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Bender (1971:187) coined the term Werizoid to refer to an East Cushitic subgroup consisting of such poorly attested dialects as Werize, Gobeze, Gawwada, and Tsamay (Tsamai). These dialects are spoken in southwestern Ethiopia on either side of the Weyto River.

During my research¹ among the neighboring Konso and Gidole during 1970-72, I was able to gather additional limited amounts of data on Werizoid dialects, particularly Gawwada. This data, coupled with earlier findings, leads me to believe that (a) the Werizoid dialects constitute a single language, and that (b) at present this language is best considered a third division of East Cushitic distinct from both Highland East Cushitic (or Burji-Sidamo) and Lowland East Cushitic.

1. Attestation

Werizoid dialects have been attested under a variety of names which can be grouped under three major tribal divisions: Gawwada, Tsamako, and Ala.

The Gawwada inhabit the highlands to the east of the Weyto River and immediately northeast of the Konso, with whom they maintain close ties. Many Gawwada are reported to be bilingual in Konso and their own language, which they call páko káwwate, 'language (=mouth) of the Gawwada.' Attested data on Gawwada varieties includes some sixty words by Fleming (1965), about a hundred words by Bender (1971:250), and several hundred words each of the Gawwada varieties of the villages of Dalpe:ne and išárkuta by myself. Some of the Gawwada of the išárkuta data appears in Black (1974: especially pp. 293-306). In the present paper my data on Gawwada of Dalpe:na is used as a source of examples wherever possible.

Jensen (1959:359-88) has presented an anthropological description of the Tsamako, who live to the west of the Weyto River, and who call their language Tsamay. Data attested under the latter name includes some eighty words by Fleming (1965; much of this is also reported in Bender 1971:250), a hundred item lexicostatistical list by Donham (personal communication), and about two hundred words by Bender, collected in 1975 (personal communication). The more limited data attested under the names 'Dūmē' by Smith (1897:277) and 'Cule' by da Trento (1941) also appear to be Tsamay. However, Da Trento's term could refer to a distinct group within the Tsamay, or perhaps even a distinct tribe. Smith (1897:272-8) distinguished between the 'Dūmē' and the 'Kuli,' and the Gawwada apparently similarly distinguish between areas called t'amaxa (i.e., Tsamako) and kuwile. The Konso call the entire area kuyle.

The terms Werize and Gobeze have been distinguished in the literature as referring to more northern and more southern varieties (respectively) of the speech of the Werizoid peoples living north of the Gawwada, from the Weyto River east to near

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the town of Gidole. A Gawwada informant, however, maintained that waráse and ko:pase were synonymous in referring to the entire area, including such divisions as ma:šille, korró:se, xarsá, ló:xte, and kolláne or kollánko. To avoid confusion I will reserve the terms Werize and Gobeze to refer only to data attested under those names, and will refer to the area as a whole by the term Ala, a rendering of the Konso name (alá:) for the region as a whole.² The Gidole refer to the same area as Dó:pas.

Attested data on Ala dialects includes scant material in Chiomio (1938), some data on 'Gowazé' in Moreno (1943), more than a hundred words in 'Warazi' or 'Innxarsi' (cf. inne 'we' and the subdivision name xarsa) by Fleming (1965), more than two hundred words in Gobeze and more limited data on Werize and 'Welango' - probably equivalent to kollanke - by Linton, Kaley, and Coolidge (ms.), one hundred words each in Werize and Gobeze by Bender (1971:249), and some two hundred nouns in Gobeze by myself. My Gobeze informant gave the indigenous name of his speech as póko é:kite 'language (=mouth) of (the village of) é:ke': Gobeze data in this and other cases appears to be associated with the area around the higher villages in the Mashille region to the southwest of the town of Gidole.³

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