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# On the non-Bantu origins of reflexive-reciprocal polysemy in Tanzanian Bantu languages

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## *Reflexive and reciprocal markers in Bantu*

- In most Bantu Languages, the reflexive marker is a prefix (inherited from the Proto-Bantu reflexive prefix *\*i-*):

1. Juma a-li-ji-on-a [Swahili G42]  
Juma SM1-PST-REFL-see-FV  
'Juma saw himself'

- The reciprocal marker is a suffix (from Proto Bantu *\*-an*):

2. Juma na Miriam wa-li-on-**an**-a [Swahili G42]  
Juma com Miriam SM2-PST-see-RECP-FV  
'Juma and Miriam saw each other'

## *Reflexive/Reciprocal polysemy*

- Some Tanzanian Bantu languages have REFL/RECP polysemy, which is not inherited from Proto Bantu
- The originally reflexive prefix has expanded to encode both reflexive and reciprocal events:

3. ʊ-Naftali    na    ʊ-Juma    a- <b>i</b> -yón-ile	[Nilamba F31]
AUG-Naftali COM AUG-Juma SM2PL- <b>REFL/RECP</b> -see-PFV	
‘Naftali and Juma saw each other/themselves.’	(Ngwasi 2021, 141)

## Overview

### Objectives of this study:

1. Mapping the distribution of the innovated REFL/RECP prefix in TNZ Bantu
2. Propose a hypothesis for its development

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1. The innovation is found in at least 26 Tanzanian Bantu languages belonging to different genealogical sub-groups. – Spread through contact.
2. Grammaticalization patterns suggest that the innovation originated in the Tanzanian Rift Valley
3. Possibly introduced in Bantu through Cushitic or Nilotc substrate influence

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### Relevance for LHEAf:

- Shows patterns of Bantu-Bantu contact in Tanzania
- Indication of Cushitic and/or Nilotc substrate influence in Tanzanian Bantu (multilingualism/language shift)

# 1. Geographical distribution

## Earlier works

- Polak (1983, 297) claims that the reflexive prefix is used for reciprocals in Hehe (G62), Nyaturu (F32), Sukuma (F21), and Sumbwa (F23).
- Stegen (2003, 11) mentions the reflexive-reciprocal prefix as an innovation found in some languages in Guthrie's zone F, namely Sukuma, Nyamwezi (F22) and Rangi (F33)
- Ngwasi (2021), shows that the prefix is the productive reciprocal marker in Nyaturu, Sukuma, Nilamba (F31), and Hehe, but with some specific (mostly natural reciprocal) verbs the reciprocal marker is still the suffix *-an*:

5. **kʊ-omol-an-a**  
INF-divide-REC-FV  
'to share'

[Nilamba F31]  
(Ngwasi 2021, 81)

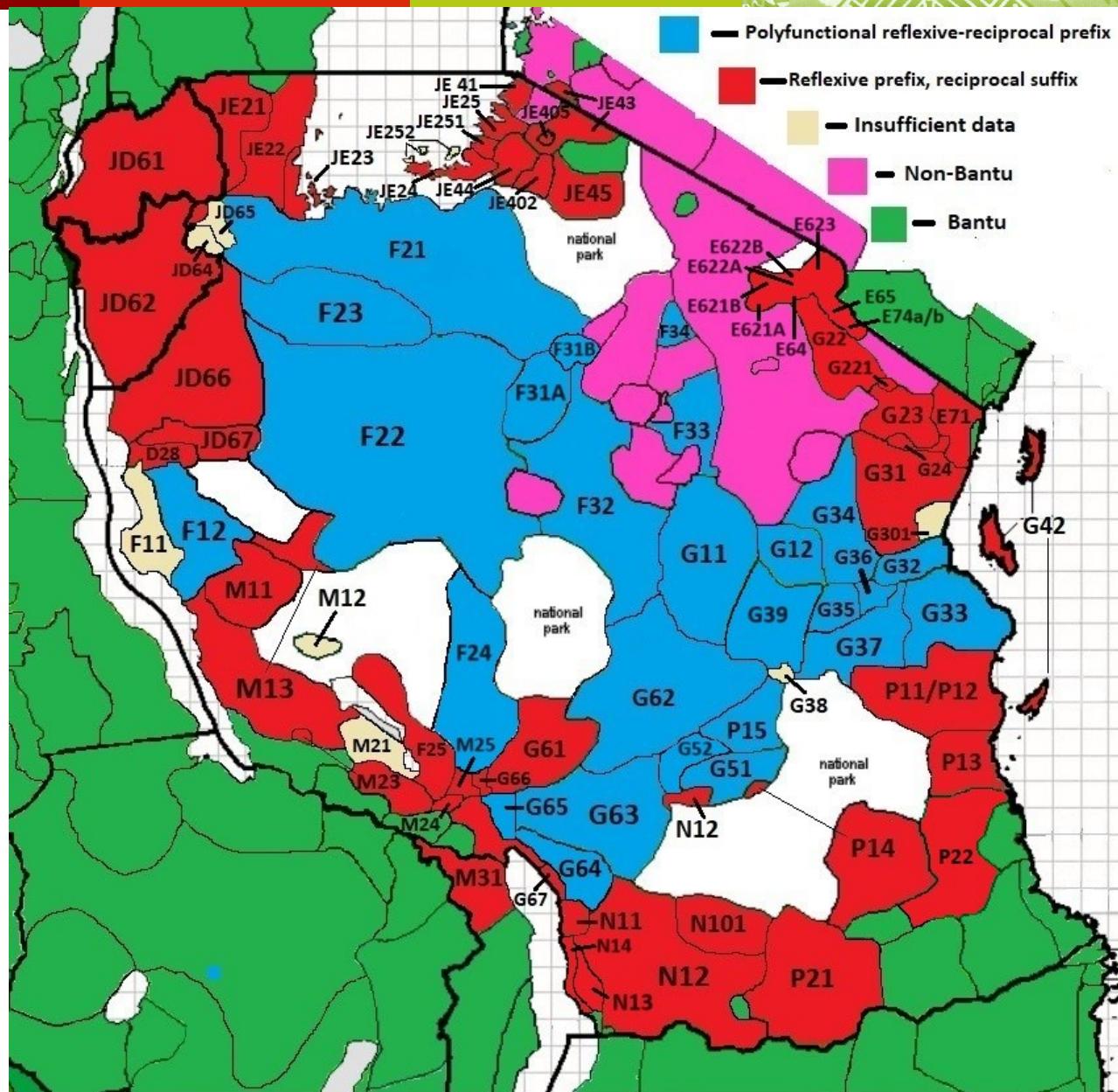
## *My sample*

- Departing from the 8 languages mentioned by Polak (1983), Stegen (2003), and Ngwasi (2021), I looked at reflexive and reciprocal marking in languages expanding in all directions
- I considered a total of 87 Tanzanian Bantu languages; I was able to obtain data for 79 of them

## 1. DISTRIBUTION

The innovation was found in 26 languages

F12	Bende
F21	Sukuma
F22	Nyamwezi
F23	Sumbwa
F24	Kimbu
F31A	Nilamba
F31B	Ihanzu
F32	Nyaturu
F33	Langi
F34	Mbugwe
G11	Gogo
G12	Kagulu
G32	Kwere
G33	Zalamo
G34	Ngulu
G35	Luguru
G36	Kami
G37	Kutu
G39	Sagala*
G51	Pogolo
G52	Ndamba
G62	Hehe
G63	Bena
G64	Pangwa
G65	Kinga
P15	Mbunga*



## 2. Origins: Grammaticalization patterns

## ***A word on different reciprocal types<sup>1</sup>:***

Prototypical reciprocals: “*The children are hitting each other*”

- *Typically requires overt reciprocal marking*
- *Implies multiple sub-events (A hit B; B hit A)*
- *Typically easy to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

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<sup>1</sup> Based mainly on Kemmer (1993) and Haspelmath (2007)

## ***A word on different reciprocal types<sup>1</sup>:***

Prototypical reciprocals: “*The children are hitting each other*”

- *Typically requires overt reciprocal marking*
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- *Typically easy to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

Natural reciprocals: “*We met at the party*”

- *Reciprocity is often implied in the lexical verb*
- *Overt marking often absent or optional*
- *Difficult or impossible to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

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<sup>1</sup> Based mainly on Kemmer (1993) and Haspelmath (2007)

# *What does the grammaticalization path of the prefix (REFL > REFL-RECP) look like in Tanzanian Bantu?*

- There is a lot of variation in the extent to which the innovated REFL-RECP prefix has been grammaticalized
- Based on the synchronic variation, 4 diachronic stages are identified in the grammaticalization path from REFL > REFL/RECP

## Grammaticalization stages

Stage	Defining property
0	* <i>i</i> - is the reflexive marker, *- <i>an</i> is reciprocal marker
1	* <i>i</i> - and *- <i>an</i> are both used as reciprocal markers with prototypical reciprocal verbs, *- <i>an</i> is used with natural reciprocal verbs.
2	* <i>i</i> - is the reciprocal marker with prototypical reciprocal verbs, *- <i>an</i> is used with most, or all, natural reciprocal verbs.
3	* <i>i</i> - is used with both prototypical and natural reciprocal verbs, *- <i>an</i> is still retained as a suffix with a few natural reciprocal verbs
4	* <i>i</i> - is the reciprocal marker used with both prototypical and natural reciprocal verbs, some fossilized traces of *- <i>an</i> can be found with lexicalized meanings.

## *Stage 1: Exemplified with Bena\* G63*

- In Stage 1, both the prefix *i-* and the suffix *-an* are productively used with prototypical reciprocals:

5. tu-hu-**i**-won-a

SM1PL-E-REFL/RECP-see-FV

'We see each other / ourselves.'

6. tu-**i**-won-**an**-a

SM1PL-PRES-see-RECP-FV

'We see each other'

- With natural reciprocal verbs, only the *-an* suffix is found:

7. va-i-taang'-**an**-ag-a

SM2PL-PRES-meet-RECP-NARR-FV

'Then they met.'

8. va-i-diing'-**an**-ile

SM2PL-PRES-agree-RECP-ILE

'They agreed with one another.'

## *Stage 2: Exemplified with Kinga G65*

- In Stage 2, the prefix *i*- is the sole productive marker with prototypical reciprocals:

9. O-Juma na-o-Rehema va-hu-í-nogw-a  
AUG-Juma COM-AUG-Rehema SM2-PRS-REFL/RECP-love-FV  
'Juma and Rehema love themselves/each other' [Chesco Habili p.c]

10. a-va-ana va-ha-í-tov-ile  
AUG-2-child SM2-REM.PST-RECP-hit-PRF  
'The children beat each other' [Chesco Habili p.c]

## *Stage 2: Exemplified with Kinga G65*

- With natural reciprocals, *-an* is still used:

11. O-Pendo na-o-Rehema va-ha-gav-**ine** e-nyama  
 AUG-Pendo COM-AUG-Rehema SM2-REM.PST-divide-**RECP\PRF** AUG-9.meat  
 'Pendo and Rehema shared the meat ("with each other")'

12. O-Neema a-ha-g-**ine** na-o-Juma  
 AUG-Neema SM1-REM.PST-meet-**RECP\PRF** COM-AUG-Juma  
 'Neema met ("each other") with Juma' [Chesco Habili p.c]

- In Stage 2, the *i-* prefix is marginal, or does not occur, with natural reciprocals

## **Stage 3: Exemplified with *Kwere* G32**

*In Stage 3, *i*- is the productive reciprocal marker with prototypical reciprocals;*

13. w-ana wa-ja w-o-**i**-lond-a

2-child 2-DEM SM2-PST-**REFL/RECP**-like-FV

'Those children like each other/themselves'

14. w-o-**i**-tow-a

(Zahran, fieldnotes)

SM2-PST-**REFL/RECP**-beat-FV

'They beat each other/themselves'

*In Stage 3, *i*- is also used with many natural reciprocals, although *-an* is still preserved (often fossilized) with a varying number of such verbs:*

15. **-golana** 'separate'

**-i-leka** 'separate/divorce'

**-i-gona** 'have intercourse'

**-igala** 'resemble/become equal'

**-fanana** 'resemble'

**-i-tinh'anila** 'be gathered/assembled' (Légere 2021)

## Stage 4: Exemplified with *Mbugwe F34*\*

The REFL-RECP prefix is the sole marker of reciprocity with all reciprocal verbs:

16. -é-kéra	'cut oneself / each other'	
-í-túl-a	'hit oneself / each other'	
-é-kúmbater-a	'embrace (e.o)'	< <i>kúmbater</i> 'embrace'
-é-kátal-i-a	'argue'	< <i>kátal</i> 'become tired'
-é-réméra	'quarrel'	< * <i>réméra</i>
-é-vaan-er-i-a	'share'	< <i>vaan</i> 'divide'

## Stage 4: Exemplified with *Mbugwe F34*\*\*

- There is very limited synchronic evidence of the –an suffix
- Occurrences are lexicalized and mostly have non-reciprocal semantics:

17. -tyan	'forge'	*tya
-kwát-án-a	'to shake milk'	cf. -kwát-a 'to seize'
-ún-án-y-a	'to bend'	cf. -úna 'to break'
-rem-an-y-a	'to weed'	< -rema 'to cultivate'

\*\*Data from Dempwolf (1915), Mous (2004), and Wilhelmsen (2018)

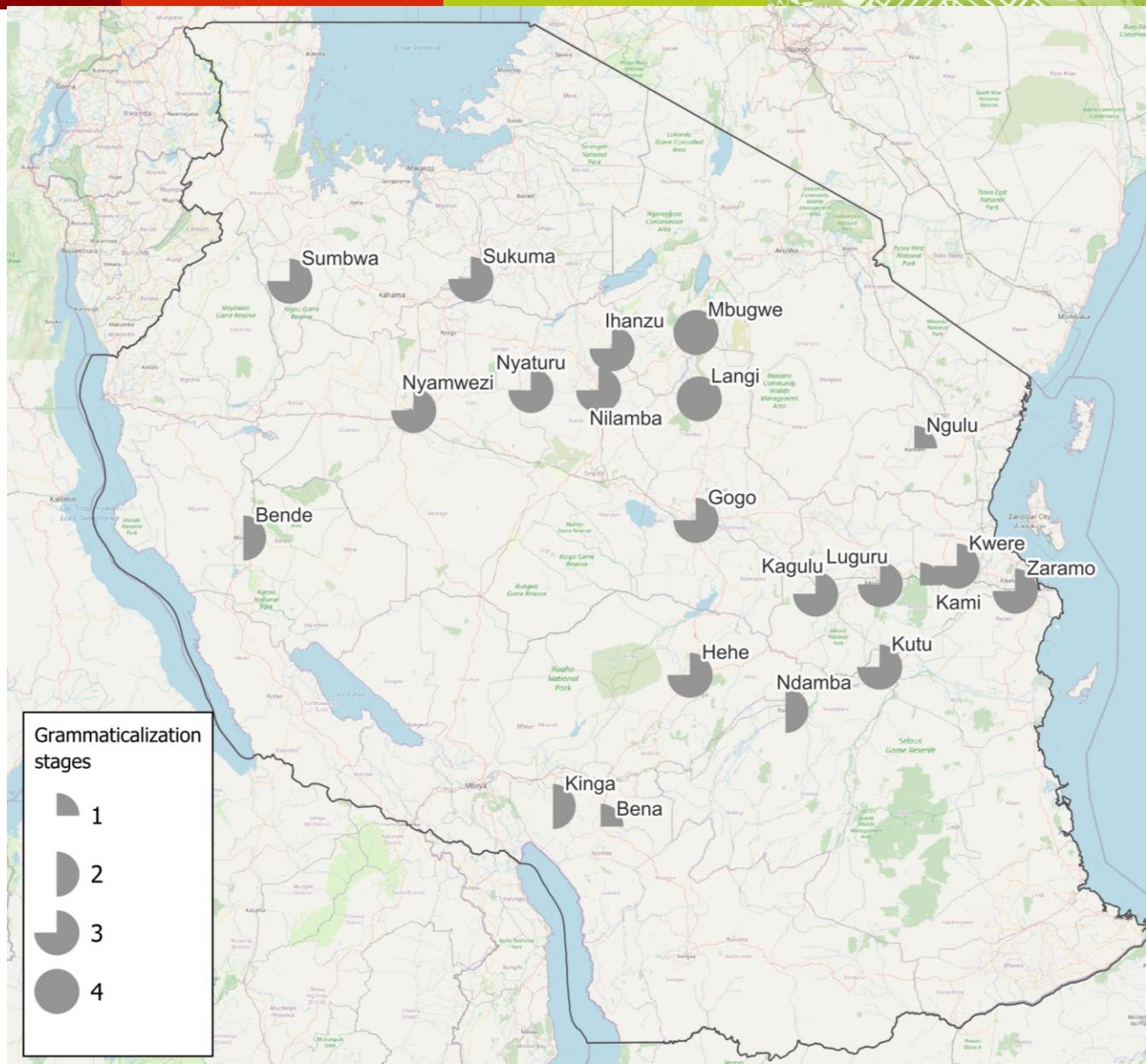
\* Stegen (2002), suggest –tyúla 'hit, strike' as a possible source in Langi (fossilized –ul- ?)

## 2. ORIGINS & GRAM.

The geographical pattern:

The Rift Valley and adjacent areas contain languages in the latter (3-4) stages of grammaticalization

Early stages (1-2) of grammaticalization are found in languages which are further removed from the Rift Valley



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## 3. The Tanzanian Rift Valley

## ***Multilingualism and sustained language contact***

The following modern languages have all been involved in heavy language contact in the Rift valley according to Kießling, Mous, and Nurse (2008, 186):

Language Family	Language
<b>Southern Cushitic</b>	Iraqw, Gorwaa, Alagwa, and Burunge
<b>Southern Nilotic</b>	Datooga dialects
<b>Bantu Zone F</b>	Langi, Mbugwe, Nyaturu, Nyilamba, Ihanzu (plus Kimbu, Nyamwezi, and Sukuma as marginal members)
<b>East African Khoisan</b>	Sandawe
<b>Isolate</b>	Hadza

## *REFL/RECP Polysemy in the Rift Valley: Cushitic*

*Iraqw* (Mous and Qorro 2000, 159–60):

18. a) dir <b>ti</b> doge'	b) mos <b>ti</b> tareree
place REFL meet.2PL.PST	3SG REFL hang.3SG.M
'Where did you meet?'	'He will hang himself'

*Alagwa* (Mous 2016, 176):

19. a) <b>kunu</b> ariir-im-an	b) <b>kunu</b> arar-im
REC see.HAB-IMPF-1PL	REC see.HAB-IMPF.1SG
'We will see each other'	'I see myself'

*Burunge* (Kießling 1994, 176):

20. a) 'inay <b>hingi</b> 'arinay	b) 'inay <b>hingi</b> 'ariirinay
3PL <b>S3.REFL</b> see.3SG.IPFV.3PL	3PL <b>S3.RECP</b> see.3SG.IPFV.3PL
'They see themselves'	'They see each other'

## *REFL/RECP Polysemy in the Rift Valley: Nilotic*

*Bijanjida, Datooga (Rottland 1982, 191):*

21. *qána:ljige:wi*      'I teach (it) to me.' (I learn.)  
22. *génuljige:di*      'We see/look at ourselves/each other.'

*Asimjeeg, Datooga (Griscom 2019, 108, 111):*

23. a) *g-εε:-fúŋ*      **gíjɛɛ:t**      b) *g-à-gùr-sí:n*      **gájɛɛ:t**  
AFF-IMPERS-hide **REFL.PRO.PL**      AFF-3-call-TERM **RECP.PRO.PL**  
'They hide themselves.'      'They call each other.'

## *REFL/RECP Polysemy in the Rift Valley: Sandawe*

*Sandawe* (Steeman 2012, 160)

24. *dùbé* 'hit with fist' > *dùbé-ts'i* 'hit oneself with fist'

*Sandawe* (Steeman 2012, 167–68):

25. *mèénà* 'love' > *mèénà-wá-ŋki* 'love each other'

- No REFL-RECP polysemy

## REFL-RECP polysemy in the Rift Valley:

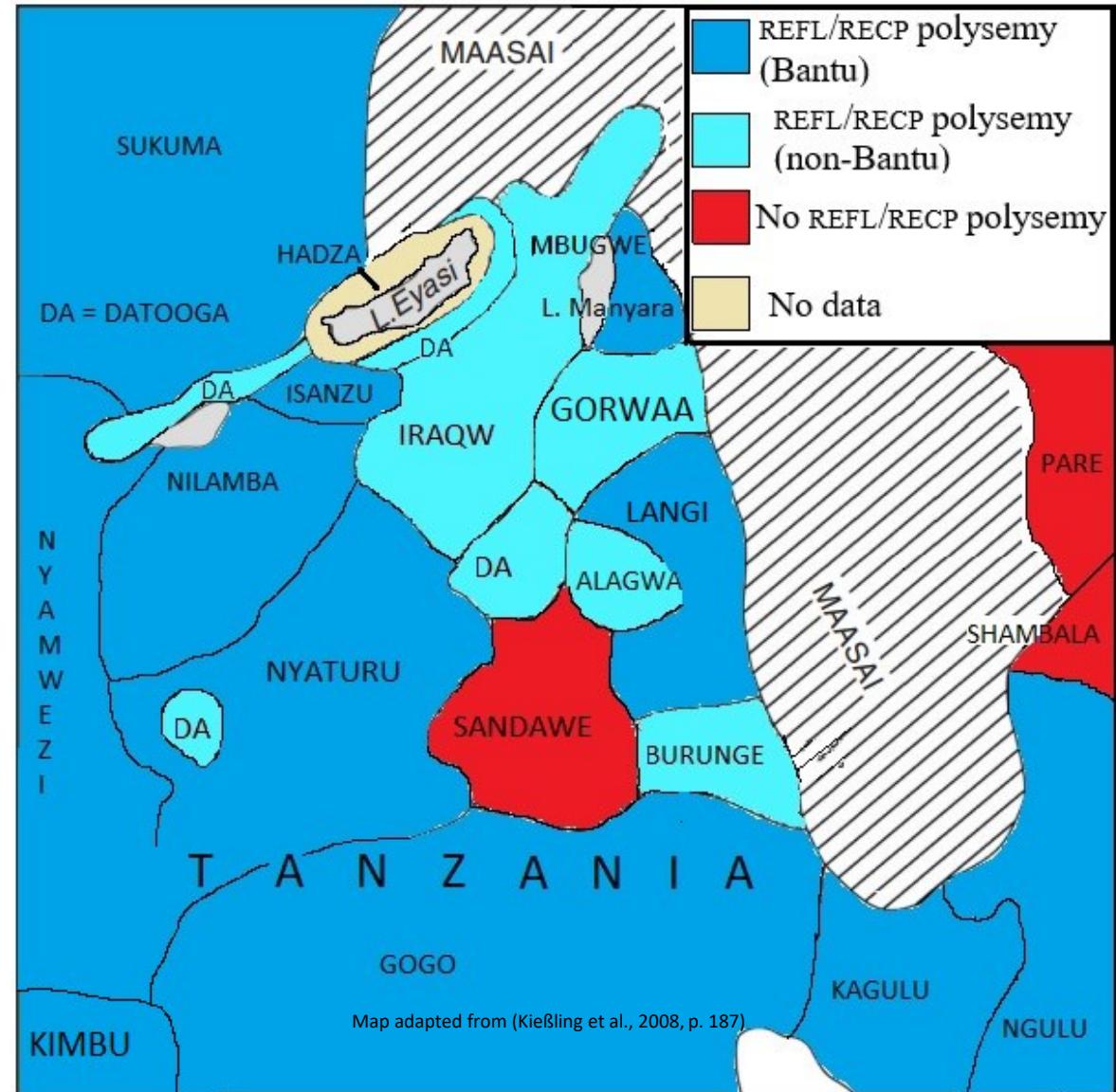
- Cushitic:
  - Alagwa, Burunge, Gorwaa, & Iraqw
- Nilotic:
  - Datooga

### No polysemy:

- Sandawe

### No data:

- Hadza



## Conclusions

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# Thank you!

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## ***Types of reciprocal events: Prototypical reciprocals<sup>1</sup>***

*“The children are hitting each other”*

- *Typically requires overt reciprocal marking*
- *Implies multiple sub-events (A hit B; B hit A)*
- *Typically easy to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

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<sup>1</sup> Based mainly on Kemmer (1993) and Haspelmath (2007)

## ***Types of reciprocal events: Natural reciprocals<sup>1</sup>***

High distinguishability:      “Juma and Miriam kissed (each other)”

- *Reciprocity is often implied in the lexical verb*
- *May or may not be overtly marked*
- *May be construed as a single event or multiple sub-events*
- *Still easy to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

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## ***Types of reciprocal events: Natural reciprocals<sup>1</sup>***

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- *Reciprocity is often implied in the lexical verb*
- *May or may not be overtly marked*
- *May be construed as a single event or multiple sub-events*
- *Still easy to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

Low distinguishability:      “We look alike”

- *Reciprocity is often implied in the lexical verb*
- *May or may not be overtly marked*
- *Difficult or impossible to imagine non-reciprocal scenarios*

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