

‘Cut deeper than a knife’: A Folk-Onomastic Study of Negative Attitudes in Egyptian Toponymic Proverbs

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Abstract:

This paper examines Egyptian toponyms in colloquial proverbs and the attitudes of Egyptians toward these names. It belongs to socio-onomastics, specifically folk-onomastics (Ainiala 2008) and folk linguistics (Vaattovaara 2009: 26-33). It investigates Egyptian’s perceptions and beliefs regarding the names of their villages, cities, and towns. The corpus is based on 121 proverbs selected from Sha^cla:n’s (2003), Taymu:r’s (2014), Maqa:r’s (2009), and Egyptian newspapers. This study proposes a two-fold approach to analyzing name data. It begins with a semantic analysis of the proverbs' toponyms, including their origins, structure, and language. The second phase investigates the attitudes underlying the diverse perceptions and beliefs that Egyptians may hold regarding these toponyms. This paper postulates that eighty percent of toponymic proverbs, in the corpus of this study, contain offensive remarks, verbal slurs, stereotyping, and racial content that may promote violence against innocent people. Egyptian toponymic proverbs are rhymed, repetitive linguistic formulas that lack wisdom and depend on figures of speech and proverbial exaggerations. Many of them can be attributed to historical, linguistic, social, and economic reasons. In fact, they are the result of rough daily interactions, and they are used by Egyptians as jokes and as a means of releasing tension.

Keywords:

Egyptian proverbs; folk-onomastics; negative attitudes; semantics; toponymy.

**”أشد إيلاماً من جرح السكين“ : دراسة فولكلورية لغوية تبحث أسباب
ارتباط بعض أسماء البلاد والمحافظات المصرية بصفات سلبية**

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية بعض أسماء البلاد والمحافظات المصرية في الأمثال الشعبية ومواقف المصريين تجاهها. تندرج هذه الدراسة في إطار علم دراسة الأسماء الاجتماعية، وتحديداً في إطار علم دراسة الأسماء الشعبية (إينالا، 2008) وعلم اللغة الشعبية (فاتو فارا، 2009: 26-33). وتهدف الدراسة إلى دراسة معتقدات المصريين واتجاهاتهم تجاه أسماء قراهم وبلادهم ومدنهم. تم اختيار المادة البحثية من بين 121 مثلاً شعبياً يمثل مجموع النصوص التي يستند إليها البحث من شعلان (2003)، تيمور (2014)، ومقار (2009). وتقرح هذه الدراسة نهجاً ذا شقين لتحليل بيانات أسماء البلاد، حيث يبدأ الأول بالتحليل الدلالي لأسماء البلاد في الأمثال الشعبية، بما في ذلك أصولها وتركيبها ولغتها، أما الشق الثاني فيتناول التحليل المواقف والانطباعات المتعلقة بالأسماء والتي قد يتبناها المصريون. تشير الدراسة إلى أن ثمانين بالمائة من الأمثال الشعبية المتعلقة بأسماء البلاد والمحافظات، في إطار هذه الدراسة، تحتوي على ملاحظات مسيئة، وإهانات لفظية، وتتميط، ومحتوى عنصري يمكن أن يشجع على العنف ضد الأبرياء. كما تشير الدراسة إلى أن الأمثال المصرية الشعبية عن أسماء البلاد والمحافظات هي صيغ لغوية متكررة تنقصها الحكمة وتعتمد على التعبيرات المجازية والمبالغات التي يتم استخدامها كأدوات للتعبير، ويمكن أن يرجع الكثير منها إلى أسباب تاريخية، ولغوية، واجتماعية، واقتصادية. ويستخدم المصريون هذه الأمثال كنوع من النكات وكوسيلة لتخفيف التوتر في الحياة اليومية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمثال الشعبية المصرية، علم دراسة الأسماء الشعبية، المواقف والانطباعات السلبية، علم الدلالة، علم دراسة أسماء البلاد.

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1. Introduction

Proverbs are a rich reflection of a society's values, beliefs, and worldview. (Lomotey 2021: 86). In fact, sometimes they serve as valuable didactic and teaching tools (Mieder 2004:146). However, they project stereotypes and ideologies that go unnoticed (Lomotey 2021: 86). They are perceived as easy to remember concise and formulaic language which are “ready to be used instantly as effective rhetoric in oral or written communication” (Mieder 2004: xi) and which are “passed as expressions of wisdom and truth from generation to generation” (Hrisztova-Gotthardt & Varga 2014: 1). The interdisciplinary field of paremiology has attracted academics from various disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, psychology, folklore, and sociology.

In the field of linguistics, proverbs have garnered considerable attention. They have been studied from different perspectives, such as Sociolinguistics (Lomotey 2019 a, b), Anthropological Linguistics (Khatri & Laishram 2013; Mansyur & Suherman 2020), (Feminist) Critical Discourse Analysis (Orwenjo 2009; Diabah & Appiah Amfo 2015; Lomotey 2017; Rasul 2015), Pragmatics (Bobuafor 2021; Lomotey & Chachu's 2020; Dzahene-Quarshie & Omari 2021; Ayekum 2021), Semantics (Kayange 2014; Gheltofán 2015), and Sociopragmatics (Oboko 2020). In Arabic proverbs, e.g., semantics (Ghaly 2002; Hassanein 2021; Assaqaf 2019; Fahmi 2016; Naoum 2007), sociopragmatics (Alghamdi 2019), and feminist critical discourse analysis (Altohami 2023). Despite the affluent number of research papers on proverbs, there has been a dearth of research on the onomastics of proverbs. For instance, Diiriye (2006) investigated the Somali nomenclature system in his dictionary and compared Somali proverbs to non-Somali sayings. Possa-Mogoera R. (2020) analyzed a proverb in Sesotho, the language of the Basotho people, using onomastics and discourse analysis. Eminoğlu (2016) attempted to provide a classification for place names in Turkish proverbs. Delaroche (2013) investigated place names in English, French, and German proverbs. Bredis and Lomakina (2019) compared proverbs with

toponyms in Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, German, French, English, Finnish, and Tajik.

This study intends to demonstrate that Egyptian toponymic proverbs can sometimes be biased and prejudiced. Sometimes they are unfair, and they can do more harm than good. Occasionally, they can serve as a mechanism for disintegration rather than integration. Proverbs can be negative when they express, as many of them do in the corpus of this study, slurs or stereotypes. Some of these proverbs are still used today despite attempts to be open-minded towards ethnic, religious, national, and regional differences. One of the most important goals of this research is to prove that proverbs are not absolute truths and that sometimes they can be dangerous to the point of causing harm and damage to many innocent people. Nazi Germany is an example of how proverbs became lethal verbal weapons (Mieder 2004: 139). This study will highlight a variety of linguistic, sociolinguistic, social, economic, ethnic, and historical elements that may be responsible for the unfavorable views that may be linked with various Egyptian place names in the corpus of this study.

2. Background

2.1 Socio-onomastics, folk-onomastics, and proverbs

According to the *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, onomastics is “the study of the etymology, history, and use of proper names”. Socio-onomastics can be defined as a sociolinguistic study of names. It explores the use and variation of names. Socio-onomastic research method considers the social, cultural, and situational fields in which names are used (Ainiyala 2016: 1). Onomastics traditionally has largely focused on the etymology and typology of names. Socio-onomastics, on the other hand, look at how names are used. Folk onomastics is a part of the socio-onomastic research paradigm. It can be defined as a study of people’s beliefs and perceptions about names and name use; thus, the term is parallel to folk linguistics and folk dialectology (Vaattovaara 2009: 32). It investigates people’s attitudes and stances towards names and name use. This covers analyses of how

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residents feel about the names planned for their region, what names they regard as good and suitable, and what names they regard as bad, and why. Socio-onomastics stresses the importance of looking at the use of names in every-day interaction: variation in name usage, why some names are avoided, why some names are coupled with particular pejorative attitudes, and how name users themselves perceive the very names they use.

Negative attitudes in toponymy happen when the residents of a particular location or users of a place disdain it. For instance, the disdain for villages and rural life in Egyptian proverbs. The physical place is therefore associated with negative social characterizations and descriptions accompanied by negative stereotypical images of the place (Ainiala 2016: 121). Additionally, attitudes can appear through exaggeration or understatement, in which case, the names can often be humorous or ironic. Negative attitudes are often intertwined with irony and even humor (Ainiala 2016: 122). For example, the inhabitants of the beautiful city of Alexandria and its people are both ridiculed by the inhabitants of Cairo. In one proverb, the beautiful city has been reduced to *ميه مالحة* ‘salty water’ and its people to *وشوش كالحة* ‘gloomy faces.’ The enraged citizens of Alexandria retaliated in an ‘anti-proverb’ (Mieder 2004: 28) by associating Cairo with *ميه نيلى* ‘Nile water’ and its inhabitants with *وشوش طينى* ‘muddy faces’ or, in some violent versions, *وشوش خنازيري* ‘pigs faces.’ Attitudes are generally expressed quite directly in many unofficial place names. However, they do not always appear so clearly instead, circumlocutions may be used or subtly hinted at (Ainiala 2016: 122). Both cities and their people are subtly hinted at without mentioning any names.

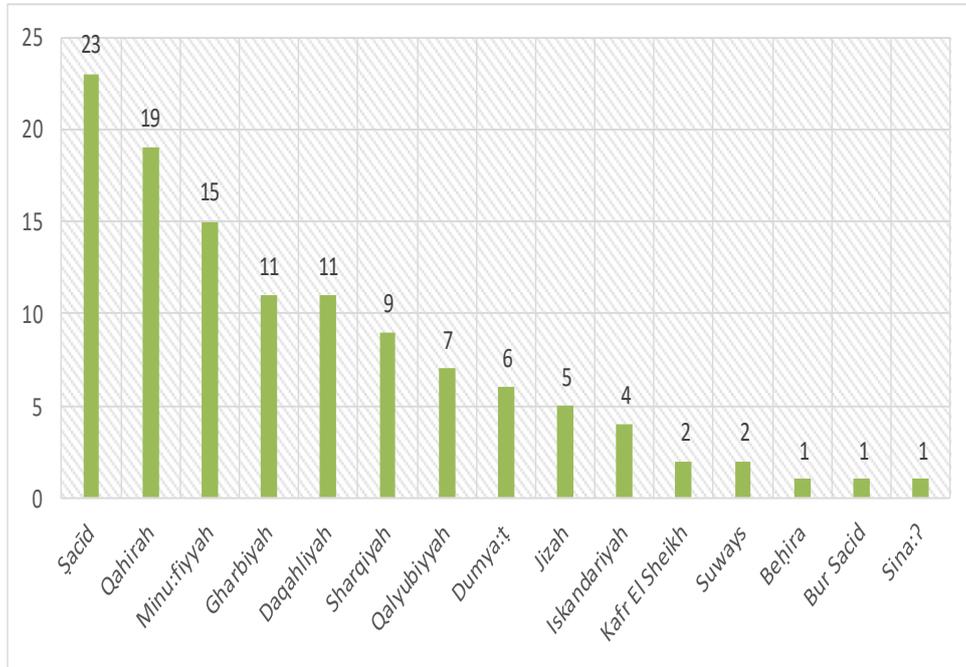
3. Data and Methods

3.1 Data

The corpus of this study consists of 121 proverbs. They have been selected from *Sha^cla:n’s* (2003), *Taymur’s* (2014), *Maqa:r’s* (2009), and Egyptian newspapers. Names of villages, and towns, in the corpus of this

study, have been classified and grouped according to their major districts. I have identified 15 major districts in the corpus of this study, *Ṣaʿīd Miṣr* ‘Upper Egypt,’ *al-Minu:fiyyah*, *al-Qahirah*, *al-Gharbiyah*, *ad-Daqahliyah*, *al-Sharqiyyah*, *Dumya:t*, *Qalyubiyyah*, *Al-Jīzah*, *al-Iskandariyah*, *Kafr El Sheikh*, *El-Behira*, *Al-Suways*, *Bur Saʿid* and *Sina:ʔ*. Seven proverbs that designate the quality of life in the villages and Egyptian countryside, in general, are found in the corpus of the study.

Figure 1: (Names of districts vs. proverb numbers)



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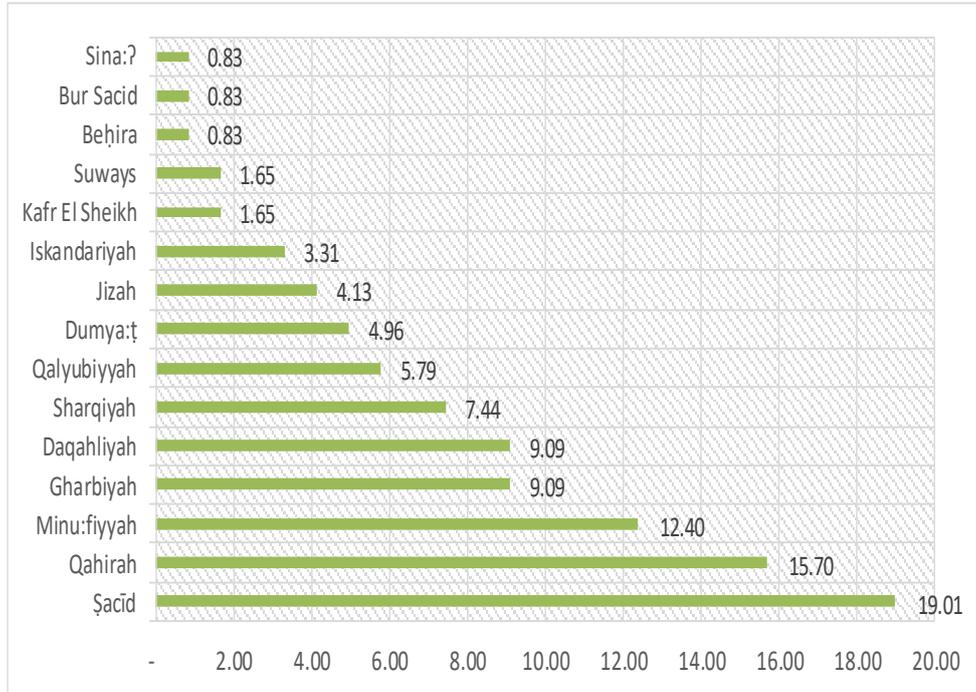


Figure 2: (Names of districts vs. their percentage)

According to the previous chart, there are 23 proverbs (19.01 %) for *Ṣa'īd Miṣr* 'Upper Egypt' in the corpus of this study; 19 for *al-Qahirah* (15.70%); 15 for *al-Minu:fiyyah* (12.40 %); 11 for *al-Gharbiyah* (9.09%); 11 for *ad-Daqahliyah* (9.09%); 9 for *Al-Sharqiyyah* (7.44%); 7 for *al-Qalyubiyah* (5.79 %); 6 for *Dumya:t* (4.96%); 5 for *al-Jizah* (4.13 %); 4 for *al-Iskandariyah* (3.31 %); there are two proverbs for each of *Kafr El Sheikh*, and *Al-Suways* with (1.65 %) for each; one proverb for each of *El-Beḥira*, *Bur Sa'id*, and *Sina:?* with (0.83 %) for each. The English renditions of the Egyptian proverbs discussed in this research are provided by the author of this paper. I also relied on my "insider" knowledge as an Egyptian and a native speaker of the Arabic language. The author of this paper has used other proverbs that have not been codified yet in dictionaries making use of other resources such as newspapers and social media.

3.2 Methods

The analysis begins with a semantic and an etymological examination of toponyms in Egyptian proverbs. Understanding the semantics of the linguistic structure of proverbs and place names is a fundamental requirement of onomastics. By semantics here I mean the name's factual background 'the regional nomenclature', 'the original semantic content'. (Ainiala 2016: 71-2). This study examines the etymology of place names and their origins. One of the most important subjects in etymological research is to examine the name's original semantic content. In this study, therefore, the etymology of place names and their semantic analysis go hand in hand. The semantic analysis in this research undergoes three linguistic levels (Bergs 2012: 212-23), including the origins, the structure, and the language of place-names.

The second step examines place names from a folk onomastic perspective. It analyses the characteristics and attitudes language users associate with names. In fact, people's opinions and attitudes toward names are important issues in both pragmatics and socio-onomastics (Ainiala 2017:1). This paper examines the reasons for associating specific place names in the Egyptian culture with negative or positive attitudes and feelings. For instance, *Ša^cīdī* people or the inhabitants of *Ša^cīd* are sometimes portrayed as incredibly naïve and foolish. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the city of *Dumya:t* are associated with miserliness. Investigations into people's attitudes and stances towards names and name use require sociolinguistic and, in particular, folk linguistic research of the names.

4. Analysis

The data in this study have been divided into four major categories: general proverbs, *Ša^cīdī* (Upper Egypt) proverbs, lower Egypt proverbs, and proverbs related to *al-Qahirah* (Cairo) and other governorates. The Arabic examples in this section are followed by their English translation.

4.1 General proverbs

This section is titled "General Proverbs" because none of the proverbs include the names of specific villages or governorates. Seven proverbs have been identified in the corpus of this study. Proverbs in this section refer generally to the conditions of living in certain places, such as the countryside in general, without mentioning any specific names or exact locations. For instance,

(1) a. يا ساكن الكفور يا ساكن القبور (Sha^cla:n 2003: 547, vol.1)

b. O dwellers of Kufur, O dwellers of graves.

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- (2) a. الكفر فقير ولئيم (Sha^cla:n 2003: 302, vol.2)
b. The Kafr is poor and mean.
- (3) a. بلد تولد البغلة (Sha^cla:n 2003: 302, vol.2)
b. Mule-breeding country.
- (4) a. بلد تكفر السقا (Sha^cla:n 2003: 303, vol.2)
b. The country of atonement for al-Saqqah.

Words such as قرية *Qarya* ‘village,’ بلد *balad* ‘town,’ ناحية *na:hīya* ‘sub-district’ are synonymous words used in Egypt from the first Arab conquest to describe the Egyptian villages. The word كفر *kafr* has been used to refer to ‘a small village’ during the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk eras. Words such as نجع *najc*, نزلة *nazala* are small settlements affiliated with villages, and they have been known since the time of the Ottomans. Words such as أبعدية *ab^ca:dīya*, عزبة *‘izbat*, قصر *qaṣr*, and منشأة *minsha:ʔt* have been known since the time of Muhammad Ali until today. (Ramzī, 1994, p. 5). Words such as *Kafr* and its plural form *Kufur* are used in two proverbs to refer to all Egyptian villages that begin with this word. The word has been associated with negative descriptions, such as ‘graves’ in Example 1 and ‘poor and mean’ in Example 2. The word *balad* ‘country or town’, on the other hand, has been used in 4 proverbs in the corpus of this study. It has been used with negative and sometimes offensive references in 3 out of 4 of these proverbs. In example 3, for instance, the word *balad* is associated with “mule breeding,” and in example 4, it is portrayed as a place of torture even for patient hard-working people such as *Saqqahs* (water carriers).

4.2 *Ṣa^cīdī* (Upper Egypt) proverbs

The Arabic word *Ṣa^cīd* means “highland, upland, plateau”. (Wehr 1979: 515). The suffix “-ī” denotes the adjective. According to *A Coptic Dictionary* (Crum 1939: 300), *ρεμρhc* or *ρεμ(π)μαρhc* means a man from the south, a man from upper Egypt, or a *Ṣa^cīdī* man. It is also known as the Nile Valley and represents the southern portion of Egypt or the upper Nile River regions in Egypt. In addition to the literal meaning of the word *Ṣa^cīdī* which means ‘from *Ṣa^cīd*’ (Upper Egypt), it can refer as well to a form of music originating there or to the dialect spoken by *Ṣa^cīdīs* (Zuhur 2001: 456). Only three major *Ṣa^cīdī* cities are mentioned in 4 proverbs in the corpus of this study, and they are *Qina:*, *Asyuf*, and *Al-Minya:*. The rest of the proverbs refer generally to *Ṣa^cīdī*, *Ṣa^cīdīah*,

al- Ṣaʿāīdah without any reference to exact locations. However, all the previous words denote all the villages, towns, and cities of *Ṣaʿīd*. The majority of the proverbs 17 out of 23 in the corpus of this study (74 %) bear a negative attitude toward the *Ṣaʿīdī* people or the inhabitants of *Ṣaʿīd*. For instance,

- (5) a. ان فاتك حمار اركب صعيدي (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 173, vol.1)
b. If you miss a donkey ride, you can ride a *Ṣaʿīdī*.
- (6) a. الصعايدة جاينن عايمين على بلاص (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 131, vol.4)
b. *Ṣaʿīdīs* have come sailing on a *bala:ṣ* (water jug).
- (7) a. عقل الصعيدي في جيبه (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 131, vol.4)
b. The *Ṣaʿīdī*'s mind is in his pocket.
- (8) a. يا صعيدي عمك دابت من السلطة والفول النابت (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 475, vol.2)
b. O *Ṣaʿīdī*, your turban is worn out from eating salad and sprouted beans.
- (9) a. اللي يجي من الصعايده فايده (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 152, vol.1)
b. Whatever comes from *al- Ṣaʿāīdah* is beneficial.
- (10) a. ان على واترقى علامته الدقة (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 603, vol.1)
b. Wherever he rises, he is well-known for his tattoo 'mark'.
- (11) a. يا حال يا مايل عمل الزمان عمايل حتى النواقص سموا انفسهم قبائل (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 162, vol.3)
b. Oh, Time! thou art unfair. Even the deficient persons claim that they have descended from Qaba:yil 'large tribes'.
- (12) a. اتجوز غازية ولا تتجوزش منياوية (*Maqar* 2009: 127)
b. Marry a Ghazīya 'a gypsy dancer' and do not marry a Minya:wīya 'a girl from Minya:'
- (13) a. ألف لوطى ولا أسيوطى (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 379, vol.3)
b. A thousand *luṭī* 'sodomites' and not an *Asyuṭī*.

Ṣaʿīdīs are sometimes portrayed as extremely naïve and foolish. For instance, in example 5, if you need a donkey ride or miss the train, you can simply ride a *Ṣaʿīdī*. In proverb 6, *Ṣaʿīdīs* have arrived in urban cities sailing on a *bala:ṣ* (water jug). In examples 7 and 8, *Ṣaʿīdīs* have severe financial difficulties since they are constantly concerned with money and are accustomed to wearing old clothes and eating simple food. In other proverbs, they have been depicted as useless and reckless people, as in proverb 9. They have been as useless as the dog's hair, the reeds, and the wind (*Shaʿla:n* 2003:176; *Taymur* 2014: 377, 407). They will always be branded by their humble origin as *Ṣaʿīdīs*, even if they are promoted or successful, as in proverb 10. According to proverb 11, they suffer

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from an inferiority complex because they falsely claim descent from huge tribes. They are as bad as *al-Sharaqwah* (the inhabitants of *Sharqia*) (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 167, vol.6) and *Al-Mana:yfa* (the inhabitants of *Minu:fiyyah*) (*Maqa:r* 2009: 127). In proverb 12, you can marry a ‘*Gha:zīya*’ (gypsy dancer) rather than a ‘*Minya:wīya*’ (a girl from *Minya*:). In proverb 13, even a thousand sodomites are not equal in viciousness to just one man from *Asyut*.

In the next three proverbs, 14, 15, and 16, the *Ṣa^cīdīs* have been humanized. They are hard-working people who bear the burden of all work more than others. They are courageous, and they refuse any kind of insult or humiliation. To make ends meet, *Ṣa^cīdīs* have to travel for work leaving behind heartbreaking wives and families. For instance,

- (14) a. كله عليك يا صعيدي لو بات
(*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 131, vol.4 ; *Taymur* 2014: 311)
b. It is all on you *Ṣa^cīdī* even if you have not finished it in daylight.
- (15) a. راجل صعيدي والصعيدي حر
(*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 118, vol.5)
b. *Ṣa^cīdī* man is a free man. (He does not accept insult or humiliation).
- (16) a. يا صعيدية جوزك قبل قالت قلبي على الفراق اتدبل
(*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 603, vol.1)
b. O *Ṣa^cīdīa*, your husband departed! She replied, “From parting my heart was broken”.

Many Egyptian stereotypes and ethnic jokes have been made about *Ṣa^cīdīs* and their dialect, primarily by upper-class Egyptians who own businesses in Egypt's major cities and used to hire *Ṣa^cīdī* workers in construction fields. Other Egyptians commonly assume them to be rural simpletons (*Mazīd* 2012: 65). Several social realities can be inferred from the ethnic proverbs in this study's corpus. For instance, words such as *bala:ṣ* (water jug), *al-daqa* ‘tattoo’, *qaba:yil* ‘large tribes’, *al-gha:b* ‘reeds’, and *zīyr* ‘clay pot cooler’ relate to rural areas. In fact, according to the World Bank (2012), Upper Egypt is predominately rural, with 75% of its youth residing in rural regions. Many words indicate the terrible living conditions in *Ṣa^cīd*, such as proverb 8, which states that they are accustomed to wearing old clothes and eating simple cheap food. For instance, their turbans are worn, and their main meal is salad

and sprouted beans. In work, they have to travel to urban areas leaving their wives and children behind them, as in proverb 16.

In their quest for a living in urban cities, *Ṣa^cīdīs* have to look for low jobs such as the job of ‘a doorman’ (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 603, Vol.1), and they have to face boldly all various forms of discrimination against them as they are men of honor and they do not accept any kind of humiliation or insults, as has been stated in proverb 15. In proverb 14, *Ṣa^cīdīs* encounter various forms of discrimination and oppression as they bear all the workload alone because they are regarded by many urban dwellers as ‘simpletons’ and ‘fools.’ In fact, approximately 40% of Egyptians live in Upper Egypt, and 80% of Egypt's severe poverty is concentrated in Upper Egypt. The official youth unemployment rate in Upper Egypt is 16 percent, which does not count the ‘jobless,’ those neither employed nor seeking work, a state that describes almost half of all young people in Upper Egypt. Illiteracy rates for young people in Upper Egypt are at 17 percent, higher than the national average, with illiteracy rates for females more than twice those of males (World Bank, 2012). The poverty rate in rural Upper Egypt decreased from 56.7% in 2015 to 51.94% in 2018, according to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (*Al^cashrī* 2019: 77-81). Nonetheless, this remains the poorest region in Egypt. The national poverty rate is 32.5 percent, and it is 26.7 percent in urban governorates, 14.3 percent in urban Lower Egypt, 27.2 percent in rural Lower Egypt, and 30.0 percent in urban Upper Egypt. *Asyut* is the poorest governorate in Upper Egypt, with a 66.7% poverty rate, followed by *Sohag* (59.6%), *Luxor* (55.3%), and *Minya* (54.7%). (Roman 2020).

4.3 Lower Egypt proverbs

Lower Egypt *Miṣr as-Sufla:*; (Coptic: τσαῖντ) is the northernmost region of Egypt, which comprises the fertile Nile Delta between Upper Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea, from *El ^cAiya:t* to *Dahshur*, south of modern-day Cairo. Ancient Egyptians referred to Lower Egypt as *mḥw*, which means "north." Later, in Antiquity and the Medieval Ages, the Greeks and Romans referred to it as *Κάτω Αἴγυπτος* or Aegyptus Inferior, both meaning "Lower Egypt." After 3600 BC, Lower Egypt was divided into nomes and began to advance as a civilization. (Roebuck 1966: 52-53). After the Muslim conquest, the middle part of the Delta was called *al-Rif* (Arabic: الريف), which means countryside or rural areas. According to B.T.A. Evetts, ‘in Egypt, the word *Rif* was used to denote

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the Delta or Lower Egypt’ (Burmester 1939: 96). There are 66 Egyptian proverbs about lower Egypt in the corpus of this study. Nine Egyptian governorates are explicitly mentioned in this study such as *Al-Minu:fiyyah*, *Al-Gharbiyyah*, *Al-Daqahliyyah*, *Al-Sharqiyyah*, *Al-Qalyubiyyah*, *Dumya:t*, *Al-Iskandariyyah*, *Kafr al-Shaykh*, and *Al-Buḥayrah*.

4.3.1 Al-Minu:fiyyah

Al-Minu:fiyyah is an Egyptian governorate located north of the capital, Cairo, in the south of the Nile Delta, and its capital is the city of *Shebin El-Ku:m*. The name of *Al-Minu:fiyyah* Governorate is originally attributed to the city of *Minu:f* or *Manu:f*, which was an ancient Pharaonic village known as *pr-nbw* which means house of gold (treasury) (Peust 2010: 65). The name (Arabic: منوف *Minu:f*, Coptic: πανοῦϥ *Panouf*, Greek: Ὀνουφίς *Onouphis*). Both the city’s Coptic and Greek names *Panouf* and *Onouphis* are driven from the ancient Egyptian name *p³-jw-nfr*, which literally means the good island. (Peust 2010: 65; Ramzī 1994: 222-23). After the Islamic conquest of Egypt, the name turned into *Ma:nu:fīs*, which literally means good land. To facilitate the process of pronunciation, the name has finally turned into *Minu:f*. (Muḥammad 1971: 77). There are 15 proverbs about *Al-Minu:fiyyah* and *Al-Mana:yfa* in the corpus of this study, which makes it the largest among the lower Egypt proverbs. All proverbs ridicule the character of *Al-Minu:fī* in general. In five proverbs, they are accused of ingratitude, denial of favor, and even stinginess. For instance,

- (17) a. المنوفى لا يلو فى ولو أكلته لحم الكتوفى (Sha^cla:n 2003: 506, vol.1)
b. *Al-Minu:fī* cannot be appeased, not even with shoulder meat.
- (18) a. لو خدوا من الكلب صوف كانوا ياخذوا من المنوفى معروف (Sha^cla:n 2003: 304, vol.2)
b. *Al-Minu:fī* will grant you a favor only if you take wool from a dog.

In three proverbs, *Al-Mana:yfa* are ridiculed for their passion for government work and concern with government red tape; for instance,

- (19) a. ان فاتك الميرى اتمرغ فى ترابه (Sha^cla:n 2003: 449, vol.2)
b. If you miss the merī ‘military or civil job,’ wallow in its soil.

- (20) a. شريطين على كمي ولا فدانين عند أمي (Rīḍa: 2018)
b. Two stripes on my sleeve, not two acres for my mother.

Some villages and districts in *Al-Minu:fiyyah*, including *Ṭu:kh*, *sirs al-laya:n*, *Tala:*, *Minu:f*, and *Qwsina:*, are described negatively as well. For instance,

- (21) a. خد غازية ولا تأخذش سرساويه (Sha^la:n 2003: 313, vol.2)
b. Marry a *Gha:zīya* ‘a gypsy dancer’ and do not marry a *sirsa:wīya* ‘a girl from *sirs al-laya:n*’

Four proverbs in the corpus of this study ridicule the *Minu:ft*'s passion for enlisting in the military and police. In proverb 20, for instance, the people of *Minu:fiyyah* favor the *miri:* or ‘government military ranks’ over owning agricultural land. The bulk of *Al-Mana:yfa*, who are, in fact, army volunteers, have a general preference for military positions above property. The proverbs abound with military terminologies such as *miri:* in proverb 19 above; *bruji:* ‘trumpeter’; *bīya:da* ‘military boots’; *alʔajaza:t* ‘military leaves’; *shiriṭīn* ‘two military strips’; *jama^cat thala:tha:t* ‘gathering troops’; and *istad^cat* ‘military call-up’ (Sha^la:n 2003: 408, Vol.4). The *Minu:ft* has been distorted and demonized, with one proverb depicting him as worse than the devil himself (Sha^la:n 2003:379, Vol.3). Other proverbs are racist because they divide the *Minu:ft* people into those who are damned by God in *Shebin El-Ku:m* (Sha^la:n 2003: 94, Vol. 1), Christians in *Ṭu:kh* (Sha^la:n 2003: 304, Vol. 2), and gypsy dancers in *Sirs al-layn* (Sha^la:n 2003: 313, Vol.2). The origins of some proverbs may occasionally reveal secrets that entirely contradict the apparent literal and superficial meaning of the proverb. For instance, proverb 17 dates back to the *Mamlu:k* era, when a *Mamlu:k* assaulted his colleague by beating him until he died, and a man from *Minu:fiyyah*, specifically from the city of *Minu:f*, witnessed him. The *Mamlu:k* killer wanted to bribe him so that he would not reveal his secret, so he kept feeding him sheep and camel meat and agreed with him that he would not testify against him in the *Mamlu:k*'s judgment hearing. The *Minu:ft* refused to commit perjury, and he decided to tell the truth in court. The *Mamlu:k* murderer, stunned by his testimony, uttered the saying in court (*Al-Najja:r* 2016).

Al-Minu:fiyyah is a poor governorate that expels its population and is based on agricultural activity; as a result, its residents' personalities are characterized by heightened caution. Due to a lack of

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resources and poverty, the people of *Minu:fiyyah* resorted to investing in education and enlisting in the army. *Minu:fiyyah* Governorate has the highest rate of education in schools and universities, and illiteracy is extremely low (*Al-ḥara:nī* 2017: 119). Therefore, the people of *Minu:fiyyah* migrate to Cairo to search for work in the army, police, Al-Azhar, and government jobs. Some writers and scholars believe that *Minu:fī's* competence, tenacity, and perseverance on the job, his excitement for work ethics, and his ambition for progress prompted his peers from other governorates to brand him and refer to him as an unkind person. In fact, in search of greater prospects, his economic and social constraints, which included poverty and limited agricultural land, required him to be careful and frugal (*Riḍa*: 2018). There are further political motives for hating and demonizing the *Minu:fī*. For forty years, the *Minu:fīs* maintained control of Egypt's political power, governance, and military. Several Egyptians disagreed with the reigning regimes' decisions. So, they made jokes about them, and the jokes gradually spread to everyone who belonged to these regimes, either by birth or upbringing (*Al-ḥara:nī* 2017: 120).

4.3.2 Al-Gharbiyyah

Al-Gharbiyyah governorate is a Lower Egyptian province located in the Nile Delta. It was given this name during the Fatimid era, and it was called Western because it was located west of the eastern Nile branch (*Ramzī* 1994: 8). It was described as fertile and prosperous by *al-Qalqashandī* (d. 821/1418). *Al-Maḥalla al-Kubra* was the provincial capital until 1836. It has a long history of spinning and weaving cotton and is now the epicenter of Egypt's most advanced textile manufacturing. *Ṭanṭa* is now the capital of the province, which has the tomb of *Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī*, where annual feasts attract thousands of devotees. (Lewis 1991: 1009-10). This corpus contains eleven proverbs pertaining to the governorate of *Al-Gharbiyyah*, nine of which have negative implications. Some cities and villages are explicitly stated in the proverbs, including *Ṭanṭa*, *al-Maḥalla*, *Samannu:d*, *Zifta:*, *Ha:nu:t*, *al-^cA:ysha*, *Shirsha:ba*, *Mīt al-Mukhliš*, *ṣandafa:*, and *Bīrma:*. For instance,

(22) a. بلدى طنطا وأحب أعيش أونطه (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 407, vol.4)

b. *Ṭanṭa* is my country, and I like to live *a:wantā* ‘without fatigue.’

(23) a. ألف حاوى ولا محلاوى (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 117, vol.1)

- b. One *Maḥallawī* is shrewder than a thousand *ḥa:wī* ‘snake charmers.’
- (24) a. ما أسخّم من زفتى إلا ميت غمر (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 455, vol.1)
b. Nothing is worse than *Zifta*: except *Mīt Ghamr*.
- (25) a. الفرح في ميت المخلص وأهل شرشابه بترقص (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 388, vol.1)
b. The wedding is in *Mīt al-Mukhliṣ*, and the residents of *Shirsha:ba* are dancing.
- (26) a. عاشر اليهودى ولا تعاشر السمندى (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 305, vol.2)
b. Deal with a Jew and do not ever deal with a *Samannu:dī*.

In proverb 22, the entire population of *Tanṭa* is portrayed as sluggish, careless, and dependant. The word *a:wanta* in this adage is derived from the Turkish *avanta* and it refers to illicit gain (*Alu:b* 2014: 42). In the context of the previous proverb, it refers humorously to the typical *tantawy* man who lives without charge on the benefits of others and loves profit without exertion or fatigue. Proverb 22 was used as a rhyming couplet in a humorous monologue (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 407, vol.4). In proverb 23, *Al-Maḥallawī* ‘a person from the city of *al-Maḥalla*’ has been described as *ḥa:wī* ‘snake-charmer’ from *ḥayya*, snake. *Al-Maḥalla* and *ṣandafa*: are mentioned in one proverb due to their geographical proximity. For instance, when there is a bride in *ṣandafa*:, women of *al-Maḥalla* make it their pretext to beautify (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 134).

Al-^cA:ysha, *Ḥa:nu:t*, *Mīt al-Mukhliṣ*, *Shirsha:ba* are four villages affiliated with *Zifta*:. In proverb 25, *Mīt al-Mukhliṣ* and *Shirsha:ba* are two neighboring villages on the main route between *Zifta*: and *al-Maḥalla*. When there is a wedding celebration in *Mīt al-Mukhliṣ*, the residents of *Shirsha:ba* respond by dancing. This adage is for people who are preoccupied with things that do not concern them (*Maqa:r* 2009: 143). The inhabitants of *al-^cA:ysha* and *Ḥa:nu:t* are described as stingy people in two proverbs (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 703-4). In proverb 26, the people of *Samannu:d* are compared to Jews to demonstrate that they exemplify malice and selfishness. Proverb 24 states that *Mīt Ghamr* is worse than *Zifta*:. Another proverb in the corpus of this study (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 303, vol.2) states clearly that the two previous cities share a common fate. So, whatever evil befalls the city of *Zifta* also descends upon the city of *Mīt Ghamr*.

Several of these proverbs may have origins that contradict their meanings. For instance, the two cities of *Zifta*: and *Mīt Ghamr* are close neighbors, and they also share a similar history and various customs and traditions. Proverb 24 was said to demonstrate the courage and valor of

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the people of the city of *Zifta*: in the *Gharbiyyah* Governorate and the city of *Mīt Ghamr* in the *Dakahlia* Governorate when they confronted the British occupation forces. When the city of *Zifta*: declared independence and established the Republic of *Zifta*:, the occupation forces moved to suppress and eliminate the attempt, which, if successful, would spread to other Egyptian cities. Teams from the occupation army encountered fierce resistance from the people of *Mīt Ghamr*, particularly when they crossed the For *Mīt Ghamr* bridge. According to Egyptian historian *Ra:ḏy Juda*, the British occupation was responsible for the above proverbs (*Aḥmad* 2019). Surprisingly, the adage is now commonly used to compare one unpleasant thing to another that is worse. Proverb 26 carries an exaggeration, implying that the *Samannu:dī* is superior to the Jew in stinginess and clamoring for money and preferring it over other values. The previous parable is an example of hostility among the inhabitants of towns and villages. In fact, the people of *Samannu:d* are merchants who care more about material possessions and money than about human aspects (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 305, vol.2). The same is true for the cities of *Zifta*:, which produces 80 percent of Egypt's flax harvest (MENA 2020) and *al-Maḥalla al-Kubra*, the most advanced textile manufacturing center in Egypt (Britannica 2014).

4.3.3 Ad Daqahliyah

The governorate of *Ad Daqahliyah* is located northeast of Cairo. Although the governorate's capital is *Manṣoura*, its name derives from the ancient town of *Daqahlah* (Arabic: دقهلة, from Coptic: *τκεζλι*, lit. 'shrine') which is located in the modern Damietta Governorate. (Peust 2010: 34). Some cities and villages are mentioned in *Ad Daqahliyah*'s proverbs, such as *Mīt Ghamr*, *Daqa:du:s*, *Dima:s*, *El-Senbellawein*, *Mīt Na:bit*, *Gedila*, and *Ku:m Al-Nu:r*. The corpus of this study contains eleven proverbs about *Ad Daqahliyah* governorate, ten of which have negative connotations. Two proverbs are about the city of *Mīt Ghamr*. Proverb 27, for instance, is in the form of a recommendation to people moving from *Zifta*: to *Mīt Ghamr* to bring cakes, presents, and gifts with them. This proverb illustrates the close ties between the two cities as a result of their physical and human proximity. Proverb 28, on the other hand, claims that marrying a gypsy dancer '*Gha:zīya*' is preferable to marrying a girl from *Mīt Ghamr* '*Ghamra:waya*'. For instance,

- (27) a. يا معدى ميت غمر اوعى تسيب الكعك (Sha^cla:n 2003: 304, vol.2)
b. If you pass by *Mīt Ghamr*, do not forget to bring cakes with you.
- (28) a. اتجوز غازية ولا تتجوزش غمراوية (Sha^cla:n 2003: 83, vol.1)
b. Marry a gypsy dancer and do not marry a *Ghamra:waya*

Dima:ṣ, *Daqa:dws*, and *Ku:m Al-Nu:r* are three villages affiliated with the city of *Mīt Ghamr*. There are two proverbs about the village of *Daqa:dws*. Proverb 29 states that one *Daqa:dwsī* man is worse than a thousand *Majwsī* "fire worshipper." The second proverb, on the other hand, depicts *Daqa:dwsī* people as miserly (Sha^cla:n 2003: 392, vol.1). Proverb 30 states that anyone who comes from the village of *Dima:ṣ* is a *bala:ṣ* (water jug). Proverb 31 likens some people to the crows of *Ku:m Al-Nu:r*'s village. Due to the abundance of dates in the region of *Ku:m Al-Nu:r*, the crows there consume a large quantity of dates. When the date season concludes, they starve to death. The proverb refers to a foolish wasteful individual who squanders and spends all of his money when he is wealthy, then returns to begging when he is broke (Maqa:r 2009: 128-9). *Gedila*, a neighborhood in *Manṣoura*, the capital of the *Dakahlia* governorate, is mentioned in one proverb. The meaning of the proverb is that despite the monkey's lightness, the residents of *Gedila* almost offended and aroused it. (Sha^cla:n 2003: 306, vol.2). For instance,

- (29) a. ألف ماجوسى ولا دقادوسى (Sha^cla:n 2003: 117, vol.1)
b. A *Daqa:dwsī* man is worse than a thousand *Majwsī* 'fire worshipper.'
- (30) a. ما يجى من دماص الا كل بلاص (Sha^cla:n 2003: 475, vol.1)
b. No one comes from *Dima:ṣ* except water jugs.
- (31) a. عامل زى غربان كوم النور (Maqa:r 2009: 128)
b. He is acting like the crows of *Ku:m Al-Nu:r*.

The inhabitants of *Manṣoura* have always been described by other governorates as "Louis's descendants" and "natural beauties" (°Abdalla:h 2016). Additionally, they raised rumors about the secret behind the French elegance and beauty of the blonde-haired and green-eyed women of *Manṣoura* (Al-Shaḥa:t 2009). The previous phrases were used viciously in an attempt to dishonor the *Manṣoura* residents who mingled with the French during the French occupation of *Manṣoura* despite the fact that some of them married legitimately (°Abdalla:h 2016; Al-Shaḥa:t 2009).

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4.3.4 *Al-Sharqiyyah*

As its name suggests, *Al-Sharqiyyah* governorate, which means eastern in Arabic, is situated in the eastern Nile River delta of lower Egypt. *Bilbays*, the historic capital of *Al-Sharqiyyah* and a medieval fortified town is located 30 miles (50 kilometers) northeast of Cairo in the southeast. During the 19th century, *Al-Zaqā:zīq* replaced *Bilbays* as the capital. *Al-Shara:qwa* are the people of *Al-Sharqiyyah*'s governorate, and they have two ethnic origins. The first origin is the Bedouins, who resided on the eastern edge of the delta and whose ancestors were the Bedouins of *Sina:ʔ*. As for the other origin, they are immigrants from the inhabitants of Upper Egypt that *Muhammad ʿAli* Pasha expelled in order to reclaim the lands of this province after creating massive irrigation projects and attempting to profit from the water. (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 408). There are 9 proverbs in the corpus of this study about *Al-Sharqiyyah*. For instance,

- (32) a. الشراقة سدوا البحر بالتين وعزموا القطر وكحلوا الوزه
(*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 408, vol.4)
b. *Al-Shara:qwa* blocked the Nile with hay, invited the train, and eye-lined the goose.
- (33) a. الشراقة سقوا الفرخة ميه سخنة علشان ينزل البيض مسلوق
(*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 408, vol.4)
b. *Al-Shara:qwa* provided chickens with hot water to drink so that their eggs would be boiled.
- (34) a. الببالسه أبالسة (*Shaʿla:n* 2003: 303, vol.2)
b. *Al-Bala:lasa* (the inhabitants of *Bilbays*) are demons.
- (35) a. زي ولاد بلبيس يبيعوا العيش ويشحتوه (*Maqa:r* 2009: 132)
b. Such as the inhabitants of *Bilbays*, who both sell and beg for bread.

Al-Shara:qwa, in general, have been accused of foolishness and naivety in two proverbs. In proverb 32, for instance, they invited the train, blocked the Nile with hay, and eye-lined the goose. In proverb 33, they provided chickens with hot water to drink so that their eggs would be boiled. The town of *Bilbays* is mentioned four times in four proverbs that accuse its residents of covetousness and other undesirable traits, such as proverbs 34 and 35. The residents of *Mit Yazid*, one of the villages comprising the *Minya: al-Qamh* district in the governorate of

Al-Sharqiyyah, have also been accused of miserliness (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 140). The people of *Al-Gha:r* village, one of the villages of *Zaqa:zīq*, have been described as “few and haughty” (*Taymu:r* 2014: 249). One proverb blames the villagers of *Janjarah*, a village in *Al-Sharqiyyah*, for displaying happiness before receiving confirmation of good news (*Maqa:r* 2009: 135).

The governorate of *Al-Sharqiyyah* is always associated with the trait of generosity. In one famous proverb, for instance, they are well-known for inviting the train. In 1917, during the month of Ramadan specifically, the first train passed by the village of *Akya:d* in the *Faqa:s* Center of *Al-Sharqiyyah* Governorate. The inhabitants of the village prepared Ramadan breakfast tables on the train platform and required all passengers to disembark for breakfast (*Al-Qaṭa:wī* 2017). However, the historical event that illustrates the goodness of these individuals, their good intentions, and the generosity for which they are known was later misinterpreted as naiveté and folly.

4.3.5 *Al-Qalyubiyyah*

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2012), *Al-Qalyubiyyah* is a tiny, highly populated governorate in Lower Egypt's Nile Delta. Three-fifths of the population is dependent on agriculture. The principal towns are *Banha:*, the capital of the *muḥa:faḏah*, and *Qalyu:b*, the former capital of the governorate until 1850. The name of *Al-Qalyubiyyah* governorate is derived from the city of *Qalyu:b*. *Qalyu:b*, on the other hand, is derived from *Calliope*, which is an ancient Greek goddess and the Muse of epic poetry (Peust 2010: 71). There are seven proverbs with negative connotations in the corpus of this study about *Al-Qalyubiyyah*. One famous proverb referred to those who avoided paying for Alexandria train tickets as " He claims to be from *Banha:*. " Since then, this popular idiom has spread, and it is now a metaphor for feigning apathy and desiring to escape the surrounding reality (*Mursī* 2022). In proverbs 36, 37, and 38, the inhabitants of some villages in *Al-Qalyubiyyah*, such as *Mīt Kina:na*, *Al-Shamu:t*, and *Al-Kha:nkah*, are accused of miserliness. For instance,

- (36) a. أبخل من كلبة ميت كنانة (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 379, vol.3)
b. Stingier than *Mīt Kina:na*'s dead dog.
- (37) a. يا رايح الشموت خد غداك لتموت (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 380, vol.3)
b. If you are traveling to *Al-Shamu:t*, bring your lunch unless you wish to perish.

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- (38) a. يا رايح الخانكة على حمار ما ينوبك من السفر قد المشوار
(*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 704, vol.1)
b. If you travel a long way to *Al-Kha:nkah* on an ass, only you will get a pain in the ass.
- (39) a. عفريت من الزأر ولا مرة من الشقر (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 296, vol.3)
b. a demon in a hidden corner is better than a woman from *al-Shuqr*.

Proverb 39, on the other hand, is an insult to the women of *al-Shuqr*. It is stated that a demon in a secluded corner is superior to a woman from the village of *Shuqr*.

4.3.6 Dumya:t

In lower Egypt, *Dumya:t* is a port city and the capital of the Damietta Governorate. The modern name of the city is derived from its Coptic name (*ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲁⲧ*), which likely derives from ancient Egyptian *dmj.t* (‘harbour, port’) (Peust 2010: 38). However, *al-Maqarizī* has suggested that the origin of the name may have been Syriac (Bouriant 1900: 632). Six proverbs about *Dumya:t* and their inhabitants can be found in the corpus of this study. In five proverbs, they are associated with miserliness. They are described as better people than the people of *Al-^cIya:t* in Al-Jīzah governorate in the sixth proverb (*Sha^cla:n* 2003:412, vol.4). For instance,

- (40) a. تشرب شاي والا ما انتش كفيف (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 305, vol.2)
b. Do you drink tea, or are you not used to it?
- (41) a. تتعشى ولا تنام خفيف (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 305, vol.2)
b. Do you prefer to have dinner or sleep with a light stomach?
- (42) a. تنام هنا ولا تبات في اللوكنده (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 306, vol.2)
b. Do you prefer to sleep here or in a hotel?

According to historians such as *Subhī* and *Abdulrahman (Al-Zughbī* 2019), the people of *Dumya:t* are not stingy, but they are careful and cautious with their money. The people of *Dumya:t* are known to be involved in trade in Damietta, and the majority of them are financially well-off, but they fully appreciate the value of money and do not spend it unless it is in the right place (*Al-Zughbī* 2019).

4.3.7 *Al-Iskandariyyah, Kafr Al-Sheikh, and Al-Buḥayrah*

Alexandria, Arabic *Al-Iskandariyyah*, is an important city and *muḥa:fazah* (governorate) in Egypt. It was named after Alexander the Great, who established the city in 331 BCE (Pollard 2006:2). It was once one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean and a center of Greek education and science. Now it is an important seaport and industrial hub. The city is located on the Mediterranean Sea on the western edge of the Nile River delta, approximately 183 kilometers (114 miles) to the northwest of Cairo in Lower Egypt (Reimer 2023). Two of the four proverbs in the corpus of this study that refer to Alexandria have positive connotations. For instance,

- (43) a. اسكندرية مارية وترابها زعفران (*Sha'la:n* 2003: 202, vol.6)
b. Alexandria is as beautiful as Almería and has saffron-colored soil.
- (44) a. إسكندرية أجدع ناس (*Al-Wakīl* 2016)
b. Alexandrians are the bravest people.

In proverb 43, Alexandria has been compared to *Almería*, the greatest naval facility in eastern Andalusia, which is a picturesque city. Its soil has been compared to saffron which was farmed, sold at a high price, and weighed in gold, is used here as a praise simile, i.e. its soil is valuable (Al- 'iba:dī 2000: 87). In proverb 44, the citizens of Alexandria are described as "أجدع ناس" "the bravest people." Alexandrians believe that these traits date back to the time of leader Ahmed Orabi's resistance to the English invasion, when battles were fought in Alexandria and *Kafr El Dawa:r* and Alexandrians demonstrated the extent of their bravery and sacrifice (*Al-Wakīl* 2016). The other two proverbs, however, have negative connotations. For instance, in one proverb the palm trees in the *Abu: Qīr* region in Alexandria produce few dates there. The proverb alludes to the increasing number of persons whose high unemployment rate diminishes the benefit they provide (*Maqa:r* 2009: 131).

Kafr Al-Sheikh is an Egyptian city and the capital of the *Kafr El Sheikh* Governorate, located approximately 134 kilometers north of Cairo in the Nile Delta. It was formerly known as the village of *Duminqwn*, and the name *Kafr al-Sheikh* derives from a *sheikh* named *Ṭalḥa al-Tlemsa:nī* who lived there over a thousand years ago. In the year 600 AH, when *Ṭalḥa al-Tlemsa:nī* arrived from Morocco, he settled in the little settlement, then known as *Duminqwn*. After he died in the year 631 AH, he was buried there, and because the people of the region

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believed in his blessing, the inhabitants of that small village constructed a ‘mausoleum’ for him. Since then, *Duminqwn* was known as *Kafr al-Sheikh Talḥa*. King Fouad I, constructed his palace there and dubbed it *Al-Fouadiyah*, after his name. After the July 1952 revolution erupted, the Revolutionary Command Council reverted it to its previous name *Kafr al-Sheikh* without *Talḥa* as a kind of abbreviation (*Abu: al-Maḥa:sin* 2018). *Kafr El Sheikh* which literally means "the village of the chief" was chosen in 1955 in an attempt to reflect the city's spiritual devotion towards many Sufi figures (Peust 2010: 56). *Kafr Al-Sheikh* has been associated with two common proverbs. The first proverb is an old popular saying applies to every citizen of the *Kafr El-Sheikh* governorate due to the large number of *ʔadriḥa* ‘shrines’ and *zawa:yas* ‘Sufi lodges’ in the villages and cities of the governorate. (*Abu: al-Maḥa:sin* 2018). The second proverb, on the other hand, ridicules the city of *Balṭim* in *Kafr Al-Sheikh*. In comparison to the swimming pools of *Sharm El-Sheikh* and the most prestigious coastal cities in Egypt, the Egyptians make fun of the simple citizens who visit the city of *Balṭim* to go to the beach during the summer months while wearing clothing that reveals their poverty (*Abu: al-Maḥa:sin* 2018).

Damanhur is a city and the capital of *Al-Buḥayrah* Governorate in Lower Egypt. The present Arabic name of the city comes from Coptic *p-Timinhor* (Coptic: πτμινḥωρ), which is derived from Ancient Egyptian: *p³-dmi-n-Hr.w*, lit. 'the settlement of Horus' (Peust 2010: 33). The *Damanhurī* people have been associated in Egyptian culture with banditry. For instance, one proverb in the corpus of this study states that “الف نوري ولا دمنهورى” a *Damanhurī* citizen is more cunning than a thousand *Nurī* ‘thieves’.” (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 118, vol.1). The origins of this adage can be traced back to an old narrative in which one of the merchants attempted to fool a trader from *Damanhur* named *Hajj Ibrahim*. When this merchant swiftly left, rejoicing in the accomplishment of his trick, he realized that his trick had failed and the *Damanhurī* merchant had not been duped (Riḍa: 2018). *Damanhur* is currently a prominent urban center in the western delta. It is the core of a network of railways that transport the region's agricultural hinterland's cotton, dates, vegetables, and grains. The city's industries include date packaging, potato processing, cotton-ginning, and textiles. *Damanhur* is served by the main Cairo-Alexandria railway and is a significant crossroads for branch railways, roads, and canals (Britannica 2009).

4.4 *al-Qahirah* (Cairo) and other governorates

4.4.1 *al-Qahirah*

The governorate of Cairo or *al-Qa:hirah* is a part of Metropolitan Cairo which is made up of the Cairo *muḥa:fazah* (governorate) as well as other districts, some of which belong to adjacent governorates such as *Al-Jīzah* and *Qalubiyyah*. *Al-Qa:hirah* is the capital and largest city of Egypt as well as the city-state of Cairo Governorate. Its official name *al-Qa:hirah* (القاهرة) means 'the Vanquisher' or 'the Conqueror', supposedly due to the fact that the planet Mars, *an-Najm al-Qa:hir* (النجم القاهر, 'the Conquering Star'), was rising at the time when the city was founded (*Maqrīzī* 2009: 78). Egyptians frequently refer to Cairo as *Maṣr*, the Egyptian Arabic term for Egypt, stressing the significance of the city to the nation (*Golia* 2004: 152). In the corpus of this study, *Maṣr* has been used in 11 proverbs to refer to the nation in general. The proverbs include both positive and negative attitudes to *Maṣr* or Egypt in general. *Maṣr* has been stated positively from a patriotic standpoint in 8 proverbs out of 11. *Al-Qa:hirah*, on the other hand, has only appeared in a single proverb to allude to Cairo. Seven proverbs mention well-known landmarks and areas in the city of Cairo, including *Ba:b al Luq*, *Ba:b al-Naṣr*, *Al-Maṭariya*, *Shubra:*, *Abu: -Za^cbal*, and *Ḥarat al-Saqqayin* in *‘Abdin*. Some of them, such as *Ba:b al Luq* has been associated with *Ḥasha:shīn* 'weed smokers' (*Maqa:r* 2009: 128); *Abu:-Za^cbal* with fake news (*Maqa:r* 2009: 137); *Al-Maṭariya* with gypsy dancers (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 114, vol.5); and *Shubra:* with closed shops (*Taymu:r* 2014: 233). In contrast, the people of *Ba:b al-Naṣr* are linked with decency (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 283, vol.1), and those of *Ḥarat al-Saqqayin* are associated with craftsmanship (*Sha^cla:n* 2003: 704, vol.1).

4.4.2 *Al-Jīzah*

Al-Jīzah is the capital of *Al-Jīzah* governorate, together with the governorates of Cairo and *Al-Qalyubiyyah* they form a part of what is called the Greater Cairo Area GCA *Al-Qa:hira al-Kubra:*. *Ya:qu:t al-Ḥamawī* (1995: 200) noted it in his *Dictionary of Countries*, saying: " *Jīzah* in the language of the Arabs means the valley, which indicates the best spot in it, and *Jīzah* is a country on the Nile to the west of the Egyptian metropolis opposing it." *Al-Jīzah* is an Islamic city that was established in 642 AD - 21 AH, and it has been the capital of the *Jīzah* governorate since 1884 (*Ramzī* 1994: 11). The corpus of this study contains five proverbs concerning *Al-Jīzah*, all of which have negative connotations. For instance,

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- (45) a. زى غز الجيزة تملى السجادة على البحر (Sha^cla:n 2003: 167, vol.6)
b. Such as the Jīzah’s Ghuz, pray along the riverbank.
- (46) a. انى غازية ولا تأنيش جيزاوية (Sha^cla:n 2003: 112, vol.5)
b. Marry a *Gha:zīya* ‘a gypsy dancer’ rather than a *Jīzaha:wya* ‘a woman from *al-Jīzah*’.
- (47) a. يارايح بدسا خد غداك لتتسى (Sha^cla:n 2003: 704, vol.1)
b. Bring your lunch if you are traveling to *bidsa:*, unless you forget.

In proverb 45, the inhabitants of *Al-Jīzah* are likened to *al-Ghuz* ‘Turks.’ In fact, the Turks preferred to reside in Giza due to its proximity to Cairo and to enjoy the convenience of ablution from the Nile, and to pray on the riverbank without the trouble of fetching water. The above proverb has been employed in Egyptian culture to allude to wealthy, slothful individuals (*Taymu:r* 2014: 240). Proverb 46 indicates that it is preferable to marry a *Gha:zīya* ‘a gypsy dancer’ rather than a *Jīzaha:wya* ‘a woman from *al-Jīzah*’. Proverb 47 accuses the people of *bidsa:*, which is one of the villages attached to *al-^cAyya:t* district in *al-Jīzah* governorate of stinginess. The fourth saying (Sha^cla:n 2003: 380, vol.3) states that the dogs of *Abu el-Numrus* district are better than the boys of *Tirsa:* village in *al-Jīzah* governorate. *Tirsa:* is a village attached to *Abu el-Numrus*, while the latter is a district and business center known for agriculture and light industries, such as the production of dates and bee honey, as well as the trade of domestic goods. The final proverb (*Maqa:r* 2009: 138) mentions the northern *Al-Jīzah* working-class neighborhood of *Imba:ba*. The essence of the fifth saying is that whoever says " *Imba:ba*’s lupine is better and sweeter than almonds" was just intending to amuse the impoverished, as they eat lupine but not almonds. The adage is for individuals who choose the bad above the good without dispute. (*Taymu:r* 2014: 347).

4.4.3 *Bur Sa^cid*, *Al-Suways* , and *Sīna:?*

Bur Sa^cid is a city in northeastern Egypt located north of the Suez Canal. *Bur Sa^cid* is a compound name made up of two parts: *Bur* (port) and *Sa^cid* (the name of the Egyptian monarch at the time). The name is forged during a meeting conducted in 1855 by the International Committee, which comprised of England, France, Russia, Austria, Spain, and Piedmont (*Najm* 1987: 439). The city of *Bur Sa^cid* has been associated

with the funny character of *Abu: Al^cArabī* which is a symbol of all *Bur Sa^cidī* citizens in the corpus of this study. Many consider *Al-Fashr*, or exaggeration in the narration of events and facts, to be *Bur Sa^cidī*'s defining trait. *Muḥammad Bayu:ḍ*, a historian and expert on the legacy of *Bur Sa^cid*, asserts that exaggeration in affairs (*al-Fashr*) is a part of the *Bur Sa^cidī* personality. It is also a hallmark of the Mediterranean personality, such as that of the Greeks and Italians. He added that the majority of *Bur Sa^cidī*'s used to practice the profession of *Al-Bambuṭī*, a merchant who takes goods in a small felucca to display them to large passing ships, and the nature of this profession requires him to exaggerate the display of his goods in order to attract the buyer who is standing on top of the ship while *Al-Bambuṭī* is below his boat. *Bayu:ḍ* explained that the origins of the name *Abu: Al^cArabī* date back to the British occupation, when the city was divided into two neighborhoods: (the *Al-ʔAfranjī* neighborhood), inhabited by Europeans, and (the Arab neighborhood, inhabited by *Bur Sa^cidī*'s, who were eager to name their children in Arabic out of spite against the *Al-ʔAfranjī* residents. He noted that the operations of the popular resistance were launched from the Arab neighborhood towards the *ʔAfranjī* neighborhood. Therefore, the term *Abu: Al^c Arabī*'s origins are related to the notion of national struggle and the Arab neighborhood residents (*Al-Wakīl* 2016).

Al-Suways is the capital of the Suez Governorate and a seaport city in north-eastern Egypt, located on the north coast of the Gulf of Suez on the Red Sea. There are two adages in this study's corpus that have positive implications. For instance,

(48) a. بعر السويس ولا رطب بلبيس (Taymu:r 2014: 128)

b. Animal dung in *Al-Suways* is better than wet dates in *Bilbīs*

(49) a. يا حامى السويس يا غريب (Sha^cla:n 2003: 116, vol.3)

b. O, Protector of Suez, O *Gharīb*

According to proverb 48, animal dung in *Al-Suways* governorate is preferable to wet dates in *Bilbīs*, *Al-Sharqiyyah* governorate. A fable is the source of the previous proverb. Due to the absence of vegetation, a crow in *Al-Suways* subsisted solely on excrement. Another crow led the former bird to *Bilbīs* and its numerous palm trees, where it was shot and killed. The adage implied that the hardship of living safely is preferable to the desire for risk (Taymu:r 2014: 128). In adage 49, a request is made to *Sheikh Gharīb* to protect the city. Since ancient times, the Suez Governorate has been known as the city of '*Al- Gharīb*,' the name which is known in reference to '*ʿAbdullah Al- Gharīb*,' whose shrine is located

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within a mosque carrying his name in the *Al-Gharīb* neighborhood of the Suez Governorate. ^c*Abdullah Al- Gharīb* was a renowned military leader famous for his piety and asceticism. During the war, the citizens of *Al-Suways* are said to have called out, " O, Protector of Suez, O *Gharīb*," in hopes of receiving his blessings (*Sanad* 2013).

Sina:ʔ is a peninsula in Egypt. It is a geographical bridge between Asia and Africa, situated between the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the south (*Shuqayr* 1991: 9-10). The name *Sina:ʔ* refers to a mountain and a peninsula (Peust 2010: 86). Historiographers disagree regarding the origin of the term ‘*Sina:ʔ*.’ Some of them believe that its name in ancient hieroglyphs is ‘*Tushwit*,’ which translates to "land of barrenness and openness" because of the country's numerous mountains (*Shuqayr* 1991: 10). In fact, *Sina:ʔ*'s population has historically been dominated by desert-dwelling Bedouins with their colorful traditional attire and rich culture. (Leonard 2002: 67). There is a well-known saying that has persisted throughout Bedouin governorates and *Sina:ʔ*. It states that “ا قيراط عداوة ولا فدان جار البداوة” “a carat of animosity is better than an acre with a Bedouin neighbor.” In light of this well-known saying, Egyptians despise having a neighbor from *Sina:ʔ* or ^c*Arish* (^c*Abdalla:h* 2016). However, the name of the peninsula has many positive connotations as well. The ancient Egyptians called it (the "Mining Country") and the (‘Ladders of Turquoise’), because it was the principal location for turquoise mining (Gauthier 1927: 189). The name has also been associated with numerous positive religious meanings in the *Qurʔa:n*, the Bible, and the Torah.

5. Results and discussion

This section seeks to interpret the causes for all the negative attitudes that dominate the Egyptian toponymic proverbs in this study's corpus. Figures 3 and 4 show that the majority of the proverbs in the corpus are associated with negative emotions. For instance, 17 proverbs from *Ṣaʕīd* (14 %); 15 from *Minu:fiyyah* (12.30 %); 10 from *Daqahliyah* (8.20 %); 10 from *Gharbiyyah* (8.20 %); 8 from *Sharqiyyah* (6.56 %); 7 from *Qahirah* (5.74 %); 7 from *Qalyubiyyah* (5.74 %); 6 general proverbs (5 %); 5 from *Jīzah* (4.10 %); 5 from *Dumya:ʔ* (4.10 %); 2 from *al-Iskandariyah* (1.64 %); 2 from *Kafr Al-Sheikh* (1.64 %); 1 from *Al-Buḥayrah* (0.82 %); 1 from *Bur Saʕid* (0.82 %); 1 from *Sīna:ʔ* (0.82 %); and 0 from *Al-Suways* (0 %).

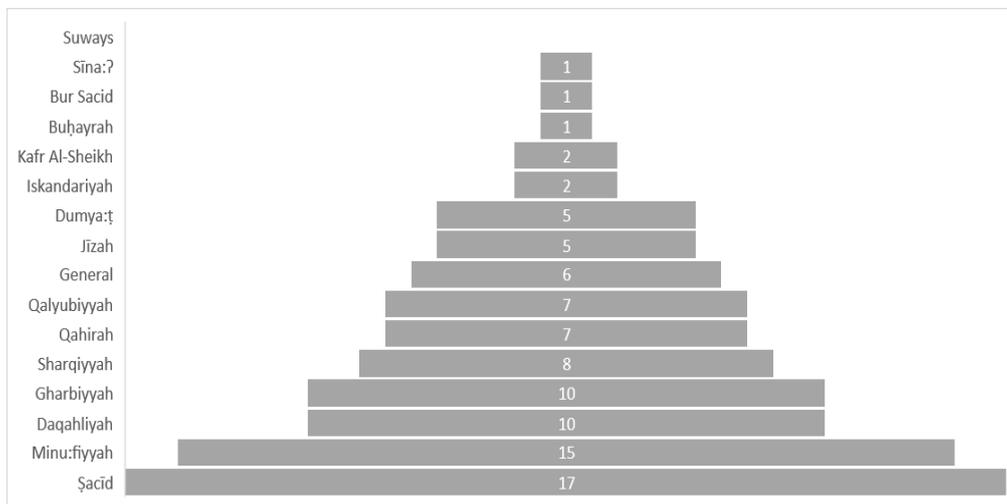


Figure 3: Number of proverbs that carry negative attitudes in the corpus of the study in each district.

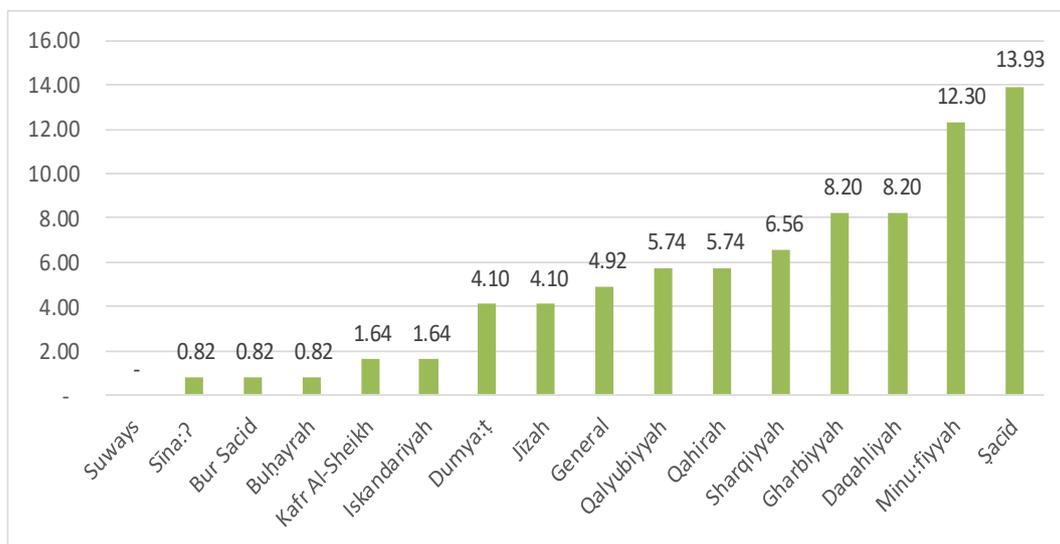


Figure 4: Percentage of proverbs that carry negative attitudes in the corpus of the study.

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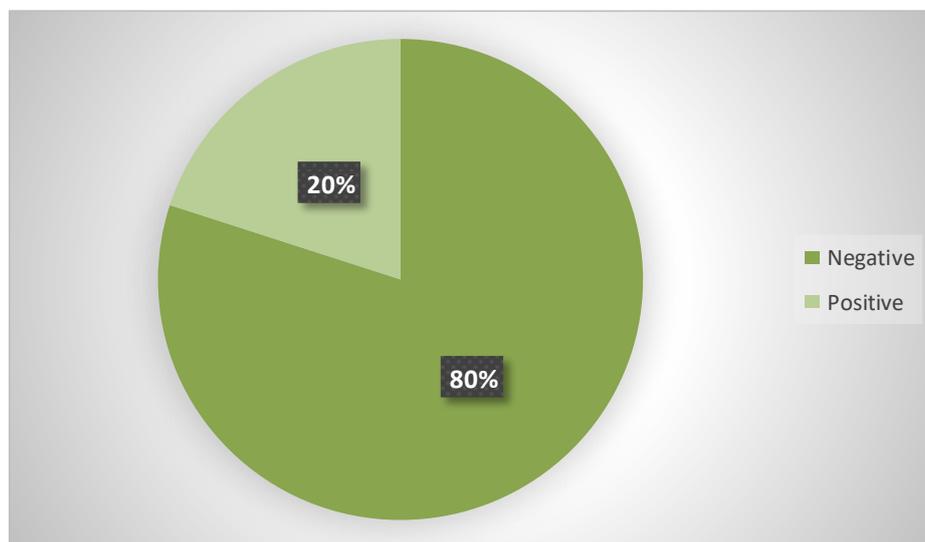


Figure 5: Percentage of negative and positive proverbs in the corpus of the study

Figure 5. shows that the total number of proverbs that carry negative meanings, feelings, and attitudes in the corpus of this study is 97 of 122 (80 %). From a linguistic perspective, many rhetorical linguistic formulas have been repeated excessively in the corpus of this study. It is important to mention in this context that many proverbs in many languages can be reduced to certain common structures or patterns. For instance, in English, there are common linguistic formulas such as “Better X than Y,” “Like X, like Y,” “No X without Y,” “One X doesn’t make a Y,” “If X, then Y.” (Mieder 2004: 6). Many similar linguistic formulas have been found in the corpus of this study. For instance,

Table 1: Common linguistic formulas in the corpus of the study

Better X than Y	Like X, like Y	If X, then Y
اتجوز غازية ولا تتجوزش منياوية	شر زفتى ينزل على ميت عمر	ان فاتفك حمار اركب صعيدى
جاور الحاوى ولا تجاور المحلاوى	مية مالحة ووشوش كالحة	ان فاتفك القطر اركب صعيدى
عاشر اليهودى ولا تعاشر السمندى	مية نيلى ووشوش طينى/خنازيرى	ان فاتفك البجور اركب صعيدى
بعر السويى ولا رطب بلبيى	يا ساكن الكفور يا ساكن القبور	ان كان دراعك سنابله اقطعه

The corpus of this study provides several examples of repeated, imitated, and remodeled verbal patterns such as "ان فاتك", "يا معدى", "يارايح". Using the same linguistic formulas and cliches in different places is evidence that none of these violent proverbs, which are employed in various circumstances and locations, genuinely reflect reality. Like any form of verbal folklore, the proverbs in this corpus use a pretentious form of wording, structure, style, and metaphor to make it memorable. Many proverbs are alliterative and full of other figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors.

One of the most important stylistic features on which the Egyptian colloquial proverbs of toponyms are based is proverbial exaggerations (Mieder 2004:14), especially if one wants to ridicule a person, a place, or even a situation. Many of these formulaic expressions are based on structural patterns such as,

Table 2: Examples of proverbial exaggerations

a thousand of ...is better than one of	Marry a ... and do not marry a ...
ألف لوطى ولا أسيوطى	اتجوز غازية ولا تتجوزش منياوية
ألف حاوى ولا محلاوى	اتجوز غازية ولا تتجوزش غمراوية
ألف ماجوسى ولا دقادوسى	النى غازية ولا تأنيش جيزاوية
الف نورى ولا دمنهورى	خد غازية ولا تأخذش سرساويه

The previous linguistic formulas are based on twin (binary) formulas which are traditional word pairs that are linked together by alliteration and/or rhyme, as in 'Gha:zīya' with 'Minya:wīya', 'Ghamra:waya', 'Jīzaha:way', and 'sirsā:wīya'. The rhyme can be found as well in *luṭī* with *Asyuṭī*; *ḥa:wī* with *Maḥallawī*; *Majwsī* with *Daqa:dwsī*; and *nwrī* with *Damanhurī*. According to Mieder (2004:14), none of these proverbial phrases contain any complete thought or wisdom. Their main function is to supply colorful elements to oral and written communication. Therefore, it would be unjust to compare all females from previous governorates to *Gha:zīyas* or 'gypsy dancers'. Also, the inhabitants of *Asyuṭ*, *Maḥalla*, *Daqa:dws*, and *Damanhur* cannot be compared to sodomites, snake-charmers, fire-worshippers, and thieves.

Tracing the origin, history, dissemination, and meaning of individual proverbs and their variants from a semantic perspective has been extremely helpful in elucidating certain facts about toponym proverbs. The author of this paper reached the conclusion that toponymic proverbs are sometimes insincere, deceptive, misleading, self-contradictory, stereotypical, and even racist. The majority of proverbs in

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the corpus of this study express either slurs or stereotypes. Some proverbs are stereotypes that the British occupation invented against the native population of some cities, such as the cities of *Zifta*: and *Mīt Ghamr*. Numerous proverbs, such as those that disparage and undervalue other religions in Egypt, such as Christianity and Judaism, stoke the flames of sectarian strife such as the Christians in *Ṭukh*. Other ethnic groups and minorities in Egypt, such as the Bedouins in *Sina*:?, the Turks in *Jīzah*, and the nomads, are frequently denigrated in Egyptian proverbs. Many proverbs are based on the distortion of true stories or historical manipulation, such as proverb 17 about *Minu:fiyyah*, proverb 24 about *Zifta*: and *Mīt Ghamr*, proverb 32 about *Al-Sharqiyyah* and many others about cities such as *Manşoura* and *Kafr Al-Sheikh*.

The sociolinguistic analysis of data has demonstrated that negative attitudes and emotions are more commonly associated with small villages than large cities. According to figures 3 and 4, the percentage of negative attitudes in large cities such as Cairo and Alexandria is much less than in other cities. This may be consistent with the notion that rural areas have a higher poverty rate than urban areas. Also, many negative attitudes are associated with great industrial urban centers such as *Damanhur* and *Mahalla*. This may be consistent with the fact that they are significant industrial centers filled with tension, stress, and competition as a result of trade and transactions.

One of the most significant conclusions of this study is that proverbs are not always didactic and prescriptive; they can also be satirical, sardonic, and humorous (Mieder 2004: 153). *Sha^l:n* (2003: 380, vol. 3) asserts that the majority of Egyptian toponymic proverbs are used as jokes. These proverbs arose from daily interaction, direct friction in relationships, and the consequent annoyances that manifest themselves in various ways. Some of these proverbs are local since they are prevalent in the same regions where they originated. They appear due to daily stress from conflicts, transactions, and interactions (*Sha^l:n* 2003: 296, vol.3). On the surface, it may appear that these expressions have no influence on the consistency of daily transactions and they are occasionally employed as a defense mechanism to alleviate tension and rage as *Sha^l:n* (2003: 306, vol.2) persistently claims. Nonetheless, this paper argues that these proverbs are hazardous weapons that should not be underestimated or disregarded. In fact, they are offensive and hurtful and may cause long-term harm to innocent individuals.

Numerous proverbs in this corpus make generalizations about the inhabitants of a province or country. *Al-Sa:ʿa:tī* (*Al-Wakīl* 2016) stated that this phenomenon is referred to in sociology as centering around race, gender, and social class. Each person believes that his or her country or province is the best. She noted that these viewpoints and evaluations are the product of specific circumstances that have imbued different governorates with distinct traits, features, and qualities. These features prompted residents of neighboring governorates to express their feelings towards them using idiomatic proverbs. *Al-Sa:ʿa:tī* stated that it is impossible to determine the origins of these proverbs because they are not dated, and that the majority of them are passed down orally from one generation to the next. (*Al-Wakīl* 2016).

6. Conclusion

This study seeks to demonstrate that folk-onomastics is an effective method for analyzing Egyptian toponyms in proverbs. By investigating the data of the corpus, it has been noticed that 80% of the Egyptian toponyms in colloquial proverbs are associated with negative attitudes. In order to understand the reasons for these negative attitudes, this paper has employed a two-fold approach to analyzing name data. It begins with a thorough semantic analysis of the place names in the proverbs, including the origins, the structure, and the language of the proverbs. The second phase investigates the attitudes which are implicated in the various perceptions and beliefs the Egyptian people might have regarding these place names. By tracing the history and origins of Egyptian toponyms, the paper has reached the conclusion that some of the Egyptian place names carry negative and offensive meanings due to historical, linguistic, social, and economic reasons. A classification of the Egyptian districts according to the percentage of negative attitudes in the corpus will be as follows: *Šaʿīd*, *Minu:fīyyah*, *Daqahliyah*, *Gharbiyyah*, *Sharqiyyah*, *Qahirah*, *Qalyubiyyah*, *Jīzah*, *Dumya:ʿ*, *al-Iskandariyah*, *Kafr Al-Sheikh*, *Al-Buḥayrah*, *Bur Saʿid*, *Sīna:ʿ*, and *Al-Suways*.

Egyptian toponymic proverbs are founded on pretentious, repetitive linguistic formulas that lack wisdom. They contain negative attitudes that are frequently interwoven with cynicism and humor. Some of these proverbs are false, deceitful, and contradictory. They promote racial discrimination, slander, and stereotyping. Analysis of data has demonstrated that negative attitudes and emotions that are more commonly associated with small villages might be attributed to the fact

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that rural areas have a higher rate of poverty than cities. Toponymic proverbs are primarily used as jokes by the Egyptian people. They are triggered by daily interactions, conflicts, friction in interpersonal relationships, and frequent annoyances. Some of these proverbs are local because they are commonly used in the same regions where they originated. However, these expressions have no influence on the consistency of daily transactions. They are occasionally employed as a defense mechanism to alleviate tension and rage. Finally, these proverbial slurs against the Egyptian people by Egyptians are harmful and should no longer be used because they can cause damage to innocent people.

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Appendix 1: Transliteration symbols for Arabic vowels and consonants

Arabic alphabet	Symbol	Example	Meaning
ء	ʔ	ʔamal	hope
ث	th	tha ^o lab	fox
ج	j	jamal	camel
ح	h	hub	love
خ	kh	khubz	bread
ذ	dh	dhahab	gold
ز	z	zayt	oil
ش	sh	shams	sun
ص	s	sayf	summer
ض	d	dayf	guest
ط	t	ti:n	mud
ظ	TH	THuhr	noon
ع	c	ʿabd	slave
غ	gh	gharb	west
ق	q	qalam	pencil
و	w	ward	rose
ي	y	yawm	day
فتحة ()	a	kataba	he wrote
ضمة ()	u	kutub	books
كسرة ()	i	sin	tooth
مد طويل / اى	a:	ka:tib	writer
ضممة طويلة و	u:	fu:l	beans
كسرة طويلة ي	i:	fi:l	elephant
Diphthongs	aw	mawt	death
(أصوات علة مركبة)	ay	bayt	house