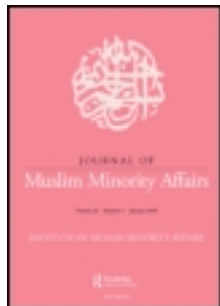


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**The 'Nubians' of East Africa:
Muslim Club or African "Tribe"? The View From Within**
Omari H. Kokole

Sociologically the Nubians form a fascinating category for scholars to study forming as they do . . . a secondary and expansible social category capable of assimilating Ugandans previously classified under other tribal names.¹

Michael Twaddle

Introduction

Between January 25, 1971 and April 11, 1979 many Ugandans and much of the rest of the world innocently believed that Uganda was, by and large, under the ruthless rule of an alien, Southern Sudanese derived "tribe" called the "Nubi" or "Nubians," whose language was "ki-Nubi" (or "Lu-Nubi" as the Baganda and other Bantu-speaking Ugandans preferred to call it). This article aims at correcting this popular misconception or ethno-linguistic error especially now that Idi Amin and his fellow "Nubi" are no longer a significant factor in the politics of Uganda and the destiny of that country. The "Nubi," as Bernd Heine has reminded us, must not be confused with the *Nubians* or the *Nuba* of the Southern Sudan and upper Egypt with whom they share hardly more than a similar name.² These "Nubi" were by no means an exclusively Ugandan phenomenon since many of them also constituted distinct Muslim minorities in Kenya (especially in the Nairobi "shantytown" of Kibera) as well as other parts of Eastern Africa. Our thesis in this paper is that the "Nubi" are *Muslim* by faith but do not constitute a "tribe" in the usual African sense as was, and still is, widely believed. The evidence presented to support this thesis is cumulative and its interests primarily *sociological* or ethno-cultural rather than politically evaluative of the Amin years in power. Indeed, the literature on the woes and tribulations of Uganda ever since attaining independence more than two decades ago is now enormous and wide-ranging.³ The evidence mobilized to support the thesis in this essay consists of the following *four* inter-related components (a) The "Nubi" as a people without an indigenous *language* of their own; (b) The "Nubi" as a people without a tribal *myth of origin* of their own; (c) The "Nubi" as a people without indigenous African *names* of their own; and finally (d) The "Nubi" as a people without a *land*, or "hinterland,"⁴ of their own – these usually being either defining or accompanying characteristics of "tribe" in the African sense of the term. Unlike Aidan Southall and others we reject the proposition that the "Nubi" constitute a "tribe."⁵

The "Nubi" as an African People without an Indigenous Language:

Virtually all African "tribes" (with probably the single exception of what Ali Mazrui calls the "Afro-Saxons" i.e. Africans or people of African ancestry who

speak English as their native tongue, e.g. Jamaicans, Sierra Leonean Creoles, Americo-Liberians etc., etc.⁶) each have a language of their own. Oftentimes these languages are related to other proximate ones, and are collectively given a single broad generic label. In the Ugandan situation, for example, such languages like Lungada, Lusoga, Runyakore/Rukiiga, Runyoro/Rutooro etc. are collectively known as “Bantu” languages. These “Bantu” languages are by no means limited to Uganda since “Bantu” peoples and languages are scattered all over central as well as the bulk of southern Africa. Again, within Uganda there are the so-called “Luo” peoples who include the Langi, Acholi, Alur, Jonam, Japadhola etc. Next door in Kenya are a related ‘Luo’ people actually called the “Luo” as an ethnic group, whose language is *Dholou*. There are also some Luo in the north-eastern parts of Tanzania especially around the Lake Victoria area. What is more, there are also some indigenous Luo (*Acholi, Langi, Shiluk, and Anuak* etc.) in the Southern Sudan – a fact that is not widely known.⁷ Idi Amin did have his fellow ethnic compatriots (Kakwa in Sudan) but so does Obote (the Sudanese Langi and Acholi). The list of African peoples and their related languages could of course be indefinitely lengthened. However, when one examines closely the case of “Ki-Nubi” or “Lu-Nubi” one finds that it is in a class by itself, partly because it is not related to other indigenous African languages nor is it grouped together with them (e.g. “Bantu” “Nilotic” etc.) although it does borrow some of their words, especially Ki-Swahili words. In this particular sense, “Ki-Nubi” is in “splendid isolation” more comparable as it is in this instance to the *Creole* or *Krio* (pidgin derivatives of English and French), spoken in parts of Western Africa and the Caribbean than to native African languages. In fact, a German scholar, Dr. B. Heine has published a book on “Ki-Nubi” as a derivative of the Arabic language. Dr. Heine’s book is, significantly enough, entitled, *The Nubi language of Kibera – An Arabic Creole*.⁸ Like David Dalby before him, Heine classifies Ki-Nubi a Semitic language.⁹ We suggest that it was precisely the use of this same “Arabic Creole” in Amin’s Uganda which led many to conclude that the “Nubi” speakers were all Southern Sudanese Muslims despite the obvious fact that the Southern Sudanese are, by and large, believers in traditional religious tendencies although some of their political leaders and elites are, *not Muslim*, but indeed Christian. Indeed, had the majority of Southern Sudanese been Muslim, there would have been *no* seventeen-year long civil war in that massive country between “Arab North” and “Black South”.

Over sixty years before the publication of Heine’s above-mentioned book, a British soldier, Major Chauncey Hugh Stigand (1877-1919), who served in colonial Eastern Africa both in military and civilian capacities, including service in the then “Lado enclave” – which now constitutes parts of northwestern Uganda, northeastern Zaire and Southern Sudan – wrote several anthropological books about the inhabitants of the “enclave”. One of Major Stigand’s books, published posthumously, was entitled, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave*.¹⁰ Major Stigand met his death on December 8, 1919, at the hands of the insurrectionist Aliab section of the Dinka tribe near Kor Raby, a village between the River Lau and the River Nile. In this particular book Major Stigand calls the Arabic of the Sudan “Ki-Nubi” and credits the Swahili with inventing the term. In Major Stigand’s own words:

The Sudanese Arabic, a language called *Kinubi* (the Nubian tongue) by the Swahilis in contradistinction to *Kiarabu* (Arabic), was introduced by the old Egyptian Government and the Danagla traders, the latter leaving behind them also some Dongolese words, such as “Nyerkek” for a child, which have passed into local Arabic.¹¹

Part of the explanation of the origins or genesis of the term “Nubi” or “Ki-Nubi” may have to be traced to the fact that in classical Arabic the word for “south” is “Junub” and the “southerners” of a country or particular region are called “Junubiya”. For those who have had the opportunity to visit both Uganda (especially Amin’s Uganda) and the Southern Sudan (anytime) the similarities between the “Ki-Nubi” of Uganda and the colloquial Arabic of the Southern Sudan (Junubi) are very clear, striking and unmistakable, although of course there are also some slight dialectical variations. A substantial portion of the Ugandan refugees (post-Amin) now languishing in Southern Sudan insist on calling their variety of Arabic “Nubi”. The indigeneous Southern Sudanese call it “Arabic” – albeit a variety of Arabic that is distinctively southern partly because of the many local words it has absorbed from such local African languages as Bari, Mundari, Pojulu, Kuku, Zande, Kakwa, etc., etc. Sometimes even English words are borrowed.

It should also be pointed out that the Arabic spoken in the “real” Arab world proper is not uniform either. An ordinary Tunisian or Moroccan Arab may encounter serious difficulties in trying to communicate with a Saudi or Yemeni Arab unless the two make special efforts to approximate the classical Arabic of the Qur’ān. One reason why the Arabic of the eastern part of the Arab world (Egypt and the Arabian peninsula) is called *Mashriqi*, as distinct from the Arabic (called *Maghribi*) of the western parts of the Arab world (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) is because these two broad varieties of the same language are sufficiently different, even mutually unintelligible sometimes to warrant separate labels. But the Arabic language has been helped by the Qur’ān since this Muslim scriptural document has stabilized and standardized the language thus averting the possibility of the language changing too fast and thus disintegrating into a whole mosaic of vastly different linguistic “animals”. By contrast, African languages, including my own – Kakwa, – partly because they don’t have scriptures of their own and therefore little or no mystique to them (not to mention the fact that African languages are simply too numerous) face the danger of changing too rapidly, even ‘withering away’ altogether.

Ki-Swahili, itself heavily influenced in *vocabulary*, though not in structure by Arabic, including the name of the language itself, “Swahili” derived from the Arabic word “Sawahel” Arabic for “coast,” is a Bantu language. The structure of Ki-Swahili is definitely *Bantu*, though approximately 20% of its vocabulary is derived from Arabic. This particular language may have anywhere up to 20 dialects of its own. For example, the Ki-Swahili spoken by the *Wazanzibari* (people from Zanzibar) is called “Ki-Unguja”, whereas the Ki-Swahili of the old town of Mombasa is called “Ki-Mvita,” and “Ki-Ngazijja” is the variety people from the Comoro Islands speak. The language is the same, but it has evolved a multiplicity of varieties, sometimes to the extent of sounding like entirely unrelated tongues. This writer is relatively fluent in both Ki-Swahili

and “Ki-Nubi” and there is no doubt in his mind that “Ki-Nubi”, unlike Ki-Swahili, is not an African language (in structure) although it has evidently borrowed many African words from the innumerable languages it has interacted with across the years. On the other hand, Ki-Swahili is a “Bantu” or African language though approximately a quarter of its vocabulary is of Arabic derivation, sometimes of a combined Arabo-Turkish derivation.

The entire system of numbers (or numerals) in “Ki-Nubi” has a one-to-one correspondence with that of classical Arabic. The “Ki-Nubi” words for one (wahid), two (ithineni), three (thalatha), four (aruba), five (khamsa), six (sita), seven (sabab), eight (thamaniya), nine (tisa), ten (ashara) are *identical* to their Arabic counterparts. There is *no* single “Ki-Nubi” number of *any* quantity that is not directly lifted from classical Arabic although the pronunciation may sometimes be somewhat “Africanized”. Of the first ten Arabic numerals listed above, Ki-Swahili borrows only three “sita” (for six), “saba” (for seven), “tisa” (for nine) and the rest (seven numbers or 70%) are all Bantu-derived, this perhaps reflects Ki-Swahili’s overall marginal (as compared to Ki-Nubi’s) indebtedness to Arabic. No other African language I know anything about is so deeply influenced or is so close (if not necessarily identical) to Arabic as is “Ki-Nubi”, especially at the level of the *numeral*. There are of course other illustrations of the “Arab-ness” of, or of the influence of Arabic on “Ki-Nubi” but in this essay we have drawn heavily from the system of numbers partly because it is so telling and in the case of “Ki-Nubi” so comprehensive and so total; and finally partly because one has to be selective in the range of illustrations one can employ within the scope of a single article.

One of Idi Amin’s earliest and most consistent critics was a British journalist, David Martin. David Martin wrote a lengthy book about Amin entitled *General Amin* (London: Faber, 1974). In enumerating the multiplicity of languages that Idi Amin spoke, Martin cited “Ki-Nubi” though, interestingly enough, without making the common mistake that many of Amin’s own national compatriots often made of calling Idi Amin a “Nubi” by “tribe” or calling “Ki-Nubi,” a tribal language as such. In David Martin’s own words:

Amin’s mixed background has given him a smattering of five languages. He speaks some Kakwa and some Luganda having been raised in the part of Uganda where those vernacular are spoken. From the army he learned Swahili which is the language of command, as well as limited English, which is laboured when he is reading a prepared text, and somewhat better during his impromptu harangues. *The only language which he (Idi Amin) speaks reasonably well is a type of broken Arabic referred to as Nubian which is used by the West Nile Muslim colony in Buganda.*¹² (Emphasis added)

David Martin should also have added 3 other languages – Lugbara, Madi and Luo – to the list of the languages that Amin spoke. Amin’s capacity to be multi-lingual, we contend, was no evidence of his “genius” but rather part of the sociology of a marginalized people who come from the periphery (social as well as geographical) of their new artificial “nations” and are, precisely because of their marginality, forced to learn more than one language as one way of beginning to transcend their marginality and peripherality, a natural method of survival.

It is Professor Aidan Southall who finds Idi Amin's "multi-lingualism" unusual whereas in fact most Ugandan West Nilers are almost all necessarily multi-lingual. Professor Southall even accuses Idi Amin of pretending to be Kakwa (like former Uganda Anglican Archbishop Silvanus Wani)¹³ as if when two individual Kwakwas profess two different (monotheistic and universalistic) religions they then cease to belong to the same "tribe" because they belong to two different non-African religions. In a way, this assertion is comparable to saying, for example, that the late Lebanese leader Major Haddad, Shiite leader Nabih Berri and Sunni leader Salim-el-Hoss are all not *Arab* Lebanese because they profess different *religions*.

Professor Southall once accused Southern Ugandans of being relatively uninformed about North Uganda. In Professor Southall's words:

It is instructive and indicative of the depth of ignorance about North Uganda in South Uganda, that in the report of the Commission of Enquiry on the allegations by Daudi Ocheng, Amin's mother tongue is variously referred to as Lugbara, Madi, and Luo, while an interpreter, Mathew Opu, brought for him, was no doubt Kakwa.¹⁴

It is not clear from Professor Southall's paper what makes him so certain that Justice Mathew Opu (a Christian Kakwa) is "no doubt Kakwa" while another Kakwa's "Kakwa-ness" (Idi Amin) is in doubt. Is it because Amin happens to be Muslim by religion while Justice Opu is Christian? Why should two Kwakwas cease to be simultaneously Kwakwa simply because their respective (non-African) religions differ? Why, especially in the African context, should religion define "tribe"?

The confusion about Idi Amin's mother tongue – at least during the Commission on Enquiry that Professor Aidan Southall mentions – originated in part from Dr. Apollo Milton Obote's own testimony. Obote had apparently advised the then Colonel Idi Amin (the two men were "buddies" then) not to deny the fact that the pro-Lumumba Congolese (now Zairean) rebels whom the Ugandan Government had authorized Amin to assist had entrusted to Amin some of their money for safe-keeping and for use in purchasing supplies and equipment if and when they needed or requested them. Obote also advised Colonel Amin to look at the issue as a case of "embezzlement," a term which Amin, expectedly, did not seem to understand. Obote then decided to switch to "Luo" (Obote's mother tongue *not* Amin's) to make sure that he and Amin understood each other. To use Obote's own words to the Board of Enquiry, some nineteen years ago:

I told him that it was a mistake for him to have banked this money in his own name and I also told him that since the account existed it could only lead to further suspicion if he now closed it or tried to hide this account. I told him that he should be quite open about it and it was his responsibility to account for the money he had received. I also told him that I was taking steps to ascertain the exact amount of money which had been given and I in fact said to him that he should regard himself in this matter as in the same position as a Chief who, though authorised to collect taxes, can run into serious trouble in case of embezzlement. *This conversation took place in*

*English but the word "embezzlement" I translated into Luo since he appeared not to have been able to understand it when I said it in English.*¹⁵ (Emphasis added)

Here was Prime Minister Apollo Milton Obote, as he then was, using his own native language (Luo) to translate a western concept, "embezzlement", to a non-Luo but multilingual rustic Kakwa soldier, the then Colonel Idi Amin, whose command of the English language was, and still is, less than adequate. But just as Amin's capacity to speak and understand *Luo* did not make him a Langi or Acholi "tribally," likewise his command of "Ki-Nubi," should not convert him into a "Nubi," a group that is *not* really a "tribe."

There is perhaps no single Muslim Ugandan West Niler (Kakwa, Aringa, Lugbara, Lendu, Logo, Madi, etc.) in or outside of the West Nile region, who cannot speak "Ki-Nubi." Yet these same West Nilers also retain their indigenous tribal identities and languages. What is more, many non-Muslim West Nilers speak "Ki-Nubi" as well. The late Brigadier Charles Arube (Amin's first Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and a Roman Catholic *Kakwa*) spoke impeccable "Ki-Nubi" and yet his differences with Amin were widely, and erroneously, interpreted as "tribal" although *both* men were in fact Kakwa. There was a pervasive tendency in Amin's Uganda to regard all Amin's dissidents as non-Kakwa or as non-Muslim. Yet at least "tribally" Brigadier Charles Arube, Colonel Elly Aseni and Justice Mathew Opu were in fact all fellow Kakwa, albeit Christian, and all critics who in April 1974 even attempted (unsuccessfully) to eliminate the Amin regime.

Another Britisher who has written a book on Field Marshall Idi Amin Dada was a man who was himself once Amin's own boss in the colonial period, Major Iain Grahame, now retired and a fowl farmer in Britain. Grahame's book entitled *Amin and Uganda: A Personal Memoir* betrays a deep admiration for *soldier* Idi Amin (especially the subordinate sergeant-major Idi Amin) subordinate to Major Iain Grahame then company Officer Commanding (OC) of Idi Amin's B company at the Jinja-based 4 Kings African Rifles Battalion. The book also betrays a quarter-hearted denunciation of *President* Amin as a simple man, or a "lumpen militariat" or "imperfect acculturated," a la Ali Mazrui¹⁶ whose limited western/intellectual credentials made him unequal to a modern presidential role, though clearly an exemplary sergeant major in colonial East Africa while it lasted. But Grahame has a lot of complimentary things – especially regarding Amin's physical prowess, leadership qualities, and sheer presence – to say in his book about the simple Kakwa soldier who was once his own company sergeant-major and later second-in-command:

There was one particularly painful training exercise that every company was forced to carry out once a year, and that was a ninety-mile route march . . . Throughout that long and painful night, one man was an example and inspiration to us all. As we finally passed the finishing post, Idi Amin was marching beside me at the head of the column, head held high and still singing '*Tufunge safari*' ('Let us complete the march') for all he was worth. Across one shoulder were two bren-guns and over the other was a crippled *askari* (Swahili for soldier) ¹⁷

Then one day, many years later, in Kampala while sipping a soft drink in Army Commander, (pre-President) Major General Idi Amin's living room in the "wee-hours" of the morning Grahame heard Amin shouting out orders to one of his soldiers. According to Grahame, the language used was either Arabic or Nubian (i.e., meaning the "Arabic Creole").

At that moment a sentry came in, saluted both of us in turn and addressed some message to Idi *in Arabic or Nubian*. There was a note of urgency in his voice. Idi rose from his chair and clasped my right hand in both of his.¹⁸

On yet another occasion during Amin's regime Major Iain Grahame and Lieutenant General Sir Chandos Blair were both involved in a desperate bid to gain the release of the English teacher, author and critic of Amin, Denis Cecil Hills. Here Grahame heard President Idi Amin in Arua talking in Lugbara.

Idi, rising from his throne, shook hands warmly with both of us. Then turning to a minion who was crouching in the corner, *he shouted something in Lugbara that I failed to understand*.¹² (Emphasis added)

But several years before the Denis Cecil Hills' imbroglio, Iain and his ex-sergeant major had private discussions about Amin's defiant and very daring decision as President of Uganda to expel the Ugandan "Asians" (mainly Indians, Pakistanis and Bangla Deshis) in November 1972, giving them only a ninety-day notice. Grahame, perhaps discreetly encouraged by the British government, attempted to persuade President Amin to change his mind about the "Asians" and to revoke the expulsion order. On this occasion Major Grahame tried a variety of tactics including the use of *an Acholi proverb*, but all to no avail:

I tried a different tack. 'Motmotocero Munupoto.' It was an acholi proverb meaning literally 'Slowness prevented the European from falling.'²⁰

But Idi would not change his mind about the Ugandan "Wahindi." They had to go! Nevertheless Grahame then proceeds in his book to lavish praise on Idi Amin (and in a way on himself) for their mutual capacity to master a variety of unrelated Ugandan languages:

Severely limited in so many intellectual spheres and often ridiculed for his slender knowledge of English, *Idi was in fact fluent in at least a dozen African languages. He laughed once more, complimenting me on still remembering a dialect that we had struggled together to master in years gone by. Often, as part of his education, it had been English only, but on other occasions we would endeavour to converse in Acholi or some other Ugandan tongue. His memory for words, for people and for places never ceased to amaze me*.²¹ (Emphasis added)

Major Grahame clearly seems to be among those who were never able to make up their minds whether to like Idi Amin completely or to entirely hate

him. In Grahame's case the ambivalence was compounded by memories of the past. Listen to this schizophrenic nostalgia or romanticizing of the past that Grahame shared with soldier Idi Amin.

*Idi was certainly an outstanding soldier, within the context of that period, and yet his very qualities of leadership and loyalty, brute force and bravery served merely to accentuate the very fragile thread on which the future of Uganda then hung.*²² (Emphasis added).

But what about others (Ugandans as well as non-Ugandans) who never knew the colonial soldier Idi but only the Soldier-President? What contributed to their own ambivalence – basic incapacity either to like Amin completely or to dislike him totally? Ali Mazrui may have already provided us with at least part of the answer:

A major aspect of world history is the rise and fall of great heroes and great villains. The corridors of time echo the applause and denunciations of yester-years. Fused into the paradox of heroic evil is Idi Amin – at once a hero and a villain, at once a subject both of applause and denunciation. As a villain he was a symbol of tyranny. As a hero, Amin has four meanings for Africa and the Third World. Economically he attempted to strike a blow against dependency and foreign control of his country's economy. Culturally, he signified a reaffirmation of cultural authenticity. He helped to foster cultural self-discovery among Africans – for better or for worse. Politically, Amin was often in rebellion against the northern-dominated power structure of the twentieth century. He made fun of the mighty – and sometimes helped to inspire self-confidence in the ranks of the Third World.²³

But let us now return to Amin's multi-lingualism and relate it to the broader reasons that led him to join the army in the first place. Ali Mazrui begins his fascinating article, "Boxer Muhammad Ali and Soldier Idi Amin as International Political Symbols: The Bioeconomics of Sports and War," with the following significant questions:

Did Idi Amin join the army because of a lack of alternative economic opportunities for uneducated Kakwa in colonial Uganda? Or was he helped by the prior attractiveness of "tall African specimens" to those who were recruiting for the King's African Rifles?²⁴

I am myself inclined to agree that both factors – i.e. lack of alternative economic opportunities for unwesternized Kakwa as well as their relative physical tallness (whatever its worth to the British) as compared to other, mainly southern Ugandans, – were concurrently at play. But I would also carry Mazrui's discussion one step further by suggesting that Idi Amin's related "multi-lingualism" (and by extension that of his fellow uneducated Kakwa and West Nilers in, or outside, the army) was itself also partly a function of limited economic opportunities for uneducated Kakwa (and of course other peripheral Ugandans) in colonial Uganda and partly a function of their peripherality as well. Among the languages most West Nilers speak is the colloquial Arabic

which heartland Southern Ugandans mistook for a “tribal” language and called “Ki-Nubi” or “Nubian.” Henry Kyemba was closer to the mark by calling “Ki-Nubi,” – “their own version of Arabic.” As he put it:

A third element, and one of particularly tragic significance for Uganda today (Amin’s Uganda), was the community of *Southern Sudanese* brought in as mercenaries by the British to staff the lower ranks of the army and the police. In Uganda, indeed throughout East Africa, *they became known as Nubians*. They have retained their own identity, like the Asians. They are *wholly Moslem* and *still speak their own version of Arabic*.²⁵ (Emphasis Added).

Kyemba does not address the question why an African “tribe” (Southern Sudanese as he assumes it to be) should speak, “their own version of Arabic”. Why don’t the *Basoga* (Kyemba’s “tribesmen”) have or speak their own version of Arabic? In other words why should a non-Arab African tribe speak Arabic as its mother tongue?

Yet Henry Kyemba is definitely correct in stating that, “In Uganda, indeed throughout East Africa, they became known as Nubian.” He is correct partly because there are no people in Southern Sudan known as “Nubian” although as indicated earlier there are indeed some Northern Sudanese and Upper Egyptians who are so called. In a way, in calling the descendants of Emin Pasha’s mercenaries “Nubians,” Ugandans and other East African, were making a mistake somewhat akin to that which Christopher Columbus and his cohorts made a few centuries previously when they called the *native Americans* “Indians,” firmly convinced as they were that they had reached not the “New World” but India. The term “Indian” has of course stuck as part of the identity of native Americans despite its obvious historical inaccuracy and despite the very basic fact that there are no links of any kind whatsoever between Native Americans on one side and the Indians of the Indian subcontinent on the other. It is suggested here that the term “Nubian” in the East African, and particularly Ugandan sense, is a comparable misnomer, a creation of Ugandans and other East Africans, and that there are equally no links between the “Nubians” of East Africa and the *real* Nubians of Upper Egypt and northern Sudan. The latter were of course Christian *before* they became Muslim and were a major bulwark against the Islamization and gradual Arabization of Upper Egypt and northern Sudan until approximately the fifteenth century A.D. This is the ancient and authentic “Nubian Kingdom” in African history, and not by any means the partially detribalized speakers of colloquial Arabic in East Africa.

One thing that Grahame does not seem to have grasped is the fact that the Ugandan Kakwa, including Idi Amin, and indeed most Ugandan West Nilers are by definition almost *all* multi-lingual. The West Nile district was of course not, until 1914, part of Uganda as we know it today. In fact that particular part of Uganda (West Nile) has within a period of less than a century, much like North Africa, albeit over a longer span of time, had a triple identity. With regard to North Africa it has been pointed out that:

If in some respects and at certain periods in history North Africa has virtually been the southern extension of Europe, and if since the Muslim conquest it has been the western extension of Asia, it has all

along also remained the northern portion of Africa. The greatest theater of interaction between Europe, Africa, and the Arab world has been the Mediterranean coastline of the African continent.²⁶

Could not one equally say that the greatest theater of interaction between today's Uganda, Zaire and Sudan (partly Arab itself) has been, albeit for less than a century, the current peripheral district of the Republic of Uganda called West Nile?

Clearly, what is today the district of West Nile in Uganda has, in its own small way, had a triple identity of a kind albeit within the relatively short period of a single century. West Nile as well as the Acholi District in today's Uganda were once part of the Lado Enclave of the Equatoria Province of Egypt. It later became briefly part of what was then the Belgian Congo before it was "returned" to the Sudan. Then in the second decade of this century it became part of what is now Uganda. In the words of a distinguished native Ugandan historian, Professor Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire:

Then finally West Nile District was added to Uganda and this rounded off the northern limits of the Protectorate. West Nile used to be part of what was called the Lado Enclave which had been leased by Britain to Belgium's King Leopold II. Leopold died in 1910, the lease lapsed and the Enclave was handed over to the Sudan. *Then in January 1914 [only 70 years ago] a boundary readjustment between Uganda and the Sudan was made and West Nile district was handed over to Uganda while Gondokoro and Nimule districts were transferred to the Sudan.* Thus by 1918 the British Protectorate of Uganda had attained a definite shape and by 1921 [barely 63 years ago] the whole protectorate was under a civilian administration.²⁷ (My emphasis.)

My own paternal grandmother, Kidde, without ever leaving her ancestral village of Koboko in today's Uganda had a triple "national" identity in her life. There was a time when she was a Sudanese or Egyptian; she later became a Congolese (under Leopold II), she died a Ugandan in 1978, for West Nile had indeed become part of Uganda from 1914 onwards. The artificiality of Africa's borders, "nations" and changing identity labels is captured in the life-story of that simple Kakwa grandmother.

Since Emin Pasha recruited his "mercenaries" rather heavily from the "Lado Enclave" it is right to say that at the time when Emin Pasha was operating his "mercenaries" were largely *Sudanese* or *Egyptian* although also briefly Congolese as well. Since Uganda's borders later (by 1914) expanded *northwards* these Sudanese later became Ugandans too, partly as a result of Uganda's northward territorial expansion, and partly because these were no longer fresh immigrants into Uganda as such. It is therefore incorrect to continue to use such anachronistic labels like "Sudanese" or culturally meaningless terms like "Nubian" to describe these group of post 1914-Sudanese Ugandans. Those West Nilers who are today 75 year of age or older have been citizens of three different countries in a single lifetime and have been, in the process, held accountable to three divergent capitals during 3 different phases of their lives –

Cairo (or Khartoum), Kampala (Entebbe at that time) and Leopoldville (now Kinshasa).

But one consequence of West Nile's rapidly shifting and multiple identity in this century as well as its enduring peripherality has been to encourage the propensity among its inhabitants to speak more than one language. Idi Amin's "multi-lingualism", unbeknownst to his ex-boss, Major Iain Grahame, was not unique or specific to the Field Marshall. Many Ugandan Kakwa speak, at the very minimum, *three* languages simultaneously. Their nearness to the numerically more preponderant *Lugbara* tended to force them to learn *Lugbara*. The geographical proximity of their home-land to Zaire and the resultant interaction with the Zaireans has enabled many of them to speak *Lingala* (once called *Bangala*). To the north of West Nile lay Sudan and from Sudan and Egypt came both Islam and a bastardized, or as Dr. Heine would put it, "Creole" Arabic called "Ki-Nubi".

In addition, those Ugandan Kakwa or other West Nilers who trekked southwards in search of jobs and greater economic opportunities learnt in the process additional languages as well. Those West Nilers who joined the Uganda Army or the then King's African Rifles in the colonial period, K.A.R. or "Keya", or the police – who have been called the "lumpen militariat" – picked up some form of Ki-Swahili, a Ugandan variety of course, not the classical Swahili spoken in Tanzania or Coastal Kenya, a creolized Ki-Swahili one is tempted to add. As for those who settled and became peasants or indentured laborers ("Kasanvu") in other parts of Uganda or East Africa generally they picked up the relevant local languages as well; Luganda in the case of those Kakwa or other West Nilers who settled in Buganda, Lusoga in the case of Busoga etc., etc. My own father, spoke a total of 7 languages: his native Kakwa, Ki-Nubi which he insisted on calling "Arabic", Lugbara, Lingala, Luganda, Ki-Swahili and finally some Lusoga – some of these totally unrelated to each other. In calling "Ki-Nubi" Arabic, my father was in the company of such people as Captain Stigand (as already indicated) and Colin Legum. As Legum has had occasion to put it:

The firm link between all 'Nubians' is their Islamic faith (of the Sunni sect) and *their use of Arabic*. They are also less a tribe than a community, albeit only a fraction of one percent of the total Ugandan population.²⁸ (emphasis added)

Partly because I was myself not born in my ancestral homeland, West Nile, in the North but rather in Jinja (Eastern Uganda, where my father spent 34 years of his life), I never had the opportunity to learn some of the languages he learned in Koboko. At home in Jinja we spoke Kakwa; the urban culture of Jinja taught me Ki-Swahili, my first four years of primary (or elementary) schooling in colonial Anglophone Uganda were conducted in a "vernacular," in this case *Luganda*. But Jinja is also the land of the Basoga and from them I learned their tongue – Lusoga. And because Luganda and Lusoga were inter-related Bantu languages, the combination of these two languages enabled me to understand ("hear") fairly well, though not necessarily speak fluently other Bantu languages especially Runyoro/Rutooro, Runyakore/Rukiga, etc., etc. But the fact that I was born in the south of Uganda deprived me of the oppor-

tunity to learn languages like Lingala, Lugbari, Madi, Aringa though the more widespread, universalistic and non-tribal nature of Islamic culture enabled me to learn “Ki-Nubi” (because of its neo-Islamic nature) even though I was in Jinja in southern Uganda, over four hundred miles away from the land of my ancestors, Koboko, in West Nile. A peripheral and marginalized people like my own, the Kakwa, tend to be “multi-lingual” partly as a matter of necessity and partly as a method of coping with their geographic-cum-social marginality and attempting to maximize their economic opportunities. The “Nubi” phenomenon in Uganda and other parts of East Africa has to be seen, to a substantial degree, as a manifestation of, or the unfolding of this process in the new and very artificial or synthetic nations of twentieth century Africa.

The “Nubi” as a People Without a Tribal Myth of Ancestry of Their Own:

Virtually every nation or “tribe,” as both Roberto Michels and Max Lerner have reminded us, tends to have two predominant myths – the myth of ancestry or myth of origin (how the society started and expanded) and the myth of mission or purpose (that which is unique to that nation or “tribe” in terms of human values).²⁹ In the case of Africa, some “nations” or “tribes” have elaborate stories about how it all started, complete with the names of the original ancestors. This is, to a large extent, what “traditionalism” in Africa south of the Sahara is all about. What is more, traditionalism tends to be ethnic-specific. One element of traditionalism that has been particularly influential in Africa beyond the colonial period has been what we may call, “*Ancestral Solidarity*” or fellowship on the basis of shared ancestors often manifesting itself in “tribalism”.³⁰ In the case of the *Baganda* it is all said to go back to *Kintu*; for the Kikuyu the relevant original ancestors were *Mumbi* and *Gikuyu*, as for Amin’s people, the Kakwa, it is *Yeki*. This list of African tribal ancestors could be lengthened indefinitely.

In the case of the “Nubi,” however, precisely because they are not a “tribe” they do *not* have a myth of ancestry or origin of their own. It is curious how in Uganda in the immediate post-colonial period (1962-1967) the four topmost military officers in Uganda happened to be – unbeknownst to most Ugandans – all *Muslim* and all *multi-lingual*. More pertinent for our purposes is the fact that all four officers spoke “Ki-Nubi”. We are here referring to the days when Sir Edward Muteesa was the President (non-executive) and Dr. Apollo Milton Obote, Prime Minister of Uganda.

The first black Ugandan Army commander was Brigadier Shaban Opolot (an Iteso Muslim, from the Teso district); his deputy was Colonel Idi Amin (a Kakwa from West Nile). The Commanding Officer (CO) of the First Battalion of the Uganda Army was Lieutenant-Colonel Juma Musa, alias “Juma Ndege,” (whose father was a Ugandan Lugbara and mother of Munyoro). The Second Battalion of the Ugandan Army was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Suleiman Hussein, later Brigadier, a “Nubianized” Alur, descended from Zairean (or then Congolese Alur most probably part of Emin Pasha’s “Nubian mercenaries”).

Perhaps no other non-Muslim Ugandan had a better grasp of the non-tribal essence of the “Nubi” phenomenon than President Milton Obote himself. Obote knew full well that *all* four of his top military officers spoke “Ki-Nubi”

but he seems to have also been supremely aware that these four were not from the same “tribe” although the four happened to share the same universalistic religion-*Islam*. Obote was therefore quite conscious of the possibility of handling these four officers without taking the “ethnic” or “tribal” factor into serious consideration. So much so that all of Obote’s military counter-moves against Idi Amin while Obote was attending that fateful Singapore Conference of Commonwealth Heads of State and Governments in 1971 were *not* Luo-led but entirely “Nubi”-led. Army Chief of Staff Brigadier Suleiman Hussein, Air Force Chief of Staff Juma Musa and Buganda Police Chief Constable Suleiman Dusman were supposed to arrest and presumably liquidate Amin – an entirely inconceivable scenario had the “Nubi” really been a “tribe” in an African context.³¹ In his moves to neutralize Major Idi Amin militarily Obote “promoted” Amin to the essentially ceremonial title of Chief-of-Defence (itself an ominous replication of Opolot’s prior eclipse from the Uganda Army). President Obote assigned and distributed Amin’s executive military responsibilities between two other “Nubi” – Brigadier Suleiman Hussein and Colonel Juma Musa. In the words of Jan Jørgensen:

Radio South Africa eagerly reported a coup in progress in Uganda on 29 September (1970). After suspending normal programmes, Radio Kampala gave notice of a special announcement that evening. The somewhat anti-climactic announcement reported that the Defence Council, chaired by Obote, had approved a number of promotions, transfers and a reorganisation. Those promoted included Sandhurst and other educated officers who would be more loyal to Obote than to the enlisted men and NCOs surrounding him. The Defence Council also promoted Brigadier Suleiman Hussein to Army Chief of Staff and Colonel Juma Musa to Chief of the Air Force, leaving Amin with less direct control over the military.³² (emphasis added).

Obote knew very well that these three Muslim Soldiers – Amin, Hussein and Musa – though all speakers of “Ki-Nubi” were from three different “tribes” and in Africa “tribe” is often “thicker” or more important than *religion*. As a generalization it is probably true that Africans are more likely to kill each other more because they belong to different *tribes* than because they profess different *religions*. After all there are many African families that are multi-denominational without manifesting signs of religious tension and conflict within them. Obote’s own family was a good illustration of this phenomenon. Though himself a Protestant (or Anglican) Obote’s cousin and at the time Chief of Intelligence (General Service Unit), Mr. Akena Adoko, was Catholic while another cousin and also Cabinet Minister – Abubaker Adoko Nekyon was Muslim.

Had the “Nubi” been more than a mere Muslim Club, Obote, astute as he is, would have turned to fellow *Luo* instead of using Amin’s fellow “Nubi”. It ought to be remembered that there were many senior Luo officers at Obote’s disposal whom he could have used, albeit by “by-passing” the relatively more senior Brigadier Suleiman Hussein and Colonel Juma Musa and “jumping” a single rank which is hardly unknown in African situations. The senior Luo officers included Colonel M. Arach, Colonel Albertino Langoya, Lieutenant-

Colonel Ojok, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Loyira, Lieutenant Colonel Abwala, Lieutenant-Colonel Obama Ayumu, Lieutenant-Colonel Pirimo Obol and Lieutenant-Colonel Emmanuel Ogwal.³³

Brigadier Suleiman Hussein was promptly, and it seems brutally, murdered after Amin's successful coup in January 1971. Colonel Juma Musa was luckier; he was spared this brutal fate perhaps because of his partial Lugbara roots (Amin himself has some Lugbara relatives) and partly because of Musa's own Arua connections as he had a personal house there, as well as relatives (Amin's home district town).

To be sure, the "Nubi" have no tribal myth of origin of their own. It is the Jewish myth of origin – Genesis and Adam and Eve – which the "Nubi" have adopted, borrowed not directly from Judaism but indirectly through Islam. But in adopting this Hebraic myth of origin, the "Nubi" have not been alone:

The Jewish myth of origin . . . has been replacing Africa's own tribal myths of origins from one corner of the continent to the other. Monotheism has been conquering Africa under the banner of either the cross or the crescent – but behind both banners is the shadow of Moses and the Commandments he conveyed.³⁴

The "Nubi" case is distinct because there was no indigenous "Nubi" tribal myth of origin to be replaced by the Jewish one. In a way, this scenario is reminiscent of the North American experience. White America tended to emphasize its innovative essence, its newness and to play down its European ancestry. Likewise, "Nubianized" Ugandans and "Nubianized" East Africans have tended to emphasize their Islamic essence, their newness (universalistic non-tribalness) and to underplay their African tribal origins. But whereas White America's "New World" was *territorial*, the "Nubi" "New World" was simply *religious* and *cultural*. Both peoples tended to under-emphasize their "Old Worlds." Many "Nubi" can of course trace their African "tribal" roots quite easily, surely not as long as it took, say, Alex Haley to trace his African roots to the village of Juffure in Senegambia – 12 years – a process that could have been considerably shortened had Haley's name been, say, "Alex Kinte".

White America's rejection of Europe and the rebellion against the father was, as Max Lerner once argued, to be seen as part of the American mythology in relation to both origin and mission. The American newness was at once a myth of origin and mission. It is equally arguable that the "Nubi" newness is both a myth of origin and mission. In the "Nubi" case these two myths are ultimately *Semitic* or Middle Eastern in derivation rather than traditional or indigenous to Africa. This is a partial explanation of the speedy process of "Nubianization" in East Africa. During the Amin years, encouraged by the universalistic tendencies in Islam, many Ugandan Muslims picked up the "Nubi" language and claimed, for opportunistic reasons, that they were "Nubi" by "tribe". Little did many non-Muslim Ugandans know that all that these "Nubi pretenders" meant was that they were *Muslims*, sometimes recent opportunistic converts to the Message of Allah – a monopolistic and universal religion whose myth of mission aspires to the Islamization of the entire human race if feasible and conceptually divided the world between – – *Dar-el Islam* (Home of Islam) – – and – – *Dar el Harb* (Home of War) – –. Michael Twaddle put his finger on this tendency when he observed thus:

Ugandans who had previously called themselves by other tribal names, now called themselves 'Nubians' and were able to be accepted as such simply by speaking Nubi and practising Islam.³⁵

Idi Amin, despite several disclaimers that there was no such thing as a "Nubi" tribe in African terms and that anybody was welcome to join it, and that he personally was not "Nubi" but *Kakwa* by tribe was himself not averse to exploiting the "Nubi" connection, or *Muslim Club* as I prefer to call it, primarily for two basic reasons. First, the Ugandan *Kakwa* (his own tribe) were only a tiny fraction (approximately 50,000 strong) in a national population of over 14 million people. It did therefore make political sense to cultivate additional constituencies including the "Muslim Club" ("Nubi") that had an open door policy a'la Owens or unlimited membership, (Dar-el-Islam), of which some Muslim *Kakwa* and *Kakwa*-related groups (Bari, Aringa, Kuku, Nyepo, Pojulu, Nyangwara, Liggi, Mundari, Shir, Reli, Rigbo and Gimara) had already been assimilated i.e. Islamized and relatively detribalized.

Second, it was advantageous for Amin to mobilize the Muslim card in the 1970s partly because Amin's benefactors from 1972 onwards included Islamic fundamentalists like Saudi Arabia and Libya. Amin was in power precisely during the heyday of OPEC power (1971-1979). As an organization OPEC is overwhelmingly Muslim in composition. In the words of J.S. Trimingham:

This Organization (OPEC) may also be viewed as a political power block of Islamic influence, since two-thirds of its members, in respect of both number of states and quantity of oil production and revenue, were Muslim . . . the small Gulf states wield immense financial resources that can be tapped for projects far beyond the boundaries of the Arab world. In Africa, apart from the Arab states of Libya and Algeria, the OPEC has two black African members in Nigeria, with an immense Muslim population, and Gabon, whose President Omar Bongo has become a Muslim.³⁶

The aid-distribution behavior of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) or OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) has tended to be to help: firstly, fellow Arabs; second, fellow Muslims; and thirdly fellow Third World countries provided there is some evidence of support and sympathy for the "Arab cause".³⁷ Under Amin, and despite the fact that Muslims are a minority, Uganda benefitted considerably from OPEC sources because Idi Amin himself was a Muslim head of state who was also staunchly pro-Palestinian as well as a dedicated and consistent friend of the Arabs, once he had taken the decision to break ties with the Israelis in 1972. Amin had once trained as a paratrooper in Israel and continued to wear Israeli wings to his last days in power. In one estimation at that time:

Partly because OPEC is so Islamic in composition, and partly because the 'Fourth World' or poorest countries are disproportionately Muslim, about 80 per cent of aid from oil-exporting countries has gone to Muslim countries . . . Within Africa, Muslim recipients of Arab aid have included Mali, Somalia, Senegal, Guinea and Sudan. *Uganda is not a Muslim country but has had a Muslim head of state since the army took over in power in 1971. Until the end of*

*1974 Uganda had received approximately \$120 million in official aid from OPEC sources. Double that amount was promised.*³⁸ (emphasis not in original)

Amin's relatively consistent – perhaps the most consistent aspect of his policies as President of Uganda – anti-Israeli/anti-Zionist orientation and strong pro-Palestinian/pro-Arab stand has continued to pay off even after his violent overthrow in April, 1979. Amin is now enjoying Saudi hospitality and generosity partly in return for his dedicated pro-Arabism. The rustic Kakwa soldiers whose father had been converted to Islam less than three quarters of a century ago now resides in the heartland of Sunni Islam – the ancestral home of the message of Allah, the original “Dar-el-Islam” – among fellow believers.³⁹

The “Nubi” as a People without “Tribal” or African Names of Their Own:

When in the late 1960s the Black American Boxer *Cassius Clay* converted to Islam, his new Muslim names became *Muhammad Ali*. The name *Muhammad* was of course the name of the Prophet of Islam himself. The other name, *Ali*, was that of the fourth Caliph or “Khalifa” (political successor) to Prophet Muhammad also a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, and grandfather of all those who today claim direct descent from the House of Muhammad. Ali was also the principal figure in the major split in mainstream Islam between Sunni Islam and Shiite Islam. For our purposes and within the limitations of this article, it is the fact that Boxer Cassius Clay adopted double Muslim names instead of, for instance, becoming *Muhammad Clay*, which is most pertinent. The full Muslim names *Muhammad Ali* betray the ex-boxer's newly embraced universalistic religion but are *not* of course helpful either in identifying his ancestral continent (Africa) or in linking him to any ethno-cultural group in Africa or indeed elsewhere on the globe. Like Islam itself, Muslim names tend to be “colour blind” and universalistic (tribal-less or nation-less).

Partly because Islam is not just a religion but also a comprehensive culture it tends to encourage the personal disAfricanization or disAsianization etc. of the personal identity of its followers (it does not share this with Christianity especially in Africa). *Muhammad Ali's* disAfricanization at the level of personal identity when he became a Muslim is of course to be contrasted with, and differentiated from, the prior disAfricanization of the personal identity of, say, *Kunta Kinte*, Alex Haley's ancestor in *Roots*, and by extension the disAfricanization of the bulk of the original Africans who were brought in chains to the New World approximately four centuries ago.

In the case of Boxer Muhammad Ali, the adoption of his Muslim name when he joined Elijah Muhammad's “Nation of Islam” was *voluntary*, indeed enthusiastically self-embraced. By contrast, Kunta Kinte was literally *forced* to adopt the Euro-Christian pet name “Toby”. In the television series of *Roots* there is a very moving scene where Kunta Kinte is whipped ferociously because he kept insisting, that his real name was *Kunta Kinte*, until in a moment of sheer physical exhaustion, due to this vicious lashing, he finally capitulates to the master's given name of “Toby”.

Clearly, had Alex Haley's name been, say *Alex Kinte* it would probably *not* have taken him a dozen years to trace his roots to the Senegambian village of

Juffure. There were of course, other processes of disAfricanization underway in Black America which had a cumulative impact on the psyche of Black Americans including the *disAfricanization* of their collective African identity while simultaneously *racializing* this identity. In other words, the experience of Black Americans in the New World tended to encourage them to forget they were *Africans* and to remember instead that they were, simply, *black*. So “Black” Americans gradually became the *only* group of Americans who were *officially* classified according to their racial or physical characteristics (Negroes, Niggers, Blacks etc.), whereas *all* other Americans were either linked to their geographical points of ancestry or cultural identities (hence “Jewish Americans”, “Polish Americans,” “Italian Americans” “Irish Americans” etc.). Even in the case of the mistake made by Christopher Columbus and his cohorts the native Americans were called “American Indians,” – neither dis-Americanized nor *racialized*. The only group of Americans whose official categorization, until fairly recently and even then only partially, didn’t link them to their ancestral home were the “Black Americans.” This was not by choice. It was imposed upon them by forces bigger than themselves in their new environment.

In addition, Black Americans were made to feel ashamed of Africa (a’la Tarzan) and the *nostalgia* for their ancestral continent thereby considerably undermined. In Alex Haley’s *Roots* there are disparaging remarks about Africa reported by Fiddler, clearly intended and calculated to discourage Kunta Kinte from entertaining the possibility of ever running away and returning to Africa:

... White folks says all Africans knows is livin’ in grass huts an’ runnin’ ‘roun’ killin’ an’ eatin’ one ‘nother’.⁴⁰

The death of the African languages the slaves brought with them (linguistic disAfricanization) and the withering away of the African traditional religions in the New World (religious disAfricanization) completed the process of disAfricanizing Black Americans as their identity was *racialized* (overemphasis of their *blackness*) and disassociated from Africa (underemphasis of their *African roots*).

It is arguable that Islam unleashed a comparable process of disAfricanization among Africans within Africa, especially among the “Nubi” and North Africans, although there are important variations that ought to be borne in mind. In North Africa, Islam spread by a combination of conquest and colonization right from the Seventh Century of the Christian era onwards. In fact, in the case of North Africa, Islamization was paralleled by Arabization. Islamization is of course a process of religious conversion and refers to the way by which pre-Islamic North African including the Egyptians who previously had been Christian under the Byzantine Empire embraced Islam (though the Copts in Egypt resisted Islamic proselytization). Arabization, on the other hand, is the process by which North Africans became native speakers of the Arabic language and also absorbed other aspects of Arab culture. Over time, Islamized North Africans began to identify themselves as “Arabs”, a rather dubious claim in a “blood sense” though culturally, especially linguistically, it did make sense.

In Black Africa, on the other hand, Islam spread by trade, (indeed it was one extra commodity in the market place for Muslim traders) and through inter-

Black state conquest. In other words in Black Africa many Black Muslims were instrumental in converting their own “heathen compatriots”. Idi Amin’s father (the late Amin Dada) for example was a Roman Catholic during the first decade of this century before he later became a Muslim. Andrea (his Catholic name) Dada was converted to Islam by a fellow Kakwa by the name of Ali Kenyi, perhaps the most influential and towering Ugandan Kakwa “chief” in the first half of this century. Major Stigand seems to have cultivated Ali Kenyi’s friendship as well as a particular fondness for Kenyi’s people. Stigand also makes reference to Kenyi’s “recent” passing to Uganda – itself an additional testimony to the artificiality and recency of Uganda’s present territorial frontiers. In Major Stigand’s own words, written less than sixty-five years ago (Stigand was killed on 8th Dec. 1919):

Southwards and westwards of Yei is inhabited by the Kakwa, the most intelligent people in the Enclave, excepting perhaps the Makaraka. These people, who speak Bari, are chiefly situated about the sources of the Yei; their biggest chief, Bangala, now deceased, lived 37 miles south of Yei. *South of Bangala and the source of the Kaya is the Kakwa chief (Ali) Kenyi, who has recently passed to Uganda, the Kaya having been made the new frontier between the Sudan and Uganda.* The Kakwa are thus now divided between three Governments, as they extend westwards into the Congo, about Aba and the Kibi river.⁴¹ (Emphasis added)

The comparative point here is that whereas on one side the disAfricanization of the personal identity of Black Americans was involuntary and implemented by coercion, that of Black African Muslims and most Muslims elsewhere has, on the whole, been voluntary, self-embraced and partly doctrinally-inspired.

Like most major religions Islam has of course its own kind of ‘us/them,’ ‘Jew/Gentile,’ ‘Christian/Pagan,’ ‘believer/non-believer’ dichotomy. But partly because of Islam’s universalistic and monopolistic tendencies it divided, conceptually, the world into *Dar-el-Islam* (the Abode of Islam) and *Dar-el-Harb* (the Abode of War). The Abode of Islam was by definition governed by shared norms and principles and by mutual allegiance to *Allah* (God). Within the world of Islam the rules of intersocietal relations assumed the bonds of Community of whom the “Nubi” are a distinctive sub-section. Muslims all over the world were supposed to constitute an *Ummah* – namely a community and a people – with the culture of Islam serving as the necessary cement for social cohesion. This worldwide community had names of its own (originating from Arabia), Islamic or neo-Islamic, and a language of its own, Arabic (all Muslims pray in Arabic) with several varieties of which, we argue, “Ki-Nubi” is definitely one. Rather than constituting a tribe in the African sense, the “Nubi” we contend, are an “East African Muslim Club” to which members of all tribes who have accepted the Message of Allah were welcome.

As for Muslim names which defy national or cultural classification the list is virtually endless and scattered all over the Afro-Asian world and beyond. Islam is by and large an Afro-Asian religion in distribution though there are Muslim minorities elsewhere (especially in Eastern Europe) on the globe. How do Muslim names demonstrate this reality?

One of Africa's best known radical economists is an Egyptian called *Samir Amin*. Another interesting Egyptian is the world-renowned film actor *Omar Shariff*. The great modernizer of Egypt in the 19th century was the Ottoman *Muhammad Ali*. The Great Persian (today's Iran) poet and mathematician of the 12th century and author of *The Rubaiyat* was *Omar Khayyam*.

The former president of Afghanistan prior to President Babrak Kamal was called *Hafizullah Amin*; Field Marshal Idi Amin ruled or "mis-ruled" Uganda with the help of a cabinet that increasingly assumed a "Muslim face" and whose members carried names that were virtually indistinguishable from the names of Cabinet Ministers in the Arab countries, or Muslim world more broadly. Listening to Radio Uganda in the Amin years non-Muslims (the majority) sometimes wondered whether Uganda was not Arab-ruled as illustrated by the following full Muslim names of Amin's ministers.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Full Muslim Names</i>	<i>African Tribe</i>
President	Idi Amin	Kakwa
Finance	Moses Ali	Bari/Rigbo
Internal Affairs	Mustafa Adrisi	Aringa/Kakwa
Foreign Affairs	Juma Abdalla Oris	Alur/Madi
Local/Provincial Administration	Ali Fadhul	Avukaya
Cooperatives and Marketing	Mustafa Ramadhan	Lugbara
Animal Resources	Ismail Sebi	Aringa
Commerce	Noah Muhammad	Alur
Industry and Power	Dusman Sabuni	Moru
Minister with Portfolio/or other	Hussein Marijan	Kakwa

Partly because Christianized Ugandans tended to adopt only a Euro-Hebraic *first* name and retained their African family or surnames (e.g. *David Oyite Ojok*, *Francis Nyangweso*, *Milton Obote* etc.) it is not difficult to see how for the non-Muslims, the use of double non-tribal Muslim names became confusing. How could an African possibly not have an African or tribal name as part of his/her personal identity? The "Nubi" phenomenon was at the center of this Islamization-cum-disAfricanization of personal identity and the confusion it generated.

The names listed above are decidedly not African in any sense. Rather, they originate from the Arabian peninsula. In Amin's Uganda the popular misconception was that these Muslims were, mainly due to their names (which were not tribal but in fact Muslim and universalistic) members of a particular tribe – the "Nubi" tribe and that these names pointed an accusing finger to their non-Ugandan roots. What these critics of Amin's regimes "ethnocracy" were doing was basically to confuse or equate *religion* with "tribe". Although Amin had a strong partiality towards fellow Muslims, and included many of them in his cabinet and appointed them to other influential positions during his reign, these "Nubi" were by and large not from his tribe – the Kakwa. What he shared with them was membership to the universal Muslim *Ummah* within *Dar-el-Islam* but not *tribe* in the normal African use of the term. In fact the only fellow Kakwa to have ever become (briefly) a member of Amin's cabinet was a

Christian Kakwa – Major-General Isaac Lumago (briefly Minister of Industry and Power and also as Minister of State for Defence). In African “tribal” terms *Isaac Lumago* was closer to Idi Amin and *Isaac Maliyamungu* than he was to Vice President Mustafa Adrisi (the latter was a partial member of the Aringa tribe from northwestern Uganda). In religious or Islamic terms, the reverse was the case, General Lumago was in religious terms further away from Idi Amin than Muslim Mustafa Adrisi who was half Kakwa.

The only important position that Idi Amin tended to reserve for his ethnic compatriots (fellow Kakwa) instead of religious compatriots (fellow Muslim) was the militarily strategic post of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. For some reason, no other Ugandan tribe in the Amin years had more than its fair share of this office than the Kakwa (regardless of religion). The list of the Kakwa who held this post included the late Brigadier Charles Arube, General Isaac Lumago, General Yusuf Gowon and the half Aringa/half Kakwa General Mustafa Adrisi. The only non-Kakwa who, briefly, held that position was Major-General Francis Nyangweso.

In addition, the majority of army battalion commanders under Amin tended to be fellow Kakwa (fellow tribesmen regardless of religion) with a sprinkling of a few fellow but non-Muslim West Nilers as well as other Ugandans. One is tempted to conclude that Idi Amin, for some reason, preferred to have a Kakwa-based military ethnocracy (at least in terms of command) and a broader Muslim political constituency (sometimes erroneously called the “Nubian” tribe).

An American student of the “Nubi” language once wrote to the influential Kenyan magazine, *The Weekly Review*, partly to correct the mistake people often made in calling the “Nubi” a “tribe”. Jonathan Owens wrote from the “Nubi village” of Kibera on the outskirts of Nairobi. To use Owens’ own words:

The general picture of Nubi presented is wrong. It is a “tribe” of the loosest sorts – anyone who speaks Nubi and is (though not necessarily) a Muslim is a Nubi. I, for instance, an American studying the Nubi language, could claim to be a Nubi if I made the effort to adopt myself to Nubi customs.⁴²

Owens then went on to make the point that although the original East African “Nubi” did come from the (then) Sudan, intermarriage with the other tribes of East Africa had, “given the Nubi a very heterogeneous character”.⁴³ But, surprisingly, what Owens does not seem to have noticed was that the “original Nubi” he refers to were themselves *very heterogeneous* to begin with. Evidence of this heterogeneity was right under Owen’s nose and relatively undisguised. It is rather strange that Dr. Owens does not seem to have detected it. The evidence consisted mainly of how the “Nubi” residents of Kibera themselves used and still use the word “Kambi” (a corruption of the English word “camp”). When the “original Nubi” first settled in Kibera they tended to segregate themselves into ethnic-specific units hence the resilience of terms like “Kambi Kakwa,” “Kambi Alur,” “Kambi Makaraka,” “Kambi Avukaya,” “Kambi Lendu,” “Kambi Bari” etc., incontrovertible and enduring evidence of the *original* tribes of these heterogeneous “Nubi”.⁴⁴ The fact that there is *no* “Kambi Nubi” is no accident. “Kambi Nubi” simply *does not exist in Kibera*. However, the necessity to have a lingua franca, a mutually intelligible lingo,

forced these immigrant people to develop their “own version of Arabic” partly because a colloquial Arabic was already a common denominator for all the “Kambis”. As already mentioned, these “Kambis” continue to exist in Kibera to the present day and point to the multiplicity of indigenous tribes that resulted in the neo-Islamic cultural melting pot called “Nubi”.

“Kambis” were also present in another major “Nubi” settlement elsewhere in East Africa – Bombo, in the Buganda region of Uganda. In Bombo too were to be found “Kambi Makaraka,” “Kambi Tekrur”, “Kambi Bari,” “Kambi Mundu,” “Kambi Kuku” etc., etc. – a whole host of tribes which were not neatly Sudanese because by the time Emin Pasha operated and recruited his “Sudanese mercenaries” the present borders between Uganda, Zaire (then Congo) and Sudan had not yet, as Stigand and others have reminded us, stabilized or been consolidated.

It should also be pointed out that some of Emin Pasha’s “mercenaries” or soldiers who also came to be subsumed under the label “Nubi” came from as far afield as what later became Nigeria, Niger, and Chad in West and Central Africa originally as Muslim pilgrims en-route to Mecca over land in the pre-air travel era. For several reasons many of these Muslims never returned to their respective homelands. In some cases the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) took the better part of a lifetime and according to some estimates the present population of Sudan consists of a considerable “Nigerian” factor consisting of pilgrims who never made it back home to West Africa.⁴⁵ Dennis Pain has suggested that some of the “Nubi” were in fact Nigerian, though it is conceivable that other West African Muslims were also involved:

In a separate and later movement many Nigerians came to the Sudan and some of these joined the Nubians and are to be found among them in Uganda. Indeed Emin found some among them in the 1880s.⁴⁶

What this demonstrates is that the “Nubi” phenomenon is more *heterogeneous* and more universalistic than many Ugandans and other Africans as well as non-Africans have tended to assume.

Concerning the theme of the non-tribal names of the “Nubi” let us go a little back in Muslim history. The Caliph (“Khalifa” in Arabic) of Baghdad, Iraq between 789 and 809 A.D., for example, was *Harun al-Rashid*. Harun al-Rashid was later to be given popular fame as a hero of the *Arabian Nights*. In 1980 my colleague at the University of Michigan, Professor Ali A. Mazrui, attended and delivered the keynote address at the ceremony for the installation of the new Chancellor of the University of Calabar in Eastern Nigeria. The new Chancellor’s name was also precisely *Harun al-Rashid*. Both Rashids were male. Both were Muslim and both belonged to the same worldwide Muslim *Ummah*. Both were important personalities in their respective societies albeit in different moments of Muslim history. Had these two men been both Ugandan or East African many non-Muslims there would have jumped to the (wrong) conclusion that they both belonged to the same “tribe” in African terms – the “Nubi”. But in fact not only did the two *Harun al-Rashids* not share a tribe, they were also not from the same nation-state or, for that matter, the same continent.

In Black Africa, Islam is strongest in West Africa and in the Horn of Africa.

It is weakest in Southern Africa. Central Africa and East Africa are somewhere in between. In both West Africa and the Horn of Africa, Muslim purists tended to have double Muslim names making it virtually impossible to identify their tribal or national or African cultural origins. In the case of the "Nubi" it is not just *names* that have been completely Islamized but also *language*, albeit a broken rather than the classical Arabic of the Qur'ān. However, as has already been pointed out, even in the Arab world proper varieties of the Arabic language exist, and are sometimes mutually unintelligible unless its speakers approximate and emulate Qur'ānic Arabic. This briefly, then, is the thrust of our argument that the "Nubi" have no *names* of their own, although in their case this was mainly *voluntary*, or self-embraced disAfricanization at the level of personal identity. To borrow Haley's imagery, there was no Arab slave master equivalent of the White master in *Roots*, whipping Kunta Kinte into finally capitulating to the "civilized" name "Toby". Like *Cassius Clay* who voluntarily became *Muhammad Ali*, most African Muslims opted for Muslim names.

But while this disAfricanization of personal identity was voluntary, the death of the languages of the different tribes that came to comprise the East Africa "Nubi" discussed earlier was probably a logical necessity of their predicament. In a way it is comparable to the manner in which the languages the original slaves brought to the New World finally died. The African languages the African slaves brought were just too numerous and too diverse to permit inter-tribal communication. A Yoruba slave could not possibly have communicated with a Mkongo slave in the plantations of the southern United States. The two languages were simply too different from each other for mutual intelligibility. An additional complication was that, given the circumstances, the *language of command* had of necessity to prevail. In North America, the language of command was of course English. In the case of Emin Pasha and his "Sudanese soldiers/mercenaries" the language of command was Arabic, probably a peculiar brand of Arabic somewhat comparable to the broken Ki-Swahili that German and British colonists insisted on using in communicating with their African subordinates. It is conceivable that the broken Arabic of the southern Sudan, "Junubi," was facilitated to some extent by the racially arrogant Germanic (Teutonic) colonial administrators who insisted on speaking to the "natives" in "their own language" be it Ki-Swahili, Arabic or whatever. Usually these colonialists' command of the native languages was very poor, or substantially Europeanized enough to result in, in the case of Ki-Swahili, a distinctive dialect called "Kikoloni" (a variety of the Ki-Swahili language spoken by the white colonialists and settlers).

On the whole, the thesis that the Teutonic or Germanic wing of the white race (English, Dutch, German, etc.) was racially arrogant and insisted on speaking with the "natives" in the natives' own languages (however poorly) instead of using English or German or Dutch seems to be validated by the Eastern African experience. Because of this particular racial orientation, the Germans, perhaps in spite of themselves, helped to "Swahilize" Tanganyika (now mainland Tanzania) albeit without having intended the latter-day benefits in terms of national integration and cohesion this process has afforded Tanzania. The British in turn helped to standardize Ki-Swahili and to spread it to other parts of East Africa after the Germans had departed following their defeat in

World War I.

Since it was Teutonic or Germanic whites – Emin Pasha himself was a German born in Austria – who operated in the Sudan it is equally conceivable that the Germanics helped to spread Arabic in non-Arabized Africa including Southern Sudan/Uganda, primarily as a medium of command in those days. But rather than help to standardize Arabic, the Germanics instead contributed to *bastardizing* it in this latter case. Standard or classical Arabic owes its quality to the Qur’ān, now thirteen centuries old. Arabic had attained a degree of stability and mystique, thanks to the Qur’ān, which, to put it mildly, needed little or no European help.

The “Nubi” as a “People” Without a Land of Their Own

Each African “tribe” or ethnic group has a piece of land that it regards as its own, as its ancestral home. The *Baganda* have their *Buganda*; the *Basoga* their *Busoga*; the *Banyoro* their *Bunyoro* etc., etc. The names of the ethnic group need not reflect or echo the name of the home-land of the relevant people, hence the tendency sometimes to refer to Kikuyu-land, Lugbara-land, etc., etc. in African situations. Colin Legum was certainly right when he once observed that, “In Africa, soil is often thicker than blood”.⁴⁷ The pre-colonial state in Africa entailed the principle of land reverence. It was the Martinique poet and inventor of the term “Negritude” – Aime Césaire – who perhaps best captured this African or black man’s orientation:

My Negritude is no tower and no cathedral. It delves into the deep red flesh of the soil.⁴⁸

Indeed pre-colonial Africa (and even post-colonial Africa) indulged in land worship in relation to both cultivation and ancestry. The ancestors were buried there and the present generation sustains itself on land. So will those yet to be born. The contract between the dead, the living and the unborn was by and large land-based.

In the case of what is today Republic of *Uganda*, the name of the entire country is itself derived from a sub-section of its population, the *Baganda* of *Buganda*. It is conceivable that some future leader in that country may one day decide to change the name “Uganda” precisely because of its sectional origins, the way Mobutu Sese Seko substituted “Zaire” for “Congo.” The Swahili interpreters of the British colonial authorities have sometimes been credited (or debited) for creating the name “Uganda” partly as a result of their own difficulty with pronouncing the word “Buganda.” In the words of Professor Karugire:

In Uganda the most effective agency of transition from the traditional way of life to colonialism was the missionary and the issues of religion have dominated public life in Uganda to the present day. In order to get a proper perspective it is necessary to turn our attention to the activities of the Christian missionaries in Buganda as these explain events in the subsequent Uganda Protectorate – *the name Uganda itself owing its origin to the kingdom of Buganda, apparently for no better reason than that the Swahili interpreters of the European colonialists found it difficult to pronounce the word Buganda.*⁴⁹ (Em-

phasis added)

In reality, what the Swahili and Swahili-speaking Arabs were doing was to "Swahilize" the land of the "Ganda" (or more correctly the Baganda). Classical Ki-Swahili normally utilizes the prefix "U" (pronounced "oo") to refer to the "land" or "home" of others as, for example, in the following select illustrations:

<i>Uarabuni</i>	—	Arab world
<i>Uturuki</i>	—	Turkey
<i>Uajemi</i>	—	Persia (today's Iran)
<i>Ujerumani</i>	—	Germany
<i>Ungereza</i>	—	Britain
<i>Ulaya</i>	—	Europe
<i>Ufaransa</i>	—	France etc., etc.

Indeed, partly because of the role of Ki-Swahili in the history of colonial Uganda names like "Unyoro" (land of the Banyoro) "Usoga" (land of the Basoga) etc., etc. inundate the pages of Ugandan history books. This was the period before Uganda attained its present day territorial boundaries. Dr. Karugire and others are right in making the Swahili responsible for giving "Uganda" its name, but it was more for reasons of grammatical consistency than linguistic difficulties in pronouncing the word "Buganda". Grammatical consistency need *not* of course reflect historical or geographical facts or realities.

To the present day, standard Ki-Swahili continues to refer to Ugandans as "Waganda" (plural) each of whom is a Mganda (pronounced "Muganda") which is technically incorrect since the Baganda who call themselves individually as such (Muganda) constitute only a small fraction of the total population of the Republic of Uganda. The Baganda are also only one of over 50 or so ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. The West Nile district alone consists of over ten such groups and this is the area from which the foreign "Nubi" are supposed to have originally come. In this final section we intend to demonstrate that there is no part of present day West Nile or even part of the then Equatoria Province and more specifically the then Lado Enclave which was ever called "Nubi-land" or "Nubi" attesting further still to the non-tribal essence of the "Nubi" phenomenon in an African context.

We referred earlier to the role of the Austrian-born German physician – Emin Pasha – who is "debited" with bringing the Sudanese "mercenaries" to Uganda. What ought to have been pointed out as well is that Emin Pasha himself though "tribally" a German was also a "Nubi". To the extent that he de-Europeanized his personal identity by adopting entirely non-European names and by embracing Islam and its names he, too, was "Nubi". There is some controversy regarding the depth of his devotion to the Message of Allah and his motives for doing so but that he converted to Islam and prayed regularly, in and out of Equatoria, is well-documented. What is more, Emin seems to have talked to others outside his domain about his Islamic practices with some pride:

During the period he spent with Hakki Pasha he seems to have wholly adopted Turkish manners and customs, and kept to these throughout the rest of his life. According to Junker he used to attend mosque regularly on Fridays; on his arrival in Khartoum he

persisted in calling himself a Turk to Giegler Pasha, then Governor-General, and refused to admit that he was a German, in spite of being described as such on his passport. *In 1876, on his visit to Uganda, he told Mtesa that he was a Mohammedan.* Whether he had really embraced Islam, or whether this was only a pose, seems uncertain.⁵⁰ (Emphasis added)

The name "Emin" is of course the Turkish version of the Arabic "Amin" and literally means, "faithful" – a common name among Muslims worldwide, as in, for example, Hafizullah Amin, the late president of Afghanistan.

Thus the man who is supposed to be responsible for bringing the "Nubi" to East Africa is supposed to be the Austrian born German doctor Edward Schnitzer, alias Emin (Amin) Pasha. Although racially or "tribally" a German, Emin Pasha was himself deeply immersed in Islamic and Turkish culture and cultivated the friendship of influential people in the Ottoman Empire. He was assigned the responsibility of recruiting Sudanese soldiers to "pacify" the various feuding tribes and kingdoms of Uganda and to help bring them under Anglo-Egyptian control.

Where did Emin Pasha recruit his mercenaries? Were they from the Nubian Mountains in Upper Egypt and the Egypt-Sudan border areas? Were his soldiers the original *Nubians* (not "Nubi") of Upper Egypt with a rich and well documented civilization? The Nubians of Upper Egypt and Northern Sudan had of course resisted Islam for quite a long time, having been converted to Christianity a few centuries previously. The Nubian culture and civilization has been used by African historians and Black pan-Africanists including W.E.B. Dubois, Chiekh Anta Diop and others as part of the evidence for arguing that pre-colonial Africa was not as primitive as has been alleged and that pre-colonial Africa had a rich civilization of its own, the Nubian paradigm being pre-eminent among them.

The Nubians of Upper Egypt have of course a language of their own which is very distinctive and has no affinity at all with the Arabic language, although the twin processes of Islamization and Arabization have, gradually but steadily, been making inroads into Nubia for over ten centuries now. The National Egyptian Museum in Cairo has to this day a wide variety of Nubian artifacts as part of the Egyptian cultural heritage. There is no evidence whatsoever, either linguistic or otherwise (including the artifacts in the Museum in Cairo) of any link at all between the Nubians of Upper Egypt/Northern Sudan and the "Nubi" of East Africa. If Emin Pasha did not recruit his men from Upper Egypt, where then did he get them? Need he have recruited them from that far afield?

If Emin Pasha's theatre was what is today Southern Sudan, northwestern Uganda and northeastern Zaire how could it be that he recruited his "mercenaries" from over one thousand miles away, especially in those old days of poor communications and near-impossible mobility?

The Egyptian Government was not in a position, financially, geographically or materially, to support this distant province (Equatoria), cut off from it by a thousand and more miles of impenetrable and hostile territory.⁵¹

Didn't Emin Pasha have "natives" nearer to his theatre of operation to use? This writer is convinced that Emin Pasha's recruits were drawn substantially from the then Lado Enclave which has since become parts of three different countries, (Sudan, Uganda and Zaire) now accountable to three divergent capitals: the three Ks of Kampala, Khartoum and Kinshasa. And the very fact that there is no piece of land called "Nubi-land" anywhere in southern Sudan is further testimony to the fact that the label "Nubi" which came to stick on these soldiers, either referred to the type of Arabic ("Junuub"-Southern) they spoke, or simply was used, for lack of a better term, as a collective name for a group of ethnically diverse and linguistically disparate African soldiers who, like Emin Pasha himself, were by now Muslim. Indeed some of Emin Pasha's commanders were well-known pure "tribal" Africans who had their own "tribes" and languages in the usual African sense. John Agami identifies two such Africans and their respective African "tribes". The descendants of these commanders were probably later detribalized (Islamized and semi-or creole-Arabized) and came to be labelled "Nubi". In the words of John Agami, himself a living Lugbara ex-soldier from the West Nile district of Uganda:

The origin of the Armed Forces of modern Uganda (till 1979) were Sudanese soldiers who mutinied against Dr. Emin Pasha, Governor of Equatorial Nile in 1889. These soldiers were of various tribes in Sudan (now Southern Sudan) under the Command of Fadl el Mula (notice Muslim names) a 6 feet 4 inches tall *Lugbara* and Selim Bey a giant *Makaraka*: They were adopted and adapted by a man called Captain Fredrick Lugard who was employed by the Imperial British East African Company which needed a military protection for a successful colonization of the people of the head-waters of the Nile.⁵²

Mr. Agami is certainly correct in re-stating the obvious fact that Emin Pasha recruited for his military forces from a variety of black African ethnic groups or "tribes" including Dr. Agami's own – the Lugbara. Unfortunately for a West Nile Ugandan who should have known better, Dr. Agami insists on using the historically anachronistic label of 'Southern Sudanese' to describe his own people long after the borders had shifted. Part of the then Lado Enclave "remained" Sudanese of course, but two other substantial branches became part of today's Uganda (and Mr. Agami would describe himself as a Ugandan) while a third portion was given to Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire, formerly Congo Leopoldville.

Conclusion

History is replete with instances of mistaken identities. The range is from Christopher Columbus' contribution in labelling native Americans, "Indians," to the ongoing insistence by the Swahili that an individual Ugandan is Mganda (Muganda). Africa's artificial borders and changing identity labels have of course compounded the problem of this particular continent. One such case of mistaken identity is the one discussed in this paper – the "Nubi" – a group of partially detribalized and heterogenous Africans whom alien forces once uprooted, militarized and to some extent semi-disAfricanized. A new breed of Africans was thus born out of this *interaction* between the *indigenous* (the arena

and the people), the Islamic (Islamization and “Creole-Arabization”) and the new territorial imperative (the Western concept of the nation-state) of the Western heritage. The concept of Africa’s ‘Triple Heritage’ which has fascinated great African minds from Kwame Nkrumah to Ali Mazrui is perhaps most paradigmatically captured in the emergence of such a community.

The majority of indigenous Southern Sudanese continue to be both militantly anti-Islamic and anti-Arab. They are themselves largely non-Muslim and have, partly on this basis, fought one of Africa’s longest and bloodiest civil wars against their Arabized and Islamized compatriots to the North. Yet the disparate Southern Sudanese continue, paradoxically, to use “their own version of Arabic”. Today there are thousands of “Nubi” – virtually wholly Muslim West Nile Ugandans of various “tribes” who are post-Amin refugees in the Southern Sudan living, not in disharmony but in fraternal peace, with their host-cousins across the European-drawn borders to the north. The territorial imperative of the modern state that the West bequeathed to Africa and the dichotomous conception of the world between the “Abode of Islam” and the “Abode of War,” have not stopped these Africans from loving each other. Yet, the Anyanya Movement is militarily resurrected against Arabized Northern Sudan. But the Anyanya have not rejected their own “prodigal sons” from further south, in what Emin Pasha and his Ottoman employers used to include in their concept of “Equatoria.” In Africa “soil is perhaps thicker than blood” but blood is still thick, usually thicker than religion and western-style territorial jurisdiction. What this demonstrates is that the “Nubi” phenomenon in Uganda especially as well as in other parts of East Africa, is not a sudden alien intrusion but an integral part of its modern history. It is also inextricably linked to the pattern of ethnic affiliations between the West Nile district of Uganda and the contiguous areas of the Sudan and Zaire. The “Nubi” factor in Uganda also simply reaffirms that the boundaries drawn up by the colonial powers were arbitrary. One result has been the tendency sometimes to disregard and defy national frontiers, for better or worse.

Notes

1. Michael Twaddle, “The Ousting of Amin,” *The Round Table*, No. 275 (July, 1979), p. 221.
2. Bernd Heine, *The Nubi Language of Kibera – An Arabic Creole* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982) p. 11.
3. See for example Tony Avirgan and Marsha Honey, *War in Uganda* (Westport, Conn.: L. Hell, 1982); Princess Elizabeth of Toro, *African Princess: The Story of Princess Elizabeth of Toro* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983); M.S.M. Semakula Kiwanuka, *Amin and the Tragedy of Uganda* (Munich: Weltforum, Verlag, 1979); David Martin *General Amin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974); Iain Grahame, *Amin and Uganda: A Personal Memoir* (London, Toronto and New York: 1973) Henry Kyemba *State of Blood* (London: Corgi Books, 1977) Dennis C. Hills, *The White Pumpkin* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975); B.W. Langlands, “Students and Politics in Uganda” *African Affairs* vol. 76, No. 302, January, 1977; David Gwyn, *Idi Amin: Death Light of Africa* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1977); Ali A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publication, 1975) A.G.G. Ginyera – Pinyewa, *Apolo Milton Obote and His Times* (New York, London and Lagos: NOK Publishers, 1978); Ali A. Mazrui, “Religious Strangers in Uganda: From Emin Pasha to Amin Dada” *African Affairs* (London), vol. 76, no. 302 (January, 1977) pp. 21-28.
4. Unlike other East African people, the “Nubi” tend to live in or near urban centres. The radical Kenyan historian Atieno Odhiambo has described them as a “tribe without hinterland”.

- See his, "Cry havoc! And Let Slip the Dog of War: Historical origins of the Nubian "tribe" in East," Nairobi, 1977 Annual Conference of Historical Association of Kenya.
5. Aidan Southall, "General Amin and the Coup: Great Man or Historical Inevitability?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 12, no. 1 (1975) pp. 85-105.
 6. Consult Ali A. Mazrui, *The Political Sociology of the English Language: An African Perspective* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).
 7. Consult for example Dunstan M. Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan* (New York: Africana, 1981), pp. 17-18.
 8. Heine, *The Nubi Language of Kibera*, *op. cit.*
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Also see David Dalby, *Language Map of Africa and the Adjacent Islands* (London: International African Institute, 1977) p. 24.
 10. Major C.H. Stigand, *Equatoria: the Lado Enclave* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1923) 1968 ed.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 12. David Martin, *General Amin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), pp. 17-18.
 13. Aidan Southall, "Social Disorganization in Uganda: Before, During and After Amin" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 18, no. 4 (1980) pp. 627-656.
 14. Southall, "General Amin and the Coup," *op. cit.*, p. 102.
 15. Cited in S.M. Mpambara, *The Gold Allegation in Uganda* (Nairobi: East Africa Institute Press, 1967) p. 74.
 16. See for example, Ali A. Mazrui, "The Lumpen Proletariat and Lumpen Militariat: African Soldiers as a new Political Class," *Political Studies* (United Kingdom) vol. 21, no. 1 (February, 1977).
 17. Iain Grahame, *Amin and Uganda: A Personal Memoir* (London: Granada, 1980) pp. 38-39.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
 23. Ali A. Mazrui, "Between Development and Decay: Anarchy, Tyranny and Progress under Idi Amin," *Third World Quarterly* vol. 11, no. 1 (January, 1980) p. 40.
 24. Ali A. Mazrui, "Boxer Muhammad Ali and Soldier Idi Amin as International Political Symbols: The Bioeconomics of Sports and War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April, 1977). Also consult *idem*.
 25. Henry Kyemba, *State of Blood* (London: Corgi books, 1977) p. 18.
 26. Ali A. Mazrui, "Eurafrica, Eurabia, and African-Arab Relations: The Tensions of Tripolarity," in Dunstan M. Wai (ed.) *Interdependence in a World of Unequals* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982) p. 19.
 27. Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi and London: Heinemann, 1980) p. 116.
 28. See Colin Legum, "Uganda," in Legum (ed.) *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents, 1973-74* (New York: African Publishing Co., 1974) p. B295.
 29. We have here expanded on Lerner's more compressed remarks: "Taking the suggestion of the Swiss-Italian theorist Roberto Michels' that every man has two dominant myths – the myth of origin and the myth of mission – America's rejection of Europe and the rebellion against the father may be seen as part of its mythology." See Lerner *America as Civilization*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p.26. Also consult Ali A. Mazrui "Political Nostalgia" *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* no. 2 (October, 1981) pp. 1-17.
 30. Again I am indebted to sustained intellectual stimulation by Ali Mazrui. Consult for example his unpublished manuscript, "African Political Thought," Department of Political Science, University of Jos. Unpublished MS, 1983, p. 6.
 31. For details of Obote's moves consult David Martin, *General Amin*, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 26-48.
 32. Jan Jelmert Jorgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981) p. 256.
 33. See for example David Martin, *General Amin*, *op. cit.*
 34. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Semitic Impact on Black Africa: Arab and Jewish Cultural Influences," *Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Opinion* vol. XII (1984) pp. 3-8.
 35. Michael Twaddle, "The Ousting of Amin," *op. cit.*, p. 221.
 36. J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam Upon Africa* (London and New York: Longman, 1968), 1980 ed., p. 133.
 37. Consult for example Omari H. Kokole, "African and Arab States and the Call for a New

- International Economic Order" *Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Opinion* vol. XIII (1984), pp. 14-19. And Ali A. Mazrui, "Cultural Aspects of Foreign Aid" *The Overseas Development Institute Bulletin* (London) Autumn, 1978.
38. See Ali A. Mazrui, *Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change* (London and Boulder, Colorado: Heinemann and Westview Press, 1977), p. 154.
 39. See Sheikh Muhammad Said Farsi quote in Peter Truell, "Amin Now More Tourist than Tyrant," *Canada Times* May 15, 1984.
 40. Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an African Family* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), p. 255.
 41. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado-Enclave op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
 42. Jonathan Owens, "Nubian Reputation," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi, Kenya), August 11, 1975, p. 2.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. This writer was last in Kibera in March, April, and May, 1983.
 45. See, for example, J.S. Birks "The Mecca Pilgrimage by West African Pastoral Nomads," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 15, no. 1 (1977), pp. 47-58.
 46. Dennis Pain, "The Nubians: Their Perceived Stratification System and Its Relation to the Asian Issue" in Michael Twaddle (ed.) *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians* (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), p. 178.
 47. Colin Legum, "African, the Arabs and the Middle East" in Legum (ed.) *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents, 1972-73* (London: Rex Collings, 1973), p. A6.
 48. Aime Cesaire, *Return to My Native Land* (1939).
 49. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda, op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.
 50. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave, op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
 52. John B. Agami, *The Roots of Political Crisis in Uganda* (Denmark: H.P. Tryk. Kastrup, 1977), p. 117.