

Water, Culture and Identity

Comparing past and present traditions in the Nile Basin Region.



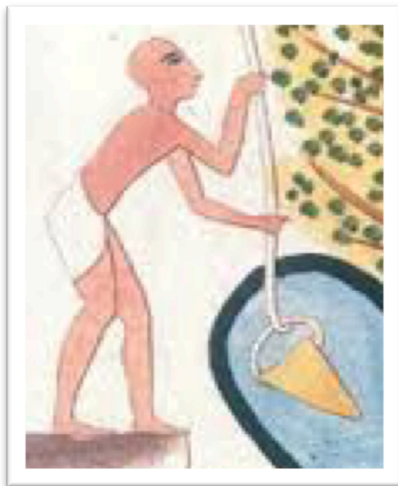
Why, how and to what extent does water constitute parts of people's identity and core value systems in the Nile Basin.

The overall aim of this report is to study why, how and to what extent water constitutes parts of people's identity and core value systems in the Nile Basin societies and religions, in contextual and comparative contexts.

The paper investigates how and why water as a structuring agency has been institutionalized in various societies, giving legitimacy to continuity or change in cultures and traditions.

The authors found that:

- Various types of water have been culturally and religiously institutionalized and incorporated as part of peoples' lives in particular ways and in specific contexts.



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- The absence rather than the presence of water is equally or even more important and structuring in a given society or region
- If there is only one life-artery in society, this water will attain a different meaning and role compared to places where there are multiple water-bodies.
- From the highest level in a given society, to internal gender relations within a household, water constitutes not only identities but also social organizations and hierarchies.



The report makes the following conclusions:

- Religions and divinities can both be understood through water symbolism.



- The reverence of different types of water as holy or the attribution of various degrees of sacredness to water has caused controversies between religions.
- Even transcendental religions such as Christianity and Islam have not only been concerned with eschatology and soteriology, but have also incorporated the actual water-world into religious cosmology.

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- The religious control and interpretation of the Nile was also a political one and a source of both theological and secular conflicts.

