



Cultivating the Nile: The Everyday Politics of Water in Egypt (New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century)

By Jessica Barnes

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The waters of the Nile are fundamental to life in Egypt. In this compelling ethnography, Jessica Barnes explores the everyday politics of water: a politics anchored in the mundane yet vital acts of blocking, releasing, channeling, and diverting water. She examines the quotidian practices of farmers, government engineers, and international donors as they interact with the waters of the Nile flowing into and through Egypt. Situating these local practices in relation to broader processes that affect Nile waters, Barnes moves back and forth from farmer to government ministry, from irrigation canal to international water conference. By showing how the waters of the Nile are constantly made and remade as a resource by people in and outside Egypt, she demonstrates the range of political dynamics, social relations, and technological interventions that must be incorporated into understandings of water and its management.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Cultivating the Nile* is an impressive account of something we know little about despite its growing urgency: the causes of water scarcity in any particular region and the ways that the people affected deal with it. A significant contribution to the growing literature on water sustainability around the world, *Cultivating the Nile* is likely to be discussed for years to come."

(Steven C. Caton, Harvard University 2014-03-10)

"Readers will be drawn to this book for the timeliness of its topic, an examination of a major case of scarcity of water, the most basic of all resources. They will read it closely, finding it one of the very few academic books that is genuinely a page-turner, with its vivid narration, powerful evocations of daily life, and provocative insights into the workings of power. And they will remember it because it will make them understand water in a new way, as a substance that has a social life as well as a material existence."

(Ben Orlove, Columbia University)

"Barnes argues that water scarcity in Egypt is not a 'given' but rather 'made,' through the interactions of bureaucrats, donors, and consumers. . . . Among other fascinating details that Barnes describes is the country's massive system of underground drains; if laid end to end, the drains would circle the globe multiple times.

(*Foreign Affairs* 2015-05-01)

"[This] book is likely to be a cornerstone in the growing anthropological literature on water by virtue of a rare combination: of accessibility of language and structure, and complexity of argument and method.... *Cultivating the Nile* is a fascinating account, which is likely to attract the attention of the growing community of water anthropologists. It also deserves a wide readership within the community of water policy-makers and others working with resource governance."

(Mattias Borg Rasmussen *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2016-04-27)

"Given its ethnographic richness and its analytic originality, this book should be on the shelf of readers who are interested in any of the following fields: political ecology, science and technology studies, and Middle East studies. It will also certainly find its own place in the emerging literature of our discipline including the anthropology of infrastructure, the anthropology of water and the anthropology of resource making. Since it is written lucidly and plainly, without jargon, I also expect the book to move beyond the Ivory Tower and to draw a broad non-academic audience."

(Bada Choi *Social Anthropology* 2016-06-01)

"...Barnes's book is a fresh and innovative addition to the study of inequality, globalization, and Egypt. Scholars and students in a range of academic disciplines will find *Cultivating the Nile* valuable due to its focus on timely questions of the human–nonhuman and the political–natural worlds."

(Rania K. Sweis *American Anthropologist* 2016-06-01)

"*Cultivating the Nile* reaches to a body of research and theoretical horizons not usually covered by scholarship on everyday politics in Egypt and the Middle East, pointing to the relevance of environmental politics in the region to wider theoretical debates on materiality and the role of material substances in social

theory, nonhuman and distributed patterns of power and agency, and the fluidity and verticality of space. As such, the book's significance extends beyond the limits of its regional scope to speak to wider intellectual engagements with environmental and spatial issues in social theory."

(Tamer Elshayal *Arab Studies Journal* 2016-03-01)

About the Author

Jessica Barnes is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment and Sustainability Program at the University of South Carolina.

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Ella Cook:

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Mattie Peters:

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