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5. Semitic-Cushitic/Omotic Relations

Abstract

The 30+ Cushitic languages, excluding Omotic now generally agreed to constitute a separate branch of Afroasiatic, comprise four distinct branches broadly named after their geographical location across the Horn of Africa as North, Central, East and South. Typical of the more conservative phonological systems is the presence of pharyngeals and laryngeals as well as triads of stops and affricates with voiceless, voiced and glottalised articulation, as well as five-term vowel systems with phonemic length. Most Cushitic languages are pitch-accent languages in which accent plays a morphologically defined role. Throughout inflectional morphology most fundamental structures and associated morphemes can be related to the rest of Afroasiatic, including Semitic. Nouns exhibit gender, number and case; in the latter instance typical is a "marked nominative" contrasting with a multi-function "absolutive" and a possessive or genitive. Postpositions, some-

times developing into further case suffixes, are also typical. The personal pronoun system shows partial division into independent subject and often clitic oblique (object, possessive, etc.) sets. A few conservative languages show two types of verbal inflection, one with person marking essentially by prefixes, the other by suffixes. Remnants of the prefix system are found in a few more languages. The suffix conjugation demonstrably derives from the addition of a prefix-inflecting auxiliary to the verb stem. Also typically Afroasiatic is the sytem of derived stems in verbs marking valency variations (causative, reflexive, passive, etc.)

1. Introductory remarks

There are between 30 and 50 or so Cushitic languages depending in the first instance on what is differentiated as a language or a variety or dialect of a language, and in the second instance on whether or not the so-called Omotic languages are subsumed under the term Cushitic, which would add around another 30 languages. For a brief discussion on the status of Omotic see 1.2. below. The various Cushitic languages are considerably more differentiated amongst themselves than the members of the Semitic family, and several branches of Cushitic themselves show as much internal complexity as Semitic as a whole. The present-day focus or epicentre of the Cushitic languages is the area of the four countries of the Horn of Africa: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Outside this region, one language, Beja, is also spoken in Sudan and southern Egypt, and Somali and Oromo extend into Kenya along with a few smaller languages, chiefly members of the South Cushitic branch, which are found only in Kenya and Tanzania. There is also some linguistic evidence that Cushitic languages were in the past more widespread in East Africa and have now given way both to Bantu and Nilotic languages in the area of today's Kenya and Tanzania.

In terms of numbers of speakers many Cushitic languages are comparatively small, with a few thousands, tens of thousands or occasionally hundreds of thousands of speakers, and in a few instances with only a few hundred or less. Although available figures are not always reliable in respect of exact numbers, the only Cushitic languages with more than a million speakers are 'Afar (c. 1 million), Beja (c. 1.2 million), Oromo (at least 18 million, counting all varieties), Sidaama (c. 2.9 million), and Somali (around 13 million). To these may be added Omotic Wolaitta and the varieties of the Gamo-Gofa-Dawro cluster (c. 1.2 million each). There are no pre-modern records of Cushitic languages, the earliest attestations being in the first instance extracts from the Song of Songs translated at the behest of the Scottish traveller, James Bruce, in the late 18th cent., and later some Agäw prayer texts written in Ethiopic script that probably date from the mid 19th cent. Otherwise, until orthographies were developed for some languages towards the end of the 20th cent., all prior attestations derive from language studies made by foreign scholars from the latter half of the 19th cent. onwards. Some languages remained unknown to scholarship until the second half of the 20th cent.

1.1. Internal classification

Whilst Cushitic is now universally recognised as a branch of the Afroasiatic phylum, there is still some controversy about the details of the internal classification of the

family, and a detailed account of the history and various developments in the internal classification of Cushitic can be found in Tosco (2000) (see also Hayward 2003). Aside from the question of Omotic, with regard to the internal classification of the remaining languages, the fairly conservative picture that is generally presented divides Cushitic into four branches:

(1) North Cushitic, represented by the single language Beja.
(2) Central Cushitic [C. Cush], also called Agäw (or Agaw), represented by four closely related languages or dialect clusters, the two largest being Awngi (500,000 speakers) and Bilin (100,000 speakers).
(3) East Cushitic [E. Cush], by far the largest both in terms of number of languages and of the overall number of speakers of those languages; also the most complex branch insofar as it is further divided into several discrete sub-branches: Lowland East Cushitic [L. E. Cush], with various sub-groups (the largest languages being Oromo and Somali), Highland East Cushitic [H. E. Cush] (the largest languages being Sidaama and Hadiyya), and Yaaku-Dullay, comprising the single, now extinct language Yaaku as one branch, and a cluster of small languages and/or dialects as the other (e.g. Gawwada).
(4) South Cushitic [S. Cush], represented by a number of small languages of Kenya and Tanzania, of which the largest is Iraaqw (c. 460,000 speakers). This branch, in particular, has been the subject of debate in recent years: one language, Ma'a (also called Mbugu) has been regarded as a mixed language with sizeable non-Afroasiatic (Bantu) input, and another, Dahalo, is now regarded as forming a separate branch of E. Cush.

Various refinements and adjustments to this model have been proposed: in his major survey of various questions of Cushitic morphology, Hetzron (1980) suggested on the one hand that Beja should be reclassified as a separate branch of Afroasiatic and not a member of the Cushitic family, and, on the other hand, that C. Cush. and H. E. Cush. showed sufficient features in common to query whether there might be a closer genetic affiliation between the two to form a "Rift Valley Cushitic" branch. Both of these suggestions have, however, been contested (for Beja see Tosco 2000; and Appleyard 2004; for C. Cush. and H. E. Cush. see again Tosco 2000; and Appleyard 1996) and there is no reason to redraw the generally accepted classification here. Hetzron also proposed that the for him remaining E. Cush. languages and S. Cush. be merged into a single group, as there is insufficient morphological differentiation to warrant two separate groups. Since the 1970s, other scholars have questioned the inclusion of one language, Dahalo, under the S. Cush. umbrella, notwithstanding the picture commonly presented in reference works deriving from the only detailed study of comparative S. Cush. (Ehret 1980), which places Dahalo as a separate branch of S. Cush. A contrary statement was decisively presented by Tosco (2000), arguing for the placing of Dahalo as a separate branch of E. Cush.

1.2. The question of Omotic

The ongoing re-analysis of the internal classification of Cushitic is not the only question regarding the nature of the family, nor the most recent one. For many years since the

first attempts at a classification of Cushitic a further branch called West Cushitic was proposed, comprising a number of languages spoken in South West Ethiopia. There are sufficient substantial differences both in morphology and lexicon that set these languages apart from the rest of Cushitic such that the erstwhile West Cushitic, now renamed Omotic, was proposed as a quite separate family of the Afroasiatic phylum originally by Fleming in 1969 (see Fleming 1976) and backed up in several in-depth studies by Bender (esp. 2000). The majority of linguists working in the area now concur with this classification (see Hayward 1990). There has, however, been some opposition to this view with the proposal to retain some or all of Omotic within the Cushitic family (Zaborski 1986a; Lamberti 1987). It has for instance been suggested that only part of Omotic, the Aroid (also called Ari-Banna, or Southern Omotic) languages, form a separate branch of Afroasiatic, whilst the rest are part of Cushitic. These problems of classification essentially revolve around the questions (a) how much that is similar between Omotic and Cushitic is due to shared archaisms from Afroasiatic, and (b) how much arises from convergence due to an extended period of geographical proximity. There are certainly many similarities at all levels of linguistic analysis that are best explained by contact and convergence. On the other hand, there are considerable and fairly fundamental differences. Originally, much was made of the fact that in the personal pronoun system, in the languages of several branches of the family, the 1sg. and 2sg. forms seemed to show the reverse of what would be expected for Cushitic, or indeed any Afroasiatic language: Wolaitta *ta*, *ne*, resp., hence the label "ta/ne" sometimes applied to these languages. This isogloss has certainly been overstated in the past, and it has been shown (Bender 2000) that the current forms represent a specific internal development. Nonetheless, person marking in Omotic both in the pronouns and in verbal inflexion shows some differences from Cushitic, as do, by and large, gender and case marking in nominals. Further discussion of Omotic is excluded from what follows.

2. Grammatical survey

For the Semitist the Cushitic languages show numerous familiar structural and formal features, especially in the areas of phonology and morphology. Together with the Berber (see ch. 3) languages, Cushitic shows the closest parallels with Semitic most notably in the inflexion of verbs with the distinctive interlocking or "block" pattern (Tucker 1967, 657) marking of person by means of prefixes, such that it is sometimes suggested that Berber, Cushitic and Semitic form a closer grouping within the Afroasiatic phylum. There are also clear similarities in the morphology of the pronominal system and in the inflexion of nouns.

2.1. Phonology

Many Cushitic languages show a number of parallels with other Afroasiatic and specifically Semitic languages in their phonemic and phonological systems. For instance, the presence of pharyngeals (ʿ, *ħ*) and laryngeals (ʾ, *h*), and a series of stops

with secondary, typically glottalised articulation, forming triads with plain voiceless and voiced stops (*t*, *d*, *t'* and *k*, *g*, *k'*) as well as an affricate triad (*c*, *j*, *c'*). Consonant and vowel length are also widely phonemic, as in Proto-Semitic, for example. Another feature of Cushitic phonemic systems that is reminiscent of some Semitic varieties, including Ethiopian Semitic, is the widespread absence of a voiceless pair *p* of the labial stop *b* and the concomitant presence of a labial fricative *f*. Not all of these features, however, occur in all Cushitic languages. The pharyngeals, for instance, only occur in 'Afar-Saho, Somali, Dullay, Dahalo and Southern Cushitic. The phonemic systems of Beja and the C. Cush. branch, for instance, show marked differences: Beja has no pharyngeals and no glottalised consonants, but a retroflex pair (*ṭ*, *ḍ*); similarly, in C. Cush. there are no pharyngeals and generally no glottalised consonants (other than chiefly in loans from Ethiopian Semitic and glottalised *k'* in Bilin which seems to be a comparatively recent realisation of older uvular *q*, still occurring in Awngi as well as apparently in the earliest recorded Bilin material), but reconstructed in the proto-language there is a pair of alveolar affricates (**ts*, **dz*) which have differing reflexes in the various languages. It is probable that the Beja retroflex and the C. Cush. affricate pair derive from earlier glottalised alveolars. As well as the retroflex *ḍ*, a voiced implosive *ɗ* is also found in many E. Cush. languages (the symbol *d'* or orthographic *dh* is often used in the literature for both), which suggests that both may derive from an earlier glottalised stop.

Other features of the phoneme inventory that are found in separate languages or branches of Cushitic and which are sometimes reconstructed for the proto-system are the presence of labialised velars (k^w, g^w, k'^w), found in C. Cush. and S. Cush. and partially in Beja; a lateral fricative/glottalised affricate pair (*ɬ*, *tɬ'*) also exists in Iraaqw and is reconstructed for Proto-South-Cushitic; a voiceless velar fricative (*x*) occurs in a wide range of languages, sometimes demonstrably deriving from an earlier stop, but *x* is also sometimes tentatively reconstructed for the proto-system (Sasse 1979, 20–21); some E. Cush. languages have a voiceless glottalised labial (*p'*) of infrequent occurrence, which cannot, however, be reconstructed for the proto-system and is perhaps due to Omotic influence. There have been various proposals for the reconstruction of the Proto-Cushitic consonant system, some with a smaller number of phonemes, others with a larger set. Table 5.1. shows what is by and large the most widely accepted system, differing little from what is proposed for Proto-E. Cush.

Tab. 5.1: Proto-Cushitic consonants

	Labial		Dental/Alveolar		Alveolar-Palatal		Velar		Pharyngeal		Laryngeal
Voice	–	+	–	+	–	+	–	+	–	+	–
Stops		*b*	*t*	*d*	*c*	*j*	*k*	*g*			*ʔ*
Glottalised			*t'*	*ɗ*	*c'*		*k'*				
Fricatives	*f*		*s*	*z*	*š*		*x (?)*		*ħ*	*ʕ*	*h*
Nasals		*m*		*n*							
Liquids				*l, r*							
Glides		*w*				*y*					

The majority of Cushitic languages have a five-term vowel system (*i*, *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*) each with long counterparts. C. Cush., however, has the same seven-term system as Ethiopian Semitic (*i*, *e*, *a*, *ä*, *ə*, *o*, *u*) without phonemic vowel length. The vowels *e* and *o* are of restricted occurrence, and the other five appear to have developed from an earlier three-term system ±length in the same way as Ethiopian Semitic vowels derive from Proto-Semitic (**i/u* > *ə*, **ii* > *i*, **a* > *ä*, **aa* > *a*, **uu* > *u*).

2.2. Morphology

The type of non-concatenative morphology that is a hallmark of the classical Semitic languages, typified by apophony in verb stems, partial reduplication again as a part of verb inflexion, the so-called "broken plurals" in nouns, etc., features that are noted elsewhere in Afroasiatic, can also be found in Cushitic, though in many languages only as traces. At the northern extent of the Cushitic area, however, Beja and 'Afar-Saho preserve this kind of morphology best. In the instance of verbal inflection, it has been suggested that this may be due to close contact with Semitic languages, and not just in obvious loans which adopt the prefix-conjugation, but also as an over-all "revitalisation" of the inherited pattern (see Hayward 1978, 356). The Cushitic languages of the Ethiopian highlands have been in close contact with Ethiopian Semitic languages for more than two millennia, at least as far as the C. Cush. languages are concerned (see 77). These are generally believed to have formed the substratum over which the modern Ethiopian Semitic languages developed, and there are many shared typological features in morphology and especially syntax, as well as the more expected borrowings in the lexicon, in both families of languages. The beginnings of this linguistic interference can already be observed in Ge'ez (see 69), though of course it is much more apparent in the modern languages such as Tigrinya (see 71) and Amharic (see 73). The typical SOV, head-final syntax of the modern Ethiopian Semitic languages is generally attributed to the influence of substrate Cushitic languages.

2.2.1. Personal pronouns

One of the most obvious parts of the morphological system of Cushitic languages where the common Afroasiatic heritage is apparent is the system of personal pronouns, both in terms of structure and form. Most Cushitic languages operate with a seven-term system, in which gender (masculine and feminine) is only distinguished in the 3sg. Whilst only S. Cush. retains the inherited gender distinction in the 2sg. and plural, there are traces of the different forms of the 2sg. in C. Cush. though without any gender distinction. Somewhat differently, Beja, which has innovated extensively in its independent pronouns, marks gender distinction in both the 2nd and the 3rd persons, singular and plural (the latter in some dialects only), but not in dependent (possessive and object) pronouns. Beja also has "allocutive" suffixes marking the gender of the addressee (masc. *-a* and fem. *-i*) added to verbs. A number of L. E. Cush. languages (Somali, Rendille, Dhaasanac, etc.) have introduced a distinction in the 1pl. between exclusive and inclusive, though no common form of the exclusive can be reconstructed, even at a low level. Most languages also make a formal distinction, particularly in the

1st and 2nd persons, between the independent pronoun, typically used in subject function, and the dependent or clitic pronoun used in a range of oblique functions, such as possessive, verbal object, or in combination with various case suffixes. These two sets of pronouns have clear parallels and indeed cognates in Semitic with, for example, the 1sg. and 2sg. independent forms in **ʔan-* and **ʔa/i[n]t-*, resp., and the corresponding dependent forms in **yV-* and **kV-*. Some languages have confused the two sets, especially in the plural, but note also Arbore *ye*, *ke*, as both subject and object pronouns 1sg. and 2sg., resp. The 3rd person pronouns in both sets derive from proto-forms in **sV-* or **šV-*. Interestingly, differing Beja dialects have clitic forms in both *s* and *h*/*Ø*, which recalls the similar alternation in Semitic (e.g. in both modern and ancient South Arabian, and between Akkadian and Central Semitic for further details see Appleyard 1986).

Tab. 5.2: Independent pronouns (nominative). The *-s* form in the Beja sg. 3 m. is the 'Amar'ar dialect; the upper forms of pl. 1 in Somali and Rendille are exclusive 'we but not you', and the lower forms are inclusive 'I/we and you'.

	Beja	Somali	Rendille	Oromo	Sidaama	'Afar	Bilin	Iraaqw
sg. 1	*ane*	*anigu*	*ani*	*ani*	*ani*	*anu*	*an*	*an*[*i*]
sg. 2	*baruuk* *batuuk*	*adigu*	*ati*	*ati*	*ati*	*atu*	*ənti*	*kuuŋ* *kiiŋ*
sg. 3 m.	*baruu;* *baruus*	*isagu*	*usu*	*inni*	*isi*	*usuk*	*ni*	*inos*
sg. 3 f.	*batuu;* *batuus*	*iyadu*	*ice*	*išeen*	*ise*	*is*	*nəri*	
pl. 1	*hinin*	*annagu* *innagu*	*naħ* *inno*	*nuy*	*ninke*	*nanu*	*yən*	*at*[*en*]
pl. 2	*baraak*[*na*] *bataak*[*na*]	*idinku*	*atin*	*isini*	*kiʔne*	*isin*	*əntən*	*kuŋga* *kiŋga*
pl. 3	*baraa;* *baraasna,* *bataasna*	*iyagu*	*ico*	*isaani*	*insa*	*oson*	*na*	*inoʔin*

2.2.2. Gender, number and case in nouns

The typical Afroasiatic grammatical gender system comprising "masculine" and "feminine" runs throughout Cushitic morphosyntax. In nouns, gender is not always apparent from the citation form of the noun, though in 'Afar, for example, all consonant-final and all vowel-final nouns with penultimate accent are masculine, whilst all others are feminine; or, in the C.Cush. language Awngi in the citation form all masculine nouns end in *-i* or a consonant, and all feminine nouns end in *-a*. Apart from nouns referring

Tab. 5.3: Oblique pronouns

	Beja		Somali		Oromo		Sidaama		‘Afar		Bilin
	poss.	obj.	poss.[2]	obj.	poss.[2]	obj.	poss.	obj.[3]	poss.	obj.	poss./obj.[4]
sg. 1	*-Ø*	*-heeb*	*-kayga*	*i*	*koo/kiyya*	*[a]na*	*-ʔya*	*-e* *ane*	*yi*	*yoo*	*yə*
sg. 2	*-k*	*-hook*	*-kaaga*	*ku*	*kee*	*si*	*-kki*	*-he* *ate*	*ku*	*koo*	*kʷə*
sg. 3 m.	*-Ø; -s*[1]	*-Ø; -hoos*[1]	*-kiisa*	*Ø*	*isaa*	*isa*	*-si*	*-si iso*	*kay*	*kaa*	*ni*
sg. 3 f.			*-keeda*		*išee*	*išee*	*-se*	*-se ise*	*tet*	*teeti*	*nər*
pl. 1	*-n*	*-hoon*	*-kayaga* *-keenna*	*na* *ina*	*keenya*	*nu*	*-nke*	*-nke* *ninke*	*ni*	*nee*	*yəna/ä*
pl. 2	*-kna*	*-hookna*	*-kiinna*	*idin*	*keessan*	*isin*	*-ʔne*	*-ʔne* *kiʔne*	*sin*	*siini*	*ənta/ä*
pl. 3	*-hina;* *-sna*[1]	*-Ø;* *-hoosna*[1]	*-kooda*	*Ø*	*isaanii*	*isaan*	*-nsa*	*-nsa* *insa*	*ken*	*keeni*	*na*

[1] *-s* forms ’Amar’ar dialect
[2] masc. non-subject forms
[3] Sidaama has both suffixed and independent object pronouns
[4] object forms require the case suffix *-t*

to humans, where natural gender assignment prevails, grammatical gender is mostly randomly assigned. Gender is for the most part manifested through agreement, for instance, between the verb and its noun subject, or between determiners and head nouns: e. g. Beja *yaas* 'dog/bitch' but *uu-yaas* 'the dog', *tuu-yaas* 'the bitch'; [*ʔ*]*oor* 'boy, girl' but *wi-ʔoor-i baaba* 'the boy's father', *ti-ʔoo*[*r*]*-t-i baaba* 'the girl's father'; *uu-tak uu-win ee-ya* 'the tall man came', *ti-takat tuu-win ee-ta* 'the tall woman came', where the feminine markers are the various *t-* elements. Throughout Cushitic the commonest feminine marker in determiners is the consonant *t*, or its development in keeping with predictable sound changes in individual languages. It is often associated with the vowel *i*. The corresponding masculine determinative element in all of Cushitic except for Beja is *k* or its development, which is often linked with the vowel *u*, though the latter may be rather a nominative case marker: cp. Oromo demonstrative 'this' masc. nom. *kun*[*i*], fem. nom. *tun*[*i*], masc. abs. *kana*, fem. abs. *tana*; Burji possessive pronoun 'our' masc. nom. *nin-ku*, fem. nom. *nin-ci*, masc. abs. *nin-ka*, fem. abs. *nin-ta*; Awngi complemental relative suffixes masc. *-γ*^{w}*/w*, fem. *-t*. There is some evidence that the Beja masculine marker in determiners equivalent to *k-* in the rest of Cushitic was **w-* (see Appleyard 2004, 180). If this is so, the use of **k*[*u*] in this function is a later innovation of the rest of Cushitic. In some languages, there are also differences in case inflection according to gender; typical is that in several languages only masculine nouns are marked for the nominative or subject case, as well as some classes of feminine having a distinct genitive suffix. In Bilin, on the other hand, nouns have different endings for the accusative or object case and the dative case, as well as the genitive, according to gender.

Number marking in nouns in Cushitic is particularly complex and heterogeneous, and whilst there are commonalities, by and large it is not possible to reconstruct a single system for the proto-language. The number system in most languages operates with three terms: a basic, indeterminate form that is often called "the singular" in the literature, though it is usually neutral in respect of number, which in many languages has collective or mass reference, too. Formally derived from this may be two marked forms, a "singulative" referring to a single individual, and a plural with multiple reference: Bilin *dəmmu* 'cat(s)', *dəmmura 'a* single cat', *dəmmut* 'several cats'. All three terms, however, do not necessarily occur in every noun or in every language: Kambaata basic *adani-ta* 'cat(s), singulative *adancu-ta* 'a single cat'; singulative *abur-cu* 'a single cockerel', plural *aburra-ta* 'cockerels'; basic *ciila*-[*ta*] 'infant', plural *ciilla-ta* 'infants'. The singulative suffixes vary, but many incorporate the feminine t-suffix (though singulatives are not necessarily grammatically feminine): e.g. 'Afar *-yta*, *-ytu*, *-yto*, *-ta*, *-tu*, *-to*; Sidaama, *-icco*, Oromo *-icca* (masc.), *-ittii* (fem.), Bayso *-ti/-titi*; Bilin *-ra* (for more details see Zaborski 1986b, 291–293). This recalls, for instance, the *nomen unitatis* forms in Arabic and Hebrew constructed with the feminine ending, and is thus most probably an inherited Afroasiatic feature.

The formation of noun plurals is very diverse, even within groups of closely related languages, though is mostly by means of suffixes. Plurals formed by internal modification of the noun stem, sometimes in combination with the addition of a suffix, do exist in a number of languages; devices include partial or, rarely, total reduplication, lengthening or shortening of an internal vowel of the stem, consonantal ablaut and lengthening. The northern languages, such as 'Afar-Saho and Bilin, also have examples of Semitic-type "broken plurals", but these seem to occur mostly in loans from Arabic

or Ethiopian Semitic (Tigrinya and Tigre). Examples of Cushitic internal plurals are: Beja *ginuuf* – *ginuf* 'nose', *oor* – *ar* 'child', 'Afar *dayla* – *dayloola* 'medicine', *duʿur* – *duʿuura* 'fool', Saho *anrab* – *anrub* 'tongue', Bilin *ʿəl* – *ʿələl* 'eye', *gira* – *git* 'mountain'; Somali *geel* – *geelal* 'herd of camels'. Plural suffixes show a wide range of forms, and often more than one plural-forming device may be used with the same noun. The commonest shape of plural suffixes may be typified as: -[*V*]*t*[*V*], -[*V*]*w*[*V*] and -*Vn*. A further formative that is restricted to E. Cush. is -*Vy*[*V*], and there are others of more restricted occurrence (for details see Zaborski 1986b). The first three of these all have parallels elsewhere in Afroasiatic, including Semitic, and are almost certainly inherited from Afroasiatic, though because of continuing uncertainties about the relevant sound changes at such a deep level, as well as the inevitable cycles of morphological innovation, it is impossible to reconstruct precise proto-forms. Examples of suffixed plurals are: Beja *gaw* – *gawa* 'house', *ragad* – *ragada* 'leg, foot', 'Afar *bar* – *baritte* 'night', *bakkeela* – *bakkelwa* 'hare', Saho *ʿeela* – *ʿeelit/ʿeelwa* 'well', Oromo *laga* – *lagoota/laggeen* 'river', *gaara* – *gaarota* 'mountain', *saʾa* – *saawwan* 'cow', Somali *kab* – *kabo* 'shoe', *ʿas* – *naʿasyo* 'fool', *waddo* – *waddooyin* 'road', *ugaħ* – *ugħan* 'egg', Bilin *mərawa* – *mərawti* 'snake', *bəra* – *bərtət* 'field'. In many languages such plural noun forms require singular (masculine or feminine) rather than plural agreement, since gender assignment attaches to the specific "plural" formative: in Kambaata, for instance, most formal plurals are feminine. In other languages, such as Somali, different plural devices have different associated genders; e.g. the ending -*o* requires masculine agreement: *naag* f. 'woman' – *naago* m. 'women', *jilib* m. 'knee' – *jilbo* m. 'knees', but – *Co/yo* is feminine: *baabuur* m. 'truck' – *baabuurro* f. 'trucks', *naʿas* m. 'fool' – *naʿasyo* f. 'fools'.

Most languages have a three-term primary case system: a marked nominative or subject case, an unmarked form often called "absolutive" with a wide range of functions including that of citation form as well as the complement or object of verbs, and a possessive or genitive case. In some languages such as 'Afar and C. Cush. Kemant (and this appears to be the original situation) only masculine nouns mark the nominative. Others have innovated and spread nominative marking to some classes of feminine nouns, as in Somali and Oromo, whilst yet others (e.g. C. Cush. Bilin and Awngi, also the languages of the Dullay group) have replaced the marked nominative-absolutive system with a nominative-accusative pattern, introducing a specific accusative case marker and leaving the nominative unmarked. Table 5.4. shows a sample from a few languages, but it should be borne in mind that there are variations and complexities in each language that have had to be omitted. Beja, however, appears never to have had this system, but to have retained an older pattern which may be compared directly with Proto-Semitic (see Appleyard 2004, 178–180; also Sasse 1984), whilst the rest of Cushitic innovated with a marked nominative system in -*i*. There are traces of the older pattern here, too, with masc. nom. -*u* in demonstratives, as well as 'Afar personal pronouns (*anu*, *atu*, cp. Table 5.2.), and in H. E. Cush. nouns.

Adverbial relations are variously denoted, in keeping with the typical SOV syntax of Cushitic, by means of postpositions, which in some languages, notably C. Cush. and H. E. Cush., but also to some degree in 'Afar-Saho and Oromo, have become so closely fused with the noun as to be regarded as secondary case suffixes. Interestingly, however, in Somali and most of its closest relatives, these original postpositions have become detached from their nouns and accumulate in preverbal position: Somali *markaasay šeekadii dabada uga gašay* 'then she entered upon the story from the beginning',

Tab. 5.4: Primary cases in nouns

masculine							
	‘Afar	Somali	Oromo		Bilin	Beja	
						indef.	def.
nom.	*awkí* *dul*	*inan* *nin*	*namni*	nom.	*gərwa* *ləŋən*	*tak* *haɖa*	*uu-tak*[1] *wi-haɖa*
abs.	*áwka* *dul*	*inán* *nín*	*nama*	acc.	*gərwäs* *ləŋənsi*	*tak* *haɖaa-b*	*oo-tak* *wi-haɖa*
gen.	*awkí* *dulti*	*inán* *nín*	*namaa*	gen.	*gərwi* *ləŋən*	*tak-i* *haɖa-i*	*i-tak-i* *wi-haɖa-i*
	‘boy’, ‘hippo’	‘boy’, ‘man’	‘man’		‘man’, ‘house’	‘man’, ‘lion’	

feminine							
	‘Afar	Somali	Oromo		Bilin	Beja	
nom.	*saga*	*naagi*	*lafti/lafni*	nom.	*gäna*	*yaas-t*	*ti-yaas*
abs.	*saga*	*náag*	*lafa*	acc.	*gänät*		
gen.	*sagáh/* *sagáC*	*naagéed*	*lafaa*	gen.	*gänär*	*yaas-t-i*	*ti-yaas-t-i*
	‘cow’	‘woman’	‘land’		‘mother’	‘bitch’	

[1] The article in Beja varies according to the syllabic structure of the following noun (see Appleyard 2007, 452). The endings *-t* and *-b* are gender markers on indefinite nouns, masc. and fem., resp., the latter only in the acc. case.

Tab. 5.5: Proto-forms of primary cases

	masc. short vowel	masc. long vowel	fem. short vowel	fem. long vowel
nom.	**-i*	**-ii*	**-a*	**-VV*
abs.	**-a*	**-VV*	**-a*	**-VV*
gen.	**-i*	**-ii*	**-[a]ti*	**-VVti*

in which *uga* is a combination of *u* and *ka* referring to nouns *šeekadii* ‘the story’ and *dabada* ‘the front’. The forms of many of these elements are clearly related across Cushitic, though the functions vary to some extent: dative/instrumental **si*, locative **la/li*, instrumental/comitative **ni*, ablative/instrumental **ka*, locative **[V]dV*, allative/adessive **wa* (for details see Appleyard 1990; Sasse 2003).

2.2.3. Verbal inflexion

It is perhaps in the area of verbal inflexion in Cushitic that the Semitist will most readily recognise several familiar features. Inherited from Afroasiatic, most languages show a

complex system of verbal derivation marking changes in valency: a causative or transitive formed with a sibilant affix *s*, or its expansions (e.g.; "double causative"), a passive or intransitive formed with a nasal affix *m* (*ŋ* in C. Cush. with reciprocal and allied functions), and another passive or reflexive extension, which in some languages developed a subjective or "middle", or "autobenefactive" sense, formed with a dental affix *t*. Some L. E. Cush. languages have a further affix *-VVw* with inchoative function, and all languages have the possibility of combining derivational affixes. Many also have intensive or iterative derivations which are formed by partial or total reduplication of the basic stem. In Beja some verb types also form an intensive by means of inserting a long vowel within the verb stem: *adbil* 'I collected (once)', *adaabil* 'I collected (several times or several things)'. A few languages have two types of verbal inflexion, one involving person marking by means of prefixes, and the other, more common type, by means of suffixes. In Beja (always) and 'Afar-Saho (frequently), where prefix-conjugating verbs are common, the derivational affixes appear in the verbal chain between the personal prefix and the verb root: Beja *ʔi-too-maan-na* 'they have been shaved' (passive *-tVV-*), *ti-s-dabil-a* 'you made (him) collect' (causative *-s-*). Otherwise, they occur after the verb root and before the personal marker: Beja *raat-am-een* 'they were asked/asked one another' (passive-reciprocal *-am-*), *tam-s-een* 'they made him eat' (causative *-s-*).

Tab. 5.6: Prefix-conjugation paradigms

	Beja		'Afar		Somali	
	present	past	present	past	present	past
1 sg.	*anbiis*[1]	*abis*	*amaate*	*emeete*	*imaadaa*	*imi*[*d*]
2 sg.	*tinbiis-a* *tinbiis-i*	*tibis-a* *tibis-i*	*tamaate*	*temeete*	*timaadaa*	*timi*[*d*]
3 m. sg.	*inbiis*	*ibis*	*yamaate*	*yemeete*	*yimaadaa*	*yimi*[*d*]
3 f. sg.	*tinbiis*	*tibis*	*tamaate*	*temeete*	*timaadaa*	*timi*[*d*]
1 pl.	*neebis*[2]	*nibis*	*namaate*	*nemeete*	*nimaadaa*	*nimi*[*d*]
2 pl.	*teebisna*	*nibisna*	*tamaaten*	*temeeten*	*timaadaan*	*timaadeen*
3 pl.	*eebisna*	*ibisna*	*yamaaten*	*yemeeten*	*yimaadaan*	*yimaadeen*
	'bury'		'come'		'come'	

[1] the n before R_1 in 2-consonant verbs and before R_2 in 3-consonant verbs is seen by some as a dissimilation from a geminate or long consonant, and by others as an n-infix deriving from the interpolation of an old auxiliary.
[2] the plural persons of the present adopt an intensive stem inflexion.

As indicated earlier there are two types of inflection for person, the prefix-conjugation, which has marked similarities to the same in Semitic and Berber, and which is clearly related, and the suffix conjugation, a Cushitic development, in which it has long been recognised that the person + tense marking suffixes derive from an old prefix-inflecting auxiliary suffixed to the verb stem. The exact nature of the auxiliary is uncertain as it is now reduced to the tense/aspect marking vowel, but the most likely contender is the monoconsonantal root *y-* 'say' which still survives in C. Cush. and H. E. Cush. with traces elsewhere, e.g. in Saho and Somali.

The person markers are readily identifiable as the same or similar in both patterns and follow the distinctive Afroasiatic "block" pattern: 1sg. *ʔ-* (> Ø), 2sg., 2pl., 3fsg. *t-*, 1pl. *n-*, 3msg., 3pl. *y-* (> Ø), and a suffixed element *-n* in the 2pl. and 3pl. The prefix-conjugation is an archaism and occurs as a functioning and productive part of verbal inflexion only in Beja and 'Afar-Saho (see *inter alia* Voigt 1996). Several other languages (C. Cush. Awngi and L. E. Cush. Somali varieties, Rendille, Boni, Arbore, Dhaasanac) preserve a handful (between four and thirteen according to language) of such verbs. There are generally two tenses or aspects (past/perfective and present or non-past/imperfective), which are distinguished by contrasting vowels in the verb stem in the case of prefix-inflecting verbs, or in the ending in the case of suffix-inflecting verbs. Whilst the imperfect is generally marked by the vowel *a*, a variety of other vowels marks the perfective: e.g. in 'Afar prefix-verbs *i*, *u*, *e*, *o*, which are lexically conditioned, and *e* in suffix-verbs. The position of the tense/aspect vowel may be both after the person marker and inside the stem: *yemeete* – *yamaate* 'come' (see Table 5.7. and Table 5.8.), or only after the person marker: *yokme* – *yakme* 'eat', *yuduure* – *yaduure* 'return'. In Beja the vocalisation is different; it has been argued (see Zaborski 1975, 12ff.) that with the innovation of a "new" present (*inbiis*), the old present shifted to past function (*ibis*), whilst the old past acquired a variety of other functions ranging from remote past to dubitative and conditional (*iibis*). The expected vocalisations, however, only appear in suffix-verbs: old present = past, *tam-ya*, old past *tam-i*; the new present is *tam-iini*. In H. E. Cush. and in C. Cush. the original pattern of the prefix-conjugation has mostly been ousted from main-verb functions by new forms and is retained chiefly in various subordinate functions. In H. E. Cush. (see Table 5.7. Sidaama) the new endings contain some additional elements, perhaps of pronominal or copular original. In C. Cush. the original forms are retained in the negative verb complex, e.g.

Tab. 5.7: Suffix-conjugation paradigms. Present/Imperfective

	Beja		'Afar	Somali	Oromo	Sidaama
	new pres.	old pres. (= past)				
1 sg.	*tamani*	*taman*	*faka*	*keenaa*	*deema*	*sirbeemm-o/-a*[1]
2 sg.	*tamtinii-a* *tamtinii*	*tamtaa* *tamtaa-i*	*fakta*	*keentaa*	*deemta*	*sirbatt-o/-a*
3 m. sg	*tamiini*	*tamya*	*faka*	*keenaa*	*deema*	*sirbanno*
3 f. sg	*tamtini*	*tamta*	*fakta*	*keentaa*	*deemti*	*sirbitanno*
1 pl.	*tamnay*	*tamna*	*fakna*	*keennaa*	*deemna*	*sirbineemmo*
2 pl.	*tamteena*	*tamtaana*	*faktaana*	*keentaan*	*deemtu/deemtani*	*sirbitinanni*
3 pl.	*tameen*	*tamaan*	*fakaana*	*keenaan*	*deemu/deemani*	*sirbitanno*,[2] *sirbinanni*

[1] the vowels *-o* and *-a* mark masc. and fem., resp.
[2] in Sidaama the 3 fsg. functions as a plural, whilst the old 3 pl. now marks 3rd polite.

Tab. 5.8: Past/Perfective

	Beja (old past)	ʻAfar	Somali	Oromo	Sidaama
1 sg.	*tamii*	*fake*	*keenay*	*deeme*	*sirbumm-o/-a*
2 sg.	*tamtii-a* *tamtii*	*fakte*	*keentay*	*deemte*	*sirbitt-o/-a*
3 m. sg	*tami*	*fake*	*keenay*	*deeme*	*sirbi*
3 f. sg	*tamti*	*fakte*	*keentay*	*deemte*	*sirbitu*
1 pl.	*tamni*	*fakne*	*keennay*	*deemne*	*sirbinummo*
2 pl.	*tamtiina*	*fakteeni*	*keenteen*	*deemtani*	*sirbitini*
3 pl.	*tamiin*	*fakeeni*	*keeneen*	*deemani*	*sirbitu,*[2] *sirbini*
	ʻeat'	ʻopen'	ʻbring'	ʻgo'	ʻsing'

Bilin *gäbnä-li* 'we do not refuse', and in part as "indefinite" tenses in Awngi alone, as well as in numerous subordinate forms, whilst the affirmative main-verb tenses use a different "auxiliary" from a root 'be', e.g. Bilin *gäbnäk^{w}ən* 'we refuse' (see Appleyard 1992).

An interesting, third type of verb inflexion occurs in a small number of L. E. Cush. languages (ʻAfar-Saho, Somali), with possible traces elsewhere, in the so-called Stative conjugation of adjectival verbs (see Table 5.9.), which has been compared with the Akkadian "permansive" etc., Cushitic having no trace of *-kV* 1sg. marker, only *ʔV* and the oblique pronoun *yV*.

Tab. 5.9: Stative conjugation

	Saho	Somali		Saho	Somali
1 sg.	ʿ*adiyo*	ʿ*usbi*	1 pl.	ʿ*adino*	ʿ*usbin*
2 sg.	ʿ*adito*	ʿ*usbid*	2 pl.	ʿ*aditin*	ʿ*usbidin*
3 sg.	ʿ*ado*	ʿ*usub*	3 pl.	ʿ*adon*	ʿ*usub*
	ʻbe white'	ʻbe new'			

3. Concluding remarks

The discussion has deliberately focused on inflexional morphology as it is here that the most identifiable links between Cushitic and Semitic (and indeed the rest of Afro-asiatic) can be readily described, in addition to the fact that morphology is usually thought of as being one of the more conservative areas of linguistic analysis. The lexicon also shows parallels, but perhaps less so overall than in morphology, and even between the different branches of Cushitic the amount of shared lexicon is not impres-

sive. It is in the area of syntax, though, that Cushitic most differs from Semitic, insofar as the family is generally pervaded by a head-final, SOV syntax. In addition, in most languages syntax is further dominated by discourse factors such as topicalisation and focalisation which can influence case marking, agreement and forms of the verb.

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