



## MARRIAGE PATTERN IN EGYPTIAN NUBIA

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### INTRODUCTION

In connection with the international scheme to safeguard the Nubian monuments which were in danger through the construction of the High Dam near Asswan, scientific interest during the last few years has turned towards studying the Nubian population. The basis for this study was laid by R. Herzog (1957) and others. The members of the Social Research Centre of the American University in Cairo (Fernea 1966a, Geiser 1967) and several other scientific expeditions, collected interesting sociological, socio-economic, linguistic and ethnographic findings in Egyptian Nubia.

Two Arab-Czechoslovak Anthropological Expeditions were undertaken in 1965 and 1967 to New Nubia, based in the vicinity of the Upper Egyptian town of Kom Ombo, where the inhabitants of Nubia were resettled 1 — 4 years earlier. The aim of the Expeditions was to study the physical characteristics of the present Nubian population, including the growth and development of the young generation. Its findings, about which preliminary reports have been published (Valšík et al. 1970a, Valšík et al. 1970b, Valšík 1972), are now being compiled into a comprehensive monography, which will be published under the auspices of the Comenius University in Bratislava. Apart from physical-anthropological results (Strouhal 1970, 1971a, 1972a, Hussien 1971a, 1972a, Ferák-Pospíšil 1972, Drobná 1972), biological (Hussien 1971b, Strouhal 1971b), medical (Strouhal 1972b, c) and linguistic findings (Fiedler et al. 1971) the elaboration of the material assembled by the Expeditions brought a number of social-

anthropological facts, of which the marriage pattern in Egyptian Nubia will be treated here in more detail.

It should be remembered that the research was not primarily focused upon a systematic collection of these findings, but they were noted during the investigation of individuals, chosen from the population as samples, for a closer analysis of the physical-anthropological data obtained. The composition of the population samples also conformed to the aims of physical anthropology. It is then necessary to look upon the findings as upon by-products of our Expeditions which indeed characterize perfectly our population samples but can give only rough information about conditions in Nubia as a whole.

#### MATERIAL AND METHOD

We start with data collected from 597 Nubian men, representing 4 — 5 % of the male population over 15 years. They were divided from the physical anthropological aspect into groups of 119 juveniles (15 — 20 years), 437 adults (21 — 55 years) and 41 old men (57 — 87 years). They represented all three settled Nubian ethnic groups, inhabiting old Nubia from north to south in the following sequence: Kenūz (184 persons), Arab (130 persons), Fadīdja (233 persons). Moreover, we were able to get a small sample of Abābda (27 persons), which by origin belonged to different Bedja tribes, living as nomads in the Eastern desert, but which for centuries have been settling down in the Nile valley and are gradually merging with the resident Nubians. A special group comprises hybrids (23 persons), on the one hand cross-breeds between the single Nubian ethnical groups, and on the other cross-breeds between them and Egyptians and Sudanese. They, too, form no negligible part of the Nubian population, so they cannot be eliminated from social-anthropological studies.

For physical-anthropological reasons several villages, twelve altogether, were selected from each ethnic group of which the most numerous samples were obtained. This enabled a thorough study of the micro-areas. Besides that, members of other villages were also found by chance during the investigation, which are a minority in the material. For technical reasons it was impossible to make a systematic investigation of samples from all villages in order to make in this respect too, the groups fully representative. Samples of the Kenūz were assembled from the villages

of Dahmit, Umbarakāb, Koshtamna and Ad-Dakka, of the Arab group from the villages of Wadi'l-Arab, Shāturma and Mālikī, of the Fadīdja from the villages of Ad-Derr and Ad-Dīwān, joined into one group, further Qatta, Ibrīm, Qustul and Balāna. The Abābda were taken from the villages Wadi Alāqi, Sayāla and Maharraqa.

The data were collected anamnesticly. The questions were posed to the probands at the beginning of the investigation by an Arab collaborator of the Expedition instructed in advance. Practically all Nubian men speak Arabic fluently and the same applies to those of the Kenūz and Fadīdja groups, who preserved their dialects of Nubian; for the Arab and Abābda Arabian is the only language. Questions concerning genealogy, membership of an ethnic or descent group, number of children and the like, were answered by most of the questioned men without hesitation and with certainty, because these are facts which form part of the current social structure in Nubia. As a rule we only eliminated information about parents of old men from the reports because many of the old men could no longer remember certain facts clearly.

## RESULTS

### 1. Age of Men When Getting Married

Nubian men marry much later than is the custom in European countries (Table 1.). Not one marriage of a man younger than 21 years of age has been ascertained. This is certainly connected with the fact that in the young age groups mainly students of the secondary school and teachers' training college from the

Tab. 1. Number of unmarried men\* in Nubian ethnic groups according to age

Ethnic group	Total no. of men	15 — 20 years			21 — 30 years			31 — 40 years		
		A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Kenūz	184	42	42	100,0	43	32	74,4	18	1	5,6
Arab	130	14	14	100,0	35	18	51,4	39	6	15,4
Fadīdja	233	54	54	100,0	47	31	66,0	65	4	6,2
Abābda	27	3	3	100,0	8	7	87,5	6	0	0,0
Hybrids	23	6	6	100,0	4	2	50,0	6	1	16,7
Total Nubians	597	119	119	100,0	137	90	65,7	134	12	9,0

41 — 50 years			51 — 60 years			61 — 70 years			71 — 87 years		
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
31	2	6,5	23	0	0,0	21	0	0,0	6	0	0,0
31	0	0,0	10	0	0,0	1	0	0,0	—	—	—
45	0	0,0	21	0	0,0	1	0	0,0	—	—	—
7	1	14,3	3	0	0,0	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	0	0,0	5	0	0,0	—	—	—	—	—	—
116	3	2,6	62	0	0,0	23	0	0,0	6	0	0,0

\* divorced men and widowers not included  
A = no. of all men    B = no. of single men    C = % of single men

New Nubia Centre, Nasr City, are represented. It can also be due to the fact that a relative shortage of women results from polygyny, neither are economic reasons to be ignored. Most marriages fall within the age category of 21 — 30 years although almost two thirds, ascertained in the material, are unmarried. This may probably be connected with the fact that the material comprises also a number of students from the afore-mentioned schools who, because of social-economic changes in New Nubia, began to study in later years. Among the 31 — 40 years olds only 9 % remain unmarried and a mere 2,6 % among the 41 — 50 year olds. All men over 51 years were married which is in keeping with the Islamic principle that marriage is a merit.

From the table can be inferred that of the single ethnic groups the Fadīdja marry earliest, after them the Arab and hybrids, then the Kenūz and at the latest age the Abābda. This is probably connected with the general social-economic level of the groups mentioned.

## 2. Number of Wives and Divorces

Polygyny is not ruled out in the Islam world of which present day Nubia is part. In Egypt the highest number of simultaneous wives was stipulated by law to four. Polygyny is, however, on the decline, particularly for economic reasons. Tables 2 and 3 show the situation among the Nubians.

The quotient of the number of simultaneous wives per man is between 1.06 — 1.10 with adult Nubians. The ethnic groups forming an ascending sequence are Abābda, hybrids, Fadīdja,

Tab. 2. Number of actual, divorced and dead wives with Nubian men

Ethnic group	Age group	No. of married men	Total no. of their wives	Actual wives			Divorced wives			Dead wives		
				n	A	B	n	A	B	n	A	B
Kenüz	21—55	71	87	78	89,7	1,10	7	8,0	0,10	2	2,3	0,03
Kenüz	56—87	36	62	48	77,4	1,33	5	8,1	0,14	9	14,5	0,25
Arab	21—55	91	103	98	95,2	1,10	2	1,9	0,02	3	2,9	0,03
Fadidja	21—55	140	160	151	94,3	1,08	6	3,8	0,04	3	1,9	0,02
Arab and Fadidja	56—70	5	8	5	62,5	1,00	1	12,5	0,20	2	25,0	0,40
Abäbda	21—55	16	18	17	94,4	1,06	1	5,6	0,06	—	—	—
Hybrids	21—55	14	15	15	100,0	1,07	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total Nubians	21—55	332	383	359	93,7	1,08	16	4,2	0,05	8	2,1	0,02
Total Nubians	56—87	41	70	53	75,7	1,29	6	8,6	0,15	11	15,7	0,27

A = % of total no. of wives      B = Quotient wives per man

Tab. 3. Number of simultaneous wives with Nubian men

Ethnic group	Age group	No. of actually married men	One wife		Two wives		Three wives		Total no. of wives
			n	% of no. of actually married men	n	% of no. of actually married men	n	% of no. of actually married men	
Kenüz	21—55	71	64	90,1	7	9,9	—	—	78
Kenüz	56—87	35	24	68,6	9	25,7	2	5,7	48
Arab	21—55	91	84	92,3	7	7,7	—	—	98
Fadidja	21—55	140	129	92,1	11	7,9	—	—	151
Arab and Fadidja	56—70	5	5	100,0	—	—	—	—	5
Abäbda	21—55	15	13	86,7	2	13,3	—	—	17
Hybrids	21—55	14	13	92,9	1	7,1	—	—	15
Total Nubians	21—55	331	303	91,5	28	8,5	—	—	359
Total Nubians	56—87	40	29	72,5	9	22,5	2	4,0	53

Arab and Kenüz (both of the two latter groups have an equal quotient). In 91.5 % of cases adult Nubians have, on an average, one wife and 8.5 % only have two wives (Table 3). Out of the single ethnic groups mostly the Abäbda have two wives (13.3 %), followed by the Kenüz (9.9 %), then the Fadidja (7.9 %), the Arab (7.7 %) and hybrids (7.1 %). We did not find polygynous marriages of a higher grade among adult men.

On the other hand among old Nubians, significantly represented only by Kenūz, the quotient reaches much higher values (1.29 resp. 1.33; Table 2). In 68.6 % cases the old Kenūz have only one wife, whereas they have two wives in 25.7 % and three wives in 5.7 % cases.

The predominance of polygyny among old men, in comparison with adults, ensues from the fact that they are already providing final information, whereas with adults there could be an increase in the number of wives during the years to come. At the same time it should be taken into consideration that among old men the rate of divorced and deceased wives is also much higher (Table 2), part of whom could belong to polygynous marriages. We therefore assume that the conspicuous difference between old and adult men regarding number of wives, at least partially, reflects a decline of polygyny in Nubia.

Divorces are much less frequent than in European countries, despite the comparative freedom given by the Islamic law. With adult males a mere average of 4.2 % divorced marriages were found and the quotient per man was 0.05 divorces (Table 2). Of the various ethnic groups most divorces were found to be with the Kenūz (8.0 marriages, quotient 0.10), and less with the Abābda, Fadīdja and Arab; in the too small group of hybrids no case of divorce was ascertained. It is not out of the question that the number of divorces is lower because we recorded mostly that part of the male population which doesn't migrate to Egypt for work. Among the labour migrants the divorce rate will probably be higher.

A somewhat higher divorce rate was ascertained among old men, though the difference was comparably small; so this probably results from the natural age difference between them and adults.

Based upon anamnestic data of women, also gathered by our Expeditions, Miss Hussien (1971) came to the conclusion that divorces of first-cousin marriages are much rarer (3.6 %) than those of other marriage types (14.6 %). We tried to verify this in the material concerning men (Table 4). In the whole material the difference shows up markedly with the adults as well as — and most conspicuously — with old men. But these differences are based only on the results shown by the Kenūz. With the Arab and Fadīdja groups the results seem to be rather reversed, with

**Tab. 4. Divorced marriages and relationship of both partners**

Ethnic group	Age group	Total no. of divorced marriages	Closely related partners			Distantly related partners			Unrelated partners		
			A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Kenūz	21—55	7	46	1	2,2	20	3	15,0	17	3	17,6
Kenūz	56—87	5	19	0	0,0	19	0	0,0	21	6	28,6
Arab	21—55	2	65	2	3,0	30	0	0,0	6	0	0,0
Fadīdja	21—55	5*	89	4	4,5	43	1	2,3	21	0	0,0
Fadīdja	56—70	1	1	0	0,0	3	1	33,3	3	0	0,0
Abābda	21—55	1	11	0	0,0	3	1	33,3	1	0	0,0
Total Nubians	21—55	16	211	7	3,3	96	5	5,2	45	3	6,7
Total Nubians	56—87	6	20	0	0,0	22	1	4,6	24	6	25,0

\* One more divorced marriage is without indication of relationship of both partners

A = no. of all marriages    B = no. of divorced marriages    C = % of divorced marriages

the Abābda they are inestimable. These anomalies may be caused by the too small number of cases in the category of marriages between unrelated persons. And so, like Miss Hussien (1971), we consider it as very probable that marriages between relatives have a favourable influence upon the permanency of the marriage bond.

About 2.1 % of the total number of wives of adult men died; the quotient per man is 0.02 (Table 2). This number is quite low and suggests that the mortality of women in the productive age is probably not higher than that of men. A large percentage of the deaths of the wives of old men (15.7 %, quotient 0.27) was naturally connected with their age.

Most wives die with the Arab, less with the Fadīdja and Kenūz; the deaths of wives are not represented at all among the Abābda and hybrids, probably because of the small number of cases investigated.

### 3. Marriage and Kinship

A characteristic feature of Nubian marriages is the high proportion of kinship marriages, among which first-cousin marriages again predominate over the marriage of other and more distant relatives (second-cousin, uncle-second niece, etc., Table 5).

**Tab. 5. Related and unrelated marriages in ethnic groups and generations of Nubian men**

Ethnic group	Generation	No. of marriages with known relationship	First-cousin marriages		Distantly related marriages		Unrelated marriages	
			n	%	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	adult*	83	46	55,4	20	24,1	17	20,5
	older**	122	45	36,9	35	28,7	42	34,4
Arab	adult	101	65	64,4	30	29,7	6	5,9
	older	123	63	51,2	29	23,6	31	25,2
Fadidja	adult	153	89	58,2	43	28,1	21	13,7
	older	210	96	45,7	62	29,5	52	24,8
Abābda	adult	15	11	73,3	3	20,0	1	6,7
	older	26	23	88,5	2	7,7	1	3,8
Hybrids	adult	15	5	33,3	3	20,0	7	46,7
	older	23	—	—	—	—	23	100,0
Total Nubians	adult	367	216	58,8	99	27,0	52	14,2
	older	504	227	45,0	128	25,4	149	29,6

\* = adult probands (married 1931 — 1966)

\*\* = parents of adult probands, parents of younger probands, old probands (married 1889 — 1951)

A detailed analysis of the material showed differences between the frequency of the various marriage types of adult probands and three other groups (the parents of adult probands, the parents of younger probands and the old probands). We therefore divided the material into the generation of adults, where the marriage had been concluded between the years 1931 — 1966, and into the sum of older generations, where the marriages were concluded between the years 1889 — 1951.

Table 5 shows that adults marry more often close relatives than the older generations (with the exception of Abābda). Logically a basic conformity or the reverse should be expected, signaling the beginning of disintegration of the predominating custom of kinship marriages. The results gained by our Expedition inquiring among women (Hussien 1971) would, in the comparison of two generations, allow a rather slight decline in the proportion of consanguineous marriages with a simultaneous slight increase of first-cousin marriages. Our paradox finding concerning men can be explained that in the group of adults recorded, such men



were predominant who had remained for most of their lives or permanently in Nubia. They can easily conclude the customary consanguineous marriage. On the other hand this opportunity occurs less frequently for men, who leave for a longer time to seek work in the large towns of Egypt (labour migrants), who account for about 85 % according to Scudder (1966, 105). They probably more often take not related wives, though still preferring Nubian women. The parents of our adult and young probands, just as our old probands, belong to the natural mixture of migrants and non-migrants. Their average proportion of marriages — 45 % closely related, 25.4 % distantly related and 29.6 % unrelated, viz approximately 2 : 1 of related to unrelated marriages — approaches the results ascertained by Hussien (1971) for women (with the exception of the Fadīdja group where a much smaller rate of related and higher rate of unrelated marriages among women remains in comparison with men).

Only among the Abābda, when comparing the generations, is a reverse process noticeable, a decline of first-cousin marriages and ascending trend of the percentage of distantly related and unrelated marriages among adults in comparison with older generations. This is probably connected with the transition from a nomadic way of life in small groups in the Eastern desert to a settled life in the Nile valley, with possibilities of wider contacts.

Hybrids derive directly by definition from unrelated marriages, but even in their own marriages, obviously because of the family traditions, unrelated marriages are reaching the highest values ascertained in Nubia (46.7 %).

The Abābda have the highest percentage of first-cousin marriages out of the various ethnic groups, followed by the Arab, the Fadīdja and the Kenūz (with women the sequence of the last two is reversed, Hussien 1971).

The custom of marriages between relatives originates directly from the settlement pattern of old Nubia where hamlets (in Arabic nag') were the basis of settlement, often situated very far from each other and accessible rather by water-ways than along narrow paths between rocks. There was only relatively little contact between neighbouring nag's although in modern times 10 — 20 of them were grouped together into higher administrative units, villages (in Arabic qaria or nahia). A hamlet was original-

ly the settlement of a certain descent group as can be seen from the original names of some nag' which are identical with the names of the descent groups (Fiedler et al. 1971). Right up to the present time people related to each other were usually living in the nag's although fractions of other descent groups have settled among them in the course of time. The preference for marriages between relatives, particularly between first cousins, is also probably based upon economic reasons (attempts to prevent disintegration of the family property) as well as upon psychological moments (the mother-in-law gets on better with the related, thus known, daughter-in-law). It became a definite part of the social system.

From part of our material we could ascertain the detailed types of first-cousin marriages (Table 6). A striking difference

**Tab. 6. Patrilineal and matrilineal first-cousin marriages in ethnic groups and generations of Nubian men**

Ethnic group	Generation	No. of first-cousin marriages		Patrilineal first-cousin marriage		Matrilineal first-cousin marriage	
		total	with type specification	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	adult*	46	41	22	53,7	19	46,3
	older**	45	32	25	78,1	7	21,9
Arab	adult	65	8	6	75,0	2	25,0
	older	63	14	8	57,1	6	42,9
Fadīdja	adult	89	56	25	44,6	31	55,4
	older	96	45	20	44,5	25	55,5
Total Nubians	adult	200	105	53	50,5	52	49,5
	older	204	91	53	58,2	38	41,8

Abābda and hybrids not included for small number of informations.

\* = adult probands (married 1931 — 1966)

\*\* = parents of adult probands, parents of younger probands, old probands (married 1889 — 1951)

was shown between the Kenūz and the Arab groups in which patrilineality predominates, and the Fadīdja among whom rather more matrilineality has been ascertained. The comparison of generations shows a decline in the predominance of patrilineality among the Kenūz which is especially conspicuous among older generations, while among the Arab group an increase of patri-

laterality is evident (inconclusive because of the small number of cases) and among the Fadīdja the situation remains unchanged. On the whole it can be assumed that modern tendency is towards an equalization of both marriage types. This state is indicated by the results in the total Nubian adult groups.

Regarding the Kenūz group it is possible to take the analysis still farther to the level of parallel-cousin and cross-cousin marriage types (Table 7.). In both age groups the patrilineal parallel

**Tab. 7. Four types of first-cousin marriages in two age groups of Kenūz men**

Age group	No. of first-cousin marriages		Patrilineal				Matrilineal			
	total	with type specification	parallel-cousin		cross-cousin		parallel-cousin		cross-cousin	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
21—55	46	39	15	38,5	7	18,0	10	25,6	7	17,9
56—87	19	17	13	76,5	1	5,9	2	11,7	1	5,9
Total	65	56	28	50,0	8	14,3	12	21,4	8	14,3

prevail over matrilineal parallel types. The least often and equally represented are both types of cross-cousin marriages. In the older age group patrilineal parallel-cousin marriages seem to have a more significant predominance over other types than among contemporary adults, with whom a tendency towards an equalization of all four types of marriage (decline of patrilineal and matrilineal parallel-cousin and increase of both cross-cousin types), can be observed.

#### 4. Marriage in Relation to Descent and Ethnic Group Origin

The analysis of the relation of marriage to kinship was strictly separated from the analysis of the connection of marriages with the descent and ethnic group. True, both categories are parallel in very many cases but the number is not small of those where a close relative from the father's or the mother's sister's side is a member of another descent, eventually ethnic group. Kinship and appurtenance to a descent and ethnic group are independent categories, although the results of the elaboration could appear to be similar at first glance.

We devoted a special study from the linguistic, historical and physical-anthropological point of view to the problems of Nubian descent groups (in Arabic qabila, Fiedler et al. 1971). Their character is not entirely clear. Some consider them as tribes (for example Junker and Schäfer 1932, p. 14) others as clans or kins (for example Herzog 1957, p. 106). We rather chose the neutral term descent group (analogous to Hill 1965 or Fernea 1966a) because their character is inconsistent. Among some large descent groups, such as the Al-'Ulaiqat of the Arab, the tribal character is indisputable, others represent rather clans, whereas small descent groups or fractions of them comprise kins. Generally speaking patrilinear groups of people are in question, linked by the consciousness of an ancient common descent from a single, often mythic and always Arab ancestor (for further details see Callender 1966). In the present paper we limit ourselves merely to their role in relation to marriage.

Summing up it can be stated (Table 8) that in adult and older generations most marriages (56.7 — 59.5 %) are usually

**Tab. 8. Descent and ethnic group origin of couples in ethnic groups and generations of Nubian men**

Ethnic group	Genera- tion	No. of couples with known relationship	Identical <b>DG</b> and <b>EG</b>		Different <b>DG</b> of identical <b>EG</b>		Different Nubian <b>EG</b>		Different <b>EG</b> outside Nubia	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	adult*	45	22	48,9	22	48,9	1	2,2	—	—
	older**	89	48	53,9	40	45,0	—	—	1	1,1
Arab	adult	99	72	72,8	25	25,2	2	2,0	—	—
	older	125	86	68,8	39	31,2	—	—	—	—
Fadīdja	adult	157	86	54,8	68	43,3	1	0,6	2	1,3
	older	210	109	51,9	101	48,1	—	—	—	—
Abābda	adult	16	13	81,2	—	—	3	18,8	—	—
	older	26	24	92,3	1	3,8	1	3,9	—	—
Hybrids	adult	14	4	28,6	5	35,7	3	21,4	2	14,3
	older	21	—	—	—	—	12	57,1	9	42,9
Total Nubians	adult	331	197	59,5	120	36,3	10	3,0	4	1,2
	older	471	267	56,7	181	38,4	13	2,8	10	2,1

\* = adult probands (married 1931 — 1966)

\*\* = parents of adult probands, parents of younger probands, old probands (married 1889 — 1951)

**DG** = descent group      **EG** = ethnic group

concluded between members of the same descent group (endogamy), about one-third between members of various descent groups but still within the same Nubian ethnic group. Only not quite a twentieth of all marriages are concluded between members of various Nubian ethnic groups or between Nubians and members of extra-Nubian groups. The last three categories concern exogamic marriages.

The frequency of the afore-mentioned categories is very similar also among the settled Nubian ethnical groups in the comparison of generations which suggests that of late there has been no substantial change in this respect and that the composition of the sample of migrants and non-migrants has not such a great influence as it has in the frequency of kinship marriages. Only among the Abābda was a change observed. In the present adult population, as compared with the older ones, there has been a marked increase (18.8 %) in the category of marriages between different Nubian ethnic groups. This is connected with the process of their settling down among the Kenūz and Arab whose women they sometimes take as wives.

Hybrids are descendants, by their very definition, of members of various Nubian or extra-Nubian ethnic groups. But in their own marriages can be observed a conspicuously high representation of marriages with women from different Nubian (21.4 %) and extra-Nubian (14.3 %) ethnic groups and on the contrary a low representation of marriages with women from descent groups to which they themselves claim to belong (28.6 %). In their family tradition the preference of marriage with persons of their own descent eventually ethnic group has obviously not the same weight as with other Nubians.

Out of the various ethnic groups, marriages of members of identical descent groups are represented mostly among the Abābda, where this is naturally connected with the nomad life of small groups, belonging mostly to the same descent group. After them are the Arab, of whom a large number of probands belong to the large descent group Al-'Ulaiqat, followed by the Fadīdja and Kenūz. This sequence is thus similar to that of kinship, according to the representation of first cousin marriages.

It is interesting to note the category of marriages with women of extra-Nubian ethnic groups. They occur only among the Kenūz, Fadidja and hybrids, not among the Arab and Abābda.

The last two ethnic groups lived in the centre of Nubia or in the Eastern desert obviously more isolated from adjoining populations than the marginal Nubian ethnic groups, the Kenūz and Fadidja. Finally it should be mentioned that among women too, cases of marriages with non-Nubian partners were found to be just as rare (less than 2 %, Hussien 1971).

#### 5. Territorial Origin of the Marriage Partners

As the material has been selected to comprise the birth-places of both partners and in most cases of the proband too, above all in the afore-mentioned 12 villages, it was necessary to eliminate the parents of the probands from the elaboration and to base the analysis only on the marriages of the probands themselves. Nevertheless a similar distortion can be assumed which appeared in the analysis of the kinship and which is also due to the fact that most of the non-migrating part of the male population was that investigated, which had greater possibility of choosing a partner from the same or a nearby village, than had the migrating part of the population.

Most of the married couples are natives of the same hamlet (Table 9) which is in keeping with the result of the analysis of kinship and the relation to the descent groups. This comprises  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all cases. According to that the hamlet (nag') can be

**Tab. 9. Territorial origin of couples in ethnic and age groups of Nubian men (adult and old probands)**

Ethnic group	Age group	No. of marriages	No. of couples with available data	Partners from identical hamlet		Partners from different hamlets of identical village		Partners from different village of identical ethnic group		Partners from different villages of different ethnic groups	
				n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	21—55	87	85	52	61,1	19	22,4	8	9,4	6	7,1
Kenūz	56—87	62	57	34	59,6	18	31,6	3	5,3	2	3,5
Arab	21—55	103	101	68	67,3	26	25,7	3	3,0	4	4,0
Fadidja	21—55	160	159	87	54,7	47	29,6	20	12,6	5	3,1
Arab and Fadidja	56—70	8	8	3	37,5	4	50,0	1	12,5		—
Abābda	21—55	18	16	12	75,0	—	—	3	18,8	1	6,2
Hybrids	21—55	15	15	4	26,7	4	26,7	5	33,3	2	13,3
Total Nubians	21—55	383	376	223	59,3	96	25,5	39	10,4	18	4,8
	56—87	70	65	37	56,9	22	33,8	4	6,2	2	3,1

considered as the core of the marriage circle. Among the various ethnic groups most of these marriages occur with the Abābda, where, at the same time, marriages with partners to another nag' of the same village are missing. This may be the result of the small number of cases and it may just as well be a proof that the settled Abābda are dispersed only in separate nag's, quite far from each other. Moreover, marriages between partners of the same hamlet are very frequent with the Arabs, followed by the Fadīdja and the Kenūz. This is again the sequence known already from the analysis of kinship as well as from the analysis of relation to the descent groups. The smallest number of marriages of partners from identical hamlets occurs among the hybrids, which is connected with their different mentality as a consequence of the influence of their mixed origin.

Marriages follow between natives of different hamlets of the same village (approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all cases). Most of them occur among the Fadīdja, then among the hybrids and Arab, least among adult Kenūz. On the other hand, they occur much more among the old Kenūz than among adult Fadīdja.

Least frequent are married couples originating from different villages. They are to be found mostly among hybrids and Abābda, less among Fadīdja and Kenūz, least among the Arab, whereby the villages of the same ethnic group outnumber the villages of different ethnic groups (only among the Arab are they roughly balanced).

## 6. Number of Children

An inseparable part of all deliberations about the family is on the number of children. We report on it in relation to the number of investigated married men (including those without children). We did not calculate the number of children in relation to the number of women ascertained, because divorced women could have more children during another marriage, so that the results would be distorted.

On the whole it can be said that as a rule 4 — 5 children are born to one married man in Nubia (Table 10). In comparison with other developing countries, above all with neighbouring Egypt, this number is quite low. The influence of temporary migration certainly makes itself felt here; among our adult men, however, it is just non-migrants who predominate. In this case

**Tab. 10. Number of born and living children in ethnic and age groups of Nubian men**

Ethnic group	Age group	No. of married men with available data	Born children		Living children		
			n	Quotient children per man	n	Quotient children per man	% of born children
Kenūz	21—55	70	337	4,8	222	3,2	65,9
Kenūz	56—87	36	195	5,4	129	3,6	66,2
Arab	21—55	85	384	4,5	238	2,8	62,0
Fadīdja	21—55	138	625	4,5	391	2,8	62,6
Arab and Fadidja	56—70	5	19	3,8	11	2,2	57,9
Abābda	21—55	16	80	5,0	51	3,2	63,8
Hybrids	21—55	14	54	4,2	34	2,6	63,0
Total Nubians	21—55	323	1480	4,6	936	2,9	63,2
Total Nubians	56—87	41	214	5,2	140	3,4	65,4

a role may probably be played by a lower child-bearing rate of Nubian women through the influence of diseases, contagious (syphilis and other) as well as inherited, which have a lethal effect upon the development of the foetus. The comparatively low economic standard and difficulties with procuring food in old Nubia also must have played their role.

Out of the various ethnic groups higher quotients of the number of children per married man are reached by the Abābda (5.0) and Kenūz (4.8), lower by the Fadīdja and Arab (4.5) and the lowest by hybrids (4.2). This corresponds with the sequence of ethnic groups according to the number of polygynous marriages (Tab. 3).

A comparison of two Kenūz generations (Table 10) reveals that there is still a greater number of children (quotient 5.4) among the older one. This is the consequence of age difference (among the older people the number of children is final, among the adults it can still increase), and it also ensues from the higher polygyny of old Kenūz (Table 3). A similar difference is at the same time obvious in the comparison of the two total Nubian samples.

A high percentage of Nubian children die from contagious diseases and undoubtedly also from the higher incidence of



genetic combinations, lowering the resistance of the organism. This is due to the high degree of inbreeding of the Nubian population. We are devoting a special analysis to this problem (Strouhal 1973). Here we are taking notice of the number of living children, which is not quite two-thirds of the children born (Table 10). The findings are surprisingly coincident in the various ethnic groups, with the exception of a somewhat better situation among the Kenūz (in both age groups). It is possible that the nearness of Asswan has been in their favour and with it the much more easily obtainable medical aid and better supplies of food.

The quotient of living children per married man fluctuates around three. Higher values are reached by the Kenūz and Abābda (3.2) in connection with their higher number of children born per married man. The Fadīdja and Arab follow (2.8) and then the hybrids (2.6). A still more favourable situation prevails among the old Kenūz (3.6) for reasons already referred to. Considering this small number of living children and the constant outflow of part of the population from Nubia, it is not surprising, that, while the population of Egypt trebled during the last 60 years, the population of Nubia remained practically stationary between 1897 (96.500 in Nubia and an unspecified number outside Nubia) and 1960 (48.000 inside and about 70.000 outside Nubia) — (Geiser 1966, 148).

From the social-anthropological point of view the number of living children in a family is to a certain extent an indicator of the social standard. Meanwhile, the family was considered in its relationship to the husband, so that also families with two wives are taken as a single unit. When gathering the material the number of children by each wife was not distinguished separately.

It ensues from the total of data (Table 11) that among the adults in Nubia families with 1 — 2 children (33.1 %) are most frequently represented, followed by families with 3 — 4 children (22.3 %) and those with 5 — 6 children (17.9 %). A similar number of families is childless (18.0 %). These comprise newly concluded marriages, then marriages where all children have died and finally marriages which are sterile, mainly for biological reasons (for more see Strouhal 1973). Families with a large number of children (7 to 12) are not very frequent in Nubia (8.7 %).

Tab. 11. Number of living children per family in ethnic and age groups of Nubian men

Ethnic group	Age group	Total no. of families	0		1—2		3—4		5—6		7—12	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	21—55	70	13	18,6	18	25,7	15	21,4	17	24,3	7	10,0
Kenūz	56—87	36	3	8,3	10	27,8	14	38,9	4	11,1	5	13,9
Arab	21—55	85	17	20,0	33	38,8	13	15,3	14	16,5	8	9,4
Fadīdja	21—55	138	22	15,9	48	34,8	36	26,1	21	15,2	11	8,0
Arab and Fadīdja	56—70	5	1	20,0	2	40,0	1	20,0	1	20,0	—	—
Abābda	21—55	16	3	18,7	3	18,8	5	31,2	3	18,8	2	12,5
Hybrids	21—55	14	3	21,4	5	35,7	3	21,4	3	21,5	—	—
Total Nubians	21—55	323	58	18,0	107	33,1	72	22,3	58	17,9	28	8,7
Total Nubians	56—70	41	4	9,8	12	29,2	15	36,6	5	12,2	5	12,2

Of the various ethnic groups families with a large number of children are more frequently represented among the Abābda, followed by the Kenūz, then Fadīdja and Arab and least of all among the hybrids. That corresponds with the sequence of the quotients of born and living children per man as previously mentioned.

The final state of the number of children is possible to ascertain from the reports of the old Kenūz. Among them families with 3—4 children (38.9%) predominate, in comparison with adult Kenūz also the numbers of families with 1—2 children and very large families (7 to 12 children) increase slightly; the increase in the last category is also connected with the higher frequency of polygyny. Naturally, less marriages remained childless which comprise only those where the children died and the biologically sterile marriages (8.3%).

#### 7. Birthplace of Children in Relation to Birth-Place of Parents

A glance at the structure of a Nubian family can also provide a confrontation of the child's birthplace and that of its parents (Table 12). In most cases of our sample, on the average two-thirds, the birthplace is the same for the child, the father and the mother and that is usually on the level of a hamlet (the re-

Tab. 12. Birthplaces of probands and their parents in ethnic and age groups of Nubian men

Ethnic group	Age group	No. of probands	No. of available data	Amphilocality		Patri-locality		Matri-locality		Neo-locality inside Nubia		Neo-locality outside Nubia	
				n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kenūz	15-20	42	42	27	64,3	8	19,0	—	—	2	4,8	5	11,9
	21-55	106	105	69	65,8	18	17,1	6	5,7	6	5,7	6	5,7
	56-87	36	36	30	83,3	5	13,9	1	2,8	—	—	—	—
	Σ	184	183	126	68,9	31	16,9	7	3,8	8	4,4	11	6,0
Arab	15-20	14	14	6	42,9	4	28,6	2	14,3	1	7,1	1	7,1
	21-55	115	114	80	70,2	30	26,3	1	0,9	2	1,8	1	0,8
	56-70	1	1	—	—	1	100,0	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Σ	130	129	86	66,7	35	27,1	3	2,3	3	2,3	2	1,6
Fadidja	15-20	54	54	24	44,5	8	14,8	5	9,2	6	11,1	11	20,4
	21-55	175	175	126	72,0	32	18,3	3	1,7	4	2,3	10	5,7
	56-70	4	4	2	50,0	2	50,0	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Σ	233	233	152	65,2	42	18,0	8	3,4	10	4,3	21	9,1
Abābda	15-20	3	3	1	33,3	—	—	—	—	1	33,3	1	33,4
	21-55	24	24	14	58,3	2	8,3	4	16,7	4	16,7	—	—
	Σ	27	27	15	55,6	2	7,4	4	14,8	5	18,3	1	3,7
Hybrids	15-20	6	6	2	33,3	2	33,3	2	33,4	—	—	—	—
	21-55	17	17	4	23,5	5	29,4	3	17,7	5	29,4	—	—
	Σ	23	23	6	26,1	7	30,4	5	21,7	5	21,7	—	—
Total Nubians	15-20	119	119	60	50,4	22	18,5	9	7,6	10	8,4	18	15,1
	21-55	437	435	293	67,4	87	20,0	17	3,9	21	4,8	17	3,9
	56-87	41	41	32	78,1	8	19,5	1	2,4	—	—	—	—
	Σ	597	595	385	64,7	117	19,7	27	4,5	31	5,2	35	5,9

Amphilocality = proband born in identical place (mostly hamlet) as both parents

Patri-locality = proband born in identical place (mostly hamlet) as father

Matri-locality = proband born in identical place (mostly hamlet) as mother

Neolocality inside Nubia = proband born in different village in Nubia than both parents

Neolocality outside Nubia = proband born in different village outside Nubia, both parents originating in Nubia

search was not focused upon the level of single houses). We designate these cases with the term amphilocality.

We noticed less frequently that the child and its father had the same birthplace (patri-locality). The identity of the child's birthplace and that of its mother (matri-locality) is still rarer (less than one twentieth of all cases). The remainder, something over one-tenth of all cases, consists of different birthplaces of

the child and its parents, partly in and partly outside Nubia (neolocality).

The preponderance of amphilocality proves the constancy of the settlement pattern of Nubians, and is the result of a large number of marriages among the inhabitants of one and the same hamlet, as we have mentioned. Apart from this the preponderance of patrilocality over matrilocality (in the relation of 4:1) is evidence, that in the case of marriages of members from different hamlets or villages, the newly-weds more often move into the hamlet or village of the father than that of the mother. The cases of differently localized birthplaces of children and both parents inside Nubia are the result of the moving of families as a consequence of the last heightening of the old Asswan dam during the years 1929 — 1933. It meant the shifting of the inhabitants from the northern-most villages to the southern part of Nubia which in our material is, for instance, recorded as migration from Dahmīt to Balāna. The cases of extra-Nubian birthplaces of children whose parents are born in Nubia is at the same time evidence for the recently increasing custom that the husband who leaves for Egypt in search of work is also followed by his wife, while previously the wife used to stay in Nubia.

It is instructive to follow the changes in the representation of the quoted categories for the various age groups. Amphilocality, which expresses stability of the settlement pattern of old Nubia, clearly decreases from the old generation (78.1 %) to the adults (67.4 %) and then to the young age group (50.4 %). The share of patrilocality doesn't change while matrilocality increases (from 2.4 % to 7.6 %). The modern trend moves thus in the direction of equalization of the relation of patri- and matrilocality. While cases of a different birthplace of children and parents inside Nubia are missing in the oldest group, they account for 4.8 % among the adults and in the young generation they are still more frequent (8.4 %). The number of births outside Nubia at places of temporary migration of both parents, most frequently Cairo and Alexandria, is also increasing conspicuously. Such cases are missing among old people, they are rare among adults (3.9 %) and surprisingly frequent among young people (15.1 %).

Out of the various ethnic groups amphilocality is equally represented among the Kenūz, Arab and Fadīdja, among the Abābda less and least of all among hybrids. We observe the lar-

gest predominance of patrilocality over matrilocality among the Arab, which is probably connected with their general conservative milieu. The relation of both types of birthplaces is roughly the same among the Fadīdja and Kenūz. On the other hand, matrilocality predominates over patrilocality among the Abābda. Among the hybrids both categories are relatively more frequent with patrilocality slightly predominating. Neolocality inside Nubia is most frequently found among hybrids and the Abābda; among the first because of their resettlement through mixed marriages and among the latter because of their settling down in hamlets of the Nile valley. This category occurs less frequently among the other ethnic groups. Outside Nubia, during the stay of labour migrants, most Fadīdja were born followed by Kenūz, Abābda and Arab, but no hybrids. If, in view of the great differences between the generation, only the young ones are compared, then the extra-Nubian birthplace again predominates among the Fadīdja over the Kenūz and Arab; the result among the Abābda is influenced by the negligible number of cases.

#### 8. Patrilinearity and Matrilinearity

In the chapter about the relationship of marriage to the descent groups we stated, that Nubian descent groups are patrilineary. There are, however, exceptions from that general principle, which deserve attention.

Out of the young and adult probands, whose parents were of various descent groups, 183, i. e. 96.3 % said they belonged to the descent group of their father (patrilinearity), only 7 probands (3.7 %) said they belonged to their mother's descent group (matrilinearity). Most of the latter were among the Kenūz (6.7 %), then among the hybrids (4.8 %) and Fadīdja (2.5 %). Among Arab and Abābda no cases of matrilinearity was found; among the former, probably in concordance with the strong clinging to traditions previously mentioned, among the latter most probably because of the negligible number of cases with parents from different descent groups. Cases with matrilinear appurtenance were mostly ( $n = 5$ ) young probands (15 to 20 years old), 12.5 % of this age group were Kenūz and 15.8 % were Fadīdja. The other cases belonged to the adult group (21 — 55 years old), of which there were 1.3 % of adult Fadīdja and 6.2 % of adult hybrids.

Among the Kenūz there was a 19 year-old boy from Dābūd (nag' Marīs) who said his descent group was the Sābāb, the same as his mother's, coming from As-Sayyāla (from the nag' of the same name), as opposed to the descent group Mūsāb of his father whose birthplace was the same as that of the proband. Another 20 year-old boy from Abū Hūr (nag' Arsamak Kūlī) reported that he belonged to his mother's descent group, the Dachāb, although his father was of the Husaināb; both parents came from the same village and nag'.

Among the Fadīdja a 19 year-old boy from Ad-Dīwān (nag' As-Sabrābīya) reports to belong to his mother's descent group Adūlāb who comes from the same place, while the father comes from the descent group Nuqīdāb from another nag' of the same village (Al-Garbābīya). Another 19 year-old boy from Adindān (nag' Al-Djamma) claims to belong to the descent group Al-Kāshif of his mother from the same village but from another nag' (Al-Barbarīya) although the father, born in the same nag' as the proband, belongs to the Ahmad 'Alī. Finally, a 20-year-old boy from Wādī Halfā (of the nag' of the same name) also reported as his descent group appurtenance Al-Kāshif, the descent group of his mother, originating from the same village but from another nag' (Karīma); his father belongs to Dāwudab and comes from Adindān (nag' Abloko). Out of the group of adults, a 21 year-old man from Balāna (nag' Haud Korosko) considers himself to be a member of the descent group Abū Rās of his mother who was born at Korosko (nag' of the same name), while his father who was born in the same place belongs to the Darāqab.

Among the hybrids, a 34 year-old man, physically a pure-blooded Negro, from Ad-Derr (nag' of the same name) proclaimed himself to be a member of his mother's descent group Hamatta who was born at the same place, while his father comes from the village of Ganatti in the Sūdān, from the Negro tribe Robotāb.

It is not easy to make an interpretation of these exceptional cases of matrilinearity. It can hardly be considered a relict of matrilinearity that predominated in Christian Nubia until the time of the Arab invasion in the 14th century and which the Arab author Ibn Chaldūn (+1406) mentions. The case will rather be that some descent groups are considered more aristocratic than others, so that descendants sometimes arbitrarily claim to belong to them even in cases where it is the mother's descent group.

Here we should register two cases of the descent group Al-Kāshif, which represents the descendants of Turkish military commanders of Balkan and Caucasian origin, who, from the 16th to the 18th century in the southern part of Egyptian Nubia practically independently ruled the Nubians and collected taxes from them. It is possible that some more descent groups enjoy similar higher esteem than others. In the case of a Negro who claimed to be rather a member of the Fadīdja descent group of his mother, than of the tribe of his father from the Sudan, we can notice the striving of the Negroes and their cross-breeds to merge socially with the Nubian milieu.

#### DISCUSSION

Previously Nubian men got married at the age of 18 years (Herzog 1957, 90). Our ascertainment of later marriages tallies with Herzog's conclusion that the average age is now several years higher.

The low frequency and intensity of polygyny has been found also by Herzog (1957, 94) who heard only of few cases where the husband had 2 or even 3 wives. The cause for this were the economic conditions which did not allow such luxury. Contrary to our findings of a somewhat higher frequency of polygyny among the older generation, Herzog assumed, according to records from the beginning of the last century, that polygyny was rare already at that time.

In accordance with our findings Geiser (1967, 166) found a low divorce rate and a small number of widowers among Nubian men, while among women these data were higher. That could be evidence for our assumption that the difference between non-migrants and labour-migrants has an effect here. On the other hand Herzog (1957, 95) presumes that divorce is frequent in Nubia which, as he believes, ensues from its ease with which it may be obtained based upon Islamic law, but not upon a modern disintegration of morals.

The high frequency of marriages between relatives, particularly between the first-cousins, is not limited to Nubia only. According to Fernea (1966b, 260), it is common among settled and nomadic peoples of the Near East, according to Herzog (1957, 89) also in Egypt, Sudan and elsewhere in Africa, where it is

connected with the spreading of the Islam. Cuisenier (1962, 80) considers marriages with the daughter of the uncle on the father's side as one of the most characteristic traits in Arab marriages. Just as in our material, Callender (1966, 191), too, ascertained a preference for marriages of patrilinear parallel-cousins among the descent group Mehennāb at Dahmīt in the Kenūz region.

Although a larger amount of reliable statistical data is not available, it seems that the preference for endogamous marriages within the descent group is higher in Nubia than in other Arab countries. Cuisenier (1962, 88—89), for example, reports a frequency of 36 % of marriages among members of the same tribe, 35 % of marriages among members of different tribes and a relatively high rate, 29 %, of marriages with strangers in the descent group Ouled Arfa of the Ansariin fraction of the Drīd tribe in southern Tunisia. We ascertained among Nubians a more than half larger representation of endogamy and, on the contrary, a negligible number of marriages with members of other Nubian or extra-Nubian ethnic groups. Callender (1966, 191) reports a similar preference of marriages inside the Mehennāb descent group at Dahmīt, and recalls that one of the factors supporting endogamous marriages is the height of the marriage fee (mahr). This is usually higher if the man takes a wife from another descent group.

The small number of children of Nubian married men, as reported in our analysis, has its parallel in the low fertility ratio (number of children up to 5 years in relation to the number of 15 — 44 year-old women) in Egyptian Nubia (479) against the much higher fertility ration in Egypt (729; Geiser 1967, 168). This is also evident by the low number — only 2.5 — of children up to 10 years per one household, as ascertained among Nubian labour-migrants in Cairo (Geiser 1966, 158).

Just as we ascertained among the Nubians a predominance of patrilocality over matrilocality in the analysis of birthplaces of the probands on the level of nag', so others confirmed this rule also on the level of single houses, for example in the nag' Ismailia at Balana (Haikal 1966, 192) or among members of the Mehennāb tribe at Dahmīt (Callender 1966, 192), although neither contrary cases are rare.

The ascertained ascending number of birthplaces of probands outside Nubia, particularly in our youngest group corresponds



with the statement of Herzog (1957, 173) that only for about 20 years (i. e. cca from 1937) is the number of wives increasing who follow their husbands temporarily or permanently in labour migration.

Just as the descent groups of the Arab world, so the majority of Nubian descent groups are patrilinear (Fernea 1966b, 262, Haikal 1966, 292). Callender (1966, 186) reports the patrilinearity of the Mehennāb children without exception. Our seven cases of matrilinearity has nothing like it in the literature available. Herzog (1957, 105) reports that among Nubians, as opposed to their eastern and southern neighbours, the main traits of original matriarchy have disappeared through the influence of a strong merging with Arab and the full acceptance of Islam and Islamic law. Certain relicts of the matriarchy, however, remained preserved, according to him in some wedding customs (the mother as negotiator, the respect for the mother-in-law, matrilocality during the first days of married life) and in the consequent distinction between the uncle of the father's or mother's side. We have already mentioned that we do not consider the found cases of matrilinearity to be relicts of matriarchy, but rather as the expression of the preference of some descent groups in comparison with others.

#### SUMMARY

Based upon materials of the Arab-Czechoslovak Anthropological Expeditions to New Nubia in 1965 and 1967, the fundamental features of marriage patterns of contemporary Nubia were dealt with from the point of view of men. Part of it was primarily the comparatively late age when men married, the relatively low intensity of polygyny, which seems to be on the decline, and the relatively low frequency of divorces, which the institution of kinship marriages seems to influence favourably. Marriages between relatives in Nubia largely outnumber those between people who are not related (2:1), whereby the largest number of marriages between relatives is of first-cousin marriage category. Similarly marriages of members of the same descent groups (endogamy) outnumber marriages between members of different descent, eventually ethnic groups (exogamy). Finally, more than half of the married couples come from the same hamlet, about a quarter from different hamlets but from

the same village and the remainder from different villages. We found most marriages between relatives, marriages within the same descent group and marriages between natives of the same hamlet among the Abābda, then the Arab, followed by the Fadidja and the Kenūz and finally, the last in the sequence, are the hybrids. In comparison with Egypt relatively few children are born in Nubia (4 — 5 per married man), of which not quite two-thirds remain alive, so there is an average of about three living children per married man. Families with 1 — 4 children are the most frequent. On an average, in two-thirds of all cases, the birthplace of the child is the same as that of both parents (amphilocality), less frequently it corresponds with that of the father (patrilocality) and rarely with that of the mother (matrilocality). At present amphilocality is declining, the relation of patri- and matrilocality is becoming equalized and different birthplaces of children in comparison with parents are increasing not only inside but even more often outside Nubia, during the seasonal migration of families in search of work in the large Egyptian cities. Although patrilinearity is the rule among Nubian descent groups, 7 (3.7 %) interesting matrilinear cases were ascertained.

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