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“Nihna nâs al-bahar –
We are the people of the river.”

Ethnographic Research in the Fourth Nile
Cataract Region, Sudan

Edited by
Cornelia Kleinitz and Claudia Näser

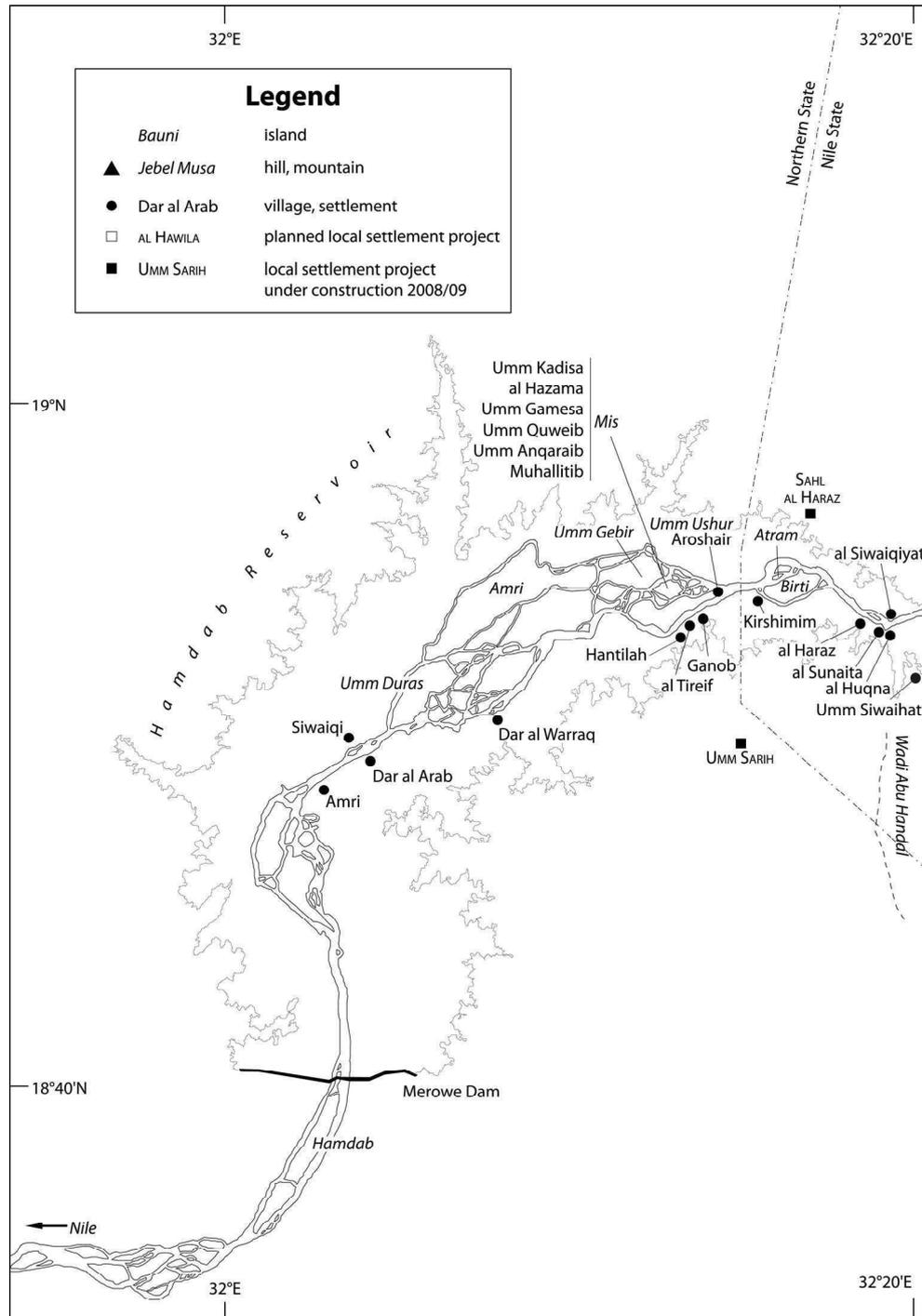
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The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: A Case Study on the Politicisation of Archaeology and its Consequences from Northern Sudan

Claudia Näser and Cornelia Kleinitz

To the memory of Khidir
who was with us at the Fourth Cataract
and when we wrote this paper.

1. Prelude

In February 2006, the Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) set out for its third archaeological salvage season in Dar al-Manasir in the heart of the Fourth Nile Cataract region. The study area was to be flooded upon completion of the Merowe Dam, then under construction some 50 km downstream of the H.U.N.E. concession area. After two successful campaigns in the previous years, H.U.N.E. had planned for a long season of excavation work. But things took an unexpected turn: only three days after our arrival we were informed by our local hosts that the Executive Committee of the Manasir people had decided on the expulsion of all archaeologists from Manasir territory i.e., Dar al-Manasir, and asked us to cease our work. What came to us as a complete surprise at that point, can upon closer analysis be understood as the result of a complex process of socio-political negotiation and conflict connected to local resistance against some of the conditions of resettlement and compensation issued by the developer of the Merowe Dam. The present paper discusses the trajectory of this process, which eventually led to the abortion of all archaeological work connected to the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDASP) in Dar al-Manasir. It further explores the consequences of this case for the self-conception of the involved archaeological community and other stakeholder groups as well as its implications for the future of salvage archaeology in the context of contested development projects in Sudan and beyond. Four years after the final expulsion of archaeologists from the Fourth Cataract – and the drowning of Dar al-Manasir (see Hänsch, this volume) – similar scenarios are emerging in other parts of the Middle Nile valley, where numerous further dams are in the planning phase and where protests against these new dams have already been voiced by representatives of the local population.¹

¹ Both authors were actively involved in the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project: Claudia Näser as project director of the Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) working in the area from 2004 to 2008, Cornelia Kleinitz as a rock art specialist working for British, German and American

2. The context: the Merowe Dam

The Merowe Dam² is located at the downstream end of the rocky terrain of the Fourth Nile Cataract in northern Sudan, some 350 km north of Sudan's capital Khartoum. After the Aswan Dam, it is the second major dam on the main Nile and the largest hydropower project currently completed on the African continent (Bosshard and Hildyard 2005). Its primary purpose is to generate electricity: its projected output of 1,250 MW is expected to nearly double Sudan's power capacity (Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 68). Moreover, the project was planned to supply water for the irrigation of large-scale agricultural schemes and help in flood control and sedimentation reduction (Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 70; Verhoeven 2011: 9).³ The dam is thus expected to play a vital role in Sudan's economic growth.⁴

While the first plans for building a dam at the Fourth Cataract go back to the 1940s (Kleinitz and Näser 2011; Ahmed, this volume), their actual realisation became feasible only in the late 1980s (Al-Hakem 1993: 1; Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 68; Grzymiski 2010: 67). The project was commissioned by the Sudanese government; its implementation rested with the Merowe Dam Project Implementation Unit (MDPIU), which was renamed and restructured into the larger Dams Implementation Unit (DIU) in 2005. While the MDPIU was part of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, the DIU has been directly responsible to the Sudanese president since its inception (Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 68; see also Verhoeven 2011: 9).⁵

Construction of the Merowe Dam proper started in mid-2003. Despite its enormous size – 9.3 km in length and a maximum height of 67 m (Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 71) – it was completed only five years later, in 2008. The overall cost of the project amounted to more than 2 billion USD (Hildyard 2008: 22). Next to the Sudanese state, the main

missions from 2004 to 2009 (SARS-AGE 2005-2007, SARS-AKSC 2004-2006, SARS-AKSE 2006 and 2007, H.U.N.E.: 2005 and 2007, UCSB-ASU: 2009). The authors are presently concerned not only with the publication of extensive data corpora and fieldwork results from their respective fields of research in the Fourth Cataract, but also with the critical analysis of archaeology in development contexts. This paper is based on research partly undertaken within the study group 'Archaeotopia' of the Berlin Cluster of Excellence TOPOI.

2 Originally, the dam was called Hamdab Dam. Its denomination has been interpreted by some of its critics to be a measure to divert financial support from the region of the dam site at Hamdab i.e., the area immediately affected by the new reservoir. Instead, the town of Merowe, a major regional administrative centre, some 40 km downstream of the dam site, outside of the affected area, was to benefit significantly (see e.g. Hänsch, this volume and a commentary by the German Society of Endangered Peoples at <http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=hamadab>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

3 See also <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/location.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012) and the 2002 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by Lahmeyer (quoted by Hildyard 2008: 21).

4 See e.g. 'Merowe Dam: Pearl of Nile in Sudan' (Sudan Tribune, 24/12/2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25295>, last accessed on 18/05/2012). For general critical information on the Merowe Dam see Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Hildyard 2008 and <http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=merowe>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

5 See also <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/establishment.html> and http://www.diu.gov.sd/en/founding_decisions.htm (both last accessed on 18/05/2012).

investors were several Arab development funds, namely the Funds for Development of Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Oman, the Arab fund for Economic and Social Development, the government of Qatar, and last but not least the Chinese Export Import Bank, which again was backed by several western commercial banks (Hildyard 2008: 22).⁶ The actual construction of the dam mainly rested with the Chinese consortium CCMD, which comprises the China International Water & Electric (CWE) Corporation and the China National Water Resources & Hydropower Engineering Corporation (CWHEC), known as Sinohydro (Burke 2007: 8; Linke i.pr.).⁷ But European companies, such as the French Alstom, the Swiss-German ABB and the German Siemens corporation, were also involved.⁸ The German-based Lahmeyer International acted as the General Technical Consultant for the project.⁹ In what can only be regarded as a conflict of interest, Lahmeyer was also appointed by the Sudanese government to draft the Environmental Impact Assessment report (Lahmeyer International 2002), which includes a short section on the mitigation of effects on cultural, including archaeological, resources.¹⁰ In an independent review, EAWAG, the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology criticised this report for grossly downplaying the negative effects of the dam (Teodoru, Wüest and Wehrli 2006; see also Hildyard 2008: 24-25; Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 257-259).

In 2008, the Merowe Dam flooded some 180 km of the Nile valley. Immediately behind the barrage the reservoir lake is more than 10 km wide. According to final calculations, over 50,000 people had to be removed from the dam site and the reservoir area (Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 6).¹¹ Most of the affected people were small-scale riverine peasants (Salih 1999; Beck 2003, this volume; Hänsch, this volume). They belong to three main ethnic groups, namely the Shaiqiyya of Amri¹² and Hamdab, and the Manasir, who are all Arabic-speaking Muslims. About 33,000, or 65%, of the resettled people are Manasir, making this

6 See also <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/funding.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012). Regarding the involvement of western financial institutions see also 'Bond issue sounds ethical alarm' (Megan Rowling, BBC News, 09/08/2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4134922.stm>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

7 On China's role as a dam builder in Sudan and beyond see also Askouri 2007; McDonald, Bosshard and Brewer 2009; Bosshard 2009/10. Compare also 'China: new dam builder for the world' (Shai Oster, The Wall Street Journal, 29/12/2007, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119880902773554655.html>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), and 'Investing in Tragedy. China's Money, Arms, and Politics in Sudan' (2008, <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/our-work/crimes-against-humanity/stop-arms-to-sudan/investing-in-tragedy/>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

8 According to press reports, ABB and Siemens have meanwhile stopped their commitment in Sudan and renounced follow-on contracts, at least for the time being; see 'Siemens verlässt den Sudan' (Die Welt, 18/01/2007, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article709607>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

9 See <http://merowedam.gov.sd/en/consultancy.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012) and <http://www.lahmeyer.de/de/projekte/detailansicht/project/298/lng/33.046875/lat/19.559790136497/country/0/spectrum/0/show/showGMView/lngt/63.369140625/lngf/2.724609375/latt/5.6159858191553/latf/32.398515802474/> (last accessed on 18/05/2012).

10 See also a statement by Lahmeyer International at <http://198.170.85.29/Lahmeyer-statement-Merowedam-Sudan-May-2005.pdf> (last accessed on 18/05/2012) and for a critical view Sheikheldin 2007. Generally on EIAs in African development contexts, see Arazi 2009.

11 A higher figure of 70,000 people is given by Failer, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 73 and misquoted as 78,000 by Hildyard 2008: 2: note 9.

12 Contra Hildyard 2008: 25, who identifies the Amri as a 'sub-clan' of the Manasir.

group the most affected (Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 6). The new lake drowned most of their traditional homeland, Dar al-Manasir.

The terms of resettlement and compensation that were issued by the DIU promised to improve living conditions by providing access to electricity and running water, adequate housing as well as health and schooling facilities in the resettlement areas (Failor, Mutaz and El Tayeb 2006: 73).¹³ Nevertheless, these terms were considered deeply inadequate and felt to violate human rights by many of the affected people as well as by international human rights organisations (Askouri 2004a; Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Hildyard 2008; McDonald, Bosshard and Brewer 2009; Hänsch, this volume).¹⁴

Contested items included the terms of eligibility for compensation and the amount paid per date palm, which is the major cash crop of Manasir agriculture (Haberlah, this volume; Hänsch, this volume).¹⁵ A second major issue was the resettlement schemes, which had been planned and partly constructed in four locations up- and downstream of the Fourth Cataract (Askouri 2004a; Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; McDonald, Bosshard and Brewer 2009; Bosshard 2009/10; Calkins, this volume; Hänsch, this volume). Representatives of the affected people pointed out early on that international standards on human rights, resettlement issues and the environment were violated by the developer on several counts, and that the project design should be reassessed (Askouri 2004a). In response to the DIU's plans, the affected people issued a set of demands, which they hoped would alleviate post-flooding hardship. A major point for the Manasir was the opportunity to resettle on the shores of the newly created lake instead of having to move to areas distant from their homeland and the river itself (Hänsch, this volume).¹⁶

In order to represent their claims, the affected people organised themselves in several tiers of elected committees, which acted locally as well as in the relevant district capitals and in Khartoum (Hänsch, this volume). On an international level, the case was publicised by the London-based Leadership Office of Hamdab Dam Affected People (LOHAP). Moreover, two globally active advocacy groups, The Corner House and International Rivers Network, kept an eye on the Merowe Dam and its humanitarian and environmental consequences. Other NGOs were reluctant to respond to the case, which was overshadowed by the larger conflicts in western and southern Sudan.

13 See also <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/social.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012).

14 See also the report of the German Society of Endangered Peoples at <http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=manasir> (last accessed on 18/05/2012) and the actions and statements – to no avail – of the UN Human Rights Council's special rapporteurs on human rights and adequate housing at <http://www.sudantribune.com/Merowe-dam-floods-thousands-in,28812>, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=23617&Cr=sudan&Cr1> and <http://reliefweb.int/node/241370> (all three last accessed on 08/05/2012).

15 See also Osman A. H. Al Magdoun's statement 'The Dams Unit and instigation of disturbances in northern Sudan' (<http://sudaneseonline.com/cgi-bin/esdb/2bb.cgi?seq=msg&board=12&msg=1194104091&rn=1>, 03/11/2007, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

16 See also 'Sudan dam will drown cultural treasures, destroy Nile communities' (Ali Askouri, Sudan Tribune, 29/04/2004, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-dam-will-drown-cultural,2714>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

3. Archaeological involvement: basic data

In the mid and late 1990s, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) i.e., the Sudanese antiquities service, had appealed to the international archaeological community for assistance in documenting the archaeology of the Fourth Cataract (Al-Hakem 1993; Idriss 1999; Idress 2004, XVI; see also Ahmed, this volume). Subsequently, missions from Poland¹⁷ and Great Britain¹⁸ joined the Sudanese colleagues, starting reconnaissance work in the future reservoir area in 1996 and 1999 respectively.

In 2003, a new urgent call for assistance was issued and a meeting held at the British Museum in London, in order to attract more missions and coordinate concessions. Consequently, about a dozen missions became involved, together forming the loosely knit Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (Ahmed 2003; Kleinitz and Näser 2011). Missions active in MDASP came from all over the world: Sudan (NCAM), France (Section Française de la direction des antiquités du Soudan), Great Britain (Sudan Archaeological Research Society/British Museum, University College London), Poland (Gdańsk Archaeological Museum, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology and the University of Warsaw, Archaeological Museum Poznan), Germany (Humboldt University Berlin, University of Cologne), Hungary (Academy of Sciences Budapest), USA (University of California Santa Barbara, Arizona State University, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, University of Delaware). Among them were colleagues with a long-standing involvement in Middle Nile archaeology, but also missions new to Sudan. Their agreed aim was to retrieve as much information as possible on the archaeological heritage of the region before its flooding. Surveys and excavations were not only initiated at the building site of the dam and the future reservoir area, but also along the power transmission lines and the projected resettlement schemes. The archaeology of all of these areas was virtually unknown when the project commenced.¹⁹

The scientific results of MDASP were extremely rewarding. Although total numbers are not yet available, the missions recorded well over 10,000 sites, proving a continuous occupation from Palaeolithic times onwards (Welsby 2009). The record is particularly rich for the local Bronze Age Kerma culture (c. 2500–1500 BC), the late antique post-Meroitic period (c. 350–600 AD) and the Medieval era (c. 600–1500 AD), on which excavations also concentrated. One of the many unexpected finds was e.g. several hundred fragments of parchment and leather from a church, excavated by H.U.N.E. on the island of Sur. These fragments form the largest corpus of medieval manuscripts and book bindings recovered from the Middle Nile valley in the last fifty years i.e., since the UNESCO Campaign in Lower Nubia, the only other place where comparable material has come to light (Näser and Tsakos i.pr.). The rich rock art record of the cataract landscape also deserves a special mention, as the density of rock art sites is outstanding in the entire Nile valley (Kleinitz 2007). MDASP members shared and discussed their results at annual conferences organised

17 The Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition, GAME (Paner 1998).

18 The Mission of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, SARS (Welsby 2000).

19 For a synopsis of archaeological assessments and reconnaissance of the area previous to MDASP see Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 256-257 and Ahmed, this volume.

in turns by the missions involved.²⁰ Thanks to the combined efforts, knowledge of the region's archaeology expanded rapidly.

The results are all the more remarkable when viewed against the conditions under which they were achieved (for greater detail see Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 258-261). Although the missions were formally organised under the umbrella of MDASP, this was of no practical consequence in terms of support for their work. All international missions had to come up with their own funding.²¹ At the same time, they ended up being responsible for surveying the bulk of the projected reservoir area and carrying out substantial excavation work. Necessary resources were often difficult or even impossible to obtain, given the reluctance of many western academic funding bodies to support 'non research-led' salvage projects. However, facing the irrevocable loss of the Fourth Cataract archaeological landscape and motivated by a professional commitment to help preserve Sudan's heritage, many missions 'scraped the bottom of the barrel' and ran their projects on micro budgets. The constant search for funding and the ensuing insecurities put an additional strain on the work and the extremely protracted time frame of the entire salvage project. It was an American Foundation which saved some of the missions from financial collapse: The Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) generously funded several of the international missions in the later part of MDASP, from late 2006 onwards. But it was not only funding that turned out to be a problem. In addition, the missions suffered from a lack of infrastructural support. This concerned both provisions for the most basic facilities, such as free entry visas, storage space for finds and equipment, or staff accommodation in Khartoum, and information vital to archaeological work, such as detailed maps and data on the projected reservoir level, or even the timing of the flooding.

Due to the lack of funding, the organisational deficiencies and the remoteness of the research area, work on the ground was very demanding (see e.g. Näser 2011). At the time there were no roads to or within the region (pl. 1). From the H.U.N.E. concession it took about eight hours to drive to Merowe, the nearest town with regular shops and health service. Thus, missions had to rely on heavy equipment, including four-wheel-drive cars and lorries, generators, water pumps and filters as well as complete medical and food supplies, brought in from their home countries and from Khartoum. At times, working and living conditions were extremely adverse, including restricted access to clean drinking water, food, fuel and electricity. Still, the missions went about their business without questioning this situation and concentrated their efforts on documenting as much of the archaeology of the region as was possible in the time remaining before flooding.

20 The following meetings were held: 2004 at the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum (Paner and Jakobielski [eds.] 2005), 2005 at Humboldt University Berlin (Näser and Lange [eds.] 2007), 2006 at the University of Cologne (Wotzka [ed.] i.pr.); 2007 at the University of Lille III (Gratien [ed.] 2008), and finally in 2009 again at the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum (Paner, Jakobielski and Anderson [eds.] 2010).

21 The DIU claims to have financed various salvage campaigns at the dam site, in resettlement schemes, new power substations and along transmission lines by providing all in all 587,000 USD for the entire project (Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 34; see also Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 258-259). This differential treatment of national and international missions is startling, but it seems to have already been anticipated in the initial impact assessment reports (for details see Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 258-259).



Pl. 1: Archaeologists, equipment and supplies of the 2007 H.U.N.E. island mission waiting to be transported across the Nile in small local motor boats (photo: Krzysztof Pluskota).

4. The expulsion of the archaeologists: a history of events

While the salvage work was gathering momentum, most members of the international missions were only vaguely aware of the contested nature of the overall dam project. The restrictive and one-sided information policy of the DIU had left archaeologists – and local people alike – uninformed about fundamental aspects of the project (Beck 1997; Näser and Kleinitz 2010; Hänsch, this volume). Moreover, archaeologists exclusively focused on what they saw as their task: the recording of archaeological sites. Thus, the developments recounted in the following came as a surprise to most members of MDASP.

4.1. Spring 2006: the first wave of expulsions, an eyewitness account

Notwithstanding the dismal working conditions, the H.U.N.E. ‘island team’ set out for a third field season in early February 2006.²² Already at the team’s arrival in Khartoum it transpired that the Manasir had begun civil resistance against the terms of their imminent resettlement. However, this news and our fears concerning the viability of a field season were downplayed by colleagues from other missions and by NCAM representatives. After a

²² This eyewitness account is based on Claudia Näser’s experiences in early 2006. Shorter versions have been published in Näser 2006: 99-101 and Näser in pr. Names of Manasir representatives are not given in any of the accounts, as the permission to publicise these was not obtained at the time due to the extraordinary nature of the circumstances.

week of preparation in Khartoum the team, at that point comprising nine members, headed north. After a two-day journey, we reached our destination: the mainland opposite our concession, which comprised three large islands in the centre of the cataract region. Leaving the cars behind, the team crossed with men and mice to the island of Us. There, we intended to resume work, continuing the projects which we had started in the previous year: excavations at a Medieval site with a well preserved church of late Christian date, the investigation of a cluster of Neolithic and Kerma habitation sites, and a detailed rock art survey. As in the previous year, we set up camp in a rented compound in the hamlet of Umm Hesai. Only three days later we were informed by our hosts that the rumours which we had heard in Khartoum had been substantiated: The Executive Committee of the Manasir had decided on the expulsion of all archaeologists from Manasir territory and asked us to stop our work. The committee was an independent body, elected by the Manasir, in order to represent their interests regarding resettlement and compensation towards government institutions.²³ We had already been in contact with some of its members in the previous year in another context, namely a social geographical survey carried out by H.U.N.E. (see below 5.4.; Näser 2007; Haberlah, this volume; Haberlah, von dem Bussche and Ahmed, this volume).

How should we react? When our host informed us that the next meeting of the 'Manasir Committee' would be on the subsequent Monday, the weekly market day, in Salamat, the regional market place at the upstream end of our concession area, we decided to go there and try to arrange a meeting with the Committee. We booked places on the boat, which collected the market goers from Us on Monday morning, and went together with two Sudanese team members, Prof. Khidir Abdelkarim Ahmed (Al-Neelain University Khartoum) and Fawzi Hassan Bakhiet, who acted as antiquities inspector to the project. The meeting finally took place in the early afternoon in the local flour shop. In a discussion that lasted well over two hours, we tried to gauge the reasons for the decision of the Committee and to state our opinions and objections. We reported on our work, presented extracts from the H.U.N.E. homepage, which was a direct outcome of the social geographical survey undertaken in the previous year (<http://www2.hu-berlin.de/aknoa/hune/daralmanasir/>), and showed the contribution which the ZDF, a major German public TV station, had filmed on the Manasir and our work in the Fourth Cataract in 2005. All this was very well received: the small shop was stuffed with people, and in front of the door and the windows a large crowd had assembled. Our demonstration was reported to those who had to remain outside, and all pictures received lengthy and lively comments. The general atmosphere was positive, and for some minutes we became optimistic that the situation could be resolved without us having to leave. However, after two hours it was confirmed that the members of the Committee would stick to their initial decision. The reasons they gave were three:

23 For the history and the structure of the Manasir committees see Hänsch, this volume, p. 213: "In late April 2004, the Manâsir, overseen by the commissioner of Abu Hamed locality, elected a Council of the Affected People (*majlis al-mut'athirîn*) from the administrative units of Shîrî and al-Kâb. They voted two people from each of the community councils, of a total of 33 communities, into that Council. One member of each pair is resident in Khartoum, but originally hails from the respective community. The Council, in turn, formed an Executive Committee (*lijna tanfîdhiyya*). It consisted mostly of Manâsir resident in Khartoum and Ed-Damer, but also included some local representatives."

1. They hoped that a prevention of archaeological work would delay the imminent flooding.
2. They also hoped that the expulsion of the archaeologists would raise national and international awareness of the plight of the Manasir.
3. According to their estimates the development of an armed conflict between the Manasir and the Sudanese authorities could not be ruled out, and the local communities could no longer guarantee the safety of the archaeologists.

Beyond these reasons, which were discussed extensively, there certainly were other sensitivities. Some complained that more was done for the archaeological monuments than for the living people (pers. comm. to CN) – a charge which was hard to refute. Moreover, for many Manasir, the archaeological salvage campaign appeared to be part of the official activities connected with the building of the dam. That not all Manasir thought this way became clear on the next day. Babiker from the village al-Marcha on Sur, where H.U.N.E. had recorded a church in 2004 and where we had also planned to excavate in the 2006 season, commented upon the decision of the Committee with the Manasir saying “*higerti fi bigerti*”, which could be translated as “one can only maltreat one’s own cows” or “to cut off one’s own nose”. This sententious remark spread within days and earned Babiker the reputation of having summed up the situation shrewdly and aptly. In this context, it should also be noted that in contrast to some other missions we did not experience any personal threats or hostilities from members of the Executive Committee or other individuals at any point during our stays in the Fourth Cataract.

Still, the market day in Salamat spelled the end to H.U.N.E.’s barely begun third field season in the Fourth Cataract. To ignore the decision of the Committee was out of the question. We would not only have created a difficult situation for our host family – our landlord, as the local policeman and thus a representative of the official authorities and the head of the village, was in an awkward position anyway. We also felt that at this point we had to subordinate our plans to the interests of the Manasir. They would have to leave their homeland within a couple of months, moving on into an uncertain future. If they felt that our expulsion would achieve something, could we deny it to them? Three days later, after extensive deliberation, consultations and finally re-packing, we left. We spent the remainder of our ten-week field season on the island of Mograt, 100 km upstream of our original concession area, and well outside Dar al-Manasir and the projected reservoir area of the Merowe Dam.²⁴

H.U.N.E. was one of four missions expelled towards the later part of the overall excavation season, which lasted from October to March.²⁵ In July 2006, the annual Fourth Cataract conference was held in Cologne/Germany. The organisers acknowledged the difficulty of the situation in the Fourth Cataract region by inviting the German anthropologist Kurt Beck, who had a long history of working in Dar al-Manasir, to talk about ‘Manasir

24 The possibility to take up work on Mograt was kindly granted by NCAM at short notice, after we had informed them about the events in Dar al-Manasir over satellite telephone, and asked for a new concession. Our choice had fallen on Mograt, as we were equipped for work on an island, and the sites we expected on Mograt promised to match the composition and specialisation of our team.

25 Already in January 2006 an American mission from the University of Delaware had been prevented from starting work in the centre of the Fourth Cataract region (Ross Thomas pers. comm. to CK).

reactions to resettlement: cultural background and the state of affairs'. However, his assessment that archaeologists should seek to contact Manasir representatives in order to discuss the situation and find mutually beneficial solutions, and that they should actually ask the Manasir themselves for the permission to work on their land, was met with reserve. NCAM representatives assured the international participants of MDASP that the problem with the Manasir had been solved on a political level and that the missions could return for their 2006/07 winter campaigns.

4.2. Winter 2006/07: the second wave of expulsions

The archaeological community may have hoped that the problem had been solved – on the ground, however, it turned out that this was not the case. In mid-December 2006, not long after the arrival of the first missions, the British team of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS-AKSE) was asked by Manasir representatives to stop working and leave Dar al-Manasir within 24 hours (Welsby 2008; Kleinitz and Näser 2011). This was not the only demand, however. The archaeologists were informed that all finds were considered the property of the Manasir and were not to be taken out of Dar al-Manasir. The SARS team had unfortunately just transferred archaeological material uncovered in previous seasons outside of Manasir territory to their new dighouse store in Dar al-Manasir, and managed to retrieve these finds only several weeks later. When the team returned for a quick sojourn into Dar al-Manasir on that occasion, an inspection of some of the sites at which the mission had been working when they were expelled showed evidence of substantial destruction, quite likely from illicit digging (Derek Welsby pers. comm. to CK). SARS-AKSE relocated to another part of their concession some kilometres to the west, just outside Dar al-Manasir, and continued to work there for the remainder of the season.

In winter 2006/07 SARS-AKSE was the first mission to be expelled. All other missions followed suite; ironically, only H.U.N.E. escaped that fate (Näser and Kleinitz 2010). This was due to direct talks with Manasir representatives in Khartoum before the start of the season, resulting in permission to work in Dar al-Manasir, provided the mission kept a low profile. Ultimately, the team completed an entire season's work on the islands Us and Sur. The threat of having to abort the mission was constant, however, and work only remained possible through extensive lobbying behind the scenes by the project antiquities inspector at-Tayeb Adjak and Khidir Abdelkarim Ahmed, a senior Sudanese member of the group. Moreover, the authorisation to work was bound to an extremely worrying condition, which had only been voiced mid-season by a local representative of the Executive Committee: All finds were to be handed over to Manasir representatives at the end of the season. H.U.N.E. – after telephone consultation with members of the NCAM in Khartoum – ostensibly complied with this demand, leaving sacks with processed pottery in the care of a representative of the Committee upon departure. Other finds, such as the Medieval manuscripts and book bindings from the church excavated on Us were 'smuggled' out of Dar al-Manasir. They have since been painstakingly restored in Germany and are currently being studied (Näser and Tsakos i.pr.), to be returned to Sudan after their full publication. The highly fragile leather and parchment fragments would have been lost without adequate storage and care, which the local Manasir could not have provided. While the cause of the Manasir was not taken lightly, the H.U.N.E. mission still decided to defy their requests in

this situation. Professional ethics about the care for archaeological remains and the antiquities laws of Sudan, which consider archaeological objects property of the state,²⁶ were called upon to justify the decision.

The claim to the archaeological objects recovered from excavations in Dar al-Manasir can be linked to an additional fourth reason given for the dismissal of the archaeologists during the second wave of expulsions. Only then the Manasir connected their request to the failure of the Sudanese authorities to “honour an undertaking that archaeological treasures salvaged from the reservoir area would not be removed to distant museums”²⁷. Original plans by NCAM and the then MDPIU envisaged a museum “at the first resettlement area (el-Multaga) for the preservation and exhibition of the archaeological and ethnographical wealth of the 4th Cataract” (Ahmed 2003: 14). Al-Multaqqa was intended for the Shaiqiyya people living close to the dam site, who in the eyes of the Manasir stood to reap major benefits from the dam project, including an international airport, medical facilities and a new university at Merowe, while being affected by resettlement to a much lesser degree than the Manasir.²⁸ Moreover, in the course of the archaeological salvage operations, the Manasir saw the archaeological finds, the ‘treasures’ of their land, being taken away by the missions. They may have perceived this as an additional draining of resources from their land and the feeding of foreign interests at their expense. In the course of events, negotiations between Manasir representatives and government bodies settled on the construction of a cultural center including a museum in Dar al-Manasir (see note 27; Nicholas Hildyard pers. comm. to CN). As this agreement had not materialised and no steps had been taken towards its realisation, the request for ‘local preservation’ became intertwined with the expulsion of the archaeologists at some point in 2006. This trajectory shows the intricacy of the situation, in which principal failings of the developer (see below 9.) had negative repercussions on various aspects of the dam project.

4.3. Winter 2007/08: the third and final wave of expulsions

At the next Fourth Cataract conference in Lille in June 2007, NCAM representatives again assured the increasingly concerned and upset community of international archaeologists that the situation was going to be resolved by the start of the coming and final field season in winter 2007/08. Several missions returned to the Fourth Cataract and attempted to resume work in Dar al-Manasir, but none succeeded. H.U.N.E. had initially been granted permission to work in their concession area by members of the Executive Committee of the Manasir in Khartoum, as well as by local representatives on Shirri island. However, these

26 Ordinance for the Protection of Antiquities 1999 (<http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/details.jsp?id=5867> and http://www.wipo.int/clea/docs_new/pdf/en/sd/sd002en.pdf, with English translation, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

27 ‘Sudan’s Merowe requests to stop excavating reservoir area’ (Sudan Tribune, 27/02/2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-s-Merowe-requests-to-stop,20457>, last accessed on 18/05/2012). See also Hildyard 2008: 30.

28 ‘Comments from Ali Askouri, Leadership Office of Hamdab Affected People, and members of the Executive Committee of the Manasir communities affected by the Merowe Dam, Sudan’ (13/09/2007, <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/Askouri-response-to-Lahmeyer-re-Merowe-13-Sep-2007.doc>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

permits were revoked within days of the arrival of the mission and the archaeologists were once again asked to leave. This final set of expulsions spelled the end of archaeological work in Dar al-Manasir. Soon afterwards, the region was submerged under the swiftly rising waters of the new reservoir (see Hänsch, this volume).

5. Contextualising the position of the Manasir

The reasons given by the Manasir representatives for the expulsion came to play a major role in the ensuing debate about the participation of the archaeologists in the Merowe Dam project among different stakeholder groups, such as the archaeologists, local people and their representatives, and human rights organisations. Some foreign archaeologists in particular questioned the justification of the arguments brought forward by the Manasir (see below 7.). It therefore seems expedient to scrutinise these arguments one by one, and position them in the wider context of the conflicts surrounding the Merowe Dam project.

5.1. Postponing the flooding

While the intention to postpone the flooding of the reservoir by stopping archaeological salvage operations may seem naïve, this strategy must be viewed against the informational basis on which the Manasir acted. The Dams Implementation Unit – which was regarded as an adversary by many Manasir – had again and again associated itself with the archaeological salvage project in newspaper reports, radio broadcasts and on their homepage (pl. 2).²⁹ From these reports and other public statements, it seemed that the DIU attached great importance to the archaeological work and that the national and international salvage campaigns took place under its leadership. In view of this, it should come as no surprise that the Manasir linked the archaeological campaigns to the contested dam project and believed that archaeology was ranked high in the priorities of the developer. Most archaeologists, who could not read Sudanese newspapers or follow local radio programmes, were completely unaware of this association and thus of the instrumentalisation of their efforts by the DIU.

Possibly even more important, however, was the fact that the archaeological salvage campaign was not matched with a similar effort destined to study the living cultural heritage of the Manasir. From what local people witnessed, much attention was given to archaeology, to the ‘dead stones’ – and very little to what the Manasir would have perceived as worth saving. If archaeology was valued much more than living culture, and if the DIU put so much stress on the successful completion of the archaeological work, it does not seem far-fetched to come to the conclusion that the reservoir would not be flooded until the salvage project had been completed.

5.2. Raising awareness

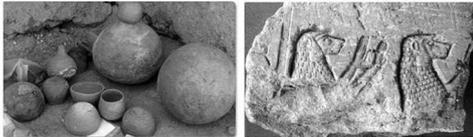
A similar reasoning underlies the second aim connected to the archaeologists’ expulsion. As the high turnout of archaeologists from all over the world showed, and as was stressed in DIU statements (see e.g. pl. 2), archaeology attracted international attention – seemingly to a

²⁹ See <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/archaeological.html> (last accessed on 08/05/2012).



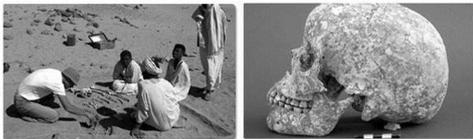
Archeological Salvage

First we have to note that Merowe most famous archaeological heritage such as Barkal Mountain, and the Pyramids fall after the Dam's location and are not affected in any way by its structure. On the contrary, the Dam will have a positive effect on these sites, as the Dam by itself, is an area of attraction, and is expected to bring more tourists to the area.



In its efforts to preserve the archeological remains at the Dam area, The Dam's Implementation Unit in cooperation with the National Corporation for Antiquities & Museums announced a comprehensive project for saving Merowe archeological remains. On the 6th of Oct. 2001, according to gradual steps. The Project is expected to complete in 2008.

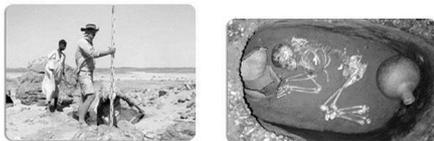
The Unit and the Corporation released an International Call for institutions to participate in rescuing the archeological remains in the area covered by the Dam's lake and the resettlement areas. The area has been divided among the Polish, British, and French missions in addition to the Sudanese Corporation.



The work started in the Dam's site (Mirowe Island) because it is the first affected area. In mid 2002, the archeological survey in this area revealed a tomb that dates back to the fifth century AD. The excavations include around 11 Christian tombs, and 120 archeological remains that are traced back to the Stone Ages.

Not very far from the first resettlement area which is called the New Hamdab or El-Multaga, the survey unveiled a Christian residence near to the water spot. This indicates that there was a residential town in this location 1000 years ago.

By July 2003, the National Corporation for Antiquities & Museums announced the salvation of all archeological remains in the Dam's location and in Multaga area. This was all done with full local funding in which The Archaeology Department at University of Khartoum, and the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Dongola took part.



Pl. 2: Screen shot of the DIU website presenting the archaeological salvage campaign at the Merowe Dam (<http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/archaeological.html>, last accessed on 08/05/2012).

much greater degree than any other aspect of the Merowe Dam project. In contrast, the Manasir found it difficult not only to have their voice heard in negotiations with the developer (Beck 1997; Askouri 2004a; Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Hänsch, this volume), but also to find support for their cause nationally and internationally. The Merowe Dam project was portrayed as “the national project” that would solve the energy problem afflicting the country, eventually ending poverty.³⁰ Local resistance to aspects of the project was regarded by some as damaging the country’s hopes for rapid economic development.³¹

On an international level, non-academic interest in the Fourth Cataract case remained severely limited as governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as the international media, focused on the humanitarian disasters in Darfur and other parts of Sudan (but see Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Lawler 2006). H.U.N.E., for example, addressed authorities such as the German Embassy in Khartoum and the relevant ministries in Berlin, and tried to involve NGOs in projects at the Fourth Cataract. However, these efforts met with

30 See the DIU’s website at <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/location.html>, particularly <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/testimonials.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012), or ‘Merowe Dam: Pearl of Nile in Sudan’ (Sudan Tribune, 24/12/2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Merowe-Dam-Pearl-of-Nile-in-Sudan,25295>, last accessed on 18/05/2012). Compare also Verhoeven 2011: 7-9.

31 This opinion was voiced in comments by Sudanese readers on articles in online newspapers as well as in several personal encounters of the authors with Sudanese citizens.

little success.³² In view of a surge in dam building around the world and humanitarian crises linked to these and other major development projects, the case of the Fourth Cataract was just one among many problematic situations. Considering how little power the Manasir had to influence the trajectory of the overall project (Beck 1997; Askouri 2004a; Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Hänsch, this volume), halting the archaeological work was one of the very few options available to them in order to raise awareness of their plight. Any delay in flooding would have given their representatives more time to renegotiate the terms of resettlement and compensation.

5.3. Protecting the archaeologists

Even the third reason the Manasir listed for the expulsion of the archaeologists, namely removing them from a potential line of fire, was justified as subsequent events tragically proved. In April 2006 three men lost their lives when Shaiqiyya of Amri staged protests against the conditions of their resettlement and compensation (Askouri 2007: 79-81).³³

5.4. The 'local preservation' argument

It was only during the second wave of expulsions, in winter 2006/07, that the fourth argument appeared, which connected the dismissal of the archaeologists to the request for a local museum and the local preservation of archaeological finds. Manasir representatives proclaimed that the "Manasir don't want their history to be given to other communities" and that they don't want "the archaeological treasures salvaged from the reservoir area [to] be removed to distant museums".³⁴ While these statements could be celebrated as showing the success of MDASP in relating the importance of archaeological heritage to the local communities, they actually mark the ultimate failure of the salvage project as well as the devastating shortcomings of the Merowe Dam project with regard to Cultural Resource Management (CRM) and especially community participation (Kleinitz and Näser 2011).

While the 'local preservation' argument has been connected to the failure of the Sudanese authorities to build a museum on Manasir territory or in Manasir resettlement areas (see above 4.2.), some additional thought should be given to the very category of 'cultural heritage' as conceptualised by the involved parties. During the entire process of planning and conducting cultural resource related work in connection with the Merowe Dam project, the affected people were not integrated in the development of mitigation measures. Instead, CRM work within the Merowe Dam project lacked community participation. Thus, no one ever bothered to enquire what the Manasir perceived to be their

32 But see 'Deutsche Unternehmen sind mitverantwortlich für Menschenrechtsverletzungen. Bau des Merowe-Großstaudamms im Sudan' (German Society of Endangered Peoples, 22/06/2006, <http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&stayInsideTree=1>, last accessed on 08/05/2012).

33 See also 'Sudanese militia kill three people in Merowe dam area' (A. Askouri, Sudan Tribune, 22/04/2006, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-militia-kill-three-people,15209>, last accessed on 18/05/2012) and the report of the German Society of Endangered Peoples (<http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=manasir>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

34 'Sudan's Merowe requests to stop excavating reservoir area' (Sudan Tribune, 27/02/2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-s-Merowe-requests-to-stop,20457>, last accessed on 08/05/2012). See also Hildyard 2008: 30.

‘cultural heritage’ and what they thought worth documenting and/or preserving. As a consequence, we are not in the position to answer questions about Manasir perceptions of the past and of cultural heritage in any systematic and meaningful way. Still, some work conducted by H.U.N.E. may help elucidate some answers.

Already during the first H.U.N.E. field season in 2004, members of the archaeological survey team were repeatedly asked by local people why they put so much effort into studying the ‘dead stones’ rather than giving attention to the living people (pers. comm. to CN). Such questions made it very clear that the interests and priorities of the archaeologists had little in common with those of the affected people, even if the archaeological community may have liked to think otherwise. In response to these questions and in view of the limitations in respect to CRM work connected to the Merowe Dam project, H.U.N.E. inaugurated a social-geographical survey in 2005, which focused on documenting the current cultural and economic life of the Manasir and the environmental conditions in its concession area (Haberlah, this volume; Kleinitz and Näser 2011 with further references; <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/aknoa/hune/daralmanasir/>). This project had a strong community-led component in which local participants made decisions on which subjects should be documented. Very consistently, their interests revolved around everyday material life worlds in their compounds, villages, fields and palm groves as well as modern poetry and song. Archaeological heritage played no role whatsoever in this context.

This observation was confirmed during the archaeological surveys, which were undertaken in all of the four H.U.N.E. field seasons from 2004 to 2007. While traversing the islands of the concession area by foot, locating and documenting sites, the teams would often stop in villages, chat and enquire about sites. Sometimes they were accompanied on their trips by interested members of the local communities. While these community members could and would point out archaeological sites upon request, they expressly dissociated themselves from these places and features in terms of cultural belonging and relevance. In local terminology, archaeological sites were called *asar rum* or simply *rum*. Literally meaning ‘places of the Romans’, *rum* in this context designates Roman (and Byzantine) Christians and refers to the pre-Islamic, Medieval period of the Middle Nile valley.³⁵ Among our Manasir hosts there was a general vague awareness of former Christianity in the area, which is also testified e.g. in the name of the village al-Kenisa, ‘church’, next to a large Medieval site on Sur (Näser 2005: 85: note 15).³⁶ The Manasir, however, do not place themselves in any relation to this pre-Islamic heritage today, but they rather construct their history in terms of tribal genealogies.³⁷ Instead, the foreign archaeologists were thought by some to have come in search of their Christian past (pers. comm. to CK).

Only one category of places was exempted from the general indifference towards ‘archaeological sites’: the *baniyat*. The Arabic word *baniya* in the first place means ‘built structure’ and ‘built-up area’, but it specifically denotes (built) places, at which – according

35 Compare e.g. MacMichael 1922, II: passim, 478: index (Rum).

36 Compare also Jackson 1926: 26: “The name Kanisa (or Church) is common in Abu Hamed district, and [...] always seems to denote a Christian settlement.” See also Ahmed 1971: 12-13 and Crawford 1953: 7.

37 See MacMichael 1922, II: passim, index: 470 (Manasra, Mansurab) and Hasan 1967: 145-153. Compare also Jackson 1926: 3-5.

to local belief – Muslim saints manifest themselves.³⁸ In general, every outstanding, special feature of the natural and cultural landscape – like trees and wells – can become a *baniya*. *Baniyat* are places of veneration and ritual activities evoking blessings i.e., *barakat*. During our surveys we repeatedly noted such *baniyat*, which were easily recognisable by traces of physical manipulation and related material equipment (Näser 2007: 126-128). All *baniyat* we encountered in our concession area were archaeological sites, namely former churches and superstructures of pre-Islamic graves. On the one hand, they were clearly part of a lived heritage, although one which is not easily communicated to ‘outsiders’ and probably not shared by all members of a community. But *baniyat* also illustrate the place which archaeological heritage holds in the cultural world of the Manasir. Archaeological sites could be turned into *baniyat* only because they were perceived as something outside of the canon of one’s own culture, something ‘extra-normal’. Thus, the *baniyat* are a telling expression of the ‘not-belonging’, the cultural dissociation from archaeological sites.

Leaving the *baniyat* aside, archaeological heritage did not figure prominently in the conceptualisation of heritage and the past by the Manasir. Various encounters during four H.U.N.E. seasons showed that the concept of archaeological work also proved hard to relate to for many Manasir (for a contrasting position see Welsby 2008: 15). Even when the aims of archaeological method and practice were promoted in daily talks with local excavation workers and in lectures in local schools – which H.U.N.E. did throughout its fieldwork – many Manasir, quite understandably, continued to perceive the purpose of archaeology to be nothing more than treasure hunting, with archaeologists extracting the ‘treasures of the land’ for their own gain and not for the Manasir’s (Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 265).³⁹

From all this it becomes clear that the ‘local preservation’ argument clearly did not emerge from an intrinsic appreciation of archaeological heritage by the Manasir. Instead, the trajectory of the controversy suggests that it had only been adopted during the abrupt and unmediated confrontation with western notions of the value of this heritage in the course of the archaeological salvage operations. In response to observing the importance which archaeologists and the responsible administrative bodies attached to archaeological heritage, the Manasir deemed it important to claim their right to the antiquities recovered from their land – contra the national antiquities laws – by requesting that these objects should remain in Dar al Manasir and be displayed in a local museum. In a second step, by preventing archaeological work, they actively appropriated the archaeological sites, using them as a means of empowerment in order to have their plight heard. Thus, they made the archaeological heritage an asset of their negotiations, tying it to their struggle for existential and cultural survival for better or worse.

38 An alternative term for these locations is *bayan*, ‘manifestation’ (Trimingham 1949: 139, 143-145, 233). Compare also Walkley 1936: 92 and Humoudi 1977: 110. Neither in the Fourth Cataract nor in other regions of Sudan, have *baniyat* been investigated systematically so far. However, they are described as an ubiquitous phenomenon and – as the *qubbat* – related to ‘popular religion’.

39 Looting i.e. illicit non-archaeological digging had become a major problem at the Fourth Cataract in the mid-2000s, creating additional distrust between archaeologists and local inhabitants. Looting also put an additional strain on the work of the archaeologists who saw themselves confronted with the irrevocable loss of objects and archaeological information without an effective means to counter it.

6. Advocacy against archaeology

Together with the ‘local preservation’ argument one further protagonist entered the scene, namely the London-based NGO The Corner House.⁴⁰ Representatives of this advocacy organisation advised the expatriate London-based Leadership Office of the Hamdab Dam Affected People (LOHAP) and – either directly or indirectly – the Executive Committee of the Manasir. In late 2006 and early 2007 Manasir representatives in the Fourth Cataract referred to The Corner House when they asked the archaeologists to stop their work (Vivian Davies pers. comm. to CN). On that information, Claudia Näser called The Corner House representative Nicholas Hildyard in London in order to discuss the chances of a socially engaged and ethically responsible archaeology in the Fourth Cataract. Hildyard (pers. comm. to CN, January 2007) insisted that archaeologists should join the fight of the Manasir by directing their funds and energy towards making their case public, instead of trying to resume their salvage work. At a later stage, they might then be invited back to continue working in Dar al-Manasir. At least with regard to redirecting funds, which to a large part came from public sources and whose purpose of use could not have been changed by the archaeologists at will, this suggestion was utterly unrealistic. Still, The Corner House maintained its polarising position, which eventually culminated in a published dispute between Hildyard and the British archaeologist Derek Welsby, who had headed the SARS mission in the Fourth Cataract for many years. Hildyard (2008: 19) fundamentally challenged the position of the archaeologists in the Fourth Cataract salvage project:

“What about institutions that have no direct contractual relationship with a [...] project, but whose association [...] gives the project or its promoters a credibility they would not otherwise enjoy? Do they have a responsibility to voice their concerns when human rights abuses occur? Do they have a duty to respond to requests from those affected to use their good offices to bring pressure to prevent further abuses?”

In the following, he portrays the archaeologists as profiteers of the dam and passive bystanders to human rights violations (Hildyard 2008: 20-21, 30, 34), accusing them of:

- having neglected the plea for help of the affected communities
- having refused to use their influence to improve the project, facilitate dialogue with the authorities and the honouring of existing agreements
- arguing that they are a neutral party
- criticising the communities’ leadership, when they requested the archaeologists to leave.

Hildyard grossly generalises by depicting the archaeologists as a homogenous group with a single position, agenda and voice (Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 269) and by deliberately ignoring those projects which made an effort to embrace a more socially engaged archaeology (see above 5.4.). Still, in view of the overall trajectory of the Merowe Dam project and the subsequent stance that many members of the archaeological community took, his critique cannot be dismissed wholesale. His point that the archaeological missions by their

⁴⁰ See <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/> (last accessed on 08/05/2012).

very presence lent the dam project with all its shortcomings credibility, and that archaeologists may have implicitly sanctioned human rights abuses by remaining silent, should be of great concern to the professional community (see also Schmidt i.pr.). While this discussion needs to be taken further, Hildyard misses three major issues. First, his critique did nothing to help the Manasir, but instead opened an unproductive ‘sideshow’, which only diverted attention from the existing problems without offering a path towards their solution. Secondly, in its generalisation, Hildyard’s critique could be read as a principal questioning of archaeological salvage and the preservation of cultural heritage as justified and integral components of development projects. And finally, by honing in on the positioning of the archaeologists, Hildyard distracts from the major failures and responsibilities of the developer in terms of planning and conducting proper CRM work with all its components, including integrating affected communities and observing human rights.

7. Reactions by the archaeologists

The archaeologists participating in MDASP saw their work as an important contribution to the preservation of heritage in Sudan and of humanity in general. Moreover, they had been widely ignorant of the tensions between the local communities and the developer. Therefore, the sudden termination of archaeological work was met with general incredulity. Archaeologists’ reactions were mainly those of frustration and lack of understanding. They felt badly repaid for their commitment. Derek Welsby (2008: 13-14), at the time, was the only one who put his thoughts and feelings in writing, but his words resonate the opinion of most of the MDASP participants:

“The archaeological community from many countries has gone to considerable lengths to raise money for rescue work in the region to be inundated by the new reservoir. Raising the necessary money is far from an easy task. The various missions have worked extremely hard, often in difficult conditions, to do their utmost to gather whatever information they can in the short time available. During their endeavours they have lived with the local communities of the Shagiya, Manasir and Rubatab renting houses in the local villages and employing local workmen. They have, as a by-product of their work, injected a considerable amount of money into the local economy. The archaeologists have invariably been welcomed by the local people. Although perhaps not fully understanding why the archaeologists would choose to spend many months, and considerable amounts of money, in the region it is my impression that the local people respect the archaeologists for their hard work and obvious dedication.”

This statement contains several stereotypical arguments, which were at the core of the archaeologists’ self-perception and self-description. By and large, archaeologists emphasised that they:

- undertook considerable efforts to raise money, at the same time postponing other projects
- endured physical hardships during their fieldwork, thus proving their dedication

- were friends with the local people as they lived among them
- injected money in the local communities by renting houses and hiring workmen.

To which degree do these arguments hold true? Several points should be taken into consideration. First, the Manasir themselves did not invite the archaeologists to work in their territory. The intention of archaeological work was alien to most of them and the cause for the archaeologists' presence i.e., the dam project, was the source of existential threat and social conflict. Second, the friendly attitude of most Manasir towards the archaeologists may have had other roots than an appreciation of archaeological work or personal 'friendships', e.g. a general obligation of extending hospitality and courtesy to strangers, curiosity, the wish to interact with foreigners, the prestige arising from these interactions or an economic interest. Third, the investment into the local economy through renting lodgings, hiring workmen and other services, such as carrying water, washing, cleaning and waste disposal, using local transportation by donkey or boat, and shopping in the local markets would not have amounted to more than a few thousand Euros per field season, depending on the length of stay and the specifics of the project, such as the number of hired workmen or the size of the team to be maintained. This certainly was a large sum to most members of the local communities, and one of their few chances to locally procure cash income. For the archaeological missions, however, it only was a minor item in their budget, usually amounting to as little as 5% to 10% of their total budget. The major part went into the salaries of foreign team members, technical equipment and international travel.

These observations are not to belittle the very real commitment of international archaeologists in Sudan and their achievements in protecting the archaeological heritage of the region. However, the case of the Fourth Cataract strongly calls for a critical analysis of the idealised self-understanding framing this commitment.

The archaeologists working in the Fourth Cataract acted upon the deep conviction that salvage i.e., the documentation of archaeological heritage along the western notion of its innate value, is a universal goal of first priority and that the value system along which western archaeologists act is objective and universally valid. Moreover, they often had a 'romantisised' involvement with the research area and its inhabitants. They felt attached to the local people they encountered and perceived themselves as their supporters and friends. In return for their commitment and their many-fold investment they expected recognition of their 'higher' motives as well as gratitude from the side of the local communities. When such gratitude was denied by Manasir representatives, archaeologists were blankly disappointed. In this context, an observation by Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles (2007: 10) comes to mind. They draw attention to the fact that "indigenous communities rarely thank the archaeologist: [...] if the archaeologist expects such gratitude, that presumption reflects the patriarchal, colonial role of archaeologists as articulators of heritage for the mute, bestowers to the bereft". A similar discrepancy in expectations and reactions has been analysed by anthropologist Karl Anthony Schmid (2008) in interactions between tourists and local guides in Luxor, Egypt. In this context, the 'westerners' also impose their expectations on a social interaction, not allowing for a potentially divergent perception by the 'locals'. When such differing perceptions emerge they are often met with incredulity and surprise on the side of the tourists. Schmid (2008: 115) states that western tourists "want a friendship to be

a friendship; and a business transaction to be a business transaction, with transparency and openness. What they encounter are individuals who are making their living from commercial transactions, as well as possibly being interested in friendship. From the guides' perspective, both can be exercised at the same time; there is no such thing as a pure friendship in such relationships."

Archaeologists at the Fourth Cataract regarded their 'mission' and their actions as fundamentally positive, and without further reflection transferred this perspective onto their interaction with the local population. General well-meaning and friendly functional relationships were overrated, while cultural strangeness, potential political tensions and different perspectives on their presence and the 'worthiness' of their work on the part of the Manasir were systematically underestimated. The archaeologists assumed – or prescribed – a principal accordance of their interests with those of the local population. When the acknowledgement of a discrepancy was forced upon them upon their expulsion, they privileged the 'archaeological interest' over all others, defining the preservation of archaeological heritage as the ultimate point of reference (Welsby 2008: 14-15):

"By banning archaeologists from the region the Manasir Higher Committee is wantonly destroying the heritage of the people it is there to represent. The dam will also destroy that heritage but, notwithstanding the problems with the dam, it will bring some concrete benefits. However, the activities of the Manasir Higher Committee vis-à-vis the archaeologists will bring no benefits whatsoever. It is vandalism of the highest order and one can only hope that succeeding generations of Manasir do not feel too keenly the wanton disregard shown for their cultural heritage by their representatives in the first decade of the 21st century."

These are strong words against people who faced the irretrievable loss of their ancestral land and their previous way of life as riverine farmers, in exchange for an uncertain future due to the development project that also brought in the archaeologists. In view of this, tribute should be paid to their anger and grief. Moreover, as Lynn Meskell (2002: 564) has emphasised, there is a difference between human lives and material culture, and we must be careful to keep our professional commitment in proportion. Welsby seems to express the attitude of many archaeologists active in the Fourth Cataract towards their expulsion, which was characterised by a lack of empathy for the cause of the Manasir, for the validity of their interests and the desperateness of their situation (for a contrasting position see Näser and Kleinitz 2010; Hafsaas-Tsakos 2011; Kleinitz and Näser 2011).

A further point needs to be taken into consideration when attributing responsibilities. Some colleagues proclaimed to have witnessed discontent between the representatives of the Executive Committee of the Manasir and the majority of the Manasir people, who did not seem to support the expulsion of the archaeologists (Welsby 2008: 14). Indeed, according to our knowledge, the ultimate decision on the termination of archaeological work had been taken by the Executive Committee in Khartoum (see above 4.1., 4.2.). It is also true that neither the Manasir nor any other involved party should be viewed as a homogenous group with a single voice (see e.g. Beck 1997; Kleinitz and Näser 2011; Hänsch, this volume; Weschenfelder, this volume). Interests, opinions and positions on such complex issues as resettlement, compensation and how to negotiate them best varied according to economic,

political as well as gender and age status, and the development of the overall situation through time. Power shifts in the intricate web of interests within local communities were reflected in the changing compositions and agendas of their Executive Committee (Hänsch, this volume). However, at least with regard to the expulsion of the archaeologists, the decisions of the highest elected body of the Manasir were honoured by all, even if they as individuals differed in their opinion.

A final point concerns the self-image of the archaeologists regarding their ‘influence’ or power to address and even change the shortcomings of the Merowe Dam project. Welsby (2008: 13) asserts:

“Archaeologists have never been supporters of dam projects. They do not support the large-scale destruction of the heritage of mankind wherever in the world it may occur. However, they cannot be opposed to development projects *per se*. It is the archaeologists’ task to recover as much information as they can in the time available in advance of such projects. Occasionally, when a site or monument is of world heritage status, they might be forced to oppose, or urge a modification in, the development plans, as in the case of the construction of the First Aswan Dam but, except in these exceptional cases, they have very little power and influence.”

Again, this view seemed to be shared by many archaeologists who worked in the Fourth Cataract. The question, however, should not so much focus on the amount of influence, but on whether we want to use it or not. While some opine that archaeology should be “a discipline that plays an active role in helping to bring about social changes” (Trigger 1990: 310; see also 10. below), archaeologists at the Fourth Cataract saw the struggle of the affected people for appropriate terms of resettlement and compensation as completely divorced from archaeological activities and maintained that mixing the two testified to a lack of judgement on part of the Manasir (e.g. Welsby 2008: 15). We have argued elsewhere that this may not be a good position to take if we want to keep our discipline relevant and credible in the future (Kleinitz and Näser 2011; Näser and Kleinitz i.pr.; see also 10. below).

8. ‘Preserving’ heritage?

One further issue needs clarification. It concerns terminology, but not exclusively so. We have so far mainly spoken of ‘salvage’ and the ‘preservation’ of heritage. This could be called a euphemism. What is actually meant is the documentation of archaeological data, with only relatively few objects being recovered and thus ‘preserved’. For a large part ‘preservation’ is by documentation only, and it is linked to another obstacle, namely publication. Although most MDASP missions diligently produced yearly reports, up to date i.e. 14 years after the commencement of the project and five years after its last field season, only one final publication has appeared (Welsby 2003). The Packard Humanities Institute (see above 3.) which supported fieldwork activities in the later part of MDASP also very generously provided some funding for post-excavation work, but it could not finance the entire exercise. With the prevailing funding politics in the home countries of the MDASP participants it will be nearly impossible to raise the substantial amounts needed to carry

through the complete post-fieldwork analysis and produce final reports. In the end, it is doubtful whether the scientific potential of MDASP will ever be fully realised and made publically available, and whether the archaeological heritage will really have been preserved.

The international Nubian Salvage Campaign of the 1960s, south of the Aswan High Dam, can serve as a close analogy: its data and research results are still in the process of being published more than 40 years after the termination of fieldwork. Publication work at that scale is usually carried out by succeeding generations of researchers, who have to work from field records and notes only, without having first-hand knowledge of the surveys and excavations (Säve-Söderbergh 1995). Such constellations inevitably entail a loss of data and information. It seems that MDASP may face the same fate – not least as the ‘caravan’ of the archaeological missions is already moving on to the next salvage campaigns (see 10. below). Against this background it must be asked to what the extent the ‘preservation of heritage’ can really be accomplished in the framework of large development projects with patchy CRM programmes that do not include provisions for post-excavation analysis and publication as well. What presently remains are preliminary reports – which may turn out to be the final ones –, unfinished projects, hardly accessible field documentation, processed and unprocessed finds in storage, and some objects that made it into the exhibitions at the National Museum in Khartoum and some additional museums abroad.⁴¹

9. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

What transpires from the above analysis is that the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project at the Fourth Nile Cataract ended in a no-win-situation – for the archaeologists and the affected people alike. However, to blame its partial failure on either of these two groups is overlooking a key point, namely that the conflict which eventually led to this situation was not inherent in the relationship between these two groups, but was anchored in the very set-up of the Merowe Dam project with its improper handling of compensation and resettlement issues, its human rights violations and its lack of a comprehensive CRM plan including community consultation and integration. Some of the development project’s flaws are apparent when surveying the provisions for mitigating project-induced negative effects on the cultural resource sector (Kleinitz and Näser 2011; Näser and Kleinitz i.pr.). By failing to procure an independent, well researched and publically available Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and to develop a comprehensive programme organising and funding all work necessary with regard to *all* affected cultural resources, the developer

41 In order to attract missions to the Fourth Cataract, NCAM had offered a share of the finds to the teams committing to MDASP. Some, such as the SARS mission of the British Museum and the mission of the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum have already received a share of the objects recovered at the Fourth Cataract. An additional concession allowed missions to take finds to their home institutions in order to facilitate post-excavation analysis, on the condition that these loans would be returned after analysis. H.U.N.E. has exported a substantial portion of its finds to Berlin, where they are currently being studied and conserved. After their processing and – hopefully – the preparation of the final report they will be returned to the National Museum in Khartoum.

denied CRM – and thus also archaeology – an integral place in the general project design (as predicted by Gisema 2006). The local communities were at no stage actively incorporated in the project, despite the fact that community integration has proven an important element of successful CRM projects in Africa and beyond (e.g. Nicholas and Andrews 1997; Brandt and Hassan [eds.] 2000; King 2003; Schmidt i.pr.). Instead, CRM work had effectively been reduced to archaeological salvage – using this component as a smoke-screen for the multiple shortcomings of the overall project. While archaeologists went to considerable efforts to record archaeological sites, almost no attention was given to the living culture of the affected communities – the cultural heritage that would have been worthwhile saving not only *for* them but also *with* them and *by* them. The few projects focusing on the living heritage and the actual situation of the Manasir within MDASP, most of them are presented in this volume (see Kleinitz and Näser, Introduction to this volume), were only of limited scope in terms of personnel, project design and duration due to their ‘adjunct’ role. The inhabitants of the Fourth Cataract were thus effectively reduced to mere bystanders of history and the efforts of its salvage. More cynically, the setup of the salvage project also communicated a worrying scale of values, which put archaeological heritage at the top and the living heritage of the affected people at the bottom.

From our perspective as scientists and heritage professionals we may lament the lost chance to preserve more of the cultural heritage of the Manasir or more fully document the archaeological sites, and we may criticise the shockingly improper handling of CRM in the context of the Merowe Dam project. These losses and missed chances, however, pale against the plight of the affected people. Concurrently with the first expulsions of the archaeologists in early 2006, their conflicts with the developer deepened. While representatives of the Manasir community were locked in lengthy negotiations regarding compensation and resettlement issues (Hänsch, this volume), increasingly desperate protest actions by the affected people were met with an armed response by the state authorities (Askouri 2007: 79-81; Hildyard 2008; Hänsch, this volume).⁴² In August 2007, the UN Human Rights Council’s special rapporteur on adequate housing pointed to human rights violations in relation to the Merowe Dam project and appealed to the developer, the investors and the contractors to stop construction until the resettlement issue had been resolved – to no avail.⁴³ In July 2008 the gates of the Merowe Dam were closed before most of the inhabitants

42 See also ‘Sudanese militia kill three people in Merowe dam area’ (A. Askouri, Sudan Tribune, 22/04/2006, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-militia-kill-three-people,15209>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), the report of the German Society of Endangered Peoples (<http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=manasir>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), ‘Leaders of Sudan’s Merowe Dam community escape assassination’ (Sudan Tribune, 16/02/2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20289>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), ‘Barren idea? How Sudan’s dam will harness the Nile but widen discord’ (A. England, Financial Times, 09/03/2007, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/216d6532-cde3-11db-839d-000b5df10621.html>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

43 See ‘UN expert urges Sudan to respect human rights of communities affected by hydro-electric dam projects’ (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=7513&LangID=E>; compare also <http://www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=23617&Cr=sudan&Cr1=>; <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/KothariMerowedamAug2007>). The intervention was based on a ‘Complaint to UN special rapporteur on adequate housing by the Amri Committee’, which detailed the various human rights violations (available at <http://www.hlrn.org/img/violation/Merowe%20AMRI%20COMPLAINT.doc>; all last accessed on 18/05/2012).

had been resettled from the reservoir area: they were practically flooded out of their homes (Hänsch, this volume).⁴⁴ Until today – four years later – the situation has not been resolved. In late 2011 and early 2012 many Manasir declared that they were still waiting for compensation payments, and protests continued.⁴⁵ Reports from the resettlement areas are ambiguous: while some commend the new facilities (compare Weschenfelder, this volume)⁴⁶, others relate e.g. that the widely advertised new hospital at Merowe⁴⁷ is closed (pers. comm. Timothy Kendall) and that projections for a successful implementation of agricultural production are critical (Malterer 2006: 58; see also Hänsch, this volume).

Some time must pass until the impacts of the dam construction and the resettlement can be reliably assessed; yet the analogous case of the Nubians who moved to New Halfa in 1964 due to the construction of the Aswan High Dam allows some insights (Sørbø 1986). Salem-Murdoch (1989) has pointed out, for example, that different groups had different strategies in adjusting to New Halfa, which soon upset the initially equal distribution of land to those who were resettled and fostered disputes over land and social conflict. Similar dynamics can be predicted for the Manasir. One example may illustrate this point: in Dar al-Manasir women traditionally cultivated part of the *jarf*-land i.e., the zone which was annually flooded by the Nile and which allowed the growing of vegetables and animal fodder without further irrigation (Weschenfelder, this volume; compare also Beck, this volume; Haberland, this volume). For the women, this meant physically hard labour, but also an active participation in agricultural production and in the generation of family income. In the resettlement areas, far away from the Nile, there is no *jarf*-land, and women will be excluded from agricultural activities. They will thus lose an important source for generating an independent income, and this will have strong consequences for their position in the families and their role in the wider social environment. All in all, as individuals and as a social group, the Manasir face an uncertain future.

In sum, the story of the Merowe Dam project turned ugly. While internal and external observers drew attention to human rights violations on the part of the developer and the companies involved (Hildyard 2008; McDonald, Bosshard and Brewer 2009)⁴⁸, neither the

44 See also 'An emergency appeal for urgent relief of Merowe dam communities' (Statement by the Executive Committee of the Manasir Communities, International Rivers, 31/07/2008, <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/an-emergency-appeal-for-urgent-relief-of-merowe-dam-communities-2521>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), 'Sudanese government forcibly displaces more than 6000 families affected by the Merowe Dam' (Statement by the Leadership Office of Hamdab Affected People LOHAP [London], International Rivers, 01/10/2008, <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/sudanese-government-forcibly-displaces-more-than-6000-families-affected-by-merowe-dam-4311>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

45 See 'Sudan breaks up dam demo' (Sudan Tribune, 20/12/2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-breaks-up-dam-demo,41049>); 'Sudanese police in second crackdown against dam protestors' (Sudan Tribune, 22/12/2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-police-in-second,41069>); 'Sudanese authorities block opposition convoy from reaching protesters in al-Damer' (Sudan Tribune, 13/01/2012, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-authorities-block,41289>, all last accessed on 18/05/2012).

46 See also <http://merowedam.gov.sd/en/social.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012).

47 See <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/merowehospital.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012) and Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 27.

48 See also 'Update on the Merowe/Hamadab Dam Project, Sudan' (P. Bosshard and N. Hildyard, International Rivers and The Corner House, 06/07/2005, <http://198.170.85.29/Intl-Rivers-Network-and->

Sudanese state nor expatriate investors and contractors took any responsibility for humanitarian, environmental or cultural consequences. When several European companies were requested to intervene or to pull out of the project by representatives of the affected people and western advocacy groups (Askouri 2004a; Bosshard and Hildyard 2005; Hildyard 2008)⁴⁹, most responded by withdrawing into a position of neutrality, relegating any responsibility for negative effects of the dam project to the developer.⁵⁰ In May 2010 executive employees of the project's technical consultant, Lahmeyer International, were sued by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) for human rights violations in connection with their involvement in the Merowe Dam project, including the drowning of Dar al-Manasir in 2008.⁵¹

The Merowe Dam case demonstrates that there is no neutral stance that archaeologists can claim (Kleinitz and Näser 2011). Archaeologists need to acknowledge that by their very presence they are part of potential conflicts and that their work has political implications, regardless of all assertions to the contrary. At the Fourth Cataract, the DIU adorned itself with the achievements of the archaeological salvage project in its national and international public relations media against the knowledge of most archaeologists, giving them the air of observing rules of appropriate conduct, even after the archaeological operations had terminated prematurely due to the intervention of the affected people.⁵² Claims to positions of neutrality are thus futile. Equally, the denial of influence by archaeologists can be called into question. Recently, a growing number of authors have been calling for archaeologists to play a more active role not only in protecting cultural heritage in consultation with local communities but also in aiding those communities in their struggle for physical and cultural survival in the face of forced resettlement and the loss of their livelihoods (Pyburn 2007; Ronayne 2008; Schmidt i.pr.; compare also Trigger 1990). This activist stance maintains

Corner-House-update-Merowe-Dam-Sudan-6-July-2005.doc, last accessed on 18/05/2012), a report of the German Society of Endangered Peoples (<http://www.gfbv.de/inhaltsDok.php?id=761&highlight=manasir>, last accessed on 18/05/2012), and the involvement of UN special rapporteurs on human rights and adequate housing (see above note 43; reported at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article26194>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

49 See also an online-petition requesting the postponement of the dam, which is addressed to the president of Lahmeyer International, see <http://www.petitiononline.com/hamadab/petition.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012).

50 See <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/KothariMerowedamAug2007>, a statement by Lahmeyer International (<http://198.170.85.29/Lahmeyer-statement-Merowe-dam-Sudan-May-2005.pdf>) and the 'Update on the Merowe/Hamadab Dam Project, Sudan' (P. Bosshard and N. Hildyard, International Rivers and The Corner House, 06/07/2005, <http://198.170.85.29/Intl-Rivers-Network-and-Corner-House-update-Merowe-Dam-Sudan-6-July-2005.doc>). Several European companies contracted for the Merowe Dam project have also been involved in other controversial hydropower projects, such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (ABB, Lahmeyer), the Birecik Dam in Turkey (Alstom) and the Three Gorges Dam in China (Alstom) (<http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/corrupt-lahmeyer-debarment-welcome-but-late-ngos-3866>; all last accessed on 18/05/2012; Hildyard 2008: 23).

51 A detailed account of human rights violations in connection with the project is given in the complaint filed against Lahmeyer International. The PDF documents are available at the ECCR website under 'Deutsche Ingenieursarbeit – ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste' (<http://www.ecchr.eu/index.php/lahmeyer-fall.html>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

52 <http://www.merowedam.gov.sd/en/archaeological.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012); Ali, Salih and Ali 2010.

that archaeologists' "first relationship must be with people in the present" (Ronayne 2008: 376; compare also Perring and van der Linde 2009: 206). The people of the Fourth Cataract have forcefully underlined this imperative by terminating an archaeological salvage project that showed little concern for their interests and needs.

Elsewhere in the world, local communities are also increasingly opposing development projects or aspects thereof that compromise their livelihoods and cultural identity (e.g. Ronayne 2008). As archaeological salvage becomes more and more a politically marked phenomenon, governance and advocacy groups will equally continue to put it on their agenda. In these contexts archaeologists may find themselves amidst a conflict between various interest groups, in which it is impossible to reach a basis for professional practice within a mere disciplinary frame of reference. In such cases it could be advisable to embrace the stance expressed by Perring and van der Linde (2009: 197) in their contribution on 'archaeology in conflict', namely that "best archaeological practice should build from an understanding of local socio-political and cultural power structures, draw on assessments of need, and build upon a notion of heritage that moves beyond the purely materialistic".

10. Dawning recognition or future struggles?

In May 2012, NCAM and the International Society for Nubian Studies (ISNS) invited the global community of Sudan archaeologists for a meeting at the British Museum in order to launch yet another call for assistance. In the coming years, six more dams are planned to be built on the Middle Nile; an additional dam on the Atbara river is already under construction and supposed to be completed by 2015.⁵³ Reactions to this call among the attendants of the London meeting were divided. Already in advance of the meeting and in contrast to the archaeologists' 'neutral' stance in the case of the Merowe Dam, two committees had formed from amidst the European and American archaeological community, whose aim it is "to preserve the Middle Nile" and the "Nubian heritage in the Nile Valley", respectively.⁵⁴ While members of these committees and other attendants of the London meeting questioned the set-up of the new dam projects and the role allotted to archaeology, which eerily remind of the Merowe Dam project, other colleagues declared their willingness to take up concessions in the affected areas. The post-Arab spring unrests render many countries of the Near East, North and West Africa unsuitable for archaeological fieldwork and leave an increasing number of colleagues looking for new places to work, and ironically Sudan may be one of them. Memoranda of the two committees in international disciplinary journals⁵⁵ seem so far

53 See http://www.diu.gov.sd/en/other_projects.htm (last accessed on 18/05/2012); Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 22; Verhoeven 2011: 18-19. Further dams are planned for South Sudan (Ali, Salih and Ali 2010: 23; Verhoeven 2011: 19). Other sources, such as Hashim 2010: 149, mention additional planned dams.

54 See <http://preservethemiddlenile.wordpress.com/about/> (last accessed on 18/05/2012). For an online-petition asking "the Government of Sudan to abandon any plans for further dam building on the Nile and Atbara" see <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/stop-the-dams-in-sudan.html> (last accessed on 18/05/2012).

55 Namely in *African Archaeological Review* ('Petition to stop the dams in Sudan', European Committee for Preserving the Middle Nile, AAR 29 [2012]: 1-5) and in the online project gallery of Antiquity

to have had little impact in regard to a modification of the set-up of the new development projects and the role of CRM including community involvement within them. The same goes, at least for the time being, for the protests of local communities affected by the new projects. Representatives of the communities affected by the planned Dal and Kajbar dams have in particular voiced very strongly their opposition to the construction of these dams and forced resettlement (pl. 3), which they have been calling a ‘developmental genocide’ (pers. comm. to CK and CN; Gamal 1998).⁵⁶ Both the Dal and Kajbar dams are to be built in a section of the Nile valley which is inhabited by Nubians who have witnessed the resettlement of their northern neighbours several times in the wake of the Aswan Dams (Hassan 2007: 85) and are now confronted with the total loss of their homeland.



Pl. 3: Protest graffito on a house wall in a Third Cataract village, which would be directly affected by the planned Kajbar Dam (photo: Cornelia Kleinitz, 2009).

(‘Preserving the Middle Nile (Sudan)’, Randi Haaland et al., <http://antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/haaland332/>, last accessed on 18/05/2012).

56 See also <http://www.rescuenubia.org/>, an online-petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/Appeal/petition.html> and a letter of the Anti Dal-Kajbar Dam Committee to Chinese companies involved at <http://www.sudan-forall.org/COMMITTEE-OF-ANTI-DAL-KAJBAR-DAMS.pdf>. Compare also ‘New Chinese dam project fuels ethnic conflict in Sudan’ (P. Bosshard, *International Rivers*, 20/01/2011, <http://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/227/new-chinese-dam-project-fuels-ethnic-conflict-in-sudan>, all last accessed on 18/05/2012).

For the moment, prospects are unclear. The Sudanese state has already met local protests against one of the new dams with violence (Kleinitz and Näser 2011: 272-273) and seems determined to go on with the projects, although they show the same deficiencies as the Merowe Dam project. Looking ahead, one may ask how an ethically responsible and successful salvage campaign can be possible in the regions of Dal and Kajbar, where affected people have decisively declared their opposition to the dam projects, but are being denied the opportunity to have their voices heard. One may also wonder what role adequate CRM planning will play in future development projects in Sudan when flawed and devastatingly inappropriate set-ups continue to find their supporters in the scientific community. Will community participation and the preservation of cultural heritage, including and beyond archaeology, form a more respected, integral part of development planning? Current trajectories do not offer much hope, although at least now members of the archaeological community are speaking up, citing the Merowe Dam project as case in point (Kleinitz and Näser 2008, 2011; Näser and Kleinitz 2008, 2010, i.pr.; Hafsaas-Tsakos 2011; compare also Leturcq 2009).

In the case of the Fourth Cataract, awareness of, and interest in, CRM work – beyond the ‘core business’ of archaeology – as well as in existing international guidelines and codes of ethics related to development projects were scarce among the involved archaeologists (but see Gisema 2006; Näser and Kleinitz 2010; Kleinitz and Näser 2011). This may have led many of the archaeologists involved to believe in their lack of influence and power with regard to alleviating the shortcomings of the overall dam project. If this passed as professional ‘naivety’ or ‘innocence’ in the first instance, such an attitude is not possible any longer (Kleinitz and Näser 2011). The trajectory of MDASP has impressively illustrated the lesson that archaeologists cannot place themselves above and beyond social conflict in their study regions (compare Perring and van der Linde 2009). Archaeologists’ insistence to take a ‘neutral stance’ in the Fourth Cataract, which also entailed the failure to consult with local communities about their wishes and visions with regard to salvaging endangered heritage, proved extremely counter-productive. The Manasir prevented archaeological work on their land, appropriating the concept of cultural heritage and turning it into a political weapon in their fight for existential, economic and cultural survival. By using archaeological heritage as a means of empowerment, they attached value to it – only not in the way the archaeologists would have wished them to (Näser and Kleinitz 2008, 2010; Leturcq 2009). Heritage professionals active in future development projects along the Nile and beyond will undoubtedly face similar situations in which heritage is put at stake by one or more of the parties involved. In the long run archaeology will only be able to keep its professional credibility and preserve the objects of its study when its practitioners find more holistic definitions of professional best practice. A key component of this must be a serious engagement with the people who today inhabit and shape the cultural landscapes which archaeologists explore. The study and preservation of archaeological heritage cannot be considered separately from the interests of these people, and their struggle for securing adequate conditions for human life and human rights cannot be considered irrelevant to/by archaeologists. As McIntosh (1996: 15) stated, and as still holds true, there are three preconditions for archaeology to be done properly on the African continent – within and outside of development projects – namely, “peace, equitably shared prosperity, and respect for civil and intellectual rights”.

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