

Title	KOEGU, a preliminary report
Author(s)	Hieda, Osamu
Citation	スワヒリ&アフリカ研究. 1 P.97-P.108
Issue Date	1990-04
Text Version	publisher
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.18910/71065">https://doi.org/10.18910/71065</a>
DOI	10.18910/71065
rights	
Note	

***Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA***

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/repo/ouka/all/>

## 1. Introduction

The Koegu are a very small group numbering about 300 individuals, who call themselves /koegu/, and who are called Muguji (which means 'black ant') by the Kara and Umucu by the Bume. They were scattered in villages along the banks of the Omo River in the extreme southwestern corner of Ethiopia. They, however, concentrated and made a village at Kuchur, along the western bank of the Omo, 3km up from the point where it is joined by the Mako River, a few years ago, in order to resist the pressure from the neighbouring powerful groups, though they hope to go back to their home villages when the outer threat is diminished.

They practice flood cultivation along the banks of the Omo, with durra as a main crop. Hunting and gathering make a large contribution to their daily diet, and especially fishing in the Omo produces a main resource for their protein supplies. They also gather honey for their own consumption and trade.

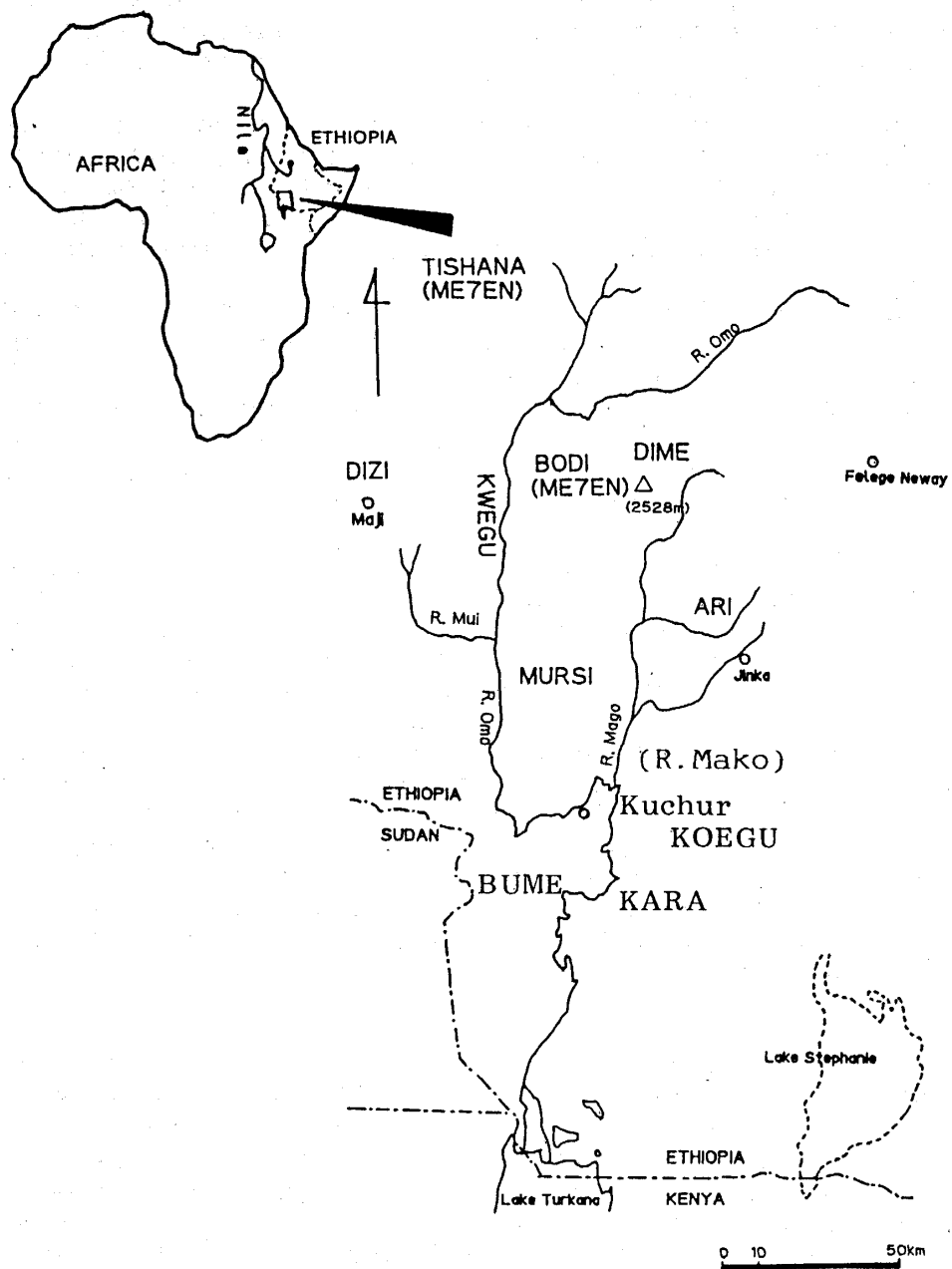
They are allotted by their Kara and Bume neighbours to the social inferior position. The Kara do not share food from the one container with the Koegu and do not allow inter-marriage between themselves and the Koegu. The Bume do not have such strong taboos against the Koegu. The Bume men do not hesitate to marry the Koegu girls nowadays(, because such a big bride-price is not needed to marry them as to marry the Bume girls).

The Koegu were connected by symbiotic relationship with the Kara until quite recently. The Kara claim that the Koegu do not own their land and borrow their farms from their Kara patrons, and that in return the Kara receive services from the Koegu as expert hunters-gatherers and makers of dogout canoes. There recently happened a conflict of opinions on land between the Kara and the Koegu, who considered that the Koegu land was originally of their own. The Koegu swore their independence from the Kara and chose the Bume as a new patron.

Most of the Koegu speak both their own language and the language of the Kara(an Omotic language). The social change mentioned above is reflected in a sociolinguistic situation that the Koegu learn the language of the Bume(a Nilotic language) on the increase.

## 2. Koegu and Kwegu-Muguji languages

The Koegu language is the one variant of the Kwegu-Muguji languages, which belong to the southeast Surma group within the Surma languages in the Nilo-Saharan phylum. The another variant of the Kwegu-Muguji languages is the Kwegu language, which is spoken by a small group (numbering probably no more than 300 individuals, according to Turton & Bender, 1976), who call themselves Kwegu, and who are called Nyidi(pl.) by



the Mursi and Yidi(pl.) by the Bodi. The Kwegu live among both the Mursi and the Bodi along the banks of the Omo further north from Kuchur. The Koegu know of the existence of a group of people speaking a similar language to their own one who live north. Even a few of the Koegu explain their own origin from the people who live north. However, there is no evidence to identify the Kwegu among the Mursi and the Bodi indeed with the people of whom the Koegu know of the existence.

Haberland mentions Kwoygi, a cast of hunters among the Dizi(an Omotic speaking people). It is impossible to decide if the people among the Dizi speak a variant of the Kwegu-Muguji languages, due to lack of linguistic data.

The Koegu and the Kwegu variants show sufficient convergence to be dialects of the one language group, though not a few differences are observable between the two variants, as the result of the fact that the Koegu and the Kwegu were separated geographically by the neighbouring powerful groups who continuously conflicted with each other. The Kwegu language is affected by contact with the Mursi and the Bodi (Surma) languages. The Koegu language shows considerable divergence lexically and grammatically from Surma patterns because it is strongly influenced by the Kara language. In fact the Koegu language has a quite lot of loan words from the Kara language.

There are some regular correspondences between the Koegu language in my data and the Kwegu(Yidenić) language in Haberland, 1966. There are three groups of lexical items. The first group consists of the lexical items which have the same forms between the Koegu and the Kwegu languages. The second one consists of the lexical items which show regular correspondences between the Koegu and the Kwegu languages. The third one consists of the lexical items of which the languages use different forms.

1) Lexical items which have the same forms between the two languages.

	Koegu	Kwegu(Yidenić)
mouth	tók	tōk
way	gúar	gwār
water	mwá	mūa
fire	gu	gu
cow	bi	bi
goat	toŋ	toñ
lion	móho	mōho

2) Lexical items which show regular correspondences between the two languages.

a) Koegu A : Kwegu(Yidenić) E

	Koegu	Kwegu(Yidenić)
eye	kárbo	kérbo
ear	nábo	nébo
foot	jap	geb
stone	bái	bēi

Koegu A : Kwegu(YideniĆ) A

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
girl	ĩnashi	ĩnas
arm	búá	bóá
ground	daalí	dǎlu
way	gúar	gwār
water	mwá	mǔa
elephant	núar	nǒ'ar
bird	kúbar	kúbar
fish	árte	árto

b) Koegu I : Kwegu(YideniĆ) U

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
ground	daalí	dǎlu
star	bíiri	bí'elu

Koegu I : Kwegu(YideniĆ) I

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
girl	ĩnashi	ĩnas
forest	dúúi	dī
stone	bái	bēi
moon	tígishi	tígīs
cow	bi	bi
giraffe	kírún	kírén

c) Koegu U : Kwegu(YideniĆ) O

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
nose	júruŋ	ǵúro
arm	búá	bóá
elephant	núar	nǒ'ar

Koegu U : Kwegu(YideniĆ) U

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
head	shúbó	sǔbo
fire	gu	gu
sun	shúúshi	sūs
hyena	gúshur	ǵúsur
bird	kúbar	kúbar

d) Koegu SH : Kwegu(YideniĆ) S

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
head	shúbó	sǔbo
sun	shúúshi	sūs
moon	tígishi	tígīs

Koegu SH : Kwegu(YideniĆ) SH

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
hyena	gúshur	ǵúsur

e) Koegu final C or V : Kwegu(YideniĆ) zero

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
girl	ínashi	ínas
nose	júruŋ	ǵúro
sun	shúúshi	sūs
moon	tígishi	tígīs

Although the data are not sufficient to make clear the process of sound change and to find out the cause which brings about the sound change, these correspondences suggest a systematic sound shift rather than inconsistency of the data. The hypothetical sound shift in the Kwegu(YideniĆ) is schematized as follows.

i	→	u
↑		↓
e		o
↑		
a		

The sound change from /a/ to /e/ is evidenced by the correspondence listed above in a). The sound changes /i/ to /u/ and /u/ to /o/ are manifested on the correspondences in b) and c) respectively. There is a probable evidence to show the sound change from /e/ to /i/.

f) Koegu E : Kwegu(YideniĆ) I

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
hair	c'éراس	ćira

3) Lexical items which the two languages use different forms.

	Koegu	Kwegu(YideniĆ)
body	rúá	kíá
ox	bi júmú	lūć
dog	kíani	bóho
house	to'o	áruk

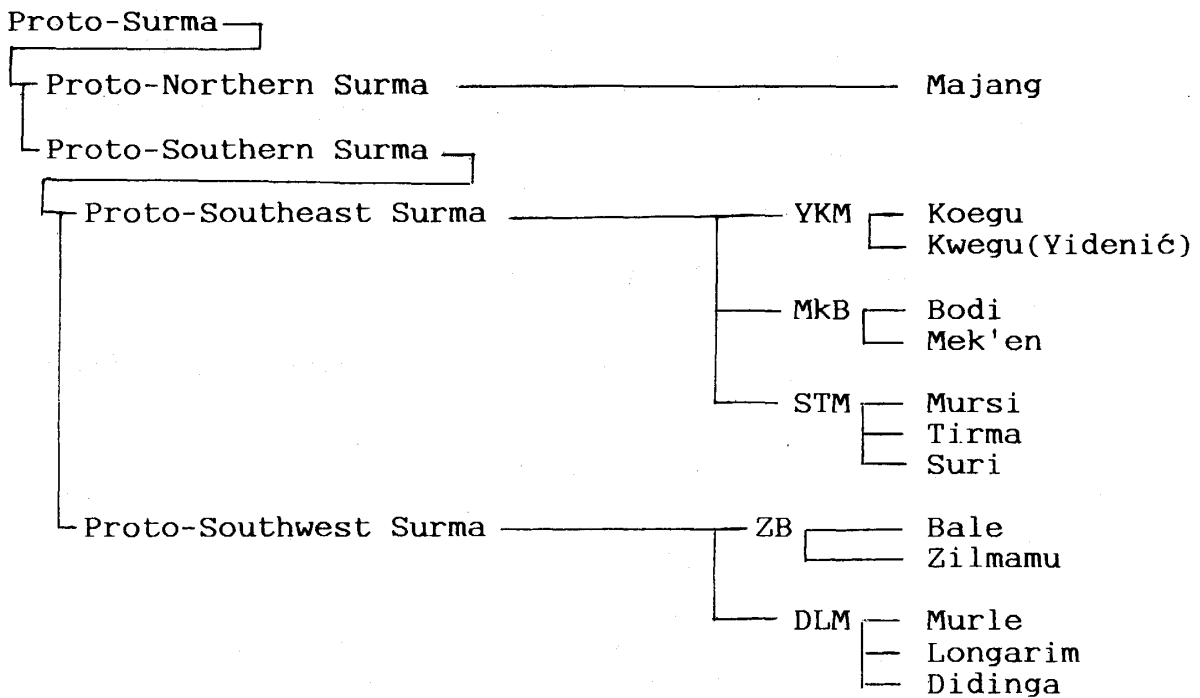
Some lexical items are replaced by other forms for various reasons. The Koegu language uses the general term which is modified by an adjective in stead of the word having a specific meaning for 'ox'. Original lexical items are sometimes replaced by loan words, which show the linguistics situation where the two languages are located. The Koegu language has a lot of loan words from the Kara language, on the other hand the Kwegu language has loan words from the Mursi or the Bodi languages. The numerals of the Koegu and the Kwegu languages give an interesting example of the language contact mentioned above.

	Koegu	Kwegu(Yidenić)	Kara	Bodi
1	kíum	čéman		kónna
2	daa	da		rámma
3	jien	ǵí'en		sízi
4	áhur	wōc		wú'ic
5	con	háčāna		háčana
6	le	éle	la	éle
7	t'úbá	issabi	t'oba	issāba
8	lonkai	issēt	lonkai	issēt
9	sali	sá'al	sali	sále
10	tómon	tómno	tabí	tómno

It is clear that the Koegu language borrows the numerals over five to nine from the Kara language and that the Kwegu language borrows the numerals over three to nine from the Bodi language.

### 3. Koegu and Surma languages

Fleming, H.C. schematized the subclassification of the Surma languages in 1983, as follows;



The Koegu language shows considerable divergence lexically and grammatically from Surma patterns, though there are sufficient evidences to identify the Koegu language with a member of the Southeast Surma languages. I give some examples, referring to the etymological sets listed in Fleming, 1983.

1)	my	Ko	nááni
		SES	nan-
		NS	nak-
2)	I	Ko	aan
		SES	any, probably from *ani (STM, MkB)
		NS	et
3)	we	Ko	úao
		SES	age (Ti, Ms)
		SWS	age-ta (Ml), agi (Zi)
		NS	et-i-nk, et-ek, it-i-nk
4)	our	Ko	guayu
		SES	-d-egai (Bo)
		NS	nank-
5)	thou	Ko	iin
from *ini-)		SES	iny-i/-u (all but Kwegu, probablyly
		SWS	ine-ta (Ml, Zi), un-da (Ba)
		NS	in
6)	thy	Ko	niini
		SES	nun- (STM, YKM)
		SWS	nun- (ZB)
		NS	-nok, -nook
7)	you	Ko	íyou
		SES	iye (Kw), ige (Ti)
(Di)		SWS	ige-t 'you, accusative' (Ml), n-iga
		NS	inak/iinək/ineku
8)	your	Ko	guuyu
		SES	-d-egu
9)	he/she	Ko	íshi/írún
		SES	nen (Bo, Ti)
		SWS	nen (Di)
		NS	isi/isha
10)	his/her	Ko	nuunu
		SES	-nene (Ti, Ms), -d-eng (Bo)
		NS	nek-

The Koegu language shows an unique vowel pattern in possessive pronoun: 1st person -a-, 2nd person -i-, 3rd person -u-. The other Surma languages show the possessive pronoun vowel pattern: 1st person -a-, 2nd person -u-, 3rd person -e-, and the personal pronoun vowel pattern: 1st person -a-, 2nd person -i-, 3rd person -e-. The Koegu language has personal prefixes which are affixed to a verb stem in verbal conjugation. The personal prefix vowel pattern is: 1st person a-, 2nd person i-, 3rd person  $\emptyset$ -. The Koegu language lost the



3rd person vowel element, and merged the possessive pronoun vowel pattern with the personal pronoun vowel pattern.

11) foot	Ko	jáp	
	SES	jagari, jaari, jar-	(STM, MkB)
	SWS	dho-c (DLM), so, sho, tho	(ZB)
	NS	díra-n, derə-n	
12) hand	Ko	búá	
	SES	íba/éba	'arm' (DLM)
	SES	si-t, thi-	
(ZB), aayi (Ba)	SWS	adhi-t/adi-na	(pl.) (DLM), ashi
	NS	ari	
13) fire	Ko	gú	
	SS	go, gwo, gu, gwu	
	NS	maat, maad	
14) ear	Ko	nábo	
	SES	nyab, nab	
	SWS	it-at, itat/itatiin	(pl.),
kitat/kina (pl.) (DLM),		idhaani	(Ba)
	NS	wina, weyna, wiina	
15) egg	Ko	móógó	(borrowing from Omotic)
	SES	bur	(STM)
	SWS	bur-	(DLM, Ba)
	NS	tutuka-n	
16) eye	Ko	kárbo	
	SES	*kabar-	
	SWS	*keber-	
	NS	tama	
17) hyena	Ko	gúshur	
	SES	gushur	(Ms)
	SWS	gudhul, guludh	(LM)
	NS	duñit	
18) leopard	Ko	kárúŋ	
	SES	kéréŋ	(Kw)
(Zi)	SWS	cεεlaŋ/xεlaŋ, kεεlaŋ	(DLM), kelaŋ
	NS	domon	
19) cow/cattle	Ko	bíí	
	SES	bi, bi'	
	SWS	be'e	(Zi, possibly borrowed from
Majang)	NS	be'e	

20) sun	Ko	shúúshí
	SES	sus-, suu (Tirma of Bender)
'day' (Ml)	SWS	kor, kɔrr, koro (DLM, ZB), kɔr
	NS	wawi
21) dog	Ko	kíani
	SES	boho (YKM)
	SES	rɔth, rɔs, ros (STM), ros- (Mkb)
ɔrsa' (ZB)	SWS	odhor, urudh, ɔrɔth (DLM), oresha,
	NS	war, warr
22) belly	Ko	kíyaŋ
	SES	*kiaŋ- (STM), keŋ- (Mkb)
	SWS	kɛɛŋ, kɛŋ, keɛn, kɛŋ- (DLM, ZB)
	NS	am, amd, amt
23) body, skin	Ko	rúá
	SES	eri, ɛri (STM)
	SWS	ɛlɛ 'body' (DLM)
'animal hide'	NS	ɛk 'body', wan 'human skin', tarma-n
24) honey	Ko	ítire
	SES	reti/Irɛte (Ti)
	SWS	lete-, líti, lete 'bee' (DLM, ZB)
	NS	ɛtɛt
25) blood	Ko	nyíábo
	SES	*nyaba
	SWS	βiye, βedha (DLM, ZB)
	NS	yerum, yerm
26) bone	Ko	gíci
	SES	*gigec, gi' c/giet/giec/gi'ec (Mkb),
gige (Su), gige/gigai	(Ti), giye (Ms)	
	SWS	eme-n, ame-n (DLM, ZB)
	NS	emenan, emene, emenen/emek (pl.)
27) knee	Ko	kuamin
	SES	k'omec, komi, kwaami-n
(Zi)	SWS	hodhoŋ/kudhuŋ/kodhoŋ, kushuŋ-at
korɔna-n	NS	korɔna-n, kɔrɔŋ-ay, kɔɔrna-n,
28) fish	Ko	árte
(STM)	SES	urgusi, urguth, urgush, urgicha
k-ulug-it, ulugut (Zi)	SWS	k-ulug-oc/-a' (pl.), ulugeta,
	NS	olt/olt-ir

29)	grass	Ko	shúchu
		SWS	art- (DL), arrte-ni (Ba)
		NS	elti
30)	goat	Ko	toŋ
		SES	toŋo (TM, MkB)
		SWS	eth/edh (DLM), esh (Zi)
		NS	kɛmt
31)	hair	Ko	c'éراسي
		SES	cor-, c'or-, cira-sh-
		SWS	ima, eme (DLM, ZB)
		NS	ami
32)	meat	Ko	áruŋ
(MkB)		SES	aayu, ayu, ayub, acuk (STM), acuk
		SWS	idiŋ (DLM), idiŋ (Zi), εεdi (Ba)
		NS	tar, tarr
33)	moon	Ko	tígishi
		SES	*tagis, tagi (STM), ta'is (MkB)
		SWS	nyilok, nyelok, nyɔɔ' (DLM, ZB)
		NS	eyɛn
34)	nose	Ko	júruŋ
		SES	giron, giro, juuro
		SWS	uŋe-c, oŋe-c, oŋi-c, ɔnye
		NS	eŋe-n
35)	drink v.	Ko	mat
		SES	mat-, mad- (STM, MkB)
		SES	ir (MkB, TM)
(Ba)		SWS	k-a-hudi, -udi, a-wudi (DLM), wudò
		NS	ut, ʊt
36)	lion	Ko	móho
		SWS	ma, maa/mata (pl.) (DLM)
		NS	dɛpe
37)	snake	Ko	chaach
		SES	kuno, kono, kunu, kɔni (STM, MkB)
(ZB)		SWS	xuka-t/kuka-t (Di), koki-at, kuka
		NS	kuku, kɔkɔ, kɔkɔ

The innovations took place in various areas, that is, Proto-Southern Surma, Proto-Southeast Surma, etc., which were caused by both external and internal factors. Whichever the Koegu language inherited the innovated forms and the other languages preserved the original forms, or the Koegu language preserved the original forms and the other languages inherited the innovated forms, the Koegu language shows the lexical items which originate in Proto-Southeast Surma: 12), 14), 20), 25), 26), 27), 30), 31), 33), 34), 35), and the items which originate in the Proto-Southern Surma: 13), 16), 17), 18), 22), 23), 24), 36), and the item which originates in the Proto-Surma: 19). The lexical items which were innovated only in the Koegu language are 15), 21), 29), and 37).

The Koegu language, however, does not have the items which are not common to the other Southeast Surma languages, but common to the Southwest Surma languages except for 32). In 32) the Koegu form *áruŋ* is common to the southwest Surma form *idig*, and both of them are originated from the Proto-Surma, moreover from the Proto-Nilo-Surmic. The innovations took place in the Southeast Surma languages except for the Koegu language, and the Northern Surma languages. These facts are clear evidence of the membership of the Koegu language into the Southeast Surma.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The Koegu language is quite unique in the Surma languages. The uniqueness is due to its geographical situation, not to the archaism. The Koegu language was separated from the other Surma languages and was greatly influenced by the Omotic and the other languages. Further research on the contact among these languages will give more evidence for us to study the history of the Koegu people and the neighbourings.

#### Note

My field reserch on the Koegu language was made at Kuchur in Ethiopia, between December 1987 and February 1988, and between January and March 1989, supported by the fund of the Ministry of Education, Japan. And I also appreciate the co-operation of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University.

#### Abbreviation

Ba: Bale  
Bo: Bodi  
Di: Didinga  
Ko: Koegu  
Kw: Kwegu  
Ml: Murle  
Ms: Mursi  
NS: Northern Surma  
SES: Southeast Surma  
SS: Southern Surma  
SWS: Southwest Surma  
Ti: Tirma  
Zi: Zilmamu

#### References

- Bender, Lionel, M. 1983. 'Majang phonology and morphology',  
M. L. Bender (ed.), Nilo-Saharan Language Studies.  
pp. 114-147, East Lansing, Michigan State University.
- Fleming, Harold. 1983. 'Surma etymologies', Rainer Vossen  
& Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (eds.), Nilotic Studies.  
pp. 523-555, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer.
- Haberland, Eike. 1966. 'Zur Sprache der Bodi, Mursi und  
Yidenić in Südwest-Äthiopien', Johannes Lukas (ed.),  
Neue Afrikanistische Studien. pp. 87-99, Hamburg,  
Deutsches Institut für Afrika-Forschung.
- Turton, David. & Lionel, M. Bender. 1976. 'Mursi', M. L.  
Bender (ed.), The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia.  
pp. 533-561, Carbondale, Michigan State University.