

The late entry of Cushitic in Tanzania

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Kießling and Mous (2003) identify a set of loans from an early form of Oromo into proto Tanzanian Cushitic, in addition to two nominal suffixes. Since East Cushitic languages are not spoken in Tanzania, such contact may come as a surprise. The source is indeed Oromo since we can show that the source had undergone specific Oromo innovations and therefore must be (early) Oromo, termed here pre-Oromo, and not its predecessor proto-Oromoid. It is this influence of Oromo on Tanzanian Cushitic that has led in the past to suggestions of South Cushitic being part of East Cushitic, in particular due to grammatical transfers from Oromo. However, we show that Tanzanian Cushitic (the core of South Cushitic) is not closely related to Oromo, nor East-Cushitic, as it has not undergone a number of the Oromoid or East-Cushitic lexical innovations. The Oromo are mentioned in written history in 1593 and we can propose an approximate period for the contact situation. And as a consequence, this yields a chronological limit to the entry of Tanzanian Cushitic into Tanzania as there is no indication of Oromo presence in Tanzania and an approximate geographical situation of Oromo-Tanzanian contact in Kenya. This state of affairs challenges the attribution to Cushitic of Pastoral Neolithic sites in Tanzania, assuming that no other Cushitic speaking peoples lived in Tanzania before the entry of Tanzanian (South) Cushitic. Consequently, Pastoral Neolithic sites were inhabited by speakers of Early East African languages and EEA speakers were not all always only hunter-gatherers; various scenarios can be put forward which we leave to others.

These latter interpretations pre-supposes that the current Tanzanian Cushitic languages were not preceded by earlier Cushitic languages that since have disappeared. However, recently Sands and Tosco (2023) proposed contact between Yaaku-Dullay and Hadza and suggest that Yaaku-Dullay is the first southward Cushitic expansion. In that light we inevitably need to embark on a similar study involving proto Tanzanian Cushitic and Yaaku-Dullay.

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

Kießling, Roland, Maarten Mous and Christian Rapold (in prep) Oromo influence on Tanzanian Cushitic and its late entry in Tanzania.

Sands, Bonny and Mauro Tosco 2022. Early East African and Peripheral East Cushitic: Foragers and pastoralists in early East Africa. Paper presented on December 14 2022 in the Rift-Valley Network Seminar Series. <https://zenodo.org/record/7440446#.Y8lKqoHMJmM>