

You are cordially invited to the preview of

## PARADISE LOST: NUBIA BEFORE THE 1964 EXODUS

a photographic tribute to a traditional way of life by

**HERMAN BELL**

at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies,  
University of Exeter

on Thursday 2 November 2006 at 6pm

Exhibition open 9am to 5pm  
Monday – Fridays,  
2 November 2006 – 9 February 2007

Please telephone:

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for more details



## THE HIJRA

Photographic tribute by Herman Bell

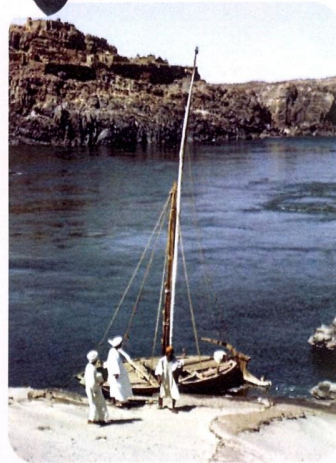
The 1964 *hijra*, or exodus, was a traumatic event in the long history of Nubia. Floodwaters were already rising behind the High Dam near Aswan and would eventually cover almost 500 kilometres of riverbank. Many Nubians in southern Egypt and the northern Sudan were evacuated from their homes. Sudanese Nubians were resettled far away from the Nile Valley.

Nubian songs and Nubian poetry celebrate the old way of life. The past is still vividly alive. The original homelands are remembered as a Garden of Eden.

The sense of loss is strong. A link with the environment has been broken. Many Nubians left the river Nile with its rich cultural associations. They left their boats,

their palm trees, their irrigated fields and their water-wheels. After the *hijra* many of their ancient rituals associated with the river seemed no longer relevant. Some of the Nubians had lived in villages in the shadow of ancient and mediaeval monuments. Some left houses covered with traditional decorations. They were no longer able to visit their ancestral graveyards and the shrines of their saints. Those who eventually moved to urban areas were shocked at the extent to which their children were losing the ability to speak the Nubian language.

Although Nubians who lived to the south of the flooded area were spared the acute trauma of the *hijra*, they also experienced a sense of loss as their people were drawn away to the cities. Nubian poems from the south similarly express a longing for a return to the traditional way of life along the river.



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