Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies

The development of the national language of Somalia

Through which processes did Somali develop into it?[1]

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Abstract:

The present work deals with the development of the Somali language in the 20th century, and tries to explain the different stages of development and development processes. Linguistically speaking, Somalia is an outstanding example as it is one of the few African countries with a homogeneous language group. This means that around 95% (cf. Warsame 2001, p. 342) of the Somali population speaks the Somali language, and communicates predominantly in this language. The focus of this work is mainly on the process of decision-making about a fixed writing style, and why Somalia came to a decision about a uniform writing form relatively late. In addition, the possibilities are explained that were up for discussion and thus seriously discussed, as well as how the decision made was justified. The literacy campaign, which was carried out between 1973 and 1975, represents a central aspect of this development and thus of this work. In addition, from a linguistic and strategic point of view, the processes by which the Somali language was modernized and which bodies played a role are described.

Keywords:

Somalia; language; Somali; linguistic development.

[1] DOI: https://doi.org/10.59569/jceeas.2021.1.1-2.5
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Introduction

The following chapter is intended to provide an introduction to the subject as well as an outline of some important background information about the East African state of Somalia.

When we talk about Somalia, we are talking about an African state located along the east coast of Africa, on the Horn of Africa. Somalia covers an area of approximately 637,000 km^2. In 2020 the population of Somalia was around 15 million (see UK Visas and Immigration, 2016, p. 7). The official languages of Somalia are Somali and Arabic. In addition, as a result of the colonial past, Italian and English are still spoken in Somalia today. These framework conditions should be mentioned first in order to get a rough idea of Somalia.

In Africa we find a third of the approximately 6,500 languages in the world, divided into the Afro-Asian language family, the Khoisan languages, the Nilo-Saharan language family and the Niger-Congo languages. Somali is described as a language in the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asian language family. In addition, Somali is considered to be the best-documented language of the Kushitic languages, as language descriptions have been handed down before 1900.

The Somali dialects can be divided into three different language groups: In addition to the (1) northern dialects, the (2) Benadir and the (3) Maay dialects. Somali, which was introduced as the national language, is derived from the northern Somali dialects. The Benadir dialects are spoken along the coast, from Adale to Merca (which also applies to the region around Mogadishu). In these linguistic variants of the coast there are additional phonemes that are not found in standard Somali. The Maay dialects are mainly spoken by the Digil and Mirifle clans in the southern regions of Somalia (see Lamberti, 1984). For more information, see the chapter on “Description of the Somali Language”.

In the first years of independence, the demand arose to determine a font in which Somali should be written from now on.

Nowadays, Somali is spoken in addition to Somalia in the surrounding countries of Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as by people of Somali origin in the diaspora, among others in Scandinavia and the United States.

The Arabic language is spoken by around 2 million people in Somalia. Since the time of the kingdom of Aksum (1st to 7th centuries AD) there was linguistic contact between the Somali language and the Arabic language, which is why an Arabic influence is noticeable to this day, for example through loanwords. These loanwords are mainly found in the religious area.

English is still taught in most schools in Somalia today and served as the language of the colonial administration in the former colonial protectorate. Due to globalization and the increased role of English as a world language, English is now also seen in Somalia as a language which, for example, enables students to have new career prospects.

Italian in Somalia was used as an official language in Italian Somaliland, for example very heavily in the administration, but the importance of the Italian language declined immensely as a result of independence. Nowadays, Italian is mainly spoken by citizens of the older generations.

There are also minority languages in Somalia such as Bravanese or Kibajuni, both of which are linguistic varieties of Swahili.

Linguistic description of the Somali language

The following chapter is intended to provide an overview of the extent to which linguists divide the Somali language into different language variants. This understanding is important in that there is not just one form of language, but many different linguistic varieties. Dialects are often described as "less valuable" than languages, although this is not a linguistic but rather a political argument to increase the prestige of one language over the other.

Enrico Cerulli was one of the first linguists to divide the Somali dialects into four different dialect groups (cf. Lamberti 1986: 25). According to him, these are the (1) Issaq group, which are spoken in northwestern Somalia, including the Issa and Gadabursi dialects. Cerulli describes the (2) Darood dialects, which comprise the largest dialectal language group and are found in Ogaden in Ethiopia, as well as in the regions of Bari, Nugaal and Mudug in Somalia. There are also the (3) Hawiye dialects, which are used along the coast between Hobbio and Shebelle, and the (4) Sab dialects, which are spoken in the Upper Juba Region and the Southern Shebelle. Lamberti, on the other hand, distinguishes between five different dialect groups, namely the (1) northern Somali dialect groups, the (2) Benadir dialects, the (3) Ashraf variants, the (4) Maay dialects and the (5) Digili variants.

The northern Somali dialects (cf. Lamberti, 1984, pp. 162-189) are spoken not only in the north but also in the south and consist of three subgroups: the dialects Issa, Gadabursi and Issaq, in the north and northwest of Somalia. Furthermore, the Darood dialects exist , which are mainly spoken in Dhulbahante, Marehan, Degodiya, Warsangel, in north-eastern Somalia. In addition, the dialects Af-Majerteen, Af-Marehan, Af-Degodiya in the Jubbada Hoose region, in southern Somalia, were transferred by people who emigrated into to the south of the country, from northern Somalia in the 19th century.

The linguistic varieties which are described as northern Somali dialects differ mainly in a few points such as the absence of the nasals [ɳ] and [ɲ], the pharyngeal phonemes (throat sounds) "c" and "x", as well as the specific article "- ku / -tu ", which is followed by (for example: *ninku halkanuu imaanayaa*" the man comes here ").

Lamberti (see Lamberti, 1986) again divides the Benadir dialects into five subgroups, all of which are predominantly spoken in the south, namely as follows, the (1) Abgal dialects, the (2) Galjeel dialects, the (3) Ajuran dialects , the (4) Hamar dialects and the (5) Biimal dialects.

As the Norwegian organization LandInfo (The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center) describes, these dialects differ among other things in the "form" of various expressions (for example for "we say" there are three different forms: *waa - niraahdaa / niraadaa / niraa*). (see LandInfo, 2011, p. 13).

Furthermore, there are the Ashraf dialects, which are spoken along the southern coast of Somalia and mainly consist of two variants (cf. Lamberti, 1986, p. 37): the Ashraf dialects in Mogadishu (also called Af-Shingani) and the Ashraf dialects in Shabeellaha Hoose (the Merka region in southern Somalia).

In addition, (cf. Lamberti, 1986, p. 39) the May dialects, also described under the name Rahanweyn, are spoken mainly in Jilib (in southern Somalia). According to Lamberti (cf. ibid.), however, it is difficult to classify them into subgroups based on linguistic differences, since the differences between the individual variants are not always sufficient for this. Typical of the linguistic varieties of the May dialects are, above all, the presence of the vowel [ʕ], which does not appear in the other dialects, and the pharyngeal phonemes “c” and “x” are missing. In addition, the plural forms of the nouns are masculine.

There are also the Digil dialects, which Lamberti (cf. Lamberti, 1986) divides into the Tunni dialect, the Dabarre dialect and the Garre dialect.

As already mentioned, Somali is not only spoken by the people of Somalia, but also by people from the surrounding countries, i.e. Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. In Djibouti, the number of those who speak Somali reaches around 40% of the total population (cf. LandInfo, 2011, p. 7). In Djibouti and the region around the city of Zeila (in northwest Somalia), the speakers use the Issa dialect. In the north-eastern part of Ethiopia, around the Harar region, the Af-Gadabursi dialect is used. In the south of Ethiopia, around Jijiga in the Ogaden region, linguists describe the Ogaden and Wardey dialects. In Kenya, on the other hand, the Darood dialects Af-Aulihan and Af-Harti are spoken. I would like to show that there are some dialects of Somali, therefore a brief description of the situation in the surrounding areas.

There are also different reasons why there are different variants of Somali. As Lamberti (cf. Lamberti, 1986, p. 9) describes, the clan system (in Somalia there are numerous so-called clans), the nomadic way of life and migration contribute to the fact that more and more dialects have developed over time. In addition, the development of the language is continuous.

The linguistic history of Somali

As described by Labahn (see Labahn, 1983, p. 268), political, economic and social processes can be planned with greater efficiency through a homogeneous language culture in a country. The government spares itself the cost-implicating multiplication of planning. In most African countries, the search for an African national language was made difficult by the

fact that there would be unrest among the individual peoples if one language were preferred over the other. That is why it was agreed to continue the former colonial language as the official language. In addition, it was also in the interests of the political “elite” of the time to continue to maintain these colonial languages in their form, as this provided a safeguard of power. This means that the broad mass of the population, on the other hand, made it difficult or impossible to influence public discussion.

In 1960, the merger of English and Italian colonial areas resulted in the Republic of Somalia, whose official languages became English, Italian and Arabic, although about 97% of the Somali population were powerful. One of the reasons for this is that there was no standardized script for Somali until then, which is immeasurable for an official language, which is represented in schools, administration and the media. In 1972 a new language policy was implemented. Thomas Labahn describes the implementation of the language policy in four phases. The first phase, lasts until the end of the Second World War; while the second phase is characterized by a new "sense of state" and it seamlessly passes over into the third phase of independence. In the third phase, a Somali national idea is formed. When the military came to power in 1969, the fourth phase began, in which Somali national sentiment expanded.

Before the 1950s, the Somali language was used orally rather than in writing; during this period we mainly find religious writings that were written in Arabic, for example, and published by Enrico Cerulli, for example (cf. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 9). Oral literature, on the other hand, was very lively according to Andrzejewski, with the indication that this is literature that includes learning by heart, the transmission and dissemination of this literature. These are mainly songs, as well as fairy tales and anecdotes for adults and animal fables for children. Furthermore, the “classical verse” took over an important part of the oral literature, which was primarily intended to further disseminate historical knowledge.

The first attempts to develop a script for the Somali language were made (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 343) by Sheikh Yusuf bin Ahmed al-Kowneyn, who came to the East African region in the 13th century. Sheikh Yusuf introduced a collection of technical terms. Sheikh Yusuf also taught some students from the Koranic schools the subtleties of Arabic script and distinguished the Somali language with the Arabic alphabet. With this, Sheikh Yusuf can be seen as the first person who has dealt scientifically with Somali phonology. Variants of the script introduced by Sheikh Yusuf have received great recognition in Somalia. His attempt to distribute mass literature in Arabic script among the citizens of Somalia thus formed the preliminary stage of a Somali script.

Later, European missionaries attempted to introduce the Latin alphabet for Somali, when Evangelist de Larajasse and Cyprien de Sampont published a first grammatical textbook of the Somali language in 1897 (Practical Grammar of the Somali Language) (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 344).

Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, who appeared scientifically at the end of the 19th century and can be seen as a Somali national hero, not only wrote poems in Arabic, but also used the Arabic script for his poems in Somali. In 1919, Sheikh Uways ibn Maxamed al-Barawani introduced the Barawanese-Arabic script for the Somali language. Sheikh Uways published Qasidaas, poems in which he honors the Muslim prophet. Sheikh Abdirahman also introduced Sheikh Noor of Borama, another Somali font, in 1933. His writing, which is described by linguists such as Ali Warsame (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 344) as phonetically very precise, received little attention from the population. According to his own statements, Sheikh Abdirahman did not aim to increase the confusion about the choice of a standardized spelling, which is why he only published a small number of works in this font.

In 1938 Sheikh Mohamed Abdi Makahil published a book in which he wrote down a modern form of phoneme-grapheme correspondence (sound-letter assignment). He did this using the standard Arabic script. In the same year the British colonial government tried to introduce Somali written in Latin in elementary schools (including in the city of Burco (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 344)), which, however, triggered demonstrations by the population. The plans were then discontinued in this form. In the southern part of Somalia, however, the attempt was also successful, so that the Italian colonial government installed a permanent committee in the southern part in 1955. The *Kullanka Afka Soomaaliaga* (Conference on the Somali Language).

However, the Somali nationalists saw it as a sign of their own strength and identity to establish a national writing system. To promote independence, a separate script for the unique Somali language should be introduced. This was the opinion of Osman Yusuf Kenadid, a Somali nationalist and member of the Somali Youth League. He developed the Osmaniya script (Som.: Far Soomaali) between 1920 and 1922. As Martino Moreno (cf. Moreno, 1955, p. 290) describes, this written form is a very precise rendering of the Somali language due to the phonetic details and precise distinctions, for example in vowel length. Even at the end of the 1970s, Horseed magazine was still published in Osmaniya script (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 345).

Somali was introduced as the only official language of Somalia on October 21, 1972 and is now also the language of education in schools until the last two years of schooling. It was also due to political reasons why the Somali government at the time decided not to keep a former colonial language as an official language, but to encourage the role and development of Somali. As Andrzejewski (cf. Andrzejewski, 1983, p. 69) describes Somali intellectuals, there is the term *“Gumeysi maskaxeed”,* which means “colonization of the brain”) and by which one understands the excessive veneration of foreign languages and cultures which often results in the opinion that the African languages do not seem appropriate in today's modern world.

According to Andrzejewski (cf. Andrzejewski, 1983, p. 70), there were two weighty advantages to using the literary campaign in 1972. Firstly, a large majority of Somali citizens

should speak a single language and, secondly, that a common linguistic variety of Somali should serve as a means of communication for all Somalis.

In the years before 1972, linguists developed a common orthography, a script that Somali should use from now on. Two of these linguists were Muuse Xaaji Ismaaciil Galaal and Shire Jaamac Axmed, who both studied the Somali language abroad. While Galaal dealt with phonology in London, Axmed dealt with philological studies in the United States. The Latin alphabet was seen as the most suitable; as it reproduces the phonemes best and, for example, better reproduces the vowels which are expressed in Somali compared to Arabic. When we look at the Somali font, the first thing we notice is that, unlike most European languages, “c” and “x” are expressed differently (like ʕ and ħ, respectively) and the length of vowels is expressed by doubling these vowels becomes.

Linguists who have studied the Somali language leaned heavily on the IPA (the International Phonetic Alphabet) after Andrzejewski (cf. Andrzejewski, 1972, p. 39). Linguists used this IPA to help them when they wanted to record descriptions of the individual phonemes for a language whose writing they could not read. Each individual sound should be expressed by a letter and at the same time express special accents or tones. Andrzejewski also grants the IPA a particularly appropriate role in that, on the other hand, to previous attempts by European linguists to describe African languages, no longer from an ethnocentric point of view, through which many researchers use the new language with expressions from their own language tried to describe, but there was now a uniform phonetic alphabet for all languages.

While the Somali language appeared in oral communication, the former colonial languages were used for the written area. Until the end of the Second World War, Arabic was much more widely used in the written field (but more by missionaries to document individual records), after which the Arabic script competed with Italian and English.

The Latin script was used mainly by a small layer, but very actively, mainly to record the oral Somali literature. A big advantage of the Latin script was that typewriters in Somalia did not need to be changed, but simply the same letters could be used.

When Somalia and Somaliland united in 1960 and the colonial countries gained independence, there were now language difficulties in the country.

First there was a discussion about which language or script should be used. There were those who advocated Somali in Latin, those who supported Somali in Arabic, and those who welcomed the Cismaaniya script. In addition, those who demanded Somali as their national language and those who aspired to the Arabic language longed for it. As a result, there was a split in supporters, as Arabic was supported because of religious motives and therefore viewed the Latin script as inappropriate. Until 1960, when Somalia gained independence, a common script had not yet been agreed, which is why Arabic, Italian and English were retained as the official languages (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 345).

So there were different languages in the country that were used for administration and education, and so there were communication difficulties in writing with fellow citizens of the same nation. That is why the then government of Somalia introduced steps to minimize these difficulties. A linguistic commission was initiated and a cultural department in the Ministry of Education was set up with the aim of creating a uniform script. However, these steps have been made more difficult because the choice of a typeface created controversy as to why one typeface should be preferred over the other.

Choosing a suitable font

The different scripts were accompanied by different experiences, opinions and motives, why exactly one script is more suitable for the Somali language than the other. The main discussion was between supporters of (1) the Osmaniya script, (2) supporters of the Latin script, and (3) supporters of the Arabic script for Somali. The latter were mainly for religious reasons of the conviction that the Arabic script is the most suitable, since they saw an influence on religion through the script as undesirable. The Latin script was regarded or despised as *Laa diin* (som. For: religionless / godless).

In addition, there was the discussion whether Somali should be established as the national language, whereby it was not primarily about the writing, but these supporters simply wanted Somali as the national language, regardless of the then selected written form. In addition, the supporters of Arabic as the national language and a few who have even spoken out in favor of Italian as the national language, which where then rejected. According to Warsame (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 345), English was not up for discussion and should be introduced as the national language.

For Somali nationalists it was of immense importance that the then becoming independent state should establish its own language with a unique script.

During the process of independence, when Somalia and Somaliland merged into the Somali Republic in 1960, there was a status that Warsame (cf. Warsame 2001: 346) calls "linguistic chaos". In order to be able to work in the public service, it was sufficient to speak one of the three languages English, Italian and Arabic.

In 1960, a commission was set up by the Somali government to find out, based on several criteria, which script should be introduced to serve as the standard for the now young independent republic. The aim was to make a decision by March 1961. So now, there was a choice between nine fonts, which were subjected to seventeen different criteria. Since it would go beyond the scope to describe and assess every criterion, only the most important are mentioned here. Among other things, it was analyzed how well the sounds of the Somali language could be reproduced by the phonemes of the writing. That means, briefly summarized here, for example, a phoneme stands for a sound or a combination of different phonemes has to be written in order to reproduce a sound. Or it was analyzed, among other

things, whether phonemes can be easily distinguished from one another, or whether phonemes can describe several sounds. As Warsame describes, after an analysis of the seventeen criteria it was found that the Latin script was best suited for the written reproduction of the Somali language.

The then government of Somalia did not want to implement this result, however, because the population was divided on the choice of a fixed font and so the government did not want to trigger any domestic political conflict with regard to the choice of font. That is why in 1966 there was another commission by the government under Aden Abdulle Osman and his Prime Minister Abdirisak Hagi Hussein. This time, linguists were invited by UNESCO to work on a solution. Among other things, the Polish linguist B.W. Andrzejewski, who dealt with the Somali language, participated in Mogadishu 1966, at the commission for searching a national script. This commission encountered a crowd of demonstrators who favored the Arabic script. However, this commission, did not really contribute to the decision-making process as different sections of society favored different scripts, and especially those citizens who do not support the Latin script wanted to delay the matter. Shortly thereafter, in 1967, Abdirashid Ali Shermarke became President of Somalia after old President Aden Abdullah Osman Daar was overthrown. The following quote has come down to us from Abdirashid Ali Shermarke:

“As long as I am in the power, I shall never permit the adoption of Latin characters for Somali” (cf. Laitin, 1977, p. 111).

Also noteworthy is the quote on Radio Mogadishu, which pays tribute to the written Somali, as the state of a written Somali was sometimes inaccessible and therefore not known to the Somali population. The quote reads as follows: “In the world, our language was taking no part; but the sunrise appeared uncovering our language from darkness; the fence was cleared, so the livestock could graze. Give me your pen, the words I wrote from you. It is not a foreign language; the tongue does not slip. Like milk, it can be swallowed smoothly.” (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 347). The media, too, should now have an influence that should lead to the Latin script being accepted and used in society.

Steps towards a uniform writing system

The following chapter is intended to give an overview of the chronological order in which the font selection process was carried out. When the Siad Barre regime came to power in 1969, this process accelerated in the following years.

Until October 1969, there was hardly any progress in this regard, and due to the internal political tensions surrounding the overthrow of Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, there was hardly any progress in the process of choosing a font. In 1969 Somalia came to power (coup d'état) by the Supreme Revolutionary Council, led by Siad Barre. One of the main goals of the new government was to develop a uniform script. Through this body of power, a larger linguistic

commission was set up, the aim of which, unlike the previous commissions, was not to decide on a uniform script for the Somali language. Instead, this commission has now been given the task of developing numerous textbooks for primary schools, as well as a uniform Somali grammar and a dictionary that should contain 10,000 terms. This dictionary should include especially terms relating to the areas of language, mathematics, science, geography and history and, where necessary, new terminology should be developed. However, Warsame also mentions that citizens who tried to take action against the plans of the new government were treated brutally (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 347). That means that the government had pushed so hard to use a uniform writing format that it had muted controversial opinions. As a result, the era of free expression and discussion of political decisions in public space was over.

On October 21, 1972, the then President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council announced the decision to introduce the Latin writing system as the official writing system in Somalia. Leaflets in Latin script were circulated over the crowd listening to the national script designation speech, and announcements of the decision were made across the country with the main aim of silencing oppositional voices. Every employee in the government was required to pass a literacy test. Failure of the test resulted in discharge for that person.

According to Warsame (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 348), literacy is an important factor for the development of a country. However, since not all citizens of Somalia had access to education, literacy among the masses took place in the 1970s.

A linguistic congress was held to define the goals and tasks of language policy. Tasks included the introduction of a modern Somali grammar work, the introduction of a modern Somali dictionary and the strengthening of Somali as an educational language. In a very short time, more than 260,000 books for schools and more than 1.2 million books for the general public have been written and published.

In addition, the radio and the press played a special role, such as the *"Xiddigta Oktoobar"* (October star), which published exclusively in Somali within a few months. Talks were held on the radio about what is now the national language in order to support the language skills of the population.

In 1973 Somali was first introduced as the only language of education in the lower elementary school classes, then also in higher school classes. The National Printing Agency, which was commissioned to publish numerous school books in the Somali language, played an important role here. In addition, literarisation campaigns were carried out, initially in cities, which citizens should help with language acquisition. These language lessons were mainly undertaken by volunteers and if the students succeeded in learning (recorded by language tests), the teachers were awarded a state certificate.

In the same year (1973), two important steps were taken, which should further strengthen the position of Somali, and thus a primacy of the Somali language should be secured. The Ministry of Education was divided into two sub-groups, namely the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture and the Ministry of Education and Youth Education. The former introduced a culture academy which took on the tasks of the cultural sector, mainly through researching and collecting oral literature and the cultural heritage of Somalia by full-time employees. In addition, this institute made it possible to provide financial support for authors who have written in Somali.

Development through the choice of font

In the following chapter I would like to bring closer the aspects of how the choice of a fixed script was observed or received in Somalia, a country or a society that was previously characterized by its oral literary wealth. Not all sections of the population immediately agreed to write the language, pressure was often triggered on these citizens, or propaganda was sometimes used so that the position of writing would gain popularity.

Somalia is one of the few African nations with a homogeneous linguistic population, as almost 95% of the citizens of Somali speak Somali as their mother tongue. Arabic and Swahili, among others, are also spoken. Somali has a rich oral literary tradition, but for a long time there was little or no written material due to the lack of a uniform writing system. Ali Warsame describes in his text that Somalia is a great role model for other African countries to reflect on its own culture and values. Language has a great influence on identity and some countries succeeded in becoming aware of this in the years after they gained independence. Somalia serves as a classic example of this.

Warsame also describes that the introduction of the Somali language represents a major step in the development of Somalia's literary history, among other things. Above all, this would secure Somalia's independence and detachment from its colonial past and the Somali people are aware of their own culture and identity. There would be a great increase in publishing in Somali as many intellectuals are encouraged to publish in Somali.

The official writing system should be explained to the population, among other things through the transcription system of Shire Jaamac Axmed in his literary magazine *"Iftiinka-Aqoonta"* (Light of Education).

Nevertheless, from a linguistic point of view, there are areas in the language that cannot be expressed using the Latin script, but are part of the Somali language. Among other things (cf. Andrzejewski 1977) there is no possibility of expressing accents that are expressed through tone or lexical stress. There is no accentuation, among other things, to express certain vowels differently. For example, duul means "to fly" and "to attack", or dhis means "to build" and "he has built". In his text from 1977, Andrzejewski describes that this is not

necessary to express in the written language, but that the context brings the intended meaning with it.

In the process of developing a uniform orthography, writers and poets have also contributed, who held by Andrzejewski (cf. ibid.), the role of searching aesthetical criterias in the somali Language.

In the following years after 1973, Andrzejewski also noticed a social development. The gap between the small elite who enjoyed education abroad and those who in Somalia and there sometimes had little or no access to education, the social gap has narrowed. This means that people with less education can now fully participate in public life within a few months or weeks (cf. Andrzejewski, 1977), since Somali is the only official language in Somalia. Accordingly, the knowledge of foreign languages has lost a lot of its importance.

The literacy campaigns in Somalia in the 1970s

This is followed by an observation of the literacy campaigns of the 1970s, especially in the years between 1973 and 1975, which is an extraordinary campaign, not only in Africa but also worldwide. In a few years, a large part of the population learned to read and write through the help or lessons of fellow citizens.

According to the government of that time under Siad Barre, a change should also take place in the education system. First of all, the language of education should be Somali, which was a great benefit for the students who spoke Somali at home instead of studying in a foreign language (especially English). In addition, the private schools that were run by people from abroad were to be closed, which is why 42 schools in which 15,000 students were studying (cf. Warsame 2001: 348) were closed. For the first time in the history of Somalia, a standardized education system came into being (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 349).

The goals of the government under Siad Barre can be expressed through four principles. In addition to (1) disseminating educational opportunities, the aim was also (2) democratization, (3) vocational training and (4) Somalization (cf. ibid.). From 1975, compulsory schooling was introduced for children between the ages of six and fourteen, which falls under the first point. The second point (democratization) means that education has now become free of charge and this for all parts or regions of Somalia. The third point, vocational training, means that a new curriculum was introduced, i.e. a new curriculum that provided that through education the students could acquire technical as well as practical skills. This was seen as an advantage for the individual and the service of society (cf. ibid.). Accordingly, the education of children was also of little value if it did not benefit society in some way (cf. Somali Ministry of Education, 1977, p. 4). Ali Warsame describes that the principle of Somalization was pursued most ambitiously and was also most successful after it (Warsame, 2001, p. 350). For example, Somali was introduced as the language of instruction in primary schools in 1972 and as the language of instruction in the middle school between

1973 and 1975 and as the language of instruction in the upper school in 1977. Another focus of the new curriculum was also on the theming of Somali history and culture. The Somali culture, for example, in the way of life of the different population groups, such as the nomads, here the students should be taught that this is also a part of the Somali tradition, or also poetics, the Somali oral literature, which by (in the chapter on literary culture of Somalia more on this), certain characteristics stand out. So we can already see here that the government in the post-independence era is moving away from the colonial thought patterns that the colonial countries have "brought with them" (such as the inferior position of African culture and social systems) and towards an attitude towards African identity and thus the emphasis on various typical aspects of Somali identity.

As Ingemar Sallnas describes (cf. Sallnas, 1975, p. 326), the Ministry of Education now faced difficulties in developing a curriculum and corresponding teaching material. Sallnas describes that the difficulty here was not due to the actual production of the textbooks, but rather to the time pressure under which the Ministry of Education found itself due to the plans and demands of the government. There was a production of almost 263,000 books for schools and around 1.2 million books for the public sector, as well as adult education (figures from Warsame 2001: 350). In addition, books were published in Arabic and English, which, however, dealt with Somali culture and now, instead of former books in foreign languages, did not deal with foreign culture but (as already mentioned) Somali culture.

In the following I name some figures and data that show the development of the education sector in Somalia in these years:

While in 1969 there were a little more than 200 primary schools, as well as almost 38,000 students and 1,100 teachers, in 1976 there were almost 1,000 primary schools with around 230,000 students and around 6,500 teachers. (Figures from Ministry of Education 1987: 18).

According to Warsame (cf. Warsame 2001: 348), literacy is a decisive key for the development of a country. However, since not all citizens of Somalia had access to education, literacy among the masses took place in the 1970s. While the literacy campaign took place between 1973 and 1974, the literacy campaign for the rural population took place between 1974 and 1975.

In the urban population, literacy took place among around 500,000 citizens (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 351), although Warsame notes here that a number of no fewer than 600,000 citizens learned to read and write through media such as radio, for example. So more than a million people among the urban population took part in the literary campaign and learned the alphabet. However, there was no other option than literalization if citizens wanted to acquire or keep a profession. After three months there were exams that civil servants had to pass, if they had not yet been successfully passed after three attempts, the person was dismissed from his / her office.

The literacy campaign of the rural population was exposed to a different situation. Since the rural population mainly followed a nomadic way of life and the population was larger than in the cities, the scope and effort of this campaign was greater than in the urban regions of Somalia.

Since this campaign now required a strategic effort, there was a three-week conference in Mogadishu, mainly by representatives of the respective districts to develop the organization and planning of the campaign. The commission decided to close schools across the country for a year so that there would be enough teachers to teach the rural population.

A total of five different bodies participated in the process. In addition to the (1) Central Committee for Rural Development Campaign, which had set the goals for the campaign, these were the (2) Central Office for the Rural Development Campaign, which had collected information and documentation from the rural population, the (3) Regional Committee for Development Campaign that contributed to the process by exercising the regional role of educational planning in the respective region, and the (4) District Committee for the Rural Development Campaign, which took over the educational planning in the districts. The last body the (5) District Inspection Office, which consisted of the education ministers of the individual districts and individual school directors.

In addition to literacy of the population, one of the goals of the government at the time was to locate diseases and, if possible, to combat them by vaccinating the population (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 354).

According to Ali Warsame (and as we can see from some of the following data) the literacy campaign has been very successful. Volunteer teachers, who took on the task of teaching the rural population to read and write, made a significant contribution. It was often necessary for these teachers to adapt to the living conditions and habits of the nomadic population, so they often had to live like nomads (cf. Osman, 1978, p. 34).

Because the schools in Somalia were closed for one year, over 1000 teachers were able to deal with the task of literarization, as well as over 15,000 students who stood by their teachers. In the rural population, over 1.2 million people took part in the education program, of which over 900,000 passed a final test and 795,000 passed this test (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 356).

In 1975 the literary campaign had to be canceled due to a drought that had spread across the country.

In 1974 and 1975, a literary campaign aimed at the general public, this time also in rural areas, achieved excellent results (cf. Andrzejewski, 1972, p. 74). This made about 15,000 teachers available who were confronted with the national obligation to literate their fellow citizens. In addition, there were financial supporters through which (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 356) this campaign was a great success and a jump from 5% who could speak and read the

language to at least 80% succeeded. For this merit, Somalia was awarded the UNESCO Literature Prize in 1975.

The Somali script, and thus Somali, was also able to gain great popularity primarily through the radio. There were two literary programs that the population should hear. In addition, the national theater in Somalia put the focus on local culture on local artists and mainly local films were shown, such as Heesaha Hirgalay or Keddis.

In addition, in 1976, a Somali Language and Literature Department was introduced at the National University of Somalia so that students can choose Somali as a subject for a bachelor's degree.

Another ministry, the Ministry of Information and thus the Somalia National News Agency, had to change its offers. Thus the operation of the up to then regular magazines *Najmat October* (in Arabic) and *Stella d'Ottobre* (in Italian, ceased on January 21, 1973) and now joined the Xiddigta Oktoobar, a daily newspaper in Somali this role.

Vocabulary modernization of the Somali language

Because the Somali language was written down and became more and more popular, the role of Somali increased, including as a language of education. In order to modernize or expand the Somali vocabulary, poets and linguists worked closely together through commissions. In the following I would like to describe some of the means used.

Somalia has long been inhabited by nomads who roamed the country and dedicated themselves to agriculture. There was little contact with the outside world, mainly with countries on the Arabian Peninsula. Through this contact, there was not only a cultural exchange, but also a language contact or a linguistic exchange. Not long after trade contacts between Somalia and Arab countries intensified, Arabic words that were now used in the Somali language began to be borrowed. At first, words were predominantly borrowed from the religious field, from Muslim culture, and then more and more descriptions for innovations, such as, for example, for “gunpowder” or “airplane” (som. *“baaruud*, arab.“ *albarud ”*, or som.“ *diyaarad ”*, arab.“ *tayira*”). Loan words from European languages, however, were a rarity for a long time (cf. Andrzejewski, 1977).

In the years of the Second World War, the radio gained much in importance, so there were also a number of initially technical terms, which the broad monolingual mass, however, could not understand. Because of this, some terms were designed during these years to modernize the Somali language. Instead of borrowing words from other foreign languages (for example from English or Italian), attempts were made to use paraphrases from Somali to create new words to describe these technical innovations. Andrzejewski describes (cf. Andrzejewski, 1983, p. 75) that this has to do with the patriotic ulterior motive on the one hand, and with the cooperation between the broadcasters and the writers on the other. In

Somalia, poets usually enjoy a high reputation and can therefore have a say in what is linguistically aesthetic, which is why these well-known poets were also placed at the side of the translators in order to create uniform translations.

Linguistic "games" which these poets used included creating new words from existing stems or adding affixes to words.

According to Andrzejewski, there were three different forms that language developers used to create new terms. There were (1) the method of composition, the method of semantic shift (2) (to be translated into German as semantic change) and the method of (3) borrowing foreign words. In addition, new terms were often created from a combination of the methods just mentioned.

Examples of new words:

(1) Composition

Kacaan for „Revolution", is a combination of *kicid* („to rise") and the affix of nouns -aan

Curiye for „element", a combination of the word *curin* for „begin" and the affix of the noun „-e"

(2) **Semantic Shift**

eber, which meant „to be empty", now also for the number „0"

suummad for „chemical symbol", which meant „mark"

(3) **Loanwords:**

Jamhuuriyad for „Republic" from the Arabic word *jumhuriyyah*

ordinayt for „ordinate (mathem. Term) from English word *ordinate*

In addition, mixtures of the above options were used

(4) Composition and semantic shift

Agaasime for director from the word *agaasimid,* which previously meant „to take care of sb/sth", and the nominalization suffix -e

Codayn for phonetics, from *cod*, with the original meaning „voice" and the suffix: –ayn for use

(Examples all from Andrzejewski, 1983, pp. 78-81)

The role of poetics in language modernization

As mentioned earlier, poets worked with linguists to modernize the language. The oral literary tradition of Somalia, which can be divided into different genres, also played an important part in this. In the following I would like to give details about the methods used by poets to modernize Somali vocabulary.

As Warsame describes (cf. Warsame, 2001, p. 343), the language of oral writers is part of Somali culture, as this form of communication has a long history within Somali society. Particularly noticeable in this form is the expression through proverbs or pictorial descriptions, which have gained meaning during speeches at numerous events.

The oral literary tradition in Somalia encompasses pretty much all areas of social life. Alliteration in literature follows clear rules, so that a certain tone should appear in every line throughout the poem. A poem by Xuseen Aw Faarax should explain more here (cf. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 81), with the letter "d" appearing in every line:

1. *Waa duni gabowdoo*
2. *Illeen wa dumaale*
3. *Ninna malab darsanayoo*
4. *Ninna dacar ka leefa*
5. *Kay dooranaysow*
6. *Ha ka moodin daacade*
7. *Kay dooni siisow*
8. *Way kaa dalooline*
9. *Kay meel degsiisow*
10. *Daadkay ku raaciine*

This literary game can be very long and thus fill many lines; in some cases it is regulated by an additional meter (cf. ibid.). As a result, some Somali poets use the creation of new words and then make them understandable in a different way through the context expressed in the poem. To make these poems as entertaining as possible, some poets use wordplay or word derivations. These word games and word derivations also played an important role in the modernization of the Somali vocabulary and led to the fact that some terms found a place in the dictionary (cf. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 82).

The process of vocabulary modernization began with radio, mainly radio in the early 1940s. Somali translators quickly agreed that the innovations that arose around the 1940s, many of which were introduced by the colonial countries, should get terms from Somali. Instead of borrowing numerous words, the vocabulary developers decided to use paraphrases from their own Somali language and work closely with poets. (see ibid.).

The workers of the Somali radio soon saw the potential of the respective programs, namely the demand not only for information but also for entertainment. The genres used included, for example, *gabay, geeraar, jiifto* or *guurow*. While these radio programs initially

reported or entertained private affairs such as love life, social and political issues were soon discussed, often with the help of the literary form of allegory (from ancient Greek *"allegoría*", in German as much as "on others Wise "expressed) - sometimes also known as semantic shift - here one thing is used as a sign of another thing because of, for example, family relationships.

Poets have also played an important role on the radio, as they were highly regarded and played with the language, which, in the form of oral literary tradition, was part of Somali culture.

Some examples of the resulting new meanings or new words were:

Dayax gacmeed for „artificial satellite", which originally meant „handmade moon"

Hubka halista *ah*, now as „nuclear weapons", before it had the meaning of „weapons of extreme danger"

The role of literature in Somalia

So we see that terms have now been used in a different context and the speakers have also recognized the meaning of the word in the new context.

Since radio programs (Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 83) were very popular, even in the most remote regions of Somalia, the population could become familiar with these terms through the constant use of newly introduced or at least newly used words.

According to Amin Warsan (cf. Warsan, 2016, p. 8), orality means verbally expressing a train of thought, although scientists only began to look at it in this way in the second half of the 20th century. Before Warsan, orality and literature were always seen as two separate areas. According to Warsan, the analysis of orality and literature differs significantly. Oral literature is about analyzing the speech, the expression of the speaker is the focus, and gestures and facial expressions are also analyzed. In the case of written literature, the focus is on other areas, such as sentence structure (see ibid., p. 9), here the author quotes Walter J. Ong and his work from 1982 "Orality and literacy: The technologising of the word (London: Methuen)". The narrators use mnemonics, with the help of which they (the narrators) can better speak by heart.

This chapter describes the state of oral Somali literature, which is characterized by a long history or tradition and is of great importance for the Somali population. While oral Somali literature went unnoticed for a long time or was undervalued by the colonial powers or missionaries, it now plays a much more central role, especially since one now better understands the methods and approaches of literary workers and gives more recognition to their artistic components. As Andrzejewski describes, there was „a thriving oral literature, which was truly oral in the sense that its composition, memorization, transmission and

dissemination all took place without recourse at any stage to writing or any other technology of communication and memory storage" (vgl. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 9).

Nowadays one can also find numerous translations of Somali poems in different languages (cf. ibid.). Somali literature has special characteristics, especially with regard to its composition, memorization and the transmission of oral literature (cf. ibid.).

If we take a closer look at the written literature before the 1950s, we find a few religious poems in Somali that were recorded in Arabic script (cf. ibid.). Some of them were translated into Italian by Enrico Cerulli (cf. Cerulli, 1964, pp. 118-138).

Most of the oral literary works dealt with recurring themes. In addition to poetic texts about work or religious content, these included songs, as well as fairy tales and anecdotes for adults (cf. Andrezejwski, 2011, pp. 9), as well as animal fables for children.

In addition, Andrzejewski describes another literary style that was particularly formative for Somali literature, which is referred to as Andrzejewski's classical verse (cf. ibid.). This style was very complex, strongly emphasized by emotions and served as a public communication forum as well as a further narration of Somali history.

Even in pre-colonial Somalia, the poets of oral literature held a representative function, among other things, of clans or population groups (cf. ibid.), who sometimes expressed their political views in the form of poems. In some cases, these poems even dealt with very private matters of certain people who also dealt with the marriage covenant (cf. ibid., p. 10). In some clans this was a matter for the whole group, as a functioning marriage was a success for the sense of community of the whole clan (cf. ibid.). However, as in the clans, poetics also had another function worthy of a political name, since in some cases poetics was used to make peace or even war could be triggered by this literary form.

Andrzejewski (ibid.) Describes another notable point by speaking of the fact that these poetic texts were under unwritten protection of copyright, since the reproduction of an orally transmitted poem was subject to strict rules, as he describes:

Anyone who memorized someone else's poem and wanted to recite it afterwards was under a strict obligation to remember the text accurately to the best of his ability and to reproduce it faithfully at each recital, for he was considered to be a channel of communication and in no way a co-author with the original poet" (vgl. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 10).

As described by Andrzejewski, these oral texts had to be retold as well as possible, since poetics was a means of communication. In addition, different statements, different opinions or interests were expressed.

However, if it happened that text passages were improvised, changed or even left out, then that person was accused of dishonesty and these errors were excused solely because of the inability to remember (cf. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 10). In addition, the narrators had to

name the poet for each narration, otherwise this was condemned as a moral error (cf. ibid). So much for the framework of oral poetics, what role they played in society and in which contexts oral literature was used.

In Somali poetics we typically find the form of alliteration, whereby here in each line at least one or two words should contain the same consonant or the same vowel (cf. ibid).

At the beginning of the 20th century there was the Somali Dervish Movement, which rebelled against the colonial powers and strongly supported the use of Somali poetics (ibid.), Which led to a strong increase in historical narrative prose. The leader of this Somali Dervish Movement, Mohamed Abdille Hassan, who was himself a poet, used his oral literature as a means of propaganda to get his compatriots to rebel against the power of the colonial countries (ibid). As Andrzejewski also describes, Hassan sometimes dealt with his strategic thinking in his poems in order to announce his plans to his fellow citizens (ibid.) And in his poems denounced not only the foreign powers, but also the Somali fellow citizens who had not sided with the colonial powers (ibid.). Andrzejewski describes a poetic war that took place between the supporters of Mohamed Abdulle Hassan and the neutral Somali citizens (cf. Andrzejewski 2011: 10). The literary level did not suffer as a result, instead the poets remained aware of their role and thus these poems continued to follow the aesthetic and literary guidelines (ibid.). As the following quote is supposed to describe: „the formal skills of poetry continued to be highly cultivated and so were the devices of poetic diction such as the use of figurative language and the insertion of descriptive passages in poems with otherwise quite practical message" (ibid., pp. 10-11).

In the 1950s there were more and more researchers who had noted Somali oral literature in many different written forms (ibid., p. 12). Through independence and the definition of a script, the government oriented itself more intensively to its own Somali identity and also pushed it, which is why, for example, the task was now placed to collect oral oral texts, first by the Ministry of Education, then later by the newly created Academy of the Arts and sciences (cf. Andrzejewski, 2011, p. 12). Because a lot of the texts of Somali poetics have now been written down, they could be offered to a wider audience and often summarized in anthologies or in articles (ibid.). Meanwhile there are also many students who are writing a dissertation on the Somali language and literature, mainly at the National University of Somalia, in Mogadishu, mainly at the Institute for Somali Language and Literature.

So, as we have seen in this chapter, Somali oral literature has spanned a wide variety of fields, and even in the context of politics and propaganda, or persuasion, the poets followed certain guidelines that are relevant to Somali poetics.

Conclusion

This work endeavored to give an overview of the history of the Somali language, especially with regard to the developments in Somalia after the end of the Second World War. In doing so, it investigated the question of how the language was developed, especially after the choice for a script. Tests were based on the assumption that language encompasses very many different areas and also expresses different ideologies, such as religious motives when choosing a suitable writing system. For a long time, Somali society did not need to be written down, since Somali oral literature was used, among other things, to tell stories or to criticize; it was not standardized in writing until after independence. It was only with independence and the orientation towards one's own identity, which was suppressed by the colonial government that the first steps were taken towards the development of a standardized written form for the Somali language.

From a language that was not written down until 1972 to a language that has an immensely greater position in Somalia than the foreign languages Arabic, Italian and English, which were still the most important languages for administration and education in the colonial era, the Somali language has gone through a tough process. The literacy campaigns between 1973 and 1975 among the urban and rural populations made a major contribution to this process of the new position of the Somali language. On the other hand, through modernization processes, which were established by several linguistic commissions in the (partly dependent, partly independent) cooperation between poets and linguists, many new terms were established in the language. An unprecedented production of school books and literary texts for adults also contributed to the fact that writing no longer represented alienation for the population, but was seen as a progress in language.

Somalia is an extraordinary example of the countries in Africa in which, after independence, people have reflected on their own African identity, as foreign languages have lost much of their importance and through their own African language Somali, all strata of the population can communicate with each other and pupils offer prospects for later professional life.

Conflict of interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

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