

SUDAN & NUBIA

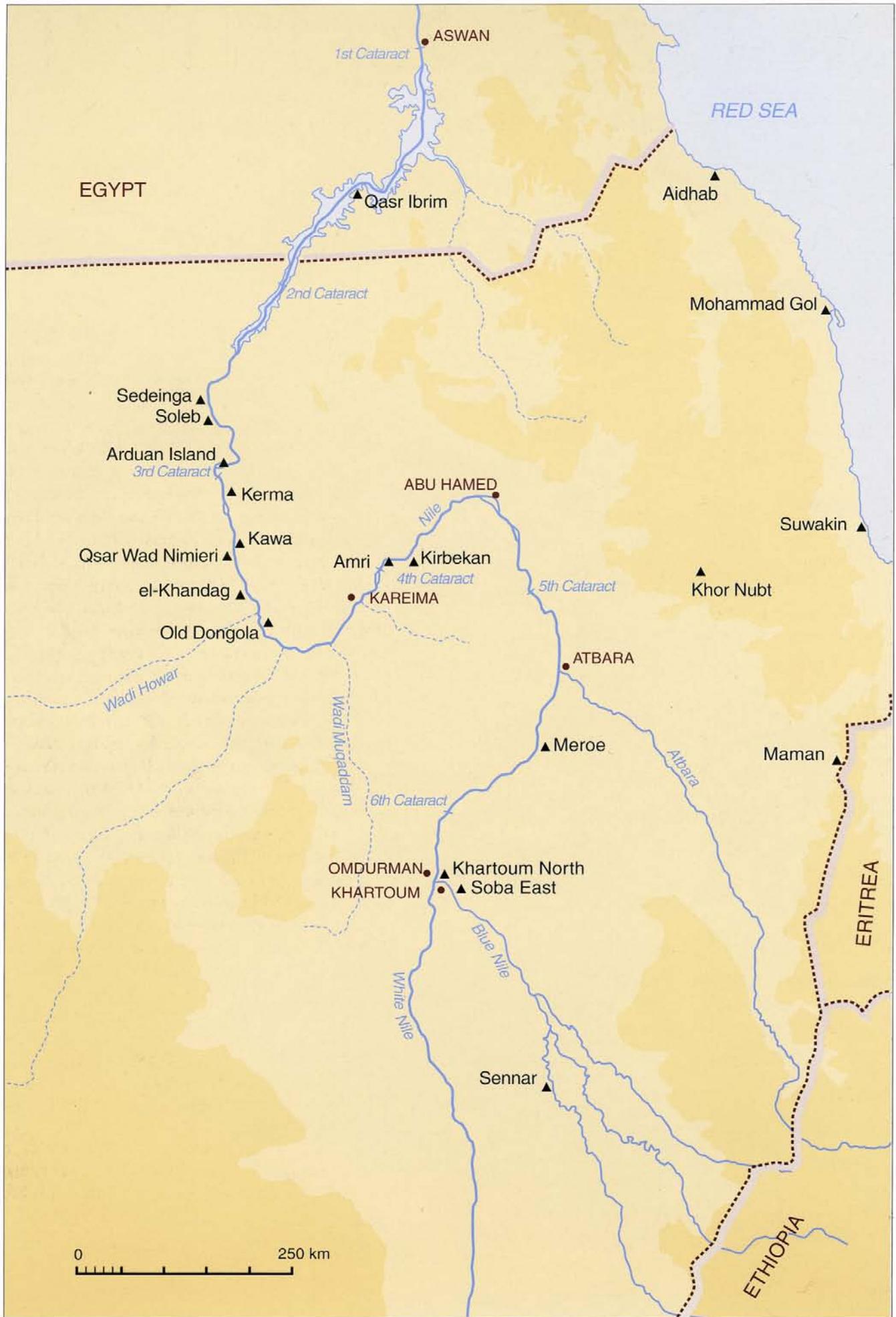
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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Front Cover: Meroe. Pyramid BEG N 18 (type XII) before restoration work on the chapel. In the background pyramid BEG N 9 (type VII). Photo taken by F. W. Hinkel in 1980 from the top of BEG N 19 (slide 5467).

Introduction

Vivian Davies

During the last winter the Society resumed its flagship project at Kawa, among other things uncovering more of the early Kushite town, including an extraordinary mud-brick building once decorated with wall-paintings showing royal and divine figures and containing the remains of large ceramic figures of the gods Bes and Beset (see Welsby below). We also responded to the international appeal for help from the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums to document sites threatened by the planned Merowe Dam, carrying out a survey on the left bank of the Nile and on the islands between Amri and Kirkeban above the Fourth Cataract which identified well over a hundred sites of different types and periods (Welsby). Qasr Ibrim, for many years under excavation by the Egypt Exploration Society and still yielding information of first-rate importance (Rose), embodies an acute reminder of the destructive consequences of dams and of the loss to knowledge that such schemes entail.

The need for rescue-work in response to various threats (environmental as well as man-made) is a thread running through much of this issue, which also includes reports on the study and conservation of the monuments at Meroe (Hinkel), excavation necessitated by road-building at Soba East (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), archaeological survey in the little-known Fifth Cataract region (Yousef El-Amin and Edwards), and continuing investigation of the Mahas region at the Third Cataract (Edwards and Ali Osman), the latter an interdisciplinary project which now valuably incorporates ecological, ethnographic and linguistic components (Muhammad Jalal Hashim and Bell). We are also very pleased to include two papers on aspects of Islamic archaeology in the Sudan (Intisar Soghayroun el-Zein and Salah Omer Elsadig), hitherto a chronically neglected subject but clearly one with great potential for further research.

It is an enormous pleasure to report that Professor William Y. Adams, one of the great names of modern Sudanese archaeology, has accepted our invitation to become Honorary President of SARS, in succession to the late Sir Laurence Kirwan. Professor Adams takes office in time to preside over our tenth anniversary in 2001, a year in which SARS celebrates a decade of progressive achievement and looks forward to the formidable but exciting challenges that lie ahead.

Reconstructing the History of Settlement Patterns in the Mahas: Evidence from Language and Place-names

Mubammad Jalal Hashim and Herman Bell

The region of the Third Cataract of the Nile is threatened by a projected dam at Kajbar [Kajbáar].¹ An interdisciplinary enterprise known as the Mahas Project is now being conducted there by the Department of Archaeology of the University of Khartoum. Participants representing various disciplines share the goal of reconstructing the history of boundaries and settlement patterns. In addition to archaeological work, the project includes an ecological study, an investigation of Nubian dialects and a survey of Nubian geographical names.

The survey of place-names in 1999-2000 covered the islands and both riverbanks from the shaikhdom of Kajbar [Kajbáar] (19° 56'N/30° 32'E) to the southern part of the shaikhdom of Tajab [Taajáab] (19° 49'N/30° 18'E). The circuitous routes of the survey especially around the island of Arduan [Arduáan] added up to more than 100 kilometres.

The study of place-names involves the investigator directly with the local communities to a much greater degree than is normal with archaeological work. It opens new dimensions of evidence for solving problems of mutual concern. The present report will focus on recent contributions of the Survey of Nubian Place-names and also on the results of the investigation of Nubian dialects.

Project Procedures and Personnel

The Mahas Project has a Director, Ali Osman Salih, who is not only a native speaker of the local Nubian language, but also an original resident of the village of Mashakéela in the Third Cataract region. He has been producing studies of the region for more than three decades (Osman 1969; 1978; 1982). In recent years he has collaborated with David Edwards (Osman and Edwards 1992; Edwards and Osman 1992; 1994). Their insights are valuable, not least in helping to formulate hypotheses for further investigation.

The Survey of Nubian Place-names was activated within the Mahas Project in April 1999 as a result of a grant from the Bryan Haycock Memorial Fund administered by the British Institute in Eastern Africa. The late Bryan Haycock combined an interest in the Nubian languages with his work on Sudanese archaeology. The Old Nubian language was the

subject of his last lecture before he was fatally injured by a car as he was cycling home in Khartoum in 1973. He had always devoted himself to his Sudanese students, and one of these students was Ali Osman.

The recent Survey of Nubian Place-names was the outgrowth of a much earlier survey conducted in 1962-64 in the areas which were flooded by the waters of the High Dam near Aswan (Bell 1970). The recent survey began in early 1999 with a pilot project. A Nubian research investigator, Muhammad Jalal Hashim, was instructed in fieldwork procedures. He was given copies of the *Mahas Survey Report* 1 and 2 (Edwards and Osman 1992; 1994) in order that he might familiarize himself with the identified archaeological sites before he began his fieldwork. He then recorded place-names from the Kajbar cataract to a point about 15 kilometres upstream as far as the shaikhdoms of Nauri [Náwri] and Shofein [Shooféin].² On a second field trip he was accompanied by Mohammed El Hadi Hashim who provided valuable insights from his extensive knowledge of the Nubian language.

At the end of May 1999 the results of the fieldwork were submitted to Al-Amin Abu Manga, Head of the Department of Sudanese and African Languages at the Institute of African and Asian Studies of the University of Khartoum, for his inspection. Cassette recordings of the place-names were submitted to him and the field transcription of the place-names was double-checked by him together with his postgraduate students in Khartoum.

Abu Manga photocopied all of the research materials and sent them to Oxford for the survey co-ordinator, Herman Bell, to examine the results and make a needs analysis. The co-ordinator was able to suggest remedial training and make plans to visit the sites and to correct several shortcomings in the initial fieldwork. A woman postgraduate student of Abu Manga's, Asmaa Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, was trained to participate in fieldwork and to investigate the toponymic perspectives of Nubian women.

The aim of fieldwork in December 1999 was to test and refine the results of the pilot survey. Further fieldwork in March and April 2000 covered the whole of the island of Arduan [Arduáan] and adjacent areas. Support was offered by the Director of the Mahas Project, Ali Osman Salih, and by his fellow archaeologist, David Edwards. Members of the toponymic team were as follows: survey co-ordinator, Herman Bell; principal field investigator, Muhammad Jalal Hashim and three women field investigators, Asmaa Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, Rihab Yahia Dafalla Adam and Entisar El-Sideeg El-Hassan, all three of them postgraduates from the Department of Sudanese and African Languages, Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum. Al-Amin Abu Manga provided training and support

¹ Nubian spellings appear in square brackets. The accent marks the first high tone in the basic dictionary form of the name. Gemination of consonants is indicated by doubling the consonant. Vowel length is marked by doubling the vowel.

² Note that **ee** in Nubian names does not sound like the vowel in the English word 'see', but closer to the vowel in 'say'. Similarly, **oo** does not sound like the vowel in "boot", but closer to the vowel in "boat".



in Khartoum. Ahmed El-Motassim offered comparative evidence on Nubian place-names from his previous work in the Rubatab area. Intisar Soghayroun El-Zein of the Department of Archaeology offered insights on the Islamic period, and especially on the fortified houses of the region. Yahia Fadl Tahir of the Department of Archaeology supplied information on the area of his original residence in the Third Cataract region.

The University of Khartoum, the Sudan Ministry of Higher Education and the Sudan Ministry of Surveys all gave support to the project. The Ministry of Surveys provided detailed air photographs of the Third Cataract region. With these photographs David Edwards will be able to refine the maps which he has already produced on the basis of satellite photographs.

A Musical Introduction

The direct involvement of the toponymic team with the local communities had a dramatic result. Residents directed the team to a number of rock gongs (Plates 1 and 2). These are huge granite boulders which produce a musical sound when they are struck. When Catherine Fagg (1997, 40-41) published a world survey of this phenomenon, she had not been informed of any rock gongs from Nubia and was able

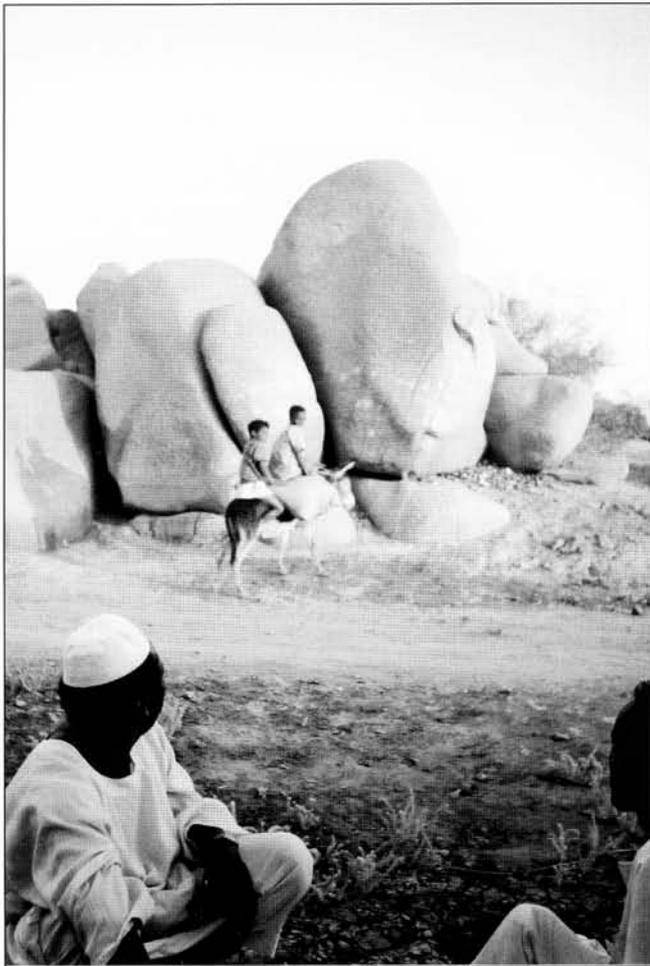


Plate 1. The larger rock gong at Kidállá (tallest rock).

to list only three for the whole of the Sudan. As a result of the Mahas Project, this number has more than tripled. Seven rock gongs have now been identified in the Third Cataract region alone and there is no reason to believe that this has exhausted the possibilities.

The rock gongs have onomatopoeic Nubian names such as Kiddállá 'rock-striking' [two gongs here] (19° 57'N/30° 20'E), Konngéel 'ringing' (19° 54'N/30° 20'E), Kidnuungúil 'rock-tolling' (19° 53'N/30° 24'E) or Kidindongúir 'rock-gong' (19° 54'N/30° 24'E). The last name has a variant Kidindallúuka 'rock-drum', in which 'drum' is represented by dallúuka, a loan-word from Arabic into Nubian.

As long ago as 1991 Edwards and Osman identified a rock gong in the southern part of the Third Cataract region on the east bank (19° 44' 15"N/30° 23'E). They described it as a 'delicately balanced boulder' with 'remarkable resonant qualities and ... a number of small depressions pecked into its face' (Edwards and Osman 1992, 32). This description equally fits the six above-mentioned rock gongs which were observed further north on or adjacent to the island of Arduan during the 1999-2000 season.

The three women field investigators, Asmaa Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, Rihab Yahia Dafalla Adam and Entisar El-Sideeg El-Hassan, conducted an interview with elderly women and men who lived in the neighbourhood of Kidindongúir in order to determine the function of this rock gong. There were no reports of special women's rituals such as the *zār*, but there were suggestions of treasure, a divine origin for the gong and even its possible significance as a totem for ancient Nubians. Sparks of fire were said to fly from it when struck and these sparks were claimed to induce joy. It was a place where children have always gone to sing and play.

Muhammad Jalal Hashim observed that Christian sites and even rock engravings of crosses were frequently located near the gongs. He noted that the rock gong known as Konngéel produced bell-like sounds which were loud and clear over a range of several hundred metres, within earshot of near-by dwellings. He therefore proposed the possibility of a religious function, mediaeval, if not modern, as an hypothesis for further investigation.

Archaeological sites among the settlements

The direct involvement of the toponymic team with the local communities had another result. Inhabitants reported a number of new archaeological sites in their residential areas, e.g. Sóore (see Plates 4 and 5). This data was immediately reported to the archaeological survey.

Geographical Names

The first task of the Survey of Nubian Place-names is to make accurate transcriptions. The names are transcribed in three ways; (1) phonetic symbols, (2) a system of Arabic-based characters and (3) a system of Old Nubian characters, e.g.



Plate 2. The smaller rock gong at Kidálla within earsbot of the larger. Mubammad Jalal Hashim at work.

Konngéel: phonetic symbols - koηηéel, Arabic-based characters - كَنْيَل and Old Nubian characters - KOFFEEX. This provides not only a triangular check for accuracy, but also evidence on the comparative efficiency of each of these systems.

Place-names need to be elicited both in the context of Nubian sentences and in the context of Arabic sentences. Certain place-names have been observed to differ according to language. For instance, the Mahas Kingdom of Kokka would be pronounced by one and the same person as Kokka in Arabic, but Kókke in Nubian.

There are many inaccuracies on the published maps and the phonology of Nubian is seldom represented with precision. For instance, a shaikhdóm located (19° 48'N/30° 18'E) just to the southwest of Arduan island appears as 'Taqab' on the English map: Sudan Survey Department, Khartoum (Topo. No. 5 625 40), corrected 1983. This is a transliteration of the Arabic version of the name, where the Arabic letter qāf, represented as q in English, indicates the sound of the hard g in Sudanese colloquial Arabic (Arabic map: Sudan Survey Department, Khartoum [Topo. No. 1163], corrected 1983). Thus both the English and Arabic maps mistakenly indicate that the name is pronounced 'Tagab'. Edwards and Osman (1994, 4) gave an improved version of this name as 'Tajab'. However, if the Nubian pronunciation is to be represented fully, then the name should be written 'Tajááb' with the doubling of the letter 'a' indicating vowel length and the acute accent indicating the first high tone in the name.

Musical Tone

Musical tones in the Nubian languages have the potential to distinguish one word from another. However, musical tones are also subject to variation from one dialect to the next. This variation created a problem early in the fieldwork.

The tonal system of the Nobíin Nubian language has been published, but the analyses are based on dialects to the north of the Mahas. The tonal system of the Mahas dialect is different.

In the Mahas dialect an initial high tone in a word shifts to the following syllable when the word is followed by a suffix. This is illustrated below with the Nubian word áman 'water' followed by the suffix góo(n) 'and'.

	in isolation	before a suffix
Sikkóod and further north	áman	áman-góon
Mahas	áman	amán-góo

The chart below shows some complications which result from this phenomenon. In isolation it is extremely difficult to distinguish a name with only low tones from a name with an initial high tone (Sabo versus Návri). Similarly, before a suffix it is impossible to distinguish a name with a shifted high tone mark on the second syllable from a name with an original high tone mark on the second syllable (Nawír versus Kajbáar).



in isolation	before a suffix
Sabo	Sabo-kóo
Náwri	<u>Nawír</u> -kóo
Kajbáar	<u>Kajbáar</u> -kóo

The only way to be sure that a name, such as Nauri [Náwri], has an initial high tone in isolation is to test it both in isolation and before a suffix.³

Musical tone is characteristic not only of Nobīn, but also of its sister language, Dungulāwī immediately to the south. These two Nubian languages are not mutually intelligible, but they are remarkably similar in phonology. A study by Ibrāhīm Hamid ‘Abd al-Karim and Herman Bell (1990) concludes that Dungulāwī makes use of musical tone in its phonology and that Dungulāwī and Nobīn show considerable similarity in their tonal systems.

Armbruster (1965, 120) marked Dungulāwī for stress rather than tone. A problem with his analysis may be illustrated by reference to the place-name Kawa. Armbruster (1965, 120) gives this name as ‘káwwa’. Separately he gives an adjective ‘káwwa’ meaning ‘broad, wide’. It seems likely that the place-name ‘káwwa’ is derived from an adjective which describes the landscape. However, Armbruster’s evidence does not demonstrate with certainty that the place-name and the adjective have an identical pronunciation. The acute accent in ‘káwwa’ indicated that the first syllable was stressed, according to his analysis. Normally he would mark one stress in each word. However, if one needs to mark for tone, the situation may be different. An acute accent is used to mark the first high tone in the word. Words and place-names where all tones are low would not require any accent at all. This was the case with the Mahas place-name Sabo above.

In isolation it is extremely difficult to distinguish a name with only low tones from a name with an initial high tone (Sabo versus Náwri). A test frame will need to be designed for Dungulāwī in order to reveal whether the initial vowel in the place-name is high (‘káwwa’) or low (‘kawwa’). The same test will need to be applied to the adjective ‘broad, wide’ to reveal whether it is ‘káwwa’ or ‘kawwa’. Only then can the phonetic identity of the place-name with the adjective be established or rejected.

It is one thing for a toponymist to aim for a more exact transcription of place-names. It is quite another to expect archaeologists to reject established spellings and to adopt more accurate ones, especially when the names are still under analysis. We shall probably not be reading about the temples of Káwwa (or Kawwa?) for some years to come.

³ In this particular name the vowel ‘i’ in the second syllable may also be observed to shift its position with ‘r’ (Náwri versus Nawír). The geographical position of these three places is as follows: Sabo (19° 55’N/30° 32’E), Náwri (19° 56’N/30° 27’E) and Kajbáar (19° 56’N/30° 32’E).

Linguistic Boundaries and Historical Boundaries

The Mahas dialect is bounded by the mutually intelligible dialect of Sikkóod to the north and the distinct Nubian language of Dongola to the south. The northern border area was briefly investigated in April 2000.

The tonal evidence above prompted the team to search for a dialect boundary between the Mahas and Sikkóod. When linguistic boundaries appear on the map, they can be assumed to have historical implications. In the Rhineland there is a celebrated distribution of dialect features known as ‘the Rhenish fan’ (‘der rheinische Fächer’). It has been argued that certain ‘isoglosses’ or geographical boundaries between particular dialectal variants were established due to the prestige of Cologne in the sixteenth century and even as early as the thirteenth century.⁴ The team objective was to identify similar isoglosses between Mahas and Sikkóod.

Since Muhammad Jalal Hashim is a native of Sikkóod, he conferred with the Mahas speakers of the Third Cataract region and arrived at a list of paired items which were considered to distinguish the two dialects. He selected the following ten variations.

1. Sikkóod: detté
Mahas: indaléeg
Gloss: firewood
2. Sikkóod: urkáj
Mahas: jakaró
Gloss: unripe date
3. Sikkóod: diffé
Mahas: gallóka
Gloss: unripe date
4. Sikkóod: ir kokki-nám(i)
Mahas: ir kokkí
Gloss: You knock
5. Sikkóod: immí gallim·uni?
Mahas: irim kawiméene?
Gloss: Why are you not seen?
(Why don’t you appear?)
6. Sikkóod: wildii⁵
Mahas: bitáan
Gloss: children
7. Sikkóod: míra kír
Mahas: géda kír
Gloss: Come running!
8. Sikkóod: hisóon salaa fa sállii⁶
Mahas: hisóon salaa fa dúugi?
Gloss: When are you going to say your prayers?

⁴ Suzanne Romaine in Asher (1994, 2: 903) ‘sixteenth century’ for the ik/ich isogloss and ‘thirteenth century’ for the maken/machen isogloss.

⁵ Wildii is a loan-word from Arabic.

⁶ Sállii is a loan-word from Arabic.

9. Sikkóod: ay mando júukummu
 Mahas: ay mando júwa-ammu
 Gloss: I have not gone there.
10. Sikkóod: ir kire iikkúmmi?
 Mahas: ir kire yámmi?
 Gloss: Haven't you called me?

Items 4 (involving a pronominal suffix on the verb) and examples 9 and 10 (involving a perfect tense suffix) are tightly bound in the grammatical system and are therefore more resistant to borrowing between dialects. This makes them strong diagnostic items for distinguishing dialects.

Muhammad Jalal began his survey in the Sikkóod. He proceeded southwards from Osšimóttö on the east bank and then back northwards to Nulwa on the west bank. Between Soleb and Nulwa he located six isoglosses involving a shift in items 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10. This bundle of isoglosses was doubly significant since it included all of the strong diagnostic items. Soleb was distinguished from Agúula further south by a shift in item number 8 above.

An identical pattern appeared on the east bank from Osšimatto to Wawa (separated by the same six isoglosses) and from Wawa to Koyyimatto (separated by a shift in item 8). The only additional factor on the east bank was the presence of the hamlet of María between Osšimatto and Wawa. María was identical with Wawa except for item 3 where it showed agreement with Osšimatto.

This preliminary dialect survey suggests that the northern boundary of the Mahas dialect is located just north of Soleb. This is also the location of the administrative boundary between Sikkóod and the Mahas, and thus the administrative boundary appears to coincide with a dialect boundary.

Defining the Mahas from a Linguistic Perspective

The southern border of the Mahas has not yet been examined from the point of view of dialect geography. Nevertheless, brief visits in 1999 and 2000 to the complex borderland between the Nobíin and the Dungulāwī languages gave rise to a few observations. According to reports, both flooding and population growth have put pressure on the limited agricultural lands of the Third Cataract region. A number of Mahas people have moved southward and settled around Kerma. In the Kerma region considerable trilingualism may be observed in Mahas (Nobíin), Dungulāwī and Arabic. There are reports that the Mahas have emigrated for centuries even further towards the south. They have prominently established themselves in Khartoum, e.g. Tuti Island and Burri al-Mahas.

Reconstructions of ancient links between the Mahas and the linguistically related people of Dongola are still highly controversial. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (1984-85; 1996) has argued that the Nile Nubian languages are much less closely related than previously thought. Her arguments require a fresh evaluation. They have a direct bearing on

the history of Nubian settlement along the Nile.

Settlement through time: continuous or interrupted?

The survival of ancient place-names implies some sort of continuity in population to achieve the transmission. At Sedeinga, an ancient Egyptian place-name is believed to have been transmitted through 34 centuries. The reference here is to *hwt-Ty* 'the mansion of [Queen] Teye' which is thought to be preserved in the modern Nubian *Adaay-faar*⁷ 'old Adaay' for Sedeinga. Priese (1980, 493) suggests that another ancient Egyptian place-name of the Middle Kingdom has survived as 'Ashmeik' in Sabo just across the river from Kajbáar. The precise location of 'Ashmeik' and the probabilities of an ancient Egyptian origin are under investigation.

Within the Third Cataract region there are a number of place-names with no obvious meaning in Nubian or Arabic. Some of these names may have a Nubian origin. They may have become unintelligible as a result of particular changes within place-names through the centuries. On the other hand, they may have originated in languages other than Nubian. In order to explore the possible origins of these names, the main characteristics of toponyms in languages such as Beja and Ottoman Turkish are being defined. A particular challenge is posed by Meroitic, since the documentary evidence is obscure. Seeking evidence from another source, the team has begun building a record of non-Arabic place-names and associated geographical features in the Meroitic heartland.

The greatest contribution of the Survey of Nubian Place-names will be to more recent periods of history. This coincides with a renewed emphasis on the archaeology of the Christian and Islamic periods. While the survey aims to include place-names of all kinds, certain features have been selected for special attention. One of these is the 'diffi'.

The Diffi

Diffi is a Nobíin word for an old fortified house (Plate 3). Occasionally one of them is imposing enough to be considered a castle. The Nobíin plural of diffi in Nobíin is diffii. The singular diffi has a high tone on the initial syllable. The plural diffii has only low tones.

Another plural is used when people are speaking the local colloquial Arabic. 'Deffufa' represents the Arabized plural form of the Nobíin word. Local people say 'difuufa' or sometimes 'dufuufa' with assimilation of the initial vowel to the uu. One may perhaps be forgiven for opting for the anglicized plural 'diffis' rather than importing the Nubian diffii or the Arabized difuufa.

'Difuufa' is the word familiar to archaeologists as the Western Deffufa, the modern name of the colossal monument in the centre of ancient Kerma of the first half of the second

⁷ This name was last transcribed in 1973 and needs to be checked again for features such as tone and vowel length.

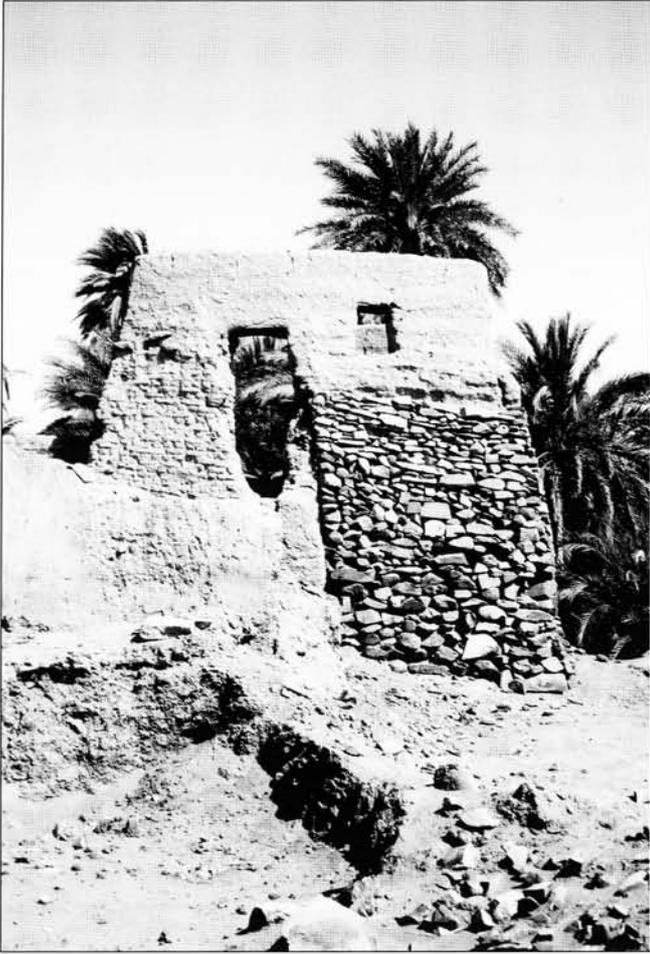


Plate 3. *Abushúusbanciin diffi*, a small fortified house in the northwest of Arduan island (19° 56'N/30° 20'E).

millennium BC. Nora Ferrero (1990, 25) wrote that *Deffufa* was a Nubian term for any fortified brick building.

Kerma is a place where both *Dungulāwī* and *Nobiin* are now spoken, but '*Deffufa*' sprang from a *Nobiin* original. The *Nobiin* word for fortified house is *diffi*, while the *Dungulawī* word is *dib* (Arnbruster 1965, 50). In Old Nubian the word *diffi* is attested as ΔΙΠΠΙ. The Old Nubian word means 'town' and it occasionally corresponds to the Greek word *πολις* (Browne 1996, 45-46). There appears to have been a semantic shift from the mediaeval 'town' to the modern 'fortified house', although the possibility of variant meanings needs to be explored both in Old Nubian and modern Nubian. Looking for a link between 'town' and 'fortified house', one may hypothesize an intermediate semantic stage such as 'citadel'.

Diffis are present in abundance in the Third Cataract region. The approach of the Survey of Nubian Place-names to this phenomenon is illustrated below by a study of the *diffis* of the shaikhdom of *Mashakéela* (19° 56'N/30° 27'-28'E). Eight *diffis* have been identified in this study, although one local inhabitant claimed the existence of fourteen. The names or designations of the *diffis* are as follows:

1. *Abdal-Hamīd-ikkin diffi*
2. *Abdalláykin diffi*
3. *Fegīir-Hiséenin diffi*
4. *Mashakéelan diffi*
5. *Uddúulikkin diffi*
6. *Kuushánikkin diffi*, also *Ḥājjinikkin diffi*
7. *Fijjūnikkin diffi*
8. *Malkannáasrin diffi*

These names may be analyzed as follows:

1. Analysis: 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (personal name) + *ikki* < *irki* (family unit community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's community
2. Analysis: 'Abdallāh (personal name) + *yki* < *ikki* < *irki* (family unit community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of 'Abdallāh's community
3. Analysis: *Faqir Ḥusayn* (religious title and personal name) + *in* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of *Faqir Ḥusayn*
4. Analysis: *Mashakéela* (name of shaikhdom and community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of *Mashakéela*
5. Analysis: 'Udūl* (personal name) + *ikki* < *irki* (family unit community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of 'Udūl's community
6. Analysis: *Kuushá* (female personal name?) or *Kuush* (historic country name?)⁹ + *n* (genitive suffix) + *ikki* < *irki* (family unit community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of the community of *Kuushá* (also *Ḥājjinikkin diffi*)
7. Analysis: *Fijjū* (*not identified*) + *ikki* < *irki* (family unit community) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of *Fijjū*'s community
8. Analysis: *Malik al-Naṣir* (royal title and personal name) + *n* (genitive suffix) + *diffi*
Gloss: the *diffi* of *Malik al-Naṣir*

The first observation is that most of these *diffis* are associated with the name of their corresponding community (Nubian *irki* or *ikki*). *Mashakéela* is ambiguous since it can refer either to such a community or to a much larger administrative unit, the shaikhdom. Only two *diffis* make no mention of a community or shaikhdom, but they are associated directly with a personal name: *Faqir Ḥusayn* and *Malik al-Naṣir*. The community known as an *irki* is based on a kinship group descended from a founder. Normally the founder's name appears in the name of the community.

A fuller understanding of the significance of these place-

* If *Uddūl* arose from a rare Arabic name 'Udūl, then the gemination (*dd*) would need to be viewed as a secondary development, possibly induced by the high tone on the following syllable.

⁹ This etymology is preferred by Ali Osman



Plate 4. Modern house on Arduan island with a site of old graves immediately to the left ($19^{\circ} 56'N/30^{\circ} 20'E$).

names involves a knowledge of local genealogy. Consequently, it was decided always to ask the informants, preferably older women and men, what relationship there was between people now alive and these ancestors. In the case of Faqīr Ḥusayn, an informant who was approximately 80 years old counted nine generations, including himself, back to Faqīr Ḥusayn, who was buried in a domed tomb in a near-by cemetery in Nāwri. With reference to Kuushānikki, Ali Osman counted

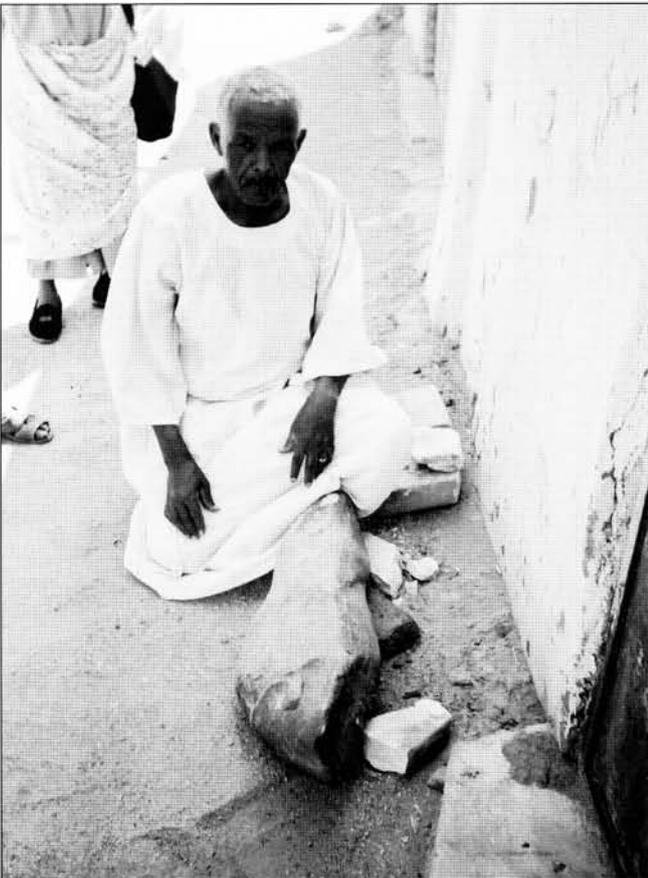


Plate 5. A 'fish' of stone discovered in the old graves on Arduan island ($19^{\circ} 56'N/30^{\circ} 20'E$).

ten generations, including himself, back to an ancestor with the non-Muslim name of Agré. Agré was maintained to be a Christian and his son Muḥammad Agréen-tood (i.e. 'Agré's son') was claimed to have been a convert to Islam. The grandson of Agré was known as Ḥājj who was considered to be the founder of Ḥājjinikki, an alternate name for Kuushānikki.

Three of the eight diffis show the name of a learned religious teacher who came from outside the original community, i.e. ʿAbd al-Hāmid, Faqīr Ḥusayn and ʿUdūl. ʿUdūl was acknowledged to be of West African origin (Fulānī). He also appeared in the genealogy of Ali Osman. The family of the diffi of ʿUdūl still own it and the grandfather of the informant was said to have resided in it.

In terms of generations the presence of alien teachers of Islam and also the shift to Muslim names seem not very far back in time. From the genealogies a picture emerges of the diffis of Mashakécla belonging to the early period of Islam. This is consistent with the analysis of the pottery by the archaeological team of the Mahas Project.

All of the diffis were said to have been built for defensive purposes. In one case reference was made to a fight with a neighbouring chieftain in the Mahas. In several cases the aggressors were said to be the Shayqiyya people from the south. Remarkably, the immediate neighbours of the Mahas, the Nubians of Dongola, were not mentioned as aggressors.

Two of the eight diffis (6 and 8) had practically disappeared. Others had been inhabited until about two generations ago. One, Abdallāykin diffi, was still inhabited.

United Nations (UNGEGN) and Standardization

The Sudan National Committee for Geographical Names invited the project co-ordinator to participate in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) in New York in January 2000. Extracts from the UNGEGN report are as follows:

'Working paper No. 19 was a survey of Nubian place names ... Of particular interest to the UNGEGN were the technical challenges associated with rendering geographical names in standard Arabic and English orthographies when the names are in languages not genetically related to either Arabic or English. The paper presented compelling points regarding the cultural and historical significance of geographical names and their potential use in historical reconstruction. The Group of Experts agreed that this project presented a unique opportunity to implement many of the procedures recommended by UNGEGN, especially related to the names standardization in multilingual areas.'

(United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, 24 March 2000, 7).

A further report on the Survey of Nubian Place-names appeared in the UNGEGN *Newsletter* 23, 24 of July 2000.

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