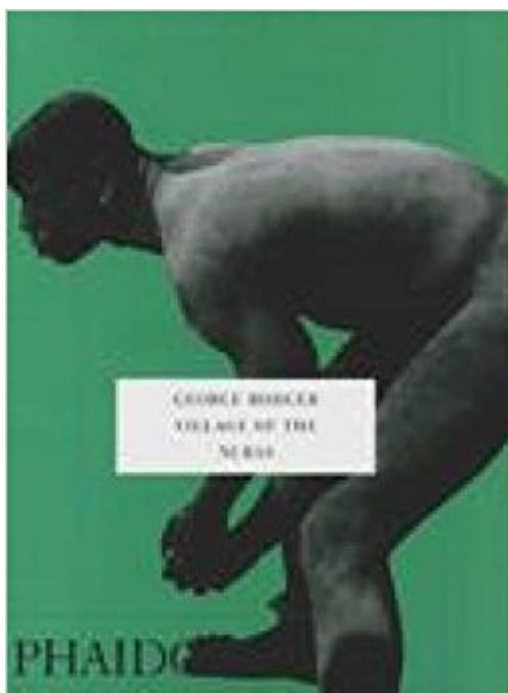


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# Village Of The Nubas (Contemporary Artists (Phaidon))



## Synopsis

In 1949 the Englishman George Rodger, one of the founding members of the Magnum photo agency, learned of the Nuba tribe while travelling in the Kordofan region of the Sudan. The Nubas were a people living just as their ancestors had lived - centuries before. Remarkably, he was granted permission by the Sudanese government not only to spend time with the tribe, but to be the first ever Westerner to photograph its rituals and way of life. In 1955, Rodger's 'Nubas' photographs were published in France as *Le Village de Noubas*, a diary-like account in words and pictures of his journey through Kordofan. A limited number of copies were produced and the book became an instant classic. Phaidon celebrates Rodger's most famous work with the first ever English language version, in a facsimile edition of this famous book.

## Book Information

Series: Contemporary Artists (Phaidon)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

This is the first English-language version of one of the classics of photographic literature, George Rodger's *Village of the Nubas*, which was originally published in France in 1955. Rodger was a Life magazine photographer during World War II, but in 1945 he reached a breaking point after having witnessed for years the atrocities of that war. He became determined to find a world in which universal values prevailed and the horror of war could never be repeated. With that, arguably naive, intent, he traveled to Africa on a quest for a society untarnished by "civilization." He found the Nubas, a southern Sudanese people living in the region around Kordofan, and developed a series

of pictures of and writings about them and their customs. His photographs and writings serve as an intimate and revealing record of the state of Africa just before the "modernizing" changes of the postwar era began. Using a Rolleiflex and a Leica to capture images, and keeping copious diaries, Rodger invented the genre of "package stories," which he sold to magazines like National Geographic. His famous portrait of a dignified Korongo Nuba wrestling champion being carried aloft the shoulders of his defeated foe caught the attention of the German photographer Leni Riefenstahl, who would later document the Nubas herself. This compelling, 120-page, diary-sized hardcover includes Rodger's original text and 38 excellent black-and-white reproductions. --A.C. Smith

'This facsimile edition, the size of an ordinary novel, tells the story of Rodger's great African journey and how he came to know the Nuba people. It combines great travel writing with some of the best known travel photography of our era. It's a wonderful little book.' (British Journal of Photography)

'One of the classics of photographic literature ... a remarkable anthropological study cum travel book, small in format, yet perfectly formed.' (Art Newspaper) 'This classic collection of photographic images, accompanied by Rodger's honed text, is a stunning testament to a way of life long since vanished in Africa.' (Good Book Guide)

Reading about this society is captivating. One wonders how other societies approach relationships, sexuality, raising of young, living in communities, violence, deviant behavior, aging, spirituality and religion, and death. This is a society without much in the way of status symbols and without money. If you are seeking to learn about human behavior, you will enjoy this book; it will set you thinking.

Very informative.

The 1999 British book *Village of the Nubas* by writer-photographer George Rodger (1908-95) recounts a 1949 incursion into the South Kordofan state of the Sudan (permission from Khartoum was easy, driving in very difficult), the prodigious hospitality of three villages, each with an Arab sheikh, and each specializing in a different form of sportive combat: wrestling, club-fighting, and use of spiked bracelets, the last inflicting the most damage. The book expands upon a 1951 National Geographic piece that ran 30 pages. The arrangement does not fit the text in that wrestling photos spill over for several sections. The archetypal photo (on p. 80) is of one triumphant naked wrestler being carried on the shoulders of another man (the text makes me question Peter Hamilton's surmise in a very useful preface that it is the vanquished man). In that

Rodger was celebrating the Nubas (there are a hundred Kordofanian languages) as a rare link with the Africa of time passed. Progress of any kind had passed them by, according to Hamilton, Rodger felt saddened that his words and pictures, published in magazine articles throughout the world, brought the Nubas to the attention not merely of the outside world, but [of] their own government. The newly independent Islamic state pressured the Nubas into changing their way of life, obliging them to cover their bodies and outlawing their fighting contests. Rodger and his entourage were only there eleven days, and the book does not pretend to be an ethnography (the ethnographer of the Nuba Mountains was R.C. Stevenson, who had begun publishing on them before Rodger's sojourn). Rodger's descriptions are travel writing with black-and-white photos (in the book; Hamilton says Rodger shot some in color, as Leni Riefenstahl would do and have published in a much larger format than the posthumous Phaidon Rodger book). Alas, the South Sudan was devastated in the civil wars beginning soon after the publication of the book, that did not really end with 2011 division of North and South Sudan, continuing with major famine now.

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