Language and ethnic statistics in 20th century Sudanese censuses and surveys

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Abstract

The paper investigates the creation of language statistics in the Sudan, from the beginning of the 20th century up to the division of the country into two states. Like many other African countries, Sudan is characterized by a high degree of ethnic and linguistic diversity that has participated in the fueling of murderous civil wars since independence. The paper recontextualizes the construction of the ethno-linguistic categories and statistics within their broader political and administrative contexts. It analyzes the objectives and output of each type of statistics and questions their influence on the foreign and native representations of Sudanese society.

Key words: Sudan, ethno-linguistic categories, statistics, national census, colonial and post linguistics.

1 Introduction

Within African linguistics circles, Sudan is known for its linguistic diversity, not only in terms of numbers of languages but also because it contains languages belonging to three of the four language families attested in Africa per Greenberg's classification (i.e. Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, and Niger-Kordofanian, see Greenberg 1963). In the first part of the 20th century, Sudan therefore occupied a key position within African language classification. The current prevailing Sudanese ethno-linguistic categories have been regarded as established scientific fact (Abdelhay 2010; Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2010; Miller 2015). It is only recently that, following constructionist and post-colonial studies such as Errington (1998), Gal and Irvine (1995) etc., a few authors have started to describe the ideological implications of the language-making processes of the colonial enterprise, particularly regarding the concepts of 'indigenous' or 'local' languages (Abdelhay 2008, Abdelhay 2010; Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2010 and Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2016).

Ethno-linguistic categories represent major contemporary political and social issues in Sudan due to the intensity of the conflicts that have plagued the country since independence and led to the division of the country into two states in 2011. Language policies have been among the factors fueling the long Sudanese civil wars (Abdelhay 2008; Abu Bakr 1995; Hurreiz 1989; Lesch 1998; Miller 1986, Miller2003; Nyombe 1994; Rondyang 2007; Sharkey 2003 and Sharkey 2008). The two main peace agreements between the South and the North (Addis Ababa in 1972 and Naivasha in 2005) included important language decrees concerning the status of the different Sudanese languages (Abdelhay 2008; Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2011; Berair 2007).

It is in front of this tense political background that the making of language statistics in Sudan needs to be examined. Censuses and statistics are key tools in the construction of social categories (Anderson 1991, Appadurai 1993). As Kertzer and Arel pointed out: "Rather than view social links as complex and social grouping situational, the view promoted by the census is one in which populations are divided into neat categories" (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 6).

This paper presents a short chronological overview of the main language and ethnic statistics in Sudan through a variety of sources: the 1928 *Rejaf Language Conference*, the Sudanese national censuses, the language surveys undertaken by the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS) in Khartoum, and the statistics provided by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) via its database *Ethnologue*.

Each type of statistics reflects different historical contexts, as well as different logics of classification, different institutional or political goals. This has led to rather large discrepancies between statistics in terms of the number of Sudanese languages and the number of speakers recorded. According to the main references, the number of recorded Sudanese languages is 106 (Tucker and Bryan 1956), 135 (Mugaddam and Dimmendaal 2006), 136 (Greenberg 1963; Bell 1975), 142 (*Ethnologue)*, or 177 (Abu Bakr and Hurreiz 1984). The variation in the number of languages reflects a tension between two main trends of language categorization and statistics: reproducing large language groups or language clusters versus reproducing small language units. We find here what Irvine (2008: 338) has characterized as "a process of lumping together or splitting apart linguistic varieties in order to produce territorially regimentable language boundaries."

Whenever possible, the paper tries to identify the sources, objectives and ideology of each type of statistics. Generally speaking, large language groups have been established for educational and administrative purposes whereas smaller language units serve as a tool of identification and belonging. The use of language and ethnic statistics is also closely

associated with administrative and political decisions by government, particularly with what has been known in Sudan as the *Native Administration* system, established during the colonial period and reactivated in 1994 by the Sudanese Islamist government. Since the early 20th century, the conducting of language statistics in the Sudan has been marked by two important ideological stances. First, many statistics and classifications postulate a close and natural association between languages, ethnic groupings, and territorial belonging. This postulate is part of the heritage of the 19th century European scientific background (Gal and Irvine 1995), which has dominated linguistics all around the world. Second, many statistics tend to reproduce the view that in Sudan, there is a specific linguistic division between Arabic - typically treated as one single language - and all other Sudanese languages, labeled African, local, vernacular or indigenous languages.

2 Speakers or Tax payers? Language statistics in South Sudan during the Colonial era

2.1 Native Administration and the North-South Policy

Ethno-linguistic classifications and statistics played a crucial role as tools of governance during the colonial era (1898-1956), particularly in South Sudan. In 1921, the British colonial administrative policy implemented the Indirect Rule and Native Administration (NA) system in both North and South Sudan (Abu Shouk 1998). The 'native' population was to be represented along tribal lines, with the idea that the bigger, older, and more powerful groups had the right to have appointed representatives in the various levels of administration. In each region, the major tribal groups were also supposed to represent the smaller groups that were administratively affiliated to them. This administrative construction determined access to land rights and natural resources. The first task of the colonial power was therefore to identify the

tribes, groups, and sub groups. The colonial archives abound with administrative reports trying to assess the different ethnic/tribal groups of each area and the demographic weight of the tribes. In Northern Sudan (including Western and Eastern Sudan), the colonial classification often reproduced previous tribal-administrative classifications established by the former Sudanese kingdoms like the Funj (Spaulding 1985) or by the Ottoman-Egyptian administration of the 19th century. For Arab groups, the classification was based on tribal genealogy (MacMichael 1922). For non-Arab groups, the classification was based on a number of factors such as genealogy, physical anthropological features, and languages. In South Sudan, the Native Administration system was immediately influenced by an anti-Arab and anti-Islam policy that determined a specific educational and language policy. Language classification and ethno-linguistic statistics became important administrative tools of this policy. Identification of ethno-linguistic groups was undertaken by British district officers, anthropologists such as Evans Pritchard, linguists such as D. Westermann and A.N. Tucker, and missionaries from the different congregations that had been given religious and educational control of assigned territorial areas.

From the very beginning, the British Condominium had established different systems of education in North and South Sudan. In the dominant Muslim North, the British were careful to maintain Arabic as language of instruction in primary schools to avoid the upheaval of Mahdist or other Islamist movements. A very different policy was implemented in the South (including the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, Abdelhay 2010). Education was left in the hand of the missionaries who opened village schools using local vernacular languages as media of instruction (Beshir 1968 and Beshir 1969; Sanderson and Sanderson 1981). The main objective was to limit the use of Arabic as both an oral *lingua franca* and a written language. During this period, language became a major criterion for establishing the tribal belonging of the South Sudanese groups. This is why language classification was more

developed in the South than in the North of the country. The division between North and South was institutionalized by the 1922 *Close District Order* and by the 1930 *Southern Policy*. It aimed "to build up a series of self–contained racial and tribal units", as clearly expressed in a 1927 secret memorandum on Southern Policy (Abdelhay 2008: 136; Beshir 1968: 115–118).

2.2 The 1928 Report of the Rejaf Language Conference (RRLC)

In order to stop the spread of Islam and Arabic, the Colonial administration decided to organize, systemize, and support teaching in South Sudanese vernacular languages. The 1928 Rejaf Language Conference was to set up the educational guidelines of the Southern Policy. There was the feeling that missionary efforts were in need of strong state coordination and supervision to become more effective (Abdelhay 2008; Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2010 and Abdelhay, Makoni, and Makoni 2016; Beshir 1968; Sanderson and Sanderson 1981). The Conference took place in Mongalla Province, Southern Sudan, in April 1928, under the chairmanship of Mr. J. G. Mathew, Secretary of Education and Health for the Sudan. It brought together all the 'experts' that could provide the necessary scientific legitimacy to this colonial enterprise: the director of the International Institute of African Language and Culture, Professor D. Westermann, recognized as "one of the greatest authorities on African Linguistics" by J. G. Mathew in his opening speech, and mission representatives coming from the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and the Sudan. Some of them, like L. M. Spagnolo, F. N. Crazzolara, and P. B. Kohnen from the Italian Catholic Mission, or N. MacDiarmid from the Sudan United Mission, remain renowned references on linguistics in South Sudan to this day.

One of the problems faced by the government in the South was the fact that there was no South Sudanese language similar to Swahili in East Africa or Hausa in West Africa -

possessed of a "respectable literary tradition and capable of further development" - that could be used as a language of intercommunication (RRLC 1928: 10). The colonial officers were faced with the bitter reality that Arabic was, de facto, the well-established and spreading Southern *lingua franca*. This had already been pointed by the General Governor John Maffey in his 1927 secret memorandum: "Things have gone much further than I had expected. Whenever I penetrated to the top of the Imatong or the Belgium Congo border, I found Arabic in ready use by the local spokesmen of the people" (quoted from Siddiek 2010: 82). Although colonial officers were not all in favor of the eradication of Arabic, the RRLC dismissed the option of keeping the Southern Arabic *lingua franca* and described it as "a pidgin Arabic, a jargon severely limited in its mean of expression" (RRLC 1928: 10).

The main objective was therefore to draw up a list of languages and dialects and to agree on the choice of *group languages*, i.e. demographically important languages considered as representative of a group of languages/dialects that could be used as medium of instruction in the various areas. Five language committees were constituted to assess the feasibility of such objectives and agree on common orthographic rules (RRLC 1928: 14). They were: a) Dinka-Nuer; b) Shilluk-Acholi; c) Bari-Latuko; d) Bahr al Ghazal Languages excluding Dinka; e) Madi. After six days, the five committees came up with recommendation on the choice of group languages and orthographic rules. They produced a list of languages, dialects, and group languages within their respective areas. Dinka-Nuer, which was first considered one group language with several sub dialects, was subsequently treated as two separate group languages. The same occurred with Bari and Latuko.

The RRLC succeeded in listing most of the South Sudanese languages and paved the way for all further language classification efforts in South Sudan. It demographically delimited the 'major' South Sudanese languages that have since repeatedly been chosen as potential media of instruction in 1930, 1975, 2009, i.e. whenever the teaching of vernacular

languages was reintroduced in Southern schools. The Rejaf Language Conference is considered a milestone of British language policy. It is either negatively perceived as the epitome of colonial invention in language (Abdelhay 2008; Abdelhay, Makoni and Makoni 2016) or more positively as the most effective step in promoting literacy in South Sudanese languages (Rondyang 2007). The RRLC has deeply influenced subsequent representation of South Sudanese languages, particularly regarding the concept of major and minor languages.

2.3 Language statistics in the RRLC

Appendix I (Reports of Language Committees, pp. 33-43) and Appendix V (List of Languages Spoken in Southern Sudan, pp. 51-55) of the RRLC 1928 provide a list of the South Sudanese languages and the numbers of speakers/ethnic group members by dialect/language and district/province. To our knowledge, the RRLC is the first official document producing statistics for the South Sudanese languages. The listed group languages are Dinka (500,000 speakers), Nuer (430,000), Shilluk (95,000, plus 'allied dialects' including Acholi, 72,000 speakers), Bari (110,000), Latuko (73,000), Zande (179,000, plus 56,000 speakers from other small languages). Within each group, numbers are also provided for the 'allied dialects,' or other languages, even the smaller ones like the Avokaya (given as 'Vukaya') with 200 speakers recorded in the Meridi District. Arabic is not listed as a Southern language and no number of Arabic speakers is provided, even if some participants in the Conference (like Archdeacon Shaw and Mr. Hillelson) insisted that Arabic was not only the main *lingua franca*, but also the vernacular of some communities in mixed areas (RRLC 1928: 23, 25, 26). When teaching in Arabic appeared inevitable in some areas, it was decided that it should be written in Roman script (Miller 2014).

The distinction between languages and dialects remained a sensitive issue between the government and the missions. Missionaries in Africa have often been suspected of participating in a process of linguistic fragmentation that hampered the process of language convergence and literacy in African languages (Mansour 1993; Prah 1998: Rondyang 2007). In the case of the Dinka language, the Committee recommended that no mission should attempt to translate the text-books into "its own dialect" (RRLC: 33). The Secretary of Education, M. G. Matthew, insisted that "There is little doubt that some of the tongues conventionally enumerated as separate languages are in reality local variants of a common form of speech, and that the names by which they are known are tribal rather than linguistic." (RRLC 1928: 10).

The RRLC provides no details about the exact sources for the number of speakers associated with each language. The numbers might have been estimated based on the list of tax payers from each district and province. An estimate of this type is found in one of the key references on Sudanese languages, *The Eastern Sudanic Languages* by Archibald N. Tucker (first published in 1940 by the International African Institute and reedited in 1967). Archibald Tucker was appointed advisor to the Southern Sudan on the preparation of teaching materials from 1929 to 1931 (Sanderson and Sanderson 1981: 114; Abdelhay 2008). He published several linguistics books considered as major references for the classification of Sudanese languages (Tucker 1940: Tucker and Bryan 1956). In Section 1 of *The Eastern Sudanic Languages*, Tucker provides figures for all the described languages and mentions that, "In the case of some tribes, attempts have been made at an exact census. In other cases only the number of taxpayers is given. In such cases a fair estimate of tribal strength may be obtained by multiplying the number of taxpayers by four" (Tucker 1940: 3). The same method was applied in Tucker and Bryan (1956).

Both RRLC and Tucker adopt the principle of a neat correlation between territory, ethnic affiliation, and language. The assumption is that the inhabitants of village X belong to tribal group X and speak language X. When some groups are considered to speak a dialect and not a separate language, their 'tribal name' is perceived as part of a larger tribal group/confederation. For example, the Fojulu form a sub-group of the Bari tribal group, speaking a Bari sub-language/dialect called Fojulu. Prof. Westermann summarized this static territorial vision of language on the second day of the Conference: "We are dealing with a definite group of African languages spoken in a circumscribed geographical area and also for the larger part within one administrative unit." This territorial vision continues to be shared by a number of South Sudanese linguists aiming to successfully implement South Sudanese literacy (Rondyang 2007: 93).

No similar Language Conference took place in Northern Sudan, even though non-Arab groups inhabited large areas of the western, eastern, and northern regions. It wasn't until the first national census, that the entire population of the Sudan was enumerated in terms of ethnic affiliation and language.

3 Language and Ethnic statistics in the National Sudanese Censuses

Several references investigate the role of censuses in the construction and representation of social categories (Kertzer and Arel 2002), particularly for colonial states (Anderson 1991, Appadurai 1993) and multilingual and multiethnic countries like India (Appadurai 1993; Cohn 1987; Guilmoto 1992 and Guilmoto 1998; Sundar 2000), the Soviet Union/Russia (Arel 2002 and 2009), Eastern Europe, Canada, or the USA (Anderson and Fienberg 2000). These authors agree that the inclusion of ethnic and language statistics is always a very sensitive political issue. According to a 2003 UN report, African countries today have the lowest rate of

inclusion of ethnic and languages statistics. Only 30% of African countries include data on ethnicity, compared to 81% in North America, 79% in South America, 71% in Asia, 75% in Europe, and 76% in Oceania.[1] In many African countries, questions on race, ethnicity, and language were drop out from national censuses after independence. South Africa is the sole country that has regularly included ethnic and language categories in its censuses from 1904 up until today. In Sudan, censuses have been irregular in both frequency and content.

The first official national census of the Sudan took place in 1955/6 on the eve of independence and was supervised by British officials. It was a challenging task due to the size of the country, the lack of previous demographic data, the lack of communication, problems related to mobility, and the scattered spread of a high percentage of the population. It was conducted through sampling methods. While the population was estimated at around 8,784,000 at that time, the results of the census amounted a total population of 10,262,536 people, 73% in the North and 27% in the South (Henin 1960)

Since then, four national censuses have been officially published: in 1973, 1983, 1993, and 2008. Due to the civil war in the South, the 1973 and 1983 censuses are not considered reliable for the South, and the 1993 census covered only North Sudan. The 2008 census was conducted after the 2005 Naivasha Peace Agreement. It covered all Sudan under the supervision of both the Northern and Southern statistical offices, advised by international experts. It was intended to provide the demographic data needed to determine the balance between the Northern and the Southern populations in service of the crucial goals of evaluating power and wealth sharing ratios following Southern Sudan's self-determination referendum in 2011. The official results gave a figure of 39.15 million Sudanese, 30.89 million from North Sudan and 8.26 million from South Sudan. First published by the Northern government, it was contested by the Southern government (Fick 2009). After the

[1] See *Ethnicity. A Review of data collection and dissemination*. United Nation Statistics division, 2003 https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/popchar/Ethnicitypaper.pdf (accessed February 2017).

separation of North and South Sudan, no new referendum took place. In the North, i.e. the Republic of the Sudan, the sixth census is announced for 2018. No precise date has been provided for the Republic of South Sudan.

3.1 The 1956 census

Languages and ethnic statistics are included within two censuses: the 1956 census and the 1993 fourth census (covering only North Sudan). As the 1993 classifications reproduced the 1956's categories almost exactly, I will focus on the 1956 census. The conception and the realization of the 1956 census reflect the way colonial power has conceived of and framed the organization of Sudanese society. It relied heavily on information provided by the colonial administration, including British District Commissioners, Sudanese tribal sheikhs or headmen, and anthropological sources (Henin 1960, Appendix 38 and Appendix 39). The elaboration of the lists of ethnic/tribal groups and languages led to several rounds of test and corrections as it was the first time that official lists had been compiled for the whole country. In 1940, in anticipation of the census, a bulk of information concerning the distribution of tribes, languages spoken, the number of people, the names of tribal leaders, etc. was collected by the District Commissioners and used as 'supplementary data' for the 1956 census. In some areas, these supplementary data amounted to 50% of the information and fieldwork used in the 1956 census (Henin 1960, Vol. 1: 70). The lists of taxpayers provided by the sheikhs were used to identify people. Then, a first pilot census was launched in nine areas in 1953, to test the sampling methods (Krótki 1955). It revealed a number of unrecorded tribes and a number of other tribes were reclassified. Finally, a list of tribes/sub-tribes and a list of languages/sub-languages associated with specific codes were provided to the enumerators. They were allowed to register the local 'unofficial' names when they could not identify the tribe or the

language. However, it was thought that most of these 'unofficial' names were local variations of 'proper names.' We find here the idea that "in colonial census formulation of categories were unilaterally done by the ruling officials" (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 10), and that they were mainly "based on external expertise and not based on internal subjectivity" (Arel 2009). However, the external expertise of the British District Commissioners was, to a great extent, dependent on the information provided by the local sheikh or headman.

In the *Final Report*, Vol. 3, Chapter 6 of the 1956 census (FPCS 1962), tribal affiliation and language statistics are presented in separate tables under the respective titles 'Tribe and Nation' and 'Languages.' The tables under *Tribe and Nation* correspond to Question 8 - "Nationality Sudanese or Foreigner?" - and to Question 9 - "Tribe or Country of origin?". The tables under *Language* correspond to Question 25 - "Language spoken at home". Questions 8 and 9 were recorded for every member of the household whereas question 25 was "recorded against the head of household only." For both tribe and language, the classification ranged from smaller to larger units, and three columns were allotted for coding: Major tribal group/tribal group/tribe and language group/language/sub-language. The conception and implementation of 'major tribal group' and 'language group' obey to census needs, in particular, the need to present the results in a coherent and summary manner through the use of macro-categories. It also reproduces the model of classification of the Rejaf Language Conference and the Native Administration system. However, the construction of these major categories does not follow strict methodological logics and appears rather erratic. There is a tension between a classification based on typological criteria (through tribal lineages or language families) and a classification based on geographical or territorial criteria. Unfortunately, I was unable to find information concerning who exactly made the final decision concerning the inclusion of the macro-categories.

3.2 Tribal classification in the 1956 census

Concerning the elaboration of the tribal list, the 1956 Methods Report (Hénin 1960, Vol 1: 159) acknowledges that "it was difficult in many cases to distinguish between 'tribe' and a 'sub-tribe'. For this reason the tribal classification which gave birth to 570 tribes is subjected to criticism from various point of view, e.g. historical, anthropological, ethnological, administrative and linguistics."

The 570 recorded tribes were grouped into 56 tribal groups and 23 nationalities, themselves clustered into 11 major tribal groups/races or peoples.[2]

Table 1: Tribal classification and coding system

The classification of the 56 tribal groups follows a different logic of identification, even within the same major tribal group. Some tribal groups are identified by their lineage and tribal name (Baggara, Shukriya, Guhayna, Amarar, Hadendowa, Moru-Madi, Bonko-Baka, etc.), others by their geographical location (Arab tribes Northern, Nuba North East, Dinka South West, etc.), and others still by region or country of origin (French Equatoria, West Darfur, Western Europe, etc.). The tribal classification of 1956 indicates that the population of Darfur, the westernmost region of Sudan bordering Chad and Libya, was not considered as distinct from the population of West African origin.

3.3 Language classification in the 1956 census

[2] Initially, the major tribal groups were labeled 'race.' However, after a number of objections it was replaced by people (Henin, Vol. 1: 159).

The same system of collection, naming and classification was applied to languages. The list of languages was elaborated drawing from different sources. For the non-Arabic languages spoken in North Sudan, the major language groups 1, 5, and 6 were built up principally based on local information (Henin 1960, Vol. 1: 163). Another source was *Sudan Notes and Records*, an academic journal that contained articles by historians, anthropologists, and linguists, but also British officers. For the Southern languages (groups 2, 3, and 4), the list of languages and language groups was taken from Tucker and Bryan (1956). Therefore, the accuracy of the classification varies according to the sources. The languages of the South are classified into more detailed categories according to typological linguistic criteria, whereas the languages from Western Sudan (Darfur and Kordofan) are classified into very broad categories by region, without taking into account typological criteria. For example, the Nuba language (code 14) includes 10 sub-languages spoken in the same region - the Nuba Mountains - but belonging to two different language families (Kordofanian and Nilo-Saharan).

Like in the RRLC, the census officers encountered difficulties in distinguishing between language and dialect: "In many part of the Sudan and in the absence of comprehensive survey of languages, it was difficult - if not impossible - to make a clear distinction between the many languages. To distinguish between a language and a dialect was particularly difficult, as many of the languages and the dialect are oral and not written" (Henin 1960, Vol 1: 163). During the census data collection, enumerators often entered local names for dialects. The local names were considered "simply unofficial name for the sub-language related to the place name of a chieftainship or an *omodiya*." They were not coded and were referenced under the correct official sub-languages (Henin 1960,Vol 2: 8).

In total, 117 Sudanese 'sub-languages' plus 29 foreign languages were grouped within 28 'languages,' clustered into 10 language groups.

Table 2. Classification of Language groups, languages and Sub-languages

The 1956 language classification reveals a difference of treatment between the non-Arabic languages of North Sudan and those of South Sudan. The former are clustered in one major group, in spite of their typological differences. Their main common characteristic is being non-Arabic. The languages from Darfur appear to be little known. None of the important languages of Darfur (Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa) are classified as languages, appearing only as sub-languages or even un-coded dialects. Doornbos and Bender (1983) attest this lack of knowledge about Darfurian languages as late as the early 1980s. The classification of the South Sudanese languages appears far more well established, thanks to the Rejaf Conference and Tucker and Bryan's publications. However, there are striking differences in term of number of speakers between the 1956 census and Tucker and Bryan (1956). For example, the census puts the number of Dinka speakers at 1,127,192 and of Nuer speaker at 464,159 compared to 627,868 Dinka and 260,000 Nuer in Tucker and Bryan (1956: 95-97; 98).

Two publications (Hurreiz and Bell 1975; Thelwall 1978) provide careful analysis of the 1956 census and identify the most important Sudanese languages in terms of number of speakers: Arabic was the most spoken language in the country with 5,762,007 speakers, followed by Dinka with 1,127,192 speakers. The other main languages were Beja (472,534), Nuer (464,159), Fur (265,565), Teso (219,301), Zande (209,513), Nubian (167,831), Bari (167,658), Masalit (162,524), Fulani (156,840), Koalib (154,685), Hausa (118,230), Lotuko (116,875), Moru-Madi (102,675), and Shilluk (107,834). While the majority of these languages were recorded and coded at under the language category, four of them appeared only as sub-languages: Masalit, Fulani, Koalib, and Hausa.

Compared to previous statistics such as the RRCL or Tucker and Bryan, a striking characteristic of the 1956 census is the fact that there is no one-to-one systematic correlation between tribal and language classification. For example, the Nubiyins are divided into 12 sub-tribes, but only 4 sub-languages; the Beja into 6 tribal groups and 4 sub-languages, etc. However, at the macro level, each major tribal group is supposed to correspond to one language group or one language. Therefore, for the first time, the results of the 1956 census enabled a comparison between ethnic affiliation and language use. One of the main findings was that only 39% of the Sudanese population claimed an Arab ethnic affiliation, while 51% claimed to be Arabic-speaking at home. The process of Arabization and language shift was to become one of the main domains of research in the 1970s, because it raised the crucial issue of the management of multilingualism and the choice of national languages.

3.4 Post-1956 censuses: Sudanese nationalism and the tribe.

After the publication of the 1956 census, there was some expectation that the next census would build on the experiences made during the 1956 census and bring more sophisticated results, particularly regarding language use (Henin 1960, Jernudd 1979). However, ethnic and linguistic tables disappeared in the two following national censuses (1973, 1983) due to post-colonial changes in policy with regards to national cohesion. For the Northern Sudanese nationalist elite, the Native Administration was an archaic colonial legacy that has fostered tribalism. Like in most decolonized countries, administrative tribal/ethnic representation was thought no longer suitable for a modern post-colonial state, and many modernists believed that the tribes would disappear. The Native Administration system was officially abolished in 1971 by the People's Local government act. The Northern Sudanese government and the dominant Northern Arabic-speaking elite considered linguistic and ethnic diversity a threat to

national unity. They opted for a policy of Sudanization and Arabization, intended to spread the culture, way of life, and language of the Central Northern Sudan to the whole country (Dornbos and Bender 1983; Doornbos 1988; Nyombe 1994; Sharkey 2008).

However, ethnic affiliation remains a powerful factor in social organization and political representation. The Native Administration system was never totally abandoned in the 'peripheral areas,' i.e. Western, Eastern and Southern regions where tribal customary courts and tribal organization continue to function. The Sudanese situation echoes here what Sundar (2000: 116) has noted for India: "Contrary to the expectation of the Constitution makers, the refusal to count castes in the census has not helped in its disappearance." As the North/South war started again in 1982 and progressively spread to other peripheral regions (West and East), the issue of ethnic equality and power sharing became more and more acute and sensitive. The regional and social disparities were translated into ethnic conflicts. The military Islamist-oriented government who seized power in 1989 opted for the reenacting of a new kind of Native Administration, particularly in the Eastern and Western regions where tribal conflicts had dramatically risen. The reenacting of the Native Administration gave birth to several tribal conferences in the various Northern provinces/states, where tribal classifications and representations were heavily discussed. Many small groups previously included in bigger tribal confederations wanted to be recognized as autonomous entities entitled to administrative positions and their own territory. Some of them claimed that their 'dialect' was a separate language as of their tribal identity (Manfredi 2015).

Ethnic and linguistic tables reappeared in the 1993 census. The 1993 linguistic and ethnic categories are very similar to those of the 1956 census. It seems that the government and the statistical department did not consider it important to revise the 1956 census categories, despite the rising ethnic controversies. They also did not consult Sudanese linguists to ameliorate the linguistic classification. The 1993 Census covered only Northern

Sudan, at a time of relative political international isolation following the Islamist coup. Its results have been little discussed in the academic literature, even though it pointed to important (socio)linguistic changes when compared to the 1956 census, particularly regarding the high degree of recorded language shift toward Arabic (Miller 2006).

Therefore, throughout the second part of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the ethnic and language statistics of the 1956 census remain the only official reference regularly quoted as an index of language vitality (McLaughlin 1964; Hair 1966; Thelwall 1978; Jernudd 1979; Doornbos and Bender 1983; Nyombe 1994 and Nyombe 1997, Abu-Manga and Abu Bakr 2006; Mugaddem and Dimendal 2006, etc.). In spite of the relative incoherence of the data collection, the classification and statistics of the 1956 census continue to influence the present-day representation of the language situation in Sudan. They help to identify the most important languages that could become media of instruction, or to point to the main endangered languages.

4 Beyond the 1956 census. The Language Survey of the Sudan and the Summer Institute of Linguistics

The final publication of the 1956 census appeared in 1962. At that time, the war between the South and the North had escalated, the teaching of vernacular languages had been abandoned, and the Sudanese government was supporting a pro-Arab and pro-Islam policy. As far as I know, no Sudanese governmental institution immediately referred to the 1956 tribal and language data. At the academic level, McLoughlin (1964) published one of the first works referencing the ethnic and linguistic data of the 1956 census. His work highlighted the process of Arabization among non-Arab ethnic groups and used it as an indicator of social/national integration. His book was criticized by a number of scholars (Jernudd 1979; Kronenberg

1965) for his lack of caution in the analysis of the 1956 Census data. They argue that the 1956 census did not provide an authentic picture of the language situation in Sudan because the results relied on too simple a formulation, "the language spoken at home," leading the census data to occlude the state of multilingualism, seen as a major political issue among recently independent states.

The consequences of the first civil war in the South (1956-1972) raised strong debates concerning the ideological stances vis-à-vis language and national integration. Both the Northern progressive factions and the Southern political elite seriously challenged the idea that Arabic could act as the sole national language that would break down ethnic boundaries and promote national integration. After the hardline period of the Abud Regime (1958-1964), the political changes of the late 1960s led to a new ideological climate under the 1969 May Nimeiri's regime, promoting new prospects on language planning and language policy. The 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement provided South Sudan with a certain degree of autonomy. The Regional Self-Government Act, Chapter 2, Section 5, opened the door for the recognition of vernacular languages (Miller 1986). This fostered several projects on language in the Sudan led by the Sudan Research Unit (SRU), and later by the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum and the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Juba. The goals were to investigate the degree of multilingualism and language change in the whole country, and to evaluate the feasibility of vernacular teaching.

4.1 The Language Survey of the Sudan

Foreign and Sudanese scholars share the opinion that, due to the shortcomings of the language question, the 1956 census could not provide a clear picture of multilingualism in Sudan or help in guiding educational planning (Hurreiz 1968). The *Conference on Language and*

Literature held in Khartoum in 1970 highlighted the need for a language survey (Hurreiz and Bell 1975, Thelwall 1978). An attempt to convince the Department of Statistics to include more substantial and meaningful questions on language in the 1973 census remained unsuccessful (Jernudd 1979: 15). In 1971, the *Fifth Erkoweit Conference* held in Juba argued that before embarking on educational planning and social and economic development, it would be necessary to survey the languages of the country. The Sudan Research Unit (SRU) was commissioned to form a specialized committee to study the language question in Southern Sudan. However, the SRU was unable to conduct statistical data collection in the South.

The *Language Survey of the Sudan* began with the establishment of the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS) in 1972, and was presented as one of the Institute's main projects. The objectives of the survey were more sophisticated and complex than the methodology followed by the Statistic Department for the national censuses. It aimed at a) the identification and classification of languages and dialects in the Sudan by linguistic methods; b) accounting for the relative sizes of populations speaking the different languages and dialects; c) studying for what purposes each language and dialect is used; d) mapping the distribution of languages and their use in different areas throughout the country. It used a long questionnaire inspired by those compiled in Eastern African countries like Kenya and Tanzania. The main objective was to "study the relationship of Arabic to vernacular usage because of national language policy" (Jernudd 1979: 26). The language survey was presented as a tool of assessment and evaluation for Ministries involved in human development (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Planning, etc.). The survey "was launched on the morrow of the second census of the Sudan in April 1973 and was designed to map patterns of language use in such a way as to permit cross-referencing with the results of the census." The idea was that "The census provides economic and social

background for the survey and the survey provides ethnic and linguistic information" (Bell 1975: 156). But this complementarity between the national census and the language survey never really materialized. The language survey never had the coverage of censuses launched by the Department of Statistics.

Compared to its objectives, the concrete outcome of the language survey is both impressive and limited. It covered a few areas in South Sudan (Mahmud 1983) and several regions of the North, including the Nuba Mountains in Kordofan, Darfur, and some places in the East (Wadi Halfa, Ingessana Mountains). It produced several publications, including 29 volumes by Herman Bell dedicated to the Nuba Mountains (Bell 1978 & 1995), a few edited books, and more than 30 masters and PhD theses in English and Arabic. These surveys, conducted mostly among school students, provide numerous statistical tables showing the percentage of use of Arabic versus other languages. The results describe the type of multilingualism according to region. They highlight the rapid spread of Arabic and the process of language shift among the young generation. One strong point of continuity between the Rejaf Language Conference, the 1956 census, and the Language Survey of the Sudan is the fact that Arabic is systematically contrasted with non-Arabic languages. The development of linguistic research in post-colonial Sudan never led to the contesting of the ethno-linguistic classifications established during the colonial era. The IAAS publications reproduced the language classification of Tucker and Bryan (1956), with slight changes based on new-recorded linguistic data, particularly regarding Kordofanian and Nilo-Saharan languages. In this regards, the language survey has participated in the maintenance and internalization of language boundaries.

The dynamism and high expectations of the 1970s rapidly faded away in the 1980s with the end of the phase of political opening and the return to a hard pro-Arabic policy in the 1990s. The results remained largely unknown by the public, circulating only among the few

specialists. They did not influence the language policy of the Sudanese government. The IAAS played a minor role in South Sudan compared to the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Nevertheless, at each period of relative academic and political opening (1985-1989; 2005-2011), numerous new research projects were launched between IAAS and foreign universities (e.g. a new language survey of the Nuba Mountain by Bayreuth University in 1987 and numerous projects on endangered languages since 2005). After the 2005 Naivasha Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the National Council for Promotion and Development of the National Languages was established by presidential decree in Khartoum in 2008-2009. Although not very effective due to the lack of financial means or a real political agenda, the National Council attests a new tolerance for language issues in North Sudan.

4.2 The Summer Institute of Linguistics

The Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL) is an evangelical institution based in Dallas, which promotes literacy and Bible translation "in more than 40 countries on over 1,000 languages" (SIL 1987). Today, the SIL *Ethnologue* database is one of the most consulted references for people looking for demographic data on any language in the world. For the two Sudanese states, the SIL recorded 78 languages in the Republic of the Sudan (formerly Northern Sudan)[3] and 72 for South Sudan.[4] The estimation of the number of speakers associated with each language is based on a variety of sources, including SIL surveys, academic references, adaptation of the 1956 data, etc. A striking point is the fact that the SIL data makes little difference between ethnic affiliation and language use. In contrast with the results of 1993 census and those of the Language Survey of the Sudan pointing to the spread of Arabization,

[3] Cf. https://www.ethnologue.com/country/SD (accessed 26 February 2017).
[4] Cf. https://www.ethnologue.com/country/SS (accessed 26 February 2017).

particularly among displaced and urbanized populations, the statistics compiled by the SIL indicate an increase of speakers for most languages between 2001 and 2016.

The SIL has a long-established expertise in South Sudan and is a major actor for the promotion of vernacular literacy. Its approach combines the assessment of the language situation through language surveys, the description of the languages, and the production of readers. Its activities appear to be continuous with the Rejaf Language Conference. It entered South Sudan following the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement that paved the way for a return to the pre-1956 educational policy (Abdelhay, Abu-Manga and Miller 2015). It initiated a rough language survey in South Sudan (Bendor-Samuel 1975). In 1977, it signed an agreement with the Southern Ministry of Education to set up a program for implementing the official language policy of reintroducing the teaching of ten group languages. In 1978, it opened the Institute of Regional Language (IRL) in Meridi (Equatoria Province) for the training of teachers and the production of readers. SIL developed orthographies and basic literacy materials for 25 languages, in a program that received a $1 million grant from USAID (Marshall 2013: 189). The SIL's publications on Sudan amounted to around 100 works in the form of books, orthographies, primers, readers, and teachers' guides. SIL linguists appear to have been divided between two models. On the one hand, following the guidance of the Southern Ministry of Education, they looked to codify of important languages (the former group languages of RRLC). On the other hand, they had people working on linguistic descriptions of and Bible translation in small languages, like Kresh (16,000 speakers), Avokaya (15,000 speakers), Ndogo (20,000 speakers), etc.

With the escalation of the war, the SIL left South Sudan from 1988 to 2005. It came back after the 2005 Navaisha Comprehensive Peace Agreement and restarted its collaboration with the South Sudanese sovernment. The latter had officially come back to an educational policy based on the use of national languages as media of instruction in the first primary

years. However, it seems that everything started again from the scratch. Because of the impact of the war and the displacement of a large majority of the South Sudanese either to North Sudan or to neighboring countries, it was felt that an assessment of the language situation was needed. A first estimation was provided by the SIL in 2006, indicating that the four largest groups (Dinka, Nuer, Bari, and Zande) together accounted for over 65% of the population, the ten largest groups (Dinka, Nuer, Zande, Bari, Shilluk, Otuho, Luwo, Moru, Mundari, Toposa) making up over 80% of the population. Those largest groups correspond to the major group languages in the RRLC. This estimate seems to indicate that the ethnic and language balance of the Southern population have changed very little in spite of almost fifty years of war and displacement.

In March 2012, a *Language-in-Education Policy Conference* was held in Juba, organized by the British Council. It was the first major international conference in South Sudan since independence on 9th July 2011, a fact attesting the importance of the language issue. Like the 1928 Rejaf Conference, it united a number of experts: "Academics in language and education from Africa and beyond, representatives from national, regional and international organizations with an interest in development in Africa and policy makers and ministry official including from South Sudan itself" (McIlwraith 2013:). Among the most prominent academics and organizations were the African Academy of Language (ACALAN) and the Summer Institute of Linguistic. The main sponsors were the South Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MOGEI), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), UNICEF, and the British Council. With a remarkable persistence, constant references were made to the Rejaf recommendations, either by Deng Deng Hoc Yai from the Ministry of Education, or by South Sudanese participants. However, compared to the 1928 Rejaf Language Conference, the practical implications of the 2012 Juba Language-in-Education Conference appear far less developed. Many contributions praised the benefit of

multilingual education, and the Conference endorsed the language policy proposed by the Ministry of Education in its Education Bill.[5]

After the Juba Conference, the SIL was of the opinion that "Due to many years of armed conflict and political instability in South Sudan, language assessment and survey to ascertain the current linguistic situation and to answer the questions of 'who speaks what language to whom and when (and where)' was impossible to carry out […] This lack of up-to-date information made it very difficult for the Department of National Languages to make decisions as to how to even begin facing the challenges of the policy implementation" (Spronk 2014: 2). The SIL organized a ten-day workshop, inviting Ministry of Education representatives from each South Sudanese state in order to set up the priorities. Again, it was decided that the languages of the 10 largest groups would be used in the first phase of implementation, and again the insecurity and violence that soon came to prevail in large areas of South Sudan halted the implementation of this multilingual educational policy.

5 Conclusion

Since the beginning of the 20th century, linguists and development experts have regularly advocated the need for updated demographic data on Sudanese languages in order to develop language planning and educational policy in a multilingual context. Every period of relative peace and political opening towards multilingualism sees the same calls for launching new language surveys, the organization of conferences on similar or related languages, the reappearance of the same list of major languages that should be promoted, the same wishes to publish readers, etc. In the South, but also now in the Western parts of Sudan, those periods of peace and political opening tend to be quickly followed by long periods of war and violence

[5] See MoEst 2008a. *2cd draft of GOSS Education Act*. Juba, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; MoEST 2008b. *Technical finding of MoEST principles, practice and planning of multilingual education workshop*.

that hamper any educational efforts while reinforcing ethnic competition and ethnic conflicts. In this unstable situation, censuses and statistics usually presented as tools of state control seem to have little direct concrete impact, at least at the level of language planning. However, the question of their influence upon the representations of social categories remains open. The Sudanese situation shows us that language categories and statistics are far from being restricted to national censuses. The works of Tucker and Bryan (1956), as well as the 1928 RRCL have played a more important role in the shaping of language categories than the 1956 census. Interestingly the results of the 1956 and 1993 censuses and those of the Language Surveys of the Sudan that highlighted the lack of one to one correlation between ethnic affiliation and language never led to a radical contesting of colonial ethno-linguistic classifications. The idea of a strong correlation between ethnicity and language is widely shared by the different social actors, from the top of the state down to the ordinary citizens, in spite of the important language changes precipitated by urbanization and displacement. In this context, the role of statistics and censuses in the construction of linguistic and ethnic boundaries is ambiguous and complex. Counts and estimates of ethnic demographics can be found at all administrative levels and in most reports, including NGO and UNDP reports. Those numbers are regularly collected from local administrative authorities and tribal representatives. As they assure access to territories and resources, they have a far greater impact than the macro-results of the national censuses that nobody really trusts.

Ethno-linguistic categories appear, therefore, to be a product of both the external foreign expertise (the colonial foreign administrators, followed by the post-colonial national administrators) and the 'internal subjectivity' of ordinary citizens. They are fields of negotiation and contestation, particularly regarding the boundaries between macro and micro groupings. The institutional national or foreign experts will rely on 'scientific facts' to legitimize the identification of macro-groups for administrative or educational purposes.

These macro-grouping have also proved to be platforms for political and social mobilization (Harir 1983, Miller 2015). Nevertheless, identification with a macro-grouping (such as the Nuba one for example) does not necessarily erase the feeling of belonging to a micro-group, one known by its 'local unofficial names' in the eyes of the census officers. Negotiation between the members of a small group and the different administrative levels of the state can lead to the recognition of a small group as a separate entity. Therefore ethno-linguistic categories do not impede on a certain degree of fluidity.

The major boundary, inherited from the colonial power and reinforced by the post-colonial language policy, is the opposition between Arabic and all other Sudanese languages. The maintenance of this boundary can be seen in a recent development of South Sudan, where the Southern Arabic variety (Juba Arabic) was refused status as one of the national South Sudanese languages. Spoken as a *lingua franca* or as a first language by many South Sudanese, Juba-Arabic cannot be associated with the 'Arab ethnic groups.' However, its typological disconnection from standard Arabic and its potential naturalization are not yet accepted by part of the South Sudanese population, who associate Arabic with Arab political domination.

6 Appendix

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group of Western Sudanic languages. Many of the word stems are monosyllabic, consisting of one consonant and one vowel, whereas in the Nilotic Group consonantal ending is the rule. Words are distinguished by tone, e.g. in Madi *ti* with a low tone means "mouth", and with a high tone "cow". In the genitive case the possessor precedes the thing or person possessed. The sounds gp and kp are of frequent occurrence.

GROUP I.—(NILOTIC.)

1. DINKA.

Upper Nile Province.

Northern and Donjol Dinka (Renk and Melut)	46,000
Southern and Bor Dinka (Bor and Duk Faiwil)	64,000
Aliab, Atwot, Chich (west of the Nile)	50,000–100,000

Bahr el Ghazal Province.

Northern District	190,000
Central District	150,000

The following are Dinka dialects:—Bhor, Thaing, Twi, Nyarweng, Chich, Aliab (Upper Nile Province), and Agar, Gok, Rek, Malwal, Twich (Bahr el Ghazal Province); there probably are other dialects as well.

2. NUER.

Upper Nile Province.

Garjok, Garjak, Jekiang (Nasser District)	200,000
Lau (Abwong District)	100,000
Gaweir (Fanjak District)	30,000
Lak and Thiang (Zeraf Island, Fanjak District)	40,000
Western Nuer (Yirrol District)	60,000 430,000

The Atwot speak a Nuer dialect, but some sections of the tribe have adopted Dinka as their vernacular.

3. SHILLUK AND ALLIED DIALECTS.

Upper Nile Province.

Shilluk (Northern District)	90,000
Anuak (Anywak)	40,000

Bahr el Ghazal Province.

Shilluk (Northern District)	5,000
Jur or Luo (Wau District) / Bolanda or Bor (Wau District)	13,000
Jur or Luo (Northern District)	1,000
Dombo and Shatt (Northern District)	4,000

Outside the Sudan.

Acholi (Lango, Eastern Province Uganda)	207,000
Acholi (Gulu and Chua, Northern Province Uganda)	163,000
Badama (West of Mt. Elgon on Kenya border)	52,000
Jaluo (Nyanza Province, Kenya)	375,000
Alur (West Nile District, Uganda)	60,000
Alur (Belgian Congo)	77,000
Kisii (East of Lake Victoria, Kenya)	130,000

4. BURUN.

Upper Nile Province	5,000
Fung Province	?

GROUP 2.—(NILOTIC.)

5. BARI AND ALLIED DIALECTS.

Mongalla Province.

Bari (Rejaf and Mongalla District)	30,000
Fajelu (Rejaf and Yei District)	20,000
Niangbara (Rejaf and Amadi District, also including Shir)	20,000
Kuku (Kaji Kaji District)	20,000
Mandari (Amadi District)	7,000
Kakwa (Yei District)	20,000

Outside the Sudan.

Bari (Belgian Congo)	8,000
Kakwa (Belgian Congo and West Nile District, Uganda)	15,000

6. LATUKO, ETC.

Mongalla Province.

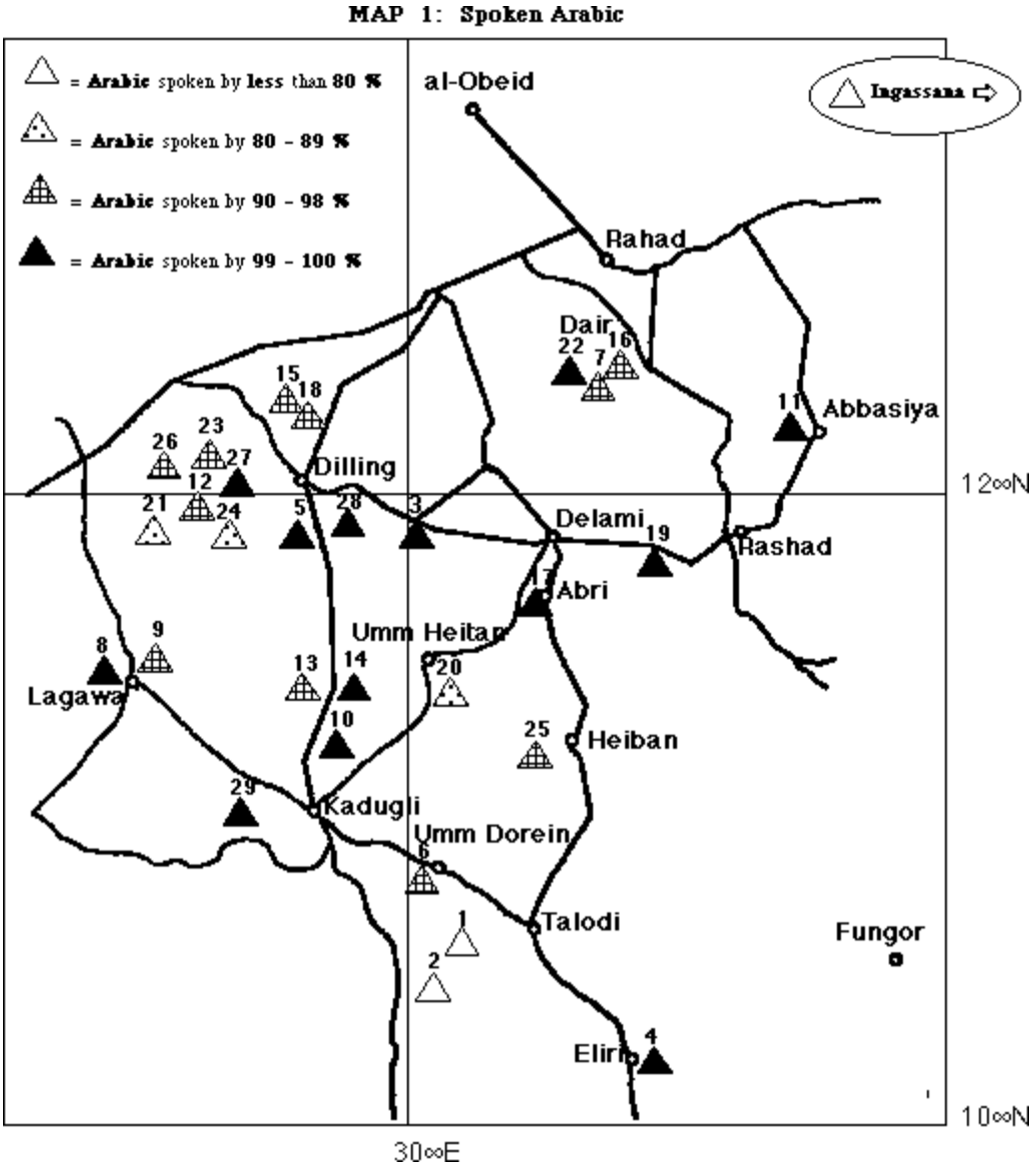
Latuko (Torit District)	35,000
Lokoya (Rejaf and Torit District)	12,000
Lofit (Torit District)	8,000
Dongotono or Lango (Torit District)	18,000

Uganda.

Dongotono or Lango	?

It is probable that there are other tribes using kindred dialects, but no definite information exists.

Maps from the Nuba Mountain Language Survey, Bell, 1995



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