

Banti, G. (1984) "Possessive affixes in the  
Soomali area". In Labahn, Th. (ed.) Proceedings  
of the Intern. Congress of Somali Studies (Hamburg  
August 1-6, 1983), vol. I, pp. 135-154. Helmut Buske  
Verlag, Hamburg. <sup>SOOMAALI CLASSIFICATION</sup>  
Mohamed Nuux Ali  
Christopher Ehret and Maxamed Nuux Cali

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This paper intended to offer a comprehensive hypothesis on the classification of the Soomaali dialects and languages, together with the evidence on which the classification was based. Unfortunately the one of us (Ehret) who was able to attend these meetings was ill throughout the month of June just at the point when the final composing of the paper was about to begin. In consequence, what we must offer here is a summary version of the complete paper, which should be finished and available by the end of the Northern Hemisphere summer. In this summary we present our classification, and we describe the kind of evidence we used, but without specification and full argumentation.

Our study began in 1979. It relies on field collections of data made by one of us (Ehret) in 1979 and 1982 for approximately seventeen diverse dialects and languages and on further secondary collections of data for another 15-20 less divergent dialects, belonging principally to what we have called the Northern subgroup of Soomaali. We also made use of data for Kenya Soomaali graciously provided by Bernd Heine and his colleagues at Köln; we are most appreciative of this assistance. The overall purpose of the study is to reconstruct the early history of Somalia and neighboring areas, a project which will form the substance of a doctoral dissertation of one of the writers (Maxamed Nuux) and should be completed during the coming twelve months. The classification of Soomaali presented here is just one element in this wider project, although it is of course an essential first step.

The evidence was analyzed from two classificatory perspectives:

1) from the aspect of cognate-counting in a basic vocabulary, and 2) from the patternings of shared innovation.

Cognate counts were severely affected in many crucial areas of southern Somalia by extensive long-term dialect borrowing. The distortions occasioned by such histories of contact could be partially compensated for by systematically excluding identifiable word-borrowings from the reckonings (according to the procedures discussed in Ehret 1971: 94 and 1980: 385). A second act of compensation was to put aside from the rest the percentages of cognation between dialects and languages which are neighbors or very close to being neighbors or for which identifiable borrowings indicated former histories of contact. The remaining percentages then proved to offer a generally consistent picture of underlying relationships.

Shared innovations provided the strongest evidence for classification, however. Lexical, morphological, semantic, and phonological innovations were all looked at. A consistent standard sample of two hundred words, collected for all the dialects and languages, was used to identify the first three kinds of innovation, which we will sometimes refer to under the blanket designation of "lexical" innovation. (For arguments on the importance of such an approach in dialect classification, see Ehret and Kinsman 1981.) Phonological innovations were often supported by a wider sampling of data. Innovations, it should be emphasized, were identified as such only if the earlier items they supplanted or supplemented in use could be identified. In several instances, for example, we found for particular meanings lexemes known so far only from our Soomaali language group, but not presently includable in our proto-Soomaali innovation set because we could not yet reconstruct proto-Omo-Tana or proto-Lowland Eastern Cushitic roots with which to contrast them.

A certain number of areally distributed features attributable to contacts of the past millennium turn up in southern Somalia, but their distribution through solid blocks of territory, without regard to the underlying linguistic relationship of the tongues in which they occur, give their non-genetic origins away. For example, Garre of southern Somalia uses Siid for "stone" as do all its immediate neighbors, but in the Aweer<sup>1</sup> dialects of Garre spoken outside the southern Somalia contact zone the original root \*qagah continues in use. In phonology the most notable areal feature is the wide southern Somalian shift of non-initial, non-geminate \*q to /r/; it has no diagnostic value for classification. A few older areal tendencies, such as toward palatalization of velars and falling together of non-initial voiced and voiceless stops, which arose in much earlier times when the Somali speech areas were less extensive, can also be discerned and discounted in the identification of diagnostic innovations.

From a social point of view the various tongues we dealt with all have to be considered dialects of Soomaali. But from a purely linguistic perspective both language and dialect differences were involved--up to seven or more "languages" identifiable in a linguistic sense. Pointing up the social nature of the common perception is the case of Jiiddu, accepted by everyone as Soomaali, yet more distantly related to the rest than is Rendille, which has generally been thought of as a sister language of Soomaali.

Most surprising is the necessity of including Bayso in our widened and diversified Soomaali group. Bayso's closest relationship, within Eastern Cushitic, attested solidly both by cognation counts and by small but compelling sets of lexical and phonological innovations, is apparently to Jiiddu! Bayso also shares in a considerable set of Soomaali lexical innovations--that means, it shares vocabulary which is unique to the broad Soomaali group and for which the earlier Omo-Tana and Lowland Eastern Cushitic equivalents

displaced from use in proto-Soomaali can be determined.

Our classification still needs names for a number of higher-level divisions (names translatable into standard Soomaali!), and we would appreciate any suggestions other participants in the conference might wish to give us. For sociological reasons we have favored names with geographical implication. With its interim names included, marked with asterisks, the classification is as follows:

#### SOOMAALI (I)

##### A. Bayso-Jiiddu

1. Bayso
2. Jiiddu

##### B. \*Soomaali II

1. Rendille
2. \*Soomaali III

###### a. Garre-Aweer

- i. Garre
- ii. Aweer dialects

###### b. Jubba

- i. Tunni
- ii. Baardheere

###### c. \*Soomaali IV

- i. Maay

(dialects: Luuq, Dhiinsoor, Daafeed, Afgoye,  
Bay, Baydhaba, Eyle, etc.)

###### ii. Banaadir-Northern

(a) Baraawe

(b) Banaadir

(1) Xamar

(2) Southern Banaadir (Jamaame, Merka)

(c) Jowhar

(d) Shebeelle-Northern

- (1) Cadale  
 (2) ~~Buur~~ ~~bleyle~~  
 (3) ~~Buulooburti~~ ~~Buur~~ ~~bleyle~~  
 Buulooburti - Nord  
 (3) Northern  
 1) Buulooburti  
 2) Digoodi  
 3) Bali  
 4) Warkheer  
 Somali

Most stages of this classification seem to us solidly based. The justification of the Bayso-Jiiddu and general Soomaali linkages was touched on previously. The Soomaali II, Soomaali III, Soomaali IV, and Banaadir-Northern stages are established by phonological as well as semantic, morphological, and lexical innovations. The Northern subgroup within Shebeelle-Northern is composed of all the dialects of the northern half of the Soomaali speech area, the dialects south of the Jubba (except for Aweer), and the dialects of several communities around the fringes of the intervening region. We have as yet no distinctive phonological innovations for this subgroup, but the percentages of cognation and a significant set of other kinds of innovations attest its validity. The Maay branch of Soomaali IV, called Central Somali by John Saeed, has at least eight major dialects, possibly more, as distinct from each other as the most distantly related dialects of the Shebeelle-Northern subgroup of Banaadir-Northern. Some of these dialects in turn have subdialects, but we did not carry our study down to this level of detail.

We have divided Soomaali III into three coordinate branches for now. The inclusion of Baardheere with Tunni is quite tentative, however. Baardheere has been deeply influenced in recent centuries by Maay speech. But outside of its use of \*qimo for "to die," a distinctive innovation of Soomaali IV otherwise entirely restricted to Soomaali IV dialects and languages, its patterns of innovation show it to be a pre-Soomaali IV but post-Soomaali III

split-off. What links it provisionally to Tunni are a couple soundshifts, though of rather limited generality, and a couple lexical innovations which seem difficult to explain away as borrowings. Since there are, however, some probable Tunni borrowings in Baardheere, we are reluctant to put more than a tentative reliance on this meager evidence.

Another point of uncertainty is the fit of Cadale in Shebeelle-Northern. Cadale lacks the unique phonological shift of medial \*mm to /b/, found in all the rest of the Shebeelle-Northern dialects. On the other hand, it shares in the great majority of the lexical innovations characteristic of the Shebeelle-Northern subgroup. We have thus treated the \*mm>b shift as an early areal feature affecting the proto-Buuloburti and proto-Northern facies of early Shebeelle-Northern speech but not spreading as far as proto-Cadale. A plausible alternative classification of the subgroup could have the following shape, however:

(d) Shebeelle-Northern

(1) Cadale

(2) Buuloburti-Northern

(i) Buuloburti

(ii) Northern

It is also not clear that Garre-Aweer should be broken into Garre and Aweer divisions. Dialect differences of some note are known to exist among Aweer speakers, and it is quite possible, for instance, that some of the northern Aweer dialects might be closer to Garre or that the group has a three- or four-way split. (It should be pointed out that the people who call themselves Garre in northern Kenya speak <sup>today</sup> either an Oromo or a Northern Soomaali dialect; frequently their present-day languages contain Garre loan-words, though, indicative of the language some of their ancestors once spoke.)

What the classification reveals is that Soomaali is a rather more divergent group than even Heine (1978) recognized. The minimal cognation, between Bayso-Jiiddu and Soomaali II, centers on the low forty percents; within each of the two primary branches--between Bayso and Jiiddu and between Rendille and Soomaali III--the percentages of cognation fit in the fifties. The Soomaali III split is matched by a range from the high fifty percents into the low sixties between non-proximate tongues, while the minimum range between the two subgroups of Soomaali IV lies in the mid-sixties. Banaadir-Northern Cognation ranges from the high sixties upward. In other words, the beginnings of Soomaali divergence fall far back in the first millennium B.C., and a complicated history of social divergence and culture change awaits our unravelling of it.

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