

## *The Status Of Arabic In The Southern Sudan*

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## Abstract

Unlike the case with other parts of Black Africa (Western, Eastern and Central), the situation in the Southern Sudan (henceforth SS) did not allow for the spread of Islam, but for more use of Arabic language which is still playing important roles in the lives of the black African populations of SS. This paper explores the relationship between Arabic language and historical, cultural and 'politico-socio-economic' factors that determined the place of Arabic in the linguistic map of the SS and its present-day importance.

The paper falls into five parts: an introduction, three major sections and a conclusion. The introduction presents the purpose of the study and methodology. Section one is a survey of the sociolinguistic background of the Northern and Southern Sudan. Section two accounts for the status of Arabic in Northern Sudan (NS); its emergence, formation and spread in SS. Also, it identifies the varieties of Southern Sudanese Arabic (SSA).

Section three focuses on the examination of the range of uses and the present-day status of Arabic in SS. It discusses the assumption that since Arabic is not culturally related to SS, its development and spread came, partly, as a result of the political and economic dominance of the North rather than its cultural importance and, partly, as a result of the linguistic disunity of the South. Thus, the 'politico-socio-economic' and cultural factors that influenced the emergence, evolution, spread and promotion of Arabic in SS are freshly re-examined. Also, the section examines four different varieties of SSA in accordance with the scope of their functions and sociolinguistic positions. The concluding section sums up the discussion and presents a fresh evaluation of the present status of Arabic in the SS.

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## **0. Introduction**

### **1. Purpose of the Study:**

The present paper is an attempt to give a first insight into the history and present-day sociolinguistic position of Arabic language in the Southern Sudan (SS). It tries to establish a link between Arabic language and historical, cultural, social and political factors in SS and, at the sametime, gives an impression of the type of Arabic used which is already playing a new and important role in the lives of the African population of the SS.

### **2. Methodology**

The method based on the 'Formulas of National Sociolinguistic Profiles', developed by Ferguson (1966) and Uribe Villegas (1968), proved to be useful in studying a language within the framework of a nation or a political entity. In so doing, the method is less concerned with other important ethnic, cultural, societal or psycholinguistic frameworks (Stewart, 1968). In brief, this method includes any language, to be studied, in a "formula representing the sociolinguistic profile" of the nation or political entity in question (Ferguson, 1970:113). However, details of this method can be found in the articles cited.

The method adopted in this article, though makes use of Ferguson's, is extended to provide for sociolinguistic data basic for the examination and assessment of the range of uses of Arabic and, consequently, its status in the SS. To do this, four major steps were followed:

1. Survey of the language situation in the SS.
2. Identification of the major varieties of Sudanese Arabic.
3. Assessment of the status of Arabic in Northern and Southern Sudan.
4. Examination of the range of uses and status of Arabic in the SS.

### **1. The Sudan: A Sociolinguistic Perspective**

#### **1.1. The Two Sudans:**

Geographically, the term 'SS' refers to all lands south of Latitude 10°, comprising the three provinces of: Upper Nile (Malakal), Bahr-al-Ghazal (Waw) and Equatoria (Juba), occupied by the Negroid tribal population of black African Culture. But, since the terms 'Northern Sudan' (NS) and 'SS' are usually confused and, often, taken by many people to stand for two major geographical divisions of the Sudan, it is relevant, in this respect, to illustrate their meaning. In fact, the terms are designated to ethnic and cultural divisions rather than geographical ones. Accordingly, the term NS is a cover term for all those areas (constituting Northern, Central, Eastern and Western Sudan) occupied by the Muslim-Arab tribes, the Arabized Nubians (in Northern and Central Sudan), the Beja tribes (of Eastern Sudan) and the less Arab-

ized Muslims of Western Sudan (i.e. the Nuba-Mountains and the Fur tribes). Also, it covers the Christian but Arabized Sudanese Coptics whose mother tongue is, now, Arabic.

## 1.2. A Historical Note

The fact that the Sudan in general and its Northern regions in particular constitute a unique meeting point of Arabism and Africanism is the result of the geography and history of the land. The country, located in the northern-eastern part of the continent of Africa, is only separated from Arabia by the Red Sea; it directly borders on Egypt and Libiya, and at the same time stretches deep into the heart of Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sudan, though deeply entrenched in Africa, has had a long history of close contacts with the nations of the Mediterranean and the Middle East,<sup>1</sup> particularly Egypt and Arabia. All those who ruled or conquered Egypt, says Arkell (1955:177), found it either necessary or desirable to try to extend their influence, if not their power, into the lands which, today, constitute the Sudan. Of all those conquerors (the Pharaohs, Romans, Arabs, Turks and the British), the Muslim Arabs were the most successful and their religion and culture, having replaced those of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, have been of lasting effect in the Sudan (Abdel Rahim, 1971:231).

## 1.3. The Northern Sudan

Contacts between the Sudan and Arabia had started sometime before the dawn of history when the earlier waves of Arab tribes, the ancestors of the present Beja tribes, crossed the Red Sea and settled in Eastern Sudan (Hakim, 1980:171). Late Arab tribal legends (Al-Ya'goubi, 1960; Al-Masudi, 1861; Ibn Khaldun, 1867; Al-Qalqashandi, 1913 and Al-Maqrizi, 1922) refer to a pre-Islamic influx of Himyarite people known as 'Hadareb' (also 'Bellou' by Al-Masudi) who settled among the Beja and intermarried with them, but were unable to establish Arabic language. With the arrival of the Muslims in Egypt in 640 A.D. and their famous peace treaty ('al-Baght'),<sup>2</sup> signed by Abdullahi Ibn al-Sarh with the Nubians in 641-2 A.D., a slow process of Muslim-Arab infiltration started to take place in NS. Consequently, after at least two centuries of close contact, Islamic-Arabic culture gained prestige and predominance (Hassan, 1967:176). Arabic, being the language of the Holy Qur'an, trade and contact, assumed the 'lingua franca' status and, since then, its impact was tremendously felt.

The result of the social and cultural revolution which had thus taken place (640-1520 A.D.) was the total transformation of Christian Nubia and the establishment of the Islamic Kingdom of the 'Funj' at Sennar (Central Sudan) which lasted until 1821 when the Turks invaded the Sudan from Egypt.

However, with the advantage of religious and cultural predominance in Central Sudan, the, by now, largely Africanised Arabs, still holding to their Arabism and Islamic culture, were able to penetrate the more remote parts of the country, including

areas, i.e. Kordofan and Dar Fur in Western Sudan (Append. II), which were geographically less similar than Central Sudan to Arabia. Consequently, the areas which now constitute NS became Islamized and, to a lesser degree, Arabized. Certain sectors of the NS population, namely the Nubians, the Beja, parts of the Nuba Mountains and the Fur tribes, for example, had accepted Islam but were not likewise Arabized. Nevertheless, the Arab tribal divisions which existed within the context of the Arabic language and culture, superseded the indigeneous divisions and put them on an entirely different plane and perspective and, indeed, gave the people of NS what it had already given to the Arabs of Arabia: a unifying cultural bond which they did not possess before. The Islamization-Arabization unifying process has gone so far that, by comparison with SS, those tribal differences which still exist in some areas in NS are 'mainly superficial', says Nadler (1935:44).

#### **1.4. The Language Situation in the Southern Sudan**

The SS was preserved from all early external influences that invaded NS by climatic and geographical difficulties and thus remained virtually untouched until the mid-nineteenth century. Like many black African countries, SS is inhabited by languages and separate dialects (about 50 in number) of the Eastern African culture type. These may be classified into three different ethnic groups, each includes a cluster of tribes speaking different dialects, sometimes in very small communities.<sup>(3)</sup>

##### **A. Nilotic**

The people under this designation are "Negroes of the tall slender subrace" known as Nilotes (Murdock, 1959:328). Today, they occupy a large territory extending from the north-west border of Kordofan and through SS to northern Uganda, Tanzania to western Kenya and to the edges of Ethiopia and the Congo Basin (present-day Zaire). They speak languages of the Eastern subfamily of the Sudanic stock. The tongues of the Sudanese Nilotes fall into three subdivisions according to different tribe clusters:

##### **1. Dinka-Nuer Cluster**

This constitutes a number of separate dialects spoken by different pastoral rather than agricultural tribes: Dinka, Nuer Jur, Padang (a detached branch of the Dinka) and Pari (a branch of the Anuak from whom they split).

##### **2. The Luo Cluster**

It includes several agricultural tribes of which the Acholi and Lango live in SS. The rest extend to northern Uganda, Congo Basin (e.g. Alur) and the Luo between SS and Kenya.

### 3. Prenilotes

The Prenilotes occupy the Basin of the Blue and White Nile Rivers south of Kordofan, together with the adjacent slopes of the Ethiopian plateau to the east. They speak languages of the Sudanic linguistic stock, in some instances specifically of the Nilotic ethnic group (Evans-Pritchard, 1947:70). Two major Sudanese tribes (i.e. Shilluk and Anuak), for example, which linguistically belong to the Nilotic branch are ethnically prenilotes.

### B. Nilo-Hamitic

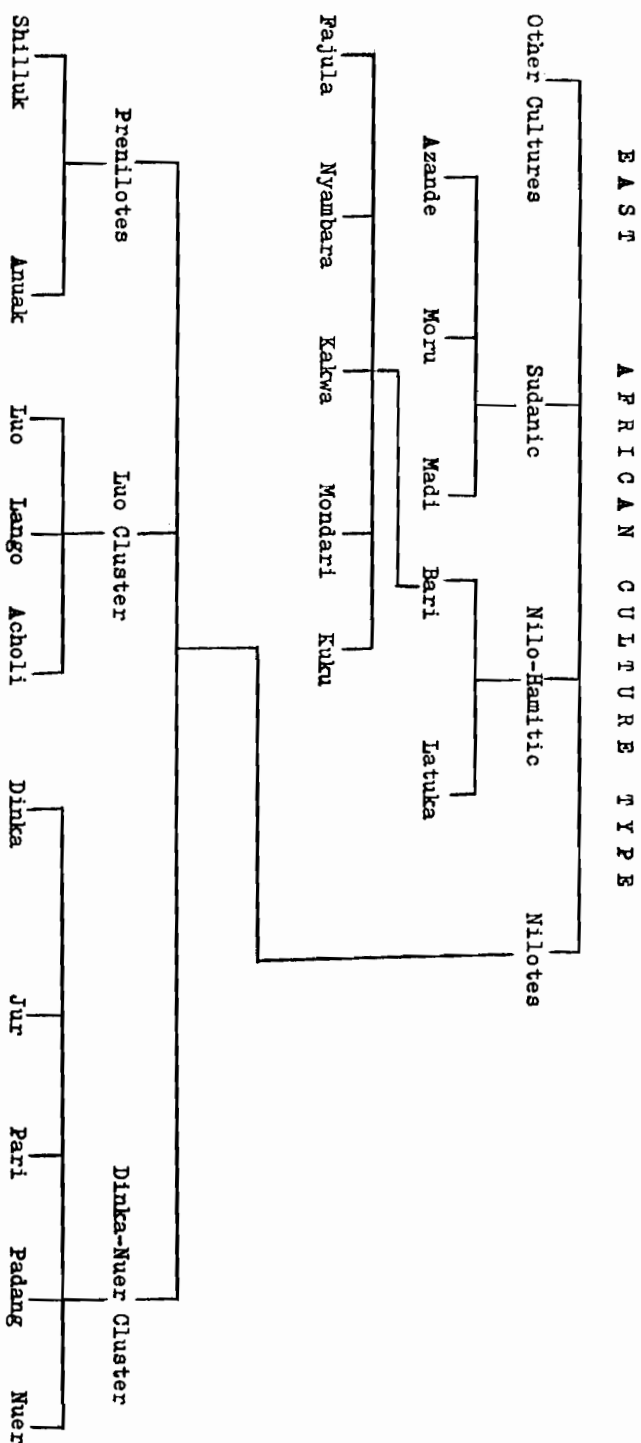
The Nilo-Hamitic group includes different tribe clusters of the Negroid peoples of the southern Nile Valley. Being Chushitized, they reveal considerable intermixture with their central Sudanese neighbours on the West (Murdock, 1959:330). Two Sudanese tribes (i.e. Bari and Latuka) belonging to the Bari cluster are wedged between the Dinka-Nuer cluster on the north and the Luo on the south and extend into Zaire. The rest of the Bari cluster living in Western Equatoria are: Fajulu, Nyambara, Kakwa, Mondari and Kuku.

### C. Sudanic

This group includes various clusters of tribes west of the River Nile including the Azande (also Zande by Sudanese anthropologists), Moru and Madi in SS. Though Greenberg (1963:9) relates it to the Eastern subfamily of the 'Niger-Congo' languages, the Azande linguistic position has not been established until today. However, occupying, with other tribes, the zone of the tropical rainforest (between the latitudes 3° and 6° N. and longitudes 23° and 29° E.), the Azande still enjoys an expansion which is not reached by many African languages (Heine, 1970:110-111). The total number of the Azande language users living in SS, today, amounts to about 400,000 (Sudan Third Population Census, 1983. See Appendix I).

It is evident, from the above survey, that the Southern Sudanese tribes have affinities with tribes to be found in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Zaire as the international boundary is nowhere an ethnic one. Butt (1952:42) observed that the various groups are still closely connected, linguistically, physically and in their traditions of origin, the fact that they must have experienced the most intimate contact in the past. But this cannot be taken as indicative of a unique ethnic group, because of the present individualistic character of each group. However, the following chart, which is similar to those produced by Africanists,<sup>(4)</sup> has been modified, by the writer, to indicate what seems to be the linguistic situation in the SS in relation to other East African groups.

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The Major Languages of SS

N.B.:

Languages of the Same Ethnic Groups but spoken by tribes living outside SS are not represented in this Chart.

## **2. Varieties of Sudanese Arabic.**

### **2.1. Northern Sudanese Arabic.**

#### **2.1.1. Arabic as Religious Language:**

Religious education, being a basic requirement of all Muslim societies, demanded a knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the sacred Book of the Muslims, and consequently the ability to read, write and, at least, recite some of its verses in order, in Ibn Khuldun's (1961:779) words, "to inculcate and strengthen the faith". The nomad Arab settlers, whose sole purpose was to spread Islam in the predominantly Christian NS, intermarried with the people and initiated their children in the benevolent teachings of Islam. Thus, the type of education developed was similar to that existing in Arabia, North Africa and Egypt (Beshir, 1969:5). This type of education used to take place in the 'Khalwa'<sup>(5)</sup> which, literally, is a place of seclusion primarily for 'sufi' initiates. In NS, the 'Khalwa' emerged as the characteristic religious institution and was run, and still is in some rural parts, by a 'faki'.<sup>(6)</sup> Verses of the Qur'an were to be learnt by heart through memorization, and it was mainly through memorization that the young children used to learn the orthography of Arabic language.

As a result of this type of Islamic education, Northern Sudanese mother-tongue speakers of Arabic developed a variety which is roughly comparable to those existing in other parts of the Arabic speaking countries. There is, to use Ferguson's term, a 'diglossia' situation where speakers acquire a non-standard form of Arabic in childhood and then superpose some amount of Standard Arabic for certain educational and formal purposes (Ferguson, 1959). By 'Standard' (cf. 3.4.1) reference is made to what is known today as 'Modern Standard Arabic', a modern version of Classical Arabic whose main sources are the language of poetry and oratory of the Classical Arabs, the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith (the teachings of the Prophet).

In this connection, it is worth noting that the Nubians of NS,<sup>7</sup> though still retaining the ancient Nubian language<sup>8</sup> as their mother-tongue, have become strongly Arabized (Arkell, 1955:217) and use Arabic as their first language.<sup>9</sup> Again, the Beja tribal population of Eastern Sudan and the Fur<sup>10</sup> of Western Sudan use Arabic as their first language. Today, the great majority of the educated Nubians, Western and Eastern Sudanese living in urban districts use Northern Sudanese Arabic (henceforth NSA) as their native language and speak it just in the same way as mother-tongue speakers and bring up their children to do the same. The majority of the illiterate of these groups use Arabic as their major language of communication when they leave their families or localities. Although the variety of Arabic among the illiterate may differ from tribe to tribe and from community to community, it is spoken in the direction of the NS Colloquial Arabic.

### **2.2. Southern Sudanese Arabic**

It is essential to point out that the term 'Southern Sudanese Arabic' (SSA) lacks

linguistic exactitude and is often loosely employed as if it refers to a uniform dialect of Arabic language used by all Southern Sudanese, no matter what tribe or social background they come from. There are, of course, many linguistic differences (mostly lexical and grammatical) between, for example, the form of Arabic spoken by the average well-educated Southerner and that of the average un-educated. Again, differences exist between the speech of un-educated Southerners living in the urban centres in NS and those in the rural districts of the South. Therefore, a distinction should be made, at least, between three forms of SSA.

- a) The variety spoken by the average well-educated Southerners.
- b) The variety spoken by the lower-class of un-educated Southerners living in urban centres of NS.
- c) The variety, or varieties, used by the overwhelming majority of un-educated Southerners as 'lingua franca' in the different districts of the South.

Accordingly, the author prefers to designate the term 'Educated Southerners Arabic' (ESA) to the variety spoken by the average educated Southern Sudanese. This is the most refined variety of the three as it is spoken by the Southern Sudanese intelligentsia (usually high school and university graduates). Almost all of the ESA characteristic features (with the exception of certain phonological features) are derived from NS Colloquial Arabic as well as from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The term 'Southern Vernacular Arabic' (SVA) is designated to the variety used by the lower-class uneducated Southerners living in the urban ghettos in NS. This is the type of SSA which flourished in NS and is greatly influenced by the form of Arabic spoken by the majority of uneducated Northerners living in these ghettos or near them. The rapid growth of such ghettos have led to the independent development of this variety in NS as it was able to generate its own distinctive innovations away from local languages influences. The third variety is given the term 'Pidgin Arabic' (PA) to refer to a 'rudimentary, pidginized' form of Arabic as some of its features are derived from the local languages of SS.

However, despite the linguistic differences between the three forms of SSA, they all agree in their being derived historically from NSA and in their development in the direction of the present NS Colloquial Arabic.

### **3. The Range of Uses of Arabic in the Southern Sudan**

#### **3.1. Arabic as Substitute Language (1840-1930)**

The term 'substitute language' was first used and defined by Schultze (1933:380):

I would like to define as substitute languages those languages which are used as means of communication by people speaking different languages, of whom neither speaks the other's tongue, thus obliging them to make a linguistic detour in order to converse with each other.

Accordingly, Schultze distinguished four types of 'substitute' languages in accordance with the scope of their function:

1. Settlement-gibberish
2. Trading-gibberish
3. The Slave and Servant languages
4. The Artificial International Auxiliary languages.

Like Schultze, other workers on lingua-francas (Reinecke 1938; Jacquot 1960; Berry 1962 and Heine 1970) have frequently made the range of functions of these languages the basis of their classification. Reinecke (1938), for instance, laying emphasis on the sociolinguistic function, has adopted Schultze's topology which is based on a functional criterion. Berry (1962:225) nominated more than one range of function of the same lingua franca and classified each as a 'pidgin of restricted function'; Heine (1970:19) treated the 'substitute languages' as a sub-division of lingua francas. To this end, a language defined as 'substitute' was dealt with as a separate or a distinguished type of a lingua franca. Apart from the 'artificial international auxiliary languages,' it is evident that all types designated 'substitute languages,' make reference to a particular functional extent, rather than a sociolinguistic status responsible for the formation of each type.

For the purpose of this section, the term 'substitute language' is used as a cover term for all those designations stressing the importance of a language as a medium of communication amongst populations of different tongues. As such, the origin of a substitute language, in many cases, is connected to a specific situation of interethnic or international contact, by which its linguistic forms as well as its sociolinguistic status are influenced. The basis of such contact situations are particularly formed by trade, domination, administration and communication which represent the function and the social status of a 'substitute language'.

Thus, the several types of Arabic (settlements-gibberish, slave language, soldier language and trade jargon) which were formed in SS by different contact situations, may be dealt with as different 'major' ranges of function and application within the same language (i.e. Arabic), and not as different 'substitute' languages. This, however, makes the designation 'Arabic as substitute language' more realistic and relevant to the situation of Arabic in these regions, at least, in the period 1840-1930.

Since the several types of Southern Pidgin Arabic were all employed in the capacity of the media defined as 'substitute', the above topology, which is primarily based on a diachronic criterion, may be adopted to approach the formation and spread of Arabic as a 'substitute language' in SS. It is only that the sociolinguistic function is given precedence, as the emergence of Arabic, its evaluation and continual spread in SS, came as a result of the radical disruption of the 'politico-socio-economic' structures of the southern tribal population which took place during the mid-nineteenth century. The previously disparate ethnic groups were being politically and economically centralized by the domination of successive foreign rulers and colonial administrators. Therefore, it is relevant to outline the historical development of

the politico-socio-economic factors that determined and fostered the emergence and spread of the different varieties of PA which made the core of SSA and which are spoken, today, in different parts of SS.

### **3.1.1. Arabic as Soldier Language**

While Arabic was widely used as mother tongue and lingua franca in various parts of NS, there is no evidence that it was spoken anywhere in the South before the mid-nineteenth century. In their search of the Nile sources, the three expeditions sent by the Turkish government of Khartoum, under the leadership of Selim Quputan (1839-1841), opened the waterways and reached as far south as Gondokoro (the present-day Juba, the capital town of the Equatoria Province). Selim's soldiers who were of different nationalities (Turkish, Egyptian, Sudanese and Europeans) used a form of 'Turko-Egyptian' Arabic as lingua franca. This was the first time in history that Arabic was carried into the far regions of SS. Despite the fact that some of the SS tribes were engaged in long-distance trade (e.g. the Bari with the Arabic and Swahili speaking Muslims of Zanzibar and the Shulluk with Arabic and Fur speaking Muslims of Dar Fur), the reports left by the expeditions show that Arabic was unknown in these regions until 1840 (Werne, 1849).

However, the Turkish government conquering troops were able to establish a number of military posts (especially the expeditions led by Samuel Baker in 1871 and Gordon Pasha in 1874) between Gondokoro and Lake Albert along the Nile and into the interior of the region. In their contact with the native southerners, a rudimentary form of Arabic known as 'Bimbashi' or 'Mongalese' (Heine, 1970:118) emerged, developed and spread around these military posts. Bimbashi Arabic (BA) was the only means of contact between the foreign soldiers and the native southerners working in, living near or providing subsistence needs to the military posts. This sort of contact, which was mainly controlled by the foreign soldiers (or rather invaders) did not promote the evolution or spread of Arabic outside the military posts. Consequently, showing no real characteristic features of any of the vernacular languages of the region, BA remained a 'foreign' tongue inside and outside these military posts.

### **3.1.2. Arabic as Settlement-Gibberish:**

In 1850, when the government abandoned its monopolistic policy over the ivory and slave trade, several trading companies and merchants of different nationalities (Europeans, Turkish and Northern Sudanese) poured into the interior regions of SS. They established (1850-1870) a number of settlements along the white Nile and controlled almost all the areas of the district between Malakal, the capital town of Upper Nile, and the North of Uganda (Schweinfurth, 1873:172). These trading settlements were manned by armed bands from different nationalities (Turkish, Europeans, Tunisians, Egyptians, N. Sudanese and local tribes). As more Northern Sudanese dealers and traders joined the settlements, a new form of Arabic, based mainly on NSA varieties, emerged and developed as the only means of communication among the settlements population. Since each settlement was established in

the neighbourhood of a Southern tribe, different types of PA developed. Thus, the view that a single form of PA developed in one settlement and then spread among others forming one type of SSA does not hold true in view of the settlements geographical distribution. According to Schweinfurth (1873:183), for example, the whole country between the Dinka territory in the north and the Azande in the south was occupied at intervals with settlements. In Bahr-al-Ghazal, there were several others running from the north at Kaka in Shilluk land to the south of Fowera in Northern Uganda.

With the flourishing of the settlements (1850-1870), the development and spread of BA, which was confined to the area of military posts, came to an end and different forms of PA (rather pidgins than creoles) which were mainly based on NSA, developed and spread in and around the settlements almost all over the Southern regions of the Sudan. It is important to note here, that the Turks, whose intentions were completely colonial, did not support or encourage the use of Arabic, be it BA or PA. Its progression and spread during their reign (1840-1884) came as a result of (a) the linguistic disunity of the South and (b) because it was the only possible medium of communication between the government officials and the merchants on one side and the natives on the other (cf. 3.1.1 & 3.1.2). As such, the different forms of PA developed and spread only around the Turkish military posts and trading settlements.

During their short stay in the south, the Mahadists fulfilled part of their major objectives, that is destroying the Turks and abolishing the slave trade, but were unable to establish Islam or Arabic language. Paradoxically, Arabic flourished and spread with the Turkish colonial administration and started its decline and reversal process with the Mahadists whose motives were religious, nationalistic and humanistic. This paradox, however, needs further clarification.

First, though they took Bahr-al-Ghazal in 1884, the Mahadists did not actually establish themselves in the South as the armies were soon called to the North. Again, in 1888, they controlled al-Rejaf and pushed into Equatoria, but their advance was stopped by the Belgians who by then consolidated the Lado Enclave from Congo (Stigand, 1968:29). Looking for a 'lingua franca', the Belgians supported 'Bangala'<sup>(11)</sup> which had already gained prestige along the River Congo and assumed a supra-regional importance (Heine, 1970:72) and thus continued progressively to displace the form of rudimentary PA used by the Southern communities in this region. The fact that each of the PA varieties was restricted to a special contact situation minimized their chances to cross the borders to the Congo. Besides, the Christian missionaries, working from the Congo against the Mahadist advance, supported Bangala and encouraged more contact with the Lado Enclave. Second, in their fighting against the Turkish armies and slave traders, the Mahadists destroyed all the military posts and trading settlements, the 'politico-socio-economic' institutions once promoted the development and spread of Arabic. Fourth, the very few expressions used by the Mahadist Southern 'jihadiya' for prayers, greetings and religious occasions were relatively insignificant in the total language economy of the SS. Finally, being associated with the Turkish conquest and slavery, Arabic was

never popular and for the Southerners it was, and still is, a foreign tongue on which they never prided themselves.

Furthermore, the Mahadists drive in the South disrupted the social stability of some tribes as some Muslim Southerners joined the Mahadist army as 'jihadiya' (fighters for Allah), others left the country. A group of 'Nubi' soldiers working under the Turkish administration in the South, for example, fled with Emin Pasha to Uganda in 1888 and carried a variety of SSA even into some East African countries, particularly Kenya and Tanzania (Smith, 1972:308). Though it did not achieve the function of a lingua franca in these countries, this variety, which is still in common use and known as 'Nubi' Arabic, flourished with the descendants of those soldiers in Southern Uganda. The Nubi population group, now living in the South of Uganda, says Soghayroun (1981:14), "... seem to have been strong Muslims and speak Arabic as mother tongue".

In reaction to the Mahadist Islamic ideology, the British colonial governors outlined a new policy for the South to keep it cut off from the Muslim-Arab culture of the North and initiate it into the African tradition and, perhaps, into the Christian civilization. As early as 1904, Wingate, the Governor-General of the Sudan, informed the governor of Bahr-al-Ghazal that English should replace Arabic as the latter contains "references to the Prophet... [and the government] was not at all keen to propagate Mohamedanism in countries in which that religion is not the religion of the inhabitants" (SGA, 1904:103). Accordingly, the educational policy of the Christian missionaries, to whom education in the South was wholly entrusted (1899-1945), was directed toward the segregation of the Southern education. To suppress the development and spread of Arabic and promote the use of English as a medium of instruction and lingua franca, a specific language policy was outlined: 'that every effort should be made to make English the only means of communication to the complete exclusion of Arabic (SGA, 1904:103). The Rejaf Language Conference in 1928, for example, stipulated the use of the major vernacular languages as media of instruction in elementary schools, English in the intermediate and the teaching of Arabic only as a subject in the curriculum of the intermediate schools (SGA, 1928). Again, the Southern students (up to 1950) were sent to Makerere College in Uganda instead of Gordon College of Khartoum. Finally, under the belief that Arabic 'would open the door for the spread of Islam, Arabize the South and introduce the Northern Sudanese outlook' (SGA, 1928), the SS was declared, in 1930, a closed region against any Northern Sudanese activities (SGA, 1930). Consequently, the South was alienated from NS culture and initiated into the Black African Culture.

However, unlike the case with other parts of Black Africa (i.e. Western, Eastern & Central Africa), the situation in SS did not allow for the spread of Islam, but for more use of Arabic, especially in urban districts, as it was, and still is, the only means of communication between government officials and the native Southerners. Conversely, Arabic did not find its way to the rural areas of the South as there was less

contact between the villagers and government officials. To this end, it can be generally stated that, up to 1950, Arabic remained a FL, at least to all Southerners living in the rural districts, and Muslim-Arab Culture an alien one.

### 3.2. Arabic as Official Language

By 'Official Arabic', reference is made to its use by the government in education, the courts of law, administration, government publications, radio and television which, in this case, are all government run. In a linguistically heterogeneous country like the Sudan, it actually makes more sense if the term is interpreted in terms of the sociolinguistic situation, since there are different forms of 'official Arabic' appropriate for different situations or regions. In NS, for instance, Arabic receives a considerable support from the people while using it for official as well as other purposes, whereas it is hardly taken into consideration by the Southerners, especially in the smaller villages of the South, where the sociolinguistic prerequisites are of a different nature. To the average Northerner carrying on a conversation in town with an official, for example, 'official Arabic' means the 'regional standard' or a clean form of NSA. To the average Southerner living in the South, it can only mean the 'rudimentary, pidginized' form of Arabic spoken by most of the uneducated lower class Southerners. Again, to the educated Southerner, the term may refer to the variety of Arabic described as 'SEA' (cf. 2.2), and the 'regional standard' of NS becomes an active 'standard official' (still in the Southern accent) only if he obtains a university degree and when he writes official reports or addresses other educated Northerners showing no or little interest in English.

However, despite the efforts made by the colonial government to replace it by SS vernacular languages and English, Arabic made a remarkable progress and expansion between 1934 and 1956, both as an official language and a lingua franca, in big urban centres. None of the major vernacular languages (Dinka, Shilluk or Nuer) has gained prestige to be used as a medium of communication outside its locality. Instead, SSA, which by now has undergone a considerable process of pidginization, was substituted and came to be used in big towns all over the South. From 1930 onward, the significance of Arabic was furthered by local government activities as more administration officials, teachers, medical doctors, policemen, etc. poured into the Southern regions.<sup>(12)</sup> Again, focusing on the patterns of language use in SS, the 1972 nationwide survey<sup>(13)</sup> illustrates that Arabic as an 'Official Language' was promoted by the important roles it played in the lives of the town-dwellers who employed it for various purposes in their everyday contacts with the government officials.

Finally, though it did not accomplish the status of a lingua franca in the rural districts of the South up to 1956, Arabic retained its status, at least in big urban centres, as the official language of the state where it was, and still is, widely used for various official purposes and in formal situations, especially by the educated Southerners.

### 3.3. Arabic as Lingua Franca

A lingua franca is defined as a common language used as a medium of oral or/ and written communication between groups of people of different mother tongues (Jacquot, 1960:30; Samarin, 1962:54; Greenberg, 1965:52). The criteria according to which the term is defined makes no reference to whether this medium is spoken as mother tongue, or first language, by one of the groups involved or only employed as second, or third, language by populations separated by language barriers. The definition, therefore, suffers from linguistic inexactitude and does not always seem to be justified. However, in their search for a suitable method for the study of lingua francas, sociolinguists as well as ethnologists (Unesco, 1953:46; Ferguson, 1970:120; Hall Jr., 1972:143; to mention a few) have dealt with them from very differing aspects and agreed upon a number of criteria. In reference to the sociolinguistic aspect, to which this section restricts itself, four major criteria, among others, have proved their usefulness in the examination and assessment of the status of a lingua franca:

1. The factors (cultural, political, social and economic, etc.) that influence the origin and development of a lingua franca.
2. The spread and status of a lingua franca including its emergence, the area, the number of speakers and whether it is used as first, second or third language.
3. The function of a lingua franca as a medium of communication stressing its importance as 'contact', or 'substitute', language.
4. The linguistic characteristics stressing a lingua franca's special linguistic structure as 'pidgin', 'creole' or just as a 'rudimentary' form.

Criteria (1) and (4) have already been discussed (cf. 3.1.1. and 3.1.2.). As to the second criterion, it is important to state while certain factors can be favourable to the spread of a lingua franca, others, in turn, offer resistance to its spread. The cultural factors, for example, can promote a lingua franca or deter it. Heine (1970:36) observes that 'the more the ways of life of two groups differ, the smaller become the contacts between them, or vice versa'. The existing cultural differences between the Northern and Southern Sudanese populations, for instance, explains the fact that Arabic which is an important lingua franca in other parts of Africa (i.e. Northern, Western and Eastern Africa) could not establish itself in the inner rural areas of the South in comparison with the big urban centres. Again, the spread of many of the African lingua francas (e.g. Amharic in Ethiopia, Azande in SS and Congo, Fanagalo in Southern Africa, Arabic in Somali, to mention a few) over large areas and across political boundaries came as a result of cultural unity. In fact, the same situation of interethnic contact did not exist for Arabic in SS which explains the fact that, although it is spoken commonly almost all over SS, the actual number of Southerners able to use it is very limited. As Arabic is not culturally related to SS, its spread in these regions came, partly, as a result of the political and economic dominance of the North rather than its cultural importance and, partly, as a result of the linguistic disunity of the South as well as the socio-economic disruptions. In this capacity, Arabic may be classified as 'langue principale' which, says Jacquot (1960:30), "belongs to a cer-

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tain defined ethnic group but is spoken in a more or less widespread area, because of particular economic and social reasons".

As to the range of function (criterion 3), it is relevant to point out that a lingua franca may reach the ultimate of its development when it loses its function as an inter-linguistic means of communication and becomes itself a vernacular language as a result of its being adopted by its speakers as first language or mother tongue (Heine, 1970:33). Again, another situation may arise when a lingua franca exists in a peaceful relationship or complementary way with another language creating a bilingual situation. Such a situation existed long time ago between the Tuareg and the Arabs in Timbuktu. Greenberg (1965:56) writes:

The Tuareg and the Arabs have been bilingual for centuries, employing Songhai and their own language without loss of ethnic identity or serious impairment of group membership.

Similarly, Arabic developed from the stage of its function as a 'religious language' and then a lingua franca by the less Arabized Northern Sudanese Muslims to the stage of first language or mother tongue when it has relinquished its linguistic features and status as a religious language only and a lingua franca. Such a situation, however, is far from being true of Arabic in SS, as there is no evidence that any of the SSA varieties has become the first language of any of the Southern groups, even those groups living in the urban centres of the North. On the contrary, its development in this direction has been deterred by many factors some of which may be mentioned.

First, the type of SSA used as lingua franca (i.e. PA), though developing in the direction of NSA (especially in lexicon), is not yet of a standardized form. This refers to the fact that the features of local languages it incorporates are not uniform and differ from district to district according to the native language of the speakers. Second, PA does not seem to be popular in the remote rural areas and within smaller communities, especially among women. It has been found,<sup>11</sup> for instance, that the Southerner coming from the village into the town, first of all, uses PA as lingua franca in his contact with strangers who are mostly of other SS tribes, but not with the members of his own tribe or family. In contact with other members of his tribe, even at the presence of strangers in town, the use of his own native tongue gains a stronger foothold and remains the mother tongue and the primary language of his children. Arabic for him, is a 'foreign', 'nobody's' or a 'substitute' language used only for communication with strangers, be they Northerners or Southerners.

So far, there is no comprehensive statistical data on Arabic as lingua franca in SS, so as to know the different attitudes of men and women towards it. Undoubtedly, though SS women have a good opportunity of using Arabic in market places, the SS men demonstrate on the average a greater mobility in comparison with them as they travel much and come in contact with strangers. Moreover, the proportion of the male population in government business and school attendance is still essential-

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ly larger than that of the female population, and the importance of government business and schools in the development of Arabic as lingua franca in SS cannot be underestimated.

Third, the fact that the Arabic orthography was, and still is, not used for writing any of the SS vernacular languages, lessened the chances of Arabic to develop as a lingua franca. In this connection, it is relevant to mention that the orthographies of Western European languages (i.e. English and French) used in writing certain African vernacular languages, have influenced the sociolinguistic position of these African languages to varying degrees of importance (Alexandre, 196:184). This, in turn, led to the development of certain lingua francas (e.g. Hausa and Yourba in Northern and Southern Nigeria). Official Arabic, for example, which is the language of all government publications and is essentially used in the South, has no or little effect in the promotion of Arabic as lingua franca and its effect can only be felt among the little minority of those Southerners who can read and write in Arabic. Because of the high rate of illiteracy, official Arabic does not really exist for the majority of SS population. Conversely, through Christian missionaries working in the South, English language was used in writing some of the major local languages and thus gained prestige among Christian Southerners, even among those of average education whose English is now better than Arabic. As a result, the role played by Arabic as an official and religious language in NS, is partly transferred, by the educated Southerners, to English in the South.

Fourth, the SS sociolinguistic situation has, now, been changed according to the growing consciousness of cultural and political individuality among the Southern elites who started to look for recognition as an autonomous entity from the North. The effect of this change is reflected on the ways of life of the SS elites who tend, for example, to use English as lingua franca, even with Northerners, whereas the Southern lower class citizens, who are mostly uneducated, use Arabic. Consequently, the role of the lingua franca once played by Arabic all over the South is now beginning to transfer, at least by the majority of SS elites, into English.

### **3.4. Arabic as National Language**

#### **3.4.1. Standardization of Arabic**

In its most general linguistic sense, the term 'standardization' refers to a 'superior', or standard, form or variety of a language over others (Southworth and Daswani, 1974:262; Quirk, 1982:17). In this sense, the process of standardization concerns primarily public usage as it emphasizes the acceptance, or prestige, of a certain variety, or dialect, of a language by all groups in a society. However, as far as Arabic in the Sudan is concerned, the term may not fully apply as it always implies that there can be one 'standard variety' of Arabic valid for all Sudanese which is not the case. Thus, by 'standardization of Arabic', reference is made to a variety, of NSA, or an approximation of it which is used, by necessity, to facilitate communication or inter group dealings in the linguistically heterogeneous situation of the Sudan.

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Of course, there is a considerable variation in the extent of acceptance and also in the range of situations in which it is used. Acceptance, in this case, means that different Sudanese groups agree to employ Arabic, to the best of their ability and knowledge, for official and religious uses, as well as lingua franca, the way they perceive it. Accordingly, standardization of Arabic, in the case of the Sudan, means: there is no place for a 'standard', 'superior' or 'prestige' dialect, but there are variable standards, each group (or tribe) produces its standard according to its own ethnic or cultural background.

### **3.4.2. The Relation Between Standard, Official and National Language**

That Arabic has become so highly standardized as the official language and the only means of oral communication all over the Republic of the Sudan, does not necessarily mean that it is the 'national', or the only 'standard', language for all its citizens. The standardization of Arabic in NS refers, partly, to the fact that it is spoken as mother tongue in many parts and partly to the cultural and political importance of the North. The Southern Sudanese, though came to use one form of Arabic or another as lingua franca among themselves or with Northerners, they still prefer to communicate in their own mother tongues, even at the presence of strangers, whenever possible. In this connection, it is relevant to make distinction between the terms 'standard language', 'official language' and 'national language'. The relation between these terms has been clarified by Lyons (1985:278):

... any language that is accepted by its speakers as a symbol of nationhood (i.e. of political and cultural identity) or is designated by government for official use will tend to be standardized, whether deliberately or not, as a precondition or consequence of this very fact. The converse relation, however, does not hold.

The relation between Arabic as 'national', 'standard' and 'official' language holds true as far as the situation in NS is concerned, but does not hold in the same way in SS where Arabic, though commonly used as lingua franca by Southern speakers of different mother tongues, has not yet been standardized in the same way as it has in the North. Again, though it is widely used for official purposes at the national level all over the country, Arabic cannot be considered the 'national' language of the SS population for the characteristic regional and cultural differences that exist between the North and South.

In support of this argument, it is worth to note that the role played by Islam in the promotion of Arabic language and, consequently, its acceptance by all Northern Sudanese Muslims as their 'national' and 'sacred' language is of great significance. The Nubians of the northern province, the Beja tribal population of eastern Sudan, the Nuba-Mountains (only the Muslims) and the Fur of Western Sudan, for example, all pride themselves in their accepting Arabic as their religious and national language. Like the Southerners, they were all of different cultural and linguistic background, than that of the Muslim-Arab tribes. But, unlike the Southerners, they all

lived in the midst of the Muslim-Arab culture and were in constant contact with them and, as such, were influenced by the Islamic and Arabic culture.

Moreover, although it is used, by necessity, as *lingua franca* by most Southerners, Arabic has never achieved the status of a national language in SS. Symbolically, Arabic means Islam which they believe endanger their own tribal religions and rituals, the creed of the majority. Like most black African tribes, the Southerners are fond of their own culture and are too suspicious about all that is foreign, especially that they think endangers their individualistic character and the unity of the tribe. The character of the Nilotic peoples described by Butt (1952:41), for instance, may still be taken as representative of all SS tribes:

They [SS tribal populations] have a remarkable proud individualistic behaviour. They consider their country the best in the world for this reason they . . . scorn European and Arab cultures, and are contemptuous and reserved with foreigners, so that it is difficult to get to know them. Their attitude towards any authority that would coerce them is one of touchiness, pride and reckless disobedience. Each determines to go his own way as much as possible, has a hatred of submission, and is ready to defend himself and his property from the inroads of others. They are thus self-reliant, brave fighters, turbulent and aggressive, and are extremely conservative in their aversion to innovation and interference.

However, the smaller minority of SS Muslims, who are not actually practising Islam, do not often come into contact with NS Muslims. Like all Muslims in the non-Arabic speaking world, they learn very few expressions which they should use for prayers, greetings or religious ceremonies. But the use of such expressions, if ever used, does not allow for real linguistic communication and, therefore, it cannot be said that Arabic is used as a religious language in SS. Thus, the amount of Arabic acquired by Southern Muslims is relatively insignificant in the total language economy of the Southern Sudan.

Under these circumstances, many Southerners, mostly university graduates, came to regard themselves as a different people, or 'nation', from Northerners and as such believe that they should have their own independent country or if some link with the North had to be maintained, this they feel, should be in the form of a weak federal or confederal relationship. Accordingly, they started to 'boycott' any Muslim-Arab traditions and initiate their own black African culture and tribal traditions. They tend, for example, to communicate among themselves in their own vernaculars and use English in informal situations, even at the presence of Northerners. Hence, though Arabic has been accepted by the Northerners as their national language, the situation created by the SS elites, plus the existing cultural differences, did not allow for such acceptance by the Southerners.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The preceding discussion has concentrated on the disruptions of the 'politico-

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socio-economic' structures of the Southern Sudanese tribal population in as far as they had an effect on the history and present-day status of Arabic language in the SS. Caused by successive foreign rulers, administrators and traders, since the mid-nineteenth century, these disruptions have determined the emergence, evolution, spread and the sociolinguistic positions of the different varieties of SSA. Their significance is that they guaranteed the survival, continuity and the present-day status of Arabic in the SS.

Since the term SSA does not refer to a uniform dialect of Arabic language, distinction is made between the different varieties of SSA on the basis of tribal and social differences among the Southerners themselves as well as on the basis of the degree of their contact with foreigners. Between 1840 and 1930, for example, at least four varieties of PA (cf. 3.1.) were used as 'substitute languages' in accordance with the scope of their functions. Each variety is a pidgin of a restricted function formed as a result of a special contact situation and none of them has achieved the status of a 'substitute' language outside these particular situations. As such, they may all be considered as 'sub-divisions' within the same substitute language which, in this case, is PA and not as different substitute languages. In view of this fact, the theory that a variety of PA was first developed in one region and then spread among others does not hold true.

Being pidginized to a greater degree, by 1950, Arabic retained its status as the only 'official' language in the urban centres of the SS, where it was, and still is, widely used for various official purposes, especially by the educated class of Southerners. Today, the status of Arabic as an official language and a lingua franca has been furthered by the recently established systems of regional autonomy, transport, communication and mass media which brought in more contacts between the Northerners and Southerners on one hand and among the Southerners of different mother tongues on the other. Nevertheless, though extensively used in these capacities, Arabic could not establish itself as the 'national' language of the South as it did in the North. Symbolically, Arabic means Islam which the Southerners believe endanger their own tribal religions and rituals, the creed of the majority. Now, the situation has been aggravated by the growing consciousness of cultural individuality among the Southern elites who started to look for recognition as an autonomous entity from the North.

Hence, the existing regional and cultural differences between the North and South, explains the fact that Arabic, which has played an important role as 'lingua franca' in many parts of Africa, could not establish itself in the same way in the rural districts of SS. In support of this view, the following facts may be mentioned:

1. In spite of the fact that some of the SS tribes were engaged in long-distance trade (with Western Sudan and Zanzibar) and that Arabic was widely spoken as mother tongue, first language and lingua franca in many parts of NS, there is no evidence that any of its varieties was spoken anywhere in the South before the mid-nineteenth century.

2. The actual number of Southerners, able to use Arabic, today, is very limited compared with other Northern Sudanese populations of different mother tongues.
3. None of the SSA varieties has been used as first language by any of the SS tribes, even those groups of Southerners living in the urban centres of NS.
4. The 'rudimentary, pidginized' variety of Arabic used as lingua franca in the South, is not yet of a standardized form as the linguistic features it incorporates are not uniform.
5. There is no actual link between the smaller minority of the Southern Sudanese Muslims living in the South and the majority of Muslims in NS, the fact that the amount of Arabic acquired by the former (i.e. the very few expressions they use for prayers, greetings and religious ceremonies) is relatively insignificant in the total language economy of the SS.

To sum up, in view of the above mentioned facts, it can be generally stated that, apart from its uses in the capacities and situations described, Arabic to the majority of Southerners remains a 'foreign tongue' and Muslim-Arab culture an alien one. As such, the SS remains a separate 'social and cultural entity' from NS.

## Appendices

### Appendix I.

#### Sudan Third Population Census, 1983

| Region         | Urban   | Rural Sedentary | Nomads  | Total    |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| EQUATORIA      | 176544  | 1229637         | -       | 1406181  |
| BAHR EL GHAZAL | 181925  | 2083585         | -       | 2265510  |
| UPPER NILE     | 52510   | 1547090         | -       | 1599605  |
| SUDAN          | 4153559 | 14218844        | 2191611 | 20564364 |

**N.B.** 1- The Sudanese Azande is the biggest of the tribes (Moru, Madi, Acho li, Mundu) living in Equatoria.

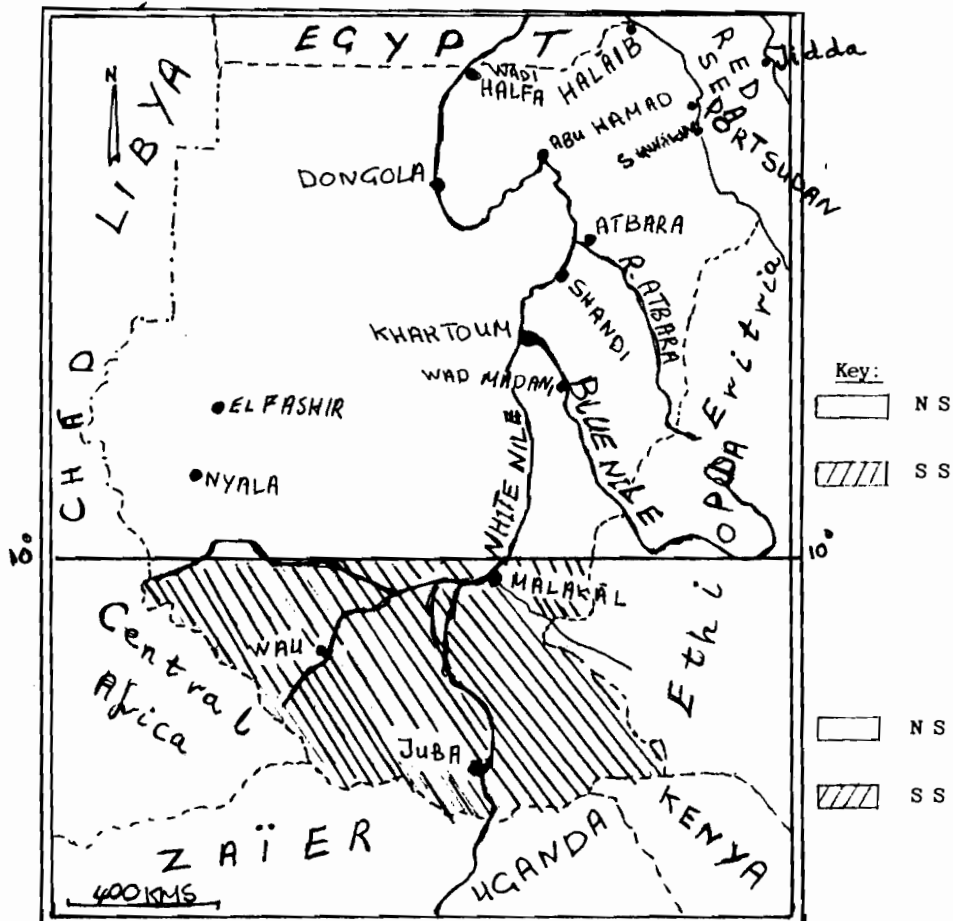
2- The Annual Growth Rate = 2.9%.

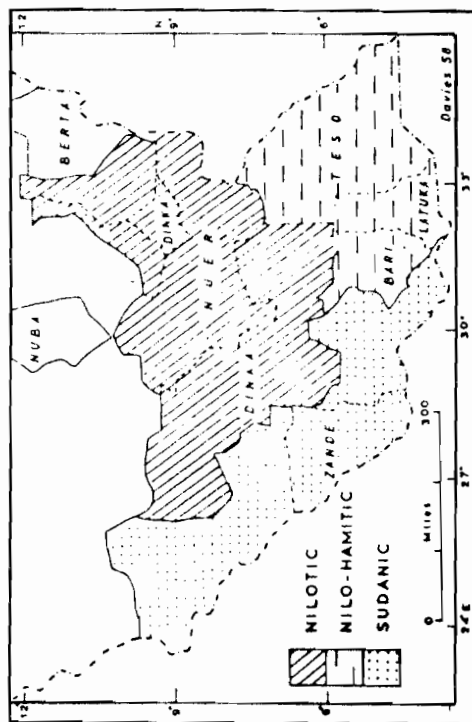
**Source:** Third Population Census - 1983. Department of Statistics, Sudan Government, Khartoum, 1983.

- ## Appendix II: Arabs Tribal Settlement in Sudan 640 - 1520 A. D.

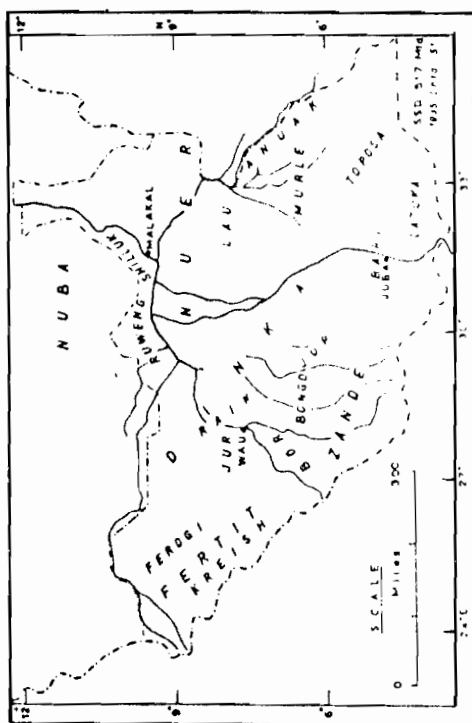
Appendix III

1. The Sudan Today.





## 2. Linguistic map of the Southern Sudan.



### 3. Tribal map of the Southern Sudan.

## Notes

1. It is attested in Biblical, Greek and Roman Sources that the 'Cushites', the indigeneous ancestors of the Northern Sudanese (particularly the present-day Nubians), have been involved in the affairs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Arabia (Isaiah XXXVI, 9 and Kings XVIII, IXI).
2. The 'Baght' treaty signed by the Muslim leader Abdullahi Ibn Sa'ad Ibn Abi-Sarh with the Nubian king of 'al-Maqrura', Qalidrouth, in 31 H. (641-2 A.D.) allowed the Muslims to build a mosque in 'Dongola' and cross the Nubian territory for trade (see al-Maqrizi, 1922:199).
3. The population census of 1950 recorded 572 SS tribes and subtribes ranging from the one million Dinka down to groups of a few dozen individuals (Beshir, 1968:5). This fact has been confirmed by the (latest) census of 1983.
4. Several charts indicating the linguistic profiles of African countries were produced by anthropologists and sociolinguists worked in African affairs: Tucker (1940), Evans-Pritchard (1947), Murdock (1959) and Greenberg (1963), only to mention a few.
5. The Sudanese usage of the word 'Khalwa' is to signify a place for religious instruction. It is also known as 'kuttab' in other parts of the Arabic speaking world (e.g. Egypt). In Ethiopia it is called 'Al-Madrasa' which refers to a sort of traditional religious school.
6. 'Faki' is a Sudanese coinage referring to the traditional male teacher who teaches the Qur'an to the children in the 'khalwa'. In the Gulf countries, he is known as 'Mulla' and in Egypt as 'Sheikh', and all three words are always preceded by the Arabic definite article 'al-'.
7. The term 'Nubians' should not be confused with the negroid population of the Nub-Mountains in Western Sudan. In fact, the 'Nubians' (Barabra, Mahas, Sukut and Danagla), a mixed population, are the indigeneous ancestors of the Northern Sudanese. They occupy the lands between the first and fourth cataracts of the River Nile between Wadi Halfa and Dongola. Due to the flooding of their land (after the building of the High Dam), the Barabra now occupy part of the 'Buttana' land in Central Sudan.
8. The Nubian language is the ancient language of the Nubians and is a branch of the Eastern subfamily of the sudanic linguistic stock.
9. A difference in meaning between 'mother tongue'/'native language', on the one hand, and 'first language' on the other is essential. The term 'first language' is used in the sense of a learned language as opposed to an acquired one. Thus, a Sudanese child speaking 'Dongolawi' (a Nubian language spoken by the 'Danagla' tribe of Northern Sudan) at home, does not acquire formal education in that language, as the language used in Sudanese schools is Arabic. The child then may grow up to use Arabic in a wide scale as compared with 'Dongolawi' language in this case is Arabic, whereas his 'mother tongue' is 'Dongolawi'.
10. The word 'Fur' was the name given, by the early light-coloured Muslim Sultans of Western Sudan, to the original negroid inhabitants of this part of the country (such as Binga, Banda, etc.) who accepted Islam and submitted to the Sultans. Today, it refers to all mixed tribal population occupying the Province of Dar-Fur.
11. Bangala (also Lingala and Mangala) belongs to the Ngala group of Bantu and was the predominant lingua franca along the River Congo, even before the arrival of the Europeans in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the arrival of the European slave traders, colonial soldiers and officials, Bangala gained more prestige as the Whites zealously used it as contact language with the natives. Since the pre-requisites for the spreading of a European language were not yet established, the Belgian colonists primarily used Bangala, and with the building of new military posts and trading settlements, it developed and sprang up the River to the borders of the SS (around the Lado Enclave) which lost direct contact with Khartoum since the expulsion of the Turks in 1884 (Also, see Heine, 1970:72-80).
12. Tucker (1934:28) reports:  
It [SSA] also had—and still has in some areas—a great prestige as being the language best calculated to win favour with the police, for the native police are not, as a rule, recruited from the tribes, speaking totally different languages. Ultimately, of course, it was a useful language to know, should one's case come before the District Commissioner, since it enabled the plaintiff to evade the court interpreter, who was not always to be trusted to translate unless well-bribed.
13. The Survey has carried out intensive interviews with Southerners (government officials, teachers,

students, workers, merchants, etc.) living in big towns (Juba, Wau, Yei and Malakal) where varieties of SSA were, and still are, widely used as the principal official language as well as lingua franca. (Also see Hurriez, S.H. & H. Bell (eds.), **Directions in Sudanese Linguistics and Folklore**, Institute of African and Asian Studies, Khartoum, 1975, P.2 & PP. 81-93).

14. My informant (Mr. Antony Savario Malwath), a graduate of the University of Khartoum (majoring English) and a chief administrator in the Bahr al-Ghazal Province, is a member of the Dinka tribe.

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