THE PROBLEM OF VOWEL REPRESENTATION IN THE ISAAQ DIALECT OF SOMALI[1]

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§ 1. INTRODUCTION

IN representing the vowels of the Isaaq dialect of Somali[2] we meet with many difficulties not only because of a large number of vowel distinctions but also on account of the operation of Vowel Harmony.

I use the term Vowel Harmony in the same sense as Armstrong,[3] i.e. as the harmony (or 'matching') of vowels belonging to the same series. Schleicher,[4] Reinisch,[5] and Abraham[6] use this term quite differently, meaning by it certain types of assimilation of vowels without postulating two vowel series. Armstrong was the first writer in the literature on Somali to become aware of the existence and complexity of the problems under discussion.

The method of representing vowels, introduced by Armstrong, has many disadvantages. Apart from typographic difficulties, Armstrong's system is too narrow to deal with the fluctuations in the extents of Vowel Harmony and so rigid that its symbols often imply pauses (or absence of pauses) and a particular speed and style of pronunciation.

My researches into this problem have led me to the conclusion that for representing vowels in this dialect three separate systems have to be used for dealing with different aspects of vowel representation. If only one system is used it will be either so narrow as to represent one particular utterance (or type of utterance) or so broad as to ignore vowel distinctions lexically and grammatically significant.

On the following pages I shall describe three systems of vowel representation which, in my opinion, offer a solution to the problem under discussion. Before I do so, I find it necessary to explain the data at my disposal.

[2] This dialect is spoken by the Isaaq tribal family who inhabit the British Protectorate of Somaliland. For further geographical and ethnographic information see: M. A. Bryan, *The Distribution of the Semitic and Cushitic Languages of Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1947, International African Institute; J. A. Hunt, *A General Survey of the Somaliland Protectorate*, London, 1951, Crown Agents for the Colonies; I. M. Lewis, *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho*, London, 1955, International African Institute.

[3] Lilias E. Armstrong, 'The Phonetic Structure of Somali', *MSOS*, XXXVII, III, 1934, pp. 116–61. On p. 149 of her article Armstrong speaks of 'retracting' and 'fronting' vowels and thus sets up two series of vowels.

[4] A. W. Schleicher, *Die Somali Sprache*, Part I, Berlin, 1892, p. 89—'Vokalharmonie'.

[5] L. Reinisch, *Die Somali Sprache*, Vol. III, Grammatik, Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Südarabische Expedition, Vienna, 1903. p. 28—'Vocalharmonie'.

[6] S. Warsama and R. C. Abraham, *The Principles of Somali*, London, 1951, 2nd edition (cyclostyled); 'Vowel Harmony' is chiefly dealt with on pp. 396–9, and there are numerous references to it throughout the book.

§ 2. THE TWO SERIES OF VOWELS

There are in this dialect ten significant vowel qualities (with two significant degrees of length) :—

Series A	Series B
(i)	[i]
(e)	[e]
(a)	[a]
(o)	[o]
(u)	[u]
(ii)	[ii]
(ee)	[ee]
(aa)	[aa]
(oo)	[oo]
(uu)	[uu]

The difference between the vowels of Series A and B is that the vowels of Series B are more 'front', i.e. articulated with the mid part of the tongue more advanced towards the hard palate and the teeth-ridge than in the corresponding vowels of Series A.

The relationship between my symbols and those of Armstrong is as follows :—

My symbols for
vowels of Series A   Armstrong's symbols

		$(V) = \underline{V}$
(i)	i	
(e)	ε	
(a)	a	
(o)	o	
(u)	u	
(ii)	ii	
(ee)	εε	
(aa)	aa	
(oo)	oo	
(uu)	uu	

My symbols for
vowels of Series B   Armstrong's symbols

		$[V] = \overset{\lor}{V}$
[i]	i [1]	
[e]	e	
[a]	æ	
[o]	œ	
[u]	ɥ	
[ii]	ii	
[ee]	ee	

[1] Note that Armstrong's i corresponds to my (i) and [i], and her ii corresponds to my (ii) and [ii]. These additional distinctions of vowel quality which I have introduced are necessary, as otherwise pairs like

My symbols for
vowels of Series B   Armstrong's symbols

[aa]	ææ
[oo]	œœ
[uu]	ɥɥ

§ 3. HARMONIC GROUPS

It is a characteristic feature of this dialect that vowels of the same series often occur in whole groups of syllables as will be seen from the examples below. Such groups of syllables with vowels belonging to the same series I propose to call ' harmonic groups '. As in harmonic groups all the vowels belong to the same series it is more convenient and economic to show only the limits of a harmonic group rather than to mark each vowel letter within it with a distinctive mark of its series. The round and square brackets are used here as limit marks and are placed underneath the lines, in order not to interrupt the graphic continuity of the text. All the vowel letters between the subscript round brackets represent vowels of Series A and all the vowel letters between the subscript square brackets represent vowels of Series B. Whenever these limit marks are used the following convention must be observed : The letter P indicates a pause in speech and it is assumed that pauses are made only in places thus indicated and that there are no pauses elsewhere.[1]

Examples [2]

Waa saan dibi. [ ]	It is an ox's (bull's) skin.
Waa saan faras. ( )	It is a horse's skin.
Oday ma ihi. [ ]	I am not an old man.

    ɖis ' build ' (Imperative Sing.), with the vowel (i) and
    ɖis ' he built ', with the vowel [i],
     ɖiiday ' I fainted ', with the vowel (ii) and
     ɖiiday ' I refused ', with the vowel [ii]
could not be distinguished.

The vowels [i] and [ii] are very near in their quality to the Cardinal Vowel i, while (i) and (ii) are, comparatively, somewhat lowered and retracted (more open and less front). The exceptions in Vowel Harmony, to which Armstrong refers in her footnote 1 on p. 149 of her article, have arisen, in my opinion, because Armstrong did not recognize the distinctions between (i) and [i] and between (ii) and [ii].

[1] At the end of a paragraph, or when words are given in isolation pause marks are unnecessary and are therefore dispensed with.

[2] In the examples given in this article all the symbols, except the vowel symbols and the symbol ɏ are identical with those of Armstrong. The correspondences between my vowel symbols and those of Armstrong have already been given in § 2. The symbol ɏ represents a sound articulated by a movement of the tip of the tongue towards the upper teeth or the teeth-ridge but without actual contact. The tip of the tongue is raised to the level of or above the lower teeth but there is no substantial raising of the mid part of the tongue towards the hard palate. This sound occurs only intervocalically and is always voiced. Berghold uses the symbol δ for this sound and describes it on pp. 125–7 of his ' Somali Studien ', *WZKM*, XIII, 2, 1899. Tone and stress are not marked here as they are not relevant to the problem under discussion ; to use the tone and stress marks would require a lengthy explanation.

Oday ma aha.   He is not an old man.
(   )

Soortii baan kariyay.   I cooked the food.
[   ]

Soortii bay kariyeen.   They cooked the food.
(   )

Kanu waa dameerkiisii.   This is his he-donkey.
[   ]

Kanu waa dameerkaagii.   This is your (Sing.) he-donkey.
(   )

Waa meel doog le.[1]   It is a place where there is fresh grass.
[   ]

Waa meel ḍagaḥ le.   It is a place where there are stones (rocks).
(   )

Ma libaaḥ baa ?   Is it a lion ?
[   ]

Ma ʃabeel [2] baa ?   Is it a leopard ?
(   )

Ugaaskii baa loo aʃtakooday.   People complained to the chieftain.
[   ]

Ugaaskii baa loo keenay.   People brought it (him, her, them) to the chieftain.
[ ](   )

Reer Maḥamuud buu ahaa.   He belonged to the tribe (or family) of Mahamuud.[3]
[   ] (   )

Reer ʿAli buu ahaa.   He belonged to the tribe (or family) of ʿAli.[4]
(   )

Wuu tegi lahaa.   He would go (or He would have gone).
[   ]

Wuu iman lahaa.   He would come (or He would have come).
(   )

Berberuu qabtay.   He went to Berbera.
[ ](   )

Burʿuu qabtay.   He went to Burʿo.
(   )

Hilibkaa soo iibso.   Buy that meat.
[   ]

Hilibkaa kari.   Cook that meat.
[ ](   )

For further examples see Armstrong, pp. 152–6, and §§ 7 and 12 of this article.

[1] Note that under certain conditions **le** when followed by a vowel is pronounced as **leh**.

[2] The symbol ʃ corresponds to š as used in most of the works on Somali in German and Italian and to sh as used in most of the works in English, including C. R. V. Bell's *The Somali Language*, London, 1953 (Longmans).

[3] In this context Mahamuud would be either the actual head of a family or an eponymous ancestor of a tribe.

[4] See the preceding footnote.

§ 4. THE ROLE OF PAUSES

The extent of harmonic groups may often vary even in the same sentence according to the distribution of pauses made by the speaker, e.g. :—

Beertii ma soo iibsatay ?   Have you (Sing.) bought the garden ?
[   ]

Beertii ma soo iibsatay ?   (The same meaning.)
( ) P [   ]

Waḥaasu ma doonni baa ?   Is that thing a sailing ship ?
[   ]

Waḥaasu ma doonni baa ?   (The same meaning.)
(   ) P [   ]

Markaasuu waaўaў oo is ka ḍaqaaqay.   Then he could not find it (him, her, them) and went away.
[   ](   )

Markaasuu waaўaў oo is ka ḍaqaaqay.   (The same meaning.)
[   ]P(   )

Even in the same sentence, unless it is very short, there are usually several places where the speaker may or may not make a pause according to his personal or stylistic preferences and thus the distribution of pauses may affect the extents of the harmonic groups. That is why if the limits of harmonic groups are marked in the text, pauses must also be marked, with the convention that no pauses other than those indicated are permissible.

§ 5. THE ROLE OF THE SPEED OF PRONUNCIATION

The speed of pronunciation [1] may also sometimes affect the extent of the harmonic groups.[2] In the examples below speed is indicated by superscript indications in italics.

Slow

Markaasaa ʃabeelkii ninkii ku soo   Then the leopard jumped at the man.
(   ) [
booday.
   ]

Quick

Markaasaa ʃabeelkii ninkii ku soo   (The same meaning.)
( ) [
booday.
   ]

Moderate

Haddaan la kala roonaan roob ma   Unless people are better than each other rain does not fall. (' Unless one party in a dispute shows more good will than the other reconciliation never comes.' A proverb.)
(   ) [
do'o.
   ]

[1] It is very difficult to measure or to classify the speed of pronunciation. It is even more difficult to induce a speaker of this language to keep to the same speed, say, while he narrates a story.

[2] This appears to happen only, however, when higher speed is accompanied by greater spontaneity of utterance and lower speed by its greater deliberateness.

Haddaan la kala roonaan roob ma (The same meaning.)
(   )[
do'o.
]

The fluctuations in the distribution of pauses and speed of pronunciation often determine the extent of harmonic groups and thus, if the exact limits of these groups are given in our transcription only one particular utterance (or one particular type of utterance) is recorded.

§ 6. INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS

Individual variations as to the occurrence and extent of harmonic groups can sometimes be observed in this dialect. The following sentences, pronounced by different speakers, may serve as an example :—

Waa kiiʃ.	It is a bag.
[ ]	
Waa kiiʃ.	(The same meaning.)
( )	
Geed buu koray.	He climbed a tree.
[ ] ( )	
Geed buu koray.	(The same meaning.)
( )	

§ 7. THE BACK AND THE FRONT FORMS

In the study of the occurrence and extent of harmonic groups it is essential to devote some attention to forms in isolation or in a minimum size utterance [1] as then the possibilities of influence of the neighbouring sounds are eliminated and a convenient basis is formed for the study of the same forms in other contexts.

Those forms whose vowels belong to Series A in isolation or in a minimum size utterance I propose to call 'Back Forms', and those forms whose vowels belong to Series B in isolation or in a minimum size utterance I propose to call 'Front Forms'. The Back Forms [2] are marked, in the examples below, with

a line under the first vowel letter, while the Front Forms are marked with a cedilla under the first vowel letter.

It is a characteristic feature of polysyllabic forms [1] in isolation or in a minimum size utterance that all their vowels belong to the same series (and thus to the same harmonic group), with very rare exceptions of certain compound words. In view of this fact it would be superfluous to place a subscript line or a cedilla under each vowel letter of a given form.

Examples :—

boqor	a chieftain
ḥoolo	livestock, wealth
niman	men
fandaal	a spoon
waddo	a road
'Ali	'Ali (a man's name)
ilaaliya	watch (Imper. Plur.)
WAAN [2] toosay	I woke up
WAY keeneen	they brought (it, him, her, them)
dabqaad [3]	an incense burner
waraabe	a hyena
SANDUUQ 'ulus	a heavy box
WAY karisay	she cooked
WAAD tagtay	you (Sing.) went
kuwaas	those
Bur'o	Bur'o (name of a town)
wadaad	a mullah
ugaas	a chieftain
biyo	water
joojiya	stop (Imper. Pl., Trans.)
WAAN kariyay	I cooked
WUU keeni	he will bring (it, him, her, them)
WAAN tegay	I went
reermagaal [4]	townsfolk
waddooyin	roads
kuwee	which ones ?
WAY gaaḍeen	they reached
Berbera	Berbera (name of a town)

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[1] I have introduced here the term 'minimum size utterance' in order to deal with those forms which cannot occur in isolation. By 'minimum size utterance' I understand the shortest possible utterance in which a form of this kind can occur. There may be, in the case of some forms, several minimum size utterances for a particular form, but they are never very numerous. When the term 'minimum size utterance' is used in this article the following restrictions are attached to it : all the forms in a minimum size utterance, except the form under examination, must be Back, i.e. their vowels must belong to Series A when they themselves occur in isolation or in a minimum size utterance. These restrictions are necessary in order to remove the possibilities of influence of the vowels of the neighbouring forms described in § 8.

[2] I use the term 'Form' instead of 'Word' as very often some forms of the same word are Back and some are Front. Some words, however, are indeclinable and have only one form and in such cases 'Form' and 'Word' are co-extensive. When some forms of a particular word are Back while some are Front the differences in their distribution can usually be connected with the presence or absence of certain affixes, e.g. wuu eegay 'he looked', wuu eegayay 'he was looking'.

[1] Note that monosyllabic forms are also divided into Back and Front according to the same criteria and are marked in the same way as the polysyllabic ones, e.g. dar 'clothes', beer 'a garden', god 'a hole', geed 'a tree'.

[2] Forms which belong to the minimum size utterance but are not under discussion themselves are written in capital letters.

[3] A compound word ; cf. dab 'fire' and qaad 'take'.

[4] A compound word ; cf. reer 'people, tribe, family', and magaalo 'a town'.

Exceptions (rare compounds) :—

daan-ḍeer [1]	strong camels of a herd (those capable of great exertions)
jẹeni-waṛeen [2]	pneumonia

§ 8. HARMONIC TENDENCIES

The division of all forms into Back and Front has been introduced here on account of the fact that there is some relationship between the series of the vowels of a particular form in isolation or in a minimum size utterance and the series of the vowels of the same form when it occurs in other contexts.

It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to state this relationship in rigid rules, because of the complexity and vagueness [3] of the determining factors. It is, however, possible to state this relationship in terms of ' tendencies '.[4]

In this relationship the following tendencies can be observed :—

I. The vowels of all Front Forms have the tendency to belong to Series B in all contexts.

II. The vowels of Back Forms have the tendency to belong to Series B if they (the Back Forms) are followed by a Front Form or Forms within the same uninterrupted [5] utterance.[6]

III. The vowels of the following forms,[7] when they are immediately preceded by a Front Form and immediately followed by a pause, have the tendency to belong to Series B :—

The Syntactic Particle (Indicator) baa.

The Adjectives leh (le) [8], ah and la' in their simple (non-verbal) forms.

The Conjunctions oo (yoo, y̆oo), e (ye, y̆e), iyo, na, se and the word ba.

The Subject Pronouns aan, aad, uu, ay, aynu, aannu, aydin, ay.

The Definitives (i.e. the Definite Articles, the Demonstratives, and the Possessives).

The Negative Particle aan.

The following Auxiliary verbal forms : doonaa (doona), doontaa (doonta), doonnaa (doonna), doontaan, doonaan ; doono, doonto, doonno ; maayo,

mayso, mayno, maysaan, maayaan ; lahaa, lahayd, lahayn, lahaydeen, lahaaẏeen.

Any sequences and combinations of the forms enumerated above.

IV. The vowels of all Back Forms always belong to Series A, unless they occur in a context specified under II and III.

As examples of these tendencies we can use the sentences given in § 3, if we supply all the forms which occur in them with marks indicating Back and Front Forms. The translations of these sentences have already been given.

Waa saan dịbi.
[   ]
Waa saan faras.
(   )
Oday ma̱ ịhi.
[   ]
Oday ma̱ a̱ha.
(   )
Soortịi ba̱an ka̱riyay.
[   ]
Soortịi ba̱y ka̱riyeen.
(   )
Ka̱nu wa̱a da̱meerkịisịi.[1], [2]
[   ]
Ka̱nu wa̱a da̱meerka̱agịi.
(   )
Waa mẹel dọog lẹ.[3]
[   ]
Waa mẹel ḍagah lẹ.
(   )

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[1] In this dialect, owing to certain junction features it is often convenient and sometimes necessary to write two or more forms together. In such combinations of forms the tendencies described above operate in the same way as elsewhere. It may be difficult for a reader not familiar with the morphology of this dialect to recognize the component forms, and that is why in a text where the marks for Back and Front Forms are given and the limit marks of harmonic groups are omitted it may be useful to show, in textual notes, the internal composition of mixed combinations, i.e. the combinations which include both Back and Front Forms at the same time.

In the case of some combinations of forms it is possible to show their internal composition by giving an alternative, optional arrangement of the component forms, e.g. Ma̱ 'Alaa ? ' Is it 'Ali ?' = Ma̱ 'Ali ba̱a ? (with the same meaning). In some combinations, however, there are no alternative optional arrangements of forms and the component forms can only be hypothesized on the grounds of structural analogy. We may say, for example, that Ma̱ tukaa ? ' Is it a crow ?' = Ma̱ tu̱ke ba̱a ? (with the same meaning) on the ground of comparison of such analogous structures as :—

Ma̱ gẹed ba̱a ? ' Is it a tree ?' : Waa gẹed ' It is a tree ' =
Ma̱ tukaa ? ' Is it a crow ?' : Waa tu̱ke ' It is a crow '

Such hypothetical breaking up of combinations of forms is indicated by placing the sign + between the hypothetical components.

[2] da̱meerkịisịi = da̱meer + kịis + kị̱i (Noun + a Possessive Definitive + the Definite Article).

[3] See n. 1, p. 570.

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[1] A compound word ; cf. daan ' a jaw ' and ḍeer ' long '. Compounds of this kind should, in my opinion, always be hyphenated.

[2] A compound word ; cf. jẹeni ' a front leg or paw ' and waṛeen ' stab ' (Imper. Sing.).

[3] Due to such difficulties as, for example, the varying speed of pronunciation and individual variations.

[4] i.e. probabilities of frequent occurrence.

[5] i.e. an utterance within which there are no pauses.

[6] It is very difficult to assess how far back, within an uninterrupted utterance, this tendency reaches. Here, particularly, individual variations and variations according to the speed of pronunciation can be observed. I have often found, moreover, that the more spontaneous the utterance the further this tendency extends.

[7] For grammatical information concerning these forms consult C. R. V. Bell, The Somali Language, already mentioned in n. 2, p. 570 of this article.

[8] See n. 1, p. 570.

Ma̱ li̱baah ba̱a ?
[　　　　　　]

Ma̱ ʃabeel ba̱a ?
(　　　　　　)

U̱gaaski̱i [1] ba̱a lo̱o a̱ʃtakooday.
[　　　　　　　　　　]

U̱gaaski̱i ba̱a lo̱o ke̱enay.
[　　](　　　　　　　)

Re̱er Ma̱hamuud bu̱u a̱haa.
[　　　　　] (　　　　)

Re̱er ʻA̱li bu̱u a̱haa.
(　　　　　　　　　)

Wu̱u te̱gi la̱haa.
[　　　　　　]

Wu̱u i̱man la̱haa.
(　　　　　　　)

Be̱rberu̱u [2] qa̱btay.
[　　](　　　　　)

Bu̱rʻu̱u qa̱btay.
(　　　　　　　)

Hi̱libka̱a [3] so̱o i̱ibso.
[　　　　　　　　]

Hi̱libka̱a ka̱ri.
[　　](　　　)

§ 9.　SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTIONS IN VOWEL SERIES

It must be added here that the difference in vowel series can only be significant in a pair of forms when one of them is Back and the other is Front. It is never significant when the difference in vowel series is due to one of the harmonic tendencies described above.

Examples of significant differences in vowel series [4] :—

d̲is ' build ' (Imper. Sing.)	d̲is ' he built '
he̱l ' find ' (Imper. Sing.)	he̱l [5] ' he found '
ka̱b ' a sandal '	ka̱b ' he set ' (a fractured bone)
qo̱d ' dig ' (Imper. Sing.)	qo̱d ' he dug '
tu̱s ' show ' (Imper. Sing.)	tu̱s ' he showed '
di̱iday ' I fainted '	di̱iday ' I refused '
he̱es ' a type of song or poem '	he̱es ' he sang a " hees " '
la̱ab ' chest (thorax) '	la̱ab ' he folded '

[1] u̱gaaski̱i = u̱gaas ki̱i (Noun and the Definite Article).

[2] Be̱rberu̱u = Be̱rbera + bu̱u = Be̱rbera + ba̱a + u̱u (Proper Name + the Syntactic Particle baa + a Subject Pronoun).

[3] hi̱libka̱a = hi̱lib ka̱a (Noun and a Demonstrative).

[4] Minimal pairs of this kind are not very frequent.

[5] Note that he̱l is further differentiated from he̱l by the fact that the former has final glottalization and the latter final aspiration.

qo̱d ' a thorny fence '　　qo̱d ' he enclosed (it) with a thorny fence '

du̱uʃay ' she (it) flew '　　du̱uʃay ' she attacked '

§ 10.　THE VOWEL SYSTEM OF SOME OTHER SOMALI DIALECTS

What has been said does not only apply to the Somali spoken by the Isaaq.[1] In spite of some differences in the actual distribution of Back and Front Forms, the vowel system of the dialects spoken by the 'Iise,[2] the Gedabuursi,[3] the Northern Daarood,[4] and the Northern Hawiye [5] resembles closely the vowel system of the Isaaq dialect and could be represented by the same graphic devices.

§ 11.　THE THREE SYSTEMS OF VOWEL REPRESENTATION

On the basis of the data presented on the preceding pages I would suggest that three systems should be used for representing vowels of this dialect. I propose to call them the ' Narrow System ', the ' Broad System ', and the ' Vernacular System ' of vowel representation, each with a different purpose.

The Narrow System would employ the following devices [6] : Limit marks for the harmonic groups (round and square brackets), indications of speed and pause marks.

The Narrow System might also employ the subscript line and the cedilla under the first vowel letter of a form, but these marks would be used only for additional elucidation of a text and would not form an essential part of the system. In a text where the Narrow System is used throughout, the round brackets could be dispensed with as the absence of subscript square brackets would imply that the vowels of the syllables thus left unmarked belong to Series A.

The Narrow System would be capable only of representing one particular utterance (or one particular type of utterance) and would leave very little freedom of interpretation to the reader. It would be suitable only for two purposes : for a detailed description of the operation of Vowel Harmony in this dialect (and dialects enumerated in the preceding paragraph) and for teaching the pronunciation of it to non-Somali students.[7] It would not be suitable, however, for the general grammatical description of this dialect,[8] for lexicography, for recording the Oral Literature,[9] or for a practical orthography.[10]

[1] See n. 2, p. 567.　　[2] Usually spelt Issa or Esa.　　[3] Usually spelt Gadabursi.

[4] Usually spelt Darod. I have no adequate information about the Southern (Transjuban) Daarood.

[5] Usually spelt Hawiya.

[6] These devices have been described in §§ 3–5.

[7] cf. Daniel Jones's recommendation in his The Phoneme (Cambridge, 1950) : ' It is probable that a certain narrowing of transcription would be useful in teaching English learners to make proper use of vowel harmony in Somali ' (§ 675, p. 222).

[8] Where a high degree of generality of spelling would be required.

[9] Where some freedom of interpretation must be left to the readers.

[10] This system of vowel representation would not be general enough for a practical orthography. Moreover, like Armstrong's system it would be too difficult for the general public (both Somali and non-Somali) to handle.

The Broad System would employ only the cedilla and the subscript line [1] thus distinguishing between the Front and Back Forms ; the subscript line, however, could be dispensed with in a text where all the Front Forms are marked with a cedilla, as in such circumstances, the absence of a cedilla under the first vowel letter of a form would imply that the form is Back. In the Broad System the limit marks of harmonic groups, pause marks and indications of speed would be omitted and the potentialities of distribution and extents of harmonic groups would be only roughly indicated by reference to the harmonic tendencies described in § 8. This system of vowel representation offers a great latitude of interpretation, i.e. it may represent many possible utterances (and types of utterances). It gains, in fact, in generality [2] what it loses in accuracy. Making no limitations as to the distribution of pauses and speed of pronunciation, this system does not restrict the text to one particular utterance (or type of utterance).

The Broad system has been designed for the description of grammar, the study of the lexicon,[3] and for writing down the Oral Literature for philological purposes. It would not be suitable, however, for a practical orthography for Somali speakers for which simplicity and typographical economy would be very important considerations.

The Vernacular System, the aim of which is to answer the practical needs of everyday orthography, would dispense with all the devices of the Narrow and Broad Systems on the assumption that even if only five vowel qualities are recognized the native speaker of the language would be able to read the text without any difficulty. The cases of possible ambiguity which could result from not distinguishing between the two vowel series are not very common and are usually eliminated by context. In those rare cases where ambiguity could not be eliminated by context the Vernacular System could be supplemented by the cedilla and the subscript line used only as ' emergency devices ' [4] and not throughout the text.

In this connexion it must be added that the two spelling systems evolved by the Somalis themselves [5] recognize only five vowel qualities in the vowel letters [6] of their alphabets.

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[1] For the use of these graphic devices see § 7.

[2] This is one of the basic problems of transcription in general. The broader the transcription the greater its generality and vice versa.

[3] This system represents all the distinctions of meaning which depend on the differences in vowel series.

[4] In the same way as the vowel points are sometimes used in Arabic in an otherwise unvocalized text.

[5] For information about these two systems of spelling evolved by the Somalis the following works should be consulted : Enrico Cerulli, ' Tentativo Indigeno di Formare un Alfabeto Somalo ', *Oriente Moderno*, XII, Gennaio–Dicembre, 1932, pp. 212–3 ; M. Maino, ' L'Alfabeto " Osmania " in Somalia ', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, X, Gennaio–Dicembre, 1951, pp. 108–21 ; M. Maino, *La Lingua Somala, Strumento d'Insegnamente Professionale*, Alessandria (Italy), 1953 (Tipografia Ferrari, Occella e Co.) ; M. H. I. Galaal, ' Arabic Script for Somali ', *The Islamic Quarterly*, I, 2, July 1954, pp. 114–8.

[6] In the section entitled ' Grafemi " 'Ismaniya " ' in *La Lingua Somala Strumento d'Insegnamento Professionale (pp. 33–4)* M. Maino gives an account of the fact that the system of spelling

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§ 12. SPECIMEN TEXTS

Narrow System.

  Moderate—
    Laba nin baa beri geel wada hayay.   Geela laba halaad baa ka irmaan.
    [   ] P [   ]   P

Slow—   *Moderate—*
Markaasaa labada halaad labada nin kala maali jireen.   Labada halaad na mid
                        P [   ] P   [

baa badin jirtay.   Maalintii dambaa kii hafa badisa maali jiray   kii hafa yaraysa
   ] P   [   ] P [

                   Quick—
maali jiray ku yiḍi :   ' Ina'adeerow xayaanada [1] i bar ! '   Markaasaa kii hafa
          ] P   P [

yaraysa maali jiray yiḍi :   ' Waa tahay e hafaada aan maalo ! '   Markaasaa
            ] P   P [

                   Moderate—
kii kale yiḍi :   ' Waa tahay.'   Markaasaa labadii halaad lays ḍaafsaday.   Markii
  ] P   P

labadii halaad lays ḍaafsaday baa kii yiḍi :   ' Dee xayaanadii i bar !   Markaasaa
               [   ] P   P [

kii kale yiḍi :   ' Dee waa taa aan hafii kaaga qaaday.'
      ] P

Broad System.

    Laba nin baa beri geel wada hayay. Geela [2] laba halaad baa ka irmaan. Markaasaa labada halaad labada nin kala maali jireen. Labada halaad na mid baa badin jirtay. Maalintii dambaa kii hafa badisa maali jiray kii hafa yaraysa maali jiray ku yiḍi : ' Ina'adeerow xayaanada i bar ! '   Markaasaa kii hafa yaraysa maali jiray yiḍi : ' Waa tahay e hafaada aan maalo ! '   Markaasaa kii kale yiḍi :   ' Waa tahay.' Markaasaa labadii halaad lays ḍaafsaday.   Markii labadii halaad lays ḍaafsaday baa kii yiḍi :   ' Dee haddaba xayaanadii i bar ! '   Markaasaa kii kale yiḍi :   ' Dee waa taa aan hafii kaaga qaaday.'

Vernacular System.

    Laba nin baa beri geel wada hayay. Geela laba halaad baa ka irmaan. Markaasaa labada halaad labada nin kala maali jireen. Labada halaad na mid baa badin jirtay.

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which he describes recognizes ten vowel qualities in both short and long vowels by means of a diacritic, whenever this is necessary for eliminating an ambiguity. In practice this diacritic is very seldom used.

[1] The symbol x corresponds to ẖ as used by Reinisch (see n. 5, p. 567) and to kh as used by Bell (see n. 2, p. 570).

[2] geela = geel + ka (Noun + the Definite Article).

Maalintii dambaa kii haſa badisa maali jiray kii haſa yaraysa maali jiray ku yiɖi :
' Ina'adeerow xayaanada i bar ! '   Markaasaa kii haſa yaraysa mali jiray yiɖi :
' Waa tahay e haſaada aan maalo ! '   Markaasaa kii kale yiɖi : ' Waa tahay.'
Markaasaa labadii halaad lays ɖaafsaday.   Markii labadii halaad lays ɖaafsaday
baa kii yiɖi : ' Dee haddaba xayaanadii i bar ! '   Markaasaa kii kale yiɖi : ' Dee
waa taa aan haſii kaaga qaaday.'

Translation.

Once upon a time two men were looking after camels together. Among the
camels two she-camels were in milk. And the two men used to milk the two
she-camels separately.[1] And one of the she-camels used to give more milk
than the other.

Then one day the man who milked for himself the she-camel which gave
more milk said to the one who milked the she-camel which gave less milk :
' Cousin,[2] teach me a trick ! ' Then the man who milked the she-camel which
gave less milk said : ' All right, but let me milk your she-camel for myself ! '
Then the other said : ' All right.' Then the two she-camels were exchanged.
When the two she-camels were exchanged the one [3] said : ' Well, teach me
then the trick.' Then the other said : ' Well, it consists in my taking your she-
camel from you ! '

[1] The two men had one milking camel each and milked them each for himself, each drinking
the milk of his own camel.

[2] The word ' cousin ' in Somali is often used as a term of familiar address among men even if
they are not cousins.

[3] i.e. the prospective pupil in the art of trickery.