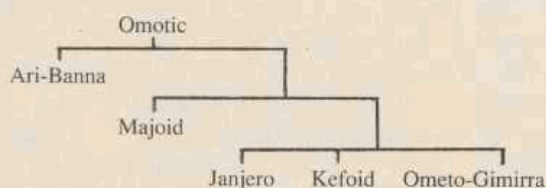


the inconsistency of the method made it impossible for him to do it convincingly. As a result of his lexicostatistical application Bender (1971) came to the conclusion that

- 1) Cushitic and Omotic are two different language families;
- 2) the Cushitic languages are to be subdivided in four main groups:
  - a) North Cushitic (i.e., several Beja dialects);
  - b) Central Cushitic with the subgroups North and South Agaw;
  - c) East Cushitic with the subgroups Highland and Lowland East Cushitic (i.e., Saho-Afar, Baiso-Somaloid, Oromoid, and Werizoid);
  - d) South Cushitic (with Iraqw, Burunge, etc.);
- 3) the "Omotic" languages are classified according to the following genealogical tree:



The apex of the "Omotic theory" was reached when, in order to ascertain the affiliation of "Omotic" (i.e., to discover whether it is a part of Cushitic or an autonomous Afroasiatic branch, or even non-Afroasiatic), Bender (1975) faced the question of how to verify whether a certain language is Afroasiatic. In order to be able to answer this question, he compiled a list of 36 features to be used as criteria by the verification. As the greatest part of these criteria are taken from the Semitic languages, and only a few of them are taken from the Chadic and the West Cushitic languages, he "discovers" as a result of his verification that Semitic is the "most Afroasiatic" family, while on the contrary Chadic and Omotic are the "weakest members" of that phylum.

In order to corroborate his hypothesis that "Omotic" is the sixth (and the weakest) family of the Afroasiatic phylum, Bender also reports the result of some lexicostatistical calculations. As a result of his argumentation he comes to the conclusion that "Semitic, Berber, Egyptian, and Cushitic form an 'orthodox core' of Afroasiatic. Chadic is just outside this solid core. Omotic is seen to be quantitatively weak in Afroasiatic characteristics to the point of being suspect" (Bender 1975: 218).

## 5. The Arguments in Favour of the "Omotic Theory"

In 1976 Fleming tried to substantiate his "Omotic" theory by also adducing other arguments than lexicostatistical tests. His arguments in favour of the "Omotic" theory are rather of typological character and as such not very conclusive, besides this they are often inexact. Nevertheless let us briefly examine them:

- 1) the Cushitic languages show a phonological pattern distinct from that of the Omotic languages (cf. Fleming 1976: 35):
  - a) "Not one Omotic language has a pharyngeal phoneme" (*ibid.*: 36);<sup>1</sup>
  - b) "All Omotic languages have at least two glottalized consonants" (*ibid.*: 2);
  - c) "The labial stops /p/ and /b/ are frequently distinguished in Omotic, and often /f/ is distinguished from both of these as well" (*ibid.*: 3);
- 2) "The status of grammatical gender is different in Omotic languages as compared with Cushitic" (*ibid.*);
- 3) Omotic languages do not distinguish gender (masculine from feminine) for the pronouns of the 2nd person singular and plural (cf. *ibid.*: 4);
- 4) the Cushitic verbal pattern -a/-ta/-na/-taan/-aan "is absent from common Omotic" (*ibid.*);
- 5) "the independent pronouns of common Cushitic differ from those of common Omotic" (*ibid.*: 37);
- 6) "many individual Omotic languages differ much more radically from the general Cushitic type of grammar" (*ibid.*);
- 7) "in vocabulary, the Omotic languages have a series of common basic words which differ systematically from the same series in Cushitic" (*ibid.*).

1 Similarly most of the Cushitic languages (such as Oromo, Konso, Galaboid, Burji-Sidamo) do not have any pharyngeal. One can obviously argue that in these languages the pharyngeal phonemes have been lost or have developed to another sound in course of time, and this is probably true! But as the pharyngeals have disappeared in most of the Cushitic languages, so they (can) have also disappeared in West Cushitic.

2 This is also true for most of the Cushitic languages.

3 This is not true. In most of the Omotic languages /p/ and /f/ are either two allophones (like in Shinassha and Moccha) or two free variants of the same phoneme (like in Gamu).

4 This distinction still exists in residual form only in a couple of languages, but the great majority of the Cushitic languages do not show it (any more). Cf. also Hetzron (1980: 71).