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# **somalia**

## **the writing of somali**

a Study by  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In preparing this report we have taken into account the results of researches into the Somali language undertaken by both foreign and Somali scholars. We have also been greatly assisted in our task by studying the report of the previous Linguistic Commission set up by the Somali Government in 1961 under the chairmanship of Mr. Musa Galaal.

Of particular value in drawing our own conclusions were the interviews which we had during our stay in Mogadiscio with members of the Somali general public and of the Somali civil service. We had the opportunity to meet almost all those Somalis who have contributed to the advancement of the Somali language, and those who, in connexion with their professions, were particularly interested in the problems of Somali orthography. In our interviews, which were most kindly arranged by Dr. Yassin Osman Kenadid who acted as the liaison officer between the Ministry of Education and ourselves, we were able to have frank discussions.

These interviews confirmed, first of all, the assessment of the structure of the Somali language which we formed when studying the result of researches so far undertaken. They also amply corroborated what we read in the existing published sources about the need for establishing a Somali national orthography. Serious linguistic confusion arises from the unpredictable diversity in the knowledge of foreign languages among educated Somalis, some knowing well only one of the three current in the Somali Republic (Arabic, English and Italian), and some, though fewer, knowing two. A good knowledge of all three languages is a rare achievement.

Thus, while the Somalis share the same spoken language, they frequently cannot communicate with one another in writing without the help of translators. This is a great anomaly, since the Somali Republic is one of the very few countries in Africa in which one language only is used all over its territory. Where there are no natural linguistic barriers, artificial ones have been erected. When the vast number of students who at the moment are receiving their education in foreign countries where languages other than Arabic, English or Italian are spoken, return to the Somali Republic, the linguistic confusion will be even further intensified.

The history of the numerous attempts to establish a national orthography for Somali is a matter of common knowledge. Many ways of writing Somali have been evolved, both by Somali and by foreign scholars, and the reason why none of them has been generally accepted does not lie in any failure on the technical side. Some of the systems of writing used by private individuals or groups in the Somali Republic are of a high standard of phonemic accuracy and precision and compare favourably with any existing scripts used as national orthographies in other countries.

The praiseworthy report of the Linguistic Commission appointed by the Somali Government in 1961 shows that there is a widespread interest in their mother tongue among the Somali public, and this is confirmed by the existence of several books and articles written by Somalis in Somali. The real problem lies not in a lack of

endeavour and enthusiasm but in the irreconcilable views held by different members of the community as to how the Somali language should be written.

Unless a decision on the choice of an orthography is made at the national level, Somali will never be written as an official language of the country. While we could not presume to give advice on the political and social aspects of such a choice, in this report we shall endeavour to show the technical advantages and disadvantages of the systems of writing which can be seriously considered as possible national orthographies. We shall deal with them under three separate headings: the Somali scripts, the adaptations of the Latin script, and the adaptations of the Arabic script. We must stress, however, that the order in which we evaluate them does not imply any order of preference.

We have first of all to give an inventory of the sounds of the Somali language. To transcribe the consonant phonemes in our inventory we shall use the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (which will be placed in square brackets) and the symbols used by various Somali orthographies, available in published form. The orthographies concerned are numbered and described by reference to the following books, arranged according to the date of publication:

1. Muḥammad ʿAbdī Makāhīl Inshāʿu -lmakātabāti -lʿaḡriyati fī -llughati -aḡḡmāliiyati, published by Almunshī Ghulām Muḥammad, Aden, A.H.1351, printed in Bombay
2. Gōsan ka Af Sōmāli ga Marsi kōwād ka af Sōmāli ga, duplicated issue, Mogadiscio 1951
3. Musa H.I.Galaal 'Arabic script for Somali', The Islamic Quarterly, Vol.I, N<sup>o</sup> 2, 1954, Islamic Cultural Centre, London
4. Musa H.I.Galaal Hikmad Soomaali, Oxford University Press, 1956
5. ʿAbdullāhi Khāji Mahhamūd Afkayaga Hōyo, Edizioni Arte e Cultura, Mogadiscio 1960
6. Ibrāhīm Hāshi Maḥmūd Aḡḡmāliiyatu bilughati -lQurʿān, 1963
7. Shire Jaamac Achmed Gabayo, maahmaah iyo sheekooyin yaryar, The National Printers, Mogadiscio 1965

In the list of consonants given below, the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (I.P.A.) are put in the first column and the symbols of each of the orthographies are arranged in columns, headed by their serial numbers.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
[b]	ب	ب	ب	b	b	ب	b
[d]	د	د	د	d	d	د	d
[t]	ت	ت	ت	t	t	ت	t
[dʰ]	تھ	تھ	تھ	d	dh	تھ	dh
[g]	ج	ج	ج	g	g	ج	g
[k]	ك	ك	ك	k	k	ك	k
[q]	ق	ق	ق	q	q	ق	q
[ʔ]	ء			ء		ء	the sign
[r]	ر	ر	ر	r	r	ر	r
[s]	س	س	س	s	s	س	s
[ʃ]	ش	ش	ش	sh	sh	ش	sh
[x]	خ	خ	خ	kh	kh	خ	kh
[ʕ]	ع	ع	ع	c	c	ع	c
[ħ]	ح	ح	ح	ħ	hh	ح	oh
[h]	ه	ه	ه	h	h	ه	h
[ʝ]	جھ	جھ	جھ	j	j	جھ	j
[m]	م	م	م	m	m	م	m
[n]	ن	ن	ن	n	n	ن	n
[r]	ر	ر	ر	r	r	ر	r
[l]	ل	ل	ل	l	l	ل	l
[w]	و	و	و	w	w	و	w
[j]	ي	ي	ي	y	y	ي	y

In orthographies Nos. 1, 3 and 6 the doubling of consonants is represented by the sign ω (shadda), and in Nos. 4, 5 and 7 by doubling the letter. In orthography No. 2 letters are also doubled, but in practice this is often dispensed with.

There are ten vowel phonemes in Somali, short i, e, a, o, u and long i, e, a, o, u. They are transcribed as follows in the Somali orthographies:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
إ	9	ط	i/i̇	i	ى	i
إ	6	ع	e/ė	e	ع	e
أ	5	ا	a/ȧ	a	ا	a
أ	٧	و	o/ȯ	o	و	o
أ	٨	و	u/u̇	u	و	u
إى	ع	إى	ii/i̇i̇	ī	ى	ii
إى	ع	ع	ee/ėė	ē	أى	ee
أ	٩	أ	aa/ȧȧ	ā	أ	aa
أو	٧	و	oo/ȯȯ	ō	أو	oo
أو	٧	أو	uu/u̇u̇	ū	و	uu

In orthography No. 4 the cedilla or its absence denotes certain minute distinctions in vowel quality connected with the subdivision of the ten vowel phonemes into pairs distinguished by "front" or "less front" quality. For a practical orthography this distinction can be disregarded, as the context of the sentence normally eliminates any possible ambiguity. Moreover, in this orthography tone marks are occasionally used, but they again can be dispensed with for practical purposes, since tone in this language is tied to grammatical structure and can be predicted from the context of the sentence.

The consonant and vowel symbols which we have listed in our inventory have been designed for use mainly in the dialect group, sometimes called "Common Somali", which covers all the major Somali dialects except those spoken in the coastal dialect group (Benadir) and central dialect group (spoken mainly in the Upper Juba).

Coastal Somali has the additional phoneme [ɲ] (a palatal nasal), while central Somali has the additional phonemes [ŋ], [ɳ] (a velar nasal) and [dʒ] (an alveolo-palatal affricate).

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## 2. THE NATIONAL SOMALI SCRIPTS

The problems posed by the creation of a completely new script are very different from those which one has to solve when applying a script which is already in use in one or more languages, to an unwritten language.

When one decides to adopt a script already in use for a language so far unwritten, this means:

1. That one has decided to accept the conventions and the graphic signs of the writing, with their merits and demerits.
2. That one is ready to make up the deficiencies of the writing, without allowing oneself to have recourse to procedures which are contradictory to the conventions proper to that script.

The simplest solution consists of taking a particular script without modifying it and without making up its deficiencies. The initiators of such scripts make no effort, and it is all those people instead who use them that have constantly to exert themselves to understand them.

Important progress in adapting the existing scripts consists in retaining all the signs which correspond to the meaningful sounds of the language to be written, and combining single signs or introducing new signs in order to represent the sounds for which no signs are available.

In any case, the shortcomings proper to all "historical" scripts (i.e. scripts which have developed in the course of history), such as inconsistency in the use of symbols, overloading or insufficient distinctiveness of features, excessive use of digraphs or diacritics, cannot be remedied. One can only suppress the superfluous signs.

In the case of a completely new script, one can adjust the number of graphic signs precisely to the number of sounds of the language; one can adopt conventions, enabling one to arrange signs into groups according to the common phonological characteristics of the sounds which they represent (thus aiming at a graphic systematization). One can design the shapes of new letters so that they are adjusted to the direction of writing, free from any unnecessary flourishes, and lend themselves to cursive writing (very important in schools and universities)

Nevertheless, every script which is peculiar and unique to its own language (Greek, Armenian, Hebrew, Ethiopian, etc.) creates a barrier around that language, difficult to cross, and isolates it and the people who speak it. Those among the speakers of such a language, who want to learn a foreign language, are compelled also to learn a new script at the same time.

A script must be treated as a tool and be chosen accordingly: it must be simple, sturdy and as economical as is consistent with its other good qualities.

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In the case of Somali, about ten national scripts have been proposed. Of all these the most important ones are the ones invented by Osman Yusuf Kenadid (Osmania) and by Hussein Sheikh Ahmed Kaddareh.

The other ones are interesting but not as satisfactory. They all have the merit of suiting the sounds of the Somali language. They all claim to be independent of all the scripts in existence and in particular, independent of the Latin, Arabic and Ethiopian scripts.

However, this is not altogether true for any one of them, as some unintended similarities cannot be avoided. In fact, while the number of graphic signs is theoretically unlimited, the number of simple and clear graphic signs is very small and many scripts which are historically completely unrelated show considerable accidental similarities.

The efforts of the inventors of Somali scripts to move as far away as possible from the scripts known to them, has had two very grave technical consequences. Firstly, while striving to get away from the existing scripts they nevertheless doomed themselves to follow in their new scripts the confusion and complications present in the old ones (while the advantage of a new script should lie in a simple and scientific systematization of signs). Secondly, in order to differentiate their signs from those of other scripts, they were led to use signs whose features are overloaded, or which resemble one another, or which are not suited to the direction of writing and consequently not fitted for cursive writing.



If one considers Osmania as a "historical" script, even though its history is brief, one cannot treat it as a "new" script\*. It is the oldest and most widely diffused among the national scripts and it is used in typing.





It can be completed by adding the letters which are lacking and which should be drawn by graphic designers, in co-operation with those who use the script. For example, from the purely hypothetical point of view, if it is decided that the letter *h* will represent the sound [w] one could represent the long vowel u as *n* (parallel to *ɾ* which represents the short vowel u). If it is decided that *o* represents [j], one could represent the long vowel i as *o* or *g* or *ɸ* (parallel to *ɟ* representing the short vowel i). Since the

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\* i.e. graphic systematization is no longer possible.















direction of writing is from left to right, the glottal stop, i.e. the sound corresponding to the Arabic hamza, could be represented, for example, by  (a sign which is not otherwise used in the script) or by  .



For the central and coastal dialects the sound [ŋ] could be written as  (parallel to  representing [ŋ] and the sound [ɲ] could be written as  or  ).







It is not possible to go much further in improvements to the Osmania script (for example, to group in a more systematic way the shapes or to simplify their designs) without seriously upsetting the whole system, because the least change would have extremely important consequences.

Simply to show that an attempt has been made in this direction and to explain our position more clearly, we give examples, which must not be considered in any way as proposals for reforming the script.

Let us consider the short series of consonants pronounced with the lips: [f], [b], [m]. If we take as the basis the shape  representing [f], then the shape representing [b] ought to be  rather than  , and the shape representing [m] should be  rather than  (and consequently, the shape of  representing [n], could remain as it stands).

If we take as the basis the shape  representing [b], then the shape of the letter representing [f] ought to be  (which is used for [q] i.e. the 'ayn), rather than  , and the shape of the letter representing [m] should be  rather than  ; but then one should no longer use  for the short vowel i, on account of the inevitable confusion which would occur in the cursive writing.

Turning to another aspect of this script, we must observe that the shape  representing [x] begins on the right, which is a mistake in a script which runs from left to right. But if it begins from the left, it would become  (a sign of the Latin alphabet).

The shapes of  and  for the short and long o could be simplified, either by removing the initial curl, i.e.  and  , or by placing the component lines at the same level,  and  , but then again one comes very near other alphabets.

The pursuit of absolute originality is always costly.

Let us examine now the script proposed by Hussein Sheikh Ahmed Kaddareh. It is less widespread than Osmania and its history is even shorter, yet one can choose to treat it as a "historical" writing. It is more satisfactory than Osmania if one considers the number of signs, but their grouping and shapes are subject to the same criticism.

Its cursive writing could be simplified if the printing form is taken as its basis. For example, u a could become u ; z e could become E , etc. Generally speaking, the procedure which should be taken to develop a satisfactory cursive writing in this script consists of simply abandoning the cursive proposed by the inventor and using his "printing form" for handwriting. A satisfactory cursive writing would then develop by itself in a natural way, after having been used for some time. A simple internal decision of the Ministry of Education could, after two or three years' use, fix the cursive form to be taught in elementary schools.

A greater simplification of this script would lead to the same consequences as in the case of Osmania, i.e. it would upset the whole system.

Let us return to the same examples. If one retains l for [f], [b] ought to be represented by L instead of ll , [m] ought to be represented by u or L instead of w (and [n] by l instead of ll , because [d] is represented by l ), and in the cursive writing, respectively: l [f], l [b], u or u [m], l [n] and l [d]. Σ for e is too near Σ for [h] etc.

It is true that a new writing, conforming more to the principles which we have indicated, could be elaborated, taking into account the positive elements of each of the two scripts, but such a writing would in the end resemble neither of the two scripts and would constitute a third system of writing. Such a hypothesis cannot be rejected, but would be beyond the scope of our mission. Nevertheless, we have given an example of what such a project would involve.

Such an enterprise, if it were to be carried out well and have a chance of success, would require the collaboration of specialists in graphic arts (letter designers).

Such a hypothetical project should not, in our opinion, in any way be used as an argument for delaying the decision concerning the choice of a Somali script.

In the event of the choice being made in favour of a new script, combining the advantages of Osmania and Kaddaria, and based on the same principles, we suggest that a strictly limited period, say 30 days, should be given to the experts (linguists and designers) for presenting to the Somali Government a definitive project.

See Appendix 1 for an example of what might be expected in such a case.

### 3. THE LATIN SCRIPT

In the course of our enquiries we heard various persons expressing the view that the system of writing which should be adopted for Somali ought to be simple, have one letter for each sound of the language, have no diacritical signs, no diacritical letters (i.e. letters which merely modify the preceding one) and no special new signs.

If one tried to apply such criteria to the Latin script, the only solution which would suggest itself would be to re-employ the letters which are superfluous for Somali, namely c, j, v, x and z, and assign them arbitrarily to some particular sounds. Even then there would not be enough letters to represent all the sounds of the Somali language, since the following sounds have no equivalent in the Latin script: [d], [ʔ], [ɣ], [ʃ], [x], [ħ], [tʃ]

In fact, nowhere in the world is there a system of writing based on the Latin script which does not use either diacritical signs or diacritical letters. Scripts which have been in use for a long time not only employ digraphs (i.e. combinations of two letters in which one is basic and the other diacritical), but also graphic devices which consist of even more than two letters, e.g. the sequence sci in the Italian word scienza.

If we examine the different systems of writing based on the Latin script, adapted to different languages in modern times, we find that they contain diacritical signs, diacritical letters, or new signs. Below are some examples of alphabets based on the Latin script in which the characters with diacritical

signs or special letters are placed in circles, and the characters which contain digraphs are placed in squares.

(a) Turkish Alphabet

a b c **ç** d e f g **ğ** h **ı** i j k l m n o **ö**  
p r **ş** t u **ü** v y z

Note: Turkish was written in Arabic script till 1928.

(b) Swahili Alphabet

a b **ch** d **dh** e f g h i j k l m n  
**ny** o p r a t **th** u v w y z

Note: Swahili written in Arabic script has been in use for at least three centuries.

(c) Chinese Alphabet

a b c **ch** d e f g h i j k m n **ng**  
o p q\* r s **sh** t u **ü** v w x

Note: This alphabet was adopted in 1958 and is scheduled to replace gradually the Chinese pictographic writing.

(d) Some alphabets developed for languages of West Africa at the Conference of West African Linguistics at Bamako, February 1966:

1. Tswana (Shona) Alphabet

a b d **ḍ** **ḍ** **ḍ** f g **ḍh** h i j k **kh** l  
m n **ḥ** o p q r s **sh** t **t** u v w y z **t**

2. Mandingo Alphabet

a **an** b u **dy** e **en** é **en** f g **eb** h i  
**in** k **kh** l m n **ny** **ny** o **on** **é** **en** p r  
r **sh** t **ty** u **un** y z

\* A re-employed letter, with the value.  
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3. Fulani Alphabet

Ⓟ	a	aa	b	c	d	e	oo	f	g	h	i	ii		
j	k	l	m	ab	n	nd	ng	nj	ny	Ⓡ	o	oo	p	r
s	t	u	uu	v	y	Ⓢ								



If it is decided to adopt the Latin script for Somali, we recommend that it should follow the system used by Shire Jaamac Achmed (whose name is usually spelt Shireh Jama Ahmed), and referred to in the Introduction to this report as Orthography No. 7, with the exception that the consonant [q] (the 'ayn) should be represented by the symbol ' , and the consonant [ʔ] (the hamza) by the symbol ʔ , as in the system used by Musa H.I. Galaal (Orthography No. 4). In this system of writing, double consonants would be represented by repetition of the same letter, and long vowels by repetition of the vowel letter.

The dialectally restricted sounds should be represented as follows:

- [ŋ] — ng
- [ɲ] — ny
- [dʒ] like [tʃ] j

During our inquiries, we found no valid objections to the Latin script on technical or scientific grounds.

The Latin script for Somali would have numerous advantages. It is easy to write and its shapes lend themselves readily to cursive writing. If it is adopted, it could be easily printed and typed with the machines used for Italian or English, with only minor adjustments consisting of the addition of the signs ʔ and ' .

Printers familiar with Italian or English would not have to be retrained.

The adoption of this writing would not put any additional burden on the children who already have to learn English or Italian at school. Indeed, the learning of this script first through the national language would facilitate the acquisition of many foreign languages later.

Finally in any discussion of the eventual introduction of the Latin script for Somali, one must not lose sight of the pivotal fact that this script is directly derived from the North Semitic script (the Phoenician branch). The Arabic script is derived from the same North Semitic script (the Aramaic branch) as can be seen from the table in Appendix 2 to this report.

#### 4. THE ARABIC SCRIPT

The question of how and with what degree of success the Arabic script could be adapted for Somali is mainly concerned with the system of representing vowels. The consonants of the Somali language can all be transcribed with Arabic letters as they stand, except for the consonant [q] (as in [qul] "land, earth") and the consonant [g] (as in [gal] "enter"). These two consonants can be represented by ĵ and ğ respectively, a modification which involves the addition of two dots to the existing letters j and ġ.

To explain the difficulties involved in the transcription of vowels we must mention briefly certain relevant characteristics of the Arabic script as it is used for the Arabic language.

In the Arabic script normally only three long vowels, i, a and u, are fully represented. The short vowels i, a and u are omitted altogether, with the exception of the initial short vowels which are marked by the letter <sup>l</sup> (alif). This letter, unless marked with a diacritic, may represent any of the three existing short vowels. Moreover, no distinction in writing is made between the long vowel u and the short vowel a followed by [w], and between the long vowel i and the short vowel a followed by [j].

That such a system of writing can be read accurately is only due to the structure of the Arabic language, which frequently makes it possible to predict the quality of the short vowels from their consonantal structure and the grammatical

context of the sentence. Even so, persons who speak Arabic as their mother tongue are sometimes troubled especially when foreign personal names or place names have to be transcribed.

In sacred and theological writings and in school books the short vowels are shown throughout by means of three vowel points (the ḥarakāt) and the diacritic called sukūn which makes it possible to distinguish the sequences a + [w] and a + [j] from the long vowels u and i respectively. When all these additional marks are added, no ambiguity can arise as to the vocalization of the text.

The vowel points and the sukūn are sometimes used in a text which otherwise dispenses with these devices, and have as their object the removal of a possible ambiguity of interpretation. There are no rules or conventions indicating when this should be done, and it is left to the writer to assess whether his reader will need them.

The system which marks only long vowels and the system which uses the ḥarakāt and the sukūn only occasionally are both totally inadequate for Somali. Even the system which uses the ḥarakāt and the sukūn throughout is still incapable of representing four Somali vowels, namely the short e and o, and the long e and o.

In our view this deficiency can be overcome by using one additional symbol — , first introduced in a book written by 'Abdi Makāhīl (see the Introduction to this report). When placed above a letter this symbol would represent the short vowel o, and when placed under a letter it would represent the short vowel e, e.g. ر "climb"; ج "descend". The corresponding long vowels o and e would be represented by the same symbol, followed by the letter و or ي respectively, e.g. ر و "green grass"; ج ي "garden". The letters و and ي would be without a sukūn over them; with a sukūn the sequence و would represent o + [w] and the sequence ي would represent e + [j], e.g. و "old age"; ي "big". For Somali the sukūn would be necessary only for marking و and ي. Otherwise it could be omitted. The dialectally restricted sounds should be transcribed as follows:

[p] by the sequence of ن and و  
[ŋ] by the sequence of ن and ج  
[dz] like [tʃ] by ج

Such a system of transcription would represent accurately the sounds of the Somali language and would have the following advantages:

- (i) Being virtually the same as the ordinary, fully vocalized Arabic script it could be learnt with ease by all those who have even an elementary knowledge of the Arabic language.
- (ii) It could be easily printed with the standard machinery used for Arabic, with only minor adjustments consisting of the addition of letters with the sign <sup>~</sup> above or under them. Printers familiar with Arabic would not have to be retrained.
- (iii) It would make it very easy to quote Arabic within a Somali text.
- (iv) Those who learned how to use this system of writing Somali would find it easier to learn the Arabic language.

The system of writing under discussion has certain disadvantages:

- (i) Under the influence of Arabic its users would tend to leave out the ḥarakāt and the sukūn and thus render it almost totally useless. An element of subjective choice as to what to put in and what to leave out would thus be introduced and might lead to orthographic chaos. Much effort would be required on the part of teachers and the authorities entrusted with the matters of the language to suppress such a tendency.
- (ii) It would require an unusually high degree of concentration of attention and effort on the part of those who would use it in reading or writing.
- (iii) Typewriters would have to be equipped with the ḥarakāt symbols which would have to be put on "dead keys", i.e. keys which do not move the typewriter carriage forward. The constant use of dead keys would be troublesome and time-consuming for the typist. Experience shows, moreover, that it is very difficult to cut stencils in the Arabic script when the ḥarakāt are included.
- (iv) Printing would be expensive if ordinary typesetting were used. It is well known that printing Arabic letters together with the ḥarakāt is much more expensive than printing without them. Photoprinting



(e.g. by the offset method) from typescript or calligraphic handwriting might, however, solve this problem.

There are some alternatives to the system of writing which we have outlined, but they all seem completely unsatisfactory. We shall describe them briefly in order to show the grounds on which we have rejected them.

The first of these alternatives is to augment the Arabic script by adding to it seven completely new letters indicating the five Somali short vowels and the long e and o. These new vowels would be written on the line, like the existing letters of the Arabic alphabet, and not above or below like the *ḥarakāt*. The following symbols have been proposed for this purpose: ٩ ٣ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧ ٨.

Another alternative would be to use the existing letters and signs of the Arabic alphabet but to give them different values. Thus the letters ' , ٩ and ٤ would be used for the short vowels a, u and i, while the short vowels e and o would be represented by ٤ and , respectively but with the sign ° (hamza) above them. The long vowels would then be marked by the sign ¯ (madda).

Finally, a system of writing has been proposed in which the Arabic letter ° in one of its cursive forms would be used as a marker of length, but would be written on the same line as all the other letters. The sign ° (hamza) and the sign ^ , which is used in the Ruq 'a style instead of the three dots in ٤ and ش , would be used for representing some of the vowels.

The three alternatives which we have just outlined introduce important changes in the established use of the Arabic alphabet. Firstly, people are reluctant, because of the high prestige of the Arabic language, to adopt radical modifications which are completely alien to the basic principles of the Arabic orthography. Experience has already shown this both in the Somali Republic and in some Arab countries. Secondly, the users of the new systems, even if they accepted the changes, would tend to transcribe Arabic loanwords in Somali in the traditional Arabic way and thus a mixture of writing conventions would result.

## 5. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the Somali Government has decided which script to adopt, some positive steps will be necessary to implement their decision without any unnecessary delay.

Training courses for teachers will have to be organized and graded textbooks will have to be prepared for schools. We would particularly recommend the preparation of a short film which would help the learner to correlate the sounds of the language with the letters used by the national orthography.

The use of special radio programmes, accompanied by a well-illustrated booklet, might also be of assistance to teachers and those individuals who wish to learn the script by private study.

It would be most essential to take into account all the labour and talent which has already been applied to books written in Somali and to republish them in the new national orthography. Translations of reference works on Somali grammar and vocabulary should follow.

A permanent linguistic committee should be set up and entrusted with the task of producing a monolingual dictionary and later on bilingual dictionaries for Arabic, English, Italian, Russian, etc.

A newspaper in Somali should be started as soon as possible after the decision on the script is taken. Periodicals and cheaply printed books (paperbacks) should be published, since a constant flow of reading material is necessary to maintain literacy in the country. In this connexion the riches of Somali oral literature would be of immediate value.

London, 14 May 1966.

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APPENDIX 1

Somali Scripts

1. Complements to Osmania.

[w]	<u>u</u>	<u>uu</u>	[j]	<u>i</u>	<u>ii</u>	[n]	[ŋ]	[ɲ]	[ʔ]	
h	u	u	ɟ	i	i, i'	ɲ	ŋ	ɲ, ɲ'	ʔ, ʔ'	osmania
h	u	u	ɟ	i	i, i'	ɲ	ŋ	ɲ, ɲ'	ʔ, ʔ'	completed osmania

1) one only to be used.

2. Examples of Reformed Osmania.

o	oo	[χ]	[f]	[b]	[m]	[ɣ]	[a]	[ɟ]	<u>i</u>	
h	m	h	ɟ	y	ɲ	ɲ	ɔ	ɟ	i	osmania
h	m	h	ɟ	y	ɲ, ɲ'	ɲ	ɔ	ɟ	i	ref. osm. A
n	m	h	ɟ	y	ɲ, ɲ'	ɲ	ɔ	ɟ	i	ref. osm. B

1) one only to be used.

3. Examples of Reformed Kaddaria.

[f]	[b]	[m]	[d]	[n]	[χ]	<u>e</u>	[k]	
ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	kaddaria.
ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ɸ, ɸ	ref. kadd. (2)

2) the first one for printing and typing, the second for handwriting.

4. "THIRD SCRIPT". A few examples.

(a) Consonants. (I) Labials. Starting from  $y = [b]$ , then  $ɟ = [f]$ ,  $ɲ = [m]$ .

The capital letters are angular:  $ɸ = [b]$ ,  $ɸ = [f]$ ,  $ɸ = [m]$ .

(II). Velars. Starting from  $ɸ [k]$ . First, conversion to the right of the lower part of the letter, i.e.  $ɸ = [k]$ , then  $ɸ = [g]$ ,  $ɸ = [χ]$ ,  $ɸ = [q]$ .

Capital letters:  $ɸ = [k]$ ,  $ɸ = [g]$ ,  $ɸ = [χ]$ ,  $ɸ = [q]$ .

(b) Vowels. Starting point  $ɸ$ , e. Cursive form  $ɸ$ . Then:

- short vowels:  $ɸ = i$ ,  $ɸ = e$ ,  $ɸ = a$ ,  $ɸ = o$ ,  $ɸ = u$ .

- long vowels:  $ɸ = ii$ ,  $ɸ = ee$ ,  $ɸ = aa$ ,  $ɸ = oo$ ,  $ɸ = uu$ .

Capital letters: short:  $ɸ, ɸ, ɸ, ɸ, ɸ$   
 long:  $ɸ, ɸ, ɸ, ɸ, ɸ$ .

A complete set of new signs could be designed according to these principles.

APPENDIX 2

The evolution of the Arabic and Latin scripts from the North Semitic

IV	III	II	I	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	Α	Α	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
B	Β	Β	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
C	Γ	Γ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
D	Δ	Δ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
E	Ε	Ε	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
F	Ϝ	Ϝ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
Z	Ζ	Ζ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
H	Η	Η	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
I	Θ	Θ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
K	Κ	Κ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
L	Λ	Λ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
M	Μ	Μ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
N	Ν	Ν	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
O	Ο	Ο	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
P	Π	Π	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
Q	Ϟ	Ϟ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
R	Ρ	Ρ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
S	Σ	Σ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
T	Τ	Τ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
U, V	Υ	Υ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ
X	Χ	Χ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ

1. North Semitic (Aramaic Branch) VIIIth century A.C., Syria.
2. Aramaic, VIth century B.C., Syria.
3. Aramaic Vth-IVth century B.C., Egypt.
4. Palmyrenian.
5. Nabatean.
6. Sinaitic.
7. Arabic, VIIIth century A.D.,
8. Kufic.
9. Early Naskhi.
10. Modern Naskhi.
- I. North Semitic (Phoenician Branch).
- II. Etruscan (from Marsiliana).
- III. Classical Greek.
- IV. Latin.