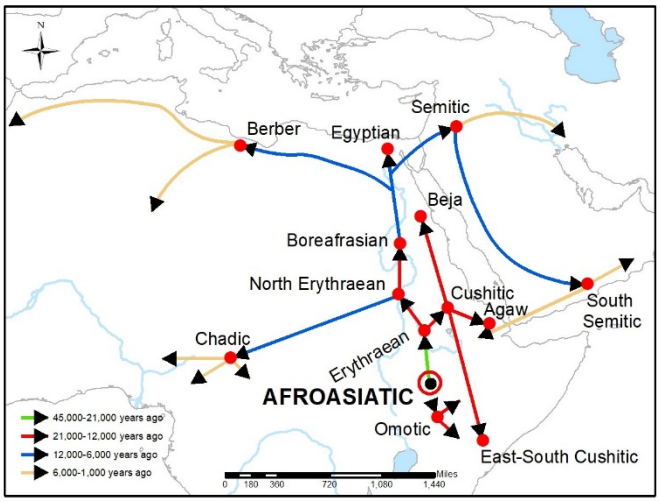
# 2.Afroasiatic

**Homeland.** The homeland of Afroasiatic languages lies in the middle Nile Valley. Its location is indicated by the division between the Omotic languages (all in the middle Nile Valley) and all other Afroasiatic languages.




**Concise Spreadsheet: top five levels**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afroasiatic | | | | |
| | Omotic | | | |
| | | North Omotic | | |
| | | | Dizoid | |
| | | | Gonga-Gimojan | |
| | | | Mao | |
| | | South Omotic | | |
| | Erythraean | | | |
| | | Cushitic | | |
| | | | Beja | |
| | | | Agaw | |
| | | | East-South Cushitic | |
| | | | | Eastern Cushitic |
| | | | | Southern Cushitic |
| | | North Erythraean | | |
| | | | Chadic | |
| | | | Boreafrasian | |
| | | | | Egyptian |
| | | | | Berber |
| | | | | Semitic |

**Full Spreadsheet: see "2.Afroasiatic,"** listing Afroasiatic languages by groups and subgroups.

**Pleistocene Changes**.

*65,000–45,000 years ago.* Languages ancestral to those of the Afroasiatic phylum emerged from the original speaking community and persisted within the homeland.

*45,000–21,000 years ago.* Languages of the Afroasiatic phylum took form and divided into Omotic and Erythraic families before the Glacial Maximum.

*21,000–12,000 years ago.* The division of Omotic into North and South and the division of Erythraean into Cushitic and North Erythraean likely took place in the era of late Pleistocene warming. Late in the Terminal Pleistocene, the Cushitic and North Erythraean groups underwent subdivision. East–South Cushitic overlaid some northern territories of Khoesan.

**Holocene Changes.**

*12,000–6000 years ago.* Early Holocene warming encouraged the migration and separation of Cushitic and Erythraean groups. Chadic speakers settled the Lake Chad basin; Boreafrasian speakers moved to the lower Nile and then became the dominant languages of Northwest Africa, Egypt, and the Levant.

*6000 years ago–1000 CE.* Roughly 2000 years ago, Semitic-speaking merchants from South Arabia moved into Cushitic-speaking Ethiopia. Their languages, now known as Tigrinya and Amharic, became important and even governing languages of the region.

**Commentary and Debates.** Because of the importance of Semitic languages in the spread of literacy from more than 3000 years ago, many scholars have assumed that the Semitic homeland in the Levant was the homeland for a much wider range of languages and peoples. The ultimate ancestry of Semitic languages in the Afroasiatic homeland has now been confirmed.

**References.**

Ehret, Christopher. *Reconstructing Proto-Afroasiatic (Proto-Afrasian): Vowels, Tone, Consonants, and Vocabulary.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.