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# The Ethiopian Linguistic Area: Lectures 1-4 and References

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Yvonne Treis  
(CNRS-LLACAN)

# The Ethiopian Linguistic Area

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SUMMER SCHOOL “SEMANTIC SHIFTS: FROM LEXICON TO GRAMMAR”,  
FRÉJUS, 11-23 SEPTEMBER 2022

# Overview of the lectures

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- 1: Ethiopian languages: An introduction
  - + Avoidance lexicon in Highland East Cushitic
  - + ‘know’ as experiential perfect marker
- 2: Defining (and contested) features of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area
  - + Sub-areas of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area
- 3: Shared lexicalisation patterns
- 4: Shared multifunctionality
  - ‘like’ as purposive marker

Focus on Areality

Yvonne Treis  
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# Ethiopian Languages: An introduction

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SUMMER SCHOOL “SEMANTIC SHIFTS: FROM LEXICON TO GRAMMAR”,  
FRÉJUS, 11-23 SEPTEMBER 2022

# Part 1: Languages of Ethiopia

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# Overview of Lecture 1

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- Part 1: Languages of Ethiopia
  - How many?
  - From which genetic branches?
  - Linguistic hotspots
  - Earliest sources
- Part 2: Selected features of Ethiopian languages
  - The avoidance lexicon in Highland East Cushitic
  - ‘know’ > experiential perfect marker

Languages of Ethiopia ≠ Ethiopian Linguistic Area

# Languages of Ethiopia: How many?

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- Population of Ethiopia: 110 mio. (World Bank estimate of 2018)
- Last population (and language) census: 2007
- “Big” languages:
  - Amharic (S), the federal working language and Ethiopian lingua franca
  - Oromo (C), the biggest Cushitic language [also in Kenya]
  - Somali (C) [also in Somalia, Somaliland, Kenya]
  - Tigrinya (S) [also in Eritrea]
  - Sidaama (C)
  - Wolaitta (O), the biggest Omotic language
- ~ **80 languages**
  - Ethnologue (2022): 84 living indigenous lgs (incl. ESL), 2 “dormant” lgs, 1 extinct lg, 5 non-indigenous lgs, 1 liturgical lg (Geez; no L1 speaker)
  - 0.3%–0.6% of the population are speakers of Ethiopian Sign Language

# Languages of Ethiopia: How many?

Ethnologue (2022)

No. 1-4: ~74% of the population (2007 census)

	L1 speakers		L1 speakers		L1 speakers		L1 speakers
Amharic	3180000	Alaba-K'abeena	278000	Girra	50000	Seze	13000
Oromo (all varieties)	3660000	Kistane	255000	Daasanach	48000	Kunama	7430
Somali	6720000	Konso	242000	Burji	46400	Mursi	7390
Tigrinya	6390000	Xamtanga	213000	Argobba	43700	Arbore	7210
Sidaama	4340000	Berta	197000	Sheko	38900	Nayi	7190
Wolaitta	2380000	Mesqan	195000	Oyda	36900	Hozo	6000
"Sebat Bet Gurage"	2170000	Gumuz	161000	Borna	35900	Kwegu	5110
Afar	1840000	Koorete	157000	Dizin	33900	Opo	5000
Hadiyya	1840000	Nuer	153000	Saho	32800	Bayso	4620
Gamo	1630000	Me'en	151000	Majang	30000	Kachama-Ganjule	2830
Gedeo	1410000	Maale	94700	Suri, Tirmaga-Chai	26900	Suri, Kacipo-Bale	2360
Kafa	1190000	Baskeet	92600	Harari	25800	Mawes Aas'e	2300
Silt'e	881000	Yemsa	92200	Nyangatom	24300	Qimant	1650
Kambaata	743000	Anywa	90600	Dorze	20800	Karo	1480
Ethiopian Sign Language	560000	Ale	84300	Melo	20200	Komo	1000
Dawro	513000	Shekkacho	80100	Zayse	18500	Dime	570
Awngi	489000	Hamer-Banna	74400	Mositacha	18100	Anfillo	500
Gofa	359000	Dirasha	73500	Tsamakko	18000	Ganza	400
Bench	348000	Wolane	70000	Gwama	1500	Shabo	400
Aari	285000	Libido	58800	Zay	14000	Daats'iin	300
Inor	280000	Gayl	55700	Chara	13100	Ongota	10
OMOTIC (AA)		CUSHITIC (AA)		KOMAN			
SEMITIC (AA)		EAST SUDANIC (NS)		OTHER			





# Languages of Ethiopia: How many?

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- Difficulties (as in other parts of the world):
  - Who is a speaker? vs. Who is a member of the ethnic group (but not necessarily an L1 speaker)?
  - What is a language and what is a dialect?
    - Oromo: considerable dialectal variation but considered 1 language (Ethnologue: “macrolanguage”)
    - “Sebat Bet Gurage”: cluster of Ethio-Semitic languages (one language in the Ethnologue)
    - Kambaata-Xambaaro-Alaaba-K’abeena: only small differences but considered 2 (in the future 4?) separate languages
  - Ever changing language names
- Ethiopian federalism:
  - Art. 5 (1) of the FDRE Constitution stipulates that “[a]ll Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition”. > Right to speak, write and develop the languages of all ethnic groups
  - Amharic: Status of working language (not “national language”)
  - Administrative boundaries (regional states, zones, districts) determined by linguistic boundaries

# Languages of Ethiopia: Which branches?

- Afroasiatic language phylum:
  - Semitic > South Semitic > Ethio-Semitic [yellow]
  - Cushitic > East and Central branches [green]
  - Omotic (if you believe that Omotic is AA ...) [blue]

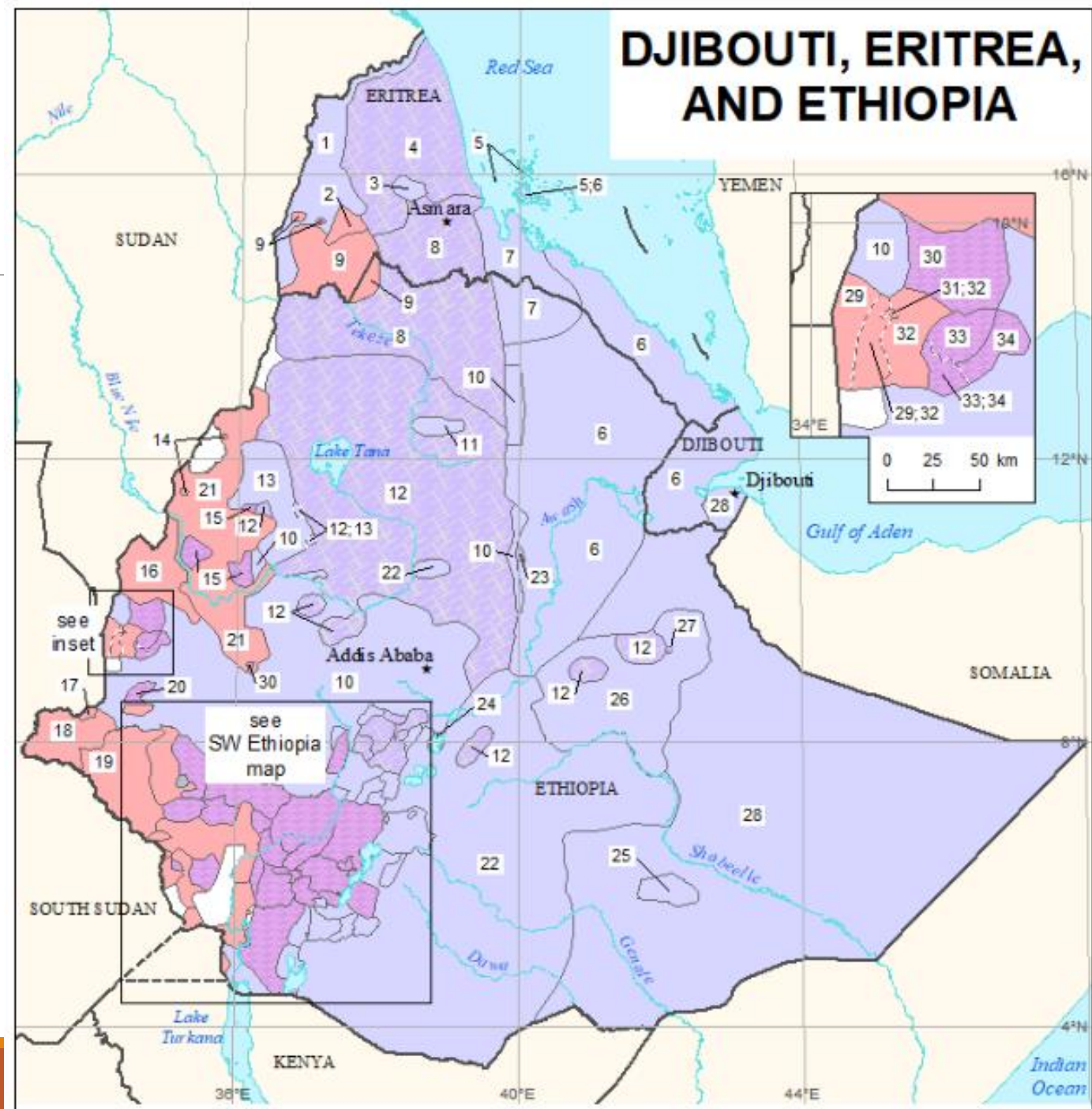
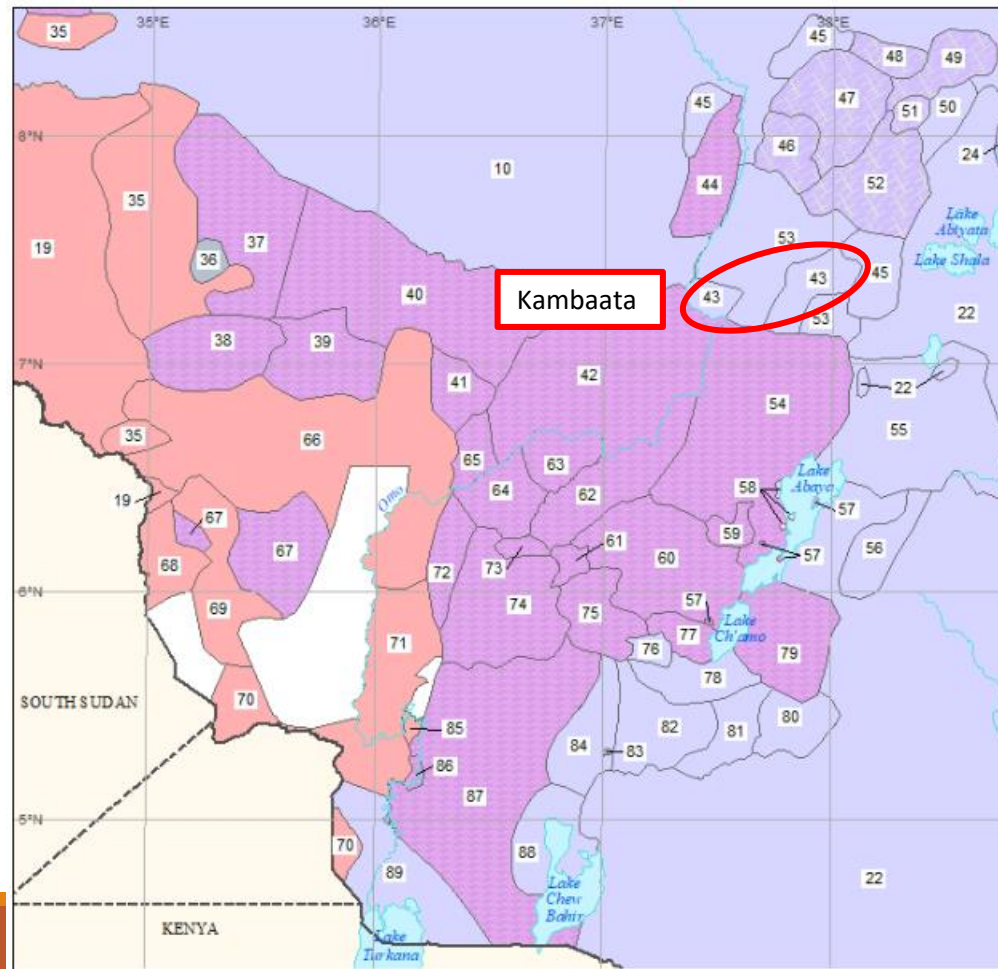
- Disputed “Nilo-Saharan” phylum:
  - East Sudanic branch: Nilotic languages, Surmic languages [red]
  - Berta
  - Kunama
- Koman language family (3) [violet]
- B’aga language family (2)
- Isolate: Shabo
- Unclear: Ongota

	L1 speakers		L1 speakers		L1 speakers		L1 speakers
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SEMITIC (AA)		EAST SUDANIC (NS)		OTHER			

except for Kunama, all spoken in remote areas along the western and southwestern border

- Ethiopian Sign Language [grey]

# Linguistic hotspots





# Languages of Ethiopia: Earliest sources

- Ethio-Semitic

- Generally assumed to have been introduced into the Horn from the South Arabian peninsula at an undetermined time in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC
- Geez (“Ethiopic”):
  - Language of the ancient capital of Aksum
  - First attested in pre-Christian monumental inscriptions
  - Probably no longer spoken by the early medieval period
  - Continued for centuries to be the written language of the Ethiopian state
  - Liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church up to today
  - Rich manuscript tradition, especially of religious content
- Ethiopian alphasyllabary: consonantal signs with vowel diacritics, first used for Geez, then adapted to modern Ethio-Semitic languages (e.g. Amharic and Tigrinya)



QUIZ!

# Languages of Ethiopia: Earliest sources

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- Amharic (Ethiosemitic):
  - No direct descendant of Geez
  - Earliest examples in the “Royal Songs” (14<sup>th</sup>, early 15<sup>th</sup> century)
  - First grammar by Ludolf (1698)
- Oromo (Cushitic)
  - First documented Cushitic language
  - First data found in the work of Ludolf
  - Oromo grammar and dictionary by Krapf (1840, 1842) [Ethiopia]
  - Oromo dictionary and grammar by Tutschek (1844, 1845) [Munich]
- Kafa (Omotic)
  - First documented Omotic language
  - Kafa grammar by Cecchi (1886), Reinisch (1888)

## Part 2: Selected features of Ethiopian languages

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# Selected features

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On the Ethiopian buffet for today:

- Avoidance lexicon / register
- Experiential perfect with 'know'



## 2.1. Avoidance register of married women

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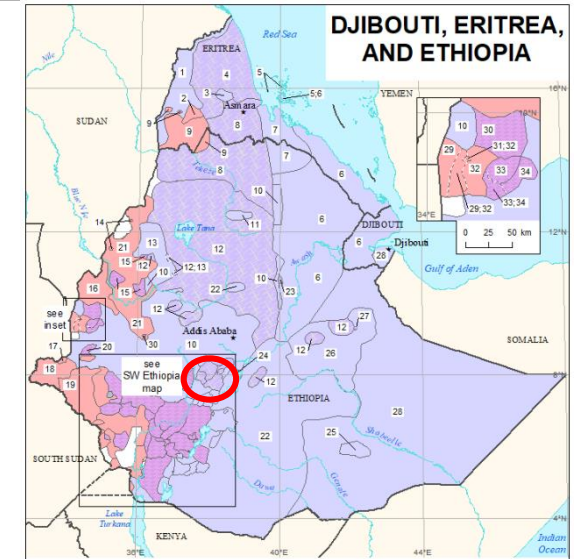
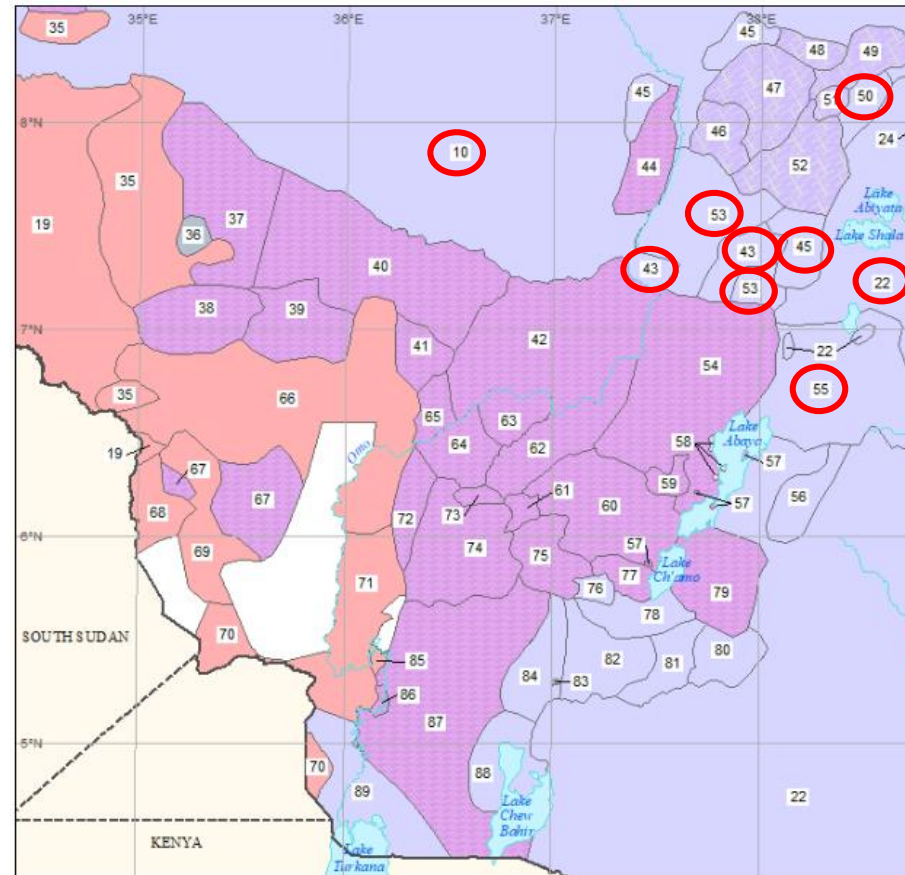


# Avoidance register

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- Avoidance lexicon / register of **married women** (*ballishsha*), NB: <sh> = /ʃ/
- Extended name taboo, found a.o. in Kambaata (Treis 2005)
  - Also reported for Sidaama (Anbessa 1987, 2016), Alaaba (Aklilu 2005), Hadiyya (Aklilu 2005), Libido (J. Crass p.c.), Oromo (Wondwosen 2000, Maweja 2002) [all East Cushitic]
- On the verge of extinction, if not extinct in most areas
  - little documented
  - no data from observation (my own data is from interviews)
- 3 interpretations of *ballishsha*
  - (widest sense:) avoidance of / respectful behaviour towards senior in-laws (esp. father-in-law and mother-in-law) – i.e. avoidance of eye contact, direct address, shared meals, walk side-by-side
  - (narrower sense): linguistic avoidance of the names of senior in-laws and all similar words
  - (narrowest sense): dedicated avoidance lexicon

# Avoidance registers



# Avoidance register

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- Etymology of *ballishsha*, see root *ball-* in
  - *ball-ú* (for a man/woman:) ‘father-in-law’, ‘father of daughter-/son-in-law’, (for a man only:) ‘brother-in-law’
  - *ball-úta* (for a man/woman:) ‘mother-in-law’, ‘mother of daughter-/son-in-law’
  - *ball-aakk-áta* (PL) ‘affinal relatives’
  - *ball-is-* ‘respect one’s in-law’ (**causative**, so lit. ‘make (so.) an in-law’)
  - *ball-ishsh-áta* = action nominal of *ball-is-*

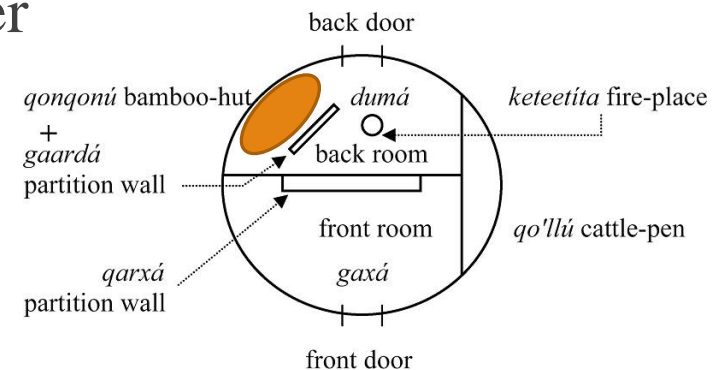
# Avoidance register

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- Linguistic avoidance trigger: initial CV of name of father-in-law, name of mother-in-law (possibly also grandparents-in-law), e.g.
  - Wodeebo (m.) triggers the avoidance of words starting with #wo/wa
  - Maassebe (f.) triggers the avoidance of words starting with #ma
- Consequence: (active) lexicon of all married women is different
- Only lexical (no grammatical) impact (Kambaata = exclusively suffixing)
- Salience of the initial CV also in other domains (esp. poetry)

# Avoidance register: Cultural context (in the past)

- Patrilinear, virilocal, bride moves to the household of her father-in-law
- Bride is given a new name in her new household
- In the first months: bridal hut in the in-law's house
- Concealed from her parents-in-law > after some months: first ritual encounter with the mother-in-law > after some more months: first ritual encounter with the father-in-law
- After 1-3 years: Husband builds house in close proximity to his father's house



# Avoidance register: Acquisition

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- Acquisition of the avoidance lexicon in a ritualised lesson on the second day of her marriage – teachers: paternal aunt of husband and sister of husband
- Fed for the first time in the in-law's house: Spoon by spoon and sip by sip she learns the avoidance lexicon
  - 'Don't say *waasá* (= most important staple food), say *coqqá!*'
  - 'Don't say *wo 'á* (water), say *daadaamú!*'
  - 'Don't say *wo 'ichchú* (calf), say *ladiichchú* (newborn calf)!' etc.
- A core of lexemes is taught to her, for other lexemes avoidance strategies are developed individually
- Linguistic avoidance also acquired and practiced in the absence of the parents-in-law

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

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- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms
- Loanwords
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

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- **Lexical doublets (synonyms)**
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms
- Loanwords
- **Word associations**
- **All purpose tool**



# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

---

- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation, e.g. *boorá* ‘bull’ > *hoga’-aan-ch-ú* ‘the one that ploughs’
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms
- Loanwords
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

---

- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis, e.g. *fella'ú* 'goat' > *qac-ú gizz-á* 'small livestock'
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms
- Loanwords
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

---

- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words, e.g. synonyms, hyponyms, hyperonyms, whole/part
- Antonyms
- Loanwords
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

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- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms, e.g. *ba'*- 'disappear' > *fanqal*- 'come back'
- Loanwords
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Linguistic strategies

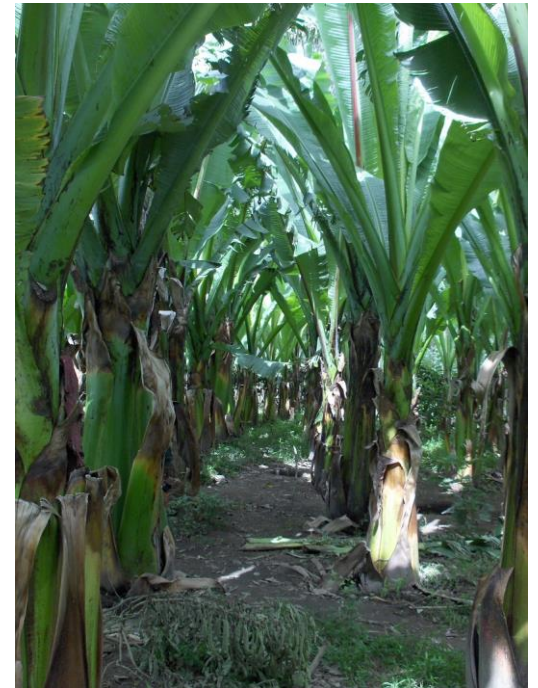
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- Lexical doublets (synonyms)
- Morphological derivation
- Periphrasis
- Semantically related words
- Antonyms
- Loanwords, e.g. spontaneously borrowed from neighbouring Hadiyya or Alaaba, or Amharic
- Word associations
- All purpose tool

# Avoidance register: Lexical dublets

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- True *ballishsha*-vocabulary: Fully synonymous words that come in a non-avoidance/avoidance pair
- 47 pairs documented (most probably incomplete)
- Core vocabulary
  - Body parts: hand/arm, beard, belly, eye, leg/foot, nose, heart, head
  - Food and drinks: water, enset food, wheat, milk, pepper, roasted grain, cabbage, enset flour, butter, fermented enset corm, fat enset bread, meat, cheese, barley beer, cheese-cabbage-dish
  - Material objects: winnowing plate, money, chamber pot, pot for melting butter, fermentation hole for ensete, tissue of enset plant, milking vessel, leather clothing
  - Domestic animals: chicken, cow
  - Other: sit down, sleep, sun, fire, dry season, dove, problem, seven, two, Meskel feast, things, land, rain

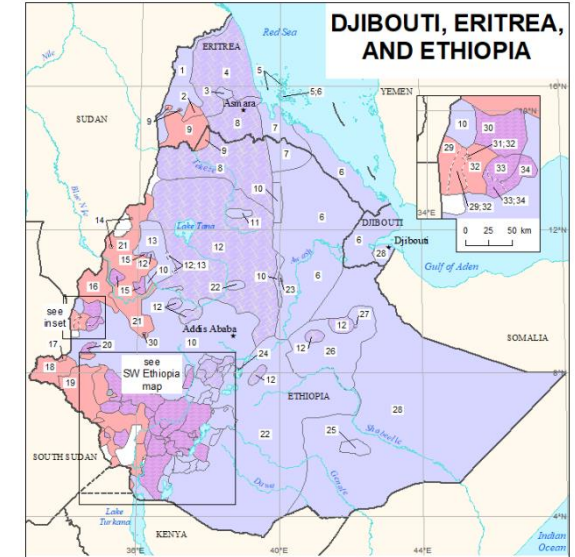
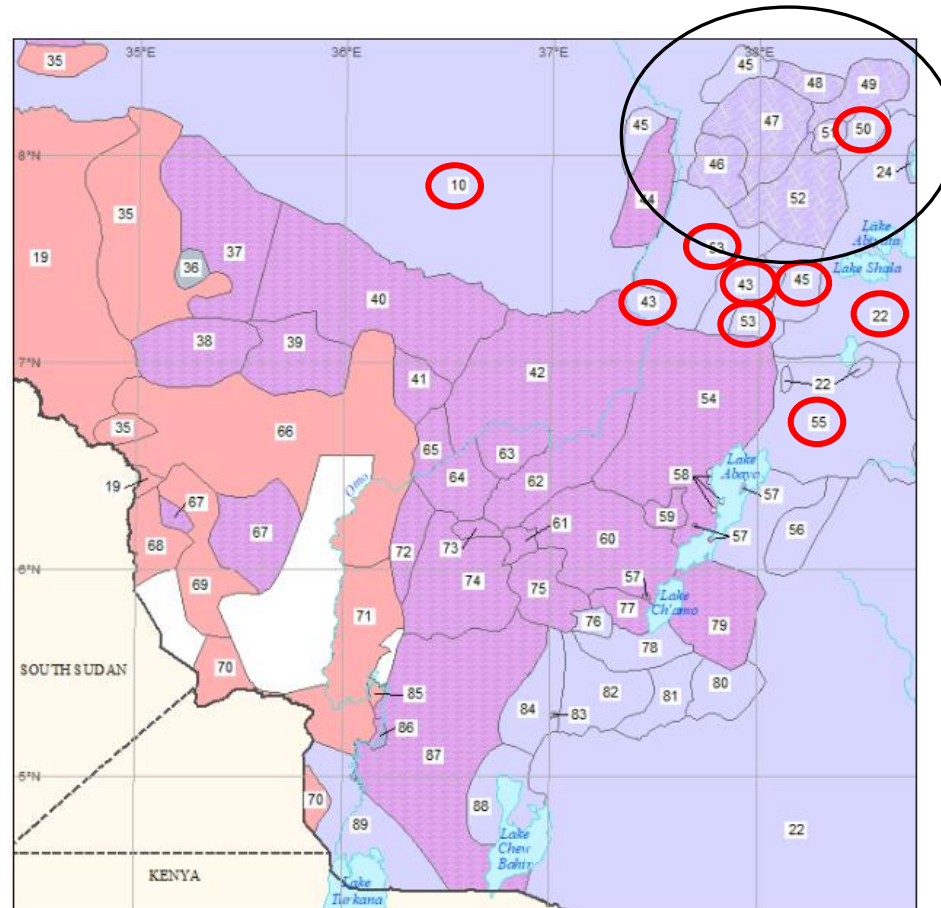


# Avoidance register: Lexical dublets

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- Examples (and their possible origins)
  - Many words of unknown origin, e.g.
    - enset flour: *bu'llá / qaxxannáta*
    - milk: *azúta / shiishú*
    - enset food: *waasá / coqqá*
  - Only sporadic proof of inheritance from an earlier stage of the language (~ northern HEC):
    - butter: *buurú / handanú* [also attested in Hadiyya, Alaaba]
    - water: *wo'a / daadaamú* [also attested in Hadiyya]
  - (Non-recent) borrowings from Gurage (Ethio-Semitic) languages
    - Where spoken? →

# Avoidance registers





# Avoidance register: Lexical doublets

---

- Examples (and their possible origins)
  - Many words of unknown origin, e.g.
    - enset flour: *bu'llá* / *qaxxannáta*
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    - water: *wo'a* / *daadaamú* [also attested in Hadiyya]
  - (Non-recent) borrowings from Gurage (Ethio-Semitic) languages
    - arm/hand: *angáta* / *ejáta* [West Gurage: *äj*, Amharic: *ij*]
    - head: *boqúta* / *go'nnora* [West Gurage: *gunnän*]
    - leg/foot: *lokkáta* / *igiráta* [West Gurage: *ägir*, Amharic: *igir*]
    - meat: *maalá* / *bosorá* [East and West Gurage lgs: *bäsär*]
    - things, tools: *odáata* / *muutá* [East Gurage *mu(u)t*]
    - cow: *sa'á* / *laamuwwá* [East Gurage and Amharic: *lam*]
    - centre pole of the house: *utubú* / *waaggá* [East and West Gurage lgs: *wägga*, *waggá*]

# Avoidance register: Historical linguistics

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- Some Kambaata *ballishsha*-words reflect an older stage of the language
  - Sound change in the history of Kambaata:  $d > z$ ; compare:
    - Sidaama *ad-o* / Kambaata *az-úta* ‘milk’
    - Sidaama *dar-* / Kambaata *zar-* ‘tear’
    - Hadiyya/Sidaama *daad-* / Kambaata *zaaz-* ‘flow’
  - But: no avoidance word with  $z$ 
    - Kambaata avoidance word for *wo’á* ‘water’ = *daadaamú* (not *\*zaazaamú*)
    - Kambaata avoidance word for *wozaná* ‘heart’ = *leedaná* (not *\*leezaná*)
- > Avoidance word by association

# Avoidance register: Word associations

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- Avoided words and avoidance words can form word associations
- Avoided words that share an initial syllable have corresponding avoidance words that also share an initial syllable
- Point of departure: salient avoidance word pair
  - ‘snake’: worrá > common avoidance by metaphor: leegá ‘beautifully decorated walking pole’  
→ ‘heart’: wozaná > leedaná
  - ‘drink’: ag- > common avoidance by near synonym: tokk- ‘drink a large amount’  
→ ‘moon’: aganá > tokkaná
  - ‘milk’: azúta (PHEC \*ado) > shiishú (pure avoidance word)  
→ adalá ‘yellow flower sp.’ > shiishalá  
→ adanchúta ‘cat’ > shiishanchúta  
→ anshiba’ll- ‘be easily frightened’ > shiinshiba’ll-
  - ‘rain’: xee’nná > jilaamá (pure avoidance word)  
→ xe’- ‘taste good’ > jilaa’mm-

# Avoidance register: The last resort

- Root *soomm-* ‘the unspeakable, unpronounceable’
- Can receive verbal and nominal inflectional and derivational morphology and replace any word to be avoided
- Spontaneous uses if avoidance word forgotten
- Conventionalized uses for a particular word to be avoided

**Table 8. Examples of the Conventionalized and Spontaneous Use of *soomm-***

	AVOIDED NAME	TABOO WORD	SUBSTITUTE	
1	<i>Kombo</i>	<i>kombú-ta</i> ‘flower sp.’	<i>soomichchú-ta</i>	
2	<i>Gammeebo</i>	<i>gammá</i> ‘mane’*	<i>soommá</i>	<b>msc. noun</b>
3	<i>Caa’mmise</i>	<i>caa’mmá</i> ‘shoes’	<i>soommá</i>	
4	<i>Bonje</i>	<i>boqú-ta</i> ‘head’	<i>soommá-ta</i>	<b>fem. noun</b>
5	<i>Kumaalo</i>	<i>kucaamí-ta</i> ‘stomach’	<i>soommaanchú-ta</i>	
6	<i>Darille</i>	<i>damuuns-</i> ‘cause headache’	<i>soommoons-/soommaans-</i>	
7	<i>Darille</i>	<i>damuumí-ta</i> ‘headache’	<i>soommí-ta</i>	
8	<i>Burjo</i>	<i>bukees-</i> ‘make dough’	<i>soomnees-</i>	<b>-ees CAUS</b>
9	<i>Burjo</i>	<i>bukú-ta</i> ‘dough’	<i>soomneesú-ta</i>	
10	<i>Godde</i>	<i>Goddé oosú-ta</i> ‘Godde’s children’	<i>Soommí oosú-ta</i> ‘the children of Soomma’	<b>name</b>
11	<i>Adeebo, Ashuure</i>	<i>abbáta</i> ‘Sunday’	<i>soommá bari</i> ‘soomma day’	
12	<i>Bataame</i>	<i>baráachchee’u</i> ‘it is plenty’	<i>soommáachch-ee’u</i> [soommaat(+PAL+GEM)-3M.PFV]	<b>verbal inflection</b>
13	<i>Maddeebo</i>	<i>maxámmee’u</i> ‘it was picked’	<i>soommáachch-ee’u</i> [soommaat(+PAL+GEM)-3M.PFV]	

# Avoidance register: World-wide perspective

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- Australia
  - Mother-in-law vocabulary in Dyirbal and Yidiny (Dixon 1990)
- South Africa
  - Nguni and Southern Sotho (Herbert 1990a, b; Kunene 1958)
  - Women avoid words that are based on the same root or root syllables as the names of the father-in-law (and other affines)
- Tanzania
  - Datooga (Nilotic)
  - Women avoids word that „smell like father-in-law“ (lexically related and similar-sounding words) (Mitchell 2015)

# Study of taboo vocabulary

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- What is phonologically similar for speakers?
- What is semantically sufficiently similar to serve as replacements?
- Taboo words may be exempt from sound changes
- Taboo words from various domains (sex-related, death-related, hunting-/fishing related etc.) have been shown to undergo frequent replacement

## 2.2. Experiential perfect: 'ever?' – 'never!'

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# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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- Kambaata (Highland East Cushitic): strictly head-final, i.e. Modifier N, SOV
- Perfective converb + uninflected *kása(-ba'a)* = 'have (n)ever V-ed (once)'
- Construction expresses that a certain type of event occurred at least once in the past/in the person's lifetime: 'I have been to Paris (at least once before).'

(7) A: *Kám waayy-áno!*  
leave.2SG.IMP probably.not.do-3mIPV

*Át Duuball-i min-i már-t kása-ndo?*  
2SG.NOM D.-M.GEN house-M.ACC go-2SG.PFV.CVB ever-Q

A: 'Come on, I doubt that! Have you **ever** been to Duuballa's house?'

B: *Márr kása-ba'a gagás. Ikkodáa ...*  
go.1SG.PFV.CVB ever-NEG in.fact but

B: 'I have in fact **never** been (there). But ...'



# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

- Converbs: dependent non-final verbs, reduced in finiteness; no overt sub- or coordinator

*Már-t*

go-2SG/3F.PFV.CVB

*kása-ba'a.*

ever-NEG

‘She has/you have **never** gone (there).’

- **Perfective converbs:**

semantic relation to superordinate verb vague; anteriority; manner

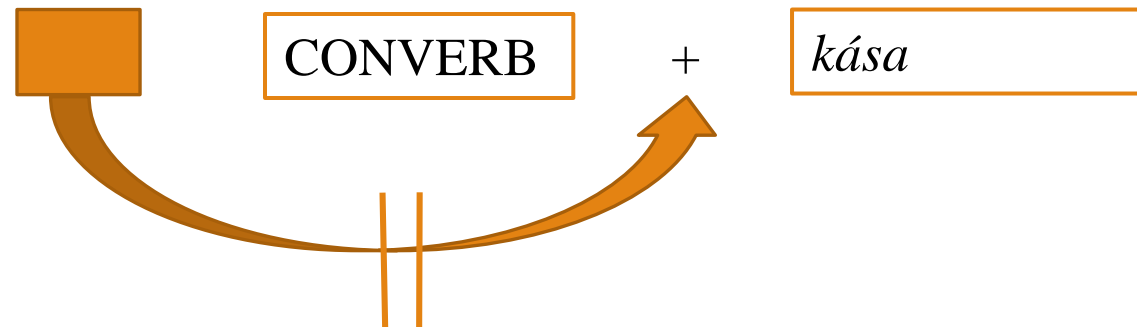
- Imperfective cvb: temporal simultaneity
- Negative cvb
- Purposive cvb

			Perfective
1s	3m		ʼ(GEM/PAL)-Ø ~ -Ø-í
2s	3f	3p	ʼ- <i>t</i>
3hon			- <i>éen</i>
1p			ʼ- <i>n</i>
2p	2hon		- <i>téen</i>

# Experiential perfect

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- Converb and *kása* are independent words (see stress marking)
- But no element (argument, adverbial constituent etc.) can intervene > monoclausal construction



# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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## Origin of *kása*? Noun?

- +/ – standard negator *-ba'a*  
(used with verbal and non-verbal main predicates)
- + stress pattern of a predicate noun
- – no copula

## Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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- *kása* is of verbal origin, see object pronoun  
(≠ differentiated from possessive pronoun in the 2SG)

(8) *Aní-i*                      *kées*                      *xall-i*                      *su'mm-íinee-t*                      *bagáan*  
1SG.NOM-ADD      2SG.ACC      only-M.GEN      name-M.ICP.VV-COP3      CONTR  
  
*daqq-ámm*                                      *xíujj*                                      *kása-he-ba'a*  
find.MID-PASS.1SG.PFV.CVB      see.1SG.PFV.CVB      ever-2S.OBJ-NEG

'I also know you only by name, but I have never met you.'

- Position: ...-OBJ-NEG cf. imperfective verbs (≠ perfective: NEG-OBJ)

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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- Traces of verbal inflection
- *kása* can inflect for 3M.IPFV in questions; no other persons attested
- Only 2 examples in the corpus: 1 from a schoolbook, 1 from the Bible

(9) *Kii hegeg-óon mánn-u yáa' kas-áno?*  
2SG.GEN area-M.LOC people-M.NOM hold.3M.PFV.CVB (do.)ever-3M.IPFV  
'Have the people in your area ever held meetings/a meeting?' (K89: 3.41)

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

- *kása* can be relativised + takes the relative negator (3 attested examples)

(10)	(...)	<i>mexx-e-níi</i> single-MULT-ADD	<i>maccoocc-í</i> hear-1SG.PFV.CVB	<i>kas-úmb-ut</i> (do.)ever-1SG.NEG.REL-F.NOM	Relative clause	
		<i>kohíchch-ut</i> strange-F.NOM	<i>láag-at</i> voice-F.NOM	<i>gisan-áachch</i> sleep-F.ABL	<i>báqq=át-t</i> wake=do-3F.PFV.CVB	Head noun
		<i>ke'-is-soo-'é</i> get.up-CAUS-3F.PFV-1SG.OBJ	<i>j-áata (...)</i> time-F.ACC			

‘(...) when a strange voice that I had **never** heard before woke me up from (my) sleep.’ (Saint-Exupéry 2018)

- P.S. **Audio** of the *Qakkichchu Laaha* (‘Little Prince’) in Kambaata available at: <https://llacan.cnrs.fr/blog/?p=362>

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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Interim conclusion on the form:

- Traces of verbal inflection
- *kása* must have a verbal origin > auxiliary
  
- Synchronically: morphologically defective
  - Invariant in declarative clauses
  - Invariant or (rarely) inflected imperfective in interrogative clause (but only 3M examples attested)
  - Inflecting in relative clauses

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata: Semantic aspects

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- **Questions** about whether a certain event has occurred at least once in the past/in the addressee's life time can be **negative and affirmative**: 'Have you (n)ever V-ed?'
- In contrast: **Declarative** sentences are overwhelmingly **negative**: 'I have never V-ed.'
- Affirmative declaratives are (very) rare, seem to express: '**only once**' (regular answer: *xúujjeemm* 'I have seen (them).')

(Volunteered 2021)

[S1:] Ajjoor-í faam-á xúud-d kása? –  
PN-M.GEN waterfalls-M.ACC see-2F.PFV.CVB ever

[S2:] Āā, xúujj kása  
yes see-[1SG.]PFV.CVB ever

[S1:] 'Have you ever seen the Ajjoora falls?' – [S2:] 'Yes, I have seen them (only) once.'



# Experiential perfect in Kambaata: Semantic aspects

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- Experiential perfect constructions can be situated in the past (NB: Kambaata has only periphrastic tense)

*Mexx-e-nii*                      *daqq-ámm*                                      *kása-si-ba'a*                      *ikke*

single-TIMES-ADD meet.MID-PASS.1SG.PFV ever-3M.OBJ-NEG PAST

(Context: Did you know my father who died last year?) 'I had never met him (before he died).' (Elicited 2004 with Dahl's TMA questionnaire, sent. 50)

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata: Diachrony

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- Where does *kása* come from?
- > Let's take a look at neighbouring languages ...

# Experiential perfect

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## - Cushitic

Oromo (Lowland East Cushitic) (Crass & Meyer 2008)

- (1) *ameerikaa deem-tani beek-tuu?*  
America go-2PL.PFV.**CVB** **know**-2PL.IPFV.Q  
'Have you ever been to America?'

lit. Have you gone (and do you) know America?

Xamtanga (Central Cushitic) (Darmon 2015: 212)

- (2) *ɲri=s'ibb-in-i-l sibrä qal-dir arq-a-y=im*  
3FSG.POSS=live-NMLZ-DEF-LOC snake see-3FSG[**CVB**] **know**-IPFV-NEG=M  
'She has never seen a snake in her life.'

lit. In her life, she has seen a snake (and) does not know.

# Experiential perfect

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## - Ethiosemitic

Wolane (Semitic) (Crass & Meyer 2008)

- (3) *'amarikan hedkum-ani tichuw-ahum?*  
America go.PFV.2PL-**CVB** know.IPFV.2PL-AUX.2PL  
'Have you ever been to America?'

lit. Have you gone (and) know America?

Amharic (Semitic) (Leslau 1995: 875)

- (4) *käzzih bäfit əbab ayto ayawqəmm*  
[ABL.this LOC.front snake see.3M-**CVB** NEG.3M-**know**.IPFV]  
'He has never seen a snake before.'

lit. He has seen a snake (and) does not know.'

# Experiential perfect

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## - Omotic

Koorete (North-Omotic) (Lydia Höft p.c.)

- (5) *qam'o usshi eruwasso* lit. He has drunk coffee (and) does not know.  
*qam'o ush-d-i er-u-wa-s-so*  
coffee drink-PFV-CVB know-trV-NEG-3M.SG-FOC  
'He has never drunk coffee.'

Hamer (South-Omotic) (Petrollino 2016: 219)

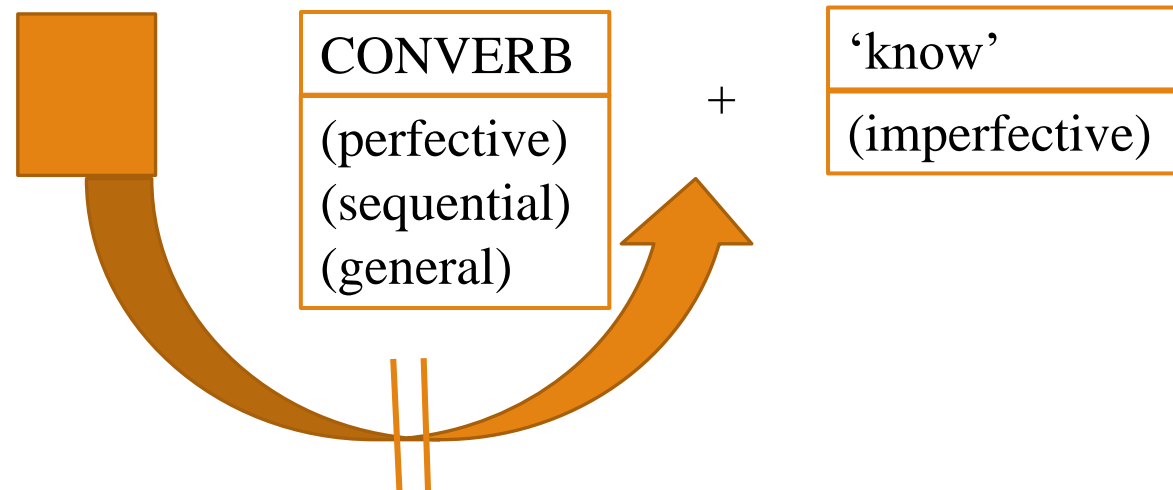
- (6) *yáa éna éedi-bet gobá-ise des-atáne*  
2SG past person-COM run-CVB1 know-PRES.NEG.2SG  
'You never raced with anybody before!' lit. You have run with a person (and) don't know.

- In all languages (except Kambaata): 'know' of the experiential perfect = regular 'know'-verb of the language

# Experiential perfect

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- Expressed in Ethiopian languages (just like in Kambaata) in a periphrastic (monoclausal) construction



# Experiential perfect in Kambaata

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- Can *kása* be connected to a verb ‘know’?
- Not in synchronic Kambaata: *\*kas-*, instead:
  - *dag-* ‘(come to) know; find’; *enkee ’nn-* ‘(come to) know, become knowledgeable’
- K’abeena (Highland East Cushitic)
  - *dag-* ‘know’ (Crass 2015: 18); *ekee ’n-* ‘know’ (Crass 2015: 36); *kas-* ‘know’ (Crass 2015: 19)

(a) *’ooso!*            *dabdaabit<sup>a</sup>* (...) *k’ara’een<sup>i</sup>*            *kas-seenani-ndo?*  
children.VOC   letter.F.ACC            read.2PL.CVB1            know-2PL.IPFV-Q

‘Children, do you know how to read (...) a letter?’  
(Crass 2005: 106; translation mine)

(b) *kabare-gg<sup>a</sup>*            *gawwi*            *kaš-šoom-ba*            (< *\*kas-yoomm*)  
today.GEN-SIM   be.stupid.1SG.CVB1   know-1SG.PFV-NEG

‘I have never been stupid like today.’ (Crass 2005: 192; translation mine)

# Experiential perfect in Kambaata: Diachrony

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- Semantic development:
  - Inference of subject knowing something > subject has experienced something > subject has done something (and brought about the experience)
- Diffusion in the **Ethiopian Linguistic Area** through loan translations
  - No independent grammaticalization in each individual language
- Kambaata: ‘know’-verb lost, only retained in experiential perfect construction
  - Problem with this analysis: Hudson (1989: 87) lists several ‘know’-verbs for HEC languages, *kas-* is not among them



# Preview on the next lecture

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- Ethiopian Linguistic Area: Proposed and contested features
- Subareas of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area
- Switch-reference marking