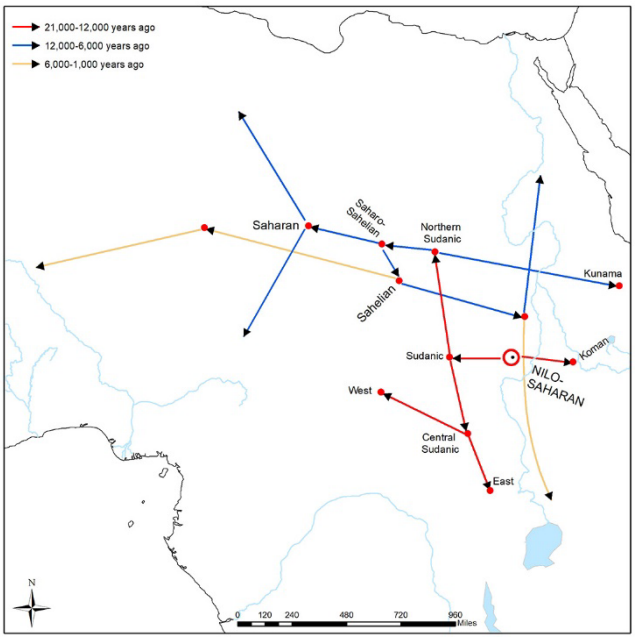
3.Nilo-Saharan

Homeland. The ancestral homeland for Nilo-Saharan languages is in the middle Nile Valley. It is indicated by the division between the two main families within Koman–Gumuz and Western Koman.



Concise Spreadsheet: top four levels

Nilo-Saharan			
	Koman		
		Gumuz	
			Gumuz
		Western Koman	
			Southern Koman
			Gule
	Sudanic		
		Central Sudanic	
			East
			West
		Northern Sudanic	
			Kunama
			Saharo-Sahelian

Full Spreadsheet: see "3.Nilo-Saharan," listing Nilo-Saharan languages by groups and subgroups.

Pleistocene Changes.

65,000–45,000 years ago. Languages ancestral to the Nilo-Saharan phylum arose out of the original speaking community.

45,000–21,000 years ago. In this period, as Gregerson has argued, the Niger–Kordofanian family formed and separated from Nilo-Saharan.

21,000–12,000 years ago. In the late Pleistocene, the Koman languages remained centered near to the original Nilo-Saharan homeland in the Nile Valley, while speakers of Sudanic languages began to move to the northwest and southwest. Perhaps after the Glacial Maximum, the Central Sudanic languages divided into those in the east (south of the original homeland) and the west, in the basin of Lake Chad.

Holocene Changes.

12,000–6000 years ago. During the early Holocene, the Northern Sudanic languages divided into Kunama (east of the Nile) and the Saharo-Sahelian languages (west of the Nile). The Saharo-Sahelian languages expanded within the warming and humid Sahara and spread as far west as the middle Niger. Various of the Central Sudanic languages expanded their terrain to the west and the south.

6000 years ago–1000 CE. Speakers of Nilotic languages, a subgroup of Sahelian, moved with their cattle and crops southward and upstream along the Nile from 1000 BCE to 1500 CE.

Commentary and Debates. The Nilo-Saharan homeland is remarkably close to that of Afroasiatic: the languages of the two phyla, however, have become very different. It is possible that the initial migrants to Asia from Africa were speakers of Nilo-Saharan or languages ancestral to Nilo-Saharan. Greenberg speculated about the possibility that this combination of languages was ancestral to Dravidian and Indo-Pacific.

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