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OMO-MURLE, a preliminary report

HIEDA Osamu

1. Introduction

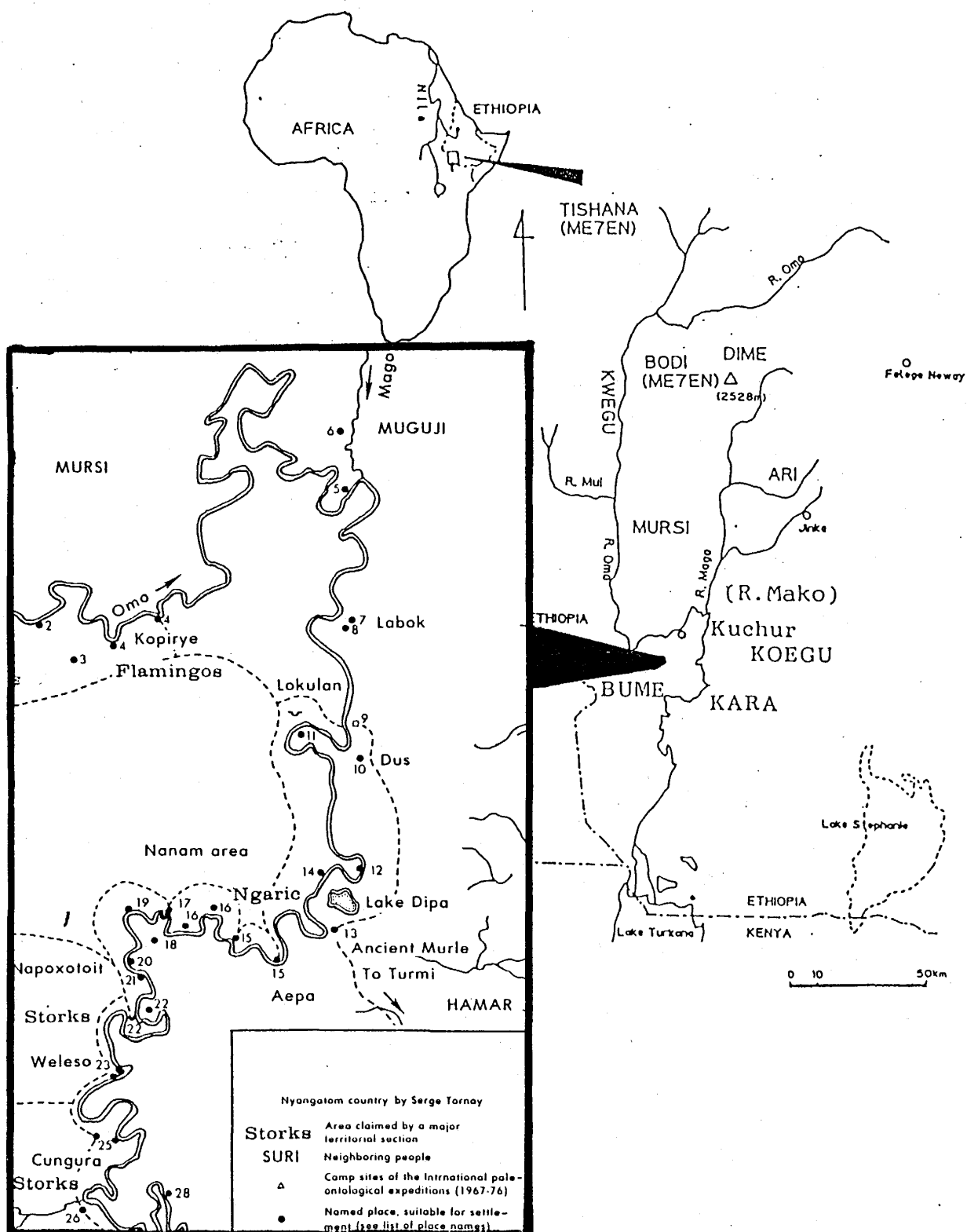
The Omo-Murle, who call themselves /murlo/ (pl.), and who are called Ngarich by the Nyangatom, now form one of the seven Nyangatom sub-groups, "territorial sections" (Torney, 1981a). They are scattered in the villages (Aepa, Kachule, Nachukul) along the western bank of the Omo River about 80km upstream from the Lake Turkana in the extreme southwestern corner of Ethiopia.

All of them can speak the Nyangatom language (Eastern Nilotic). Moreover, all of them except for four old men and five old women speak the Nyangatom language as their first language. The Omo-Murle language will be soon absolutely extinct after the oldest generation dies out. Although most of them have no knowledge on the Omo-Murle language, some bear a small number of Omo-Murle words in their memory. The only four old men and five old women, three old men and an old woman of whom the author held directly an interview with, can communicate to each other by the Omo-Murle language. In fact the actual communication by the Omo-Murle language was frequently observed between the two old men who worked as informants with the author.

The Omo-Murle people practice flood cultivation along the bank of the Omo River, with durra as a main crop. They also have cattle, goats and sheep. And now they live in the Nyangatom economic and social system. Nyangatom men marry Omo-Murle girls, but they give cattle to girls' fathers as bride wealth instead. The reverse match is, of course, possible, but the children who are born as the result of intermarriage are grown up at Nyangatom cattle camps in order to master the way of cattle keeping. The younger generation speaks more and more frequently the Nyangatom language, and the acquisition of the Omo-Murle language as a first language seldom happens.

2. Omo-Murle and southwest Surma languages

The Omo-Murle language is a variant of the Didinga-Larim-Murle languages, which belong to the southwest Surma languages within the Surmic languages in the Nilo-Saharan phylum. The Didinga-Larim-Murle language group consists of the Didinga, the Larim (Longarim), the Murle, and the Omo-Murle languages. All of them except for the Omo-Murle language are spoken in the southern Sudan. The Omo-Murle language only is spoken in Ethiopia. Bender states that the



From Tornay, 1981a

sample of the Omo-Murle collected by Ivo Strecker (p.c.1973) shows little apparent divergence from that of Pibor Post examined by Lyth (Bender, 1976). The data collected by the author do not contradict the Bender's statement. Although the whole data do not show more apparent convergence between the Omo-Murle language and the Murle language spoken in Sudan than that between the Omo-Murle language, and the Didinga or the Larim languages, some examples show enough convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages to suggest relatively closer relationship between them.

The data on the Omo-Murle language were collected in my field research at Nachukul in March 1990, supported by the fund of the Ministry of Education, Japan. My field research on the Larim and Didinga languages was made at the Boya hill in the southern Sudan in October 1982.

The days which I spent for my field research were too short to complete the comprehensive work on the Omo-Murle, the Larim and the Didinga languages. But this small report is of a little value, because there is no published data on the Omo-Murle language as far as I know, and because the Omo-Murle language is likely to die out soon.

And this small report gives a story about the Omo-Murle history which was told by two old Omo-Murle men. To study this story as well as the linguistic consideration is very interesting for studying the Omo-Murle history.

There are four groups of lexical items. The first group consists of the lexical items which show certain convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages among the southwest Surma languages. The second group consists of the lexical items which show the similarity of the Omo-Murle form to the Didinga and Larim forms rather than to the Murle form. The third group consists of the lexical items which show the deviation of the Omo-Murle form from the other southwest Surma forms. The last group consists of the lexical items which show no apparent divergence between the Omo-Murle and the other southwest Surma forms.

A) Some examples show certain convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages in the southwest Surma languages.

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 1) all | OM: 'duok | |
| | Mu: dook | Ly |
| | Di: vɛɛk | Od |
| | La: vɛ́ɛk | |
| 2) husband | OM: (h)eet | |
| | Mu: et | Ly |
| | Di: mac | (macwa) Dr |
| | La: maaca | (maacúá) |

In the examples listed above the Omo-Murle and the Murle forms are of one common origin, while the Didinga and the Larim forms have the other common origin. Although the two examples show apparent convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages, the lexical evidence is not so strong for language grouping. It is impossible to exclude deviance which was brought in by the researchers.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------------------|----|
| 3) two | OM: ram | | |
| | Mu: ram | Ly | |
| | Di: ramma' | TB | |
| | La: rammá | | |
| 4) long | OM: wuun | | |
| | Mu: wun | Ly | |
| | La: úúni | | |
| 5) hair | OM: ím | | |
| | Mu: imitaat | (im or ima) ¹ | Ly |
| | Di: emáác | (emá) | Od |
| | La: ématok | (émá) | |
| 6) tree,
wood | OM: keet | (keen) | |
| | Mu: kɛɛt | (kɛɛn) | Ly |
| | Di: xɛɛt | (xɛɛna) | Od |
| | La: kééta | (kɛɛna) ² | |
| 7) red | OM: mǎrí | | |
| | Mu: meri | (merik) | Ly |
| | Di: mariki | (marikik) | Dr |
| | La: mɛrík | | |
| 8) night | OM: bal | | |
| | Mu: baal | (baalinok) | Ly |
| | Di: baálin | (baalinyook) | Od |
| 9) throat | OM: logor | | |
| | Mu: logor | (logoornya) | Ly |
| | La: logorón | (logorogeeta) | |

The final vowel or final syllable tends to be lost frequently in the Murle language. The Didinga and Larim languages tend to maintain it. The Omo-Murle language loses the final vowel or final syllable, but less frequently than the Murle language does. In the process of the final syllable loss the Omo-Murle language is still in the middle stage between the Murle language, and the Didinga and the Larim languages.

- 10) one OM: codoi
 Mu: c-o' doi Ly
 Di: xodoi Dr
 La: ódóí
- 11) black OM: kólí (dark)
 Mu: koli Ly
 Di: holi, hola Dr
 La: ól(y)a

The initial /k/ tends to be maintained in the Murle and Omo-Murle languages, while it is weakened into /x/ or /h/ in the Didinga language, and then is lost in the Larim language.

- 12) crocodile OM: golu
 Mu: agul (agulwa) Ly
 La: kugul (kugulyá)

On the contrary the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages lose the initial /k/ or initial syllable in 12). The initial /k/, "movable k", is not very strong evidence for language grouping.

- 13) feather OM: ribeec
 Mu: roobec (rɔɔbɛn) Ly
 Di: xaureec (xaurɪ) Od
 La: kavurec (kavure)

In 13) the metathesis bVr > rVb takes place in the Murle and the Omo-Murle languages like as in the Koegu language among the southeast Surma languages.³

- 14) canoe OM: kovol
 Mu: kavol (kavolɛt) Ly
 La: koboxólu (koboxole(ta))
- 15) iron OM: dhiit
 Mu: dhiit (dhiik) Ly
 Di: dhorogoic (dhorogo) Dr
 La: dhígit (dhí)

At the middle position, /g/ or /ɣ/, and /r/ tend to be lost in the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages.

- 17) three OM: iiyu
 Mu: (h)iyu Ly
 Di: iyó Tu
 La: iyó

- 18) pot OM: eju
 Mu: iju (ijunya) Ly
 Di: ijo (ijonya) Dr
 La: ijó (ijonya)

The Omo-Murle and Murle /u/ corresponds to the Didinga and Larim /o/.

- 19) rotten OM: amí
 Mu: mi (ammi, intr.) Ly
 La: amú
- 20) hair OM: ím
 Mu: imitaat (im or ima)
 Di: emáác (emá) Od
 La: ématok (émá)
- 21) moon OM: nyóólok
 Mu: nyɔɔɔk / nyelok (nyɔɔwɛ / nyɛɔwɛ) Ly
 Di: nyɪɔɔk (nyɪɔɔɣɪ) Od
 La: nyíɔk (nyɪɔɣɪ)
- 22) mouth OM: otok
 Mu: otok (tugeti) Ly
 Di: ɔtók (utugeeti) Od
 La: kɔtók (kutugeeti)
- 23) river OM: leel
 Mu: lel (lelok) Ly
 Di: līl (līlōk) Dr
 La: líl (lilyók)

The Omo-Murle and Murle /i/, /i/, /o/, /o/, and /e/ correspond to the Didinga and Larim /u/, /e/, /ɔ/, /ɔ/, and /ɪ/ respectively. But the distinction of /i/ : /ɪ/, /u/ : /ɔ/, /e/ : /ɛ/, and /o/ : /ɔ/, which is naturally observed in the southwest Surma languages, is not recorded in the data on the Omo-Murle language. The Omo-Murle /e/ and /o/ in the data might represent /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ respectively.

- 24) goat OM: eédh
 Mu: ɛɛdh (ɛɛdha) Ly
 Di: ɛ́ɛth (ɛ́ɛdha) Od
 La: ɛ́ɛth (ɛ́ɛdha)

The Omo-Murle and Murle /dh/ is not devoiced at the word-final position, while it is devoiced into /th/ in the Didinga and the Larim languages.

- 25) fish OM: úlúgit
 Mu: kulugit (kuluk) Ly
 Di: ulugoic (ulugo) Od
 La: kulugóic (kulugwa)⁴

The Omo-Murle and Murle forms have the same suffix which functions as a singularity indicator. But the choice of a suffix is not so strong criterion for language grouping, because various variants of singular and plural suffixes are quite freely affixed to a nominal stem in the southwest Surma languages, and even in a language among them.

26) personal pronoun abs.	OM:	ánééta	(ágééta)	1st.	
		ínééta	(ígééta)	2nd.	
		écélice	(worice)	3rd.	
	Mu:	anéta	(agêt)	1st.	TB
		inét	(igêt)	2nd.	
		nɔnɔ	(nɔgɔ)	3rd.	
	Di:	ɲanɛta	(ɲageta)	1st.	Dr
		ɲánita	(ɲagita)	2nd.	
		inono	(igogo)	3rd.	
	La:	anéta	(agéta)	1st.	
		aníta	(agíta)	2nd.	
		ɪnɔnɔ	(ɪnɔgɔ)	3rd.	

The vocalic elements /a/, /i/, and /e/ or /ø/ indicate 1st., 2nd., and 3rd. person respectively in the southwest Surma languages. This vocalic pattern of the personal pronoun construction is clearly observed in the verb conjugation and the nominative personal pronouns. This pattern, however, is vague in the absolutive personal pronouns in the Didinga and the Larim languages, while it is clear at the initial position of the absolutive personal pronouns in the Omo-Murle and Murle languages.

B) Some examples show that the Omo-Murle form is similar to the Didinga and Larim forms rather than to the Murle form.

27) seed	OM:	kinyómo	
	Mu:	dooc	(dowɛn) Ly
	Di:	xinyómooc	(xinyómó) Od
	La:	kinyóménít	(kinyómo)

The Omo-Murle, the Didinga and the Larim forms are of the common origin, from which the Murle form only has a different origin.

28) who?	OM:	ɲane	
	Mu:	ɲɛn	Ly
	Di:	ɲani	Dr
	La:	ɲɛnɛ	
29) bad	OM:	bédhi	(abédhi)
	Mu:	badh	(abadh) Ly
	Di:	badhi	(abadhi) Dr

- 30) cold OM: lále (alále)
 Mu: lal (alal) Ly
 La: lálɪ (alálɪ)
- 31) small OM: cé 'dice
 Mu: ci dec Ly
 Di: ci kidici Dr
 La: ci dicí
- 32) hot OM: burí (aburí)
 Mu: bur (abur) Ly
 La: burí (aburí)
- 33) light OM: valvalé
 Mu: vɔlvɔl Ly
 La: vɔlvɔlɛ́
- 34) white OM: woori
 Mu: fɔɔr (fɔɔrik) Ly
 Di: ora (orik) Dr
 La: vɔ́rɔ
- 35) child OM: 'doolí
 Mu: 'dol-êc ('dɔl) Tu
 Di: doɣólééc (dɔɣɔ́lɪ) Od
 La: dɔ́ɔ́lɪc (dooli)
- 36) to laugh OM: arére
 Mu: rar (arar) Ly
 Di: tārári (laughter) Dr
 La: arárf

The final vowel is maintained in the Omo-Murle language as well as in the Didinga and the Larim languages, while it is lost in the Murle language (cf. 3)~9)).

- 37) green, OM: colak
 wet Mu: colai (colaik) Ly
 Di: culak (culakik) Dr
 La: culák
- 38) string OM: lóóronɔ
 Mu: looro (looronya) Ly
 Di: lóronɔ (lóronɪta) Dr
 La: lɔ́rɔɔ (lɔ́rɔɔɪta)

The final consonant is lost in the Murle language, while the Omo-Murle language as well as the Didinga and the Larim languages maintain the final consonant (cf. 7)~9)).

- 39) fire OM: guo
 Mu: go (gonya) Ly
 Di: gwoó (gwooyyeén) Od
 La: gwó (gwonya)

The glide /w/ or /u/ is lost in the Murle language, while it is maintained in the Omo-Murle language as well as in the Didinga and the Larim languages.

- 40) tongue OM: ayaat
 Mu: aat (aati) Ly
 Di: ayaat (ayaattwa) Od
 La: ayaat (ayaatwa)

At the middle position /ɣ/ tends to be lost in the Murle language.

However the Omo-Murle language maintains it as /y/, which corresponds to the Didinga and the Larim /ɣ/ (cf. 14)~15)).

- 41) small OM: cé 'dice
 Mu: ci dec Ly
 Di: ci kidici Dr
 La: ci dicí

- 42) hunger OM: magedh
 Mu: magidh (magidheti) Ly
 Di: magɛdh Dr

The Omo-Murle, the Didinga and the Larim /i/ and /e/ or /ɛ/ correspond to the Murle /e/ and /i/ respectively (cf. 19)~23)).

C) Some examples show that the Omo-Murle form deviates from the Didinga and the Larim forms, and even from the Murle form.

- 43) ear OM: idhiit
 Mu: itat (iin) Ly
 Di: itát (itattwá) Od
 La: kɪtát (kína)

The Omo-Murle form may have a different origin from the other southwest Surma forms (cf. 1)~2) and 27)).

- 44) smoke OM: bur
 Mu: burɛt (burɛtok) Ly
 Di: buré (burettwa) Od
 La: burút (burutwá)

The final vowel or syllable is lost only in the Omo-Murle language, while it is maintained in the other southwest Surma languages (cf. 3)~9) and 28)~36)).

- 45) breast OM: adhiit
 Mu: kedh (kedhin) Ly
 La: kídhiit (kídhiin)

The initial /k/ is lost only in the Omo-Murle language, while the Murle and the Larim languages maintain it (cf. 10)~12)).

- 46) four OM: woic
 Mu: wec Ly
 Di: wec Tu
 La: wéc
- 47) baboon OM: lotém
 Mu: lotiim (lotiima) Ly
 Di: lōtīm (lōtíma) Dr
 La: lotím (lotima)
- 48) bird OM: kupalít (kupalíc)
 Mu: kibaalic (kibaali) Ly
 Di: kíballec (kíballè) Tu
 La: kɪbálíc (kɪbálí)
- 49) charcoal OM: dhil
 Mu: dholomon (dhɔɔɔmɔ) Ly
 Di: dhōlomōnit (dholomo) Dr
 La: dhɔɔɔmɔnit (dhɔɔɔmɔ)
- 50) milk OM: íiri
 Mu: iraooc (ira) Ly
 Di: íra (irayók) Dr
 La: iryá
- 51) good OM: bonó
 Mu: bona Ly
 Di: bon'á Dr
 La: boná
- 52) back OM: bouc
 Mu: bauc (bauci) Ly
 Di: bahuc (báhucwa) Dr
 La: bauc (báuici)

The Omo-Murle /oi/, /e/, /u/, /i/, /i/, and /o/ correspond to the other southwest Surma /e/, /i/, /i/ or /ɪ/, /o/ or /ɔ/, /a/, and /a/ respectively (cf. 17)~23) and 41)~42)).

- 53) bee OM: mágáro
 Mu: migoot (migɔk) Ly
 Di: māgōt (maga) Dr
 La: migóyit (migowa)

- 54) blood OM: ber
 Mu: biyetot (biye) Ly
 Di: bīyí⁴ Dr
 La: bīyí

The Omo-Murle /r/ corresponds to the other southwest Surma /y/, /ɣ/ or /ø/.

- 55) face OM: wuum
 Mu: guum (guumti) Ly
 Di: mūm (mumti) Dr
 La: muma (mumtí)

The Omo-Murle /w/ corresponds to the Murle /ŋ/, and to the Didinga and the Larim /m/.

- 56) heart OM: dhiit
 Mu: dhinidh (dhindhethi) Ly
 Di: dhínít (dhinneeti) Od
 La: dhínín (dhineeti)

At middle position the nasal /n/ is lost only in the Omo-Murle language, while the other southwest Surma languages maintain it.

- 57) house OM: ceeth
 Mu: ceedh (ceedhi) Ly
 Di: cyɛdh (cyɛdhi) Dr
 La: cííth (ciidhi)

At the word-final position the Omo-Murle /th/ corresponds to the other southwest Surma /dh/, although the Larim form which has the voiceless /th/ at word-final position is recorded.

D) Some examples show no apparent divergence between the Omo-Murle and the other southwest Surma forms.

- 58) cow, OM: taŋ
 cattle Mu: taŋ (tiin) Ly
 Di: taan (tiina) Od
 La: táŋa (teena)
- 59) my father OM: báába
 Mu: baaba Ly
 Di: baba Dr
- 60) fingernail OM: falak⁵
 Mu: valait (valak) Ly
 Di: walagit (walak) Dr
 La: báláít (bálák)

- 61) grass OM: arté
 Mu: arten (artɛ) Ly
 Di: arrteenit (arrte) Od
 La: kartenít (karté)
- 62) name OM: dhaar
 Mu: dhaar Ly
 Di: dhaar (dhaaryook) Od
 La: dhaara (dhaara)
- 63) rain OM: tamu
 Mu: tämu (tämunya) Ly
 Di: tamU (tammwɛɛta) Od
 La: támÚ (tamwéna)
- 64) sandal OM: caafa ⁵
 Mu: caavit (caava) Ly
 Di: cawác (cāwa) Dr
 La: caabɛt (caaba)
- 65) rope OM: wááro ⁵
 Mu: baroc (barɔ) Ly
 Di: báròc (bāro) Dr
 La: baroc (baro)
- 66) water OM: maam
 Mu: maamoc (maam) Ly
 Di: maám (maamittyook) Od
 La: maám
- 67) woman,
 wife OM: ɲa
 Mu: ɲa (ɲai) Ly
 Di: ɲaa (ɲaɑɾ) Od
 La: ɲa (ɲaɾ)

The correspondence is; OM /a/ : Mu /a/ or /ä/ : Di /a/ : La /a/.

- 68) many OM: mééle
 Mu: mɛɛlɛ Ly
 Di: mɛlik Dr
 La: mɛlí
- 69) axe OM: meleek
 Mu: mɛlɛɛk (mɛlɛɛkwa)
 Di: mɛlɛɛk (meleekkwa) Od
 La: m'ɛlɛk (melegwá)

- 70) body OM: ele (elecin)
 Mu: ελε (εleti) Ly
 Di: ελε (eleeti) Od
 La: ελε (eleeti)
- 71) stomach OM: keen
 Mu: kεη (kenit) Ly
 Di: xεη (xεnti) Dr
 La: kεεηa (keeniti)
- 72) stone OM: be
 Mu: bε (biεn) Ly
 Di: bεε (bιyyέεna) Od
 La: bíí (bíyén)

The correspondence is; OM /e/ : the other southwest Surma /ε/. But the Omo-Murle /e/ may also represent /ε/.

- 73) skin OM: caram
 Mu: cεram (cεrama) Ly
 Di: cεrεm (cεrεmwa) Dr
 La: cέρέm (ceremwá)
- 74) man OM: eet
 Mu: et
 Di: έέt (εεta) Od
 La: έέt (εεta)

The correspondence is; OM /a/ or /e/ : Mu /ε/ or /e/ : Di, La /ε/.

- 75) hand OM: adhiit
 Mu: adhiit (edhεn) Ly
 Di: adhíit (adhdhεn) Od
 La: adhi (adhrina)
- 76) meat OM: i'din
 Mu: idin (idi) Ly
 Di: idín (idingwa) Od
 La: kídín (kidingwá)

The correspondence is; OM /i/ : the other southwest Surma /i/.

- 77) tooth OM: nyigit⁵
 Mu: nyigitaat (nyigit)
 Di: nyígítaat (nyígit) Od
 La: nyígítaat (nyígít)
- 78) spear OM: délá
 Mu: dila (dilanya) Ly
 Di: 'dílá (dīlanynya) Od
 La: dílá (dīlanya)

The correspondence is; OM /i/ or /e/ : Mu /i/ : Di, La /ɪ/. The Omo-Murle /e/ might represent /ɪ/ (cf. 19)~23)).

- 79) foot OM: dhooc
 Mu: dhoc (dhɔ) Ly
 Di: dhoic (dho) Dr
 La: dhoc (dhó)
 80) hoe OM: kolyeec
 Mu: kɔlyac (kɔlyaanɛn) Ly
 Di: kolaíɕ (kolêna) Dr
 La: kolyaic (kolyanyene)

The correspondence is; OM /o/ : Mu /o/ or /ɔ/ : Di /o/ : La /o/.

- 81) head OM: wo
 Mu: ɔ (oti) Ly
 Di: ɔɔ (ooti) Od
 La: ɔɔ/ɔ́wá (óoti)
 82) ten OM: hamáto
 Mu: ɔmɔtɔ̃ TB
 Di: ɔmɔtɔ̃ TB
 La: ɔmɔ́tɔ̃
 83) to sleep OM: toŋu
 Mu: taŋu (oŋ) Ly
 Di: ɔnyák (sleep) Dr
 La: ɔ́ŋɛ
 84) leaf OM: boló (boloi)
 Mu: bɔloitot (bɔlɔk) Ly
 Di: bológinit (bolók) Dr
 La: balóít (balɔ)
 85) urine OM: dholo
 Mu: dhɔɔ Ly
 Di: xula Dr
 La: dhɔ́lɔ

The correspondence is; OM /o/ or /a/ : Mu /ɔ/ or /a/ : Di /ɔ/ or /o/ : La /ɔ/. The Omo-Murle /o/ and /a/ might represent /ɔ/ (cf. 19)~23)).

- 86) five OM: tur
 Mu: tur TB
 Di: túr TB
 La: tur

The correspondence is; OM /u/ : Mu /u/ : Di /u/ : La /u/.

The small amount of data does not give reliable evidence that the Omo-Murle language forms a more closely related group with the Murle language

than with the other southwest Surma languages. For instance the correspondences of the vowels and the consonants listed above do not show any systematic phonological changes that take place both in the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages. The "movable k" is not useful for language grouping at all. However, the metathesis bVr > rVb, which happens on an unknown condition, takes place only in the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages. And the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages have the unique construction of the absolutive personal pronouns among the southwest Surma languages. Moreover, the final vowel or final syllable tends to be lost most frequently in the Murle language. The Didinga and the Larim languages tend to maintain it. The Omo-Murle language loses the final vowel or final syllable, but less frequently than the Murle language does. All of the southwest Surma languages have more or less a tendency to lose the final vowel or final syllable. Since the phenomenon of the final vowel or final syllable loss takes place independently in each language, it does not give strong evidence for language grouping.

The data do not show very apparent convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages except for some instances. But the metathesis bVr - rVb and the construction of the absolutive personal pronouns show some convergence between the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages, and give small evidence that the Omo-Murle is more closely related to the Murle language than to the other southwest Surma languages.

3. Omo-Murle history

The two old men, who are named Aepa and Ikeno, narrated a short story on the Omo-Murle history. They spoke it in the Bume language. The following text is translated into English by a Bume interpreter.

Aepa and Ikeno said;

The people came to this area⁶. They mixed together with the Bume people. All of them, who understood the stories were dead. But we do not understand all of them. The old people became dead, and they made new people. Then they became dead. That is, the first people died, and the others died again. When the old people became dead, I was young. From that time I was speaking only the Bume language, and I know only a little story.

The Nyipeta came, and the other Nyipeta were behind there. The Nyipeta lived in the Nyijie. They divided into two parts. The young men and girls came here, and the old men and women stayed there. When they came here, they came directly to the Ngkapung⁷. They mixed together with the Ngkapung at this side of the river⁸. They had only donkeys. They brought the donkeys from the

Nyipeta in the Nyijie to the Ngkapung. When they came to the Ngkapung, the Geleb (Dasenech) people took all of their donkeys. When the Geleb people took the donkeys, the Ungarich people followed the footprints of the donkeys. When the Ungarich people asked the Geleb where the donkeys were, they did not give answer to the Ungarich. When the Ungarich came back, they asked the Ngilingakol to take the dokeys from the Geleb⁹. The Ngilingakol told the Geleb to give back the donkeys to the Ungarich. The Geleb people gave back the dokeys to the Ungarich. The Ungarich people moved and crossed a river.

The Ungarich people crossed the Karkoreng¹⁰. They came to this side. They came to the Murkapel¹¹. At that time they met with the Hamar at the Murkapel. The Hamar, when they saw the Ungarich, moved. They gave their place to the Ungarich, and moved to another place. The Ungarich stayed at the Murkapel. They took some cattle, goats and sheep from the Hamar. They stayed for a long time at the Murkapel. And then they moved again.

The Ungarich people crossed the Kiso river, that stony river which is located on the way to Turmi¹². They came to the Murle, where the Hunting Office is located. They stayed there. They had the two main places of them, Kuma and Murle. The one is Kuma. The other is Murle near the Hunting Office. That is Aepa. They had the Aepa at that side¹³. At that time when they stayed at the Murle, they became a lot of people. At that time the Muguji (Koegu) people lived near Nauamur¹⁴. There were no Kara people. The Mursi people lived there. All the land was controlled by the Mursi people. The Ungarich people went fighting with the Mursi. The Mursi people escaped from there. The Ungarich people took the land.

Q: Had the ancestors any different groups like the Nyangatom "territorial sections", ngiteala?

Aepa and Ikeno said;

They had ngiteala. They were Ibbo, Tangajon, Bor chi mari, Bor chi chi b'oori, that is, Arai chi b'oori (=white beans), Bor chi cholak, Ninpaachi, and Araat. Now we have only one group.

This story says that the Omo-Murle have their origin in the Nyipeta in the Nyijie. The name Nyipeta is very similar to Kapeta, Epeita, or Kapeita by which the Murle at Pibor Post are called. The Nyijie is supposed to be the Jiye, an offshoot of the Jie (Eastern Nilotic), who live near the Boma Plateau in Sudan. The Jiye and the Murle are neighboring in the same area. The Omo-Murle people memorise the clan names Ibbo and Tangajon, which are the same ones that the Murle at Pibor Post have. From these fact it is certain that the Omo-Murle originated from the Murle at Pibor Post.

When the Omo-Murle moved to the Omo area from Sudan, they crossed the Omo river to the eastern bank. The point of their crossing the river is supposed to have been far south, since they were encountered by the Geleb there. They had a contact with the Ngkapung, a Nyangatom "territorial section" at first. Next they had a contact with the Ngilingakol, a Nyangatom "territorial section". This story may reflect their real historical events or their present relationship with the Nyangatom "territorial sections".

The Omo-Murle moved upstream or to uplands along the eastern bank of the Omo river, and were encountered by the Hamar. There was fighting between them. The Omo-Murle won the fighting and occupied the land. They took some cattle, goats and sheep from the Hamar. This story says that the Omo-Murle made cattle raids on the Hamar.

And again the Omo-Murle moved upstream up to Nauamur, where the Hunting Office is now located. Their main territory was located there at the eastern bank of the Omo river. They called the place Aepa. But now after fighting with the Kara people, they live on the western bank of the river. And now they call the place at the western bank of the river Aepa.

4. Concluding remarks

Lewis (1972) says that the Murle at Pibor Post say that they moved down the Omo river to Lake Turkana, and that there is still a Murle village mentioned by various travellers on the Omo¹⁵. The Omo-Murle, however, are not the people who were left behind by the Murle. If the Omo-Murle were the people who had been left behind by the Murle, they could not memorise the name of the Nyijie who live in Sudan. And the Omo-Murle bear the detail route to their present residential area from Sudan in their memories.

From the linguistic point of view, if the Omo-Murle were the people who had been left behind by the Murle, the Omo-Murle language would be most divergent from the other southwest Surma languages. And since the Murle, the Didinga and the Larim separated in Sudan after they moved from Ethiopia, if Lewis's statement is true, these languages must have shown any convergence. But the data collected by the author show that the Omo-Murle language is relatively closer to the Murle language than to the other southwest Surma languages. Roughly speaking, the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages make one linguistic group, and the Didinga and the Larim languages make another linguistic group. This fact suggests that the Omo-Murle language separated from the Murle language after the Murle, the Didinga and the Larim languages separated in Sudan. The history narrated by the two old men is attested by the linguistic data.

Abbreviation

Di: Didinga	La: Larim
Mu: Murle	OM: Omo-Murle
Dr: Driberg, 1931	Ly: Lyth, 1971
Od: Odden, 1983	Tu: Tucker, 1952
TB: Tucker & Bryan, 1966	

Notes

1. The final vowel is dropped in the plural forms both in the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages. But the variant form in the Murle language maintains the final vowel.
2. The final vowel is dropped in the plural forms both in the Omo-Murle and the Murle languages. The Didinga language loses the final vowel in the singular form.
3. cf. Fleming, 1983, p.542.
4. The "movable k" is maintained both in the Murle and the Larim languages. The "movable k" is not a strong evidence for language grouping.
5. The form may be the plural form in the Omo-Murle language.
6. This means the Omo area.
7. The Ngkapung is one of the seven Nyangatom "territorial sections".
8. This means the eastern bank of the Omo river.
9. The Ngilingakol is one of the seven Nyangatom "territorial sections".
10. The Karkoreng is not identified.
11. The Murkapel is not identified.
12. The Kiso river is not identified.
13. This means the eastern bank of the Omo river.
14. Nauamur is a place name, which is also called Murle.
15. cf. Lewis, 1972, p.22.

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