

# A Typological Perspective on Somali

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Helsingin yliopisto

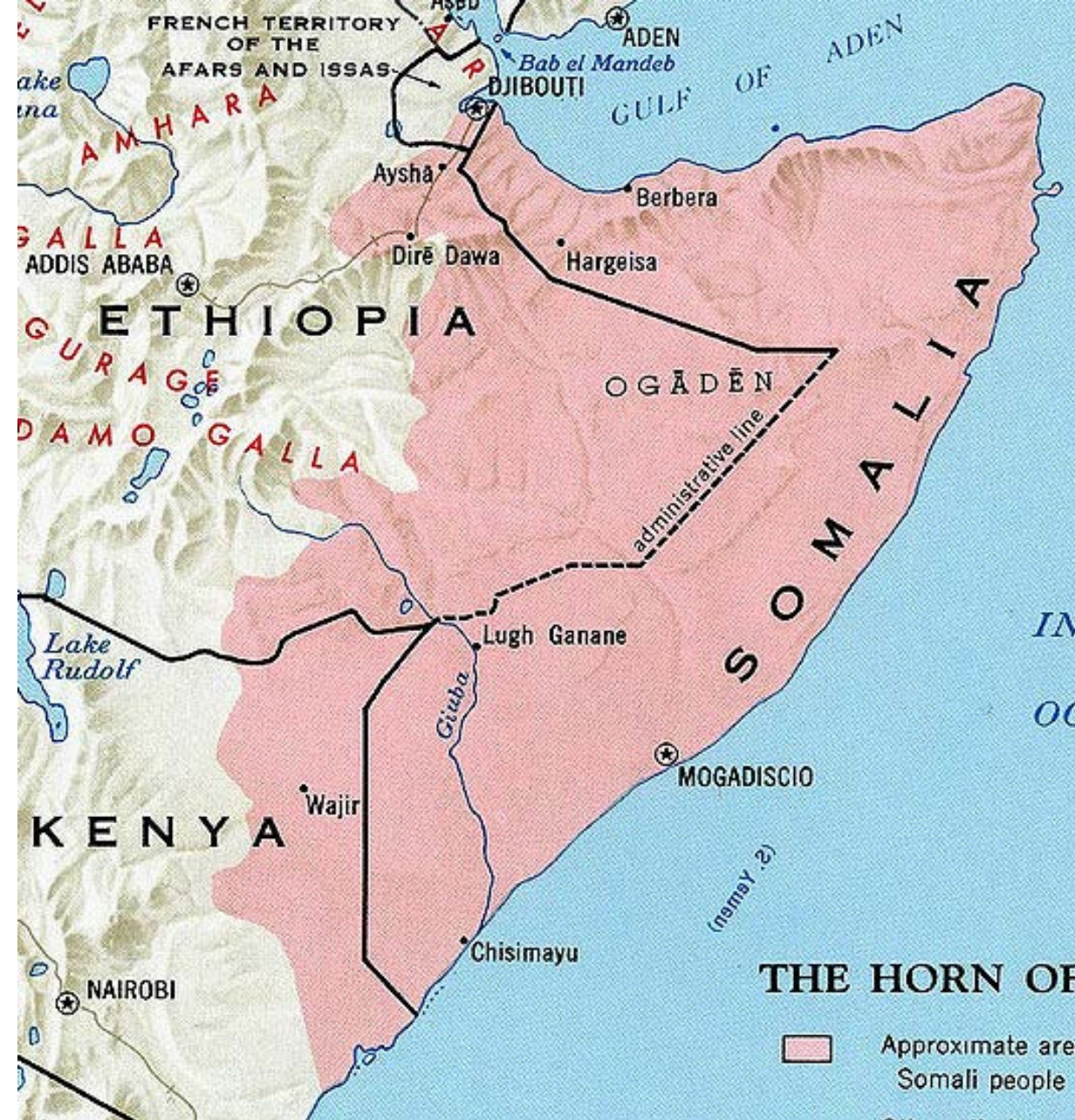
30. 1. 2019

# Somali speaking areas

Somalia,  
Somaliland,  
Djibouti (south-east),  
Etiopien (east + Addis Abeba),  
Kenya (east + Nairobi)

The area is appr. 1,100,000 km<sup>2</sup>

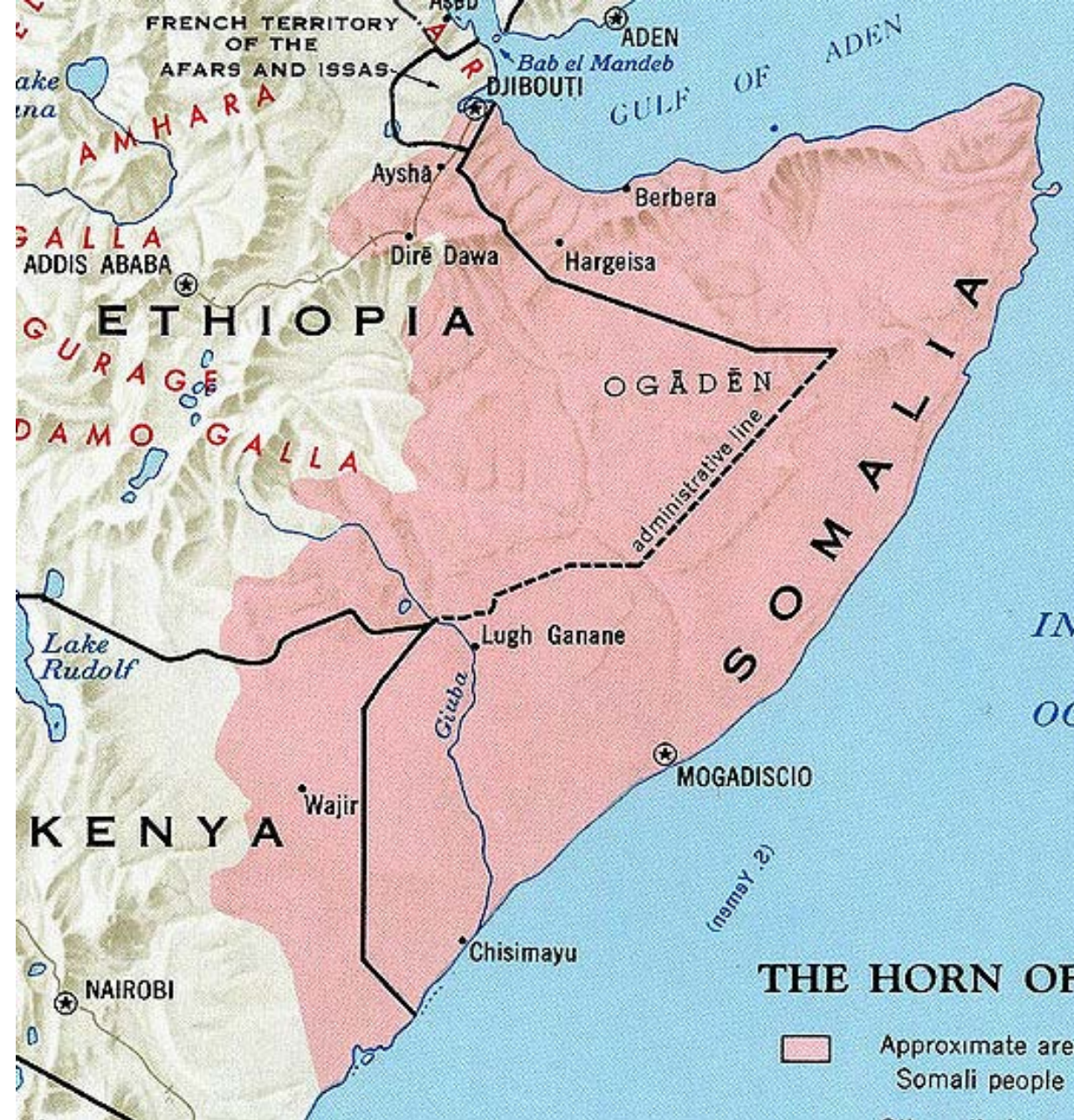
Appr. the size of Finland, Norway  
and Sweden taken together.





# Hur många talare?

Somalia & Somaliland	ca 13-15 million
Djibouti	ca 0.5 million
Ethiopia	ca 6-7 million
Kenya	ca 2.5-3 million
Rest of the world	ca 1-2 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>ca 25 million</b>



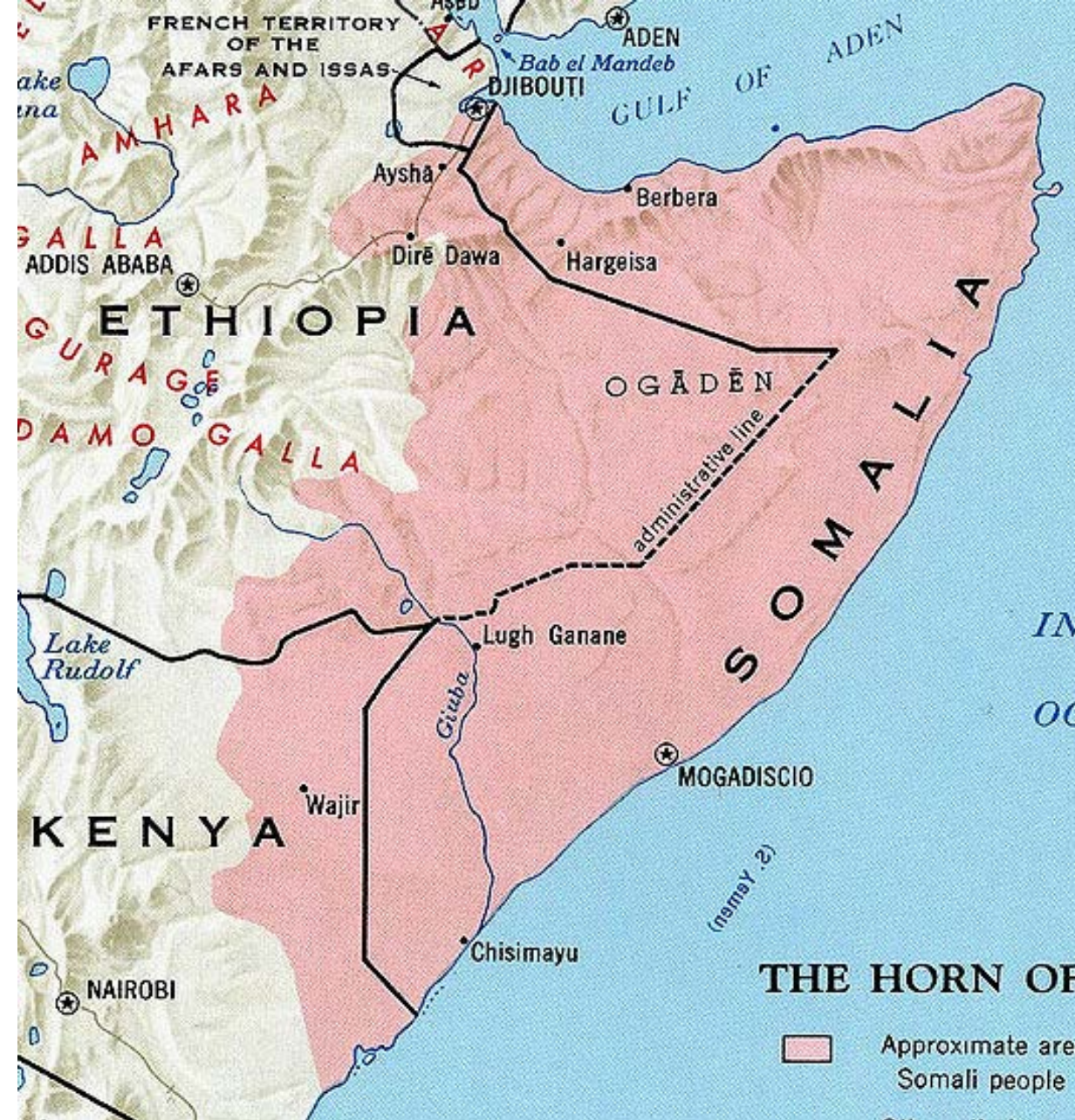


# Somali – a big language!

- 9th largest in Africa
  - (of about 2,100 languages)
- appr. 70th largest in the world
  - (of about 7,000 languages)

## Swedish

- appr. 100th largest in the world.





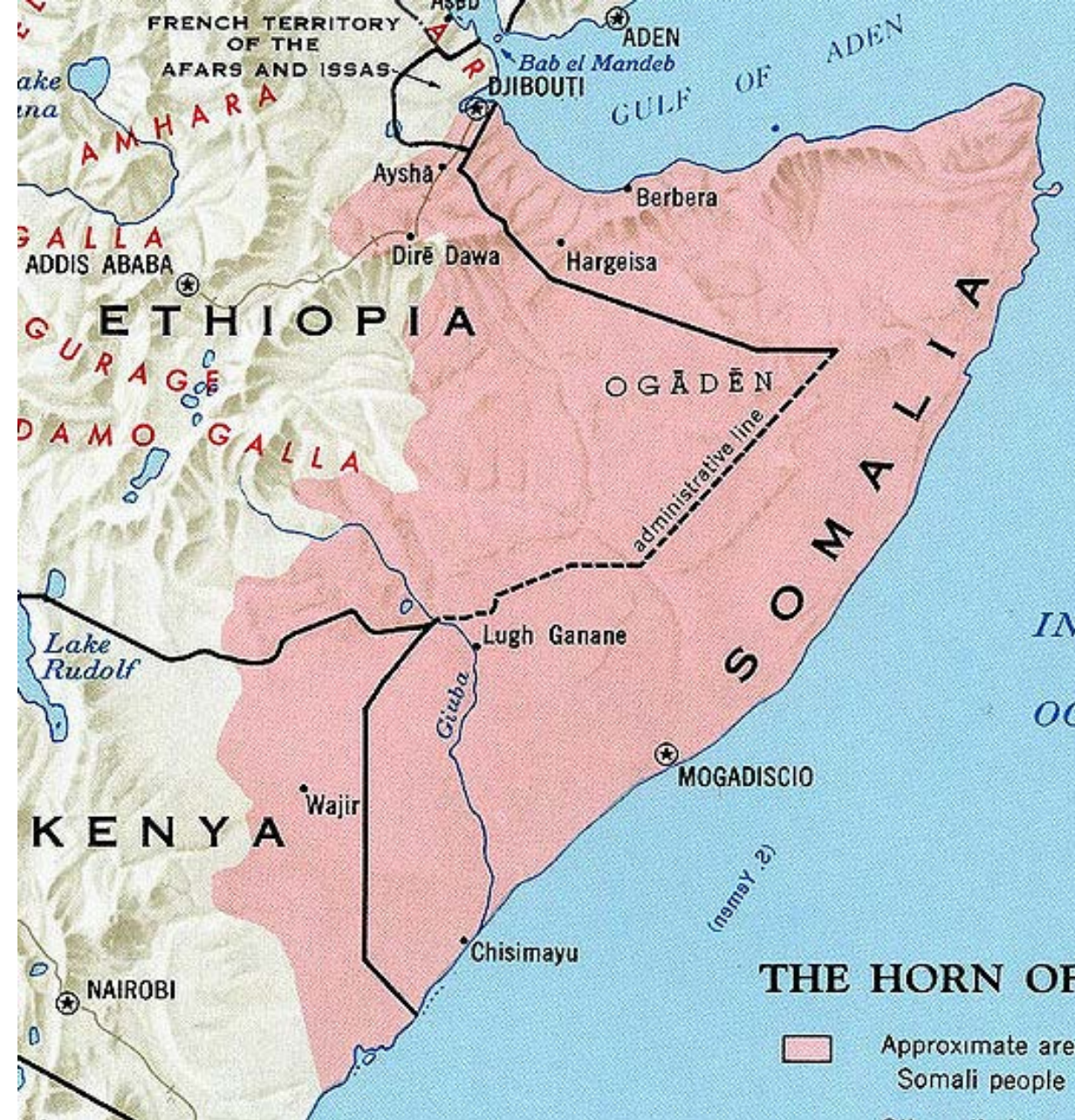
# Somali's position

Somalia & Somaliland  
official language

Ethiopia  
official language in the region

Djibouti  
spoken language  
official: French, Arabic

Kenya  
spoken language  
official: English, Swahili





# Somali in school

## Somalia & Somaliland

English, Arabic, Somali

## Ethiopia

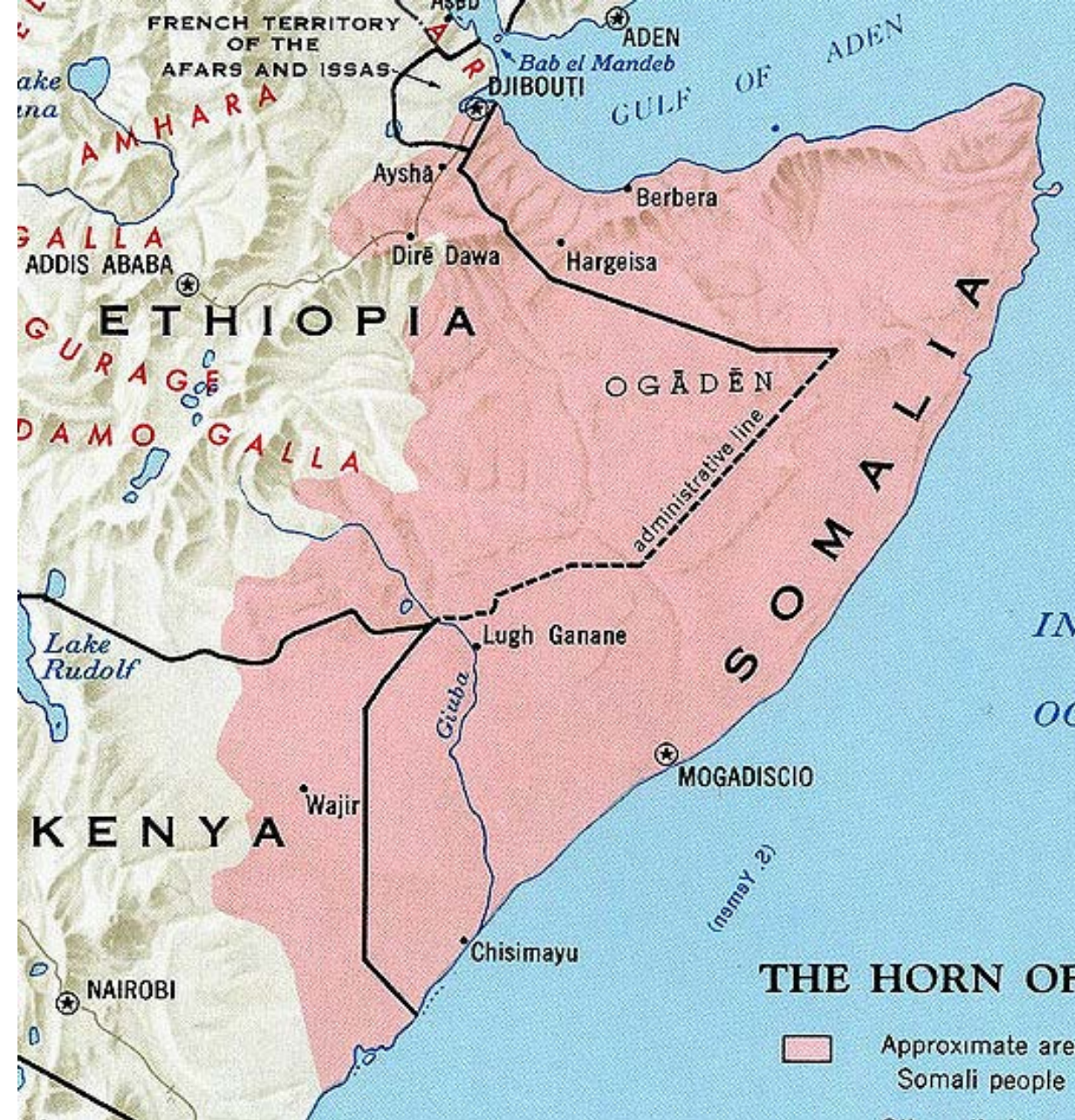
Somali in grades 1-8 (-12),  
English at universities

## Djibouti

mostly French, some Arabic,  
no Somali

## Kenya

a little Somali in lower grades,  
then English, Swahili





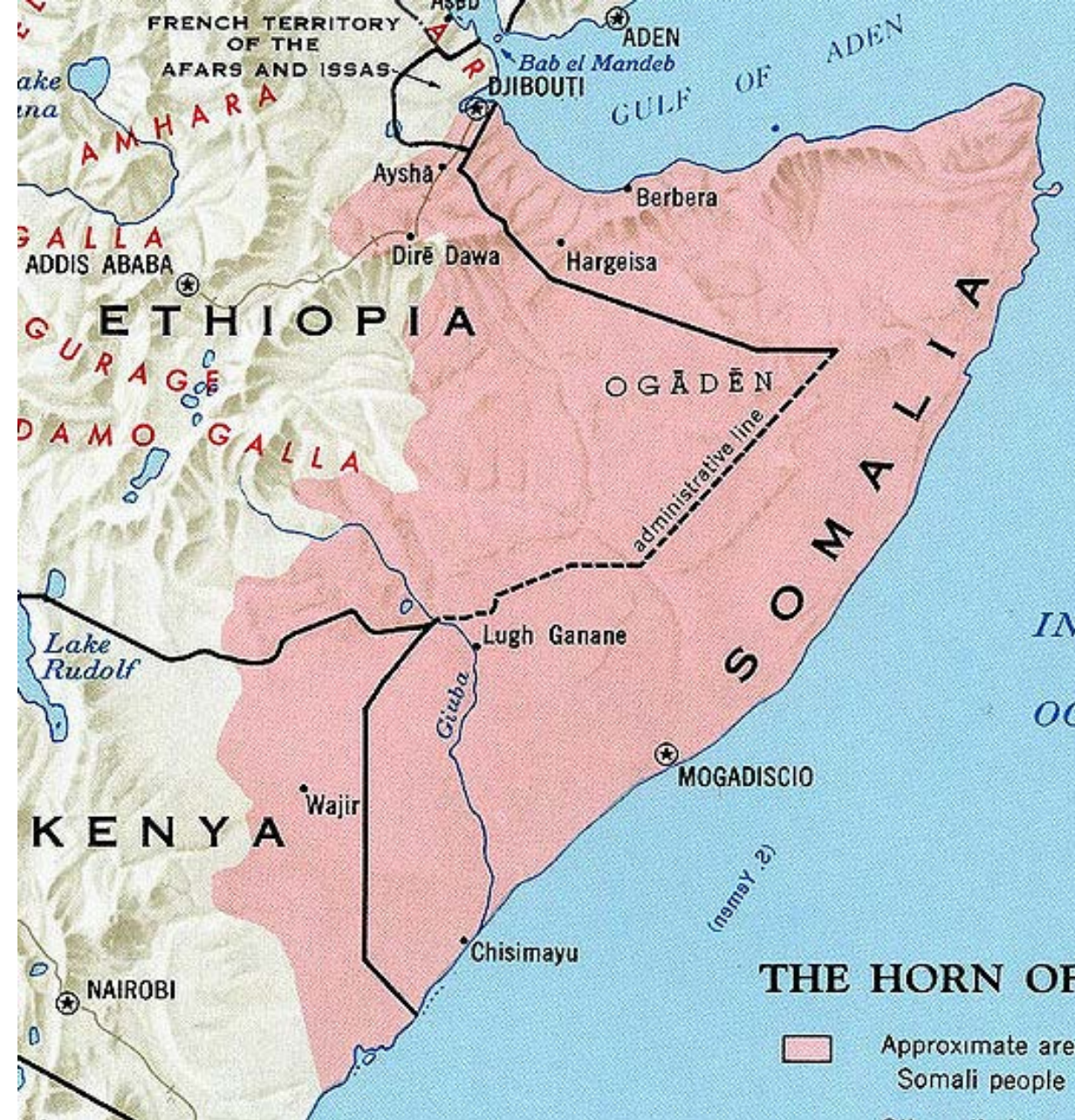
# Somali in media

Somalia & Somaliland  
many radio and tv channels  
many newspapers

Ethiopia  
few radio and tv channels  
hardly any newspapers

Djibouti  
few radio and tv programs  
hardly any newspapers

Kenya  
few radio channels and tv  
program, hardly any newspapers



# How many speak somali in Sweden?

Statistics Sweden: at least 100.000                      1% of the population  
ca 66,000 born in Somalia                                      as of 31 Dec 2017  
ca 35,000 born in Sweden with one or two parents born in Somalia

Skolverket, school year 2017/18:

Children in grades 1-9                                      2% of the school children  
ca 21,000    second largest after Arabic

Children who participate in mother tongue classes  
ca 16,000      (77%)                                      highest proportion of all languages



# Somali speakers in other Nordic countries

31 Dec 2016, born in Somalia + their children

Norway	41,500	0.8%	of the population
Denmark	21,200	0.4%	
Finland	20,500	0.4%	

according to national statistical agencies



# Somali dialects

- Maxaatiri (Northern Somali)
  - Banadir
- Maay (possibly a language)
- Digil
- Ashraf ...

Small differences between dialects in areas inhabited by nomads.

Larger differences around the rivers south/east of Mogadishu where the population is more settled.





# Regional variation **within** standard Somali

## Phonetics

**j**      voiced [dʒ] or voiceless [tʃ] or something in between, e.g. Jubba

## Phonology

/dh/ ~ /r/ non-initial

tid**h**i/tiri      'you/she said'

/kh/ ~ /q/

wak**h**ti/waq**q**ti      'time'

/n/ ~ / / before cons.

min**d**i / middi      'knife'

daan**y**eer / daayeer 'monkey'

/o/ ~ /a/ final

Sahra / Sahro

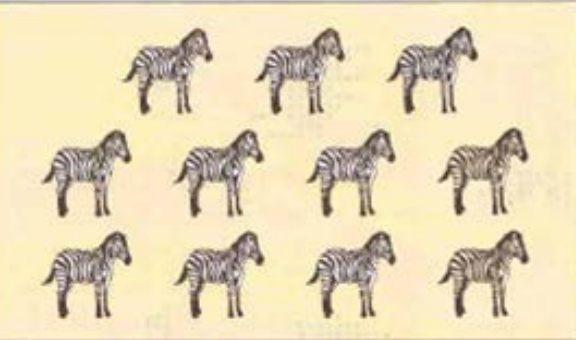




# Regional variation **within** standard Somali

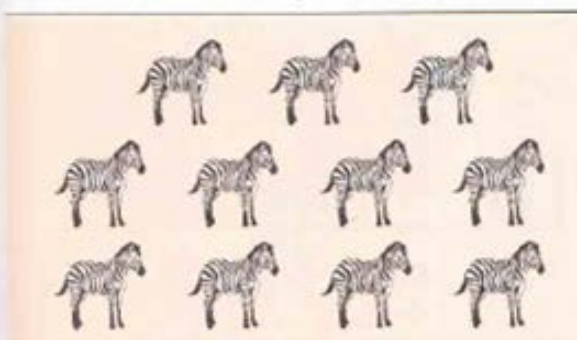


## Skillnader inom

- morphology: akhrisaa / akhridaa.  
'you/she writes'
- syntax: Muu/Ma arki karo, Miyuu/Ma arki karaa?  
'Han kan inte se, Kan han se?'
- word order: Waxaan rabaa in uusan.../ in aanu...  
'I want that he doesn't/that doesn't he...'
- vocabulary: bisad, mukulaal, yaanyuur, dinnad, basho, durmad  
'cat'

# Matte, åk 1, Hargeysa resp. Mogadishu

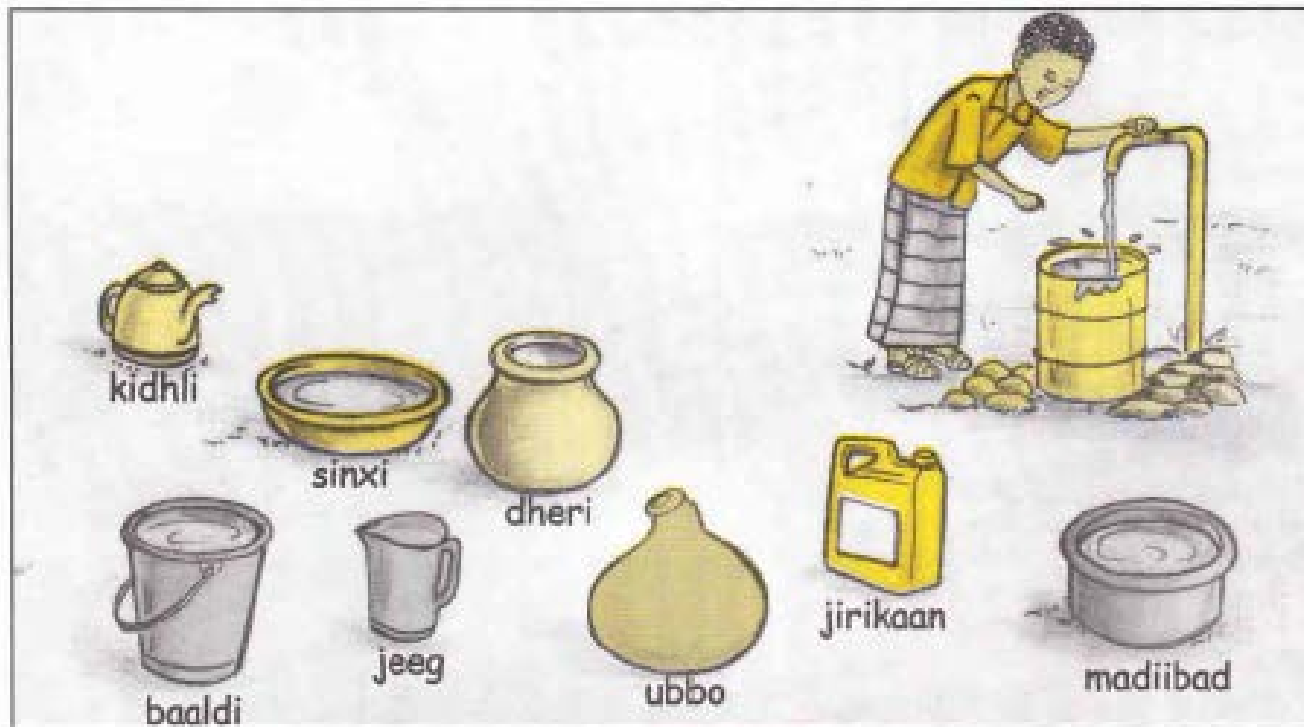
	11	kow iyo toban
	12	laba iyo toban
	13	saddex iyo toban

(Xisaab 1, Hargeisa, 2001)

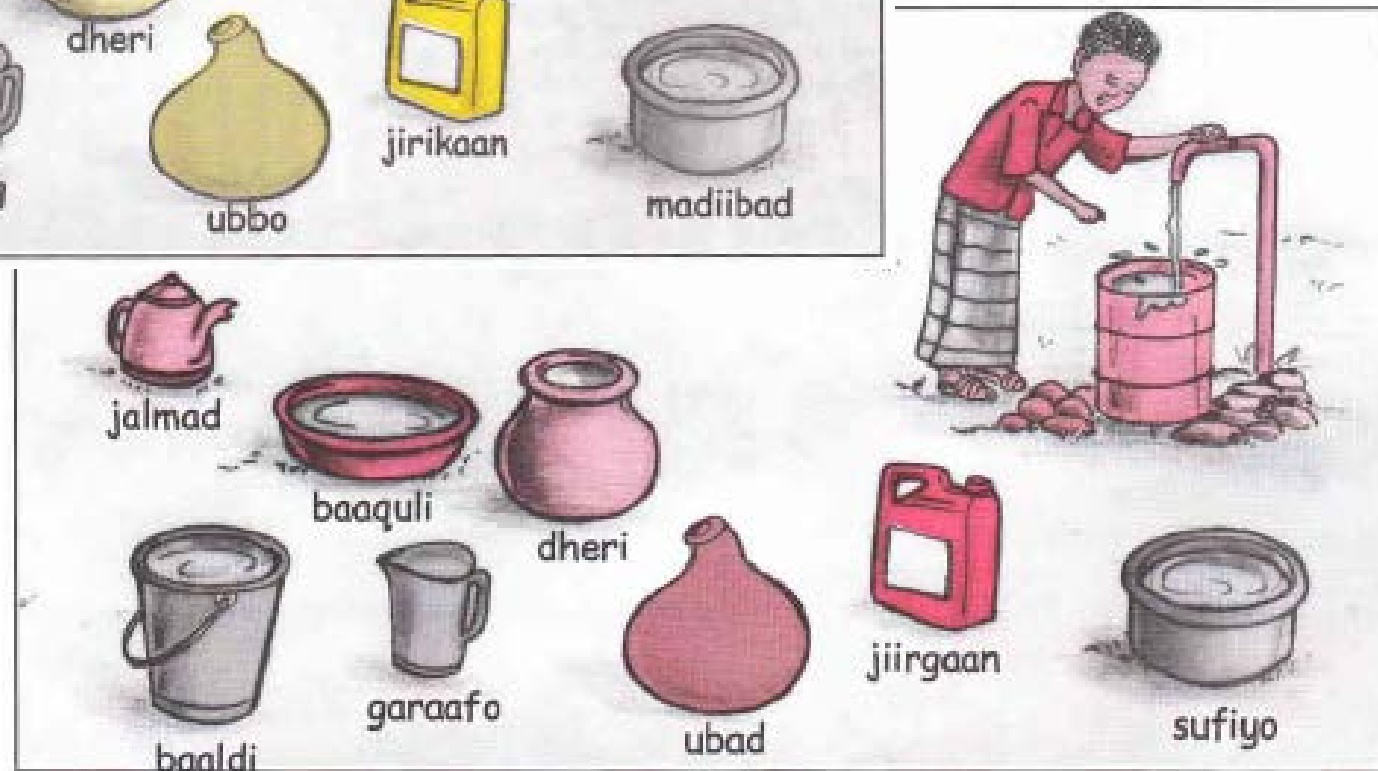
	11	toban iyo kow
	12	toban iyo laba
	13	toban iyo saddex

(Xisaab 1, Mogadishu, 2001)





ur Matte, åk 2 (2001: 126)  
Hargeysa  
resp.  
Mogadishu



# More regionally differentiated vocabulary

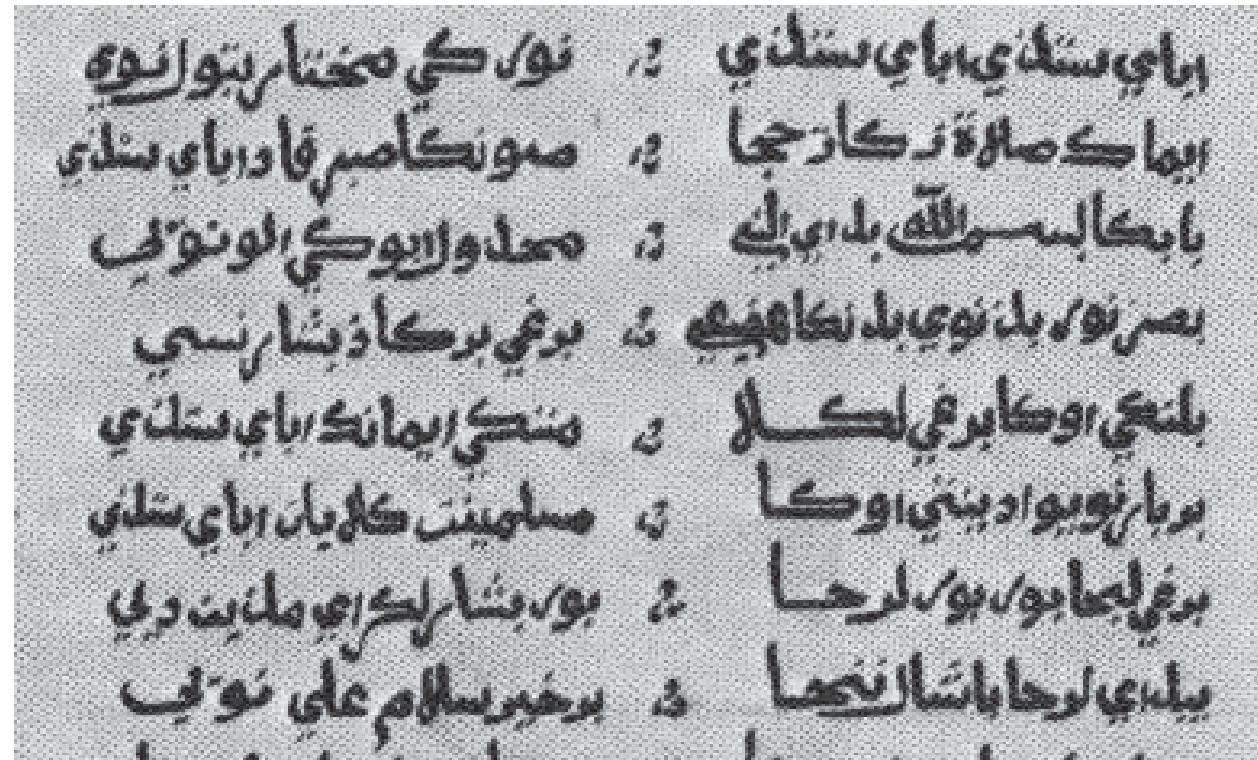
fish	kalluun	mallaay
look	eeg	fiiri
egg	beed	ukun
kettle	kildhi, kirli	jalamad
red	cas	guduud
green	akhdaar	cagaar
yellow	hurdi	jaalle
window	daaqad	dariishad
water melon	xabxab	qare



# Development of written Somali

# The oldest preserved texts

- ca 140 years old, from the later part of the 1800's
- Somalis used the Arabic script





# The oldest preserved texts

- ca 140 years old, from the later part of the 1800's
- European linguists used the Latin script

*2. Ninba gabaɗ leha magaaɓo Walákaded. Afar nin ba u timid nimanki ba yiɗi " gabaɗda na si," wahu yiɗi " gabaɗda ma nin ba donaiya musse gidigen wa donaisán ?" kí kale ba yiɗi " ninba gonidisa yu donaiya" wahu yiɗi " anigo bisha rajal dehe aiyán gabaɗda idin so diraiya" ninba u eshai " haurársan," issna wahu u eshai " ninba mahu holo haista" ninba yiɗi " anigo rihyo aiyán haista" kikale na wahu yiɗi " loh bán haista" kikale na wahu yiɗi " gel bán haista" kikale na wahu yiɗi " idán haista." Kolkásai ka tagen. Wahai kala maɗnadán ba bishi rajal dehe aiyu gabaɗdi abahed*

# The first Somali reference grammar

Bombay 1880

181 pages

[read as PDF](#)

A GRAMMAR  
OF  
THE SOMALI LANGUAGE ;  
TOGETHER WITH  
A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTICE,  
AND  
A FEW EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS ;  
CONCLUDING WITH  
AN ENGLISH-SOMALI  
AND  
SOMALI-ENGLISH VOCABULARY.  
BY  
CAPTAIN FRED. M. HUNTER,  
BOMBAY STAFF CORPS,  
ASSISTANT POLITICAL RESIDENT, ADEN,  
F.R.G.S., Z.S.L. (CORRESPONDING MEMBER),  
AND F.R.A.S. (BOMBAY BRANCH).  
Bombay:  
PRINTED AT THE  
EDUCATION SOCIETY'S PRESS, BYCULLA.  
1880.

# The first Somali dictionary

London 1897

301 pages

[read as PDF](#)

SOMALI-ENGLISH  
AND  
ENGLISH-SOMALI  
DICTIONARY.

BY  
REV. FR. EVANGELIST DE LARAJASSE,  
MINS. APOST. ORD. SS. FRANCISCI CAP. PROVINCIÆ LUGDUNENSIS ALUMNUS.

LONDON:  
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.,  
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHANCING CROSS ROAD.

1897



- word class
- gender of nouns
- definite form
- plural form
- verb transitivity
- examples

**jih**, *m.n.*, a tree the bark of which is black.—**hi**.

**jila'**, or **jilai'**, *m.n.*, fragility, brittleness.—**hi**.

**jilai'san**, *a.v.*, brittle, soft; **galas wa jilai'san**, glass is brittle; **ninkasi wa arab jilai'san yahai**, that man is eloquent, intelligent.

**jilal**, *m.n.*, dry season.—**ki**.

**jilbad**, *f.n.*, heavy silver necklace (for women).—**di**.

**jilbis**, *m.n.*, viper, adder.—**ki**, —**yo**.

**jilib**, or **jilab**, *m.n.*, hook (for fishing).—**ki**. This last word is used by some for the rope or string.

**jimid**, *m.n.*, meat, flesh.—**ki**.

**jina'**, *m.n.*, big black ant (the stinking one).—**hi**, —**yo**.

**jini**, or **jimi**, *m.n.*, genius, demon.—**gi**.

**jir**, *v.i.* (used for the verb of existence, "be, live," and also as an auxiliary verb, and for the division of time into years, age;) **Adan jir**, or **Adan'iss ka jir**, live at Aden; **shalai aurba-jirai . . . .**, there was a camel yesterday; **hebelba Bulahar jogi jirai**, a certain man was living at Bulahar; **adigu imisad jirtai**, or **imisa jir ba tahai?** how old are you? **labatan jir ban ahai**, I am

# The first Somali-German

*Südarabische Expedition.  
Die Somali Sprache  
Vol. II. Wörterbuch.*

Leo Reinisch

Wien 1902.

540 pages.

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DIE  
S O M A L I - S P R A C H E

VON

LEO REINISCH

II

WÖRTERBUCH



WIEN

ALFRED HÖLDER

K. UND K. Hof- und UNIVERSITÄTS-BUCHHÄNDLER

1902

- accent
- cognates in other languages

*Šalmād* s. f. -*di* (vgl. كِبَات tapis, Dozy) unterlage, 1) teppich welcher dem pferde unter den sattel gelegt wird, *fáraska šalmād hōsta kōráha ú sār* lege dem pferd eine decke unter den sattel! — 2) gestoßener tabak, unter die zunge gelegt, als schutz gegen durst auf der wanderung, *anígu šalmād-bān áfki gášaday* ich steckte mir tabak in den mund.

*Šalmán* s. m. -*ki* plur. -*o* (cf. Bed. *šámila* und שלמה) ein wandteppich mit farbigen parallelen streifen 116, 19.

*Šilin* s. f. *šilín-ti* plur. *šilm-o*, -*á-ha*, -*í-hi*, -*ú-hu* (Ga. *zilmā*, Sa. 'Af. *kilím* id., cf. سلم mordere) die kamellaus, zecke.

*Šilis* adj. plur. *šilsilis* (cf. Sa. *kulús* id., كَلْر musculosus, crassus, كِنَاز carnosus, crassus) beleibt, fett, feist, *wān šilis*

189, 31; 269, 14. 21.

*Šiláys* s. m. fettleibigkeit; s. *šilis*.

*Šám-o* s. f. -*á-di* plur. -*óyin-ki* (A. *ሸላግ*) feine abessinische toga.

*Šáma'* s. m. -*a* plur. -*yo* (Sa. *šám'e*, 'Af. *sám'i*, Bed. *šamá'*, شَمْع, Ti. *ሸምዕ*: G. *ሠምዕ*: Ty. *ሠምዒ*) das wachs, die wachskerze.

*šamá'-la* s. m. -*lí-hi* leuchter, kerzenständer.

*Šámbel* s. m. wüstenhund; s. *jámbel*.

*Šímbir* s. f. *šimbír-ti* plur. -*o* (Ga. *zímbirā*, Südga. *šímbirō*, Sa. 'Af. *kimbirō*, Ti. im Samhar *ክምበርት*: plur. *ክፍበር*: id., cf. *صَافِر*, *صَافِر*, *صَافِر*) der vogel, allgemeine bezeichnung für kleinere vögel wie *had* für große vögel; *šimbiro* (5, 14) vögel, *šimbiráha 'írku* (68, 13) die vögel des himmels; s. a. 5, 20.



# Unique Somali script

“Osmania”

introduced in 1922

OS&Y7SOS&S Y&A&A&Y9 Y&G 7&S&Y7 190.  
Y&SM&G H&S 590 S&Y H&A&Y&S 7&U7&U&S 7&U 07&U  
8&G2&U&S& 09797&U&S 890S 5&8&U&S S&J. Y&SM&G  
H&S 590 S&Y H&A&Y&U 92 0&S Y&S092 7&U 0&S0&S  
5&U0 92 9&U&A H&S S7&H9&H&S792, 7&U Y&SM  
7&U&U&U&8&U&S S&S Y&SM 90&G0&U&S. Y&SM&G  
H&S07&U H&S 590 S&Y H&A&Y&U 8&G&U&92  
Y&U&82 7&U 0&G0&0 S&Y&2 07&U&A 0&Y&7&U.

# The first Somali newspaper page

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Mogadishu, 2 March 1957

Wargeys-ka Sômalıyed

Bal-ka Saddex-Ad

# Wargeys-ka

MURTI-DI  
TODOBAD-KA

# Somaliyed

HU DHAWAQID-DA HORRIYAD-DA HEB-TA DAHAB-HA

## Dowlad-da Sômalıyed

### wâ lô ga yerey

Warqad u usô direy Rais alwasara-ha Kwame Nkruma mudane 'Abdullâhi 'Isse.

Dowlad iyo dad  
**Biyo dôn**  
**Bulo Ahmed**  
Malin Ahaad ah ba wasir-ka dhaqalo-ha mudane HAJI FARAH 'ALI 'UMAR o ay la so'dan mudaneyal Mahamud Janaqow iyo 'ALI SEEKH JES, iyo HAKIN-ka jaha-da BANADIR, iyo HAKIN-ka magalo-da Jawhar iyo nin-ka u madah ah hafis-ka hawsha iyo dabib-ka magalo-da ba wahay so dawden BULO 'AHMED o ku tal bari iyo uqoyi

lug ku maren gabal dher o webi-ga jin-kisa ku yal, iyago firo u leh mel-sha iyo sameyski la weyddistey.

Waha goni ahân naga yabiyeey mar-ki anu so geleyney bulo-da, hayirad-da dad-kasi ku jiro gohi babur-ta mar-ki u maqlay ba wahu ku so ururay mel bannan inu arko waha dha'ay daradded illen wa ku dhif arag-ti babur eh.

Annagi in badan ku waregney Sômalıya waha kediso na gu shadey inta dad weli ka goon hor u ka'ayada o magaloyin-ka wawein u ad u ga so-

## Afrika wâ u bar-ka sare

### siyasad-da u dhahyesa ummado-ha

Afrika-du barka sare bay shir-ka faransis in wah hortahay siyasad-da ummado-ha yad u eg la siyo Madagaskar u dhaheysa, wahay ku si tahay iyo labo iyo toban tal o kale warki dowlad-da fransis-ka ay o Afrika ah o ka mid ah Afri- so jedisei o ah in la gu daro ka-da Galbed e faransis-ka dalal-ka bad-da ka shisheya (wa: Senegal, Sudan, Mausita- nia, Niiter, Volta-da Sare, Gui-

# The first Somali language committee

Appointed by the government after independence in 1960.

Worked from December 1960 until May 1961.

Proposed the Latin script, mainly for economical reasons.

Nothing happened.

[Read their report as PDF](#)



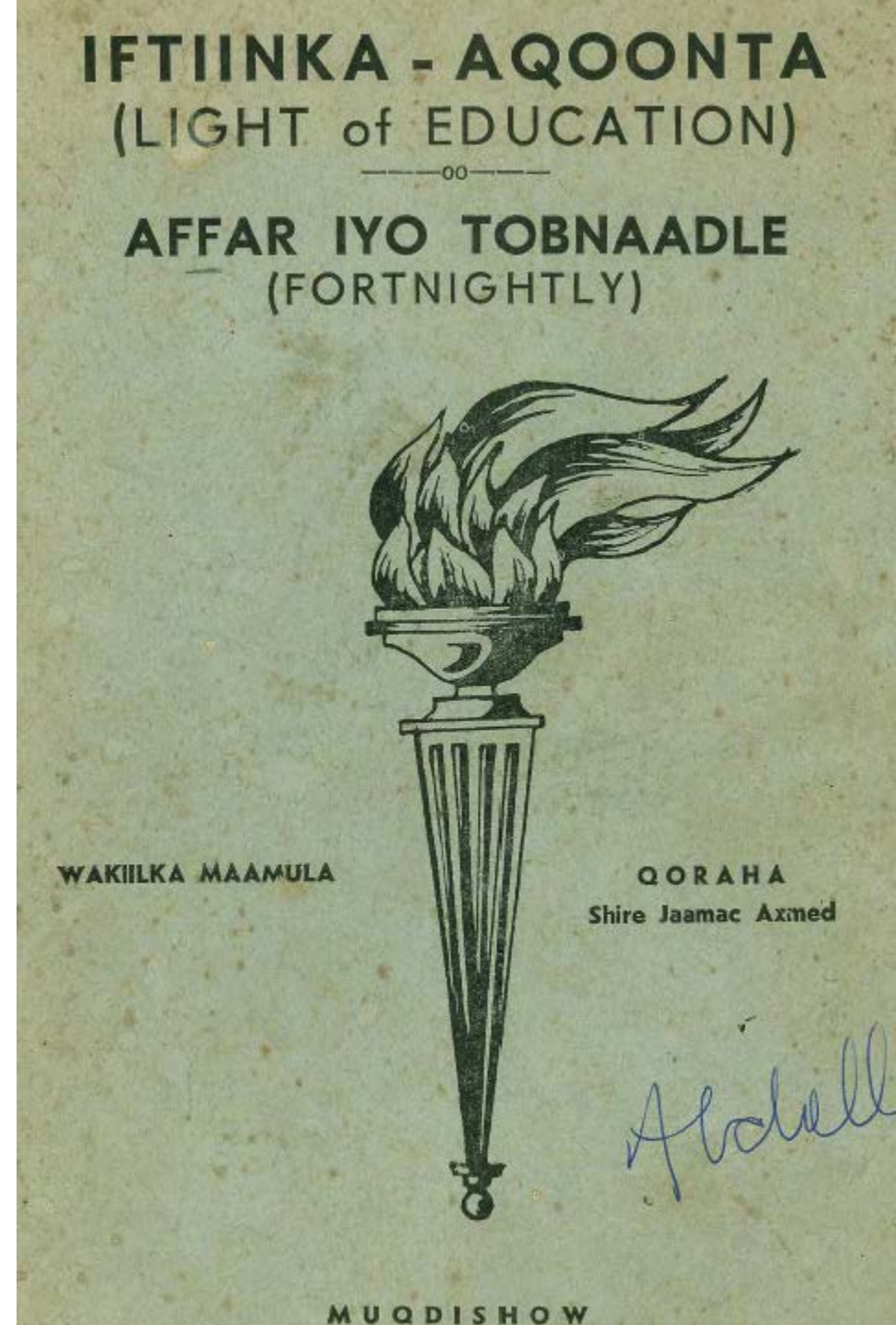
# Shire Jama Ahmed

Member of the Committee  
"lobbyist" for Latin script

Published privately

- a book (1965),
- six issues of a journal (1966-67)

[Read the journal as PDF](#)



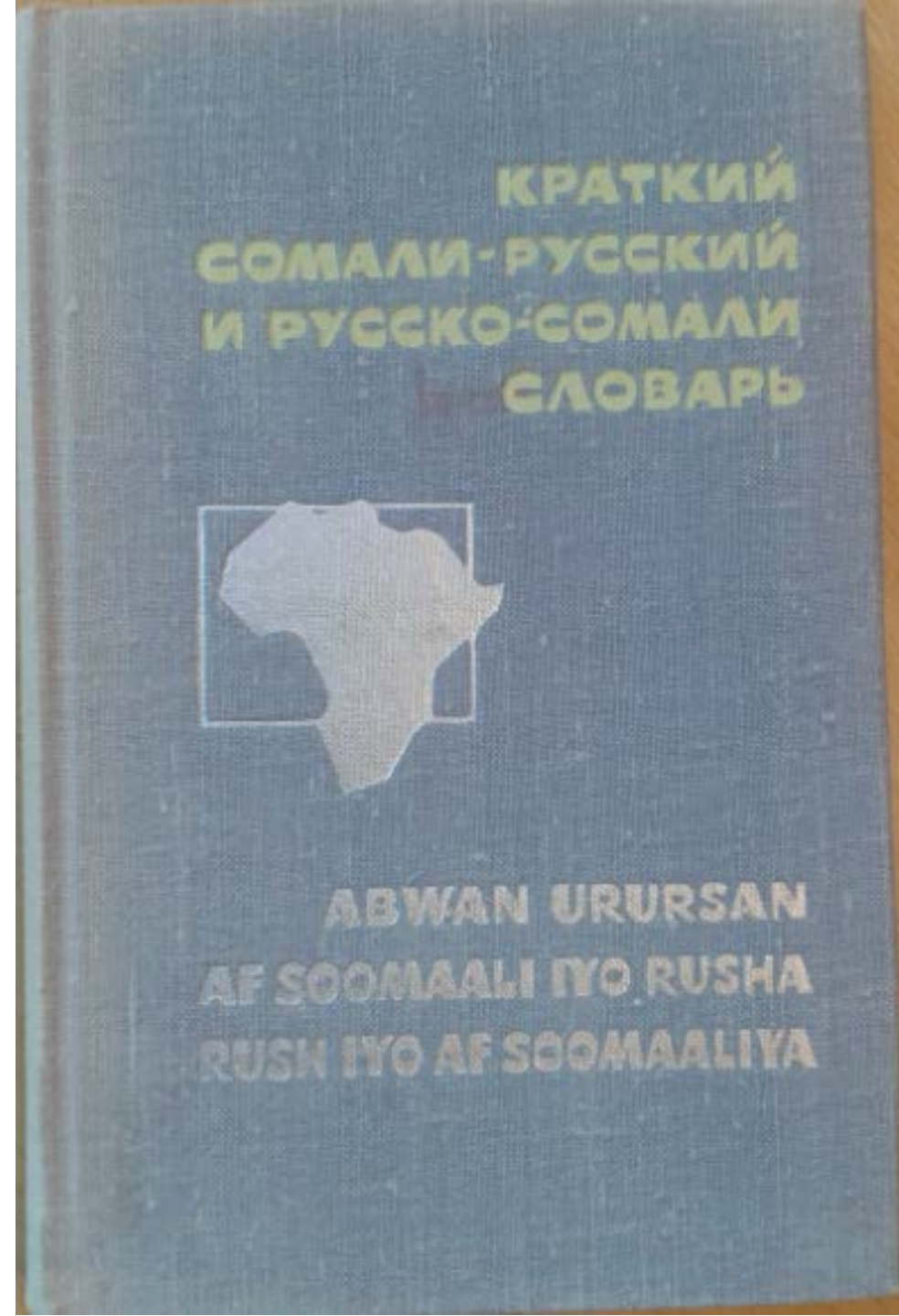
# First modern dictionary

With today's orthography

Moscow 1969

319 p.

[Read as PDF](#)



# First grammar

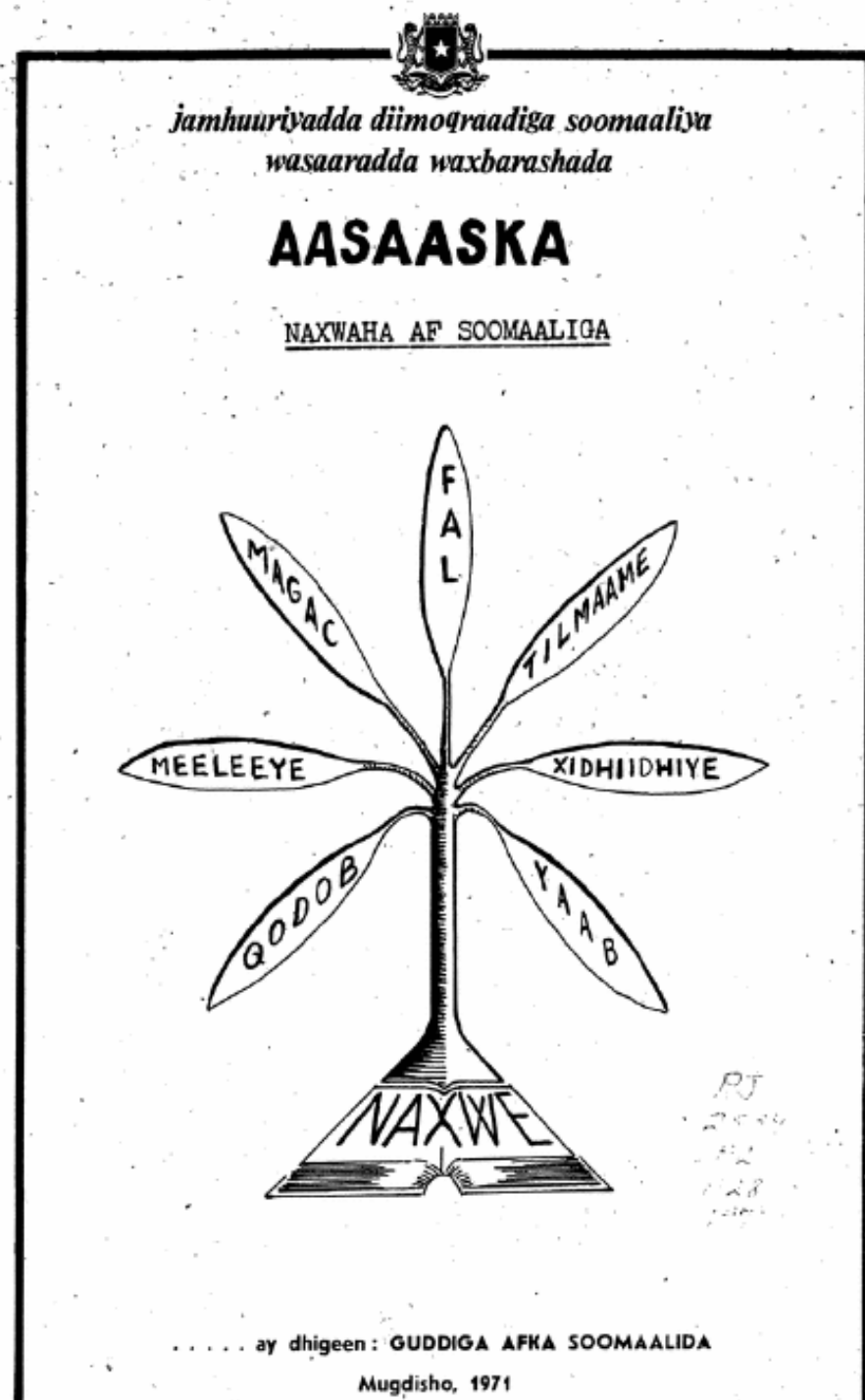
completely in Somali

Mogadishu 1971

46 p.

[First edition 1971 as PDF](#)

[Second edition 1973 as PDF](#)





# Somali becomes the official language

Governmental decision in October 1972

Introduced in public administration in January 1973

Introduced in schools gradually  
as soon as textbooks were produced.

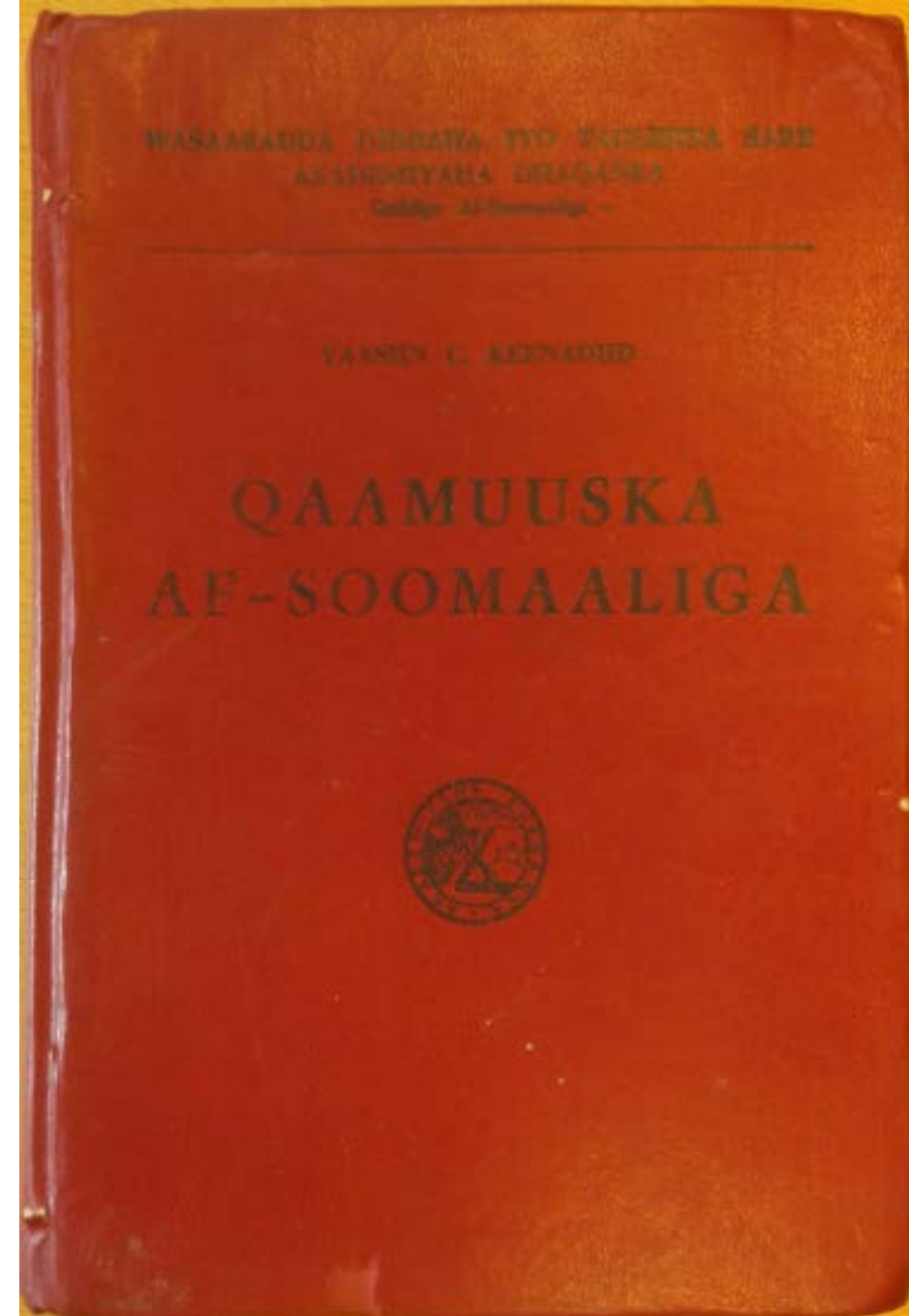
In 1978 there were books in all subjects for grades 1—12.

# First dictionary

Completely in Somali

Mogadishu 1976

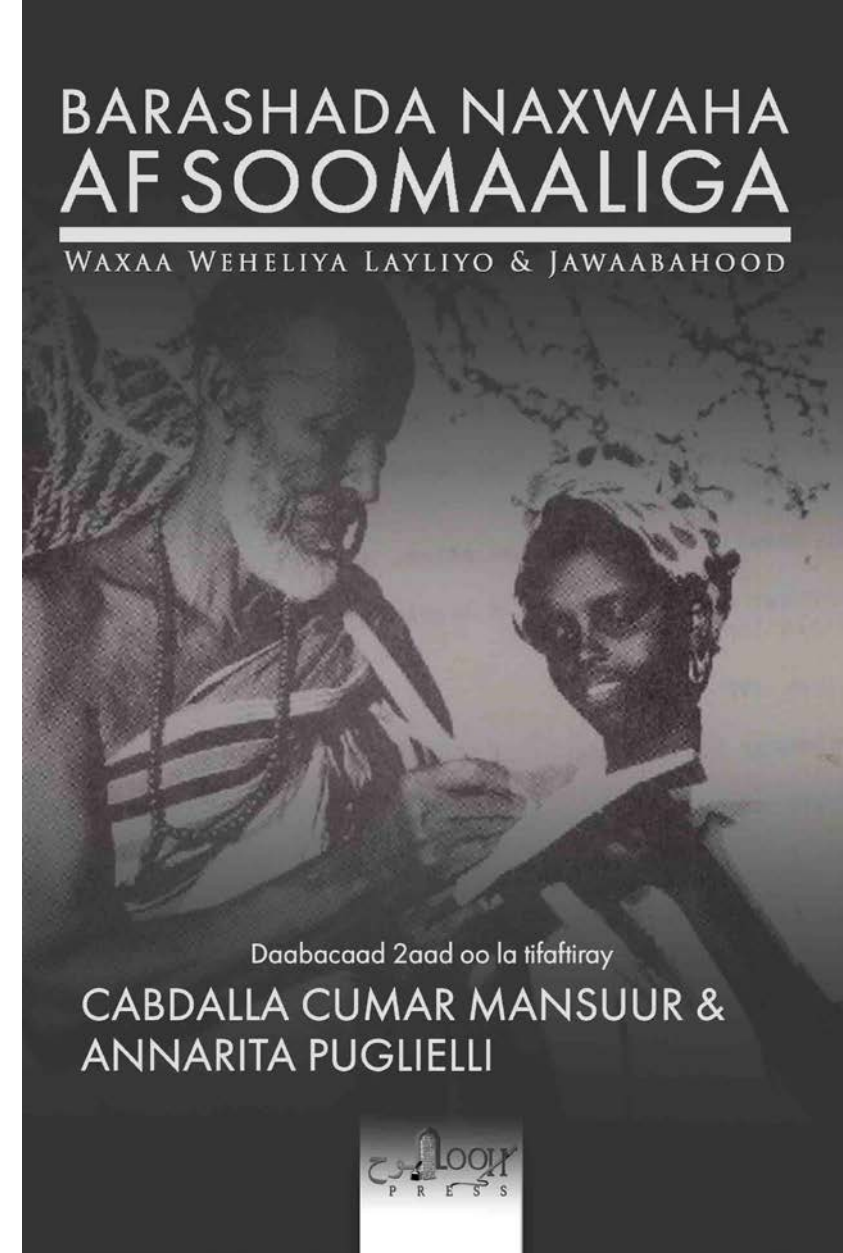
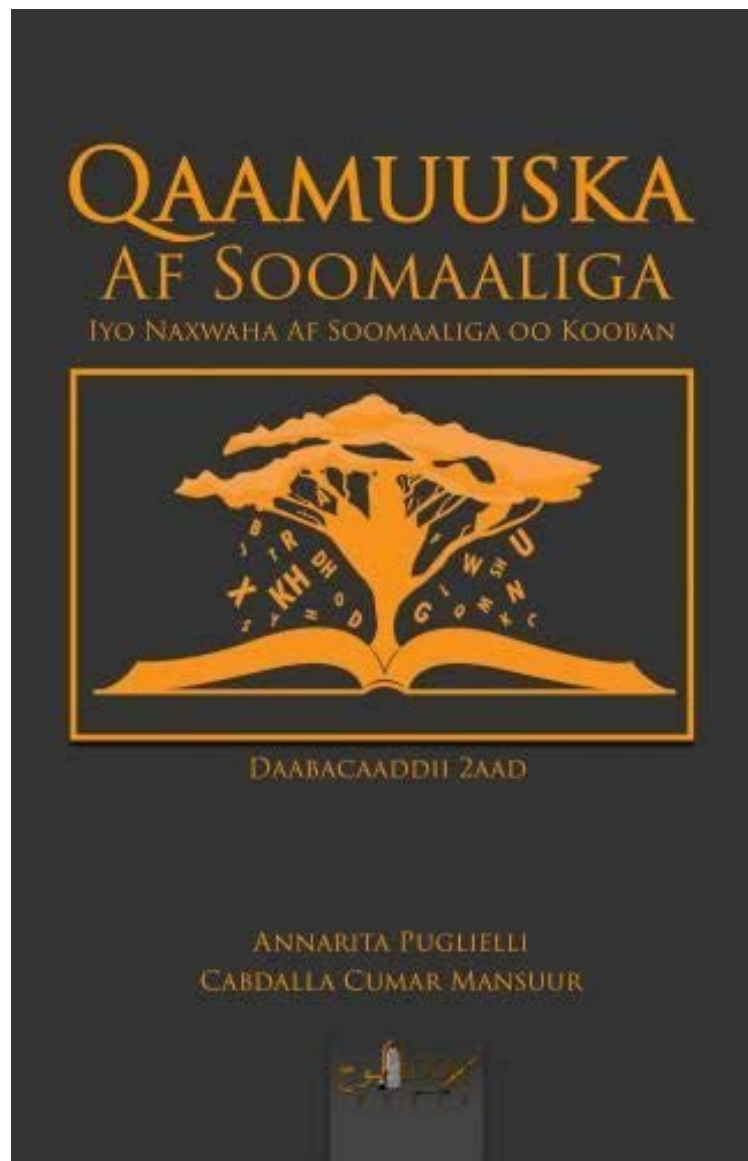
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# Two modern reference books

By Mansuur & Puglielli  
2012 (dictionary)  
1999 (grammar)  
re-published by  
Looh Press

[Läs som PDF](#)



[Läs som PDF](#)



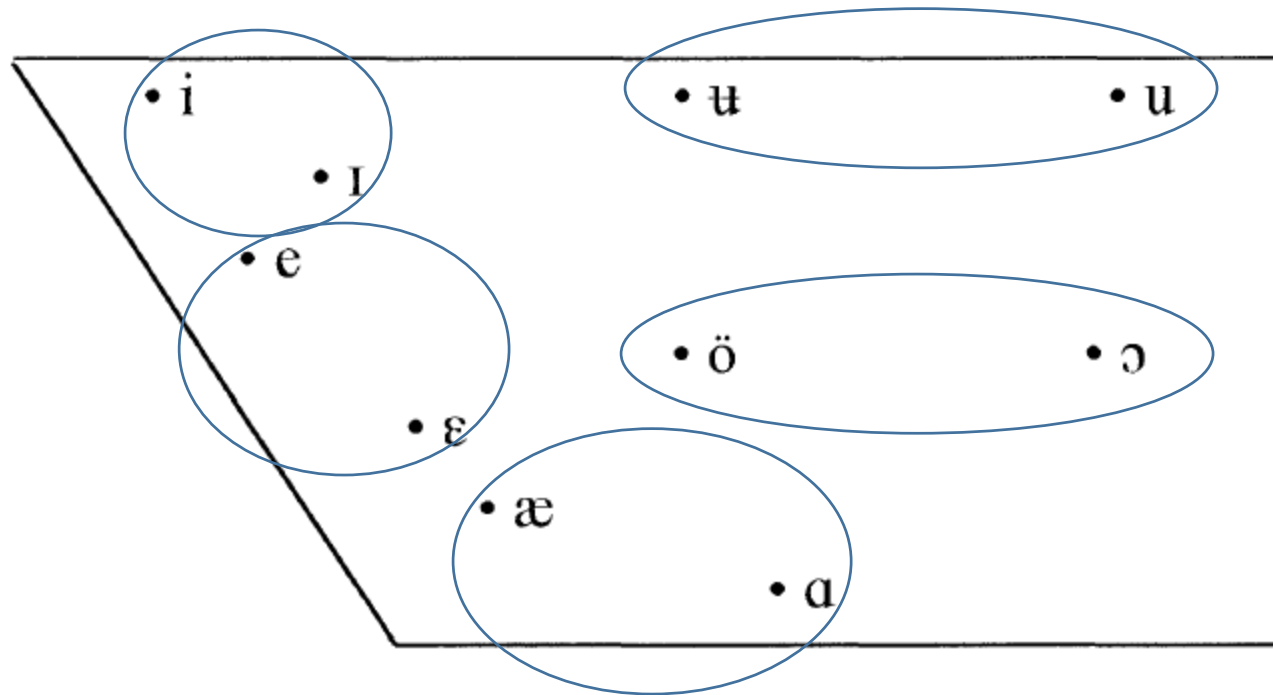
# Phonetics & Phonology

# Inventory

- 10 vowel phonemes, all exhibiting length distinction
- Few uncommon consonants
- Uncommon tonal accent system

# Somali vowels

- 5 letters: short i, e, a, o, u – long ii, ee, aa, oo, uu
- 10 phonemes (20 if counting length distinctions)



(Saeed 1999)



# Vowel length

- All 10 sound occurs as both long and short
- Long vowels can be unaccented, as in Finnish, e.g.

maalín ‘day’

sheekáda ‘the story’

# Konsonanter

- Finns ej: p, v, z
- Som i svenskan: b, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, r, s, t,
- Som i engelskan: j, sh, w, y (t.ex. **Joshua's way**)
- Som i arabiskan: c = ع , kh = خ , q = ق , x = ح , ' = ء  
Cali, Caasha, Khadra, Qaasin, Xasan, Israa'iil
- Som i svenskan: dh = rd  
dhir 'växt', dhar 'kläder', yidhi/yiri 'han sa'

## Allofoner

	LABIAL		CORONAL				DORSAL			RADICAL		LARYNGEAL
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Epi-glottal	Glottal
Nasal	m	ɱ	n					ŋ				
Plosive	p b		t d			ɖ	k g	q ɢ				
Fricative	β	f	ð	s	ʃ			ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ		h ɦ
Affricate			tʃ dʒ									
Trill			r									
Approximant	ʋ		l				j					

## Fonem

	LABIAL		CORONAL				DORSAL			RADICAL		LARYNGEAL
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Epi-glottal	Glottal
Nasal	m		n									
Plosive	b		t d			ɖ	k g	ɢ				
Fricative		f		s	ʃ			χ	ħ ʕ		h	
Affricate			dʒ									
Trill			r									
Approximant	ʋ		l				j					



## Fonem

	LABIAL		CORONAL				DORSAL			RADICAL		LARYNGEAL
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Epi-glottal	Glottal
Nasal	m		n									
Plosive	b		t d			ɖ		k g	ŋ			
Fricative		f		s	ʃ				x	ħ ʕ		h
Affricate			tʃ dʒ									
Trill			r									
Approximant	w		l					j				

## Grafem

	LABIAL		CORONAL				DORSAL			RADICAL		LARYNGEAL
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Epi-glottal	Glottal
Nasal	m		n									
Plosive	b		t d			ɖ		k g	q			
Fricative		f		s	ʃ				kh	x c		h
Affricate			tʃ dʒ									
Trill			r									
Approximant	w		l					y				

# Ljudregler

Maximal syllable is CV:C  
iskuul, ayskiriim

No /p/, /v/, /z/, generally replaced by /b/, /f/, /s/  
boolis, koob, fiitamiin, telefihin, Yurub, wasiir 'minister'

No final /m/, /t/, /k/, /j/ in Somali words, instead /n/, /d/, /g/, /sh/  
buug, filin, keeg, wiig, boorash, kaabash,

# Prominence by High Tone

Accent or “stress” is realized by a high pitch on one mora.  
A long vowel contains two moras: hence falling or rising tone.

- la = man (obestämt subjekt)
- lá = med (preposition)
- ku = dig
- kú = i/på
- búug = en bok
- buúg = flera böcker (inte pl, utan kollektiv form)

# Tone distinguishes gender in nouns

## Masculine

H on penult mora

- ínan 'boy'
- béer 'liver'

## Feminine

H on final mora

- inán 'girl'
- beér 'garden, field'



# Vocabulary

# Many borrowings

**Arabic:** moos/muus 'banana', sariir 'bed', subax 'morning', salaan 'greeting', albaab 'door', xisaab 'mathematics', cilmi 'science', macallin 'teacher', dukaan 'shop', kursi 'chair', waqti 'time', waddan 'home country', timir 'dates', saxan 'plate', baabuur 'car', bisad 'cat', usbuuc 'week', digaag 'chicken'

**English:** tuwaal 'towel', buluug 'blue', garoon 'field, ground', shaati 'shirt',

**Italian:** shukumaan 'towel', shineemo 'cinema', koronto 'electricity', setimaan 'week', jalaato 'ice-cream', armaajo 'cupboard', okiyaale 'eye-glasses', bakeeri 'drinking glass'

**European:** iskuul, litir, kiilo, telefoon, fiitamiin,

**Persian:** miis 'table', baraf 'ice, snow', galaas 'drinking glass', ranji 'colour'

**Indian:** baaldi 'bucket', gaari 'car', rooti 'bread',

**Swahili:** jiko 'kitchen', yaambo 'pickax', yaanyo 'tomato', baaquli 'bowl'

**Amharic:** dooro 'chicken'

# Many compounds

madax 'head' + weyn 'big' -e 'person' > madaxweyne 'president'

bad 'sea' + weyn 'big' > badweyn 'ocean'

libaax 'lion' + bad 'sea' + -eed > libaaxbadeed 'haj'

cilmi 'science' + baar 'investigate' + -e 'person' > cilmibaare 'forskare'

sannad 'year' + dugsi 'school' + -eed > sannaddugsiyeed 'skolår'

marti 'guest' + qaadaa 'takes' > martiqaadaa 'inviterar'

# Derivation

Often noun and verb from the same root

tartan-ka 'the competition'

tartam-aa 'competes'



# Morphology

# Word classes (parts of speech)

Nouns	many	Not necessary:	
Adjectives	fewer		Adverbs
Pronouns	fewer		på ett snabbt sätt
Verbs			Numerals
Particles	fewer		trio, trea, tredje
Prepositions	fewer		
Conjunctions	fewer		
Interjections			

# Nouns

Two genders:

masculine

feminine

Kani waa...

Tani waa...

'This is ...'

buug 'a book'

kab 'a shoe'

moos 'a banana'

bisad 'a cat'

No indefinite article.

The definite article is a suffix:

moos-ka 'the banana'

kab-ta

buug-ga

bisad-da

# Gender Polarity

## The traditional view

	Singular	Plural	
feminine	{t}	{k}	masculine
masculine	{k}	{t}	feminine

The exponents of definiteness in Somali nouns.

Realisation depends on stem final phoneme.

{k} is realised as /k/, /g/, /h/ or zero.

{t} is realised as /t/, /d/ or /š/.



# Examples

**Fem.** sg. indef. & def.  
sabab 'reason' sabab**ta**  
mindi 'knife' mindi**da**

**Masc.** sg. indef. & def.  
gambar 'stool' gambar**ka**  
derbi 'wall' derbi**ga**

Masc. sg. indef. & def.  
miis 'table' miis**ka**

**Masc.** pl. indef. & def.  
sabab**o**                      sababa**ha**  
mindi**o**                      mindiya**ha**

**Fem.** pl. indef. & def.  
gambar**o**                      gambarrada**da**  
derbi**o**                      derbiyada**da**

Masc. pl. indef. & def.  
miis**as**                      miisaska**ka**

Agglutinative:  
sabab -a -**h** -a  
reason-PL-**DEF**-ABS



# Tonal gender distinction

Masculine nouns have stress-tone on the second last mora of the stem.

ínan 'a boy'            ínank**a** 'the boy'

Feminine nouns have stress-tone on the last mora of the stem.

inán 'a girl'            inánt**a** 'the girl'

# Gender from a typological point of view

- Gender is "reflected in the **behavior of associated words**".  
(Hockett 1958: 231)
- "The relevant 'reflection' in the associated words is agreement [...]. **No amount of marking on a noun can prove that the language has a gender system**; the evidence that nouns have gender values in a given language lies in **the agreement targets** which show gender." (Corbett 2013: 89f.)

# Exponents of agreement in Somali

VERBS	Present indicative		Past indicative		Present subjunctive	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Masculine	-aa	-aan	-ay	-een	-o	-aan
Feminine	-taa		-tay		-to	

PRONOUNS	Reduced personal		Full personal		Demonstrative	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Masculine	uu	ay	isaga	iyaga	ka	kuwa
Feminine	ay		iyada		ta	

POSSESSIVES	Singular	Plural
Masculine	-iis-	-ood-
Feminine	-eed-	

ADJECTIVES	Singular	Plural
Masculine	yar 'small'	(yar)yar
Feminine		



# Morphologically assigned plural definite article

- **Feminine nouns** (in the singular)
  - **All** nouns take the definite morpheme {k} in the plural.
- **Masculine nouns** (in the singular)
  - The vast majority take the definite morpheme {t} in the plural.
  - Only those with a **monosyllabic stem** (or bisyllabic indefinite plural) take {k} in the plural.

# The proposed view Exponent Polarity

	Singular	Plural
feminine	{t}	{k}
masculine	{k}	{t}

The exponents of definiteness in Somali nouns.

# The simpler view exemplified

Fem. sg. indef. & def.  
sabab 'reason' sabab**ta**  
mindi 'knife' mindi**da**

**Fem.** pl. indef. & def.  
sabab**o** sababa**ha**  
mindi**o** mindiya**ha**

Masc. sg. indef. & def.  
gambar 'stool' gambar**ka**  
derbi 'wall' derbi**ga**

**Masc.** pl. indef. & def.  
gambar**o** gambarr**ada**  
derbi**o** derbiya**da**

Masc. sg. indef. & def.  
miis 'table' miis**ka**  
geed 'tree' geed**ka**  
guri 'house' guri**ga**

Masc. pl. indef. & def.  
miis**as** miisask**ka**  
geed**o** geeda**ha**  
gury**o** gurya**ha**

# Nouns

Suffixes:	definite form	kab	kab <b>ta</b>	'shoe the shoe'
	plural	kab	kab <b>o</b>	'shoe shoes'
	possessive	kab	<b>teeda</b>	'her sko'
	demonstrative	kab	<b>tan</b>	'ths skon'

## Agglutinative tendency

kab-a-heed-an

sko-pl-poss-dem

'these shoes of hers'

# Case: base form vs. subject

Citation form & object & adverbial

kab

'a shoe'

kabta

'the shoe'

kabta yar

'the small shoe'

kabteeda

'her shoe'

kabtan

'this shoe'

Subject: NP final **-i**, **-u**

kab**i**

kabt**u**

kabta yar**i**

kabteed**u**

kabtani**i**

Tan**i** waa kab.

'This is a shoe.'

Kabteed**u** waa yar tahay.

'Her shoe is small.'

Waxaan rabaa kabteeda.

'I want her shoe.'

# Adjectives

Almost no morphology, only **distributive** form (also called **plural**).

yar	'liten'	yaryar	'små'	
weyn	'stor'	waweyn	'stora'	(irreg.)
wanaagsan	'bra'	wanwanaagsan	'bra'	

yar	'small'
ka yar	'smaller', literally 'small than'
ugu yar	'smallest', literally 'allra liten'



# Few adjectives, hardly any adverbs

Nouns are very often used instead.

gabār <sub>N</sub> yar <sub>Adj</sub> <i>girl Somali being</i>	'a small girl'
gabār <sub>N</sub> Soomaali <sub>N</sub> ah <sub>V</sub> <i>girl Somali being</i>	'a Somali girl'
buug <sub>N</sub> xiiso <sub>N</sub> badan <sub>Adj</sub> <i>book interest much</i>	'an interesting book'
Koonfur <sub>N</sub> waa <sub>PtCl</sub> kulayl <sub>N</sub> . <i>south is heat</i>	'In the south it's hot.'

# Other noun complements

$N_{\text{def}} + N_{\text{def}}$

$N_{\text{def}} + N_{\text{proper}}$

baabuurta Axmed

'Ahmed's car'

*car-the Ahmed*

kubbadda cagta

'football'

*ball-the foot-the*

# Numerals heading NP's

$N_{\text{num}} + N_{\text{sg}}$

$N_{\text{num}} + N_{\text{numerative}}$  (counting form) -ood, if fem. and pl. -o

buug (m.), buugag; bil (f.), bilo 'book, books; month, months'

shan buug 'five books'

shan bilood 'five months'

# Verb

Inflected for

person

heesaa      heestaa      heesaa**n**  
*han sjunger    hon sjunger    de sjunger*

tense

hees**aa**      hees**ay**      heesi**doonaa**  
*han sjunger    han sjöng      han kommer sjunga*

aspect

heesay      hees**ay**ay      heesi**jiray**  
*he sang        was singing    han brukade sjunga*

mode

hees**aa**      hees**o**      hees  
indicative    subjunctive    imperative

# Verb

Reduced relative/attributive indicative present/past (cf. active participle)

heesa	heesaya	heesay	heesayay
<i>sings</i>	<i>is singing</i>	<i>sang</i>	<i>was singing</i>

infinitive

heesi	<i>sing</i>
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verbal noun

heesid	<i>singing, to sing</i>
--------	-------------------------

verbal adjective / past participle

qor-an	<i>written</i>
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# Syntax



# Word order

Generally considered: SOV

Almost equally frequent: SOV and SVO

Determined by information structure / focus.

VP is the core (obj. pron, positional particles, verb)

Sentence marker (+ subj. pron) closely precedes VP

NP's are satellites (may be shuffled around freely)

# Constituent structure

Basic constituents in Swedish (English):

- **Subject + Predicate**

- Hon springer.
- Barnen äter.
- Sover katten?
- Snön faller.
- Det regnar.

# Same in Somali?

- Hon springer
- Way ordaysaa.
  - What is "way"?

# Contractions are very common in Somali

- an sammandragning av **waa + ay**

Hon springer.                    **Way** ordaysaa. = **Waa ay** ordaysaa.

cf.

**I would** like to eat.                    **I'd** like to eat



# Sentence particles are obligatory in Somali

- "Waa" is a **declarative** sentence particle.
- The opposite is the negative declarative sentence particle "ma":
  - Waa (ay) ordaysaa.      Hon springer.
  - Ma (ay) ordayso.      Hon springer inte.

# Swedish: noun **or** pronoun

Hon springer.

Sahra springer.

Den springer.

Katten springer.

- Subjektspronomen:

<b>la</b>	'man'
<b>aan</b>	'jag/vi'
<b>aad</b>	'du/ni'
<b>uu</b>	'han, den, det'
<b>ay</b>	'hon, den, det , de'

<b>aannu</b>	'vi (exkl. du/ni)'
<b>aynu</b>	'vi (inkl. du/ni)'
<b>aydin</b>	'ni'



# Somali: both noun **and** pronoun

- Somali **almost always has a subject pronoun** in positive declaratives, even if there is a subject noun.
- **Way** ordaysaa.                      Waa **ay** ordaysaa.
- **Sahra way** ordaysaa.              **Sahra waa ay** ordaysaa.
  - (Spoken Swedish: Sahra hon springer.)
- **Bisaddu way** ordaysaa.          **Bisaddu waa ay** ordaysaa.
  - (Spoken Swedish: Katten den sover.)

# Other sentence particles

**waa** – positive declarative

**ma** – negative declarative

**ma** – positive polar question                      jfr. fi. -ko/-kö, ry. li, po. czy, fr. est-ce que

**∅** – positive imperative

**ha** – negative imperative                      cf. 'don't'

and a few other ones...

<b>Waa</b> cuntaa.	<b>Ma</b> <b>cunto</b> .	<b>Ma</b> <b>cuntaa</b> ?	Cun	<b>Ha</b> cunin.
'Hon äter.	Hon äter inte.	Äter hon?	Ät.	Låt bli att äta.

# Focus particles

Other particles replace the declarative **waa** if focus on NP is required:

**baa / ayaa** – focus the preceding NP before the VP

**waxa** – focuses the final NP after the VP

Fasalka **immisa kursi baa** yaalla ?

class-the **how-many chair** FOC stand

How many chairs are there in the classroom?

**Waxa** uu la kulmay **Xasan**.

FIN.FOC he with met **Hassan**

He met with Hassan.

# The use of subjunctive (irrealis)

The subjunctive is used in  
negated clauses

Ma cun**o** kalluun.                      I don't eat fish.

subordinate clauses

Waxa    aan rabaa in    aan cun**o** kalluun.

FIN.FOC-I    want that I    eat fish

'I want to eat fish.'

optative clauses

Ha cunt**o**. 'Let her eat.'

# Prepositions

defines a relation between two words, often a verb and a noun.

Swedish prep.: **i, på, från, till, med, ur, av, för...**

Somali, only 4 prep.:

**u** (allativ), **ku** (adessiv, instructive), **ka** (ablativ), **la** (comitative)

- Position

- in Swedish: before the noun
- in Somali: before the verb/adjective

Waxaan **ku** noolahay Göteborg. 'Jag bor i Göteborg.'

*jag i bor Göteborg*

# Head + complement

Phrases always begin with the head word.

- **Subax walba** iyadu waxay aaddaa dugsigu.  
*morning every she FOC-she goes school-the*  
Every morning she goes to school.
- Dabadeed waxay gashataa **dharkeeda dugsigu**.  
*Then FOC-she puts-on clothes-her school-the*  
Then she puts on her school clothes.
- **Bisadda yari** waxay raadinaysaa hooyadeed.  
*Cat-the little FOC-she is searching mother-her*  
The little cat is looking for her mother.

# Main verb + aux.verb

Dharkeeda waxa **qabsan kara** dab.  
*clothes-her FOC catch can fire.*  
'Her clothes may catch fire.'



# Relative clauses

## No relative pronoun

- Dawacadii waxay aragtay **tuke** ( hibil afka ku haysta ).  
*fox-the FOC-she saw crow meat mouth-the in holds*  
'The fox saw a crow (that was) holding some meat in its mouth.'
- **Ninkii** ( Xamar ka yimid ) baa buuggan keenay.  
*man-the Mogadishu from came FOC book-that brought*  
'The man who came (coming) from Mogadishu brought the book.'