

## Leveling in the Sudan: from Arabic creole to Arabic dialect

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The subject of this special issue, koineization, is usually viewed as a process of speech leveling within a speech community in which various groups of speakers have been forced to live together. The outcome of the process, the koine, is then regarded as some kind of general language, in which the differences between the individual variants of the groups of speakers that make up the speech community have all but disappeared, and which is identical with none of the preexisting varieties.

The process of koineization is in most cases connected with situations in which groups of speakers were lumped together by accident. For the sake of curiosity I shall mention one, little studied, case where koineization was the intended outcome of an experimental process, namely that involving settlers in the new polders of North Holland that were reclaimed in the first half of the twentieth century. When the Dutch government decided to reclaim the land of the former *Zuiderzee*, a special committee, *Stichting voor het Bevolkingsonderzoek in de drooggelegde Zuiderzeepolders* [Foundation for the Study of the Population in the Reclaimed Zuiderzeepolders], was set up in 1936. The people in charge of the scientific supervision of the project had a special view on the future of the polders. They believed that careful screening and selection of the new inhabitants would bring about a process of natural improvement. They decided that the population of the polders should represent a cross-section of the Dutch population as a whole, and accordingly selected the new inhabitants on the basis of religion, region, profession, and even language. It was thought that a representation of all Dutch regional accents would gradually lead to the disappearance of the regionalisms and the emergence of a new interregional standard, which would be better suited to serve as the means of communication for these carefully selected inhabitants. Unfortunately, the fieldwork actually carried out to study the results of this process was minimal, so that it is difficult to assess the degree of success of this policy.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this rather special instance, koineization has always been