

## **Shifted meanings and cultural adaptations of migrated Nubian settlements**

**Hisham S. Gabr**

**Professor of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt**

**Tarek Galal Abdel-Hamid**

**Assistant Professor of Architecture, Modern Sciences and Arts University (MSA), Egypt**

**Nouran El-Begermy**

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Architecture, The American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt**

The Nubians are an ethnic group who has been residing since ancient times along the Nile in southern Egypt as part of a larger area including northern Sudan historically known by their name: Nubia. Due to the construction of the ambitious hydroelectric generation project known as the High Dam in the 1960's, they have been forced to be displaced from their traditional lands due to the flooding that occurred with the creation of a large manmade lake (Lake Nasser) behind the dam. Tens of thousands were dispersed in several places, where they rebuilt their communities and attempted to adapt. Most of the Nubian families relocated to the city of Aswan, which has become New Nubia. New Nubia was supposed to preserve the qualities and culture of Old Nubia while introducing modern utilities, but in reality it was a development made of concrete homes in the desert, unlike the lush charming Nubia they left behind. A large portion of the inhabitants migrated to other parts of Egypt due to their dissatisfaction with their new homes. Until today, Nubians regard the move as temporary and are still looking forward to a day when they will return to their so-called ancestral land in the south. This paper briefly traces this forced migration and sheds light on the meanings gained or lost in their new settlements and on their methods of adaptation. Architecture of the Nubian settlements, particularly homes, are in focus. The structure, form and morphology of Nubian villages and homes are known to result from various cultural factors particular to their group including strong expressions of meanings associated with the family, the rituals, social associations, living habits, and tribal sense of place. In their newer settlements, Nubians attempted to recreate their architecture while responding to a shifting sense of meaning coupled with a sense of shared authentic meanings of place. The relationship with tourism shows in the building of a selected number of new hotels to emulate the Nubian experience allowing for tourism to act as a vehicle for the production of meaning. Findings support that the attractiveness of the Nubian region is attributed to cultural factors including elements of authenticity and diversity. Additionally, the setting within the natural landscape adds to the meanings of the place.