

**WE REAP WHAT WE SOW**

In the beginning, there was a river.  
The longest river.

There was flooding too.

The result of a combination of the  
following elements:

1. Unending tears of the mother of all mourners – Isis – mourning her brother and lover Osiris;
2. And monsoons in the South.

The sky pours –  
An unforeseeable discharge,  
Inundating one patch of land.

The river redistributes this water,  
Transporting it north to other plots:

The annual coming of God.

Three seasons to mark this event and  
divide the year:

Inundation (Akhet)  
Growth (Peret)  
And Harvest (Shemu).

Dams, dykes,  
intake and exit canals.  
Controlling flows.

Basins flooded  
Soils softly saturated with moisture.  
Slit deposited.

Then:  
Sowing,  
Harvesting.

Fertility,  
Or nourishment from tears.



In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
a Frenchman named M.  
Jumel proposed to the ruler  
of Egypt, Mohamed Ali Pasha,  
that he could earn a substantial  
income by growing an extra-  
long staple (*Gossypium  
barbadense*) cotton in Lower  
Egypt, for the French market.  
Mohamed Ali Pasha accepted  
the proposition.

Cotton had a longer growing  
season and required sufficient  
water at all times. To this end,  
he built barrage dams and a  
wide system of new canals,  
changing the irrigation system  
from the traditional basin  
irrigation to perennial irrigation  
whereby farmland could be  
irrigated throughout the year –  
accommodating for maximum  
cotton production –  
From controlled flooding to  
controlled damming.

Rising two or three feet  
Expanding limbs  
Stretching wide  
Bristling with hair.

Heart-shaped  
Hairy leaves.  
Velvety petioles.  
Dingy flowers  
Oval, large, capsules  
Emitting a fluffy white fiber  
Unusually long  
Esteemed in commerce  
Giza 45.



Though relatively little is known of peasant landholding before the late eighteenth century, the information at hand suggests that it had hardly changed before Mohamed Ali's rule. The Byzantines regarded all land as "state fiscal land" and their principal concern was for the tax it yielded.

Similarly, under Muslim rule, an individual's possession of land was contingent upon continuous cultivation and payment of taxes.

The community as a whole owned the land, immobilized as waqf – a charitable endowment – administered by the sovereign who in turn, was responsible for spending its revenue in the benefit of the community.

(If someone could not cultivate his land, it was given to another villager who could.)

Under Mohamed Ali, the legal status of land ownership changed considerably. Abolishing the existing tax system, he confiscated waqf properties thereby eliminating an intermediary class that had collected taxes on behalf of the state. He restored full authority to the government.

Next came consolidation of ownership rights, precipitated by a series of decrees, which progressively gave landholders greater rights over their land, until by the end of the century, full ownership rights had been granted.

Ali established a monopoly on this newly owned land, distributing it to friends and family. He also established a monopoly on the sale and export of cotton in Egypt. He dictated cotton should be grown in preference to other crops.

Agriculture was no longer about subsistence and food. From there-on out, it became a commercial production.

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From Ancient Egyptian texts:

**The river separates people.  
A poor man is someone who has no boat,  
Whom the more fortunate have to ferry across.  
Dying is 'coming to land' on the other side,  
and the passage into the next world is a 'crossing'.**



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The conversion of remaining state annexed land to private property occurred under the British towards the end of the nineteenth century, as part of their policy of cultivating support of a propertied class.

The class owning land constituted less than 6% of the population. The rest were landless peasants who had to rent the land they cultivated from absentee owners.

This uneven structure and distribution of ownership persisted until Nasser's nationalization policies in 1961. His Agrarian Land Reform act redistributed about 15% of the land. However, this redistribution effort was uneven and arbitrary.

Government credit, pricing, marketing, crop consolidation and investment policies favored rich peasants and capitalist farmers.

Real wages for the landless actually deteriorated in the early 70s. By the mid-70s, forty-four percent of rural households were below the poverty line. Farming became less manageable and profitable.

Converting agricultural land to residential use yielded more revenues.



Facebook meme (slightly modified):

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Water solves all problems:

Lose weight?  
Drink water.

Clear skin?  
Drink water.

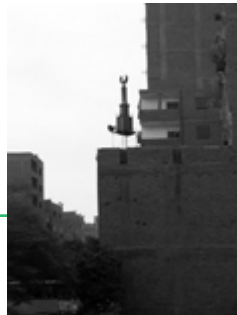
Tired of a people?

Drown  
Them.



Following their 1882 invasion and occupation of Egypt, the British began construction of the first dam across the Nile in 1898. Construction lasted until 1902, and the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn inaugurated the dam on 10 December 1902.

50 years later, the Greek-Egyptian engineer Adrian Daninos began to develop a plan for a new Aswan Dam to meet requirements for irrigation and hydroelectric power that the low dam was not meeting.



Rock and clay  
43,000,000 cubic metres  
(56,000,000 cu yd) of material.  
A barrier.

An engineering feat.

Thank-you gifts given to those who helped build it:

- The Debod temple to Madrid
- The Temple of Dendur to New York
- The Temple of Taffeh to Leiden
- The Temple of Ellesya to Turin

Dear Sir/Madam,



Thank you for my temple,  
It was well received.

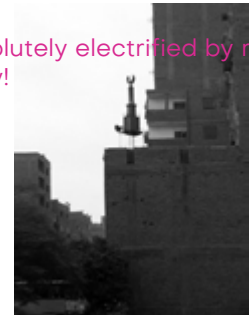
Designed in Moscow  
Russian engineering expertise.

Trade-in your grain and cotton:  
Get hydroelectricity.

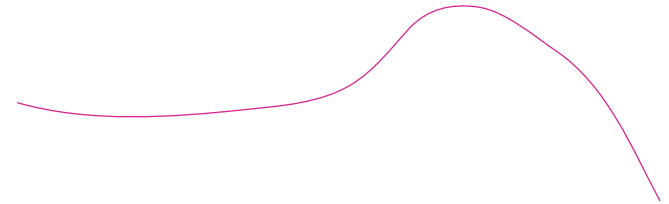
Stop the floods.  
The coming of God.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am absolutely electrified by my  
electricity!



Thank you!



First encounter with electricity in villages:  
Light at night.  
Longer night  
Later starts.  
Electric pumps.

With lights on,  
It is less dangerous.

Stilt is a type of soil.

It is a dark, fertile soil.

It is found in the Nile River valley.

It is a symbol of rebirth.

Associated with the Egyptian god Anubis

Stilt:  
non-sticky,  
plastic feel.

Floury feel when dry,  
Slippery when wet.

Sparkly when observed with a hand lens.  
Granular when placed on the front teeth.

“The fertile black stilt of the Nile River’s  
banks is a symbol of rebirth,

Associated with the Egyptian god Anubis”





“Yes. When the flood goes down, people plant the fertile alluvial soils. I mean the whole development—early Egyptian Pharaonic society was largely based on the natural flood of the Nile. That is where they developed their astronomy, to predict when it would come. It would flood into the Fayum then the water would recede and you would get that new silt; 100 million tons per annum used to come into Egypt from the Sudan... Fifty millions of those would be deposited along the Nile, in the Fayum and in the delta. The other fifty million would go out into the Mediterranean. Now those 100 million tons of nutrients are being caught in the Aswan High Dam reservoir.

The delta is receding, which is expected to be the biggest cost of the high dam in the long-run.

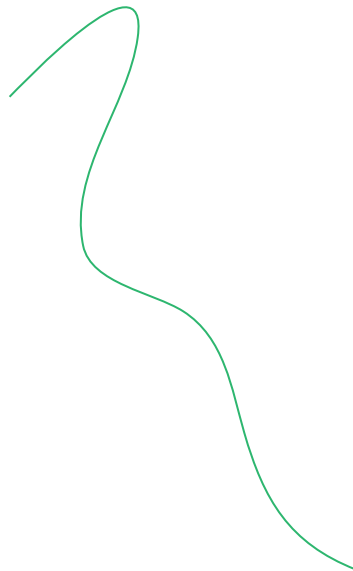
Gradually, salinity from the Mediterranean is seeping into the delta, the breadbasket of Egypt. There is no fresh-water buffer to keep that salinity out.”

The red-brick construction industry, which consisted of hundreds of factories that used Nile sediment deposits along the river, has also been negatively affected. Deprived of sediment, we use older alluvium of otherwise arable land to build our houses.



As they built you,  
Archaeological sites:  
Some sunk,  
Some relocated.

Homes submerged,  
700,000 Nubians relocated.  
Crocodiles too,  
And sardines.



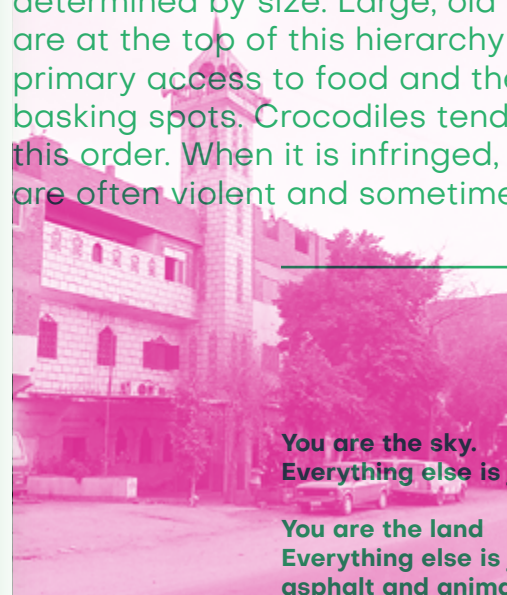
The titular Nile Crocodile is considered king reptilia.

It appeared in Egypt in prehistoric times and was very common during the dynasties of ancient Egypt.

A descendent of dinosaurs.

“Nile crocodiles have an extremely powerful bite that is unique amongst all animals, and sharp, conical teeth that sink into flesh, allowing for a grip that is almost impossible to loosen. They can apply high levels of force for extended periods of time, a great advantage for holding down large prey underwater to drown.

Nile crocodiles are relatively social crocodiles. They share basking spots and large food sources, such as schools of fish and big carcasses. Their strict hierarchy is determined by size. Large, old males are at the top of this hierarchy and have primary access to food and the best basking spots. Crocodiles tend to respect this order. When it is infringed, the results are often violent and sometimes fatal.”



**You are the sky.  
Everything else is just the weather.**

**You are the land  
Everything else is just concrete, brick,  
asphalt and animals.**

While previously, because of flooding, a buffer existed between the banks of the Nile and where construction could begin, the completion of the Aswan dam in the '70s opened new pockets of land that could be developed.

At present, 83% of Cairo's informal settlements, and 60% of the city's housing stands on these formerly fertile flood plains.

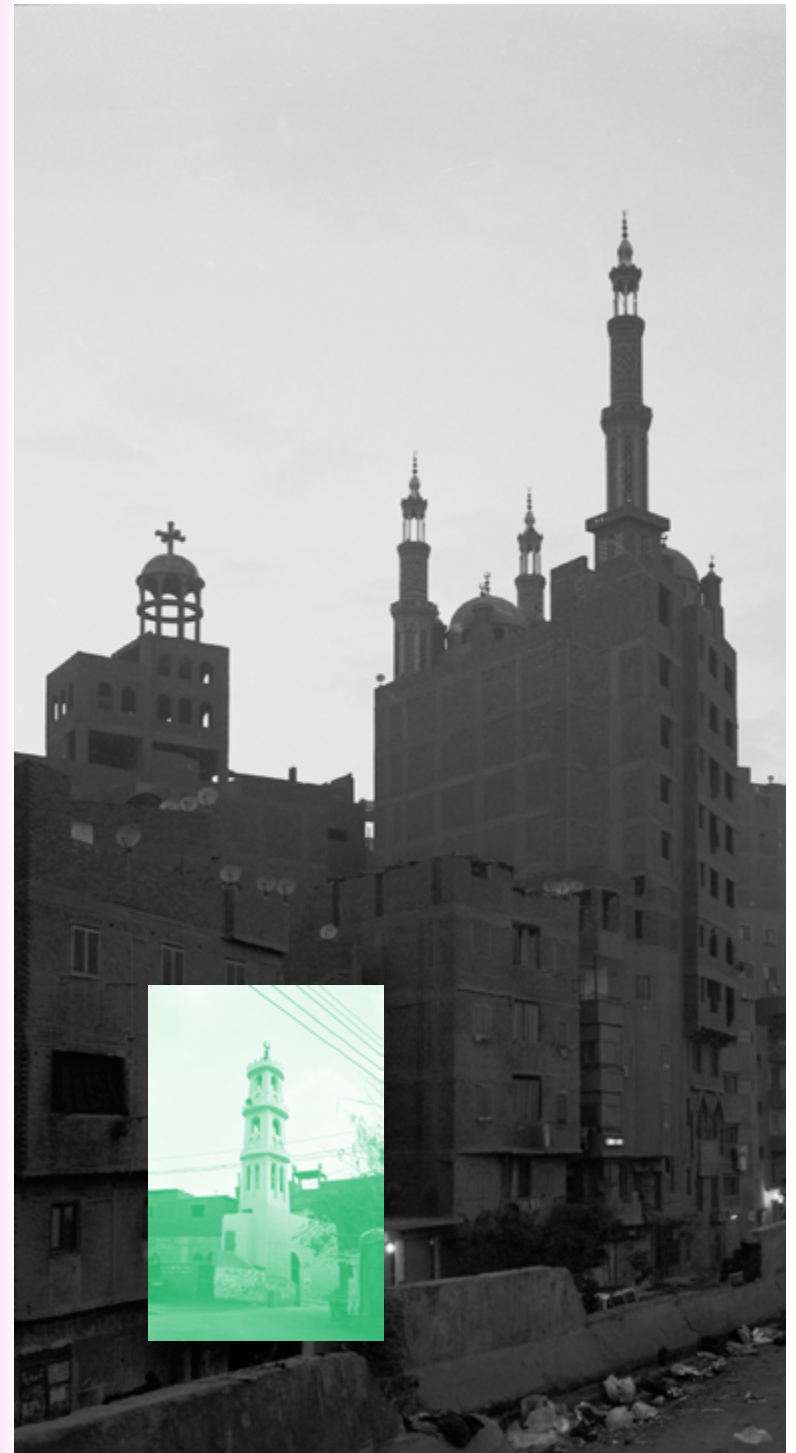
From the '70s onward, possession of land became contingent upon continuous cultivation of buildings on it.

Land is not owned by the community as a whole, rather by individuals.

Seeing the opportunity, these landowners sell their land to mini-developers who are responsible for generating revenues for themselves. The benefits to the community come in the form of providing otherwise non-existent affordable housing.

(If someone cannot cultivate his land to harvest buildings, he sells it to a villager who can.)

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Horizontal plane:  
Checked.  
Morphology informed by a grid of  
canals drawn on the land.  
Thin, blue lines, forming the  
boundary  
Around green rectangles.

Vertical plane:  
Checked.  
Morphology informed by gridded  
concrete frames --  
Thick grey lines,  
Outlining  
Rectangles filled with red bricks  
Making buildings and homes.

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We lost the potatoes,  
the wheat,  
But we kept the  
checker box pattern.

Constructed in the late 80s,  
The Cairo ringroad was intended  
as a wall to contain urbanization.

A dam.  
To curb the annual flood of humanity  
To curb uncontrolled ebbing and flowing.

Inside is the city,  
Outside is you.

Inside is us,  
Outside is you.

43,000,000 cubic metres  
(56,000,000 cu yd) of material.

Cement, displacement,

No crocodiles or  
Sardines this time.

No temples or grain or cotton  
gifted or exchanged.  
No electricity.

Just debt,  
Cars,  
Trucks,  
And minibuses  
Vibrating  
In a trail of smoke.



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Like all walls,  
The ring road was unsuccessful,  
Urbanization tripled in amount and the  
remaining arable land inside and outside  
the perimeter was converted to urban use.

In Cairo now: Scapegoats of the ring road.

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In Greek religion, a human scapegoat was  
used in certain state rituals. In Athens  
for example, a man and a woman who  
were considered “ugly” were selected as  
scapegoats each year. At the festival of  
the Thargelia in May or June, they were  
feasted upon, led around the town, beaten  
with green twigs, and driven out or killed  
with stones.

This was a purification ritual, a form of  
societal catharsis.



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