



THE WRITING OF THE SOMALI LANGUAGE

*— A Great Landmark
in Our Revolutionary History*

Mogadishu
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President of the Supreme
Revolutionary Council*

INTRODUCTION

Many African nations have been struggling, after the attainment of their independence from the colonialists, in order to get rid of all colonial problems, so that they may easily decide their future without aid from or intervention by foreigners.

Most of these nations have realized that political independence was meaningless unless the people attained full cultural and economic independence.

The Somali Democratic Republic, being one of the progressive African countries especially in this Revolutionary era decided, among other things, to free its people from all kinds of cultural domination, through the writing of their language which has been neglected for so many years by both the colonialists and the former regimes. This step has been desirable because it was not only the right way of overcoming the adverse educational and cultural problems that existed before, but it was also an effective means of remolding the people's consciousness and of reviving their traditional values that were in danger of being lost.

This book is small in size but, as we hope, will be valuable as far as its contents are concerned. It is intended to give the reader an idea about the richness of the Somali language and the place it occupies in the peoples' life and history: the attempts made by researchers in writing the language, the problems and difficulties that handicapped it and the measures taken by the Revolutionary Government in solving this national issue and how the government introduced it in our educational and administrative machinery. The reader will also see the benefits that accrued to the Somali people when their language was written and how they are, at present fighting against illiteracy.

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CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

An important point which is often lost sight of is that the **ancient Somalis** had evolved their own script systems which existed for a considerable period in their history. Convincing historical evidence in this respect is the numerous inscriptions and rockpaintings on cave-walls, on granite rocks, old coins etc., that are found to this day in various parts of the country. Some important sites where ancient inscriptions on cave-walls exist are reported as follows:

1. **Godka Xararka** in Las Anod District.
2. **Qubiyaaley** in Las Anod District.
3. **Hilayo** in Las Khoray District.
4. **Karin Heeggane** in Las Khoray District.
5. **Dhalanle** in Las Khoray District.

The most noteworthy of these inscriptions are undoubtedly those found on the mysterious «Taalo Tiiriyaad». These are huge stone mounds which are dotted about in north-eastern Somalia and are a veritable archaeological riddle, since it is hard to tell when and for what purpose they were constructed. Noteworthy **Taalo** sites are in places such as:

1. **Baar Madhere** in Beledweyne District.
2. **Xabaalo Ambiyad** in Alula District.
3. **Harti Yimid** in Las Anod District.

Yet, these strange edifices must have had a definite purpose. Local opinion holds that they used to serve as altars or as sorts of religious monuments in the era when nature-worship was practised in the Land; still others consider that the **Taalos** mark ancient graveyards in which were buried important personages — chieftains, rulers, etc. together with their personal effects. In any case, these mute sentinels could, no doubt, tell much about the country's cultural and historical past and give us a glimpse into the life-story of by-gone ages.

Although it is difficult to determine what caused the ancient Somalian system of writing to disappear altogether and how long it flourished, etc., there is no doubt that the encroachment of foreign cultures had greatly contributed to its final decline and disappearance. An interesting point, however, is that this script system was apparently based on vowel sound, not a Word-Picture writing as in ancient Egypt.

As generations succeeded one another and people acquired better technical and scientific knowledge there were constant reforms and improvements called forth by the new social conditions of the age. This process might have been repeated over and over again in subsequent periods in the history of the land, until the very old forms of Somalian script finally died out and were completely forgotten by later generations.

Another probable cause for the disappearance of the old script system of a given people might be due to the pressure exerted upon it by another more vigorous foreign culture. An example of such a process is provided by the ancient cultures of the Indian subcontinent, which for many centuries spread far and wide in almost all the far eastern countries of Asia, superceding the native culture of these lands.

Available historical evidence tends to indicate that eastern Africa was subjected to a similar cultural assimilation caused by the encroachment of Asiatic cultures, chiefly Persian and Arabian. The temporary establishment (in the 7th century) of Persian and Arabian (in the 13th century) suzerainty on the south-eastern coast of Africa brought on its wake a cultural break-through, which sought to assimilate or supersede altogether the native cultures. These alien cultures, however, had in the new vitality and they, therefore, found a receptive mind in the African environment. The Persian presence on the whole made no difference to the African scene, as historical circumstances did not permit them to effect any serious penetration of the continent. The Arabs, on the other hand, were determined to accomplish that task forcibly, and thus they presented a more formidable threat to the existing native cultures. Their efforts in this respect were crowned with some singular successes, for the ascendance of Arabian influence resulted in the islamization of north and east Africa, including the Somali peninsula, displacing partly the ancient religious forms in these lands, and thereby reorientating the theological outlook of the Somali people and others in the area. In our opinion, such assimilation coming in the wake of the ascendance of alien cultures had also the effect of displacing the ancient Somalian script.

The Arabic script, which came along with Islam, was used in Somalia in later ages, though it was confined chiefly in the religious sphere. Neither was the Latin system which was brought in by the colonial powers more wide spread in the country, than was the Arabic one. Both

scripts practically remained foreign to the majority of the Somalis over the ages.

That was, it seems to us, the historico-cultural background which gave birth to the modern Somali language and its specific characteristics. Linguistically modern Somali belongs to the Cushitic group of languages and is more akin to the Galla language in respect to its grammatical structure, vocabulary etc. Moreover, it has a considerable percentage (20% nearly) of Arabic terms in its modern vocabulary, which greatly enriched the language. Such terms are chiefly employed in the religious and commercial sphere, since the Horn of Africa acted, as we have pointed out earlier, as cross-roads for diverse foreign cultures, political and commercial intercourse etc. over the centuries. In this light, it is logical to conclude that the modern Somali language has borrowed foreign vocabularies from the various Asiatic and African languages and cultures which penetrated the land.

The colonial era which lasted nearly a century harnessed all social progress in the country, stultifying the people's natural talent and destroying whole generations. They sought to detach the subject peoples from their historical past and to delute their minds with destructive alien ideas and conceptions. Particularly the missionaries, forerunners of European colonialism and imperialism, have done untold harm in Africa and elsewhere by poisoning innocent minds. While they sung poems and played ecclesiastical music in churches and talked glibly to credulous Africans about blissful life after death, in order to turn the simple, honest people away from reality and life, other whitemen with no religious whims were already seizing and dismembering Africa, killing or carrying off her hapless sons and daughters to slavery. They sought to enslave the giant continent culturally, too, and suppressed all progressive thought and ideas getting to the masses. European colonialism and imperialism thus pulled down over Africa a curtain of eternal darkness. Yet, inspite of the fact that the European powers succeeded to grab African territories by force, establishing there what they fon-

dly called «zones of influence», they could by no means create such «zones» in the African mind, no matter how hard they tried to do so. This was due, chiefly, to the existence of great African cultures which on the whole proved too rich to be dislocated completely. Southern Somalia for instance, where the colonialists met with considerable resistance on the part of the patriotic forces, had fallen into the grip of a brutal fascist terror, which brought all social progress to a stand still for nearly a century.

During the twenties of the present century, inspired by the great patriotic struggle led by the famous Somali nationalist, Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hasan, a well-known Somali scholar-educator named Osman Kenadid, invented a new system of script for the Somali Language, which having long lost its ancient script, is today spoken orally. This new script came to be known as «Osmania» after its talented inventor, soon became popular and spread far and wide in many parts of the country. The gifted inventor also had to his credit several valuable works — text books on the Somali language, and other scientific subjects, such as geography, astronomy, treatise on Somali philosophy, etc. The scholar drew much from the inexhaustible treasure-house of the ancient Somali cultures which he earnestly strove to revive to their glorious past.

Suspicious of all kinds of progressive ideas, the Italian fascist colonialists at once banned the script, together with the vast literatures connected with it. But the light of reason can never be extinguished once set aflame, nor is it possible to control men's mind for ever by means of terror. For it is intrinsic in men to always seek self-expression and the more that natural urge is represented, the stronger would be his opposition to what he things to be wrong.

The Osmania script did not disappear completely but went underground temporarily and with the resurgence of the people's struggle for national independence in the forties and fifties of the present century it reappeared with new vitality. This time it spread still wider, being used

chiefly by the patriotic forces in the struggle for freedom as a vital medium of communication.

After independence public opinion split upon the important question of adopting an official script for the mother-tongue. Some favoured the Osmanya script, others — the Latin, and still others suggested the Arabic characters to be used. The continued absence of a written Somali constituted a serious setback for the country, since it practically held up its economic and cultural progress.

The gravity of this situation was pointed out by an expert of the United Nations, where the then Somali Government sought some technical advice in solving this problem: «... the continued language problem is impeding the development of the Somali State. Students are discouraged from attending school because they must struggle with the essentials of a foreign tongue before they can master the substantive courses. All available literature remains the preserve of a privileged few. Laws that define rights and obligations must be interpreted, often falteringly, to the people. Finally, the absence of nationally accepted written language inhibits further development of a virile national consciousness». (A.A. Castagno, Somalia — International Conciliation, United Nations, N.Y., No. 522, 1959, P. 371).

The emergent new Africa, having successfully regained national independence from the old colonial powers, is presently making tremendous efforts to free also her economic and cultural life from foreign influence, so that at long last this great continent be able to be free in all respects and take its rightful place in the world. But there are forces intent to stand on the way to Africa's march towards progress and better future and to yet keep her people in the old colonial bondage. For this purpose scores of old colonial votaries are all the time being sent out to this continent, whose sinister activities in Africa and elsewhere have benefittingly been defined as «neocolonialism». These disruptive forces are presently doing untold

damage in the social fabric of the newly-freed African nations. In the cultural field, for instance, our young generations are growing in an unhealthy atmosphere contaminated by these destructive alien influences (Viz. sordid literature, films, etc., all depicting the evils in human character: rape, stealing and the like).

All these acts of violence are purposefully idealized by the producers of such materials in capitalist countries, for commercial profit is the deciding factor in a world where the principles of human code of behaviour.

The main purpose is, of course, to sow in Africa the seeds of strife and hatred where the Al-Capones and Hitlers might hold sway, where the sciences and arts could not flourish freely. Under such conditions it could hardly be expected that future African generations to be able to preserve for posterity the continent's ancient cultural values, nor could they appreciate the noble heritage which their forefathers held dear and cherished. It is quite evident, therefore, that the resultant outcome of such a cultural onslaught by the forces of international reaction and neocolonialism could only be a real threat to not only African cultural life, but also to her national security.

Fortunately, Free-Africa is fully aware of this potential danger posed by these forces and is determined to pool her efforts and take, through the Organization of African Unity, effective measures to not only contain these evil forces, but also to free the millions of her people still under foreign subjugation.

«... Colonialism is an evil that has been experienced and endured by all our people, first in its most distinctive form, the slave trade, which devastated almost all the African continent, and in its most tangible and insolent form, political domination, over which we must strive to triumph.. In order to survive, it has to justify itself morally and intellectually by force and coercion to extend its hold over all fields of human activity. In order to exist as such, it must exercise in addition to its concrete and material hegemony,

a social and intellectual hold — particularly over the ruling classes on which it relies...»; the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto goes on: «Culture starts with the people as creators of themselves and transformers of their environment. Culture, in its widest and most complete sense, enables men to give shape to their lives. We must go back to the sources of our values, not to confine ourselves to them, but rather to draw up a critical inventory in order to get rid of archaic and stultifying elements, the fallacious and alienating foreign elements brought in by colonialism, and to retain only those elements which are still valid, bringing them up to date and enriching them with the benefits of the scientific, technical and social revolutions so as to bring them into line with what is modern and universal.

The sum total of world cultures is a common heritage for all mankind, a potential factor promoting human understanding between the different peoples of the world. That is the chief role world cultures ought to play, that is to say, to bring the nations together to share their respective cultural wealth and thereby learn to live in peace and concord. For the great universal cultures thus complement one another and the peoples of all lands creating them could always find elevating inspirations in the creative genius of all mankind. Let all the progressive world cultures flourish in all lands and enrich one another, for this really promotes world peace and human progress.

CHAPTER II

OBSTACLES THAT HAMPERED THE WRITING OF THE LANGUAGE.

The Somali people are known to have a great pride for their race and language. They are a homogeneous people with a common religion (Islam), common traditions and common language and are more united than any comparable group in the African societies. But one problem that had been a headache for the Somali people for ages was that their only spoken language was not a written language. The question of writing the language was, therefore, accepted as a matter of urgency for many years. The gravity of the problem and the need to find a solution was most acutely felt by the public, who showed their great desire to get the problem solved once and for all by developing a number of scripts.

Although the masses, particularly patriotic individuals, have explored every avenue to find a script which was acceptable to all, yet both the colonial administrations and the successive civilian regimes have failed to recognise the importance of this issue in violation of the people's

aspirations. The most unfortunate thing was that civilian governments have taken the same path as their colonial masters and never seriously made the writing of the Somali language as a government policy.

To exploit the government in action the so called opposition Deputies used to move now and again a motion in Parliament only only to drop it when their selfish ends were satisfied by the corrupt regimes. In fact the only time politicians used to emphasize the need for writing the language was during «election campaign» when they wanted to seek a mandate from the electorate. But as soon as the election fever was over the victorious Party used to shelve the whole issue.

The idea of finding a script first occurred to a certain Sheikh Yusuf al Kawneny, better known as Aw Barkhadle. He was a native, who lived in about 1,000 years ago and is buried now in a ruined town named after him — Aw Barkhadle, which is a few miles away from Hargeisa.

Although Aw Barkhadle did not attempt to write the Somali language himself, yet he contributed greatly to the idea as he was the first man to teach the Somalis the fundamental basis of reading and writing. He was one of the pioneers, who introduced the teaching of Islam in the Horn of Africa and is particularly famous for his special interest in mass literacy. Aw Barkhadle devised a unique system of Arabic vowel points (Harakat) in a skillfully formed system in the Somali language (Alif la Kordhabay) and by so doing managed to make the ordinary Somali understand the very difficult Arabic vowel system, which as we know has the double function of signifying the vowel sounds as well as providing grammatical illustration in Arabic language.

In studying the Arabic vowel system through the medium of Somali language, Somali students learn not only the Arabic vowel but also concurrently a good deal of Somali basic sounds. For this reason Aw Barkhadle's teaching of Arabic phonetics and phonology had an indirect

bearing on the idea of written Somali. This had facilitated when the language script was later introduced by the Revolutionary Government.

From the beginning Sheikh Barkhadle's aim was to introduce mass literacy in this country through the Arabic language so that the Somali people might adopt Arabic instead of their own language and, therefore, comprehend the Islamic faith. This was the tactic which seems to have originated from the early Arab missionaries and was practised in a number of African countries for example the Sudan, where several aboriginal languages were said to have been replaced by the Arabic language.

To achieve his aim Sheikh Barkhadle established a large scale system of learning in the Horn of Africa, in which the Holy Quran, the basic principle of Islam and the rudiments of classical Arabic were taught extensively.

This system was divided into two stages:

Qoranic schooling of about two years and an extensive study of Moslem theology taught in an unlimited period of time.

In the primary schools, the children were taught the Quran and how to read and write thoroughly. Those pupils who were successful then joined higher Islamic Institutions, where discipline, principles of Islam and classical Arabic were learnt.

In teaching how to read and write, Aw Barkhadle first followed the method practised in the Arab countries. In this method a system of Arabic terminology established to define the Arabic vowel points was used (Aanishaa aa, ii kisraa ii, uudumaa uu). In this way Arabic language was used from the start in teaching Somali pupils and thus Sheikh Barkhadle met two serious difficulties.

- (1) The teaching of the complicated Arabic vowel system and the Arabic spelling, (Imla) to foreign beginners,

through the medium of foreign language was not an easy task. He encountered great difficulties in teaching Somali students the complex Arabic vowel and the result was slow and dragging process.

- (2) The Somali pupils having a language of their own so rich in vocabulary and literature, would not converse among themselves in a foreign language, though they accepted systematization in the doctrines of Islam, they did not feel the need to speak Arabic or any other foreign language for that matter.

Having met these two significant obstacles, Sheikh Barkhadle totally abandoned the Arabic method and devised the Somali system mentioned above. The result was that the Somalis understood the principles of the Arabic vowel system and they read the Quran perfectly. Thus the Arabic language which Sheikh Barkhadle wanted to introduce to Somalia was confined to coastal towns and was used in commercial correspondence.

(1) Earlier Researchers

The reluctance of the Somalis to adopt the Arabic language as their own mother tongue gave rise to a general feeling at the beginning of this century that the Somali language was also to be expressed in written form. Accordingly, a number of people tried to devise an alphabet for the language. Among them were Sayid Mohamed Abdilleh Hasan, whose genius and exploits remain unique in Somali history, Mohamed Abdilleh Mayal of Berbera, Isman Kenadid of Hobya, Haji Abdirahman Qadhi of Borama, and Captain J.S. King of the United Kingdom, serving in the East India Company at the time. In later years, other pioneers followed suit; Abdillahi, Sh. Ibrahim Hashi, Dr. B.W. Andrejewski, Penza Bruno, Shire Jama, Musa Galaal and others.

(2) Efforts to write the language in Arabic Script.

All the early pioneers in this field first tried to write Somali in the Arabic characters. They did this in consideration of:

- (1) The passionate attachment of Somalis to Islam.
- (2) The close proximity of Somali territories to the Arab world.
- (3) The Historical and cultural connection of the Somalis to the Arabs, and
- (4) The then higher literacy in Arabic in Somalia, rather than in other languages.

However, these pioneers have all failed in various stages, having all met the same technical difficulty attributable to the limitations of the signs of the Arabic vowel system and their total inadequacy for the greater multiplicity of Somali vowel sounds. The author would be able to express the 10 basic Somali vowel sounds a, i, u, e, o, and their five long respective counterparts, with the six vowel signs existing in the Arabic alphabet, i.e. **Fatxa, Kisra, Dhumma, Alif, ya and waw.**

The inadequacy of the Arabic vowel letters to denote the greater number of basic Somali vowel sounds was aggravated by a further serious difficulty which arose from the structural differences of the two languages. Arabic, due to its basic structural pattern could be written with or without the vowels. That is, the meaning of a word could be understood even if the vowel sounds are omitted in the writing. The consonantal structure of a word, usually three letters, would be enough for the identification of the word. The vowels have only a grammatical function, and their insertion in the writing would not, therefore, be necessary if the corresponding parties know the grammar.

It has been established that this special linguistic feature by which the vowel sounds could be omitted in the writing, is peculiar to the semitic languages. Somali, being a member of the Cushitic group of the Hamitic stock of languages does not have such a characteristic. When written, the vowels and consonants are not separated. The vowels or consonants alone cannot make any sense.

Some of the pioneers endeavouring to establish a script for the Somali language went as far as publishing primers. For instance, Mohamed Abdi Makahil of Berbera, who continued the research began by his cousin, Mohamed Abdille Mayal, after the death of the latter. Mr. Makahil published a set of these books for Somali beginners in the nineteen thirties in Aden. Immediately after publication the difficulty of vowel representation in these books was noticed. His idea of using the Fatha and Kisra, at the same time to denote the non-Arabic sound «a», and the Kisra, and dhumma to denote «o» was considered incongruous and his method of giving the «waw» and «ya» have each two functions in Arabic, «ee» and «oo» respectively, was thought to be complex.

As we know, the «waw» and the «ya» have each two functions in Arabic. The special rule governing their use, is that when they are followed by vowels they function as consonants, otherwise, they are read as the long vowels, «ii» and «uu» respectively. By giving each of these two letters a third function, Mohamed Abdi Makahil greatly overloaded them, and the result was ambiguous and vague in his new publication.

Captain J.S. King published an article in a magazine called «Indian Antiquity» and devised a method to write Somali also in the Arabic characters. (*) His rules, being almost identical with those proposed by Mohamed Abdille Mayal, were also ambiguous and unacceptable.

Finding the Arabic characters totally unsuitable for writing the Somali language, these pioneers changed their tactics some abandoned the idea altogether. Others explored new fields.

(*) Here we are confronted with a fact constituting a historical perplexity, — a non-Moslem colonial official advocating the use of Arabic script for writing the language of non-Arab Moslems who were part of the British Colonies, against the current British Policy at the time, when languages of some of the colonies like Swahili and Hausa, etc., which had already been written in Arabic, were rewritten in Latin.

Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hasan who at first thought the ordinary 30 Arabic letters would be sufficient to write his language, found this impossible and then dropped his idea of effecting a mass-literacy project among his followers. He confined the use of his Arabic version only to the recording of his poetry. Finding it still confusing, he abandoned the whole idea and relied on the memory of his followers for the preservation of his beautiful poetry and historical events. This he made it an obligatory. That is why his poetry unwritten, has been intact until now.

(3) Radical Departure from the use of Arabic Script.

Soon after the Dervish liberation war in 1925, one of the pioneers, Osman Kenadid, made a radical departure from the path of his predecessors. He devised a new system of writing of his own; better known after his name (Osmania). Although a modern linguist might raise a lot of criticism against the practicability and value of Osman Kenadid's alphabet as a potential modern script, the new characters were at that time definitely for the following reasons:

- (1) It had signs for most of the basic consonantal sounds of the major Somali dialects.
- (2) In the field of the vowels, it had 2 signs than arabic.
- (3) It possessed no diacritics over or under letters as one would find in Arabic, (modern Linguist consider «Diacritics» as being great flaws in writings, and therefore seldom accept them).
- (4) Each of its letters was written in the same form in all its three positions and not in three different forms as in the case of many letters in Arabic. (In Arabic most consonants have 3 forms).
- (5) It had no diacritics signifying full basic sounds.

Osman Kenadid's new alphabet was regarded with suspicion by the Italian authorities then ruling Somalia (the southern regions of the present Somali Democratic Republic). Remembering the strains caused to them both financially as well as in manpower by the Dervish Liberation war in the previous 22 years, the European Administration in (pre-independence) Somalia were then extremely sensitive to the slightest manifestation of a Somali nationalistic movement. For this reason the new alphabet was proscribed.

It was only revived by the birth of the Somali Youth League, the first really effective political party in the country in 1943, when the younger generations commonly used it as a secret means of communication in their political activities. Soon afterwards it was abandoned mainly due to strong partisan conflicts, the scientific value of this alphabet is given in the report of the Committee appointed by the Somali Government on independence, in 1961.

At about the same period as Osman Kenadid, another researcher Haji Abdirahman Qadhi of Borama devised a system known as, «The Borama writing», It was based on the same principles as those of Osman Kenadid, i.e.:

- (1) It was written from left to right; and
- (2) It was broken (Isolated); i.e. its letters had no cursive forms.

In spite of the sentiment under which it was devised, the Borama alphabet was very much inadequate for the transcription of the Somali language. It lacked symbols for several of the basic Somali sounds. Its shortcomings precluded its adoption.

After independence in 1960, the Somali Government, appointed a committee consisting of 9 Somalis, to investigate and recommend the best way of writing the Somali language. This Committee submitted a report to government in which a modified form of the Roman characters was recommended; having worked for a year.

The choice of this Roman script was made from 18 different sets of characters submitted to the committee by Somali researchers. These sets of characters fell within the following categories:

- (1) Forms based on Arabic characters (5)
- (2) Forms based on the Roman characters (3)
- (3) New characters devised by Somalis (10)
(the Osmania and the Borama alphabets are included here).

The criteria guiding the committee during its investigation were the following 17 guiding principles, adopted by the committee before the 18 characters submitted to them were studied:

The committee was to find an alphabet which:

- (1) Was phonetic.
- (2) Was simple in form.
- (3) Had as small number of diacritics as possible.
- (4) Had no signs in it having more than one function.
- (5) Did not have signs differentiated by means of diacritic only.
- (6) Did not have diacritics representing basic sounds of the language.
- (7) Had printing machines available in the country.
- (8) Conforms to the international morse code system.
- (9) Had been standardised.
- (10) Was based on an alphabetic system.
- (11) Was as economical as possible from all aspects.
- (12) Had cursive as well as printing forms.
- (13) Was a unique kind of alphabet.
- (14) Could cover the basic sounds of all the Somali dialects.

- (15) Could be further modified, if necessary.
- (16) Is already known in the country.
- (17) Has signs with consistent sound value.

Having agreed upon the above 17 guiding principles as the yardstick for determining the merits of each script submitted to them the committee started the evaluation of the 18 sets of characters and recommended a modified form of Roman script developed by Dr. Shirreh Jama Ahmed (and was scrutinized by the Committee), as it exhibited the highest degree of conformity with the agreed criteria in the preceding paragraph.

A form devised by Mr. Hussein Sh. Ahmed known as (Kaddare) was considered second best.

The colonial powers in the former Somaliland Protectorate and Somalia, made a number of attempts to establish a script for the Somali language during their last thirty years of Administration.

Such moves become necessary for them, as they needed a quick and easy way of making contacts with the general public, so as to understand its political motives. The most significant events in this connection were:

- (1) A British attempt in 1938 to introduce written Somali on the basis of a modified form of Roman Characters in the first primary schools built in the protectorate. This resulted in disturbances brought about by a wave of religious emotion against the proposed script which was misconstrued as a deliberate Christian plan to weaken the influence of Islam in the country.
- (2) A three-year British colonial Research Programme conducted by B.W. Andrzejewski of the London University school of Oriental and African Studies who, after a thorough study on the basic structure of the Somali language, again recommended a modified form of Roman script, based on phonetic principle, for adoption in Somalia. Andrzejewski's recommendation,

which was given in the form of a report, was also not accepted as it co-incided with the tense political situation which preceded the independence of the former protectorate.

- (3) An inter-governmental conference was held in Mogadishu in 1955 under the auspices of the Italian Trusteeship Government in Somalia. This conference was attended by a delegation from the former Somaliland protectorate consisting of the British Director of Education and a Somali Researcher on the one hand, and a strong delegation of Ten Members from (Ex-Italian) Somalia, led by the Italian Director of Education, on the other. The delegation representing Somalia also included three Somali researchers. The conference also recommended a version of the Roman Alphabet, which again did not go through owing to the political atmosphere then prevailing include:

- (a) The origination of over fifty new sets of characters by various Somali researchers desirous of seeing a script adopted for the Somali language. Several other sets based on Arabic and Roman characters were framed:

(4) **Unesco on the problem of writing Somali.**

The urgent need to write Somali and teach it in schools as the media of instruction, was confirmed by several U.N. Missions, the most important of which were a UNESCO Education Group sent here in 1962 to advise the Somali Government on the development of Education. The view of this planning group, which in fact puts the whole problem of written Somali in a nut-shell from the Educational point of view, could be found in the Ministry of Education.

The famous commission of 1966, consisted of three linguists specialise on African languages, from U.K. France and Poland. The reports of this mission could be found in the Ministry of Education and in UNESCO also.

CHAPTER III

THE WRITING OF THE LANGUAGE

1. The Somali Language Commission.

Replying partly to a comment often heard (a poor people in a rich country), we can say, if we the Somalis are not rich in the sense of material productivity, we are no doubt, rich in other things and qualities, such as a homogeneous country possessing a homogeneous culture and language that is rich in its inestimable resources and values, which we have inherited from our forefathers.

But the unfortunate thing was that the language had not for centuries been in a written form. However, many attempts were made in the past in writing the language but all failed. Because the idea was very complex and sometimes a political manouvre still complicated this national issue. Especially whenever the so-called ex-parliamenta-

rians wanted to shake up the previous governments as an individuals or as groups, different interests conflicted, and the government in order to quell the flame had to pay for the cost. At times, the bargain was so profitable that it helped to keep the motion-movers from the doors of the boss for a lengthy period. In this way, the fate of the language became a game of contest between the Parliament and the government, and the nation was given the position of a referee, and as a result the whole idea was regarded as a dead issue.

It did not happen that this catastrophe be continued such longer than it was bearable. A wind of change was blown into the country and the sacred October Revolution of 1969 brought the evil regime to an end.

As it is known, the Supreme Revolutionary Council of the Somali Democratic Republic made it clear in Article 4 of its First Charter as one of its aims to put the Somali language in its written form, and to finalize as early as possible the long standing argument of which script to be chosen as the Somali national script, in order to revive and preserve the language, to be used as an administrative and educational instrument.

To fulfil this obligation, the SRC set up in Jan. 1971 the Somali Language Commission which was entrusted to undertake a heavy and important assignment, and the members were drawn from experienced civil servants, researchers in the language, script supporters, as well as public representative of Somali traditions and customs.

On the outset and before any start was made, in the early preliminary sessions of the commission, discussions revolved round the topic of the Somali script to be adopted. The topic was controversial and some members thought that the question of the «script» should have been dealt with before preparing any text books. Other members were of the opinion, that to start with the government required teaching materials as samples of how the language could be utilized, and this idea was appropriate and essential,

because when the question of the script has been finalised, there should be some instructional materials ready to be put into immediate use. The term of reference for the Commission was to write Somali text-books nationally oriented and environmentally centred, for the Elementary Schools, the final decision on particular script to be adopted rested entirely with the SRC. The required books covered these educational fields:

- (1) Language books including Somali grammar series — 4
- (2) Mathematics and Science Books series — 6
- (3) Geography and History Books one each — 2
- (4) One basic Somali Dictionary (**Abwaan**) containing nearly 10,000 words — 1

Due to the fact that the task required of this Commission to be accomplished in so short a time and that it was highly professional, it has been necessary that some of the members had to work with two groups or sub-committee and at times with three, where in each case a member had to prepare some lengthy materials.

The main organ of the Commission has been the Secretariat Office headed by an Executive Secretary which in addition to its normal functions of administrative nature, its members have been also participating in the work of the various sub-committees. These members also worked as a co-ordinating body who were required to link up their respective group activities with the Secretariat Office, where abundant manuscripts were constantly assembled, sifted, checked, read over and finally typed and memographed. Book illustration which plays an important role in book production and its classifications a central office acted as publisher and served the Commission and its Sub-committee as a clearing house.

The Commission which was required to write various text books suitably designed for young children as well as for grown up people, school-goers at different grades and stages, were composed in the first instance by members who

have almost differed in every respect of experience, ability, attitude and even in outlook. Obviously, for a Commission of such different views, it was clear from the outset, that the whole idea of the assignment was too much for them, to speak about a script of one kind or the other being praised, or directly or indirectly condemned.

Regardless of the numerous difficulties and obstacles that the Commission has encountered in the beginning, the first assignment was accomplished with success and 12 manuals covering the Elementary School requirements were handed over to the Secretary of State for Education in time at the end of August, 1971 as scheduled.

At this stage, the activity of the Commission was held over, in fact the members being extensively exhausted, they were allowed a few weeks to rest and relax so that they might regain their strength and recover physically and mentally alike. Meanwhile it goes without saying the results of these books were awaited impatiently by the Commission.

The reunion of the Commission in order to start on the second assignment was inaugurated by the Ministerial letter No. 215/2/7164 dated 9th September 1971. Another assignment was given to the Commission in September 1971, and it was one of threefold interpretations:

- (1) to revise thoroughly the Somali text books (12) which were previously prepared for Elementary Schools.
- (2) To commence writing new Somali text books suitably designed for Adult Education Institutions — some of these books were based on the newly proposed Adult Education Syllabuses.
- (3) The continuation of the work on the Somali Dictionary which was partly completed then.

The principal guide for the Commission writing these Somali text books have been to prepare suitable instructional materials which will foster and shape a new citizen, having developed mentally and educationally a lively spirit, a new outlook in shaping a modern Somali community of which he is an active member — a society based on true principles of self-reliance and cooperative social work. And above all, a new Somali citizen being proud of his inherited nationality, patriotism and cultural values by which he is identified with dignity and pride.

Judging by the light of the outlined syllabus which the Ministry of Education has forwarded to the Commission, the total requirements of Adult Books were to be simple manuals for the elementary stage. In addition, the new task which the Commission has undertaken, was to be completed and finally submitted to the Secretary of State for Education at the end of December 1971. There was no time to waste then.

Immediately newly organized sub-committees were formed and job description were circulated and soon the Secretariat of the Commission started to get the assignment materials as early as possible from the new sub-committees as under:

- (1) Language sub-committee;
- (2) Mathematics sub-committee;
- (3) Civics sub-committee;
- (4) Health and Hygiene sub-committee;
- (5) Dictionary sub-committee;
- (6) Terminology sub-committee.

However, with few people who had little experience in writing books the nature of such a task was great. The volume of work entailed particularly in this assignment being so large and the fact that the limited time that has been allowed for its completion has only magnified the enormous energy and labour, that the Commission has had to put in, in order to achieve its objectives.

Despite, in fact of countless difficulties, and undesirable acts of impediments, the second phase of writing 8 text books for Adult schools have been completed on 8/1/1972 as thoughtfully and carefully planned. These books are:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| (1) Language Books | I, II, III |
| (2) Mathematics Books | I, II, III |
| (3) Civics Book in distinct parts for 3 grades; | |
| (4) Health and Hygiene Books in distinct parts for 3 grades. | |

Also included in the series is the Somali Dictionary containing 10,000 words. The Dictionary was presented in a draft form which later required a thorough revision before it is finally printed. The whole assignment makes up the total of 21 Somali text books written and submitted in one script, the Roman script which was conceived by the Commission to be convenient for their task.

The success of the Commission in this work was largely due to the fact, and as in agreement with its terms of reference, that they were not to discuss the question of «SCRIPTS» or anything that may lead to that effect. It has been clearly understood that the decision of the Script to be adopted rested entirely with the Supreme Revolutionary Council, and so the members on the Commission particularly of certain script supporters were cautioned to refrain from any activity that may arouse suspicion in propagating one script system against another in public places or elsewhere.

It must be mentioned, that from the beginning members of the Commission have shown prompt response and sense of willingness to cooperate with one another, because, as one may imagine, they do value the responsibility they have been asked to shoulder. It has been the practice in all their proceedings to allow the expression of ideas freely and frankly, so that views exchanged in an orderly procedure, should in fact contribute to the smooth running

of the business, and above all, to maintain the individual spirit in driving the machinery of such a noble task, so as to produce some fruitful results.

BOOK RELIEVS

1. Reading Books:

To start with, language books are graded series which contain topics of general interest and environmental values and interests. Basically they are as under:

- (a) Word-building and sentence structure designed to help the learner to be able to read and write as quickly as possible.
- (b) Readable Somali text material including songs, poems, folklore, traditions, heroes and heroism and mode of life.
- (c) Environmental topics of local interest.
- (d) Nationalism, moral and character training.
- (e) General Knowledge.

For Adult Books, consideration has been made in these books to include topics revolving on patriotism, ideas of socialism, unity and spirit of cooperative system.

The Global Method of teaching has been chosen as an approach to immediate response in early stages in both Primary and Adult Reading Books. Grammar lessons are included instructionally as part of the language. Most of the illustrations and drawings, etc. are environmentally-centred. At present specimens are inserted but full sets are being developed.

2. Geography and History:

The main theme in these books has been to know:

- (a) The locality first and the environment next;
- (b) To understand what goes on in the neighbouring countries and in the world outside as well.

The place of home country, its value, importance, in past and present will enable the young learner as well as the Adult learner to know and love his country. One can't appreciate the value of the universe before knowing his/her place in it. The ideas fostered in these books have been meant to eradicate an old concept that Somalis are poor people in a poor country. Contents in both books are varied and related to the Somali mode of life. Illustrations and drawings which have been selected with care intended to support the idea of building a new nation.

3. Mathematics and Science Books.

These two areas were in fact where the Commission has had great anxiety, because the common idea that many people have maintained was that maths and science contain so much of scientific concepts, ideas and some technical terms which would be difficult to find their equivalents in Somali. It is interesting to note that in the Mathematics area the modern idea of «sets» has been easily interpreted in the Somali concept and much as of common catch-words often read in foreign books have been beautifully inculcated such as «Asal tiro ma doorshe, isugeynta iyo kala goynta waa isweydaar». These are not intended as a new teenage lingo.

Experience has shown that, to attempt the two subjects is not as frightful as might think at the beginning. The idea of putting heavy burden on the terminology group as well as the initiative made by each sub-committee in struggling with this new idea combinedly, has enabled the Commission to overcome this difficult problem. Another attempt has been the preparation of one Health and Hygiene book for Adult. This book is the first of its kind ever being attempted and it covers the scope of general Health lessons and Hygiene principles which have both educational and communal importance. The book is divided into four vital parts and each deals with the main topics required at this stages.

Like the Geography and Science books, this one in the series of the Adult course contain a good deal of scientific and technical aspects, but inspite of these difficulties, some reasonably good books have been the outcome of this modest endeavour.

4. Civics (Xilkasnimo).

This book is meant to be a large one, because it deals on the whole with topics that are closely related to the life of the Somali community. Normally, a learner at first is given an opportunity to know the background of this country, historically, geographically, and economically. After he knows how to stand on his feet and finds his way home he wants to learn, to think and then decide what sort of a person he wants to be.

This book intends to shape a Somali citizen who loves his country, his people and himself. What are his duties and his obligation towards his country and what are his rights in a new state of Somalia, which marches on to occupy its rightful place in the world, illustrations are meant to show various aspects of communal life, such as work on self-help. Topics are graded, varied, classified, and conveniently supported with maps, illustrations or drawings.

5. Somali Dictionary (Abwaan).

This is a tentative Dictionary. Being the first one to be attempted, it is intended to be used as a «basic» Dictionary to help any Adult who wants to study the Somali language in the early stages. It contains about 10,000 words of common usage but not necessarily those words which have been inculcated in these text books. The Dictionary requires a thorough revision before it has been finalized. The alphabetical order in which the Dictionary takes the final shape is also something to be decided at a later stage. There are some typographical errors, but as there has been little time left to attend to such finals, we have allowed them temporarily so that the appearance of the book should not be too late to be considered along with the other books.

6. Terminology.

The Sub-committee working on terminology were directed to collect all the foreign words which are used in these text books and find their equivalents in Somali.

It has been maintained, although many foreign words have crept into the language, we should be on guard not to allow the language to be destroyed by these infiltrations. This group has been able to collaborate with other suitable Somali words which are meant to replace, if possible, all foreign scientific, technical or administrative terms.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADOPTION OF THE SCRIPT

One of the greatest achievements of the glorious October Revolution is the bold decision to write the Somali language. On the blessed day of October 21st, 1972, the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre told the nation that the revolutionary government had chosen the **Latin Alphabet** with the necessary modifications as the official script for writing the language. The President also explained how this decision was reached and the reasons which had made the Latin as the chosen script.

This long-awaited decision, which was announced on the Second Anniversary of the Revolution was received with tremendous rejoicing not only by the people in the Democratic Republic, but also by the people in all the Somalilands.

Soon after the adoption of the script, government civil servants as well as the Armed Forces were given three months to learn this script and use it in writing, so that it should be introduced officially in the government offices. Therefore, emergency courses were organised, and at the same time a considerable number of text-books that were already prepared by the language Commission were printed. Also, Somali lessons concerning the learning of the script and its application were initiated in the radio programmes

and publicised in the government newspapers. All these practical steps were intended to make easy the learning of written Somali, which in a short time enabled the government personnel as well as the public to become familiar with the system of writing their language. This step was the solution for the long fruitless debates of the issue for over 80 years in the past by the colonial administrators and civilian regimes before the Revolution.

After the three months courses, just in the middle of January 1973, Somali was officially introduced in the administrative machinery of the government replacing the former three foreign languages (Italian, English and Arabic) which were used in the country for the last hundred years or so. And the first government newspaper in Somali «XIDDIG-TA OKTOOBAR» was produced on 21st January 1973, as the teaching of Somali at the same time started in the Elementary schools.

However, it must be mentioned here, that before the adoption of written Somali by the Revolutionary Government, the educational system in Somalia was in great confusion and disorder, because of the multiple foreign languages in use, and the Somali language was only spoken orally. This resulted in the disorientation of the whole educational system, causing great difficulties to the student who had to struggle in mastering two or more foreign languages before he could qualify himself in any scientific or professional subjects. Each one of these languages had its own culture and required special trained teachers who followed different ways of teaching doctrines and programmes, and this naturally resulted in creating dualism of culture in the minds of the Somali youth.

Moreover, Somali students who used to go abroad for higher education used to come back with alien cultures. It was difficult for a graduate from Italy to communicate with the one from the United States. This has hampered the efficiency in Somalia's administration. Each office needed two or three translators, and this has caused duplication of work. These foreign languages were also used as a

weapon to propagate colonialism and the past glories of the respective colonial powers.

But now, the foreign languages do not exert strong influence as the mother tongue is written, and the advantages of using it as a media of instruction in the lower schools has already been proved by the results achieved in the elementary and adult schools. Learners in these schools could follow much easier their lessons than when the foreign languages were in use, and this fact raised the standard of education in so short a time and created self-confidence in both Somali teachers and students, for the language barrier was lifted once and for all.

The public had and still has ample opportunity to go to schools to learn quickly the basic adult education, which they were deprived off so long in the past. Over a million people have benefited from the recent campaigns on literacy. The rate of literacy in the country have jumped from mere five percent to 33 per cent. The mass literacy campaign in the urban areas is to be followed by another in rural areas. Courses designed for the nomadic settlements have already been organised.

On the other hand the door has been opened to the public particularly those talented in Somali literature to compile and write their own books on the wisdom, philosophy and cultural heritage. Comparatively the people were not able in the past to read foreign books or even enjoy reading their own literature written in foreign languages. Today the Somali language is being studied as one of the African languages in a number of foreign countries. The entire foreign diplomats accredited to Somalia learn the Somali language organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Somali people with that sort of education will help them restructure their social existence and also will be a weapon to create an absolute unity which will lead the nation to a rapid social, political and economic advancement.

Having now written the language the Somali people have to make it their principal obligation to educate their people, not only those who happen to be in the towns but

also in the country side and further in the remote areas. The first and foremost responsibility of education is not only to make an illiterate person literate, but it is also that people want to fight against ignorance, and social backwardness.

When due consideration is given to this idea, the functions of education will provide and create unlimited resources of labour both skilled and unskilled, not necessarily in town but also in villages and among the unsettled community of our people who are looking forward to be a settled community, so as to participate in the production of the material wealth of the country. Therefore, our educational system provides the people with ample publications and informations with regard to the development of the country, the benefits of the ideology of scientific socialism, self-reliance and co-operation which are the pillars of the social life of the people of this country, whose undisputed rich literature and traditional heritages are self-explanatory. It is a true fact that when education plays its role in moulding the society in the way it ought to be, it creates mutual understanding among the peoples all over the world who have the same problems and experiences to share with.

The campaign that have been launched at the beginning of March 1973 in eradicating ignorance, disease and poverty throughout the country have been very successful. The reason for this success is mainly the self-confidence of the masses in learning the reading and writing of their language, the dedications of the thousands of volunteer teachers, the sound administration of the many committees who were assigned to undertake the application of this campaign, and above all the many who offered financial contributions.

Meanwhile, it must not be forgotten, that in all these literacy campaigns, the doctrine on which the campaign moved has been: («HADDAAD TAQAANNO BAR HADDAADAN AQOONNA BARO»), which means: IF YOU DONT KNOW LEARN IT; BUT IF YOU DO KNOW TEACH IT. The doctrine itself relates to the principles of

self-help «Iskaa-Wax-U-Qabso». To speak now in terms of figures, the adult classes enrolment for the first phase of the campaign (April 1973 to January 1974) reached 400,000 students who successfully passed the literacy exams. But what is more interesting to know is the number of people who have learned through other media of instructional programmes such as radio lessons, self-help in seeking knowledge, amount to not less than 600,000 candidates who were equally qualified for the same exams. This proves the value that had been obtained initially from written Somali, which produced almost a million people who are now able to read and write, but who failed in the past due to lack of schools, and above all lack of their language being written. They are now counted among the literate population. The next step for these people is to enrol them into functional literacy campaigns so that they may increase the range of their learning. Our ultimate goal is to create a skilled labour force that will improve its economic conditions and contribute towards building the socialist society.

As for the nomadic community, who are the majority of our population, and their livestock, the mainstay of the Somali wealth, effective consideration of improving their way of life was not possible in the past. The Revolutionary Government took care of their welfare and have made special consideration in the National Five-year Development Plan for their advancement. As it has been planned at the beginning of the campaign, a mass literacy campaign for the nomads will be launched this year, and the Regional and District Governments are instructed to make their own plans for the organization and execution of this national task. Also there is an idea of establishing 10 experimental schools, each will accommodate 400 students. These are pilot projects and if they are found successful they will serve as the nucleus for the establishment of a wider range of nomadic system of education. But there is no reason why it should not succeed as long as we believe in the Somali traditional proverb: («RAQIBA WAA KU RAGGEEDA»), which means: each task has its own merited people.

Inspite of these, we must not lose sight of the words spoken by the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, Jaalle Siyad, addressed to the nation in various occasions, that the campaign requires a lot of preparations and facilities, but in this regard we have ample space under the trees which can accommodate as many Somali students as the case has been in the past.

Following is the speech of our Great Leader, Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre.

SRC PRESIDENT MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMED SIYAD BARRE CALLS ON THE SOMALI NATION TO START THE CAMPAIGN FOR ERADICATING ILLITERACY IN THE RURAL AREAS.

In a national speech, March 8, 1974, President Siyad said:

We met this time last year at Cons Stadium for the sake of two matters concerning education. The first concerned the inter-scholastic regional games, and the other the launching of the literacy campaign in urban centers. We have explained on that occasion the vital importance of education and the aims behind the campaign against illiteracy. We told you that no nation can progress without having concrete education, which is the key to literacy. That does not mean that an illiterate public is an ignorant one. The public does have knowledge but the education we need to serve us today in the consolidation of our revolution, and leading our people to prosperity, must be based on mass literacy as a fundamental prerequisite for deciphering

the mysteries of knowledge. This reciprocates to the principles of socialism which we have adopted, and on which depends the know-how one uses, and how he develops his social well-being.

It is therefore necessary that, if we want to raise the political, social and economic standards of the nation, we must devise a new educational system that pervades the whole country. This revolutionary educational policy must oppose any tribal, district, regional, or cultural polarisations, and promote ways of making our mother tongue the national medium of instruction.

If the entire Somali nation is to think and act alike, the scholar and the layman must have the mother tongue as the common medium of communication and correspondence.

In the past, it happened that our educated people had no way of communicating their knowledge to the rest of us. This was due to the lack of a written national language to express oneself. Luckily, writing our mother tongue has unleashed the forces of language transmission, and enabled the educated to convey their knowledge to others of less education. The literacy campaign is intended to improve the technical ability of our masses by enabling them to read and write, and thus increase their productive capacity. By this we mean to enable the farmer to consult the latest agricultural techniques and thus utilize scientifically this newly acquired knowledge of his. In this same way the fisherman, the technician, the trader, the soldier, the artisan and all members of the society must acquire sufficient scientific know-how to improve national living standards.

The current literacy campaign which was launched this time last year is meant specially for the adult members of our population since the youngsters are expected to pursue their education in regular schools.

It is necessary that the adult citizens, on whose shoulders lie the responsibility of implementing our revolutionary policies, acquire appropriate revolutionary education to equip them for the national task. A year has passed since then. It is now high time that we examined what we achieved. We have certainly scored many successes, although we also had some short-falls.

You all remember that we were doing this through our declared policy of self-reliance. It was a task to which no special funds or individuals were allocated. We did and are still doing everything by the help of the conscientiousness and the revolutionary spirit of our people, who contributed a lot to the implementation, coordination and financing of the campaign. This task has given us the chance to observe and know who the most responsible and best revolutionaries are of our people. We must remind ourselves again that eradicating illiteracy in our midst is not an easy task. To attain success numerous programs and support facilities must be planned and executed. Only then can it be possible for us to spread education to different generations and urban and rural populations.

THE LANGUAGE AND SCHOOLS.

The problem of having no written national language was most aptly depicted in the schools. Three foreign languages were used as media of instruction. This greatly confused students and lowered their educational abilities. Since each foreign language was accompanied by its cultural strings, it became necessary to employ different teachers to instruct in the three foreign languages.

This raised the problem of different text books, teachers with different backgrounds, and the inability to unify our educational system. Students spent most of their time trying to understand the meaning of the

vocabulary used in explaining lessons in the text books, their talents were thus wasted and their educational standards lowered. All these problems became insurmountable obstacles in the fulfilment of state educational policies.

The long awaited hope of the nation was realised when on October 21, 1972 it was announced that the Somali language will be written. This decision made it possible to make Somali the medium of instruction in all the schools. We then started writing text books based on Somali culture and written in the Somali language.

Somalia can boast today of its successful implementation of writing the Somali language within a short time. In 1972-73 all subjects taught at elementary schools were written in Somali. In 1973-74, text books for intermediate schools were fashioned, and soon will be text books for kindergartens and women's adult classes. Secondary school text books are now under way to be ready for the academic year 1974-75. The aim behind all this is to have university education in Somali within a short time.

The speed of learning by children who were learning subjects in Somali this year showed progress, and added confidence in being taught in their mother tongue.

Writing the Somali language also facilitated teachers' training courses since they don't have to be taught in three different languages now. Unification of the national educational system also became possible.

IMPLEMENTATION OF OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE IN SOMALI.

Before announcing Somali as the sole official language of the country, English and Italian were mostly used as the media of official correspondence. After

the announcement, Somali was fully implemented in all offices and all civil servants were given three months of training in mastering the Somali script. The national examination of 19 January, 1973 in which a large number of passes were scored showed how successful this training course was.

Some elements thought that English and Italian would also be used for a while side by side with Somali, but our pragmatic policy to eliminate all foreign correspondence from official use forced everyone to implement the Somali script. This brought quick returns of success. The practice of using foreign languages beside one's indigenous language had made it impossible in many African countries to fully implement their own languages.

Of course writing Somali had its problems initially but soon all major difficulties were surmounted. Soon enough work in our offices was unified and the problems raised by polyglot cultures eliminated. The Somali masses had full understanding for the first time of what goes on in government offices, and thus mutual cooperation between the public and civil servant officials were cemented. Today most people can write with confidence to any government office to which is tied some interest of theirs — that is victory.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ILLITERACY.

Writing the Somali language made it necessary to spread it to the whole population. We aimed at giving the society a kind of education they never experienced before; creating a class of workers that are well trained and confident in doing a job properly; creating a society that can understand its interests and watchful about its sovereignty and unity.

These fundamental aims are not so easy to fulfill. But up to now thousands of text books have been published to educate the masses. So far 400,000 persons

have enlisted and taken the exams of the first three phases of the literacy campaign. Added to this are those who took the trouble to learn for themselves and also the unknown number who are now undergoing training in this fourth phase.

Development of adult education requires that those who learn how to read and write be given an opportunity to use constantly their acquired literacy lest they forget what they learned. Moreover, since reading and writing is not the end of knowledge it is necessary that literate people be taught the rudiments of science, mathematics, social science and the principles of socialism. Training Somalis for some trade or another to earn a useful living is also necessary.

LITERACY AMONG THE NOMADS

About two-thirds of our population are nomads who rear vast herds of livestock which is one of the mainstays of Somali economy. It rather saddens me to know that not much has been done for this majority of our population.

The current Five Year Plans is therefore meant to give special consideration to the nomadic population. At the outset, the literacy campaign must be launched in the entire rural areas this year. Every region must therefore prepare for this major task. There are also ten centers, each with a capacity of 400 students, which are to be experimental centers in eliminating illiteracy among nomads, and is included within the 5-year plan. The campaign we are to launch must utilise every well, and the shade of every tree and rock as a language class. We are very confident that all will join, as usual, in this frontal attack against illiteracy...

THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPLUSORY INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION.

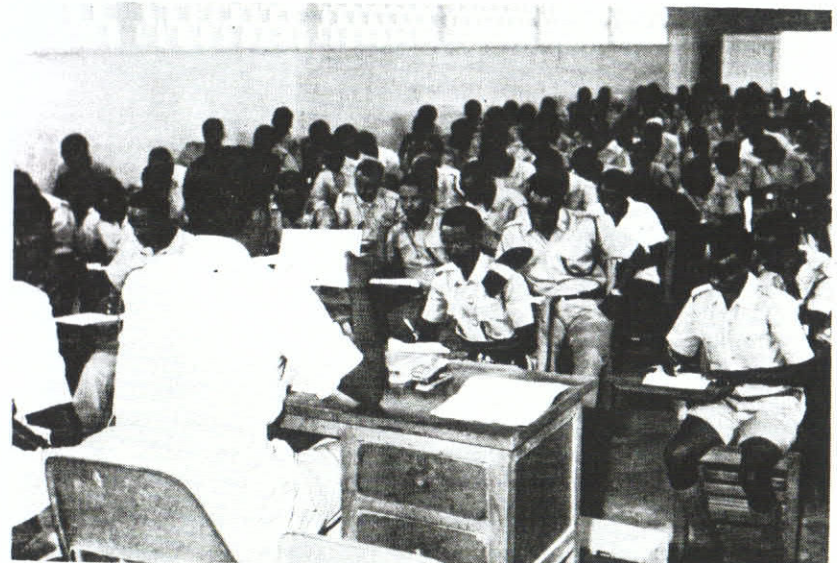
In his May day speech the President of SRC, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre announced that all children of school age in this country will have free and compulsory education upto intermediate school level.

This revolutionary step will automatically give many Somali youngsters the opportunity to have an education and at the same time will put an end to the practice, by some parents of pushing their children on to the streets before they are adequately prepared for life.

The Revolutionary Government has taken this bold step because of its sincere belief in social justice and equal opportunity for all Somali's at all costs. According to the Secretary of State for Education his Ministry will, in order to implement this decision, ask all the regions and districts of the country to make a master plan by finding out the number of school-age children in their areas. Then the Ministry of Education will supply them with teachers at their request. The Ministry of Education will also arrange seminars for regional and district education authorities.



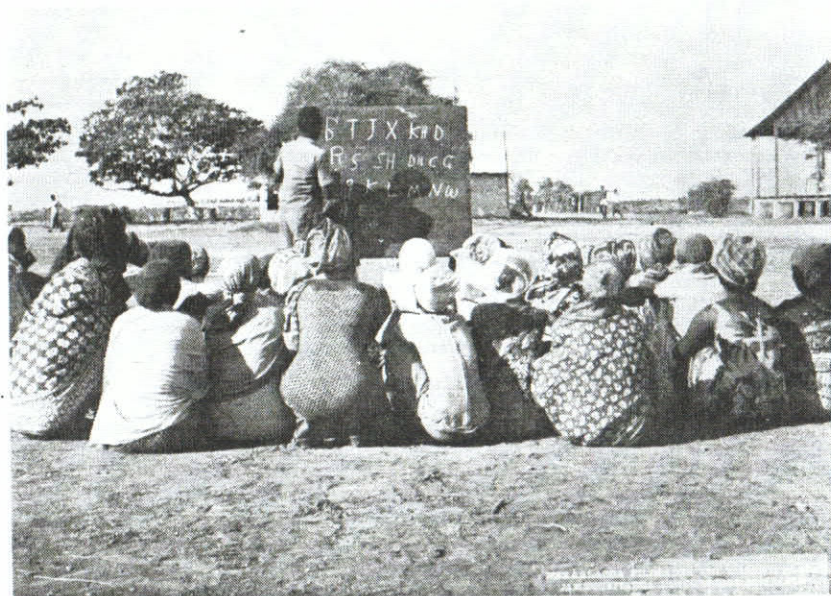
The session of the Supreme Revolutionary Council and the Council of Secretaries of State, under the Chairmanship of Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre, approving «Latin» as the script for writing the Somali Language.



Government officials were the first people to learn the new script in preparation for the introduction of Somali as the sole official language.



Two young Agricultural Programme pioneers teaching each other or reading jointly the written Somali.



A group of women learning Somali script in an open square in their village.



The Somali Language Commission in one of their ordinary sessions.



Another group of womenfolk in a courtyard «classroom».



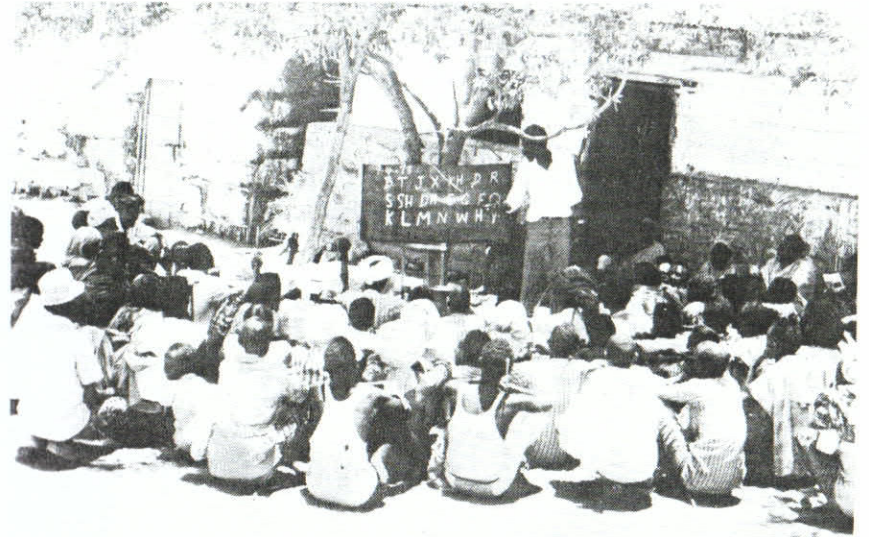
The President of the SRC, Jaalle Siyad received a present of Somali books from a young «October Flower» girl.



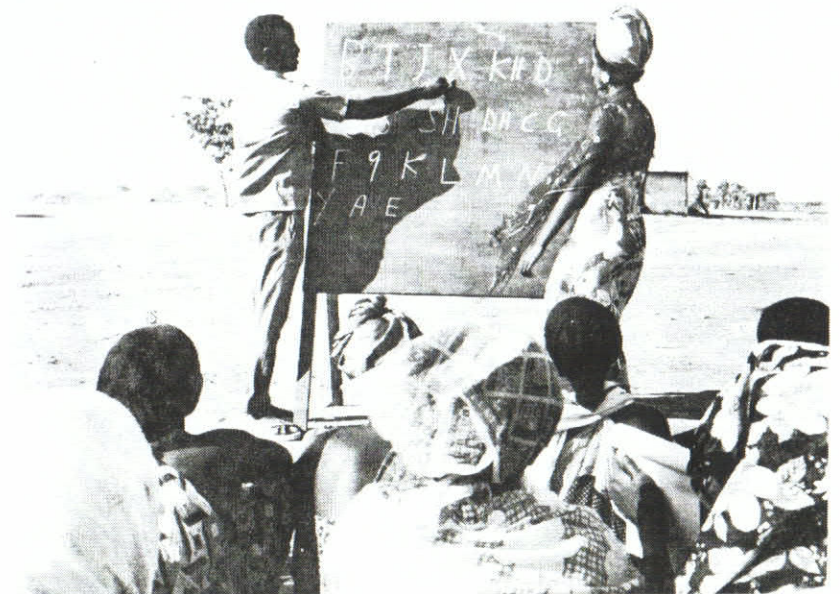
A group of young girls in a classroom learning the writing of the Language.



A group of womenfolk learning the script of the written Somali



Every conceivable space was used as a classroom for the literacy campaign.



A young girl is seen here undergoing a test in front of her comrades



A man reading a newspaper (Xiddigia Oktoobar) for the first time in his mother-tongue.

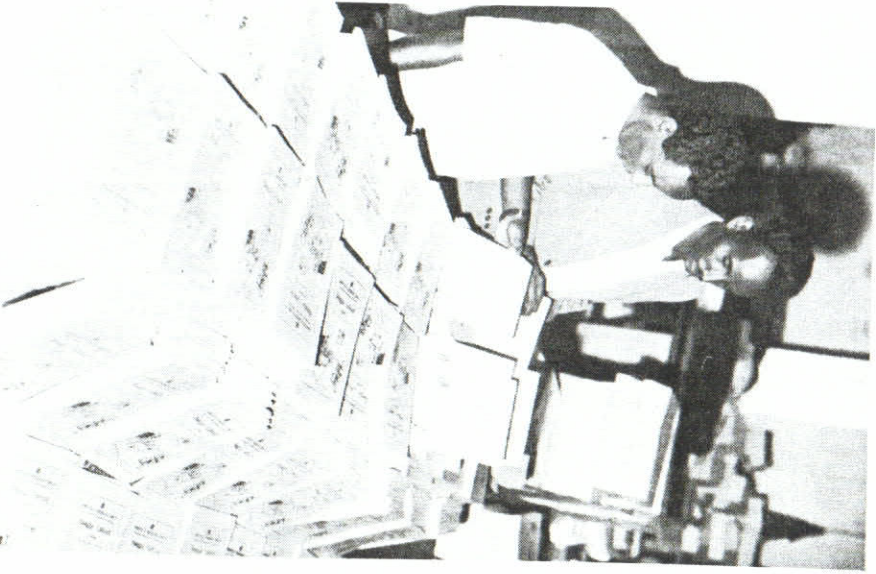


An energetic, curious and young Somali reading his own language.

A neighbour comes to help a busy housewife with her homework.



A display of Somali books produced by the Printing Press for the «students» of the written Somali.

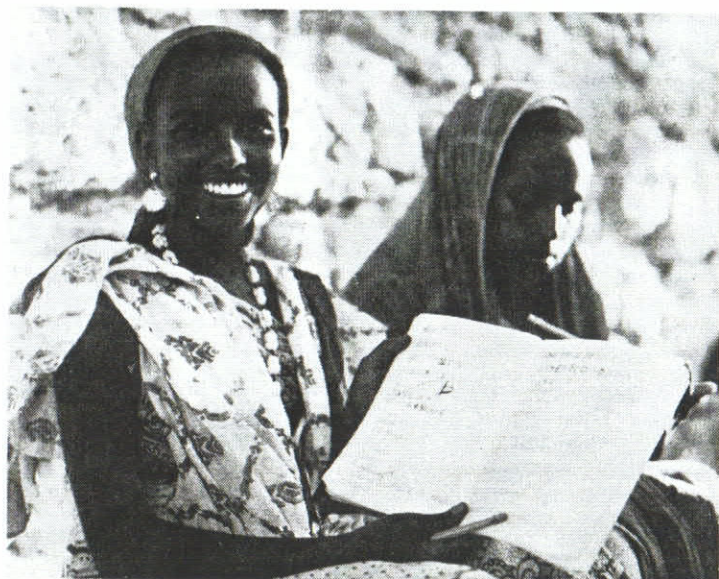


Studying the written Somali is no exception to any one:

- a) Here is seen an old man with a deep interest for learning sitting side by side with his comrades, the womanfolk.
- b) A young lad helps an elderly man with his alphabet.



Somali people's enthusiasm for learning their new script is not confined to any particular age-group.



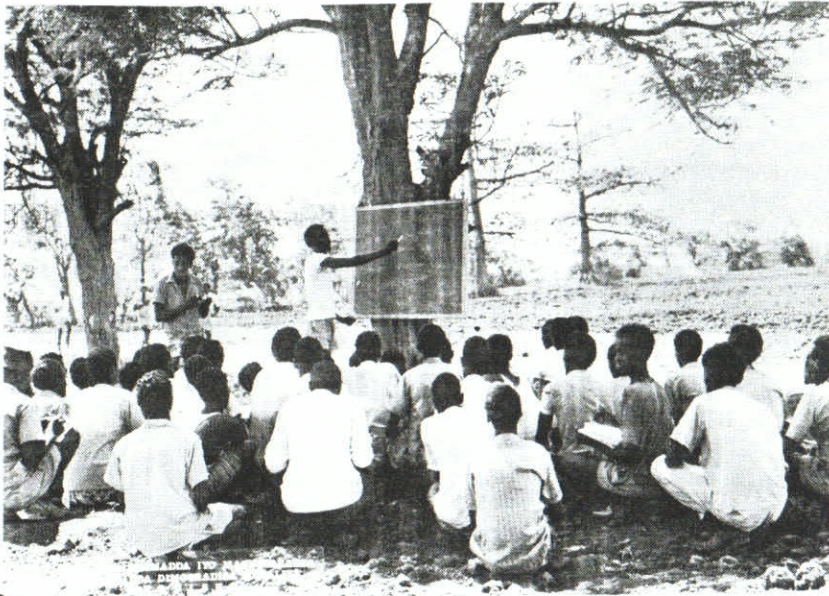
Two Somali girls, proudly showing their ability to write their own language.



The Secretary of State for Education, Lt. Col. Abdirazaak Mohamed Abubakar, presents the flag of the «Campaign against illiteracy» to the inhabitants of one of the Mogadishu Quarters for their exceptional efforts in learning and teaching the «written Somali»



A group of people learning the writing of the Somali language under the shade of a tree, in the open air on the banks of river Shabelle.



A group of peasants taking lessons in written Somali.



With the start of the campaign against illiteracy, the Somali women, eager to learn the script are seen in one of the Orientation Centres in Mogadishu.

ERRATA

P. 10 - Line 7 omit one «only».

P. 10 - Line 17 read town for two.

P. 15 - Line 22 read as «it had 2 more signs than Arabic».

P. 19 last line but two: linguists specialised.....