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Nubia and Nubians: The 'Museumization' of a Culture

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Citation

Simone, M. C. de. (2014, February 12). *Nubia and Nubians: The 'Museumization' of a Culture*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/23598>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

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Title: Nubia and Nubians : the 'museumization' of a culture

Issue Date: 2014-02-12

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the kind cooperation of many colleagues and friends. I would like to thank in particular:

Abdel Rahman Ali (current Director of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan); Khaled Babikir Awad El Karim (National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan); The Nubian Language Society of Khartoum and its former president Mohamed el Khedir; Intisar Soghayroun el Zein (University of Khartoum); Ossama Abdel Wareth (former Director of the Nubia Museum of Aswan and current director of the Children Museum in Cairo); Rageh Zaher Mohamed (Director of the Nubia Museum of Aswan); Athef Naguib (Aswan/Elephantine Museum); Ezzat Salib (Coptic Museum in Cairo); El Saady Hassan M. (Alexandria University Museum); Wendy Urmila Sant and Braj Basil Lal (Archeological Survey of India, New Delhi); Andrea Zingarelli and Violeta Pereira (for the collection at the Museum of Natural Sciences, La Plata); Barbara Lawson (Redpath Museum, Montreal); Krzysztof Grzymski (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto) Joan Knudsen (University of California/ Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley); Ann Russman (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn); Dennis P. Van Gerven, (University of Colorado- Department of Anthropology); Susan Haskell (Harvard University Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnography); Sara Good (Mercer Collections, Fonthill); Teeter Wendy (Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles); Timothy Kendall (for the Museum and Center for Afro-American Artists - NCAAA, Roxbury); Chrisso Boulis (University of Pennsylvania/Museum of Archeology and Anthropology); Maria Carmela Gatto (Yale Peabody Museum); Isabel Stuenkel (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); Regine Schulz (The Walters Arts Museum, Baltimore); Maarten Raven and Christian Greco (National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden); Regina Holtz (Kunsthistorische Museum of Vienna); Limme Luc (Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels); Lenka Sukova and Josef Kandert (National Museum-Naprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague); Hans Åke Nordström (for the Scandinavian Joint Expedition's collections); Geoffry Metz (Gustavianum Museum, Uppsala); Dietrich Wildung (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, Berlin); Sylvia Schoske (State Museum of Egyptian Art, Munich); Friederike Seyfried (for the University of Leipzig, Egyptian Museum) Stephen Wenig and Cornelia Kleinitz (Humboldt University, Berlin); Friederike Jesse (University of Cologne); Eva Liptay and Gabor Lassany (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest); Angelo and Alfredo Castiglioni (for the 'Depandance' of Villa Tosplitz, Varese); Simone Petacchi (Museo dell'Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo); Cristina Guidotti (Egyptian Museum, Florence); Maira Torcia Rigillo (for the International Museum of Ceramics, Faenza); Flora Silvano (University of Pisa, Egyptian Collections); Elena Garcea (for the University of Cassino- Department of Philology and History); Cristina Morigi Govi and Daniela Picchi (Civic Archeological Museum, Bologna); Andrzej Cwiek (Poznan Museum); Olga Vassilieva (Pushkin Museum, Moscow); Salome Zurinaga (for the National Archeological Museum of Madrid and Museum of La Coruna); Tom Hardwick (Bolton Museum); Phil Watson (City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham); Ken Sedman (Dorman Memorial Museum, Middleborough); Cooke Ashley (Merseyside County Museum, Liverpool); Stephen Quirke (Petrie Museum-University College of London); staff of the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery; Helen Whitehouse (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford); Sally-Anne Coupar (Hunterian Museum-University, Glasgow); Jill Greenaway (Reading Museum); Helen Armstrong (University of Durham Oriental Museum); Karen Exell and Campbell Price (The

Manchester Museum-The University of Manchester); Rory Cook (Science Museum-South Kensington, London); Carolyn A. Graves-Brown (The Egypt Center at the University of Wales Swansea); Sophie Hawkins (Old Speech Room Gallery Harrow School); Noraah Al-Gailani (Museum at Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove); Mark Nesbitt (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew); William Adams (for the Kolubnarti collection he has donated to the British Museum); David N. Christensen (National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen); Mogens Jørgensen (Ny Carlsbergh Glyptothek Museum, Copenhagen) Henriette Hafsaas Tsakos and Alexandros Tsakos (for the materials at the University of Bergen); Galina Belova (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg); Jaqueline Studer (Museum of Natural History, Geneva); Michael Turner (Nicholson Museum of Antiquities/The University of Sydney); Annette Schmidt (Museum Volkenkunde, Africa Department, Leiden); Anna De Simone (architect) for drawing the maps of Nubia, the Nubia Museum of Aswan and the front cover illustration; Giovanni Marasco, photographer, for graphic advises.

Last, but not least, I especially wish to thank Dr. Daniela Merolla and Prof. Mineke Schipper who have patiently followed, advised and encouraged me in this challenging work.

CV SUMMARY

Maria Costanza De Simone was born at San Giovanni in Fiore, Italy, on April 1, 1964. She holds a High School Diploma in Classical Studies, obtained in 1983 at the *Liceo Classico* Vincenzo Julia of San Giovanni in Fiore.

In 1989, she was one of the first students of Egyptology to defend an MA thesis (*Tesi di Laurea*) on the “Cemeteries of the C Group of Lower Nubia” at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’, under the supervision of the newly created Chair of Nubian Antiquities. Since then, Nubia has become the focus of her academic life and professional carrier. In 1993 Maria Costanza again submitted a thesis specialized in Nubian Antiquities at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’ (where she later lectured temporarily) on the “Archaeological and Epigraphic Documents of the Viceroy of Nubia”. Her interest in the ‘museumization’ of Nubia arose in 1996 when she moved to Egypt with a one-year scholarship granted by the Egyptian Ministry of Education. The purpose of the scholarship was to support the classification of Nubian artifacts, in particular those related to the Viceroy, kept at the Egyptian Museum of Cairo. After the scholarship at the Egyptian Museum, she worked as expert before for the Italian Egyptian Center for Restoration and Archaeology (a field school based in Cairo), and after for the Italian National Research Council. In both institutions the activities have focused on training courses for Egyptian experts in the field of archeology and restoration.

In 2000, Maria Costanza De Simone was the curator of the Permanent Photographic Gallery : *Nubia Submerged: through their eyes with their own words* at the Nubia Museum in Aswan. This section, sponsored by the Scientific Office of the Italian Embassy in Cairo, is one of the most visited and most impressive section of the museum.

In 2002 Maria Costanza started to work as a UNESCO expert, based at the Cairo Office, where she has successfully implemented several projects in Egypt and Sudan. Her first assignment was the creation of the Library and Documentation Center on Nubia at the Nubia Museum in Aswan, a follow-up to the worldwide famous Salvage Campaign of the Sixties. In Sudan, she monitored the rehabilitation of the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum and, particularly importantly, in cooperation with the local authorities and the Nubian community, she developed the concept of the Nubia Museum of Wadi Halfa which is expected to be a community-based museum. It is actually conceived as a compound, including a building for the historical and archeological artifacts and an ‘interactive’ Nubian village for the preservation of the living heritage. In 2009, in cooperation with the Egyptian and Sudanese Authorities, Maria Costanza De Simone organized the 50th Anniversary of the appeal - launched by Egypt and Sudan to UNESCO - to Save the Monuments of Nubia. Such an international event brought together in Aswan the protagonists of the famous rescue campaign of the sixties to retrace, after half a century, the memories of the past and to envisage initiatives for a better future.

One of the most important aspects of Maria Costanza De Simone’s approach to heritage is community participation and consultation. She participated in the challenging project the ‘Mobilization of Dahshour World Heritage Site for Community Development’, considered a model for cultural development. It combines cultural heritage aspects, natural heritage dimensions, and community development components (UNDP/Spain MDG Achievement Fund).

