

Tourism Prospects and Livelihoods of Sudan's River Nile Islands

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Abstract

The Nile is one of the longest rivers in the world and flows through several countries, including Sudan. The banks of the Nile in Sudan are an important recreational and economic resource for both tourists and rural communities. Ecotourism, conservation of natural resources, and local livelihoods are one of the most important issues for the development of local communities worldwide. It is nature-based tourism that is concerned with improving livelihoods and protecting biodiversity. The Nile Islands in Sudan are a real breathing space for the surrounding towns and villages. In an environment with numerous economic, environmental, service, and overpopulation problems, coupled with the erosion of agricultural land due to urban sprawl and poor agricultural techniques. However, the tourism prospects of the Nile Islands are promising, but not widely known. The islands have unique natural resources that attract tourists, the sink of migrant birds during winter seasons. In the Nile Islands, sufficient studies have not been conducted to highlight the maximum benefits of their natural resources serving as tourist attractions, nor have adequate development efforts been undertaken to provide better services to residents or improve their local environment. The Nile is characterized by numerous natural phenomena and human interventions, reflected in the island's diverse characteristics and the spread of many activities along the river. There are more than 75 islands along the River Nile in Sudan that are considered tourist destinations. Kassinger, Al Sabalouga, Saï islands, and Mugrat are the most common islands. The present work highlights Sudan's most famous island and waterfall along the River Nile.

Keywords; *tourism, islands, activities, nature, attractions, waterfall, River Nile.*

INTRODUCTION

Geographically, Sudan is a large country in the Sudano-Sahel region of Northeast Africa between latitudes 10 and 23 N and longitudes 21.45 and 38.30 E and lies in the central part of the Nile River Basin. It covers an area of about 1.9 million km² and most of the country consists of vast, dry plains punctuated by a few widely spaced hills and mountain ranges. The country's borders are South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Libya, Chad and the Central African Republic. The country's population is estimated at around 43 million.

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The Sudanese economy is based on agriculture and livestock farming, which contributes about a third of the population's gross domestic product (GDP). Sudanese agriculture relies primarily on rainfall and the Nile and its tributaries for irrigation. The Nile is considered one of the largest freshwater reservoirs in the world [1, 7, 8]. The River Nile is one of the longest rivers in the world, flowing through several countries, including Sudan. The Nile banks in Sudan are an important recreational and economic resource for both tourists and rural communities. Both local and international communities have recognized the recreational and economic importance of the Nile banks in Sudan. The Nile is an important resource for both tourism and rural communities in Sudan and understanding how these communities use and interact with the river is crucial for its sustainable management. This study aims to explore the recreational and economic activities that take place along the Nile banks in Sudan and their impact on the livelihoods of local communities.

The tourism prospects and livelihoods of Sudan's River Nile islands are promising yet not exploited to their full potential. The islands possess unique natural resources that attract tourists, but most of them have not been adequately developed for their tourism potential. Despite the challenges in the tourism areas, the tourism industry is crucial for economic development, providing jobs and enhancing livelihoods, as it significantly impacts local communities and infrastructure [6]. Addressing political and financial constraints is essential for revitalizing tourism and leveraging the rich cultural heritage of Sudan, including the remnants of the Nubian civilization. Thus, a multifaceted approach is needed to unlock the tourism potential of Sudan's River Nile islands. The Nile is characterized by numerous natural phenomena and human interventions, reflected in the island's diverse characteristics and the spread of many activities along the river. Many islands along the River Nile in Sudan are considered tourist destinations. Kassinger, Al Sabalouga, Sai, and Mugrat are the biggest islands located north of Khartoum. Well known that the Nile islands in Sudan are an important resource for both tourists and rural communities and that these activities have a significant impact on the local economy and the livelihoods of those living along the river. Therefore, the present work highlights and reflects Sudan's most famous island and waterfall along the River Nile.

Al Sabalouga waterfall

Al Sabalouga or the sixth waterfall is one of the six waterfalls of the River Nile, north of Khartoum and south of Bajrawiyah, and is located in the village of Al Sabalouga. Al Sabalouga is one of the most important tourist areas in Nile River State and has a very spectacular landscape and is considered a destination for tourists because of the nature of the mountainous area, the narrow stream, and the flow of water, it provides ski tourism, swimming, and Nile excursions, its climate is semi-arid, and the nature of the mountainous area is many rocks. The area includes many wildlife species such as birds and different animals.

Kassinger island

Kassinger Islands is one of the distinctive tourist destinations in Sudan with all the qualifications that make it a tourist destination from the islands, waterfalls, rocks, and sands of the central Nile River and the tourist season begins in October and ends in April. In the east, it is bordered by enormous attractive rocks, and in the west the Nile. The area is famous for the cultivation and production of date palms and many waterfalls flowing on the islands of 75 islands, with some habitable waterways and others where there are several bird species, natural sceneries, and traditional agriculture. The charming Kassinger Islands are located 420 km north of the capital, Khartoum, and belong to the Marwe locality. Kassinger Islands extend from the Marwe Dam to the city of Nouri. The climate in the area is semi-desert, very hot in the summer months

(April up to July), and very cold during the winter months November up to February [6].

Saï Island

Saï is a large island in the Nile 12 x 5.5 km situated between the second and third cataracts of the Nile in Upper Nubia (figure 1), in a strategic position just at the southern end of the Batn el-Hagar and provides excellent conditions for settlement and cultivation. It has a long history of occupation, dating from Palaeolithic times right through to Ottoman and the present day. It is well known that the Egyptian involvement in Nubia was intensive during the New Kingdom and Sai Island played a major role in this era. It is located in a border region, close to the second cataract area, which has been the spotlight of various and changing interactions between ancient Egypt and Kush since Predynastic times. In the second millennium BC, two ruling powers prevailed in the area: Pharaonic Egypt and the Kingdom of Kush based on the town of Kerma. An Egyptian-style temple town was erected on the island, with an enclosure wall, major mud-brick buildings, and a sandstone temple. Sai is one of the key sites in Sudan to illustrate the heyday of Egyptian culture in Nubia during the 2nd millennium BC, but also the specific adaptation of the Egyptian lifestyle by indigenous Nubians plus the local substratum of a unique Nubian culture surviving throughout the ages. The Pharaonic town is located on the eastern bank of the island. It has the shape of a fortified settlement with an orthogonal layout. Associated with the town are several nearby cemeteries forming an integral part of the New Kingdom constructions on the island. Sai also was an important royal site during the Meroitic Period. This is testified by the discovery of column capitals with the names of Queen Amanitore and King Natakamani. Sai Island also reveals the presence of X-group burials dated to the 4th century AD. The remains of a Medieval Christian cruciform church, identified as a cathedral, demonstrate that Sai was the seat of a Nubian Bishop. Ottoman presence is also well noted in Sai Island when the fort was built in the sixteen century AD over part of the walled New Kingdom town.

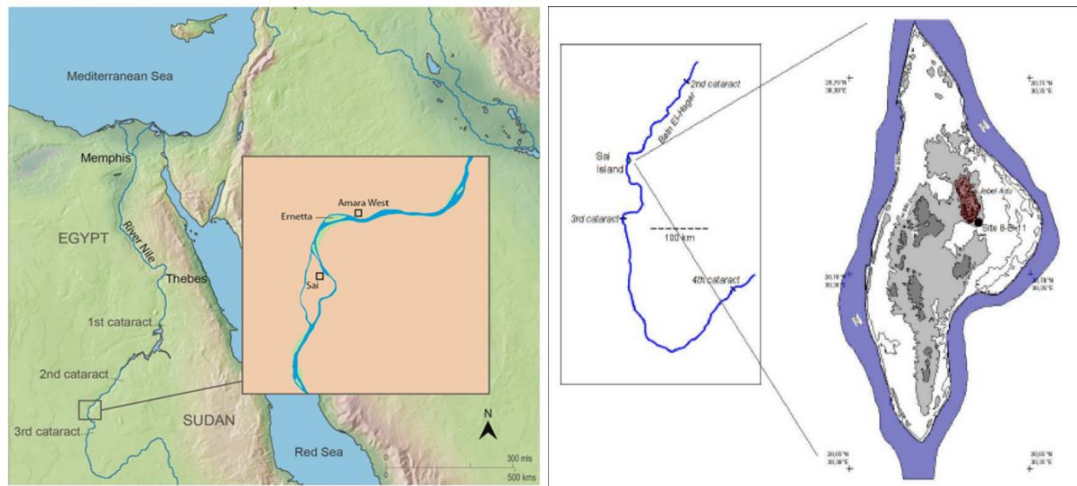


Figure 1. Sai island location

The property is protected under the Antiquities Protection Ordinance of 1999 and the regional decree from the Northern State to protect the cultural heritage. However, its sustainable protection against different threats, notably environmental and human factors, conservation, and future research, exceeds the capacities of the national country. Therefore, international protection is indispensable for the sustainability of the property.

Saï island's potential and value

Sai Island is an exceptional testimony that provided evidence of early human occupation in this part of Africa, notably the Homo-erectus and the Homo-Sapience. It offered early attested

evidence for the use of color in the world. Sai is one of the key sites in Sudan to illustrate the heyday of Egyptian culture in Nubia during the 2nd millennium BC, but also the specific adaptation of the Egyptian lifestyle by indigenous Nubians plus the local substratum of a unique Nubian culture surviving throughout the ages (reflects the mutual influences across cultures; African Nubian and the Pharaonic Egypt). Sai reflects the continuity of best-preserved monuments and occupation from Prehistory to the Ottoman period. All these attributes qualify Sai as unique and outstanding, and it has great importance as a tourist destination for many people around the globe [1].

Sai Island is the biggest island in the River Nile of Sudan. It exhibits an important interchange of human values expressed through its archaeological remains from 300,000 to the 14th century. It reflects the development of architecture and town planning which is well integrated with the natural landscape. Sai Island functions as a “bridgehead” between Egypt in the North and the realm of the kingdom of Kerma in the South. It represents a complex mixture of Nubian and Egyptian lifestyles during the New Kingdom (figure 2). Sai is a unique testimony cultural tradition of Homo-sapiens and Homo-erectus, as well as Kushite, Pharaonic, and Christian civilizations which had disappeared. Sai Island is the biggest island in the River Nile of Sudan. It exhibits an important interchange of human values expressed through its archaeological remains from 300,000 to the 14th century. It reflects the development of architecture and town planning which is well integrated with the natural landscape. Sai Island functions as a “bridgehead” between Egypt in the North and the realm of the kingdom of Kerma in the South. It represents a complex mixture of Nubian and Egyptian lifestyles during the New Kingdom. Sai is a unique testimony cultural tradition of Homo-sapiens and Homo-erectus, as well as Kushite, Pharaonic, and Christian civilizations that had disappeared [1].



Figure 2. Archaeological occupation in the Saï historical island

The island is an outstanding example that provided evidence of a well-preserved settlement of early human occupation which is well integrated in the Nile Valley environment. Sai Island is a unique site consisting of an agglomeration of well-preserved monuments that provide evidence for understanding the human and ecological history of Nubia from prehistory to the Islamic period. These monuments retain their structural components and original locations within the island without any significant changes. However, the impact of the archaeological

explorations, environmental degradation, and recent pillage due to local gold prospection have little impact on the authenticity of Sai monuments.

Tourism Potential of Nile Islands

The tourism prospects and potential of Sudan's River Nile Islands present significant opportunities for enhancing local livelihoods and economic development. Despite challenges, strategic initiatives can leverage the islands' unique cultural and natural resources to attract tourists.

The Nile Islands are underused as tourist attractions and offer the potential for development through architectural and service improvements, as demonstrated in similar global contexts [4]. The islands serve as refreshment areas, increasing their attractiveness and accessibility for tourists. This boosts the local economy and increases the interaction of endogenous culture with others [4]. Economic and social impacts Tourism is vital for livelihoods and provides jobs and income, particularly during tourism seasons in Sudan. It promotes community development and cultural exchange and improves social structures [5]. However, political and financial constraints continue to hinder tourism growth and require international cooperation and investment to realize the sector's full potential, specifically in the monuments and like these islands [9]. While the prospects for tourism in Sudan's Nile Islands are promising, overcoming existing barriers and effectively promoting these unique destinations will be critical to realizing their economic benefits and local communities' livelihood sources.



Figure 3. Archeological occupation in the Sai Island [2]

CONCLUSION

The Nile Islands in Sudan, including Al Sabalouga Waterfall, Kassinger Islands, and Sai Island, are important tourist destinations with unique natural resources and cultural heritage. These islands have the potential to improve local livelihoods and economic development through tourism. Al Sabalouga is known for its spectacular scenery, while the Kassinger Islands offer waterfalls, rocks, and traditional farming. The island of Sa has a long history of occupation with evidence of early human presence and influence of various civilizations including Cushites, Pharaohs, and Christians. The tourism prospects of Sudan's Nile Islands offer significant opportunities to improve local livelihoods and economic development. Despite the challenges, strategic initiatives can leverage the islands' unique cultural and natural resources to attract tourists. Nevertheless, in the face of constraints such as environmental degradation and political and financial constraints, tourism remains crucial to the local economy and community

development. Strategic initiatives and international cooperation are needed to exploit the islands' tourism potential and overcome existing obstacles.

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