

Classification of Tshila

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Roadmap

- Outline of data collection in 2023
- Description of the Tshila [ts^hílà] community and sociolinguistic status of the language
- Summary of prior literature on Tshila classification
- Present proposal: **Tshila is closer to Cua/Tsua than to Gllana/Glui**
 - Two types of morphological evidence, pronouns and wh-words
 - A lexical comparison accounting for two tonal patterns
 - Lack of palatalization (phonologically conservative)
- Next steps







Fieldwork

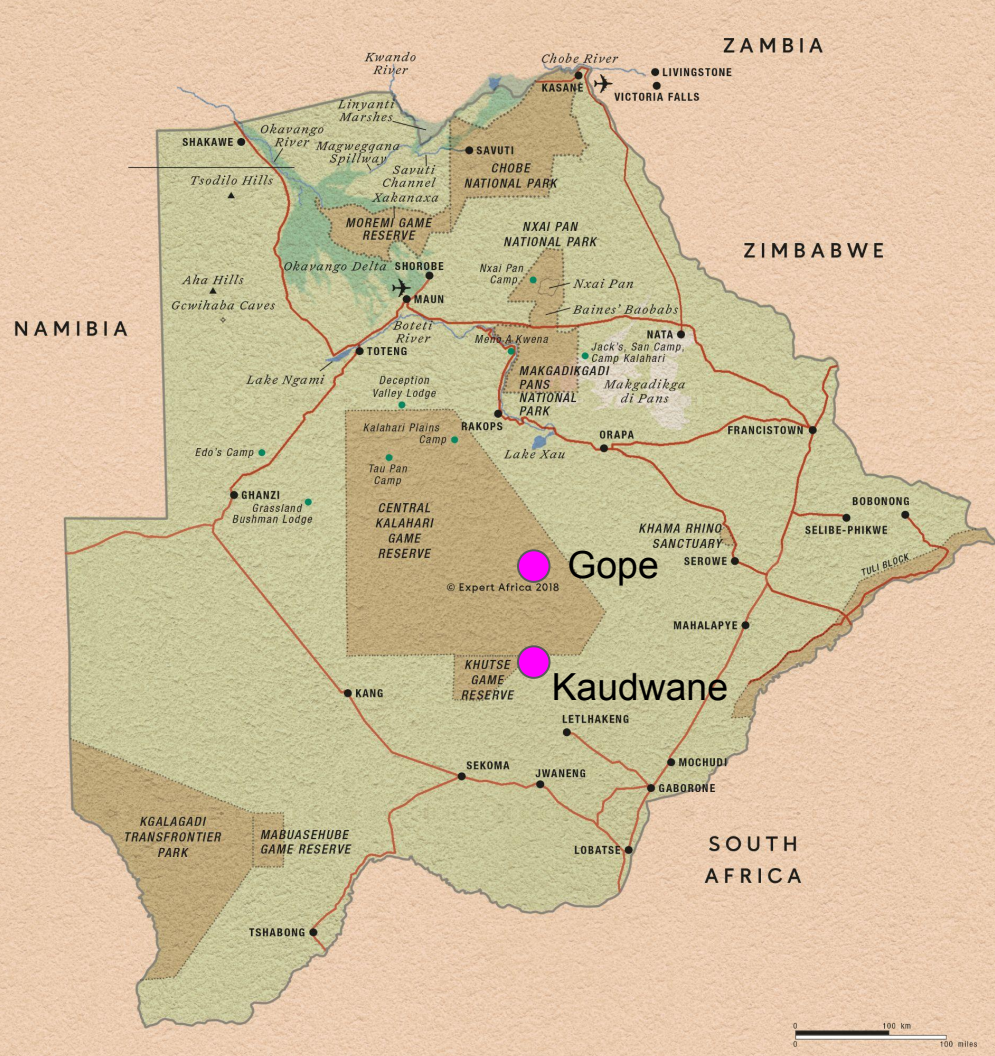
- Two weeks of work in Kaudwane, Botswana
- Six elders and three middle-aged speakers of Tshila, all of whom are functionally bilingual in Sekgalagadi
- Typically held elicitation sessions with two speakers but sometimes up to six
- Recording equipment: H4N Zoom Pro
- Working languages were Setswana/Sekgalagadi

The Tshila community

- Tshila is the name the community uses for themselves and their language.
- About 300 speakers: 250 in Kaudwane, 50 around Gope.
- Everyone over 20 years old speaks it fluently; children are reported to still speak it.
- Kaudwane is 50% Tshila, 50% Gllana, and a handful of Glui and Shua speakers. There are a small number of Setswana-speaking professionals who live in the village transiently. We found no #Hoan speakers in 2023.
- Tshila has been in intense contact with Glui and #Hoan historically (Traill 1973:25-27), but is currently in intense contact with Gllana and Sekgalagadi.
- The medium of education is Setswana, and children learn English as a foreign language in school.

Botswana

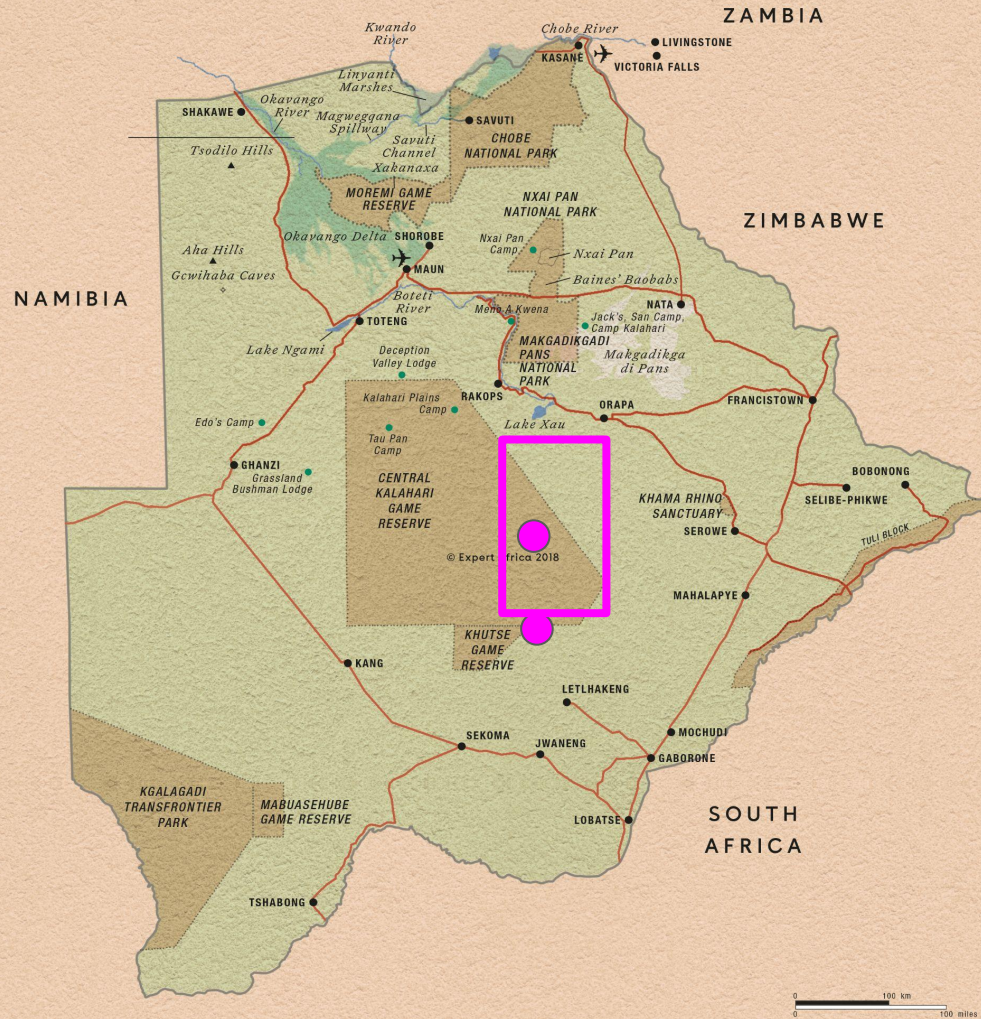
Two villages
with Tshila
speakers:
Kaudwane
(250) and Gope
(50).



Expert Africa. 2018. Botswana Reference Map.
<https://www.expertafrica.com/botswana/reference-map>

Botswana

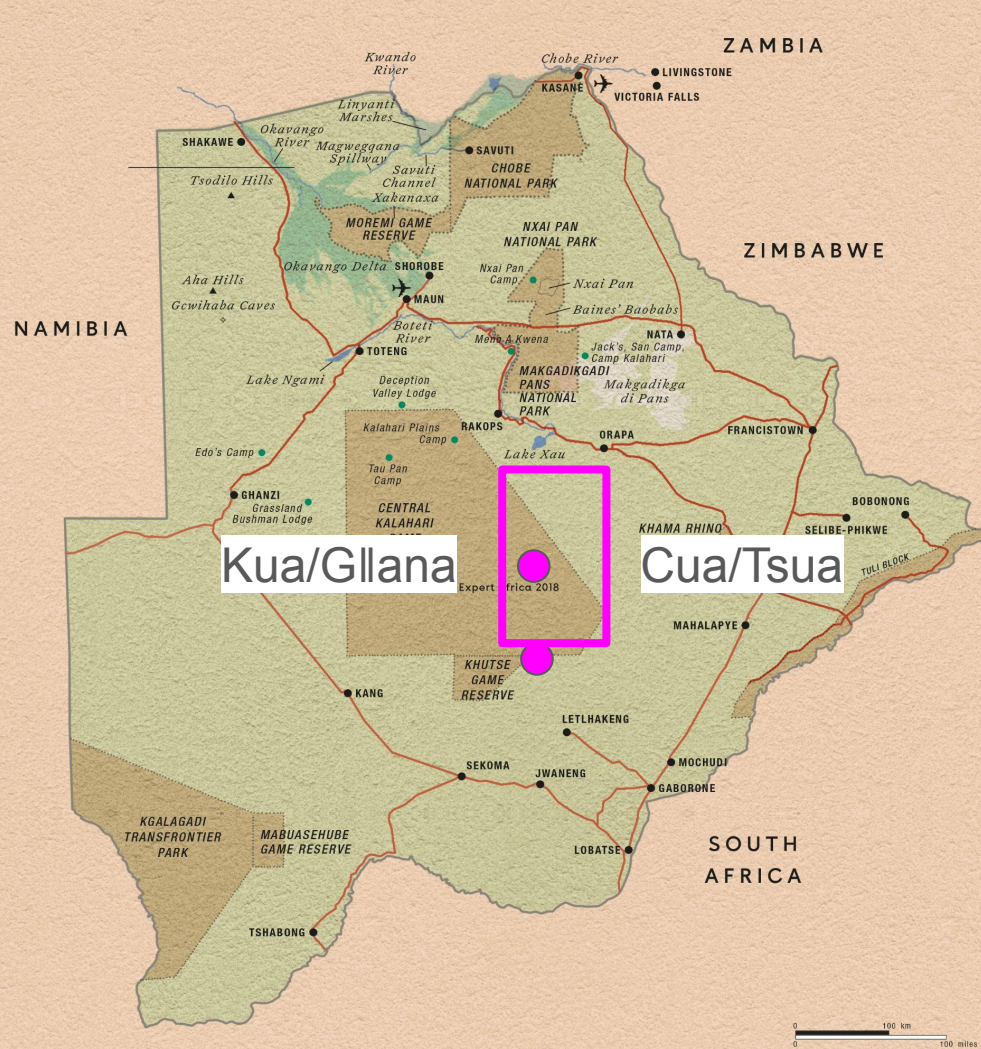
Traditional
range of the
Tshila people,
according to
elders.



Expert Africa. 2018. Botswana Reference Map.
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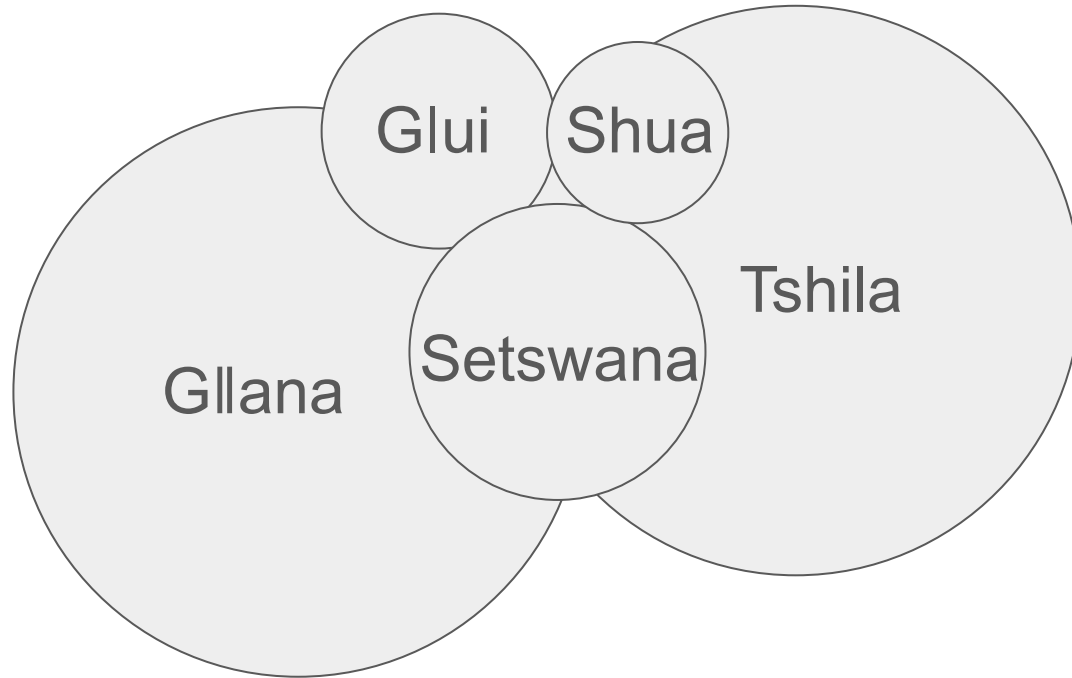
Botswana

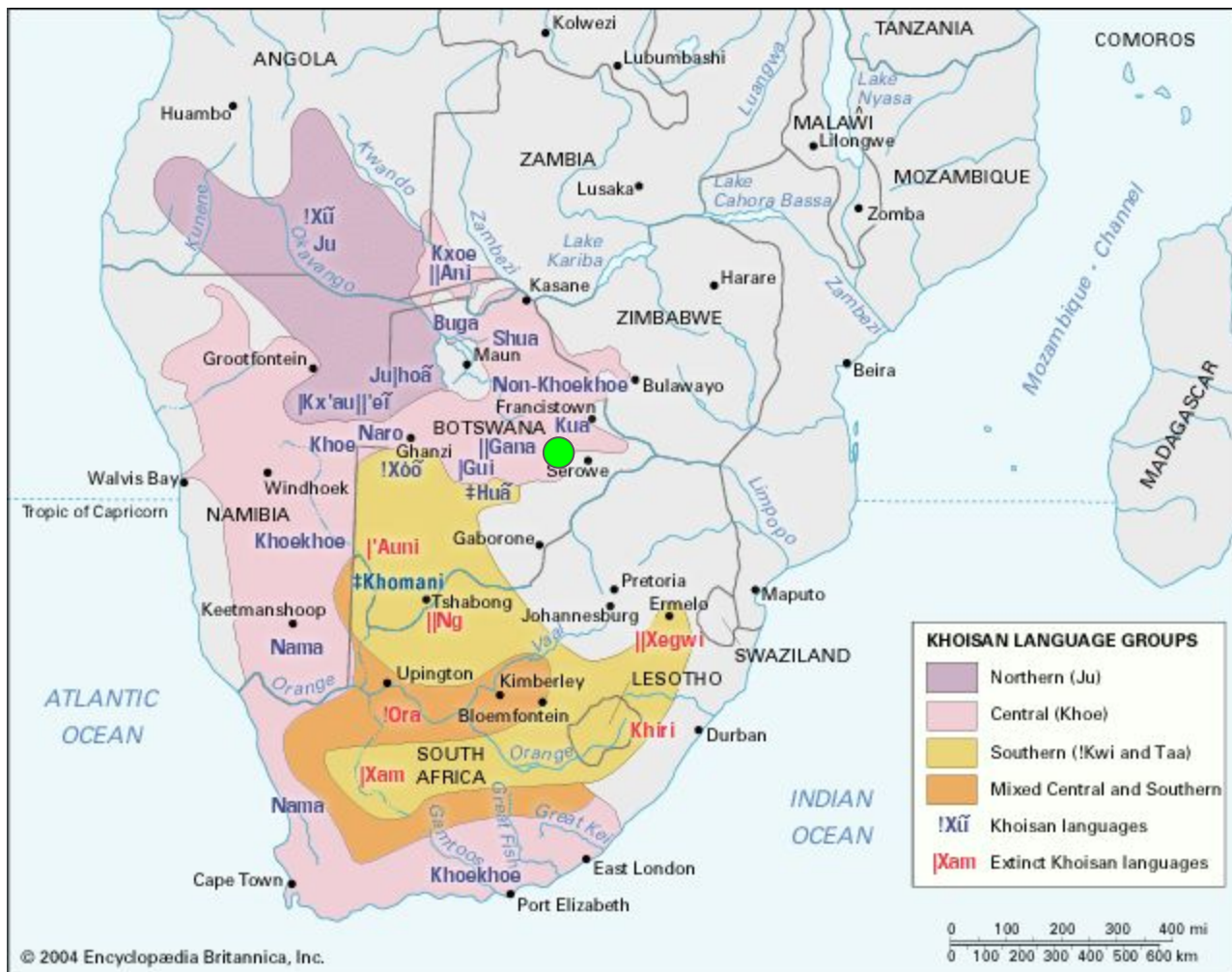
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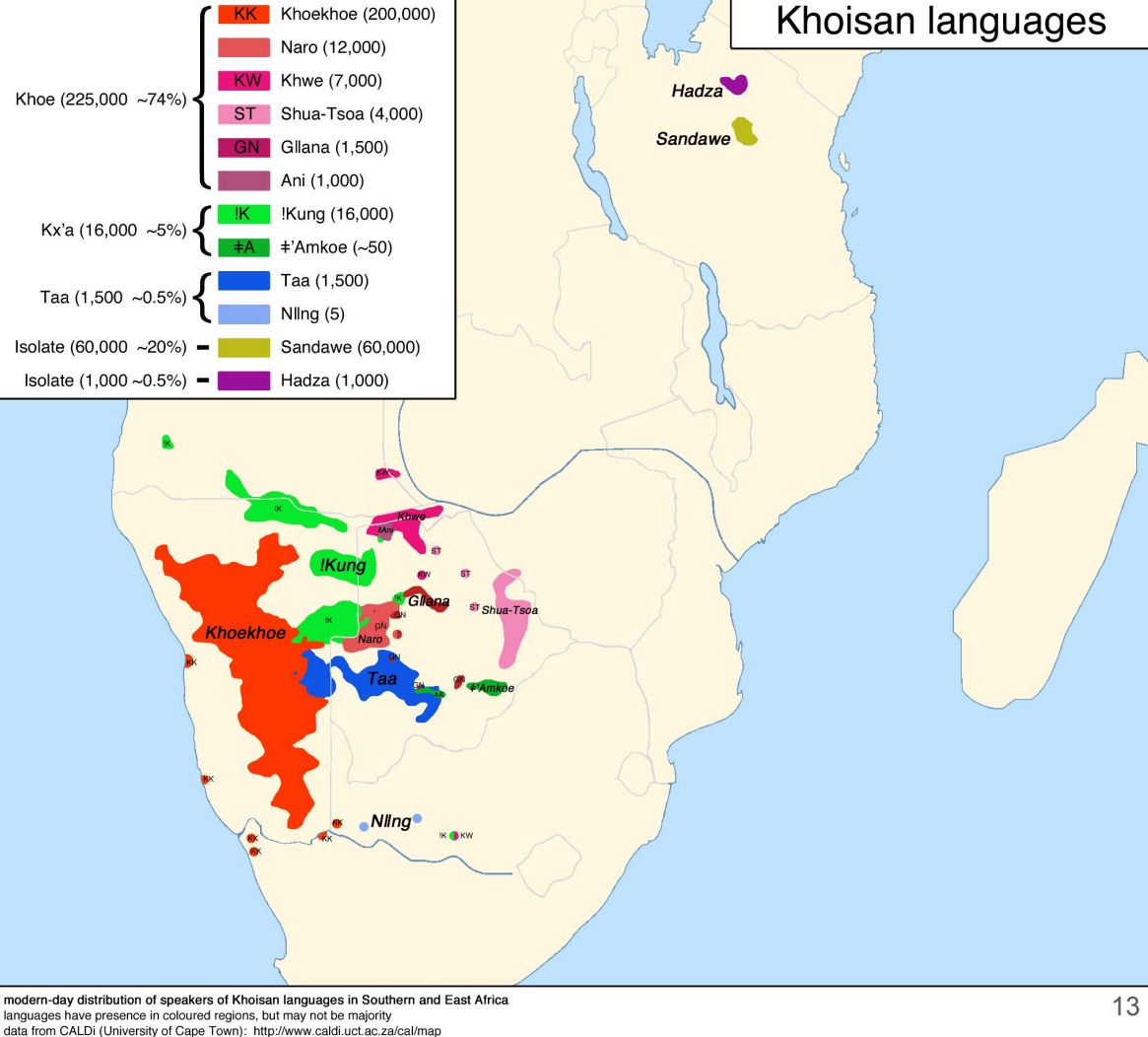
Layout of Kaudwane

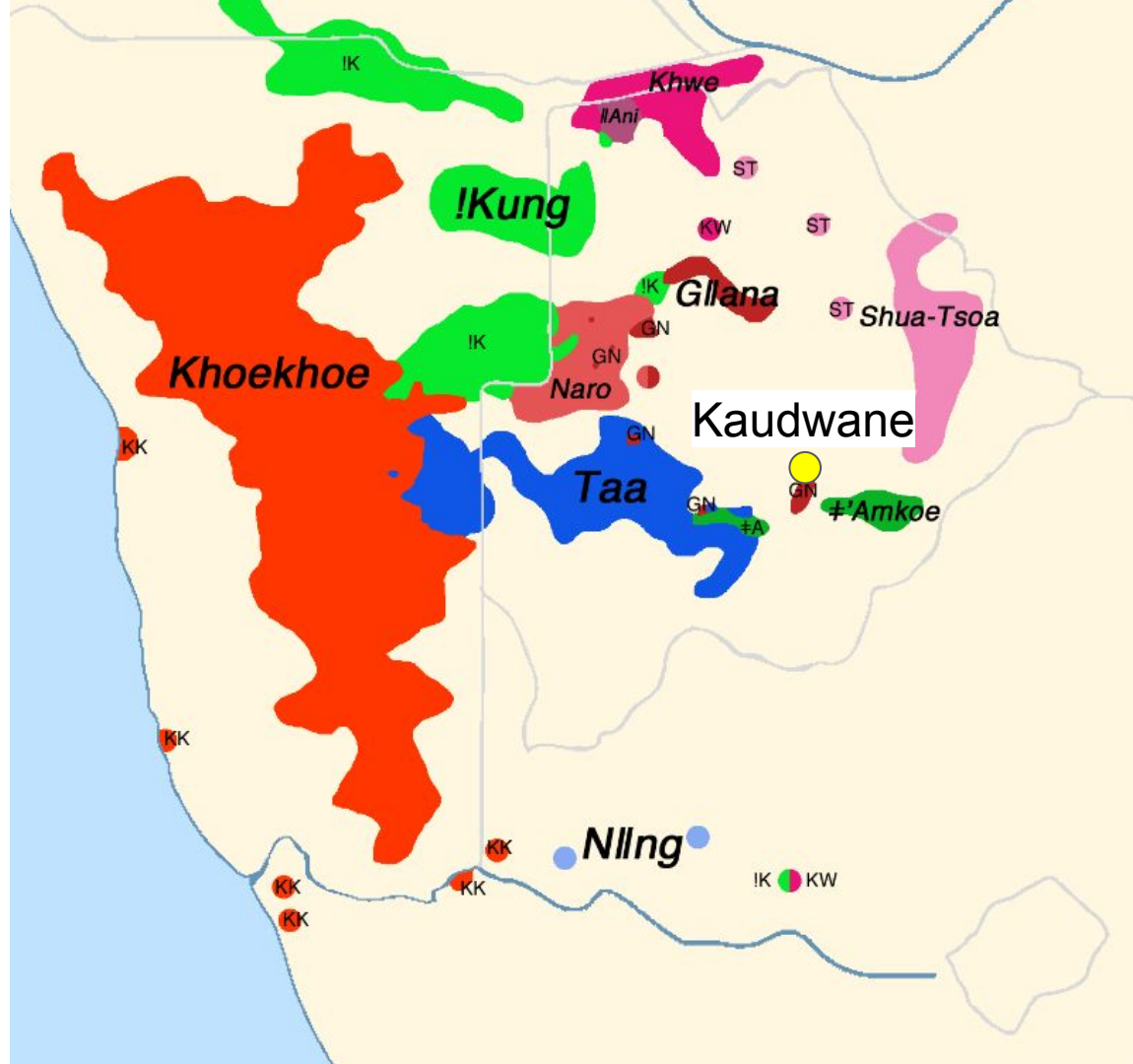




Khoe languages

- Tshila is not included in most work on Khoisan languages due to lack of documentation.
- Kho language in contact with other Kalahari Kho languages, and historically \neq Hoan (\neq 'Amkoe)





Prior literature on Tshila

- First mention of Tshila seems to be in Traill 1973, a paper attesting the existence of ꞤHoan. Traill mentions Tshila is a Khoe variety.
- Tshila is preliminarily placed in a genealogical unit with Gllana, Glui, ꞤHeba, Dom, Tsere, Gllolo, and Gllulu (Vossen 1984:21 'Tsila')
- Later work on ꞤHeba and Tshila convincingly demonstrates Tshila to be closer to Gllana than to Naro (Nakagawa 2011; Ono 2011), but does not look at relationships elsewhere within the Khoe language family.

Closeness between Tshila and Cua:
'submerged features' (Honken 1977)

Pronoun comparison: Tshila vs. Gllana/Kua vs. Cua

- Tshila has 120 pronouns stratified by gender, number, case, and exclusivity.
- Segmentally, Tshila pronouns exactly match Cua for 26/30 subject pronouns, but match Gllana/Kua zero times.
- Cua tone does not always match Tshila, but the entire Cua tone system has undergone massive change from Proto-Khoe.

	2.sg.m	2.sg.f	2.dual.m	2.dual.f	2.dual.mix	2.pl.m	2.pl.f	2.pl.mix
Gllana/Kua	tsèè	sèè	ítsò	ísò	íkhò	ílò	ídzò	ícò
Tshila	tsáé	sáé	ítsòè	ísòè	íkhòè	ílòè	ídzòè	ítòè
Cua	tsáé	sáé	ítsóé	ísóé	íkhóé	ílóé	ídzóé	ítóé

Figure 1: 2nd-person subject pronouns compared across Tshila, Gllana, and Cua.¹⁷

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Tshila	tsáé	sáé	ítsòè	ísòè	íkhòè	ílòè	ídzòè	ítòè
Cua	tsáé	sáé	ítsóé	ísóé	íkhóé	ílóé	ídzóé	ítóé

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Question words

- Tshila and Cua match almost exactly in question words, to the exclusion of Gllana/Kua.
- Tshila speakers understand the Gllana/Kua question words and know how to use them, but do not offer them in elicitation tasks and report not using them in normal speech.

	yes/no	what	who	which	when	where	how
Gllana/Kua	mà	níú	mǎǎ / jǐ rě	mǎǎ	mǎǎ làm	mǎǎ χwà	mǎǎ thà
Tshila	mà	nǎú	níná	námā	námā lám	nām	nǎǎ thà
Cua	mà	nǎú	nín	námā	námā lám	nām	nǎǎ thà

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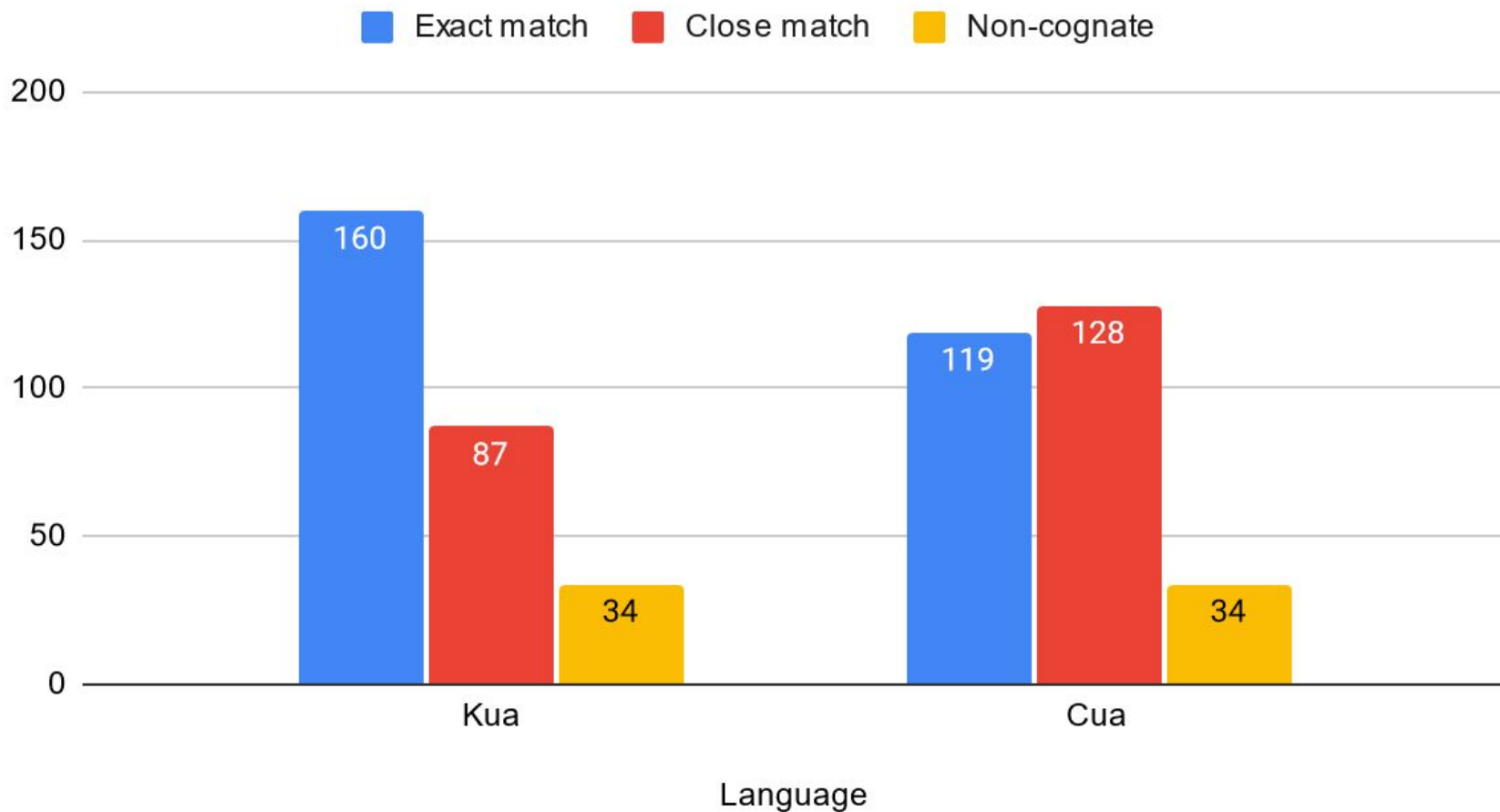
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Lexical comparison is initially misleading...

Lexical comparison

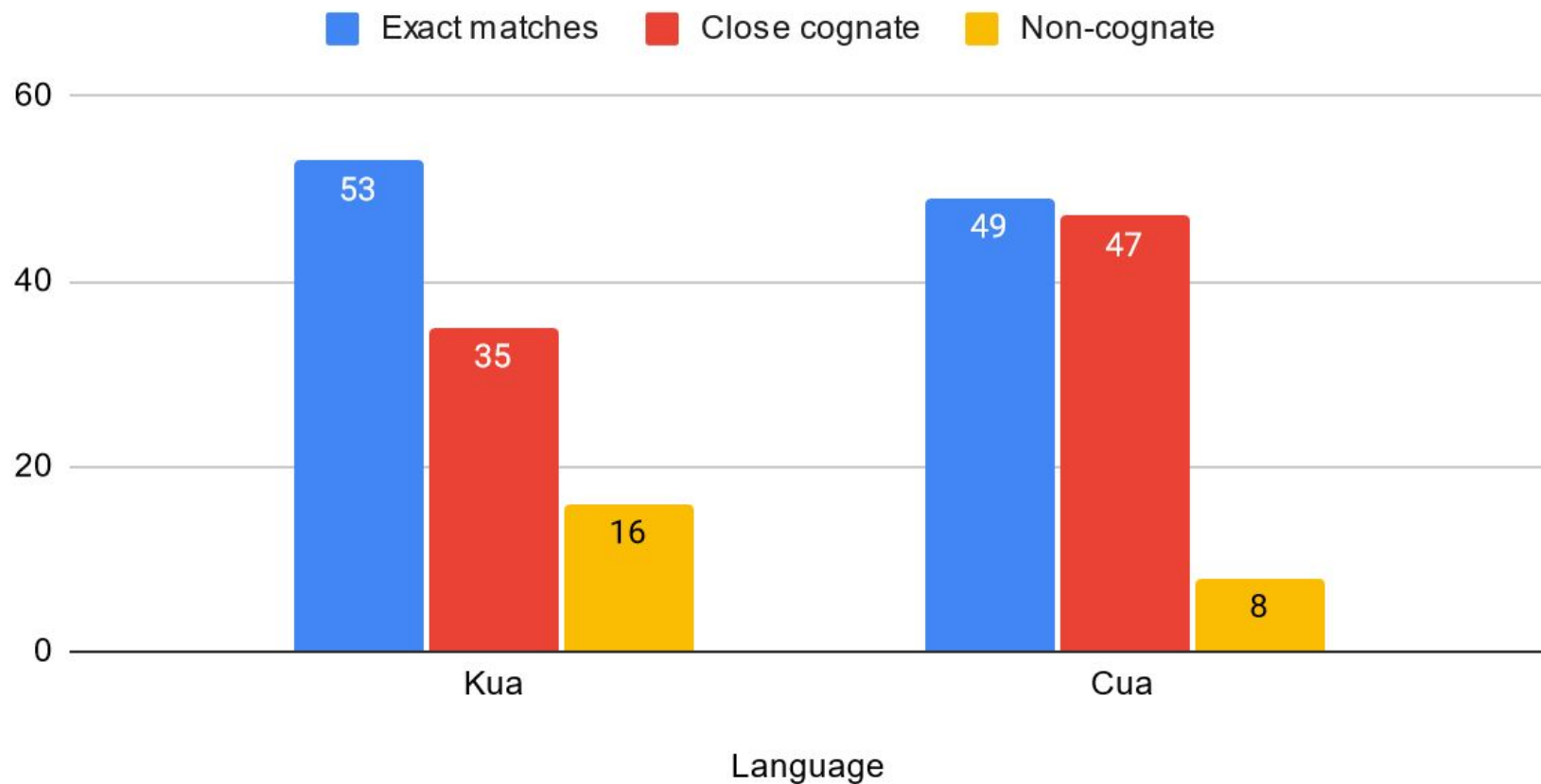
- Compares cognates across the three languages
 - Kua/Gllana wordlist (Collins 2023b)
 - Cua wordlist (Collins 2023a)
 - Tshila wordlist compiled during authors' 2023 fieldwork
- 281 lexical items found in all three datasets
 - Exact matches (both segmental and tonal)
 - Close cognates (at least one segmental or tonal difference)
 - Non-cognates
 - Comparison repeated only with the 104 verbs

Cognates with Tshila



Tshila Cognates

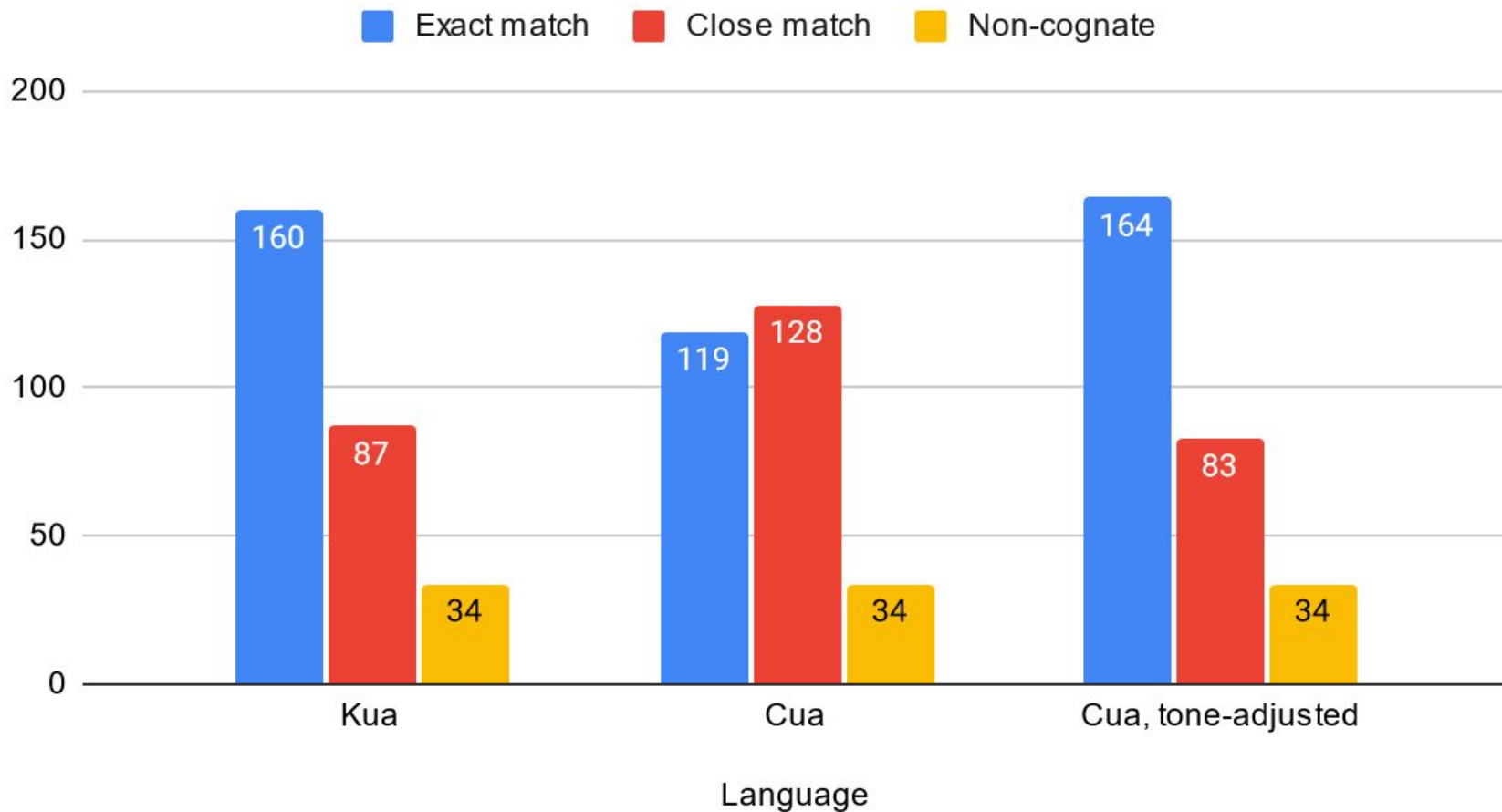
104 Verbs



Two tonal adjustments for Cua

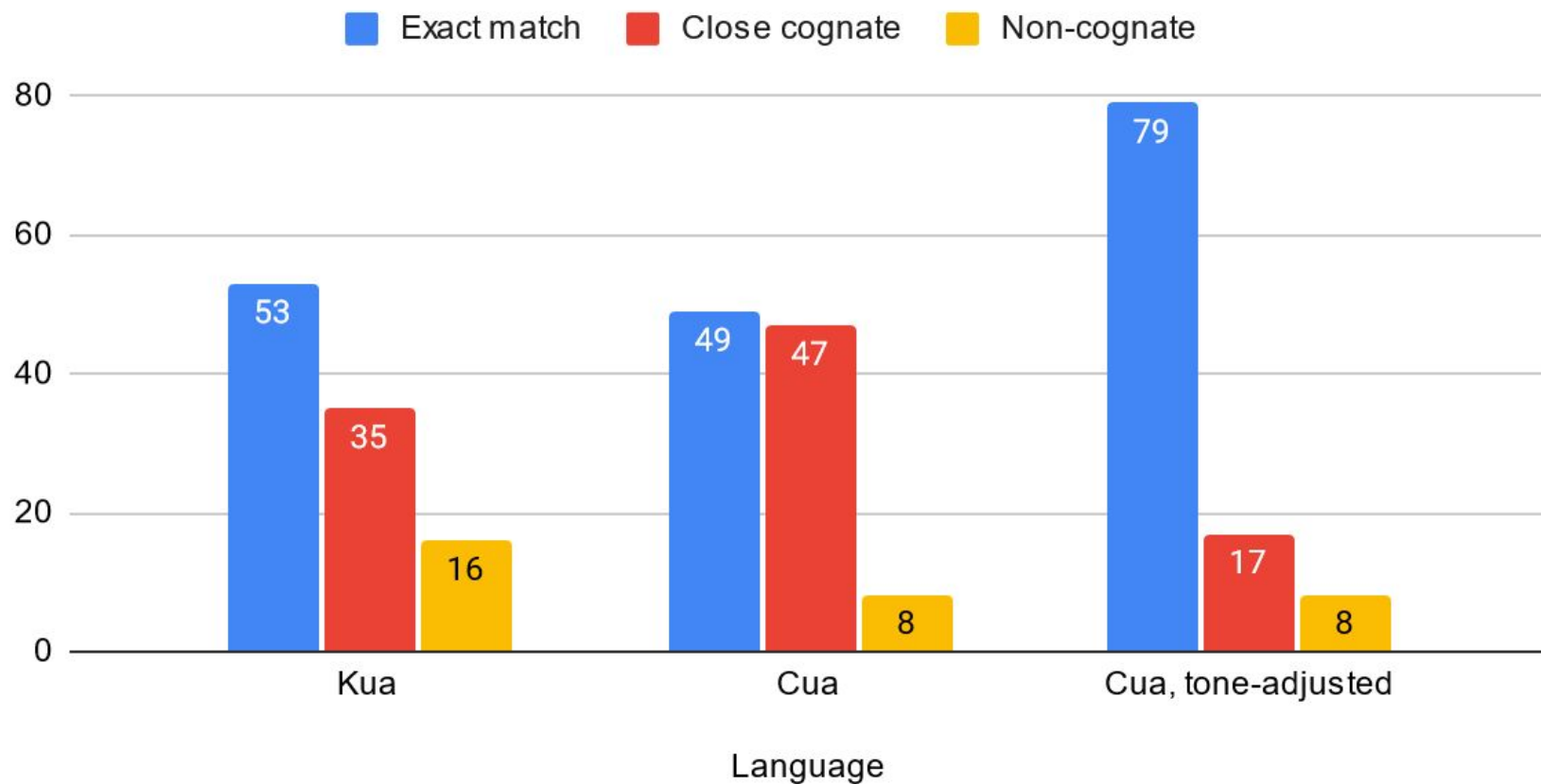
- Predictable tone depressor rule (identical to Tsua, as in Mathes 2015:166) affecting HM and HL lexical tone melodies, argued to be a consequence of areal influence of TjiKalanga and other nearby Bantu languages (Chebanne 2014; Mathes & Chebanne 2018:13).
- A phonological argument for relabeling the MH tone (Tsua, Mathes 2015; Cua, Collins 2023b) as LM.
 - The Juncture morpheme (JCT) occurs between verb root and benefactive morpheme (and also between the root and the perfective).
 - JCT has a complex allomorphy that is sensitive to lexical tones ending in mid-tone (MM, HM, LM), where it becomes /-na-/ in Glui (Nakagawa 2006:97), Gllana/Kua (Collins & Chebanne 2022), and Tshila.
 - JCT is /-na-/ in Cua (Collins 2023c) before ostensibly MH tones, as well as MM and HM.
 - Therefore, MH tones are probably actually LM tones in Cua and Tsua.

Cognates with Tshila



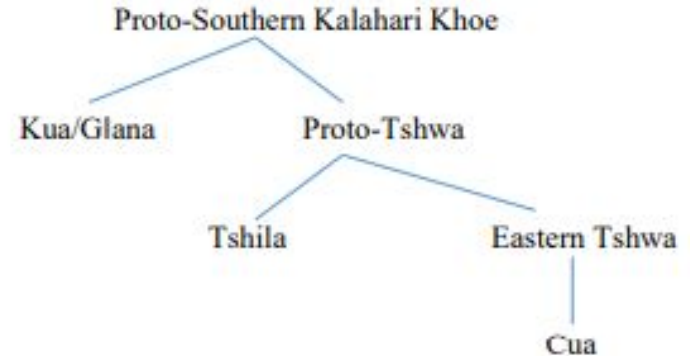
Tshila Cognates, adjusted

104 Verbs



Conclusion

- Based on grammatical features and lexical comparison, Tshila is classifiable as closer to Cua than to Gllana/Kua.
- All these languages are very closely related. Tshila and Gllana are mutually-intelligible, and Cua probably is too.
- Further steps:
 - Palatalization processes have occurred on multiple separate occasions in Khoe (Honken 1977).
 - Tshila has largely avoided palatalization, so Kua/Gllana and Cua/Tsua must have innovated palatalization separately.
 - Correspondences are not yet worked out.



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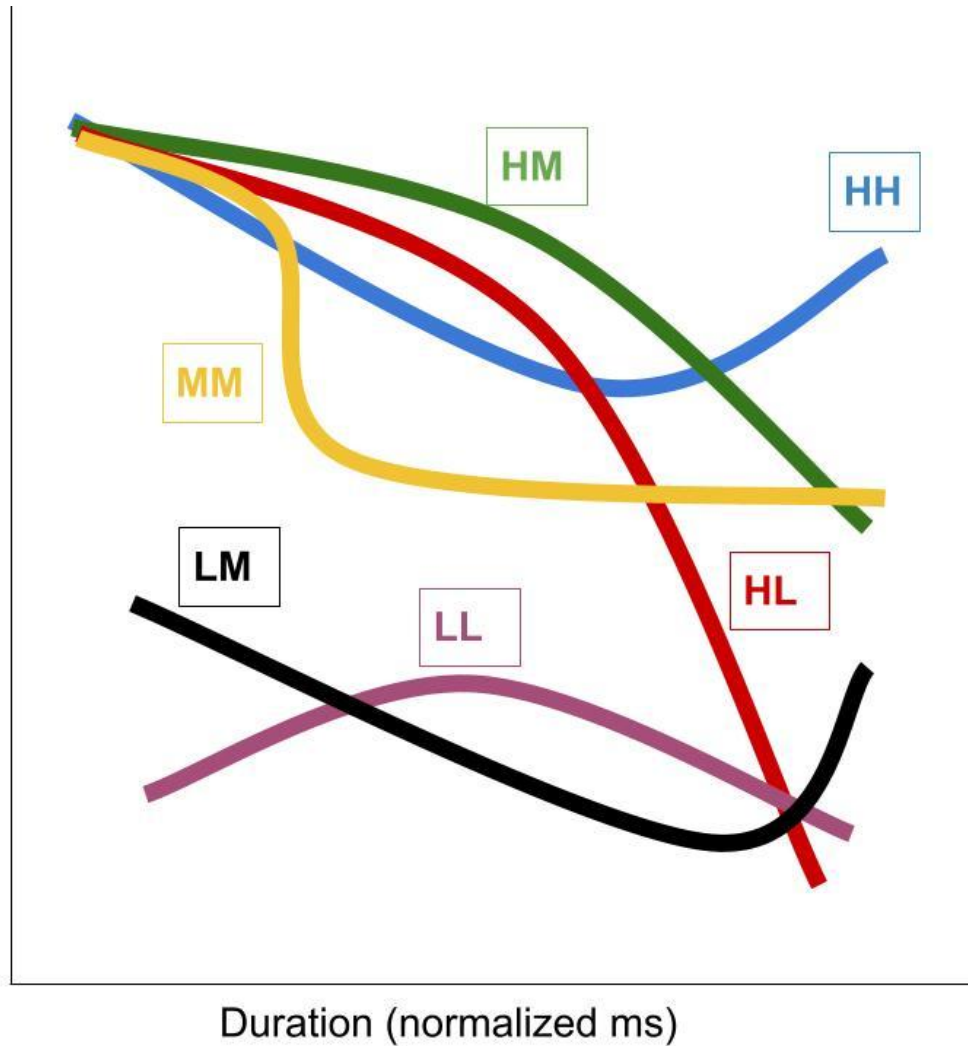
Thank you!

Questions/comments:
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QR code for slides; also found on andreschwab.com

Pitch (normalized Hz)



Six lexical tone contours of Tshila

		labial	coronal	velar	uvular	glottal
Stops	plain	p	t (tʰ ?)	k	q	ʔ
	voiced	b	d	g	(ʔ)	—
	aspirated	(ʔ)	tʰ	kʰ	qʰ	—
	nasal	m	n	ŋ	—	—
	ejected	—	tʼ	kʼ	—	—
Fricatives	plain	—	s	—	χ	h
Affricates	plain	—	ts tsχ	—	qχ	—
	voiced	—	dz	—	—	—
	aspirated	—	tsʰ	—	—	—
	ejected	—	tsʼ (tsχʼ ?)	—	qχʼ	—
Approx.		—	j l	—	—	—

**Tshila
non-click
consonant
phonemes**

	dental	alveolar	palatal	lateral
plain		!	‡	
voiced	g	(?)	g‡	g
aspirated	(?)	(?)	‡ ^h	^h
delayed-aspirated	ŋ h	ŋ!h	ŋ‡ ^h	—
nasal	ŋ	(?)	ŋ‡	ŋ
glottalized	ŋ ʔ	ŋ!ʔ	ŋ‡ʔ	ŋ ʔ
fricated	x	—	‡x	x
fricated ejected	—	!x'	—	x'
ejected	—	—	—	'
uvular	q	!q	‡q	q
uvular aspirated	—	(?)	‡q ^h	q ^h
uvular ejected	q'	—	‡q'	q'
uvular voiced	(?)	—	(?)	^g

Tshila click consonant phonemes

Tshila vowel phonemes

	Front	Back
High	i ĩ iʎ	u ũ uʎ
Mid	e	o oʎ
Low	–	a ã aʎ