

Marcello Lamberti

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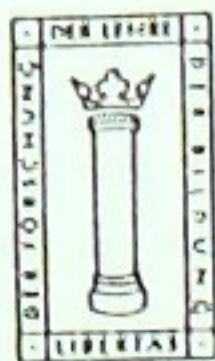
Map of Somali Dialects  
in the  
Somali Democratic Republic

*With Supplement:*

Speech Variation in Somalia  
with 6 maps and foreword

by

*Andrzej Zaborski*



HELMUT BUSKE VERLAG HAMBURG

## FOREWORD

The appearance of this publication is an important historical event. For the first time we have a clear picture of dialect differentiation and dialect spread of the Somali language within the present borders of Somalia based on extensive and well-organised field work. Never before has anybody collected and analysed so much material. This is actually one of the first detailed dialect maps presenting also the most important isoglosses of a major African language in general. Dr. Lamberti owes quite a lot to the leading center of African studies of the University of Cologne but he also continues the well-established tradition of Italian research of the Somali language and culture which has culminated so far with Enrico Cerulli and Mario Martino Moreno's important contributions. He has done very important work which cost much effort and necessitated various sophisticated skills with a high degree of scientific impartiality. It is my deep conviction that this will remain a standard reference work not only because it records the situation A.D. 1981 but also because it presents valuable results of a highly technical analysis of newly collected data. The importance of this work not only for scholars but also for the Somalis in general can hardly be underestimated as it provides a basic source for the history of the Somali language and culture as well as guidelines for the further successful continuation of the language and culture policy of the Somali Democratic Republic. The next step would be a compilation of an even more detailed dialect atlas, of a detailed comparative dialect dictionary not to mention about monograph descriptions of various dialects and sub-dialects. This further step has also been initiated by Dr. Lamberti and we may hope that his Ph.D. thesis *Die Somali-Dialekte: eine vergleichende Untersuchung* (Somali dialects: a Comparative Study) as well as his descriptions of several Somali dialects will follow soon. A new period in Somali language studies is beginning.

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## INTRODUCTION

The material on which I base my observations in this pamphlet was collected during six months of field work in the second half of 1981 in the Somali Democratic Republic. At that time I had the chance to travel around the country and to work on the spot with numerous informants. A list with the precise indication of the dialectal varieties studied and the names of the many Somali who acted as my informants can be found in my dissertation (Lamberti 1983:24-33). In that occasion I did not limit myself to collecting material only on the Somali language, but I collected also some material on the languages of the few minorities I found on my way. More than 64 tapes (for a total recording time of nearly 100 hours) were registered. The interviews with the informants were carried out with the aid of a questionnaire already drawn up in Europe, which was designed to grant the comparability of the collected material. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts, i.e. a lexical and a morphological/syntactical one. The lexical part of the questionnaire was a list of ca. 600 words (mostly belonging to the basic vocabulary, but also culture terms were included). The morphological/syntactical part consisted of a corpus of more than 500 sentences from which the morphology and the syntax of the informant's idiom could be inferred. With the aid of the bulk of the material collected on numerous research sites, where I personally ascertained the existing linguistic situation, I was able to draw up with Mrs. Butz the dialect map of the Somali Democratic Republic enclosed here, although I have only now found the time to devote myself to its publication.

Finally I would like to express my best thanks to the *Graduiertenförderung* of the University of Cologne which financed my field work in Somalia, to the Somali authorities (including the Somali National University of Mogadishu, the Ministry of Culture, the Somali Studies International Association and the local authorities of the single towns and villages, where I was) for the support they gave me during my stay in their country,

to all my Somali informants for their patience, to Prof. Bernd Heine, who encouraged me in my Somali studies and suggested to me to publish this work, to Mrs. Carla Butz (cartographer at the Institut für Afrikanistik of the University of Cologne) for her tremendous support without which this pamphlet could never have come about and to Prof. Andrzej Zaborski for having written the foreword of this work and for his advice.

## 1. Somali and the linguistic minorities

In contrast to most African countries the Somali Democratic Republic presents a considerable linguistic homogeneity. There are few linguistic minorities and they are limited to small territories, while the Somali language is the unchallenged medium all over the country. These minorities are usually so integrated in the Somali society that their members, as a rule regard themselves as Somali in spite of their own mother tongue. Their youth and grown-up men can usually speak fluent Somali, which is something like a second mother tongue for their children. Only the old people of these groups and the women still have some difficulties in speaking and understanding Somali, the former because of missing of school education and the latter because their social contacts are restricted to their respective clans. The only minorities, which until now were ascertained within the Somali Democratic Republic, are those speaking

1. O r o m o,
2. S w a h i l i,
3. M u s h u n g u l u and
4. A f - B o o n.

## 2. Classification of the Somali dialects

Apart from the few minorities mentioned above, the mother tongue of all the rest of the citizens of the Somali Democratic Republic is the Somali language. But Somali is not a homogeneous idiom and consists of several dialects. Altogether we can subdivide all the Somali dialects spoken in the Somali Democratic Republic into five or six dialectal groups (according to whether a separate group is set up for Af-Jiiddu or not). These are:

- (1) the Northern Somali dialects (Nsom.), which supply the official language of the Somali Democratic Republic;
- (2) the Benaadir dialects (Ben.), which are spoken along the coast of Southern Somalia;

- (3) the Ashraaf dialects (Ash.), which are spoken only in Mgadi-shu's Shangaani quarter and in the district of Merka;
- (4) the May dialects, which are the usual medium of the former Upper Juba, of Lower Shabelle and partially of Lower Juba;
- (5) the Digil dialects, which are scattered here and there all over the May-speaking territory. In spite of many common features these dialects are quite heterogeneous. The Digil dialectal group consists of Af-Tunni, Af-Dabarre, Af-Garre and perhaps Af-Jiiddu, which however could be also classified as the sixth dialectal group of Somali.

### 5. The dialectal groups in details

#### 3.1. The Northern Somali dialects

The Northern Somali dialects are spoken all over Northern Somalia bordered by the region of Mudug (including also Western Somalia), along the Ethiopian border in the regions of Bakool and Gedo, and in the Lower Juba region. Being spoken by more than 60% of the whole Somali population, the NSom. dialects supply the official language of the Somali Democratic Republic. The most famous and important poets of Somalia recited and composed their poetical works in NSom.; so for instance Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, Muuse Xaaji Ismaaciil Galaal and so on.

Some of the most striking peculiarities of NSom. are:

- (1) the presence of pharyngeal phonemes (ʕ and x);
- (2) q and kh are two different phonemes, cf.  
qal (slaughter!) vs. xal (alcoholic drink);
- (3) the absence of nasals like ŋ and ŋ;
- (4) the progressive endings -ayaa/-aysaa may not be contracted (for instance to -aa or -ee);
- (5) monosyllabic masculines form their plural by means of partial reduplication, cf.  
san (nose) + pl. san-an;

- (6) there is no singulative suffix. -koo/-too is a demonstrative;
- (7) there is an article -ku/-tu for the subject case, cf.  
nin-ku halkan-uu imaanayaa (the man will come here);
- (8) the subject pronoun of the 3.m.sg. is -uu, cf.  
w-uu yimid (he came);
- (9) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is idin, cf.  
waan idin arkay (I saw you);
- (10) for the pronoun of the 1.pl. there is an opposition inclusive/exclusive, cf.  
annaga (we, but not you) vs. innaga (we and you);
- (11) the infinitives of the 2. and 3. conjugation end in -n, cf.  
jebi-n (to break, tr.), gara-n (to understand);
- (12) there is a subject marker -i or -u, cf.  
naag-i way timid (a woman came);
- (13) the negation of the jussive is yaa, cf.  
yuu(san) tegin (he shall not go);
- (14) if the subject is focused, the verb is to be conjugated according to the restrictive paradigm, cf.  
adig-aa yimid (you came), but not \*adig-aa timid.

Some more isoglosses characterizing the NSom. dialects are reported by Lamberti (1983:65-74).

The NSom. dialects of the Somali Democratic Republic can be subdivided into three subgroups, namely:

- (1) Northern Somali in its proper sense spoken in the regions Waqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag and Western Nugaal. The dialects belonging to this group are called Af-Ciise, Af-Geedabuursi, Af-Isaaq and partially Af-Warsangeli and Af-Dolbohaante;
- (2) the Daarood group spoken in the regions Bari, Nugaal, Mudug, in Western Somalia (Soomaaliya Galbeed) and along the Ethiopian border in the regions Galgaduud, Bakool and Gedo. This is the Somali dialectal group, which presents the greatest number of speakers. The dialects of this group are the North-Eastern dialects (including Af-Warsangeli and Af-Dolbohaante),

Af-Ogaadeen, Af-Degodiya<sup>1</sup>, Af-Wardeyg and Af-Marrehaan;

- (3) the Lower-Juba group spoken by the part of the Northern Somali population, which have immigrated into the Lower Juba region in the last 100/150 years. As this territory was a Benaadir-speaking area before the arrival of the immigrants from the north, the NSom. of Lower Juba presents many peculiarities typical for the Benaadir dialects and could be considered a Benaadirized NSom.

This subdivision of the NSom. dialects is supported by a complex of isoglosses, which because of lack of space cannot be discussed here (for a synchronic comparison of the NSom. dialects with the treatment of their internal differences, I refer here to Lamberti (1983:489-711)). Thus I will mention now only one peculiarity for every subgroup:

- (1) the NSom. in its proper sense is characterized among other things by the realization of the phoneme dh as [d] also in intervocalic position vs. the rest of NSom. [ɾ] or [r], cf.  
 NSom. in its proper sense wuu yidhi [wuu yidi] (he said) vs. the rest of NSom. [wuu yiri] or [wuu/waa yiri] respectively;
- (2) the Daarood group is characterized by the realization of the phoneme j as /c/, cf.  
 Daarood coog (remain!), waa/wuu cabay (it broke) vs. the rest of NSom. joog and waa/wuu jabay respectively;
- (3) the NSom. of Lower Juba is characterized by
- a) the ending of the 1.sg. of the negative present -i vs. the rest of NSom. -o, cf.  
 Lower Juba ma keen-i (I do not bring it) vs. the rest of NSom. ma(an) keen-o;
- b) the fact that the restrictive paradigm can be replaced by the subjunctive, cf.  
 Lower Juba anig-aa keen-o (I bring it) vs. the rest of NSom. anig-aa keen-a.

### 3.2. The Benaadir dialects

The Benaadir dialects (Ben.) are quite heterogeneous and

even within one and the same dialect there are several concurrent forms, cf.

Xa. waa niraahdaa / waa niraadaa  
 waa niraahaa / waa niraa we say

Even for the application of grammatical rules there is a greater freedom than in NSom.; so for instance if the subject is focused, only the verbal form of the restrictive paradigm can be used in NSom., while several possibilities exist in the Ben. dialects, cf.

NSom. adig-aa dir-a (y o u send it),  
 but not \*adig-aa dir-o or \*adig-aa dir-ta  
 or other verbal forms

vs.

Aj. adig-aa dir-to or adig-aa dir-ta  
 adig-aa dir-a or adig-aa dir-o  
 (y o u send it).

The first form (of the four) is the usual one in Aj., but the other ones too are also possible.

The Ben. group consists of five dialects, which are spoken in the central part of the Somali Democratic Republic and along the coast in the north and in the south of Mogadishu. I subdivide the Ben. dialects in Northern and Southern Benaadir (the subdivision is only a geographical one). The Northern Ben. dialects are:

- (1) Af-Abgaal (Ab.) spoken in the southern part of Mudug and in the regions Galgaduud and Middle Shabelle up to Mogadishu;
- (2) Af-Ajuraan (Aj.) spoken in the region of Hiraaan and nowadays also as a result of immigration into the districts of Dhiinsoor (only in the south-western part), Saakow and Bu'aale, which has taken place in this century;
- (3) Af-Gaaljacal (Ga.) spoken in the districts of Buulo Berde, Jalalaqsi, Jowhar and partially in those of Wanle Weyn and Afgooye. Moreover in consequence of immigration, which took place during the last sixty years, some Ga.-speakers can be found also in the districts of Saakow and Bu'aale.



The Southern Ben. dialects are:

- (4) Af-Xamari (Xa.) spoken only in the oldest part of the town of Mogadishu, i.e. Xamar-Weyne and
- (5) Af-Bimaal (Bi.) spoken in the districts of Afgooye (up to the town of Mogadishu), Merka and Jamaame.

Ab. is the Ben. dialect presenting the greatest number of speakers and holds an intermediate position between NSom. and the rest of Ben. Bi. consists of two similar dialects (i.e. Bi. of Lower Shabelle and Bi. of Lower Juba). Aj. bordering in the north on NSom. and in the east on May has been influenced by both, nevertheless it has preserved its Ben. character. Some of the most striking peculiarities of the Ben. type are:

- (1) q and kh are two free variants of the same phoneme;
- (2) the endings of the present tense are contracted in the sg. to -aa (vs. NSom. -ayaa) and -ee (vs. NSom. -aysaa), cf.
- Xa. waa keen-aa (I am bringing it),  
waa keen-ee (you are bringing it) vs.  
NSom. waa(n) keen-ayaa and waa(d) keen-aysaa respectively;
- (3) the plural morphemes are according to the respective dialects -yaal (Xa. and Bi. of Lower Juba), -ooshin/-ooyin (Xa. and Bi. of Lower Shabelle) and -no (Bi. of Lower Shabelle)<sup>2</sup>;
- (4) the subject pronoun of the 3.m.sg. is -aas (vs. NSom. -uu), cf.  
Xa. biyah-aas dhamey (he drank the water);
- (5) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is ni, cf.  
Xa. waa ni arkey (I saw you);
- (6) the progressive forms of the causative and reflexive conjugation contain h, cf.
- Bi. waa jebihaa (I am breaking it),  
waa imaahee (you are coming) vs.  
NSom. waa(n) jebinayaa and waa(d) imaanaysaa respectively;
- (7) the ending of the 3.pl. of the jussive is -aan(o), cf.  
Aj. ha siiy-aano (they shall give it) vs.  
NSom. ha siiy-een;

- (8) the infinitive forms of the causative and reflexive conjugation do not end in -n as in NSom., cf.
- Ben. jebi (to break, tr.) vs. NSom. jebin,  
imaa (to come) vs. imaan;
- (9) the ending of the 1.sg. of the negative present is -i, cf.  
Xa. ma keen-i (I do not bring it);
- (10) the verb uwaad- (be able) is still conjugated by means of prefixes, cf.
- Xa. waa t-uwaad-aa (you are able),  
waa y-uwaad-aa (he is able).
- In NSom. on the contrary this verb is conjugated only by means of suffixes, cf.
- Og. waad awood-d-aa (you are able),  
waan awood-n-aa (we are able),  
and so on;
- (11) if the subject is focused, the subjunctive can be used, cf.  
Aj. adig-aa dir-to (you send it).

Moreover the Ben. dialects share with NSom. many isoglosses in opposition to the other Somali dialects and at the same time they share many isoglosses with the rest of Southern Somali in opposition to the NSom. As the Ben. dialects are quite close to NSom., many Somali scholars regard these two dialectal groups as a greater unity, that they call Na x a a d - t i r i (Mat.) and that they set against all other Somali dialects.

In order to characterize each Ben. dialect I will report here only one or two isoglosses, but actually it is the structure of the respective dialect as a whole that differentiates it from the other ones. Some peculiarities of Ab. are:

- a) the subject pronoun of the 3.m.sg. is -oow (Northern Ab.)/-aaw (Southern Ab.)<sup>3</sup>, cf.
- Ab. ussugu niq dheer-oow yahey (he is a tall man);
- b) the verbal ending of the 3.m.sg. does not correspond to that of the 1.sg. as it does in the rest of Mat., but it is marked by a verbal pronoun -y-, cf.
- Ab. waa rab-y-aa (he wants it),  
waa rab-y-ey (he wanted it) vs.

the rest of Mat. waa/wuu rab-aa and waa/wuu rab-ey respectively.

Some peculiarities of Aj. are:

a) if the absolute personal pronouns are focused, they can be used without an article, cf.

Aj. ad-aa fii<sup>4</sup>ay (you are good) beside  
adig-aa fii<sup>4</sup>an (like in the rest of Mat.);

b) the possessive of the 2.sg. contain a dental<sup>4</sup>

Aj. miis-kaadii<sup>5</sup> (your table) vs.  
the rest of Mat. miis-kaagii.

A peculiarity of Ga. is the use of nominal focus particles like yaa and baa (beside -aa), while the rest of Ben. has only -aa at its disposal, cf.

Ga. niq dheer yaas yahey (he is a tall man).

The Southern Benaadir is characterized

a) by the plural morphemes -yaal and -ooyig/-ooshig, cf.

Xa./Bi. san-yaal (noses) vs.

NSom. san-an/san-an and Northern Ben. sam-an/sam-o/san-o;

Xa. naag-ooshig (women) vs. NSom./Northern Ben. naag-o;

b) by the contracted ingressive endings -ooyaa (< -ow hayaa), -oosaa (< -ow haysaa), and so on, cf.

Xa./Bi. waa keen-ooyaa (I am going to bring it);

c) by the possessive of the 1.pl. -aano/-aana<sup>6</sup> (vs. the rest of Ben. -een-/-ayn-), cf.

Xa. minig-kaano (our house),

Bi. (of Lower Shabelle) minig-kaana (our house).

Xa. differs from the other Ben. dialects in the fact, that the possessives usually appear without any article, cf.

Xa. minigkeed (her house) vs.

Bi. minigkeed-a/minigkeed-a (her house).

The preterital endings of Bi. are -i/-ti/-ni and so on (vs. the rest of Mat. -ey/-tey/-ney or -ay/-tay/-nay), cf.

Bi. waa i dili (he beat me) vs.  
the rest of Ben. waa i diley.

### 3.3. The Ashraaf dialects

The Ashraaf dialects (Ash.) are spoken only along the coast of Southern Somalia, their speakers are light-skinned Somali of Arabic provenience, who claim to be the offspring of the prophet Mohamed. This is the dialectal group that presents the least number of speakers, nevertheless the Ashraaf dialects are among the most conservative and thus interesting Somali dialects. They consist of only two subgroups, i.e.

(1) the Ashraaf of Mogadishu, Af-Shingaani (Shi.), spoken in that part of the capital called Shingaani and

(2) the Ashraaf of Lower Shabelle spoken in the district of Merka, in the town itself and in some villages near it.

The peculiarities of these dialects are numerous, but only a few of them will be reported here:

(1) x + t + Ash. xt vs. Mat. xd, cf.

Shi. maskaxta (the brain) + maskax + -ta vs. Mat. maskaxda;

(2) l + t + Ash. lt vs. Mat. sh, cf.

Shi. walaal<sup>7</sup>tey (my sister) + walaal + -tey vs.  
Mat. walaashay;

(3) l + y + Ash. λ, cf. Me. geli (he entered) + gal- + -yi;

(4) d + y + Ash. c, cf. Me. us imaaci (he came) + imaad- + -yi;

(5) the phonetic sequence \*ishV has not become iyV (like in the other Somali dialects), cf.

Shi. isha (she), aq su siishi (I gave it to him) vs.  
Mat. iya-da and waa(n) siiyey respectively;

(6) all the nouns ending in a vowel are feminine, cf.

Shi. diwi-ta (the bull) vs. Mat. dibi-ga;

(7) plurals are formed with the suffix -aay, cf.

Shi. naag-aay (women);

(8) all plurals are feminine, cf.

Shi. naagaay-ta (the women) vs. Mat. naaga-ha;

(9) the personal pronouns are:

Shi. 1.sg. aq (I) vs. Mat. ani-ga,

do  
collehi  
e sugle  
elwintor

bileon  
haleemey

Shi.	2.sg.	at (you)	vs.	Mat.	adi-ga,
	3.m.sg.	us (he)	vs.		isa-ga/ussu-ga, etc.,
	3.f.sg.	ish(a) (she)	vs.		iya-da, etc.
	1.pl.	anuug (we)	vs.		anna-ga, etc.
	2.pl.	asiig (you)	vs.		idin-ka,
	3.pl.	ishooq (they)	vs.		iya-ga/uyu-kka, etc.

(10) there are forms for the object pronouns of the 3. person, cf.

Shi. su dil (kill him), sa dil (kill her) vs.

Mat. dil (kill him/her!);

(11) the ending of the 3.m.sg. of the perfective preterit is -yi, cf.

Ash. us dhik-yi (he wrote);

(12) there are no infinitive forms, in their place the subjunctive is used;

(13) there are neither focus particles nor a difference between re-attricitive and extensive paradigms and prolonged verbal forms.

The two Ash. subgroups differ from each other in some respects, Shi. differentiates from the Ash. of Lower Shabelle by, amongst others, the following features:

a) progressive forms are formed by means of the infixes -yaaw-/-iiw-/-eew- according to the respective type of conjugation, cf.

Shi. aq fur-yaaw-a (I am opening),  
 aq kar-iiw-a (I am cooking),  
 aq jiif-eew-a (I am sleeping);

b) the present ending of the 2.sg. in the positive conjugation is -tid (vs. Ash. of Lower Shabelle -te), cf.

Shi. at keen-tid (you bring it),  
 at keepaa-tid (you are bringing it) vs.

Me. at keenee-te (you bring it) and  
 at keenidee-te (you are bringing it) respectively;

c) there are lexical differences like

Shi. kooy- (to come) vs. Me. imaad-,  
 joog- (to remain) vs. roog-,  
 widay (friend) vs. akhwaag.

and so on.

Some peculiarities of the Ash. of Lower Shabelle are:

a) progressive forms are formed by means of the infix -dee- (< dee- to see), cf.

Me. aq keeni-dee (I am bringing it);

b) the verb to be has only one form for all persons in the past tense,

cf. Me. aq ahay (I was), at ahay (you were),  
 anuug ahay (we were) and so on vs.

Shi. aq ahay (I was), at ahat (you were) and  
 anuug ahan (we were) respectively;

c) the vowel of the definite article is -e (vs. Shi. -a), cf.

Me. niq-ke (the man) vs. Shi. niq-ka,  
 naak-te (the woman) vs. naak-ta;

d) the vowel of the demonstrative suffix for the deixis of proximity is -o- (vs. Shi. -a-), cf.

Me. naakta-kog (this woman) vs. Shi. naakta-kaq.

### 3.4. The May dialects

The May dialects are spoken nowadays in the regions of Ba-kool, Gedo, Baay, Middle Juba, Lower Shabelle and to a small extent in Lower Juba (mainly in the district of Jamaame). But not the whole population living in this territory has May as its mother tongue; in fact within the same area the Digil and also some Mat. dialects are spoken (for instance Aj. and Ga. in the districts of Saakow and Bu'aale). Even in the districts of Dhiinsoor, Qoryooley and Jilib, which along with Buurhakaba are the centers of the Digil dialects, do the May-speakers fail to constitute 40% of the local population.

As the May dialects form a linguistic continuum, their subdivision in groups is difficult and to a certain extent arbitrary, especially because the borders among the dialectal varieties present merging features. Although May presents slight differences everywhere, on the whole it is homogeneous. Some of the most striking peculiarities of the May dialects are:

(1) there is a vowel phoneme ə (vs. Mat. and Ash. have no ə);

- (2) there are no pharyngeals at all (vs. Mat. and Ash. have at least a devoiced pharyngeal fricative x);
- (3) l + t + May *li*, cf.  
May *weelli* (you did it) + *weel-* + *-ti*;
- (4) h + t + May *tti*, cf.  
May *batti* (you went) + *bah-* + *-ti* vs.  
Ash. *baxti* and Mat. *waa(d) bax(a)day* (you came out);
- (5) h + n + May *nni*, cf.  
May *banni* (we went) + *bah-* + *-ni* vs.  
Ash. *baxni* and Mat. *waa(n) baxney* (we came out);
- (6) all plural are masculines;
- (7) the plural of the possessive and demonstrative pronouns are formed prefixing the demonstrative *haan(i)-* to the respective adjectives, cf.  
May *haan-aas* (those there), *haan(i)-key* (mine, pl.);
- (8) the ending of the 2.sg. and 1.pl. of the present are *-aasə* and *-aanə* respectively, cf.  
May *fad-aasə* (you want), *fad-aanə* (we want);
- (9) the ending of the 2.sg. of the imperative of the reflexive conjugation is *-oy*, cf.  
May *jiif-oy* (sleep!);
- (10) in the heraldic constructions the verb takes prolonged forms, which are typical for these dialects, i.e. *-ee/-aa* (in the present) and *-ey/-aa* (in the past), cf.  
May *may fadaan-ee beesə* (we want some money).

I refrain here from a subclassification because of the above-mentioned reasons. As among the Somali dialects that do not belong to Mat., the May dialects present by far the greatest number of speakers, they could be said to symbolize in Somalia the opposite pole to Mat.

### 3.5. The Digil dialects

This is the most heterogeneous dialectal group of the Somali Democratic Republic and it is indeed questionable, whether the

Digil dialects form a single group, or whether each single Digil dialect constitutes its separate group. This does not apply so much to Tu. and Dab., but it does to Gr. and especially so to Ji. By *Digil dialects* I refer here to the following Somali dialects:

- (1) Af-Tunni (Tu.) spoken in the districts of Dhiinsoor, Baraawe and Jilib. The speakers of this dialect are nomads and herdsman, who do not keep camels, but cattle, sheep and goats. Tu. is the Digil dialect which was influenced in the strongest way by May;
- (2) Af-Dabarre (Dab.) spoken mainly in the districts of Dhiinsoor, Qansax Dheere and as a result of immigration, which took place during the last decades, in the whole Middle Juba especially along the river. Dab. consists of two subgroups which are:
- Dab. in its proper sense, which is spoken by the Dabarre themselves and
  - Af-Oroole (Or.); the Oroole traditionally entertain a very close and friendly relationship with the Dabarre and both clans claim to be *brothers*.
- The Or. of the district of Dhiinsoor has in the meantime been influenced by Dab. quite strongly, while the Oroole, who migrated to Bu'aale and Jilib, have preserved their linguistic identity better. Dab. is a fairly homogeneous dialect, but the May influence has also had a strong effect on it;
- (3) Af-Garre (Gr.) spoken in the districts of Baydhaba, Dhiinsoor, Buurhakaba and Qoryooley is one of the most heterogeneous dialects of Somalia; in fact, some Gr. dialects (those of Buurhakaba and Qoryooley) have, for instance preserved the conjugation with prefixes to date, while others (those of Baydhaba) have already given it up. Also the typical Digil plural morpheme *-tə* has been replaced in some Gr. dialects (especially in those around Baydhaba) by the common Southern Somali morpheme *-yaal*. Although the Reer Amiir are no Garre at all, their idiom belongs to this dialectal group. Also the Boni language of Kenya (described by Heine 1982) is very closely related to Gr., indeed one could say that Gr. is the Boni of Somalia or, if you want, Boni is the Gr. of Kenya<sup>7</sup>;

(4) Af-Jiiddu (Ji.) spoken in the districts of Qoryooley, Dhiinsoor, Jilib and Buurhakaba. It can be split into several dialectal varieties and has an exceptional position within the Digil group; especially on the lexical level, Ji. differs from all other Somali dialects. Therefore the status of Ji. as a Somali dialect has been called into question by some scholars like Biber (1980)<sup>8</sup> and Banti (1981)<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand one may not forget the very numerous isoglosses, which relate Ji. to Tu. and May and especially to Dab. and Gr. From a grammatical point of view Ji. is structured like these dialects. The Jiiddu of the district of Buurhakaba seem to have given up their dialect in favor of the local May.

The most striking peculiarities, which justify referring to Tu., Dab., Gr. and Ji. as a single dialectal group (the Digil group) are:

(1)  $1 + t \rightarrow$  Digil sh vs. May ll, cf.

Tu. walaashiitə (my sister) + walaal + -tiitə,  
but in Ji.  $1 + t \rightarrow$  lt (like in Ash.);

(2) plural nouns are formed by means of the suffixes -ə, -yə and mainly -tə (in Ji. -dhə), cf.

Tu./Gr. min-tə (houses), Dab. min-etə, Ji. min-dhə;

(3) the suffixation of the article is expressed by the lengthening of the word-final vowel (presenting similarities to May), cf.

Tu./Dab. lugə (legs)  $\rightarrow$  Tu. lugoo (the legs), Dab. lugaa,  
Gr. mintə (houses)  $\rightarrow$  mintaa (the houses),  
Ji. eldhə (eyes)  $\rightarrow$  eldhaa (the eyes), but also  
May lugə (legs)  $\rightarrow$  lugoo (the legs);

(4) the possessive of the 2.pl. is -əsəg, cf.

Tu./Dab. walaal-kəsəg (your brother),  
Ji. ii-dəsən (your mother), vs. May -iiq, cf.  
May aa-diiq (your mother),  
May walaal-kiiq (your brother);

(5) the interrogative adjective *which* is expressed by the suffix -oo, cf.

Tu./Dab. miq-k-oo (which house), Gr. miq-oo vs.  
May and the rest of Somali -ee, -ma, maashee and so on, cf.

May miq-k-ee (which house);

(6) the negative preterit is formed with the ending -nə (like in May), cf.

Tu./Dab. nə kooy-nə (I did not come);

(7) the infinitive form corresponds to the verbal stem (vs. May, where the infinitive is formed with the suffix -ə), cf.

Gr. keeq (to bring), Tu./Dab. sheeq vs.  
May sheen-ə;

(8) the verbal noun is formed with the suffix -aal (vs. May, where the suffix is -ow), cf.

Ji. jam-aal (the fact of wanting);

Tu./Gr. fed-aal (the fact of wanting) vs.  
May fad-ow (the same);

(9) the future and present tenses are expressed by the insertion of the imperfective preverb sə, cf.

Tu./Dab. sə sheenə (I bring it, I will bring it),

Gr. was (< wə sə) keenə (the same).

The preverb sə can be found only in the Digil dialects of Tu., Dab. and Gr., but not in any other Somali dialect;

(10) there are prolonged verbal forms in the case of application of the heraldic construction (like in May).

On the other hand the isoglosses separating these four dialects from each other are also numerous. Some of the most noteworthy features which distinguish them from each other are the following, whereby Ji. seems to be the most isolated dialect within the group:

in Tu.

(1)  $h + t \rightarrow$  Tu. tt, cf. *ttay*  
Tu. dhetətə (you said) + dheh- + -tə;

(2)  $h + n \rightarrow$  Tu. nn, cf. *nan*  
Tu. bannə (we went) + bah- + -nə;

(3) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is iskii, cf.

Tu. unnəiskii goronnə (we know you);

- (4) the plural of the possessive and demonstrative pronouns is formed by means of the prefix *hug-*, cf.  
 Tu. *hugookiik* (mine, pl.); *Dab*
- (5) the progressive endings are *-aaya* (1.sg./3.m.sg.), *-aayta* (2.sg./3.f.sg.) and so on, cf.  
 Tu. *sheeg-aaya* (I am/was saying),  
*sheeg-aayta* (you are/were saying);
- (6) the endings of the preterit are: *-a* (1.sg.)/*-ta* (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/*-ya* (3.m.sg.)/*-na* (1.pl.) and so on, cf.  
 Tu. *sheeg-a* (I said), *sheeg-da* (you/she said), etc.;
- (7) the auxiliary of the habitual past tense is *dit-*, cf.  
 Tu. *ada sheen-ditta* (you used to bring it);
- (8) the future tense can be expressed only by means of the imperfective preverb *sə*, cf.  
 Tu. *sə sheena* (I'll bring it);
- (9) the dative/benefactive preverb is *i*, cf.  
 Tu. *i sheeg* (tell him!);
- (10) in the heraldic constructions the verbal form takes the suffix *-ey* as prolongation, cf.  
 Tu. *Ali may sə fed-ey beesə* (Ali will look for some money).

In Dab.

- (1) *Vh + t + Dab. V̄d*, cf. *Dab. beedi* (you went) + *beh- + -ti*;
- (2) the suffixation of the article to masculines ending in a vowel consists in the lengthening of the word-final vowel itself, cf.  
*Dab. harta* (man) + *hartaa* (the man, the husband);
- (3) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is *siig*, cf.  
*Dab. Ali sə siig kassə* (Ali knows you);
- (4) the plural of the possessive and demonstrative pronouns is formed by means of the prefix *hali-* before the respective adjectives, cf.  
*Dab. hali-kaseq* (yours, pl.);
- (5) the progressive forms are expressed by means of the preiphrastic construction verbal noun in *-ow* + auxiliary *heesh-* (to keep), cf.

- Dab. inna sheenow-heesha* (I am bringing it);
- (6) the auxiliary of the habitual past tense is *kat-*, cf.  
*Dab. ida sheeg-katti* (you used to bring it);
- (7) the verbal noun is formed with the suffix *-ow*, cf.  
*Dab. sheen-ow* (the act of bringing);
- (8) causatives are formed by means of the suffix *-Vs-*, cf.  
*Dab. jab-* (to break, intr.) + *jab-as-* (to break, tr.);
- (9) the negation of the jussive is *iq*, cf.  
*Dab. ussə iq kooyna* (he shall not come);
- (10) in the heraldic constructions the verbal forms takes the suffix *-aa* as prolongation, cf.  
*Dab. mee sə fed-aa beesada* (I want the money).

In Gr.

- (1) *h + t + Gr. ht*, cf. *Gr. wə bahta* (you went) + *bah- + -ta*;
- (2) *n + t + Gr. nn*, cf.  
*Gr. wə keenna* (you brought it) + *keen- + -ta*;
- (3) the phonemes *d*, *g* and *j* of the other Somali dialects correspond in Gr. to *t*, *k* and *sh* respectively (Gr./Boni devoicing laws), cf.  

Somali <i>d̥id-</i> (to refuse)	=	Gr. <i>t̥id-</i> ,
<i>gal-</i> (to enter)	=	<i>kal-</i> ,
<i>jilib</i> (knee)	=	<i>shilib</i> ;
- (4) the gender consonant for masculines is realized as  $\emptyset$  after a consonant, cf. *Gr. laq- $\emptyset$*  (a man) < \**laq-k-oo*;
- (5) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is *ad*, cf.  
*Gr. Ali wəs ad karada* (Ali knows you);
- (6) the possessive suffix of the 2.sg. is *-ah*, cf.  
*Gr. miq-ah* (your house);
- (7) the plural of the possessive and demonstrative pronouns is formed by means of the prefix *kun-*, cf.  
*Gr. kun-ah* (yours, pl.);
- (8) in the present the ending of the 3.pl. is *-iq*, cf.  
*Gr. wəs keen-iq* (they bring it/they will bring it);

- (9) the progressive forms are expressed by the verbal noun in -aal and the auxiliary heey- (to keep), cf.  
Gr. wə keen-aal-heeya (I am bringing it);
- (10) the auxiliary of the habitual past tense is sher-, cf.  
Gr. wə keeq-shertə (you used to bring it);
- (11) the ending of the 2.pl. of the imperative in the reflexive conjugation is -adhaha, cf.  
Gr. kar-adhaha (know!);
- (12) there is an optional verbal focus particle, i.e. wə/wa;
- (13) no prolonged verbal forms are used in the heraldic constructions.

In Ji.

- (1)  $1 + t \rightarrow$  Ji. lt, cf.  
Ji. issə dhaltey (she bore) + dhal- + -tey;
- (2) the vowel of the suffix for reflexive verbs -adh- is syncopated in certain circumstances, cf.  
Ji. anə dhaltey (I was born) < \*d'al-ad'-ay;
- (3) plurals are formed by means of the suffix -dhə, cf.  
Ji. min-dhə (houses);
- (4) the suffixation of the articles consists in the lengthening of the word-final vowel (also in singular), cf.  
Ji. weesə (crocodile) + weesaa (the crocodile);
- (5) the object pronoun of the 2.pl. is essen (in the district of Dhiin-soor), assoo (in the district of Jilib) and essaa in the district of Qoryooley), cf.  
Ji. Ali essaa hasni (Ali knows you);
- (6) the plural of the possessive and demonstrative pronouns is formed by means of the prefix haar-, cf.  
Ji. haar-əkaakə (those ones);
- (7) the interrogative adjective *which* is expressed by the pronoun hoom/toom (pl. haarmə), cf.  
Ji. min hoom (which house), namaa toom (which woman);
- (8) for the expressions of the past there are periphrastic constructions with the auxiliaries -ook-/-oot- (to come), -aab- (to

bring) and aw- (to be). cf.

- Ji. jam-ooku (I wanted), shin-away (I had gone);
- (9) the ending of the 2.pl. of the present tense is -ta, cf.  
Ji. gow-ta (you have), aamenet-ta (you eat);
- (10) progressive forms are expressed by means of the verbal noun in -aal and the auxiliary heesh- (to keep), cf.  
Ji. anə aam-aal-heeshə (I am eating).  
In some Ji. dialects (namely in those of the district of Qor-yooley) this periphrastic construction can be contracted to the verbal stem having the ending -aashə (1.sg./3.m.sg.)/-aashta (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/-aashnə (1.pl.). etc., cf.  
Ji. aam-aashə (I am eating);
- (11) the future and the habitual present are formed by means of the endings -(e)ni (1.sg./3.m.sg.)/-(e)netta (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/-(e)nen (1.pl.)/-(e)netta (2.pl.)/-(e)niya (3.pl.), cf.  
Ji. aam-eniva (they are eating/they will eat);
- (12) the habitual past tense is formed by means of the endings -aaley (1.sg./3.m.sg.)/-aatey (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/-aaney (1.pl.)/-aatin (2.pl.)/-aalin (3.pl.), cf.  
Ji. aam-aaley (I used to eat it);
- (13) the endings of the 3. person of the jussive are: -is (3.m.sg.)/-tis (3.f.sg.)/-aas (3 pl.) or -aney (3.m.sg.)/-taney (3.f.sg.)/-aney (3.pl.), cf.  
Ji. forsh-is (he shall cook), forsh-aney (they shall cook);
- (14) the endings of the imperative are: -ə (2.sg.) and -en (2.pl.), cf.  
Ji. aam-ə (eat!) + pl. aam-en;
- (15) the negative preterit appears with the endings -əb (1.sg./3.m.sg.)/-təb (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/-nəb (1.pl.)/-tab (2.pl.)/-ab (3.pl.), cf.  
Ji. mə jam-təb (you did not want it);
- (16) the negative present appears with the endings -(e)nimiir (1.sg./3.m.sg.)/-(e)nimiit (2.sg./3.f.sg.)/-(e)nimiin (1.pl.)/-(e)nimiita (2.pl.)/-(e)nimiira (3.pl.), cf.  
Ji. aam-enimiir (I do not eat it);
- (17) the dative/benefactive preverb is is cf.  
Ji. y-is dhu (go to him/her);

S.N. dhigaa

Ash. D. 2

M

Tu

essen

ookoo } D.  
ootoo }

in?

(18) in the heraldic constructions the verbal forms take the suffix -uu/-ee as prolongation, cf.

Ji. gaam jamny-uu beesə tooshə (I want my money).

#### 4. The linguistic minorities

##### 4.1. The Oromo minorities

These ethnic groups live scattered in the whole region of Gedo on the frontier with Ethiopia. The language of the Oromo minorities of Somalia is evidently quite heterogeneous. The relevant material, which I collected in the region of Gedo, indeed contains many dialectal differences, although from a linguistic point of view it is doubtlessly Oromo. In Somalia these different Oromo dialects are called *Af-Arussi*, *Af-Qotto*, *Af-Boraan*, *Af-Garre*, and so on. All of them are influenced to a certain extent by the Somali language, especially in the lexicon. Apart from in Gedo Oromo minorities can be found in the region of Lower Juba and especially in the district of Badhaade, Afmadow and Kismaayo.

##### 4.2. The Swahili minorities

In Somalia there are only two Swahili minorities and both speak Northern Swahili dialects. The Swahili community of Lower Shabelle speaks a northern dialect called *Af-chimwiini*; these people live in the town of Baraawe and are known as good artisans manufacturing shoes, bags and other leather goods. The second Swahili community lives in the district of Kismaayo, in the town itself and in the neighbouring coast. Its dialect is called *Af-Bajuun* by the Somali and *KiBajuni* by the Swahili themselves. The Bajuun earn their living by fishing and are considered good and courageous sea people. They settled in the district of Kismaayo before the big immigration from Northern Somalia took place, nevertheless they are probably not the original inhabitants of the Lower Juba region, because their extension is limited to the coast and, according to the Somali tradition, they came there some centuries ago from Zanzibar;

anyway Af-Bajuun is among the dialects which are spoken nowadays in the town of Kismaayo, the one which has been spoken there the longest.

##### 4.3. The Mushungulu minority

The Mushungulu live in the Lower Juba district of Jamaame along the banks of the river Juba. The village Bendarjidid has to be considered the center of the Mushungulu minority. According to the Somali tradition these people immigrated during the last centuries from Tanzania to Somalia. As the Mushungulu do not mingle with the rest of the Somali population and in their private life they isolate themselves from them, it is not seldom that their women do not learn Somali at all. On the other hand, their men, who, because of professional reasons have a greater chance of coming into contact with Somali, learn relatively quickly the local May dialect. The Mushungulu also differ from the rest of Somali by their habits, for instance they eat fish from the river and cultivate the land. The language spoken by the Mushungulu is an Eastern-Bantu language, which according to W.I.G. Möhlig<sup>9</sup> corresponds to the language of the Shambaa people of Tanzania, although, nowadays, presents some lexical loans from Somali and some regular sound correspondences in comparison with the language of the Shambaa. Apart from this Af-Mushungulu disposes of a nominal class system and its structure is very similar to that of Swahili.

##### 4.4. The Boon minority

The community speaking Af-Boon is not as a rule to be found in towns or villages, but they are scattered in the bush and live in settlements of two or three houses with their closest relatives. Although these people are only to be found in the district of Jilib in the Middle Juba region, there are some clues that lead us to assume that they perhaps inhabited a greater area between the two rivers in the past. Formerly *Boon* was the name that people gave to those families, which lived by hunting and leather manufacturing in Somalia. Nowadays the word *Boon* is used for designating people working as shoemakers.



All these people (hunters, leather manufacturers and shoemakers) belonged in the past to the lowest social classes of the Somali society. But by *Boon minority* it is not a certain trade group to which is referred to, but to a clan of hunters and gatherers, who do not seem to have any relation with the Boni (or Aweer) people living in Kenya and speaking a Somali dialect very similar to Af-Garre.

In the last decades the Boon underwent a very strong somalizing process, which has caused them to give up their mother tongue and to take over the local May dialect of Jilib as medium. Only Boon people older than sixty years still have Af-Boon as mother tongue, but they use it only with fellow tribesmen of the same age. The medium used with and by younger Boon generations is, as I have already said, the May dialect of the district of Jilib; so that one has to assume that within one decade Af-Boon will die out. A reliable classification of this idiom is unfortunately not possible at the present time, because my material on it is too poor. Although Af-Boon differs in many respects from the other Somali dialects, I think that it is a Cushitic language (and perhaps an Eastern-Cushitic one). My supposition is based on the following pronominal forms:

## Af-Boon

ani (I, personal pronoun of the 1.sg.);

ati (you, personal pronoun of the 2.sg.);

hebla (he, personal pronoun of the 3.m.sg.), cf. Somali hebel (someone) < \*hebela;

ukka (that, demonstrative), cf. Ji. ekka (this), Dab. akkey (that);

unna/inna (this, demonstrative), cf. Somali -ka-n (this) vs. -kaa-s (that);

-na<sup>10</sup> (definite article), cf. the nasal ending of some Oromo words like bissaa-n (water, the water).

Also the existence in Af-Boon of two nominal classes characterized by the opposition kk/k vs. t present in the postponed demonstratives or possessives can be interpreted as a Cushitic characteristic, cf.

## Af-Boon

aakka vs. aata (that mentioned above) with common pl. aasa;

kakaaka vs. takaata<sup>11</sup> (yours, possessive pronoun of the 2.sg.);

maassa (indefinite article), cf. Somali mid (one, indefinite pronoun) < \*miza.

The lexical correspondences that Af-Boon shares with Somali, could obviously be recent borrowings (from the latter); the most striking thing however is the fact that the Boon forms often agree with the Old Somali ones, which we have to reconstruct from the comparison of the Somali dialects according to the historical-comparative method; they seem to have preserved the final vowel we have to reconstruct for Old Somali, cf.

Af-Boon		Old Somali		Modern Somali
afi	(mouth)	*af-a/af-i <sup>12</sup>	>	af
illa	(eye)	*ila	>	il
luko	(leg)	*luko	>	lug
hididi	(vein)	*xizizi	>	xidid
dhiiga	(blood)	*d'iigi/d'iiga	>	dhiig/dhiig
sugge	(wait!)	*sugi	>	sug
ruuma	(good)	*ruma	>	run (truth)
mantako	(he vomited)	*mantak-/mattak-	>	matag- (to vomit).

The arguments inducing us to reconstruct the Old Somali forms as we have done above are explained by Lamberti (1983:191-371).

Sometimes the Boon lexemes have no correspondence at all in Somali, but in other languages, cf.

Af-Boon		vs. Somali	
helliiso (liver)	Rendille	xelési	beer, turaw and similar
boogo (jaw)	Oromo	bookho	daan, Ji. gooy
dhinne (rib)	Oromo	c'innac	feer and similar, cf. also dhinna <sup>c</sup> (corner, side)
bafii' (lungs)	Oromo	bafeed'- (to breathe)	sanbab and similar
kekkebi (basket)	Swahili	kikapu	danbiil <sup>13</sup> and similar
dhabba (palm of the hand)	Nilotic	dap/tap	ʕalaaʕal, saʕab, ʕag, dhano, buubba, baabaʕo, Ji. c'arrac'era.

But for most lexems no correspondence at all was found in any other African language, cf.

Af-Boon .

naata (body, skin),	simbiino (tear),
gabo <sup>14</sup> (breast),	dimbaaro (lip),
muddur (finger),	figgilo (finger nail),
dhuuma (kidney),	maaka (knee),
naaju (man),	and so on.

Nevertheless as the syntax of Af-Boon is very similar to that of Somali, it cannot be excluded from consideration that it perhaps was a secret language spoken by people belonging to a low social class (as the name itself suggests), who lived in the regions of Middle/Lower Juba and perhaps also Lower Shabelle. That in Somalia people of lower classes formerly spoke a secret language beside the respective local Somali dialect has been already pointed out by Kirk (1905) and Cerulli (1927 and 1964). In today's Somalia these secret languages have either already disappeared or are just dying out, nevertheless some of them are still spoken, so for instance in the district of Buurhakaba

I found Af-Helledi, a May secret language spoken by a clan of hunters. So maybe Af-Boon too is such a secret language. The arguments speaking in favor of this hypothesis lie in the fact, that the Boon syntax is, as already said, very similar to that of Somali<sup>15</sup>; apart from this there are some lexical correspondences between Af-Boon and some (other) secret languages of Somalia, they are only a few, but we should not forget that the data on these secret languages consist of only a few pages, so that it is possible that they share more lexems and features with Af-Boon, cf.

✓ Af-Boon kattaama (throat), cf. Yibir (also of Northern Somalia) katowa/kattawa (mouth);

✓ Af-Boon nihin (meat), cf. Midgan rihin (meat);

Af-Boon adhum (bosom), cf. Midgan adeisimo (milk), but also Gollango ʕad'un-ko (woman's breast).

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Degodiya are no Daarood clan at all, nevertheless their dialect belongs to this group.

<sup>2</sup>But Northern Ben. has -o/-yo (and more rarely -yaal) as plural morphemes like NSom.

<sup>3</sup>Vs. the rest of Ben. -aas or NSom. -uu.

<sup>4</sup>This isogloss is shared also by Bi., which however can be distinguished from Aj. by other isoglosses.

<sup>5</sup>From \*-ka + adi + deixis -ii (literally *that of you*).

<sup>6</sup>Only in Xa. and Bi. of Lower Shabelle.

<sup>7</sup>The most salient difference between Boni and Gr. consists in the fact, that Boni was more influenced by Oromo, while Gr. was more influenced by the other Somali dialects.

<sup>8</sup>Personal communication.

<sup>9</sup>Personal communication.

<sup>10</sup>Contraction from unna/inna like Somali -ka/-ta < \*akkaa/attaa (demonstratives).

<sup>11</sup>Perhaps from \*ka + ku + aakka and \*ta + ku + aata respectively.  
that (of) you that one      that (of) you that one

<sup>12</sup>According with the reconstruction of Old Somali one has to suppose that the ending \*-a alternated with \*-i (cf. Lamberti 1983:231-233).

<sup>13</sup>Cf. also Boni kakkaba (basket).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Saho gubul (lung).

<sup>15</sup>The morphological data I have about Af-Boon are too poor to estimate its relationship with Somali, but I have the impression, that there are considerable differences between the two idioms.

## APPENDIX

## The classification of Ehret and Nuux Cali

At the 2nd International Congress of Somali Studies in Hamburg (August 1983), Jonn Saeed read a paper prepared by Christopher Ehret and Maxamed Nuux Cali, who unfortunately could not attend the Conference. The paper ("*Soomaali Classification*") contained a classification of the Somali dialects basically differing from that I have proposed here, thus I will now express my opinion on it. The classification that Ehret and Nuux Cali propose is the following:

## SOOMALI (I)

## A. Bayso-Jiiddu

1. Bayso
2. Jiiddu

## B. \*Soomaali II

1. Rendille

## 2. \*Soomaali III

## a. Garre-Aweer

- i. Garre
- ii. Aweer dialects

## b. Jubba (Dijib)

- i. Tunni
- ii. Baardheere (Bab)

## c. \*Soomaali IV

- i. Maay

(dialects: Luuq, Dhiinsoor, Daafeed, Bay, Baydhaba, Eyle, etc.)

## ii. Banaadir-Northern

- (a) Baraawe
- (b) Banaadir

(1) Xamar

(2) Southern Banaadir (Jamaame, Merka)

- (c) Jowhar
- (d) Shabelle-Northern
  - (1) Cadale
  - (2) Buuloburti
  - (3) Northern

## (A) Nomenclature of the Somali dialects

The first general observation is that this is more of a puzzle than a scientific classification. The authors in fact do not regard one of the most important problems of the Somali dialectology; that is, they replace the usual designations of the dialects by names of towns<sup>1</sup>, although referring to Somalia, it is senseless to speak about the "dialect" of a certain town, because in nearly every town and village of this country several dialects are spoken so that the label *Baardheere* or *Baraawe* does not say anything about the dialect meant and for the hearer/reader it constitutes more of a puzzle (as I shall show below) than a useful piece of information, especially if the speakers of the dialect in question are nomads<sup>2</sup>, who move from place to place according to the season. Thus whoever wants to specify a Somali dialect, for avoiding misunderstandings he has to mention its usual designation (even if this corresponds to the name of a clan) and the place, where it is spoken; so for instance: Dab. of Dhiinsoor, Dab. of Jilib, Ji. of Jilib etc. But to say "the dialect of Jilib" does not mean anything, because it is too ambiguous, as in Jilib several different dialects are spoken. Nevertheless I shall try below to solve the puzzle the authors presented us, to interpret their classification and to comment on it, although unfortunately Ehret and Nuux Cali did not substantiate at all their suppositions in the hand-out mentioned above.

## (B) The Relationship between Ji. and Bayso

The second point is that according to Ehret's and Nuux Cali's classification one would have to suppose that Ji. is closer to Bayso than to the other Somali dialects, which of course is not the case<sup>3</sup>. By a simple synchronic comparison of the grammatical

structure of Bayso, Ji. and the other Somali dialects, it is plain that Ji. is much closer to Somali than to Bayso and even Bayso itself is not closer to Ji. than to the other Somali dialects, at least not closer than to May and to the rest of Digil. For instance the Ji. syntax is nearly the same as that of Somali, cf.

in Bayso: adjectives, demonstratives and relative clauses precede their governing noun and postpositions are used;

vs.

Ji. and Somali, where adjectives, demonstratives and relative clauses have to follow their governing noun and instead of postpositions<sup>4</sup> preverbs are used.

The situation is similar in morphology: The plural formation of nouns in Bayso perhaps reminds one of some Somali dialects<sup>5</sup>, but not of Ji. The Bayso singulative suffix *ko/to* can be found all over Southern Somalia in form of *-ko/-to* or *-koo/-too* or *-koo/-too*, but not in Ji., where the singulative suffix is *-mee*. Ji. has no subject case marker in contrast to Bayso (*-o*) and NSom. (*-i/-u*). The dative/benefactive case is marked in Bayso by the suffix *-un*. Also Ash., May and Dab. have a dative/benefactive preverb *uq*, but Ji. marks this case by the preverb *is* (like the Oromo postposition *-Vf*). The demonstratives of Bayso are more similar to those of Dab. than to those of Ji., cf.

	Bayso	Dab.	Ji.	
m.	hikki/hikka	hikkey	ekke	this
f.	hitti/hitta	hittey	ette	
m.	aakki	akkey	ekaake	that
f.	aatti	attey	etaate	

It is true that the verbal morphology of Bayso is very complex as is that of Ji., but the two idioms use different auxiliaries, so that their similarity is rather a typological one. One could argue that if Ji. nowadays is much more similar to

the other Somali dialects than to Bayso, it could depend on an approaching process (between Ji. and Somali) caused by the geographical situation of the two idioms and occurring recently like, for instance, a substantial borrowing from Somali. This too is not true, in fact Ji. shares with Somali, Rendille and Boni (in opposition to Bayso) the oldest sound laws, which brought about the formation of the Sam type within the Omo-Tana group like the *older spirantization law* (\*k>h) and the *older palatalization laws*, cf.

after \*e, \*a and \*o \*k > h in the whole Sam and Ji.<sup>6</sup>,  
e.g.

- \*raka > NSom. rah (frog);
- ✓ \*y-ak-ay > NSom. wuu yahay (he is);
- \*d'ego-kaa > Mat. dhegaha (the ears);
- \*wakkalo-kaa > \*wakkalaha > Ji. wakkalaa (the frog);
- \*luko > Ji. lohə (leg);
- ✓ \*akay (<\*ak-y-ay) > Ji. ehey (copula, he is).

But in Bayso there are no clues at all for such development, cf.

Bayso

hunna ka ambaalee (the power of the wind), but not

\*hunna ha ambaalee;

raa ka konoonoo (the way of the nose, viz. nostril), but not

\*raa ha konoonoo;

haggee ko emette (where have you come from?), but not

\*haggee ho emette.

(All these examples are taken from Hayward 1979:107-108).

✓ Note also: the Bayso postposition ko (from) corresponds to the Ji. preverb ha (cf. Somali ka).

Before \*i and \*e \*k, \*g and \*k' > sh, j and j/j respectively in Somali and Ji., but not in Bayso, cf.

\*ken- > Bayso ken (five) vs. Somali and Ji. shan;

\*kimbiro > Bayso kimbir (bird) vs. Somali shinbir and Ji. shibbirə;

- \*kebeel- > Bayso keebeel (leopard) vs. Somali shabeel and Ji. shuul (< \*shuweel);
- \*gilub- > Bayso gilub (knee) vs. Somali jilib and Ji. jelow;
- \*ingir-/izgir- > Bayso iggir (louse) vs. Somali injir and Ji. ejjirə;
- \*gecela-ad'- > Bayso geelaat- (to love) vs. Somali jeclaat-; the Ji. form jallaat- is a borrowing from Oromo, cf. also Ji. jiiri (hippo) < \*geero;
- \*k'eb- > Bayso eb-<sup>7</sup> (to break, intr.) vs. Somali jab- and Ji. jaw-;
- \*k'ebish- > Bayso ibis- (to break, tr.) vs. Somali jebiy- and Ji. jawsh-.

In the treatment of \*z there is agreement between Bayso and Somali (\*z>d) and contrast to Ji. (\*z>y), cf.

\*xiziz- > Bayso hidid (root) and Somali xidid vs. Ji. hey;

\*waz(a)naa > Bayso wodana (heart) and Somali wadne vs. Ji. wayne.

In conclusion Ji. and the other Somali dialects, including Boni and Rendille, form a close linguistic group, that one could call Sam, but which Bayso does not belong to, although it is probably the language which is closest to it.

(C) Ehret and Nuux Cali's classification of the Upper-Juba dialects (May and Digil)

The subdivision of \*Soomaali II in Ehret and Nuux Cali's paper is also questionable. It is not clear, what the authors mean by *Baardheere*. In Bardheere three dialects are spoken, i.e.

- (1) an Oromo dialect, which is called *Af-Garre*<sup>8</sup>;
- (2) a Northern Somali dialect called *Af-Degodiya* and
- (3) the local May dialect of Bardheere.

The puzzle is: which one of these three do the authors mean by

*Baardheere*? The Oromo dialect should not be referred to, because it does not belong to the Sam group, Af-Degodiya is clearly a Mat. dialect and should be put into the group that Ehret and Nuux Cali call *Banaadir-Northern*. If the authors mean by *Baardheere* the May dialect of this town, why do they not put it together with the other May dialects? The puzzle seems insoluble. Perhaps *Baardheere* refers to an other Somali dialect spoken by nomads, who were just in Bardheere, when Ehret interviewed them, but who do not always reside there. Let us suppose, *Baardheere* is a dialect which is very close to Tu., as the authors say, the closest dialect to Tu. are the May on one side and the Dab. dialects on the other. As I visited Bardheere in order to study the dialects of the region, I did not find that Dab. is spoken there, but Dabarre are nomadic herdsmen and they move with their livestock according to the seasons. The territory which they move in is beside Western Baay, that of Middle Juba (along the river). Thus maybe when I was in Bardheere the Dabarre had already moved away, so that I was not able to ascertain that in the dry season Dab. is also spoken there. During Ehret's visit to Bardheere, he could have found Dabarre people there, studied their dialect and called it *Baardheere*. At any rate it is arbitrary to set only Tu. and Dab. (or Tu. and May) in one group, one has to set up either a separate group for every Digil dialect (so that for all Digil dialects four different groups would be set up) or a common group consisting at least of Tu., Dab. and Gr./Boni. May with its numerous varieties forms at all events a separate group. Ehret and Nuux Cali on the contrary put it under c. \*Soomaali IV; according to which May is closer to the Mat. dialects than to the Digil ones. This is as wrong as the statement that Ji. is closer to Bayso than to the other Somali dialects. In fact, May shares unequivocally many more isoglosses with Digil than with the Mat. dialects.

(D) Ehret and Nuux Cali's classification of the Mat. dialects

Regarding the Mat. dialects (called by Ehret and Nuux Cali *Banaadir-Northern*), it is not clear which dialect is referred to by *Baraawe* (another puzzle!), because in Baraawe no Mat. dialect is spoken at all<sup>9</sup>. The dialects spoken in Baraawe are:

- (1) a Northern Swahili dialect called *Af-chimwiini* (spoken only in the town itself);
- (2) the Tu. of the district of Baraawe and
- (3) the local May.

If Ehret and Nuux Cali mean the Tu. dialect by *Baraawe*, then it would be better placed under \*Soomaali III; if they mean the May dialect of Baraawe, then they ought to put it under the other May dialects and finally *Af-chimwiini* may not be taken into consideration, because it is no Somali dialect at all. Until one knows what the authors mean by *Baraawe*, the classification of this dialect cannot be verified. An easier puzzle is presented by the term *Jowhar*; the main dialect of Jowhar is Ga., which is clearly a Banaadir dialect, but also Ab. (which is like a bridge between Ben. and NSom.) seems to be spoken there. Some problems are still caused by the terms *Cadale* and *Buuloburti*. In *Cadale* two dialects are spoken, i.e. Ab. and a NSom. koiné (consisting mainly of the North-Eastern dialects). By *Buuloburti* Aj. should be referred to, although it is surely arbitrary to group it together with the NSom. dialects (instead of putting it with the other Ben. dialects)<sup>10</sup>, since it presupposes a disregard of its morphological structure.

(E) Methodological questions

Now a few words about the method: if one finds two or more lexems for a certain meaning in a language family, which has not been recorded in the past, it is arbitrary to regard one of them as an innovation; for instance in Somali there are two lexems for *stone*, i.e. *dhagax* (and similar forms) and *shiid*; Ehret and Nuux Cali want to consider *shiid* an innovation (see Ehret and Nuux Cali's hand-out), but this is an arbitrary act, because nobody can say (as the older linguistic stages of Somali are not recorded) which of the both is really the older one. Of course *dhagax* is an old lexem, but the fact that in Mat. there is no lexem *shiid* for *stone* (*shiid* and *shiid-* mean in Mat. *grindstone* and *to grind* respectively) does not mean at all that Mat. had

never possessed it; theoretically it can have lost the meaning of *stone* because replaced by *dhagax*, which would be in that case the innovation. Thus to consider *shiid* or *dhagax* an innovation is no scientific operation, but an arbitrary act. Equally arbitrary is the disqualification of some isoglosses (like for instance the development of \*a' or the occurrence of the palatalization and sonorization laws in the respective dialects), only because their existence does not fit into the conception of the author. The motivation for their being disregarded, their being the result of contact, cannot be taken seriously, because every isogloss presupposes contact and a scientific classification of dialects must be always based on isoglosses.

Finally I would like to add: as Ehret and Nuux Cali were unfortunately absent at the Congress, it was not possible to discuss all the points criticized here with them; nevertheless the authors are invited to reply to the criticism contained in this paper about their classification.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The authors have probably chosen their procedure for avoiding the use of clan names (most names of dialects in Somalia correspond in fact, as shown above, to names of clans). The Somali do not like to be reminded, that in their history clans played an important role because of political reasons. But for a scientific classification of the Somali dialects the use of clan names is unavoidable, because only the usual names of the dialects are really clear and, if necessary, verifiable.

<sup>2</sup> The greatest part of the Somali population consists of nomads.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately Ehret and Nuux Cali do not substantiate in the hand-out with isoglosses their supposition that Ji. and Bayso constitute a common branch.

<sup>4</sup> The only postposition of Ji. is -l (genitive marker), which perhaps is connected etymologically with the comitative postposition of Bayso -ne (with).

<sup>5</sup> In NSom. also there are plurals by reduplication, like in Bayso. The Bayso plural suffixes -aal/-eel/-ool and -jool could be connected with the morpheme

-yaal of Ben., May and Dab. But in Ji. the only plural morpheme is -dha, and such a form was not found, at least to date in Bayso.

<sup>6</sup> This law must be older than the *older palatalization laws*, because otherwise the \*k of \*bekee (> Tu. behe water) would have been palatalized instead of being spirantized, as is the case.

<sup>7</sup> The loss of \*k' in Bayso fully agrees with its sound laws, cf.

Bayso

ab- (to have, hold) < \*k'ab-,

uub- (to pour) < \*k'ub-, cf. Somali qub- (to pour away),

bool (hundred) < \*bok'ol-, cf. Somali boqol, usw.

<sup>8</sup> Here not the Somali dialect Af-Garre, which we have classified as Digil, is meant, but a homonymous Oromo dialect.

<sup>9</sup> In the seventies of this century the Somali Government established a colony of Northern Somali (mainly from the regions Waqooyi Galbeed and Togdheer) in the district of Baraawe, but according to my knowledge they still speak the dialect of their region, i.e. NSom. in its proper sense.

<sup>10</sup> In spite of their heterogeneity Ga., Aj. and Ab. form a certain unity, which I termed here *Northern Benaadir*.

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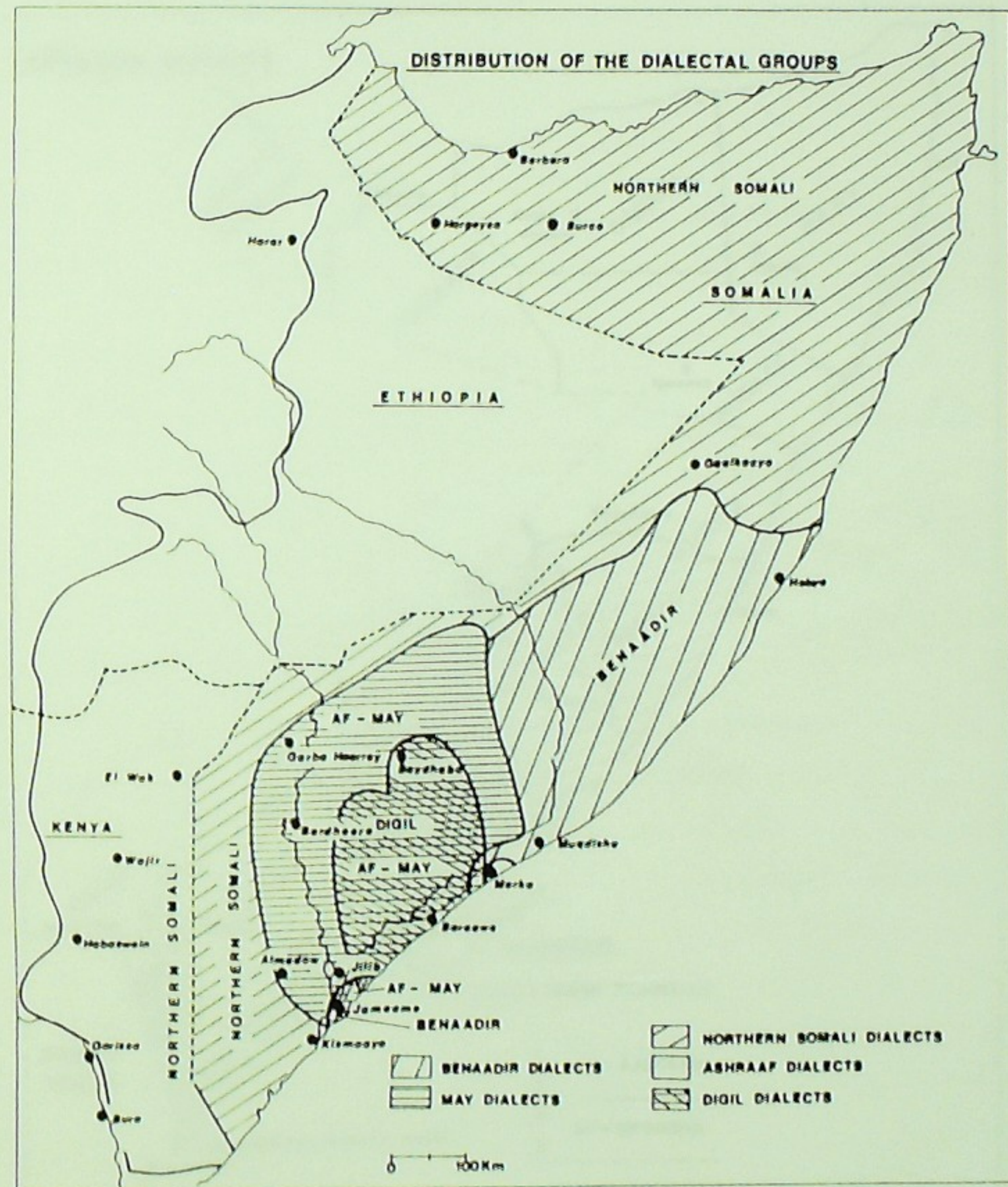
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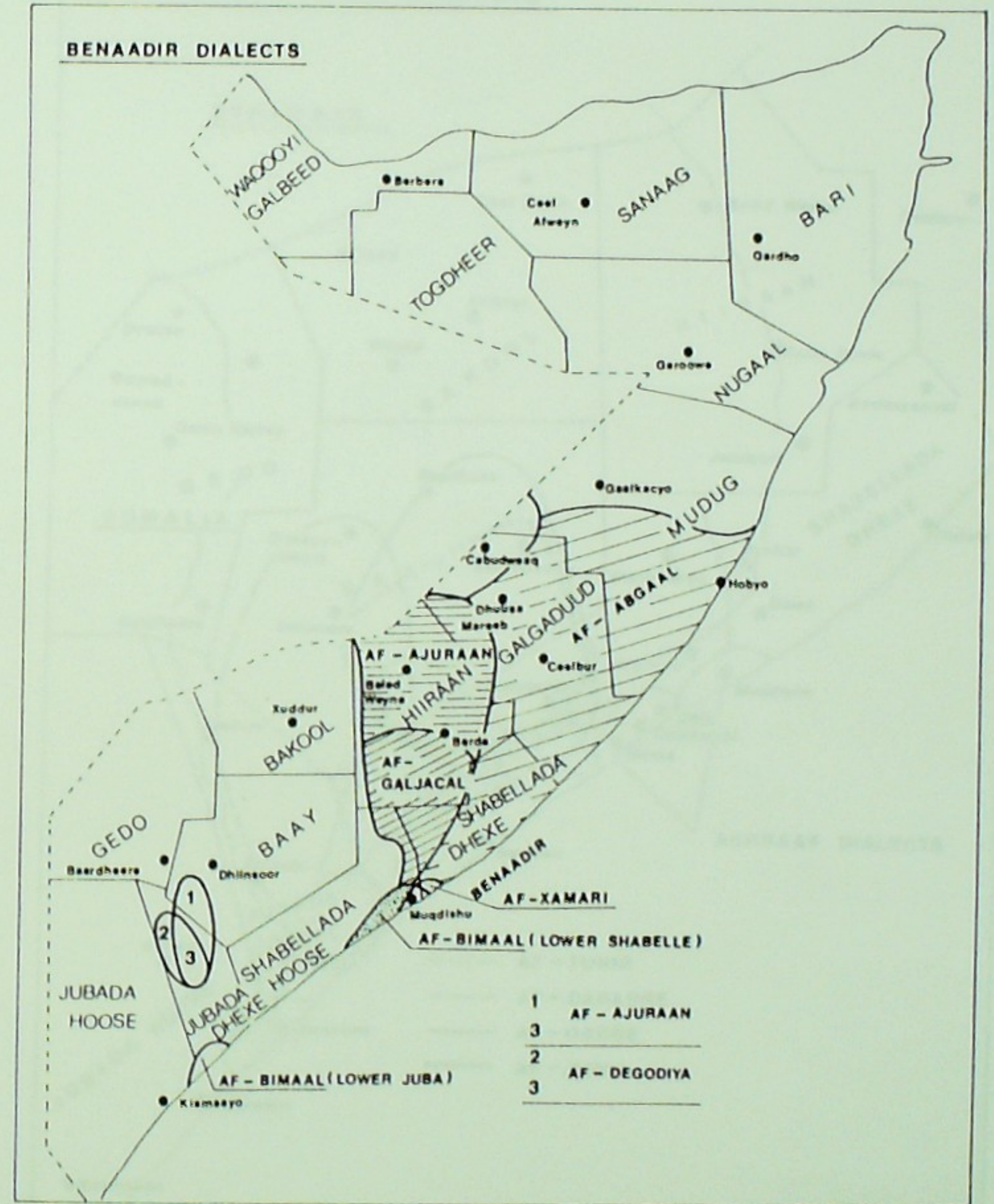
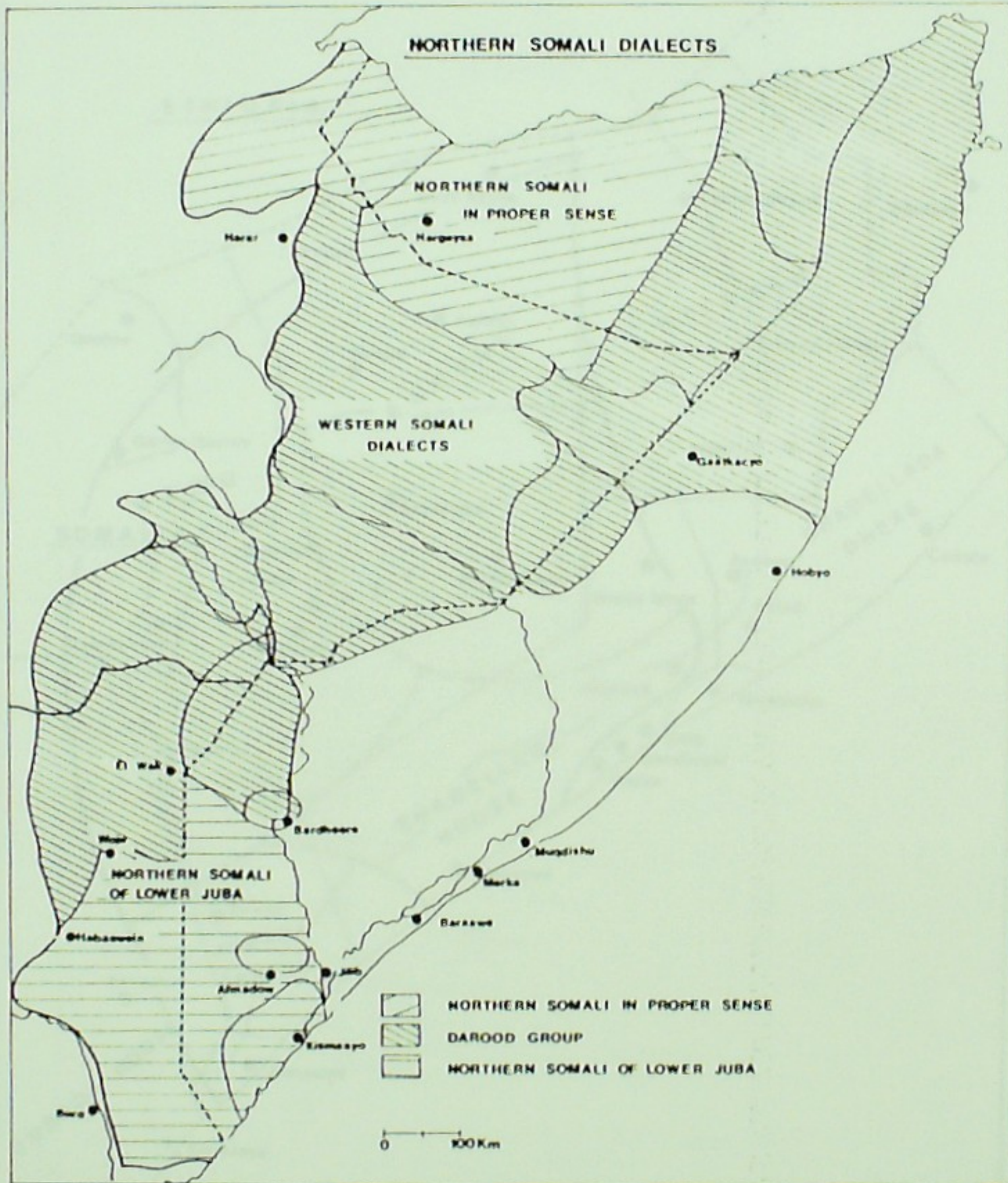
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## M A P S

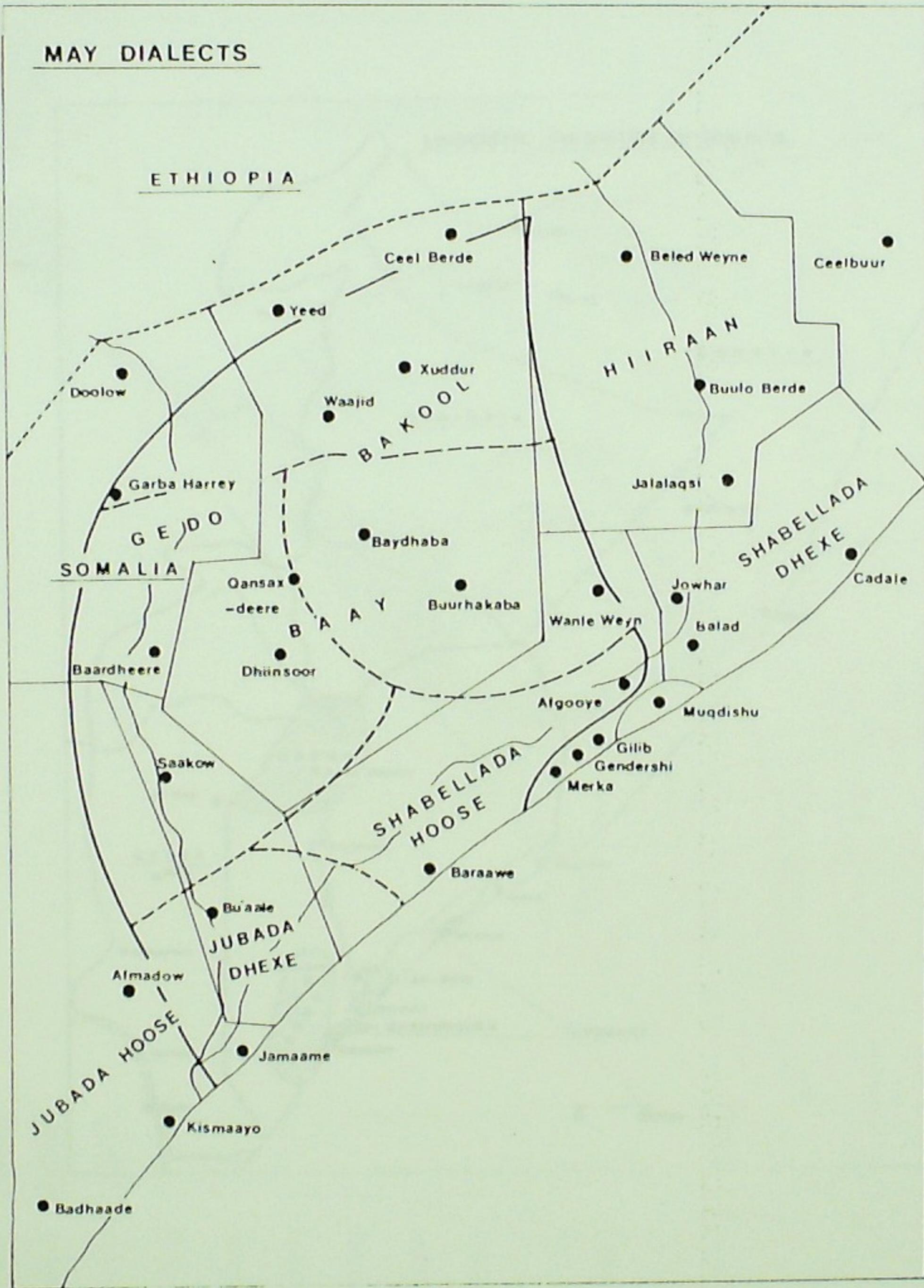
1. Distribution of the Dialectal Groups
2. Northern Somali Dialects
3. Benaadir Dialects
4. May Dialects
5. Ashraaf and Digil Dialects
6. Linguistic Minorities of Somalia



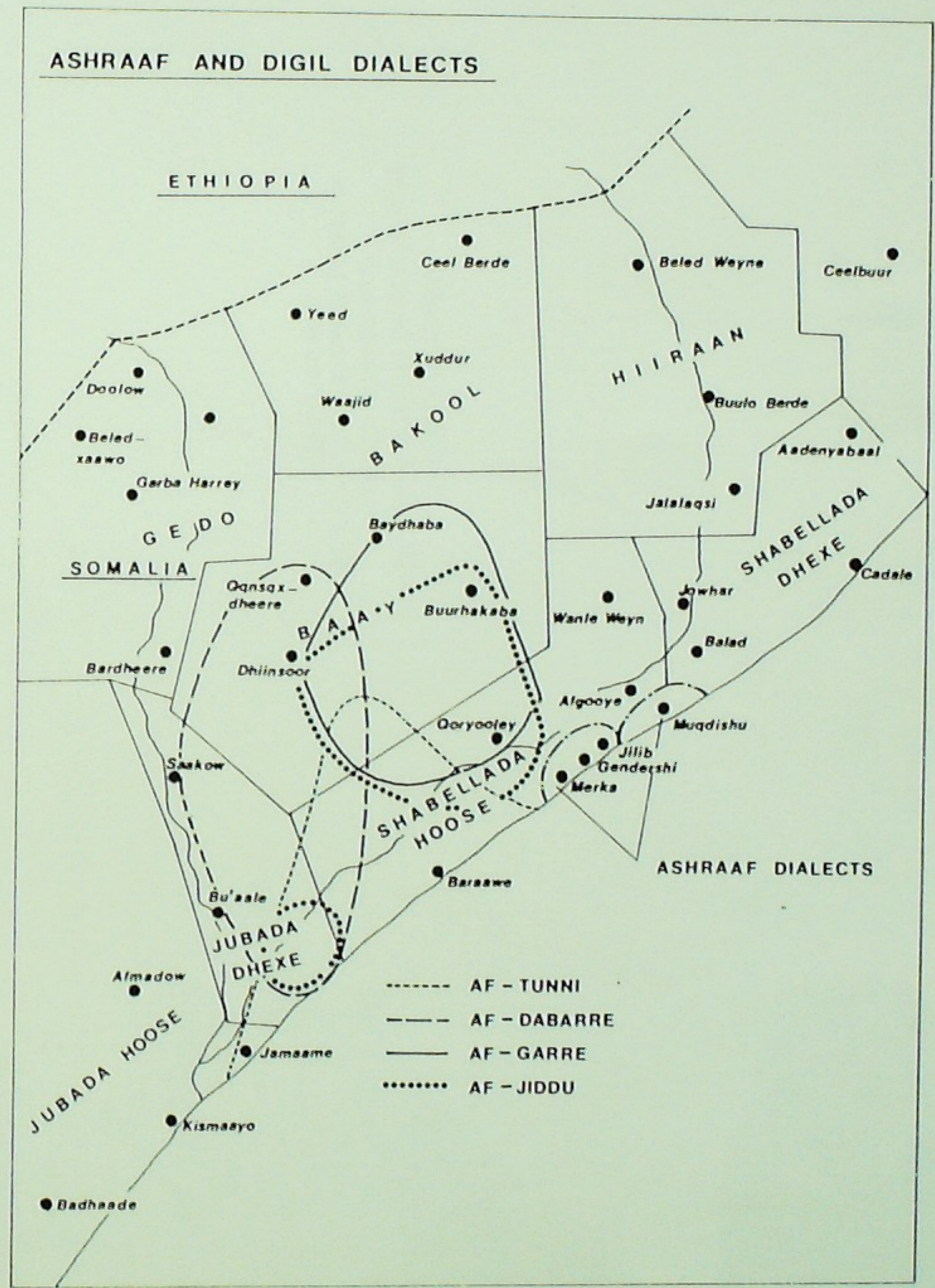




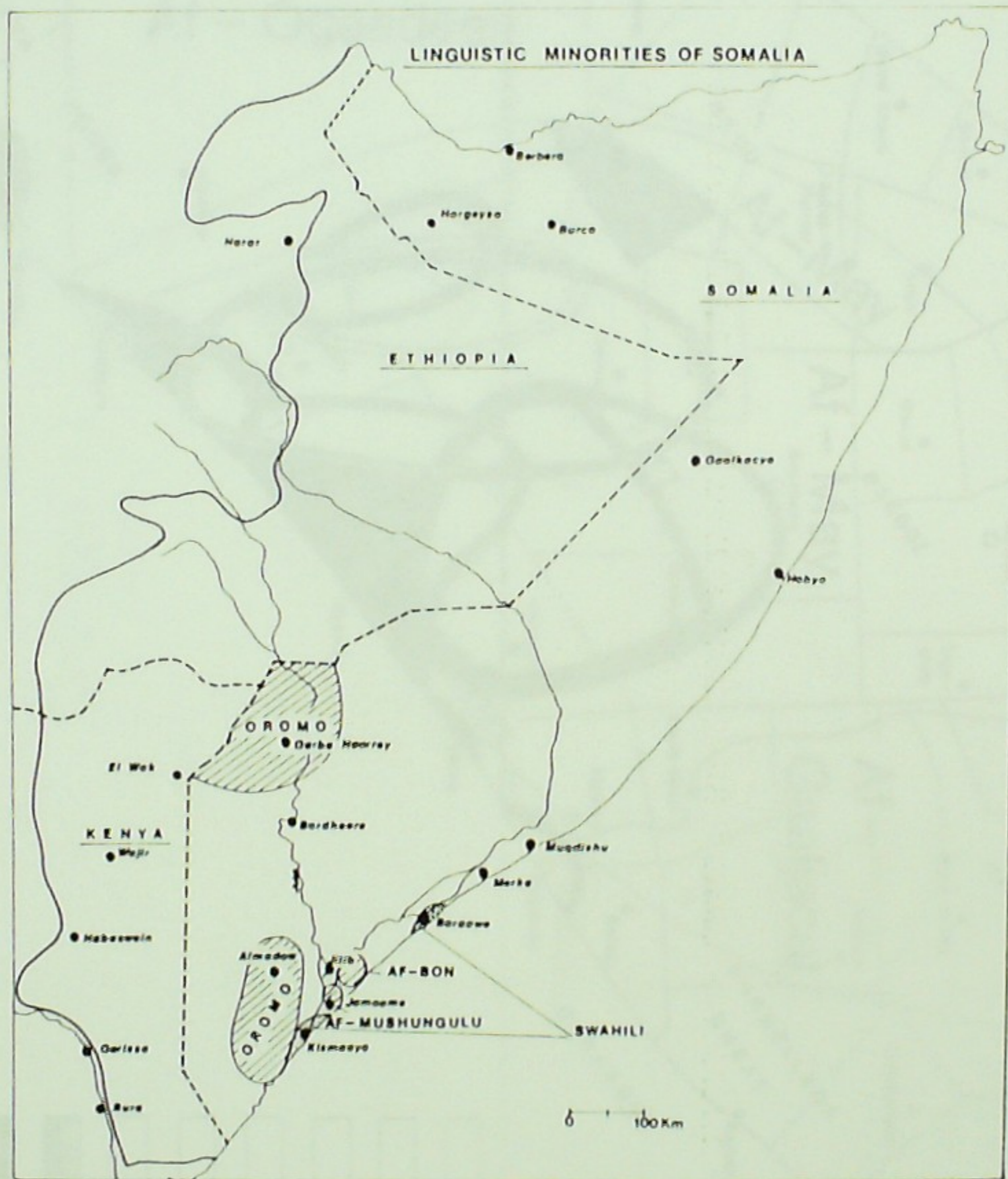
MAY DIALECTS



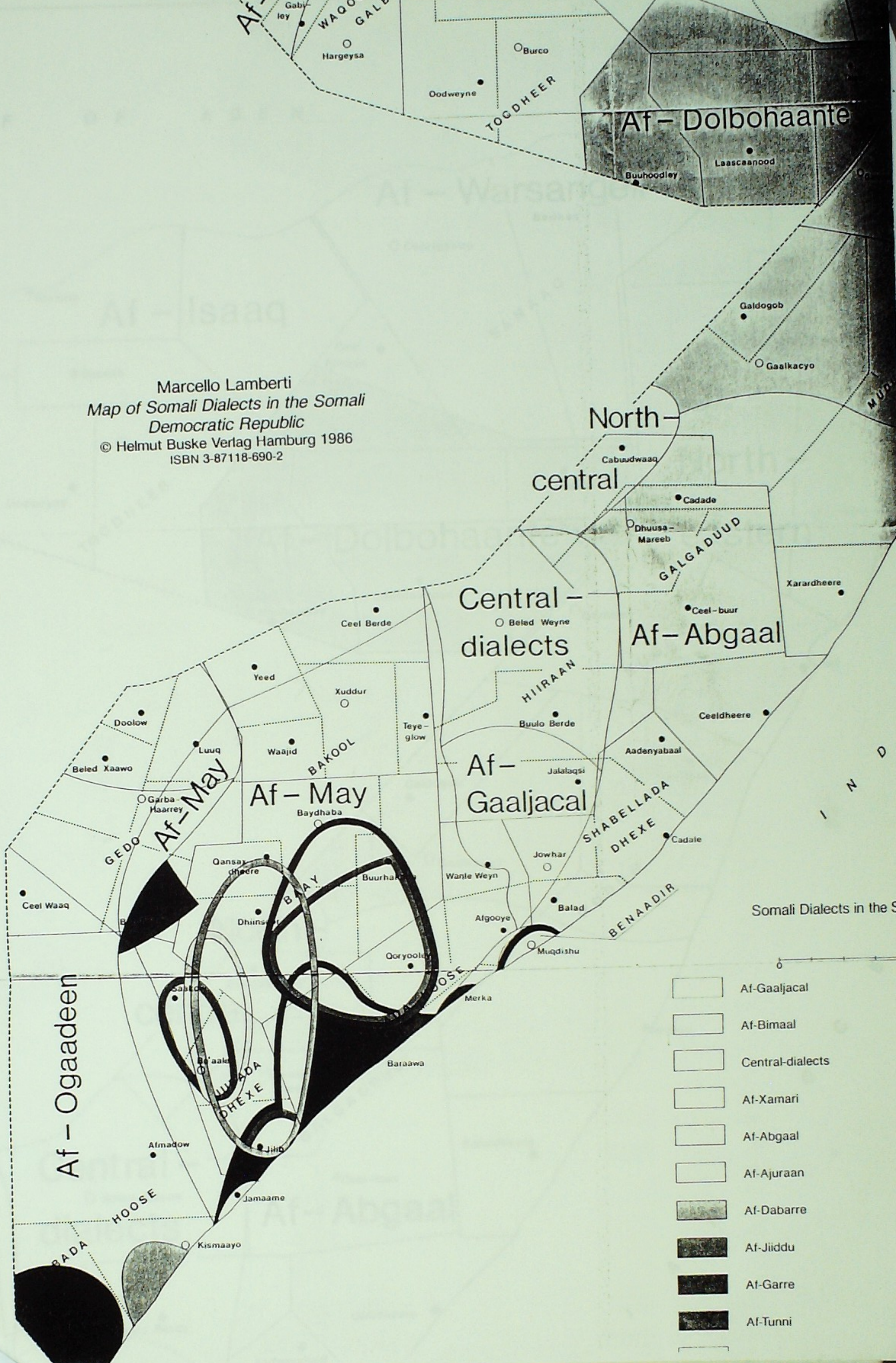
ASHRAAF AND DIGIL DIALECTS



- AF - TUNNI
- - - - - AF - DABARRE
- AF - GARRE
- ..... AF - JIDDU



Marcello Lamberti  
 Map of Somali Dialects in the Somali  
 Democratic Republic  
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 ISBN 3-87118-690-2



- Af-Gaaljacal
- Af-Bimaal
- Central-dialects
- Af-Xamari
- Af-Abgaal
- Af-Ajuraan
- Af-Dabarre
- Af-Jiiddu
- Af-Garre
- Af-Tunni

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Af - Warsangeli

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Af - Dolbohaante

North - eastern

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Central - dialects

Af - Abgaal

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○ Ceerigaabo

● Berbera

● Iskushuban

● Ceel Afweyn

● Qardho

● Sheekh

○ Burco

● Taleex

● Oodweyne

● Eyl

● Laascaanood

● Buuhoodley

○ Garoowe

● Jariiban

● Galdogob

○ Gaalkacyo

North - central

● Cabuudwaaq

● Hobyo

● Cadade

○ Dhuusa-Mareeb

● Xarardheere

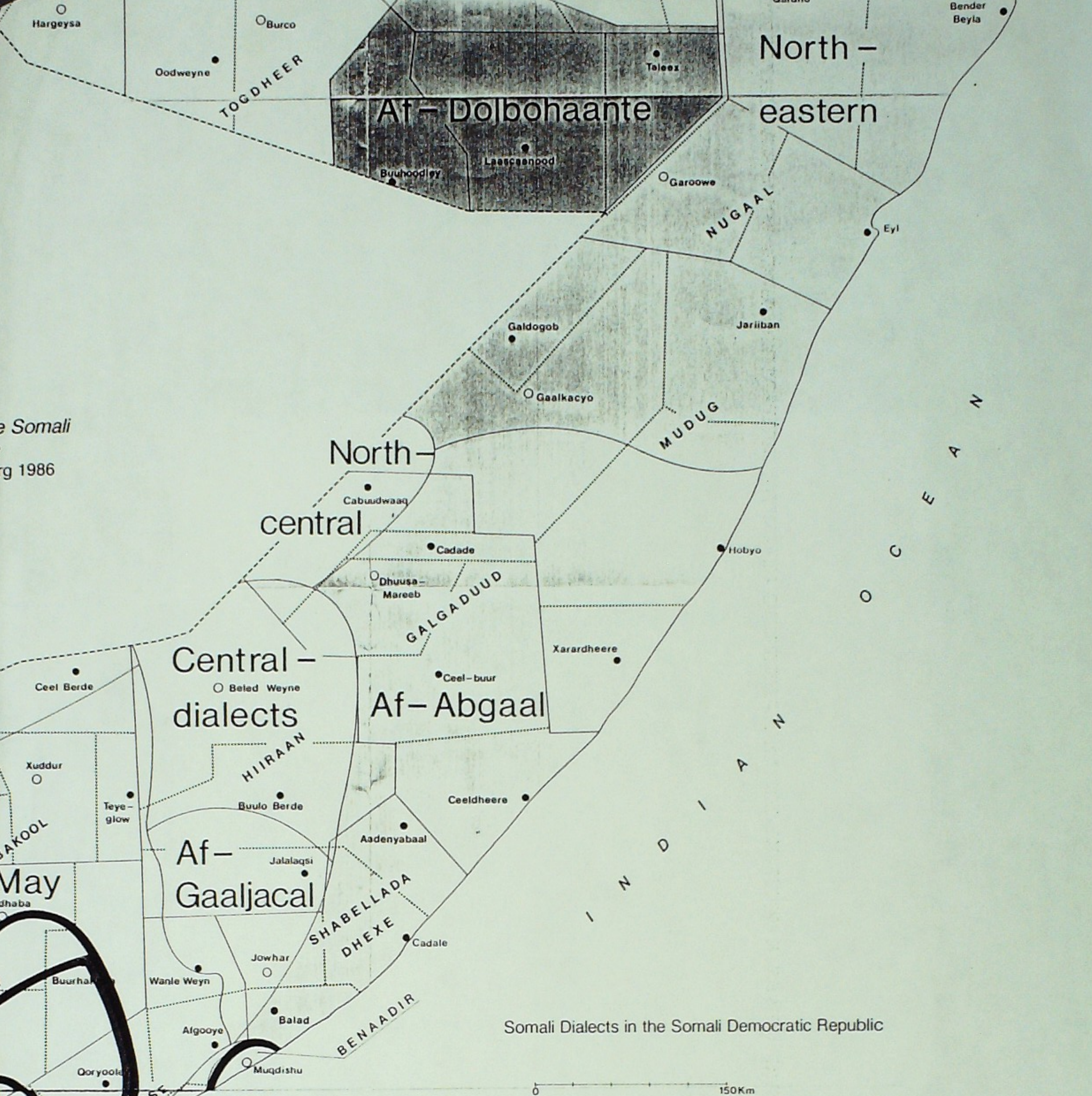
Central - dialects

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● Ceel-buur

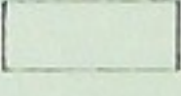
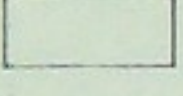
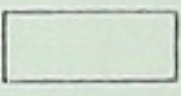
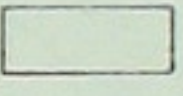
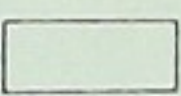
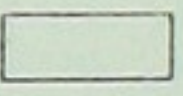
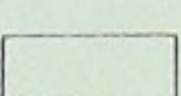
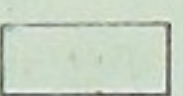
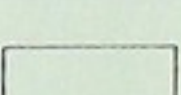

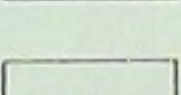

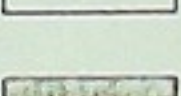
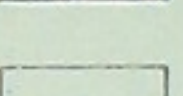
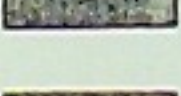
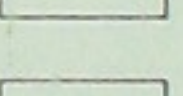
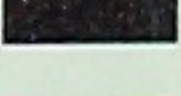
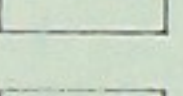
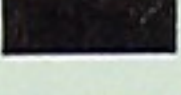
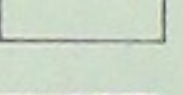
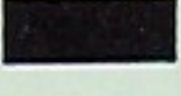
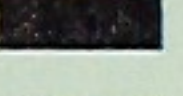
● Buulo Berde

● Ceeldheere



Somali Dialects in the Somali Democratic Republic

0 150Km

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|---|------------------|---|------------------------------------|
|  | Af-Gaaljacal     |  | Af-Ogaadeen                        |
|  | Af-Bimaal        |  | North-central                      |
|  | Central-dialects |  | Af-Warsangeli                      |
|  | Af-Xamari        |  | North-eastern                      |
|  | Af-Abgaal        |  | Af-Dolbohaante                     |
|  | Af-Ajuraan       |  | Af-Degodiya                        |
|  | Af-Dabarre       |  | Af-Isaaq                           |
|  | Af-Jiiddu        |  | Af-Geedabuursi                     |
|  | Af-Garre         |  | Af-Ciise                           |
|  | Af-Tunni         |  | Ashraaf-dialects of Lower Shabelle |
|  | Af-May           |  | Af-Shingaani                       |