



Ancient River Nile **By Janet Wood**

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INUNDATION:

The Nile River has always been the backbone of Egypt. The mighty river flows for some 4,000 miles from the mountains of Equatorial Africa (Blue Nile) and Lake Victoria (White Nile) before it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. Without the Nile River and its annual inundation Ancient Egypt would never have come into being. Its fertile valley was renewed every year with rich silt deposits laid down during the flooding.

Nilometers were placed at various points along the Nile in order to monitor the changes in the water level. It was recorded that at the start of the flooding the clear waters would turn a turbid red.

As the agriculture of Egypt revolved around the Nile, so did the social life of the ancient Egyptians. During inundation when there was less to do, people had more time for recreational activities; they played games, held sporting tournaments and regularly feasted.

When the River Nile receded the appearance of the land had radically changed and there was a great rush to restore boundaries. There were many disputes as markers had moved, banks had collapsed, and distinguishable features had disappeared.

TRANSPORT:

The river was also the chief means of transport. It was their highway, making roads superfluous, except between close villages. Virtually everything moved by boat.

FOOD AND SPORT:

The Nile, for the most part, is a gently flowing river and in the time of the ancients, was crammed with fish. It's easy flow made fishing very popular. Everyone enjoyed fishing, from the young to old, peasant to noble.

RELIGION:

The Egyptians believed that the Nile was the centre of the world and the place from which it originated was, 'the beginning of the world'. In Lower Egypt, in the area of the Nile Delta, the river splits into two great arms. The area between the two was densely populated from the earliest times. Many of the major cult centres developed in this region. Even the soul of a deceased had to cross the Nile before he could enter the kingdom of the dead.

SUMMARY:

The ancients utilised every aspect of the river, and the achievements of both man and the Nile down the ages, deserves praise. The River Nile was the fundamental and protecting force of a great nation. Of all the great rivers, the Nile blessed its people with the most reliable and predictable cycle of seasons.

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