



The Nile During Inundation

Date

late 19th to early 20th century (printed 1992)

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

gelatin silver print

Description

Bathing was important to the ancient Egyptians, and according to Herodotus intolerably important for their priests. When the Nubian pharaoh Piye was preparing to enter the temple complex at Karnak, the king instructed his troops: "When you arrive in Thebes, in front of Karnak, enter into the water and purify yourselves in the river (Nile)...." This photo appears to have been taken during the time of the Nile's annual inundation. Rains in the highlands of Abyssinia swelled the Blue Nile, which met the White Nile at Khartoum and sent the rising, silt-laden waters north to cover the fields of Egypt. During the summer months Egypt disappeared beneath the brown waters, the whole of the land a vast sheet of water stretching from desert to desert, with the villages protruding like islands from the flood. In antiquity this was a time of increased navigation, festivals in honor of the inundation, booths and bowers on the edge of the swollen river, and festooned boats upon the waters. Since the building of the High Dam, the inundation no longer occurs in the Nile valley north of Aswan.

Dimensions

Sight: 11 7/8 x 16 1/8 in. (30.2 x 41 cm) Mat: 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm)