

ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGE SUBAREAS

Andrzej Zaborski

As it is widely known, Ethiopian languages possess a number of common features that are due to contact so that Ethiopia is considered as a classical language area (*Sprachbund* in German). It has to be emphasized (Zaborski in Bender 1976b:81-83) that this area is composed of several frequently overlapping subareas due to the contact and interference between Ethiosemitic and Cushitic, Cushitic and Surma, Cushitic and Nilotic as well as between different branches of Cushitic (e.g. between Highland East Cushitic and West Cushitic) and even Ethiosemitic (e.g. Amharic as a recent *adstratum* of some Gurage languages and dialects). It is probably impossible to find an Ethiopian language not influenced by other language or languages. It has to be emphasized also that this large area (or superarea) goes beyond the limits of the Ethiopian state so that we should speak rather about a large North-East African language area stretching southwards to Kenya where there has been a strong interference of the Lowland East Cushitic languages with Nilotic¹ (cf. the works by J. Hohenberger which contain a lot of valuable confrontation of data though their interpretation is either controversial or unacceptable) and to smaller degree with Bantu (including lexical contacts of Dahalo with Pokomo) as well as of Dahalo with an extinct click language while in Tanzania there has been also a contact of Iraqw, Allagwa, Burunge with Bantu culminating in Ma'a (Mbugu) which is a Bantu language (the morphology is Bantu) with a big number of Cushitic loan-words.

¹ Cf. Zaborski 1985. I do not think that there is a necessity to posit hypothetically an extinct East Cushitic "Proto-Baz" that could influence Southern Nilotic since the reconstructions by Heine, Rottland and Vossen go back either to perfect Somali or Rendille so that they have been taken over probably just from these languages.

For the area limited to the languages spoken on the Ethiopian territory we have a special study by Ferguson which has appeared in two slightly different versions. This study has been based on a limited number (only seventeen, including merely one Nilotic and three West Cushitic or Omotic) of rather random selected languages. Moreover, most of the alleged areal features (i.e. twelve of the eighteen morphological features) are not really areal but of common genetic origin,² though some of these features could be somehow reinforced and spread more widely due to the Ethiosemitic and Cushitic contact and interference, e.g. the use of singular with numerals (related to the gradual disappearance of nominal plural influenced e.g. by Oromo) or the very frequent use of singulative (e.g. in the Sagan subarea) so that these genetically inherited features have acquired also a secondary areal status.

Which features (i.e. areal features) are Pan-Ethiopian? First, we have to bear in mind that there are still languages which are practically unknown or very little known. As a matter of fact it is difficult to find features that can be found in all the Ethiopian languages. The interference has been, first of all, lexical (consequently also phonetic and phonemic³) and syntactic, morphological only to a limited extent and only in cases of very intensive and deep interference. Even the syntactic group order (usually erroneously called "word order") SOV is not absolutely Pan-Ethiopian since at least some of the so-called Nilo-Saharan languages have SVO (e.g. Anywa; cf. Bender 1976b:508) though SOV is marginal (synactically conditioned), Berta is also SVO (ibid. 526), Mursi has SOV and also OVS but usually SVO (ibid.:554). In Ometo there is normally SOV but also OSV as in Dizi (ibid.:389). On the other hand, we find SOV as a variant also in the Arabic of Ethiopia (e.g. *huwa l-bēt ga'a*, lit. "he home came", parallel to *huwa ga'a l-bēt*; Prof. Muhammad Ali, personal communication). This syntactic feature as well as

² E.g. features 7-18 (grammatical); cf. Ferguson 1976:75.

³ Ferguson (1976:69) mentions a phonological features of which only two, i.e. glottalic consonants and, with reservations, in my opinion, palatalization are really areal.

several other concomitant syntactic features are generally ascribed to the influence of the Cushitic *substratum* though in some cases there has probably been not only a *substratum* but also a Cushitic *adstratum* (e.g. Oromo influencing syntactically languages which already had acquired VSO order). Also Amharic secondarily works as an *adstratum* reinforcing this syntactic group order. Other widely spread syntactic features are: 2. subordinate clauses precede, 3. adjectives precede substantives, 4. main verbs precede auxiliaries, 5. "gerund" or "converb" for co-ordination (Hetzron 1972:99), 6. postpositions, 7. "quoting clauses", 8. compound verbs with "to say, to live, to be". I should add⁴ also a remarkable spread of special negative paradigms particularly common in West Cushitic which has, as a subareal feature, also special interrogative paradigms.

How many subareas are to be found in Ethiopia? The question can be answered only in a preliminary way since we still lack a lot of data on many languages (especially of Southwest and West Ethiopia) and special studies of the particular cases of interference are necessary. Most if not all areas overlap and there are also secondary phenomena due to secondary *adstrata* mainly of Oromo and Amharic. Due to population movements in the past (not to mention recent forced resettlement undertaken by the Ethiopian government) many languages actually constitute inlets of pockets separated from other languages of the same family or branch, e.g. Gurage, Harari, Raya and Wello Oromo, Shinasha; Masongo split into four inlets, Gumuz in at least two etc. It has to be emphasized that some languages which could play an important part are now probably extinct (e.g. perhaps some extinct Agaw languages). All these factors complicate the picture.

Tentatively I propose the following subareas:

1. Eritrean
2. Central
3. Southwest:
 - a. Northern Omo
 - b. Southern Omo

⁴ Cf. also Hetzron 1972:94.

- c. Sagan
- d. Maji
- 5. Western Peripheral
- 6. Eastern Peripheral

Only the Gurage-Sidamo interference has been studied in detail (mainly by Leslau and by Hetzron) though not exhaustively. We need special studies of other subareas in order to explain common areal features in detail. Here only the main participating languages and the main features can be mentioned.

In the North the Eritrean subarea is actually also composed of several smaller contact and interference units: 1. Beja-Tigre with an Arabic *adstratum*, 2. Bilin and Tigre, eventually (25% ?; cf. Thompson in Bender 1976b:598) Bilin and Tigrinya, 3. Nera and Tigre (with some Arabic - *ibid.*:599), also some Nera and Kunama, 4. Kunama and Tigrinya as well as Kunama and Tigre; even Bitama Kunama and Beja⁵ (*ibid.*), 5. Saho and Tigrinya, eventually also some Saho and Tigre. There is something like Eritrean Arabic in use. In general, it looks that apart from some not very strong syntactic interference (cf. Raz 1987; Hetzron 1972:120; Moreno 1948:123 on the article and the relative in Beja and Tigre) there has been first of all a lexical interference. Tigrinya has been more affected by the Cushitic (Northern Agaw?)⁶ than Tigre. It has to be pointed out that Ge^Cez - the predecessor of Tigrinya and Tigre has only some Cushitic (Beja but also Agaw) loan-words. Nera and Kunama have not influenced other languages, but have taken from them some vocabulary and perhaps some syntax. Beja-Tigre contact has been limited to the Beni Amer mixed tribal group. Today the language shift within the Beni Amer in Eritrea is from Beja to Tigre (Thompson in Bender 1976b:600). It is difficult to find concrete arguments for an assumption that the particular development of Tigre is due simply to a Beja influence

⁵ Fleming and Bender (see Bender 1976:10) say that "[...] a good part of the vocabulary of Beja is unique or shared with Nilo-Saharan languages such as Kunama, Nara and Nubian, as well as Giiz and Tigre". They provide no evidence for Nilo-Saharan and I do not think one can find it except several cultural borrowings from Nubian.

⁶ Today apart from a contact with Bilin in the extreme North, Tigrinya does not have Agaw inlets on its territory - cf. Hetzron 1972:19, 87,93; Moreno 1948:123.

(cf. Hetzron 1972:123).

Central Ethiopian subarea consists of Amharic and several Agaw languages and dialects with Oromo *adstratum* for Amharic. According to Hetzron (1972:123), Gafat was influenced by Southern Agaw and by Highland East Cushitic.

I call the Gurage-Sidamo subarea "Intermediate" because it has strong links both with the Central and with the Southwestern Subareas and even with the Eastern Subarea. The main components are the Gurage languages and dialects, Highland East Cushitic (mainly Hadiyya-Kambata but also Sidamo) languages, Janjero as well as Welamo and Kullo of the West Cushitic (Omotic) branch. Finally there is Oromo as a strong *adstratum* and secondarily Amharic. According to Hetzron (1972:61,123) "Peripheral Western Gurage" (Ennamor, Endagany, Enar, Gyeto) is probably the most Cushitic influenced Semitic language cluster in Ethiopia. Notably not only lexicon, phonology and syntax have been involved, but also morphology to a considerable extent (Zaborski 1975:114-119), involving e.g. Cushitic *k/t/d* morphemes traced back already to Proto-Western Gurage (Hetzron 1972:67). What is called "Transversal South Ethiopic group" underwent also Cushitic (Highland East Cushitic but also Somali?) influence yielding East Gurage and Harari (Hetzron 1972:95).

South of the "Intermediate" or Gurage-Sidamo subarea begins the large Southwestern Subarea which is, in its turn, composed of several smaller units. It involves Cushitic languages and non-Afroasiatic languages of the Surma and Nilotic groups. Amharic is only a recent *adstratum*. West Cushitic languages have developed under a heavy impact of Surma and Nilotic so that, as it is well known, in the seventies Bender and Fleming tried to separate these languages as "Omotic" from Cushitic considered so far as an independent branch of Afroasiatic. There are, however, good reasons to consider West Cushitic or "Omotic" as a part of Cushitic as I have suggested myself and as it has been acknowledged by Bender at least since 1986.

What I call Northern Omo smaller unit comprises mainly the Ometo cluster of West Cushitic and the adjacent Highland East Cushitic languages. West Cushitic Janjero probably also has areal links with it though today it is separated from Ometo

geographically. The main isogloss that separates West Cushitic from the rest of Cushitic consists, as it is widely known, of the 1st person sing. *ta* and 2nd person sing. *ne* morphemes. This isogloss occurs in all the West Cushitic languages (on South Omotic see below) except Dizi, Sheko and Nao. No satisfactory explanation of the origin of this *ta/ne* pattern of West Cushitic has been given so far. A possible Nilotic influence has been pointed out already by Conti Rossini. The adjacent Surma languages have forms which have most probably interfered with Cushitic (cf. Bender 1976b:470 and Tucker-Bryan 1966:379):

| | Murle | Mursi | Kwegu | Muguji | Majang | Bale |
|--------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| S. 1. | <i>anetya</i> | <i>anyi</i> | <i>an</i> | <i>an</i> | <i>et</i> | <i>anda</i> |
| 2. | <i>inetyx</i> | <i>inye</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>unda</i> |
| 3. | <i>nono</i> | <i>non</i> | <i>iun</i> | <i>isi</i> | <i>iso</i> | <i>non</i> |
| Pl. 1. | <i>agety</i> | <i>age</i> | <i>uwa</i> | <i>uwa</i> | <i>et-ink</i> | <i>agi</i> |
| 2. | <i>igety</i> | <i>ige</i> | <i>(i)ye</i> | <i>i'o</i> | <i>in-ak</i> | <i>ola (?)</i> |
| 3. | <i>nogo</i> | <i>yok</i> | <i>yegu</i> | <i>ingin</i> | <i>se-k</i> | <i>ole(?)</i> |

In Didinga Murle *-tya/-da/-ta* is the ending of the absolutive case¹ (cf. also Bender 1983:168). Therefore Majang *et* could be explained hypothetically as going back to something like *an-t* (cf. Bale) but then there would be a problem how to explain the lack of an alleged *-t* in the second person singular. Perhaps we can suppose a secondary interference with West Cushitic in the case of Majang. The pronouns of South Omotic (Hamer-Ari-Banna of West Cushitic) show resemblance also in the first and possibly second person plural (cf. Fleming reconstructions in Bender 1976b:315):

| | Galila | Ari | Hamer | Banna | Kara | Dime |
|--------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| S. 1. | <i>i-ta</i> | <i>i-ta</i> <i>T-tan-ta</i> | <i>in-ta</i> | <i>in-ta</i> | <i>in-ta</i> | <i>ato, ā-to</i> |
| 2. | | <i>ha-na</i> | <i>ya</i> | <i>an yā</i> | <i>ya</i> | <i>yá-è, yā-u</i> |
| 3. | <i>nu</i> | <i>nō</i> | <i>ki-si</i> | | | |
| Pl. 1. | <i>wā-ta</i> | <i>wo-ta</i> | <i>wo-si</i> | | | <i>wātu</i> |
| 2. | <i>yes</i> | <i>ye-ta</i> | <i>ye-si</i> | | | <i>ye-se, ye-to</i> |
| 3. | <i>ke-ta</i> | <i>kē-ta</i> | <i>ko-si</i> | | | <i>ke-te</i> |

⁷See also Pakot below which is particularly interesting with its *-n-tV* suffixes and cf. also Zilmamu (Bender 1971:193) Sing. 1. *aneta*, 2. *ineta*.

There is no doubt that South Omotic has been more influenced by Surma⁸ and probably also by Turkana than other West Cushitic languages. As a matter of fact, the problem of the origin of South Omotic pronouns needs further investigation though I have expressed myself in favour of the classification of SOM within West Cushitic which has been recently questioned by Lamberti (personal communication). My arguments have been morphological but the pronouns are still a puzzle. Though Bender and Fleming (in Bender 1976a:48) compare Ari and Dime *no/na* "he/she" with a common Afroasiatic *-n-* base for demonstratives or third person singular pronouns, nevertheless we have also Surma *no-* (e.g. Murle, Mursi, Kwegu) parallel to other Surma (e.g. Majang, Muguji) *is-V* which looks like Afroasiatic (deceiving!). The whole problem of the *ta/na* pronouns has to be further investigated taking Surma and Nilotic into account though perhaps it is not necessary to consider borrowing as the only reason. Already in Proto-West Cushitic the 2nd person singular could be ambiguous due to a possible assimilation of *-t-* to the preceding *-n-* (**in-ta>*in-na>ina*) and this ambiguity could be strengthened by the interference with Surma and Nilotic. It is generally accepted that the first and the second person pronouns usually are not borrowed but we have to remember a frequent confusion of "I" and "you" by unsophisticated informants in the early stage of field work. It is difficult to say how old the contact between Hamar and Bume (Turkana) is (Lydall in Bender 1976b:394; she also mentions contacts with Dasenech, Arbore and Tsamay), but there are also interesting resemblances, e.g. in the second person plural *ēsi* and the third person plural *kēci*, *kesi* (Dimmendaal 1983:207; Heine 1981:51). Both Bender and Fleming (cf. Bender 1976:46,49) emphasize also South Omotic lexical interference with Ometo pointing to a northern subarea as well. How careful we have to be with the *ta/ne* question is indicated by Gafat 1st person singular *anät*, *anätti* compared by Conti Rossini with Kafa (Ricci

⁸ Kwegu is strongly influenced lexically by Kara (Bender 1976b:536) and a part of Kwegu by Mursi (ibid.). Cf. Fleming and Bender in Bender 1976:19.

1974:144); cf. also "Ganza" *adā* (ibid. or *di*, Bender 1983:349 but cf. Bender 1971:276, *ara* for Gumuz and *āda* for the Disoha dialect). The similarity of Gurage Soddo first person singular *adi* (*ad-i*) is misleading since it contains the Common Semitic *-i* suffix of the first person singular.

Dizi (Maji) is considered to be archaic as far as West Cushitic pronouns are concerned (Bender 1976b:394; Bender 1971:262):

| | Dizi | Sheko | Nao |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Sing. 1. | <i>yinu</i> | <i>neta</i> | <i>na</i> |
| 2. | <i>yetu</i> | <i>yeta</i> | <i>ne</i> |
| 3m. | <i>iti</i> | | |
| 3f. | <i>iʒi</i> | | |
| Pl. 1. | <i>inu</i> | | |
| 2. | <i>iti</i> | | |
| 3. | <i>iʒi</i> | | |
| Dual. 2. | <i>it</i> | | |

But even here we have to investigate the problem of interference not only with Surma but also with Nilotic since in the latter we have (cf. Bender 1976b:499; Tucker and Bryan 1966:418, 469):

| | Anywa | Shilluk | Dinka | Päkot | (cf. Nandi) |
|----------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Sing. 1. | <i>āni</i> | <i>yán</i> | <i>ân, gén</i> | <i>anĭ̂</i> | <i>án-tē̂</i> |
| 2. | <i>yĭni</i> | <i>yín</i> | <i>yĭn</i> | <i>nyĭ̂</i> | <i>nyin-tē̂</i> |
| 3. | <i>eni, yeni, ye</i> | <i>én</i> | <i>yĕn</i> | <i>a a</i> | <i>aca-n</i> |
| Pl. 1. | <i>wāni</i> | <i>wón</i> | <i>wúòn</i> | <i>acā</i> | <i>acā-nē̂</i> |
| 2. | <i>ūni</i> | <i>wún</i> | <i>wĕk</i> | <i>akwā̂</i> | <i>akwā-nē̂</i> |
| 3. | <i>ge-ni</i> | <i>gí-n</i> | <i>kĕk</i> | <i>cā̂</i> | <i>cā-nē̂</i> |

The Maji interference subarea comprises Dizi (Maji proper), the surrounding Surma languages and the West Cushitic Sheko, Bencho (Gimira) and Nao, these contacting, in their turn, with Kafa. Perhaps also Anywa belongs to this subarea. There has been a great deal of intermarriage among the speakers of different languages of the Maji area so that there are clans belonging to two different language communities and e.g. the Me'en in the north generally speak also Gimira and there are also many borrowings in most of the languages (cf. Muldrowi in Bender 1976b:603). An important areal feature is "real" tone i.e. complicate tonemic systems culminating in Gimira with its five

tonemes, while e.g. Mursi has probably four tonemes (Bender 1976b:539) and tone is also an important feature of Anywa. Also to the North we find tonal languages like, at least, Mocha and Northern Mao which, according to Bender (1971:205) "[...] gives an impression of being an extremely tonal language".

The Western Peripheral subarea comprises mainly little known Koman and Berta languages contacting with Shinasha (Kafa), Oromo and Amharic with an Arabic *adstratum*. There is also Southern Mao or Anfillo (West Cushitic) inlet while the enigmatic Northern Mao (Koman ?) which may be, according to Fleming (in Bender 1976b:311-313) a language "[...] which nearly captured the world's record for borrowing". At least Busasi Kafa and the Southern Mao are switching to Oromo (Bender 1971:205). There has been Koman borrowing from Nilotic (Fleming in Bender 1976b:312). Since there is a Koman inlet of Langa among Nilotic, there has probably been also a corresponding interference.

The subarea called "Sagan" by Sasse in the South comprises East Cushitic subbranches of Dullay (called also 'Werizoid' or Qawko); Konso, Gidole (Dirayta, Bussa and Gato forming together a 'Konsoid' subbranch probably related to Oromo which works also as an *adstratum*), Burji (belonging to Highland East Cushitic), then also East Cushitic Arbore and Galab (Dasenech) and finally West Cushitic Koyra and Zayse. There is also a contact with the Northern Omo subarea (Ometo probably including also Male) and with Southern Omo (Banna and Hamer). This subarea has been studied in detail by Sasse (cf. Sasse, n.d. and Sasse in Amborn et al., 1980:58-63). There are both phonological and morphological isoglosses as well as many lexical (loan-words). E.g. in Konsoid and Dullay there is a lack of voiceless-voiced distinction while in the field of morphology there are the so-called "selectors" occurring with verbs. It has, however, to be emphasized that we find selectors also in Iraqw group in Tanzania.

The Eastern Peripheral subarea comprises Afar contacting with Tigrinya and perhaps with Raya and Wello Oromo in the West with Amharic as an *adstratum*, and with Somali in the South. Then there is Somali contacting with Oromo in the West and in the South as well with Harari in the city of Harar. Apart from

lexical borrowing (on alleged Harari-Somali contact see above) little is known about the interference between all these languages.

In general, the most archaic Cushitic (Beja, Saḥo-Afar, then, to a smaller degree, Somali, Rendille and Boni) and Ethiosemitic (Tigre and Tigrinya) languages are spoken in a north-eastern external belt of the Ethiopian macroarea, usually among nomads. Gradual Ethiosemitic and Cushitic "waves" going to the south and south-west are weaker and interfering more and more so that very innovating languages have developed in the South-West due to the Cushitic and non-Afroasiatic (Surma and Nilotic) interference.

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