

Nubian

Loanwords are lexical items which are phonetically and morphologically integrated into a language other than the one where they originated. The prerequisite for such lexical items to be incorporated in another language is the presence of bilingual individuals. Arabic/Nubian bilingualism can be characterized as *replacive* in the sense that the Nubian languages are threatened by complete replacement by Arabic.

The Nubian languages are scattered today over a large area comprising both the northern half of the Republic of Sudan and southern Egypt. They form a language family that can be divided into three geographically defined branches: Darfur Nubian in the western Sudan, comprising Midob and Birgid; Kordofan Nubian, a group of closely related dialects spoken in the northern Nuba Mountains; and Nile Nubian, comprising Kenzi-Dongolawi, Nobiin, and its medieval predecessor, Old Nubian. Before the successive building of the dams near Aswan, the Nile Nubian languages were spoken in the Middle Nile Valley between the first Nile cataract upstream to Debba at the great bend of the river. After the inundation of a large part of Nubia in the waters of Lake Nasser, a considerable part of the local Nubian population was displaced. The resettlement – outside of Nubia, near Kom Ombo in Egypt, and in the Khashm el-Girba scheme of the eastern Sudan – has contributed considerably to the decay of Nubian and the decreasing number of monolingual speakers.

Typologically, the Nubian languages are characterized by SOV word order and postpositions. The genitive usually precedes the noun, while the adjective follows it. Genetically, the Nubian language family forms a subgroup of Eastern Sudanic, which in turn is a subgroup of the Nilo-Saharan phylum (Greenberg 1963; Ehret 1989; Bender 1991).

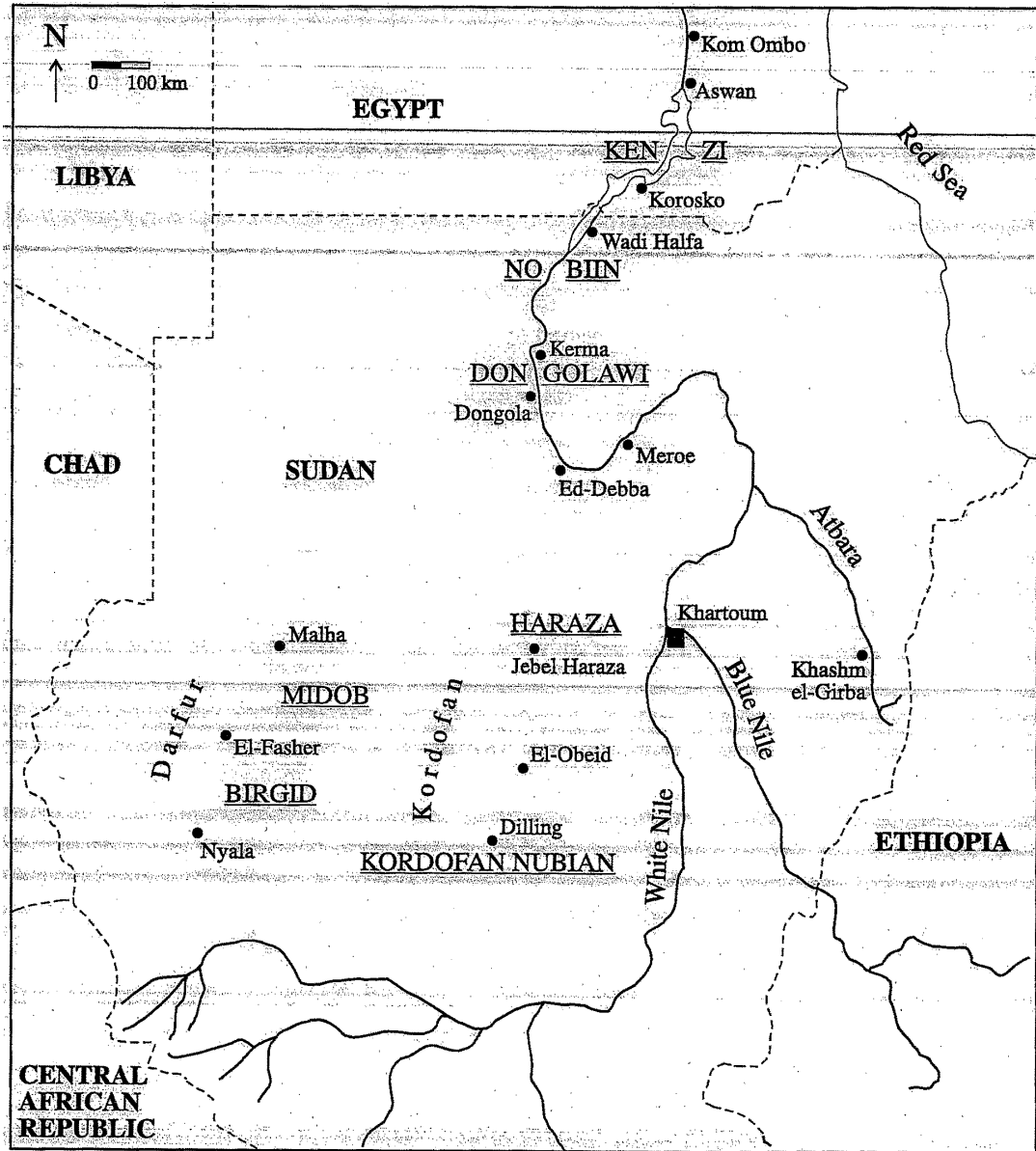
Early contacts between Arabic and Nubian were probably established by Arab nomads and merchants who came from Arabia and entered the Nile Valley long before the coming of Islam (Hasan 1973:12). After the Islamic conquest of Egypt in 641 C.E., and throughout the era

of the Christian Nubian kingdoms (6th–15th centuries), Arabic as a spoken language was gradually spread by Arabs engaging in trade between Egypt and the Middle Nile Valley. Arabic (along with Old Nubian, Coptic, and Greek) was also used as a written language in Medieval Nubia, as attested by gravestones, graffiti, and letters of commerce (Shinnie 1974:46; Adams 1977:447ff.). The few Arabic loanwords in the Medieval Old Nubian texts suggest that, despite the long presence of Arabic in the Nile Valley, its influence on Nubian was insignificant. It was only at the end of the Middle Ages, after the successive breakdown of the Christian kingdoms, that Arabization and Islamization gained momentum in Nubia and the Central Sudan (Adams 1977:556–563; Spaulding and Spaulding 1988). The immigration of Arab nomads, mainly from Egypt, and the intermarriage of the Arabs with the local Nubian population resulted in the spread of Arabic as a *lingua franca*. The intensified linguistic contacts appear to have triggered Nubian/Arabic bilingualism both among the Nubians and those Arab immigrants who became farmers. This can be inferred from the incorporation of Nubian loanwords, mainly terms from agriculture, into Sudanese Arabic (Gasim 1965).

Because of the impact of Arabization, several Nubian languages have disappeared, among them the Old Shaiqi language, spoken south of the fourth cataract until the beginning of the 19th century (Spaulding 1990), the Nubian languages of northern Kordofan, probably spoken until the end of the 19th century (MacMichael 1912:85; Newbold 1924; Bell 1975; Lea 1994:147), and, more recently, Birgid of eastern Darfur (Thelwall 1977; Idris 2004). Recent sociolinguistic studies (Rouchdy 1991; Patriarchi and Rottland 1993; Satti 2004) highlight the various factors that threaten to replace the Nubian languages with Arabic.

The integration of Arabic loanwords into the Nubian languages has not yet been systematically investigated, although most linguistic publications on Nubian languages dedicate some passages to them. Nor does the following

Map 1. Geographical distribution of the Nubian languages



discussion exhaust this topic. For example, Arabic stress patterns and their integration into the Nubian phonological system are an interesting but unconsidered problem. The present entry focuses on the Nile Nubian languages, drawing Kenzi data from Massenbach (1933) and Kamil (1937), Dongolawi data from Armbruster (1960), and Nobiin data from Werner (1987).

Nobiin is a tone language, distinguishing between a high, a low, and a falling tone. The tones are marked on a vowel by an acute (*á*), grave (*à*), or circumflex (*â*) accent, respectively. In the case of long vowels, which in the Nubian items are represented by doubled vowel signs, only the first vowel receives a tone mark (*áa*). Long vowels in Arabic items, in contrast, are marked by a stroke (*ā*).

The source of Arabic loanwords in the various Nubian languages is usually the local Sudan Arabic dialect, rather than Modern Standard/Classical Arabic. This is attested by the following loanwords in Kenzi, which has adopted *huusa* < Sudan Arabic *xūsa*, rather than Classical Arabic *sikkīn* ‘knife’; *angaree* < Sudan Arabic *‘angarēb*, rather than *sarīr* ‘bed’; *bit-ee* < northern Sudan Arabic *beyyat*, rather than *bāt* ‘to spend the night’. Further evidence is provided by the following phonological characteristics of Sudan Arabic, which are also attested in loanwords integrated in the Nubian languages: (i) the opposition of Classical Arabic *t/ṭ* and *d/ḍ* is neutralized in favor of the dental plosives *t/d*, respectively; (ii) Classical Arabic *q* is realized as *g* or sometimes even as *g̃*; (iii) the voiced palatal plosive *j* may be replaced by the voiced alveolar plosive *d*, e.g. *deeš* < *jēš* ‘army’; (iv) final consonant clusters in syllables of the type CVCC are often simplified by inserting an epenthetic vowel; (v) the short central low vowel *a* is realized as front mid vowel [e] if it occurs in an open syllable and if the vowel of the following syllable is *i* or *ii* (Reichmuth 1983:58); in loanwords [e] is therefore often rendered by *e*, *dérís*, *dérs* < *dars* ‘lesson’; *jediid* < *jadīd* ‘new’.

Arabic loanwords are phonetically adapted to the Nubian phonological system. Because of the increasing knowledge of and proficiency in speaking Arabic, loanwords may preserve some of the characteristic Arabic segments or structures, thus enlarging and modifying the

original Nubian phonological system. The following examples consider only those Sudan Arabic consonants which are foreign to the Nubian language, the data being drawn from Dongolawi. The emphatic consonants *t, d, s, z* are replaced by their nonemphatic counterparts *t, d, s, z*: *tabbaah* < *ṭabbāx* ‘cook [noun]’; *fuuta* < *fūṭa* ‘towel’; *daruuri* < *ḍarūrī* ‘necessary’; *haadir* < *ḥādir* ‘ready’; *seed* < *ṣēd* ‘hunting’; *halaas* < *xalās* ‘finished’; *zarif* < *ẓarf* ‘envelope’; *naazir* < *nāzīr* ‘superintendent’. The voiced alveolar fricative *z* is not an original consonant of the Nubian phoneme system, but, as the examples show, it is admitted in loanwords. The voiced velar fricative *g̃* is replaced by the voiced velar plosive *g*: *garib* < *garb* ‘west’, *gulgul* < *ḡulḡul* ‘cottonseed’. The voiced pharyngeal fricative ‘ is usually deleted: *adu* < *aduww* ‘enemy’; *arbain* < *‘arba‘īn* ‘forty’; *šema* < *šam’*, *šama’* ‘wax’. The voiceless velar and pharyngeal fricatives *x* and *ḥ* are replaced by the voiceless glottal *h*, which is a marginal consonant phoneme in the Nile Nubian languages: *habar* < *xabar* ‘news’, *washaan* < *waxxān* ‘dirty’, *haal* < *ḥāl* ‘state’, *absen* < *‘aḥsan* ‘better’, *Saaleh* < *Ṣāliḥ* [proper name]. In final position, *ḥ* may be deleted: *faala* < *fāliḥ* ‘skillful’. Originally, in the Nubian languages, the lateral *l* and the vibrant *r* were not admitted in initial position. In loanwords, however, they do occur there: *lijaam* < *lijām* ‘bridle’, *rukun* < *rukṅ* ‘corner’.

The syllable structure in Nubian is CVC, i.e. consonant clusters in word-initial and final position are not admitted. This explains why the CVCC structure of (Sudan) Arabic words is changed to CVCCV or CVCVC when they are integrated into a Nubian language. In Kenzi the structure CVCCi is chosen if the Arabic CC cluster consists of geminates: *kummi* < *kumm* ‘sleeve’, *bunni* < *bunn* ‘coffee’, *hajji* < *ḥājj* ‘pilgrim’, *šarri* < *šarr* ‘evil’. The structure CVCVC is chosen if the final Arabic CC cluster is represented by different consonants: *darub* < *darb* ‘path, road’, *fejir* < *fajr* ‘dawn’, *sahal* < *sahl* ‘easy’. The change from Arabic CVCC > CVCVC is also attested in Nobiin. There are often two versions of the loanwords, however, which indicates that the Arabic CC cluster may be retained, although it does not conform to the canonical Nubian syllable structure: *áriš* < *arš* ‘roof’; *dérís*, *dérs* < *dars* ‘lesson’; *ésím*, *ésm* < *ism* ‘name’; *másír*, *másr* < *mašr* ‘Egypt; Cairo’.

As for the morphological integration of Arabic loanwords, the data show that Nubian grammatical suffixes are attached to these loanwords. In Nobiin, for instance, consonant-final nouns take the low tone plural suffix *-ii*, which lowers all tone(s) of the singular form: *báhár* [sg.], *bàhàrù* [pl.] < *baħr* ‘river; Nile’; *déris* [sg.], *dèrsù* [pl.] < *dars* ‘lesson’; *dùkkáan* [sg.], *dùkkàanù* [pl.] < *dukkān* ‘shop’; *féjír* [sg.], *fèjrù* [pl.] < *fajr* ‘dawn’. Nouns ending in the Arabic feminine suffix *-a* are pluralized by the low-tone suffix *-ncù*, which lengthens the final *-a* and lowers all preceding tones: *šèbèkà* [sg.], *šèbèkàancù* [sg.] < *šabaka* ‘net’; *tàagyá* [sg.], *tàagyàancù* [sg.] < *tāgiyya* ‘skull cap’; *mèdrèsá* [sg.], *mèdrèsàancù* [sg.] < *madrasa* ‘school’. Less frequently, a loanword, whether consonant-final or vowel-final, takes the plural suffix *-gúu* or *-rú*. These suffixes lower the preceding tone as well: *áadèm* [sg.], *àadèmrú* [pl.] < *’ādami* ‘person’; *jèeb* [sg.], *jèèppúu* (< *jèeb-gúu*) [pl.] < *jīb* ‘pocket’; *sèmáa* [sg.], *sèmàagúu* [pl.] ‘sky’ < *samā*. The Dongolawi postposition *-gi* marks adverbs of time. It is attached to loanwords from Arabic: *baad-ki* < *bá’d* ‘after’, *kulyoom-gi* < *kull yom* ‘every day’, *abadan-gi* < *’abadan* ‘never’.

In Kenzi-Dongolawi, verbs based on loanwords from Arabic are formed by the auxiliary *-e*, *-ee* ‘to say’. The loanword preceding *-e*, *-ee* is not necessarily a verb; its main function is to provide the lexical information, whereas *-e*, *-ee* is inflected, providing the grammatical information. This composite mode of verb formation is well known from the Saharan languages (Crass and Jakobi 2000:21), as well as from several Semitic and Cushitic languages of Ethiopia (Armbruster 1960, Secs. 226–233, 234–237). Examples from Kenzi: *barg-ee* ‘flash’ < *barg* ‘lightning’, *lezm-ee* ‘to be necessary’ < *lāzim* ‘necessary’; examples from Dongolawi: *harb-ee* < *xarab* ‘to destroy’, *gaabil-ee* < *gābal* ‘to meet’, *šèkkir-ee* < *itšakkar* ‘to thank’. The last items attest that the prefix *it-* is deleted when such an Arabic verb stem is borrowed into Dongolawi (Armbruster 1960, Sec. 365). In Nobiin, however, this auxiliary construction does not exist. The data in Werner’s vocabulary (1987:338–383) suggest that a loan verb functions as a base to which the inflection suffix *-ir*, *-il* is attached (only 1st pers. sg. present is attested). The loan verbs are integrated into one of the three tone classes typical of Nobiin verbs (Werner

1987:141–145): Class 1: low-low; Class 2: (high-) high-low; Class 3: (low-) low-high, realized in pausa as (low-) low-high-low. Examples of this are: *féttís-ir* (Class 2) < *fattaš* ‘to look for’; *gárb-ir* (Class 2) < *garbal* ‘to sift’; *sàfar-ir* (Class 3) < *sāfar* ‘to travel’; *sàll-ir* (Class 3) < *šallā* ‘to pray’. The loanwords exhibiting the stative extension *-fi* are morphologically treated like a Nubian verb, which is required to appear in the ‘a-form’ (Werner 1987:167–170): *sàkàn-á-fiir* < *sakan* ‘to dwell’, *šium-á-fiil* < *šōm* ‘fast [noun]’. The tone patterns of these verbs correspond to Class 3.

The preceding sections show that the loanwords come from a wide range of semantic domains. It should be pointed out that a substantial portion of the loanword vocabulary is borrowed from the Islamic domain, such as Dongolawi *jaama* < *jāmi* ‘mosque’, *hamd-ee* < *hamad* ‘to praise (God)’, *halwa* < *xalwa* ‘Qur’ān school’. The loanwords comprise all word classes, such as nouns and verbs, adjectives, and numerals. To these may be added discourse markers (such as Dongolawi *bes* < *bas* ‘only, just’, *halaas* < *xalāš* ‘finally’) and conjunctions (*illa* < *’illā* ‘except that’, *laakin* < *lākin* ‘but’, *wala...wala* < *walā...walā* ‘neither...nor’). The loanwords are not restricted to the cultural lexicon but may exist side by side with or even replace Nubian core vocabulary, such as Dongolawi *eer* and *jediid* < *jadīd* ‘new’; *kal* and *akil* < *’akl* ‘food’; Nobiin *gèm* and *sènà* < *sana* ‘year’; *širáj* and *turbá* < *turba* ‘grave’.

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