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Beja and Tigrē in 9th—10th Century Period*

It is a well known fact that medieval Arab writers followed the ancient tradition of dividing the territory south and south-east of Egypt into Nubia and Ethiopia and of calling the peoples living there "Nubians" or "Ethiopians" (al-Ḥabaša), respectively. In effect a number of different peoples were classified as Nubians or Ethiopians, and an exception to this rule was made only in the case of some well known and numerous peoples like the Beja. This aprioric rule was followed not only by most of the cabinet scholars — geographers and historians, but possibly also by many of their informants, i.e. tradesmen, diplomats, military men and travellers who spent but a short time among the foreign peoples, in most cases without any knowledge of their languages, and thus they were hardly able to make a clear distinction between the different peoples of not very different culture. The contemporary Sudanese-Eritrean borderland is a very complex area from the ethnical point of view, so that the origins and actual relationship of many tribes which are often intermingled are by no means clear today. There is, in my opinion, enough evidence that the situation in the Middle Ages was not much clearer, and it is probable that the process of mutual influences, intermarriage and submission of minor tribes began already in the first millenium B.C. Taking into account also the fact that we have no detailed account of this area in 9th—10th c. period directly from an eyewitness¹, we should not rely too much on the opinion of the Arab geographers who edited the accounts received from their informants and classified some unidentified

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¹ Ibn Sulaym al-Uṣwānī's *Kitāb alḥbār an-Nūba wa'l-Muqurra wa 'Alwa wa'l-Buja wa'n-Nil* written probably in 975 is an extremely valuable source but Ibn Sulaym travelled only to the kingdom of 'Alwa and there is no evidence that he actually toured the Beja country. Cf. Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, Edinburgh 1967, p. 190.

peoples or tribes as an-Nūba, al-Ḥabaša or, as I tried to prove in an earlier article², as the Beja. Al-Ya'qūbī's *Ta'riḥ* is a typical example: in the chapter "Kingdoms of al-Ḥabaša and of as-Sūdān" we find a lot of different peoples classified as the Beja or as al-Ḥabaša — the latter name is applied even to az-Zanj³.

In my article referred to above, I have shown that some Tigrē tribes belonging to the contemporary Benī 'Āmer tribal group which consists mainly of the Beja and Tigrē with some addition of Arab elements⁴, were already taken for the Beja⁵. Here I will try to show that it is possible to identify az-Z.NĀF.J classified as a Beja tribe, hypothetically with Tigrē. Az-Z.NĀF.J are mentioned by al-Ya'qūbī (died in 897) both in his "History" (*Ta'riḥ*)⁶ and in his "Geography" (*Kitāb al-buldān*)⁷ as well as by Ibn Sulaym al-Uswānī (c. 975) in the narrative of his mission to Nubia⁸. As it has been well described by the latter, the social status of az-Z.NĀF.J was very similar to that of the contemporary Tigrē⁹. The respective

² A. Zaborski, *Notes on the Medieval History of the Beja Tribes*, "Folia Orientalia", VII, 1965, pp. 289—307. See especially pp. 297—298.

³ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, t. I, Lugduni Batavorum 1883, pp. 219 and 217.

⁴ There are different groups and strata of different ethnical and historical origin (i.e. different groups which amalgamated or superimposed one upon the other) in this very complex tribal group or federation. Some of them may be rather recent groupings but other may be quite old. Cf. C. Conti Rossini, *Die Bedja*, in: H. Bernatzik, *Afrika*, 1947, p. 838; S. Nadel, *Notes on Beni Amer Society*, SNR, vol. 26, 1945, pp. 51—94; A. Paul, *Notes on the Beni Amer*, SNR, vol. 31, 1950, pp. 223—245; C. G. and Brenda Z. Seligman, *Note on the History and Present Condition of the Beni Amer*, SNR, vol. 13, 1930, pp. 83—97. A. Paul's article is based largely on Sir Douglas Newbold's file preserved in the library of Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

⁵ Zaborski, op. cit., pp. 301—303.

⁶ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ*, p. 218.

⁷ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Lugduni Batavorum 1892, pp. 336—337. Ad-Dimašqī (died in 1338) in his *Nuḥbat ad-Dahr*, ed. M.A.F. Mehren, Leipzig 1923, p. 269, repeats the information borrowed from al-Ya'qūbī.

⁸ Ibn Sulaym's account is known only from the excerpts preserved mainly in al-Maqrizī's *Hiṭaṭ*, ed. G. Wiet, vol. 3, Le Caire 1922, pp. 252—278.

⁹ There is a class of serfs also among Tigrē who remain outside of the Benī 'Āmer group and among some other peoples of Eritrea — e.g. the Bogos and Tigrinya speaking peoples. Cf. G.K.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea — a Colony in Transition: 1941—1952*, London 1960, pp. 14—15. It will be useful, I think, to quote the etymology of the name Tigrē which is rather little known: there was originally a biconsonantal root *g—r* from which we have in Tigrē the verb *tagrā* "to be a vassal" and another one *garra* (attested also in Gə'əz) which has the same meaning. See E. Littmann, M. Höfner, *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, Wiesbaden 1962, pp. 321 and 573; A. Dillmann, *Lexicon Linguae Aethiopice*, Lipsiae 1865, 1155—1156, where the meaning is "se submittere, se subicere imperio alicuius vel subiectum esse, in potestatem alicuius se permittere, etc.". Cf. Semitic *ʾ-g-r* "to pay" which is another derivative from the original biconsonantal root *g-r*.

text has been translated by many scholars but it was commonly taken for granted that az-Z.NĀF.J were the Beja, i.e. a group of serfs of Beja origin. Let us recall this fragment of Ibn Sulaym al-Uswānī's account again: "There is with them (i.e. with Ḥadārab — A.Z.) another group¹⁰ of people known as az-Z.NĀF.J. They are bigger in number than the Ḥadārab¹¹ but they are their servants and their protected men¹²; they guard the Ḥadārab and give them cattle¹³. Every Ḥadārab chief has a group of az-Z.NĀF.J people in his company, and they are like slaves whom the Ḥadārab inherit, though they prevailed over Ḥadārab in the old times"¹⁴. In Ibn Ḥawqal's "Geography" (*Kitāb ṣūrat al-ard*) we find no mention of az-Z.NĀF.J at all, but the author mentions the Sabdārāt tribe¹⁵ and

¹⁰ Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 11, translates "another people" and this may be, indeed, the right interpretation. At any rate it seems rather certain that Ibn Sulaym was aware of the difference between az-Z.NĀF.J and the Beja in spite of the fact that he classified the former as "al-Buja".

¹¹ On the etymology of this name see L. Reinisch, *Wörterbuch der Bedāye-Sprache*, Wien 1895, pp. 112, 109, 19; C. Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia*, Bergamo 1928, p. 271; Zaborski, op. cit., p. 290, n. 3 and p. 303, n. 85. *Ḥād'a* means "a chief" in the Beja language; *ar* has the meaning "sons" and *-ab* is the ending of the accusative which occurs with proper names when quoted (cf. my review of Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, op. cit., "Folia Orientalia", X, 1969, p. 262). This may mean together "a tribe of the chief's sons" coinciding thus with the political and social status of the Ḥadārab but it is also possible that this is only a folk etymology. There is, however, some analogy in Had'endāwa/Had'enda interpreted by Reinisch as "die Herren-, Schechleute" (cf. E. M. Roper, *Tu-Bedawie*, London 1929, pp. 270, 177), and in Amar'ar which means "Āmer's sons" (= Benī Āmer). Cf. also *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 684; p. 96, *ḥaday* "people, family, household". My etymology may be false but there is no doubt that the etymology on which A. Paul based many of his erroneous theories is a folk-etymology. Both his *History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, Cambridge 1954, and *The Hadāreb*, SNR, 40, 1959, 75—78, are based too often on the ignorance of the sources and on the neglect of the historical method.

¹² Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 11, translates "but subject to them". Cf. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1863—1893, p. 507, and p. 651.

¹³ Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 11, translates "and supply the Ḥadāriba with cattle". Cf. E. W. Lane, op. cit., p. 507, where the verb *ḥabā* means "to give a thing without any compensation".

¹⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, op. cit., pp. 272—273. The information that az-Z.NĀF.J were dominant "in the past" may refer to a very remote time or it may be only an ideological fiction popular among the serfs. In the latter case it may reflect, perhaps, only a tradition that sometime in the past az-Z.NĀF.J lived independent and not necessarily that they were overlords. Cf. p. 124.

¹⁵ In my article quoted above, I did not decide whether to consider these tribes as originally from Beja or Tigrē stock (see p. 301). The etymology of Sabdārāt provides a clue: in Tigrē it means probably "the rich people" (*sab* 'men, people'; *dārāt* 'house, property, people'; *wad dar* means 'the rich man'). Cf. *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, pp. 182—183, 517 and 518; E. Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton Expedition to Abyssinia*, vol. I, Leiden 1910, pp. 250, 11, and 285, 21. Sabdārāt lived on the territory south of Musmar mountain.

speaking about Riqābāt (Tigrē today known as Rigbāt¹⁶) and Ḥ.N.DĪBA (unidentified but perhaps also Tigrē) he says¹⁷: "They are the protected men¹⁸ of Ḥadārab and the pay for their protection¹⁹ falls to 'A.B.D.K as they remain under his rule... A part of these people remain under the protection of K.W.K (KŪK?) ... 'A.B.D.K and K.W.K are the two chiefs of all Ḥadārab since there are two chiefs among them — a chief of the members of every protected house²⁰ and a chief who governs them²¹". Speaking further about Ḥadārab, Ibn Ḥawqal says: "Every sub-division²² has a chief or two chiefs". The system of the two chiefs is by no means clear²³ as it is described by Ibn Ḥawqal and most probably it was not quite clear to his direct or indirect informant, but this fragment of Ibn Ḥawqal's text has a parallel in the contemporary description by the reputed anthropologist S. F. Nadel. Speaking of the Benī 'Āmer, he says: "A few serf groups are subject only to the Paramount Chief, while the large majority live in the hereditary bondage to particular nabbat families, tributary to them and charged with all the menial tasks, especially herding and milking. The masters, in turn, are bound to protect their serfs and care for their welfare... Tribal government is in the hand of a Paramount Chief (diglāl)²⁴ and a coun-

¹⁶ It is quite probable that Rigbāt is also a Tigrē name with the triconsonantal root and the suffix -āt.

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Opus Geographicum*... "Liber imaginis terrae", ed. J. H. Kramers, t. I, Lugduni Batavorum 1938, pp. 55—56.

¹⁸ Cf. the translation by G. Wiet and J. H. Kramers, *Configuration de la terre*, t. I, Paris 1964, p. 53 and by Matveyev and Kubbel, *Arabskiye istočniki*, t. II, Moskva—Leningrad 1965, p. 59.

¹⁹ Cf. Lane, op. cit., p. 772. Wiet and Kramers, op. cit., p. 53, translate: "Raḡabat et Handiba: ce sont des sujet protégés par les Ḥadrabiya, qui dependent d'Abdak, à qui ils sont soumis".

²⁰ In the Arabic original: "*bayt dimām*". Wiet and Kramers translate "pour les membres de chaque famille confédérée". I think that it was rather a clan.

²¹ Cf. the edition by de Goeje, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1873, in which there is a variant: "There are among them two chiefs for the member of every protected house and a chief who governs them".

²² In Arabic: "*fahā*".

²³ Matveyev, Kubbel, op. cit., t. II, pp. 352 and 361—362, look for an analogy in West Africa but I think that this kind of political structure is due to the contacts between the Beja and Tigrē which resulted in a system of a peculiar relations between overlords and serfs. I think that it may be useful to quote a passage from *Hudūd al-'Ālam* (10th. c.), transl. by V. Minorsky, London 1937, p. 164, which probably refers to a special position of a Beja chief: "He does not mix with his people except by necessity".

²⁴ This title is believed by many scholars to be of Fung origin (cf. S. H. Longrigg, *Diglal, Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, t. II, p. 253) but it is most probably derived from Gə'əz *takalala* = *kalala* "to crown". Cf. *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 541, *dəglal*) *Wörterbuch der Bedaaye-Sprache*, p. 226; L. Reisch, *Wörterbuch der Bilin-Sprache*, Wien 1887, p. 219. Dəglal's hat of a unique

cil of headmen (sherfāf) elected by the different sections”²⁵.

Al-Ya’qūbī also classifies az-Z.Nāf.J as Beja, but he also makes a clear distinction between them and between the Ḥadārab and he provides some information which supports the identification of az-Z.Nāf.J with Tigrē. Al-Ya’qūbī in his “Geography” under the heading “The country of Beja” gives a description of “the Beja who call themselves Ḥadārab and al-K.D.BīN²⁶” which is followed by a description of “the Beja called az-Z.Nāf.J”. Here is the translation of this fragment²⁷: “From al-‘Allāqī to the land of the Beja called az-Z.Nāf.J there is a distance of twenty five days journey. The town in which the chief of az-Z.Nāf.J lives is called B.Q.LīN and the Muslims go there frequently for trade. The route leading to them is similar to that which goes to Ḥadārab. They have no religious law of God since they only worship an idol which they name Ḥ.ḤĀḤ.WĀ²⁸”. In his earlier “History”, however, al-Ya’qūbī says: “The second kingdom of the Beja is the kingdom called B.Q.LīN which is large and has many towns. They resemble in their faith the Magians²⁹ and the Dualists — they call God *Akzabḥir³⁰ and they call Satan Ṣ.Ḥ.Y Ḥ.RĀQ.H.³¹ They are the people who pull out their beards, pluck out their incisor teeth³² and perform circumcision. Their land is a rainy

design has a function of a crown, indeed. The meaning “old” would be then secondary though the semantic change ‘old’ > ‘chief’ is very attractive.

²⁵ S. F. Nadel, *Banū ‘Āmir, Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, t. I, p. 440.

²⁶ Cf. Zaboriski, *Notes*, p. 299, n. 57. There is a misprint in this name since there is final y printed instead of n. Perhaps K.W.B.R (this name is recorded without diacritical signs) mentioned in al-Ya’qūbī’s *Ta’rīḥ* is to be amended to K.D.B.M. or vice versa. Cf. Tigrē word for “an outsider, tramp”, *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 424; and Bilin kadān plain, flat country, prairie, the same meaning in Reinisch, *Wörterbuch der Bedāuye*, p. 136, and in Gəʿəz gadām, Tigrē gādem, *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 599.; *kidīn* ‘field, cultivated soil’ (*Wörterbuch der Bilin-Sprache*, pp. 214 and 215). It would be too risky to base an etymology solely on such a vague resemblance.

²⁷ Al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, pp. 336–337.

²⁸ This is, perhaps, a corrupted version of the name (or an epithet) of the devil mentioned in *Ta’rīḥ*.

²⁹ I.e. Zoroastrians.

³⁰ The following word, probably an epithet, remains unexplained, Kubbēl and Matveyev, op. cit., t. I, p. 40, translate it as “the highest”. Cf. J. Marquart, *Die Benin-Sammlung*, Leiden 1913, p. CCCXII.

³¹ Cf. n. 28. This name remains unexplained.

³² This Arabic word means actually “four central incisors”. Cf. Lane, op. cit., p. 359. This practice is common among a number of African peoples and is typical especially for the Nilotes. This does not mean that we have to consider the inhabitants of B.Q.LīN/T.F.LīN as some Nilotic people. My sentence “this habit which is common mainly among the Nilotic peoples seems to be completely unknown among the Beja” (Zaboriski, *Notes*, pp. 297, 298) was interpreted by the author of an abstract (Z. Frajzyngier, “Africana Bulletin”, 8, 1968, p. 152) against my intention in the following way: “According to the author, some of them

land"³³. As it has been suggested already by Th. Houtsma³⁴, the name of God mentioned in this text is Ethiopian "Egzi'abḥēr" and this is, together with the information on the social position of az-Z.NĀF.J supplied by Ibn Sulaym, rather a strong evidence for the identification of az-Z.NĀF.J with Tigrē³⁵. There is only one difficulty: in the "History" al-Ya'qūbī does not mention the name of the inhabitants of B.Q.LĪN and he mentions az-Z.NĀF.J at the end of a list of the tribes of the "first kingdom"³⁶ without any reference to B.Q.LĪN. This may be due to some mistake or we may suppose that az-Z.NĀF.J occupied B.Q.LĪN after the period prior to 872, i.e. after the completion of al-Ya'qūbī's "History". As it was rightly suggested by Kubbel and Matveyev³⁷, the "Geography" was written in Egypt, where al-Ya'qūbī would have found access to better

belong to the Nilotic tribes". This is, I repeat, a misinterpretation of what is not a very accurate, I admit, statement of mine. Cf. V. Grottanelli, C. Massari, *I Baria, i Cunama e i Beni Amer*, Roma 1943, p. 43.

³³ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ*, p. 218.

³⁴ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ*, p. 218, n.h.

³⁵ Most probably Tigrē were Christians before their Islamisation. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadānī, *Compendium libri Kitāb al-boldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Lugduni Batavorum 1885, p. 85, says that the Nubians and the Beja call the God "Baḥīr". This would be an argument in favour of a hypothesis that some Beja accepted Christianity from the Ethiopians but I think that this information is rather due to a mistake. A few lines above Ibn al-Faqīh says that the Beja are idolaters and this is said once again in another place. He also says, just before the mention of God's name, that there are different kinds of the Beja. So it is possible that some other people (Ibn al-Faqīh does not mention the name of the God used by the Ethiopians) was taken for the Beja. In my opinion this name could be borrowed by Ibn al-Faqīh from al-Ya'qūbī. Cf. Marquart, op. cit., p. CCCXII, n. 1; Zaborski, *Notes*, p. 305—306.

³⁶ Six of the names mentioned there are hapax legomena and remain unexplained. Some of them are recorded without diacritical signs. We cannot be sure, I think, that all of them were really Beja. It is rather astonishing that we do not find any traces (perhaps except of حجان mentioned below) of elements *-enda*, *-endowa*, *-tika*, *-ar* and *-ab* which are common in the names of the Beja tribes and which are recorded already by Ibn Hawqal. Cf. Zaborski, *Notes*, pp. 299—300, footnotes, and *The Names of the Beja Tribes* (in Polish), Sprawozdania z Posiedzeń Komisji Oddziału PAN w Krakowie, lipiec—grudzień 1966, Kraków 1967, p. 484. One of the names mentioned by Ibn Hawqal which I have amended to Hadandiwa may be better amended to 'Akutendiwa — cf. Reinisch, op. cit., p. 13 and 150. 'Endā/endā/jeddā occurs also in Tigrinya with the meaning "house, family" — cf. G.W.B. Huntingford, *Ethiopian Place-Names*, "African Language Studies", vol. 3, 1962, pp. 189 and 185; *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, pp. 373—374. The tribe which al-Ya'qūbī calls حجان (without diacritical signs) may be, perhaps, identical with عجان mentioned by Ibn Hawqal, op. cit., p. 55. Cf. *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 486. The name recorded by Ibn Hawqal as غركاي (cf. Zaborski, *Notes*, p. 300, n. 63) may be, perhaps, amended to عدلاي and identified with 'Adloi.

³⁷ Kubbel, Matveyev, op. cit., t. I, pp. 36, 351.

information on the countries south-east of Egypt, and therefore we should give precedence rather to this later source than to the "History". This is not, of course, a strong argument, since the latter contains a number of unique data not found elsewhere in spite of the fact that it was written outside Egypt³⁸. It seems sure, however, that the respective fragment of the "Geography" comes from an independent source (or sources), i.e. it cannot be a shortened or corrupted version of the description given in the "History" nor a contamination of it with some other source. It seems rather strange that al-Ya'qūbī did not make any use of the information he had previously gathered in his "History", but this is a fact. The only thing which may rouse suspicion is that in the "Geography" he speaks also about the religion of az-Z.NĀF.J (he does not say anything about the religion of Ḥadārab) but this may be independent of the information on the religion of the inhabitants of B.Q.LĪN provided in the "History".

The comparison of Ibn Ḥawqal's and Ibn Sulaym's texts gives further support for al-Ya'qūbī's statements that az-Z.NĀF.J were the inhabitants of B.Q.LĪN. Ibn Ḥawqal provides a description of the country of T.F.LĪN which has already been identified with B.Q.LĪN by Kramers³⁹. He says: "In the middle of this valley (i.e. of the valley of D.J.N) there is T.F.LĪN which consists also of villages⁴⁰ which belong to their (i.e. "Nubian" ? — A.Z.) nomads who go there to seek for grazing areas in the rainy season. They have a Muslim king who speaks Arabic and governs in the name of the ruler of 'Alwa. The inhabitants of T.F.LĪN depend exclusively on camels and cows and they have no seed-produce. There are among them many Muslims from other countries who preserve their religion, carry on trade and travel to Mekka and other places"⁴¹. Ibn Sulaym—a contemporary of Ibn Ḥawqal, gives the following information on az-Z.NĀF.J inserted also into his description of Nubia: "In this region

³⁸ Cf. the discussion of the respective fragment of *Ta'riḥ*. The name of God is to be amended also most probably to *Akzabḥīr. Cf. also n. 36.

³⁹ J. H. Kramers, *L'Erythrée au X^e siècle*, "Analecta Orientalia", vol. 1, Leiden 1954, pp. 162—163, and by the same author *L'Erythrée décrite dans une source arabe du X^e siècle*, Atti del XIX Congresso degli Orientalisti, Roma 1938, pp. 573—574.

⁴⁰ Al-Ya'qūbī says also in his *Ta'riḥ* that there were many "towns" in B.Q.LĪN. This means that the inhabitants (or a part of them) of this territory were half-nomads although we should expect also some mention of agriculture. At any rate it seems to be important that accordingly with both al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn Ḥawqal it was only the territory of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN which had many villages. As far as Ḥadārab are concerned, we hear only about their "King's" residence. In my opinion there could be an ethnical difference between the nomads visiting B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN in the rainy season and between the inhabitants of the villages who probably remained there all the time. E. Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*, London 1960, p. 34, says about Beni Amer (Min 'Āmār in Tigrē): "A small minority of the tribe engage in agriculture, while the great majority are nomadic herdsmen... During the rainy season a section of the tribe settles temporarily along the Barka River". On the crops cf. Ibn Ḥawqal, op. cit., p. 56.

⁴¹ Ibn Ḥawqal, op. cit., p. 57.

there is a group of the Beja known as az-Z.NĀF.J who moved to the Nubian country and reside there preserving their pastoral way of life and their language, not mixing with the Nubians and not living with them in their villages⁴². They have a governor who governs on behalf of the Nubians"⁴³. The territory of these az-Z.NĀF.J is not located with precision by Ibn Sulaym⁴⁴, but it is quite possible that it was the territory of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN where there was also a ruler dependent on the Nubians. On the basis of Ibn Sulaym's text it can be almost safely assumed that not all az-Z.NĀF.J were Ḥadārab serfs but that some were independent from them living under some kind of Nubian supremacy. Indeed one suspects that not all Tigrē were under Ḥadārab domination⁴⁵ in the 10th century. From this one may conclude that perhaps there is no mistake in al-Ya'qūbī's "History" — perhaps he (or rather his informant or written sources) mentioned there az-Z.NAF.J without reference to B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN because he knew, like Ibn Sulaym, that some az-Z.NĀF.J were rather closely bound with the Beja and because he knew B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN only by its geographical name not being aware that its inhabitants were just another, independent az-Z.NĀF.J group. On the other hand Kubbel and Matveyev suppose that since al-Ya'qūbī does not say anything about the dependency of az-Z.NĀF.J on Ḥadārab, the former were subdued only at the end of the 10th century⁴⁶. This hypothesis based on reasoning ex silentio cannot be totally refuted but we must remember that al-Ya'qūbī's informants needed not necessarily have been aware of the social position of the subdued part of az-Z.NĀF.J. Ibn Hawqal also does not say anything about the relations of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN with the Ḥadārab and with the Beja in general. I think that the process of intermingling of the southern Beja tribes with the Semitic immigrants from Southern Arabia and with their descendants had begun very

⁴² Cf. note 40.

⁴³ Al-Maqrīzī, op. cit., p. 257. Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, op. cit., pp. 11—12, interprets the last sentence in the following way: "Some of the Zanāfiy had settled in Shunqayr ... under a Nubian chief"; G. Troupeau, *La "Description de la Nubie" d'al-Uṣwānī*, "Arabica", 1954, t. I, p. 285, translates: "Ils ont un gouverneur qui relève du souverain des Nubiens". Cf. O. G. S. Crawford, *The Fung Kingdom of Sennar*, Gloucester 1951, p. 100.

⁴⁴ It may be on the territory of Maqurra but in my opinion al-Uṣwānī's description is so general that it cannot be excluded that this part of az-Z.NĀF.J lived further to the South in the vicinity of Alwa. Cf. al-Maqrīzī, op. cit., p. 277.

⁴⁵ Ibn Hawqal, op. cit., p. 55, mentions the tribes called Ḥāsa which may be identified most probably also with a part of Tigrē though the origins of this name are rather obscure. In the modern times *hassa* is the Beja name for Tigrē (*Wörterbuch der Bedaaye-Sprache*, p. 129) and in the Kassala province Tigrē is called in Arabic al-Ḥaṣṣiya (E. Ullendorff, *Eritrea, Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, t. II, 709).

⁴⁶ Kubbel, Matveyev, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 361; cf. Marquart, op. cit., p. CCCXIV. Cf. note 14.

early, probably already in the first Millenium B.C.⁴⁷ and regardless of how young the modern Benī 'Āmer group may actually be, it is possible that similar Beja-Tigrē mixed groups existed by the 9th century, since there was already one in existence⁴⁸ in the 10th c. A.C. Arab infiltration among the Ḥadārab was by no means a necessary factor contributing to the subjugation of a part of az-Z.NĀF.J by the latter and it is very possible that the Arabs intermarried with Ḥadārab just because this was, most probably, the most important of the Beja tribal groups.

The Christianity of az-Z.NĀF.J was perhaps rather superficial since it was not realized by the Arabs who visited them that they were Christians. This is not very astonishing since a similar phenomenon can be observed even today in some regions of North East Africa. According to al-Ya'qūbī's "Geography"⁴⁹. Muslim tradesmen frequently visited B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN and hence it is not surprising that about the middle of the 10th century we hear from Ibn Ḥawqal that there was a Muslim and Arabic speaking ruler there and Muslims from other countries were numerous. We know that it was only "the king" (perhaps also a small group of his retinue) and the immigrants from other countries who were Muslim — we conclude that the bulk of the people preserved their old religion, i.e. Christianity. Evidently the process of Islamisation was then at its very beginning. Most probably the ruler was only of Arab descent, or not an Arab at all since Ibn Ḥawqal says only that he spoke Arabic and this could be the result of his conversion which might have been due to the activity of Muslim missionaries. At any rate it seems rather improbable that he became Muslim only for political reasons, since we know that he was in some way dependent on the Nubians. Among the contemporary Benī 'Āmer there is a Nabtab⁵⁰ group which occupies a dominant position in this tribal group and which claims Arab descent. It may be of rather recent origin but it is also possible that some groups of Muslims (not necessarily pure Arabs) began to gain supremacy there already in the 10th century⁵¹.

Summarizing the analysis given above: there is an evidence in favour of the hypothesis that az-Z.NĀF.J were Tigrē and not Beja, since we know firstly that some Tigrē tribes were already in contact with the Beja in the discussed period, secondly that a part of az-Z.NĀF.J occupied a social position identical with that of modern Tigrē and thirdly that their religion was Christianity of the Ethiopian brand. Al-Ya'qūbī's, Ibn Ḥawqal's and Ibn Sulaym's accounts

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Zaboriski, *Some Remarks on 'Ēzānā's Inscriptions and the Beja Tribes*, "Folia Orientalia", IX, 1967, pp. 305—306.

⁴⁸ Cf. Zaboriski, *Notes*, pp. 302—303, on the references to Tigrē language. It is possible that there were some bilingual Beja-Tigrē groups but it is also possible (though in my opinion less probable) that Ibn Ḥawqal's and Leo Africanus' (cf. also t. II, p. 557) statements refer only to Tigrē who could be taken for the Beja.

⁴⁹ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, pp. 336—337.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, p. 331; Reinisch, *Wörterbuch der Bedaaye*, p. 179 and 184.

⁵¹ Zaboriski, *Notes*, pp. 292—295.

refer to the same people and supplement each other — the missing link consists only in the fact that Ibn Sulaym did not know the name of the abode of a part of az-Z.NĀF.J, i.e. the name of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN, and Ibn Hawqal did know, on the contrary, the name of the country but like al-Ya'qūbī in his "History" he did not know the name of its inhabitants i.e. az-Z.NĀF.J. The alternative hypothesis that az-Z.NĀF.J were serfs of Beja origin and that they preserved in the 9th and 10th century some traces of Christianity which they could have received from Ethiopians, seems less probable⁵².

The name az-Z.NĀF.J cannot be explained⁵³ but it is possible that the Tigrē word *az* which means "a tribe"⁵⁴ could have been misinterpreted by the Arabs as the Arabic definite article which has an *az*- allomorph in the initial position before /z/ as the first radical. The consonants of this name are attested in two independent sources but with some differences in diacritical points and we cannot be quite sure that they were not corrupted in the course of transmission. If we amend the diacritical points, there are, even if we take into consideration the rules of incompatibility of some radicals, still several other forms possible. It is to be noted also that /z/ does not occur in the contemporary Beja language, but it occurs in Tigrē. This is, of course, a very feeble argument since we do not know the phonemic system of the Beja language as it was a thousand years ago, but still this cannot be neglected.

The name B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN was evidently a toponyme used both for the main settlement and for the whole territory. Its etymology is unknown and it is difficult to accept Kramer's hypothesis that it is to be identified with Bilin⁵⁵. The mention of Bilin/Bogos would be expected to occur somewhere in Arabic medieval sources, but it has not been discovered up to now. The ending of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN (بَلِين/بَلِين) can be amended to *-ib*, *-it*, or it may be really *-in*. The first one could be considered as the accusative ending which occurs with proper names in quotations in the Beja language⁵⁶, the second one could be a Bedāuye or Tigrē

⁵² Ex silentio it would be possible to assume also that az-Z.NĀF.J occupied the territory of B.Q.LĪN/T.F.LĪN only after the completion of al-Ya'qūbī's "History" and before the writing of his "Geography" but this seems to me improbable.

⁵³ It would be possible to associate it with Tigrē *zēnā* "(good) reputation, glory" and *fayag* "what is due to a person" and to try to explain this name as *Zēnāfig or *Zēnāfayag but this would be obviously a typical example of a folk-etymology! There is also a variant with final *-a'*. The structure of this name seems to be analogous to the structure of the name Ḥadārab but this may be accidental.

⁵⁴ Cf. Zaborski, *Notes*, p. 296, n. 41, and p. 297, n. 42; *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprache*, pp. 482, 380; Huntingford, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁵⁵ Kramers, *op. cit.*, pp. 162—163. Kramers did not know the Beja language and his hypothetical Beja name for Bogos "to-bilin" has not been attested. Cf. Kramers, *L'Erythrée*, p. 574.

⁵⁶ Cf. Zaborski, "Folia Orientalia", X, 1969, pp. 262—263; R. A. Hudson, *A Grammatical Study of Beja*, Phil. Dr. Thesis (unpublished), School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1964, pp. 225—226.

suffix⁵⁷ and the third one occurs also in the Arabic dialects of the Eastern Sudan⁵⁸. Especially the first and the second one are common in many geographical names of the South-Eastern Sudan and Eritrea⁵⁹. The remaining consonants would constitute the root, but there is still a possibility that the initial /t/ which can be amended also to /n/ is a noun prefix. The root would be then ultimae /y/, perhaps. Checking dictionaries of TigrĒ language I have found an item *taqalāb*⁶⁰, which resembles *T.Q.LĪB and which means "a man supported by their overlords", and we know indeed that az-Z.NĀF.J were under Ḥadārab protection. A very serious difficulty consists in the fact that we do not know exactly the social context of this TigrĒ word and we do not know how old it is.

On the basis of existing sources it is impossible to localize exactly the territory of T.F.LĪN/T.Q.LĪN. It was situated probably somewhere about the middle course of the Gash/Mareb river as already suggested by such scholars as Cerulli and Crawford⁶¹. Kubbel and Matveyev pointed out that the small river Togan must be also taken into consideration⁶². I think that D.J.N. recorded by Ibn Ḥawqal may be the rendering of both Dequin and Togan (in the latter case there would be an assimilation of the initial voiceless /t/ to the following voiced /g/ rendered by the Arabic letter *jīm*) but since Ibn Ḥawqal mentions also a D.K.N river it seems to be rather more probable that D.K.N is to be identified with Dequin⁶³ and D.J.N with Togan. The important hypothesis posited by the above mentioned scholars cannot be, however, ignored.

It seems also that some other Ethiopian Semitic people (perhaps one of the ancestors of the contemporary TigrĒ or Tigrinya speaking peoples) neighbouring

⁵⁷ W. Leslau, *Short Grammar of TigrĒ*, New Haven 1945, p. 176; § 20; F. R. Palmer, *The Morphology of the TigrĒ Noun*, London 1962, p. 40; Hudson, op. cit., pp. 154—155.

⁵⁸ S. Hillelson, *Sudan Arabic Texts*, Cambridge 1935, p. 9, and by the same author *Sudan, Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Supplément, p. 225.

⁵⁹ These suffixes occur also in other place-names mentioned by al-Ya'qūbī and by Ibn Ḥawqal. Cf. A. Zaboriski, *Some Eritrean Place Names in Arabic Medieval Sources*, "Folia Orientalia", XII, 1970, pp. 327—337. Cf. note 67.

⁶⁰ *Wörterbuch der TigrĒ-Sprache*, p. 311. Cf. also Dillmann, op. cit., 564—565, *takala* "1. figere, infigere, statuere, stabilire, 2. plantare, 3. infixum, plantatum esse" — the same meaning in *Wörterbuch der TigrĒ-Sprache*, pp. 315—316, with participium activi *tāklāy* and participium passivi *takul*, fem. *takəlt* "standing firm, *taklāy* "harbour"; *təklay* "field with thinly growing plants". Cf. further Bilin *kālab* "thorn fence" — *Wörterbuch der Bilin-Sprache*, p. 218. Cf. also the Amharic name for a province mentioned in note 67.

⁶¹ E. Cerulli, *La Nubia Cristiana, i Baria ed i Cunama nel X secolo d.Cr. secondo Ibn Hawqal*, AIUO di Napoli, vol. 3, 1949, pp. 219—221; Crawford, op. cit., pp. 103—108.

⁶² Kubbel, Matveyev, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 428.

⁶³ Cf. *Wörterbuch der TigrĒ-Sprache*, p. 727. *Dakano* is another name for *Arkiko*. Cf. also L. Reinisch, *Die Afar Sprache*, Part III, p. 91 and 166, p. 97 *dakānō* "elephant". Cf. also BSOAS, vol. 15, 1953, p. 622.

with the kingdoms of the Negus was erroneously classified as the Beja. Al-Ya'qūbī mentions in his "History" the "kingdom" of Q.Ṭ.'Aṭ (قطعة). He says of it: "This is the last Beja kingdom. Their kingdom is large and it stretches from the frontier of the place called Bāḍī⁶⁴ to the place called Faykūn⁶⁵. They have a fortified frontier and are very strong. They have also a place for fighting⁶⁶ called Dār as-S.Wā (دارالسوا) in which uninitiated youngsters⁶⁷ prepare themselves for war and fighting"⁶⁸. It is probable that the warlike character of this people prevented strangers from gathering more information on them.

The name Q.Ṭ.'Aṭ can be easily amended to *Q.Ṣ.'Aṭ (قطعة), and there is a striking resemblance of the latter to the Tigrē word *gəz'at* (Arabic *qāf* renders frequently /g/) which means "district of government, province"⁶⁹. Al-Ya'qūbī says nothing about the relations of this people with the sixth kingdom i.e. with the kingdom of Nagāšī⁷⁰. It cannot, however, be excluded, if we can rely upon the etymology mentioned above, that this was simply a fortified frontier province (something like the Roman *limes*) of the Ethiopian state. There is, nevertheless, also a similarity with the Tigrē word *qāšə'* which means "ruler"⁷¹ and indeed could be taken by the foreigners as a name of the country and recorded as *Q.Ṣ.'Aṭ but the first etymology seems to be more probable.

⁶⁴ J. W. Crowfoot, *Some Red Sea Ports in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, "Geographical Journal of the Royal Geographic Society", vol. 5, 1911, pp. 523—550, identified *Bāḍī* with a harbour on Ayri Island and this was accepted e.g. by Crawford and Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan.

⁶⁵ Cf. A. Zaborski, *Some Eritrean*, passim.

⁶⁶ Marquart, op. cit., p. CCCXII, translates "Sie haben einen Wohnsitz der Krieger". Indeed this was a sort of a camp for young warriors. After Dār as-S.Wā Marquart adds in Ethiopian characters *makāna čawā* which he leaves unexplained. Cf. Gə'əz *makān* "place" and Amharic *čawā* "1. free, noble, 2. uneducated, untrained person". The name *čawā* was applied in later times to the troops of Galla origin who formed garrisons especially along the frontier — cf. I. Guidi, *Vocabolario Amarico-Italiano*, Roma 1901, p. 853. Marquart's hypothesis is most interesting, indeed, but still too little is known about the history of the word proposed by him. Cf. *Wörterbuch der Tigre-Sprache*, p. 647, 583; Dillmann, op. cit., p. 1335—1336, 1159.

⁶⁷ Marquart, op. cit., p. CCCXII, translates "die tüchtigen Jünglinge und jungen Männer".

⁶⁸ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīḥ*, p. 218.

⁶⁹ *Wörterbuch der Tigre-Sprache*, p. 595. Cf. Amharic *teqalay gəzāt* "province"; A. Dillmann, op. cit., 1191 and 1192—1193.

⁷⁰ *Nagaši* is the genuine Gə'əz variant of *nəgus* and not a corrupted by the Arabs rendering of the latter. See Dillmann, op. cit., 688 and A. J. Wensinck, *an-Nadjashī*, *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, t. III, s.v. On the etymology of this title — "one who imposes a tribute" cf. K. Conti Rossini, *Chrestomathia Arabica Meridionalis Epigraphica*, Roma 1931, p. 184.

⁷¹ *Wörterbuch der Tigre-Sprache*, p. 265; cf. Dillmann, op. cit., 476, "to subjugate"; Reinisch, *Wörterbuch der Bedäuye*, p. 103, *qaṭe'* in Bilin.

It is also probable that Q.T.'A^t is to be conjecturally identified with Q.'ŠA^t (قوصه) mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal as it was already done by Kramers⁷². Ibn Ḥawqal says that they (i.e. Q.'ŠA^t) live in Wādī Baraka not far from Bādī^c and that they are one of the most famous, most powerful and the richest "Beja" tribes⁷³. This would be in agreement with al-Ya'qūbī's location of Q.T.'A^t and with the information on its military power. I do not agree, however, with the second part of Kramers' hypothesis, namely with the identification of Q.T.'A^t/Q.'ŠA^t with Gə'əz since the final letter (tā' marbūta or hā'?) indicates a suffix or, if it was only a mater lectionis, a final vocal.

There is another argument for considering Q.T.'A^t/Q.'ŠA^t as a frontier province or a petty state of the Ethiopians with a mixed population. The name of their field for military exercises is "Dār as-S.WĀ". It can be hypothetically interpreted as having a *r-s-y* root from which in Gə'əz there is a derived verb *tarasaya* which means "to be armed, ready for fighting, to prepare oneself"⁷⁴. The *t-* prefix could be misinterpreted before /r/ as voiced /d/ and this would be followed by a false segmentation into "*dar*" which was associated with the Arabic word *dār* "field, abode", and the remainder of unknown meaning. I think, however, that on both philological and historical grounds Marquart's hypothesis and amendment to *Dār aš-Šawā is more probable. I am greatly indebted to prof. E. Cerulli for the following information sent in a private letter of 18th March 1971: "L'éthiopien *šewā* (amharique *čawa*) désigne les corps de soldats que les Negus envoyaient dans les pays conquis. Les *šewā* s'établissaient dans chaque pays avec leurs familles et ils avaient, presque toujours, à leurs disposition une (ou plusieurs, selon leur rang) famille des habitants locaux soumis. Cela constituait le système des *gabbār*, une forme juridique de servitude qui toutefois arrivait à favoriser la fusion — après quelques générations — des *šewā* avec la population locale. [...] Dans la langue courante d'aujourd'hui il est resté un souvenir de tout cela: c'est la phrase (amharique): *ya-čawā liḡḡ* "fils de *čawā*", qui a le sens de: "homme de bonne famille, de bonne naissance" (tel que un soldat *čawā* paraissait vis-à-vis des populations *gabbār*). We know also that in the 15th century special troops were formed of *čawā* sons and they were sent to conquer new territories.

Of course I am fully aware of the fact that these hypotheses are based solely on etymologies which may be quite erroneous. Conjectures based on changing the diacritical signs in Arabic script are also very risky — for example the unidentified region of JĀRĪN (جارين) could be also tentatively amended and identified

⁷² J. Kramers, *L'Erythrée*, p. 160. Cf. Crawford, op. cit., pp. 107, 120—121, whose identification with Ḥāsa cannot be accepted since Ḥāsa are also explicitly mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal.

⁷³ Ibn Ḥawqal, op. cit., p. 57.

⁷⁴ Dillmann, op. cit., 282—283; S. Grébault, *Supplément au Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae*, Paris 1952, p. 148. These dictionaries do not record any nomen loci which can be, perhaps, derived from this root.

with the Tigrē gəz'at (it seems, however, less probable) or even with Ger'ib mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal. The names discussed here are, however, real hapax legomena and so the recourse to etymology is the only, even though risky way to some partial elucidation. I hope that some progress in the interpretation of the texts which were drawn upon has been achieved and that some more light has been thrown on the history of the peoples of North East Africa even if many of the hypotheses presented here may prove unfounded.