

GENE · GRAGG

Gene Gragg has been awarded a National Science Foundation grant for the Cushitic/Omotic Etymological Database project. The goal of the project is to produce, distribute, and periodically update a historical-etymological dictionary of the Cushitic and Omotic language families in electronic form. The Omotic language family (spoken in South-West

Ethiopia) and the Cushitic (spoken in the Horn of Africa generally) each contains some forty languages. The two families are related to one another (but distantly), and to the better known Semitic, Egyptian, Berber, Bedja, and Chadic language families. Thus the dictionary should help elucidate the nature of the super-family constituted by these six branches, the so-called Hamito-Semitic (or, better, Afro-Asiatic) language family—a family which is thought to descend from a language spoken by a people living in the North-East corner of Africa sometime during the transition from epipaleolithic to neolithic. The dictionary will be in electronic form both for ease of manipulation and because of the constant updating of indices and cross-references made necessary by continually arriving new data. Gragg also participated as Ethiopian specialist in a symposium on Southern Arabia held at the University of Pennsylvania in May.