

Ibrahim 'Ali Salman. The poet of the Manasir and his Diwan

The following poetry from Dar al-Manasir had been written and recited by Ibrahim 'Ali Salman (إبراهيم علي سلمان) during the second half of the last century. Ibrahim 'Ali Salman is known among the Manasir tribe, who inhabit the area of the Fourth Cataract of the Nile in Sudan, simply as "Ibrahim the poet" (إبراهيم الشاعر, Ibrahim al-Sha'ir).

Already the father of Ibrahim had been called "the poet" 'Ali (الشاعر علي, al-Sha'ir 'Ali). He was the only poet among the Manasir at his time and his fame is said to have spread not only among the Manasir living all over Sudan, but even to the neighbouring tribes of Shaqiyah (الشاقية) and Rubatab (الرباطاب). As a result the family of Ibrahim became known simply as al-Shi'irab (الشعراب), literally translated as "father of poetry".

Ibrahim was the youngest among his brothers and sisters and the only one to take up the poetic tradition of the family. His father died in 1940 when Ibrahim was only three years old.

Ibrahim's linguistic genius was already revealed during his childhood years in elementary school. But his family was too poor to be able to provide the fees for further governmental school and university education. For this reason, Ibrahim entered upon a career as a scholar at diverse religious educational institutions in Karima, Kurti (معاهد الدينية) and Omdurman (معهد العلمي الأم بأم درمان).

In order to cope with the costs of living he had to work in a bakery in the evenings until he graduated with good results and took up the position of a middle school teacher in Taurit (Southern Sudan). While pursuing a career as an Arabic language teacher in secondary schools he lived in the cities of al-Barqiq, al-Debbah and Merowe until he returned to Dar al-Manasir to teach at its only secondary school on Shiri Island. He left his homeland again to teach in Libya and on his return worked as a school inspector in the White Nile Province. A heart disease forced him to retire early on a voluntary pension.

Apart from his educational career he became a member of the regional parliament, a position he did not misuse for personal gains but to provide services to the ordinary Manasir.

When Ibrahim al-Sha'ir died on the 30/03/1995 he left behind a big family and a simple house in the village of Bisawi (بسوي).

It is said that Ibrahim was a smiling and happy character, always joking with his colleagues in poetic verses.

The poems of Ibrahim al-Sha'ir have been collected by al-Nadhir Tag al-Sirr al-Bashir (النذير تاج السر البشير), a former student of his and currently in the year 2005 working as a teacher in the elementary school on Sherari Island. Out of respect for his former mentor and because of his high regards for his poetry he took up the laborious task to collect the writings and letters of Ibrahim 'Ali Salman and compiled them into a book called "The Genius Diwan of the Manasir" (ديوان عبقريّة المناصير).

Since al-Nadhir's main objective behind writing the Diwan was to preserve this important piece of written and oral heritage of the Manasir for his tribe and all people of Sudan he readily agreed to have the only remaining hardcopy digitalized and freely published on the Internet.

This task has been accomplished by the German geographer [David Haberlah](#) with the help of the Sudanese Prof. Khidir A. Ahmed from the University of Neelein, Faculty of Arts (Dep. of History). The work was part of a subproject of the Humboldt-University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) of the [Seminar of Archaeology and Cultural Studies in North-Eastern Africa](#), currently conducting salvage archaeology in the region. The funding was generously granted by the "Programm Kulturerhalt" of the [German Department of Foreign Affairs](#), in order to help preserving the culture of the Manasir people currently under severe threat by the Hamdab High Dam.

"The Genius Diwan of the Manasir" (ديوان عبقرية المناصير)

chapters:

- Dedication (إهداء)
- Thanksgiving (شكر و عرفان)
- Meaning of some Local Expressions (تعريف بعض المصطلحات)
- Foreword (المقدمة)
- Prose (النثر)
- From the Inspiration of Nature (من وحي البيئة)
- Mugada'at (classical Arabic form of poetry) (المجادعات)
- Madh (classical Arabic form of poetry to praise somebody) (المدح)
- Higa'(classical Arabic form of poetry to defame somebody) (الهجاء)
- His Days in Libya (أيامه في ليبيا)
- The High Dam (Hamdab) (الخران)
- Last Respects (حفل التأبين)
- Closing Words (خاتمة)

The following poems and passages from the Diwan have been translated by [David Haberalah](#) with the help of [Abu Bakr Hamza Mohammad al-Sha'iri](#) (أبو بكر همزة محمد الشاعر) from Siwa in Egypt, so as to allow an insight into the rare material written in the colloquial tongue of the Arab Manasir. The complete digitalized book may be downloaded as a PDF-file below and the original photographed copy can be requested from [David Haberalah](#).

Further translations, corrections and alternative readings are of course most welcome.

Excerpts from the chapter "From the Inspiration of Nature" (من وحي البيئة):

I am yearning for you Dar al-Manasir
My gratefulness to each and every one
Of my cherished, dear and smiling people
If I could hurry all the way to *Birti*
Exclamations of joy would divide the hills
Before me, drawing me close inside the country
Blood would be dripping from two knives
Always ready to slaughter animals
For joyful occasions and out of generosity
My revered learned people of the *Khalwahs*
Always aware of every aspect in our life
I will prepare *Qurasah* for you not beans and bread
From local wheat rising on an open hearth
With blessed okra and seasoned with *Gaberkulah*
And I will add to it some onions
For the ones of you without appetite
I am yearning for your company
Reclining always underneath the palm trees

حليل دار المناصير الشكر هو له
ديل أهلي العزاز الباشي لو في برتي يمشوله
وزغاريد الفرحة شق الجبال مخلوت مع حس الرينطوله
وتنقط خوستن بالدم تملي تشوفه مبلوله
ديل أهل الخلاوي الديمة مأهوله
طريت قرصة ماها رغيغي بي فوله
من قمح البلد معيوسة فوق الدوكة مدبولة
ملاحك يا نعيميتاً مشطه يا جبركوله

وكمآن فوقك بصل للنفسو مقفوله
حليلكم ويا حليل ونستكم التحت التمر دائما تقعدوله

Birti: Island and Sheikhdom in Dar al-Manasir, bordering the downstream Shaiqiyah Country

Khalwah: Qur'an School, the only educational institutions in the area until 1946, the year the first primary school was established on *Shiri* Island (cf. TAIYEB 1969:4)

Qurasah: traditional meal made from local wheat, between bread and a pancake

Gaberkulah: variety of the edible annual herb *Corchorus olitorius*, prepared like the similar Egyptian *Mulukhiya*

...

After too many initial problems with the *Barbur*, many Manasir were looking for possibilities to earn money in a different field than agriculture. The following Qasidah of our poet is picturing a life without it:

Oh *Barbur* of *Bisawi* your breakdowns exhaust us
Your daily failings freeze our nerves
We brought a mechanic who took apart everything
We brought another one for the spare parts
Every morning anew we would ride and row to '*Uthman*
And from the weight of our load we become tired
We have changed each and every single part of you
We became like a donkey stuck in the mud
Oh Merciful Lord please relief us now
The credit from the bank is growing like long beans
If we manage we shall never raise one again
What is it with us and the *Barbur* stealing our money
Our hair turning grey from expensive Diesel and the iron parts
We should return to our animals, breaking firewood
Or else to singing and twirling our moustaches all day long
Or we should go back to our childhood ignorant of anything.

ولما كثرت علل البابور فكر أهلها في إيجاد كسب غير الزراعة فكانت قصيدة الشاعر التي تصور حال الذين امتهنوا غيرها:

بابور بسوي من مرضك غلبنا
وقوفك كل يوم برد عصبنا
جبنا صديق بالحديد طير قلبنا
وجبنا فتاح برضو بالأسبير جلبنا
كل صباحاً جديد بالعقبة لي عثمان ركينا
ومن كثرة شواليتك تعبنا
لي عند الطرمبة غيارة جبنا
والحمار في طينو حد ما تكررنا
يا رب يا كريم تعدل دربنا
تحل دين العدس ومن بعده تبنا
مالنا ومالو بابورا سلينا
من جازو وحديدو الغالي شينا
نرجع للغنم وكسير حطبنا
وللا نرجع للغنا وبريم شينا
واللا نرجع لي تخارجنا وكضبنا

Barbur: four stroke single combustion diesel pump that revolutionized irrigation agriculture all along the Nile. The first pump has been introduced in Dar al-Manasir in 1955, the last traditional *Saqiah* operated until 1975 (cf. BECK 2001:69-70)

Bisawi: small village in Dar al-Manasir, home to the family of Ibrahim al-Sha'ir

'Uthman: name of the only merchant of spare parts on *Shiri* Island at that time

...

Our poet is warning his family in *Bisawi* to raise a credit from the Agricultural Bank, worrying that they will not be able to repay it. The following Qasidah illustrates his concerns:

My last will to my ignorant partners will be
To refrain from borrowing any money from banks
The debts will be like a rolling pin to you
Until they throw you into the stable
Followed by an even stranger story
You are indebted and they will ask for interest
The hour of repayment will be a bridal stick fight
All their conditions you will have to meet
Or else you will hear the beating of their war drums
The produce of your labour and land will be confiscated
Oh beggar and begging is truly hard for a person
Above all if everybody else will face the same circumstances
Trying to save his own neck out of this situation

يحذر الشاعر أهله في بسوي من سلفية البنك الزراعي خوفاً من عدم قدرتهم على تسديدها وهذه القصيدة توضح ذلك:

بوصيك يا زميل الغفلة سيبه
وسلفية البنوك أطلق دريبه
يسوولك عواسة القرقرية
لامن تنطبل جوه الزيبه
بعدين بي تحي القصة العجيبه
أنت مديون وهن يكتبولك ضريره
وعن ساعة الخلاص الصوط وديبه
والشروط الشارطوك لازم تجيبه
واللا فوقك بي يدق طبل أب حريبه
يا خدمت الطين مشيت فركه وعنيبه
يا شحد والشحده فوق الناس صعيبه
خاصة والناس جميع واقعي في هذي النصيبه
وكل واحد يكابس دا يخلص للرقبه

Excerpts from the chapter "Mugada'at" (المجادات):

[description of the annual inundations of the Nile]

The waters turn red and cloudy
Its banks black like date molasses
Its waves rising sounds of a *Mismar*
Carrying with it stalks and driftwood
Returning quite with no more reason
Becoming clean so that we can drink it

...

البحر حمر واتكرب
خلا هدامو بسوي رب
موجو بالزمارة جقلب
جاب معاهو القش والحطب
قام رجع كين بطل السبب
دابه مويتو صفت واشرب

Mismar: traditional single or double reed wind instrument

Excerpts from the chapter "Higa" (الهجاء):

A delegation responsible for building a joint school in *Shankukah* came to collect money from all concerned villages of the area. After *Bisawi* payed their due donation our poet inspected the papers and realised that *Shiri* contributed less than *'Asmah*, although *'Asmah* is a much smaller and poorer community. He was sending *Shiri* the following poem blaming them:

Oh people from *Shiri* did you forget
Or did you become deaf when they asked you
You used to be upright to the word
During hard times stepping forward to guide
Look at the number then look at the crowd
Thank Allah that you live a pleasant life
Your donation has been exceeded by *'Asmah*
We didn't come here to ask you for anything
But because of our common blood and descent
Don't be the reason for our shame
Bad talk between the people about you
Review the donation paper with wisdom
Hold the rope and twist it straight again
Mind the deficiency and fill the gap

عندما قام وفد مدرسة شنكوكه بجمع التبرعات بمجالس المنطقة وبعد انتهاء مهمة المناديب اطلع الشاعر على الكشوفات ووجد تبرع مجلس شيري اقل من تبرع مجلس عصمة الصغير فأرسل إلى أهل شيري قصيدته التالية:

يا الشرايا جاتكم لخمه
واللا طرشتو عند النهمة
قبيل إن كنت أصحاب كلمه
وفي الحارات تقودو الهجمه
شوف الكثره شوف الزحمه
وتحمدو الله عايشين نعمه
يغلبكن تبرع عصمه
ما جابتنا ليكم صرمه
لكن القرب والنسمه
لا تقولنا أسباب ندمه
وسط الناس تجيبو الشتمه
راجعوه الكشف بي حكمه
جيلكم ني أكربو البرمه
أوعه النقصة شدو الشرمه

Shankukah: hamlet belonging to Sheikdom of al-Salamat and chosen for a joint school project between various neighbouring villages in 1992

Shiri: biggest island and administrative and educational centre of Dar al-Manasir

'Asmah: small village about 10 km upstream of *Shiri* Island on the "western bank" of the Nile

...

On one occasion our poet blamed Qamr Suleiman, Sheikh of *Birti*, for asking *Merowe* to incorporate *Birti* into their administrative district for reason of its proximity in comparison to Abu Hammed. With him had been a group of people and the news reached the poet who was sending him the following Qasidah:

Oh messenger hurry from me swiftly
To a diminutive Sheikh called Qamr
Tell him I have news about him
People say they are a gypsy of *King 'Awan*
The people of *Hamadi* and you people of *Si Anwar*
Did they divide the land of the sons of Qamr?
Our boundaries are known and rooted firmly
From the time of our hero *Nu'man*
Is it the devil appearing before us?
This talk is evil oh Qamr
Never to be expected from a Mansuri man
To voluntarily join the *Shaiqi Varans*
After being king of the Nile
To become a yellow toothed crocodile
Your reputation will be looked down at
Remember the history and legacy around you
The war drums of the castle resounding
And men crouching in the trenches
Your forefathers' horses went straight ahead
Sharpening their swords shouting "*Allahu Akbar*"
Moving the heart of the castle until it split
Even where defeated keeping their reputation
But victory became their providence
Be strong like your tribe previous to you
Don't let the *palm trees* stand to your back
And don't swim on top of an illusion

لوم وعتاب الى قمر سليمان (شيخ برتي) الذي قدم طلباً للمسئولين يريد فيه الانضمام لمحافظة مروى معللاً قربها من برتي إذا فورنت مع محافظة
أبي حمد وكان معه زمرة من حاشيته فوصل الخبر إلى الشاعر وأرسل إليه القصيدة التالية:

يا مريسييل طير مني فر
روح لي شيخ الخت قمر
قولو واصل عنك خير
قالو لاملك عوان عجر
ناس حمادي وناس سي أنور
دا تقسم دار ود قمر؟
حدها المعروف منجزر
من زمن نعمان الأغر
ما هو شيئاً دابو يظهر
الكلام دا كعب يا قمر
حاشا منصورياً ضكر
ما بلم الشايقي الورر
من بعد شيقيق البحر
يبقى تمساح نايبو اصفر
ويسمعوبو الناس اتحدر
أذكر التاريخ والأثر
النحاس في القيقر نقر
والرجال لبنت في الحفر
جدك الفوق قارحو دفر
وسلا سيفه الله أكبر
هز كبد القيقر كسر
خت سمعه انكان ما انتصر
والنصر مكتوب مقدر

أبقى زي القبلك وعر
لا يكون نخلك مأخر
ولا نعوم فوق طوف العشر

Birti: Island and Sheikdom in Dar al-Manasir, bordering the downstream Shaiqiyah Country

Merowe: big town and administrative centre in the downstream Shaiqiyah country

King 'Awan: former legendary King of Merowe

Hamadi: person from Abu Hammed, not belonging to Dar al-Manasir

Si Anwar: ridicule address to Sheikh Qamr Suleiman

Nu'man: Nu'man Wad Qamr is the grandson of the legendary king al-Sukari. He was the leader of the Manasir in the al-Debbah Battle on 29/06/1884, where he died a hero despite their defeat against the Turko-Egyptian forces led by Abdel Qadir Basha (TAIYEB 1969:7)

Shaiqi Varan: according to Manasir tradition female crocodiles carry their eggs to the river; the ones drifting upstream become crocodiles, the ones drifting downstream varans

yellow toothed crocodile: varans, metaphor for the downstream Shaiqiyah tribe

palm trees: according to Manasir tradition palm trees standing in sight are a sign of good luck and a donkey in front of anything is considered to be a good omen, having both of them to your back is considered bad luck

Excerpts from the chapter "His Days in Libya" (أيامه في ليبيا):

One day in the evening our poet went home from the Sudanese Club [in Libya] after his fellow expatriates left him he starts to remember his friend Bashir 'Umer and writes him the following lines:

Oh Bashir I am tied down here
Allah decided on his will
Our people used to *travel* to Upper Egypt
And not as remote as my own journey
My situation becoming only more miserable
The food consists of macaroni and salted meat
And rain keeps falling down and snow
My sleep is unstable and disturbed
But the strangest thing will be the oncoming feast
The father of *Sha'ib* will feel so lonely
Where is *Shiri* and where are the black people
Where is *Bisawi* with its pleasant breeze?
Life does not work out the way you wish for
My longing is satisfied not growing anymore
Exactly like the *old poet* was predicting
The service to serve your people is a challenge
And a man can't escape his destiny
And fly but don't fly too far away
Even if one would have to stay selling palm leaves
Or irrigate the middle of the desert during summer
It is all better than *travelling* so far away
No money and no happy circumstances

النادي السوداني وبعد أن فارقتني أخوتي وظللت وحيداً تذكرت صديقي البشير فكانت هذه الأبيات:

يا البشير في انطيل قيد
وقادر الله فيما يريد
الناس قبيل تسفر للصعيد

ما هو زي سفري أنا ده البعيد
حالي زايد ديمه تنكيد
اللكل مكرونة وقديد
والسقط نازل والجليد
ونومي بالليل كلو غميد
والعجيبه ان حصل العيد
أب شعيب وسط الناس وحيد
وين شيري وين ناس العبيد
وينه بسوي النسامه هيد
الأمور ما بتمشي بالليل
والطمع نقص ما يزيد
زي ما قال الشاعر التليد
ان خدم خدمة ناس عقيد
ما بتقوت القاسمه السيد
تاني طر طيره لا صعيد
ان قعدت وبعث الجريد
واللا سقته الصيف في الهويد
ما بسافر السفر البعيد
لا قروش لا حالاً سعيد

travel: temporary labour migration is locally referred to as "travelling". For male Manasir rotational migration is a regular stage in their life cycle and has become a cultural tradition (cf. BECK 1999:206-207)

Sha'ib: son of the poet

Shiri: biggest island and administrative and educational centre of Dar al-Manasir

Bisawi: small village in Dar al-Manasir, home to the family of Ibrahim al-Sha'ir

old poet: the father of the poet al-Sha'ir 'Ali

...

On one occasion our poet read a letter written by his brother al-'Abid Taha handed over to him by 'Uthman Suleiman. He started to remember Taha and became homesick for his country:

This letter take it with you it to *Al-Kir*
Send it by telegraph to *Al-Basir*
Tell him that his brother is troubled
Is there anything good in the West?
What is it with me that I left my poor country?
With it a summer on my land in *Al-'Amri*
Drinking from the herbs of *Khor al-Kawatir*
I am left here in the hand of strangers
With no money, suffering from pangs of conscience
From the craving for tomorrow I grow wings

بينما كان شاعرنا يطالع خطاباً وصله من العبيد طه وعثمان سلمان تذكر أخاه (طه) وزاد حنينه وشوقه للبلد فكانت الأبيات التالية:

الجواب ودوهو اللكير
يمشي تلغراف للبصير
قولوا أخوك قاعد مستحير
اصلو دي الغربية أفيها خير
مالي فايبت بلد الفقير
وصيفي في العامري الطين قرير
واللاسق خور الكواتير
بقيت مكتف في يد الغير
لا قروش لا راحة ضمير
دابي من الشبيق أطير

Al-Kir: village of Taha, about 5 km upstream of *Shiri* Island on the "eastern bank" of the river Nile

Al-Basir: name of village in Dar al-Manasir, literally translated to "place of the water wheel"

Al-'Amri: gardens belonging to the village of *Bisawi*

Khor al-Kawatir: name of a dry valley with abundant medicinal herbs

Excerpts from the chapter "The High Dam (Hamdab)":

The Hamdab High Dam has been discussed for many decades and the Manasir people used to say that if it would ever be realized it would amount to Judgement Day. When the last revolution took place [1989], the new present government took up the idea once more, referring to it as the "*Star of opportunity for Sudan*". The government started to survey the area, counting the concerned families and investigating possible relocation areas for the Manasir. There is some poetry among the Manasir poets that disagrees with the whole project saying the dam should be build in another place. One of these poets is called Abu Hureibah and he recited the following verses:

Oh our Lord please stop the dam
Holy Men read the *Fatihah* aloud
Say Allah please prevent the dam
Oh *Khalwah* of *Shiri* mother of the Qur'an
Always reciting for the troubled souls
There is blessing here from such a long time

A young person looking ahead for the future disagrees with him and says:

Oh our Lord please bring us the dam
We will mount the camels and move to prosperity
Our journey will open the door to the West
We will be living in *Omdurman*
Feeding on the liver of young sheep

خزان الحمداب كانت فكرة إنشائه قديمة فربط الناس قيامه بيوم القيامة ولما جاءت ثورة الإنقاذ أصبح هاجساً يؤرق بالها لما له من فائدة عظيمة تكون نجم سعد السودان القادم. فكان حصر الأسر وتحديد مناطق التهجير لقبيلة المناصير هي المعنية بذلك، ومن شعرانا ما هو رافض له لما للمنطقة من مزايا خاصة قل إن توجد في منطقة أخرى حيث الأمن والهواء الطلق من هؤلاء الشعراء أبو حريبة الذي يقول:

يا ربي تبطل الخزان
شيلو الفاتحة يا أهل الشأن
قولوا الله يبطل الخزان
يا خلوة شيري أم قرآن
وديمة تقري في الحيران
فيها البركة ليها زمان

فرد عليه الشاب المتطلع للغد المشرق:

يا ربي تجيبوا ده الخزان
ونشدد فوق جمال بطران
ويبقى سفرنا باب غربان
ويبقى سكوننا في ام درمان
وناكل من كبده الضان

Fatihah: (alt. al-Fatiha) the opening Surah of the Qur'an

Khalwah: Qur'an School, the only educational institutions in the area until 1946, the year the first primary school was established on *Shiri* Island (cf. TAIYEB 1969:4)
Shiri: biggest island and administrative and educational centre of Dar al-Manasir
Omdurman: one of the three cities of Greater Khartoum

When our poet envisioned Dar al-Manasir with its inhabitants leaving the area; the Nile, their agriculture and all the other things behind, he starts reciting the following verses to picture the submerged homeland:

You shake our foundations oh dam of *Gebel Kurqeil*
We always used to settle on the banks of the Nile
Where we have our *Selukah* and Registered Land
Rearing sheep and growing date palm trees
Where calls for prayer resound from the mosques
And all good people built a *Khalwah* and inside a *Sabil*
Generous people with no greediness among them
Welcoming guests even in the middle of the night
From *Umm Seffaiah* until *Birti* there are no strangers
And never shall I forget the men of the *Khala* for their zeal
Sons of straight and always even-handed men
We live in security and nobody is being treated unfair
Since the beginning we are men of *copper and horses*
And we witnessed *Kirbeka*, *al-Debbah* and *Danaqil*
And *al-Kurniq* killed and buried in *Umm Duweimi*
Oh earth of Manasir we are going to miss so many things
Our *Mishriq* trees so heavy with dates that they fall off
Rolling up our sleeves, with a *Turiah* in hand and greasy hair
Your mountains and desert valleys and inundations
The work migrations with its farewells and returns
The ground where we sit and jointly allocate the harvest
Oh earth of Manasir there is no place like you
Your mountains are dearer to me than *Gazirat-al-Fil*
What a strange country we live in that has no guide
A stranger in any place we will be looked down at

ولما كان للشاعر إبراهيم حاسة التصور لواقع المنطقة بعد التهجير وبعد الأهالي عنها تركهم لنيلهم وزرعهم وغيرها فأنشد يقول مصوراً حال البلد وهي غرقى:

زرعت البلد خزان جبل كرقيل
قبيل إن كنا قاعدين في شواطئ النيل
عندنا أرض سلوكه وأرض تسجيل
ساعين الغنم وإيضاً زرنا نخيل
وأصوات الجوامع عامري بالتهليل
وكل ناس حلي بانين خلوة فيها سبيل
أرباب الكرم ما بتلقى فيها بخيل
والضيق يستريح لو جانا نص الليل
من أم سفاية لي عن برتي ما في دخيل
وما بنسى الخلا الرجالتو شادي الحيل
ولاد راجل تمه وميزانا ديمة تقيل
وعايشين في أمان ما بينا أي دليل
من المهديّة نحن أصحاب نحاس وخيل
وتشهد كركبان والديبي والضائقيل
والكرنيق هناك فطن أم دويمي قنيل
يا أرض المناصير يا حليل وحليل
حليل مشرقنا داك اللتهرس بالشيل
حليلو شمارنا والطوريي والكرييل
حليله جباله والوديان حليل السيل

حليل سفارنا وكت الجبي والحمديل
حليلة تقينا باللخوان حليل الكيل
يا أرض المناصير ما في ليكي مثيل
جبالك عندي أحسن من جزيرة الفيل
غريب الوطن ما عندو أي دليل
محل ما يمشي وسط الناس مقامو قليل

Gebel Kirqeil: prominent mountain in the vicinity of the building site of the Hamdab High Dam

Selukah: digging stick used to cultivate on the seasonally inundated *Gerif* land (see *Gerif*)

Khalwah: Qur'an School, the only educational institutions in the area until 1946, the year the first primary school was established on *Shiri* Island (cf. TAIYEB 1969:4)

Sabil: roadside Masirah, covered water place for passing people

Umm Seffaiah: village council in Dar al-Manasir consisting of 19 hamlets, bordering the upstream Rubatab Country (cf. SALIH 1999:29)

Birti: Island and Sheikdom in Dar al-Manasir, bordering the downstream Shaiqiyah Country

Khala: adjoining deserts, more specifically the part of the Bayudah Desert occupied by the Bedouin Manasir

copper and horses: copper (alternative reading war drums) and horses don't really exist in Dar al-Manasir nowadays, meant as a metaphor for "ready to protect ourselves"

Kirbekan: Wadi al-Kirbekan is a major 50 km long Wadi course running from the Bayudah Desert NW reaching the Nile at the height of Harag Island. In February 1885 it became the site of a decisive encounter between the Dervish forces lead by Musa Abu Higl from the Rubatab tribe and the British infantry. The latter won, but the nearby mountain had been named "Gebel Musa" after the dervish leader (cf. INNES 1931:189, TAIYEB 1969:9)

al-Debbah: location of famous battle in 1884 (see *Nu'man*)

Danaqil: location of another battle

al-Kurniq: name for Colonial Stewart, killed in Umm Duweimi north of Al-Kab in September 1884. After running his steamer aground on a nearby island Basha Stewart and some of his crew were invited by the Sheikh of the local *Khalwah* who informed the Omda of Salamat; Suleiman Nu'man Qamr. The Omda, who lost his famous father just three months before in the battle of *al-Debbah* (see *Nu'man*, *al-Debbah*), had Stewart and most of his crew murdered in an act of revenge (cf. INNES 1931:187-188, TAIYEB 1969:8)

Mishriq: most cherished and common local date variety in Dar al-Manasir (cf. Date Cultivation in Dar al-Manasir)

Turiah: hoe with angular blade (cf. Material Culture of the Manasir)

Gazirat-al-Fil: small island in the Blue Nile near the city of Medani renown for its abundant vegetation

When our poet heard that the Manasir people couldn't agree between themselves on a common relocation area, he was sending them the following word: To my people and family of Manasir, I advice you to forget about your disagreements which will only drag us down. From bad derives only bad as in earlier times a poet said:

Be together my sons in difficult times
In distress don't you simply part
A pack of arrows can never be broken
But separated they shall be broken one by one

I wish I would not have to narrate you the following:

I asked them to listen to my advice when the time was turning
But they did not understand it until noon next day

It is true that no one of us likes to part from our dear homeland (where your head touched the ground and you grazed during your childhood), but our nation has a claim on us, as the poet *Shauqi* said:

The nation in the blood of every free man
Is like a lending hand that has a rightful claim on him

ولما علم الشاعر بأن أهله المناصير لم يتفقوا في تحديد الموقع المناسب للتهجير أرسل إليهم الوصية التالية. الي أهلي وعشيرتي المناصير أسدى النصح وأنبه أن الخلاف وعدم اتفاق الرأي مفسدة ما بعدها مفسدة وقديماً قال الشاعر:

كونوا جميعاً يا بني إذا اعترى
خطب ولا تتفرقوا أحاداً
تأبى الرماح إذا اجتمعن تكسراً
وإذا افتقرن تكسرت أحاداً

أرجو ألا أخاطبكم بقول آخر:

فلم يستبينوا النصح إلا ضحى الغد أمرتهم نصحي بمنعرج اللوى

ولا شك أن كل واحد منا يعز عليه فراق مسقط رأسه ومراتع صباه ولن للوطن الكبير علينا حق كما قال شوقي:

يد سلفت ودين مستحق وللأوطان في دم كل حر

Shauqi: the Egyptian poet and dramatist Shauqi Ahmad, precursor of Arab nationalism

They asked us to move, but to where? Our answer is to a fertile area in the middle or East of Sudan, but not to the proposed area of "*Number Ten*". That miserable piece of land is not only difficult to irrigate but far away from trade, so we will never agree. We shall not talk about it even with shielded mouths. Such people never look at their future and the future of our coming generations, but just at immediate gains below their feet. "*Number Ten*" will be a cemetery and we will be buried there alive. "*Number Ten*" will result in an even worse situation for us regarding poverty, illness and ignorance, because it is further away from trade, employment and culture. "*Number Ten*" should not even pass our lips unless we are stupid and foolish. Be determent in your requests and careful of people who want to create division between you without a reason. Throw "*Number Ten*" out of your minds and listen to my following Qasidah and read it out with understanding and thought:

Oh earth of Manasir you are the most worthy of places
Home to our kind people always generous to guests
Compassionate and ever ready to help the unfortunate
Country of *Mishriq* palm trees above satiated *Gerif*land
Country of the *Danqah*, country of the *Khalwah* and Diwan
The history tells us about our great forefathers
Back then in *al-Debbah* under the leadership of hero *Nu'man*
When the people were running, turning into a mount
We taught the foreigners a lesson on the battlefields
We wish farewell to you country of security and safety
We wish farewell to you with many tears in our eyes
But we are people who are patient in sadness
People who learned how to sacrifice from their bold ancestors
We agreed to move for the sake of the restoration of Sudan
But we also have to demand the security from our president
To provide us with productive land without a need for fertilizers
Oh people of Manasir and all of you concerned residents
Oh people of the *Saqiah* and Bedouins of the *Khala*
Be careful of deception and the corruption of your ideas
Or else we shall be divided until the final flooding of the dam

Unite your opinions behind the *Committee*
 Who will look for a place without need for *Sabaluqah* and *Quran*
 The person who says "*Number Ten*" I swear he is ignorant
 Because there is no sense and no reason in it to be found
 He is not thinking about the long mountain black as tarmac
 And about the wooden sprouts under circling cawing crows
 Look at the whole story and the wickedness of it, too
 For irrigation they say the pumps will produce water plenty
 But first you will have to irrigate fallow land and weeds
 Finally when the wheat will grow until its grains start to thicken
 You will wake up one morning finding all the channels dry
 Everybody will call out at one another in despair
 What happened, they will say the place is becoming devastated
 While the spare parts will be far away in India or in Japan
 Who will help us then oh my people with the thirsty wheat
 And reaching the onions they will be shrivelled to the ground
 And you will find the tomatoes rotten and attracting flies
 I address this good advice of mine to the young and the old
 Better to associate with death than being foolish people
 Persist on land in the *Gezira* in the centre of Sudan
 This land is rich and the irrigation channels full of water
 And in addition public projects will be abundant just like rain
 Plenty of fodder growing to provide for the cow and sheep
 Also look at their agriculture different in kind and colour
 The fields of wheat producing in the scale of tons
 If we talk about vegetables it will be cucumbers and eggplants
 All this diversity will make us people very happy
 The trade so fast that we can sell our products to anywhere
 We can easily reach the capital Khartoum and *Omdurman*
 And turning east we will reach the harbour of Port Sudan
 And turning west we will reach the town of Hamran
 And turning south we will reach Munqala and Malkan
 A perfect situation not leaving any poor man among us to be found
 Just one last good advice from me to you my brothers
 Your opinions unite to be in a firm position
 And any place you shall go hold on to each other in friendship
 Living a respectful life will annoy the disapproving and the gloating

وقد وعدنا بالترحيل ولكن إلى أين؟ الإجابة عندنا إلى منطقة خصبة مجربة في أواسط السودان أو شراقه وليس كما عرض علينا (نمرة عشرة) هذه الأرض المجهولة وصعبة الري ومقفلة التسويق فهي مرفوضة رفضاً باتاً. فلا للأقوال الجانبية فإن اصحابها ينظرون تحت اقدامهم ولا ينظرون إلى المستقبل البعيد لهم ولأبناءهم.. نمرة عشرة ستكون مقبرة وندفن فيها أحياء.. نمرة عشرة ستجعلنا في حال أسوأ مما نحن فيه من فقر ومرض وجهل لأنها بعيدة عن مناطق التسويق والحضارة.. نمرة عشرة لا ترقى على أن نذكرها على ألسنتنا والإكنا في غاية الجهل والبلاهة. فاحزموا أمركم واحذروا الذين يحيون الخلاف من أجل الخلاف دون أن تكون لهم حاجة فاركلوا نمرة عشرة بأرجلكم واستمعوا إلى القصيدة التالية وقرأوها بتفهم وتمعن:

يا أرض المناصير انت اعز مكان
 بلد الطيبين اليكرموا الضيفان
 واصحاب المروة الدرجة العطلان
 وبلد المشرق فوق الجرف رويان
 بلد الدانقة بلد الخلوة والديوان
 التاريخ يحدث عن جدودنا زمان
 هناك في الدبة بقيادة البطل نعمان
 وكنت الناس جرت واتلممت كيما
 أدينا الخواجات درس في الميدان
 ودعناك يا البلد الضمان وأمان
 ودعناك باكين والدموع ريقان
 لكن نحن ناس نصبر على الأحزان
 أهل التضحية المن الجدود شجعان

قبلنا الهجرة في شان نصلح السودان
 لكين برضو دايرين من رئيسنا ضمان
 يشوف لنا أرض صالحى تقوم بلا كفان
 يا أهلى المناصير وجملة السكان
 يا أهل السواقي وفي الخلا العربان
 أوعه الغشة رايكن لا يكون تلفان
 نقعد في الخلاف لامن يجي الخزان
 الراي وحدوه وكونولو لجان
 تشوف لبنا حتى ولا سبلوقة لافي قران
 الزول البقول عشرة يمين ضهلان
 شن فيها بلا الحصاص والقيزان
 وبلا جبلا طويل أسود تقول قطران
 وفوق حطب السالك تتصايح الغربان
 شوفو القصة والعجب العجبية كمان
 الري قالوا بابور ميو بالخيران
 أول ما سقيتو البوغة والتيلان
 والقمح انسنغ قرب على الويان
 قمتوا من الصباح تلقوا الحبس نشفان
 كل واحد يكورك يا فلان وفلان
 شنو الحاصل يقولوله المكن خربان
 الإسبير هناك في الهند واليابان
 متين يلحقنا يا ناس القمح عطشان
 وإن جيت للبصل هندل على الحيطان
 وأما البيبضورة مقددة الدنان
 نصيحة بقوله ليكم شبيهه والشبان
 عشرة الموت أخير لا تبقوا ناس عثمان
 صروا على الجزيرة وصرة السودان
 أرضاً عافى والجدول تملى ملان
 وبى فوق المشاريع البلد مطران
 والقش مالو حد تسعوا البقر والضان
 كمان شوف الزراعة مصنفه والوان
 وحيطان القمح انتاجه بالأطنان
 وإن قلنا الخضار عجور وبانجان
 وأصنافاً كتيري تكيف الإنسان
 والتسويق سريع إن درنا أي مكان
 نروح العاصمة الخرطوم وأم ردمان
 وإن رحنا الشرق للمينا بورسودان
 وإن درنا الغرب لي حد بلد حمران
 وإن درنا الجنوب لي منقلا وملكان
 والحال ينصلح ما بنلقى زول فقران
 آخر القول نصيحة بقوله للأخوان
 رايمك خلو واحد بيقى ليكم شان
 محل ما تمشو كونوا ململمين حيان
 نعيش في عزة كية المابي والشتمان

"Number Ten": proposed relocation area in the triangle between the crossing of the railway lines at *Railway Station #10* (N 19.71°, E 33.15 °) and the Nile, desert stretch NW of Abu Hammed and Muqrat Island proposed as the relocation area for the Manasir affected by the Hamdab High Dam

Mishriq: most cherished and common local date variety in Dar al-Manasir (cf. Date Varieties in Dar al-Manasir)

Gerif: seasonally inundated riverside-land, cultivated mostly by Manasir women. This type of arable land will not exist at the resettlement areas nor continue to exist in the region due to the predicted fluctuations of the unstable reservoir lake (cf. BECK 1997:83,86, SALIH 1999:37).

Danqah: space in front of houses used to gather and socialize

Khalwah: Qur'an School, the only educational institutions in the area until 1946, the year the first primary school was established on *Shiri* Island (cf. TAIYEB 1969:4)

al-Debbah: location of famous battle in 1884 (see *Nu'man*)

Nu'man: Nu'man Wad Qamr is the grandson of the legendary king al-Sukari. He was the leader of the Manasir in the al-Debbah Battle on 29/06/1884, where he died a hero

despite their defeat against the Turko-Egyptian forces led by Abdel Qadir Basha (cf. TAIYEB 1969:7)

Saqiah: traditional oxen driven waterwheel lifting Nile water into irrigation channels. Denotes also the higher irrigated land itself (cf. BECK 2001)

Khala: adjoining deserts, more specifically the part of the Bayudah Desert occupied by the Bedouin Manasir

Committee: *Al-Lagnah al-Tanfidhiya lil-Muta'thirin* (arab. the committee of implementation for the affected people). Powerless government-appointed organization formed in 1992 consisting of three members of the Manasir tribe negotiating about compensation and relocation issues.

Sabaluqah and Quran: traditional tools from stone used to level the ground

Gezira: major agricultural scheme south of Khartoum between the White and the Blue Nile

Omdurman: Omdurman is one of the three cities of Greater Khartoum

...

Our poet wrote the following Qasidah to 'Abd al-'Ati 'Abd al-Kheir from al-Kasilah who is heading the "Sons of Manasir", an organisation in the capital which is not successful in helping the Manasir back home. In fact our poet holds him responsible for discussing "*Number Ten*" as a possible relocation area and blames him in the following verses:

...

You are empty and low and your idea of the dam will stretch out
To you we should all drive taxis and play football and basketball
We shall read a book or a newspaper or a magazine
Anywhere we go we should just run into a super market
Leaving our hard past behind we shall build castles and villas
And from all of the unemployed rest and the Holy Men we will seek entertainment

When the Qasidah reached 'Abd al-'Ati he came running to our poet to tell him that he is not with the people of "*Number Ten*" and all the rumours were nothing but lies. Our poet apologized in another poem.

وهذه القصيدة وجهها إلى عبد العاطي عبد الخير رئيس اتحاد أبناء المناصير بالعاصمة وهو من منطقة الكسيلة ويبدو أن هذا الاتحاد لم ينجح في مسعاه:

يا الفار يا الرهد خزائنو دابو مطه
نلقى التاكسي نلعب كوره نلعب سله
نقرا كتاب ونقرا جريده نقرا مجله
والتسويق محل من نمشى عندو محله
من بعد التعب نبني القصر والقبيله
ومن ناس الخزين ومن ناس صلاح نتله

ولما وصلت هذه القصيدة في عبد العاطي هب مسرعاً إلى الشاعر ليعلمه أنه ليس من أنصار عشرة وأن ما نقل عنه ما هو إلا وشايه فكانت الأبيات التالية:

"Number Ten": proposed relocation area in the triangle between the crossing of the railway lines at Railway Station #10 (N 19.71°, E 33.15 °) and the Nile, desert stretch NW of Abu Hammed and Muqrat Island proposed as the relocation area for the Manasir affected by the Hamdab High Dam

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[Diwan 'Abqariah al-Manasir. Li-Ustadh Ibrahim 'Ali al-Sha'ir](#)
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