REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Cultural Toponymy on the Sudanese Nile*

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I. Environmental Perceptions

Toponymic research on the Sudanese Nile has been closely related to dam projects and resettlement. The present study will focus particularly on the results of recent work in the Third Cataract area.

A. The Northern Riverain Sudan (including the Second Cataract Area)

In 1964 Nubians of the Northern Sudan were resettled far away from the Nile near Khashm al-Qirba (14° 55' N, 35° 54'E). Most of these people were bilingual in Nubian and Arabic. They are now deeply concerned about a shift away from Nubian within the younger generation, especially in urban areas. Memories of the original homelands on the river are now being collected with a focus on questions such as the following: What places do you remember? Why were they important to you? This investigation is stimulating a remarkable degree of enthusiasm and support from the people themselves. They are consciously preserving important perceptions of their traditional environment.

B. The Third Cataract Area

A similar sort of investigation is proceeding among the present-day residents of the Third Cataract of the Nile near Kajbaar (19° 56' N, 30° 32'E). In this area there are plans for a dam, but no timetable yet for a resettlement. The inhabitants are concerned that their homeland might be flooded and in response to this situation they have been publishing a newspaper entitled *Kajbār* (كجبار). The majority of these people are bilinguals in Nubian and Arabic. As part of the geographical survey they are being asked why the places in which they still live are important to them. This investigation is also stimulating enthusiasm and support from the people themselves, especially for a more extensive collection of genealogical and historical traditions associated with geographical names.

C. The Fourth Cataract Area

The construction of a dam at the Fourth Cataract (18° 45' N, 32° 03'E) is well advanced and a crisis survey of geographical names is being conducted there by Muḥammad Jalaal Haashim. The residents of this area are being resettled in locations near the Nile further downstream. Although a few Nubian geographical names have been detected, the inhabitants generally do not speak Nubian, but speak varieties of Arabic reflecting their ethnic identities, e.g. *Manaṣīr* and *Shāyqiyya*.

II. Ethnolinguistic Diversity

The three principal languages in contact today in the general region of the Third Cataract are Arabic and two mutually unintelligible Nubian languages, i.e. Nobíin Nubian [often called 'Maḥasī' in the literature] and Dungulāwī Nubian. The Third Cataract is located just north of the ethnolinguistic border between the Nobíin language and the Dungulāwī language.

Within the Nobíin-speaking area of the Third Cataract there are small villages bearing the Nubian name **Árab ikki** 'hamlet of the Arabs [i.e., non-Nubians]'. Some of the inhabitants are *Manaṣīr* Arabs from upstream near the Fourth Cataract. Others are *Kababīsh* Arabs from Kordofan and the western Sudan with their own distinctive dialect of Arabic. The *Kababīsh* Arabs are associated with the camel caravans which even at the present time can be seen arriving from the west.

An ethnic distinction between Arabs and Nubians is overtly marked by use of the term 'Arab' in **Árab ikki**. The ethnic situation of blacksmiths is different. Blacksmiths appear to be fairly well integrated into Nubian culture. They speak the local Nubian language, but they tend to live in separate villages. When a Nubian informant (not a blacksmith) described **Tebdíkki** < **tébid** + **ikki** 'hamlet (of the) blacksmith', he maintained that the blacksmiths comprised a large kinship group that originated 'in Dungula'.

III. Perceptions of the Landscape in the Third Cataract Area: the Fortress or Fortified House

The fortified house is a prominent feature of the landscape of the Third Cataract area. The Nubian word **díffi** 'fortified house' appears again and again in geographical names. The area provides numerous examples of fortified houses, mostly in ruins. All examples of the **díffi** are associated with times gone by and sometimes with precise historical events. Most of them are no longer inhabited. This might suggest that the **díffi** is no longer of great importance to present-day inhabitants, although it must have been essential in previous centuries of greater turbulence and insecurity. However, it soon becomes apparent that such a view underestimates the strong concern that some Nubians have for their own history. An understanding of the relationship of the fortified houses to each other requires a thorough knowledge of local historical traditions.

The **díffi** may be linked with another geographical feature, e.g. **Diffín aarti** 'island of the fortress' (19° 42' N, 30° 21.9' E) and **Diffín aarti kudúud** 'small island of the fortress' (19° 42' N, 30° 22' E). More often, **díffi** is associated with an ancestor or the descendants of a common ancestor, e.g. **Ab'shúushanciin díffi** 'the fortified house of the people of Abū Shūsha' (19° 56' N, 30° 20' E).

A variant form of the word **díffi** is widely known from the names of two massive mud brick structures of ancient Kerma (19° 38' N, 30° 25' E), i.e. the 'Western Deffufa' and the 'Eastern Deffufa'. In his dictionary ʿAwn al-Sharīf Qāsim (2002, 338) treats 'Dafūfa' (دَفُوفة) as a Sudanese Colloquial Arabic word [without the double *ff*] and confirms that it is '... a kind of archaeological structure from the ancient Kerma civilisation and it is [derived] from the Maḥasī word *diffi* meaning walled village or

fortress'. The two mud brick structures of Kerma are located on the southern or 'Dungulāwī' side of the ethnolinguistic border. However, the name *Dafūfa* is Maḥasī [Nobíin] rather than Dungulāwī in origin. If it were Dungulāwī, the name would be pronounced with **b** rather than **f**. The Dungulāwī cognate for **díffi** is **díb** (Armbruster 1965, 50), as in **Kowwán díb**, the ruined temple site known in the literature as 'Kawa' [but more accurately **Kówwa** and **Kowwán díb**, transcribed and published by Bell and Haashim (2002)]. Also in the Kenzi dialect, closely related to Dungulāwī, the word is **díb**, as in **Súan díb** 'Aswān' (Massenbach 1933, 157).

When speaking Arabic, the Maḥas often pronounce *dafūfa* as *dufūfa*. This has the grammatical form of an Arabic broken plural. More precisely, it is formed with an unusual pattern of the broken plural, as follows:

[Arabic Plural Form - Vowel pattern: **-u-ū-a**]

Gloss	Singular	Plural
'maternal uncle'	*khāl*	*khuʾūla*
'paternal uncle'	*ʿamm*	*ʿumūma* (also *ʿumūm*)
'fortress'	*diffi*	*dufūfa*

This pluralizing vowel pattern might be called the 'avuncular' pattern due to its appearance in Arabic words meaning 'uncle'. On the other hand, in Maḥas Nubian the plural of **díffi** is not formed by such vowel changes, but by suffixes and a shift from high tone [indicated by an acute accent] to low tone as follows:

[Nubian Plural form – Suffixes and Tone]

Singular (initial high tone)	+	Plural suffix	→	Plural form
díffi	+	**i** (low tone)	→	**diffi-i**
díffi	+	**gúu** (high tone)	→	**diffi-gúu** (**diffi** - both syllables low tone)

The shift of tone (musical pitch) above shows one of the chief complexities in recording Nubian words and phrases with precision. The word **diffi** bears an inherent high tone on its initial syllable. This high tone is part of the unpredictable phonological information about the word **diffi** and it should be marked in dictionaries. However, when the word appears in the context of various phrases, the inherent tone pattern may be changed as a result of contextual rules. For example, the high tone regularly becomes low before a plural suffix, whether the suffix itself has high tone or low tone. There may be further variation when a Nubian phrase, for example, a complex geographical name, is pronounced in the context of Arabic speech rather than Nubian. Prominent syllables in Arabic are generally marked by stress (relative loudness) rather than tone (musical pitch). Whether loudness or pitch operates as a distinctive feature in the colloquial Arabic of the Maḥas remains to be demonstrated. Loudness may often substitute for pitch, but the intricate set of rules for governing variations of prominence in Nubian cannot be assumed to apply in Arabic, even when the speaker is bilingual.

Since the plural form *Dufūfa* is formed according to Arabic rules of derivation rather than Nubian ones, it can be argued that the Nubian word **diffi** must have become established as a loanword in the colloquial Arabic of the Maḥas and then, in the context of colloquial Arabic, it became subject to Arabic rules for plural derivation.

IV. The Need to Check Toponyms in the Local Language

In a bilingual situation, when both the investigator and the informant speak Arabic as well as Nubian, there is a risk that the interview will take place in Arabic alone. However, the interview must be conducted in both languages. Otherwise, vital information on the geographical name may be lost.

In the context of Arabic speech there is a locality known by the non-Arabic name of 'Nauri' (19° 55' N, 30° 26' E). It has two spectacular hills *al-Tōmāt* 'the twin girls', one of them bearing a lengthy hieroglyphic inscription of the early XIXth Dynasty of ancient Egypt. When the survey team was investigating Nauri, they noted that the basic form of this name in Nubian speech was not Nauri, but **Nawíir**. No meaning was supplied for the name by local informants. However, a plausible argument can be made for the survival of a mediaeval Nubian word. Once the modern name in Nubian was confirmed as **Nawíir**, David Edwards observed that a similar mediaeval Nubian form appeared in Browne (1988, 9, ii. 24, also plate 8) glossed as 'shrine' [Greek ναος]. Although the example was damaged, an intact form appeared in Browne (1982, 44: 111, line 8), where it was glossed as 'tabernacle' since it was a Nubian translation of the Greek word σκηνη 'tent' with reference to the tabernacle of the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:4, cf. 9:1). In his *Old Nubian Dictionary* Browne (1996, 196) glossed the word as ' "tent, shrine" Cf. N. *nauar* "leather" '. Werner (1987, 369) cited that modern Nobíin word as '*náwá* pl. *nàwàrìi* "Haut, Fell" '. One hypothesis suggested by the evidence above is that there had been a mighty tabernacle made of skins in this location, presumably in Christian times. Another hypothesis, also alluding to tents, would situate the geographical name in early modern times instead. It is based upon an oral tradition which the survey team recorded in the royal village of **Kukke** (20° 02' N, 30° 35'E). This tradition maintained that **Nawíir** was the military headquarters of the Kingdom of **Kukke** (tradition recorded from Maqbūlī ʿUthmān Muḥammad of Kukke by Muḥammad Jalaal Haashim).

Variant spellings of the name of this royal village illustrate some of the complications arising from Nubian-Arabic bilingualism. The village is called **Kukke** in Nubian and *Kukka* in Arabic. Why is there an **e** in Nubian and a corresponding *a* in Arabic? The **e** has its own identity among the five short vowels in the phonemic system of Nubian, but it has no distinctive place among the three short vowels in the phonemic system of Sudanese colloquial Arabic (*a, i* and *u*). The **e** of Nubian is often construed as an *a* in Arabic, especially when it occurs in word final position, since the final *a* can be readily misinterpreted as the ubiquitous feminine ending in Arabic. ʿAwn al-Sharīf Qāsim (1996: 5, 1986) represents the name in Arabic script as follows: كُكّة (*Kukka*) with the feminine ending (ة). There is a widespread tendency now for one and the same person to say *Kukka* when speaking Arabic and **Kukke** when speaking Nubian [Nobíin].

In publications using Roman script the first syllable of this name is often written with an **o** instead of a **u**, i.e. as 'Koka'. Correspondingly, in the most recent edition of his dictionary of Sudanese colloquial Arabic, `Awn al-Sharīf Qāsim (2002: 872) represents the name as having a long $\bar{o}$ indicated by a slash [/] which he inserted over the و of the following representation: كوكى . According to this system of representation, the slash indicates that the Arabic letter و is to be read as a long $\bar{o}$ rather than either a long $\bar{u}$ or a diphthong *aw*. This version of the name would have been transliterated as *Kōka* [probably not *Kōkī*]. The survey team checked for this pronunciation with a number of informants, some of them from **Kukke** itself, e.g. Zakiyya Kambāl, granddaughter of one king of **Kukke** and niece of another. Thanks are due to her and also to another standard-bearer of **Kukke** traditions, Maqbūlī `Uthmān Muḥammad. No pronunciation with a long $\bar{o}$ in this name has yet been attested by the team in the context of spoken Nubian or spoken Arabic. Furthermore, every pronunciation recorded by the team shows a doubling of the medial consonant: **kk** (not just a single **k**). This raises the question of how the Arabic spelling *Kōka* originated. (1) Is it based on the transcription of a variant pronunciation which has not yet been attested by the team? Or (2) did it originate as an Arabic transliteration of the spelling 'Koka' which was found in European language texts? Explanation (2) is adopted for the time being until there is clear evidence to support explanation (1).

Another possibility requires investigation. The initial syllable was transcribed by the team as having a short **o** rather than a long $\bar{o}$. A short **o** has its own identity among the five short vowels in the phonemic system of Nubian, but it has no place among the three short vowels in the phonemic system of Sudanese colloquial Arabic (*a, i* and *u*). If there is a phonemically distinctive short **o**, it will be found in the context of Nubian rather than the context of Arabic. However, the survey team has not yet been able to confirm the independent existence of a variant pronunciation '**Kokke**' in Nubian.

The interplay of Arabic and Nubian is pervasive in geographical names of the Maḥas. Various combinations of Nubian and Arabic words and Nubian and Arabic constructions may be observed below.

Nubian Words in a Nubian Construction

A name such as **Diffîn aarti** 'island of the fort' is completely Nubian in both grammatical construction and vocabulary. The Nubian grammatical construction is as follows:

    [noun + genitive **n**] + head noun of the genitive construction
    [Diffi +   n] + aarti
     'fort's'   'island'

Arabic Words in an Arabic Construction

The Arabic translation of this (*jazīrat al-burj*) has a very different grammatical construction as follows:

    head noun of the genitive construction + [article *al-* + noun]

jazīrat	+ [*al-*	+ *burj*]
'island'	(of) 'the'	+ 'fort'

Arabic Words in a Nubian Construction

Arabic words often appear in the Nubian grammatical construction as follows:

Abu Fáatman gubbá 'the dome of Abū Fāṭima [the father of Fāṭima]'

Every word here is originally Arabic except for the Nubian genitival **n**. The Nubian high tone appears on the final **á** of **gubbá** 'dome', even though it is a loan-word of Arabic origin.

Nubian Words in an Arabic Construction

The reverse phenomenon is less common, but there are some examples of Nubian words in Arabic constructions, e.g. *Jabal `Ali Barsi* 'the Mountain of `Alī Barsi', *Barsi* being the Nubian word for 'twin'.

Shift from Nubian to Arabic

The Arabic name *Gharbí Símit* '**Símid** West' has now generally replaced the older Nubian name **Simmín og** 'facing **Símid**' [literally '**Símid**'s bosom', figuratively 'the west bank opposite the island of **Símid**'] (19° 45' N, 30° 20' E). The Nubian name can be analysed in terms of the following changes, tone shift and assimilation:

Símid n og → **Símdi n og** → **Simdí n og** → **Simmí n og** = **Simmín og**

There is also an Arabic *Shergí Símit* '**Símid** East' presented here as a Nubian name from a Nubian language context. Noteworthy is the short *e*, distinctive in Nubian, but not in Arabic. The *a* in *Gharbí* above remains *a* even in a Nubian language context, probably due to the influence of the acoustically grave feature of the previous consonant.

V. Multicultural Toponymy

Several other languages are represented in the corpus of Nubian geographical names. Muḥammad Jalaal Haashim and Herman Bell argued elsewhere in favour of a survival of a modern Nubian geographical name from ancient Egyptian (Bell and Haashim, 2002). The Ottoman presence is represented by geographical names and even by an inscription in Ottoman Turkish. There was a 'Turkish' mosque in **Hasann ikki** 'the hamlet of Ḥasan' (20° 02' N, 30° 35'E) in **Kukke**. This mosque was said to have been founded by a 'Turk', a term which has often been associated with an elite that ruled Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman sultan. The date inscribed on the mosque in an inscription partly in Ottoman Turkish was 1244 Hijrī [1828-29 A.D.]. There was also a specific mention of Ibrāhīm Pasha. However complicated the ethnic identification of the Egyptian 'Turks' may be, it is still possible to observe toponymic elements from the Turkish language. For example, close to the mosque is a place called **Eshláag Túrki** 'the Turkish barracks'. The term **Eshláag** is treated by 'Awn al-Sharīf Qāsim (2002,43: إشلاق ق [*ishlāq*]) as a variant form of a colloquial Sudanese Arabic word (ibid, 770: قِشلاق ق [*qishlāq*] derived from an older form of the modern Turkish word *kışla* 'barracks'. The

final **g** [graphic *q*, Turkish *ğ*] is probably not the Nubian object suffix that remains linked to foreign words transmitted via Nubian into colloquial Arabic. At least until the 18th century the normal spelling for this word in Ottoman Turkish was قشلاق [*qıshlāq*] with the ق representing the sound *k* adjacent to a back vowel; this is represented in Turkish as *kışlağ → kışlak* (*Tarama Sözlüğü*, 1963-77, 4, 2521-22). **Eshláag Túrki** is a huge **díffi**, even larger than the near-by royal palace of **Kukke**.

Characteristic toponymic patterns are now being collected for each of the languages which is known, or suspected, to have contributed to the corpus of geographical names in the Nubian area. These patterns are intended to provide a resource to assist in assessing claims on the possible origin of geographical names from languages such as Turkish, Beja, Berber, and even Meroitic. Data is also being collected on etymologies for which convincing arguments have been made.

Professional etymology has sometimes been regarded as the exclusive preserve of specialists. We would like to argue that there is also a role for non-specialists. They should be encouraged to express their opinions and report on cultural activities associated with geographical names, such as rituals, poems, folk tales and even folk etymologies.

VI. Folk Toponymy in a Multicultural Setting

There has recently been an appreciation of the concept of 'folk linguistics', that is, linguistics conceived and practised by non-specialists. A ubiquitous illustration of folk linguistics in Nubia is the claim that the Pharaoh Tutankhamun was Nubian since his name appears to consist of three Nubian words: **tood** 'son'+ **aany** 'life' + **aman** 'water' [rather than three ancient Egyptian words: twt 'image' +'nx 'living' +'mwn 'Amun' (the ancient divinity)]. Linguists normally reject the Nubian version, although the possibility of an Egyptian/Nubian loan relationship for the words 'life/living' is plausible. Nevertheless, from the perspective of folk linguistics the ideological claim that Tutankhamun was a Nubian is noteworthy.

Folk toponymy is parallel to folk linguistics. The geographical name **Túmbus** at the southern end of the Third Cataract area presents a situation somewhat similar to the Tutankhamun claim. **Túmbus** was reported by a local Nubian informant possibly to be derived from 'Tuthmosis,' the name of a Pharaoh who left inscriptions in that place. However, the informant attributed this opinion ultimately to 'an archaeologist'. There was no evidence that this item had acquired the status of a local 'folk' opinion. The word 'folk' implies a vitality of the concepts within the local community.

'Folk toponymy' is practised with great enthusiasm in the Sudan, often with an ideological motivation, such as the attempt to link geographical names in different parts of the country in line with a desire to stress national unity in a country of great ethnolinguistic diversity. In spite of a distaste for speculation, the historian cannot completely ignore folk toponymy since it may contain kernels of historical evidence. More importantly, folk toponymy reveals a great deal about cultural values and ideologies. It provides abundant and ideologically significant answers to the very

questions asked in the toponymic interviews. What places do you remember? Why were they important to you?

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