

South Cushitic – Kalenjin contact and its relevance for East-Africa's history

Maarten Mous 29-01-2025, Kenyatta University, Kenya.



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

Overview

- Ehret (1969,1971) in his PhD thesis on South Nilotic history proposes a set of borrowings of South-Cushitic into Kalenjin (Ehret 1969: 153-157).
- We have (re-)assessed his proposals in view of later historical work on South Nilotic, Rottland (1982) and South Cushitic, Kiessling and Mous (2003)
- With some modifications, we accept some of his proposals
- After studying South Nilotic dictionaries, we were able to extend the set considerably.
- Resulting in over 50 potential transfers

Replacive borrowings

The transfer of core concepts and verbs shows that contact must have been intense. Possibly PK people being bilingual in PTzSC.

AARA ‘goats/sheep’

ARAAR ‘see’

CAT ‘clip, cut’

łAKAAT ‘hunt

OR ‘ashes’

TAKWEES ‘greeting’

TUP ‘bury, cover’

TEERIIT ‘dust’

TAA ‘guest’

WAAX ‘fear

Additive borrowings

- 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’;

Conclusion

- We conclude that there was a long and intense contact between pre-Tanzanian South Cushitic speakers and proto Kalenjin speakers and this took place in Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda.
- The fact that proto Tanzanian South Cushitic speakers were contemporary with proto Kalenjin speakers suggests that their entry into Tanzania and subsequent splits was relatively late.

Classification South Cushitic

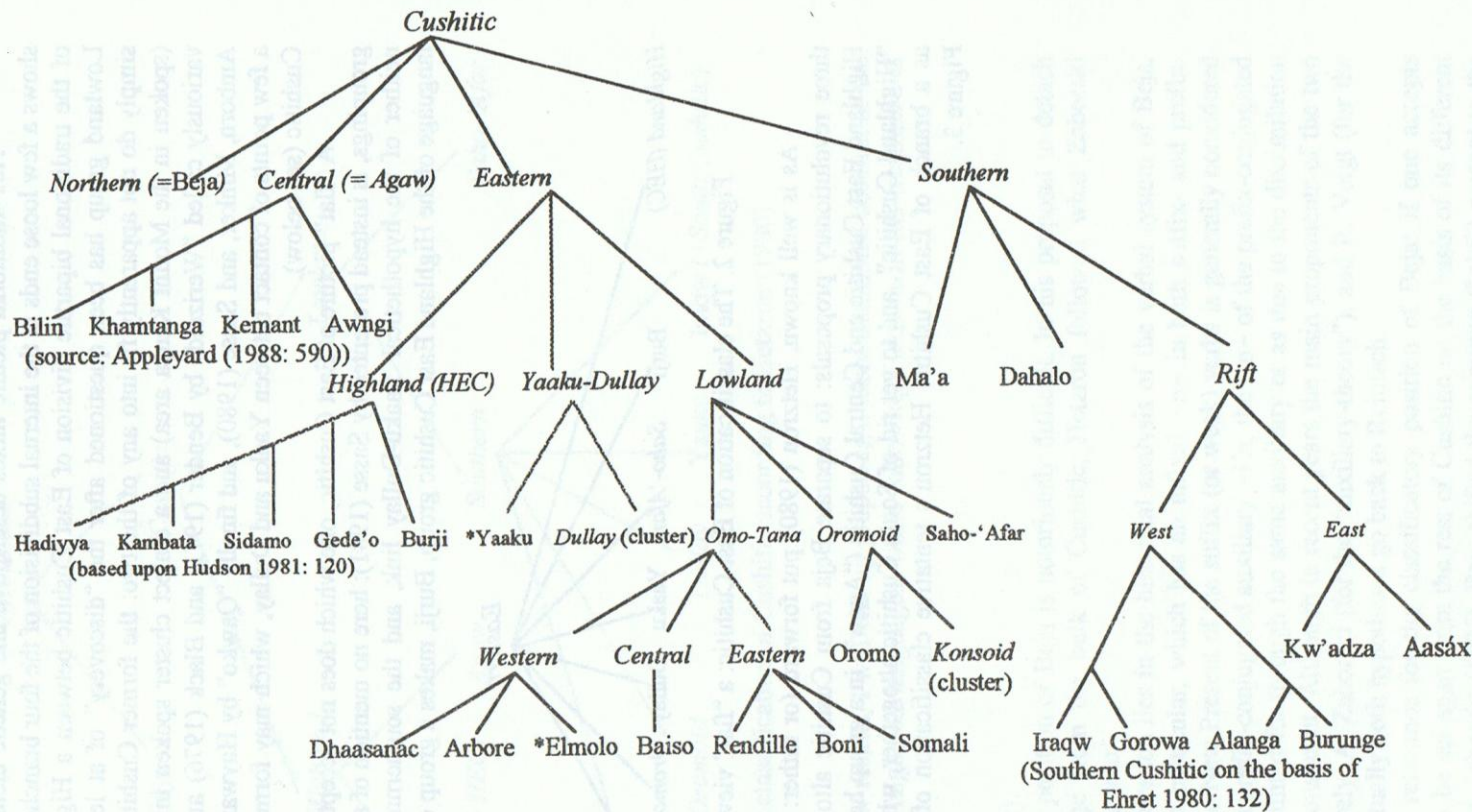


Figure 1. The classification of Cushitic: the traditional view

Some transfers: *aara ‘goats’

- PK *aara ‘goat, sheep’ Ehret (1970:153)
- PK and PKO *ar ‘Ziege’ Rottland (1982:562)
- PWR ʔaaráa ‘goats’ in KM 2003.
- Cushitic retention in TzC: Dhaasanach ʔay (m) ‘sheep and goats’
- Direction PTzSC > PK
- NB: Rottland (1982) reconstructs only ‘goats’ as meaning and not ‘sheep’ which is in line with the meaning in ProtoWestRift.
- We accept this instance of transfer from South Cushitic *ʔaaráa ‘goats’ to PK *ar ‘goat’.

2. PK *arar(ay) ‘see’

- PK *arar(ay) ‘see’ (Rottland 1982:322) Not in Ehret (1969).
- PTzC *ʔar ‘to see’ (KM 2003).
- Cushitic retention in TzSC: Proto-E-OT *ʔarg, Oromo ʔarga, Rendille ʔarga, Daasanac ʔarik ‘see’, Agaw *ʔarq ‘know’.
- Cushitic > Kalenjin
- Remaining issue: Is the transfer from a SC or from an EC source? In other words, did the velar in EC develop into r in PK or did PK reduplicate the SC root?

3 -cár ‘to shoot arrow for blood’

- Pokot *kèe-cár* ‘to shoot (special) arrow at a cow-neck to draw blood’ (Crazzolara 1978: 170)
- PTzSC *tsaxad ‘shoot’ with presumably loss of intervocalic *x*.
- Given geography and time depth it is unlikely to be direct contact Iraqw – Pokot
- Not yet reconstructed for PK but Sebei *car* ‘draw blood’ and Nandi *car* ‘to draw liquid out from by puncturing’ renders it reconstructable as PK *car ‘draw blood by shooting’
- If cognate: Direction Cushitic > Nilotic to account for intervocalic loss of *x*.

4. *ɔr- ‘ashes’ (Ehret B3)

- PK *ɔr- ‘ashes’ (Ehret 1969:153) = (Rottland 1982:530),
- PSC *ɣor- (Ehret), = ALBUTzSC *ɣura ‘ashes’ (KM 2003).
- i-ɣorá (Inner Mbugu) ‘ashes, grey’ Ehret (1980) Restricted to ALBU within TzSC => NOT late Cushitic influence in IMb. This confirms Ehret’s reconstruction beyond ALBU.
- We accept this proposal of transfer from SC to PK.
- The vowel lowering in Kalenjin is due to the phonetic lowering in the context of ɣ in Cushitic.
- Not related to a root for ‘smoke’: Black (1974:303) relates Afar *ɣir* ‘smoke’, Daasanach *ɣeer*, Elmolo *iiri?*, Arbore *irje*, Borana *aara*. The shape in Kalenjin is closest to the ALBU/PSC form. Another PK word for ‘smoke’ *i:R is a better fit for this EC cognate set.

5. PSN ***panan** ‘pauper’ Ehret B2

- = *pan-an ‘Armer, Waise’ Rottland (1982:400)
- PIRQ*pan-áy ‘orphans’.
- The ending *áy* in PIRQ is a TzSCush suffix. The suffix *-an* in Kalenjin is a deverbal noun marker for ‘objects of an action’ (Rottland 1982:224); it is not reconstructed to PSN (Rottland 1982:238).
- This is probably transfer from Datooga into PIRQ.
- The root is also present in Nyamwezi *mpiina* (Maganga & Schadeberg 1992).

The unit in contact is PK

- Not lower: more of an assumption. We expanded the number of cognate sets first by reading the Pokot dictionary.
- Pokot-ProtoTzCushitic contact would put the Tanzanian Cushitic migration and later split too late. PK-Iraqw contact is unrealistic given the geographical distance.
- Not Higher: working hypothesis is Proto-Kalenjin. We may adjust this position after more profound research into Datooga.

The direction of transfer

Mostly Cushitic > Nilotic on several grounds:

- Cushitic retention in PTzSC
- Complex phonology in PTzSC
- Other direction possibly PANAN ‘orphan’

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