

Hunting the words for ‘hunt’ in East Africa

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Linguistic History of East Africa (LHEAf)

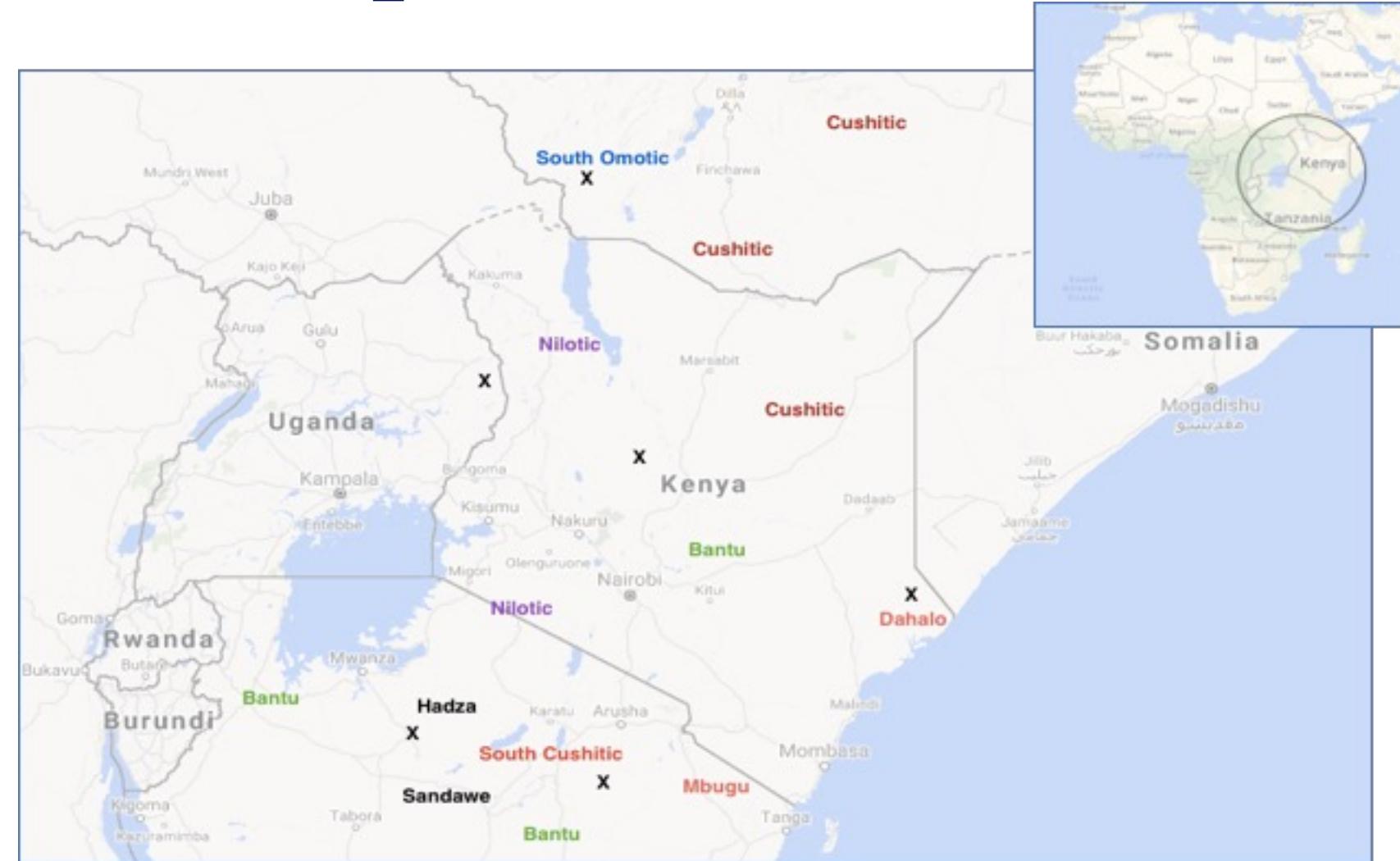


Why research “to hunt”?

- Trace the history of words
- Part of the linguistic history of East Africa (who was in contact with whom)
- Hunting is an activity known to all
- How come there are borrowings in this domain?

The linguistic landscape of East Africa

- Mainly Bantu languages (speakers arrived +- 1500 years ago)
- They met South-Cushitic and South Nilotic speakers in the area of Lake Turkana and Lake Victoria
- Hadza, Sandawe, and others present before the newcomers



Conundrum: competing sources

Proto Bantu

*tʃàk 'desire; wish; search for'

*tʃàk 'drive; chase'

*sak-a 'find food, trade or work for food' [Proto-Great-Lakes Bantu]

*tʃàgad 'lead away; accompany'
[Great Lakes area]

Tanzanian Cushitic

takaat 'to hunt'

Other Cushitic (Yaaku, Beja):
saag, saak.

Related Afro Asiatic: *sank-att*

South Nilotic

**lak-aat* 'to hunt'

Proto-Nilotic:

**lɔk* 'to trap, lay snare, angle'

Correction sources

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Proto Kalenjin *lak

Datooga

*ʃakaat

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'to trap, lay snare, angle'

How many different roots (1, 2, 3)?

Different scenarios possible:

- A: Tanzanian Cushitic borrows from Datooga (South Nilotic)
 - $f > t$ loan adaptation
 - No *fa* in TzCush
 - Bantu similarity is coincidence
- B: Tanzanian Cushitic inherited from Proto Cushitic
 - Proto Cushitic **tak* which became *saak* or *saag* in the other branches that lost *t*
 - Similarities with Bantu and with South Nilotic is coincidence
- C: Tanzanian Cushitic borrows from Great-Lakes-Bantu
 - Similarity with Datooga is coincidence
- D: ...
- Bantu—Cushitic similarities must be coincidence if the Cushitic roots are cognate: Enormous difference in time and space
- Cushitic—Nilotic similarities are often due to long history of contact at various levels but can also be considered not so similar for this root.

The second syllable: a grammatical suffix?

Proto Bantu

*-at contactive
*-ad extensive

*tʃsàgad 'lead away; accompany'
[Great Lakes area]

Not on 'to hunt' except for 3 East African Bantu languages: inherited or borrowed?

Tanzanian Cushitic

*-t middle, stative

Proto Cushitic

*-t middle

Semantically bad fit but
Highland East Cushitic
Kambaata **hugaat** and
Sidaamo **ugaat** 'to hunt'

South Nilotic

-at movement away

Fits best in meaning: such an extension in unrelated Ik **sag-w-** 'to hunt'

East Bantu



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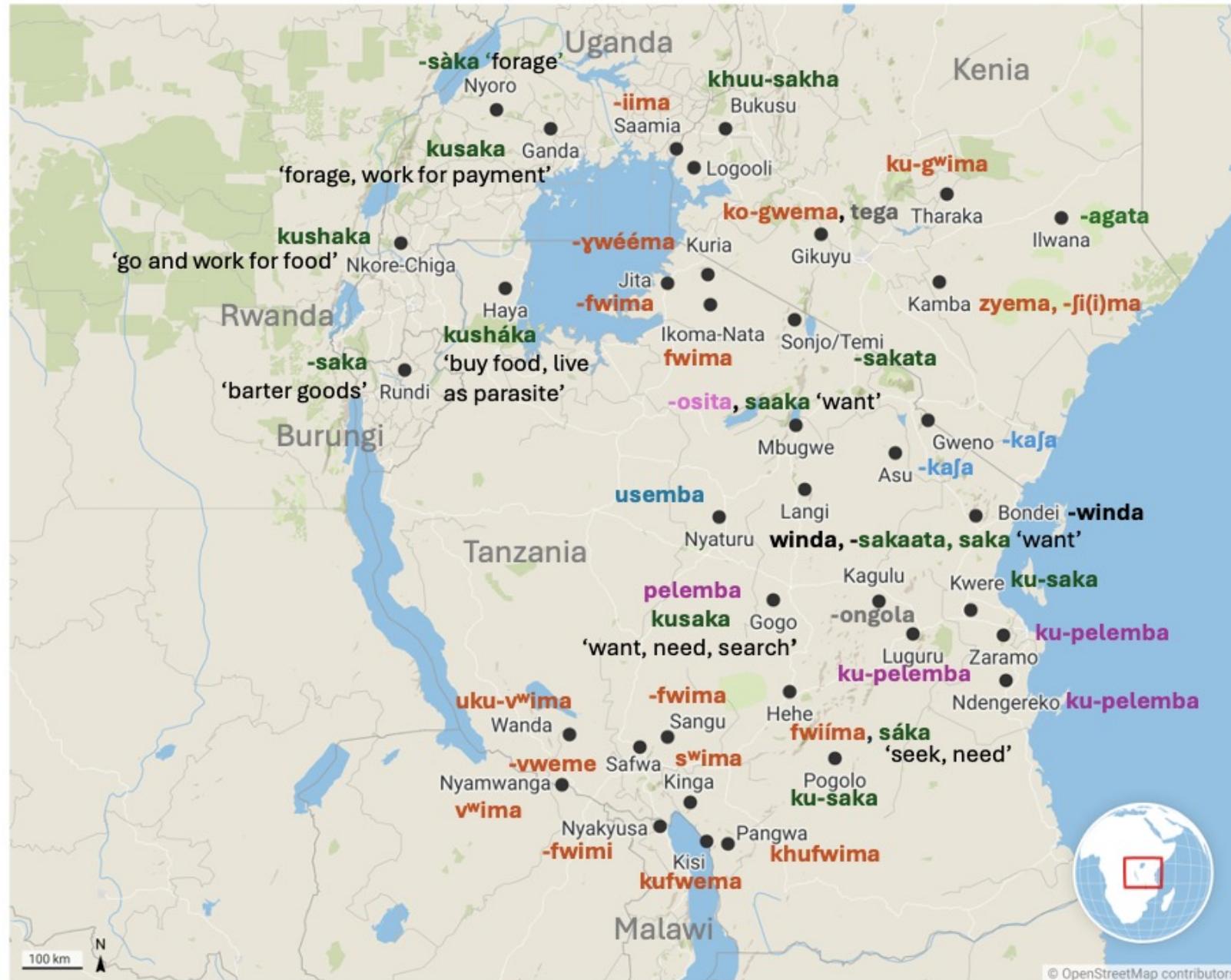
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“to hunt” in East Bantu

- One of the roots for ‘hunting’ in East Bantu: *-saka*
- Similar to Cushitic and Nilotc *takaat/sakaat*
- How to test if language contact might play a role here?
 - Sample of 38 languages
 - Data from published sources
 - Resemblances in form and meaning (cf. colexifications in CLICS database)

Eastern Africa

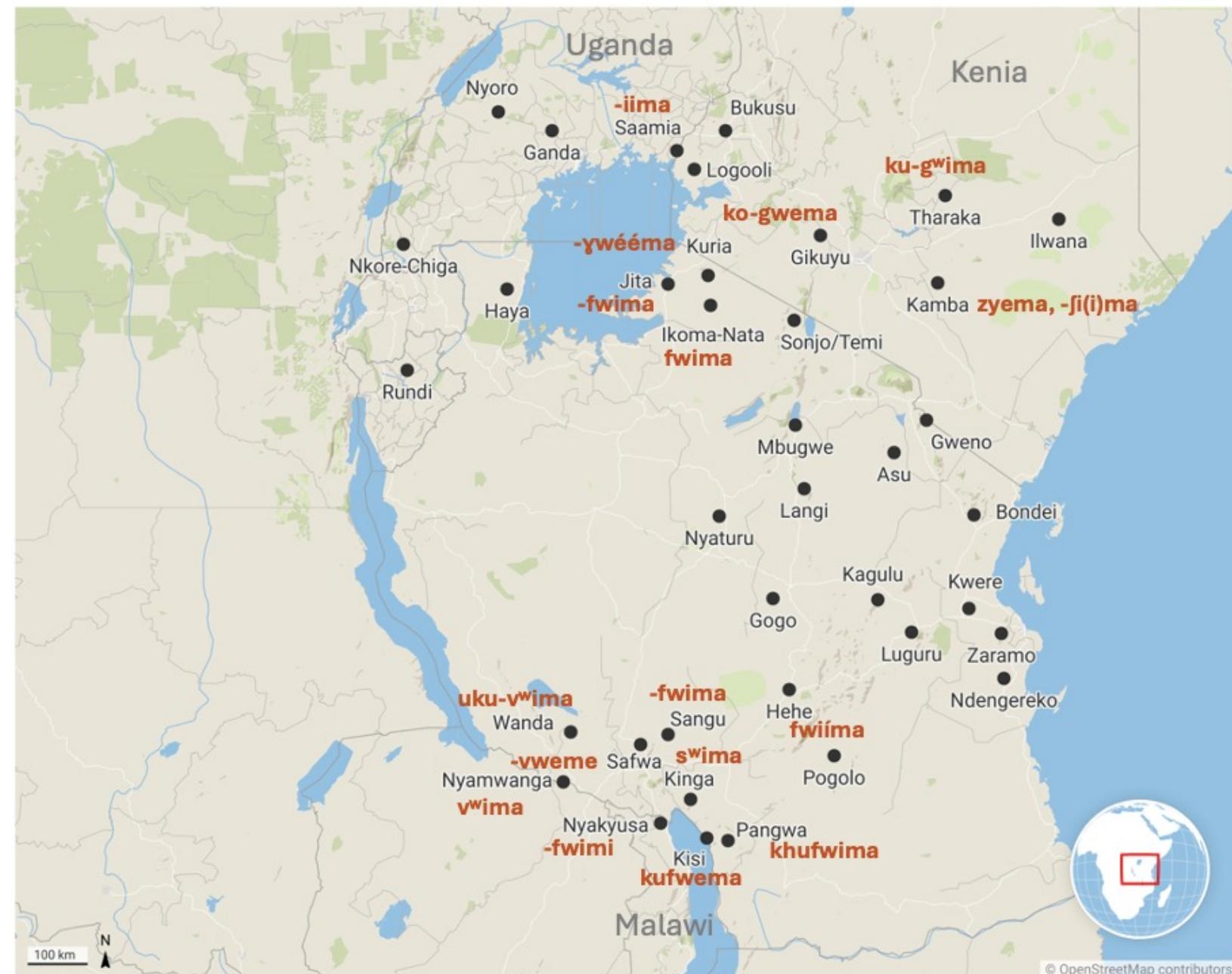
- saka**
- fwima/gwima/...**
- pelemba**
- winda**
- kaja**
- ongola**
- osita**



*gúim ‘hunt’

- *-gwima* in Kenya
- *-vwima* and *-fwima* further south
- Proto Bantu root: *gúim ‘hunt’
- Retention
- Time must have passed; regular sound changes from *g* > *v* > *f* before *_u*
- Variation due to regular sound changes in Bantu (“Bantu Spirantization”)

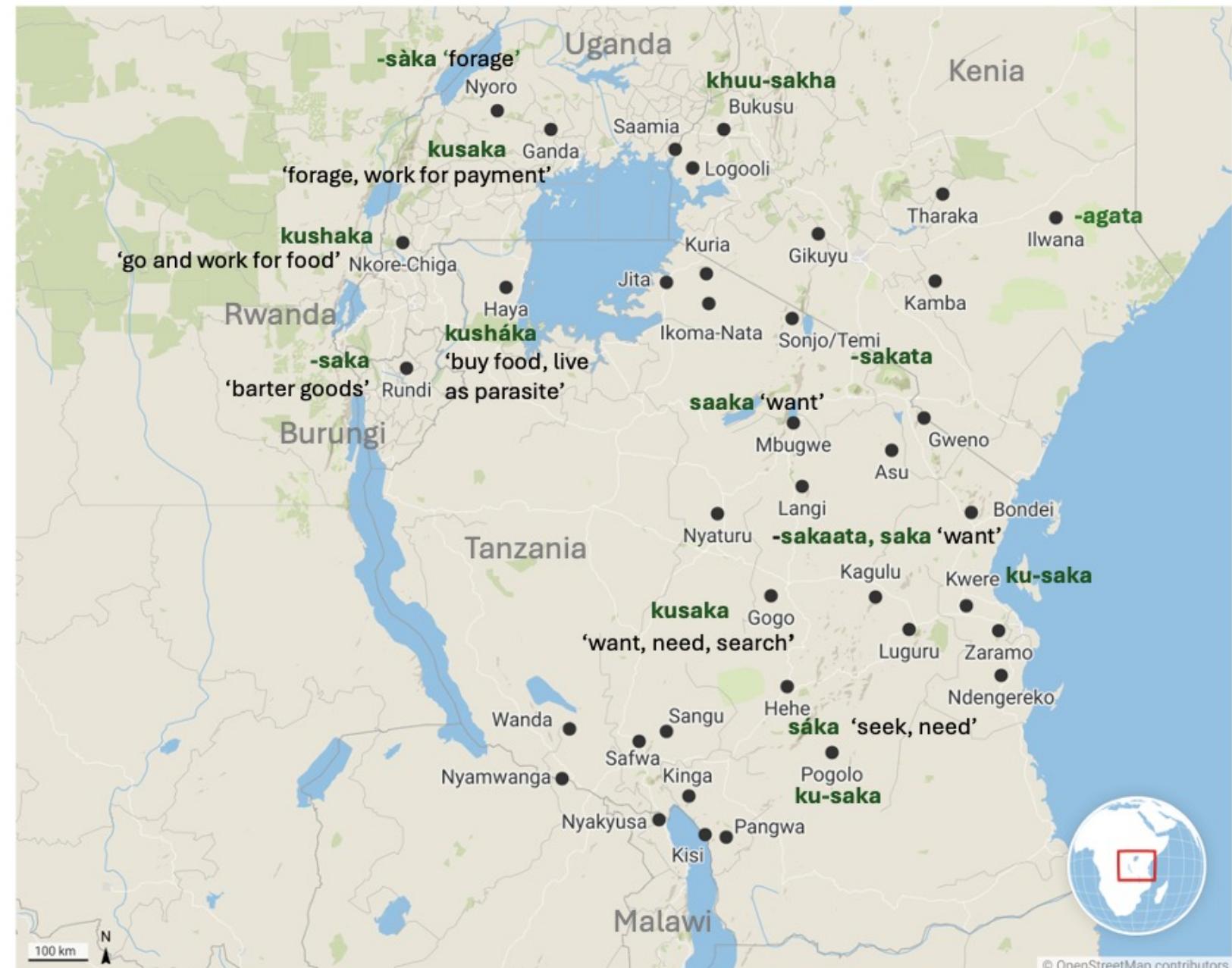
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-saka

- Great Lakes Bantu and Coastal Bantu
- Variety in meaning
- Proto Great Lakes (cf. Schönbrun (1997: 64)): “Find food, trade or work for food”
- Coastal Bantu: ‘hunting’, ‘seek, need, want, search, require’

Eastern Africa



*tʃàk

- Two Proto Bantu roots *tʃàk
 - 1.‘desire; wish; search for’ → widespread
 - 2.‘drive; chase’ → less widespread
- Great Lakes meaning: ‘Find food, trade or work for food’
- Coastal Bantu: ‘hunt’ OR ‘seek/want/search’
- Innovated meaning together (and Coastal Bantu lost) or apart (and Great Lakes specialized)?

-sakata

- Some Bantu languages (Sonjo/Temi, Langi, Central Chaga) have *-sakata*
- Analytical issue: are these from Cushitic/Nilotic or from Bantu?
 - These languages have been in contact with Cushitic
 - Proto Bantu reconstruction: *tʃagad ‘lead away; accompany’

“to hunt” in Bantu

- Numerous roots for hunting:
 - *-saka(ta), -gwima, -pelemba, -winda, -kasa, -ongola, -osita*
- Enormous variety in roots in geographically close languages, otherwise closely related
 - Diversity in the centre

Eastern Africa

- saka**
- fwima/gwima/...**
- pelemba**
- winda**
- kaja**
- ongola**
- osita**



“to hunt” in Bantu

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- Enormous variety in roots in geographically close languages, otherwise closely related
 - Diversity in the centre
- More research into the other roots for ‘hunt’, but *–saka* and *gwima* reconstructed for Proto Bantu (albeit with different semantics)
- Variety in ‘hunt’ and no conclusive Proto East Bantu word(s)
- Guthrie (1971): ”The terms for hunting in many Bantu languages are not very specific, which makes any inferences about hunting practices among the speakers of Proto-Bantu rather inconclusive. For fishing and water craft however the situation is quite different, since there are attested terms for ;to fish with a line’, ‘fish-hook’, ...”

Concept of “hunting” in Bantu

- Roots not widespread, however: ‘set (a trap)’ *tég or *dác ‘shoot at (bow); hit with missile, throw (away); bleed cattle’
- Specialized hunting terminology, reconstructable to Proto Bantu and widespread
- Is “hunting” an overarching concept?

Summary and conclusions

- Diversity in meaning
- Many different activities that we could call ‘to hunt’
- Borrow words for NEW concepts but also for HIGHER LEVEL concepts
- Proto Tanzanian Cushitic had separate words for ‘to chase’, ‘to set a trap’, ‘to kill a big animal’, ‘to shoot’ and added a general word ‘to hunt’ from Datooga/South Nilotc

Conundrum again

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*ʃakaat

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'to trap, lay snare, angle'

Revisiting the scenarios

- A: Tanzanian Cushitic borrows from Datooga (South Nilotic)
 - *f* > *t* loan adaptation, no *sa* in Tanzanian Cushitic, Bantu similarity is coincidence
 - Pro: Pro: explains -aat in Tz Cush best; is feasible as cover term loan; are known to have been in close contact
 - Cons: leaves other Cushitic look-a-likes just that.
- B: Tanzanian Cushitic inherited from Proto Cushitic
 - Proto Cushitic **tak* which became *saak* or *saag* in the other branches that lost *t*, Similarities with Bantu and with South Nilotic is coincidence
 - Pro: explains Cushitic Cognates
 - Con: does not explain similarity to Datooga; and ending -aat inherited?
- C: Tanzanian Cushitic borrows from Great-Lakes-Bantu
 - Similarity with Datooga is coincidence
 - Con: does not explain ending -aat; does not explain difference in meaning
- D: A few Bantu languages borrowed from Tanzanian Cushitic and/or Datooga.
 - Pro: explain absence of -at in rest of East African Bantu; 2 of 3 languages are known to have had intense contact

Conclusions

- HUNT crucial for pioneers
- Bantu newcomers in Great-Lakes region developed the meaning of one of their words into “go and look for food in whatever way”
- Many Bantu languages innovated yet other words
- Does the difference in meaning between Great-Lakes Bantu and Cushitic/Nilotic point to different roots?
- Lexical innovation for this item is quite common
- *-saka/-sakaat*: all reconstructable to the proto languages
 - No contact then
 - Chance resemblance
- How do we decide whether similarity shows transfer?

Thank you! Questions/comments...?

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Method

- Sample: 37 languages
- Sources: dictionaries, grammars, surveys
- Form and meaning resemblances
 - Form: *saka/saga/sagat/...*
 - Meaning → CLICS database: database of colexifications (polysemy or homophony) (two concepts linked by the same word, eg BLOEM in Dutch can mean ‘a flower’ or ‘grinded grain’)

Colexified concepts:

Links	Concept
17	LOOK FOR
15	FOLLOW
14	SHOOT
11	DISPEL
10	PURSUE
8	SEIZE
8	CATCH
5	KILL
4	TAKE
3	BITE
3	TRAP (CATCH)
3	WALK