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Endangered Toponymy along the Nubian Nile

Herman Bell
herman.nobiin@gmail.com

Abd al-Halim Sabbar
noemail@forthisauthor.com

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ʿAbd al-Halīm Ṣabbār and Herman Bell[1]

The first objective of this study is to investigate geographical names linked to historic sites as these names have been reported in Nobíin Nubian speech. The second objective is to consider evidence from a Nubian scholar who has native speaker intuition of the Nobíin Nubian language, an extensive knowledge of Nubian grammar and a concern for dangers to that language and its toponymy. The third objective is to enhance the methodology for dealing with an endangered Nubian toponymy.

Most of the toponyms in the area of Nobíin Nubian speech in southern Egypt and the northern Sudan have been recorded inadequately and even inaccurately. They are now being subjected to a process of constructive criticism. The reader is invited to reflect upon a Corpus of Toponyms from the Historic Area of the Nobíin Nubian Language and then to consider a more appropriate approach to this endangered Nubian toponymy.

The Corpus of Toponyms is provided in an appendix after the references at the end of this study. Nine illustrative examples from the Corpus are highlighted for their importance and discussed in detail. The geographical focus of the Corpus is upon the traditional area of Nobíin Nubian speech in southern Egypt and the northern Sudan. Historically this was defined as the area between Korosko north of the Second Cataract and Abū Faṭma just north of Kerma and south of the Third Cataract, but major resettlements in 1964 as a result of the High Dam near Aswan have changed the linguistic landscape dramatically.

Toponyms are guideposts to cultural history and also to the riverside environment where the Nubian languages have flourished. The representative Corpus of Toponyms from the area of Nobíin Nubian

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1   Dr. ʿAbd al-Halīm Ṣabbār (MBChB) died of a heart condition on May 1, 2017. *Eshshedóh*! An immense loss!

speech was extracted from the online volume VII of the *Topographical Bibliography,*[2] hereafter abbreviated either as TopBib or as PM for Porter & Moss, the two original authors. The purpose of selecting the *Topographical Bibliography* (hereafter abridged as TopBib) source was (1) to ensure having a carefully assembled list of site names reflecting scholarly usage and (2) to limit the data to a particular corpus of items not individually selected by the present author. To that extent, it is a random sample.

The TopBib names of historic places were contrasted with a corresponding set of toponyms collected more recently through the medium of the Nobíin Nubian language. This recent set of toponyms has now been deposited on an audiovisual videoclip in the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS in the University of London.[3] Each toponym is pronounced in a Nobíin Nubian sentence by Halim Sabbar (ʿAbd al-Halīm Ṣabbār),[4] known for his precision and accuracy in representing the Nobíin Nubian language. He provided only names of which he was certain from his own speech. These toponyms of his are marked in the Corpus of Toponyms below with a postponed asterisk (*). He was aware that no single speaker could be expected to master all the variants of toponyms throughout the Nobíin Nubian area of southern Egypt and northern Sudan.

Sabbar is concerned with threats to Nubian toponyms. He published an article on this subject[5] for the Working Group on Exonyms of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). It deals with villages around New Halfa, the centre of the forced resettlement of 1964 far away from the Nile river. The local administrative authorities used numbers in Arabic for the village names rather than retaining the traditional toponyms from the Nobíin Nubian language. For example, the village with the ancient name of "Faras" has become Qaryah Wāḥid ("Village One").

Toponyms of the Nubian Nile have been modified during centuries of close contact with the Arabic language. They have often been recorded through the medium of written Arabic, but all too seldom in the context of Nubian speech. Junker and Schäfer[6] were among the notable exceptions. Their study of Kenzi Nubian toponyms is

2   Online maps of the historic location of the sites before the 1964 resettlement are available here, see PORTER & MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Painting,* in the section on References.
3   http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0427.
4   When transliteration of Arabic is required, the system adopted here generally follows Hans Wehr (*A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic.* Wiesbaden : O. Harrassowitz, 1961 [multiple reprints]). Personal names may reflect the preferences of the person named, hence Sabbar rather than Ṣabbār. Arabic loanwords in Nubian were pronounced by Sabbar without distinctively Arabic features such as "emphatic." They are written as he pronounced them.
5   SABBAR, "Numbers as Geographical Names in Nubia: Endonyms or Exonyms?"
6   JÜNKER & SCHÄFER, *Nubische Texte im Kenzi-Dialekt.*

commendable. It provides Kenzi Nubian texts on the toponyms and on the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of each locality.

The present investigation does not aim to establish a "correct" name for each site. Numerous variants are accommodated. Scholars who are familiar with spellings established in the literature may turn away with incredulity from some of the Nubian variants. Nevertheless, toponymic investigation must ultimately give attention to forms that faithfully reflect the mother tongue of the people who inhabit the land.

The variants have an important association with individual culture bearers. Elderly women with a limited formal education, but a good knowledge of the Nubian language, have a great deal to offer. Their information has usually been less influenced by the Arabic language and culture and may reveal more about earlier forms of the Nubian toponyms.

Some of the toponyms which have been transmitted through Nubian speech are of Arabic origin. These names have not been "hypercorrected" to make them fit the rules of Standard Arabic. The present study aims to report on the existing situation impartially, even though official policy, educators and certain inhabitants may insist upon moulding toponyms into a Standard Arabic shape.

Sabbar himself is a Nubian purist and prefers not to use Arabic features such as the emphatic consonants, although Nubians frequently pronounce them, e.g., *Ṣaay*, an Arabicised variant opposed to the Nubian version *Sáay*[7] *Sáay* is preferred by Sabbar.

Learned people may sometimes become part of the problem. Arabic is the language of instruction. People who are well trained in Arabic sometimes reveal a bias when they turn their attention to a non-Arabic language. In the course of toponymic fieldwork opposite Dungulā al-Ūrdī, two elderly culture bearers were asked to consider the phonology of certain toponyms. One of them quickly recognized the existence of a separate short vowel /o/ within the five-vowel system of Andáandi [Dungulāwī Nubian]. However, the other, a respected Islamic scholar, interpreted the short vowel /o/ as a sequence of /a/ and /w/, since there is theoretically no short /o/ within the three-vowel system of Standard Arabic. He was analyzing a Nubian phenomenon according to the rules of Standard Arabic.[8]

Nobíin Nubians are now aiming for a revitalization of their language before it is too late. The Ḥarāza Nubian language of North Kordofan became extinct in the early twentieth century. The Murgandó (Birgid) Nubian language of South Darfur is now on the verge

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7   The Nubian languages are tone languages. The acute accent here represents a high tone.
8   BELL & HASHIM, "Does Aten Live On in Kawa (Kówwa)?," p. 42ff.

of extinction. How can the Nobíin Nubian language be saved? A few
Nobíin Nubians who were unwillingly evacuated from their ances-
tral lands in 1964 still have vivid memories of their traditional river-
side environment. They need to be interviewed while memories are
still alive. Their concern is not only with toponyms, but also with
the Nobíin Nubian language itself.

Work on endangered languages overlaps extensively with work
on endangered toponymy. Similar procedures of linguistic docu-
mentation are required to support their aims, whether they are the
revitalization of a language or the plausible interpretation of geo-
graphical names. Both may involve perceptions of identity, either
with a language or with a geographical place.

Nubians do not just look inward into their own culture. They of-
ten identify with "peoples of the periphery" and express solidarity
with multilingual societies elsewhere. Their concern for others may
be associated with their sense of having made an early contribution
to world history. It is also consistent with the international outlook
of the Nubian diaspora in the Islamic World, Europe, and America.

Nubia can share experiences on toponymic procedures with mul-
tilingual areas elsewhere. It can also benefit from a dialogue with
areas reflecting an ancient multilingual past, as investigated by Vin-
cent Razanajao in Lower Egypt.[9]

The Corpus of Toponyms below can be examined with reference
to languages as well as toponyms. Toponyms are arranged here as
they were in the source document (PM). The first point to be exam-
ined is the issue of appropriate conventions for representing Nobíin
Nubian.

**Brief Conventions for the Written Representation of Nobíin
Nubian**

The following comments are an introduction to the marking and the
special characters used in the present article. They deal with tone
marking (musical tone, relative pitch), nasal consonants, and long
vowels.

The acute accent (´) marks the first syllable with a high tone in
the basic dictionary entry of a Nobíin Nubian word or toponym.

The palatal nasal consonant /ɲ/ is represented here as ñ. The ve-
lar nasal consonant /ŋ/ is normally represented as *ng*, but also as *ŋ*
(when a phonological point needs to be made with precision).

There are five short vowels /a, e, i, o, u/ and five long vowels /
aː, eː, iː, oː, uː/. Although the International Phonetic Alphabet in-

9   RAZANAJAO, "Tell el Balamoun: considérations toponymiques autour de la ville la plus
     septentrionale d'Égypte"; Id., "Les noms de lieux de l'Égypte et les sciences toponymiques en
     égyptologie."

dicates vowel length by a colon following the vowel, the colon has proved to be clumsy for writing systems. The Africa Alphabet allows the vowel to be doubled to indicate its length, e.g. „"u" is short and "uu" is long.[10] Doubling the vowel character to indicate length has been applied to other modern African languages such as Swahili. It is a practice that is also occasionally found in the medieval writing system of Old Nubian.[11]

Accordingly, the long vowels of Nobíin Nubian have usually been written with doubling (*aa, ee, ii, oo, uu*). There is one serious disadvantage. Two of these double letters in writing Nubian represent very different sounds in English: *ii* is pronounced like "ee" (as in "queen") and *uu* is pronounced like "oo" (as in "root").

For better or for worse, English has now become the principal international language of communication. It has established a pattern of pronunciation for *ee* and *oo* that seriously interferes with the Africa Alphabet.

A solution proposed for consideration in the present study is to represent long /eː/ by *ey* and long /oː/ by *ow*. According to this solution, *ee* and *oo* should never be used in romanized Nobíin Nubian. They mistakenly lead the reader to say /iː/ as in "queen" and /uː/ as in "root." The goal is to facilitate widespread literacy in Nubian. A decision to avoid *ee* and *oo* may be the most effective and by far the least expensive option to avoid confusion in pronunciation. This solution is also recognized to be controversial. Comments will be welcomed.

An illustration is presented below with reference to an item from the Corpus of Toponyms.

1. Buhen

Now submerged by Lake Nubia, the fortress of Buhen has a special pronunciation in Nubian. It is /boːhéːn/ (International Phonetic Alphabet). When the Africa Alphabet system is used, it is written *Boohéen*. Almost anyone interpreting this spelling from an English perspective without thorough instruction in Nubian pronunciation would pronounce the vowels as "*Buuhíin*."

The problem is magnified by the dominant position of English in international communication. A reasonable solution would be to choose alphabetic characters that would incline people who speak English toward the correct pronunciation of Nubian. The solution adopted in the present study uses *w* and *y* to lengthen the short vow-

10 Tucker & Bryan, *Linguistic Analyses: The Non-Bantu Languages of North-Eastern Africa,* pp. 3–8.
11 Bell, "A World Heritage Alphabet: The Role of Old Nubian in the Revitalization of the Modern Nubian Languages."

els. This is a procedure similar to one used for lengthening vowels in Arabic. If *o* is lengthened by *w* and *e* or *é* is lengthened by *y*, then we would produce the form *Bowhéyn*, which, at least, does not strongly suggest an inappropriate pronunciation. Therefore *ow* and *ey* are used to indicate long /oː/ and long /eː/ respectively, as an experiment, throughout the toponymic presentation below.

Details from the Corpus of Toponyms below:
    Item 12. PM: Buhen
    West Bank
    Nobíin speech: /boːhéːn/* (International Phonetic Alphabet)
    Nobíin writing:
        Sabbar: *Boohéen**
        Bowhéyn (experimental solution to achieve a more appropriate pronunciation)
    [TopBib 701-050-090] Published in PM 7, p. 129–139

Sabbar prefers the orthography *Boohéen*. He rejects the orthography *Bowhéyn* for representing the long /oː/ and long /eː/. Yet, arguably, the *Bowhéyn* solution is the least of all evils. If revitalization of the Nubian languages is the ultimate goal, we cannot deny the need to communicate efficiently with people influenced by English in international communication. Sabbar's response is that people should be educated to pronounce correctly, but imagine what such an education would cost. We know that relatively little funding is available for education in the Nubian languages. This is why our solution is to choose alphabetic characters that incline people toward the correct pronunciation.

The present study has no evidence to suggest that the name of this fortress has been continuously uttered for more than 3,000 years since the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom. The name in hieroglyphs may well have been read and pronounced afresh after the decipherment of hieroglyphs in the early 19th century. Today the Nubian pronunciation of *Bowhéyn* is slightly different from the usual pronunciation of *Buhen* /buːhen/ in English.

Another challenge to our approach to toponymy via the Nobíin Nubian language is delivered by Abu Simbel. Our approach favours accuracy and authenticity. However, the phrase Abu Simbel has become firmly established in our toponymic vocabulary. To what did it refer? What did it signify?

2. Abû Simbel

Superficially the toponym appears to be Arabic having an element Abū "father" followed by Simbel "spike of millet" with the unconvincing sense of "possessor of the spike of millet." Ramesses II would presumably not have been amused. Are some of us complacently accepting a fiction instead of searching for a genuine etymology? The toponym Abu Simbel is now so well established as a brand name throughout the world that there seems to be no way to live without it, even though it breaks some of the rules of toponymic acceptability.

Details:
   Item 3. PM: Abû Simbel, also Absímbil
   West Bank
   Nobíin: *Absámbal* and *Absímbil*
   Standard Arabic: *Abū Simbil*
   [TopBib 701–040] Published in PM 7, p. 95–119
   In Nobíin "the temple is called Farréygn uffi "the Hole of Farreyg"
   and the hill is called Absámbal, a designation for "a high place."

The above information on *Absámbal* and *Farréygn uffi* comes from an authority on the Nobíin language and culture, Houssein Mokhtar Kobbara, originally a resident of the village of Abu Simbel on the east bank and now Director of the Centre for Nubian Studies and Documentation in the new town of Abu Simbel on the West Bank.

   Kirsty Rowan noticed that the toponym *Absambal* was recorded by John Bowes Wright who was present when Belzoni explored the Great Temple: "Plan of the disposition of the chambers at the Temple of Absambal in Nubia, drawn in 1817. From the papers of John Bowes Wright. Image courtesy of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, the Great North Museum: Hancock."[12]

   When Sabbar spoke Nubian, he would use the form *Absímbil*. He used to know a person called Ahmed Absímbil. Sabbar's original village of *Ishkéyd* was more than a day's journey on foot from the former village of *Absímbil*. *Absímbil* may prove to be a widely accepted form in the Nobíin Nubian language. However, it does not rival the local name *Absámbal* as an important historical variant for etymological study.

3. Ballâna

It is vital to provide audio documentation of toponyms in accessible archives. Scholars who have been informed of a variant toponym in Nobíin Nubian speech have been known simply to deny its existence. This was the situation in a lively discussion of the toponym *Balláañey* at the 2009 UNESCO Conference at the Nubian Museum in Aswan. Several academics insisted that the name was only *Ballāna*, even though evidence to the contrary had been provided by a toponymist. At a later date the musician Fikri Kashif from neighbouring Abu Simbel demonstrated the existence of *Balláañey* by its preservation in a traditional rhyming proverb.

A local rhyming proverb incorporating the Nubian form Balláañey:

Balláañey,
wara-toor-áañe!

"*Balláañey,*
jump, enter and live!"

a = connective copula
wár = jump(with an original high tone subject to lowering in compounds)
toor = enter
áañ = live
e = imperative

Examples of each verb with *ir* "you" (singular): *ir wáronam* "you jump"; *ir tooronám* "you enter"; *ir áañonam* "you live."

The above proverb from Absámbal was provided by Fikri Hasan Kashif (Kaashúb) with an analysis by Halim Sabbar.

At the end of an utterance, long vowels tend to be shortened, e.g., *Balláañey* may become *Balláañe*.

Adams uses a *ñ* in this toponym in the title of his book *Meinarti I: the Late Meroitic, Ballaña and Transitional Occupation* (2000).

Details from PM :
   Item 11. PM: Ballâna
   West Bank
   Nobíin: *Balláañey**
   [TopBib 701–050–040] Published in PM 7, p. 123

4. Serra East

Endangered Toponyms. Serra East (*Serra Sharq*) is now flooded. In the Arabicized phrase above, *Serra Sharq* (or *Sarra Sharq*) correctly indicates the original geminated *rr,* but two other important features of the original Nobíin Nubian form *Serré* are not represented and may soon be lost. (1) The high tone indicated by an acute accent *é* is not there in the Arabic form. (2) Final *é* and *e* in the Nubian forms are replaced and misrepresented by an Arabic *a*. The final vowel *a* (or *ah* in transliteration from Arabic) occurs frequently in Arabic nouns and toponyms as a marker of feminine gender, e.g., the name of the city of Baṣra (*al-Baṣrah*). The final *é* and *e* in Nubian forms are not feminine gender markers. Unlike their Arabic counterparts, the Nubian forms reveal a subtle interplay of semantics, tone, and the genitival *n.* This can be observed in the following closely related phrases involving *Serré* in Nubian speech:

Details:
    Item 48. Serra East
    East Bank
    Nobíin: *Serré* (often followed by a genitival *n*)*: Serren mátto** "Serré East," cf. *Serrén tino** "Serré West"
    [TopBib 701–050–070] PM 7, p. 128

Syllable by syllable, the tonal structures can be observed as follows:

    Rule: The tone of the final syllable of *Serré* may be lowered (1) when it is compounded with a following noun having an initial high tone (*mátto*) and (2) when it also means specifically "name of village on the east bank of the Nile."

- *Serren mátto** [noun + noun] [syllables: low + lowered + high + lowered (in utterance-final position)]: "Serré East," name of village on the east bank of the Nile;
- *Serrén mátto** [noun + noun] [syllables: low + high + high + lowered (in utterance-final position)] "the east outside of Serré";
- *Serré mátto** [noun + adjective] [syllables: low + high + high + lowered (in utterance-final position)] "the eastern part within Serré."

The tone of the final syllable of Serré is not lowered when it is followed by a noun having an initial low tone (*tino*).

    The first two examples of *Serrén tino* below are identical in form, but different in meaning.

- *Serrén tino** [noun + noun] [low + high + low + low] "Serré West," name of village on the west bank of the Nile;
- *Serrén tino** [noun + noun] [low + high + low + low] "the west outside of Serré";
- *Serré tino** [noun + adjective] [low + high + low + low] "the western part within Serré."

The danger is that a great deal of subtle and meaningful toponymic data will be lost if the Nubian grammatical and phonological details are lost.

5. Nauri & 6. Abri

Details:
   Item 40. PM: Nauri
   East Bank
   Nobíin: *Nawír* and *Náwri**
   [TopBib 701–060–180] Published in PM 7, p. 174

During a toponymic survey in the vicinity of Nauri in the early 2000s, the author was listening to the speech of the local Nobíin Nubian speakers and heard them saying *Nawír*, as an allomorph of *Náwri* before particular suffixes. David Edwards noted that *Nawír* bore a resemblance to a medieval Nubian word that could have referred to a "shrine."[13]

   Nawír and *Náwri* as allomorphs may be comparable to a similar relationship between *Ábir* and *Ábri*.

Details:
   Item 2. PM: Abri = Gebel Abri
   East Bank
   Nobíin: *Ábri* and *Ábir**
   [TopBib 701–060–120] PM 7, p. 166

Ábrii (also shortened to *Ábri*) is widely in use, but *Ábir* has also been attested. The following proverb was cited and analyzed by Sabbar:

   Taddo falollon
   Ábirin kaccúudo
   fam méen aam.

   "May what has happened to her/him

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13   Osman & Edwards, *The Archaeology of a Nubian Frontier: Survey on the Nile Third Cataract, Sudan,* p. 350.

not happen to the donkeys of Abir."

tar > *tad* = "he/she" (+ assimilation)
-do = "to"
fal > *fam* = "happen" (+ assimilation)
o = simple past
lon > *llon* "what" (+ gemination)
Ábirin kaccúudo = "to the donkeys of Ábir"
Ábir* = toponym
-in = genitive
kaj > *kac* "donkey" (+ assimilation)
gúu > *kúu* > *cúu* plural (+ assimilation)
méen = negative verb
aam = "would that"

The following version of this proverb was produced by El Geili Farah who grew up in the village of Morka (Nubian: *Mówrkey*) on the island of *Sáay*.

His orthography has been slightly modified to become consistent with the system used throughout this article. Tone was not marked.

Taddo ḥaṣlolloni
Abriin kaccuudo gon
ḥaṣli meyn a

In this version, the word "happen" is written twice with a loanword from Arabic, *ḥaṣlolloni* and *ḥaṣli* (from *ḥaṣala*). Even in the Nubian context, they are pronounced as in Arabic.

Note: *Ábriin*, not *Ábirin*

Ábrii = toponym
gon = "and"
meyn = negative verb
a = confirmative (grammatical term developed by Sabbar)

Both *Ábrii* and *Ábir* are attested in this Nubian proverb. There is a claim that *Ábir* is a Nubian word meaning "shelter."

7. Sai

Details:
   Item 44. Island of Sai
   Arabic: *Ṣaay*

Nobíin: *Sáay**
[TopBib 701–060–110] Published in PM 7, p. 166

Muhammad Jalal Hāshim (2014) has accused his own people of cultural suicide (Arabic: *al-intiḥār al-thaqāfiyyah*).

The wide-spread adoption of Arabic emphatic consonants is not necessarily an indication of cultural suicide. Languages in contact have always influenced each other. The use of *Ṣ* in the name of *Ṣaay* Island is most likely to have been a result of the acceptance of fashionable Arabic pronunciation. An extreme illustration of Arabic influence appears in the toponym for the hamlet *Ṣaay-Ṣaab* ("the downstream end of *Ṣaay*"). *Saab* is a Nubian word still widely in use without the emphatic *Ṣ*. The accusation of *al-intiḥār al-thaqāfiyyah* should probably be reserved for a situation in which people have lost respect for their own language. This cannot be said of Nubian.

Contrasting Categories of Toponym

Two overlapping categories of toponyms are highlighted below: (1) Toponyms already in use in the Nobíin Nubian area for more than half a century and (2) Toponyms elicited recently in Nobíin Nubian speech.

8. Dibeira & 9. Tôshka

1. Toponyms already in use have been extracted from volume VII (1952) of the *Topographical Bibliography* (PM), e.g. PM Dibeira and PM Tôshka.
2. The same toponyms elicited recently in Nobíin Nubian speech (NN) have been analyzed in sentences such as the following:

   ay Dibéyreyl fa júur "I shall go to *Dibéyrey*."

   ay Toshkél fa júur "I shall go to *Toshké*."

Investigation of the toponyms:
The investigation will proceed by examining an illustrative pair of spellings for a toponym, one from PM and the other from Nobíin Nubian speech. PM Dibeira contrasts with the Nobíin *Dibéyrey*. The discussion will be elaborated by a consideration of a second pair of spellings: PM Tôshka contrasting with NN *Toshké*.

The PM spelling Dibeira is reasonably close to the pronunciation of that name today, especially when people are speaking Arabic. However, the final syllable of the name in Nubian speech has been

identified by Sabbar as having a final syllable with a long *ey* rather than a short *a*.

The final *e* in Nubian speech may be either short as in *Toshké* or long as in *Dibéyrey*. The final long *ey* is normally shortened to *e* in utterance final position (*Dibéyre*). Diagnostic sentences such as *ay Dibéyreyl fa júur* put the toponym *Dibéyrey* in a position with the final *ey* coming before a locative *-l*. This allows *ey* to be perceived as long in a situation where it is not shortened by the utterance final rule.

Each of the two toponyms is displayed in the corpus below with the variant spellings in the categories of PM and Nobíin Nubian speech.

Item 15. PM: Dibeira
Dibeira East. East Bank
Nobíin: *Dibéyrey* /dibé:re:/*
[TopBib 701–050–080–010] Published in PM 7, p. 128

Item 57. PM: Tôshka East
Nobíin: *Toshké**
[TopBib 701–030–160] Published in PM 7, p. 95

Dealing with Endangered Toponymy

Toponymy often shares a landscape with endangered languages. Languages are likely to be in competition. Some of them may be destined for extinction. In order to plan for endangered toponymy it is important to assess the language situation.

How much is each language served by the system of education? If languages are not supported by schools, are there any viable alternatives in place? Are there any activities for the revitalization of endangered languages?

Toponyms face dangers of their own. Some toponyms are being distorted to look more like the prestigious names of a global language. Are there any procedures to protect the toponyms of local languages? Is there any commitment to support rural communities where endangered languages and toponymy are most likely to flourish?

Is there a plan for documenting the toponyms? Variant toponyms and their social significance are important. Are memories associated with the toponyms being recorded? Does the planning include a reliable system of archiving data and disseminating it back to the residents? Is information being delivered to the residents in their own languages? Variant forms of the toponyms should be reported back to the residents in a form that is consistent with their culture.

Are key groups in the society being involved in a mutual exchange of ideas? This is especially important for groups that might have been neglected in the past, such as elderly women with relatively little formal education.

Dangers range from the distortion of ancestral toponyms to the eclipse of the traditional culture that they represent. These dangers need to be identified. The original homeland of Sabbar was flooded in 1964. Its toponyms are keys to memories that will soon disappear.

Each investigator has the privilege of constructive self-criticism. When the author began working on Nubian toponomy in 1962, he had an assistant who was fluent in Nubian. That was a plus. The author spoke some colloquial Arabic. That was a minus as well as a plus. If the interview is in Arabic, that is what one gets. If it is in Nobíin, one is more likely to hear the Nubian version of the toponym. A glance at the Corpus of Toponyms at the end of this article will show how many of them have both an Arabic version and a Nubian version.

Historical identity

A key function of these toponyms is to enhance a sense of identity with the homeland and a traditional culture. The etymology of toponyms has a close relationship with a sense of identity. Accuracy is an important factor when toponyms become the building blocks of etymology. In accord with Ferdinand de Saussure, the synchronic basis needs to be sound before diachronic studies can be built upon it.

With this in mind, Muhammad Jalal Hashim and the author examined the toponym known as Kawa opposite Dungulā al-Ūrdī.[14] The late Karl-Heinz Priese has indicated that Kawa might have been a survival of an ancient Egyptian name, the Amarna period toponym *Gem-ꞌAten*.[15] Hashim and the author examined the evidence for sound changes step by step over 33 centuries and came to the conclusion that the connection was plausible.

Particular pains were taken to establish the synchronic basis of the name in modern Andáandi Nubian (Dungulāwī). It was *Kówwa* rather that Kawa. The first vowel was *o*, not *a*. Gertrud von Massenbach has published the name with *o* as well.[16] Having examined the contemporary Nubian toponym *Kówwa*, the position was more secure to proceed to the diachronic argument.

14 BELL & HASHIM, "Does Aten Live On in Kawa (Kówwa)?"
15 PRIESE, "Studien zur Topographie des äthiopischen' Niltales im Altertum und zur meroitischen Sprache," p. 323.
16 MASSENBACH, *Nubische Texte im Dialekte der Kunuzi und der Dongolawi, mit Glossar,* pp. 104–5.

Claude Rilly notes that the character *Q* in the Meroitic evidence for this name has a labiovelar sound /kʷ/.[17] This would have colored the following vowel to be more like an *o* than an *a*. Rilly's assessment of the name in Meroitic times could be represented as /kʷaw-ata/ > /kʷow-ata/. The original ancient Egyptian /m/ of *Gem-ʾAten* had arguably long before been weakened to /w/. Note also that the original ancient Egyptian glottal stop in initial position on *ʾAten* was not indicated, but that either ʾ or a subsequent *y* (as was argued by Gerhardt Fecht[18]) or some other space-holder (marked here with superscript /ʲ/) allowed that space to be filled by the doubling of the previous consonant /w/.

Thus, /kʷaw-ʲata/ became /kʷow-wata/. If so, then *Gem-ʾAten* could already have become /kʷow-wata/ by Meroitic times.

Afterwards, the last syllable of the ʾAten's name was dropped. Thus, /kʷow-wata/ became /kʷow-wa/, leaving only the final "a" from the name of the ʾAten. It is therefore plausible that the first vowel in the name of the ʾAten has survived over 33 centuries in the final syllable of the toponym pronounced today as *Kówwa*.

Scholarly etymology avoids excessive speculation but there is a very different sort of etymology that is arguably worthwhile in its own right. This is folk etymology. People engage in it with great enthusiasm. They imagine fanciful relationships between toponyms and the residents, including the redoubtable *Aman-dogrii* who are thought to live under the river. By their enthusiasm the human residents above the river are still strengthening their communities, their toponymic awareness and their Nubian language.

17   Rilly, "Une nouvelle lecture du signe méroïtique Q."
18   Fecht, "Amarna-Probleme (1–2)".

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Appendix: Corpus of Toponyms from the Historic Area of the Nobíin Nubian Language

Nobíin Nubian toponyms which Halīm Ṣabbār knows with confidence are marked with an asterisk (*).

Audiovisual recordings of Sabbar's pronunciation of these toponyms in sentences have now been deposited with the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR). It is important to continue checking pronunciations in the local community as well, e.g. Abû Simbel, item 3 below.

This is a set of toponyms for reflection. Tentative results are presented here as of September 15, 2016. Nobíin Nubian spellings can be interpreted with reference to the Brief Set of Phonological Rules (above). Maps showing the location of the sites are provided in PM vol. VII, pp. 421–22. Other versions of these names are available online by Orientalia: http://www.egyptologues.net/orientalia/home.

1. PM: ʿAbd el-Qâdir.
West Bank
Nobíin: *Sheyabdelgáadir** or *Sheabdelgáadir**
[TopBib 701–050–100] Published in PM 7, p. 140
The name is of Arabic origin.

1a. PM Appendix: Abka
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 142
Nobíin variant: *Ábkey** or *Ámkey*
The Arabic influenced variant: *ʿAmka* is usually considered to be the "correct" version of the name by the inhabitants.

2. PM: Abri = Gebel Abri
East Bank
Nobíin: *Abrii* and *Ábir**
Abrii > *Abri* in utterance final position.
[TopBib 701–060–120] Published in PM 7, p. 166

3. PM: Abû Simbel or Absímbil
West Bank
Nobíin: *Absámbal* and *Absímbil**
The temple is called *Farréygn uffi*
The high hill is called *Absámbal*
[TopBib 701–040] Published in PM 7, pp. 95–119

3a. PM Appendix: Akasha
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 157
Nobíin: *Okkáashey** [with gemination of *k* in Nubian, but no gemination in Arabic forms here]
Arabic: ʿ*Akāsha*

4. PM: Aksha = Serra West
West Bank
Nobíin: *Ákshey**
[TopBib 701–050–060] Published in PM 7, pp. 127–28

5. PM: ʿAmada
Nobíin: *Amáada* [Check locally.]
[TopBib 701–030–060] Published in PM 7, pp. 65–73

6. PM: ʿAmâra
Nobíin: *Amáara** *Amáara tino** *Amáara mátto**
No *n* genitive.
[TopBib 701–060–100] Published in PM 7, pp. 157–164

7. PM: ʿAnîba
Nobíin: *Aníibey**
[TopBib 701–030–080] Published in PM 7, pp. 75–81

8. PM: ʿAnqash
East Bank
Nobíin: *Áŋŋash** (also dialectally acceptable as *Áŋgash*)
[TopBib 701–050–110] Published in PM 7, p. 140

9. PM: Argîn
West Bank
Nobíin: *Argíin**
[TopBib 701–050–080–020] Published in PM 7, p. 128

10. PM: Armenna
See under Tôshka East.
Nobíin: *Armínney**
[TopBib 701–030–160] Published in PM 7, p. 95

10a. PM Appendix: Arnyatta, Island of ?
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 164
Nobíin: *Arñáttey**

10b. PM Appendix: Ashkeit
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 128
Nobíin: *Ishkéyd**

10c. PM Appendix: Asrunia
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 157
Nobíin: ?

11. PM: Ballâna
West Bank
Nobíin: *Balláañey**
[TopBib 701–050–040] Published in PM 7, p. 123

12. PM: Buhen
West Bank
Nobíin: *Bowhéyn** also *Buuhéyn** (by Arabs)
[TopBib 701–050–090] Published in PM 7, pp. 129–39

13. PM: Dabnarti
Island of Dabnarti, Fort
Nobíin: *Dáabn aarti** [*daab* = snake?]
[TopBib 701–060–010] Published in PM 7, p. 142

13a. PM Appendix: Dal
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 157
Nobíin: *Dáal** [person from Dáal = Dáalki*]

14. PM: Derr
Nobíin: *Dírri** (check tone locally)
[TopBib 701–030–110] Published in PM 7, pp. 84–90

15. PM: Dibeira
Dibeira East. East Bank
Nobíin: *Dibéyrey**
[TopBib 701–050–080–010] Published in PM 7, p. 128

15a. PM Appendix: Dibeira West
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 128
Nobíin: *Dibéyrey tino** from *Dibéyrey*

16. PM: Diggem
See Buhen, Appendix
Nobíin: *Digéym**
[TopBib 701–050–090] Published in PM 7, pp. 129, 131
Arabic: *Dugheym*

16a. PM: Appendix: Dorgonarti
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 142
Nobíin: *Dórogn aarti**

17. PM: Ellesîya
Nobíin: *Ellesíiya* (check locally)
[TopBib 701–030–130] Published in PM 7, pp. 74, 90–91

18. PM: Faras
West Bank
Nobíin: *Fáras**
[TopBib 701–050–050] Published in PM 7, pp. 124–27

19. PM: Farrîq
East Bank.
Nobíin: *Farréyg**
 Abu Simbel temple is called *Farréygn úffi* "The hole of Farréyg"
[TopBib 701–050–010] Published in PM 7, p. 119

20. PM: Gami, see Sesebi
West Bank
Nobíin: *Séysebii**
[TopBib 701–060–160] Published in PM 7, pp. 172–74

21. PM: Gammai
East Bank. Fort and Cemetery
Nobíin: *Jiméyy**
[TopBib 701–060–030] Published in PM 7, pp. 142–43

22. PM: Gebel Abri = ʿAbrii.
East Bank
Nobíin: *Ábir** *Ábirin muuléy** "the mountain of Ábir"
[TopBib 701–060–120] Published in PM 7, p. 166

23. PM: Gebel Adda
East Bank
Nobíin: (check locally)
[TopBib 701–050–020] Published in PM 7, pp. 119–23

24. PM: Gebel Dabarôsa
East Bank
Nobíin: *Dabrówseyn muuléy**
also: *Dabrówsey** = Wādī Ḥalfa
[TopBib 701-050-080-030] Published in PM 7, p. 128

25. PM: Gebel Dosha
West Bank.
Nobíin: *Dówsheyn muuléy**
[TopBib 701-060-140] Published in PM 7, p. 167

26. PM: Gebel Sheikh Suleiman
Nobíin: *Jebel Sheh Silemáan**
[TopBib 701-050-100-020] Published in PM 7, p. 140

27. PM: Gebel el-Shems
Nobíin: *Mashan kid** "Rock of the Sun"
[TopBib 701-050-020-020] Published in PM 7, pp. 122–23

28. PM: Geddi, near Sabu
East Bank
Nobíin: *Jáddi** "Natron"
[TopBib 701-060-170] Published in PM 7, p. 174

28a. PM Appendix: Gezira Dabarosa
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 140
Nobíin: *Dabrówseyn aarti**

29. PM: Gezîret el-Melik = Island of Uronarti
Nobíin: *Úruun aarti**
  "Island of the King"
[TopBib 701-060-050] Published in PM 7, pp. 143–44

30. PM: Gindikol = Island of Gindikol
Nobíin: *Gindikówl** "With Thorn(s)"
[TopBib 701-060-070] Published in PM 7, p. 151

31. PM: Ibrîm = Qaṣr Ibrîm (Primis)
Nobíin: *Ebríim**
[TopBib 701-030-140] Published in PM 7, pp. 92–94

32. PM: Karanog In ʿAnîba
Nobíin: *Karanówg* (H. Bell was there in 1963)
[TopBib 701–030–080] Published in PM 7, p. 77

33. PM: Kerma
East Bank
Nobíin: *Kerma,* also *Kermé** (check locally)
  *Kermennúsul** large Nobíin-speaking community.
  *Kermelbéled** mixed-Arab, Andáandi and Nobíin
Andáandi: *Kerma*
[TopBib 701–070–020] Published in PM 7, pp. 175–80

34. PM: Korosko
Nobíin: *Kuruskó**
[TopBib 701–030–100] Published in PM 7, p. 84

35. PM: Kumma or Semna East
Nobíin: *Kúmme**
[TopBib 701–060–080] Published in PM 7, pp. 151–56

36. PM: Maschakit (of Champollion) = Gebel el-Shems
Nobíin: *Mashan kid**
[TopBib 701–050–020–020] Published in PM 7, pp. 122–23

36a. PM Appendix: Maṣmaṣ
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 81
Nobíin: *Másmas** (small onion plant, "suck suck" in Egyptian Arabic)

37. PM: Mi'am See ʿAnîba
Nobíin: *Aníibey**
[TopBib 701–030–080] Published in PM 7, pp. 75–81

38. PM: Mirgissa
West Bank
Nobíin: *Mírgisse** (check locally)
[TopBib 701–060–020] Published in PM 7, p. 142

39. PM: Morka (On Island of Sai)
Nobíin: *Mówrkey*
[TopBib 701–060–110] Published in PM 7, p. 165

40. PM: Nauri
East Bank
Nobíin: *Nawír* and *Náwri**
[TopBib 701–060–180] Published in PM 7, p. 174

41. PM: Qaṣr Ibrîm = Ibrîm (Primis)
Nobíin: ***Ebríim****
[TopBib 701–030–140] Published in PM 7, pp. 92–94

42. PM: Qusṭul
East Bank
Nobíin: *Gústul**
[TopBib 701–050–030] Published in PM 7, p. 123

43. PM: Sabu
East Bank
Nobíin: *Sábu**
[TopBib 701–060–170] Published in PM 7, p. 174

44. Island of Sai
Nobíin: *Sáay**
Arabicized: *Ṣaay*
[TopBib 701–060–110] Published in PM 7, p. 166

45. PM: Sarras near Shalfak
Nobíin: *Saras** (check locally for tone)
Arabicized: *Ṣaraṣ*
[TopBib 701–060–040] Published in PM 7, p. 143

46. PM: Sedeinga or Adaya
West Bank
Nobíin: *Saadéŋŋa** (whirlpool = *Saadéy**, so "countercurrent,"
"brother of the whirlpool"?)
[TopBib 701–060–130] Published in PM 7, pp. 166–67

47. PM: Semna East or Kumma
Nobíin: *Sebné**, also: *Semné**
[TopBib 701–060–080] Published in PM 7, pp. 151–56

47a. PM Appendix: Semna South
Appendix: vol. 7, p. 151
Nobíin: ? (See *Semné** and *Sebné**)

48. Serra East
East Bank
Nobíin: *Serren mátto**
   Contrast *Serrén tino** "Serré West"
[TopBib 701–050–070] Published in PM 7, p. 128

49. PM Serra West or Aksha
Nobíin: *Serré* in *Serrén tino**
[TopBib 701–050–060] Published in PM 7, pp. 127–28

50. PM: Sesebi
West Bank
Nobíin: *Séysebii** (check locally)
[TopBib 701–060–160] Published in PM 7, pp. 172–74

51. PM: Sesi
West Bank, see Sesebi
Nobíin: *Séysey** in *Séyseyn muuléy**
[TopBib 701–060–160] Published in PM 7, pp. 172–74

52. PM: Shalfak
West Bank, "Near" Saras
Nobíin: *Shalfáag* (= "confusion"?)
[TopBib 701–060–040] Published in PM 7, p. 143

53. PM: Sheyma and Qatta
Nobíin: *Sheymá** (check locally)
[TopBib 701–030–120–020] Published in PM 7, p. 90

54. PM: Ṣûlb or Soleb
West Bank
Nobíin: *Solb** and *Solib*
[TopBib 701–060–150] Published in PM 7, pp. 168–72

55. PM: Sukkot
West Bank, See Sedeinga (Hoskins)
Nobíin: *Sikkówd**
[TopBib 701–060–130], Published in PM 7, p. 166

56. PM: Tomâs
Nobíin: *Towmáas**
[TopBib 701–030–070–020] Published in PM 7, p. 75

57. PM: Tôshka East
Nobíin: *Toshké**
[TopBib 701–030–160] Published in PM 7, p. 95

58. PM: Tumbos
East Bank
Nobíin: *Túmbus**
[TopBib 701k–070–010] Published in PM 7, pp. 174–75

59. PM: Island of Uronarti
See Gezîret el-Melik
Island of Uronarti.
Nobíin: *Úruun aarti**
[TopBib 701–060–050] Published in PM 7, pp. 143–44

60. PM: Wâdi Ḥalfa
Nobíin: *Hálfa** (*Waadi Hálfa*)
Arabic: *Wādī Ḥalfā*
[TopBib 701–050–100] Published in PM 7, pp. 140–41