

The Linguistic Landscape in East Africa 2000 BP

Maarten Mous for LHEAf team, Leiden University

Nairobi, WOCAL2024



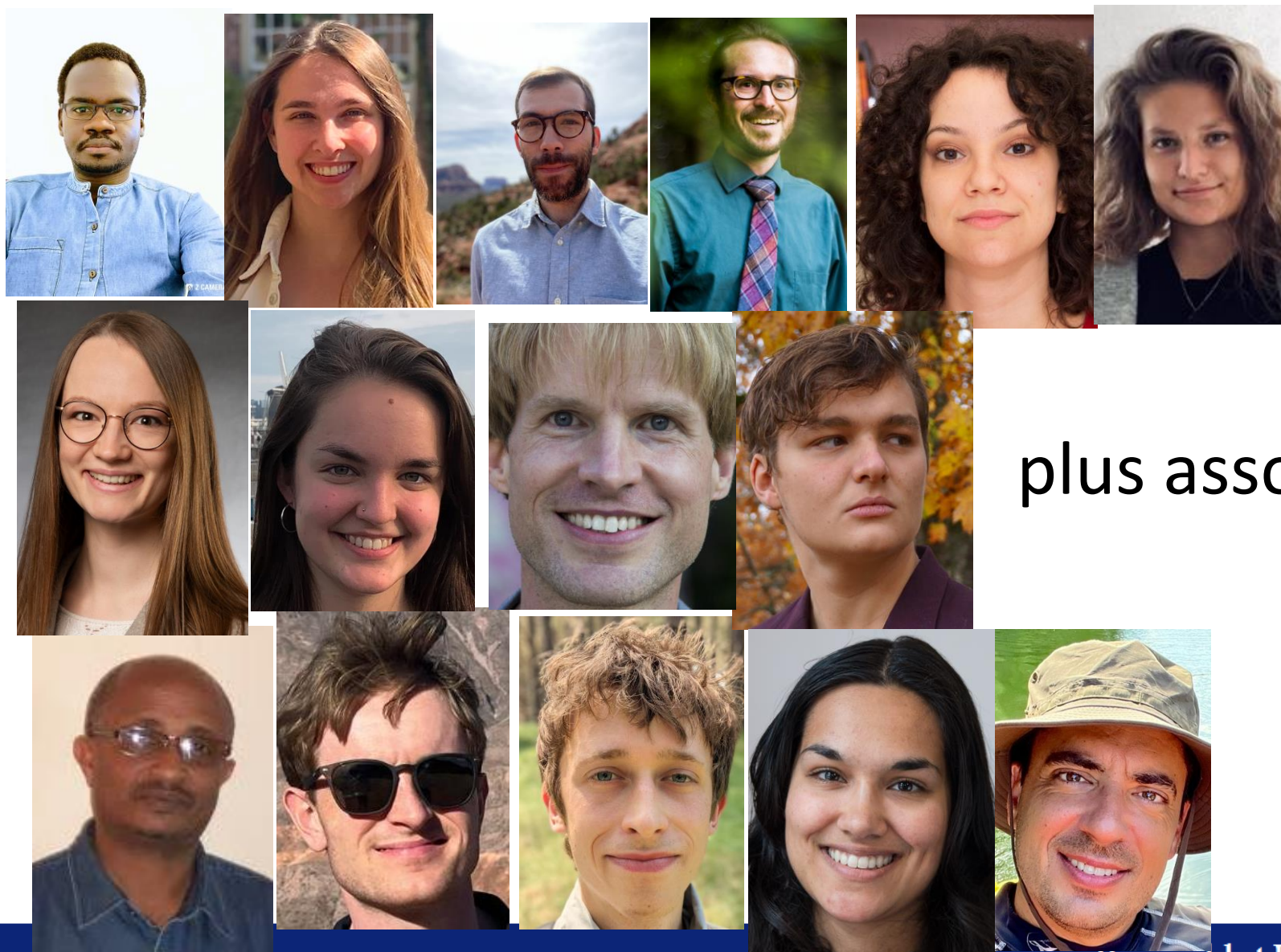
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preliminaries

- the results of our project on the linguistic history of East Africa.
- ended but not finished and to continue
- East Africa: we concentrate on current Kenya and Tanzania
- purely historical **linguistics**
- to be compared to results from other disciplines
- building on Ehret's work but critical and different

The LHEAf team



plus associates



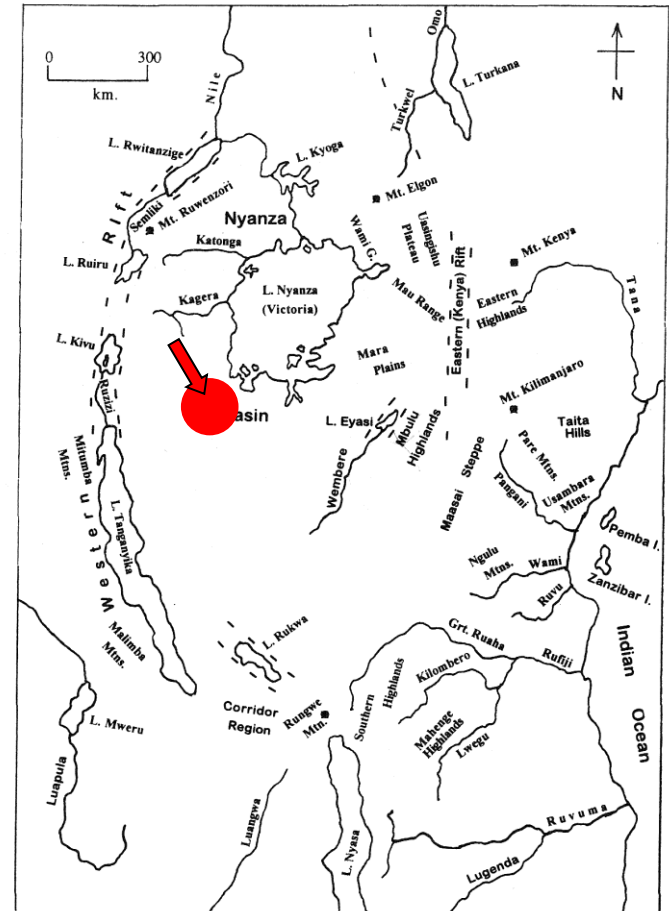
The LHEAf website

- www.lheaf.org
- find 22 publications and presentations
- which are combined in one here
- (rushing in times)

School book view on EA history

○ Southern Cushitic 4000 BP = Pastoral Savannah Neolithic culture

Before these migrations: Hunter-gatherers; stone age culture; KhoiSan languages (Hadza and Sandawe)

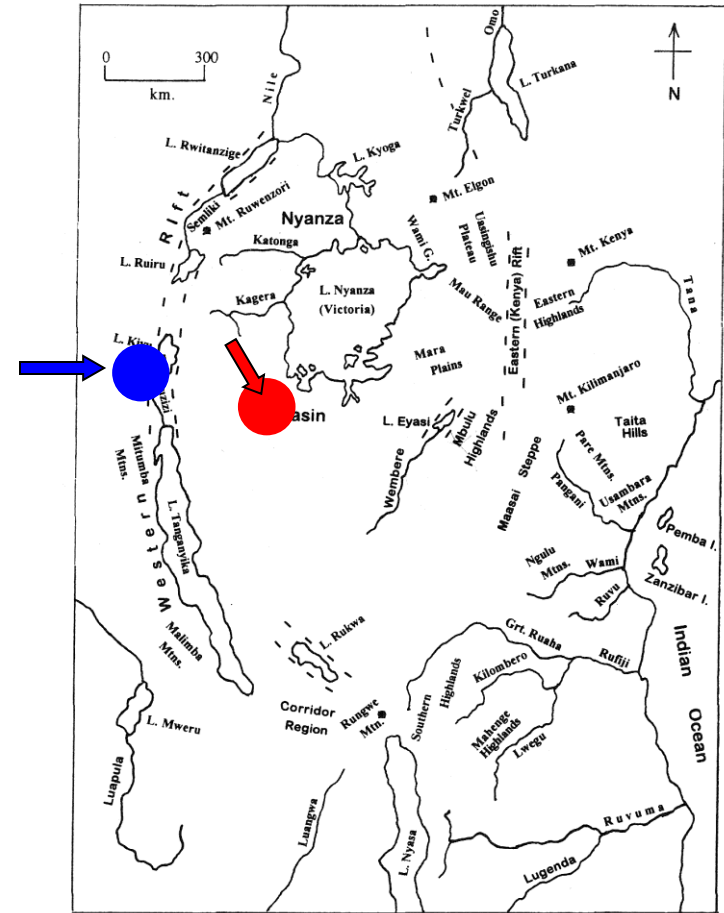


Map 3. The geographical setting of the Early Classical Age

School book view on EA history

- Southern Cushitic 4000 BP = Pastoral Savannah Neolithic culture
- Eastern Bantu 1500 BP = introduction of iron; pottery styles

Before these migrations: Hunter-gatherers; stone age culture; KhoiSan languages (Hadza and Sandawe)

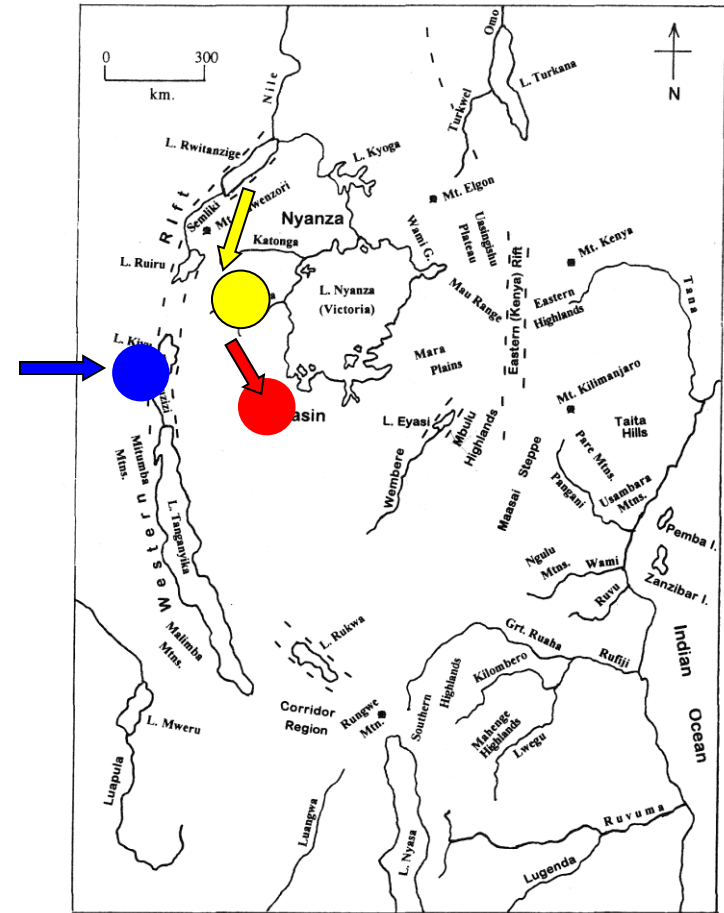


Map 3. The geographical setting of the Early Classical Age

School book view on EA history

- Southern Cushitic 4000 BP = Pastoral Savannah Neolithic culture
- Eastern Bantu 1500 BP = introduction of iron; pottery styles
- Southern Nilotic 1000 BP = Elmenteitan culture

Before these migrations: Hunter-gatherers; stone age culture; KhoiSan languages (Hadza and Sandawe)



Map 3. The geographical setting of the Early Classical Age

summary of results

1. the people present before Bantu, Cushitic, Nilotic were not all only hunting and gathering and may have had cattle (<3)
2. those earliest people include Kuliak [South Omotic still to research]
3. the Cushitic people arrived early in Kenya but late in Tanzania and in two groups
4. there were series of intense contacts between various Cushitic and Nilotic groups over time and place rendering it unlikely that archaeological cultures can be linked to Cushitic vs Nilotic families

more

5. the numerous Cushitic and Nilotic loans in the East African Bantu languages must have spread with these Bantu languages and cannot all be attributed to spurious former early Cushitic communities
6. East Nyanza (lake Victoria) functioned as a filter for Bantu groups entering Kenya and Tanzania
7. language contact suggest mutual cultural enrichment
8. contact suggests continuous reconstitutions of speech communities, especially noticeable across Bantu languages

players

- Bantu
- Cushitic: South, Omo-Tana, Oromoid
- Hadza
- Kuliak (Ik, So)
- Nilotic: South, East, West
- Sandawe
- Earlier inhabitants
- ~~Omotie~~

Circumstances:

climate, disasters, famine, epidemics, diseases, pests

link to **developments** rather than economy

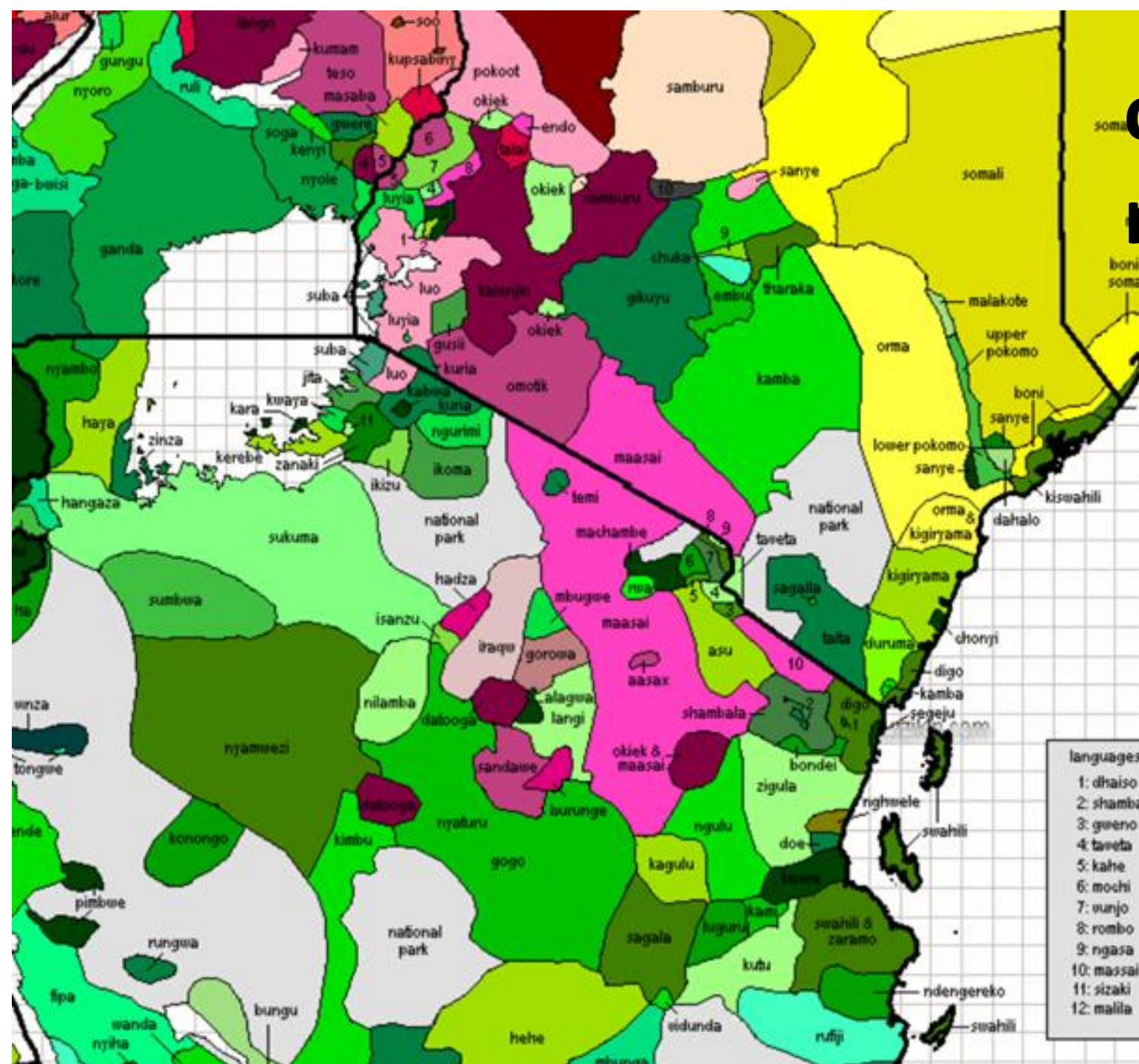
- hunting: defining activity and occasional: fishing (areas without fish); specialisations in hunting; bee knowledge; beehives
- domestication; goats, sheep, donkeys, cattle, camels, chicken, ...; breeding; specialising on cattle; use of milk & blood
- growing fingermillet, millet; peas +; new plants
- digging stick, various hoes, plough, terracing, irrigation; fallow land, shifting agriculture

approach



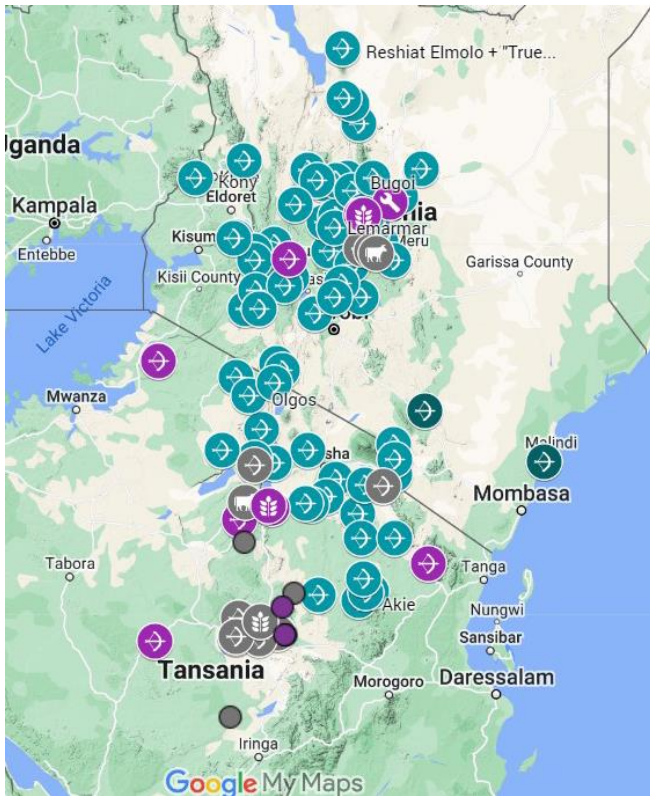
- extended lexical reconstruction specifically Cushitic by Ahmed Sosal
- non-Bantu \neq Cushitic
- to allow for researching language contact
- using contact situations for interpretations of movement and cultural innovation
- allow for direction of borrowing with earlier languages as source.

current mosaic



A portrait of a woman with long, straight brown hair and round, thin-rimmed glasses. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, top. The background is a neutral, light gray.

- [Dorobo and Vanished Peoples of East Africa – Google My Maps](#)



The map shows

- Reports on various Dorobo = dependent Hunter-Gatherers
- +
- Mentions of earlier populations in oral history

Early “hunter-gatherers” (HG)



- They were not all purely HGs
- Tanzanian Cushitic borrowed words from Sandawe (next)
- Current HGs are not a time machine to the stone age
- Not only HG's shifting to language of their pastoralist masters
- Also: pastoralist becoming HGs (after next)

Hermida, Rodrigues, Alba 2014. Sandawe language contact: Towards a linguistic map of early Tanzania. Ptdrntf at final LHEAf conference

Considerations

- Sandawe has some very detailed vocabulary for cattle domestication and agriculture
- Some of it is possibly transferred to Tanzanian Cushitic language
- Establishing direction of transfer is tricky because Sandawe is an isolate or isolated within Central Khoisan and proto-Tanzanian Cushitic has quite some lexicon that cannot be linked to the rest of Cushitic
- We explore the option to consider the direction Sandawe > Tanzanian Cushitic for those

Consider Sandawe > Tanzanian Cushitic

- Sa **tɬ'axumé** 'to dig a ditch' > Ir **tɬ'axuus** 'work in turn on each other's plot'
- Sa **muuʔ** chaff, straw, husks > pTzC ***muuʔu** chaff (m.) 'chaff'
- [Sa **tsà'tá** sterile cow > AlagwaBurunge ***tsa'ata** barren female (f)]
- Sa **kima** 'herd, flock' > Ir (poetic) **keemo** 'cattle'
- Sa **foróʔda** 'bull or any other male animal with only one testicle or apparently so, with one or both testicles not having descended in the normal manner' > Ir **foori** (f) 'sterile man'

Waata HG earlier pastoralists?



Semantics shifts suggestive of shift in lifestyle rather than in language:

- Oromo **kurroo** ‘milk container’ > Waata ‘honey container’
- Oromo **sorobad’d’a** ‘to collect food before a journey’ > Waata ‘to go and collect honey’
- Oromo **ribuu** ‘tendon, muscles’ > Waata ‘bowstring’
- Oromo **k’odaa** ‘all milk containers within one household’ > Waata ‘household utensils’

Loviscach, Dominique 2024. Herders without horde or hunters without history? Investigating the history of East-African hunter-gatherer groups. Talk at final LHEAf conference/

Early presence of Kuliak



- not only in East Uganda but also in Northern Tanzania
- Kuliak is a difficult family to work with:
Probably distantly Nilo-Saharan but with a multitude of layers in the lexicon from other languages
- marginalized people in recent times

Kuliak – Tanzanian Cushitic

- About 50 quite strong similar lexical items for Kuliak – Tanzanian Cush contact. This is a lot!
- There must have been quite intense contact
- Not necessarily in Tanzania for Cushitic; but also Kuliak-Sandawe; Kuliak-Hadza;
- Only for some items the TzCush word is retained from Cushitic (>Kuliak)
- For quite a few, the TzCush correspondent has no cognate within Cushitic (?<Kuliak)

What happened in last millenia?

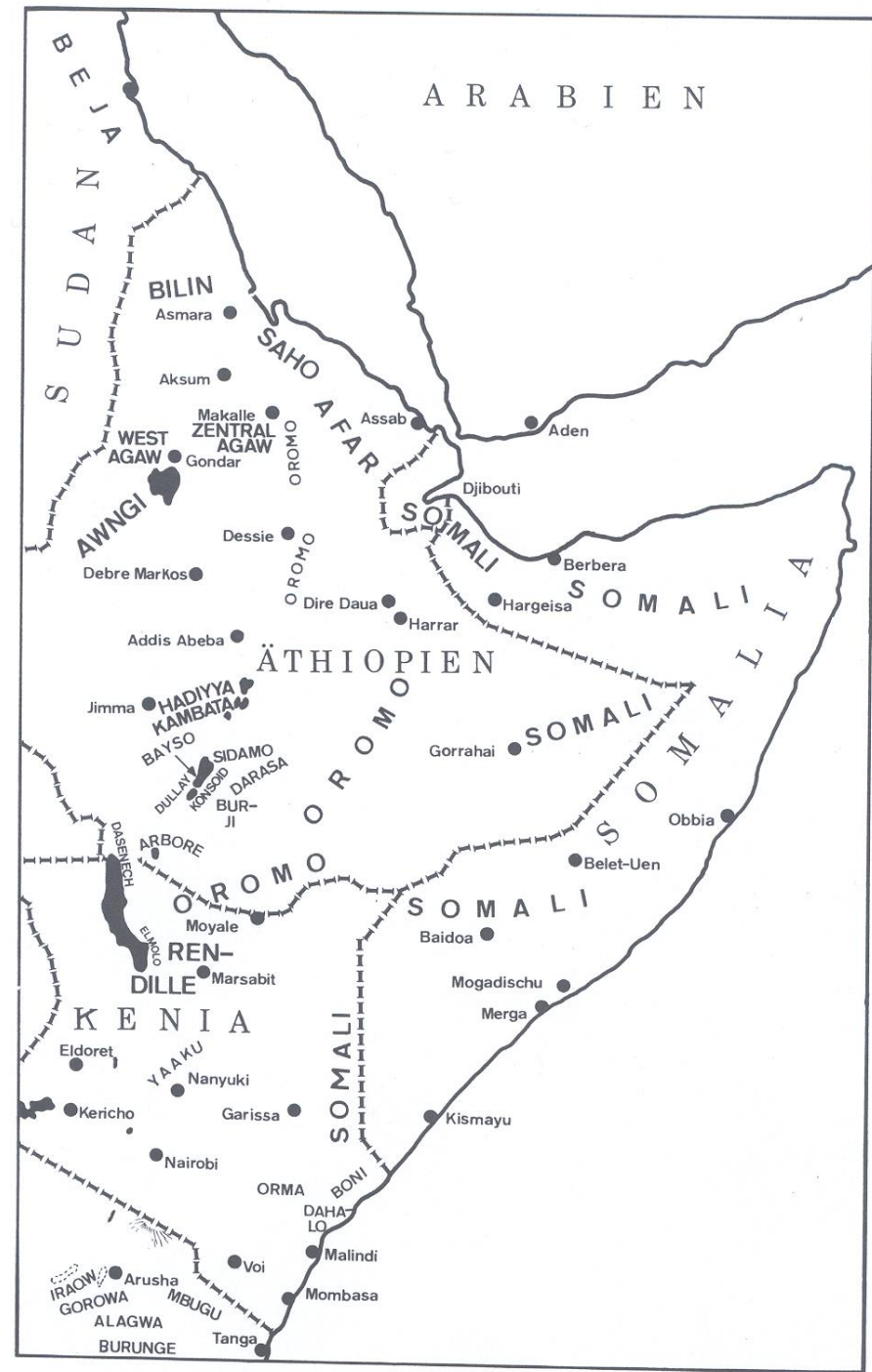
- South Cushitic migrated early to Kenya but late to Tanzania
- The migrations of Nilotic groups from Sudan to Kenya showed intense contact with different groups of East Cushitic in different areas and times
- suggesting cultural exchange and no correlation between archaeological culture and language family
- There was a now extinct group of South Cushitic speakers separate from Tanzanian South Cushitic in the Taita hills, Kilimanjaro and Pare mountains

...

- The contact between proto-Tanzanian Cushitic and Oromo plus the intense contact between proto-Tanzanian Cushitic and South Nilotic and specifically proto-Kalenjin show that Tanzanian Cushitic entered Tanzania relatively late
- The Bantu expansion into East Africa originated in the great lakes area. Transfer of cattle terminology specifically for male animals into East African Bantu languages suggests transfer of breeding knowledge
- We postulate this contact in the area east of Lake Victoria close to where proto-Tanzanian Cushitic and South-Nilotic must have been in contact

Migrations: A Cushitic

- Majority of Cushitic languages in Ethiopia
Oromo, Rendille,
Somali in Kenya in
since a few centuries
Yaaku, Dahalo
probably earlier
- Core of our project is
the extensive new
Cushitic
reconstruction by
Ahmed Sosal



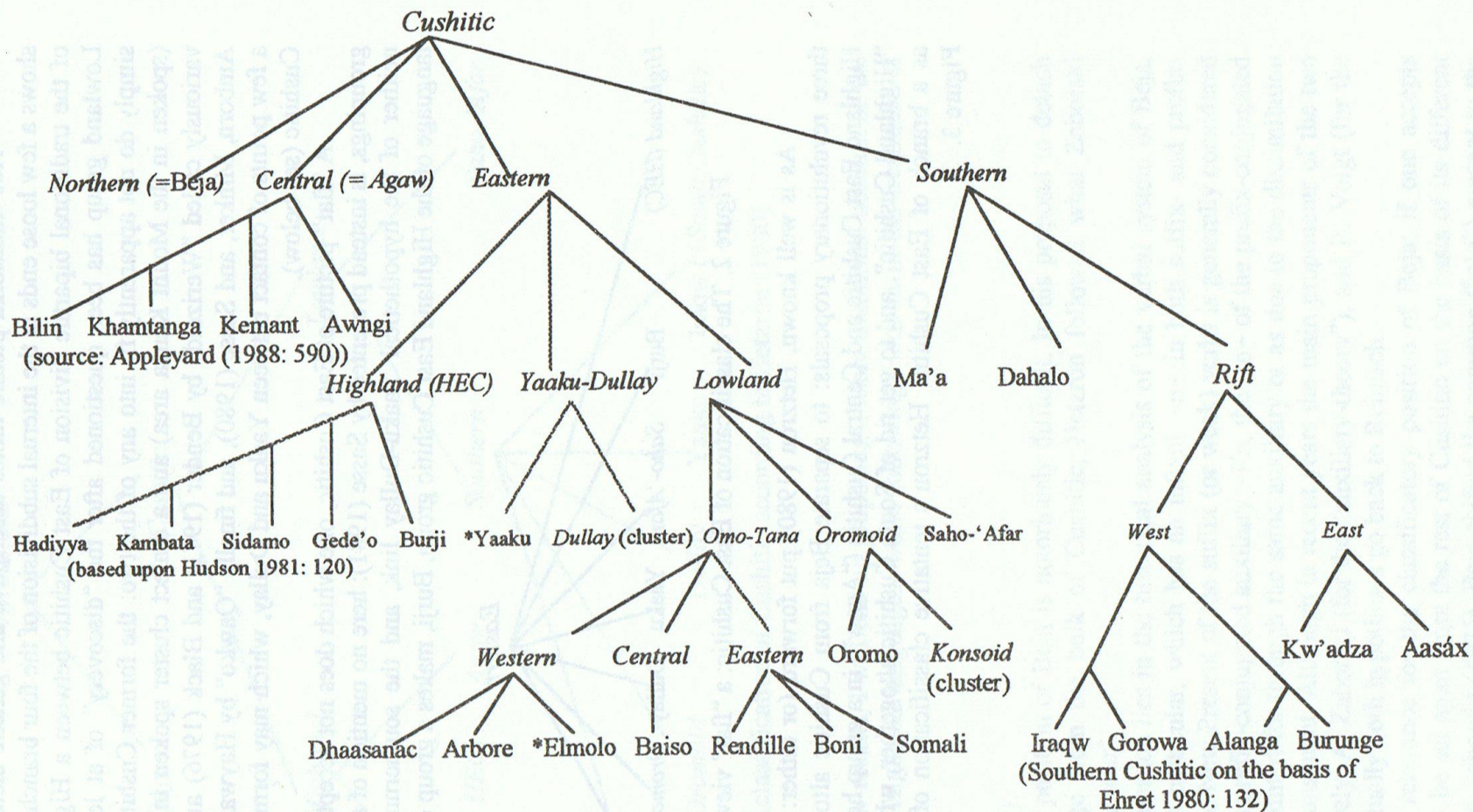


Figure 1. The classification of Cushitic: the traditional view

South Cushitic migrated early to Kenya but late to Tanzania



South Cushitic a major branch

- South Cushitic is indeed a major branch of Cushitic. It was proposed by Hetzron (1980) that it could be part of East Cushitic. Our results are:
- A. the retention of the lateral fricative and ejective affricates that have been reconstructed for proto Cushitic and shown to be retentions within Afroasiatic. The other Cushitic branches innovated resulting in loss of these sounds.

Beer, Sam, Andrew Harvey, Maarten Mous, Christian J. Rapold, Terrill Schrock and Ahmed Sosol in press. Lateral obstruents in East Africa from an areal and historical perspective: A case for contact-induced non-change,

Hetzron, Robert 1980. The limits of Cushitic *SUGIA* 2:7-126

Mous, Maarten 2023. The classification of South Cushitic. Paper at ICHL Heidelberg

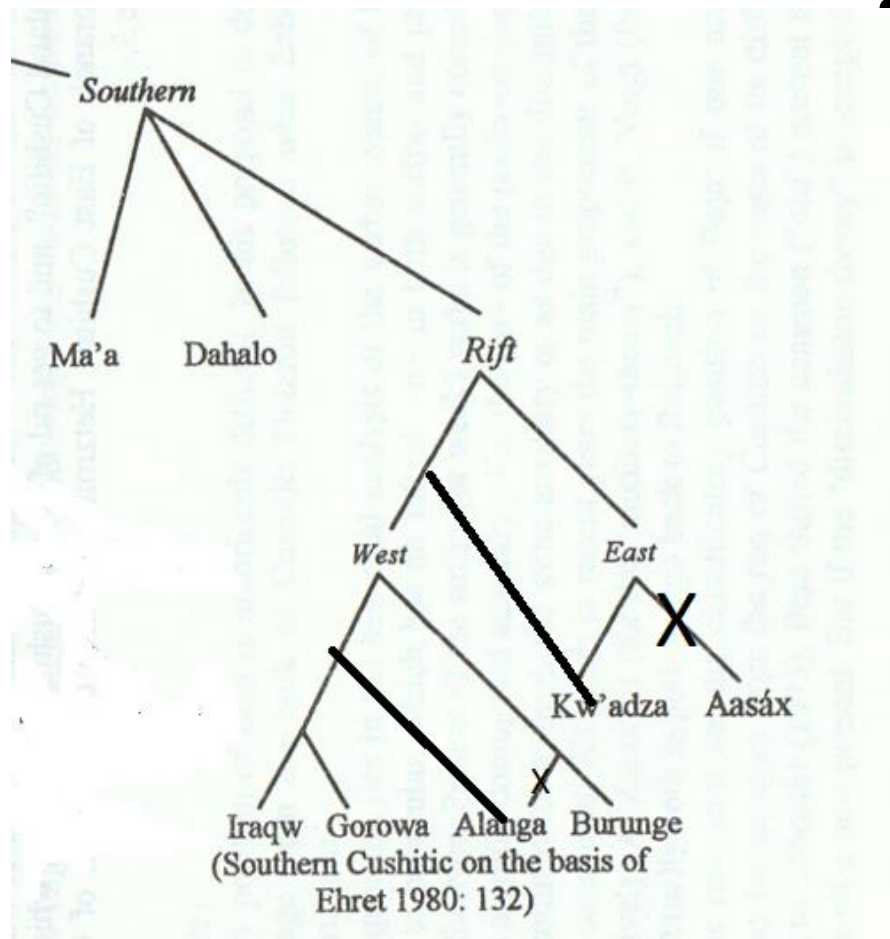
Lexical evidence

- Shared vocabulary and lexical meaning between Beja = commonly considered the first branch
- East Cushitic or Central Cushitic innovated,
- Either by replacement of the lexical item or developing a different lexical meaning
- unlikely that cognates in East Cushitic are simply not yet found because there best dictionaries
- Using Václav Blažek's work on Beja etymology

interim summary

- No arguments from morphology, except South Cush retention of **ku/ki** 2sg.m vs 2sg.f distinction. Versus loss of the *semantic* distinction in East C; with retention of both forms
- On the weight of arguments: South Cushitic is not part of East Cushitic and a major branch
- Later more of the apparent East Cush appeal of South Cushitic
- Early migration of South Cushitic, but where to? First: discuss contact with Nilotic

More on South Cushitic



Ma'á, being a mixed language with a very particular history, is excluded from South Cushitic for now, more later.

We do not know where in Cushitic to position Dahalo (shifted from a click language)

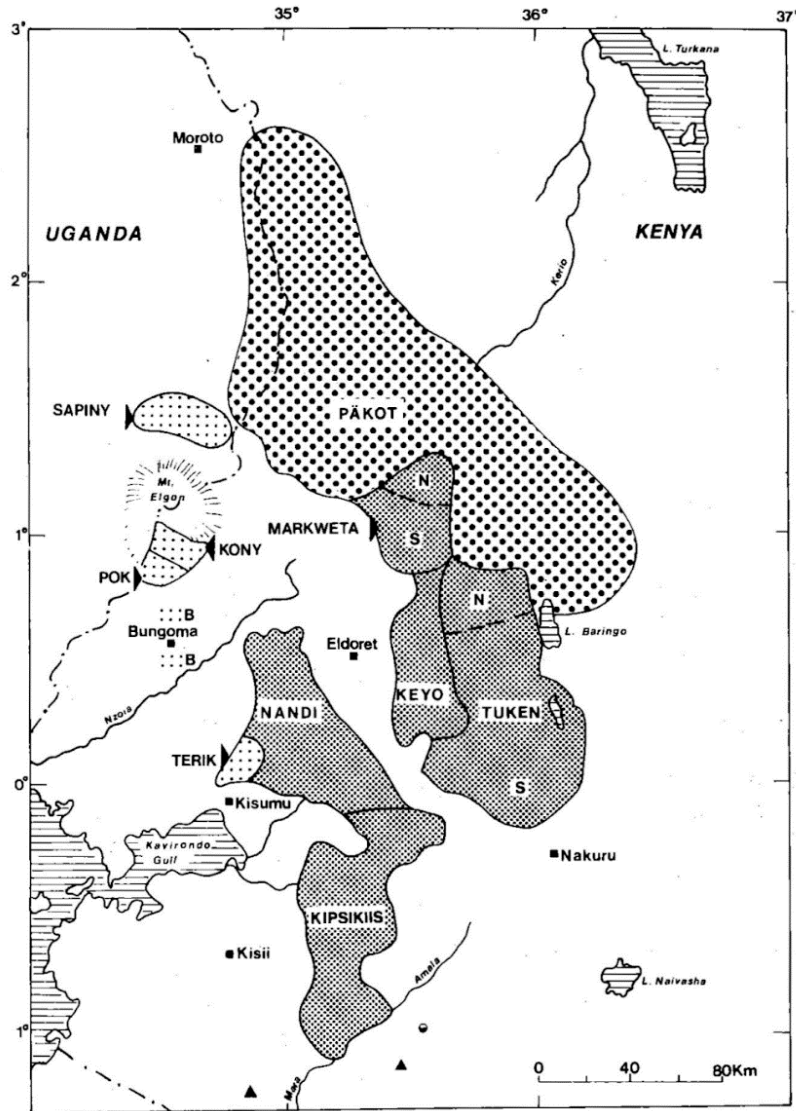
Mous, Maarten xxx to appear in Proceedings of ICHL 2022 Oxford

Iris Kruijsdijk. 2024. The position of Asá and Qwadza within Cushitic. In Yaqian Huang, Nina Hagen Kaldhol, Jun Jie Lim, Sharon Rose & Anthony Struthers-Young (eds.), ACAL in SoCAL: Selected papers from the 53rd Annual Conference on African Linguistics, 347–365. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11210466

B Migrations of Nilotic speakers

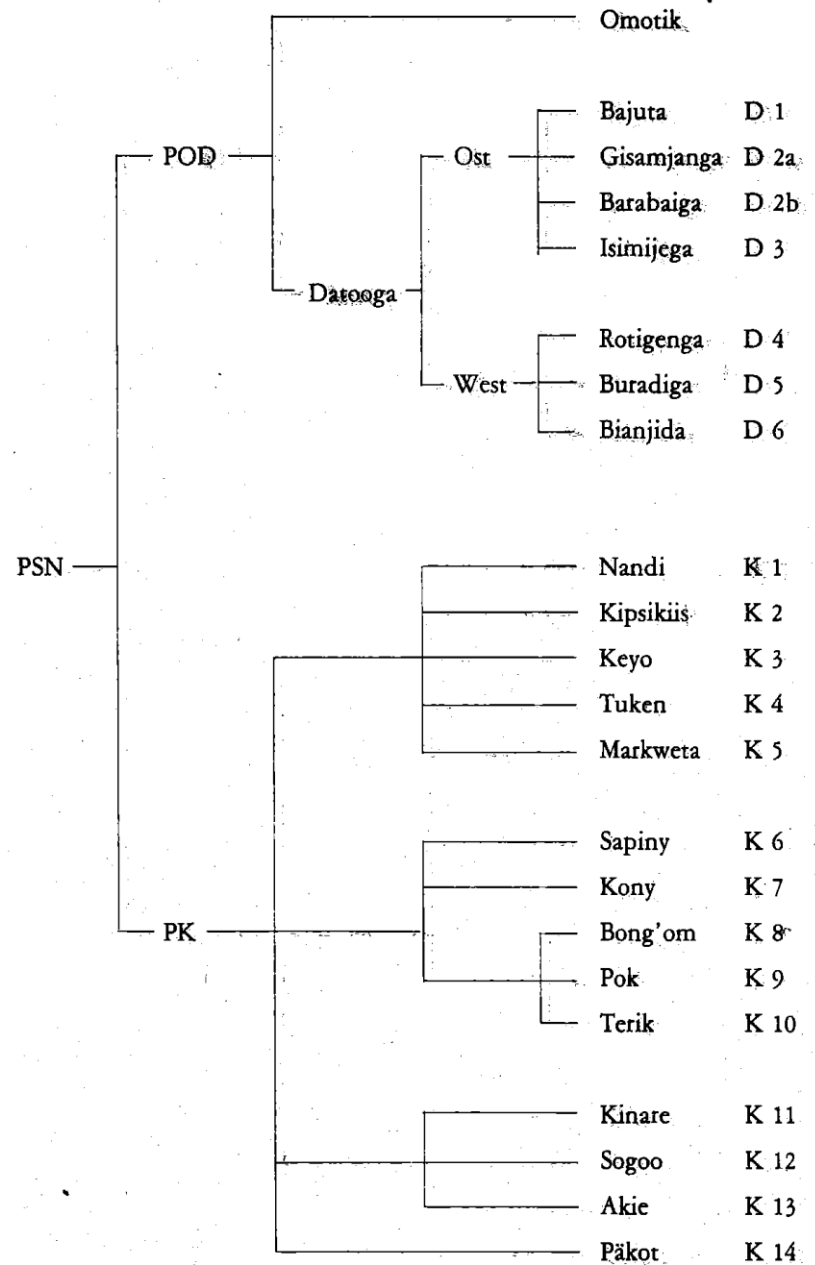
The migrations of Nilotic groups from Sudan to Kenya showed intense contact with different groups of East Cushitic in different areas and times

Nilotic: SN EN WN



Verbreitung der Kalenjin-Sprachen und des Omotik

- Paköt-Zweig
 Nandi-Markweta-Zweig
 Elgon-Zweig
- B BONG'OM
 • SOGOO
 ▲ OMOTIK





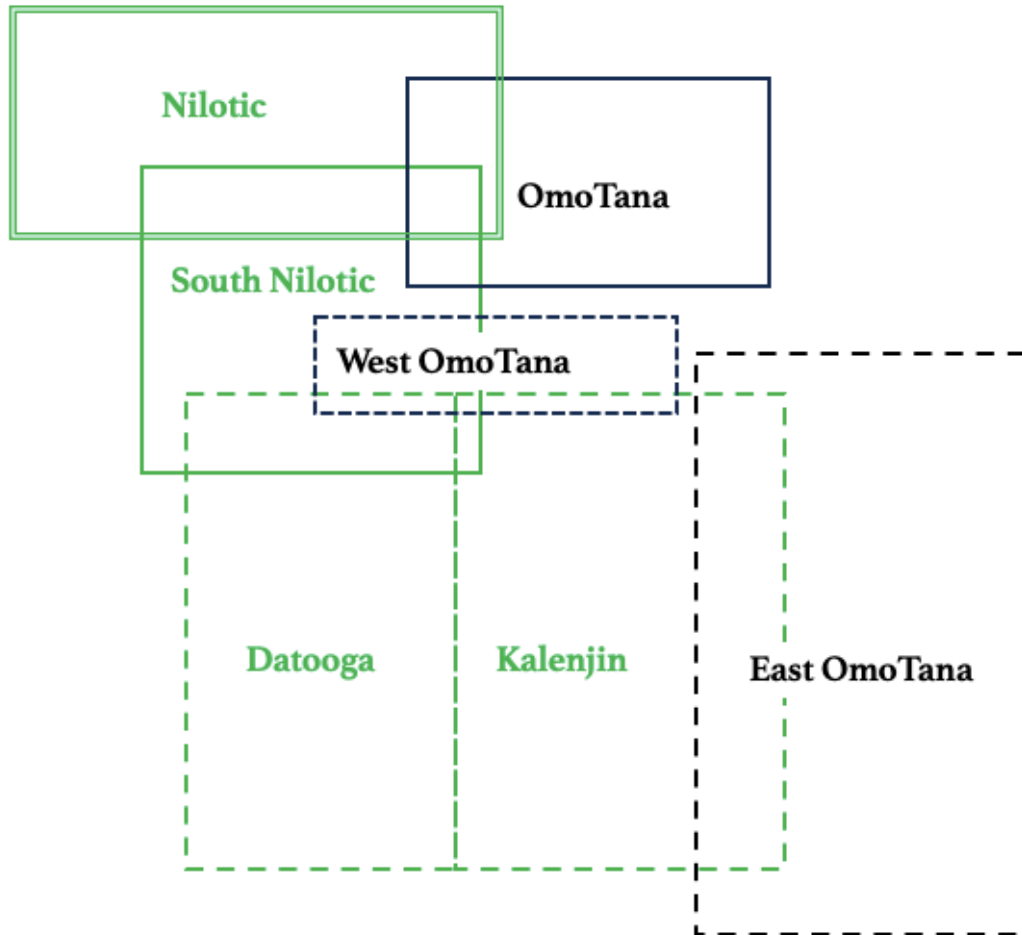
...

- The migrations of Nilotic groups from Sudan to Kenya showed intense contact with different groups of East Cushitic in different areas and times
- Cushitic-Nilotic contacts at various levels, periods and places
- South Cushitic – South Nilotic contacts

Mous, Maarten & Christian Rapold in press. Cushitic loans in South Nilotic revisited: a deconstruction of Proto Baz. Afrika and Uebersee.

Kiessling, Roland & Maarten Mous in prep. South Cushitic South Nilotic contacts

Map of Nilotic-Cushitic contacts



Early to Kenya Late to Tanzania

- South Cushitic early branch > early separation
- South Cushitic influenced by Oromo > late presence in Kenya and late entry into Tanzania
- protoTanzanian Cushitic in contact with South Nilotic and proto-Kalenjin > late presence in Kenya and late entry into Tanzania

Kiessling, Roland & Maarten Mous 2003 *The lexical reconstruction of West Rift (Southern Cushitic)*
Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.

Kiessling, Roland, Maarten Mous & Christian Rapold in prep. Oromo influence on Tanzanian Cushitic.

South Cush+Nil in “East Nyanza”

- AARA ‘goats/sheep’; ARAAR ‘see’; CAM ‘love, agree’; CAT ‘clip, cut’; †AKAAT ‘hunt’; OR ‘ashes’; TAKWEES ‘greeting’; TUP ‘bury, cover’; TEERIIT ‘dust’; TAA ‘guest’; WAAX ‘fear’;
- The transfer of **core concepts (replative)** and **verbs** shows that contact must have been **intense**. Possibly pK people being bilingual in pTzC.
- **Additive** borrowings: economic and cultural exchange

Environment:

KENEER ‘hyrax’;

KUUTA ‘aardvark’; MAK ‘hippo’; SOORI ‘buffalo’; SUYE ‘wild dog’;

Food production:

CAR ‘bleed cow’; SOON ‘barren’; TOMPES

‘camel’; TUI ‘pound grain’;

Cultural artifacts and house

INKOR ‘apron’; SEPET ‘half-gourd’; TUKADUK ‘doorpost’; YAAMA ‘floor’;

Social relations

PANAN ‘pauper; orphan’

Oromo influence on Tanzanian Cushitic

- When reconstructing proto Tanzanian Cushitic Roland Kiessling and I found and proposed that Oromo influence on proto TzCush
- We are currently deepening and expanding that observation because its historical consequences are major
- We propose **21 transfers** from (early) Oromo to proto TzCush; plus some derivational nominal derivations



...

- For some we can show they have undergone specific Oromo sound changes: hence Oromo and not a higher node
- Envisaging such contact is a challenge because of the huge distance between the language area and the relatively recent period when Oromo had evolved as a separate language

Just a few examples

Or. **foo-ni** → PWR **fuʔun-ay**

PEC **soʔ-** ‘meat’

Oromo **foː-ni** ‘meat’ (-

MASS)

pTzC **fuʔun-ay** ‘meat’ (-

COLL)

Or. **ja:l** → PWR **ɬaʔ**

PEC **geʃl-** ‘to love’

Oromo **ja:l-** ‘to love’

pTzC **ɬaʔ** ‘to love, like,

want’

Or. **jaww-** ‘python’ → pTzC

ɬan- Or. **jaba’a** ‘strong,

healthy’ → pTzC **ɬaf** ‘alive

Or. **ijjeera** → PWR **ɬaaraħí**

PEC **gerħ-** / ‘carix grass’

lerħ-

Oromo **ijjeer-a** ‘to thatch’

PTzC **ɬaaraħi** ‘grain stalks’

Iraqw **ɬarħi** ‘carix grass,

papyrus’

(used for thatching)

Or **fíntʃ-** ‘urine’ → pTzC **pits’-**

aħ ‘cow’s urine’

Or **gada** ‘age grade of elder

above 40’ → pTzC **gaduungw**

(n) ‘old people’

**South Cushitic = Tanzanian Cushitic
+ TaitaKiliPareCushitic**

Taita+ Cushitic

- Taita team meeting fortnightly on zoom to look for the etymological sources of apparent non-Bantu vocabulary in the Bantu languages Saghala, Davida (in Taita), Chaga languages and Pare language.
- Building on previous proposals by Ehret and Nurse for Taita Cushitic languages on the sole basis of loans in Saghala, Davida
- Team: Derek Nurse, Bonny Sands, Mauro Tosco, Ed Elderkin, Ahmed Sosal, Christian Rapold, Sjef van Lier, Gérard Philippson, myself

TAITA Cushitic preliminary results

- There is indeed a (or several) separate South Cushitic source(s) of loans into the Bantu languages of the Taita, Kilimanjaro, Pare and Usambara mountains.
- Into Saghala (+other): 20 potential transfers from Taita-Cush; 9 (12) from Dahalo, 14 from Coastal Bantu, ultimately Somali, 5 Maasai, 3 Oromo

...

- Hence: South Cushitic = (at last) Tanzanian Cushitic (Alagwa, Burunge, Gorwaa, Iraqw, Kw'adza) + Taita+ Cushitic (Taita, Kilimanjaro, Pare: original Ma'á language)
- With no claim (yet) on Dahalo, Asá

Non-Bantu lexicon into Bantu: The complexity of the exercise

East African Bantu



Corridor: Malila, Safwa; Bungu, Fipa; Nyika; Nyakyusa, Ndali

Kilombero: Ndamba, Pogolo

Mbugwe - Langi

NE Savanna Bantu

Central Kenya: Chuka, Meru, Tharaka; Embu; Gikuyu, Temi/Sonjo; Kamba, Dhaiso

Great Lakes

East Nyanza

Mara

North Mara: Gusii, Kuria, Suba

South Mara: Ikizu, Zanaki; Isenyi, Ikoma/Nata; Ngorome, Suguti: Jita, Kwaya

Greater Luyia: Logooli; Luyia Bukusu Saamia

~~Western Lakes (Kivu, Ruwenzori)~~

~~West Nyanza (Kerewe + Uganda)~~

Kilimanjaro-Taita: Chaga, Gweno, Taita/Davida, Saghala

NE Coastal Bantu: MANY

Sukuma-Nyamwezi

Southern Tanzanian Highlands: Bena, Hehe; ...

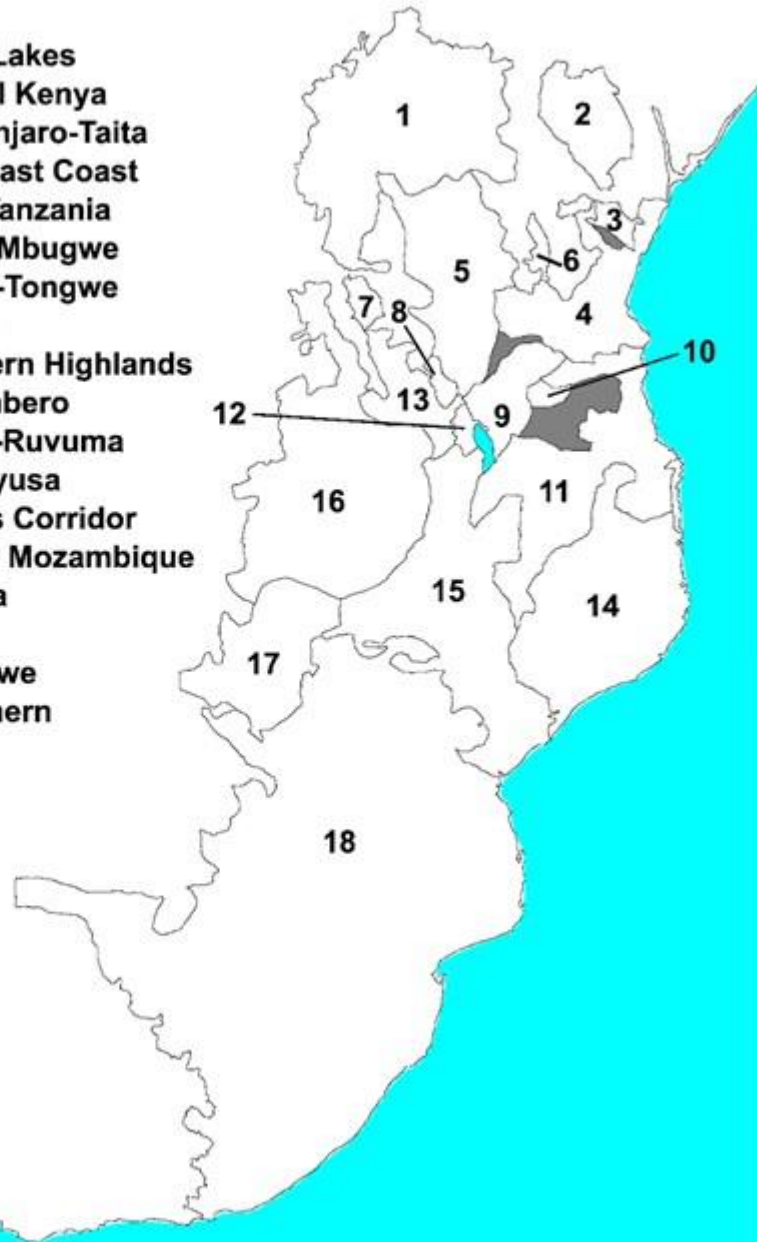
~~North Mozambique~~

Nyaturu-Nilamba

Rufiji-Ruvuma

East Bantu Clades

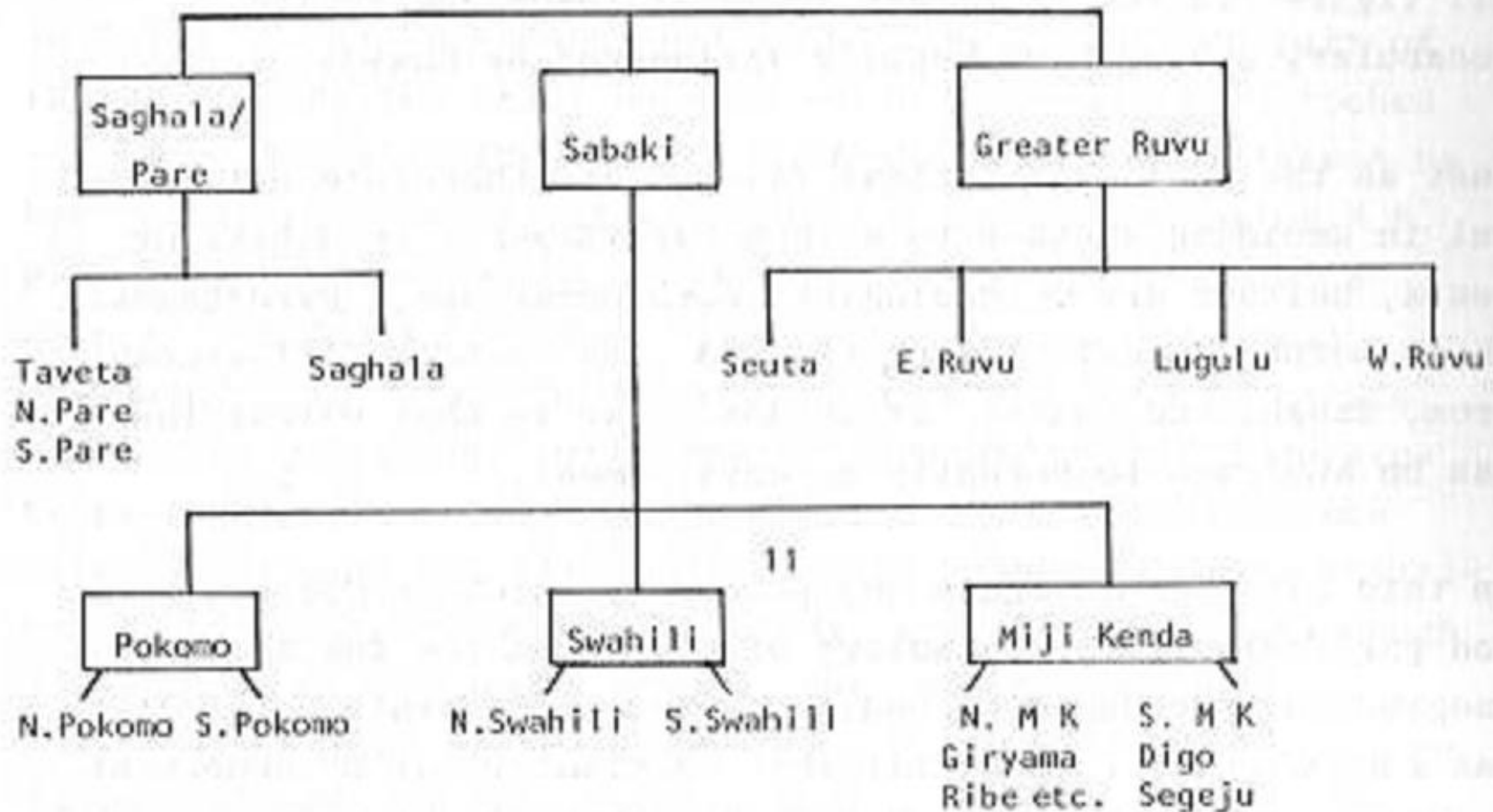
- 1: Great Lakes
- 2: Central Kenya
- 3: Kilimanjaro-Taita
- 4: Northeast Coast
- 5: West Tanzania
- 6: Rangi-Mbugwe
- 7: Bende-Tongwe
- 8: Bungu
- 9: Southern Highlands
- 10: Kilombero
- 11: Rufiji-Ruvuma
- 12: Nyakyusa
- 13: Lakes Corridor
- 14: North Mozambique
- 15: Nyasa
- 16: Sabi
- 17: Botatwe
- 18: Southern



NE Coastal Bantu

(1)

The North East



Complexities of Bantu spread in East Africa

- Conclusion from previous: Subclassification not settled
- Ideally non-Bantu transfer into Bantu should give us insight into earlier contact and culture
- But it turns out challenging to show regular developments of borrowed elements
- Bantu-Bantu contact is rampant
- What are the mechanisms and how different: The case of Rangi and Mbugwe

L(R)angi (F33) as an amalgamation



- Contradicting sound correspondences suggest “classification” as F30 is wrong or incomplete (Masele, Nurse: Chaga-clade)
- comparative method allowing for different lexical strata combined with clan histories suggest an amalgamation of different speech communities: Chaga/Pare (North) + Nyaturu-Nyiramba (West)
- merge of similar languages has its specific processes of adjusting form and (separately) semantics

Nurse, Derek 2023. A proposed new East African Bantu cladelet: Langi, Chaga, Dawida, Saghala. RVN – webinar YouTube.

Developments: lexical replacement

Rangi	Mbugwe	ProtoBantu	meaning	Swahili	Pare	
lù-fyò	lò-shó	-píú	knife	kisu	(kahandi)	Nyamwez i: lùshú; Chaga: kishu, kyandu

The item for *lù-fyò* ‘knife’ has a variant *lù-syo* in Rangi in its earliest attestations: Seidel has *lufyu*, *lusho* but later researchers (Nchimbi, Dunham, Stegen, Gibson) note *lù-fyɔ*. Double reflexes gradually dissolved with one winning rather than specialisation.

Rangi Oral Traditions

- settlement in Kondoa area East of Haubi at escarpment with Maasai plains; Haubi, spread
- mention of Nguru, Nyaturu (Vaweno clan)
- of Burunge and Alagwa to become Rangi, their own clans
- Traditions of a northern origin
- Nyaturu and Nyiramba have traditions of origin near Lake Victoria

NON-BANTU LEXEMES IN BANTU

East African Bantu



- About 150+ languages in Uganda-Kenya-Tanzania
- Arrival on northern coast Lake Victoria about 1500 BP (from 3000 BP pastoral presence there)
- Contact with the Cushitic + Nilotic societies in the Turkana corridor
- Considerable non-Bantu in Bantu:
- Dominique's database of proposed nonBantu loans in EA Bantu (725 entries)

Transfer as window to history



- Transfer from Cushitic/Nilotic at some level of proto-EA Bantu (subsequent regular sound changes apply) provides some indication of place and time (only chronology) of contact, of people.
- [distinguish from transfer at low level, individual transfers Cushitic Bantu]
- Several areas of Non-Bantu – Bantu contact: East Nyanza filter, Taita+area, later Kalenjin-Luhya contact, (Sonjo), ..., challenge of southern distribution

Male domestic animals

He-goat GULATA;

(Ram TULUME); (Ram KIRUK);

Bull JEKU/YAKAMBA/JAO all innovated in EA Bantu.

Trend in EA Bantu: male domestic animal term is innovated
maybe because breeding became important

- more at Bantu10 in Dar es Salaam

Mous, Maarten & Nina van der Vlugt. 2023. Presentation at LAEA Kampala

kurumo ‘hoe’

- The Nata (Mara Bantu) have a word **a-koromo** ‘hoe, hoe handle’ which must be a transfer from Tanzanian Cushitic kuru-moo ‘hoe’, given the presence of the Cushitic singulative suffix -mo. This is, in turn, derived from **kooloo** ‘heel, ankle’, and ultimately Cushitic, cf. pEOT ***kal** ‘ankle’. Evidence for the semantic link is the fact that Burunge uses the word for ‘ankle’ for ‘hoe’ (and Sandawe has borrowed it in that meaning in the shape **kòlòóng**). (Kiessling & Mous 2003)
- conundrum is the occurrence of **kolo** as a root for ‘hoe’ in Fipa-Mambwe-Lungu, an area famous for iron production, specifically the Fipa.

Summary and Conclusions

- About 2000 years ago Bantu languages were entering Kenya and Tanzania. Those who passed East of Lake Nyanza were in close contact with South Cushitic and South Nilotic speakers who had developed animal husbandry for a long time after a long period of influencing each other in their spread from Ethiopia and Sudan to Kenya with different cultures that were not differentiated along language family. The Bantu people that further spread to Tanzania and Kenya travelled with new knowledge of cattle breeding and the related words.

...

- The Tanzanian Cushitic people entered Tanzania shortly after and another group of South Cushitic influenced the early Bantu languages that found them in the Taita-Kilimanjaro-Pare area.
- The groups mentioned here met people speaking various other languages, some of them Kuliak and some related to Sandawe and very likely others. These speakers did hunt and gather as everybody did but also kept cattle as evidenced by archaeology and the late entry of Cushitic people into Tanzania.

...

- The linguistic history of East Africa is one of continuous linguistic and cultural contact. The speech communities are the result of continuous re-grouping of peoples with different language backgrounds.

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