

Ajang Folk Songs as Source of Linguistic and History Research

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Kordofan Nubian (KN) language group consists of more than 30 closely related languages or dialects spoken in various communities across northern Nuba Mountains in Kordofan. The members of those communities identify themselves and their languages as Ajang. In addition to the various contemporary Ajang languages, there is an older version preserved in old folk songs. These songs, which have been passed down orally through generations, come in various genres: war songs, work songs, funeral songs, ritual songs, and history songs.

The language used in these songs – and sometimes in modern songs – represents an elevated language that transcends the dialectical differences between contemporary Ajang languages. It contains morphological features not common in modern KN as well as words that are not in current daily use in most communities.

Some times, these songs relate to specific historical events and periods such as the Mahadist period, Turkish invasion, or the fall Soba. In other cases, they cannot be immediately related to specific historical periods or events. However, they tend to contain rich information in the form of place names, ethnical names and personal names and other linguistic, cultural and historical informaton.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate, through examples, how these folk songs – which represent the most important record of Ajang history and old language - can assist research in Nubian language, cultural, political and social history.