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A lexical and phonological reconstruction of Highland East Cushitic including a comparative East Cushitic database

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Stellingen (Propositions)

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A Lexical and Phonological Reconstruction of Highland East Cushitic, including a Comparative East Cushitic Database

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door Ahmed Sosal

1. In Highland East Cushitic, consonant reconstruction is often most traceable at word boundaries, where suffixation triggers the alternations that reveal the original correspondences; this is especially clear in non-trivial correspondence sets. (Chapters 2–4)
2. Several descriptive puzzles in Highland East Cushitic phonology, including palatalization, glottalization, and apparent distributional gaps, are better analyzed as outcomes of historical change than as purely synchronic irregularities. (Chapters 2–3)
3. In East Africa, contact and inheritance are often intertwined rather than opposed: the implosive **d'** of Highland East Cushitic, the clicks of Sanye (Dahalo), and the lateral fricatives of Taita Bantu are best understood within this continuum.
4. Higher-level Proto-Cushitic and Proto-East Cushitic reconstructions rely on broad top-down correspondences that can underrepresent family-internal complexity; in this domain, bottom-up reconstruction from well-established lower-level subgroups remains the most reliable method.
5. Ethnobotanical and linguistic documentation of the Cushitic, Bantu, and Nilotic languages of Tanzania preserves evidence of migration, social organization, and ecological knowledge that would otherwise be difficult to recover historically.
6. Historical reconstruction does not recover proto-languages; it builds the most coherent hypotheses about them. What is objective is the method, not the object.

7. Speaker numbers alone are an unreliable measure of linguistic vitality: the Sanye (Dahalo) community has likely long been numerically small, yet the language has persisted over time.
8. The value of a doctorate is measured not only by what one has produced, but by whom one has become.
9. There is no synchrony without diachrony.
10. People who cannot describe themselves will be described by others. The humanities are not a luxury for African development but its precondition.