and Alexandria had to compensate for such loss by sending money regularly in order to



"O, I'm coming"  
50X61 cm, Oil on canvas

"أيوه جاي"  
سم، زيت على قماش





support the families who stayed behind trapped between river and desert in the ancestral villages.

The situation was a bit better in the south. Many Fedija villages still retained vast palm groves that yielded a rich harvest of dates twice a year. Nubians used to sell their dates to merchants who came from Aswan and Esna. In return, they imported maize, linen and blankets made in Upper Egypt. Palm leaves and reeds were used for making mats and baskets of varied colors and sizes. These were used for furnishing, decoration and storage of grain.

Agriculture in Nubia has always depended on some mechanism of irrigation. The "Shaduf" seems to have been the oldest method of raising the water to a sufficient level, but in many instances a whole succession of shadufs was required to lift the water high enough. In Roman times, the "Sakya" was introduced which is a water wheel operated by a couple of cows. Sakyas were placed on stonewalls



The "Contay" maker  
40X50 cm, Watercolors

صانعة الكونتية  
٥٠X٥٠ سم، ألوان مائية

so as to give them better support against the flood. In many instances more than one family shared in a sakya, taking turns according to an irrigation schedule extending over the whole day. The most recent addition was the water pump, which the Egyptian government supplied as part of compensation for submerged fields,

in order to ensure steady irrigation of surviving land all year round. Some farmers from Upper Egypt were employed at land reclamation projects, since by the time the pumps were set up, most of the Nubian male work force had already traveled north. Known for their honesty, neatness and punctuality,

Nubians were preferred in hotels, restaurants and personal house functions.

Over the years, many Nubians enjoyed good education and became professional in the fields of technology, education, banking, politics and teaching.



Women at work  
70X100 cm, Oil on canvas

نوبيات يعملن  
١٠٠X٧٠ سم. زيت على قماش



## Origins of Nubian Race and Language

Prehistoric Nubia was occupied by people of Hamitic origin. According to the book of Genesis Ham (one of Noah's children) had four children; Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan. Some believe that Cush was the father of Nubians and Ethiopians while Mizraim was the father of the Egyptians. In any case, Nubians and Egyptians share their Hamitic origins. The first known Nubians had a slender body, Caucasian features, wavy long hair and an oblong head, and it is from this race that the modern Nubians are derived.

It would not be realistic to assume that Nubians preserved a pure race. Throughout their long history, Nubians mixed with Beja tribes of the Eastern desert, Libyans of the Western desert and people of negroid origin from the south. Starting from the middle kingdom, some Egyptians also mixed freely with the local residents of Nubia.

It is remarkable however, how Nubians have always been able to absorb a big variety of people with different cultures into the core of the Nubian fabric.

In recent history, some men from Bosnian and Hungarian garrisons, who were left behind, managed to marry Nubian women, and settle permanently in Nubia.

In the same way, many Turkish rulers of Nubia (known as Kashef) decided to stay and start a family line that still claimed great wealth till the final migration of 1964.

Egyptian Nubia was occupied by two main tribes the konooz in the north and the Fadeja in the south with some Arab tribes in between.

The konooz speak kenzi-Matuki dialect which is related to Dongolawi, which is still spoken in Dongola in Sudan. The Fadija speak Fadikki which is the dialect of south Nubia and north Sudan where it is also known as Mahsi, the language of the Seccout.

The above mentioned dialects are directly related to the ancient Nubian language, which was spoken as far back as the New Kingdom. It was during the Christian era however, that the language was written using Greek and Coptic letters.

Upon studying many manuscripts of this period, the English philologist Griffith was able to write a comprehensive book on the Nubian language in 1913.

The Nubian linguist, Mukhtar Khalil Kabbara of Cairo University introduced the Nubian alphabet in

the 1970s and paved the way for young Nubians to learn how to read and write their mother tongue. Despite many efforts in this respect, the language may be on its way to extinction as many young Nubians can no longer speak it, let alone write it.

It is interesting to mention here another important Nubian language, the Meroitic language, which had its own alphabet that is related to Demotic writing. Philologists are still working on deciphering its few texts, but Meroitic is not spoken anywhere today.







## About the Artist

Described by some people as a true (Renaissance man), Farid Fadel was born in 1958 in Assiut, Upper Egypt, into a family noted for both its musicians and its doctors. He has since excelled at medicine, art and music taking all three gifts very seriously. In art, he has held thirty five solo exhibitions; in music, he has given several recitals and concerts, and is presently working as a practicing eye doctor at the Memorial Institute of Ophthalmology, Giza.

In 1973, Dr. Fadel was awarded the Pope's medal and Vatican award in an art contest with 50,000 participants, worldwide. In 1975, on inauguration of his 5th exhibition, the Egyptian Parliament granted him a trip to see Renaissance art, which had a strong influence on his style. He has taken part in several group shows, both in Egypt and abroad, such as the People's Show in Portland, Maine, USA (1982), where he displayed 15 portraits. His 14th solo exhibition was held at the Egyptian Cultural Centre, Mayfair, London, 1989 and his 16th show in the University of Toledo, Ohio, USA. In 2000, Dr. Fadel traveled with his exhibition (On both sides) to the USA where it was displayed in Ohio, Connecticut, and Washington D.C. Some of his portraits were used as covers for Egyptian magazines. One of his paintings was chosen to be put on the back cover of the 1988 Nobel Prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz's brochure.

Farid Fadel has completed the illustration of a Children's Bible with colored plates that follow a Middle Eastern approach to the story of the New Testament. The three volumes were published in 1991, 1993 and 1995 and were bestsellers at the Cairo International Book fair. Dr. Fadel has participated in the "Call for Peace" group exhibition during the Gulf war in 1991. He also participated in two benevolence exhibitions to support the earthquake victims in 1992. For 3 successive years he has participated in the exhibition "Physician as artist" at Riverside Hospital, Toledo, OH and has won the blue ribbon prize in 1997. His interest in art theorization has culminated in publishing his AIN theory (Aesthetic Integrated Naturalism) which explains his particular views on naturalistic approach to fine art in a postmodern context. A manifesto was also published in 1997 during a lecture he gave at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio entitled "Musicality in Art".

Fadel has studied violin with Professor Adolph Menassa for 8 years, his repertoire includes work by Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Dvorak and Massenet. For the last 16 years, Dr. Fadel has studied piano on his own. His repertoire ranges from Bach to Chopin. He has given piano recitals in Egypt and the USA. He also sings, in both Baritone and Tenor ranges; his interest is mainly in Choral music, and he sang the Tenor solos of Mozart's Coronation Mass, Vesparae Solemnes, Requiem, Bach's Magnificat, Haydn's Nelson Mass, Puccini's Messa Di Gloria and Handel's Messiah with the Cairo Choral Society. He also has performed the long Tenor Aria of Hiawatha's Wedding Feast accompanied by the Brigham Young Chamber Orchestra. In addition, he has a large repertoire of contemporary American Christian songs, and several recorded cassettes of his singing.

Dr. Fadel is married to Dr. Mona L. Zaki, professor of Business Communication at the American University in Cairo and C.E.O. of Global Strategic Consultants, and has 2 daughters, Dalia and Lily. Mona has been employing her professional experience to administer Farid's organizational and promotional affairs.

(Biography updated from Who's who of intellectuals, IBC, Cambridge 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 1988)

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