

**IDENTITY AND OPPORTUNITY :**

**The Implications of using local languages  
in the primary education system of the  
Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region  
(SNNPR), Ethiopia.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis concerns the reactions of groups of people to the introduction of local languages into the primary education system in Ethiopia. The changing patterns of language use in education come in response to the language policies of the Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia, which were first introduced in 1991.

The geographical area under consideration is the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). Eight local languages, spoken by the most populous groups of people in the region, are now in use in the primary education system. Some areas of the region have, however, continued to use Amharic, the national language, in primary schools. The field-work discusses the patterns of language use in education, and attitudes towards language use, in areas where local languages have been introduced, and those where Amharic is used.

The thesis considers the wider implications of the reform for the peoples of the SNNPR, and, in furtherance of this objective, an attempt is made to place the reform in its historical context. That historical context includes the development of government language policy and the historical patterns of language use in the Ethiopian state, as well as the history of the peoples of the south-west of the country.

The reform raises questions which concern identity and opportunity, for the peoples of the south-west of Ethiopia, considered as whole units, and for the individuals who belong to these groups of people. The reform also has profound implications for the status of these groups of people in the Ethiopian state.

Opinions about the implications of this reform vary considerably, and the questions addressed by the field-work are a subject of importance in current political debate in Ethiopia.

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## Introduction

### What is Kembata? The Background of the Research Topic.

In the late-1980s and early-1990s, during the final years of the Marxist government of Mengistu Haile-Mariam, I visited parts of the Rift valley in southern Ethiopia, in the former provinces of Shoa and Sidamo. The geographical area was one of stunning contrasts. The Rift valley floor was hot, dry and arid, some areas were almost desert. On the slopes, at the edge of the Rift valley, the land was fertile, and agricultural: green fields of cereal crops dominated the landscape. The highlands on either side of the Rift valley were well-watered and lush with tropical foliage. The peoples of the area also differed from one another in their languages and lifestyles.

The impression of Ethiopia I developed was entirely different from the images of the country that were prevalent in the mid-1980s, when Ethiopia was primarily associated with drought and famine in the barren northern highlands. Alternative images of Ethiopia were also familiar to me from the literature on the country. Ethiopia was characterised as an ancient empire that had adopted Christianity and, over several centuries, developed into a fiercely independent African state. This state had resisted not only the onslaught of European colonialism, but also the ideological invasion of Islam, which had captured the surrounding region, making Ethiopia a Christian island. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Imperial system of government had crumbled, and had been replaced by a Marxist military regime which continued to rule the country despite regional liberation movements.

The historical narrative of Ethiopia failed to acknowledge the profound internal diversity of the country. The state had dictated the manner in which Ethiopia's history had been presented <sup>1</sup>, and any mention of peoples outside of the northern highlands was brief. Such peoples were presented as being peripheral to the state, and inferior to the Christian peoples of the northern highlands, who spoke Semitic languages and formed the core of Ethiopian society. The peoples of southern Ethiopia appeared in the histories of the state only insofar as they were conquered by Emperor Menelik in the late-nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter One p46-47.



century.

The southern Ethiopian peoples, nevertheless, clearly had their own histories and identities. One such group of people were the Kembata, who lived in small rural communities near the town of Shashemene <sup>2</sup>, in the Rift valley. Kembata settlement in this area dated from earlier in the twentieth century, and was a result of overcrowding in their ancestral homelands in the highlands to the west of the Rift valley, where they had once been ruled by a dynasty of kings. Oromos had also inhabited the Rift valley, for several centuries, but they were, in the main, pastoralists, and did not compete directly for land with the agricultural Kembata. The numbers of Oromo in the area began increasing from the 1970s onwards, as a result of government resettlement schemes which relocated people from the famine stricken highlands of the former provinces of Arsi and Harerghe to the Rift valley, where relief could more easily be provided. Oromos settled in the towns on the main road, and in the surrounding rural areas. The increasing size of the local Oromo population, and its sedentarisation, was a threat to the Kembata. By the 1980s competition for land in the area was increasing, and Kembatas were unable to prevent the more numerous Oromos from capturing land which they had previously controlled. Kembatas in the area were worried about domination and assimilation; they did not want to become Oromo. Above all they did not want their children to adopt the Oromo language. In the area most people, regardless of background, used the Amharic language; other languages were regarded as primitive.

But how could a Kembata become an Oromo? Adopting a different language appeared to be, in their minds, a central feature of the change, but, if this was the case, then why were the Kembata not worried about adopting Amharic or becoming Amhara? If identity could be changed simply by adopting a different language, then what was the nature of identity? Was it simply linguistic, or did it have greater depth? I asked myself: what *is* Kembata? It appeared to be several things at once; a group of people, a language, a place, an identity. The answer was that the Kembata were an ethnic group; but this raised the equally difficult question of what was meant by this term <sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One p308.

<sup>3</sup> See below p11.

Local conflicts over identity and power were indicative of the national political climate. At the national level Ethiopia was divided by a protracted civil war; at least three ethnic or regional groups (Tigrean, Eritrean, Oromo) were fighting against the government forces. In early 1991, the Marxist government began to fall apart under the pressure of the rebel armies. Mengistu Haile-Mariam, the leader of the Derg, fled the country in May, and was replaced, after a relatively smooth transition, by the leader of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, Ato Meles Zenawi <sup>4</sup>. At the same time the leader of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Isayas Aferwerki, announced the long-awaited independence of Eritrea <sup>5</sup>.

The new government of Ethiopia asserted that "All Nations and Nationalities within Ethiopia will have the right to self-determination, up to and including secession." <sup>6</sup> Although based on what might be regarded as a sound ideological principle, the practical realities of dividing the country in such a way appeared to invite problems that would be beyond the capacity of the new regime to address. Against the background of regionally based liberation movements, however, and, having already accepted the independence of Eritrea, the government had little choice but to assert such a policy. The new government seemed to be taking a substantial gamble; hoping to preserve the unity of the state by allowing the theoretical right to secession, and counting on the continued necessity for all Ethiopian groups to remain part of a larger state. The attempt to give political freedom to the various peoples of Ethiopia, even if it fell short of creating new independent states, could easily backfire and cause segregation, fragmentation and resentment. The stated intention of the government was to achieve equality for Ethiopians from all ethnic or linguistic groups, but the policy could easily create tensions which had previously been absent; it seemed likely that the various groups would compete for territory and political power.

There was also the question of how the peoples of Ethiopia (the "nations and nationalities") were to be defined. How would identity be determined? A

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<sup>4</sup> Guardian Wednesday May 29th 1991 'Politics led Zenawi to arms' John Vidal p6.

<sup>5</sup> Guardian Thursday May 30th 1991 'Eritrea sets up its own government' Hella Pick p6.

<sup>6</sup> Guardian Wednesday May 29th 1991 'Front promises voice for people' John Simmons p6.

practical difficulty for the government was the establishment of borders between Ethiopia's various peoples; the political map of Ethiopia would have to be revised. The new political divisions first appeared in map form in the UK in the Economist in December 1991. The article stated

The ethos they [the central government - GC] have supplied, to which the country's new Council of Representatives has agreed, is to let the regions have as much say as possible in their own government, with their own representative assemblies, judiciaries and police forces. Local languages - Ethiopia has many - may be taught in schools. The centre will control defence and foreign affairs, and will have a large role in foreign policy....The devolution of powers has excited less comment than the redrawing of boundaries that has accompanied it.<sup>7</sup>

The divisions on the new map of Ethiopia corresponded to the distribution of Ethiopia's major linguistic groups <sup>8</sup>. The map contained a political division called Gurage-Kembata-Hadiya which was located to the south-west of Addis Ababa; for these peoples the creation of this political unit appeared highly significant, their presence in the state was now visible. The constituent groups of people in the state were largely defined by the government according to language, which was the most obvious manifestation of their identities. Linguistic and ethnic identities were assumed to be congruent.

The introduction of local languages for official purposes was, from the outset, a strong feature of the policies of the new government. This thesis discusses the introduction of several local languages for the purpose of primary education in the south-west, and seeks to explain the varied reactions of their respective peoples.

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<sup>7</sup> The Economist 14/12/91 Ethiopia : The healing touch. East Africa correspondent p80.

<sup>8</sup> Map Two, Appendix One, p302.

### **What is an ethnic group? ; a definition for this thesis.**

Before discussing the groups of people in the south-west of Ethiopia it is necessary to examine what the nature of their identities within the state is. If they are to be considered ethnicities, then the concept of ethnicity must be defined. Several disciplines make use of the concept of ethnicity, but it appears to evade any attempts to establish a precise, and universally accepted, definition. There is, consequently, substantial debate about what ethnicity should mean, and while this thesis cannot begin to examine the complexities of this debate in general terms, the use of the concept here must be related to existing theories.

The conceptual appeal of ethnicity is obvious; it facilitates the definition and comparison of different groups of people, by providing a theoretical structure within which the differences, and indeed similarities, between recognisably different groups of people can be discussed, and explained. Ethnicity is used to provide a universal index in the face of substantial variation; it is often assumed that every individual is from a particular ethnic group.

This thesis relies on the use of such a concept, since it seeks to compare the different reactions of several groups of people to the introduction of a reforming government language policy, which seeks to provide primary education in local 'ethnic' languages. The reactions of the groups of people in question are explained with reference to their historical patterns of contact and positions within the state. Ethnicity is, therefore, examined here in a historical aspect, and the theories of ethnicity that are of greatest relevance are those that seek to explain the historical development of groups of people.

An ethnic group is typically found within a state, and the term is usually applied to groups of people who form what are perceived to be significantly different sections of a larger society. There are differential characteristics that are commonly used to isolate ethnicities. The members of an ethnic group are characterised by the use of a common language, shared religion and culture, and are usually associated with a particular territory. It is often assumed that the members of an ethnic group have common ancestry, and are thus typified by certain physical traits. In multiethnic states, like Ethiopia, however, the members of different ethnicities are not necessarily differentiated by any racial or physical

characteristics; in many cases they appear, as it were, to be the descendants of the same ancestral stock <sup>9</sup>. In these circumstances language often becomes the most salient differential feature of ethnicities; people appear to be obviously different from one another when they speak different languages. Other characteristics such as culture or religion are less obvious; and they are, after all, transmitted through language.

Indeed, in Ethiopia, successive governments, and scholars from all disciplines, have relied upon linguistic differences to define the peoples of the state. But to rely on language alone as a defining characteristic, to equate language and ethnicity, implies that individuals who belong to the same ethnicity would in all cases speak the same language, and that individuals from different ethnicities would always speak different languages, yet it is common to find exceptions to both these propositions <sup>10</sup>. Language cannot, moreover, be relied upon as a single defining characteristic because it is a highly complex feature; no two people use it in an identical manner. Most people at some stage incorporate features from more than one language; many are bilingual or multilingual. The boundaries between languages, moreover, are far from always being definable, particularly in the case of pre-literate vernaculars. Languages are subject to substantive dialectal variation, at times forming a fluid continuum of speech varieties between which it is impossible to draw any boundaries. So the assumption that language can always be employed as a defining characteristic for ethnicity is incorrect, if only because there are inherent problems in differentiating languages themselves.

This is not to say that language and ethnicity are unrelated, if they were not, then linguistic definitions of ethnicities would have no credibility whatsoever. In Ethiopia it appears that, just as languages are typified by the speech forms of particularly homogeneous areas, while in others they overlap and merge, particular ethnic identities also have greater definition in some areas, while in other areas they are less distinct. Broadly speaking, the most homogeneous ethnic areas are identical with the most clearly defined use of the language associated with that ethnic group. Ethnicity and language are strongly

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<sup>9</sup> Takelle Tadesse, 1997a .

<sup>10</sup> Bambgose, 1991, p11.

related, but the relationship varies. So while both linguistic and ethnic definitions might be useful in helping to define the groups of people under discussion in this thesis, neither provides, at all times, a definite delineation between them.

In Ethiopia linguistic conceptions of identity have been underlined by historical circumstances. The relationship between the Amharic language and the Amhara considered as an ethnic group has been particularly influential in encouraging the equation of language and ethnicity. During the imperial period local rulers were brought into the framework of the state through the adoption of Amharic. In the twentieth century, education in Amharic created educated elites who were also closely identified with the state <sup>11</sup>. Outside of the northern highlands educated Amharic-speakers were considered, regardless of their ethnic background, to be Amharas by the local population, even by their own relatives and neighbours.

Many educated people also came to identify themselves as Amharas, and became fully integrated into Ethiopian society. Others continued to adhere to their ancestral identities while adopting the use of Amharic, but these individuals were, nevertheless, able to operate in the dominant group, and were considered Amharas by others. The national role of Amharic blurred the conception of Amhara ethnicity, which ceased to be based solely on tangible links with an ancestral group, and became instead a direct identification with the Ethiopian state <sup>12</sup>. The label 'Amhara' came to denote a fused national elite, in addition to the regional group of people who had historically adhered to Amhara identity. Those who were considered 'Amhara' had one feature in common; the use of the Amharic language. Some Ethiopians continue to regard the adoption of Amharic as being identical with becoming Amhara. But many people within the state, for whom Amharic is not an ancestral language, including the Kembatas in the Rift valley <sup>13</sup>, employ the language as their primary means of communication and feel that the adoption of Amharic does not compromise existing ethnic identities.

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter Two, p79-80, p95.

<sup>12</sup> Takelle Tadesse, 1997a.

<sup>13</sup> See above p8.

Other factors have also encouraged linguistic definitions of ethnicities in Ethiopia; it is not only that language is a particularly observable feature, it has also been regarded as less divisive than other features by Ethiopian governments. The state has actively sought to discourage local indigenous cultures and religions. During the imperial period the state and missionaries encouraged the adoption of Christianity to the exclusion of all other religions. The state also vigorously encouraged the adoption of the cultural characteristics of northern Ethiopia as national characteristics for all Ethiopians <sup>14</sup>. During the era of the Derg, although religious freedom was a stated policy of the government, it was conceived in terms of equality between Christians and Muslims. Local traditional practices, particularly ritual celebrations, were outlawed, because they were regarded as counter-revolutionary. Governments in Ethiopia, it appears, assumed that language could be stripped of its cultural context, and could remain as an acceptable differentiating characteristic of ethnicities. Governmental acceptance of linguistic diversity stemmed from an inability to legislate or act against languages or patterns of language use. So, as long as languages other than Amharic were restricted to local oral uses <sup>15</sup>, their continuance was accepted, while local religions and cultures were attacked.

One might assume that the importance of ethnicity in Ethiopia would have diminished as a result of this concerted discouragement of diversity by the state. But although Ethiopia's cultural and religious diversity has been substantially reduced as a consequence of state policies, ethnicity in Ethiopia has by no means lost its potency. In fact, the reverse is true; the political significance of ethnicity in Ethiopia seems to have been increasing in recent years. But in the absence of clear cut cultural and religious differences, and with the unreliable feature of language remaining as the primary defining characteristic of ethnicities, wherein lies the great importance of ethnicity? Evidently, ethnicity is something more than the sum of the features that are employed to define the group of people in question, neither can it be explained with specific reference to each group. The concept must be understood in terms

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<sup>14</sup> Chapter Two, p80-81.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter One, p47,

of its appeal to people across ethnicities. Above all it must be explained in terms of its use as a structure for organising society.

Ethnicity's power stems from its ability to represent collective forms of identity. Anderson has defined such a collective identity as an 'imagined community' <sup>16</sup>. This community may be imagined equally by the members of the group in question and by the members of other groups of people, but the key point is that the conception of identity is widely accepted. The community in question, without exception, depends upon established historical connections to justify its existence, and this often leads to the invocation of traditional culture, the close association with a territorial homeland and the use of an ancestral language. But the historicity of such formulations of identity has been questioned. Hobsbawm has labelled ethnic identity an 'invention' <sup>17</sup>. Identity, he argues, while invoking historical features, gains its importance in relation to more recent political circumstances, particularly the post-industrial emergence of nations, and the phenomenon of nationalism. But whether ethnicities are imagined or invented, whether they derive their substance from long-standing connections or modern processes, ethnicity remains a suitable paradigm for examining groups of people, if only because it seeks to reflect the units of population to which individuals see themselves as belonging.

In Africa the importance of ethnicity as a paradigmatic construct for examining groups of people has gained significance because of the diversity of peoples in Africa's states. The colonial division of the continent forced people with different ethnic identities into forms of political contact. Anti-colonial nationalist movements appeared to provide a basis upon which the members of different ethnicities might form new state-wide identities. Following independence, ethnicity was regarded as a problem by newly formed African governments. It was hoped that ethnic identities would diminish in importance as a result of modernisation and state development, which would foster instead national identities <sup>18</sup>. Ethiopia, although not a colonial state, in the sense that an indigenous section of the population continued to rule the country in spite of external threats, has also been subject to similar national processes. The

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm, 1981.

<sup>18</sup> Vail, 1989 p2.



diversity of the state has been regarded by Ethiopian governments as a problem to be addressed, and the subject peoples of the state have been encouraged to adopt national forms of identity which transcend their ethnicities<sup>19</sup>.

Throughout Africa the assumption that post-independence nationalism would lead to a reduction in the importance of ethnicity has been proved wrong. In fact, it would seem, the reverse is true, and the importance of ethnicity in Africa is increasing, since ethnicities have often come to represent regional political entities. Indeed it has been argued that the political context of modern African states has encouraged the invention of ethnicities. Differences between ethnicities, Vail argues, reflect the unequal patterns of resource distribution in the state <sup>20</sup>. There are regions in most African countries that are less developed than others, and particular ethnic identities appear to correspond to these areas. According to Vail, the political representatives of an underprivileged area tend to form factions based on shared concerns, and these factions assume an ethnic character. These smaller factions become submerged at the level of the central government, while those that represent the more populous groups in the state come to the fore, dominating national politics. Struggles for territory within states inevitably favour larger groups, and smaller ethnicities become marginalised. Marginalisation has much to do with strengthening ethnic identities; marginalised groups are by nature excluded from national forms of identity, and are, therefore, forced to turn inwards and focus on the group itself, and sentiments of ethnicity are encouraged. In such cases it seems impossible to separate ethnic groups from their political contexts.

Many Ethiopians feel that the group to which they belong has been ruled by another more powerful ethnic group, and this has had a profound effect in shaping their identities. The Amhara-dominated central government has been seen to oppress and marginalise the other peoples of the state. So while Ethiopia may not fit perfectly into the model of a colonial African state, it bears great resemblance to that constructed for post-independence Africa, with the larger, more populous groups of people dominating the smaller ethnicities. The

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter One, p46-48.

<sup>20</sup> Vail, 1989 p4.

ethnicities of Ethiopia's south-west have been submerged within the state in precisely this way.

But where does ethnicity come from? In Africa it has often been assumed that it represents the post-independence reemergence of pre-colonial units of population, which have been assumed to be, in some sense, primordial. This view is encouraged by formulations of ethnic identity that are heavily dependent on historical features, and suggest that the group is an unchanging entity. But it has been argued that more recent circumstances are more influential in shaping the current nature and boundaries of ethnicities. In colonial and post-colonial Africa specific circumstances have been directly related to the development of present ethnic identities. Vail argues that the shape and form of present-day ethnicities originated in the divisive policies of indirect rule through native authorities which were developed by colonial administrations <sup>21</sup>. This system enfranchised local rulers and defined groups of people, dividing the population of African states in a manner that often bore little resemblance to any earlier systems of government or traditional social structures. These, often newly-constituted, African elites produced formulations of identity that were adopted by people regardless of whether they were traditional. These formulations of identity survived independence to form the basis of accepted ethnic divisions in Africa's states <sup>22</sup>.

The processes of urbanisation in Africa have also been seen to play a part in shaping ethnic identities. Contact between members of different ethnicities in the newly developing urban environments, Vail argues, helped to induce ethnic differentiation by encouraging the creation of ethnic stereotypes <sup>23</sup>. These stereotypes were based on characteristics of the ancestral environment, but formulations of identity took on a new significance. In the multi-ethnic urban environment differences between groups were magnified; ethnicities tended to form enclaves. The use of different languages was highly influential because the language barrier enforced a certain amount of division between different regional groups. Urban dwellers perceived themselves as

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid* p3.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* p11.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid* p3.

being very different from those of other ethnicities. Ethnic categories that became firmly established in the urban environment influenced in turn the conception of ethnicity in the corresponding rural areas, and rural populations also developed a stronger conception of themselves as being different from other groups of people in the state.

Vail highlights the formative role of foreign elites, particularly missionaries, in establishing ethnic boundaries, through processes of definition. Missionaries were often responsible for defining aspects of the peoples they lived amongst <sup>24</sup>. Missionary definitions of groups of people influenced both internal conceptions of identity within the group, and the manner in which the group was perceived from the outside, particularly in terms of academic forms of study. Language was a cornerstone of missionary activity, since missionaries were concerned to use local languages to transmit biblical theology, and they often instituted primary education. Missionaries defined African languages through the processes of standardisation <sup>25</sup>. By establishing standard written forms for previously oral languages, missionaries decided who spoke, or did not speak, a particular language, and, consequently, who belonged or did not belong to a corresponding ethnicity. These processes served to provide a basis for unity within the group, and also, by establishing a defined boundary excluded those who were not seen to belong.

These arguments might suggest that Africans were being manipulated into adopting formulations of identity. But ordinary people in Africa's newly emerging states were searching for collective forms of identity, and clung to ethnic identities for their own reasons <sup>26</sup>. According to Vail, ethnicity offered the best hope of development for the members of the group. In the absence of political power in the state, ethnic loyalties provided the only forum for asserting collective forms of action. So while ethnic identities took on elements of the past in order to justify their existence, they were based on the desire of ethnic groups to benefit from material development.

The arguments presented by Vail vary in their relevance to the specific

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p12.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter Four , p130.

<sup>26</sup> Vail, 1989 p4.

case of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia the extent of missionary activity was substantially less than in most of Africa's colonial states <sup>27</sup>, local elites were constrained to adopt northern Ethiopian forms of identity and were, therefore, unable to promote formulations of local identity <sup>28</sup>, and the processes of urbanisation remain less advanced than elsewhere in Africa <sup>29</sup>. Perhaps, in Ethiopia, these processes have been less formative, but each has, nevertheless, had some influence in shaping formulations of identity. What is clear is that ethnic identities in Ethiopia, as elsewhere in Africa, have developed in response to the changing nature of the modern political and social environment, and by no means denote the primordial units of population that they were assumed to be.

While Vail's arguments help to explain the present configuration of ethnicities, they cannot explain their ethnic content, their cultural, religious and above all linguistic character. The formation of the state clearly was unable to 'produce' languages; they already existed, and that in itself suggests the existence of pre-colonial ethnic identities. It has been argued that the substance of post-colonial identities is based upon these pre-colonial identities in Africa. Hastings, discussing pre-colonial Africa, asserts that "African communities had an inherent sense of identity...whereby insiders were distinguished from outsiders, and that sense of identity was very closely linked with language use" <sup>30</sup>. Vail's arguments also suggest that diversity existed prior to the processes he describes, but he avoids defining what form this took, highlighting only its fluidity. But a premise of pre-colonial fluidity in no way precludes the existence of pre-colonial social groupings that provided a basis for collective forms of identity. In fact, the existence of post-colonial diversity, (of the phenomenon of diversity as such), seems to argue the reverse. Languages cannot arise in a short space of time, they may evolve, but rarely have abrupt junctures, and ethnic identities are broadly similar. It is impossible to argue that languages did not predate the modern processes detailed by Vail, and the acceptance that people did not speak the same languages leads to a further point; we can assume that peoples speaking different languages regarded one another as

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<sup>27</sup> Chapter One, p82.

<sup>28</sup> Chapter One, p51.

<sup>29</sup> Bjerer, 1989, Introduction.

<sup>30</sup> Hastings, 1997, p149.

being different in their nature. It would also seem reasonable to assume that these peoples also differed in aspects other than language.

If we examine the case of the Ethiopian state there is evidence that the ethnicities that inhabit the south-west existed in some form of relationship with the state, that stretches back several centuries <sup>31</sup>, certainly predating the formative processes of the modern era which Vail argues are so central to the establishment of ethnicities elsewhere in Africa. It was, moreover, by the use of particular languages that these peoples were largely identified. Modern languages display their linguistic origins in their syntax, morphology, phonology and vocabulary. These have been used, at times, to demonstrate historical relationships and the existence of long-standing ethnic identities <sup>32</sup>. So, while they have doubtless been influenced by modern processes, these ethnicities are not modern creations.

Hastings stresses the universality of ethnicity in contrast with the specific character of nations. He defines an ethnicity as "a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language", and a nation as "a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity...identified by a literature of its own" <sup>33</sup>. Hastings argues that languages develop only within an inherently limited social context, and that this context represents an ethnic group. He states that the characteristics of a nation are always based on those which have previously been established as those of a particular ethnic group (and perhaps a particularly defined and successfully cohesive one). The religious, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the original ethnicity become those of the nation. Although these characteristics may be transformed in the transition to nationhood, there is, nevertheless, continuity between the ethnicity and the nation.

Hastings argues that the transition to nationhood from ethnicity is largely accomplished by the development of a written vernacular, and highlights the particular significance of translations of the Bible into the vernacular <sup>34</sup>. The Biblical conception of the state of Israel, he argues, with its characteristic racial,

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<sup>31</sup> Chapter One, p55-60.

<sup>32</sup> Ehret, 1974, Sobania, 1978.

<sup>33</sup> Hastings, 1997, p3.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* p12.

religious and linguistic homogeneity, its monarchical institutions and structure of social organisation, became the model for the establishment of the European nations. National synthesis in Europe in turn influenced the development of nations, and of the phenomenon of nationalism, internationally. Hastings claims that the process also applies to the case of Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, Hastings argues, the conception of the nation, based upon the characteristics of the Amharic-speaking ethnic group of northern highlands was achieved through the development of the Amharic language as a written vernacular and language of the state. A Biblical conception of nationhood was, moreover, formative in shaping the nature of Ethiopian society <sup>35</sup>. The legitimacy of Ethiopian kingship, so central in ideological terms to the formulation of Ethiopian national identity, was based on the claim to Solomonic descent of Ethiopian emperors. Northern Ethiopia became a Christian nation concerned with the conversion and incorporation of the surrounding peoples who appeared to be inferior. What differentiated the northern Ethiopians so strikingly from their neighbours was the presence of the written word, and a universal form of religion, namely Christianity, which sought to convert non-believers.

Ethnicities and their languages are, according to Hastings' argument, fluid, whereas nations represent the establishment of a more defined form of a certain ethnicity, largely through the use of a written vernacular, which produces boundaries and encourages the internal homogenisation of language. He states

The main point to be made...is that of language fluidity, particularly in societies where literature is absent or limited. In this it simply reflects the fluidity of ethnicity in general. The universality of ethnicity as our point of departure is never the same thing as the stability of any particular ethnicity. Once literacy arrives, not only does the fluidity diminish, but so does the bond between ethnicity and language.<sup>36</sup>

If we adopt Hastings' form of analysis, we may say that in this thesis what we are examining is the emergence of nations in the south-west of Ethiopia,

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid* p150.

<sup>36</sup> Hastings ,1997, p174.

from the background of their ethnic past. They are moving from being linguistically defined, but nevertheless fluid, entities to being more defined political units, a change concurrent with the development of written languages. The creation of political structures which reflect ethnic distribution enforces group definition, and reduces fluidity. In the south-west of Ethiopia it is also clear that literacy does much to change the relationship between language and ethnicity, since it causes language to become more than a marker of identity, by extending the range of its use.

It is a weakness of the arguments presented by Vail and Hastings that they each seek to provide a single construct for explaining ethnicity. Ethnicities achieve definition in response to a range of different processes with varying weight in different cases. Accordingly, no single factor offers a universal answer to the question of what produces and sustains ethnicity <sup>37</sup>. Ethnicity is a constantly evolving phenomenon, influenced by a range of historical, social and political factors.

Ethnic identities concern conceptions of the self and of others, so that ethnicity is by nature comparative. Ethnic identities develop in response to patterns of contact between peoples, which pass through different historical phases. Turton discusses the conceptions of 'us and them' and analyses where ethnic boundaries might be drawn <sup>38</sup>. Taking examples from Ethiopia's south-west, he demonstrates that the boundaries of an ethnic group evolve through a series of redefinitions that are shaped by the changing nature of relations between local groups of people, under the influence of a range of factors. Ethnicity does not, as has often been assumed, represent a permanent social grouping, it is inherently flexible and reactive; ethnic identities develop in response to very present circumstances. Some ethnicities merge, producing new formulations of identity, others split and form two or more distinct groups, and an ethnic group may cease to exist as a separate entity, through being absorbed into the society of another. Turton's material also suggests that, where language is shared, or at least mutually intelligible, the formation of ethnicity is possible, but where languages are different, it is not. The point Turton fails to

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<sup>37</sup> Fardon, 1996, p118.

<sup>38</sup> Turton, 1994.

make explicit is that language barriers represent barriers to ethnic formation simply because they rule out communication.

Turton also discusses the importance of migration and warfare in the formation of ethnic identities. Turton argues that ideas of warfare and migration are influential in shaping ethnic identities in the Lower Omo valley, an area where the population still have little conception of belonging to state. These processes, it can be assumed, were also common over a wider area prior to the establishment of states. So where the modern state is still quite absent, we may observe, in spite of the evident fluidity, defined ethnicities, and established historical patterns of contact. Using examples of ethnic development in the Lower Omo valley, Turton seeks to demonstrate something more general about ethnicity itself. Turton states that

If...the distinctive identities of the Dassanetch, Nyangatom and Mursi are the products rather than the causes of the movements described in their oral traditions, then these traditions are as much attempts to account for present political identities as they are about past events...historical reconstruction can only go so far in helping us to understand processes of ethnic formation.<sup>39</sup>

Turton argues that different kinds of population movements are often presented in oral traditions as straightforward relocations of a particular group, even when they are achieved by more complex processes of assimilation and incorporation <sup>40</sup>. The presentation of different kinds of population movement in oral traditions as simple 'migrations' provides a helpful insight into the problem of defining ethnicity in general; the manner in which an ethnic story is presented is controlled by established paradigms, and these are in evidence even where the state appears insignificant. Therefore, to claim that ethnicity develops only in relation to the state appears untenable. A group's ethnicity is an idea, an idea that develops and is influenced both by established patterns of contact and changing circumstances. A formulation of a particular ethnic identity develops, moreover, in relation to ideas already established in a broader multi-ethnic context, within which ethnicities seek self-definition. The stories of different

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<sup>39</sup> Turton, 1991, p160.

<sup>40</sup> Turton, 1991.



ethnic groups are different but controlled by similar paradigmatic patterns<sup>41</sup>. These paradigmatic patterns, in the case of the ethnicities of Ethiopia's south-west include the influence of the Ethiopian state and resultant perceptions of identity shaped by processes of the types presented by both Hastings and Vail.

In the south-west, those polities that have had greater contact with the state have been encouraged by aspects of this contact to form larger, more coherent units, while those on the fringes, both geographical and social, of the state appear to have remained more fluid. Ethnicities evolve in relation to the contemporary context, but, in so doing, they actively seek to maintain connections with the past. It is impossible to say, in general terms, what the more prominent influences on ethnicity are, but the most obvious constant of ethnicities (although not entirely reliable) is the language through which the idea of this identity is expressed.

This thesis seeks to explain the attitudes that different ethnicities hold towards the use of their own ethnic languages, and to that of other languages, particularly Amharic. The assumption has been made that there is a profound relationship between ethnicity and language, but this relationship varies. This thesis defines ethnic groups linguistically, but historical features will be employed to explain their attitudes. The question of whether the members of modern ethnicities are the actual descendants of the earlier bearers of the same ethnic names will not be addressed here; for the purposes of this thesis it suffices that the groups of people under discussion imagine themselves to be the continuation of established historical entities. They are ethnicities undergoing change as a result of modern processes, and these processes affect not only their shape and size but also the nature of their identities.

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<sup>41</sup> Fardon, 1994.

### The development of the topic ; Approaches.

Notwithstanding the complexities reviewed above, no apology is made for treating language as the most salient differential characteristic of the ethnicities that are the focus of this thesis. Linguists have been responsible for defining each of these ethnicities, their definitions have influenced the manner in which scholars from other disciplines conceptualise them, and they appear inescapable. Linguistic forms of analysis have also facilitated comparison, since they make it possible to bring into focus the great diversity of peoples in Ethiopia's south-west <sup>42</sup>, by defining the geographical location and population size of ethnicities in relation to their languages. Language is, moreover, relied upon by the new government as the fundamental defining characteristic for groups of people in the Ethiopian state, and it is, therefore, formative in establishing new political agendas. A substantial feature of the changing political climate is the use of local languages for an enlarged set of official functions. The introduction of local languages for the purpose of primary education, was, from the outset, a highly charged political issue.

Before embarking on my first research trip to Ethiopia, in 1996, I was unclear about the extent to which the reforms proposed by the government had been enacted. Policies had been made clear, but I had no information as to their translation into actions. I expected to study the processes concerned with establishing the manner in which local languages were to be used, and I hoped to discover whether groups of southern Ethiopians wanted to use their languages for official purposes. Given the then recent announcement of the reform, I was surprised on arriving in Ethiopia to discover that the implementation of policy was already at an advanced stage. Along with the larger Ethiopian groups, the ethnicities of the south-west, including the Kembata, had been actively encouraged to introduce their languages in their respective geopolitical units for certain official functions. In many parts of Ethiopia local languages were already being used in the local administration of the regions, and also by the courts and the police. The primary education

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<sup>42</sup> The most comprehensive survey of the linguistic makeup of Ethiopia appears in Bender et al eds., 1976. Population distribution maps and classificatory structures employed by most works are based on this source.

system was, however, the sector in which the effects of the new policy on the use of local languages had been felt by the greatest proportion of the population, local languages having been introduced as the medium of instruction <sup>43</sup> in the first six grades of education. I decided to focus directly on the introduction of local languages in the primary education system because it appeared to be a central issue in the new political climate. The reform of language use in education was an important aspect of the government's reforms, and opinion in Ethiopia was divided about the policy.

The content of the field-work was also influenced by the geopolitical redefinition of the state. I had initially been interested in comparing the reactions of the Kembata and the Oromo to the introduction of their ethnic languages in education. But as I pursued this topic, it became clear that it would be more interesting to focus on the Kembata and their neighbours in the south-west. The area of the Rift valley in which I had initially encountered the Kembata was now part of the Oromo region, all students were being educated in the language of the Oromo, and so, in this area, all I would have been able to study was the increasing marginalisation of the Kembata. The Oromo considered as a group of people were too large for the purposes of the topic, and many lived outside the geographical area in which I was interested. The Oromo did not provide a suitable comparison to the Kembata. It appeared, therefore, more suitable for the development of my topic, to study the introduction of the local language for the purpose of primary education in the Kembata-speaking area, and to compare the Kembata with similar ethnicities in the south-west.

From the linguistic studies of Ethiopia it emerges that the Kembata are by no means an insignificant group. They belong, on the contrary, to a collection of ethnicities that have fairly substantial populations and inhabit the near south-west of the country. The Kembata are most closely related, in linguistic terms, to the Hadiya, Sidama and Gedeo; all these languages are from the Highland East group of Cushitic languages. To the north of the Kembata and Hadiya is the area inhabited by the Gurage, who speak several languages from the Ethio-Semitic language family, which also includes Amharic. To the south and west of the Kembata are peoples who speak Omotic languages; the Walaita, Kaffa,

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<sup>43</sup> Medium of instruction (MOI) - language in which subjects are taught. Chapter Three, p117.

Gamo, Gofa and Dawro. These ten ethnicities are the most populous in the south-west, each representing between 1/2% and 3% of the national population<sup>44</sup>. Although they do not form one related linguistic group<sup>45</sup>, these ethnicities occupy a contiguous territory, and have formed a new regional entity that is an important feature of the new configuration of the state.

This new entity is the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), which was formed by the union of five of Ethiopia's new regions. It stretches from the area immediately to the south west of Addis Ababa to the borders with Kenya and Sudan, occupying the south-western part of Ethiopia. This political unit includes all of the aforementioned groups, and a plethora of much smaller ones. The SNNPR is internally divided into nine zones and five special woredas, each representing a language or a collection of languages<sup>46</sup>. The SNNPR is the political region which contains the greatest linguistic diversity in Ethiopia, and this makes it a particularly interesting area in which to study the implications of the government's reforms of language use, since it is possible to contrast the reactions of different, but comparable, ethnicities. Most of Ethiopia's regions are dominated by the speakers of a single language (although all contain speakers of minority languages). Therefore, in the majority of Ethiopia's regions there is one official language that has been introduced in response to the reforms of the present government. In the SNNPR, however, there were several languages for consideration as languages in education; in 1996 eight local languages, those of the ten groups mentioned above (one was a composite of three languages from the Ometo cluster; Gamo, Gofa and Dawro, (GGD)), had already been developed for primary education, and had been hurriedly introduced into the region's schools.

These languages were almost entirely restricted to oral uses prior to the implementation of the present government's reforms of language use. Their only written uses had been the translations of the Bible, dictionaries and grammars produced by missionaries, and the study of their languages by linguists. Their introduction into the primary school system has, therefore, entailed a rapid transition from oral to written which has profound implications

<sup>44</sup> Estimates supplied by Mary Breeze (SIL), Addis Ababa, 22/3/96.

<sup>45</sup> From a linguistic point of view they form several internally related groups.

<sup>46</sup> Chapter Five, p153-157. Maps Five and Six, Appendix One, p305 & p306.

for the development of the languages themselves <sup>47</sup>, and for the peoples who speak them.

I decided to study the introduction of these languages, and to find out if opinions about language use varied in the SNNPR, and in what ways. So the topic came to be concerned with comparing the various ethnicities of the SNNPR. The Kembata remain an important case in this thesis, but without the examples provided by other groups it would be less interesting, and impossible to define what is unique about conditions in Kembata.

The introduction of local languages into the primary education system is the first point of contact at which most of the members of the ethnicities with which this thesis is concerned are experiencing change as a result of the introduction of the new government language policy. The reactions of ethnicities to the introduction of the use of their languages in education is the focus of this thesis, which will concentrate on the attitudes towards this policy of some the peoples of the SNNPR, and relate these attitudes to the historical background.

I would argue that the reform has provided a hitherto unavailable opportunity to examine these ethnicities in a historical context, since they have now been recognised officially and have been allowed rights to the use of their own languages. They have also, moreover, now been defined in a manner which facilitates study. Each administrative zone representing an ethnic group has offices of the various government ministries concerned with the specific development of the group in question. The research for this thesis was facilitated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the SNNPR. Research was conducted in the SNNPR in conjunction with MOE employees, without whose co-operation the topic would have been impossible to approach in the manner it has been here.

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<sup>47</sup> Chapter Four , p130.

### **The development of the topic ; Sources.**

The remaining sections of this introduction will describe the materials employed in writing this thesis. In approaching the topic it was necessary to examine the histories of these ethnicities and their patterns of contact with the Ethiopian state (Chapter One), and to examine the development of government language policies in Ethiopia (Chapter Two). The present context of the reform required an analysis of the political situation in the 1990s, focussing on the linguistic reforms of the government (Chapter Three), and an examination of the practical implementation of these policies against a background of language planning theory, in order to contrast policy with practice (Chapter Four). In order to define the ethnicities of the south-west in terms of the sizes of their populations, their geographical distribution and other aspects of their population, this thesis has employed a recent set of government statistics generated since the geopolitical reforms of the country (Chapter Five). The discussion of the field-work compares the characteristics of particular ethnicities and above all seeks to understand why people from certain ethnicities have developed the attitudes towards the use of their languages that they have (Chapters Six-Nine). The materials are reviewed in the order in which they bear on the foregoing topics.

### **Secondary Sources; Books and articles.**

The present topic is interdisciplinary. Secondary sources that have been important in framing this thesis have been drawn from several disciplines, and can be divided into four sets: history and anthropology, linguistics and sociolinguistics, social studies, and materials that are directly concerned with linguistic reform in Ethiopia in the 1990s (that is published articles, and both government and NGO generated reports).

#### **Historical and anthropological sources.**

Historical and anthropological materials provide much of the background of the present topic, and provide the basis for discussion in Chapters One and Two. These materials help, moreover, to provide explanations for the variety of attitudes encountered in the field-work discussed in Chapters Six to Nine.

The wider historiography of the Ethiopian state provides a general background. Bahru Zewde's A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1991, seeks to reconcile much of the earlier work on the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the Revolution of 1974, and contains references to some south-western peoples where they have come into contact with the state, thereby helping to frame the history of state actions in the south-west during the Imperial period within the wider context of the history of the state. Christopher Clapham's Transformation and Continuity in Post Revolutionary Ethiopia, 1998, is particularly important in respect of his analysis of the effects of the policies, linguistic and otherwise, initiated by the Derg. His discussion of these policies provides the immediate background to the change of government in 1991 and the reasons for the development of regionalisation policies by the government of Ato Meles Zenawi.

Some anthropological texts provided a very general description of the peoples of the south-west. Two volumes in the ethnographic survey of Africa sponsored by the International African Institute in London, Cerulli Peoples of South-west Ethiopia and its Borderland, 1956, and Shack The Central Ethiopians, 1974, provide a basis for comparing the groups of people in the south-west of Ethiopia. Both authors attempt to point out the salient features of groups of people, and include brief historical narratives. In each of these volumes, however, the authors present groups of people in a very incomplete, and ill-defined manner. Much of the information presented in these volumes is drawn from the accounts of an earlier generation of anthropologists, and is, in the light of more recent studies, replete with various inaccuracies. The depictions of groups of people in these works fails to allow for any variation or evolutionary processes within groups; they are presented as primordial, static entities.

Of greater significance is Shack's The Gurage; A people of the Ensete culture, 1966, which focusses on one group of people and provides a much fuller analysis. While based on field-work conducted in one particular area of Gurageland, namely Chaha, Shack's discussion nevertheless attempts to consider the Gurage as a whole. Shack discusses the nineteenth century northern Ethiopian conquest of Gurage, and changes in patterns of land-

holding in Gurage after conquest. Shack also discusses the social changes in Gurage that were initiated by the introduction of taxation in money under Haile Sellassie's government. His arguments are also relevant to other ethnicities in the south-west.

Hallpike's The Konso of Ethiopia, 1972, provides similar historical insights for Konso. The significance of his work for this thesis is that it helps to provide a picture of the kind of contact which peripheral peoples have had with the state. Although the conquest itself was felt quite acutely in such areas, Ethiopian rule was never cemented, and contact was usually limited to the submission of taxes. The influence of the modern Ethiopian state, and other external bodies, including missionaries, who arrived in Konso in the 1950s, has also been minimal. Peripheral areas (including Konso) in which a small amount of field-work was conducted, provide an important contrast to the more central areas that are the primary subject of the thesis.

A particularly important body of literature for this thesis has been produced by Braukämper, who has reconstructed historical accounts for several of the ethnicities that are the primary focus of this thesis. Braukämper's historical accounts are based on oral traditions, although he also uses Ethiopian court records and, for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the accounts of European travellers, missionaries and an earlier generation of anthropologists.

Braukämper discusses the origins and historical development of several ethnicities in Geschilte der Hadiya Süd - Äthiopiens 1980. These peoples, he argues, are the modern descendants of the inhabitants of the ancient state of Hadiya that was situated in the highlands to the east of the Rift valley. Braukämper characterises the polity of Hadiya thus

...the name Hadiya existed mainly as a political term. A common leadership was lacking, and the population of the state seemed to have been rather heterogenous, both culturally and linguistically. Parts of the population were Muslim, others apparently were not. In the north a Semitic ("Adare") speaking element seems to have predominated, in the south a more pastoral Cushitic speaking one.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p430.



Chronicles of the Ethiopian court contain references to the Hadiya state, which was a tributary of the Ethiopian state. The political relationship between Hadiya and the Ethiopian state was brought to an end by the Gran invasions of the sixteenth century. Braukämper argues that the conflict of the sixteenth century had a profound effect on the Hadiya state, causing it to shatter, initiating processes of ethnic redefinition. He details, through a variety of geographical, linguistic and cultural relocations, the reemergence of the descendants of the inhabitants of former Hadiya state as a cluster of related ethnicities in the Rift valley and in the highlands between the Rift valley and the Upper Omo valley.

Braukämper presents these population movements as migrations of coherent groups of people. In so doing, he fails to question adequately the nature of these relocations. Even if nomadic bands of people who originated in the Hadiya state did traverse the Rift valley and settle in other areas, their subsequent development had much to do with processes of assimilation and incorporation between themselves and the peoples with whom they came into contact. As a result of patterns of contact the identities of the polities bearing particular names (Alaba, Kebena, Soro, Limu, Badewacho, Mareko, Ulbarag, Silti) no doubt evolved, at times shedding some of the original stock, at times absorbing individuals of different origins, incorporating features of languages spoken by other peoples, remolding their religious identities and adopting new lifestyles. Braukämper's models of linguistic conversion are over-simplified, as are his explanations of processes of ethnic formation and separation, but his material does provide much that is of value.

Braukämper's work Die Kambata 1983, offers the fullest account of Kambata history available, and, therefore, represents an important source for the present study. As with the Hadiya, Braukämper's account of Kambata history begins by analysing references to the Kambata state in the records of the northern Ethiopian state. Historical Kambata was a state occupying a defined territory and ruled by a central monarchy. Braukämper's history of Kambata discusses the relationship between this state and the central Ethiopian state, until the abolition of the monarchy after Menelik's conquest, and the subsequent incorporation of Kambata into the Ethiopian state.

Aside from Braukämper there are very few materials which relate directly

to the groups of people in question in this thesis. There is, for example, very little recent historiographical discussion of the Sidama, and the Walaita have also yet to be the subject of a concerted historical study.

A body of literature produced by Donham has been particularly helpful in framing the historical context of this thesis. In his opening Chapter in The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia, 1986, titled 'Old Abbysinia and the new Ethiopian Empire', Donham presents a structure of core and periphery which allows us to place all of the ethnicities in the south-west in the context of their relationships with the state: this construct will be discussed further in Chapter One. Donham's Work and Power in Maale, 1994, which focusses on a particular ethnic group in the south-west, also offers useful perspectives on the historical development of polities in the south-west generally, and builds on the arguments offered in the aforementioned chapter.

#### Sociolinguistic studies

Sociolinguistic studies facilitate the discussion of theoretical aspects of language planning, and of language use more generally, and help to place the present topic in a wider contemporary context. Much of the discussion in Chapters Two, Three and Four has been informed by this body of literature. Sociolinguistic arguments also help to frame explanations of the reactions of groups of people in the south-west to the introduction of local languages.

Two volumes, Fardon & Furniss's African Languages, Development and the State, 1994, and, Bamgbose's Language and the Nation, 1991, have been central in providing a background concerning language use and the state, by highlighting attitudes that are prevalent in Africa. Both works explain the reasons for the widely held opinion that linguistic diversity constitutes a problem for Africa's multilingual states, the result of which are the monolingual language policies that have often been adopted by African governments. Both works challenge this view and suggest that the many languages (and by implication ethnicities) of Africa's states should, instead, be regarded as resources (linguistic and human) that are in need of development. Bamgbose argues for the establishment, among other things, of multilingual education systems that allow a role for local or regional languages in the primary education system. His

arguments rest on the pedagogical and psychological importance of using mother tongues in the early stages of primary education. Both works focus on the sociological importance of using smaller languages within the state. The use of such languages, it is argued, need not induce marginalisation. Central to this argument is the premise that the manner in which languages are employed by the state cannot help but reflect the position within the state occupied by their respective ethnicities. Social dislocation of marginalised groups inevitably presents political problems for the state, and so, it is argued, the use of local languages in official roles within their regional contexts may help to avoid or solve such problems, which have only been exacerbated by the pursuance of monolingual national language policies.

Eastman's Language Planning : An Introduction, 1983, focuses on problems associated with the tasks of formulating and implementing government language policies. Her discussion of standardisation, the processes by which oral languages arrive at defined literate forms, is particularly helpful for understanding the processes of linguistic development now being undertaken in the SNNPR. Eastman describes an ideal type of language planning exercise, and details the pitfalls of circumventing necessary steps in the process. She stresses the importance of research into language attitudes, and asserts that language planning exercises will fail if they do not harmonise with the linguistic desires of the population. But, she argues, it is not enough that policy reflects widely held opinions; however suitable a policy might be, its implementation must reflect the intention of the policy.

Cooper has produced a large body of sociolinguistic material that examines aspects of sociolinguistics with specific reference to Ethiopia. Language Planning and Social Change, 1989, argues that language planning is both a feature and an agent of much wider forms of social change. In Cooper's view language planning is central to the processes of state formation and government. He states that "To plan language is to plan society"<sup>49</sup>, and applies this view to the particular case of Ethiopia, where he examines the language policies of the governments of Haile Sellassie and the Derg

Cooper is also responsible for several chapters in Bender's collection

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<sup>49</sup> Cooper, 1989, p182.

Language in Ethiopia , 1976, which focus on sociolinguistic issues, including the formation and articulation of government language policies and the expression of these policies in patterns of official language use. Cooper also analyses other, less official, forms of language use, including those found in markets and amongst factory workers. Cooper concludes the section of this volume on the patterns of language use in Ethiopia by chronicling and explaining the reasons for the spread of Amharic in Ethiopia.

McNab's Language Policy and Language Practice , 1989, is of the most immediate importance to the thesis in that it is the most recent work to have dealt exclusively with the formation and implementation of language policy in Ethiopia. Her analysis of the situation during the era of the Derg is particularly important in that it provides an immediate background to the topic of this thesis. McNab's topic is similar to the present topic in that she outlines the manner in which government policies have been formed against an existing background of established patterns of language use. But her study is concerned with technical aspects of linguistic development as well as with the formation and enactment of policy, whereas the present work is largely concerned with attitudes. McNab's work also differs from the present study in that it is concerned with the central state; she says very little about the south-west. This thesis has, however, benefited greatly from her work because of her clearly articulated explanations and evaluations of practical processes, and because of her perceptive discussion of the significance of government language policies, and their effects, in Ethiopia.

#### Social studies

Of the limited number of social studies of the south-west, Bjerer's Migration to Shashemene 1985, is of the greatest importance here. Bjerer examines the ethnic structure of opportunities in Shashemene, which offers a useful example of a large, multi-ethnic southern Ethiopian town. Shashemene is an important focus for urban migration for many of the peoples that inhabit the SNNPR. Bjerer's discussion, outlines the different economic niches occupied by the Amhara, Oromo, Gurage, and Walaita in Shashemene. She discovered that the majority of migrants to the town were still engaged in activities similar to

those of rural dwellers, activities she describes as 'interstitial' (small scale farming, petty trading and daily labouring) <sup>50</sup>. Bjerer also differentiates between traditional urban occupations (crafts and services) and non-traditional urban occupations (administration, finance and anything involving technology).

Bjerer discovered that Amharas were the most likely to be engaged in non-traditional activities, which are the activities with the highest social prestige. Other groups were generally involved in activities of lower prestige: interstitial or traditional urban occupations. The findings of her study are mirrored in the urban areas which were covered by the field-work conducted for this thesis, although the intervening period of over twenty years has, to a certain extent, eroded ethnic niches. In the larger urban centres of the south-west Amharas are, nevertheless, more commonly found in high prestige, non-traditional activities, dependent on education, than members of other ethnicities. Gurages and Oromos are often found in skilled occupations, but the majority of Gurages are involved in trade. Members of all groups are engaged in 'interstitial' activities, but the Walaita and Kembata are often restricted to these low-status activities. The proportions of these groups in the towns of the SNNPR reflects, to a certain extent, the availability of opportunities of the kind that members of a certain group can aspire to exploit. Some towns have many more non-traditional opportunities than others, these opportunities generally arising in connection with the administrative status of the town. These ideas have been applied in the present work's analysis of urban areas in the south-west.

#### Materials concerning the reforms of language use in education.

The final set of secondary materials, informing Chapters Four, and Six-Nine, includes published articles, and government and NGO generated reports which focus specifically on the reforms in question in this thesis.

In her article 'The Language of Education in Ethiopia : Empowerment or Imposition' 1995, Hoben discusses whether the linguistic policies of the present Ethiopian government are a response to a demand on the part of the population to use Ethiopia's regional languages for primary education, or whether this is yet another example of an Ethiopian government attempting to enforce policies

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<sup>50</sup> Bjerer, 1985 , p126.

that merely reflect the political agenda of the day. Hoben stresses the importance of research into language attitudes. She also argues that in order for the policy to reflect local linguistic conditions decision-making must be made at the local level, even, perhaps, within each school. Hoben asks whether the policies of government will allow this degree of local decision-making to be achieved, or whether they are an attempt to reconsolidate power at the regional or national level by allowing a degree of linguistic freedom. Even if local communities are allowed, in the new political climate, to take such decisions, Hoben discusses whether this will increase their loyalty to a more benignly configured Ethiopian state or whether it will produce greater marginalisation.

Boothe and Walker also discuss the implementation of the policy in 'Mother Tongue Education in Ethiopia: From Policy to Implementation' 1997. These authors support the widely accepted view that education in mother tongue languages is beneficial to students for pedagogical reasons. In the case of Ethiopia the difficulties they envisage are the creation of suitable teaching materials in the regional languages, and ensuring that the use of local languages leads to increasing levels of development. They stress that these objectives can only be achieved through increased levels of local participation, and assert the value of mother tongue primary education to the local community. Primary education is often conceived in terms of preparing students for secondary education, and this, they argue, is a mistake, since very few primary school students continue to secondary education. Therefore, they argue, the most commonly voiced criticism of the use of mother tongues in primary education, namely that it limits social mobility by denying equal access to secondary education in a national language, must be balanced against the practical value to students of learning in a language they already speak, and the increased possibilities for local community involvement where local languages are employed. Their argument is that primary education should be geared towards benefiting the majority of students by preparing them to improve local conditions, and not conceived narrowly in terms of furthering the educational careers of a tiny minority.

Two consultants working under the auspices of the Basic Education Services Overhaul (BESO) project, based in Awassa, the capital of the SNNPR,

have produced reports concerning the implementation of the reform in the region. Gfeller's Language Consultancy in the SNNP Region, 1996, discusses practical processes of language development in the SNNPR and recommends a substantial revision of the first set of teaching materials produced in response to this reform. Pursely's Language in Education: The Implementation of Policy Reform in the SNNPR, 1997, discusses the roles ascribed to languages within the present reforms and suggests a more flexible model of linguistic development. The findings of these reports will be further discussed in Chapter Four. Themes emerging from the field-work have mirrored their findings, and their arguments have been helpful in analysing the content of the field-work that was conducted in connection with this thesis <sup>51</sup>.

Evaluation of the new language policy; Sidama language 1995, a report by the Institute of Curriculum Research and Development (ICDR), on the Sidama zone of the SNNPR, has also provided this thesis with a source of comparison. The report focusses on practical problems but there is an area of overlap with the field-work conducted for this thesis, and this will be discussed in Chapter Four.

#### Government statistics

In Chapter Five, a body of primary data, in the form of government statistics, will be used to outline certain characteristics of the population of the various geographical areas in which research was conducted for this thesis. These statistics were compiled under the auspices of the 1994 Population and Housing census of Ethiopia, and were published in 1996. They are, therefore, very recent; at the time of the research they had existed for only one year.

Several sets of statistics are relevant to this thesis. Firstly, there are the gross figures for the population size of ethnic groups, and those for the geopolitical zones in which field-work was conducted. Secondly, there are several sets of statistics for these zones which are employed both to draw internal comparisons and to demonstrate differences between the population of different zones, and between the ethnicities that inhabit these zones. Statistics relating to participation in education and rates of existing literacy for defined

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<sup>51</sup> I will refer to this body of original research as 'the field-work' throughout this thesis.

sections of the population will be discussed. In Chapter Five comparisons will be drawn with respect to several variables. Differences between urban and rural areas will be examined, as will those between males and females in terms of education, and literacy will be compared for each area. These figures will be compared with one another and related to inter-zone and regional patterns of reactions to the introduction of the local languages.

These statistics are unlikely to be absolutely accurate, but for certain characteristics, they demonstrate broad differences between definable sections of the population (urban/rural, male/female, different geopolitical areas). A regional pattern of responses to the introduction of local languages emerges from the field-work, and this is explained, in part, with reference to comparisons derived from this body of statistics.

### **Methodology of the field-work.**

The field-work that was conducted in connection with this thesis was accomplished in the SNNPR in the first five months of 1997. The field-work was formulated during a previous research trip in 1996, with the help of staff from the Regional offices of the ICDCR <sup>52</sup> in Awassa. In April 1996 a letter was sent to each of the nine zones and the five special woredas of the SNNPR, inviting the Ministry of Education in each of these administrative units to select schools in which research might be conducted. The letter stated that three primary schools should be selected in each zone or special woreda according to five basic criteria, which were outlined in the letter. These criteria were as follows

- 1) There should always be at least one school in the zone capital.
- 2) There should always be at least one school in an area of linguistic homogeneity in the local language which had been introduced.
- 3) There should always be at least one school in an area of linguistic diversity .
- 4) As far as possible, the schools being visited in a zone should be in different woredas.
- 5) As far as possible, the schools being visited in a zone should attempt to reflect the urban / rural balance of the area, and an attempt should be made, where possible, to include remote areas.

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<sup>52</sup> Chapter Four , p129.



It was hoped that by satisfying these criteria a balanced picture of conditions in the primary schools of the SNNPR might be achieved. If only three schools were to be visited in each zone, it was important that schools should be selected which satisfied more than one of the five requirements listed above <sup>53</sup>. Most of these criteria were satisfied in each zone in which schools were visited, although remote rural areas were only visited in four zones; the realisation of this objective was limited by the time scale of the field-work and the lack of public transport in many areas.

Because of these factors it was necessary to limit the scope of the field-work, and two zones and four special woredas of the SNNPR were consequently, omitted from the field-work. These were the Kafficho-Shakecho zone and the Bench-Maji zone, and Derashe, Amaro, Burji and Yem special woredas. Aside from the Kaffa-speaking woredas of the Kafficho-Shakecho zone, all these areas continued to use Amharic in primary education. Two other administrative units, the South Omo zone and Konso special woreda, were of limited significance to the field-work, since Amharic was also being used in these areas. The research conducted in South Omo zone and Konso served, along with research in other areas of the SNNPR which continue to use Amharic as the MOI in primary schools, to provide a comparison between areas in which local languages had been introduced and areas where they had not. In both South Omo and Konso two schools were visited, one in an urban, and one in a rural, area.

In each of the remaining six zones (Sidama, Gedeo, K.A.T., Hadiya, North Omo, Gurage), more than three schools were visited in order to broaden the scope of the field-work, and to consider areas with different linguistic profiles. In several zones more than one language is used as a MOI in schools, and an attempt was made to visit schools in the area of each language. Schools using eight different languages as MOI were visited during the field-work. Of these languages two were Semitic (Amharic and Silti Gurage) <sup>54</sup>, four belonged to the Highland East Cushitic group of languages (Sidama, Gedeo,

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<sup>53</sup> For example, schools in the zone capitals usually contain members of several language groups and are, therefore examples of linguistic diversity, whereas schools in rural areas are often populated by students from one language group.

<sup>54</sup> Chart One, Appendix Two, p310.

Kembata and Hadiya) <sup>55</sup> and two were Omotic languages belonging to the Omoto cluster (Walaita and GGD) <sup>56</sup>.

The field-work was coordinated from Awassa. The Regional office provided a letter of introduction informing MOE staff in each of the administrative units to be visited about the nature of the field-work. In each zone contact was established with the zone's offices of the MOE, and a programme of school visits was formulated. In each administrative unit research began with interviews in the zone or woreda office, with officials who had been involved in the task of implementing the reform. The MOE's regional office in Awassa directed each unit to provide facilitators from among the local staff. Using several facilitators <sup>57</sup> during the course of the field-work proved to have distinct advantages. Firstly, it provided an opportunity for discussions to take place between the staff of the MOE's local offices and those working in the schools. Secondly, the facilitators had extensive local knowledge and contacts. Thirdly, the use of separate facilitators in each zone meant that they were local language speakers and, therefore, had a different perspective on the process of reform than that which might have been offered by a facilitator from the regional office. In general, the facilitators were enthusiastic and helped to induce lively discussions.

When the field-work was formulated there was a concern that the presence of an official during school interviews might inhibit informants from discussing issues, some of which have serious political resonance in the current climate. However, in almost all cases it emerged that the presence of the facilitator had quite the reverse effect: it encouraged open discussion, because the occasion was viewed as an opportunity for school staff to raise issues which they felt that local administrators should address, and to ask questions about policy and the implementation of the reform. The facilitators were provided with an opportunity to explain the processes involved in implementing the reform, to answer questions, and to make suggestions about practice in the schools. In general the facilitators and the school staff agreed that the exercise was

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<sup>55</sup> Chart Two, Appendix Two, p311.

<sup>56</sup> Chart Three, Appendix Two, p312.

<sup>57</sup> Fifteen facilitators were used during the course of field-work.

productive because they benefited from the discussions; they were now more aware of the difficulties being faced both in schools and by the administration. All of this contributed greatly to the richness of the material that was gathered.

In addition to the facilitators, a translator was present at all interviews, except those which took place in Sidama zone. The translator's function was to assist me with translations from Amharic to English. The interviews were almost always conducted in Amharic, except where an individual informant wanted to use English and where their command of the language was adequate.

The field-work started with a list of basic questions or topics for discussion. Although this initial list of topics remained the basis of many interviews, new topics were added as the research progressed, and some of the original topics appeared to be less significant than they had been at the time when the field-work was formulated. A flexible approach was adopted, whereby each interview progressed in its own direction. Certain questions were always raised, but the structure of interviews was deliberately flexible, so that those issues with the greatest local relevance could dominate discussion in each school. The topics that were discussed in the course of interviews were as follows, with main topics followed by related sub - topics in brackets;

-Background of respondents

(sex)

(ethnicity)

(languages spoken)

(role within the education system)

-School statistics<sup>58</sup>

(nos. of students and teachers)

(graduation rates)

(drop-out and attendance rates)

-Ethnic composition of school<sup>59</sup>

(proportion of students belonging to various ethnicities)

(ethnic relations)

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<sup>58</sup> Sometimes we were unable to gather all the statistics for a particular school because they were unavailable, in the process of being compiled or, for example, on more than one occasion locked in a cupboard, the key for which was not present. Where statistics were not available we asked for rough figures to be provided.

<sup>59</sup> Here the figures were almost always rough estimates.

- ( comparative attainment of students from various ethnicities)
- Gender issues in school
  - (female attendance and participation)
  - ( comparative attainments of girls and boys)
- Assessment of the nationality language teaching materials
  - (quality)
  - (availability)
  - (content suitability)
  - (comparison between the first and second sets)
- Reaction to initial introduction of materials
- Teacher Training
- Uses of different scripts and languages
  - (two uses of Roman script: English and Qube)
  - (comparison of Roman and Ethiopic scripts)
  - (role of Amharic in primary education)
  - (role of English in primary education)
- Possible drawbacks of using local languages
  - (access to higher education)
  - (work opportunities outside the linguistic zone)
  - (access to national literature/ newspapers/ etc.)
- Overall attitude towards the language in education policy

These topics were not always addressed in that order. In general, however, the more mechanical topics were addressed first, and those which were concerned with people's attitudes were addressed later. In some areas other topics were also discussed that had some relevance to the field-work. In the Kembata-speaking areas of the K.A.T. zone the issue of linguistic migration was very important, because of large numbers of Kembatas returning to the highlands from the Rift Valley. In GGD, many informants were preoccupied with the implications of the use of a composite language. In all areas the school staff were also concerned to discuss other, more general, problems which they faced in providing education, beyond those which were related to the introduction of the new language policy. In some cases we were informed that the difficulties of implementing the new policy were insignificant in comparison to the more pressing financial problems and the lack of essential facilities such as water and electricity which are experienced by most schools in the SNNPR.

At each school the first interview was conducted with the principal. If the principal was not present, the vice-principal was interviewed instead. In Ethiopia some large schools have more than one principal, each governing a different section of the school. Where schools had several principals or vice-principals they were often interviewed together, and at times as many as four individuals were interviewed at once. Often it was impossible, especially in rural areas where foreigners are seldom seen, to prevent other people from joining in interviews, and sometimes as many as twenty teachers and parents would gather to listen and comment on such discussions. As far as possible we tried to discourage this expanded situation from developing, but in some cases it was not possible to prevent other people from joining in. On some occasions it proved fruitful to allow extra participants into the initial discussions with school principals.

Teachers and students were usually interviewed in the class room, after some class observation, time which, it was hoped, would allow both teachers and students to feel less self-conscious. Often these interviews were fairly brief and consisted of asking a few particularly relevant questions. Several teachers and students were interviewed in each school. Sometimes students were asked to vote on issues raised in interviews. Teachers and students were generally willing to participate in these discussions.

At times teachers were bullied by a principal into giving the kind of responses which he had already furnished in the initial interview. For this reason an attempt was made to interview teachers on their own, but some principals insisted on being present at all times. Teachers and principals often aired differences of opinion about both the content and the methods of implementation of the language policy. In general the principals defended the policy while pointing out difficulties in the process of implementation, whereas teachers and students were more openly critical of the policy itself. Most of the principals were cooperative and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues surrounding the introduction of the local languages. There were also occasions when a facilitator tried to steer the responses given by informants in a certain direction, but these were few. Where any pressure was exerted, either by a facilitator or a principal it was always in the direction of supporting the language

policy. No individual was encouraged to criticise the policy. The most strongly voiced criticisms of the language policy usually came from parents, often school committee members. School committee members, at times, used the interview to complain to MOE staff about conditions in the school. Many other parents were interviewed in less formal interviews outside the school premises. Often these interviews were conducted without the presence of school or MOE staff <sup>60</sup>.

At all times we had to make it clear that our research was not politically motivated; it was primarily about the benefits of introducing the local languages and the difficulties which were being experienced as a result. But, the subject is politically charged, and some respondents were concerned not to make politically provocative statements. The political climate in the SNNPR is in no way repressive, most informants were manifestly uninhibited about expressing their opinions, and many obviously relished their new-found freedom to criticise government policy.

The amount of time spent in each school varied, depending on how many interviews were conducted and on the length of each interview. Where large numbers of parents and students were interviewed one school could easily occupy a whole day and on occasion schools had to be visited more than once. In many schools the important issues were fairly evident and it was sometimes possible to visit two schools in one day if they were near one another and transport was available. Some schools that were visited operated on a shift system, with different students attending in the morning and in the afternoon. Often there was a principal for each shift and, where possible, both were interviewed. In such cases school visits invariably lasted a whole day.

In the discussion of the findings of the field-work no attempt has been made to present quantified data for the various questions addressed by the research. Since the research concerned attitudes, any attempt to quantify responses would have been largely artificial, since they were subject to extensive variation. But, this is not to say that the topic itself does not permit a systematic discussion. Areas visited during the field-work displayed particular characteristics, which were obvious in comparison to other areas.

The results of the field-work appear in Chapters Six - Nine.

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<sup>60</sup> Informal interviews were conducted in almost all areas visited in a variety of different situations.

## Chapter One : A history of contact between the Ethiopian state and the south-west.

### Introduction : Politics and Historical Writing.

The history of the area with which this thesis is concerned has not been adequately described in the existing historiography of Ethiopia, which has been largely concerned with the state. The beginning of the central state, or at least a more centralised state, has been identified with the reign of Emperor Tewodros from 1855<sup>1</sup>. The historical period since the mid-nineteenth century has largely been discussed in terms of the development of the state and its institutions<sup>2</sup>. Groups of people in the south-west of Ethiopia have been mentioned briefly in this form of literature, but only where they have come into contact with the central state. The character of government in Ethiopia, in the second half of the twentieth century, has had a profound effect on the manner in which the history of the state has been approached. By encouraging or prohibiting particular forms of scholarly enquiry, the governments of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the Derg have framed the manner in which Ethiopia's history has been presented.

Under Haile Sellassie's government the history of Ethiopia's many different peoples was suppressed as a result of government policy<sup>3</sup>. Regional histories were not permitted because it was thought that such forms of study would encourage regionalism and, thereby, weaken the foundations of the central state. The history of Ethiopia was presented as the history of the expansion of a dominant group which formed the core of Ethiopian society: the Amhara<sup>4</sup>. Amhara culture, tradition and language were promoted, developed

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<sup>1</sup> Bahru Zewde states, "...on his coronation in 1855 as Emperor Tewodros II, inaugurated the modern history of Ethiopia." Bahru Zewde, 1991, p27.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of this kind of historical writing include Marcus, 1987, Clapham, 1969, and Perham, 1948, for the reign of Haile Sellassie. Darkwah, 1975, and Marcus, 1975, for the earlier period. Tadesse Tamrat, 1972, discusses the influence of the church. The long term development of the state in Ethiopia is discussed in Marcus, 1994, and Bahru Zewde, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Triulzi, 1983, p111.

<sup>4</sup> The presentation of this culture as "Amhara" per se is questionable. It would be more accurate to refer to it as 'northern Ethiopian'. A large component of this aristocracy was Tigrean. Most historians have, however, presented this process as being largely the result of "Amhara" expansion.

and presented as national characteristics. Under Haile Sellassie's Government the use of the Amharic language was strongly encouraged. It became the national language as result of government policy <sup>5</sup>. The revised constitution of 1955 endorsed this official status, and restricted the use of other languages to the home <sup>6</sup>. All development of Ethiopia's other languages was forbidden by the state, since the development of a single national language was regarded as an essential prerequisite of national unity <sup>7</sup>. To the outside world, the language of Ethiopia was Amharic, and the history and culture of Ethiopia was that of the northern highlands. Peoples on the periphery of the state were examined by anthropologists during this period, but their historical development within the state was not addressed in anthropological literature. Instead anthropologists presented these peoples as primordial, static entities <sup>8</sup>.

After the revolution of 1974, the ideological climate altered dramatically. Although the Derg adopted, perhaps to a greater extent, centralising policies similar to those of Haile Sellassie's government, the influence of Marxist political theory demanded a political reexamination of the position of Ethiopia's various peoples within the state. The stated policy of the Derg was that regional peoples in Ethiopia should be allowed to have some form of local development or expression of language and culture <sup>9</sup>. The most tangible manifestation of this policy was the National Literacy Campaign, which began in the late 1970s and promoted the use of local languages in order to increase levels of adult literacy. This policy was influenced by Lenin's theories on the rights of nationalities; contemporary linguistic development in the Soviet Union featured adult literacy programmes, which were regarded, for political reasons, as a priority <sup>10</sup>.

The new political climate also failed to stimulate regional histories, encouraging instead the production of historiography that sought to place Ethiopia firmly within a Marxist historical paradigm <sup>11</sup>. Historiographical debate

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter Two, p81.

<sup>6</sup> Cooper, 1976a, p187 - 190.

<sup>7</sup> Fardon and Furniss, 1994, p10 - 13. Chapter Two, p81.

<sup>8</sup> Donham, 1986b, p4.

<sup>9</sup> Clapham, 1988, p195.

<sup>10</sup> McNab, 1989, p83-86. Chapter Two, p88.

<sup>11</sup> Triulzi, 1983.



addressed the question of Ethiopia's previous character : was it a feudal or a colonial state?<sup>12</sup> The question, framed in Marxist terms, introduced the concepts of class and class structures into historical writing on Ethiopia. The preoccupation with class combined in this literature with an increasing examination of ethnicity, and this resulted in a discussion of the relationship between ethnicity and class. Relations between ethnicities in Ethiopia were presented as being between classes. An enduring example of this construct in Ethiopian history is the depiction of the Amhara as a ruling class, contrasted with the Oromo as an oppressed class <sup>13</sup>. The terms of the historiographical debate had changed, but the focus remained the central state. The position of ethnicities within the state was a subject of open discussion, but many continued to be ignored in the historiography of the state. In general, those groups of people, the Amhara and the Oromo, who occupied central positions in the state were discussed in terms of class, while smaller groups on the peripheries of the state continued to be examined in terms of ethnicity. The ethnicities with which this thesis is concerned continued to be largely ignored, perhaps because they failed to provide convenient subjects for discussion that focused on concepts of ethnicity or class.

As well as framing aspects of the academic discussion of groups of people in the state, government ideology has influenced the manner in which groups of people conceive of their own identities. During the period of Haile Sellassie's government Ethiopia's various peoples were encouraged to see themselves as ethnic groups <sup>14</sup>. Discussion of class structures would not only have been politically unacceptable, it would have appeared inappropriate given the character of groups of people in the state. The concept of class was, moreover, alien to all but a small educated elite.

The promotion of socialist theory by the Derg, and the widespread use of government propaganda, introduced the idea of class to a greater proportion of the population, and caused groups of people to reexamine their relative

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p115.

<sup>13</sup> Baxter , 1983.

<sup>14</sup> Although the period in question groups of people were termed 'nationalities', since this preceded common use of the term "ethnic" . The Concept of ethnicity reflects the manner in which groups of people in the state were imagined during this period.

positions within the state. While the Derg was willing to recognise the presence of 'cultural entities', it was more actively concerned to encourage among Ethiopia's peoples an awareness of class relationships in the state which cut across the historically established units of population <sup>15</sup>. Groups within the state began to conceive of themselves as having been oppressed. Neither the government of Haile Sellassie nor the Derg was entirely successful in encouraging the population to adopt its particular ideological approach, but there was a relationship between government ideology and formulations of self-identity. New formulations of identity influenced by the political climate initially had greater relevance amongst educated elites within groups of people, and were, consequently, reflected in the academic discussions of that group, but these formulations, in time, achieved wider acceptance within the group <sup>16</sup>.

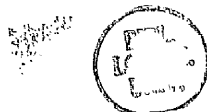
Although the prevailing political climate in Ethiopia, at a given time, exerted an influence on the manner in which the history of Ethiopia was presented, an equally profound influence was exerted by changes in nature of historical writing itself. During the era of Haile Sellassie the discipline of history was primarily concerned with the development of the state. Traditionally, historical writing had ignored the work of scholars outside of the narrow confines of the discipline and had been entirely dependent on documentary sources of information, and this led to a focus on the state, making discussion of non-literate societies problematic. Any historical discussion of groups of people outside of the northern Ethiopian highlands, who had no written languages or records, was not only prohibited by the state, it also appeared to be an unviable kind of history. In general, historians would have agreed with the government of Haile Sellassie that it was more appropriate for anthropologists to study these groups of people.

Social history only became a recognised branch of historiography during the period of the Derg. In response to this development of the subject, the discipline of history began to include a wider range of source material. In non-

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<sup>15</sup> Clapham, 1988, p252.

<sup>16</sup> The development of a political consciousness and political associations among an Oromo elite, facilitated by the ideological climate under the Derg, became the focus of Oromo self-development, and have been the subject of recent literature generated both by Oromos and others, and provided the basis for broadly conceived Oromo popular consciousness. Baxter et al eds 1996 .



literate societies oral evidence became accepted as a source of historical material<sup>17</sup>. This encouraged historians to examine anthropological material, which employed oral sources, and was concerned with social issues. With respect to the south-west of Ethiopia there was a body of anthropological literature that had been generated from the late-nineteenth century onwards, which provided a background for new forms of historical enquiry. Anthropologists had examined the characteristics and lifestyles of south-western peoples, but little attempt had been made to reconstruct their histories by collecting oral evidence<sup>18</sup>. The recent, and by no means exhaustive, body of material concerning the south-west, that provides the basis for the historical discussion in this Chapter is largely the result of discourse between the disciplines of history and anthropology; the focus is local groups of people who are placed within a historical context, and considered in terms of historical evolution.

Environmental history, which seeks to examine the effects of changes in the environment on human life, is another recent form. In a country like Ethiopia, where the vast majority of the population are engaged in subsistence farming, the effects of overcrowding, erosion, and changing farming techniques are of great consequence<sup>19</sup>. Environmental dynamics have helped to shape relations between groups of people in the Ethiopian state. Long standing patterns of human settlement and cultivation in northern Ethiopia provided a basis for state formation. Over a long period of time, agricultural practices and deforestation led to the degradation of much of the land in northern Ethiopia, and encouraged a drift of population towards the fertile south-west. Environmental factors, therefore, encouraged the colonisation of the south-west by northern Ethiopians.

The expansion of northern Ethiopian state occurred in response to a range of political, social, cultural, religious, economic and environmental pressures. The patterns of contact that resulted provide the best starting point for a historical discussion of the south-west.

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<sup>17</sup> Vansina, 1965. Vansina, 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Hassen, 1990, Preface.

<sup>19</sup> An example of Environmental History regarding Ethiopia is McCann, 1995.

**Ethiopia and the south-west :**  
**Patterns of Contact and Government.**

The mechanisms of government control and the structures of social interaction in Ethiopia have a unique character that has developed over many centuries. Patterns of governance and the nature of relations between groups of people often appear to have endured into the late-twentieth century in spite of the changing character of the central government. The political clothing of the state appears, at times, to be merely a cover superimposed upon a more fundamental pattern of contact. This is not to say that government actions have been of no consequence, but, rather, that they have a limited scope.

In Ethiopia central authority has extended its control over the population in a flexible and reactive manner. The realisation of government control in rural areas of Ethiopia has been hampered by the intransigence of the population, which often regards any form of external influence as a threat. The mountainous nature of much of the country has also inhibited government actions, imposing physical barriers to effective state control. Weighed against the difficulties of imposing control, the benefits for the state which arise from it, typically realised in forms of taxation, have often been minimal, and the state, in its various historical configurations, has often accepted forms of local autonomy.

In accepting local autonomy, the Imperial state allowed the diversity of Ethiopian peoples to persist. In the areas on the fringes of the state, a system was developed that incorporated existing polities into the structures of the state by using local ruling elites as agents <sup>20</sup>. This, at times, had the effect of establishing local polities more firmly, since the power of their rulers was now based on the presence of a larger and more powerful external authority. Under the domination of the state, local polities often thereby gained a greater degree of stability and coherence, and their distinctive characteristics were reinforced. The process of elite incorporation, often labelled 'Amharization', entailed the adoption of the Amharic language, Orthodox Christianity, and the cultural values and prejudices of the northern Ethiopians by local rulers. The Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity became, for peripheral peoples, the

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<sup>20</sup> Donham, 1986b.

characteristics of a ruling class, and were symbolic of state domination. Amharization served to distance local rulers from their subjects altering their earlier roles in local societies, and converting them into representatives of the state <sup>21</sup>. The results of this system of government are apparent in the south-west. Historically, many areas of the south-west have been, at least nominally, ruled by the Ethiopian state, but, until the late-nineteenth century, they were governed by local elites. Although such elites were often Amharised no attempt was made, until much later, to impose the characteristics of northern Ethiopia on rural populations in the south-west, and local characteristics were maintained.

Although many peoples in Ethiopia had minimal contact with the Ethiopian state before the twentieth century, they were by no means entirely isolated. Rather, there were long-established arteries of contact, which Levine has termed a 'relational network' <sup>22</sup>, based on two highly important axes of trade and external influence. One, an axis of Christian expansion, runs from north to south, from the Red Sea through the northern highlands and into the Rift valley; the other, a Muslim axis, runs from the area of Djibouti into the interior from east to west through a string of former Muslim states <sup>23</sup>. These two axes of contact cross in the upper Awash Valley, in the area of Addis Ababa, the national capital. The area under discussion in this thesis lies between these two axes to the south-west. The northernmost area with which this thesis is concerned, which is inhabited by the Gurage, lies immediately to the south-west of Addis Ababa. To a great extent the lines of communication in the south-west are still based on these two axes of contact. The larger towns of the area, for example, lie on one or other of these axes. These axes are now served by major roads, one of which leads from Addis Ababa to the south through the Rift valley, the other running west to Jimma <sup>24</sup>.

Levine also argues that the indigenous peoples of Ethiopia, although extremely varied, have common cultural features which form a 'culture area' <sup>25</sup>. He outlines religious and cultural similarities which are displayed by Judeo-

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<sup>21</sup> Triulzi, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p40.

<sup>23</sup> These included Harar, the Hadiya state, the Gibe states, and the kingdoms of Jimma and Kaffa

<sup>24</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

<sup>25</sup> Levine, 1974, p46.

Christian, Muslim and pagan groups of people in Ethiopia <sup>26</sup>, and argues that the peoples of Ethiopia, whether they speak Semitic, Cushitic or Omotic languages, are closely related in terms of culture and mentality. Within this culture area there developed particular conceptions of identity based on historical patterns of contact, and related to lifestyles and the environment, through which different groups of people have traditionally regarded each other.

Many groups of Ethiopians have customarily divided their country into three climatic zones, namely, *Dega*, the fertile highlands, *Weyna-Dega*, the inter-mediate zone, and *Qolla*, the dry and often inhospitable lowlands <sup>27</sup>. This delineation relates to more than the physical environment, the idea of these zones reflects a pan-Ethiopian mentality which shapes inter-ethnic perceptions. In general, those groups of people who live in the highlands have regarded themselves as superior to those in the lowlands <sup>28</sup>. This perception has developed in response to the actual patterns of contact and domination in the state, since historically it has been the inhabitants of the northern highlands who have ruled those who live in the surrounding lowlands.

The groups of Ethiopians who inhabited the northern highlands, principally the Amhara and Tigreans, whose common characteristics were Semitic languages, Orthodox Christianity and feudal social organisation, regarded their Muslim or animist neighbours, who spoke Cushitic languages and lived in the surrounding lowlands, as inherently inferior. They regarded many of them as *galla*, <sup>29</sup> a term which has negative connotations ranging from beast of burden to slave, and has largely been applied to the Oromo. *Galla* had, nevertheless, been incorporated into the social structures of northern Ethiopia to varying degrees from the time of their first appearance in the highlands,

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p46 -53.

<sup>27</sup> The names of these zones are presented here in their Amharic forms, but, most other Ethiopian groups have similar concepts for the same climatic zones, and similar prejudices about the people who live in them. The Amharic names are widely used and I will continue to use them in reference to areas outside of the Amharic-speaking parts of the country.

<sup>28</sup> This view is typified thus; the highlands are inhabited by Christian agriculturalists, the surrounding lowlands are inhabited by Muslim pastoralists, and the far peripheries are inhabited by animist hunter gatherers. The peoples of the highlands rank highest in terms of prestige and culture, all other groups being considered relatively uncivilised.

<sup>29</sup> I use the term *galla* only in reference to perceptions during that period when it was in common use. Substituting '*galla*' for 'Oromo' would be incorrect since it was also used for other peoples.

which some historians have dated from the fifteenth century. They were often absorbed into highland society and became indistinguishable from the peasantry of their Amhara and Tigrean neighbours, losing all of their earlier characteristics. It became impossible to distinguish between the descendants of *gallas* and Amharas, except where communities continued to use their ancestral language <sup>30</sup>.

The *qolla* areas on the far peripheries of the state were inhabited by peoples with whom northern Ethiopians felt that incorporation was impossible. Some of these peoples were referred to as *shankilla* <sup>31</sup>. Many of these groups of people were nomadic pastoralists. In the south-west their languages came from either the Omotic or Nilo-Saharan language families, and they were animist. Where the cultural proximity of Islam and Christianity allowed for conversion, as in the case of many of the *galla*, the cultural and religious differences between the northern Ethiopians and these peoples on the far periphery helped to preclude their assimilation into the structures of rule found in the north, and Ethiopian rule, where it was asserted, remained tenuous.

Power in Ethiopia has been concentrated in the northern highlands, the rulers of which have dominated the rest of the country. It is possible, in the broadest terms, to see the influence of the central Ethiopian state on the south-west in concentric waves. The area of the greatest contact has been the north-eastern part of this geographical area, where the great axes of Ethiopian contact cross, and where the local Gurage population have been actively incorporated into the state. Other highland peoples of the near south-west (Kembata, Hadiya, Sidama, Gedeo, Walaita) have also had sustained contact with the state. The influence of the state, irrespective of period and its changing political character, has decreased steadily towards the *qolla* lowlands of the extreme south and west, where it remains minimal.

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<sup>30</sup> Oromifa-speaking peoples still live as far north as Tigray.

<sup>31</sup> *Shankilla* is a less well defined term than *Galla*, its connotations include 'sub human'.

**Early contact between the Ethiopian state and the south-west  
from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.**

It has been suggested that political contact between the inhabitants of the south-west and the northern Ethiopian state began in the seventh century when northern armies pushed southwards, extending the territory under the control of their rulers <sup>32</sup>. A more sustained, and better documented, period of contact began in the fourteenth century. Ethiopian court records from this period contain references to polities on the southern fringes of the state. Some refer to groups of people with names identical or similar to those that are the focus of this thesis. Although it cannot be argued that the modern groups of people with the same names are the descendants of those polities that appear in these records, these references nevertheless suggest some continuity. References to Hadiya and Walaita, for example, appear during the reign of the Ethiopian Emperor Amda Siyon I (1312 - 1342) <sup>33</sup>. Later, during the reign of Emperor Yishak (1414-1429), there are further references to Hadiya and Walaita, and the earliest recorded contact between the northern state and Kembata <sup>34</sup>.

During this period the northern Ethiopians initiated a form of colonisation that was to become very enduring. As well as having an obvious political or military character, this colonisation invariably took on linguistic, cultural and religious aspects. Some physical evidence of northern rule has survived from this early period, and can be used to demonstrate the vast area of the south over which the northern state then held sway, and the cultural colonisation of the south-west that it achieved. Donham uses the presence of ancient ruined churches to estimate that the borders of northern rule in the fifteenth century probably included the area of Maale, which lies on the southern rim of the highlands <sup>35</sup>. The sphere of northern influence during this period included, at the very least, the area presently inhabited by the Walaita and the other groups whose languages belong to the Ometo cluster, the lacustrine belt in the Rift valley, and substantial sections of the highlands to its east. Many areas in this

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<sup>32</sup> Shack ,1966, p5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Braukämper, 1980 p429, & Cerulli, 1956, p85- 86.

<sup>34</sup> Braukämper , 1983, p294.

<sup>35</sup> Donham, 1994, p15.



southern sphere of influence were provinces of the Ethiopian empire, but were effectively ruled by local governing elites. These areas included the Islamic states of Hadiya, Bale and Dawaro in the highlands to the east of the Rift valley, and the kingdoms of Kembata and Walaita to the west of the Rift valley.

Northern Ethiopian domination of the south was challenged in the mid-sixteenth century, when the Muslim leader Ahmed Gran (1506- 1543), from Adal in eastern Ethiopia, led a jihad against the northern Christian state <sup>36</sup>. In 1527 the Muslim armies conquered many areas on the southern periphery of the Ethiopian state, including Bali, Hadiya, Sidamo and Kembata <sup>37</sup>. Some of the inhabitants of these areas subsequently joined the Muslim armies and participated in the jihad <sup>38</sup>. Gran's forces defeated the northern Christian armies of the Emperor Lebna Dengel (1508- 1540) in the upper Awash valley in 1528, and continued to push northwards, severing lines of contact between north and south, and penetrating the Ethiopian heartland as far north as Tigray. The Emperor Galadewos (1540- 1549) led a Christian counter offensive in the early 1540s, which gained momentum after the death and defeat of Ahmed Gran in 1543 <sup>39</sup>. Many areas in the south were reconquered by the Christians, but the northern state was substantially weakened and its ability to exercise political control over peripheral areas was diminished. Some areas of the south, however, including Kembata <sup>40</sup>, were ruled again, at least nominally, as provinces of the state.

By the late-sixteenth century the realities of the political situation in northern Ethiopia encouraged the rulers of the central state to adopt an attitude of retrenchment, and the importance of the south-west to the Ethiopian state diminished in response. Marcus states that the 'Emperor Sarsa Dengel (r.1563-1597) had decided, for defensive reasons, to reduce Ethiopia's size' <sup>41</sup> : there was probably little alternative, given the decline in power of the centre. Control of peripheral areas in the south-west was no longer either a realistic objective,

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<sup>36</sup> Marcus, 1994, p31.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, p32.

<sup>38</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p431.

<sup>39</sup> Marcus, 1994, p34.

<sup>40</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p296.

<sup>41</sup> Marcus, 1994, p37.

or a priority for the central authorities, and so, to a large extent, polities in the area were released from northern Ethiopian domination.

This situation provided opportunities for expansion in the south, which proved favourable to the Oromo. The Oromo had begun to expand northwards from the plains to the south of the Rift valley much earlier than the seventeenth century. However, it was during this period that they settled huge areas of central and western Ethiopia <sup>42</sup>, incorporating many of the existing inhabitants into the structures of their society and driving those sections of the population of the south-west who resisted assimilation before them, restricting them to a smaller geographical area. According to Braukämper, many of the inhabitants of the former states of Hadiya, Bale and Dawaro were driven westwards by the expansion of the Oromo, settling in the highlands to the west of the Rift valley inhabited by the Walaita, Kembata and Gurage <sup>43</sup>. As a result, the Kembata were restricted to a small area around the Ambaricco massif <sup>44</sup>. On the eastern side of the Rift valley, remnants of the Islamic polities of the eastern highlands continued to occupy the area now inhabited by the Sidama, while the high plateaux to the east of the Rift valley were settled by the Oromo.

The colonisation by the Oromo of central and western areas of Ethiopia created a barrier to communication between the northern state and the polities of the south-west, and dramatically reduced all forms of contact. South-western polities developed for more than two centuries in the absence of sustained contact with the northern state. There are, consequently, very few written records concerning the inhabitants of the south-west during this period, since, unlike the literate Semitic societies of the north, these polities never developed a written script for their languages, nor were many of the inhabitants of the area literate in any other languages. During this eclipse of contact, southern polities were far from static, but were engaged in internal and local patterns of conflict and competition, over territory, which, partly in response to the encroachment of the Oromo, was increasingly limited.

In addition to maintaining the use of many different languages, polities in

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p39.

<sup>43</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p432 .

<sup>44</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p297 .

the south-west developed different social structures from one another. Kembata, and many of the societies to its south-west whose languages come from the Omotic language family, including Walaita and Kaffa, were governed by centralising monarchies, and attempted to dominate neighbouring polities through processes similar to those favoured by the northern state. Some writers have argued that the development of the institutions of kingship amongst these peoples was a response to the earlier period of contact with the northern state, whose institutions these polities were adapting <sup>45</sup>. The ruling dynasties of many of these kingdoms, including Kembata, continued until the northern Ethiopian conquest of the late-nineteenth century <sup>46</sup>. To the north of Kembata, many of those peoples now referred to collectively as Gurage and Hadiya, were more loosely organised in clans, and lacked any central leadership <sup>47</sup>. These clans had historically followed a nomadic pastoralist lifestyle, but land shortages gradually forced sedentarisation, and the Hadiya and Gurage clans began to form into more settled polities in the highlands on the western side of the Rift valley. On the eastern side of the Rift valley, the Sidama and Gedeo, it would appear, adopted age grade systems similar to those of their Oromo neighbours. The south-west in the early-nineteenth century was an area of marked social and cultural diversity. In terms of religion, both Christianity and Islam co-existed with earlier belief systems.

Although the south-west, prior to the reestablishment of northern rule in the nineteenth century was an area of great diversity in language, culture and religion, there were, nevertheless, some underlying similarities between many of these groups of people, and these persist today. Throughout the highland areas of the south-west, the cultivation of *ensete*, the 'false banana', dominates the agriculture of the local population. Shack has pointed out some of the social and cultural effects of this dependence on *ensete* and has termed the south-west of Ethiopia 'the *ensete* culture complex area' <sup>48</sup>, arguing that the area has, in spite of diversity, an overall regional character.

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<sup>45</sup> Haberland, 1965.

<sup>46</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p296.

<sup>47</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p432, & Shack, 1974, p98.

<sup>48</sup> Shack, 1966, p3.

**The reestablishment of northern domination in the south-west  
in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.**

Direct contact between peoples in the south-west and the northern Ethiopian state resumed in the nineteenth century. The military expansion of the increasingly powerful Kingdom of Shoa brought large areas in the west, south and east of what subsequently became the Ethiopian state under the control of the northern nobility. Expansion driven by the Shoan royal household in the second half of the nineteenth century ultimately established a new power base for the Ethiopian state, which was now partly based on the exploitation of the resources of the south-west. King Sahla Sellassie of Shoa (1813-1847) began the reconquest of the south-west by conquering parts of Gurageland in successive campaigns between 1832 and 1840<sup>49</sup>. His son, Menelik, as King of Shoa (from 1847) and Emperor of Ethiopia (from 1889), attempted to draw areas as far south as the Lower Omo valley into the framework of the Ethiopian state in the final decade of the nineteenth century. The coronation of the Shoan King Menelik as Emperor of Ethiopia in 1889 permanently altered the balance of power and the nature of the empire. Huge territories to the south, east and west of the Ethiopian heart-lands, and their varied inhabitants, were incorporated into a more modern style, albeit staunchly imperialist, state. Addis Ababa, which was situated in the geographical centre of the enlarged state, was established as the national capital, and Ethiopia's new borders were recognised by the international community in 1891. All the groups of Ethiopians under discussion in this thesis were conquered (or reconquered) and incorporated into the Ethiopian state during this period<sup>50</sup>.

The reactions of southern peoples to the imposition of northern Ethiopian rule during this period varied. In many areas the local population offered little resistance to conquest. Some southern peoples surrendered to the armies of the northern state in the hope of securing a more favourable relationship. Emperor Menelik adopted a tolerant attitude towards Islamic polities which adopted this policy, since he was concerned to avoid unnecessary

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<sup>49</sup> Shack, 1966, p98.

<sup>50</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p61-68.

confrontations which might encourage broadly conceived Muslim alliances against Christian domination. Several polities in Gurageland maintained some degree of cohesion and independence by adopting or establishing more firmly the position of the Muslim religion <sup>51</sup>. Some Muslim Hadiya-speaking groups also surrendered to Menelik and formed this type of relationship, thereby avoiding some of the harsher aspects of northern rule by maintaining some form of local government <sup>52</sup>. Islam may indeed have been adopted by the rulers of some south-western polities in order to take advantage of this policy.

In many areas the population realised that the greater military superiority of the northern armies made resistance futile. Hallpike states that '...in 1897 during the last phase of...expansion... the armies of the Emperor Menelik II, armed with rifles passed through Konso, and subdued it by their usual policy of promising that if tribute were paid no violence would be done to the people, but that resistance would be crushed.' <sup>53</sup> Faced with these alternatives there was, for the smaller, less organised polities of the south, little option but to surrender. Groups of people in the Lower Omo valley similarly offered little resistance to the northern Ethiopian forces. The acephalous societies of the south, including the Sidama and Gedeo, lacked the central leadership around which any resistance to conquest could be focused, and, consequently, conquest was accepted. The conquest of many areas of the south also occurred during a period when many of the areas polities had been weakened by the epidemics of small pox and rinderpest which ravaged the area in the 1880s <sup>54</sup>. The population of many areas had been greatly reduced and this had the dual effect of lessening their ability to resist conquest, and making the newly conquered areas appear underpopulated.

In some areas of the south the condition of political stability, often referred to as the 'pax Amharica', that was introduced after the conquest was welcomed by the local population, since it brought to an end local conflicts <sup>55</sup>. In many areas the Oromo were prevented from encroaching any further into the

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<sup>51</sup> Shack, 1966, p19-20.

<sup>52</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p435.

<sup>53</sup> Hallpike, 1972, p5.

<sup>54</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p435.

<sup>55</sup> Mc Ciellan, 1986, p176. Donham, 1994, p114.

territories inhabited by other groups of people. Several long-standing conflicts between Oromo polities and their neighbours were brought to an end, including that between the Oromo Kingdom of Jimma and the Kingdom of Yem (or Janjero), which is located in the western part of the highlands that overlook the eastern side of Gibe trough bordering areas occupied by Hadiya and Gurage polities <sup>56</sup>. The imposition of northern rule also settled competition over down slope areas on the eastern shore of Lake Abaya between Gedeo farmers and Gujji Oromo pastoralists, in favour of the Gedeo, who were able to extend their territory <sup>57</sup>.

The northern system of government relied on agricultural production, since taxation was submitted in agricultural produce. Accordingly, where, as in Gedeo, the centre was able to choose between agriculturalists and pastoralists, the former were favoured. Pastoralists were generally regarded as the uncivilised inhabitants of the *qolla* zone, while the agricultural peoples perforce inhabited the *dega* and *weyna-dega* climatic zones. Taxation of agricultural produce was a pronounced feature of the system of rule in northern Ethiopia, and the system that was imposed in the south was very similar. The realities of the system of northern rule and domination, however, eroded any initial relief from local conflicts that was experienced by southern peoples.

Some groups of people in the south-west attempted to maintain their independence and refused to surrender to the northern Ethiopian armies, and, as a result, several campaigns of northern aggression were pursued in the region. In the Rift valley area to the east of Lake Zway, the East Gurage (Silti and Ulbarag) and the Mareko actively resisted conquest from 1879 to 1882, and were only defeated when Menelik formed an alliance with the powerful Islamic polity Kebena <sup>58</sup>. Under the leadership of Hasan Engamo, the Kebena themselves revolted against Christian domination in 1886. This rebellion gained support from Gurage and Hadiya groups, many of which, after northern forces subdued the rebellion, lost the privileges they had gained through their initial acceptance of northern rule. The Kembata also resisted conquest, but

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<sup>56</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p18.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p435.

were conquered between 1891 and 1892 <sup>59</sup>. Further south, the Walaita and Badewacho Hadiya formed an alliance in order to repel the northern armies, and were defeated in 1894 after what Bahru Zewde describes as '...one of the bloodiest campaigns of the whole process of expansion.' <sup>60</sup> To the west a similar campaign was waged in 1897 against the kingdom of Kaffa <sup>61</sup>. In well established kingdoms such as Kembata, Walaita and Kaffa, conquest was accompanied by the abolition of the local institutions of kingship and the destruction of existing social structures. The bitter resentment felt by southern peoples during the conquest was compounded by the imposition of a harsh system of domination which sought to incorporate subject peoples into the state

Northern domination was cemented by the presence of *neftennya*: northern Ethiopian soldiers. *Neftennya* often made marriage alliances with local elites, thereby facilitating the Amharization of the existing ruling authorities, and securing their incorporation into the structures of northern rule. The use of an external military which had no ties to the local population was a powerful tool in imposing northern Ethiopian domination. The northern Ethiopian militia assumed a cultural superiority which allowed them to feel that they had not only the right of conquest over other groups of people but also an inherent right to impose their culture on conquered populations. The presence of the northern militia was keenly felt by populations in the south-west and was directly associated with the Amhara, although often *neftennya* garrisons included Tigreans. This association was so great that in Wellega the terms *neftennya* and Amhara became interchangeable <sup>62</sup>.

The structures of northern rule in the south-west were modified versions of the *gult* and *rist* system of land apportionment which had been developed in the northern Ethiopian highlands <sup>63</sup>. Briefly stated, *gult* were grants of land which, at least in theory, were made by the emperors to the various noble families, who were expected to surrender forms of tribute to the Imperial centre. Each *gult*, was, in effect, a hereditary fiefdom which was used by the noble

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<sup>59</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p297.

<sup>60</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p64

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p65.

<sup>62</sup> Triulzi, 1983.

<sup>63</sup> Donham, 1986b.

household that ruled it to bolster and, where possible, extend its position in the society of northern Ethiopia, often by attempting to hold on to a greater proportion of the tribute than the centre was disposed to concede. *Gult* land was then divided into *rist* : plots of land given to peasant households to live on and to farm. The peasantry was then subjected to various forms of taxation in agricultural produce, and labour. After conquest, land in the the south-west was divided into *gult* and given to both local and northern elites.

The imposition of northern rule was keenly felt by the southern peasantry. The exclusion of the peasantry from the processes of Amharization ensured their inability to move out of the confines of their economic niche. The incorporation of local elites into the structures of northern rule brought to an end local forms of land-holding, and, often, denied the peasantry any forum for complaints. Local elites often provided the nucleus of settlements, which became the focus of government control over the surrounding rural areas: these were initially little more than *neftennya* garrisons, but developed over time into towns. The inhabitants of these towns invariably used the Amharic language, whereas the population of surrounding rural areas continued to use their local languages. This increased the cultural separation between local rulers and the peasantry, creating a social as well as a linguistic dichotomy in many areas.

Donham outlines three basic types of contact between the centre and the newly acquired territories. The south-west included semi-autonomous areas where local elites continued to rule, *gebbar* areas directly connected to the state with imposed northern elites or transformed local authorities, and peripheral areas, where the relationship remained tenuous <sup>64</sup>. The most typical of the historical <sup>65</sup>, or ethnic, type of relationship, were those between the centre and semi-independent enclaves. In these areas existing ruling elites were allowed to continue to exercise internal power under traditional systems of government, as long as the elite was Amharised, and submitted tribute to the centre <sup>66</sup>. The Kingdom of Gofa, for example, which was conquered between 1894 and 1897

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<sup>64</sup> Donham, 1986b.

<sup>65</sup> The type of relationship which had earlier been formed between the states of Hadiya, Kembata etc and the central Ethiopian state.

<sup>66</sup> Triulzi, 1986, provides an example of these processes.



<sup>67</sup>, was ruled, after the death in battle of King Qanna, by his wife, Misrat, who converted to Orthodox Christianity and ruled the area as a province of Menelik's empire <sup>68</sup>. Several Muslim polities in the Gurage and Hadiya highlands initially formed this kind of relationship with the state <sup>69</sup>, but, after their tendency to revolt became apparent they were more forcibly incorporated into the structures of the northern state, under the *gebbar* system.

In *gebbar* areas, a northern elite was imposed on an existing peasantry, forming a local aristocracy, or an existing elite was transformed into a role similar to that of landowners elsewhere in Ethiopia. Land redistribution by northern settlers under the *gebbar* system had little regard for the previous patterns of usage. In *gebbar* areas land was often divided between the existing elites and provincial governors who were appointed by the centre. Donham states that 'one third or one quarter of settled lands in the south were given as hereditary gult to local *balabat* (notables, literally 'one who has a father')...The rest fell to the government to distribute as gult to local governors" <sup>70</sup>. Much land was given in grants to northern settlers, many of whom established lucrative agricultural estates in the south-west. Under the *gebbar* system a substantial proportion of the southern peasantry became landless, and were, therefore, dependent on the patronage of land owners. Peasants were granted plots of land to live on and farm, in return for a proportion of their agricultural produce and a certain amount of additional labour. A system very similar to that which had been developed in northern Ethiopia was, thereby, imposed in the south. The great majority of the areas under focus in this thesis were ruled under variations of the *gebbar* system from the late-nineteenth century onwards.

In many parts of Gurageland local clan chiefs were installed as agents of the state. Although they continued to exercise power in the local area, their role was transformed so that they became agents for the enforcement of the *gebbar* system. Their most important function for the state, as with *balabat* throughout Ethiopia, was to collect taxation in agricultural produce <sup>71</sup>. Because of its

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<sup>67</sup> Cerulli, 1956, p96.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p105.

<sup>69</sup> See above, p59-60.

<sup>70</sup> Donham, 1986b, p39.

<sup>71</sup> Shack, 1966, p19.

proximity to the national capital, Gurage was a particularly attractive area for northern colonisation, so where local elites proved uncooperative they were easily replaced by northerners. Hadiya-speaking groups that resisted conquest, including the Badewacho, were also reduced to *gebbar* status, and northern elites were imposed<sup>72</sup>. Throughout Kembata and Walaita, after the abolition of local kingship, northern settlers were given grants in the fertile highlands<sup>73</sup>. The equally productive highlands on the eastern side of the Rift valley, inhabited by the Sidama and Gedeo, also became a focus for northern colonisation, since the area provided opportunities for the particularly lucrative cultivation of coffee. Throughout the south northern settlers established large agricultural estates for themselves, and the local population became landless tenants under the *gebbar* system.

Local elites and imposed northern elites were often in competition for the resources of *gebbar* areas. Describing Maale<sup>74</sup>, Donham outlines the three-way relationship which developed between the Maale Kings (an indigenous elite), the Provincial Governors of Baku and later Gamo Gofa (an imposed elite), and the Imperial Government<sup>75</sup>. He argues that when there was a strong government at the centre it exerted greater control over the local governors, and this in turn gave a greater degree of flexibility to the Maale Kings. During the inter-regnum from the failure of Emperor Menelik's health in the early years of the Twentieth century to the Coronation of Haile Sellassie in 1930, Addis Ababa was more concerned with the internal politics of succession at the court than with the political control of outlying districts like Baku. The provincial Governors were therefore able to extend their control over the area at the expense of the Kings. During the reign of Haile Sellassie, when central authority was once more vigorously asserted, the Maale Kings were gradually Amharised, and their role, which had been highly symbolic, came to resemble that of Ethiopian landlords elsewhere, while the power of the provincial governors was limited by the increasing presence of the central government. Elsewhere in the south-west

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<sup>72</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p432.

<sup>73</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p297. Bahru Zewde, 1991, p89.

<sup>74</sup> The Maale, or Mali, speak an Omotic language and inhabit the SNNPR. Map Four, Appendix One, p304.

<sup>75</sup> Donham, 1986a.

similar processes of competition were initiated by the *gebbar* system <sup>76</sup>. This competition was over a limited amount of resources, and both indigenous and northern elites were concerned with maximising the extent to which they could exploit the agricultural production of the peasantry, and with limiting the amount of taxation that was submitted to the authorities immediately above. The *gebbar* system held the southern peasantry in a vice-like grip.

Outside of the Muslim enclaves, the Orthodox Church was also given large estates in the newly conquered areas <sup>77</sup>. The introduction of Orthodox Christianity entailed the use of the Amharic language, which, from the mid-nineteenth century, began to replace Ge'ez, the ancient liturgical language, in the church. Church sponsored education in Amharic created a new kind of elite, which was often employed in the local institutions of the central state. The creation of local Amharic-speaking elites gave rise to enduring negative attitudes towards education in many areas of the south-west <sup>78</sup>.

In the far peripheries Ethiopian rule remained tenuous, raiding was used to subdue the population and, subsequently, taxation was submitted to the centre through local rulers where possible. In Konso, for example, the effects of northern colonisation remained limited, traditional ways of life continued, and the only manifestation of northern authority was the installation of a local governor. Taxation was collected and submitted through existing authorities <sup>79</sup>. Areas to the south and west of Konso, in the *qolla* zone, had even less contact with the state. In the case of the Dassanech, attempts to bring them within the structures of the central state ultimately failed <sup>80</sup>. Contact between Dassanech and northern Ethiopians was limited to a *neftennya* garrison in the region.

Partly as a result of the dislocation between local ruling elites and the peasantry, and partly because of the exacting nature of the *gebbar* system, local populations took advantage of any opportunities to rebel. The first such opportunity came during the inter-regnum between the death of Emperor Menelik and the Coronation of Emperor Haile Sellassie, when, in the absence

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<sup>76</sup> McClellan, 1986.

<sup>77</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p89.

<sup>78</sup> Chapter Two, p91-92.

<sup>79</sup> Hallpike, 1972, p5.

<sup>80</sup> Almagor, 1986.

of a powerful central figure, the centre was preoccupied with the politics of succession, and control of peripheral areas lapsed. Hadiya groups in the highlands rebelled against their *neftennya* overlords during this period, but were defeated after a campaign of state consolidation in the area, characterised by the removal of local elites, the imposition of the *gebbar* system and the introduction of both Orthodox and missionary Christianity into Islamic areas <sup>81</sup>. In 1916 resistance to Ethiopian domination was also expressed in a series of localised rebellions in Kembata <sup>82</sup>. Again these were put down, and increasingly exacting versions of the *gebbar* system, based on increased numbers of *neftennya*, were imposed in the area. Without central leadership around which resistance to northern domination could be focussed, it was impossible for south-western peoples to mount an effective challenge to the agents of the state. This situation was deeply resented, and local populations were waiting to seize any opportunity to break the yoke of northern rule.

At the outset of Italian fascist hostilities with Ethiopia in the early-1930s the position of *neftennya* in many areas of the south became insecure. After the defeat of the Ethiopians by the Italians many south-western peoples rose against the *neftennya*, and were only subdued because their attention was diverted by local conflicts over territory which the imposition of the 'pax Amharica' had succeeded in stilling <sup>83</sup>. The Italians occupied south-western Ethiopia in 1937, deposed the remaining *neftennya*, and attempted to introduce a new set of social conditions. The Italians encouraged Islam in the south-west, in order to undermine the position of the Orthodox Church, which remained as a symbol of Ethiopian state authority <sup>84</sup>. The rural population often welcomed the Italian invasion as a relief from the *gebbar* system <sup>85</sup>, but taxation and forced labour under the Italian system of rule soon engendered the same kind of resentment that had been felt towards the northern Ethiopians.

The lapse of central control after the defeat of the Italians in 1941 was, in the south-west, seized as an opportunity to pursue local conflicts over territory.

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<sup>81</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p436.

<sup>82</sup> Braukämper, 1983, p297.

<sup>83</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p436 - 437.

<sup>84</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p437.

<sup>85</sup> Donham, 1994, p44.

War between the Walaita and the neighbouring Badewacho Hadiya erupted in the fertile countryside to the north of Lake Abaya <sup>86</sup>. Further north, to the west of Lake Zway in the Rift valley, Arussi Oromo clans engaged with the Mareko, and with the Silti Gurage <sup>87</sup>. On the slopes to the east of Lake Abaya, the Gujji Oromo attacked Gedeo settlements, attempting to drive them further into the highlands and, thereby, reclaim former grazing lands. Peace was not restored to many areas of the south until 1943, when the domination of the Ethiopian state was once more asserted when Haile Sellassie's government reintroduced garrisons of northern soldiers.

From the 1940s, Haile Sellassie's government was concerned with strengthening the power of the institutions of the central state. The feudal character of the Ethiopian state was undermined by the development of a state bureaucracy, and power was gradually transferred from a hereditary nobility to an educated elite. However, although the nature of government in Ethiopia was being altered, the personnel that staffed and ran the institutions of the government was drawn from the same section of society. Land reform under Haile Sellassie's government officially abolished the *gebbar* system, and peasants in the south-west became tenant farmers under a new system of land apportionment. Established elites were, however, generally successful in securing their former holdings. Bahru Zewde states that 'the effect of the process and policies... [of Haile Sellassie's government]... was to polarise rural society into landlords and tenants, particularly in the southern half of the country' <sup>88</sup>. Northern and local elites maintained the ability to carve out large estates <sup>89</sup>. The apparatus of the state was dominated by the land-owning class, which was unwilling to damage its position in society by weakening the basis of its power, namely, control over land. The realities of land-holding changed little for the rural population of the south-west. The peasantry of most areas remained dependent on the patronage of a local *balabat* of some kind, to whom they were required to submit a proportion of their produce. Increasingly they were also subjected to direct forms of taxation by the state, and in many

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<sup>86</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p436.

<sup>87</sup> Braukämper, 1980, p437.

<sup>88</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p195

<sup>89</sup> Donham, 1994, p44-46.

circumstances were also forced to give their labour to state sponsored projects.

For the peoples of the south-west, perhaps the most influential change sponsored by the central government in the mid-twentieth century was the imposition of taxation in money under Haile Sellassie's government,<sup>90</sup> which forced rural people to produce cash crops. For the peoples of the *ensete* area this involved changing the type of agriculture in which they were predominantly engaged. *Ensete* is a crop that is difficult to harvest for anything other than domestic use<sup>91</sup>, and, there is, moreover, little demand for the products of *ensete* outside the areas in which it is cultivated. Some groups of people in the Rift valley, most notably the Alaba and Silti Gurage, responded to this situation by increased cultivation of *berebere*, a valuable hot pepper favoured by northern Ethiopians, which is suited to the hot, dry conditions of the area. In highland areas in the south-west, particularly the Sidama and Gedeo highlands on the eastern side of the Rift valley, farmers became increasingly dependent on coffee, a valuable crop that was in demand throughout the country. In many areas of the south-west, however, cash cropping was impossible because of overcrowding, which meant that all available land was occupied with the cultivation of *ensete* and other crops for family consumption. These circumstances initiated a social revolution in the south-west as the rural population was forced to develop new economic strategies<sup>92</sup>.

In many parts of the south-west, particularly in the Gurage and Kembata highlands between the Bilate river and the Upper Omo river, and in Walaita further south, overcrowding, land shortages, and the inability of the land to support the existing population combined with the imposition of taxation in money to provide the stimulus for substantial population movements from the mid-twentieth century onwards<sup>93</sup>. In the overcrowded areas of the Gurage highlands young men were forced to leave their homelands for periods of time in order to generate revenue to support themselves, provide their families with additional income and pay taxes. Initially, many became itinerant traders, but

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<sup>90</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p193 - 194.

<sup>91</sup> Although there is a dried form that keeps for a certain amount of time, the gum of the *ensete* is generally used to make a kind of porridge or a solid paste, neither of which keep for a long time.

<sup>92</sup> Shack, 1966, p77.

<sup>93</sup> Bjerren, 1985, examines patterns of rural to urban migration in the south-west of Ethiopia.

gradually they began to establish themselves in newly developing urban areas, which were usually nothing more than stations for the government offices of the police and the local administration. These towns offered wage-earning opportunities in providing services to government employees, and also acted as points of contact with the wider networks of Ethiopian trade. Gurage trading posts were established in the Rift valley along the main roads that were built in the period of the Italian occupation, from Addis Ababa to Nazret and that which leads south to the border with Kenya <sup>94</sup>. Some of these towns are now the largest centres of population in the area, including Zway, Meki and Dukem <sup>95</sup>.

The proximity of Gurage to Addis Ababa, and the industrial towns (such as Akaki and Debra Zeit) to its south, presented other opportunities for Gurage men. Here many engaged in seasonal wage labouring. Most maintained strong ties to their ancestral areas and returned during the harvest season when their labour was needed <sup>96</sup>. But, gradually, Gurage communities were established in many urban areas throughout the south. Because of its geographical proximity to Gurageland, Gurages settled with ease in the rapidly expanding national capital, Addis Ababa, which offered the best prospects for both trading and employment. Bahru Zewde states that Addis Ababa's huge market, the Mercato '...became a stronghold of... national traders, most notably the Gurage' <sup>97</sup>.

The Gurage were not alone among the peoples of the south-west in seeking to establish themselves in the urban environment. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, in response to the changing set of social conditions, many Kembatas also sought work as house servants and agricultural labourers in many parts of Ethiopia. The displacement of Kembatas from their ancestral homelands began in the nineteenth century in response to the encroachment of Hadiya clans. Kembata communities were established in rural areas of the Rift valley in the area of Arussi Negele and Shashemene, and in areas of the former province of Gojjam near the town of Debra Markos, in the Amharic-speaking area. From the 1940s the exodus of Kembatas to these areas accelerated in response to taxation in money and levels of overcrowding. Many Walaitas, also

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<sup>94</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid*

<sup>96</sup> Bjerem, 1985, p225. Fecadu, 1972 .

<sup>97</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p197.

driven by population expansion, settled in the urban centres of the south-west and in Addis Ababa, engaging in domestic and agricultural labour. The Dorze became established urban dwellers in Addis Ababa, where large numbers of Dorze weavers were employed in the growing textile industry <sup>98</sup>.

The strains of the economic and social situation in the rural areas in the south-west, and the intransigence of local elites, continued to find expression in rural unrest. In 1960 a widespread peasant revolt in the coffee producing highlands of Gedeo challenged the domination of the state, where the local population demanded access to more land. Bahru Zewde states that the uprising '...had its genesis in land alienation.'<sup>99</sup> Concentrated northern settlement, and the creation of large coffee-growing estates, had reduced the vast majority of Gedeo and Sidama farmers to tenancy, and, constrained by various forms of taxation, many were impoverished, even though the lands they farmed were very productive. The Gedeo rebellion was quashed, and the former patterns of land-holding remained unchanged. In rural areas, the state increasingly attempted to pursue unworkable policies, demanding more from the peasantry than it was able to produce. The state, moreover, offered no benefits to its subjects.

During the 1950s and 1960s Christian missionary activity sponsored by various denominations increased dramatically in many areas of the south-west. Missionaries offered tangible benefits to local populations (most usually medical services) and, consequently, missions began to attract large numbers of converts. Missions often required their converts to send their children to school if they wanted to take advantage of the medical and other facilities that they provided, and so classrooms were usually full. Education sponsored by missionaries, introduced literacy into many rural areas. Education, however, was largely conducted in Amharic, a language many did not speak, and appeared little more than a manifestation of northern Ethiopian domination. Nevertheless, throughout the highlands on either side of the Rift valley, missionary activity burgeoned amongst the more populous groups of people (Sidama, Gedeo, Kembata, Hadiya and Walaita), attracting large numbers of

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<sup>98</sup> Cooper, 1976e, p191-212.

<sup>99</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p218.



converts <sup>100</sup>.

In peripheral areas, such as Konso, missionaries also made their mark, often having a more profound impact than the state <sup>101</sup>. Donham regards the arrival of missionaries and missionary education in Maale as being responsible for stimulating a substantial cultural change <sup>102</sup>. Large numbers of Maale converted to protestant Christianity and were, consequently, expected to send their children to school. The resultant educated Maale represented an alternative local elite to the traditional rulers, who had been transformed by the apparatus of the state into little more than landlords, losing their symbolic role in Maale society. Educated Maale were, moreover, in a better position to challenge the agents of the state, if only because they spoke its language: Amharic. Donham states that 'In several land cases...between protestants and encroaching landlords, the protestants were able to win.'<sup>103</sup> Protestant Christianity, therefore, became a form of empowerment, with literacy in Amharic as a powerful tool that could be employed to resist the domination of the state, and of local authorities. Missionaries also helped to create a new ideological climate in the south-west. Many missions taught self-reliance and economic betterment as part of the values of a Christian society, and implicitly criticised the Orthodox Church, an agent of the northern state, which taught its followers to bow to authority and to accept the harsh realities of life and government without question <sup>104</sup>. Protestant churches became, in many areas of the south-west, the focus for local groups, who were increasingly dissatisfied with the state. It was this climate into which, in the 1970s, socialist theories were introduced.

In the highlands on both sides of the Rift valley local populations welcomed the revolution of 1974, which, they expected, would bring to an end many of the problems of the rural environment. Many people perceived their situation to be a result of the oppressive nature of the state. In many areas,

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<sup>100</sup> Mary Breeze, (SIL), Addis Ababa, 22/3/96.

<sup>101</sup> Hallpike, 1972, p6.

<sup>102</sup> Donham, 1994, p51.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid*

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*

including Maale <sup>105</sup>, local elites were toppled during the revolution, as the population reacted to decades of economic domination by demanding greater access to land. Mission educated Ethiopians from all backgrounds were ideally placed to participate in the social revolution which the Derg attempted to sponsor in rural areas. Since they had been educated in Amharic, they were familiar with the language of government and were also able to understand the new political climate. Resentment of the Imperial state had, moreover, developed keenly amongst this educated class, which had been largely barred from advancing in society. In ideological terms, protestant Christianity had prepared the ground for revolutionary ideas to develop, since missionaries had already encouraged their converts to adopt a critical attitude towards the inequalities inherent in the Ethiopian system of government. But the expectation of peoples in the south-west that a change of government would alleviate the unreasonable burdens imposed on them by the central state proved to be ill-founded.

Throughout Ethiopia, the Derg sought to assert governmental control over the rural population through the establishment of peasants' associations. In 1975 a new land reform was introduced that nationalised all land in Ethiopia. Clapham states that this reform 'abolished all existing forms of tenure..... it restricted the size of family holdings to a maximum of ten hectares' <sup>106</sup> . Peasants' associations were entrusted with the task of redistributing land, and, in many areas of the south-west, it was the mission educated section of society that was able to assume this role.

The great majority of settled areas of agricultural production in the south-west were organised into peasants associations within the first five years of the Derg's period in power <sup>107</sup>. These peasants' associations, and their urban counterparts, the *kebeles*, were far from being free of abuses. Once again, a local elite, albeit of a different nature, was placed in position of power, and opportunities for favouring or discriminating against individuals were inherent in the system. This new Amharic-speaking educated elite was placed in control,

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<sup>105</sup> Donham, 1986a.

<sup>106</sup> Clapham, 1990, p157.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*, p158.

perhaps even more firmly, over the most important aspect of rural life, namely, land apportionment. Injustices in the system of land distribution were by no means ended by the establishment of peasants associations; the realities of land-holding changed little, with the local population still being dependent on the good favour of local notables.

The policy of villagisation, pursued by the Derg from the late-1970s, was highly disruptive of rural life. Villagisation was presented to the population, by the government, as a means of delivering government services more effectively. Services, it was argued, could be provided to a greater proportion of the population if they were gathered in one place, instead of scattered throughout the countryside <sup>108</sup>. In fact, villagisation appears to have been a politically motivated attempt to assert government control of the rural population <sup>109</sup>. This is particularly evidenced by the government's actual inability to provide the kind of services (water, health care, education) which it offered as reasons for the policy, and which rarely materialised after villagisation. Peasants' associations in the villages continued to hold the responsibility for apportioning household land, but increasingly the government also sought to encourage collective farming as opposed to the cultivation of separate plots.

Some areas of the south-west escaped villagisation programmes because their dependence on *ensete* rendered collective farming redundant, and meant that relocation of the population would have made them unable to survive <sup>110</sup>. But many were forced, and villagisation generally produced a drop in the real standard of living. The process of villagisation was, by nature, destructive. Huts were taken down and rebuilt on the site of the new villages, and, while government directives insisted that as much of the fabric of the previous dwellings should be used, much was inevitably destroyed in the move, and little or no resources were provided in the new village sites. Materials that were provided were far from traditional, and indeed, for many southern peoples, desirable. Often the new huts had to be built to government specifications with zinc roofs, and this meant that the standard design was square instead of the

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<sup>108</sup> Clapham , 1990, p174-179.

<sup>109</sup> Pankhurst, 1992, p51.

<sup>110</sup> Clapham, 1990, p176

round shape commonly employed by many Ethiopian peoples. During the period of the Derg in villages, and towns, the dwellings came to resemble one another, being constructed in a uniform manner. This uniformity, and the change of shape and materials for dwellings, were resented by southern peoples<sup>111</sup>. Collective farming was also highly unpopular, failing to produce the surpluses predicted by the government. In general the redistribution of land by peasants' associations entailed a fragmentation of land-holdings became fragmented, plots were often far away from dwellings as a result of the concentration of populations in villages, and established farming practices were interrupted. In many areas the net result of the Derg's policies for rural agriculture was a drop in production and serious food shortages.

Along with the introduction of measures designed to control more closely the physical realities of rural life in Ethiopia was an increasing governmental interference in the cultural climate, including the prohibition of established ceremonies and practices. Under Haile Sellassie's government the various peoples of Ethiopia had been encouraged to adopt the culture and religion of northern Ethiopia, but there had been an acceptance on the part of the government that, for many peoples, this objective could not be realised. Peoples on the peripheries of the state were accepted as being different. Under the Marxist government a different attitude developed; the government sought to indoctrinate the entire population with its political ideology. While the established religions (Orthodox and missionary Christianity and Islam) were tolerated by the Derg, other groups of people were discouraged from participating in their traditional forms of cultural expression, which were regarded as counter-revolutionary and backward. Peasants associations were implicitly encouraged to discriminate against individuals who continued to persist in such practices. Instead the population were encouraged to participate in government sponsored initiatives, which, it was asserted, would produce benefits. One of these initiatives, sponsored in the 1980s, was the National Literacy Campaign, which the government hoped would have a two-fold effect of introducing the benefits of education and literacy to the population, and

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<sup>111</sup> A view expressed in informal and formal interviews in the SNNPR.

fostering a stronger identification with the state <sup>112</sup>. In fact, the effect of the literacy campaign, as with other government sponsored initiatives, was to polarise rural society into an Amharic educated elite which was, to an extent, co-opted into the framework of the wider Ethiopian society, and an increasingly dissatisfied local population which was alienated from the state.

The relationship between local elites and rural populations would appear to be more typical of the Imperial system of government, but very similar processes of domination persisted under the Derg, often based on the presence of northern, or, at the very least, Amharic-speaking, elites. In response to famine and land degradation in the north, the Derg began to resettle substantial numbers of people in the south-west <sup>113</sup>. Government resettlement often took the form of positioning Amharic-speakers in peripheral areas, frequently on the best land. The inhabitants of the area were obliged, and, if necessary forced, to help them to establish themselves: peasants' associations were, for example, compelled to provide land for settlers. As well as providing a solution to the related problems of overpopulation, famine and land degradation in the north, it was assumed that the presence of northern settlers in areas of the south would encourage the homogenisation of the population of Ethiopia. The Derg sought to bring about, through intermarriage and general contact, an Ethiopianisation that would help extend government control of peripheral areas.

New northern settlers were absorbed into the Amharic-speaking educated elites that already existed in the south-west. Many assumed an active role in peasants' associations and appeared to local populations to be agents of the state, placed in the rural environment to ensure government domination, in the mould of the *neftennya* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The old system of domination had been given new ideological clothing but the need to ensure central control over the productive areas in the south-west of the country remained the same, and the practical realities of ensuring control induced similar responses from the central government, which, regardless of political ideology, was operating within an established set of practical constraints. The maintenance of central control over peripheral areas was

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<sup>112</sup> Chapter Two, p89-93.

<sup>113</sup> Pankhurst, 1992.

important to the state; the demise of the Derg was ultimately due to its inability to control peripheral areas.

In the south-west the vast majority of the rural population continued to speak languages other than Amharic and was, for the most part illiterate in spite of the literacy campaigns. Their inability to speak the national language continued to deny rural populations any power within the state. Rural people received little if any benefits from the state, but increasingly perceived themselves as being oppressed within it. There was a greater level of day to day interference as a result of the Derg's direct interference in rural life through peasant's associations, and as a result of the policies of villagisation and resettlement, than there had been in the preceding period. The population of many areas had also been effectively forbidden to follow traditional practices<sup>114</sup>. While the Derg failed in its objective of politicising the population, it nevertheless caused a reduction of cultural diversity. The conditions of rural life in many areas of the south-west came to resemble one another more closely than they had previously, the population taking on formulations of identity concurrent with the oppressive nature of the state. In the late-twentieth century, the modernising influences of the Ethiopian state and of the wider world have had an increasing impact on the inhabitants of many rural areas of the south-west, flattening ethnic characteristics and producing instead a modern Ethiopian identity which, to a large extent, transcends ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

The most enduring expression of diversity in the Ethiopian state, and particularly in the south-west, has been the continued use of local languages. Teferra Tsehaye argues that "most of the peoples of Ethiopia are primarily identified by the languages they speak rather than by any clear cut racial or cultural traits."<sup>115</sup> For many groups of Ethiopians the continued use of different languages has been the only way of asserting an identity separate from the other peoples of the state, and, indeed, from the state itself.

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<sup>114</sup> Both informal and formal interviews provided examples of the banning of traditional ceremonies and practices in the south-west.

<sup>115</sup> Teferra Tsehaye, 1977, p30.

## **Chapter Two : A history of state language policy in Ethiopia.**

### **Introduction ; Language use and language policy in Ethiopia.**

Government language policies have influenced patterns of language use, and attitudes towards language use, in Ethiopia. Language policies were important ideological indicators of the political philosophy of the governments of Haile Sellassie and the Derg. There are also enduring patterns of language use, which develop with respect to a range of factors, of which government language policy is one. Patterns of language use are, moreover, constantly evolving, inherently complex, and vary in different sections of Ethiopian society.

In Ethiopia, neither the enactment of government language policy, nor broad patterns of linguistic evolution have been able to control the other process. But the two processes are inherently linked, and exert such profound influence over each other, that it is impossible to separate their effects. It is often unclear whether a particular government language policy is responsible for creating a set of linguistic conditions, or whether it is a response to existing or developing conditions. Policies may attempt to harmonise the wider objectives of the government and the existing patterns of language use. Ethiopian governments have also, at times, attempted to push linguistic development in a particular direction, regardless of existing conditions, and, at times, government language policies and existing patterns of language use appear to be opposed.

In Ethiopia, Amharic has come to dominate the linguistic profile of the state, as a result of both the official and the unofficial extension of its uses. It has been the only Ethiopian language employed in an official capacity, until very recently, and remains the national language. Amharic is also employed as an unofficial lingua franca (language of inter-ethnic communication), and is the first language (language most commonly used) of most people in the larger urban centres throughout Ethiopia. No other language could assume the national significance of Amharic in Ethiopia, since its position in society has been established both by enduring patterns of use, and as a result of the policies adopted by the central state from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

## The establishment of an Amharic-speaking state in the nineteenth century

From the reign of Emperor Tewodros in the mid-nineteenth century Amharic became the accepted language of the Imperial court and replaced Geez as the language in which the Royal Chronicles were written <sup>1</sup>. Bahru Zewde states that 'Culturally Tewodros's reign is significant because it witnessed the birth of a fairly well-developed literary Amharic' <sup>2</sup>. Cooper argues that Tewodros' "promotion of Amharic literature was part of his campaign to reunify Ethiopia" <sup>3</sup>. Tewodros' successor, the Tigrean Emperor Yohannes, continued to use Amharic, and not Tigrinya, for the purposes of government, thus demonstrating that the importance of Amharic to the state was more fundamental than any ethnic connotations that it conveyed <sup>4</sup>.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic expansion for the Ethiopian state <sup>5</sup>, which brought peoples and polities who did not speak Amharic under the control of the state <sup>6</sup>. In order for existing local elites in recently incorporated areas to maintain any degree of power they had to assimilate themselves to the religion, culture and above all language of northern Ethiopia, since the Imperial centre was unwilling to deal with local rulers who did not accept its cultural parameters. Not only did the adoption of Amharic facilitate communication, it also had important social and political reverberations <sup>7</sup>. The creation of local Amharic-speaking elites typifies the language policy of Emperor Menelik, during whose reign, which began in 1889, the area under discussion in this thesis was incorporated into the Ethiopian state. Amharization initially developed as a means of incorporating existing local elites without any attempt being made to introduce Amharic to the ordinary people. Amharization was cemented by inter-marriage between local elites and

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, 1976f, p290.

<sup>2</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991, p34.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, 1976f, p290.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Baye Yimam (AAU), Addis Ababa, 16/5/97

<sup>5</sup> Darkwah, 1975, p96-p110.

<sup>6</sup> Donham, 1986a.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter One, p51-52, p62-63.



members of the established northern Ethiopian aristocracy<sup>8</sup>. These new, fused elites were defined, in the south-west, by the use of Amharic. Where existing elites failed to become Amharised, they were replaced by northern Ethiopians<sup>9</sup>. The introduction of the Orthodox church into newly incorporated territories helped to cement the dominance of northern Ethiopian culture: it gave Amharic-speaking elites a religious as well as political basis for their superiority. The position of northern settlers and the church was secured by the presence of *neftennya*<sup>10</sup>. The settlers, clergy and *neftennya* all used Amharic, which, outside of the northern highlands, became the language of a ruling elite. In many parts of Ethiopia the name "Amhara" became synonymous with "ruler", and a powerful and enduring cultural stereotype was thereby created<sup>11</sup>. Amharic became a symbol of the Ethiopian state, and, consequently, a symbol of domination. To all intents and purposes the state which was forged in the nineteenth century was Amharic-speaking.

The processes of Amharization, however, did not emerge as a result of comprehensively premeditated government policy, and, equally, Amharic was never defined as the official language of the Empire in the nineteenth century.

#### **Haile Sellassie's government :** **Centralism and broad Amharization.**

Under Haile Sellassie's government the power of local elites was undermined in favour of strengthening the power of the central state. The decreasing importance of local elites, and their replacement by a state bureaucracy had a profound effect on the attitudes towards language that were adopted by the government. The aim of government language policy became the Amharization of the entire population<sup>12</sup>. In pursuance of a policy of national unification, the government sought to establish a national religion, culture and language for all Ethiopians. Government policies were intended to encourage

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<sup>8</sup> Donham, 1986a, p8 - p13.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter One, p64-65.

<sup>10</sup> Triulzi, 1983, p 122. Chapter One, p62.

<sup>11</sup> Triulzi, 1983, p119.

<sup>12</sup> Marcus, 1987, p137.

Ethiopians to embrace the Orthodox Church, the culture of the northern Highlands and the Amharic language. Haile Sellassie's government was the first to enshrine the official position of the Amharic language, in the constitution of 1955, which stated that "the official language of the Empire is Amharic"<sup>13</sup>. This official endorsement of Amharic was merely a statement of an already well-established policy.

In adopting a single-language language policy, Haile Sellassie's government was following the linguistic orthodoxy of the time. Historically, it has often been assumed that the use of one language is a prerequisite for the formation of national unity against an existing background of diversity<sup>14</sup>. African governments have invariably sought to promote one national language, since it has been assumed that linguistic diversity is a problem for the state that presents a barrier to national cohesion and to the processes of development<sup>15</sup>. In addition to the positive benefits that governments have hoped will accrue from the promotion of a single national language, the difficulties of using several languages have also appeared to be insurmountable. Firstly, the development of several languages has been seen as too costly and complicated<sup>16</sup>. Secondly, even if it were possible to develop several languages, the problems that the government would then face appear to be particularly difficult to resolve. These problems include the very general difficulty of all forms of communication between the members of society which is facilitated by the use of one language. More specifically the regularisation of aspects of government that inherently depend on language use where the government is seeking, in one area or another, to impose a national standard seem to be inhibited by the use of several languages. These areas are most typically the state administration, judicial and education systems.

Haile Sellassie's attempt to establish a state education system brought the issue of language use in education to the forefront of government language policy. Traditionally, the education which had been available in Ethiopia had been provided by the Orthodox Church, which had used Geez, the ancient

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<sup>13</sup> Cooper, 1976a, p188, quoting from *Negarit Gazeta*.

<sup>14</sup> Fardon and Furnis, 1994, Introduction. Bamgbose, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Fardon and Furnis, 1994, p10-13.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p1.

liturgical language <sup>17</sup>. In Muslim areas, Quranic schools provided education in Arabic <sup>18</sup>. Although foreign missions became involved in education in the country as early as the seventeenth century <sup>19</sup>, their efforts were largely restricted to the higher nobility. The nineteenth century witnessed a growth of missionary activity in Ethiopia <sup>20</sup>. From this period the scope of missionary activities came to encompass more than just the upper echelons of society although it was only later that it began to have a more profound effect on the populations of rural areas.

Early attempts to establish secular, state sponsored education invariably employed foreign languages. The first attempt to establish a secular education system was made by Emperor Menelik <sup>21</sup>, who opened the first government school, Ecole Menelik II in the capital in 1908, using French as the medium of instruction <sup>22</sup>. The Teferi Mekonnin school, established by Ras Teferi (later Haile Sellassie) in 1927, also used French as the principal medium of instruction <sup>23</sup>. Mission schools established during the the nineteenth and early-twentieth century also depended on the use of European languages as media of instruction <sup>24</sup>. No overall pattern of language use was established in these schools, and languages of instruction usually reflected the particular background of missionaries. The need for modernisation and development, which was the driving force behind early attempts to establish state education in Ethiopia, also encouraged the use of European languages, since the necessary materials were unavailable in any Ethiopian language <sup>25</sup>. The Orthodox Church, however, began to increase the role of Amharic in education during the nineteenth century in response to its growing importance as the language of the court and of government. Often whether or not Amharic was used in an official capacity as the language of education, it was the language in which teachers

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<sup>17</sup> McNab, 1989, p62.

<sup>18</sup> Bowen, 1976, p310.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p310.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p311.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus, 1994, p107.

<sup>22</sup> McNab, 1989, p77.

<sup>23</sup> Bowen, 1976, p318.

<sup>24</sup> Languages in which subjects are taught (MOI).

<sup>25</sup> McNab, 1989, p78.

and pupils communicated with the greatest ease and was, therefore, heavily relied upon in the classroom. There was, in short, no clearly articulated policy for language use in education.

Haile Sellassie's government inherited a patchwork of conditions in terms of education. The earliest attempts to establish Amharic as the principal language of education came as part of Haile Sellassie's efforts to establish a state education system, and to control more effectively the education which was being provided in Ethiopia by other agencies. However, anomalies continued in the system, and often there was a gap between the articulation of policy and the realities of practice, with respect to language use in education. Official recognition of the status of Amharic lagged behind the established position of the language in education. For example, the first national curriculum for elementary schools, which was introduced in 1947, used English as the main language of instruction. This curriculum was not revised until 1958, when a new education act firmly established Amharic as the language of primary education, while English remained the main language of secondary education <sup>26</sup>. Amharic was, however, the accepted medium of teacher pupil communication in the classroom, and had become the accepted language of education much earlier in Haile Sellassie's reign as a direct result of government policy. Perhaps the late introduction of an official national curriculum in Amharic can be explained by lingering doubts as to the viability of the language as a medium of instruction when compared to European languages, in which a substantial body of educational material already existed.

An area of great importance for language policy was mission sponsored education which was increasing more rapidly than that offered by the Orthodox church or the state itself. Marcus quotes from an article in *Berhanena Selam*, the official newspaper of the government which, as early in the reign of Haile Sellassie as 1933,

"criticises the foreign missions for teaching in local languages "since it creates obstacles to unity." The newspaper asserted that government policy aimed "to have all the people in the country speak Amharic. With language unity there is also a unity of ideas." Sharing a common idiom would lead Ethiopia's

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<sup>26</sup> McNab, 1984, p 717.

peoples to greater mutual understanding and intermarriage- "thus the border peoples and the central inhabitants [will] become related" and will treat each other as kin." 27

In 1944 a decree specifically aimed at regulating the activities of missions was issued. Cooper states that

"these regulations require missionaries to learn Amharic and to teach via Amharic, which is to be 'the general language of instruction'. Missionaries are allowed to teach via local languages only 'in the early stage of missionary work, until such time as pupils and missionaries...shall have a working knowledge of the Amharic language'. However, Amharic appears to be required for classroom use only, inasmuch as 'the local languages may still be used in the course of ordinary contacts with the population'. The statutory requirement that missionaries teach via Amharic is particularly important because missionaries are customarily permitted to work only in those areas in which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not well established. Since such areas are largely inhabited by people whose first language is not Amharic, the missionaries bring Amharic to people who might not otherwise have an opportunity to learn it."28

Missionary activity as such was not being discouraged; the aim was to bring it firmly into line with the objectives of the government 29. Missionaries were charged with promoting the ideological principles of the Imperial government, and expelled if they failed to do so. The restriction of missionary activity to areas where the population were not followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox church was part of a strategy for providing education without exhausting scanty state resources. It also gave the more difficult task of educating entirely illiterate populations, who had the added disadvantage of not speaking Amharic, to an external agency. Missions were encouraged to focus on the south-west, where they were allowed to carry out some very basic oral education in the local languages, because the populations they were dealing with usually contained few Amharic-speakers 30. The policy of using Amharic for

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27 Marcus, 1987, p137.

28 Cooper, 1976a, p189, quoting from *Negarit Gazeta*.

29 McNab, 1989, p80.

30Teferra Tsehaye, 1977, p79.

education throughout Ethiopia was not only politically desirable, it also reflected the practical realities of the situation. Local languages, particularly in south-west Ethiopia, were entirely oral, no attempt had ever been made to transcribe them for the purposes of education and any attempt to develop these languages would have been likely to fail if only because of lack of resources.

The first government-run Amharic language schools were established in the early-1930s. Such schools were distributed fairly evenly throughout the country in the provincial capitals. None, however, were established in the southern provinces of Sidamo, Bale or Gamo Gofa during this period <sup>31</sup>. Although these urban schools were located in areas of the country where Amharic was not spoken by the majority of the population, the majority of the population in the urban environment were speakers of the language. Towns were populated by educated Amharic-speaking government workers who were concerned to educate their children. These workers occupied the same role in local affairs that had been played by the local elites in the preceding period <sup>32</sup>. As agents of the state they used Amharic. The move to establish Amharic language schools in these urban centres emphasised the growing importance of the language in the government and administration of the provinces, as well as in the capital.

During the Italian occupation, the policy of the administration was to introduce teaching in the local languages in each of Ethiopia's linguistic regions <sup>33</sup>, but was never accompanied by a serious attempt to develop the local languages <sup>34</sup>. This policy served only to disrupt the existing pattern of language use in education. The Italian occupation had a general negative effect on the Ethiopian education system. Educated Ethiopians were perceived as a threat to Italian domination and many were killed. Established missions were also expelled <sup>35</sup>.

After the liberation of 1941, the government reasserted the position of Amharic as the language of primary education in Ethiopia, and continued to

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<sup>31</sup> Marcus, 1987, p137.

<sup>32</sup> Chapter One, p51-52.

<sup>33</sup> McNab, 1989, p78.

<sup>34</sup>Teferra Tsehaye, 1977, p74.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p 74.

strengthen its position with legislation. The government asserted that the development of the education system was a priority, but the provision of government sponsored schools continued to be concentrated in Amharic-speaking areas, particularly in Shoa province. The allocation of resources also continued to favour Addis Ababa <sup>36</sup>. In most provinces, particularly those of the south-west, government schools were established only in the larger urban centres. This may reflect the predicament in which the Imperial regime found itself. In its final phase, retrenchment became an underlying feature of government policy, in response to the failure of the cultural transformation which it had sought to bring about in non-Amhara areas of the country, and the increasing incidents of unrest in these areas. The difficulties of introducing education in Amharic to areas in which the population could not speak the language had become apparent. Available government resources were more effectively employed in Amharic-speaking areas, leaving the other parts of the country to the Orthodox Church and missions <sup>37</sup>.

During Haile Sellassie's reign, all the official functions of government, including all government pronouncements and publications, were executed in Amharic <sup>38</sup>. Almost all printed material, whether government or private, was produced in Amharic <sup>39</sup>. Amharic was the only language used nationally in government administration, and its use was required, even at the most local level. The administration of the state relied on the use of Amharic.

The use of Amharic was also well-established in the Ethiopian judicial system. Cooper and Nahum argue that "judges in the secular courts used Amharic almost exclusively with each other, with witnesses, and with participants in the case... the advocates and prosecutors were likely to use the same language as did the judges."<sup>40</sup> However, plaintiffs, defendants, respondents and witnesses were allowed to use local languages, so that it was often necessary to use translators in court <sup>41</sup>. This effectively created a two tier

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<sup>36</sup> Haile Woldemikael, 1976, p331-332.

<sup>37</sup> Yilma Workineh (MOE), Addis Ababa, 14 /4/96

<sup>38</sup> Clapham, 1969, p87.

<sup>39</sup> A small amount of printed material continued to appear in Tigrinya.

<sup>40</sup> Cooper 1976c, p260.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p260.

structure of language use in the Ethiopian courts. Amharic was clearly the preferred language of the judiciary system, and the representatives of that system used the language almost exclusively. Other languages were used largely when a particular person was unfamiliar with Amharic. Although the use of local languages in the court was not proscribed, the use of Amharic by the establishment signified the status afforded to the language in relation to other languages, further underlining to rural populations their relative position in Ethiopian society. Once again the Amharic language was, in the minds of Ethiopians who did not speak it, a symbol of the repressive character of the state.

Although government policy failed to bring about the linguistic transformation which had originally been envisaged by Haile Sellassie, other social dynamics ensured the continued extension of the uses of Amharic. Urbanisation encouraged the use of Amharic as a lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication. Many of the larger urban centres developed in the Rift valley and other southern areas outside of the traditional Amhara region. The population of these towns was a fluid combination of Amharas, Oromos and Gurages, all of whom came to use Amharic <sup>42</sup>. During the reign of Haile Sellassie the vast majority of the population remained, as it still does, rural and completely dependent on agricultural production. The only route out of the agrarian environment was through the use of Amharic. Any form of employment in towns was entirely dependent on its use. Commerce, moreover, was largely conducted in Amharic, which acted as a national trading language. As the possibilities for escaping the rural environment gradually increased, so did the power which could be gained from fluency in Amharic. Although state sponsored Amharization had failed to encompass the entire population, dynamics which encouraged the adoption of the language had developed.

During the reign of Haile Sellassie it was impossible to succeed outside the agricultural sector without a high degree of fluency in Amharic <sup>43</sup>. Haile Sellassie's education policy encouraged the development of an educated elite which was dependent on the use of Amharic, but this elite remained small, and

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<sup>42</sup> Yilma Workineh (MOE), Addis Ababa 14/4/96.

<sup>43</sup> Clapham, 1990, p23.



widespread literacy in Amharic was not envisaged during his reign. The extent of spoken Amharic vastly exceeded that of literacy in Amharic, since the language spread through a variety of uses which were outside the scope of government policy but which nevertheless reinforced, and were reinforced by, the official position of Amharic.

### **The Derg : Centralism and veiled Amharization.**

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the pronouncements of the Derg largely took the form of attacks on the policies of the previous regime. The injustices of the existing situation in Ethiopia were presented as the results of the Imperial system of government. Government propaganda, contrasting the policies of the Imperial government with its own, socialist, policies, was actively transmitted to the population by all possible means, since the government was concerned to gain the support of the population, in order to forestall any attempts at counter revolution <sup>44</sup>. The language policies adopted by the Derg imitated those of the socialist states of eastern Europe, many of which are also linguistically diverse. Language policies were developed in response to Lenin's theories on the rights of nationalities, which include linguistic freedom as an integral part of the development of an egalitarian state <sup>45</sup>. Education and adult literacy programmes in minority languages had been introduced in the Soviet Union <sup>46</sup>, and the Marxist-Leninist regime in Ethiopia was concerned to follow this example.

The Derg asserted rights of self-determination for Ethiopia's nationalities, which were defined according to language <sup>47</sup>. These rights included the right to freedom from the forms of cultural, religious and linguistic domination which the Amharization policies of the Imperialist state had encouraged. Mengistu Haile-Mariam argued that the language policies of Haile Sellassie had been part of a deliberate strategy to increase the political hegemony of a dominant group, the Amhara. Amharic, he argued, had been imposed as an elite language in rural

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<sup>44</sup> McNab, 1989, p83.

<sup>45</sup> V.I.Lenin, 1954, p8.

<sup>46</sup> Kirkwood, 1989.

<sup>47</sup> McNab, 1989, p83.

areas of Ethiopia despite the fact that in some areas as little as 2% of the population were able to speak the language <sup>48</sup>. The education system, and patterns of literacy in Ethiopia, inherited by the Derg, were replete with imbalances. Statistics for education and literacy during the final decade of Haile Sellassie's government demonstrate both the unequal distribution of educational resources and the low levels of basic literacy. While government statistics produced a figure of 6% for the national literacy rate, that of adult males in the urban environment was 50% <sup>49</sup>. The Derg blamed the policies of the Imperial government for these inequalities. These policies, it was argued, had not only favoured the Amharic dominated urban environment, but had also discriminated against the female population within the towns by failing to encourage girls to participate in education. The provision of education in Ethiopia was limited. Nationally only 19% of primary school age children and 8% of secondary school age children were attending school, and only 1/2 % of the relevant age group were enrolled in the institutions of higher education <sup>50</sup>. Although these figures were produced as part of a propaganda exercise which was aimed primarily at discrediting the previous government, they nevertheless indicate, at least in rough terms, the extremely low levels of literacy and educational facilities in Ethiopia at the beginning of the Derg's period in power.

The drive to eradicate illiteracy amongst rural populations and women became a stated aim of government policy. In pursuance of this objective, the Derg launched the National Literacy Campaign in July 1979. The aims of the literacy campaign were, from the outset, clearly stated in terms of political goals as well as educational ones <sup>51</sup>. The Derg's policies were driven by the need for the population to take on the ideology of socialism, and that encouraged a concentration on adult literacy. Again, in opposition to the policies of the Imperial government, the Derg asserted the rights of all Ethiopia's peoples to develop and become literate in their own languages, and, consequently, fifteen languages were selected to cover 90% of the population <sup>52</sup>. These languages

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<sup>48</sup> McNab, 1984, p 719.

<sup>49</sup> McNab, 1984, p719.

<sup>50</sup> Legessa Lemma, 1984, p 331.

<sup>51</sup> National Literacy Campaign Coordinating Committee, 1986, p3.

<sup>52</sup> National Literacy Campaign Coordinating Committee, 1987, p15.

were Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, Oromo, Afar, Saho, Somali, Sidama, Gedeo, Hadiya, Kembata, Kaffa Mocha, Silti Gurage, Walaita and Kunama <sup>53</sup>. In urban areas with over 2000 inhabitants, where Amharic was customarily used by the entire population, literacy programmes were in Amharic <sup>54</sup>.

The local languages selected for use in the literacy campaign were transcribed in the Ethiopic script used by Amharic and Tigrinya. The use of a common script, it was hoped, would encourage mutual intelligibility and promote the ability of Ethiopians to achieve literacy in more than one language. Most of the languages used in the literacy campaign, with the exceptions of Amharic and Tigrinya, had previously been entirely restricted to oral use. Many were Cushitic languages that were very different from the Semitic languages of northern Ethiopia. The Ethiopic script was an unsuitable vehicle for these languages. It failed, for example, to allow for the greater number of vowel sounds that are present in Cushitic and Omotic languages, and to mark gemination, the doubling of consonants common to many Ethiopian languages. (In this respect the Ethiopic script fails to serve even the Semitic languages adequately).

Literacy programmes began by teaching adults to recognise and transcribe the characters of the Fidel <sup>55</sup>. Following this, simple texts, which invariably took the form of political propaganda, were used as the first learning materials. These non-formal literacy campaigns were conducted intensively in each area, each local campaign lasting about four months <sup>56</sup>. However, it proved impossible to find teachers and indeed teaching materials for many of the local languages, and often rural populations expressed a desire to learn Amharic as opposed to their local language <sup>57</sup>. Rural populations often regarded literacy in the local languages as pointless, and were not unaware of the opportunities which could be gained from learning Amharic, which was also the only language that could boast a substantial body of literature. These realities altered the nature of literacy programmes, which, in the field often

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<sup>53</sup> McNab, 1989, p85.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p85.

<sup>55</sup> The Ethiopian alphabet.

<sup>56</sup> Yalo Kebede, (teacher in National Literacy Campaign), (SOAS), London, 10/2/ 95.

<sup>57</sup> Chapter Six, p205.

switched from promoting literacy in local languages to providing literacy classes in Amharic, as a result of popular pressure. Teachers involved in the campaigns, all of whom been educated in Amharic, often welcomed this change. In some instances, teachers may have been responsible for encouraging rural populations to abandon education in the local languages because of the total absence of suitable materials, and the resultant difficulties associated with teaching. While this change was clearly in defiance of government policy, it went unchallenged, for a variety of reasons. These include those stated above, namely the support of local populations for education in Amharic and the difficulties involved in providing teaching in the local languages.

There were, however, other reasons for government ambivalence towards teaching in local languages, which continued to favour the use of Amharic. Firstly, Amharic was seen by educated Ethiopians, including many of those in the government, as an inherently superior language, and it was also, of course, the language with which those in power were most familiar. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, since all government material was produced in Amharic, literacy in Amharic best suited the practical purposes of the government. Furthermore, doubts about the viability of multilingual policies must have still been present in the minds of those in power since not only were multilingual states seen as unmanageably diverse, but also it was generally assumed that multilingual states were under-developed <sup>58</sup>.

The attitudes of rural populations towards the literacy campaign, and their desire to challenge or alter government policy, must also be set against a backdrop of increasing rural dissatisfaction with the government, as the effects of other policies became more keenly felt <sup>59</sup>. Rural resistance to government policies was muted, because of the fear of government reprisals, but wherever possible populations actively attempted to divert the course of government policy. This kind of resistance was common in the south-west of the country, and was a continued reflection of attitudes which had developed towards the Imperial government, and government in general. Attitudes towards education

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<sup>58</sup> Bamgbose, 1994, p37.

<sup>59</sup> Chapter One, p73-76.

in the south-west were hangovers from the previous period, when the position of Amharic had been established as the language of the state. As a result, many rural people had negative attitudes towards education, but some had also begun to realise the power that resulted from fluency in Amharic.

The Derg produced a range of statistics presenting the achievements of the literacy campaign, but neglected to provide any for literacy in each of the local languages. Instead the achievements of the campaigns were presented in regional terms, the issue of language was avoided <sup>60</sup>. The only statistics produced regarding the separate linguistic development of local languages were those for the production of textbooks in the various languages. These figures hint at the extent to which literacy in Amharic dominated the results of the campaign. Whereas more than 25 million Amharic books were distributed, the total number of books which were distributed in the other 14 languages was less than 15 million <sup>61</sup>. Of this 15 million, over 10 million were in the language of the Oromo, the only Cushitic language that was developed to any degree during the period of the Derg. The tables for the production of textbooks are the only ones in the volume in which the scale is inaccurately graduated, producing an unrealistic picture at first glance, and once again indicating both the Derg's failure to introduce local languages and its attempts to cover up the shortcomings of its campaign.

The government did not acknowledge the failure of the literacy campaign to use local languages, partly because its results were not at odds with its wider objectives. The overall levels of literacy in rural areas were being increased, and to an extent it did not matter whether literacy was achieved in local languages or in Amharic. The political ambitions of the government were, moreover, better served by literacy in Amharic.

Figures published in 1990 claimed that the level of literacy had been dramatically raised to 40% in 1984, after the first five years of the campaign, and then again to 76% by 1989 <sup>62</sup>. However, administrative staff and teachers involved in the campaign have argued that the criteria used to make these

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<sup>60</sup> National Literacy Campaign Coordinating committee, 1986, p17, graphs p 9-11.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p11.

<sup>62</sup> MOE, 1990, p34.

assessments were too basic in nature <sup>63</sup>. Often anyone who could write their own name was considered literate when the surveys were conducted. No guidelines for establishing literacy were produced by the Derg, and the exercise seems to have been concerned with propaganda. The overall effect of the National Literacy campaign is difficult to assess, although it is probably reasonable to conclude that it succeeded in increasing the levels of basic literacy in Amharic amongst the adult population in many rural areas <sup>64</sup>. It also coincided with the introduction of primary education into previously ignored areas of rural Ethiopia and may well have encouraged parents in rural areas to send their children to school.

The Derg made no corresponding attempt to introduce local languages into the primary education system, which continued in Amharic throughout Ethiopia. The Derg was somewhat successful in establishing new schools, often concurrently with villagisation. Higher percentages of children attended school during the period of the Derg than under Haile Sellassie's government, thus stimulating the geographical spread of Amharic, and the extension of its uses. While adult literacy in local languages was officially promoted by the Derg, primary education continued in Amharic. McNab describes the contradictions within the system which this created:

Ironically, the recognition of nationality rights, and their utilisation as adult education media of instruction comes at a time when the spread of Amharic seems to have gained momentum. This spread, although pre-dating the revolution, is likely to be accelerated by the policy of rural development. As schools are built in more remote areas, more children are brought into contact with Amharic. The literacy campaign, although through the medium of nationality languages, brings more adults into contact with speakers of the official language, Amharic. If there are schools in the area, their children are learning in Amharic.<sup>65</sup>

McNab's research was conducted during the campaign, before its full

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<sup>63</sup> Interviews Conducted at the MOE, Addis Ababa, with staff who were involved in the National Literacy Campaign as administrators or teachers (April 1996).

<sup>64</sup> Hoben, 1995, p185.

<sup>65</sup> McNab, 1989, p88.

implications could be assessed. She had, however, foreseen the difficulties that this duality of state language policy was likely to produce:

These separate language objectives for formal and nonformal education are problematic because at the classroom level, the two halves of the system do not operate in isolation from one another. In areas where there are still no primary schools, children from the age of eight upwards may attend literacy classes. When schools are built, they may then transfer to the formal education system. Adult graduates from literacy classes may also enrol in school, in evening classes, and follow the same curriculum as the children. School teachers and the older pupils work as volunteer instructors in the literacy programmes. The separate language policies can inhibit interaction between the formal and nonformal sectors, and thereby have a deleterious effect on education development. ....Awareness of the new attitude to nationalities, and to nationality languages as media of instruction, seems to be affecting language use in primary classes, whilst the importance of Amharic as the national language and language of formal education seems to influence adults' attitudes to the medium of instruction for literacy and post-literacy classes.<sup>66</sup>

The dislocation of policies for language use in formal and nonformal education in Ethiopia reflects established attitudes towards languages, and towards language use amongst educated people in the country. In addition to these cultural attitudes, the continued strengthening of the position of Amharic suited the purposes of the government. The government was actively concerned with establishing more effective forms of central control and the Amharic language continued to prove a useful tool in this process.

No attempt was made under the Derg to alter the official status of Amharic, which remained the officially designated national language in the new constitution. Early attempts to stimulate the use of local languages were largely employed as a political device, a visible manifestation of the nationalities policy. Apart from language it was hard to find acceptable forms of regional development, since the government was concerned to maintain the political control of the centre. The nationalities policy entailed the use of local languages, but the realities of the political situation required the use of a

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<sup>66</sup> McNab, 1989, p89.

national language. The net effect of the Derg's language and education policies was to strengthen the position of Amharic.

While Haile Sellassie's government had been concerned with the development of an Amharic-speaking educated elite, the Derg attempted to introduce literacy in Amharic to the entire population through primary education. The rebel armies which fought against, and eventually overthrew, the Derg, accused the government of covertly following precisely the same kind of repressive language policies which had been developed under the Imperial government. The reluctance to embrace a policy of overt Amharization on the part of the Derg was born of a need to demonstrate its willingness to bring about substantial social change in order to hold on to political power. This need forced the government to develop and adopt policies different from those of the previous government. Continuing a policy of overt Amharization would also have represented an ideological parting of company with the Russians, who were the Derg's most influential advisors in social development.

The failure of the Derg's policies was also due to the lack of an adequate infrastructural base to support the reform as to the inconsistencies in language policy presented above. The development of several previously unwritten languages required a greater investment of both money and manpower than was possible. Beyond matters of immediate practicality, the depth of reform implied by the development of local languages would have required a greater degree of self-determination of the ethnicities, and would therefore also have demanded a more radical restructuring of the political structures of the country than the Derg was willing to allow.

In terms of language policy, and language use in education, the situation in the south-west, at the beginning of the 1990s, was far from satisfactory. Government language policies, both official and unofficial, had, for more than a century, helped to alienate groups of people in the south-west from the state, and produced negative attitudes towards education.

After the replacement of the Derg by the government of Ato Meles Zenawi, policies had to be adopted that were different in character from the failed policies of the Derg. Given the persistent flavour of domination conveyed by the exclusive use of Amharic, it was also important to increase the role of the



local languages. But the use of local languages had to take a form that was different from that adopted by the Derg during the National literacy campaign, an unpopular use of local languages, which failed to win public acceptance or to stimulate the development of local languages. The reforms with which this thesis is concerned, which will be further discussed in Chapter Three, are an attempt to introduce the use of local languages at a fundamental level, which is intended to satisfy local demands for self-expression, and to produce equity for Ethiopia's various ethnic groups.

**Chapter three : Geopolitical and linguistic reform  
in Ethiopia in the 1990s.**

**Introduction: a brief history of Ethiopia's geopolitical divisions.**

Historically, the Ethiopian state comprised several established kingdoms, none of which were defined by their ethnic or linguistic character. Their borders were established over several centuries as a result of the patterns of conquest and expansion of the Imperial state, and of the internal competition between factions of the northern nobility. As a result of Menelik's extensive conquests of the late-nineteenth century, the state was enlarged to include areas outside the established kingdoms of the north. Ethiopia's national borders were established by Emperor Menelik in response to the encroachment of the European colonial powers in the Horn of Africa. Menelik's Ethiopia did not include Eritrea, which became an Italian colony in the late nineteenth century <sup>1</sup>. Both the changing character of the state, and its increased size, necessitated a restructuring of Ethiopia's geopolitical units which would enable greater administrative control to be exercised by the centre. The first attempt to introduce a more regular administrative structure was the division of the Ethiopian state into thirty-four provinces, each with a Governor General directly responsible to the central government, in the first decade of the twentieth century <sup>2</sup>. In the south-west of Ethiopia these divisions reflected, to some extent, the ethnic or linguistic units of population. The area which is now covered by the SNNPR comprised twelve provinces <sup>3</sup>, and a degree of consistency can be seen between their names and those of the present zones and special woredas of the SNNPR, although the geographical areas covered by units which bear the same name are by no means congruent.

Ethiopia was divided according to ethnicity or language in the period of the Italian occupation: the country was divided into five regions, based on Italian

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<sup>1</sup> Eritrea's borders were first recognised by the treaty of Wichale in 1889(Bahru Zewde, 1991, p74 -75), and have remained the same throughout its history. Ethiopia's present borders are, therefore, identical to those of Menelik's state.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion of Ethiopia's geopolitical divisions has benefited greatly from interviews with Ato Emanuel of the Geographical Department of the Election Board in Addis Ababa in February 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Shack, 1966, p6, provides a map of these divisions.

perceptions of Ethiopian ethnicity<sup>4</sup>. These rudimentary divisions in fact had little to do with the actual distribution of ethnic or linguistic groups. The Oromo, for example, were divided between the Shoa, Galla and Somali regions, while the Galla region included the great diversity of groups of people found in the south-west of the country.

In the 1940s, under Haile Sellassie's government, the country was divided into fourteen larger provinces<sup>5</sup>. These provinces were internally divided into smaller units (*awrajas*) that resembled in size, and also often in boundaries, the provinces of Menelik's era. The borders of the new larger provinces were based on a combination of well established historical boundaries and a desire to increase administrative efficiency<sup>6</sup>. Shoa was situated in the geographical centre of the country, with the other provinces fanning out from its borders. The provincial capitals were located in the area of each province that were most accessible from Addis Ababa. The Derg left the structure of fourteen provinces unchanged for many purposes<sup>7</sup>. In 1987, however, thirty smaller units, of varying size and character, were established for the purposes of local administration<sup>8</sup>. Five of these units (Eritrea, Tigray, Ogaden, the Red Sea port of Assab and Dire Dawa, which included Harar), that were felt to be politically sensitive, were given a greater degree of local autonomy in an attempt to assuage their demands for independence or their tendency to cause problems for the central state<sup>9</sup>. The government had recognised that the geopolitical structures of the country failed to represent the peoples of Ethiopia in the social units into which they perceived themselves as being divided, and that, for Ethiopia to be held together, reform of the geopolitical structure of the country was essential. By recognising the special status of these areas, the Derg set a precedent for the present government's division of Ethiopia according to ethnicity.

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<sup>4</sup> McNab, 1989, p78. Ato Emmanuel, Feb 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Map One, Appendix One, p301.

<sup>6</sup> Ato Emmanuel, February 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Clapham, 1988, p201.

<sup>8</sup> Clapham, 1990, p248, provides a map of these divisions.

<sup>9</sup> McNab, 1989, p49. Clapham, 1988, p 195-201.

## Geopolitical reform under the government of Ato Meles Zenawi.

The present government of Ethiopia has employed the distribution of Ethiopia's most populous ethnic or linguistic groups as the basis for redrawing the geopolitical divisions in the country. The government had little option but to adopt this course of action, since the revolution which overthrew the Derg was achieved by the combined insurgence of separate rebel armies, each of which was regionally based and ostensibly derived from a distinct ethnic or linguistic group. Each of these liberation armies demanded a greater degree of control over the processes of development for the peoples they claimed to represent, some going so far as to demand independence, or at least autonomy within the state. The redefinition of Ethiopia's internal borders was, therefore, necessary, in order to satisfy the demands of Ethiopia's constituent groups of people, and to avoid the persistence of regional liberation movements.

After assuming power in 1991 the Transitional government rapidly embarked on the most radical restructuring of Ethiopia's geopolitical divisions which has swept away all previous internal divisions, except at the most local level <sup>10</sup>. The primary significance of the redrawing of Ethiopia's internal borders is that it is accompanied by a devolution of power, as a result, each of Ethiopia's major ethnic or linguistic groups is now able to exercise a much greater degree of control over its internal development, than under the governments of Haile Sellassie or the Derg. Adopting such a radical reform has also enabled the government to present all previous attempts at nationality development by its predecessors as superficial.

The government initially divided Ethiopia <sup>11</sup> into fourteen regions based on the distribution of major language groups <sup>12</sup>. Five of the smaller regions, in the south-west of the country, subsequently joined together by mutual agreement in order to form the SNNPR. In 1995 the government established a federal structure of nine states, each with its own president and assembly, which together form the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. These states

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<sup>10</sup> Woreda and Kebele borders have been maintained in many areas.

<sup>11</sup> Ethiopia no longer included Eritrea which had become an independent state.

<sup>12</sup> Map Two, Appendix One, p302.

are Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromo, Somali, Bani-Shangul, Gambela, the SNNPR, and the city of Harar. Addis Ababa (region fourteen) has its own administration, and continues to act as the federal capital. The intention of the government is to develop a federal structure that will allow each region to control aspects of its own development, thus averting conflicts of the type which brought down the Derg, and avoiding further divisions of the country which would create severe economic and social problems. The regions are represented in the assembly of the central government in proportion to the size of their respective populations.

Some continuity can be seen in the geopolitical divisions of Ethiopia, in spite of the different criteria which have been employed in creating the divisions. Those areas recognised as sensitive by the Derg have continued to enjoy some kind of special status in the present redivision. In the south-west of the country the geopolitical units resemble, to some extent, the smaller provinces of the Menelik era, or the awrajas of Haile Sellassie's era. This is, however, as far as any continuity goes: to all intents and purposes, the political map of Ethiopia has been entirely redrawn, and now resembles more closely the distribution of Ethiopia's language groups <sup>13</sup>.

Although none of Ethiopia's regions is linguistically homogeneous, they reflect, the broad linguistic divisions within the country. Most of Ethiopia's regions are each now dominated by the speakers of one language. The SNNPR, Gambela and Bani Shangul, however, are all areas of linguistic diversity, in which no single language group represents an absolute majority. Of these three regions, only the SNNPR contains substantial groups of people who represent more than one per cent of the national population, and it is these larger groups that are the subject of this thesis <sup>14</sup>.

The division of the Ethiopian state according to ethnicity has been enshrined in the new Constitution. The rights of territorial sovereignty have been asserted among the rights of self-determination of Ethiopia's peoples. Articles 39.1 and 39.3 of the Constitution state that:

1. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.

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<sup>13</sup> Compare maps Two and Three , Appendix One, p302 & 303.

<sup>14</sup> A detailed analysis of these peoples will appear in Chapter Five.

3. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to an equitable representation in the state assembly.<sup>15</sup>

The implication of the above articles is that all internal aspects of government within each region will be controlled by the regional government and not by the central government in Addis Ababa, which will largely be concerned with issues of national significance. However, it is not clearly stated in the constitution that it is upon the regional governments that the central authorities are seeking to devolve power, but rather to the constituent groups of people, which, in the constitution are referred to as 'Nations, Nationalities and Peoples'. The assertions in the constitution inevitably invite the question of how these social groupings are to be defined, and Article 39.5 provides a definition:

5. A "Nation, Nationality and People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.<sup>16</sup>

Of the criteria listed in Article 39.5 the most definite are shared language and territorial integrity, and it seems that, to a large extent, it has been these two factors which have been relied upon in establishing the country's geopolitical divisions. The Constitution does not state whether a given group must display all the criteria listed under Article 39.5, or whether some criteria alone are sufficient for a given group to be regarded as a nation, a nationality or a people. (Each of these terms, it seems, could also be substituted for the single term 'ethnicity'). The phrasing of the article suggests that it is necessary to satisfy all of the stated criteria, but if this is the case then many recognisable ethnic groups within the state would not be afforded such status, since they do not fulfil all the criteria. The Amhara, for example, although predominantly settled in the northern highlands, are found throughout Ethiopia, particularly in urban areas.

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<sup>15</sup>Constitution of Ethiopia, 1994, p19.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p20.

These urban Amharas are not less 'Amhara' than the peasantry of the Amhara region, they speak Amharic as a mother tongue, and most are Orthodox Christians, but, the cultural identity of urban Amharas is somewhat removed from that of the peasantry of the northern highlands. The Oromo, considered as a nation, nationality, or ethnic group contains Muslims and Christians, and groups of people who continue to adhere to traditional belief systems. The cultural or psychological climate in the Oromo region is very diverse. In the south, the Borana continue to follow a pastoralist lifestyle and adhere to the gada system of age-graded social organisation. The Arsi and Kereyu in the eastern highlands, are organised in clans and are Muslim. In the west, in the former provinces of Wellega, and in Shoa, where the influence of the state has been stronger than in other Oromo areas, the Oromo population has adopted much more of the characteristics of northern Ethiopia: they are agriculturalists and Orthodox Christians. Furthermore, the language of the Oromo is varied, with dialectal extremities that are not instantly mutually intelligible. Yet the Oromo are recognised as a coherent group of people under the present redefinition of Ethiopia's political structure. Other recognisable groups of people, however they are defined, also encompass social, linguistic and religious diversity. In the SNNPR the Gurage are regarded as a single ethnic group, but contain groups of people speaking several different languages, which are only related by the fact that they come from the Semitic language family. Many sizable groups of people in the Ethiopian state seem to contain some internal divisions that defy the definition in the Constitution.

It would appear that the definition in the Constitution is more suitably applied to smaller, more narrowly conceived groups of people in the state, and would allow the smallest, those with less than 50,000 members, to claim the rights stated in points 1 and 3 of Article 39 quoted above. But, it would be practically impossible for such groups to demand the right to secede, or to claim to be in a position to establish self-governing units. In practice the right to secede is theoretical, the implications for the state should any of the regions choose to secede would prevent the government from allowing it, but the government must be seen to be accommodating the desires of all constituent groups of people in the state.

A similar point can be made about the provision in the Constitution for the creation of new states within the existing structure, should a group of people within a state wish to secede from the region in which it is contained. Article 47.2 states that

2. Nations, Nationalities and Peoples within the states....have the right to establish, at any time , their own states.<sup>17</sup>

This implies an acceptance on the part of the government that the current divisions may have to be reviewed and that other groups within the state may demand more effective local representation, and constitutes a recognition of the fact the the regions are not homogeneous. Article 47.3 outlines the criteria, and the procedure, by means of which groups of people within the state could make such a claim for their own geopolitical unit. As yet no groups of people seem to have made such a claim. But a group of people that wished to make such a claim might not have the ability to do so, since they would, under the present divisions, be submerged within a region in which they constitute a minority and probably have no political representation. The regional authorities would not find it difficult to suppress any such demands. In the SNNPR the problem of representing the various language groups has been solved, to a certain extent, by dividing the region into zones and special woredas. Each of these units is defined by language, except for South Omo and Bench-Maji, which are areas of great linguistic diversity<sup>18</sup>. Minorities exist within all of the geopolitical units of the SNNPR, and often these groups of people appear marginalised.

The phrasing of Article 39.5 would suggest that it claims to include all of Ethiopia's constituent groups under one or other of the three categories (nation, nationality, people), however there is no discussion of what constitutes each kind of status. The Constitution would seem to imply that groups of people in Ethiopia should be regarded as either nations, nationalities or peoples. It does not state, for example, what, in this context, makes a nation different from a nationality. Furthermore, both nations and nationalities could surely also be

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<sup>17</sup> Constitution,1994, p25.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion of the geopolitical units of the SNNPR in Chapter Five, p153-157. Maps Five and Six, Appendix One, p305 & p306.



regarded as peoples, the most general term that could be used to represent social groups. As stated above, all three categories could be considered ethnicities. The Constitution fails to distinguish between these categories and seems to have employed this rather vague terminology in the hope of avoiding highly sensitive questions about what the nature, and therefore status, of groups of people in the Ethiopian state is. It is, perhaps, most useful to define the attitude expressed in the Constitution thus, that linguistic and territorial criteria are necessary for the definition of all groups of people, whilst the other criteria are used to back up these two, implying that other factors of a less easily defined nature can remain important in establishing the identity of a group, which seeks to assert the stated rights.

The ethos of the geopolitical reforms of the government, implying the devolution of power from the centre, is that each unit, of whatever size, should have as much control over aspects of internal government as possible. Precisely what these aspects of government should be often remains unclear. In the specific issue of language use in education in the SNNPR, which is the only issue in which the present discussion can offer definite observations, there is often a great deal of confusion amongst the relevant actors in the process about which powers should be invoked by the woreda, zone or regional authorities, or different departments of the Ministry of Education (MOE). It remains unclear whether decisions can be made without first obtaining some form of permission or acceptance from a higher, even central, authority. In many cases a kind of laissez faire attitude has been adopted by the regional authorities in the SNNPR. Smaller units tend to have freedom of action and the problem is often that, in the absence of clear directives from a more central body, the local units are unable to benefit from any discussion of difficulties that have been experienced and solutions that have been developed in other areas. This situation has several results. It places a responsibility that is perhaps too burdensome on local staff, who feel that they do not have the necessary experience to make such decisions. At times local decision-making processes are snagged by misconceptions, or fear of taking 'wrong' decisions. However, some highly constructive locally generated forms of action have been enabled

by local decision-making <sup>19</sup>.

Much is decided in the local area, if only because larger authorities are often unwilling to make policy statements or directives that should be applied across the board. The regional authorities are only too aware of the diversity of conditions and the differing nature of problems in different areas of the SNNPR, and are, therefore, unwilling to dictate that development must follow a particular course. These difficulties are experienced throughout the administrative system: the problem it is not confined to the education system. The uncertainty about where decision-making power lies is a commonly experienced problem that has resulted from the devolution of power from the centre.

The diversity of conditions in the SNNPR, and the climate of uncertainty about where the power to make decisions lies has led to a variety of responses from the various administrative units in the SNNPR to the introduction of the reform with which this thesis is concerned. This variation, at times, relates to the different manner in which central policies are perceived by local MOE staff. In some areas little will be done other than what has been made explicit in the form of direct instructions from the regional government, in other areas again the lack of clear directives has been seized upon as an opportunity to facilitate locally generated initiatives <sup>20</sup>.

### **Language planning issues in Ethiopia in the 1990s.**

As in the time of previous Ethiopian governments, language issues are at the forefront of the national political debate which seeks to encourage the separate development of Ethiopia's constituent nationalities. Language remains the most obvious feature that may be employed to differentiate many of Ethiopia's peoples, and, consequently, any separate development is most easily conceived of in linguistic terms. Article 39.2 of the Constitution asserts the linguistic rights of groups of people in the state,

2. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote

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<sup>19</sup> These themes will recur in the discussion of the field-work in Chapters Six-Nine.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter Seven, p226.

its culture; and to preserve its history.<sup>21</sup>

The exercise of these rights has led to a fundamental reform in education and in other areas where language is directly involved, such as the judiciary and local administration. The education system, where changes are felt by a substantial proportion of the population remains an important focus of government language policy. The field-work, the results of which will be presented in later sections, is concerned with the use of languages in the primary education system in the SNNPR, and observations about the government's linguistic reforms are, consequently, based on the results of their implementation in that sector. Although that is an undoubted limitation of this thesis, it remains the case that, in Ethiopia, the most widespread official use of language is in the education sector, and therefore it is an important area in which to consider the effects of government language policy.

While the discussion of language planning as such in Ethiopia in the existing literature is fairly limited, there is a body of literature that raises issues of importance to the discussion of language planning in Africa, which raises theoretical and practical considerations that have relevance to the Ethiopian case. Throughout Africa language planning is of fundamental importance to the state. African governments are, in general, primarily concerned with furthering the development process, and successful state development, it is often assumed, relies on increasing access to education for all sections of population, and is, therefore, inherently dependent on policy with respect to language use. Education is often the focus of government language planning exercises elsewhere in Africa <sup>22</sup>.

Virtually all of Africa's states are multilingual, but it has generally been thought that it will only be through the use of one language that the kind of development which governments have sought to foster can be achieved. It has also often been assumed that the use of one language is, in addition to facilitating development, a prerequisite for the formation of national unity against the existing background of diversity<sup>23</sup>. By encouraging the use of a

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<sup>21</sup> Constitution, 1994, p 19.

<sup>22</sup> Bamgbose, 1991, p62.

<sup>23</sup> Fardon and Furniss, 1994, Introduction . Bamgbose, 1994.

single national language governments hope not only to enable communication among all of the citizens, but also to provide the country with a symbol of national unity. Language policies are, as a result, formulated in response to both practical circumstances and political aspirations, and attempt to reconcile both of these considerations.

In addition to the positive benefits which, it is hoped, will accrue from promoting a single national language, developing several languages has been regarded as impractical for several reasons. Firstly, the development of several languages is correctly thought to be costly and complicated <sup>24</sup>. A state, particularly one like Ethiopia, which is experiencing long-term economic difficulties, may not have the resources and expertise to develop several languages for a wide range of purposes. Secondly, even if it is possible to develop several languages, a host of questions emerge as serious problems for the government. These include concerns about how the members of the various linguistic groups within the state communicate with each other, what will happen in areas of the country where more than one language is spoken, and how will equity among the various languages be achieved. Multilingual policies are often seen as possible sources of division which, while satisfying local demands for self-expression, compromise the wider objectives of the state. Multilingual language policies seem to raise more problematic issues than monolingual language policies. The governments of Haile Sellassie and the Derg certainly adhered to this view <sup>25</sup>.

Linguistic diversity, and the ethnic diversity which it represents, has usually been regarded as problematic, a source of difficulty for the state, because they have been seen as barriers both to development and to the search for national cohesion<sup>26</sup>. It has often been assumed, moreover, that monolingual states are by definition more developed, or at least easier to develop than multilingual states. For these reasons, African governments, including the previous governments of Ethiopia, have invariably sought to promote a single national language and this has, at times, created an enduring

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<sup>24</sup> Fardon & Furniss, 1994, p1.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter Two, p81, p91 & p94-95.

<sup>26</sup> Fardon and Furniss, 1994, p10-13.

tension between the broadest objectives of state development and the desires of regional or local groups of people within the state to use their own languages. Governments have expected that single-language language policies will be beneficial to the state. But experience of such policies, in Ethiopia and elsewhere, has shown that the stated expectation is often mistaken, and the problems which are avoided by promoting one language may, in fact be less serious than those which are created by it.

Single-language language policies inevitably appear to favour the group that speaks the chosen language as a mother tongue. Invariably the language that is selected as the national language will be that of a powerful group within the state, often the language of the most populous group which is also likely to be politically dominant. The decision to install the language of this group as a national language can not help but appear to further underline the dominant position of the group in the state. The status of that group may become increasingly resented, and the national language can become a symbol of domination and oppression to other groups of people within the state who feel that their languages and ethnicities are being marginalised. This has the unintended effect of sharpening the awareness of differences, and possibly even of creating divisions where previously differences may not have been perceived as threatening.

In Ethiopia governmental promotion of the Amharic language, and its endorsement as the national language by successive governments, have encouraged the view that the Amhara are a dominant group within society, even though many Amhara communities are among the most underprivileged people in the Ethiopian state. It is not the Amhara as such that have dominated the state, but a section of society that is made up, to a large extent, of Amharas. The language policies of both the Imperial government and the Derg were seen by many Ethiopians as a manifestation of Amhara ethnic domination in the state, and have, therefore, contributed to the general resentment, keenly felt by many groups of people in Ethiopia, towards all aspects of government in the country. The use of the Amharic language as a national language in Ethiopia has, however, been virtually unavoidable, given the long established patterns of use of the language as a national lingua franca. While the use of the language itself

is not necessarily felt to be burdensome, the manner in which Ethiopian governments have sought to enforce the use of the language has been perceived as oppressive. The language in its official role has, thereby, become a symbol of domination, yet, those who perceive it as such may not resent using it for certain purposes. It is, no doubt, the exclusive use of Amharic that has been felt to be oppressive. Therefore, any attempt to sponsor language planning reforms in Ethiopia, if it is to be accepted by the population, must be based on an enlarged role for other languages, and even though Amharic may retain its status as a national language, its overall position of hegemony in education and other official sectors had to be altered in order for groups of people who do not speak Amharic to take the linguistic reforms of the government seriously. This means that the government has had to adopt a multilingual solution to the problem of formulating a suitable language policy for Ethiopia.

It has been said, in response to the argument that monolingual states tend to be developed, that it is levels of education and literacy, and not the use of a single language which accelerates the development process. Bamgbose argues that

Since literacy liberates untapped human potential and leads to increased productivity and better living conditions, it is not surprising that countries with the highest rates of literacy are also the most economically advanced<sup>27</sup>.

In general those countries which have higher rates of literacy have also achieved a greater degree of linguistic uniformity, but it does not follow that literacy is dependent on the use of one language in the state. The common assumption that linguistic diversity constitutes a problem has been challenged. Sociolinguistics have argued instead that the presence of several languages within the state should be regarded as a resource that should be properly developed. Stated in abstract terms this view appears idealistic. The argument has been developed, however, in a practical context that demonstrates the practical benefits of using the linguistic diversity within the state to increase levels of literacy, and therefore, it is assumed, development. Bamgbose argues

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<sup>27</sup> Bamgbose, 1991, p7.

that in order for development to reach its maximum potential, it should be conceived of in terms of 'total human development', and this, he argues, implies the use of indigenous languages in the education system and in the mass media<sup>28</sup>. Of particular importance is the use of local languages in the primary education system, which is the first point of contact between individuals and patterns of state language use. In the absence of the use of local languages, sections of society remain outside of the national life and are, therefore, likely to see the state as oppressive, this in turn creates problems for the state since this resentment inevitably finds some expression. A multilingual language policy is, therefore, potentially harmonious with the objectives of state development since it may release untapped human potential by increasing levels of education, which is made more accessible to previously marginalised groups of people within the state, and this in turn will lessen their feeling of alienation or resentment towards the state.

This, in essence, is the reasoning behind the introduction of local languages for the purpose of primary education in Ethiopia. It is hoped that it will maximise the participation in primary education, and in the activities of the state more generally, of Ethiopia's constituent linguistic groups, particularly those who do not speak Amharic as a mother tongue and represent the great majority of the population of the country, by providing at least the early stages of education in a language which they readily understand. This in turn, it is hoped, will accelerate the processes of development within the country by creating a greater proportion of literates and by encouraging people to identify with the state.

It would, however, be naive to suggest that simply by adopting a multilingual language policy the Ethiopian government can resolve all the language policy problems that it is facing. The decision by a government to choose which languages are to be promoted for which purposes in the state, and the differentiation of the uses of languages inevitably creates a hierarchy where the speakers of languages that are selected for official functions within the state are often seen to be in a superior position within the state to the

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p7.

speakers of other languages <sup>29</sup>. Languages are different, and some are suitable for roles that others are not, whether because of the patterns of their distribution or the level of development which they have attained. Even if choices are made on the most practical criteria of suitability, it will often appear that the government is showing bias in which languages it selects for which purposes. In Ethiopia the continued use of Amharic as a national language reflects its position as an effective means of national communication: any attempt to replace it with another Ethiopian language would ultimately be doomed to failure because of the already well-established and unassailable position of the language. However, governmental promotion of Amharic cannot help but appear to some sections of the population to be little more than the continued endorsement of the superior position of the language, and the section of society associated with it, by the Ethiopian state.

In fact, languages assume different roles in society regardless of government policy, and policies are, at times unable to alter the underlying patterns of language use. All languages are influenced by patterns of contact with other languages, often in a state of constant, although slow, evolution. The importance of some languages may increase as they are adopted by sections of society which do not use them as mother tongues: thus a language may spread as a means of inter ethnic communication, becoming a regional or even a national lingua franca. The complex patterns of language use are hard to examine, impossible to quantify, and very difficult for the government to shape or control, especially in a state like Ethiopia with its great linguistic diversity, and lack of a developed government infrastructure. Nevertheless, governments, particularly of states like Ethiopia where language has become such a charged issue must engage with the issue, and attempt to develop suitable language policies. The absence of reforming policies serves only to perpetuate situations in which some sections of society will continue to feel marginalised and will, as a result, continue to be potential sources of difficulty for the government.

In many states there is no explicit language policy, and no discussion of language status at a governmental level. Eastman, however, argues that "No societies exist without a language policy, although language policies exist

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<sup>29</sup>Fardon and Furniss, 1994, p14.



implicitly and in the absence of planning' <sup>30</sup> . Bamgbose criticises the lack of coherent language policies in many African states and argues that

Avoidance of policy formulation is an attractive technique because it frees the government from the unpleasant political consequences of any pronouncement which some sections of the community may find objectionable...Several African governments appear to employ the avoidance technique, as can be illustrated by the fact that very few African countries have definitive statements on language policy <sup>31</sup> .

The attempt by the Ethiopian government to address linguistic issues squarely, and to introduce local languages for a wide range of purposes within the state has exposed the government to criticism from several angles. It has been argued that the policy is divisive because it shows the government's willingness to divide the country according to ethnicity and, thereby, contributes to the erosion of the existing basis of national unity, which depends on inter ethnic communication and cooperation. It is also argued that the policy will restrict movement across administrative units, thereby disrupting existing patterns of exchange between different areas and contact between different peoples <sup>32</sup>. Finally, it has been suggested that it may disadvantage those peoples who are, in response to the governments reforms of language use, now using their own languages since they will have less access to the state than those who are educated in Amharic, and will as a result become increasingly marginalised <sup>33</sup>.

Given this complex background of both political and practical difficulties affecting the decision making process, it appears that a language policy, no matter how carefully it is formulated, will fail to satisfy all the aspirations of the population. Some sections of society are bound to disagree with it. Because, moreover, the reaction to a language policy is potentially so diverse, it is virtually impossible to predict what its effects will be. A government when developing a particular policy is merely hoping to bring a desired situation into

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<sup>30</sup> Eastman, 1983, p 6.

<sup>31</sup> Bamgbose, 1991, p112.

<sup>32</sup> See below , p120.

<sup>33</sup> See below , p123.

being, because that situation is felt to be beneficial in one way or another, but there is no guarantee that it will produce the desired results. It has, indeed, been argued that state language policy inevitably tries to achieve unobtainable goals. Fardon and Furniss have made the following observation:

The state may sponsor a vision of language use within the limits it can bring about; but it cannot legislate a desired situation into being nor can it determine how people will interpret the changes it sponsors.

All too often a species of linguistic bad faith finds the state programmatically sponsoring one set of initiatives while pragmatically reinforcing another whether by intention or not. <sup>34</sup>

This point is central to the discussion of language use and the development of the state. While policies may set out to realise a set of clearly stated objectives, there is no guarantee that they will be achieved. The intention of a policy may be perceived differently by those upon whom it is implemented, than has been the intention of the government. Different groups of people may react to policies in a variety of ways, sometimes in response to practical or pragmatic considerations, equally often because of the political climate.

The implementation of policies may also divert the original course of the policies <sup>35</sup>. The gap between the articulation of policy and its implementation is often great, for a variety of reasons, not least of which in Ethiopia are the severe difficulties which are confronted in attempting to finance and realise the practicalities of linguistic reform, and the lack of a developed infrastructure. There is, moreover, often a lack of clarity about what the purpose of a policy is on the part of those who are expected to implement it. Often, in response to these difficulties, reforms will be only half heartedly implemented, and the goals of the government will remain largely in the realm of political aspiration, while the linguistic profile of the state continues to evolve in response to a large number of factors, of which government policy is merely one.

Given the difficulties of formulating a suitable language policy for a

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<sup>34</sup>Fardon and Furniss, 1994, p18.

<sup>35</sup> A classic example of the divergence of policy and practice can be found in Chapter Two, p90-91. The National Literacy Campaign, while attempting to sponsor the development of local languages and reduce the domination of Amharic, actually enhanced the position of Amharic in respect of those languages by introducing it more firmly into the rural environment.

multilingual state, what course of action can a government reasonably be expected to adopt? Eastman argues that, while following a political programme which is designed to achieve certain defined goals in terms of language policy is desirable, it should also be recognised that policies are likely to fail unless they are broadly supported by the population, since people cannot be coerced into using a particular language for a particular purpose. Eastman asserts that language planners have a moral responsibility, and she argues that,

If the speech community in question does not accept the purposes, goals and recommendations of language use established by politicians and educators on the advice of sociolinguists, no matter how sensible the plan is, it cannot be successful<sup>36</sup>.

A language planning exercise must, therefore, be realistic in the direction which it adopts, and should, as far as possible, be based on the existing desires of given local populations as much as on the political agenda of the government. Public consultation implies a high degree of research being conducted into language attitudes before policies are formulated, and often this is not even attempted. Without adequate preliminary research, government language policies are operating on a trial and error basis, imposing policies on a population with little idea of how it will react. In addition to preliminary research, regular reappraisals of policy and practice, and consequent readjustments are necessary to prevent a policy from failing to achieve its objectives. Again, this implies that repeated research into the effects of policies is essential. Language planning exercises would seem to be doomed to failure unless they benefit from two different kinds of support. Firstly, a language planning exercise cannot be successful unless the government provides the necessary financial and infrastructural support for it. Secondly, the policies must be in harmony with the existing aspirations and desires of the population, which is often comprised of several groups of people, each speaking a different language. No amount of infrastructural provision can make up for an unpopular policy, and a policy with broad popular support may, nevertheless, fail to achieve the desired results if the necessary infrastructural support is lacking.

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<sup>36</sup> Eastman, 1983, p5.

## Languages in education in Ethiopia in the 1990s

The language reform of the education system in Ethiopia was started during the first year of the Transitional government, and has been undertaken at a remarkably swift pace<sup>37</sup>. Prior to the introduction of the reform there was no public consultation to establish popular support for the policy: it was simply assumed by both central and regional authorities that Ethiopia's constituent language groups would favour using their own languages for an enlarged set of functions. The infrastructure had, moreover, not been developed to an extent that would enable it to cope with the reform. It was, however, politically expedient that the reform should be implemented as early as possible. This was largely because linguistic reform is a highly visible manifestation of the nationalities policy<sup>38</sup>: the reform of language use in the education system has been widely publicised, and is experienced by the rural population even in many remote areas.

At first glance, it would be reasonable to suppose that the reforms of language use in education are doomed to failure because of the lack of public consultation and the general low level of resources available to the education system in Ethiopia. It would be possible to argue that the reform was introduced merely in response to the political agendas of the government. The reactions of defined sections of the population to the reform, however, which will be detailed in later sections<sup>39</sup>, demonstrate that, while the education system in Ethiopia is clearly under great strain, the change of the language of primary education is, in many areas, producing important results, and substantial sections of the population are clearly in favour of local language primary education. It is observed, however, that the lack of resources available in the system, and the lack of prior public consultation, have had a negative effect on the success of the reform, as has the great speed at which the reform has been introduced.

The government is not unaware of the general background of problems facing the education system in the country. The Education and Training policy of

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<sup>37</sup> Chapter Four provides a discussion of the implementation of the reform in the SNNPR.

<sup>38</sup> See above, p100-101

<sup>39</sup> Chapters Six-Nine.

the government, published in 1994, states in the introduction that

To date, it is known that our country's education is entangled with complex problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity....Inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, overcrowded classes, shortage of books and other teaching materials all indicate the low quality of education provided....The gross participation rate in primary education is below 22% of the relevant age cohort. Of these a large number discontinues and relapse into illiteracy.<sup>40</sup>

During the course of the field-work the problems mentioned in the above passage emerged as the principal concerns for the staff of the MOE in the SNNPR. Without having ample resources at its disposal, the government is clearly unable to address at one time all the complex issues involved in improving the quality of primary education in Ethiopia. A much greater level of investment would be necessary in order to solve the problems that already exist within the system. Linguistic reform goes some way to addressing the problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity. But other, perhaps more tangible, problems facing the education system are dependent on increased levels of investment, and so the education system continues to operate under a high degree of strain. The reform of language use at one time alleviates some of the existing problems in the classroom, and also creates a new set of strains. This strain is felt, in the main, in the classroom by teaching staff and students.

The focus of the government's language reforms in education is the primary education sector. The implementation of reform in the education sector has necessitated a change of the roles that the languages in question adopt. Languages in education can be employed in three different ways: as a means of inducing basic literacy, as subjects in their own right, and as the medium of instruction (MOI) in which other subjects are taught. If a language is to be used only for the purpose of introducing education and producing basic literacy, it can only be used in this restricted manner for a short period of time, and its use may even remain oral. It may simply be used to teach another language which then becomes the language of education and literacy. In Ethiopia some local

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<sup>40</sup>MOE, 1994a, p2.

languages have been used in this manner, most notably by missionaries, but in general it is Amharic that has been used to introduce education and literacy to primary school children.

Languages which are employed as MOI must be developed to a certain extent, they must, for example, have achieved some degree of standardisation<sup>41</sup>, and their vocabularies must contain the words necessary to convey the concepts that are important in education. A language which is employed as the MOI is usually a widely used language in which there is an existing body of available literature. Accordingly, by no means all languages will be considered suitable as media of instruction. Any language can, however, be taught as a subject, sometimes through the use of another language, which is then acting as the MOI. In Ethiopia, Amharic has historically been the MOI for all subjects at the primary level, and both Amharic and English have been taught as subjects. At secondary level the nature of this relationship has been reversed, with Amharic and English continuing to be taught as a subjects, and English being employed as the MOI for most subjects. This is largely due to the widely held view that English is more suitable for the upper levels of education, since the necessary vocabulary already exists in the language and there is also a readily available body of relevant literature in the language.

There are also three broad groupings of languages which may be used in the education system of multilingual states: mother tongues, national languages and languages of wider communication (typically European languages). The choice to be made by governments is which language to introduce for what purpose at what stage of education<sup>42</sup>. Mother tongues are usually only employed in the search for widespread literacy<sup>43</sup>, or in primary education as an initial means of introducing education and literacy to children. They may, however, also be employed as the MOI for primary education, as in the case of the present reforms in Ethiopia. A national language is typically employed as the language of literacy and as the MOI for most subjects throughout the school system<sup>44</sup>. This practice, however, tends to erect a

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<sup>41</sup> Chapter Four , p130.

<sup>42</sup> Bambgose, 1991, p64.

<sup>43</sup> As in the case of the Derg.

<sup>44</sup> As in the case of Haile Sellassie's government.

language barrier against students who do not already know the language when they enter school and who are often therefore put off, and remain unsuccessful in, education.

In areas where mother tongues are used for initial literacy, the national language is usually introduced as a subject in the early stages of education in order that it should be employed as the MOI in later stages, once the students have become sufficiently familiar with it. A national language often forms the backbone of secondary education. In Ethiopia the national language, Amharic, has not been designated as the official language of secondary education, this role has been given to English, a language of wider communication. But Amharic continues to offer the most effective means of teacher student communication in the classroom and therefore occupied a central, although less than official, role in the secondary education system. Languages of wider communication, like English, generally increase in use in the higher stages of education. Like national languages they are often introduced fairly early in the education system of many multilingual states as subjects, in order to begin the process of preparing students to use these languages as the MOI for all subjects at the higher levels of education. In Ethiopia English has been used in this capacity in the secondary and tertiary levels of education where its use is thought to facilitate a greater depth of study by allowing students to benefit from the international development within the subject. The present government has continued the use of English in this role.

The great value of using mother tongues in the early stages of education lies in the fact that they enable the maximum participation of beginning students, thereby making the students feel a stronger connection to the processes of education in which they are involved. The value of using mother tongues in education has long been asserted<sup>45</sup>. Mother tongues are usually thought to be best employed as the first language of education, and are increasingly thought to be the most suitable language to be employed as the MOI for primary education. It is, moreover, often asserted that it is person's right that his or her mother tongue be used in primary education <sup>46</sup>. But beyond this

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<sup>45</sup> Bamgbose, 1991, p 75.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p81.

(supposed) right, there is the practical consideration that, by the time a child reaches school age they will have learned to speak a particular language and that this language will inevitably provide the child with a better footing in the transition to full literacy and education <sup>47</sup>.

In general, mother tongues, except those which are also national languages are thought by language planners in Africa, to be suitable only for the purposes of primary education, and their use is restricted to that sector <sup>48</sup>. Teaching in mother tongues depends on the ability of the teacher to use the language for the purpose of education and, equally, the ability of the language to express the ideas necessary for education. The use of mother tongues in a multilingual state, it is often feared, will have the effect, of limiting mobility, since it is unlikely that teachers will learn mother tongue languages other than their own, and they will therefore be confined to teaching in the area from which they originate. Education in mother tongues is often characterised by insufficient development in the language. Teacher training in mother tongues is frequently inadequate because, where more than one language is employed in a state's education system, less attention is paid to lesser languages, and the standard of education that is provided in those languages is, as a result, thought to be inferior to that offered in the national language. Although a teacher may speak a certain language as his or her mother tongue, it does not follow that he or she will have been trained to use the language as a medium for teaching.

Education in a language of wider communication, such as English is also, of course, entirely dependent on the teacher's command of that language. Often the use of languages of wider communication is hampered by teacher's inability to use the languages correctly. Teacher training in the use of such languages is frequently inadequate. Incorrect use of languages of wider communication may be passed from teacher to student, so much so that the command of the language is very poor.

Language planning for education in a multilingual state must balance the use of mother tongues, a national language and a language of wider communication, choosing which roles each language should play in the

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p82.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* p86.



education system. In the past in Ethiopia it has been the case that these kinds of considerations have not driven language use in education: in general, political imperatives have been the driving force behind the choices that are made about language use in education. The common lack of awareness of the wider discussion of these issues inhibits government planners from making informed decisions about the roles for which languages should be employed. Instead, they are faced with a set of practical problems, which may appear to be specific to their own country, with which they engage as best they can, sometimes arriving at ideas and solutions that are already widely discussed in the existing body of sociolinguistic literature on the subject, but without having the benefit of examples from other countries where similar problems have been faced and addressed.

### **The political and social implications of the new language policy.**

A fundamental change entailed by the reform is that speakers of Ethiopia's various languages are now required to work in their professional capacities in those areas which they originally came from, because it is there that they are most usefully employed. The use of local languages in local administration and in the education system has caused a substantial reshuffling of staff around the country. By law the local administration must be run and staffed by the members of the language group which the administrative unit represents. This policy has been adopted in order to break down patterns of domination. There are, as a result, many more opportunities for employment open to speakers of the local languages, and, consequently, in some areas there are staffing shortages, where there are insufficient speakers of a given language trained in the required skills.

Many speakers of Ethiopia's smaller languages were employed in parts of the country other than their homelands, while Amharic-speakers dominated all governmental occupations throughout Ethiopia. It is still possible to find mother tongue Amharic-speakers in positions of authority outside of the Amhara region. Often these are the descendants of earlier waves of settlement and are

also fluent in the local language <sup>49</sup>. While it may be admirable to attempt to ensure that local affairs are run by local people, some fear that the policy might have the unintended effect of causing a greater degree of separation between the various groups, causing smaller groups to become marginalised. It is, as yet, unclear whether this will happen, and opinions within the country differ on the issue.

Political control by the Oromo over their own region and the freedom to develop their own language as a medium for all forms of communication is being heralded as a kind of cultural renaissance, and Oromo popular consciousness and self-awareness are beginning to develop in response. The Oromo have been demanding a greater degree of self-expression of one kind or another for some time, and the development of an Oromo consciousness has arguably been thwarted by the history of their political and linguistic subjugation in the Ethiopian state. The Oromo now have a one hour slot on national television <sup>50</sup> each evening which is used to promote traditional Oromo culture and which presents political debates and discussions, that raise issues of particular concern to the Oromo. These debates have been influential in creating Oromo public opinion, since the older generation of Oromo are not literate in Oromifa, and therefore would not be able to benefit from any publications. Television programmes have become a tool of mass communication in a country where large distances and rugged terrain make the circulation of newspapers and other printed materials very difficult in many rural areas.

For the peoples of the SNNPR the reform has meant recognition of more than simply linguistic freedom. It has, for the first time, given these peoples a forum in which they can develop their identities, since at zone level they have been given their own political units. The development of a cultural or social identity is inevitably bound up with the development and use of language, and the hope is that this will allow these groups to reconstruct their cultural identities

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<sup>49</sup> Chapter One, p63.

<sup>50</sup> There are also national daily one hour news programmes in Tigrinya and Amharic. The Amharic programme includes issues which focus on other groups as well as those which relate directly to the Amhara, and is a national programme. Again this reflects the situation of the Amhara, which can be regarded as an Ethiopian national group, as opposed to a nationality within the state.

and their histories <sup>51</sup>. This reconstruction will certainly take on external elements that are dictated by the current political climate, but it will still allow for some kinds of expression which reflect the nature of individual groups and which were previously impossible. Above all, it is intended to foster the development of literature in these languages.

The SNNPR is particularly interesting in several respects. While Amharic has been maintained as the language of the regional administration, the local languages are being used enthusiastically in the administration of the various zones. Although local pride and self-identity are clearly increasing in response to the reform, so far there is no marked tendency for new local forms of nationalism to develop. In other areas, regional loyalties are being actively encouraged by the regional authorities since an identification with the Ethiopian state includes cultural baggage which contains elements of domination. The Oromo region has its own flag and the Oromo seem to display nationalist tendencies. In the SNNPR the language reform is perceived primarily as an opportunity to promote local self-esteem, pass on ethnic heritage, culture and history, and to develop the local community.

The opportunities afforded by this reform seem to have created two opposing dynamics which are best illustrated by, respectively, the case of the Oromo and the case of the SNNPR.

The first dynamic encourages people to identify with a larger unit in order to gain greater political leverage. This means that smaller groups will inevitably be swallowed by their larger neighbours, especially in cases where there are substantial cultural or linguistic similarities. Various kinds of cultural diversity within a region are being reduced where this dynamic is displayed. In the current political climate Oromos, for example, are being encouraged to identify themselves as Muslim, even though historically they have been either Muslim or Christian and also had their own traditional belief system which predates their adoption of either religion. Many Oromos feel that to identify themselves as Orthodox Christians is to perpetuate the cultural domination of the state that has long been imposed upon them.

The second dynamic encourages people to develop the cultural

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<sup>51</sup> As indicated in Article 39.2 of the Constitution. See above p105-106.

resources of their own group, which may be very small, and rather narrowly conceived, in order to preserve their identity; and it discourages greater incorporation with other groups. This may lead to a sharpening of the differences between neighbouring peoples. The unity of the SNNPR, which has been created in response to the first dynamic, has been based on the assumption of continuing cultural and linguistic diversity. Consequently, within the SNNPR some smaller groups are now demanding linguistic development in their own languages which may be very similar to one or other of the eight established languages of the region, each of which has a designated linguistic zone<sup>52</sup>. Within the linguistic zones there are much smaller groups who may resent being swallowed up by their larger neighbours, and who do not feel that they will receive any benefits from assimilation, since they are already politically secure within the SNNPR. The SNNPR is unique in having provided a forum for such demands to be fielded since most of the other regions have been presented as linguistically homogeneous, and are, therefore, only concerned with the development of one language. In fact, however, the situation in the SNNPR is a microcosm of Ethiopia as a whole: all the other regions contain substantial linguistic minorities. Often these minority groups have never been afforded any government-sponsored education, so that the existing imbalances in the provision of education are perpetuated by the reform. The language policy of the government has allowed one level of linguistic freedom to be achieved, but the linguistic diversity of the country makes it impossible to provide for all groups to have equal linguistic rights. Many groups are not viable for linguistic development because of their small size: some recognisably separate language groups have as few as 1,000 members. Where education is provided for such groups, it is inevitably in a language other than their own.

The linguistic diversity of the country is so great that it is impossible to draw precise borders between the language groups and this is proving to be a drawback to the current government's policy. The geographical department of the Election Board <sup>53</sup>is still mapping the country according to language in order to establish the borders of the regions, which have not yet been fixed. The

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<sup>52</sup> See the example of the Alaba in Chapter Seven, p333.

<sup>53</sup> Formerly known as the Ministry of Nationalities

governing criterion is that a given area belongs to the group which is in the majority. There are, however, substantial pockets of many language groups within regions where another group is in the majority. Such a pocket might be a village or an entire district, which is often a linguistic island, surrounded by another language group. At present guidelines for dealing with the problems created by the processes of geopolitical reform do not exist, and those involved in the process state that traditional boundaries and other similar factors still have to be taken into consideration in the mapping process<sup>54</sup>. Many areas are mixed between language groups, and intermarriage in such areas is not uncommon. Linguistic identities may be blurred in areas where large language groups overlap, and many individuals are raised in a multilingual situation where different languages are used in a fluid manner.

A major difficulty facing the MOE in instituting the reform is that the linguistic profile of a town often differs substantially from that of the rural areas which surround it. This has been particularly marked in the larger urban centres where there are substantial populations of several language group speakers, and where, in general, the entire population uses Amharic as a lingua franca, while mother tongue languages are confined to use in the home. These mixed urban populations have often demonstrated a desire that their children's education should continue in Amharic. It has, for example, been difficult to introduce teaching in Oromifa in the Gurage dominated towns of the Rift Valley. Many of these towns were originally roadside trading posts <sup>55</sup> which have gradually increased in size, and, since Amharic is the accepted Lingua Franca, it has inevitably become the language of these towns.

Linguistic migration has consequently become a feature of the present situation and may increase as the effects of the policy become more apparent. Many of the groups which have homelands within the SNNPR have substantial communities in the Oromo region. Again, these people would often prefer Amharic to any other language, (with the possible exception of their own languages), since they are usually involved in trade, or other activities which depend on communication with Ethiopians from other language groups.

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<sup>54</sup> Ato Emmanuel (Election Board), Addis Ababa, 3/2/96.

<sup>55</sup> Chapter Five, p165.

Confronted with the imposition of another language, many who can afford to have decided that it is better for them to educate their children in their own linguistic regions. In some cases entire communities have relocated and other strategies, like sending children to live with relatives, have been adopted <sup>56</sup>.

In the SNNPR there were several instances, discovered in the course of field-work, of children travelling into neighbouring woredas to obtain an education in a language that they preferred <sup>57</sup>. Sometimes this was because they lived on the 'wrong' side of the zone border. Where the Sidama zone borders the Walaita speaking area of the North Omo zone, for example, children were moving in both directions in order to obtain an education in their mother tongue languages. This had made them feel that they were living in a place that was not really theirs, even though their families had in most cases been living in the area for several generations. They felt that they 'should' be on the other side. While school authorities were tolerant of such practices, they were not really supposed to admit children from a neighbouring woreda, and sometimes the children expressed fears that they would be kicked out of school if it was discovered where they lived. In general the schools were aware of where students lived and had no intention of doing anything to prevent any students from attending the school. The problem was that the students were worried, felt that they were doing something wrong and, as a result, were tense.

In other areas students crossed woreda borders in order to continue to use Amharic as the MOI. On the borders of Alaba woreda, where schools continue to use Amharic, schools were inundated with students from neighbouring areas where local languages are used. The schools in the larger towns, many of which continue to use Amharic, were also found to have students who lived in neighbouring rural areas. Once again these students were often worried that if the school authorities found out they might not be allowed to come to school. It was, however, obvious that this was their situation because the school children were clearly visible on their way to school on the roads leading into the towns from the surrounding rural areas.

The most commonly expressed fears are that the policy of using the local

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<sup>56</sup> Migration will be discussed further in relation to the Kembata in Chapter Seven, p214-217.

<sup>57</sup> Chapter Six, p198-199. Chapter Seven, p231.

languages will encourage a greater separation between Ethiopia's ethnic groups. This in turn, some people feel, will sharpen the awareness of differences, possibly leading to serious political divisions which will be detrimental to the country as a whole. It is also feared that that the division of the country into ethnic or linguistic units will force many individuals within the state to define themselves in a more rigid manner than has previously been necessary. The accepted blurring of identities and the ability of individuals to move across the highly permeable boundaries between ethnic or linguistic groups may be disrupted by the attempt to impose fixed geopolitical borders between groups, and by the use of different languages in neighbouring areas. While the policy may give new kinds of political freedom to groups of people, this freedom will be confined to the geopolitical unit in which they live, and their wider freedom within the state may be seriously compromised. As a result the speakers of smaller languages, it is feared, may be increasingly marginalised since they will be confined to their own areas.

An important question which emerges from the present situation, and is central to the topic of this thesis, is whether the linguistic reforms of this government are enabling a process which has been demanded, or is at least desired, by the population, or whether the reforms are simply another example of a central Ethiopian government imposing a policy on the peoples of the state<sup>58</sup>. The government, simply by making it possible, appears to be sending a clear message to the various language groups that they should want to exercise their newly asserted linguistic rights in this manner, and may thereby be imposing a political agenda on the population. To what extent is the government really concerned with the active development of Ethiopia's constituent ethnic or linguistic groups? Is it merely concerned to be seen to be concerned with this process in order to appear to have adopted a radical reforming stance? It is very difficult to establish the answer to these questions. In Ethiopia the policy of using the local languages may well be accepted by many sections of the population, which has, after all, been subjected to far more disruptive government policies, simply because the population in question feels that it does not have the ability, or even the right, to challenge the policies that

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<sup>58</sup> Hoben, 1997.

emanate from the centre. It is also difficult to establish whether decisions about the use of languages are being made with a popular mandate, and at what level such decisions are being taken. These issues are central to the field-work which is largely concerned with asking a very simple question: are both urban and rural populations in the SNNPR happy with using the local languages in primary education? Although the question itself is straightforward, the issues surrounding it are complex, and opinions often differed dramatically amongst people from the same background and locality.

The Chapters that discuss the the field-work, argue that the reactions to the reform have varied considerably. Some Ethiopians clearly appreciate the use of their mother tongue languages as MOI in primary education and actively support the policy of the government, others openly reject the policy, and many accept the policy because they feel that they have no option but to do so. This thesis will attempt to explain the reactions of defined sections of the population of the SNNPR to the reforms of language use in education by placing the reform in a historical context, and by reference to certain explanatory variables, notably urbanisation and existing levels of education and literacy. In Chapter Four the implementation of linguistic reforms in the SNNPR, which has also effected public reactions, will be discussed.



## Chapter Four ; The Development of local languages in the SNNPR.

The regionalisation of primary education in Ethiopia has allowed each region to choose which languages will be employed by the primary education system. In the SNNPR this has led to the introduction of eight new languages as media of instruction in the region's primary schools.

The central government has stressed the pedagogical advantages of education in mother tongue languages to children entering the school system, as well as asserting the rights of Ethiopia's constituent groups to employ their own languages in this way. Section 3.5 of the Education and Training policy discusses the use of local languages. Point 3.5.1 states that

Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.<sup>1</sup>

However, the document makes it clear that the use of local languages is not compulsory. Point 3.5.2 states that

Making the necessary preparations, Nations and Nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.<sup>2</sup>

In practice this means that groups of people can choose either the local language or Amharic, which is the only feasible alternative. The only other language that is widely used in the education system is English, the use of which, other than as a single subject, would be unsuitable in the primary education system.

The positions of both Amharic and English in the education system are also defined by the Education and Training policy. Amharic, which still has the constitutional status of the National language, is defined as a language of

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution, 1994, p 23.

<sup>2</sup> ibid p 23.

national communication, and is taught as a subject to all Ethiopian children. In many areas of the SNNPR Amharic continues to be the MOI for primary education, either because the local population prefers its use, or because the local language has been judged unsuitable as one to be developed for the purpose of education. Where local languages are used as media of instruction in the SNNPR, Amharic is introduced as a single subject at an early stage of primary education, in or before grade three.

English is the designated language of international communication, and is taught to all Ethiopian school children as a subject from grade one. English is also used as the principal MOI for most subjects at secondary level. As we shall see when we come to examine the results of the field-work, although other languages may be designated as the MOI for a given subject, Amharic often remains the most effective means of teacher student communication, and Amharic is often relied upon in the class-room to make text-books in other languages clear. This is because it is the language in which all existing teaching staff in Ethiopia have been educated, and in which they often feel most comfortable communicating. Therefore, while the official role of Amharic in the education sector may appear to be limited, the use of the language is still central to the processes of education.

The process of developing local languages for primary education in Ethiopia has not been without its difficulties, many of which are ongoing. The Ministry of Education (MOE), which is responsible for instituting the reform, has placed the responsibility for addressing the complex implementation problems that it has created on to the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR), an executive department of MOE. The most fundamental problem, in terms of language development, is that the languages which are being introduced into the education system in the SNNPR have no established written form: they have only ever been oral languages. These languages come from the Cushitic and Omotic language families, for which there have been no established writing systems.

In order for a language to be considered for certain official functions within a state, the language must be standardised. One of the functions of the central office of the ICDR in Addis Ababa, is to oversee processes of

standardisation. Standardisation is a process by which the position of a particular variety of a language becomes established, usually as a result of government policy. Eastman states that

Language Standardisation is primarily a process of codifying a language. To standardise a language it is necessary to analyse and describe it and provide an acceptable writing and spelling system for it<sup>3</sup>.

This represents, however, merely the beginning of the standardisation process. Processes which seek to analyse, define and regulate any aspect of language use, are equally aspects of standardisation. By establishing precise rules of spelling, meaning and grammatical usage, a previously oral language is fixed in a certain stage of its development. Once an established form is written it becomes very enduring. Speakers of the language are encouraged to adopt the variety of the language that is developed as the standard. They will be required to conform to the standard wherever the language is written, and in some circumstances for oral communication (these include any official oral uses of the language in education, the judiciary or the administrative system). Consequently, standardisation reduces the dialectal variation in the language. Varieties that do not conform to the standard are increasingly seen as incorrect or parochial.

Standard languages are, by definition, written languages. The languages of the south-west of Ethiopia have remained, for the most part, confined to oral uses and have never been standardised. These languages have previously undergone different levels of development, mostly as a result of missionary activity. Missionaries, who have been concerned to learn Ethiopian mother tongue languages in order to communicate with local people, have been interested in producing dictionaries, grammars and translations of the Bible, which have been the only printed matter in most of the languages with which this thesis is concerned<sup>4</sup>. Research concerning these languages has been conducted by linguists both in Ethiopia and internationally at university level, however, none of these languages could be said to have achieved an accepted

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<sup>3</sup> Eastman , 1983, p73.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Breeze, (SIL), Addis Ababa, 22/3/96.

standardised form prior to the reforms of the present government. In most cases any work which has been done on a particular language reflects one dialectal variation and could not be claimed as a standard for the language as a whole. The reforms of the government have encountered the languages of the south-west at different stages of development, however, previous work, most of which employed the Ethiopic script to transcribe the languages of the south-west, has largely been ignored. Instead the government has embarked on a radical process of standardisation which has involved the adoption of a new writing system which uses the Roman script.

Among the Cushitic languages, Oromifa, the language spoken by the Oromo, had previously achieved the highest level of standardisation, and the development of this language has strongly influenced the development of local languages in the SNNPR <sup>5</sup>. Oromos have long expressed a desire to use their language for a wider range of functions, and there was an existing body of work that had already been produced in the language. Considered as a single language, Oromifa is extremely broad; it is perhaps best described as a linguistic continuum, the dialectal extremities of which may not be instantly mutually intelligible, but which are, however, clearly derived from the same ancestral language<sup>6</sup>. The standardisation of Oromifa was achieved prior to the reforms of the present government largely by the creation of a widely accepted dictionary in the language which attempted to include vocabulary that reflected the different variants of the language, but which nevertheless sought to define the most acceptable or commonly used variety, the form that was most readily intelligible to the greatest proportion of Oromos <sup>7</sup>, and could therefore be accepted as a standard variety. In this dictionary Oromifa was transcribed in the Roman script using a writing system which has been called the Qube. This orthography, uses double vowels and consonants in addition to the standard twenty six Roman characters in order to express all the sounds of the language.

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<sup>5</sup> The development of an orthography for Oromifa has influenced the subsequent development of certain Omotic languages, as well as the Cushitic languages which are spoken by the peoples of the SNNPR.

<sup>6</sup> R.Hayward.

<sup>7</sup> Tilahoun Gamta Addis Ababa 8/2/96. 'A Dictionary of Oromifa ' by Tilahoun Gamta was published in Addis Ababa in 1991.

The sounds in Oromifa, however, are not represented, in all cases, by the same characters as they would be in English, or other European languages. All teaching materials and other printed matter in Oromifa are now increasingly produced in the Qube, and it has been accepted as the written form of the language.

In Ethiopia, the use of the Qube has been criticised because it has been argued that it inhibits Oromo children when they come to learn Amharic, which will continue to be transcribed in the Ethiopic script. The response of Oromo politicians and linguists to this criticism has been that the Ethiopic script is unsuitable for Oromifa because it does not represent the sound system of Cushitic languages. Those who favour the use of the Qube also argue that the use of the Roman script for Oromifa will help to facilitate education in English, which has a central role in secondary education and is the principal language of higher education, since the two languages use the same script.

Those who favour the use of the Ethiopic script for all of Ethiopia's languages argue that the Ethiopic script is a suitable vehicle for any language, since it is a syllabary which can easily be modified to incorporate new sounds. The use of the Roman script, they argue, has been modified anyway, with letters representing different sounds in the Qube to those which they normally would in English. It has also been argued that because the Ethiopic script is indigenous to the country, and since Amharic, Tigringna and some smaller Semitic languages <sup>8</sup> will continue to be written in this script, it would aid mutual intelligibility between Ethiopia's languages if they were all written in the same script.

Some critics have accused the Oromo of adopting the Qube merely because of anti-Amhara, or anti-Amharic, sentiments. The response to this criticism has been that the arguments against the use of the Qube are similarly based on emotion and not on practical criteria, and that those who advocate the use of the Ethiopic script for all of Ethiopia's languages <sup>9</sup> are, at root, in favour

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<sup>8</sup> Notably Silti Gurage and Harari.

<sup>9</sup> The Ethiopic script was used for all languages in the National Literacy campaign, its continued use for non-Semitic languages would appear to be merely a continuation of earlier, failed, policies. Chapter Two, p89-93.

of continued Amhara, and Amharic, domination <sup>10</sup>. Regardless of the reasons for adopting the Qube, and the benefits or difficulties that each side in the debate has predicted will arise from its use, the Qube has become the established written form of Oromifa.

The first issue to confront the central offices of the ICDR in Addis Ababa in initiating the process of developing the previously oral languages of the SNNPR for the education system was to decide the script in which they should be transcribed. Since the Qube writing system had already been developed and accepted for Oromifa, it was readily adopted for the smaller Cushitic languages of the SNNPR. The Qube was also employed for the Omotic languages of the SNNPR <sup>11</sup>. In the SNNPR a debate about script, orthography and intelligibility between the written forms of the languages employed in the education sector, has been stimulated in response to the adoption of the Qube<sup>12</sup>. Many people, whether they are experts in linguistics at university level (both in Ethiopia and elsewhere), local teaching and administrative staff, or local language speakers, consider that the decision to adopt the Qube for all the languages of the SNNPR was made merely in order to avoid the development of more suitable orthographies for the local languages. Others argue that the Qube is the most suitable orthography that is currently available, particularly for the Cushitic languages. It is also often argued that the use of a common orthography will help to enable Ethiopians from various language groups to become literate in several languages with relative ease. In fact, the decision by the ICDR to use the Qube for all of the languages of the SNNPR seems to have been taken largely because of the short time that was available for the languages to be developed, and this primarily because the Qube was already in existence and was being used elsewhere in the country. The resources, both in terms of finance and man power, to develop specific orthographies for each of the languages that had to be developed were not available to the ICDR, and the Qube thus appeared to be the only option open to language planners, given

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<sup>10</sup> The debate as to the implications of using the Roman or Ethiopic script reflects discussions with members of staff at the University of Addis Ababa. Particularly Ato Tilahoun Gamta Department of Foreign Languages (Interview 8/2/96).

<sup>11</sup> Chapter Eight, p256.

<sup>12</sup> Chapter Six, p192.

the practical limitations of the situation, and the widely felt reluctance to use the Ethiopic script for non-Semitic languages.

Since there were no existing teaching materials in any Ethiopian languages other than Amharic, the second problem to confront the ICDR was the creation of text-books and other teaching materials in the local languages. The problem was initially tackled in two phases, each concerned with a group of four languages. Both projects were attempted during the summer vacation, when MOE staff were available for consultation and were largely free from other responsibilities. The first phase dealt with Oromifa, Tigrinya, Sidama and Walaita, in the summers of 1991 and 1992. The second phase began in 1992 and continued in the summer of 1993 and was concerned with the development of Kembata, Hadiya, Gedeo and Somali <sup>13</sup>. Of these eight languages five are within the SNNPR (Sidama, Walaita, Kembata, Hadiya and Gedeo). Between 1993 and 1994, it was decided that three further languages of the SNNPR should also be developed as media of instruction for primary education, these being Kafficho, Gamo-Gofa-Dawro (a composite language made up of several languages from the Ometo cluster <sup>14</sup>), and Silti, a Gurage language. These languages were also rapidly developed over the following two years. In all, therefore, eight sets of materials were developed for the primary education in the SNNPR in the space of four years.

Most of the translators who worked on the first phase of translation for the ICDR were school teachers. All translators were required to satisfy three requirements: they should have a first degree in the subject of the materials which they were translating, they must be bilingual in the language they were working on and Amharic, and they must come from the area in which the language they were working on was spoken <sup>15</sup>. Although these requirements seem to be of the most basic nature, finding suitable translators who fulfilled all three criteria was very difficult in some of Ethiopia's regions. In the SNNPR it has generally been possible to find staff who satisfy the requirements but often they had to be brought from other areas of the country where they were working

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<sup>13</sup> Interview Ato Daraja Tarafa, (ICDR) Addis Ababa 22/1/96.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter Eight, p249.

<sup>15</sup> Interview Ato Kedir Ibrahim (ICDR) , Addis Ababa, 22/1/96.

prior to the introduction of the present reforms<sup>16</sup>.

The initial phase of the translation process was undertaken in the regional offices of the ICDR in Awassa. Materials were needed in each language, for each of the subjects that are taught in primary education, in each of the six grades. In addition to the text-books, teacher's guides and other teaching materials, such as dictionaries and grammars, also had to be produced. In order to assist the speedy production of this large number of materials, local language teaching materials were initially produced by means of direct translation from existing Amharic text-books.

The Amharic text-books were produced during the era of the Derg, and, for a variety of reasons, were already considered inadequate by many teaching staff<sup>17</sup>. The existing text-books had been produced for use throughout Ethiopia and were designed with national objectives in mind. These materials tended, in their subject matter, to reflect the central state. In terms of history, culture and the natural environment they focussed on the northern Ethiopian highlands, and did not reflect the diversity of conditions found throughout the country.

The existing text-books had also been produced from a political perspective that was no longer acceptable. Even during the era of the Derg many teachers had objected to the use of school materials to promote the ideology of the government: some argued that the text-books were little more than government propaganda. The materials were, moreover, often thought to be of a poor quality, especially in terms of the use of language. The Amharic text-books were, accordingly, unsuitable for the production of new materials in the local languages by direct translation<sup>18</sup>. However, the extent of the inadequacy of this method of producing new materials did not become clear until the process of developing the materials was quite advanced and, for most of the languages of the SNNPR, not until the local language materials had been produced and were already being used in the classroom. This was because government bodies wanted the teaching materials to be produced very quickly, and so no time was allowed for those developing the materials to reflect on their

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Ato Kebede Sima (ICDR) Awassa, 22/4/96. Dr. Linda Pursely (BESO) Awassa, 18/2/97.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Linda Pursely (BESO), Awassa, 18/2/97.



content. Translators were working under extreme time pressure and were concerned to get the job done as quickly as possible.

Teacher-translators had no experience of translating from Amharic into the local languages, or the use of the Qube. Very few had any experience in producing teaching materials. No guidelines about the production of translations were issued by the centre. In the rush to implement the reform it was simply assumed that direct translations would be the easiest, most cost effective, and above all the quickest way to create the new materials. In the SNNPR the local staff were, therefore, expected to arrive at standardised forms of the languages in question without having any training in this kind of activity.

Most of the teachers who were employed as translators received very little training in the use of the Qube and were unsure of how to transcribe the local languages<sup>19</sup>. Some translators were trained in transcription at the Teachers Training Institutes (TTI) in Awassa and Arba Minch, but most received only three days' training. After this they were expected to explain the use of the Qube to other translators. Furthermore, the instructors at the TTI were themselves very inexperienced in the use of the Qube, and had received little training. Incorrect usage of the orthography was, therefore, transferred from the teacher trainers to the translators. Many teachers, although nominally mother tongue speakers of the languages in question, were less than comfortable with using the local languages even in their oral form. As stated above many of those who were involved in the translation of materials had been working elsewhere in Ethiopia where they had had little reason to use their mother tongue languages. Their educational and professional lives, and often also their personal lives, had been conducted entirely in Amharic. Many were unable to express themselves as clearly in their mother tongues as they were in Amharic, and this had a strong effect on their ability to produce adequate translations.

Substantial anomalies existed in the translated materials across the various grades in a particular subject, and across the various subjects in a certain grade. Without dictionaries to work from translators were often unsure of how to spell words in the local languages. Furthermore, since words in the local languages are often pronounced differently in the various dialectal variations of

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. Linda Pursely (BESO), Awassa ,18/2/97.

a language and translators had no guidelines that indicated a standard form, it was still possible for the translators, even if using the Qube correctly, to arrive at different spellings. Difficulties also arose in terms of the specific meaning of words<sup>20</sup>. The translations were, therefore, from the start, open to intense criticism from local language speakers.

Each translator worked on a particular text-book, and so the materials that were produced inevitably reflected that person's individual use of the local language. Again, many of the translators were more accustomed to using Amharic than the local languages. They found it hard to replace Amharic words with words in the local languages, and were then faced with the choice of either using a borrowed word, from Amharic or even English, or attempting to create a literal translation. No guidelines were issued for borrowing words or producing literal translations. While some translators found an equivalent for an Amharic word in the local language, others were unaware of that word. Translators working on the same subject borrowed different words for the same concepts or things. Where literal translations were produced they were often long and ungainly, and lacking in clarity. In general the meanings of sentences in the local languages lacked precision and clarity as a result of the teachers' inexperience of using the local languages, and because of the complete absence of an existing body of literature that could help to provide examples of how the written forms of the languages should appear. All in all, the use of the local languages in the newly translated materials was erratic and unsatisfactory.

The central offices of the ICDR had anticipated at least some of these difficulties, and, therefore, after the translated materials had been produced in the SNNPR , they were brought to the capital where they were subjected to an editorial process which, it was hoped, would address the shortcomings of the newly translated materials. Panels at the central office, mostly staffed by members of the university, interacted with the regional translation teams in order to improve the teaching materials. Language panels were given the responsibility for ensuring a standard of clarity and uniformity across the subjects and grades in a particular language. In addition to this there were also subject panels, which brought together translators working on different

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<sup>20</sup> Pursely, 1997, p7.

languages. The subject panels were staffed by experts in the subjects who did not necessarily have any knowledge of the local languages, and their responsibility was to maintain uniform standards in the particular subject across the various languages. Ensuring uniform standards both within one language and within one subject across the various languages was extremely complex, and was made more difficult both by the lack of experience of those involved in the process and by the short time that was available. Much was done to improve the materials, but substantial anomalies continued persisted.

Since the languages of the SNNPR were at a very low level of development in terms of the specialisation of their vocabularies, they had to be substantially modified to meet even the most basic purposes of education <sup>21</sup>. In many subjects all of the languages lacked the necessary vocabulary. In the field of science, in particular, there were acute problems of this nature because of a complete absence of technical terms in any of the languages that were being developed as media of instruction. A separate project, the Science and Technology Terminology Project (STTP), funded by UNDP, was set up in order to develop the necessary terminology in the local languages. Most of the staff of STTP were members of the Language Academy of Addis Ababa University. STTP was primarily concerned to coin new terms in the local languages using existing vocabulary. Where this was impossible, words were borrowed and precise literal translations in the local languages were provided so that concepts could be made clear. STTP was concerned to ensure two basic desiderata, firstly, that a degree of clarity was introduced to the newly translated materials, and secondly, that the terms which were used be uniformly adopted throughout the grades in a particular subject, between subjects in the same language and across the various languages. Gradually, as a result of the editorial process, including the work of STTP, guidelines about translating technical terms by borrowing vocabulary and creating satisfactory literal translations were produced. Wherever possible existing words in the local languages were preferred. Where no terms in the local languages were available but widely understood terminology existed in Amharic, its use was

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<sup>21</sup> For example many languages do not have words for "reading", "writing", "studying", "book" or "pencil".

preferred to that of any other language. Where no Amharic terms were available the terminology was borrowed from English. Graphic translations <sup>22</sup> in the local languages were provided in the text for both Amharic and English words. Where borrowed English terminology, like "X-ray", for example, was already commonly in use, and readily understood by the wider population, no effort was made to alter its established use <sup>23</sup>.

The clarity of the teaching materials was improved by the editorial process. The use of the local languages, including the meanings of words and the use of grammar and syntax in the local languages, had been regularised, as had the use of borrowed words. Many substantial problems, however, still existed that were not to be addressed until much later. Some of the continuing problems with the materials were in terms of clarity, often the local languages were still not precise enough. The meanings of important sentences in the materials continued to be ambiguous. This was partly a result of the speed at which they were created and because they were too dependent on the Amharic text-books (relying on direct translation did not aid clarity in the local languages), but was as much a result of the lack of real experience in using the languages on the part of the translators and the panel members in Addis Ababa.

Also arising directly from the fact that the materials were produced by direct translations were problems of relevance. While much had been done to improve the use of the local languages in the materials, the content of the materials had been given little attention. The materials continued to reflect the characteristics of the northern highlands and the capital, appearing once again to be reflections of the nature of the central state, and not expressions of the local characteristics of the groups of people for whom they were created. Even the political undertones that had been deliberately incorporated into the Amharic school-books when they were produced by the Derg had not been fully eradicated from the materials. However, the political necessity of producing the materials quickly did not allow for further time consuming refinements to take

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<sup>22</sup> For example, instead using the borrowed word "refrigerator", a literal translation would read 'a large metal box which uses electricity to keep food cold'.

<sup>23</sup> Kedir Ibrahim (ICDR, Addis Ababa) 22/1/96.

place.

Once the editorial phase of the translation process had been completed, the revised materials were printed in Addis Ababa and hastily introduced into the schools. Materials in the local languages were generally introduced at the beginning of the academic year, often with very little staff training or preparation. Teacher training in the use of the local languages was hurriedly organised and is generally thought to have been inadequate <sup>24</sup>. As with the translators, some teaching staff received three days training and were then expected to explain both the use of the Qube and the local language teaching materials to their colleagues in their local area (zone or woreda). The various administrative units of the SNNPR in which local language teaching materials were introduced responded to the problem of teacher training in different ways <sup>25</sup>. Some successful training programmes were sponsored in local areas that helped local staff to convert to using the new materials. Local training programmes, which focussed the attention of both administrative and teaching staff intensely on the materials, frequently exposed the inadequacy of the materials in respect of both language use and content. In many areas, however, little training was given, and the teaching staff of many schools were simply presented with the materials with little guidance in their use. There is no overall pattern in the provision of local teacher training. Within one zone or woreda the extent of teacher training in the schools varied, and often the most successful teacher training initiatives seem to have been generated at the most local level of all, namely within the schools themselves.

Within the SNNPR, it is, to a large extent, up to each administrative zone to manage the complexities of introducing the local languages, and, consequently, different practices have been developed in the various areas. These practices have also had some effect on the success of the reform. Throughout the region three different strategies for introducing local languages into schools of SNNPR have emerged.

The first of these strategies is to introduce local language teaching materials to all six grades of primary school at the beginning of a new academic

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<sup>24</sup> Honig, 1996. Gfeller, 1996. Pursely, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Chaper p226.

year, thereby converting the entire school to local language teaching materials at one time. This strategy was adopted where administrative staff felt that it was easier to make the changeover from Amharic to local language materials as rapid as possible. Its result, however, was that many students were expected to switch from one language of instruction to another during their careers in education, and, understandably, many found this problematic. Teaching staff and students in such areas tended to feel that the materials had been imposed upon them without time for preparation. In addition to this, it was difficult to provide enough of the materials at one time and, consequently, books were often in very short supply in these areas.

The second strategy is to introduce local language teaching materials only at grade one and to introduce them to the next grade each year, so that those students who graduate from the first grade continue to use local language teaching materials. This causes less disruption, since the language in which students begin learning when they first arrive at school continues to be the MOI for them. Teaching staff were, moreover, given more time to become accustomed to the local language teaching materials, and teacher training initiatives could be sponsored. Under this strategy students do not have to switch from one language of education to another, except for those students who failed a grade, who have to switch from Amharic materials to local language materials, where these have become the materials which are being used for the grade they are repeating. At the same time as local language teaching is introduced at grade one, the local language is introduced as a single subject to the rest of the school. Consequently, although some students still learn other subjects through the medium of Amharic they also learn to use the Qube and become familiar with the written form of the local language. The main drawback of this strategy is that it takes six years before the entire school has been converted to the use of local language materials.

The third strategy is a compromise between the first two. Materials are introduced simultaneously to grades one and four (the start of the first and second cycles of primary education), and then move up a grade each year with those students to whom local language materials were initially introduced, assuming they pass each grade. This reduces the period of implementation of

the second strategy to three years. The disruption to the school is less than in the first strategy, since only the year four students, and those repeating grade one, have to switch from Amharic teaching materials to local language teaching materials.

Some zones decided to set up model schools, which were used to test the local language materials, and the newly introduced policy which replaced separate teachers for each subject with self-contained classrooms where one teacher taught all subjects. Tryouts in model schools were often successful because every effort was made to ensure that the schools were provided with adequate materials and resources. The disparity between model schools and standard schools visited during the field-work was great, especially in terms of the ratios of pupils per text-book. Success in the early tryouts was often contrasted with severe problems encountered when the teaching materials were introduced throughout the zone.

In areas where Amharic has continued to be the MOI in zones where a local language has been introduced, the local languages are taught as single subjects from grade one. This policy has been adopted in the schools of several of the region's largest towns, namely Awassa, Hosanna, Dilla and Arba Minch, and in Alaba and Omosheleko woredas of the K.A.T. zone. In areas where the local languages are employed as media of instruction, Amharic is introduced as a subject anywhere between grade two and grade four. In several zones, however, this policy was being reviewed in response to complaints from teaching staff who usually argued that its introduction should be earlier. In all areas English is taught as a subject from grade one. In many areas of the region however, Amharic remains the language of primary education with English being the only other language that is taught as a subject (Bench-Maji and South Omo zones, the non-Silti woredas of the Gurage zone, the non-Kaffa part of the Kafficho-Shakicho zone and the special woredas), although some of these areas (most notably Konso and Amaro) have indicated a desire to introduce the local language.

In the immediate aftermath of the introduction of the local languages there was usually a period of intense public attention and debate. In many areas of the region, the issues surrounding the use of local languages in

primary schools became politically charged. Many people were strongly opposed to the policy. Local people questioned the use of local languages from several angles. Parents did not understand the purpose of the reform, and felt that it would limit their children's opportunities. Some argued that the whole point of education was to learn Amharic, and felt that the local languages were inadequate for even the most basic purposes of education. People argued that the government was using the policy to divide the country along ethnic lines. Administrative workers and teachers also complained of the lack of proper training and support, the shortage of materials, and above all the fact that they were placed in the position of having to defend a policy that they had not wanted or expected. Many people saw the reform as yet another example of a central government dictating to rural populations with little regard for their views.

In addition to all these difficulties it rapidly became clear that the materials themselves were inadequate. Local language speakers found the use of language in the text-books awkward and unnatural. In many areas it was observed that words had been borrowed where there was no need since words existed in the local languages that had not been used. Above all, local language speakers, including teaching staff, complained that the materials failed to reflect either the physical or the cultural conditions of the local area. From the reactions of those who were expected to use the materials, it became clear that, if the reform was to achieve the results that were hoped for, the materials would have to be revised.

In the SNNPR there has been substantial debate amongst government employees involved in the processes of the reform about the best way to address the difficulties that arise from the use of local languages. Local actors often argue that they are in need of more assistance from external bodies, including MOE departments, and also non-government organisations including the Language Academy and Linguistics departments of Addis Ababa University (AAU) and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Problems with both the use of the local languages themselves, and more specifically with the nature and content of the local language teaching materials were widely felt after their introduction, but the regional authorities did not have the experience or resources to address these and other problems associated with the reform.



In response to the difficulties created by the reform, a language development project funded by USAID was set up in Awassa. The Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) project employed foreign consultants with experience of multilingual education systems from elsewhere in Africa. The staff of the BESO project also worked closely with members of SIL, a missionary society which has been increasingly involved in all forms of linguistic development in the south-west of Ethiopia, and experts in the local languages from AAU. Most of the existing work on the languages of the south-west had, in fact, been conducted by members of the SIL or AAU, but it was only at this stage of the process that experts in the languages of the south-west were brought into the process of developing the local languages.

The BESO project was set up in order to examine the difficulties created by the reform, to produce recommendations, and, perhaps most importantly, to set up programmes that would address its findings. The First report to be generated by the BESO project was produced by Elizabeth Gfeller of the SIL in 1996 <sup>26</sup>. Research was conducted in the administrative offices of the MOE in Awassa, Durame (Kembata) and Soddo (Walaita). As a result of discussions with MOE and AAU staff, Gfeller recommended a total revision of all of existing local language teaching materials in each of the local languages in the SNNPR. This revision, she argued, must be based on the specific conditions of a given area, in order for this objective to be achieved it would be necessary to initiate a greater input from members of the local community, not only from government employees. By incorporating local people into the process Gfeller envisaged that the quality of the materials would be improved, and that the population of the area would be encouraged to accept the materials. Gfeller argued that, as a result of local participation, the materials would belong to the community in a real sense. Many of the problems that existed in the first set of materials related to the use of the languages and the fact that materials did not reflect local conditions. A problem that had been frequently cited was that borrowed words were used when adequate words existed in the local languages. The direct translations from the Amharic text-books lost their relevance in the south-west of Ethiopia because of substantial differences in the nature of the environment,

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<sup>26</sup> Gfeller, 1996.

which include different flora and fauna, foodstuffs, types of houses, historical traditions and cultural conditions. By increasing the input of local people all of these problems could be addressed.

In response to Gfeller's recommendations the BESO project sponsored translation workshops for teachers from each of the local language areas in the SNNPR. Prior to the workshops translators were instructed to compile lists of specific problems and errors in the text-books, and to compile lists of words in the local languages that could be substituted for borrowed words, with the help of local people. Translators came to Awassa to participate in the workshops, each of which lasted two weeks. Workshops began by explaining the basic principles of translation and by making the purpose of the reform clear. The problems that had been encountered were discussed and the translation teams were encouraged to develop solutions. Translators were then given the task of revising the local language teaching materials so that a second set could be produced. At the time of the field-work in 1997 several zones were using the second set of materials.

The second BESO report 'Language in Education: The Implementation of Policy reform in the SNNPR', 1997 by Dr Linda Pursely, was presented to the Language Research and Development Symposium held in Awassa in April 1997. This conference, the first of its kind in the SNNPR, was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and the SIL jointly in order to bring together the various bodies that had been involved in the linguistic development of the local languages in the SNNPR. Dr. Pursely recommended that, 'No new languages of instruction should be added until the implementation and impact of those presently in use has been assessed'<sup>27</sup>. She recommended that if additional local languages were to be employed in the primary education system, they might be used more effectively as single subjects rather than as media of instruction, this would allow time for assessments to be made as to the practical range or value of their uses. The languages that were already in use as media of instruction for all subjects, she argued, might be profitably restricted to media of instruction only for certain subjects, since some subjects were more effectively taught through the medium of Amharic. This would also allow for

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p11.

more flexibility in local decision making. If teachers in a particular linguistic area felt that, for example, science really could not be properly taught in the local language, they would be allowed to use Amharic, while other subjects could continue to be taught in the local language. Her conclusions criticised the speed at which linguistic reform had been attempted, and recommended that further aspects of linguistic reform should be attempted in gradual stages, adopting a 'transitional approach'<sup>28</sup>. Dr. Pursely was concerned that the political and social climate should not be permitted to dictate the specific usage of language in education, instead pedagogical arguments should be central to any discussion of language use in education.

Dr. Pursely also recommended closer communication among the various bodies involved in aspects of linguistic research in the SNNPR. A lack of communication among these bodies had, she argued, impeded the successful realisation of the objectives of the reform. This is a substantial, and widely recognised, problem with the present political system in Ethiopia. In response to the devolution of responsibility to local administrative units, the flow of information from local to central authorities is usually inadequate. The regional authorities in Awassa, for example, had little knowledge of the areas in which the various local languages were being used, the implementation strategies which had been adopted by each zone, or the difficulties that were being faced in the various parts of the region. Central authorities consequently had limited ability to respond to the specific needs of a given zone. There is no mechanism by which the experiences of administrators and teaching staff in various parts of the SNNPR can be shared. In some areas local teacher training initiatives had been extremely successful in improving the competence of teachers in using the local languages. Similarly, in many areas school staff had managed to raise funds for their schools by developing agricultural projects which had the combined effect of teaching students useful farming techniques and providing the school with a much needed income. Some schools had produced teaching aids and developed other resources for the school from a local base. Parents' committees were involved in making school furniture and organising fund-raising activities. Unfortunately there is no way for these initiatives to be

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<sup>28</sup> Pursely, 1997, p11.

highlighted to the staff of other schools. In some cases the staff of a school felt that they no option but to wait for the central government to provide more resources for the school. This attitude serves only to perpetuate the poor conditions in a school.

The ICDR has also initiated studies of the implementation of the reform. The Sidama zone is the first administrative unit in the SNNPR to have produced an official ICDR report on the reform, which was published in 1995 <sup>29</sup> (a similar report has been completed for Oromifa, and, at the time of writing reports were being researched concerning Walaita, Kembata and Hadiya). This report largely concerns the practical implications of the reform, it has little to tell us about the attitudes held by the population towards it. Some areas of overlap, however, exist with the subject of this thesis (difficulties of using Roman script, provision of teacher training, quality of materials, enrolment / drop-out rates, students' results, parents' attitudes, implementation problems). The ICDR's survey used questionnaires to gather information, and, consequently, the results differed from those obtained by the field-work that was conducted in connection with this thesis, <sup>30</sup> which gathered data through interviews. The ICDR's survey limited the range of responses and presented results in proportional figures. The field-work for this thesis allowed for an infinite variety of responses to each question, which it was not possible to subject to statistical forms of analysis. The results of the ICDR's survey often seem, perhaps consequently, to be less critical of the policy than those that were obtained in the course of the field-work.

When asked about the difficulties of using the Roman script 42% of head-teachers and 41% of teachers in the ICDR survey said they had minor problems, the remainder responded that they had no problems using the Roman script. No informants said they had major problems <sup>31</sup>. Although a significant proportion of the respondents in the ICDR's survey stated that they experienced problems, there is no discussion of the nature of these problems in the report. By contrast, during the field-work it was very rare to find either a

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<sup>29</sup> MOE, ICDR, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> This will be referred to as 'the field-work' throughout the remaining sections of this thesis.

<sup>31</sup> MOE ICDR, 1995, p19.

principal or a teacher who claimed that they had no problems at all associated with the introduction of mother tongues in the Roman script.

The ICDR survey asked if the provision of teacher training was adequate. 17% of head-teachers and 41% of teachers said it was adequate. 83% of head-teachers and 55% of teachers said it was inadequate <sup>32</sup>. Again, it was hard to find any informants who were satisfied with the provision of teacher training in the field-work, except in areas where local teacher training initiatives had been actively implemented. The extent and content of the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) training programmes were widely felt to be inadequate.

The ICDR report concluded, in respect of the quality of text-books, that there were areas in which the materials could be improved <sup>33</sup>. But, the criticisms levelled at the materials were only the most basic ones concerning the use of language. There was surprisingly little criticism of the content of the materials in the ICDR survey, especially in the light of the responses of many informants during the field-work. The format of the ICDR survey questionnaire may, it appears, have limited the responses that were available to teaching staff.

In the ICDR survey, 83% of head-teachers confirmed that both drop-out and repetition rates had decreased since the new policy was introduced, and 77% of teachers agreed that the policy was responsible for any improvements in drop-out and repetition rates <sup>34</sup>. During the field-work conducted for this thesis, it was found that throughout the SNNPR the enrolment figures for schools are increasing, and the figures for both drop-out and repetition rates are improving. In most schools that were visited head-teachers and teachers agreed that it was the use of local languages that was increasing the numbers of children entering school, remaining in school and achieving good results.

93% of students in the ICDR survey felt that learning was easier in the local language, but the expected results had not been achieved by students in tests in any of the subjects. The authors of the report point out that students had little experience in completing tests of this kind, and that they were not used to certain types of questions. They also said that the teachers did not have a lot of

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<sup>32</sup> MOE, ICDR, 1995, p20.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid* p48.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* p55-56.

experience of using the new materials <sup>35</sup>.

Regarding the attitudes held by the parents of students, the head-teachers in the survey were divided in their opinions. 50% felt that the majority of parents supported the introduction of the new materials, while 50% felt that amongst the parents opposers and supporters of the change were equal in number. Since no details were given about the location of the schools which were the focus of the report, it is unclear whether this reflects the urban / rural dichotomy of language attitudes present in the Sidama zone. When asked the same question, on the other hand, 86% of students stated that their parents were in favour of the changes while only 6% said that their parents did not support the changes and 4% did not respond to the question. Except for one individual, all parents interviewed stated that they supported the introduction of local language materials <sup>36</sup>. This result is again strikingly different from the results obtained from interviews conducted during the field-work. While many parents expressed basic support for the introduction of local language materials, in general they expressed some reservations, and in almost all cases their support for the policy was qualified if only by the view that the provision of resources was inadequate. In the context of a government backed survey using questionnaires it is reasonable to assume that parents felt inhibited about expressing direct opposition to the policy. Students were, in all likelihood, also inhibited and did not wish to present their parents as being dissenters.

The ICDR survey concluded that the major implementation problems were lack of funds, lack of trained manpower, and shortage of materials <sup>37</sup>. An important conclusion of the survey report was that, although the majority of the teaching staff had received training in the use of the Roman script, that training was inadequate, because it had been too short, as little as three days. head-teachers stated that the lack of staff trained in the local languages was the biggest obstacle to an effective teaching-learning process <sup>38</sup>. Throughout the field-work this view was echoed by almost all informants. Many stated that they

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid* p58-61.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid* p65.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* p66.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* p69.

failed to see the point of reform if adequate teacher training in the use of local languages was not provided by the central authorities (either in Awassa or in Addis Ababa).

The ICDR's report discusses the continuing problems associated with female education. The proportion of girls in comparison to boys usually decreases dramatically in the higher grades. The reason for this, according to many parents, is the danger of kidnapping for early marriage faced by girls on the way to and from school. Another problem which parents said was faced by both girls and boys on the way to school was flooding during the rainy season which claims the lives of many children each year as they attempt to cross previously safe watercourses which have become extremely dangerous <sup>39</sup>.

The recommendations of the ICDR's survey report were as follows. Firstly, more time should be taken to produce a second set of materials avoiding the drawbacks of the first set. Secondly, a more concerted attempt should be made to ensure an even distribution of materials. Thirdly, dictionaries and other support materials should be produced in the local languages. Fourthly, teacher training should be a priority. And, finally, ongoing research into the progress of the reform should be undertaken in order to ensure that further problems could be pinpointed and addressed. These recommendations highlight those practical areas of the implementation of the language policy which are in the greatest need of attention. The report makes no suggestions as to how these objectives might be achieved. The realisation of these recommendations would require comprehensive programmes and a degree of financial support which is currently unavailable. However, the report is valuable in that it has highlighted practical issues : the foregoing recommendations apply equally in each of the linguistic zones visited during the field-work (they are by no means specific to the Sidama zone).

A further study was produced by Ken Boothe and Roland Walker of the SIL in 1997 <sup>40</sup> . Their recommendations support the views expressed in Gfeller and Pursely's reports, and those which arise from the field-work conducted for this thesis, as follows,

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<sup>39</sup> MOE, ICDR, 1995, p70-71.

<sup>40</sup> Boothe and Walker, 1997 .

Two of the challenges which Ethiopia faces in its drive to implement MTE [Mother Tongue Education -GC] for all her peoples are (1) to provide adequate materials in each of the languages, and (2) to ensure that education leads to development. Greater local involvement, both in design and implementation, is needed to meet these challenges...The initiatives of the Ministry of Education to produce curricula and materials in each nationality language are a good start, but they are not totally adequate to meet these challenges. Large numbers of people in the community need to be involved in the development of literature to ensure an adequate supply of materials. Such involvement will also lead to a sense of ownership that can strengthen the ties between education and the community, thus enhancing the quality of both...Each nationality's producing its own literature in an ongoing process of creativity and affirmation of traditional values will help to ensure that education leads to positive social change...If teachers in each nationality were trained...they could achieve the kind of community involvement that would yield much greater impact. beyond producing literature and other educational materials, people of each nationality need to be the ones shaping the curriculum (vs. merely translating the Amharic curriculum)...<sup>41</sup>

Many critics of the policy argue that the use of mother tongues in primary education limits access to wider opportunities which can only be accessed through secondary and tertiary education in a language of wider communication. The same authors argue that this concern

...needs to be balanced with a realisation that very few students in developing nations even complete primary education, much less go on to the secondary level. Providing education that merely prepares students for more education is not in the best interest of most children in the developing nation. What they need is " appropriate education"...which prepares them to develop themselves and their communities in accord with felt needs.<sup>42</sup>

These two points, that active local participation is essential, and that the goal of primary education should not be narrowly restricted to gaining access to secondary education, are echoed in the findings of the field-work .

While the implementation of linguistic reform in the SNNPR has created

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<sup>41</sup> ibid p14.

<sup>42</sup> ibid p15.



many difficulties at various levels, the reform of language use in education has nevertheless also produced positive results. One of the greatest difficulties of discussing this topic in a manner that adequately reflects attitudes and conditions encountered during the field-work is that the questions involved are strongly interconnected, and at times it may be difficult to separate the effects of one factor from those of another. Many factors combine to produce a complex situation. In some areas particular circumstances create problems that impede the progress of the reform and in some areas the obstacles facing the reform appear to have little significance. In many areas attitudes vary. The discussion of the findings of the field-work in Chapters Six to Nine seeks to draw on arguments and information presented in Chapters One to Four which help to explain the reasons for the various reactions of groups of people in the SNNPR to the introduction of local languages. Specific aspects of the nature of these groups of people, including population size, educational characteristics and literacy rates, will be discussed in Chapter Five.

**Chapter Five:**  
**The geographical distribution, and population characteristics of**  
**groups of people in the SNNPR.**

**The SNNPR**

The SNNPR is an area of great linguistic and ethnic diversity, to such an extent that it is impossible to present an exhaustive roster of the groups of people who inhabit the region. This Chapter will begin by describing the ethnic and linguistic composition of the region in the broadest terms, and will then proceed to provide more detailed analysis only for those areas that are the subject of the field-work. The discussion of the field-work will be presented in Chapters Six to Nine.

The most northerly section of the SNNPR is comprised of a range of highlands that lie between the Rift valley and the Gibe trough, inhabited by the Kebena, the various groups who are collectively known as the Gurage, the Yem, Hadiya, Mesmes, Tembaro and Kembata. The Silti Gurage, Mareko and Alaba inhabit adjacent lowland areas on the western side of the Rift valley floor, which are included in the SNNPR. In this area, which is defined by the northern group of Rift valley lakes (Zwai, Langano, Shala and Abiata) central and western parts of the Rift valley are included in the Oromo region.

This relatively small and densely populated area is divided between three zones and one special woreda <sup>1</sup>. The Gurage zone is the northern-most of these administrative areas and is an area of great diversity. While the Gurage arguably form a single ethnic group, internal differentiation is great, in terms of linguistic, religious, social and historical features. Other substantial ethnicities in the Gurage zone are the Kebena, whose language is closely related to that spoken by the Kembata, and the Mareko whose language is related to that of the Hadiya. The zone also contains smaller minority groups. Chapter Nine will address the question of internal diversity amongst the Gurage by examining the social and historical reasons why the Silti Gurage are the only group in the Gurage zone that has chosen to employ its language for the purpose of primary education.

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<sup>1</sup> Map Five, Appendix One, p305.

Yem special woreda lies to the south-west of the Gurage zone in a particularly remote area of these highlands. The language spoken by the local population is a northern island of Omotic language <sup>2</sup>.

To the south of the Gurage zone the most populous groups (Hadiya, Kembata, Tembaro and Alaba) all speak languages that are from the Highland East Cushitic branch of the Cushitic language family<sup>3</sup>. The Hadiya and Kembata languages have both been developed as MOI for primary education, and are used respectively in the Hadiya and K.A.T. zones, which cover this geographical area <sup>4</sup>. The Hadiya zone is not a contiguous territory, Badewacho woreda being separated from the other woredas of the zone by the K.A.T. zone. Two woredas of the K.A.T. zone have, however, chosen to continue the use of Amharic in primary schools. Linguistic reform in the Hadiya and K.A.T. zones provides the basis for discussion in Chapter Seven, where the significance of literacy rates in relation to attitudes towards the use of local languages will be considered. In Chapter Seven linguistic migration will also be discussed.

At the latitude of lake Awassa, Oromo settlement in the Rift valley comes to an end, and the SNNPR opens out to include the full breadth of the Rift valley and extensive sections of the highlands on either side. The SNNPR continues to include the Rift valley floor until south of lake Chamo, where the Borana Oromo inhabit the lowland areas that stretch to the border with Kenya.

The section of the SNNPR on the eastern side of the Rift valley is much smaller than that on the west. The eastern section is characterised by a range of well-watered, fertile highlands, and associated slopes which lead down to lakes Abaya and Chamo. This area is divided into two zones and two special woredas. The northern part of these highlands, stretching further east than any other part of the SNNPR, is inhabited by the most populous group in the region, the Sidama. To the south of the Sidama zone, is the Gedeo zone <sup>5</sup>, which has the highest rate of urbanisation in the SNNPR. The languages of both the Sidama and Gedeo are Highland East Cushitic, and both are now used in the

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<sup>2</sup> Chart Three, Appendix Two, P312.

<sup>3</sup> Chart Two, Appendix Two, p311.

<sup>4</sup> Map Five, Appendix One, p305.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

primary education system <sup>6</sup>. In Chapter Six the discussion will focus on material from these two zones. The main issue to be examined is the urban / rural dichotomy of attitudes towards language use.

To the south of Gedeo is Amaro special woreda, the home of the Koyra, whose language is Omotic. Amaro is characterised by a range of isolated, steep mountains which overlook lake Abaya and lake Chamo. To the south of Amaro is Burji special woreda which is less mountainous. The language of the Burji is Highland East Cushitic. In these areas no local languages have yet been developed for use as a MOI. In Amaro, however, the local administration has requested that the local language be developed for the purpose of being taught as a single subject.

On the opposite side of the Rift valley to the west of lakes Abaya and Chamo is a broad section of highlands covered by the North Omo zone <sup>7</sup>, which is inhabited by the groups of people whose languages form the Omoto cluster <sup>8</sup> of Omotic languages. The north-eastern corner of this area is inhabited by the Walaita, the most populous of the Omotic speaking peoples. The area inhabited by the Walaita is fertile, but overpopulated. On the northern border of the Walaita woredas are the similarly overpopulated areas inhabited by the Kembata and Badewacho Hadiya. To the east, in the Rift Valley, the Walaita border the Sidama in the area to the north of lake Abaya, where the border between the two zones is the Bilate river. To the west and south, the Walaita are encircled by a ring of less populous peoples, the languages of all of which come from the Omoto cluster; working southwards from the northwest these are Dawro, Basketo, Gofa, Konta, Mello, Oyda, Zayse, Dorze and Gamo.

In this zone two new languages have been introduced as MOI. One is that of the Walaita; the other is a composite language called Gamo, Gofa, Dawro (GGD), which was intended to represent the remaining groups of the Omoto cluster. The implications of the use of the two languages in the zone, and the use of a composite language, will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

To the south of the North Omo zone is an area of great linguistic diversity

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<sup>6</sup> Chart Two, Appendix Two, p311.

<sup>7</sup> Map Five, Appendix One, p305.

<sup>8</sup> Chart Three, Appendix Two, p311.

covered by the South Omo zone and two special woredas, Derashe and Konso<sup>9</sup>. This area is very large, extending far to the south of any previously mentioned areas. To the immediate south of the Omoto cluster, in the north of the South Omo zone, the most populous groups of people are the Maale and Tsamay. To the south of Arba Minch, the highlands on the western side of the Rift valley are home to several groups of people: the Kechama, Gidole (Derashe), the Dullay group (which includes Gewada, Gobaze, Werize), Mossiya and Konso. To the west of these highlands, the Woiyto river valley, a very hot dry area, is home to several smaller ethnic groups. The Hamar are one of the most populous groups in the highlands to the south and west of this area. The area around the town of Jinka, the capital of South Omo, which is to the north of the Woiyto valley, is inhabited the Aari, and, to their north east, by the Dime. The southern part of the South Omo zone is dominated by the lower Omo valley, which is inhabited by the Mursi and Nyangatom, as well as by many less populous ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group in the extreme south of the region, around the northern shore of lake Turkana, are the Dassanech.

The languages of groups of people in this southern part of the SNNPR come from the Cushitic (Konso, Gidole, Gewada, Gobaze, Werize, Tsamay and Dassanech), Omotic (Maale, Aari, Hamar, Dime and Kechama) and Nilo-Saharan (Mursi, Nyangatom) language families. In this area all groups of people continue to use Amharic for primary education, and as yet there appears to be little desire on the part of the population, or of the local administration, to develop local languages. Research was conducted in Aari and Konso in order to provide a comparison to areas of the SNNPR where local languages are used as MOI.

No field-work in connection with this thesis was conducted in the western- most geographical section of the region, which is that part of the SNNPR which lies to the west of the Omo valley. Only minimal analysis will be provided for this area, which is covered by two zones, Kafficho-Shakecho and Bench-Maji<sup>10</sup>. Northern parts of this area are dominated by highlands, whereas to the south and west lie the lowlands on Ethiopia's border with Sudan. The

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<sup>9</sup> Map Five, Appendix One. p305.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

southern-most section of this area is inhabited by the Suri, who speak a Nilo-Saharan language. North of the Suri are the Maji, an Omotic speaking group, whose language is called Dizi. Also in the central part of the Bench-Maji zone are the Me-en and Bodi, and to their west the other Surma speaking peoples, and the Messengo or Majang: the languages of all of these groups of people belong to the Nilo-Saharan language family <sup>11</sup>. To the north of this area the languages spoken by the inhabitant groups come from the Omotic family. Working from west to east the first of these groups are Bench, She and Sheko, on the north- western border of the region are the Mocha (whose language is called Shakicho), and, moving eastwards, the Kaffa, Chara and Nao, whose eastern borders are with the Mello and Dawro of the Ometo cluster. Broadly speaking, the groups of people who speak Omotic languages inhabit the area's highlands, while those whose languages are from the Nilo-Saharan language family inhabit the lowlands.

The distribution of language groups described above is shown on Map Three <sup>12</sup>. The areas that define the distribution of certain languages on this map, it will be observed, differ from the administrative divisions of the SNNPR shown on Map Five <sup>13</sup> which are intended to represent the inhabitant groups of people. Neither of these maps provides an accurate picture of the distribution of ethnic or linguistic groups. The divisions of both maps, for example, do not account for areas in which languages overlap, and these are many. Both the linguistic and administrative maps should be regarded only as a rough guides to the geographical distribution of languages and peoples in the SNNPR. Neither can these maps provide us with information about the distribution of two other substantial groups of people in the SNNPR, the Amhara and the Oromo, who are present in large numbers, mostly concentrated in urban areas. The size, principal location and language family of the larger groups of people in the SNNPR will be presented in Table One below.

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<sup>11</sup> Chart Four, Appendix Two, p313.

<sup>12</sup> Map Three, Appendix One, p303.

<sup>13</sup> Map Five, Appendix One, p305.

**Table One**

Groups of people with populations of over 30,000 in the SNNPR by population size, administrative zone, and language family.

	ETHNIC GROUP	TOTAL POPULATION	% OF REGIONAL POPULATION	PRINCIPALLY BASED IN - ZONE (REGION)	LANGUAGE FAMILY	GROUPS DISCUSSED IN FIELD-WORK CHAPTERS
1	SIDAMA	1820030	17.55	SIDAMA	CUSHITIC	CHAPTER SIX
2	GURAGE	1647330	15.88	GURAGE	SEMITIC	CHAPTER NINE
	(SEBATBET)	721169	6.95	GURAGE	SEMITIC	CHAPTER NINE
	(SODDO)	191341	1.84	GURAGE	SEMITIC	CHAPTER NINE
	(SILTI)	734820	7.08	GURAGE	SEMITIC	CHAPTER NINE
3	WALAITA	1210235	11.67	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	CHAPTER EIGHT
4	HADIYA	874492	8.43	HADIYA	CUSHITIC	CHAPTER SEVEN
5	GAMO	697540	6.72	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	CHAPTER SEVEN
6	KAFFA	551223	5.31	KAFFICHO	OMOTIC	
7	GEDEO	459351	4.43	GEDEO	CUSHITIC	CHAPTER SIX
8	KEMBATA	443525	4.28	K.A.T.	CUSHITIC	CHAPTER SEVEN
9	AMHARA	312558	3.01	(AMHARA)	SEMITIC	CHAPTER SIX
10	DAWRO	273089	2.63	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	CHAPTER EIGHT
11	GOFA	240749	2.32	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	
12	OROMO	208310	2.01	(OROMO)	CUSHITIC	
13	BASKETO	186590	1.8	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	
14	BENCH & SHE	154381	1.48	BENCH - MAJI	OMOTIC	
15	KONSO	141375	1.36	KONSO	CUSHITIC	
16	ALABA	117449	1.13	K.A.T.	CUSHITIC	CHAPTER SEVEN
17	KOYRA (AMARO)	105244	1.01	AMARO	OMOTIC	
18	TEMBARO	84918	0.82	K.A.T.	CUSHITIC	
19	YEMSA	60811	0.59	YEM	OMOTIC	
20	ME'EN & BODI	57226	0.55	BENCH - MAJI	NILO SAHARAN	
21	GIDOLE	53747	0.52	DERASHE	CUSHITIC	
22	AARI	50945	0.49	SOUTH OMO	OMOTIC	
23	KONTA	49116	0.47	NORTH OMO	OMOTIC	
24	MAALE	46391	0.45	SOUTH OMO	OMOTIC	
25	MOCHA (SHAK)	46169	0.44	KAFFICHO	OMOTIC	
26	MAREKO	36558	0.35	GURAGE	CUSHITIC	
27	BURJI	34476	0.33	BURJI	CUSHITIC	
28	GEWADA	32636	0.31	DERASHE	CUSHITIC	
29	DASSANECH	32041	0.31	SOUTH OMO	CUSHITIC	

To describe the region broadly in terms of the overall distribution of population, it is possible to say that population is most concentrated in the north east and fairly evenly graduated in concentric bands towards the south-west, which is most sparsely populated. The highlands are, in general, more densely populated than the lowlands. The more populous groups of people, who are the focus of the field-work, inhabit the more accessible areas of the region. These

are those groups of people who have had a greater degree of contact with the northern Ethiopian state. These areas also have the highest population density and the highest rates of urbanisation in the SNNPR.

The distribution of towns also broadly follows the same pattern as that of the overall population, with the larger towns being mainly situated in northern or eastern parts of the region, where the influence of the Ethiopian state has been most keenly felt. These towns generally lie on the major roads which are arteries of Ethiopian state, tracing long-established lines of communication and influence<sup>14</sup>. There were no towns in the south-west prior to northern Ethiopian colonisation, all were established as a result of northern expansion <sup>15</sup>.

The great majority of the SNNPR's larger towns were visited during the field-work. Towns provided an important comparison with rural areas in terms of attitudes towards language use. The larger towns in the region are ethnically heterogeneous, being comprised of a mixture of Amharas, Oromos, Gurages, Walaitas and Kembatas as well as members of local groups of people. In these towns Amharic has been adopted by people from all backgrounds, even though these individuals may continue to identify themselves with their ancestral group. The smaller towns are more likely to have homogeneous populations of local language speakers, although many still contain substantial Amharic-speaking elements.

The vast majority of the population of the SNNPR, however, continues to inhabit rural areas; 93.2% according to government statistics. Urban areas contain only a small proportion of the region's population. Participation in education and existing literacy rates are much higher in the towns. In urban areas of the SNNPR 33.08% of the population were engaged in education at the time of the most recent national census, whereas in the rural areas it was only 8.28%. While the urban areas have an average literacy rate of 67.31%, in the rural areas it was only 21.09%. Figures for literacy rates can not be treated as absolutes. Apart from anything else there is no way to establish how, in the context of this government census, literacy was measured. However, treated as relative values, the figures in Table Two below demonstrate the great disparity

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<sup>14</sup> Chapter One, p52.

<sup>15</sup> Bjerer, 1985, p76.



between urban and rural areas in terms of education and literacy. The figures also demonstrate the gap between male and female rates of participation in education and in existing levels of literacy. In the urban environment the gap between males and females is not so pronounced. Urban females are only marginally less likely to be engaged in education than their male counterparts, whereas in rural areas males outnumber females by an average of two to one. There is a similar picture in terms of literacy rates. According to the census, 58.09% of women in urban areas are literate, compared to 67.31% of men. In rural areas, however, men are almost three times as likely to be literate as women: the literacy rate for rural men is 30.63%, whereas that for women is 11.77%.<sup>16</sup>

**Table Two**

Population, education and literacy in the SNNPR

	SNNPR	TOTAL (MALE & FEMALE)	URBAN (MALE & FEMALE)	URBAN (MALE)	URBAN (FEMALE)	RURAL (MALE & FEMALE)	RURAL (MALE)	RURAL (FEMALE)
1	TOTAL	10371192	704818	351579	353239	9666374	4806436	4859938
	% OF POPULATION	100	6.8	3.39	3.41	93.2	46.34	46.86
2	EDUCATION							
	POP. IN ED. SURVEY	8844560	613961	304951	309010	8230599	4087281	4143318
	% IN EDUCATION	10	33.08	35.2	30.99	8.28	11.49	5.11
3	LITERACY							
	POP. IN LIT. SURVEY	7039175	509836	253338	256498	6529339	3227516	3301823
	% LITERATE	24.44	67.31	76.04	58.69	21.09	30.63	11.77

The distribution of the use of local languages in the primary education system has also formed a regional pattern. The languages that have been developed for the primary education system are those of the more populous groups of people, who inhabit the more accessible areas of the SNNPR, and have the highest levels of participation in education and literacy rates. The population of the sparsely populated, lowland areas on the peripheries of the

<sup>16</sup> All statistics used in this Chapter were taken from the 1994 census. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1996a and 1996b.

SNNPR continues to use Amharic. None of the special woredas has begun to use the local language in primary education. Nor have any local languages been developed in the Bench-Maji or South Omo zones which cover the most linguistically diverse, sparsely populated and remote areas of the region. The population size of many of the groups of people who inhabit these areas would seem to rule out the development of their languages. Existing rates of participation in education and literacy in these areas are, moreover, the lowest in the SNNPR, and the priority for the MOE in these areas is to increase access to basic education.

The use of languages in education varies within several of the zones in which local languages are used, often as a result of the desires of the local population to use, or not to use, their own, or similar, languages in education. As will be discussed in later sections, some groups of people, or sections of a particular group, have found it possible to challenge the introduction of a local language, whereas other groups seem to have been forced to use an unpopular local language.

Three zones are split between the use of a local language and Amharic. In the Gurage zone only the three woredas where Silti is spoken use the local language, while all other woredas in the zone continue to use Amharic. In the K.A.T. zone the three Kembata-speaking woredas in the central part of the zone use Kembata language materials, while Tembaro and Alaba woredas use Amharic. In the Kafficho-Shakecho zone local language materials are used in the Kaffa area covered by five woredas, the remaining three woredas of the zone use Amharic. The North Omo zone is split between the use of two local languages, Walaita and GGD.

In the remaining three zones, Sidama, Gedeo and Hadiya, local languages are used in all areas except the largest urban centres. The largest towns in the SNNPR, Awassa, Dilla, Hosanna and Arba Minch (North Omo zone), all have schools that use Amharic as the MOI, as well as schools that teach in the local language. In the schools of these towns, where Amharic is the MOI, the local language is taught as a subject. The distribution of languages in education is presented in Table Three.

**Table Three**

Language use in primary education in the SNNPR

	NAME OF ZONE / SPECIAL WOREDA	TOTAL POPULATION	LOCAL LANGUAGE USED IN EDUCATION	WOREDAS THAT USE LOCAL LANGUAGE	TOWNS OR WOREDAS THAT USE AMHARIC	
1	SIDAMA ZONE	2044836	SIDAMA	ALL	AWASSA TOWN	
2	GEDEO ZONE	564073	GEDEO	ALL	DILLA TOWN	
3	K.A.T. ZONE	727340	KEMBATA	ANGACHA, KACHABIRA & KEDIDA GAMELA	OMOSHELEKO & ALABA WOREDAS	
	KEMBATA		414321	KEMBATA	ALL	NONE
	ALABA & TEMBARO		187034	NONE	NONE	ALL
4	HADIYA ZONE	1050151	HADIYA	ALL	HOSANNA TOWN	
5	NORTH OMO ZONE	2603057	WALAITA & GGD	ALL	ARBA MINCH TOWN	
	(WALAITA WOREDAS)	1163804	WALAITA	BOLOSSO SORE, DAMOT GALE, DAMOT WOYDE, SODDO ZURIA, KINDO KOYISHA, OFFA & HUMBO TEBELA	NONE	
	(GAMO GOFA DAWRO WOREDAS)		GAMO,GOFA, DAWRO	ELLA KONTA, ISARA TOCHA, MAREKA GENA, LOMA BOSSA, MELAKOZA, GOFA, KUCHA, BOREDA ABAYA, CHENCHA, DITA DERMALO, ZALA UBERMALE, BASKETO, KEMBA, BONKE & ARBA MINCH	ARBA MINCH TOWN	
		1439253				
6	GURAGE ZONE	1556964	SILTI	SILTI, LANFARO & DALOCHA & A SMALL AREA OF KOKIR GEDEBANO	EZHANA WELENE, GORO, CHEHA, SODDO, GUMER, MESKEN & MAREKO, ENEMORENA ENER & KOKIR GEDEBANO	
7	SOUTH OMO ZONE	327867	NONE	NONE	ALL	
8	BENCH - MAJI ZONE	322420	NONE	NONE	ALL	
9	KAFFICHO - SHAKICHO	725086	KAFFICHO	GESHA, GIMBO, MENJAWA, TELLO & CHENA	MASHA, YEKI & DECHA	
10	YEM	64852	NONE	NONE	ALL	
11	AMARO	98315	NONE	NONE	ALL	
12	BURJI	38746	NONE	NONE	ALL	
13	DERASHE	89900	NONE	NONE	ALL	
14	KONSO	157585	NONE	NONE	ALL	

## The groups of people under discussion in this thesis

This thesis is concerned with groups of people who inhabit six of the zones of the SNNPR (Sidama, Gedeo, K.A.T., Hadiya, North Omo, Gurage). This section will compare conditions in each of these zones by examining government statistics that concern urbanisation, education and literacy. For the purposes of this discussion, two of these six zones will be divided into two linguistic sections. These are the K.A.T. zone, where the Alaba and Kembata-speaking areas will each be discussed, and the North Omo zone, where the Walaita-speaking area and the remainder of the zone (where GGD is used) will be examined separately. In each of the following three tables figures will, therefore, be presented for ten areas in all. This section is intended to provide an overall picture of the area under discussion in the field-work Chapters, each of which will focus on a geographical area, and on a particular question, or questions.

**Table Four**

Population size and urbanisation of zones covered by the field-work.

	NAME OF ZONE	TOTAL POP.	URBAN	RURAL	% URBAN	% RURAL
1	SIDAMA ZONE	2044836	143534	1901302	7.02	92.98
2	GEDEO ZONE	564073	65374	498699	11.59	88.41
3	K.A.T. ZONE	727340	50987	676353	7.01	92.99
	KEMBATA	414321	29749	384572	7.18	92.82
	ALABA	187034	16723	170311	8.94	91.06
4	HADIYA ZONE	1050151	67705	982446	6.45	93.55
5	NORTH OMO ZONE	2603057	176339	2426718	6.77	93.23
	WALAITA	1163804	80305	1083499	6.9	93.1
	GGD	1439253	96034	1343219	6.67	93.33
6	GURAGE ZONE	1556964	76988	1479976	4.94	95.06

Table Four gives figures for the total populations and urban / rural composition of the ten areas in which research was conducted.

The highlands of the Sidama and Gedeo zones are densely populated. The fertility of the soil in these highlands, which are watered by many springs, has facilitated the cultivation of two lucrative cash crops (coffee and chat). The

development of a cash crop economy has enabled the area to support an increasing population. Consequently, there has been no large scale displacement of either of these groups of people in response to population increase. The Sidama, the most populous group in the SNNPR, are found nowhere outside the Sidama zone in significant numbers, and the Sidama zone contains no substantial minorities (outside of the urban environment). The Gedeo zone is similarly homogeneous. The Gedeo zone has the highest proportion of the population living in urban areas (11.59%) of any area covered by the research. The major towns in the Sidama and Gedeo zones lie on the main road to Kenya, and include many of the SNNPR's larger urban centres (including the regional capital Awassa, Yirga Alem, Leku, Dilla and Yirga Chefe) <sup>17</sup> . These heterogeneous towns contrast with the homogeneous rural areas which surround them.

The highlands on the western side of the Rift valley are also very densely populated. The Hadiya zone, although not as fertile, is similar, in some respects, to the Sidama and Gedeo zones. Few Hadiya speakers are found outside of the zone, neither does it contain any substantial minorities. Even in the zone capital Hosanna, the population is dominated by Hadiya speakers.

In other parts of the highlands to the west of the Rift valley, however, as the population has increased over the last century, a number of related factors have conspired to produce patterns of migration. Soil erosion has been particularly pronounced in some areas, and, as a result, an increasing population has had a decreasing amount of fertile land upon which to plant. Land shortages caused by population growth and soil erosion have combined with the dominance of *ensete* cultivation, which characterises the agriculture of this area, to make the development of a cash crop economy problematic <sup>18</sup> . As a result, some members of the larger groups of people (Gurage, Kembata, Walaita) have been forced to adopt alternative lifestyles, often in order to pay taxes. Often the change of lifestyle entails some form of migration. The migration patterns of these groups of people have typically been from rural to urban areas, and, as a result, they represent substantial proportions of the population

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<sup>17</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One , p308.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter One, p69.

in the urban environments of the SNNPR.

This is particularly true of the Gurage, who are often characterised as traders and urban dwellers. The Gurage zone itself, however, has the lowest rate of urbanisation in the SNNPR. Gurage urban migration has tended to be directed towards towns outside of the Gurage homelands. Many of the towns which the Gurage inhabit (Akaki, Debra Zeit, Dukem, Mojo, Koka, Awash, Meqi, Bulbula, Zwai, Adami Tulu, Alem Tena, Shashemene) are in the Oromo region, and lie on the main road south from Addis Ababa in the Rift valley<sup>19</sup>. The Gurage also form a substantial proportion of the population of Addis Ababa and the larger urban centres of the SNNPR. In all of these urban areas the Gurage are most typically involved in trade. There is also substantial seasonal Gurage migration to the industrial urban areas to the south of Addis Ababa, where many Gurage men seek employment as factory workers.

Kembata migration has been directed towards the larger towns of the south-west (Shashemene, Awassa, Dilla, Soddo), and has also included settlement in rural areas. During the course of the twentieth century many Kembatas settled in rural areas of the Rift valley near Shashemene, and in the former province of Gojjam, near Debra Markos. At the time of the research many Kembatas had returned to the Kembata highlands from these areas in response to the geopolitical reforms of the country. Many 'returning' Kembatas headed for Durame, the new zone capital, in the hope of finding work and the town's population was increasing rapidly as a result. Where Kembatas are found in the larger urban centres of the south, they are typically engaged in low prestige interstitial activities<sup>20</sup> (guard, daily labourer).

Walaita migration has also tended to be focussed on the larger urban centres, including Addis Ababa. The Walaita are typically engaged in interstitial activities. North Omo zone is the largest in the SNNPR, both in area and in population. The distribution of the population in this zone is very uneven. The seven woredas of Walaita occupy less than one quarter of the land area of the zone, but contain almost half of its population. GGD is the most sparsely populated area that will be discussed in this thesis. GGD resembles the other

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<sup>19</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

<sup>20</sup> Introduction, p 35-36.

areas focussed on in this thesis much less than it resembles the areas to its south and west, which lie outside the scope of the field-work. In GGD, groups of people have had less contact with the state than those in the other areas under focus in the research.

**Table Five**

Education in the areas covered by the field-work,  
Urban / Rural and Male / Female participation rates.

	NAME OF ZONE	TOTAL POP.	TOTAL POP. IN EDUCATION SURVEY	% ATTENDING SCHOOL (5 YEARS+)	% ATTENDING SCHOOL (URBAN)	% ATTENDING SCHOOL (RURAL)	% ATTENDING SCHOOL (MALE)	% ATTENDING SCHOOL (FEMALE)
1	SIDAMA ZONE	2044836	1771227	9.61	29.23	70.77	66.78	33.22
2	GEDEO ZONE	564073	474593	11.47	36.58	63.42	66.99	33.01
3	K.A.T. ZONE	727340	635325	15.01	13.67	86.33	60.87	39.13
	KEMBATA	414321	361881	18.03	10.67	89.33	59.68	40.32
	ALABA	187034	163342	4.27	67.43	32.57	64.31	35.69
4	HADIYA ZONE	1050151	909975	12.54	15.9	84.1	62.4	37.6
5	NORTH OMO ZONE	2603057	2234281	9.8	22.36	77.64	65.08	34.92
	WALAITA	1163804	10000734	11.06	17.26	82.74	65.91	34.09
	GGD	1439253	1235333	8.07	28.03	71.97	64.8	35.2
6	GURAGE ZONE	1556964	1340636	8.11	13.05	68.1	68.93	31.07

In the ten areas under focus in the field-work rates and patterns of participation in education vary to a great extent. Table Two gives the average figure for regional participation in the education system as 10% <sup>21</sup>, and the associated discussion outlines a broad pattern of participation which applies throughout the area under discussion; as outlined above there is a disparity between participation rates of urban and rural populations, and between the sexes. Conditions in the ten areas vary in these respects. The extent to which the respective proportions of urban, rural, male and female rates of participation in education vary in particular areas helps us to develop a picture of the conditions in each area, and, thereby, to explain the attitudes of groups of people in those areas to the introduction of the local languages.

The highest overall percentage of participation in education recorded in the census for any area covered by the field-work was in the Kembata-speaking

<sup>21</sup> See above p160.

woredas (18.03%). This high rate can largely be attributed to the great extent of missionary activity in the area. Kembata also has the highest rate of rural participation in education (89.33% of those who were attending school lived in rural areas). The Kembata area also had the highest rate of female participation in education (40.32% of students were female), which can be attributed to the missionary policy of actively encouraging girls to attend school. In Kembata, therefore, education not only involves a larger total proportion of the population, but also includes greater proportions of those sections of the population who are frequently marginalised in the education system. The high rates of rural and female participation in Kembata have helped to create a school environment which is in favour of the introduction of a local language. This is because these sections of the population are the least likely to have any knowledge of Amharic before entering school, and are also likely to see the opportunities that might arise from education as being largely restricted to the local environment <sup>22</sup>.

A stark contrast to the conditions in Kembata was found in Alaba, which has the lowest rate of participation in education of any area covered by the field-work (4.27%). As well as a very low overall rate, Alaba had the lowest proportion of rural participation in education (only 32.57% of those who were attending school in Alaba were living in rural areas). Alaba was the only area where the number of students attending school in urban areas outnumbered in absolute terms that in the rural areas. The majority of the urban population, furthermore, are not Alabas; in Kulito, the largest town, the population is largely made up of Gurages, Oromos and Amharas. Alabas account for only around 15% of the students in the schools. Alaba also has a low rate of female participation in education (35.69% of students are female). Female participation in schools in the town, however, is average for an urban area, and, because in Alaba more students attend schools in towns, this has inflated the overall percentage of female participation in Alaba, thus concealing the fact that in the rural areas girls were almost entirely absent from the schools <sup>23</sup>.

Conditions in Alaba reflect the fact that the population are predominantly Muslim. No mission schools were established in this area, since the state

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter Seven, p222.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter Seven, p333.



disallowed missionary activity in Muslim areas <sup>24</sup>. Nor did the state itself seek to provide education for Muslims. In Alaba most state schools were established in Kulito, where Amharic is the first language of the majority. Ethiopian Muslims have tended to regard education with distrust, seeing it primarily as a means by which the state seeks to extend its authority <sup>25</sup>. There is, for many Muslims, no question of sending their daughters to school. In areas like Alaba, where the population is very poor, there was also a financial constraint in sending children to state schools, until the recent introduction of free education. There was, therefore, little point in establishing schools in rural areas, since the population had neither the inclination nor the resources to send its children to school. These conditions in Alaba have discouraged the use of the local language, since most of those who are engaged in education are urban dwellers who would prefer to continue to use Amharic, which is their first language.

Reasonably high rates of participation in education, above the regional average, are found in the Hadiya zone(12.54%), the Gedeo zone(11.47%), and the Walaita area(11.07%). The Sidama zone has a rather lower rate (9.61%). Conditions in these areas are broadly similar; missions and the Ethiopian state have been involved in providing education. Rates of participation in education are much higher in urban than in rural areas, although in terms of total figures many more students attend rural schools. Reflecting the regional trend, male participation rates are between two and three times higher than those of females. Reasonably high rural participation rates in these areas have encouraged the use of the local language. In Hadiya, Gedeo and Sidama, where most people do not envisage leaving the immediate locality for more than short periods of time, the use of local languages has been welcomed by the rural population. This contrasts with the heterogeneous larger urban centres, where many people would prefer to continue to use Amharic <sup>26</sup>.

Much lower rates of participation in education are found in GGD (8.07%), and the peripheral areas to its south and west. In these areas the state has been unable to provide education for a significant proportion of the population,

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<sup>24</sup> Chapter Two, p82.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter Two, p91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Chapter Six , p182-183.

and missionary activity has been limited. In GGD, and other peripheral areas of the SNNPR, the provision of education is hindered by practical constraints, including the fact that the population is scattered over a vast and inaccessible region.

The Gurage zone also has a low rate of participation in education (8.11%). This is partly because the zone contains several Muslim groups, the largest of which are the Silti Gurage. The rates of participation in education for these Muslim groups are similar to that in Alaba. In the Gurage zone, however, it is the presence of numerous minority groups, who have continued to be marginalised in the provision of education, which makes the overall rate of participation in education very low. The Mareko, for example, have no schools in their territory and are thought to have a literacy rate of less than 1%<sup>27</sup>. As the figures in Table Six below demonstrate, rates of literacy in the Gurage zone are also lower than might be expected, given its proximity to Addis Ababa and the pattern of contact between many Gurages and the wider networks of Ethiopian society. In Gurage it is common, however, for individuals to speak Amharic without being literate.

**Table Six**

Literacy in the ten areas covered by the field-work,  
Urban / rural and male/ female literacy rates.

	NAME OF ZONE	TOTAL POP.	TOTAL POP. IN LITERACY SURVEY	% LITERATE	% LITERATE (URBAN)	% LITERATE (RURAL)	% LITERATE (MALE)	% LITERATE (FEMALE)
1	SIDAMA ZONE	2044836	1335434	24.91	76.61	20.49	34.61	14.81
2	GEDEO ZONE	564073	372481	29.92	70.05	24.06	41.99	17.82
3	K.A.T. ZONE	727340	511629	33.37	61.05	31.24	42.57	24.26
	KEMBATA	414321	296273	41.64	61	35.06	51.71	31.49
	ALABA	187034	129184	12.82	63.19	7.47	18.28	7.5
4	HADIYA ZONE	1050151	724187	33.01	66.47	30.64	43.35	22.94
5	NORTH OMO ZONE	2603057	1783963	23.27	65.4	20.01	32.49	14.31
	WALAITA	1163804	810803	27.83	59.72	24.91	38.35	16.75
	GGD	1439253	973160	18.1	70.12	15.94	27.59	12.28
6	GURAGE ZONE	1556964	1084542	20.62	60.69	18.49	31.49	10.68

Levels of literacy, which will be referred to more frequently than rates of

<sup>27</sup> Mary Breeze (SIL), Addis Ababa, 22/3/96.

participation in education in the field-work Chapters, show a pattern similar to the rates of current participation in education. However, literacy rates imply something rather different than rates of current participation in education. Literacy in Ethiopia, implies literacy in Amharic, because very few individuals are literate in any other languages, and only then in languages of wider communication. Until very recently, therefore, literacy was equated with assimilation to the Ethiopian state. The literacy rate in an area reflects the historical patterns of participation in education of the population, and, consequently, reflects the degree of contact with the state or other external bodies. To an extent, therefore, literacy rates can be used as indicators of the extent to which a population has been incorporated into the structures of the state.

But literacy rates, treated as absolutes are inherently misleading <sup>28</sup>. In general it appears, in the light of the field-work, that the recorded literacy rates are inflated. Literacy rates, therefore, should only be used as relative values. Figures for literacy rates will not be stated in this discussion, because this would appear to endorse their accuracy <sup>29</sup>. In the context of this thesis literacy rates are used to compare the extent of literacy between different sections of the population, and in different geographical areas, and not in an attempt to establish the actual extent of literacy.

In the SNNPR as a whole, literacy rates are much higher for the urban than for the rural population. Similarly, literacy rates for males are higher than those for females in both urban and rural environments. The literacy rates of the larger towns of the area under discussion in the research will be discussed in the next section. Urban rates of literacy are highest in the areas which have the largest towns, but the factors governing urban literacy are more complex and can only be discussed in relation to specific towns. Any attempt to compare the urban literacy figures for different areas without reference to specific towns would be misleading. The following discussion, therefore, is concerned with rural patterns of literacy.

Literacy rates, like rates of participation in education, were highest in

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<sup>28</sup> Introduction p38-39. Chapter Two p92-93.

<sup>29</sup> See above, Table Six, p169.

Kembata. In Kembata, rural and female literacy rates were also higher than in any of the other field-work areas. The proportional difference between the urban and rural rates of literacy was also the smallest of the ten areas. The gap between male and female literacy was also proportionally smaller than in other areas. Kembata did not, however, have the highest urban literacy rate of the ten areas. This is largely explained by the absence of large towns in Kembata. In Kembata, therefore, the high rate of overall literacy has largely been produced by a very high rate of rural literacy, and by the extent of female literacy. The other area where a high literacy rate reflects similar factors is the Hadiya zone, which has the highest literacy rate after Kembata.

Throughout the area under discussion, where literacy rates are high in the rural environment (Kembata, Hadiya, Gedeo, Sidama, Walaita), the introduction of local languages has proved popular. A large proportion of the population in these areas has already become literate in Amharic, and, as a result, has experienced the difficulties of learning in a language other than the mother tongue<sup>30</sup>. In these areas people had also been introduced to the idea of literacy in a local language as a result of the National Literacy campaign, although literacy in local languages was not a result of the campaign<sup>31</sup>. This rural literate section of the population came to appreciate the inherent value of education, and to understand the opportunities that may arise from literacy in any language. In the current political climate these ethnicities are encouraged to see their languages as the principal vehicles of their identities. In rural areas the population seeks a way to express their identity, and this reform provides them with an opportunity for such expression. The local languages are now used, moreover, for an enlarged set of functions: many government jobs in the local environment increasingly depend on their use, and opportunities that arise from literacy in these languages are not insignificant.

As with rates of participation in education the area that had the lowest overall literacy rate was Alaba, and the lowest rates of both rural, and female literacy. The gap between urban and rural literacy here is the greatest of the ten areas. When a population is introduced to education, it is the urban-male

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<sup>30</sup> Chapter Five, p171.

<sup>31</sup> Chapter Two, p90-91.

section of the population that is initially most likely to become literate, followed by the urban-female and the rural-male population, and finally by the rural-female population (the last section of population to be involved in education). Patterns of literacy in areas like Kembata reflect the long-standing patterns of education in the area. The fact that, in areas like Alaba, literacy is still concentrated in the urban-male section of the population reflects not only the the social or cultural climate outlined above, but also the fact that in this area education is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Elsewhere where literacy rates are low, as in GGD (and other peripheral areas covered by the research; Konso special woreda and the Aari-speaking area of South Omo zone), the rural population continues to favour the use of Amharic in the primary education system. This is because it is only once a substantial proportion of the population has become literate that the issues that are involved in language use in education become clear. As stated above, many people in areas of low literacy (often illiterate themselves) feel that the main purpose of education is to learn other languages. Since they have no experience of education it is difficult for them to grasp the point that languages, as well as being taught as subjects in their own right, are being used in education to convey other kinds of information <sup>32</sup>.

### **Towns in the SNNPR**

In the following section conditions in the larger towns of the SNNPR will be compared in relation to the degree of heterogeneity of the urban population, accessibility, administrative status and literacy rates. The average urban literacy rate for the SNNPR is 67.31% <sup>33</sup>. In the following discussion an urban area with a recorded literacy rate above 70% will be considered to have a high literacy rate, those between 60% and 70% will be considered to have average literacy rates, and those below 60% will be considered to have low literacy rates.

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<sup>32</sup> Chapter Seven, p235. Chapter Eight, p252-253.

<sup>33</sup> See above, Table Two, p160.

**Table Seven**Population and literacy in the larger towns covered by the field-work. <sup>34</sup>

	NAME OF TOWN & ZONE IN BRACKETS (*DENOTES ZONE CAPITAL)	TOTAL POP.	TOTAL POP. IN EDUCATION SURVEY	% LITERATE (M+F)	% LITERATE (MALE)	% LITERATE (FEMALE)
1	AWASSA (SIDAMA) *	69169	51996	82.45	88.02	76.78
2	ARBA MINCH (N.OMO) *	40020	29890	78.93	85.8	72.03
3	SODDO (N.OMO)	36287	27085	67.3	73.06	61.02
4	DILLA (GEDEO) *	33734	25255	70.06	77.16	62.83
5	HOSANNA (HADIYA) *	31701	23143	77.92	85.73	70.48
6	YIRGA ALEM (SIDAMA)	24183	18451	76.42	83.82	69.07
7	BUTAJIRA (GURAGE)	20509	14587	62.96	73.98	53.06
8	SAWELA (N.OMO)	15764	11580	64.29	72.91	55.64
9	WELKITE (GURAGE) *	15329	11513	74.26	83.72	65.08
10	ALABA KULITO (K,A,T,)	15101	11238	63.68	73.12	53.98
11	BODITI (N.OMO)	13400	9494	53.3	64.38	43.08
12	JINKA (S.OMO) *	12407	9322	69.45	75.32	62.86
13	AREKA (N.OMO)	12294	8697	51.79	61.48	42.67
14	YIRGA CHEFE (GEDEO)	11579	8611	75.15	80.81	69.57
15	LEKU (SIDAMA)	8671	6430	68.41	76.26	59.8
16	SHONE (HADIYA)	8230	5883	63.98	74.01	54.04
17	DURAME (K.A.T.) *	7092	5140	77.68	82.7	72.43

For the purpose of this discussion, the towns of the SNNPR that were covered by the research will be divided into three groups; large urban centres, medium-sized towns, and small 'rural' towns. The recorded literacy rates for these towns are not treated as absolutes <sup>35</sup>; rather they are employed as relative values.

The large urban centres are those towns in the SNNPR with populations over 30,000, that is the five largest towns in the region as they appear on Table Seven. Of these five towns four are zone capitals (Awassa, Arba Minch, Dilla and Hosanna). Only Soddo is not a zone capital, since it is included in the North Omo zone, of which Arba Minch is the capital. The schools in Awassa, Arba Minch, Dilla and Hosanna have continued to provide education in Amharic, as well as education in the local language. In Soddo Amharic education has not been allowed to continue.

<sup>34</sup> \* denotes a zone capital.

<sup>35</sup> See above p170.

Each of these towns has an importance beyond its locality, connecting the periphery of the state to the centre. These towns were, without exception, *neftennya* towns established in the nineteenth century, and, consequently, they contain substantial Amharic-speaking elements. The populations of these towns vary in their degree of heterogeneity. Awassa has the smallest proportion of members of the local language group (roughly 10% of the towns population are Sidamas). The largest single group of people in Awassa are the Amhara (roughly 40% of the towns' population), the remainder of the population being Oromos, Gurages, Kembatas and Walaitas. These five groups of people are also present in Dilla and Arba Minch. In these two towns the local language groups (Gedeo and Gamo respectively) account for roughly 40% of the population. In Soddo the Walaita account for roughly 70% of the population, and in Hosanna the Hadiya account for roughly 80% of the population<sup>36</sup>. In these large towns it is mainly the members of the local language groups who are interested in learning in the local language, members of other groups of people generally favour education in Amharic. The local language sections of schools, therefore, reflect the proportions of local language speakers; in Dilla and Arba Minch they account for roughly 40% of the schools' population as against 80% in Hosanna. In Awassa only one primary school, out of the seven in the town, has a Sidama language section.

These large heterogeneous towns are located in the eastern part of the SNNPR, and lie on main roads<sup>37</sup>. Awassa and Dilla lie on the main road south to Kenya. Arba Minch and Soddo lie on the road which runs west from Shashemene and turns south at Soddo, and connects large areas of the southwest to the centre. These two roads (one on the eastern side, the other on the western side of the Rift valley) are the main routes for trade and contact in the area under discussion. Hosanna lies on a lesser road which runs from Addis Ababa south along the western edge of the Rift valley to Butajira in the Gurage zone, through the Silti speaking area, and into the highlands of the Hadiya zone to Hosanna. After Hosanna this road forks; the eastern branch leads to Durame in Kembata and then to Kulito in Alaba, the western branch leads through the

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<sup>36</sup> These estimates are based on the proportions of school children from the various groups in the schools of these towns that were visited during the field-work.

<sup>37</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

Kembata highlands to Soddo in Walaita. The accessibility of a town affects the degree to which the urban population see themselves as belonging to the wider Ethiopian society and the extent to which the population desire to continue to use Amharic. The smaller proportion of other language groups in Hosanna is explained by the comparative remoteness of the town in comparison to the other large urban centres, all of which lie in the Rift valley.

The literacy rates for four of the large urban centres are high; they are above 70%. Awassa, predictably, has the highest rate of literacy for any area in the SNNPR, this being a result of its long standing position as a government administration centre (formerly capital of Sidamo province, now capital of the SNNPR), and of the large number of Amharic-speaking government workers in the town. Arba Minch is also an important administrative centre (formerly capital of Gamo Gofa province, now the capital of the SNNPR's most populous zone) and contains a well established Amharic-speaking population. Literacy rates in Hosanna and Dilla reflect the high extent of literacy in the zones in which they lie, and the administrative status of the towns (zone capitals), which has meant that more literate people have come to settle there since the geopolitical reforms of the present government. Of the large urban centres only Soddo has a recorded literacy rate of below 70%, which would be considered average for an urban area: this reflects the low administrative status of the town (only a woreda capital).

The medium-sized towns, with populations over 7,000, form the remainder of the towns on Table Seven. Some of them have heterogeneous populations containing large numbers of Amharic-speakers, but others do not. Many of these towns lie on one of the major roads. Of these twelve towns, three are zone capitals (Durame, Welkite and Jinka).

The medium-sized towns with heterogeneous populations are Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe on the road to Kenya, Welkite and Butajira in Gurage, Kulito in Alaba and Jinka, the capital of the South Omo zone. All except Jinka lie on major roads <sup>38</sup>. Of these six towns four lie in areas that have continued to use Amharic (Gurage zone, Alaba woreda, South Omo zone). In Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe the population has reacted strongly against the use of the local

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid*



language as the only MOI in the town's schools<sup>39</sup>. The literacy rates of both these towns are very high, and although they are only woreda capitals the population contains a high proportion of literate Amharic-speakers. Both of these towns are highly accessible urban areas on the main road to Kenya. They are, by the standards of the south-west, old towns with well established Amhara and Gurage populations, involved in trade and government employment. Both Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe were important *neftennya* towns. Yirga Alem was the capital of Sidamo province before Awassa.

It would be reasonable to expect the populations of the other heterogeneous medium-sized towns to prefer Amharic. The predominantly Amharic-speaking population of Kulito was instrumental in rejecting the use of Kembata materials in Alaba woreda<sup>40</sup>. It would be difficult to force the populations of Welkite or Butajira to accept local language materials, since both towns reflect the linguistic diversity of Gurage and include speakers of several languages. These towns are the largest in Gurageland, and the population without exception is fluent in Amharic, which the Gurage use as an internal lingua franca. The populations of these towns, and of the surrounding rural areas, were happy for education to continue in Amharic. The population of Jinka is also predominantly Amharic-speaking; Jinka was an important *neftennya* town and administrative centre. Even though it is in a remote area, the population of the town has a high proportion of government workers, and it would, therefore, be reasonable to expect a negative reaction should there be in any attempt to introduce a local language. In South Omo zone, moreover, no language presents itself as a candidate for use in primary education, since the zone is so diverse.

The other medium-sized towns have populations that are largely made up of members of the local language group, and all lie in areas where the local language is the MOI for primary education. These towns are Durame in Kembata, Shone in Badewacho woreda of the Hadiya zone, Boditi and Areka in the Walaita area, Sawela in the Gofa-speaking area of GGD, and Leku in Sidama. These towns have average (Sawela, Shone and Leku) or low literacy

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<sup>39</sup> Chapter Six, p196-200.

<sup>40</sup> Chapter Seven, p233-235.

rates (Boditi and Areka), and have populations that have accepted the use of the local language in primary education with little resistance.

Of the medium-sized towns with homogeneous populations, only Durame has a high literacy rate comparable to the larger urban centres or that of Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe. Durame is a relatively new town, which has only become important as a result of its status as the capital of K.A.T. zone, and has no established Amhara or Gurage population. Durame is the only zone capital in the SNNPR in which no primary schools have been allowed to use Amharic as the MOI. A substantial proportion of the population of the town is against the use of local language materials, even though they are Kembatas<sup>41</sup>. One reason for this is the town's administrative status; government workers of all linguistic backgrounds favour education in Amharic. Almost all of the government workers in Durame were living elsewhere in Ethiopia before they were required to take positions in the new capital of Kembata in response to the geopolitical reforms of the 1990s. Prior to their relocation, these people had become accustomed to using Amharic for all purposes. In addition to these urban professional Kembatas there are large numbers of 'returning' Kembatas from rural areas of the Rift valley and Gojjam who have settled in Durame because of the shortage of available rural land in the overcrowded Kembata highlands. Many of these rural Kembatas speak Amharic as a first language<sup>42</sup>. As a result, Amharic-speaking Kembatas now form a substantial proportion of the population of Durame.

The conditions in the small 'rural' towns visited during the field-work differed very little from the surrounding rural areas. Often the distinction between urban and rural in these areas appears artificial, since there is no marked difference in lifestyle between the population of 'towns' and that of rural areas. Small towns have similar literacy rates to the surrounding rural areas, and are populated by local language speakers. Those in areas of high rural literacy had populations that were enthusiastic about local language use. In areas of low literacy, the urban population, like their rural counterparts, were unable to see any benefit that would accrue from learning in local languages.

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<sup>41</sup> Chapter Seven, p214.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter Seven , p216.

## Conclusion

All of the features discussed in this Chapter varied in each zone in which schools were visited, but a pattern of response to the reform throughout the SNNPR nevertheless emerged. This pattern has developed in reaction to two key circumstances; urbanisation, and existing levels of education and literacy. With these circumstances now identified, and related to the historical, and sociolinguistic background, it is possible to understand the reactions of specific groups of peoples, and for the SNNPR as a whole.

The key topics of the field-work (urban / rural dichotomy, effect of literacy rates, migration, use of different scripts, use of composite language) will be discussed in relation to those groups of people, or geopolitical areas, that illustrate a specific point particularly well. This should not, however, imply that, for example, the urban / rural dichotomy is not present throughout the SNNPR, but it was a particularly relevant issue in the Sidama and Gedeo zones. The relationship between literacy rates and the desires of populations in respect of language use in education is observed throughout the SNNPR, but the examples provided by the Kembata and Alaba are not only the most poignant, they also inhabit neighbouring areas within the same zone, and speak mutually intelligible languages. Kembata also provides the best example of long-term, long-distance linguistic migration. Short distance daily linguistic migration is common in many areas, but it is the area surrounding Badewacho woreda, where Amharic and four local languages in education (Kembata, Hadiya, Walaita and Oromifa) border one another where the issue is particularly salient. The difficulties presented by the use of two languages in one zone and the use of a composite language will be discussed in relation to the North Omo zone. The manner in which the different conditions in Gurage have produced different reactions will also be considered. But all of the questions are relevant, to a greater or lesser extent, to the population of the south-west as a whole and a regional pattern of responses to the introduction of local languages emerges from the field-work.

Regional patterns also emerged with respect to the attitudes displayed by different categories of respondents in the field-work. Attitudes towards language

use varied least amongst the administrative officers and school principals, who almost all agreed with the policy, while being able to point out practical difficulties in the implementation process. Teaching staff, however, often displayed the greatest variation in attitudes in a particular area. All of the administrative and teaching staff who were interviewed during the field-work were educated in Amharic. Consequently, it is often difficult for them to envisage an education system for Ethiopia which is not based, to some extent, on the Amharic language. Many informants were, nevertheless, strongly in favour of the introduction of local languages. The concern most regularly expressed by teaching staff was that the use of the local languages and Amharic should be correctly balanced, to maximise the benefits for students. The fact that there is, for many people, no clear answer to the question of 'which language is better' must be stressed. Teaching staff frequently argued that Amharic was better in certain respects, while the local languages were also of value in other respects. It should be recognised that many informants were able to present both sides of the argument with equal force.

The attitudes held by students in a particular school also often varied. Parents in a given area, on the other hand, were usually broadly in agreement with one another, and it is their reactions that help to define the acceptance or rejection of local language teaching materials in an area. Often the attitudes of parents seemed to have developed in response to the local political climate. In many areas the local community was already convinced of the benefits of local language education by the time of the field-work, in some areas the population was skeptical, and in other areas they were hostile, in response to the factors outlined above. However, since the field-work consisted of many school visits and focussed on language use in education rather than the broader issue of local politics, it was not always possible to uncover what had occurred in a particular area to produce a certain set of attitudes. Research was conducted during the implementation of the reform, and some attitudes which were expressed by parents seemed to reflect the uncertainty felt by a population in response to the introduction of a new policy. Many Ethiopians have come to regard any form of government intervention with suspicion; they assume that its results will be oppressive.

## Chapter Six - The Eastern Highlands.

### The Sidama and Gedeo zones

#### The urban / rural dichotomy of attitudes towards Language use.

Discussions of the relationship between Amharic and the local languages in education dominated the field-work. Often this subject was raised spontaneously by respondents before a question addressing the topic had been asked. There is a degree of uncertainty about the benefits which students will gain from using the local languages in the primary education system in many areas, simply because the policy is new. While many local language speakers feel that the previously unavailable opportunity to use their languages is inherently valuable, substantial sections of the population believe that education in any language other than Amharic is inferior <sup>1</sup>.

Throughout the SNNPR definable sections of the population perceive the situation in terms of a conflict between the local languages and Amharic, and feel strongly that education should take place in one language or the other. In the area covered by the field-work, urban and rural populations in the same zones differed from one another in their attitudes towards the use of languages in education. In the eastern highlands of the SNNPR attitudes towards language use in education polarised. In the larger towns of this area (Awassa, Yirga Alem, Dilla and Yirga Chefe), all of which lie on the main road to the south in the Rift valley, the highly literate heterogeneous populations strongly favour the use of Amharic. These towns were *neftennya* towns, of political importance; the towns were, and to an extent still are, the manifestation of the state. Bjerer states that 'Prior to the Amhara conquest there had been no towns in the Southern provinces...From the outset the new towns had the character of Amhara colonial outposts' <sup>2</sup>. The population of these towns contains large numbers of Amharic-speakers, and only small percentages of the local language speakers. The homogeneous populations of Sidama and Gedeo speakers in the smaller towns and the rural areas, on the other hand, are equally strongly in favour of the use of the local languages.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter Five, p168.

<sup>2</sup> Bjerer, 1985, p77.

If we consider the respective practical uses of Amharic and the local languages in education, there are arguments that are used to confirm the choices of both urban and rural populations <sup>3</sup>. Local languages are already spoken by children in rural areas when they arrive in school, so they do not present the often insurmountable barrier which was erected by the exclusive use of Amharic in primary education <sup>4</sup>. In many areas covered by the field-work, and particularly in the areas of high rural literacy, annual intakes and pass rates were rising, drop-out rates were falling and the proportion of female students in schools was increasing as a direct consequence of the use of local languages. The use of local languages in these areas clearly maximises participation in education, and is, therefore, in keeping with the governments' stated aim to increase the accessibility of education <sup>5</sup>.

The practical value of using Amharic as the medium of instruction (MOI) for primary education is the broad and expressive range of vocabulary which is already present in the language. Amharic is a highly-developed language, capable of expressing the wide range of different ideas and concepts, and making the subtle, but important, distinctions, which are necessary for providing education. Many informants, and particularly teaching staff, found the local languages inadequate in this respect. Teachers and administrative staff argued that in order for the local languages to satisfy the requirements of a language of education further linguistic development was needed. This entailed, in their view, a lengthy commitment and the adequate provision of both man-power and material resources. Many informants hoped that these would be the eventual results of the present reform. There is, however, an acute awareness that in order for the local languages to be adequately developed for the purpose of primary education, much of the work will have to be undertaken at the local level, without explicit instructions from the central or regional governments. For these reasons teachers sometimes argued that it would be easier to use Amharic as the MOI for most subjects, while restricting the use of the local language to subjects for which it was adequate, and perhaps only as a single

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter Five, p168.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter Two, p88.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter Three, p116.

subject.

In Awassa, ICDR staff argued that choices about language use in education did not entail a conflict between languages. Instead, their approach was to attempt to reconcile the use of more than one language <sup>6</sup>. It is clear that, although the role of the local languages in education will, in all likelihood, increase, the importance of Amharic to many people is unlikely to diminish in response, since it continues to be the national language. In fact, the use of either language in primary schools by no means precludes students achieving literacy in the other language; the reverse may be true. Assuming that levels of school attendance in the Sidama and Gedeo zones (and elsewhere in the SNNPR) will continue to increase as a direct result of education in the local languages, the extent of literacy in Amharic, which is taught as a subject to all school students, is also likely to increase. In Awassa and Dilla (and indeed in Hosanna and Arba Minch), where Amharic is the MOI, the local languages will be taught as subjects, and so students will also become literate in these languages. The use of one language to teach the other, it is hoped, will lead to a higher levels of bilingualism, which, in a multilingual situation is desirable.

But both urban and rural populations are not only concerned with the pedagogical considerations that arise from the use of particular language. Their attitudes towards language use are also shaped in response to the wider benefits that they hope will accrue from the use of a particular language. The comparative discussion of the benefits that urban and rural populations perceive as arising from the use of Amharic and the local languages will focus on two concepts: identity and opportunity. Attitudes that people form about language use are responses to their desire to assert their collective identities and to ensure their individual life opportunities. These are not presented as contradictory or mutually exclusive. In fact, they are, at times mutually reinforcing, and where this is so the desire on the part of the population to use a particular language is strong. The nature of identity, however, and the kind of opportunities that are available to the population are very different in the urban and rural environments.

The arguments which urban populations put forward in favour of

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Kabiso (ICDR), Awassa 17/2/97. Getachow Mamo (TTI), Awassa, 18/2/97.

continuing to use Amharic MOI generally focus on its ability to provide opportunities. Since Amharic is the national language in Ethiopia, it facilitates all forms of material advancement, and the Amharic-speaking populations of the larger towns in the eastern highlands are convinced that their best interests lie in obtaining an education in Amharic for their children in order to ensure their ability to pursue opportunities at the level of the Ethiopian state.

In rural areas many local language speakers also desire to achieve fluency in Amharic in order to take advantage of any opportunities which are afforded by the Ethiopian state, and which arise only through the use of the language. For rural populations, the historical perception of Amharic as a tool of repression has been gradually eroded by the practical value of using the language. From the nineteen-sixties onwards, often in response to missionary education, many people in the eastern highlands began to realise the power which fluency in Amharic could afford them <sup>7</sup>. Although Amharic is still the national language, its position has changed, it is no longer forced on the non-Amharic-speaking peoples of the state in the manner in which it was in the past <sup>8</sup>, and it has lost its former flavour of domination, becoming instead a national lingua franca. Therefore, although rural populations in the eastern highlands prefer local language MOI in primary education, they are concerned that their children should learn Amharic as well. In the rural environment, however, the opportunities that arise from the use of Amharic are limited.

For the populations of the towns that lie on the main road to Kenya (Awassa, Yirga Alem, Dilla, Yirga Chefe), Amharic is more than just the language of opportunity and the state. Urban dwellers from all linguistic or ethnic backgrounds in these highly heterogeneous towns have adopted the language as their own and use it more commonly than their mother tongues. Often mother tongue languages assume the role of an ancestral language, and are rarely used. Children of local language speakers who are raised in the urban environment may never master the language spoken by their parents, and are raised in Amharic. For urban populations in the south-west Amharic has become a symbol of a new kind of identity, a modern Ethiopian national identity

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<sup>7</sup> Chapter One, p71 - p72.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter Two.



which cuts across ethnic divisions, and is instead focussed on concepts of modernity and national development. This heterogeneous urban section of society is dominated by government workers, who have been educated and trained in Amharic, and who identify directly with the Ethiopian state. For urban populations, therefore, Amharic is seen both to further opportunities and to express identity.

Local languages, on the other hand, have become the most obvious vehicles of all forms of local identity for the vast majority of the population who inhabit the rural areas <sup>9</sup> and the small towns. The use of a local language in education asserts the identity of the group, and promotes local self-esteem. As a result of the introduction of local languages, parents have been encouraged not only to send their children to school, but also to take a keener interest in the school environment, largely through participation in school committees. Rural schools, through the use of a local language will, it is hoped, be able to play an increased role in the community, since the community will feel more closely identified with the schools. The use of local languages, it is intended, will also help to provide education that is of greater practical benefit for rural populations. Education in rural areas will seek to educate students about aspects of life in the local environment, in which the vast majority of the population will continue to live, and for this kind of education it is thought to be appropriate to use the local language.

The redefinition of the role of local languages, however, means that the local languages are no longer simply a vehicle for local identity. The reform has also created opportunities that are dependent on local language use. Since local languages are used in the administration and education systems, there is now professional work available to school graduates which depends on the use of local languages. In rural areas, therefore, the reform confirms the role of local languages in defining identity, and also provides rural populations with new opportunities that depend on their use.

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<sup>9</sup> Chapter Five, p168.

## Schools in the larger urban centres; Awassa and Dilla

Awassa, the capital of the SNNPR and the Sidama zone, and the largest town in the region, lies on the western shore of the lake from which it takes its name. It has the highest recorded rates of overall literacy, the highest rates of participation in education and the highest rates of female literacy and participation in education. The population of Awassa is the most heterogeneous in the SNNPR, containing large sections of the population that use Amharic for all purposes. Since it is the regional capital, Awassa has the highest proportion of the population involved in government employment. Awassa is not a very old town: the army barracks and the hotels at the lakeside, established during the reign of Haile Sellassie, were the first state-sponsored developments in the area. Trade is of little importance to people from outside the town; the market in Awassa, for example, is only of local significance. Awassa is an administrative town. A large proportion of Awassa's population are protestant Christians and the town has several large churches.

Dilla, the capital of the Gedeo zone, is a much older town. It was a large *neftennya* town during the time of Emperor Menelik, and has always retained an administrative role in the state. There are, consequently, substantial Amharic-speaking, Christian elements in the town. Dilla is also an important stop-over in the over land route from Kenya and the south to central and northern Ethiopia, and it has a large market. As a result of its importance in long distance trade, Dilla has a substantial Muslim population which has been historically involved in commerce and is made up of Gurages, Oromos and Gedeos. Dilla lies in the foot hills of the Rift valley wall, to the east of which lie the highlands. To the west of Dilla, the sloping floor of the Rift valley leads down to the north-eastern shore of lake Abaya.

In Awassa and Dilla, Amharic has been maintained as the MOI for primary schools. The decision to continue using Amharic in schools in Awassa was taken by the Regional Bureau of Education (REB) because of the large numbers of government workers in the town <sup>10</sup>, and is justified by the use of Amharic as the language of the regional government, which is located in the

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<sup>10</sup>SZO.1

town. In Dilla the decision to use Amharic materials in primary schools was made by the zone authorities, on the grounds that Dilla was the zone capital <sup>11</sup>. In Dilla MOE staff were under the impression that all of the zone capitals in the SNNPR used Amharic: they assumed that this was the policy of the regional government in Awassa. In fact no policy as such has been developed: the regional authorities stated that no directives to this effect had ever been issued. Instead, the decision to use Amharic in Awassa was seen by the administrations in other zones as a precedent for the use of Amharic in the schools of the other zone capitals. Similarly, it was assumed that no other towns within the zone should be allowed to use the language, since this was the case in the Sidama zone. In Awassa and Dilla the decision to use Amharic has proved to be in keeping with the desires of the majority of the population. In both towns, however, it was also decided that some education in the language of the zone should also be provided for those people, mostly Sidama or Gedeo speakers, who wished to have their children educated in their languages.

#### Composition of the schools

It is difficult to estimate the proportions of students from the various groups of people in the primary schools of Awassa and Dilla. Inter-marriage is common and some children may not regard themselves as belonging to any particular group. Often adult respondents will initially state that they are from a particular group, but when questioned more closely they will reveal a complex background of inter-marriage. This scenario is common in all the major urban centres which were visited during the course of the research, but was most marked in Awassa. Often individuals who are a product of mixed marriages, and have been raised in the urban environment speaking Amharic as a first language will simply say they are Amhara, even in cases where neither of their parents was considered to be an Amhara. This is particularly true of the children of government workers, who, irrespective of their background, are regarded as Amharas by other people. Furthermore, urban dwellers who state that they are, for example, Gurage, Oromo, Kembata or Walaita, will, nevertheless, frequently say that Amharic is their first language; living in the town, it is the language that

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<sup>11</sup> GZ0.1

they use most. All of these Amharic-speakers insist that education in Amharic is preferable to education in a local language.

The proportions of students attending the local language sections of the urban schools to some extent reflect the proportions of those groups of people in the towns. In Awassa, Sidama language teaching materials have only been introduced in a section of one of the town's seven primary schools, namely, Bete Kihnet E.S. <sup>12</sup>, where the Sidama language section accounts for half of the school population and is, according to the principal, almost exclusively attended by Sidama students <sup>13</sup>. The Amharic section of the school is made up of Amhara, Gurage and Walaita students. In Gebeya Dar E.S., where all students learn in Amharic, the principal thought that the Amhara, Kembata and Walaita were the most populous groups. He estimated that each accounted for more than 25% of the school's students, and the remaining percentage was made up of Oromo, Gurage and Sidama students <sup>14</sup>. Staff in Gebeya Dar E.S. argued that it was impossible to tell what the background of many students was. When asked more than half of the students replied that they were Amharas. Less than 10% of students stated that they were Sidamas <sup>15</sup>.

In Dilla all three primary schools have Amharic and Gedeo language sections. But the Gedeo sections have fewer students than the Amharic sections. In Dilla E.S. 75% of students were attending the Amharic section while 25% were in the Gedeo section. The principal stated that most of the students who attended the Gedeo language section were Gedeos. He thought that Gedeos probably also accounted for roughly 25% of the school population, but some had decided to learn in the Amharic MOI section. A few members of other groups were, similarly, learning in the Gedeo MOI section <sup>16</sup>. Staff estimated that the most populous groups in the school were Gurages and Oromos, but there were also substantial numbers of Amharas and Walaitas. Staff in Dilla were unwilling to estimate the percentages of students from the various groups, since, they argued, all the students were able to speak Amharic before they

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<sup>12</sup> E.S. stands for Elementary School.

<sup>13</sup> SZ2.1

<sup>14</sup> SZ1.1

<sup>15</sup> SZ1.3 - SZ1.6

<sup>16</sup> GZ1.1

entered the school, and, apart from being able to distinguish Muslims and Christians, there was no way of knowing the students' background unless you also knew the parents.

The great majority of the Amharic-speaking heterogeneous populations of Awassa and Dilla clearly prefer education in Amharic. Only local language speakers attend the local language sections of schools in any numbers.

#### Attainment of students from different groups in the schools

In these heterogeneous towns we discussed whether students from particular groups achieved better results than others as a result of the use of Amharic, or the local languages as MOI. In Gebeya Dar E.S. in Awassa the principal discussed the question whether it was easier for the Amhara students because Amharic was being used as the MOI<sup>17</sup>. Both the principal, and members of staff felt that, although most students spoke Amharic when they entered school, it was usually possible to tell those who did not use the language at home. These students found it hard to use Amharic in the first year, but by the second year most had caught up. Many of the students in this school, from all backgrounds, were children of government workers and, therefore, even if Amharic was not their first language, their parents could speak the language and it was familiar to them. The results obtained by the students from the various groups were not thought to be markedly different, although some staff held the view that the Amharas were the highest achievers<sup>18</sup>. The principal argued that it was the children of government workers, regardless of what group they came from, who tended to do better than the other students because their parents were more likely to help them with their work at home.

In Gebeya Dar staff felt that the drop-out, repetition and attendance rates of students from the various groups were not markedly different and that, in general, there was not much to differentiate the groups in terms of educational abilities or attainment. The principal had been concerned to study any differences in the attainment and behaviour of the students from the different groups. He had observed that the Kembata and Walaita students did not seem

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<sup>17</sup> SZ1.1

<sup>18</sup> SZ1.5, SZ1.7

to mix as well with the others; they lacked confidence, often seemed to be indifferent to students from other groups, and did not easily form friendships with them. In order to address this problem he had instructed teachers to make them sit with students from other backgrounds in the classroom, and was waiting to see if he could discern any changes. He said it was a hard issue to examine, and stated that, while he had observed the phenomenon, he did not feel that it was causing severe problems <sup>19</sup>.

In Gebeya Dar E.S. staff also put forward the view that Amharic was more accessible to speakers of other languages as a result of the reform. Amharic had previously dominated the school environment to such an extent that students from other backgrounds had been reluctant to use it, since their command of the language was inadequate, or at least not as good as the that of the Amhara students <sup>20</sup>. They were worried that they would be ridiculed for not being fluent in the language, and because of this they were held back from achievement, and many would drop-out. Now, because of the reform, and even though Amharic was still being used as the MOI in this school, students were less in awe of the language and felt less inhibited about making mistakes and having to be corrected. This argument was put forward in many areas covered by the research, both in the larger urban centres where Amharic was being used as the MOI, and in areas where Amharic was being taught as a subject and local languages were the MOI.

In Awassa and Dilla students in the Amharic MOI schools learn the local language as a subject. The students from different backgrounds in Gebeya Dar E.S. obtain comparable results in Sidama language; the Sidama students were by no means doing better than the others. Indeed the principal stated that in at least one class the student who was achieving the best results in Sidama language was an Amhara <sup>21</sup>. Students from other groups did not seem to resist learning Sidama language; they accepted that, since they lived in Awassa, the language would be of use to them. The principal felt that, given the opportunity, some students, most notably the Kembata and Walaita, might have preferred to

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<sup>19</sup> SZ1.1.

<sup>20</sup> SZ1.3

<sup>21</sup> SZ1.1

learn their own languages, and teachers argued that students from these groups had been put off learning Sidama language because of attitudes held by their parents. The children of government workers from all language groups, however, were encouraged by their parents to do well in the language, since there were now opportunities available to those who could read and write the local language, although these were not as important as those available through the use of Amharic <sup>22</sup>.

In Bete Kihnet E.S. the principal felt that, although it was easier for the Sidama students than for those from other groups to learn in the local language, speakers of other languages could still get a good education in the Sidama MOI section <sup>23</sup>. Very few students who were not Sidamas, however, were attending the Sidama MOI section of the school, so it was difficult to answer the question. In the Amharic section of Bete Kihnet E.S. staff felt that there was no substantial difference between the attainment of students from different groups. Staff in Bete Kihnet E.S. argued that it was very difficult to assess whether students in the Amharic and Sidama language sections were achieving equal results <sup>24</sup>. In Dilla E.S. staff thought that students in the Gedeo and Amharic MOI sections were achieving comparable results <sup>25</sup>, and that the attainment levels of students from different groups of people in both sections were similar.

#### Female participation in education in the larger urban centres

In Awassa's schools girls were at least equal in number to boys. In some schools, including Gebeya Dar E.S., girls outnumbered boys. Female teachers in Gebeya Dar argued that the girls worked harder and achieved better results than the boys, in spite of having more responsibilities at home <sup>26</sup>. In this school the proportions of girls increased in the higher grades, providing clear evidence to support the stated view. The grade six class contained 23 girls and only 13 boys. Previously there had been far fewer girls than boys: education of girls had not been seen as a priority either by the authorities or by parents. The situation

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<sup>22</sup> SZ1.1

<sup>23</sup> SZ2.1

<sup>24</sup> SZ2.3

<sup>25</sup> GZ1.2

<sup>26</sup> SZ1.3, SZ1.6

had changed for a number of reasons. Female teachers argued that the new government policy had increased the numbers of girls who were involved in education. This was a result of the introduction of free education, which meant that parents could now afford to send a larger number of their children to school. Previously most parents had chosen to educate their sons and not their daughters.

There had also, moreover, been a change of attitude towards female participation in education. In modern towns like Awassa, many government workers are women who managed to get an education, often from mission schools which educated boys and girls. In government offices in the town female staff frequently outnumber their male colleagues, although the higher positions are usually occupied by men. These educated women are determined that their daughters should have the opportunity to work. In the urban environment many female students greatly value education. Male students, on the other hand, often take education for granted, and do not try as hard as the girls. In the urban environment women who were not fortunate enough to become educated have, nevertheless, observed the increasing opportunities for educated females, and are also keen to see these opportunities open to their daughters. A female teacher in Gebeya Dar E.S., who had a lot of experience teaching in rural areas of the Sidama zone, explained that in primary schools in rural areas boys always outnumbered girls, and girls seldom achieved equal results <sup>27</sup>. In the towns the cultural climate which caused girls to be more inhibited than boys was less pronounced. In Awassa many girls felt confident about competing in situations where the sexes were mixed. In Gebeya Dar the grade six girls were proud that they outnumbered the boys. They argued that girls were inherently more suited to education than boys because they listened carefully and concentrated on the teacher; they were not so easily distracted as boys, who were usually thinking about other things when they were in the classroom <sup>28</sup>.

Staff in Dilla E.S. stated that there was a great difference in the rates of

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<sup>27</sup> SZ1.4

<sup>28</sup> SZ1.10



female participation between Muslims and Christians <sup>29</sup>. The Muslims in the town did not send their daughters to school. In Dilla E.S. school the proportion of girls was less than boys, the numbers of girls in the upper grades were relatively small and staff stated that girls by no means obtained results equal to boys. Girls in the upper grades were almost all daughters of government workers.

#### Problems associated with the use of different languages and scripts

Many people are concerned that the use of local languages in primary education will restrict the opportunities that are open to students, because it will make it more difficult for them to progress on to secondary education where other languages are the MOI. In Gebeya Dar E.S., where Amharic is the MOI, the principal discussed the question of whether the use of Sidama language as a MOI would cause problems for students as they progressed up into the higher grades and eventually transferred to secondary school. He recognised that there would be difficulties for students who had been educated in the local languages when they went to secondary school because their knowledge of Amharic would not be sophisticated enough to cope with some subjects, since they would only have been taught Amharic as a subject and would not know all of the necessary vocabulary to learn subjects where Amharic was the MOI. He illustrated the problems faced by students when they had to transfer from a local language to Amharic. Three male students had transferred to Gebeya Dar E.S. from schools in Yirga Alem at the beginning of the previous academic year. In Yirga Alem they had been learning in Sidama language. They were good students and knew their subjects, none had failed a grade before and all three had passed grade four. But since they had not been using Amharic in their former school, they had failed grade five at Gebeya Dar E.S. and had to repeat the grade. The principal felt that this was unfortunate: it was discouraging for the students and meant that they had to waste time repeating subjects which they knew, mainly because they had to learn the correct vocabulary for the subjects in a different language <sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> GZ1.2

<sup>30</sup> SZ1.1

There was disagreement amongst the staff in Dilla E.S. about the benefits and drawbacks of using Gedeo language as the MOI. They all agreed, however, that there were valid arguments for the introduction of local languages and for the continued use of Amharic. They accepted that those students who learned in the Gedeo MOI section faced difficulties competing with other Ethiopians at a national level, but, those who learned in the local language were at an advantage in the zone itself, where work opportunities increasingly depended on the use of the local language. The staff felt that the two section system was the only realistic way of providing primary education in Dilla, because the population was accustomed to using Amharic for all purposes, and most would prefer their children to learn in the language. There would, nevertheless, be some parents who would prefer the local language as a MOI<sup>31</sup>.

Parents and students in Dilla argued that the use of Gedeo language materials in schools was futile and pointless since there was no other written material in the language. Parents argued that the choice of language in education was primarily a political decision. Gedeo parents in Dilla stated that they had decided to have their children educated in the local language because they thought that they should, since it was the first manifestation of the new rights of nationalities to use their own languages, but they were uncertain about the results it would produce. Few parents thought that it was good to use the local language because there would now be work in the language. Most assumed that government jobs would continue to require the use of Amharic. This assumption was often made by parents throughout the areas covered by the research, simply because, historically, the use of Amharic in government is so entrenched. Furthermore, some government workers argued that although the local languages were officially used in the administrative system, in the government offices everyone continued to speak Amharic because the staff were able to express themselves better in the language <sup>32</sup>.

One of the major difficulties of using several languages in education is the problem of different scripts and orthographies. The Amharic syllabary, the Fidel, is very difficult to learn; it has many characters and the differences

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<sup>31</sup> GZ1.3

<sup>32</sup> This paragraph is based on informal interviews.

between some of them are small. Many teachers in Awassa and Dilla agreed that the Qube was easier to teach the children to write than the Fidel. In Gebeya Dar the staff discussed the problems associated with script. Some staff felt that it would be better if all languages, including Amharic, were transcribed in the Roman script because it was easier <sup>33</sup>. The principal argued that, although the Qube was easier, it would not be possible to use it for Amharic because the Ethiopic script was inherently tied to the language <sup>34</sup>.

Other members of staff in Gebeya Dar argued that the Ethiopic script, possibly in modified forms, should have been used for all the languages used in the education system, because the script was indigenous to the country, and, therefore, the children learned it more quickly, since they had been used to seeing it all their lives. Many teachers felt that for this reason it was also easier for them to teach the Fidel, even though it is more complex. This was inevitably true of teachers who had not received any training in the Qube. In Awassa and Dilla most teachers had received training at the TTI in Awassa, but in the rural areas where the local languages are used by a greater proportion of the population many teachers had received no training.

Some teachers argued that the use of the Qube helped children to learn English. In Dilla and Awassa (and indeed throughout the area in which research was conducted), the great majority of teachers, however, stated that problems arose from using the same script for the two different languages. The Roman script was used in a very different manner for the local languages than it was in English, and it was confusing for both the staff and the students. The Qube was simple, it followed regular rules, and it was easy to understand from its written form how words in the local languages should be pronounced. English, on the other hand, was inherently difficult to teach, its spelling and pronunciation were so erratic that it was necessary to teach children the spellings and pronunciation of each word, and many teachers themselves, found the written form of the language very difficult. In English classes it was common to see teachers making numerous spelling mistakes <sup>35</sup>. In Awassa and

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<sup>33</sup> SZ1.5, SZ1.8

<sup>34</sup> SZ1.1

<sup>35</sup> Chapter Four, p119.

Dilla the extent of the difficulties children experienced while learning the two uses of the Roman script seemed to depend on the role which the local language played in education. Children who learned in local language MOI learned the Qube first and had more difficulty learning English because the rules of the Qube were already clear to them, as a result, they tried to read and speak the English language according to the rules of the Qube. Those in the Amharic MOI sections were confused between the two uses of the Roman script but, since they learned English and the local language only as subjects the problem was less serious; most of their education was conducted in Amharic. According to many teachers, learning to write the local language in the Roman script complicated the already difficult process of teaching English.

### **Schools in medium sized towns; Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe**

Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe are the largest towns in their respective zones aside from the zone capitals, and both have heterogeneous populations. The local language speakers are by no means in the majority in the urban environment. Both towns were founded by northern settlers in the late-nineteenth century, and the majority of their populations regard Amharic as their first language. Yirga Alem was an established administrative centre; it was the capital of Sidamo province before the provincial government was moved to Awassa. Like Dilla, Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe have played an important role in regional trading networks.

The primary schools in Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe use local language teaching MOI. From the first grade all subjects are taught in Sidama or Gedeo, English is taught as a subject and Amharic is not introduced as a subject until grade three. The predominantly Amharic-speaking populations of these towns, many of whom do not speak the local languages, have displayed strong reactions against the restricted role of Amharic in primary education and the introduction of the local languages.

#### **Composition of the schools**

The principal in Mekana Yesus E.S. in Yirga Alem estimated that over half of the students in the school were Amhara: they were by far the largest

group. He stated that the other half was mostly made up of Walaita, Gurage and Sidama, with a very small number of Oromo and Kembata. He said it was impossible to estimate the proportions of the other groups because they were all very mixed and most spoke Amharic as well as the languages spoken by their families. Many children were the product of mixed marriages <sup>36</sup>. The principal in Meskerem 2 E.S. in Yirga Alem also thought that the Amhara were probably the largest single group, followed by Gurage. He argued that it was very difficult to establish which group students came from because they all spoke Amharic <sup>37</sup>. In Yirga Chefe E.S. the largest single group were thought to be the Amhara, followed by the Gurage and Oromo. In the schools in these towns, a substantial proportion of students responded that they were Amhara: in the classrooms covered by the field-work it was over 50% <sup>38</sup>.

#### The difficulties created by the introduction of Sidama MOI in Yirga Alem

In Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe, the population were forced to accept the local language materials by the zone authorities. This section will focus on material from Yirga Alem, but a similar situation also obtained in Yirga Chefe.

At Mekana Yesus E.S. in Yirga Alem, there were severe problems getting the policy accepted when it was first introduced. Teaching staff were unhappy about the use of the local language for two reasons. Firstly, many did not know how to read and write, let alone teach, the local language in the Qube, because they had not received any training. Secondly they felt that learning in the local language was not serving the best interests of the students. Teaching staff were faced by a situation where they knew that the students were unable to speak the local language, and could not, therefore, obtain the full benefit of education. Teachers in Yirga Alem felt strongly that they did not want to teach children in a language they could not understand and had no desire to learn.

Most of the problems originated not with the children but with their parents. Teachers stated that many of the students were willing to try the new language and, regardless of their personal opinions, teachers had encouraged them to adopt a positive attitude towards the change. In Yirga Alem the Amhara

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<sup>36</sup> SZ5.1

<sup>37</sup> SZ6.2

<sup>38</sup> GZ4.1

and Gurage parents were particularly hostile to the introduction of Sidama MOI: many came to the schools to complain. In order to resolve the situation, school meetings were held and parents were invited to raise their concerns about the reform. MOE and school staff tried to reassure them that the use of the local language would be good for their children <sup>39</sup>. But in these meetings parents argued that the reform was supposed to introduce education in the mother tongues, and that most people in Yirga Alem could not even speak Sidama; many were monolingual Amharic-speakers. Education in any language other than Amharic, they argued, not only made no sense, but also contradicted the very purpose of the reform. Teachers agreed with this view because they faced the problem every day. Students were unable to understand the language and those students who had been learning in Amharic, and who had been forced to switch MOI in the middle of their careers in education, found the use of the Qube very difficult. The meetings did little to resolve the problem since the parents had come hoping to change the mind of the authorities, and the authorities had come hoping to convince the parents, but neither had succeeded.

A government worker who had previously taught in Yirga Alem, at the time of the introduction of Sidama MOI, described the course of events <sup>40</sup>. The vast majority of parents in the town had been thoroughly disappointed that their children would be learning in Sidama MOI. The only ones who had been enthusiastic were the Sidama, and this was largely because they were not so concerned about their children having access to higher education, since, even though they lived in the town, they were following rural lifestyles and never envisaged themselves or their children leaving the immediate area. In any case, he argued, their approval of the introduction of Sidama MOI was influenced by emotional and political considerations. They did not favour it because they thought their children would be receiving a better education.

Shortly after the introduction of local language materials, and after the failure of the school meetings, there was an informal movement led by Amhara and Gurage parents to open Amharic schools in Yirga Alem. These parents approached the local authorities. The parents' petition to maintain Amharic MOI

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<sup>39</sup> SZ5.1

<sup>40</sup> Getachow Asseffa (TTI) Awassa , 19/2/97.

in Yirga Alem was refused both by the woreda authorities in Yirga Alem, and by those of the Sidama zone in Awassa. In the town the authorities are now staffed by Sidamas, since it is the policy that the job opportunities in an area must be available to the inhabitant group of people. The administrative staff in Yirga Alem thought it would be a bad idea to allow Amharic schools in the town because they thought that if Amharic schools were opened no one would want to use Sidama MOI. Even the Sidama parents, they argued, would regard education in Amharic as more profitable, and would choose to send their children to Amharic MOI. The local authorities thought that this would be wrong, because they felt that the reform was positive and they wanted to support it. Local government representatives were also worried about taking such decisions; they felt that, since the use of local languages in primary education was a government policy, it should not be challenged <sup>41</sup>.

The response of schools in Yirga Alem to the refusal to allow Amharic MOI was to promote positive aspects of the reform by holding further meetings with parents. Here local administrative workers argued that, since Sidama was now the administrative and educational language of the zone, there would now be work opportunities for the students who completed their primary education in the language, and that it was therefore in the interests of the students from all backgrounds to learn in Sidama. But many parents remained unconvinced, and those parents who could afford to do so sent their children away to attend schools in Amharic MOI. Some sent their children to schools in Awassa, which was near enough so that students could commute. Many Gurage parents sent their children to live with relatives in the Gurage zone where most woredas still use Amharic MOI. Some of the better connected Amharas and Gurages sent their children to attend schools in Addis Ababa, since, they argued, this was now the best place for their children to obtain a good education in Amharic which would ensure the widest opportunities in the Ethiopian state <sup>42</sup>. Many parents continued, however, to send their children to the schools in Yirga Alem, grudgingly accepting that they had been forced to learn in Sidama MOI. Others decided not to send their children to school, and school attendances fell.

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> SZ6.1

According to the principal of Meskerem 2 E.S., attitudes towards the use of local languages had gradually improved after the initially hostile response from the parents and students and the majority of teaching staff. He argued that a major reason that it had been so difficult to introduce the policy was that the materials had been introduced into all the grades simultaneously. Those students who had begun their education in Amharic had then had to switch to Sidama MOI, and had found the transition very difficult. Those who began learning in Sidama MOI from grade one, even if Amharic was their first language, found it relatively easy. He admitted that there were residual problems every year in grade one because many of the children were only able to speak Amharic when they began attending school, and had to learn Sidama<sup>43</sup>.

The situation at the time of the field-work still appeared unhelpful. School staff in Yirga Alem were very disheartened by the fact that education had to be given in Sidama MOI; many felt that it would have been far preferable to introduce the language only as a single subject. In the town, they argued, the use of the local language in the primary schools had also had a wider negative effect, because it had created negative attitudes towards the language and had made the members of other groups resent the woreda and zone authorities. Students who were from Amharic-speaking backgrounds did not understand any of their subjects and were doing very badly; many would drop-out. Many students in Yirga Alem asked their teachers why they were not allowed to learn in Amharic, and the teachers felt that they were unable to give them an adequate answer. Whenever teachers approached the MOE woreda officials to argue that Amharic should be used in some schools in Yirga Alem, the authorities responded that they did not have the authority to take that decision.

Where the power to make this decision rested was entirely unclear. The zone authorities in the Sidama zone said that all schools in the zone should use Sidama MOI. The schools in Awassa, they argued, had only been allowed to use Amharic because it was the regional capital, and towns like Yirga Alem should use the local language. Regional MOE staff, however, said that it was the zone authorities who were allowed to decide whether to continue to use

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<sup>43</sup> SZ6.1



Amharic in a particular area. This was, after all, what had happened in various parts of the SNNPR. In the Gedeo zone, Hadiya zone and North Omo zone the authorities had decided to use Amharic in the schools of the zone's capitals. In the K.A.T. zone two woredas had been allowed to continue using Amharic, and in Gurage the zone authorities had decided to use Silti MOI in three woredas while the remainder of the zone continued to use Amharic. The REB had decided only what would happen in Awassa's schools because it was the capital. The local governments of other areas in the SNNPR had the authority to take whatever decisions they saw fit. The regional authorities did not feel that it was their job to dictate to the zones how to implement the policy for two main reasons. Firstly, only the staff of each area understood the local situation. Secondly, they argued that it was now the right of each nationality to use its language as it wanted, and so it was the zones, as representative institutions of the nationalities, and not the regional government, that had the constitutional right to make such decisions. When we explained the response of the Regional authorities to those of the zone, both of which are located in Awassa, and suggested that, perhaps, in the case of Yirga Alem, Amharic materials should be allowed, the zone officials continued to say that they did not have the authority to make the decision.

The result of the reform in towns like Yirga Alem, therefore, was to remove the actual first language from the primary schools and replace it with a local language which many people were unable to speak and which teachers felt unable to use. Since the main point of using local languages is that they are intelligible to the majority of students, their practical value as MOI for subjects is open to question, and the introduction of local language teaching materials in these towns clearly went against the ethos of the reform. Neither the zone nor the regional officials felt that it was within their authority to address this problem; each argued that the decision lay with the other authority.

## **Rural schools in the eastern highlands.**

The highlands to the east of the Rift valley are very fertile. In this area cash cropping of coffee, chat, fruit and maize has enabled the land to support some of the highest densities of rural populations in the SNNPR. Many people never leave the immediate area in which they are raised. All schools in the rural areas of the Sidama and Gedeo zones use the local languages, and the reform of language use has been welcomed by the great majority of the population.

### The benefits of using local languages in rural areas

Midra Genet E.S. in the area of Morocho, in Shebedino Woreda, was a typical rural school in the Sidama zone. Morocho is a fair sized village near the main road. The school is situated approximately three kilometres outside the village in a tiny settlement, which is set back about one kilometre from the road. In this rural area almost all the inhabitants are Sidama, and the population is entirely dependent on agriculture. The principal estimated that 98% of the students were Sidama. He stated that the response to the introduction of local language teaching materials in Midra Genet had been very positive; it had solved the greatest obstacle to providing education in rural areas <sup>44</sup>. When education had been in Amharic, students had found it hard to ask questions and to communicate with teachers, most of whom were not able to speak Sidama. A greater proportion of the students who enrolled each year in grade one now remained in the school, because they were no longer discouraged by a language barrier in the early stages of education. The improvement caused by Sidama MOI was clear to the staff; a higher proportion of local people were interested in education and enrolment was rising steadily, a greater proportion of students were graduating from one grade to the next, and the drop-out rate had decreased dramatically <sup>45</sup>.

Teachers argued that there had also been a behavioural change in response to the use of the local language. Since the students now felt that they were succeeding, they were no longer sullen or hostile towards the teachers; they were enjoying learning. Teachers argued that Sidama MOI made students

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<sup>44</sup> SZ3.1

<sup>45</sup> SZ3.2 - SZ3.5

feel included within the system. Students confirmed that this was how they felt. Parents in Morocho also said they were happy about the use of Sidama MOI <sup>46</sup>.

A heterogeneous rural school visited in the Sidama Zone was Yekatit 25 in the area of Abosto, Dale Woreda. Abosto is in a rural area, but lies less than ten kilometres from Yirga Alem, and so the conditions, therefore, vary slightly from those in Midra Genet. Here greater numbers of students come from other language groups. Sidamas accounted for 25% of students in this school, the remainder being Amhara, Walaita and Oromo in roughly equal proportions. The vast majority of students were from an agrarian background, but a substantial proportion could speak Amharic. They had, moreover, been exposed to the town and were therefore at least aware of the different lifestyles which might be available to them if they were successful in education. The school was an elementary and junior high school (E. & J.S.) teaching grades one through to eight, and contained nearly four thousand students: a very large school by rural standards. For this reason the school had four principals, two for each section, morning and afternoon, with one being responsible for the elementary school and the other for the junior school. All four principals were interviewed together.

They agreed that the various language groups mixed well in the school and that, although there had initially been some problems with members of the other groups when the Sidama MOI was introduced, these had not continued for any great length of time. The various peoples, they argued, were very intermingled in the area. A significant proportion of the students, some felt as much as 50%, were from mixed backgrounds. The majority of the members of other groups were able to understand Sidama quite well. Those who were not familiar with the language received help in the classroom from their Sidama-speaking friends. Students from the other groups were thought to be doing well; their exam results were not markedly different from the Sidama students, nor did they have a higher drop-out rate <sup>47</sup>.

In the two rural primary schools that were visited in Gedeo zone the reaction in the rural areas was similar to that in the Sidama zone. Materials had been introduced two years before the field-work and there was, therefore, still a

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<sup>46</sup> SZ3.6 - SZ3.9

<sup>47</sup> SZ4.1

degree of concern about some issues. Teachers were primarily concerned about the lack of training. Many were still uncertain about the long term effects that education in the local language would have on students. Parents were concerned about their children obtaining work, and some argued that an Amharic education provided the children with wider opportunities, which were not available with literacy in the local language only. In general, however, the introduction of Gedeo MOI was considered a positive step. School enrolment and attendance were rising in response to the introduction of free education and Gedeo MOI, pass rates were reasonable and drop-out rates were low <sup>48</sup>.

#### Difficulties associated with the use of the local language

While the principals in Yekatit 25 E. & J.S. agreed that the introduction of Sidama MOI was good for students, they also discussed the difficulties the reform had created. In this school the second set of materials had arrived and was being used for most subjects. But, they argued, the teaching materials were still causing some problems. The introduction of amalgamated subjects (social sciences, natural sciences), was thought to have complicated the teaching process, since it was beyond the ability of the teachers to teach all the subjects without additional training. One of the principals even argued that the first set of materials, which had been directly translated from Amharic, had been easier for the teachers to use, since, when there was a doubt as to the meaning of a certain phrase in the local language, the teacher could refer to the original Amharic text book to make it clear, and was then in a better position to explain the matter to the students. The standard of the second set of materials, some teachers felt, was too hard for the students to cope with <sup>49</sup>. Another problem with the new books, and particularly with the science books, was that they contained material which required equipment which was not available. While they agreed with the principles behind the policy, the teachers and principals in Yekatit 25 E. & J.S. felt that the reform should not have been implemented with so little infrastructural support, in terms of teacher training and the provision of the new materials: in a class of 120 students there were only 12 text books <sup>50</sup>. For this

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<sup>48</sup> GZ2.1, GZ3.1.

<sup>49</sup> SZ4.2

<sup>50</sup> SZ4.2

reason they argued that, while they would continue to implement the use of Sidama MOI with some enthusiasm, they were unhappy about the way in which the reform was being managed, and felt that this would have negative long-term effects <sup>51</sup>.

In Midra Genet E.S. staff thought that the Sidama teaching materials were reasonable in quality. The first set of direct translations from Amharic had been unsuitable, but the second set of locally generated materials that were now in use were much better. The major problems with implementing the new policy were the lack of adequate numbers of books, the inadequacy of teacher training and shortages of teaching staff. These problems, staff argued, were exacerbated by the fact that the school population was rapidly increasing, in response to the introduction of local language teaching materials, and the introduction of free education. Some teachers had been trained at the TTI in Awassa and they were well trained to use the new materials, but many of these were new teachers, they had little experience in teaching. Some of those who were already teaching when the materials were introduced, had received one week of training in workshops also in Awassa (these had been organised by the TTI in conjunction with BESO staff). In this school there were also many ordinary people teaching who had received no training at all. These people had simply graduated from secondary education, and were hired on short term contracts because of the chronic shortage of teachers. They tried hard in the school, but, not having received any training, they found the Qube very difficult because they were educated in Amharic <sup>52</sup>. The principal argued that insufficient planning had gone into the implementation of the reform and that it was essential to increase the quality and availability of teaching staff if the possibilities offered by the reform were to be fully realised <sup>53</sup>.

While the principal of Midra Genet E.S. argued that the government needed to address these issues, and that the regional authorities should be made aware of the problems the reform was creating, he also recognised that the solutions to the problems were beyond the power of either the central or

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51 SZ4.1

52 SZ3.4

53 SZ3.1

regional governments' to find. The problems had to be addressed in the local environment. In an attempt to deal with the issues, staff meetings were regularly held to try and find solutions to the problems, those who had received training were encouraged to help those who had not <sup>54</sup>.

Most of the staff in Yekatit 25 E.& J.S. agreed that there was no problem for the students when it came to learning Amharic. There was a variety of ability to speak Amharic amongst all the language groups because the town was so close; at least 75% of students spoke the language to some extent before they entered the school. Learning Amharic was not a problem, although the script was hard to write. Teachers said that the two uses of the Roman script, for Sidama and for English, were confusing for the students, and also for them <sup>55</sup>. The principal of Midra Genet E.S. recognised that the students would face difficulties when they transferred to secondary school. The main problem for students would be the transfer to English MOI in secondary school; the fact was that the two uses of the Roman script were too confusing. The Qube itself, however, was thought to be a suitable vehicle for the language <sup>56</sup>.

#### The change in attitude since the National Literacy Campaign

In Abosto the National Literacy Campaign had been conducted in Sidama language using the Ethiopic script <sup>57</sup>. The literacy classes had failed to win public acceptance, and attendances had dwindled to the point where the teachers had given up. The effect of the literacy classes was minimal, apart from engendering increased resentment from the population in an era when the government was regarded with fear and hostility. The literacy classes had not stimulated any great desire on the part of the population to use the local language.

A member of staff in Meskerem 25 E. & J.S., who had been teaching for twenty-five years, explained the factors that had caused people in the area to change their attitude towards the use of the local language in education. His arguments were repeated in other linguistic zones when this question was

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<sup>54</sup> SZ3.1 , SZ3.3

<sup>55</sup> SZ4.5

<sup>56</sup> SZ4.1, SZ4.3, SZ4.5

<sup>57</sup> Chapter Two, p90.

raised. The problem with the literacy campaign, he argued, was that it was imposed on the people; coercive methods were used to force the people to attend classes and it was seen as an example of unnecessary government interference. In general the government was feared and regarded with distrust by rural people who usually disliked any form of interference. In that era the people had also had no awareness of their own cultures, and had no pride in the local languages. This was because they had been told for many years that their culture and language were inferior to the culture of the Amhara and the Amharic language, which had been the only language that Ethiopians had been encouraged to learn. Their language had never been transcribed and was seen as backward and unsophisticated both by the government and by the people themselves. The cultural climate in the late-1970s and 1980s had not allowed them to receive the introduction of local languages gladly, because it seemed that they were being patronised or marginalised in the state <sup>58</sup>.

Since that time people's self-awareness had increased, and they were now enthusiastic about embracing their own languages and cultures. This self-awareness had increased in response to the liberation movements against the rule of the Derg, and had developed further in response to the new political climate introduced by the present government. This government's introduction of the local languages for primary education had arrived at a time when people were ready to accept it. In the time of the Derg the levels of overall education had been too low for the rural population to see any benefit from using local languages; the main purpose of education was thought to be learning Amharic. To a large extent, the teacher argued, it was essential for an elite from the local language group to become educated in Amharic before the possible benefits of mother tongue education could be appreciated. It was only when some individuals from a particular language group, or locality, had become educated that others could see that the introduction of local languages for wider functions was not simply a divisive instrument being used by a hostile regime, that it was beneficial to the processes of education because children understood the language. Although the levels of education in rural areas of the SNNPR are still low, they have reached the point at which a substantial proportion of the rural

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<sup>58</sup> SZ4.12

population are ready to accept local language teaching. A further factor which the staff of this particular school argued was responsible for producing the change in peoples attitudes was the use of the Qube. In the literacy campaign, the Ethiopic script, they argued, had been unsuitable for the local languages <sup>59</sup>.

In the light of the discussion of the success of the present reforms when compared to the failure of the literacy campaign, the staff in Yekatit 25 E. & J.S. discussed whether a language policy sponsored by the government could succeed without popular support <sup>60</sup>. The school principals felt that it was the desire of the people and not the policy which was important: if a language policy reflected popular aspirations it would be successful, if it did not then the policy would ultimately fail. They felt that in the rural areas of the Sidama zone the use of Sidama MOI would be perpetuated by the support of the local people. The views of both students and parents confirmed this argument. Although some students in Abosto said that learning in Amharic was good because, since it was the national language it provided them with wider opportunities, they all agreed that it was much easier for the students to learn in the local language, when they started in the school. Students described how difficult it had been at the beginning of grade one, and recounted the discouraging feeling which it had created. Some students who had dropped out when Amharic was the MOI had reentered the school and were now doing well as a result of teaching in Sidama MOI. They said that, because they had been unable to speak Amharic before, it had made them feel inferior to those students who spoke the language, because their own language was not thought to be good enough to be used in education <sup>61</sup>.

#### Difficulties facing female education in the rural environment

In Midra Genet E.S. two thirds of the students were boys, and the proportion of girls decreased in the upper grades. The principal stated that the proportion of girls in this school was quite high compared with other schools in the area, and that things were gradually changing for the better. Previously, he stated, it had been taboo for girls to go to school; girls who went to school were

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<sup>59</sup> SZ4.12

<sup>60</sup> Chapter Three, p114.

<sup>61</sup> SZ4.10



insulted and ridiculed. Gradually the community was accepting the need for girls to become educated. In order to encourage more girls to come to the school the staff organise open days where they tell the parents about the benefits of sending their girls to school. The staff asked the parents who were already sending their daughters to school to send them to school neat and clean, so they would appear respectable; this, it was hoped, would encourage the parents of other girls who were not attending school to send their daughters.

In Midra Genet E.S. the girls do not obtain results as good as the boys'. In the first two grades some girls have achieved good results, but they find it harder to keep up with the boys as they progress through the grades. In addition to the large amount of domestic work which girls perform in the home, there are strong cultural pressures which prevent them from competing with the boys. In general girls are brought up to be shy and unassertive whereas boys are encouraged to be aggressive and forthcoming. Girls who push themselves forward in the classroom were still frequently taunted by the boys. Staff felt, however, that the situation was improving. They felt that once some progress begins to be made in terms of female education, however gradual, it will be irreversible <sup>62</sup>.

In Yekatit 25 E. & J.S. the numbers of girls and boys were equal in number in the lower grades, but after grade five this altered dramatically with girls accounting for less than one quarter of the students. The staff attributed the reduction to the locally common practice of kidnapping which discouraged parents from sending girls to school <sup>63</sup>. In both rural schools which were visited in the Gedeo zone there were substantial problems with female attendance. Cultural taboos, particularly amongst the Muslims, prevented many parents from sending their daughters to school, even if they wanted to. Parents were also preoccupied with the problem of kidnapping. The principals of both schools argued that the government had to do more to encourage female literacy <sup>64</sup>.

Kidnapping is a common obstacle to educating girls. Girls as young as twelve years old are kidnapped for early marriage; they are simply grabbed by

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<sup>62</sup> SZ3.1

<sup>63</sup> SZ4.1

<sup>64</sup> GZ2.1, GZ3.1

men when they are alone, on the way to school or when going to fetch water. Men feel that the only way to ensure that their wives are virgins is to kidnap very young girls. In many areas of the SNNPR it is taboo for girls to have sex outside of marriage because of the risk of pregnancy. The men who kidnap girls will, in almost all cases, approach the family of the girl afterwards and make some arrangement to appease them. These arrangements vary; often the men will try to give the family some livestock, agree to work for the family a certain number of days in the year, or fulfil particular tasks. Some girls are returned to their families if a satisfactory arrangement cannot be reached. But once girls are kidnapped they are usually considered to be married, and the situation is accepted. Most families are worried that they may already be pregnant, since the kidnapers usually try to have sex with the girls as quickly as possible. Then, because of the taboos, the families often have no choice but to accept the situation, since an unmarried pregnant daughter is a disgrace.

Female students described their strategies for avoiding being kidnapped. Some walk to school early before the kidnapers expect them to be out of their family plots, many walk to school only with their brothers who carry sticks to beat off any attempts at kidnapping. Some girls said that they walked through the bush in order not to be seen, but this was not always possible. Others attempt to disguise themselves as boys, but this is difficult unless they cut off their hair, which their mothers usually did not want them to do.

In terms of education, the main result of the practice of kidnapping is that it prevents many girl students from completing primary education. When they are still small there is no danger; it is when they reach puberty that they are at risk. Most girls in grade five and six classes were past the age of puberty. Children do not enter school until they are six, and so even if the female students did not repeat any grades, they did not finish primary school until they were twelve, and most were at least fifteen.

Another factor which reduces female attendances in many rural areas is the practice of female circumcision. It is very difficult to get respondents to discuss openly the issues surrounding rites of passage into womanhood for girls in south-west Ethiopia. A few respondents (all females) argued that after girls were circumcised they invariably became sick, and it took a long time for

them to heal: some never healed properly and bled heavily for a long time. This made it very difficult for them to come to school. Once they had missed long stretches of the school year these girls often felt that they would not be able to catch up. Their families told them that they were women now and had to attend to the domestic duties of the household, they could no longer waste time at school. Female teachers argued, moreover, that in the immediate aftermath of circumcision girls felt ashamed and embarrassed and that those who returned to school lacked the confidence they had displayed earlier. One teacher described in detail the case of a very bright female student, who had disappeared from the class when she was thirteen and attending fourth grade. The teacher encountered the girl on the road several months later carrying water to her house; she asked her why she had stopped coming to school but the girl would not respond. When she pressed her for an answer the girl burst into tears and ran away. The teacher was certain that the girl had not returned to school because she had been circumcised <sup>65</sup>. Educated women often argue that circumcision presents a great barrier to female participation in education, particularly in rural areas.

### **Conclusion**

In Awassa and Dilla the desires of the population were satisfied by the decision to use Amharic MOI in schools, and by the inclusion of local language sections. In Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe, however, similarly heterogeneous urban populations were forced to use the local languages. Since Amharic was the most widely spoken language in these towns the population felt that, far from giving them education in the language of their choice, the implementation of the government's reforms had infringed on their linguistic rights, and had contradicted the very ethos of the reform.

In fact there is no conceivable reason why the populations of these towns should not be allowed education in Amharic. The fear expressed by officials that the rejection of the use of local languages would spread to the rural schools if Amharic were allowed in the urban schools seems to be utterly unfounded.

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<sup>65</sup> This teacher was particularly concerned that I did not attribute these remarks to her, and I will not, therefore, reveal the school in which she was teaching.

Even in Abosto, which was situated within walking distance of Yirga Alem, and where many students were not Sidamas, both the staff and all the students were happy to use Sidama MOI because, for them, local language education made sense; the second set of materials taught the students useful things for the rural environment, and they could see that it was beneficial. In the rural areas of the Sidama and Gedeo zones strong support for the policy was evident.

There would, moreover, have been no practical difficulties involved if education in the towns had been allowed to continue in Amharic, since that was the language in which education had been provided. The decision to use the local languages, many urban dwellers felt, had been made for misconceived political reasons. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the relevant administrative units claimed that they did not have the authority to take the decision.

## **Chapter Seven : The Western Highlands.**

### **The K.A.T. (Kembata, Alaba, Tembaro) and Hadiya Zones.**

#### **Literacy rates and the Language of Education.**

The central part of the K.A.T. zone, covered by three woredas (Angacha, Kedida Gamela and Kacha Bira) is very mountainous, and is inhabited by the Kembata. The vast majority of Kembatas are Christians, belonging either to the Ethiopian Orthodox church or to mission churches. In the eastern-most part of the zone is Alaba woreda, which is in the Rift valley, and borders the Oromo region to the east, and the Gurage zone to the north. The most populous group of people in this woreda are the Alaba, the only other substantial group found in the woreda are Silti Gurage. Unlike the inhabitants of the highland areas of the zone, these two groups share a common religion, Islam. In the west of the zone is Omosheleko woreda, which is inhabited by the Tembaro. This is an extremely mountainous, isolated and remote area of the highlands which overlooks that portion of the upper Omo valley often referred to as the Gibe trough. Three woredas (Soro, Limu and Kontob) of the Hadiya zone, which are also very mountainous, lie to the north of the Kembata and Tembaro-speaking areas. The fourth woreda of the Hadiya zone, Badewacho, lies to the south of the Kembata-speaking area, and borders the Walaita-speaking area of the North Omo zone. Badewacho woreda lies in the foothills of the Rift valley.

Initially the K.A.T. zone authorities had hoped that the set of materials which had been developed in Kembata language would be suitable for all three groups in the zone, since their languages are very similar; differences in the written forms of the languages would be minimal. However, both the Alaba and the Tembaro rejected the Kembata language materials and schools in the woredas in which they live have continued to use Amharic MOI. Officially, both groups have expressed a desire to have education provided in their own languages, but as yet the processes of linguistic development have not been initiated. The woreda administration in Alaba have asserted their rights to have materials in their own language. However, with a population of roughly 100,000

1, they are considerably smaller than any of the other groups which have so far had their languages developed for the purpose of primary education. It also seems that there is no great desire on the part of the population to use the local language 2.

In the rural areas and smaller towns of Kembata the population are enthusiastic about the use of Kembata MOI, but in the zone capital Durame the population remains in favour of education in Amharic, and has been forced to use the local language. Unlike the urban populations of Yirga Alem and Yirga Chefe 3, the population of Durame is relatively homogeneous, being dominated by Kembatas. The reasons for the desire on the part of this urban population to use Amharic MOI lie in two patterns of Kembata migration which have been stimulated by the geopolitical reforms of the present government. In the Hadiya zone all rural areas, and indeed the smaller towns, have populations that favour Hadiya MOI. Amharic education, however, continues in Hosanna, the zone capital, as it has in Dilla and Arba Minch. Like the Hadiya zone itself, Hosanna has a very homogeneous population of Hadiyas. Only 20% of children in the town's schools are being educated in Amharic.

The rates of participation in education and the literacy rates of woredas in these two zones vary dramatically. The Kembata-speaking area has the highest overall rates of participation in education and literacy of any area in the SNNPR, and the highest rates of female and rural literacy. In all of these respects Alaba has the lowest rates of any area covered by the field-work 4. The Hadiya zone is also an area of high rural literacy. The effect of these divergent literacy rates is that the Kembata and Hadiya actively embrace the use of their own languages, because they appreciate the benefits. The Alaba rejected Kembata MOI, partly for political reasons, but also because the local population does not understand the purpose of the reform.

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1 1994 Population and Housing census of Ethiopia - SNNPR Volume 1 PartV Abridged Statistical Report Central Statistical Authority p41 . Addis Ababa, 1996.

2 See below p238-239.

3 See below p195.

4 Chapter Five, p163.

## Schools in Durame

### The difficulties created by using Kembata materials in Durame

Durame has developed as a town very recently, largely in response to the decision to use it as the zone capital of the K.A.T. zone. Most of Durame's inhabitants, the great majority of whom are Kembatas, belong to one of the missionary churches, which are very firmly established in the area. Durame was originally the site of a French Roman Catholic mission.

In Durame E.S. the vice principal estimated that Kembatas accounted for at least 90% of the students. The remaining 10% were a mixture of Amharas, Gurages and Oromos. He explained that, along with the members of these three groups, many of the Kembatas regarded Amharic as their first language; it was the language they most commonly used, even in their homes <sup>5</sup>. In Hambo E.S. in Durame, teaching staff estimated that 75% of the students were Kembatas <sup>6</sup>, but, they argued, it was difficult to tell who was and who was not a Kembata because almost all of the students spoke Amharic, and most had either Amharic or mission style Christian names. Amharic is firmly established as the language of the urban environment. But this is not in response to historical patterns of settlement or government by northern Ethiopians; it is, rather, a result of recent patterns of Kembata migration.

Many of the Kembata in the town have returned to this area since the geopolitical reforms of the present government. As a result of the longstanding patterns of mission education, and the resultant high literacy rates in Kembata there were, prior to the reforms of the present government, many Kembatas working in the administration and education system throughout Ethiopia. These people were encouraged to relocate to Durame after the change of government, in order to take administrative positions in the new zone government, and government workers now represent a sizable proportion of the town's population. For a town its size, Durame has a very high literacy rate, comparable to those of the larger urban centres <sup>7</sup>. Durame is also the only zone capital in the SNNPR in which no primary education in Amharic MOI has been

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<sup>5</sup> KZ1.2

<sup>6</sup> KZ6.2

<sup>7</sup> Chapter Five, p175.

allowed to continue. The high literacy rates and administrative status of Durame explain why many parents in the town do not want their children educated in Kembata MOI. However it is not only these educated government worker Kembatas that have 'returned' to Durame, other Amharic-speaking Kembatas are also recent arrivals in the town.

In response to high levels of overcrowding in the Kembata highlands, there had been, over the course of the twentieth century, a constant drift of Kembatas into the larger towns of the south-west, and some rural areas. The most important rural area of Kembata settlement was on the eastern side of the Rift valley, around the towns of Shashemene, Kuyera, Arussi Negele and Kofele<sup>8</sup>. The area in which many Kembatas settled was, at the time, inhabited by Oromo pastoralists, but was fairly thinly populated. Kembata settlement in the area was unchallenged until the famine of the 1970s struck the highlands of the former provinces of Harerghe and Arussi. Feeding stations, often run by missions, were established along the main road, and the Oromo inhabitants of the highlands were brought down into the Rift valley, where relief could more easily be given. Some of the Rift valley towns were founded in this way; Arussi Negele was a Roman Catholic mission, Kuyera still has a Seventh Day Adventist mission and Alem Tena, as its name (world health) suggests, was originally a relief station of the World Health Organisation. From the 1970s onwards, the Kembata inhabitants of the area were increasingly subjected to population pressure from the Oromo, who began to settle in the rural areas around these towns. Another area of Kembata settlement was in the former province of Gojjam in the rural areas around the town of Debra Markos. This area of settlement was a focus for Orthodox Christian Kembatas, who were easily incorporated into the Amhara society of the area, and who readily adopted the Amharic language. The number of Kembatas who migrated to Gojjam was much smaller than those who settled in the Rift valley.

Since the geopolitical reforms of the present government Kembatas have begun to move back to the highlands. The exodus of Kembatas from the Rift valley was a response to the increasing hostility they were facing from the local Oromo population. Oromos felt that they had a political right to oust local

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<sup>8</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.



Kembata communities, since the area was part of the Oromo region and it therefore belonged to them. The Kembata, they argue, have their homeland in the mountains on the other side of the Rift valley, which was where they should live. In fact the local Oromos had no constitutional right to adopt this attitude; minorities already settled within Ethiopia's regions are supposed to enjoy the same rights as the members of the group which is represented by the geopolitical unit. Kembatas argued, however, that if they had gone to the local authorities to complain about the problems that they were facing, they would not have received justice, because the local authorities were exclusively staffed by Oromos who would not have been sympathetic. As a result many Kembatas began to feel that the only area in which they now had not only a constitutional right to settle, but also a chance of a peaceful existence, was in the Kembata highlands. Many misunderstood the purpose of the reforms; they thought they were supposed to leave. Whole communities relocated to the mountains. Some people decided to move, others were forced. Families were burned out of their huts and driven off their plots in the middle of the night. Whole villages were destroyed, and former Kembata communities in the area disappeared completely<sup>9</sup>. Many Kembatas continued to live in the larger towns of the southwest, and many of those who were displaced from rural areas of the Rift valley settled in Shashemene, Awassa, Dilla and Soddo, where there were already large numbers of Kembatas.

After the reforms of the present government many of the Kembatas who were living in the Rift valley were also unhappy about the use of the Oromifa in primary schools; they preferred their children to learn in Amharic. Although the area was predominantly populated by the Oromo, Amharic was the accepted lingua franca, and it was Amharic and not Oromifa which the Kembata in these areas had adopted. In most Kembata communities in the Rift valley at least two generations had been raised in Amharic before the present government came to power. Some Kembata communities in the Rift Valley were very firmly established; four generations had been born outside of the Kembata highlands. Many Kembatas in the Rift valley had lost any tangible connection with Kembata

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<sup>9</sup> Bahru Shikur (ICDR) Awassa, 19/2/97. Daniel Kabiso (ICDR) Awassa 17/2/97. Phillipus Paulos (ICDR) Durame KZ0.3. Also many informal interviews.

communities in the highlands, and all of their close kin were also living in the Rift valley. Many did not speak Kembata, but they, nevertheless considered themselves to be Kembatas.

The recent return of many Kembatas to the highlands only served to increase the existing competition for land in the area, and many were unable to secure adequate plots of rural land. Those who still had relatives in the highlands attempted to merge their family units. Where this was not possible, or no relatives could be located, they gravitated to Durame, in the hope of finding some means of supporting their families. Consequently, the town has grown dramatically in size. According to the census of 1994 <sup>10</sup>, it had a population of over seven thousand, but officials in the town stated that this was much less than the current population of the town. One unofficial estimate is that the population of the town had, at the time of the field-work in 1997, already exceeded ten thousand <sup>11</sup>. The influx of people from the Rift valley has, moreover, by no means come to an end; people continue to arrive in a constant stream. The majority of the population of Durame are now probably Kembatas who returned from the Rift valley. This explains the high proportion of Kembata students attending schools in Durame who do not speak Kembata and regard Amharic as their first language <sup>12</sup>. Many of these returning Kembata reacted strongly against the use of local language materials in primary education, since they were Amharic-speakers.

The principal of Durame General school defended the introduction of Kembata MOI in Durame, but admitted that it caused great problems for the large numbers of Kembatas in the school, for whom it was not the first language. He stated that it took at least two years for students who did not speak Kembata to catch up with the others, and some students were put off, and would drop-out. Each year around 20% of the grade one class in Durame E.S. did not pass the grade, this 20% being mostly made up of those who could not speak Kembata. In the primary schools in Durame, teaching staff explained that they continued to teach the lessons in Amharic even though the teaching materials were in

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<sup>10</sup> 1994 Population and Housing census of Ethiopia - SNNPR Volume 1 PartV Abridged Statistical Report Central Statistical Authority p19 (Addis Ababa June 1996)

<sup>11</sup> KZ8.1

<sup>12</sup> KZ1.1

Kembata <sup>13</sup>. Many said that they felt that this was ridiculous, the language of the easiest communication for students should be the language of education. Teachers recognised that the use of the local language was good in the rural areas; it was only in the town that it was unsuitable.

School committee members echoed the opinions voiced by the staff in Durame <sup>14</sup>. Because of the high proportion of displaced Kembata, who could only speak Amharic, and the presence of Amharic-speaking individuals who came from other groups in the town, the school committee members thought that Amharic should have been maintained as the language of primary education in the urban environment. The committee members had approached both zone and woreda officials to ask if they could allow the schools in Durame to continue using Amharic, but they had not received an official reply.

The officials found it hard to argue against them because, although they were themselves Kembatas, they also generally used Amharic for all purposes; they were government workers who had been educated in Amharic. These government workers often wanted to have their children educated in Amharic as well. However, they were caught in a difficult situation because it was their job to defend and implement the policy of the government, even though it was obviously causing problems. One official in Durame contradicted himself several times while trying to explain his attitude towards the policy <sup>15</sup>. He said that he agreed with the policy, and he had defended the introduction of Kembata MOI to school committee members when they had requested education to continue in Amharic. But he stated that the use of Amharic MOI would be better for students in the town, and also for certain subjects even in the rural schools. The use of Kembata MOI, he argued, restricted the ability of teachers to make themselves understood, denied the students access to higher education and wider work opportunities and was difficult to implement because it did not have the support of staff, parents or students <sup>16</sup>. While he clearly felt bound to defend the policy, he was equally able to see the problems it had created. On the one hand he argued that he had to tell the parents that the use

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<sup>13</sup> KZ1.1

<sup>14</sup> KZ1.11 - KZ1.13

<sup>15</sup> KZ8.1

<sup>16</sup> KZ8.1

of Kembata MOI would be beneficial to their children, but on the other hand he admitted that it would limit the opportunities which would be available to them after completing their education, and might inhibit their progress in secondary school.

In Durame parents and students saw education as a means of broadening their horizons. Parents thought that learning in Kembata would not take their children anywhere. Instead it would keep them in the local environment. Many of the returning Kembata were experiencing difficulties establishing themselves in the area, and were concerned that children should have the opportunity to leave and look for work in other parts of Ethiopia. They argue that opportunities arise from the ability to move from place to place in order to improve one's situation; often they move from town to town finding work where they can. Furthermore, many urban Kembatas aspire to activities other than agriculture and, therefore, value education and literacy.

In Durame General E.S., out of 70 teachers, there were at least 20 who could not speak Kembata; nor had these teachers received any training in the use of Kembata MOI, or the Qube writing system. In Durame those teachers who had recently graduated from the T.T.I. in Awassa had received training in the Qube. But all teachers trained more than three years previously had received no training from the regional authorities in the use of Kembata. The teachers had been educated in Amharic and found it difficult to teach in Kembata because they were not used to it. The most poignant comment, repeated by several teachers, was that although the books were now in Kembata and students were expected to produce written work in the language, the majority of teaching in the classroom was still conducted in Amharic. Teaching staff often argued that the necessary vocabulary did not exist in Kembata <sup>17</sup>.

Teaching staff In Durame felt that the balance between the use of the two languages in education was wrong. Some staff suggested that if Amharic was taught as a subject from grade one it would help the situation <sup>18</sup>. Others felt that some subjects, for which Kembata was unsuitable should be taught in

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<sup>17</sup>KZ1.3, KZ1.5, KZ1.7, KZ1.8, KZ6.3, KZ6.4 KZ6.5

<sup>18</sup> KZ1.4, KZ1.5

Amharic<sup>19</sup>. The majority, however, felt that, in the schools in the town, Amharic should have been maintained as the MOI while Kembata should only have been introduced as a single subject. Teachers were openly critical of the decision to use Kembata MOI in Durame, which they felt had been done for political reasons, with no regard for the educational needs of the children of the town. Staff argued that Ethiopia needed a national language for communication, and that Amharic was the only language available for this purpose since it was already so widely spoken. In terms of education, the language was already developed and was both sophisticated and flexible enough to convey the ideas necessary for teaching purposes. For these reasons they felt it was a better MOI than Kembata.

In both schools visited in Durame, the numbers of girls and boys were roughly equal and they were achieving equal results. There was a decline in the proportion of girls in the higher grades. In Durame E.S. staff argued that the situation was improving; each year more girls were graduating from the school. In Durame fear of kidnapping was not offered as a reason for female students dropping out, and it would seem that the practice is rare in the Kembata-speaking area. Missionary activity in Kembata had also reduced the frequency of female circumcision, since the missions declared that the practice was barbaric, and that people who continued to persist in it could not receive any of the benefits that they provided.

Durame was an example of an urban area in which the introduction of the local language for primary education was creating problems for the administration. Although government officials tried to defend the policy, it was clear that at all levels it had been recognised that Kembata MOI was unpopular in the town. The teaching staff, parents and students were unanimous in objecting to the introduction of Kembata MOI. Even though the great majority of the informants interviewed were Kembatas, they expressed serious reservations about the suitability of the language for educational purposes.

Opposition to the policy in Durame was rarely presented in political terms. It was based on the desire of urban dwellers to secure a broad and suitable education for the students. But the zone authorities refused to consider

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<sup>19</sup> KZ1.2, KZ1.3, KZ1.4, KZ1.5, KZ1.7, KZ1.8, KZ6.3, KZ6.4 KZ6.5

allowing Amharic materials to be used in the town. They argued that the nationalities in the state had the right to choose the language they would use in education; the Alaba and Tembaro had decided not to use the language of the zone and were still using Amharic. The Kembata had decided to use their language, and so all schools in the three woredas of Kembata should use Kembata MOI. Officials also argued that the population of the town was predominantly Kembata anyway, and it would not harm them to learn in their own language.

#### The Contrasting case of Hosanna

Hosanna, the capital of the Hadiya zone is, like Durame, a relatively homogeneous town with a high literacy rate. But unlike Durame the majority of the population in the town favours education in the local language. The Hadiya, unlike the Kembata, rarely migrate for work or to settle. Very few Hadiyas are found in the urban areas outside of the zone. The urban inhabitants of Hosanna, therefore, do not feel the same need to have their children educated in Amharic.

In Hosanna (as in Awassa, Dilla and Arba Minch) education in Amharic MOI has been allowed to continue in the schools. Hosanna no.3 E.S. has Amharic and Hadiya language sections. The majority of the Hadiya students, who account for 80% of the school population, learn in Hadiya MOI, while those students that are from other groups learn in Amharic. This school had a very high pass rate of 98% of students moving up from grade one to grade two each year, and the drop-out rate was also very low. The pass and drop-out rates for the two sections were similar. Girls slightly outnumbered boys in this school, and were obtaining equal results <sup>20</sup>. The conditions in the school, therefore, resembled those in other large urban centres, except that a greater proportion of the students were attending the local language MOI section.

When Hadiya MOI was introduced in Hosanna, public meetings were held to discuss the issue. School committees were involved in the decision making process. Many parents in the town decided that education in Hadiya MOI would be beneficial to their children, because it expressed their identity

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<sup>20</sup> HZ3.1

and offered them opportunities to work in the zone administration and education systems. In Hosanna the vast majority of the population are bilingual in Amharic and Hadiya. Accordingly, their parents felt they would be able to speak both languages fluently whichever language they were educated in. Neither staff nor students thought that learning in either language would produce an adverse result.

The population of Hosanna was less heterogeneous than that of the other urban centres. Although the literacy rate was high and the population were concerned about education, the Hadiya were more concerned with developing their own language and less concerned to maintain a strong connection to the state through the use of the Amharic language. This was also the case in the smaller towns and rural areas of the Kembata woredas and the Hadiya zone.

### **Rural schools in Kembata and Hadiya**

In the rural areas of Kembata and Hadiya there was great enthusiasm for the use of the local languages in primary education. These areas have the highest rural literacy rates in the SNNPR. The rural population are entirely dependent on agriculture, which is dominated by *ensete* cultivation. Many of the inhabitants of the rural areas never travel far. The land in Kembata and Hadiya consists of a series of typically Ethiopian high plateaux, which rise in steps. These plateaux are separated from each other by gorges and mountains. These highland areas are densely populated; people live on the plateaux and in the mountains.

Zatoshedera E.S., in Kedida Gamela woreda, was a typical rural school in Kembata; according to the principal, 100% of the students were Kembatas. In this school Kembata MOI had been well-received from the start. Teaching staff said that, although the language was not as expressive as Amharic, the children understood Kembata, and it was, therefore, the best language to use in primary education <sup>21</sup>. Children who had started their education in Amharic, but were now learning in Kembata, said that education was much better. These attitudes were confirmed by the rising enrolment figures, increasing pass rates, and

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<sup>21</sup> KZ2.2 - KZ2.5

falling drop-out rates in the school. Numbers of children attending school had risen from 400 to over 750, in the space of three years <sup>22</sup>. Teaching staff said that the biggest problem facing the school was the number of students that needed to be accommodated.

The numbers of girls and boys in the rural schools in Kembata were, generally, equal. In Zatoshoderu E.S. girls slightly outnumbered boys, the principal argued that this was because girls in the area did not rush to marry and were more enthusiastic about education, they were happy to learn in their own language, and the introduction of free education had meant that rural people could afford to send a greater percentage of their children to school <sup>23</sup>. Similar attitudes were expressed in Juree E.S. in Kedida Gamela woreda. The numbers of boys and girls in this school were also equal, and they were achieving comparable results <sup>24</sup>.

Fundame E.S., which is in the foot hills of the Rift valley in Kacha Bira woreda, is an area of ethnic mixing in the rural environment. 80% of the students were Kembatas and the remaining 20% were Hadiyas and Walaitas <sup>25</sup>. In Fundame E.S. numbers of boys and girls were equal in the lower grades but boys outnumbered girls in the upper years <sup>26</sup>. Teaching staff in this school said that this was not due to problems of kidnapping or early marriage; the girls who quit left school because they became bored and did not see the point of continuing their education. The Hadiya students achieved equal results to the Kembatas; they were fluent in Kembata since they had grown up in the area. The students stated that they preferred the use of the local language, although they wanted to learn Amharic as well <sup>27</sup>. Although it was situated in the Rift valley, Fundame E.S. was in a remote area far from any towns, whereas Zatoshoderu E.S. and Juree E.S. were both situated in accessible parts of the central Kembata highlands, near Durame and Shinshicho. It was generally in the remote areas, which usually have lower literacy rates, that boys continued to

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<sup>22</sup> KZ2.1

<sup>23</sup> KZ2.1

<sup>24</sup> KZ2.1

<sup>25</sup> The area borders Badewacho woreda. See below p231

<sup>26</sup> KZ5.1

<sup>27</sup> KZ5.7



outnumber girls in the primary schools.

Umaro E. S., in Soro woreda of the Hadiya zone, was one of the most remote schools visited during the field-work. It was situated on the high plateau above the Gibe trough. The area is exclusively populated by Hadiyas and Hadiya MOI has been received with enthusiasm. Parents and teachers welcomed the change because it had been very difficult for children in the area to learn in Amharic, since there was so little exposure to the language in that part of the country. The total number of students in the school was 325, of which only 25 were girls <sup>28</sup>. Staff explained that girls were used to herd cattle in this area, and could not be available to attend school <sup>29</sup>. In this remote area only a small number of the adult men were literate. The teachers stated that they were the only individuals who had had any sustained contact with the outside world, none of the parents had ever travelled further than Gimbichu, the woreda capital <sup>30</sup>. The mountainous nature of the area meant that travel was restricted to the use of mules. As a result, the school was markedly under-resourced. The majority of the classrooms were unfinished and consisted of rickety frames constructed from Eucalyptus trees. Those classrooms which had been completed had no furniture; the children sat on rocks or small piles of sticks on the floor.

It is very difficult for teachers to provide an adequate standard of education in these conditions, which are common in remote schools in Kembata and Hadiya. Teachers often argued that the problems of implementing the new language policy were insignificant when compared to the difficulties which they experienced in attempting to provide for the most basic educational needs of the students <sup>31</sup>. Parents in Umaro E.S. said that with so many other problems facing the people of the locality, it was good that their children were now being educated in a language which they understood <sup>32</sup>. The students in remote schools continued to find Amharic difficult to learn, and only a few were able to master the language, because they had no opportunities to use it.

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<sup>28</sup> HZ3.1

<sup>29</sup> HZ3.2, HZ3.3

<sup>30</sup> HZ3.6

<sup>31</sup> HZ 3.1

<sup>32</sup> HZ3.6

Very few students in remote schools continue on to secondary education; in Umaro E.S. less than 5% of those who had graduated from grade six in the preceding ten years had been able to further their education. The nearest high school was very far away, in the woreda capital Gimbichu. All of the grade six students in Umaro E.S. stated that they would like to continue their education, but they argued that this would not be possible because their families could not afford to send them to the town.

In the medium-sized homogeneous towns in Hadiya and Kembata similar conditions and attitudes were encountered to those in the rural areas. In Shinshicho, the capital of Kacha Bira woreda in Kembata, the population were enthusiastic about education in Kembata MOI, and the local authorities were actively involved in local language development <sup>33</sup>. In Morsito, the capital of Kontob woreda in Hadiya the introduction of Hadiya MOI also met with great enthusiasm on the part of school staff, students and parents. Unlike Shinshicho and Morsito, which are in the highlands, Shone in Badewacho woreda lies on the main road from Shashemene to Soddo <sup>34</sup>, but conditions in the town differ little from those in the other towns of Kembata and Hadiya. Although Shone is an accessible urban area the population is almost entirely comprised of Hadiyas; the principal of Shone E.S. estimated that 97% of students were Hadiyas <sup>35</sup>. The remaining 3% were Amharas, Gurages and Walaitas. There was no difference in the results achieved by the members of the various groups; all were achieving good results in Hadiya MOI. Boys outnumbered girls by two to one, but the principal argued that the number of girls in the school was increasing each year, in response to the use of Hadiya MOI <sup>36</sup>.

In the primary schools of these towns the teaching staff had initially expressed some fears about the results of using local languages as MOI. The main difficulty with the use of Hadiya and Kembata as MOI was the Qube, because teachers had received no training in its use. There was substantial confusion between the two uses of the Roman script. In the early stages of the reform, teachers had also been concerned that the vocabulary in the local

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<sup>33</sup> See below p230.

<sup>34</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

<sup>35</sup> HZ4.1

<sup>36</sup> HZ4.1

languages was not broad and expressive enough to use for teaching purposes. Their command of the local languages was, moreover, often limited, since they were more accustomed to using Amharic.

In Kembata and Hadiya teachers and parents discussed the failure of the National Literacy campaign, and compared it with the success of the present reform. The principal of Shone E.S. argued that at the time of the previous government the overall levels of literacy and basic education had been too low for the people to grasp the issues that were at stake. More than 90% of the population had been illiterate. Now, he argued, a basic level of literacy had been achieved, and there was a greater understanding amongst the population as a whole of the benefits to be gained by their children from learning in their mother tongue. Literacy in Amharic, he argued, had encouraged and prepared the people to accept education in their own languages. The change in the attitude of the government also had a profound effect. There was, in the present reform no element of the compulsion exercised by the previous government <sup>37</sup>.

In short, the response to the local languages as MOI in Kembata and Hadiya was very positive. In areas of high rural literacy, larger numbers of children, and particularly female students, were attending schools, and achieving good results. Some schools had successfully involved the community and many schools were attempting to develop the resources of the school from a local support base. In these areas of high rural literacy the reform became symbolic of political change; the authorities and the local population became involved in education in ways that had previously not been possible.

#### Local teacher training initiatives

In Kembata, a profound attempt was made to address the problems created by the reform at zone level. The MOE zone office instructed the woreda offices to survey the schools and find out what the problems were. Soon after the materials had been introduced the staff of Kacha Bira woreda office in Shinshicho visited all of the schools in the woreda and collected teachers' views about the difficulties they were facing as a result of the reform. In the light of the responses from the schools, the woreda office established a programme

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<sup>37</sup> HZ4.1

of local teacher training with the help of officials from the zone office in Durame. The most serious problem, according to most teachers, was the lack of training in the Qube writing system. So teachers who were already familiar with the use of the Qube, and had been trained at the T.T.I. in Awassa, were used to educate those who had not received any training in the Qube. In Kacha Bira woreda two training centres were set up in local schools; one was located in Shinshicho, the other was in the west of the woreda, so that teachers did not have to travel too far to receive training. The centres ran workshops, which lasted one week, and taught the use of the Qube. After participating in the workshops, teachers argued that they were able to use the Qube with confidence. Many teachers argued that the training programmes were essential; prior to receiving training it had been common to find classes where some of the students understood how to read and write the Qube better than the teachers. Officials from the zone also participated in the training programmes. Their role was to explain practical methods of teaching in the Qube. They also answered teachers' questions about the new policy <sup>38</sup>.

This training programme in Kembata provides a good example of the results which locally generated initiatives can produce. Relatively short, intensive periods of teacher training were thought to be the most realistic way of addressing the problems, since they did not remove teachers from the schools for a long period of time. Teachers felt that the workshops were particularly good because open discussions had been encouraged, which had allowed them to air their concerns. The discussions with the zone staff had enabled the teachers to appreciate the positive benefits of the reform. They also felt that the difficulties that they were experiencing were not being ignored by the authorities<sup>39</sup>. Both teaching and administrative staff stated that they had enjoyed the training programmes and learned a lot; they had provided a hitherto unavailable opportunity to meet other people involved in the reform, and to share their experiences. The local focus of this kind of training programme seems to be essential to its success; sending teachers away to the T.T.I. was impractical because it was costly, and time consuming. A local focus also

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<sup>38</sup> KZ9.1

<sup>39</sup> KZ9.1

allowed for back-up training to be provided. Teachers who continued to have trouble had easy access to the sources of training; they were encouraged not to hold back, but to discuss their problems with MOE officials <sup>40</sup>. In Durame, MOE officials argued that easy communication between staff and officials was essential if the reform was to succeed <sup>41</sup>.

In the Hadiya zone similar local training initiatives were sponsored by the zone authorities <sup>42</sup>. In Kontob woreda MOE zone staff established training programmes that were designed to help teachers to use the Qube. Once the rules of the Qube had been made clear to them, most teachers agreed that it was a straightforward writing system, certainly easier to use than English, and they became enthusiastic about using the Qube. The problem was to make the students understand that the Roman script was being used in an entirely different way in the English language.

The difference between the two uses of the Roman script was a major problem for students and teachers alike in Kembata and Hadiya. During the surveys in Kacha Bira woreda several teachers had suggested that classes should be organised that would specifically address this issue; they felt that part of the problem was that no one had confronted the issue directly. Schools in Kembata were encouraged to give all students extra lessons that discussed the differences between the two uses of the Roman script. Zone staff were involved in this process; they went to the schools to help to explain the differences. Many teachers said that, once students had been told that although the letters looked the same, they were being used in a different way, and had had the differences explained to them, their ability to separate the two writing systems increased. Many teachers argued that the two uses of the Roman script was a major drawback of the reform, but was probably unavoidable. After the training workshops they felt that they were now able to explain the differences clearly to the students. This, they felt, was the only way to address the problem.

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<sup>40</sup> KZ9.3

<sup>41</sup> KZ0.1 - KZ0.4

<sup>42</sup> HZ0.1, HZ6.1

### Local resource development

Another problem that had been identified during the surveys of the schools in Kembata was the lack of understanding of the policy on the part of the parents. To address this problem, public meetings were held with parents in all the kebeles of Kacha Bira woreda, to give the local population an opportunity to ask questions, and to allow the woreda staff to explain the purpose of the new policy <sup>43</sup>. At these meetings school committees were formed and parents were encouraged to take a greater interest in the school.

According to a zone official <sup>44</sup>, Zatoshoder E.S. was one of the best resourced schools in the zone because it had a very active school committee that had helped to raise funds to provide the school with equipment. The school committee had been formed at a meeting to discuss the reform of language use. Parents were exercised by the fact that there were not enough desks in the classrooms. Instead of applying to the MOE for more furniture, which the principal had explained was unlikely to produce any results, the school committee built desks and chairs from local wood and classrooms were repaired and painted. Local community participation had a substantial effect. Work on the school was conducted during lulls in the agricultural calendar so that it did not adversely affect local people. Having succeeded in this venture, the school committee decided to play an active part in the school. Meetings were held regularly to highlight what was happening in the school, and to work out ways of addressing problems <sup>45</sup>.

In Zatoshedera teachers and parents developed a resource centre with teaching aids for use in the classroom. Many of the teaching aids were made by students but were kept in a separate room which was run as a library. The materials contained in this resource centre included biological diagrams, maps, materials for chemistry experiments, information and materials for local medicine. There was also a library for books. These materials were collected by staff or school committee members. Often very basic materials, which were not difficult to obtain in the local environment, had been used, and good results had

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<sup>43</sup>KZ9.2

<sup>44</sup>KZ0.3

<sup>45</sup> KZ2.1

been achieved <sup>46</sup>.

School committees were instrumental in Zatoshodera and elsewhere, in establishing agricultural programmes on the school grounds. Students were taught how to grow crops, and how to care for livestock. Parents came into the schools to teach them, but students were expected to do the majority of the work so they learned practical skills; they learned how to protect crops from pests and how and when to use fertilisers. They were taught the most effective ways to avoid erosion by ploughing techniques and by building dikes and ditches. Students always stated that they enjoyed their agriculture lessons because they could go home and tell their parents how to improve the yield of their own family plots. When the crops that were grown in the schools were harvested, they were sold and the school was provided with an income.

#### Local language development

Members of the school committee and staff in Zatoshodera E.S. were also active in making criticisms and suggestions for improving the first set of teaching materials in Kembata, in response to the BESO initiative which asked local language speakers to help produce the second set of teaching materials <sup>47</sup>. In Zatoshodera E.S. parents and teachers collected alternative words in Kembata to replace those which had been borrowed from Amharic, and made corrections where words in Kembata had been used incorrectly. In this school the staff stated that the improvement was clearly noticeable in the second set of materials. There were, however, continuing limitations inherent in the use of the local language. The main problems were that there were no dictionaries and reference books in Kembata which would help to make the language a more practical tool for education.

When we discussed whether the language had too narrow a vocabulary to be used for education, teachers and parents said that previously the language had appeared narrow but that now, since it was being opened up for other functions, it would become broader. Elderly people said that in the past there had been many more words in the language which had fallen out of use,

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<sup>46</sup> KZ2.2

<sup>47</sup> Chapter Four, p144-145.

often because people used words borrowed from Amharic instead. They argued that because both education and the churches had exclusively used Amharic, the use of Kembata had declined, but that it would now recover; many old words would return to common use. Throughout Kembata schools were encouraged to collect lists of words that could be substituted for the borrowed words in teaching materials when the second set was produced.

Once the process of linguistic development had begun in earnest in a given area, it seems to have dispelled anxieties about the use of the local language; it created instead enthusiasm for the local language. In the Hadiya zone elders were also brought in to help by providing additional vocabulary. A glossary was produced which was used to reduce the number of borrowed words in the materials. Hadiya speakers often argued that their language was very expressive and broad and had only gone into decline in the recent period because of the great importance of Amharic as a national language. In Badewacho woreda MOE staff had also encouraged the collection of word lists for use in the second set of materials. In Badewacho the population speak a slightly different variation of Hadiya. They felt that the vocabulary which was being used for the teaching materials only reflected the form of the language that was spoken in the highland woredas to the north, and hoped that the second set of materials might also contain words which reflected language use in Badewacho. In Badewacho, MOE officials stated that "elders act as our dictionary" <sup>48</sup>.

#### Daily linguistic migration.

To the south of Kembata several ethnic or linguistic groups overlap in rural areas. This area surrounds Badewacho woreda<sup>49</sup>, where Hadiya MOI is used in primary education. In the woredas that border Badewacho several different languages are used in education. To the east of Badewacho is the Oromo region where Oromifa is used, to the north is Alaba woreda where Amharic is used, to the north-west is Kembata where the local language is used, and to the south is the Walaita speaking area of the North Omo zone,

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<sup>48</sup> HZ6.1

<sup>49</sup> Maps Five & Six, Appendix One p305 & p306.



where the local language is also in use. Furthermore, not far to the south of Badewacho lies the border between the Walaita woredas, Damot Woyde and Humbo Tebela, and Shebedino and Dale woredas of the Sidama zone which also use the local language. Members of all of these groups of people are found on the other side of the borders of the zones which represent the languages they speak. As a result there is a daily migration of students across the woreda borders. Students make this daily journey in order to receive education in the language of their choice.

Sidama and Walaita students cross the Bilate river, which separates the two zones, in large numbers each day. Because there are few suitable crossing points it is easy to observe their daily migration. Many students in this area were worried that if they were caught they would not be allowed to continue attending the schools in the other zone. Similarly, Hadiyas and Walaitas cross the border between Badewacho woreda and Damot Gale woreda in order to attend schools in their mother tongues. The main road runs through this area and passes through the towns of Shone (Hadiya) and Boditi (Walaita) <sup>50</sup>. The road makes it much easier for students to travel the distance; many students ride to school on the frequent buses and taxis (mini-buses). In both towns it was accepted that many rural students attended the urban schools, and that a proportion came from the neighbouring woreda <sup>51</sup>. School and MOE staff were aware of this practice and, while they knew it was not really permitted, they turned a blind eye to it because they felt that if the students were determined enough to make the journey they should allow them to attend the schools. The children were, after all, trying to attend schools in their mother tongues, which was the whole point of the reform.

In Juree E.S. there were large numbers of Hadiyas and Walaitas studying in Kembata MOI <sup>52</sup>. The principal argued that the students from other groups were doing well in the school; they were good at speaking Kembata because it was the lingua franca in the area. In Juree E.S. there was, however, a significant problem with the large numbers of displaced Kembata who had

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<sup>50</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

<sup>51</sup> HZ6.1 & NOZ16.1

<sup>52</sup> KZ 3.1

recently returned from the Rift valley, who had little knowledge of Kembata language. It was very hard to convince them that education in a language other than Amharic was viable. In this area large numbers of Amharic-speaking Kembata students made a daily journey to schools in the neighbouring woreda of Alaba in order to attend schools in Amharic MOI <sup>53</sup>.

This problem is a predictable result of the reform of language use in primary education. There will always be areas of overlap, and any policy that forced relocation on the grounds of ethnicity or language would have disastrous effects on the population. It is very difficult for whole families to relocate to other zones. If they move they will lose at least one season's crops, and may not survive. Even in cases where it is possible for a family to relocate, perhaps because relatives are prepared to help them make the transition, in these densely populated areas it is very difficult to obtain land. Land distribution is controlled by the local authorities and it is hard for newcomers to secure plots.

### **Schools in Alaba**

The circumstances in Alaba woreda differ dramatically from those in Kembata and Hadiya. The rural population, which has a very low literacy rate is, to a great extent, unable to appreciate the benefits of education in a local language. Many remain suspicious of education as a whole; they continue to see it as an attempt by the state to convert their children into Amharas. The Alaba are Muslim and fear that through exposure to education their children may lose their religion. Alaba is an arid lowland area where the population rely on pastoralism. Very few crops grow in the dusty bottom of the Rift valley. The climate is, however, suitable for *berebere*, and the Alaba grow the spice as a cash crop. Alaba has been marginalised in terms of education because neither missions nor the Ethiopian state sought to provide schools in Muslim areas, and Koranic schools were few and provided limited education.

When the decision to introduce Kembata MOI materials in Alaba woreda was made by the central authorities in Addis Ababa and Awassa, it was widely publicised to the population. Members of the local council (*Mikir Bet*) visited all

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<sup>53</sup> KZ3.1

of the Kebeles in the woreda in order to test public opinion <sup>54</sup>. Large public meetings were held, at which officials expressed their views. Ordinary people also had an opportunity to ask questions and to gain an understanding of the purpose of the introduction of local languages.

The people were asked to decide which was preferable; to use the Kembata materials, or to request a new set in Alaba language, and to continue using Amharic in the meantime. The invariable outcome of these discussions was always that the people rejected the use of Kembata MOI, and preferred to have a new set of materials developed in their own language <sup>55</sup>. The first request for materials in Alaba language was made in 1995. The response of the ICDR in Addis Ababa was that the Alaba would have to wait until those languages already being used in the SNNPR had achieved a satisfactory level of development before any further languages would be considered for use in education <sup>56</sup>. Accordingly, primary schools in Alaba continue to use Amharic.

Local political elites clearly induced the population to demand this kind of development; they argued that the Alaba had a constitutional right to use their own language in education. The use of the local language, they argued would be beneficial because it expressed Alaba identity and would make education more accessible to their children. No unreasonable manipulation of the population took place in Alaba; the arguments used were valid. The population in Alaba were already concerned to differentiate themselves from the Kembata. MOE staff in Kulito argued that the local political representatives had merely reinforced attitudes which already existed amongst the people, by visiting the kebeles and highlighting the issues.

In linguistic terms, the degree of mutual intelligibility between Alaba and Kembata is very high. The two groups clearly feel, however, that they are different from each other. Apart from the religious difference between them there is a great difference between the lifestyle and outlook of the Alaba, living in the Rift valley floor, and that of the Kembata living in the highlands <sup>57</sup>, and this has a profound affect on the way in which they perceive themselves and one another.

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<sup>54</sup> KZ10.2

<sup>55</sup> KZ10.1

<sup>56</sup> Kedir Ibrahim (ICDR) Addis Ababa. 23/1/96.

<sup>57</sup> Kembata is *dega*, whereas Alaba is *golla*. Chapter One, p53.

While the Kembata are confident about the use of their own language, the Alaba still clearly feel that the language is not suitable for education. Many of the inhabitants of Alaba woreda prefer the use of Amharic.

In the Rift valley, where different groups of people come into contact, Amharic is used as a language of inter-ethnic communication. MOE officials in Kulito estimated that 75% of the population of the woreda could speak Amharic<sup>58</sup>. Kulito is by far the biggest town in the K.A.T. zone having a population of over fifteen thousand<sup>59</sup>. Lying on the main road to Walaita and the other parts of the south-west, Kulito is a large and important centre for trade where Amharic is used. There has been no opposition to the use of Amharic MOI in the schools in Alaba<sup>60</sup>.

In Alaba a very high proportion of those who engaged in education are living in the town; the majority of these people are not Alabas, and all of them prefer to have their children educated in Amharic. The very low literacy rates in rural areas also means that many people do not understand what is involved in the reform of language use. They know they do not want their children to learn in Kembata MOI because it is not their language, but many do not realise that the materials would be easier for students to understand than those in Amharic. Furthermore, many rural people still thought that the only point of sending their children to school was so that they would learn Amharic.

#### A school in Kulito

The principal of Alaba Idget E.S. in Kulito estimated that the largest group in the school were the Amhara, who accounted for 30% of the students. The next largest groups were the Alaba, who represented 25%, and the Gurage representing about 15%, and a surprisingly large 10% of the students who were Tigrean. It was also surprising not to find more Kembata, Walaita and Hadiya students since these groups all live within easy reach of Alaba, but together they accounted for only about 20% of the schools' population. The principal

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<sup>58</sup> KZ10.2

<sup>59</sup> 1994 Population and Housing census of Ethiopia - SNNPR Volume 1 PartV Abridged Statistical Report Central Statistical Authority p19 (Addis Ababa June 1996)

<sup>60</sup> KZ10.2

stated that all the students were happy to be learning in Amharic <sup>61</sup>. He argued that the introduction of materials in Alaba language would be good, but only for the purpose of one subject, since the vocabulary of the language was not expressive enough to convey the ideas necessary to teach the various subjects. He also stated that teacher training in the use of the Qube, which he assumed would be used for Alaba, was completely inadequate. He argued that this had caused great difficulties in other parts of the K.A.T. zone, and in other zones of the SNNPR. He felt that continuing to use Amharic was the most realistic option for schools in Alaba, since the teachers had received no training in the use of the Roman script, and all of them had been educated in Amharic. He understood that there might be benefits for the rural Alabas, but he argued that, in the town, the results of attempting to introduce Alaba MOI would be against the wishes of the majority of the urban population <sup>62</sup>.

Boys outnumbered girls in this school. The principal said that this was because the Muslim groups, the Alaba and Silti Gurage, did not send their daughters to school. The students, including the girls who did attend school, had comparable results; no particular group tended to do better than the others, although, as in other urban areas, the principal felt that the children of government workers achieved the best results. The drop-out rate was much higher for the Alaba than for students from other groups because their families were mostly farmers; during the ploughing and harvesting seasons Alaba children were expected to help their families and often, having missed large chunks of their education, they never returned to school. The Alaba students were less likely to complete their education than those from other groups. Most of the students who came from other groups were not farmers, and were living in the town because their parents were employed there, usually in offices and business places <sup>63</sup>.

The principal also supported the continued use of Amharic for another reason: he stated that the introduction of materials in local languages in other areas was not producing good results. He felt that this was demonstrated by the

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<sup>61</sup> KZ4.1

<sup>62</sup> KZ4.1

<sup>63</sup> KZ4.1

substantial numbers of Kembata students who were regularly travelling into Alaba woreda from the neighbouring woreda in order to attend Amharic MOI schools. He thought that introducing materials in Alaba language would be equally unpopular with individuals from all groups, since all valued the opportunity of receiving an education in Amharic. Teaching staff in this school echoed the opinions expressed by the principal. Many of the staff were Alaba, but, they nevertheless stated that, while local language teaching might well be beneficial in rural areas, it was totally unsuitable for the urban environment in Kulito <sup>64</sup>.

#### A rural school in Alaba

Guba E. S. was a typical rural school in Alaba woreda. Although the school is situated near the main road, it was one of the most deprived schools in which field-work was conducted. The problems facing the school were common to all schools which were visited, with the possible exceptions of those schools which had particularly active school committees. But in this school, and in most rural schools in Alaba, the conditions were so appalling that teaching staff found it hard, if not impossible, to provide a decent standard of education for the students. The classrooms were very old and dilapidated, many had no windows and doors, making it difficult to see, and there was no electricity in the school. Some of the school buildings were so disintegrated that they appeared to be about to collapse; rainfall in the rainy season had eroded the base of the walls of the classrooms and in the dry season a cloud of dust filled the classrooms every time the wind blew. There was almost no classroom furniture; children were sitting on rocks on the floor. There was no water supply to the school. The school was lacking in all forms of educational equipment, including books. The staff said that one reason why the situation of this school was particularly bad was that the people in the area were very poor and were, therefore, unable to make any contribution to their children's education <sup>65</sup>.

The total number of students in the school was about 700; of this number only 19 were girls. They found it extremely difficult to succeed because the male students did not accept their presence within the school and tried to ridicule

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<sup>64</sup> KZ4.2 - KZ4.3

<sup>65</sup> KZ7.1 - KZ7.5

them for attempting to obtain an education. Staff stated that this was because all of the inhabitants of the area were Muslim Alabas who believed that girls should not be sent to school <sup>66</sup>. The staff said that the male students were largely hostile towards education; they were sullen and uncooperative, and discipline was a big problem in the school. The parents in the area, the vast majority of whom were illiterate had no interest in the school <sup>67</sup>.

The principal thought that the students might benefit from some form of education in Alaba, since they were accustomed to using it from childhood. He did not see the continued use of Amharic as a problem, since, although the students did not speak the language when they first began to attend school, most of them had learned it after two years. Accordingly, he thought the introduction of Alaba would probably be better in terms of one subject rather than for use as the MOI <sup>68</sup>. Teaching staff in the school were confused about the use of Amharic and Alaba in education, they found it difficult to compare which would be a better MOI. The attitudes in the rural areas of Alaba were similar to those which existed prior to the introduction of local language teaching materials in other areas. Inevitably, the practical realities of the implementation of the policy focus the staff more clearly on the problems than they could be before local language teaching materials had been introduced. It is only after the introduction of new materials that the nature of difficulties or benefits of local language use become clear.

Often, both before and after the introduction of local language teaching materials, it was unclear whether teaching staff fully appreciated the difference between the language being used as a MOI and the language being taught as a subject. In areas like Alaba, where there was clearly confusion amongst the teachers about these issues, the parents had no understanding of the issues at stake in taking decisions about which languages were most suitable for use in their children's education; instead, their attitudes were governed by their existing attitudes towards the state. Many continued to distrust schools, those who sent their children did so only because they thought that if they learned to

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<sup>66</sup> KZ7.2 - KZ7.4

<sup>67</sup> KZ7.1

<sup>68</sup> KZ7.1

speak Amharic they would be able to get good jobs <sup>69</sup>.

Students argued that education should be in Amharic. The sixth grade students in Guba E.S. all stated that they preferred to learn in Amharic because it was the national language. They regarded Alaba as a language which had limited uses and was confined to the local environment <sup>70</sup>. When staff suggested that Alaba should be introduced as a subject, most students agreed. Students felt that Alaba could only be used as a subject; it would not possible to teach subjects in the language. Some students, however, clearly felt that it was pointless to teach the language at all because they could speak the language already, and had no use for it outside the home.

The attitudes displayed by teaching staff and students in Alaba, were typical of those areas where the local languages have not yet been introduced. Confusion about the manner in which the transfer would be managed is often the cause of doubts expressed by teaching staff. They are rightly concerned that the change will have a damaging effect on those students who are expected to switch from using Amharic to the local language. Teaching staff are also worried about their own ability to teach in the local languages; these are also the concerns which teachers raise most often in areas where the local languages have already been introduced.

It is possible to prevent children having to switch from one language in education to another in the middle of their education by introducing local language materials only to new students arriving in grade one. Teacher training can also be provided in using the new languages in education and the script. Staff are not, however, unaware of difficulties which are being experienced in the other areas of the SNNPR, and are unsure about the value of using local languages. In many areas, including Alaba, it is the teachers who express the greatest reservations about the use of local languages. Administrative staff in local zone and woreda offices are usually in favour of the policy, since their brief is to establish the constituency of the local ethnic group and to introduce its language for an enlarged set of functions. School principals also often display enthusiasm for the policy. It is teachers who feel worried by their own lack of

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<sup>69</sup> KZ7.1

<sup>70</sup> KZ7.5



experience. They often have difficulty coping with the existing problems facing the education system in Ethiopia, without a further complication being added.

### **Conclusion**

The differences in attitudes towards the use of local languages in the highland areas to the west of the Rift valley and in Alaba in the Rift valley floor, reflected the markedly different levels of literacy in these areas. The attitudes of the local population had, of course, been formed in response to a complex combination of factors, but literacy rates were good indicators of the conditions in a given area.

High literacy rates in Kembata and Hadiya had produced an environment in which education was seen as a priority by the local population. Girls were encouraged to participate in education, and in Kembata, even in the rural areas, there were some primary schools where girls outnumbered boys. The enthusiasm for education on the part of the local population also facilitated the formation of effective school committees in which parents played an active role.

In many schools these committees were developing their role, and producing important results. The population was able to understand that they should not expect everything to be provided by the government; they knew that this was impossible, and so, in order that their children should obtain a good standard of education, they had decided to play a more active part. Schools now belonged to the local community in a real sense because the introduction of the local language had changed the context of education. Education no longer appeared to be an extension of the state. As well as the introduction of a local language, education was now geared towards the local environment, and the rural population appreciated this change; their children were coming home with useful knowledge.

Since the students were doing better in school, school populations were growing rapidly, and drop-out rates were falling. While teachers argued that it was the introduction of free education that had brought more children into the schools, they felt that it was the use of the local language that had kept them there. Teachers were happy to teach in the local languages because the

students were enthusiastic; the use of the local language had improved the atmosphere in the classroom. At the administrative level, the general enthusiasm for the reform had also facilitated the establishment of effective local teacher training initiatives, and participation in language development projects, such as the development of the second set of materials by the BESO project in both the Kembata and Hadiya-speaking areas, since staff were willing to participate in these processes. Even in the major urban centre, Hosanna, the majority of the population preferred education in the local language.

Only in Durame was a substantial proportion of the population against the use of the local language. The 'returning' Kembatas were concerned that their children should use Amharic, because their connection to the Ethiopian state, whether as a result of education, or because they had been living in Amharic-speaking areas, was much stronger than that of the rural Kembatas. It would clearly have been suitable for the zone authorities in Durame to have allowed Amharic MOI schools or sections in schools, especially in view of the fact that the other zone capitals in the SNNPR all had schools that offered education in Amharic MOI.

Elsewhere in rural areas 'returning' Kembatas were crossing the border into Alaba woreda in order to learn in Amharic. In the area around Badewacho woreda, and on the border of the Walaita and Sidama zones, students were crossing the woreda borders on a daily basis in order to receive education in their mother tongues, or preferred languages. While this was not really a problem, it highlighted the possible drawbacks of the use of local languages in education. There would be students who were unable to learn either in the national language or in their mother tongues, and instead were forced to learn in the local language of the administrative area in which they were living.

In Alaba Kulito the heterogeneous urban population was, predictably, in favour of education in Amharic; and, while in the rural areas of Alaba the official position was that the population would prefer the use of the local language, in reality Amharic MOI was seen as beneficial by most people who were sending their children to school. This was because such a small proportion of local population were literate, and did not really understand what took place in the schools. Many were suspicious and saw schools and teachers as

manifestations of the state, and these people did not send their children to school. Those parents who did send their children to school did so because they wanted their children to gain access to wider opportunities, and thought that this would be achieved through literacy in Amharic.

In areas like Alaba, where the population had been consistently marginalised by the state, people preferred Amharic because they were seeking to gain access to the state. In areas like Kembata and Hadiya the population had a long history of sustained contact with the state, and had already recognised that the opportunities that would arise from contact with the state through literacy in Amharic were limited. In these areas the population felt that education was more beneficial to the community as a whole if it was specifically aimed at the local environment, both through the use of local languages and through practical forms of education that taught the children useful skills for the local environment.

**Chapter Eight -**  
**The peoples of the Omoto Cluster; North Omo Zone.**

**Problems of diversity.**

North Omo zone is almost entirely inhabited by groups of people whose languages belong to the Omoto cluster, which in turn belongs to the Omotic language family <sup>1</sup>. The zone is divided into two areas; each has its own set of local language teaching materials. In the north-eastern corner of the zone, bordering the K.A.T. zone, Badewacho woreda of the Hadiya zone, the Oromo region and the Sidama zone, are the seven small but densely populated woredas inhabited by the Walaita<sup>2</sup>, whose language has been introduced into primary schools in that area. The other fifteen woredas of the zone cover a vast and linguistically diverse area, which is much less densely populated than Walaita <sup>3</sup>. In this area teaching materials have been introduced in a composite language, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro (GGD), combining the languages of the most populous groups in this area of the zone <sup>4</sup>. The central authorities in Addis Ababa hoped that this composite language would be suitable for all of the groups of people who inhabit the area.

North Omo zone has the largest population of any zone in the SNNPR and is administered from Arba Minch, which lies in the south-eastern corner of the zone. Arba Minch is the largest town in the SNNPR apart from the capital Awassa; it was the capital of the former province of Gamo Gofa. Both the size of the zone and its large population present the zone authorities with a particular set of administrative challenges. Much of the zone is inaccessible by road. The only major roads are the road that runs through Boditi and Soddo in Walaita along the western shore of lake Abaya to Arba Minch, and the road that runs from Soddo through the highlands to Selam Bar and Sawela in the Gofa-speaking area <sup>5</sup>.

The complexities of conducting field-work in this zone reflected the

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<sup>1</sup> Chart Three, Appendix Two, p312.

<sup>2</sup> Woredas 5,6,7,8,9,13 & 14 of North Omo zone as they appear on Map Six, Appendix One, p306.

<sup>3</sup> Map Six, Appendix One, p306.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter Five, Table One, p 158.

<sup>5</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

problems of diversity. All of the field-work was coordinated from Arba Minch, because it is the zone capital, but there was little understanding of the conditions in other parts of the zone amongst MOE staff in the town. In the Gamo-speaking area around Arba Minch a facilitator was assigned from the zone office; but apart from that, different facilitators were used in each woreda. A separate facilitator was assigned in each of the woredas in which schools were visited in Walaita; Walaita has no administrative centre of its own which could assign a facilitator. A facilitator was also assigned by the woreda office in Sawela, in Gofa Zuria woreda. In this zone, therefore, six facilitators in all were used. The benefit to the field-work was that these facilitators were mother tongue speakers of the three languages (Walaita, Gamo and Gofa) in which schools were visited; the drawback was that in each woreda it was necessary to spend time explaining the nature of the field-work to the woreda staff.

### **Schools in Walaita**

Soddo, the largest town in Walaita, is one of the largest urban centres in SNNPR <sup>6</sup>. The pre-conquest ruler of Walaita, the Tona, ruled from the top of the high mountain which dominates the northern side of the town. Soddo is built on steep slopes overlooking the plain to the west of lake Abaya; the north-western shore of the lake is visible from the town. Soddo lies in the geographical centre of Walaita, and has a large market. In addition to being the centre of commercial activity for the Walaita, it is an important centre for inter-regional trade. Traders from further south and west come to Soddo in order to trade with those from the centre, who seldom venture further south. The town has never, however, played an important role in the administration of the Ethiopian state; it remains merely a woreda capital. Consequently, few government workers live in the town, and the town has the lowest literacy rate of the SNNPR's large urban centres <sup>7</sup>.

The population of Soddo is dominated by the Walaita. In Ligaba Beyene E. S., the principal estimated that the Walaita students accounted for 75% of the school population. The second largest group were the Gurage, who accounted for 15%; the presence of large numbers of Gurages in the town is attributed to

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter Five, Table Seven, p 173.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

the importance of the market. The remaining 10% of students in the school was made up of Oromos, Amharas and Kembatas <sup>8</sup>. As with schools in the other large urban centres, the numbers of male and female students in this school were roughly equal throughout the grades.

In Soddo, primary schools use Walaita MOI, English is taught as a subject from grade one, and Amharic is not introduced as a subject until grade four. Soddo is the only large urban centre in the SNNPR in which no Amharic MOI primary education is available to the population. As in Yirga Alem<sup>9</sup>, parents in Soddo had mounted protests against the introduction of the local language. These took the form of large public demonstrations. Local people argued that Walaita could not be used for teaching purposes, since it was not a written language and did not contain the vocabulary necessary for teaching subjects. Parents also could not see the point in their children learning a language which they could already speak. Public meetings were held in the schools in the town in order to explain what was happening and to outline the benefits which it was hoped the students would obtain by being educated in their mother tongue. The zone authorities refused to consider allowing Amharic MOI primary schools in Soddo, although this had been allowed in Arba Minch, the zone capital. The zone authorities argued that while all of the zone capitals had Amharic MOI sections in schools, no schools in other towns were permitted to have education in Amharic. This, they argued, was the policy of the regional administration <sup>10</sup>.

At the time of the field-work, teaching staff felt that most of the parents had accepted the change but that some would remain opposed to it. Many parents refused to express their views about the introduction of Walaita MOI; one parent in the town explained that people were inhibited about criticising the use of Walaita MOI because the authorities had made them feel that they were being disloyal to their own people by demonstrating against the introduction of Walaita materials. Parents said they were glad that their language was being developed, but they were worried about the way in which this would affect their childrens' chances of gaining a good education <sup>11</sup>. In Soddo the question of

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<sup>8</sup> NOZ4.1

<sup>9</sup> Chapter Six, p198.

<sup>10</sup> NOZ0.1

<sup>11</sup> NOZ4.7

language use in primary education had been widely publicised and was a sensitive, and highly political, issue.

Initially, after the introduction Walaita MOI materials, the student's results had been bad; pass rates fell, and many students dropped-out of the school. This coincided with the highest level of parental anti-reform activities. The results, however, subsequently began to improve, and the pass rate in Ligaba Beyene E.S. is now higher than it was prior to the introduction of Walaita MOI. Those students who are not Walaita mother tongue speakers have been obtaining results as good as those of the Walaita students. The principal argued that, although Amharic was an important lingua franca in the town, it was mostly used for communication with the large numbers of people who were constantly passing through, largely in the market. The resident population, from all backgrounds, he argued, generally used Walaita as a lingua franca <sup>12</sup>.

In Ligaba Beyene E.S. the staff had been worried about the introduction of Walaita MOI. They felt that they were not adequately trained to teach in the language; they had had no experience of teaching in any language apart from Amharic. Local training programmes were attempted, but without support from the zone authorities they had little impact; most teachers received only three days training, and said that the trainers themselves had been confused about the use of the Qube. In Soddo, most teaching staff, like the parents, had gradually, and perhaps grudgingly, come to accept the policy <sup>13</sup>.

The Walaita materials contain around 10% borrowed words, most of which were from English, and a few from Amharic. The materials which were being used in Soddo were the first set of direct translations; the second set were about to be produced. In addition to the unacceptable percentage of borrowed words, staff argued that the direct translations were unsuitable because they did not reflect local characteristics. The principal felt strongly that the reform provided the Walaita with a great opportunity to develop their language and that forms of expression which had previously been impossible would now be open to the people. The main problem, he felt, was that there was not enough

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<sup>12</sup> NOZ4.1

<sup>13</sup> NOZ 4.1 - NOZ4.3

material support for linguistic development <sup>14</sup>. The problems with the reform, teaching staff argued, had been caused by the hasty manner in which it had been implemented.

Throughout the Walaita-speaking area, many people argued that the greatest problem was that there was no central authority for Walaita. North Omo zone has many different peoples, but the language of the zone government, effectively, is the linguistic idiom (perhaps best described as a variety of Gamo) which is spoken in Arba Minch. In Walaita, administrative staff argued that it was very difficult for them to understand letters from the central office; this was demonstrated by their inability to understand the local language versions of letters from the zone office that gave permission to enter schools, and explained the nature of the field-work. Many Walaitas argued that they needed to have their own administrative centre, especially in view of the fact that Walaita had a large population, greater than some of the zones in the SNNPR. They argued, moreover, that since the schools in Walaita were using the local language, the local administration should also use that language.

Soddo would be the obvious town in which to locate the capital of Walaita, and it appears that the regional authorities would do well to consider making Walaita a separate zone. The population of North Omo zone is greater than any of the other zones in the SNNPR, and there are clearly difficulties in administering such a large area. The Walaita clearly regard themselves as a separate group of people; they have a well defined history and a culture which differentiates them from the other ethnicities of the zone, which are less defined. The Walaita resemble in several respects the other large groups of the SNNPR (Sidama, Gedeo, Kembata and Hadiya), and are less like the other peoples whose languages form the Ometo cluster; they have been firmly incorporated into the Ethiopian state; they are well-established in urban areas throughout the south, and in the capital, Addis Ababa; they live in densely populated areas that have been the focus of missionary activity which has produced higher literacy rates than those of the population elsewhere in the North Omo zone. The other groups of people who inhabit the North Omo zone, in contrast, have been peripheral to the state.

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<sup>14</sup> NOZ4.1



In other areas of Walaita attitudes towards the use of Walaita MOI contrasted with those in Soddo. Schools were visited in rural areas of Soddo Zuria and Offa woredas and in three smaller towns, each of which is a woreda capital: Areka (Bolosso Sore woreda), Bedessa (Damot Woyde woreda) and Boditi (Damot Gale). In the primary schools in these areas the population was entirely comprised of Walaitas and conditions were similar throughout. Walaita was a further example of the urban / rural dichotomy of attitudes towards language use found in the densely populated areas of the SNNPR <sup>15</sup>. It was only in Soddo that the population had been against the introduction of Walaita MOI; elsewhere in the area materials had been received with enthusiasm.

The introduction of Walaita MOI in the schools in rural areas and small towns had produced good results; the numbers of students, and particularly female students, attending schools had risen sharply. In some schools there were lingering problems concerning female education. In Busha Offa E.S. near Gesuba in Offa woreda, the proportion of female students in the early years was much higher than in the upper grades. Teaching staff argued that this reflected the negative attitudes which had previously existed in the area towards girls participating in education; more girls were now being sent to school in response to the introduction of Walaita MOI. Staff in the school stated that there had been a change in attitude and that not only were more girls attending school, but they were being encouraged to do well by their families and were beginning to obtain results that matched the boys' <sup>16</sup>. In Bedessa E. S. the number of female students was rising and was nearly equal to that of male students<sup>17</sup>. Throughout the Walaita-speaking area, however, staff argued that it was not safe for girls to go to school once they reached puberty, because of kidnapping.

The benefits of mother tongue education were clear to teaching staff in Walaita; the entire population spoke Walaita and few people had any degree of fluency in Amharic. The pedagogical benefits of mother tongue education had been proved by improving pass-rates, increased attendances and greater enthusiasm on the part of students. While teachers stated that they were worried

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter Six, p180.

<sup>16</sup> NOZ5.1

<sup>17</sup> NOZ6.1

about the students' ability to master Amharic adequately for the purpose of higher education, they argued that only a small proportion of the students would be able to attend secondary schools; the priority, therefore, was to give them a good standard of primary education which gave them useful skills for the local environment <sup>18</sup>. The two uses of the Roman script, as elsewhere, were thought to cause problems in the teaching process, and in Walaita the first set of materials were felt to be inadequate in several respects (use of the local language, relevance of content and clarity). Teachers stated that the shortage of books was the largest single obstacle to the successful implementation of the reform.

The principal of Bedessa E.S. was enthusiastic about the possibilities for further linguistic development which the reform allowed. He stated that there was already a big difference because students were able to discuss what they were learning with their parents, many of whom were illiterate and only spoke Walaita. Parents were beginning to understand the wider importance of education, beyond learning Amharic, which had previously been regarded as the main function of education by most people <sup>19</sup>. Parents in Bedessa said that they were also learning to write Walaita; their children were teaching them when they came home from school. They felt that they were also, therefore, benefiting from their children learning in Walaita.

### **Schools in Gamo and Gofa**

Arba Minch, the largest urban centre in the SNNPR after Awassa <sup>20</sup>, was the capital of the former province of Gamo Gofa, and owes its existence to the patterns of expansion of the Ethiopian state; the local groups of people in this area never developed urban centres of their own. The population of the town is made up of a heterogeneous mixture of different groups of people. In Siqala E.S. in the town, the principal estimated that the Gamo-speakers accounted for 40% of the school population, Amharas also accounted for 40%, with the remaining 20% being made up of Walaitas, Konsos, Oromos and Tigreans. The

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<sup>18</sup> NOZ5.1 & NOZ6.1.

<sup>19</sup> NOZ6.1

<sup>20</sup> Chapter Five, Table Seven, p173.

school has Amharic and GGD sections with roughly equal numbers of students. The GGD section is almost exclusively populated by Gamos, while the Amharic section was mostly made up of the Amharas and the other groups. In Arba Minch, it is only the Gamo-speakers who are willing to learn in GGD MOI. The members of the other groups all argued that they wanted to continue to use Amharic because it would give them greater opportunities; many were the children of government workers. The two sections, staff felt, were providing a comparable quality of education; the pass-rates from first to second grade, for example, were equal <sup>21</sup>.

As was the case in other schools in large urban centres, female students in Sigala E.S. slightly outnumbered male students. In the sixth grade girls also outnumbered boys, by 127 to 101. Many of the girls in the lower grades, however, were not achieving results equal to the boys'. Staff explained that this was because of the large amount of domestic work which girls were expected to perform, which had an effect on their school work. Those girls who made it through to the higher grades, however, invariably did better than the boys. The principal stated that the students who achieved the best results did not come from any particular background, but were the children of government workers<sup>22</sup>.

The staff complained of inadequate numbers of books, and, even though there is a T.T.I. in Arba Minch, many teachers felt that they had not received adequate training. The second set of materials for one or two subjects had very recently been produced (a month ago); the initial reaction of staff was that the new materials were an improvement on the direct translations, but they had not begun to use them in the classrooms yet, so it was hard to be certain <sup>23</sup>.

The majority of students from all backgrounds in Arba Minch were more familiar with Amharic than with any other language when they began grade one, because the language is widely used in the urban environment. Some Gamo students spoke Amharic more fluently than Gamo and complained about having to learn in GGD. Often it had been the parents who had decided that their children should learn in GGD. They made this decision because they

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<sup>21</sup> NOZ3.1

<sup>22</sup> NOZ3.1

<sup>23</sup> NOZ3.3 - NOZ3.5

thought that there would be significant advantages to those who could read and write GGD, since there would be work in the zonal administration and education systems which would rely on using the language.

There was, however, a fundamental problem with the GGD materials, that was outlined over and over again throughout the area in which they are used. This problem is that, since they were made up of a combination of three languages, most people argued that GGD was not really their language. In the materials, many sentences were hard to understand and did not flow in a natural way. GGD was not a spoken language; when students tried to read it aloud it sounded strange. Often there were words that were merely slightly different variations in the different Ometo cluster languages, but they nevertheless made a difference to how the overall language sounded, and most people found the pronunciation awkward; they felt that it would never catch on as a spoken language.

The GGD materials contained the highest proportion of borrowed words in any of the local language materials that had been produced for groups of people in the SNNPR. Words from Amharic and English were scattered throughout the materials, and their effect was to make the language sound contrived. Many words had also been borrowed from Walaita (which is very similar to Gamo), and so it was hard to say exactly what proportion of the words in the materials had been borrowed. Estimates from teaching staff varied from 15% to 40%, but this depended to a large extent on what the mother tongue language of the teacher was. Many informants said that the materials reflected most closely the kind of Ometo language that was spoken in Arba Minch, which some regarded as Gamo. And it was, indeed, in certain areas where the population stated that their language was Gamo that the materials had been accepted with the least resistance.

In Lante E. & J.S., in Berbir town in Boreda Abaya woreda, where the population all described themselves as Gamos, the use of GGD materials was quite popular. Berbir lies on the western shore of lake Abaya. Many of the students who attend the school live in the rural areas immediately surrounding the town. Lante E.S. is a model school where policies are tested, and is well-resourced. Missions and the Ethiopian Orthodox church had been providing

education in the area, and the population understood that the new materials were being used to teach subjects which could be taught in other languages, but which were now being taught in their own languages because it was easier for students to cope with when they first began attending school. Furthermore, in Lante E. & J.S. an active school committee had been instrumental in planting large numbers of mango trees which were bearing fruit and providing the school with an annual income. Other crops were also grown on fields near the lakeshore. Unusually, for a predominantly rural school, there were equal numbers of male and female students; the girls, however, were not achieving equal results. Staff stated that girls in this area had been encouraged by church schools to obtain an education, and that because the children attended church schools it was not difficult for them to learn Amharic when it was introduced <sup>24</sup>. In all these respects Lante E. & J.S. was not typical of schools in GGD; the literacy rate in the area was thought to be higher than in neighbouring areas, again because a large proportion of the population had been educated in church schools.

In Dorze E. & J.S. in Dorze town in Chenchaworeda, the students stated that the language they spoke was Dorze. This language variety is considered by linguists to be a dialect of Gamo, but the distinction is hard to make. All of the languages of the Ometo cluster could be considered to be little more than dialectal variations, or as separate languages, depending on the criteria that are employed to make the distinction. The various languages merge into one another and the Ometo cluster might best be considered as a linguistic continuum with an almost infinite number of different localised speech varieties. The reaction to the introduction of GGD MOI in Dorze was entirely different from that encountered in Lante, and was typical of the reactions of people in areas of low literacy in North Omo zone. Teaching staff found the language hard to use and did not understand the Qube. Everyone in the school agreed, moreover, that it was not their language; it was not a real language, but a hybrid which they found impossible to use. It sounded ridiculous and there were far too many words whose meaning was unclear. Without a dictionary of GGD, teaching staff argued, they could not possibly use the language properly; they just did not

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<sup>24</sup> NOZ2.2 - NOZ2.5

understand it <sup>25</sup>.

The reaction of the parents in Dorze to the introduction of the new materials was also negative. The principal of Dorze E. & J.S. stated that the parents had only grudgingly accepted the reform because it was government policy and they felt that they did not have a choice. Parents felt that it was pointless to teach their children a language they were already able to speak. He had tried to explain that the language was being developed as MOI, but it was hard to defend the use of GGD materials when so many teachers disagreed with the policy, and when the written language did not reflect the form that was spoken in the area. The parents wanted their children to be educated in Amharic because they thought that the language would provide their children with opportunities <sup>26</sup>. In Dorze the idea that language was a tool for conveying other information was strange to the population, and no public meetings had been held about the issue. The literacy rates in Dorze and elsewhere in the Gamo heights (the mountainous area above the Rift valley wall) are much lower than in nearby areas in the Rift valley. In Dorze the population clearly regarded learning Amharic as the only reason for children to attend school. There were very few girls in the school. In this area attitudes towards education were formed solely by peoples perceptions of the state. Anyone who had received an education tended to be referred to as an Amhara even by his own family and local community; In Dorze E. & J.S. the teachers stated that, although they considered themselves to be Dorze or Gamo, the locals saw them as Amharas.

At Kusti Elementary school in Sawela, the largest town in the Gofa-speaking area, 75% of the students in the school stated that they were Gofas and the remaining 25% was made up of Amharas, Gurages, Oromos and Tigreans. The principal said that he had noticed that the children of the government workers in the town (mostly not Gofa-speakers) were much more likely to succeed in school. He argued that this was because they came from a literate background and would usually be getting help with their work from their parents. Even though they were learning in GGD, the Amharas still achieved better results because their parents encouraged them, in the light of the

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<sup>25</sup> NOZ1.2 - NOZ1.5

<sup>26</sup> NOZ1.6

possibilities of obtaining employment using the language which had opened up after the introduction of the new policy. The numbers of female and male students were roughly equal, but the principal stated that the girls were not getting results equal to the boys because of pressures faced at home <sup>27</sup>.

The second set of materials had not yet been introduced into this school and the teachers complained about the unsuitable subject matter, large numbers of borrowed words and unwieldy sentences in the direct translations. The staff had initially worried about the implications of the reform; they thought it was only being promoted for political reasons and that it would make educating the children to an adequate level more complicated. Teachers were given training in the Qube, and the pedagogical advantages of learning in the local language were explained to them in meetings in the MOE offices in the town. No teachers in this school had received training at Arba Minch T.T.I.; all training had been given in Sawela, because Arba Minch was far away and it was very costly to send teachers there. Many had come to accept the use of a local language, but continued to feel that there were problems with the use of GGD, because it was not a real language.

The staff in this school discussed whether the government language policy was a response to an existing desire of the population, or had been introduced in line with the state's political agenda. Staff stated that the idea of mother tongue education had not appealed to the people either before the introduction of the policy or immediately afterwards. But many people had come to accept the idea because they thought that there would be benefits for their children. The government, most staff agreed, had introduced a new concept to the people <sup>28</sup>. People in the area felt that this was the policy of the government and had no idea that they had a constitutional right to decide which language would be used in their children's education.

As in schools in many other areas many parents in Sawela argued that it was unnecessary to send the children to school to learn a language which they could already speak. Throughout the SNNPR many people thought that the main reason for sending their children to school was to learn Amharic. It is often

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<sup>27</sup> NOZ7.1

<sup>28</sup> NOZ7.1

hard to convey the point that language is being used as a tool to teach subjects, and that it is possible to teach these subjects in more than one language. Again, because all education in Ethiopia had taken place in Amharic, it is very difficult to convince rural populations that there is, for example, history or geography which is not taught in Amharic. This is because the history and geography which has been taught has largely been that of the northern highlands; where other groups have appeared they have been presented from the standpoint of the central state and in the Amharic language. Members of other ethnic groups think of history and other forms of learning as being interconnected with Amharic, and the Amhara. In areas like GGD this cultural preconception about education must be overcome in order for education in local languages to be accepted, and for the population to realise the possibilities for new forms of local expression which that will allow.

### **Conclusion**

In North Omo problems stem from the diversity of the zone. The Walaita-speaking area is rather different from the rest of the zone, and, it would seem, is in need of its own authority; perhaps it should be separate zone. Conditions in Walaita resembled those in several other areas visited during the field-work (Sidama, Gedeo, Kembata, Hadiya). In these areas the population of the larger towns with heterogeneous populations, or with large proportions of Amharic-speaking government workers, were the only people that preferred education in Amharic. Elsewhere, in the smaller towns and rural areas, the population were enthusiastic about the use of the local language. In Soddo it would seem appropriate that those people who prefer education in Amharic should have this possibility provided for them.

In the rest of the zone low literacy rates in the rural areas meant that the population had little ability to understand the pedagogical importance of using a mother tongue language in primary education. This situation was exacerbated by the introduction of an unpopular composite language which few people, apart from some Gamo-speakers in Arba Minch and on the western shore of lake Abaya, felt was their language. In other areas the population is dissatisfied



with the use of GGD, and its use has further complicated the teaching and learning processes, which are already beset by difficulties. Teachers had received little training in the Qube, and its use complicated the process of teaching English. The Qube is, moreover, generally considered an unsuitable orthography for Omotic languages <sup>29</sup>, by linguists, who argue that it fails to accommodate the sounds in the Omotic languages. The Qube fails particularly in this respect since it has no mechanism for marking tone, and many Omotic languages are tonal <sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Miss Mary Breeze 15/4/97. Professor R.J.Hayward.

<sup>30</sup> Pike, 1948, p3.

## **Chapter Nine; The Gurage zone.**

### **Contrasting patterns of contact.**

The Gurage zone lies in the northernmost part of the SNNPR to the south-west of Addis Ababa. To the west, north and east the zone is surrounded by the Oromo region. The southern border of the zone, in the SNNPR, is Yem special woreda, the Hadiya zone and Alaba woreda. While the Gurage have extensive contacts with the other groups of people in the south-west, and have populations within many of the SNNPR's zones, they are more strongly connected to the wider networks of Ethiopian society than are any of the other peoples of the SNNPR. This is largely because they occupy an area where major trade routes cross, and where, as a result, languages and religions come into direct contact <sup>1</sup>. There are large numbers of Gurages living in Addis Ababa. Gurage traders have been very successful, and have been partly responsible for establishing many of the towns in the Rift valley areas of the Oromo region <sup>2</sup>. Many Gurages also inhabit the larger towns of the south-west; Awassa, Yirga Alem, Dilla, Yirga Chefe, Kulito, Soddo, Arba Minch and Jinka. The Gurage have, therefore, earned themselves the reputation of being urban dwellers and traders par excellence.

Linguistic conditions in the Gurage zone differ from those in all other areas of the SNNPR, partly because the languages spoken by the Gurage are from the Semitic language family, and partly because, amongst the Gurage, Amharic is very widely used as a lingua franca. Many Gurages regard Amharic as their first language; some are even monolingual Amharic-speakers. Levels of spoken Amharic amongst the Gurage are impossible to quantify, since government statistics only relate to the mother tongues of respondents and do not attempt to analyse complete linguistic profiles. For the sake of presenting population statistics, the government has chosen to divide the Gurage into three sections, reflecting the three linguistic clusters of Gurage languages (northern, western and eastern)<sup>3</sup>, which, broadly speaking, relate to three geographical areas within the zone. These three sections are Sebatbet, Soddo and Silti.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter One, p52.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter Five, p165.

<sup>3</sup> Chart One, Appendix Two, p310.

The Sebatbet are a collection of Gurage groups found in the north and west of the zone, and in the mountainous areas in the interior of the zone <sup>4</sup>. The area around Welkite, the zone capital, is inhabited by the Sebatbet. The Sebatbet are those peoples who speak the three-tense western Gurage languages; Ezhana, Chaha, Gumer, Goro, Innemor and Ener, the names of which are reflected in the names of the woredas which they inhabit. The Sebatbet, as their name (seven houses) suggests, have a long-established connection with one another. Of the three sections identified by the government, they are, perhaps, the most homogeneous. Most Sebatbet Gurages have been thoroughly Amharised; even in the remote mountainous areas many people speak Amharic and are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox church.

The Soddo Gurage include those peoples who speak the northern-Gurage languages (Soddo, Aymellel, Dobi, Gogot, Muxir)<sup>5</sup>, and the Mesken<sup>6</sup>, who speak a two-tense western Gurage language. These groups live in the north-eastern part of the zone. A large proportion of the Gurage who are engaged in trade have come from these areas, which are situated near the Rift valley towns that have substantial Gurage populations <sup>7</sup>. The Soddo grouping of Gurages contains both Christian and Muslim peoples. The Mesken Gurage, who live in the highlands and the lower slopes of the Rift valley, are predominantly Christian. Levels of spoken Amharic are particularly high in Butajira, the largest town in the Gurage zone, and amongst the rural Mesken population, who live in the area surrounding the town.

The Silti group represents the peoples who speak the eastern Gurage languages; Silti, Welene, Inneqor and Ulbarag. The Silti are the most populous of these groups. They inhabit the south-east of the Gurage zone <sup>8</sup>. The Welene inhabit a central highland area of the zone where there is also a small number of Siltis <sup>9</sup>. Many Siltis live on the lower slopes and in the Rift valley; they are found in large numbers in the northern part of Alaba woreda of the K.A.T. zone.

<sup>4</sup> The Sebatbet inhabit woredas 1,2,3,4,7 & 8 of the zone. Map Six, Appendix? One, p306.

<sup>5</sup> These three groups inhabit woredas 5 of the zone. Map Six, Appendix? One, p306.

<sup>6</sup> The Mesken Gurage inhabit woreda 6 of the zone. Map Six, Appendix? One, p306.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter Five, p165.

<sup>8</sup> The Silti and the closely related Ulbarag inhabit woredas 9,10 & 11 of the Gurage zone. Map Six, Appendix? One, p306.

<sup>9</sup> The Welene live in woreda 2 of the zone. Map Six, Appendix? One, p306.

The Silti, and the other eastern Gurages are Muslim. Many are involved in trade, but they have demonstrated less of a tendency to settle permanently in urban environments elsewhere in Ethiopia, or to engage in seasonal labour migration. As a result, levels of spoken Amharic are much lower in this area. In the Gurage zone, it is only the language of the Silti that has been developed for the purposes of primary education.

The diversity of languages and patterns of language use in the Gurage zone make the area particularly difficult to examine. The zone would require a more detailed study than was possible during the field-work in order that any firm conclusions about attitudes towards language use amongst the population might be reached. It would be necessary to visit many more rural schools before conclusions similar to those presented for the other zones of the SNNPR in the preceding chapters might be formed. To a greater extent than in the other zones, the conclusions presented here about language use and popular attitudes in the Gurage zone should be regarded as tentative. Focus will be on the specific question why the language of the Silti has been the only Gurage language that has been developed for the purpose of primary education.

### Sebatbet

The capital of the Gurage zone is Welkite, which lies on the western side of the Gurage highlands. Welkite is on the main road west from Addis Ababa, which leads to Jimma in the Oromo region, Bonga (the capital of the Kafficho-Shakecho zone) and Mizan Teferi (the capital of the Bench-Maji zone)<sup>10</sup>. This road runs along a well established axis of trade which goes from east to west. Welkite lies in the north-western corner of the Gurage zone in the area where the Sebatbet languages are spoken. Welkite is an old *neftennya* town, and a minor market town; it is a stopover on the route west from Addis Ababa, but it is too near the capital to be of great significance as a trading centre. The administrative status of the town has caused a population influx as government workers settle in the town.

In Selam Bar E. & J.S., in Welkite, 65% of students were Sebatbet Gurage; the second largest group in the school, who accounted for about 20%

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<sup>10</sup> Map Seven, Appendix One, p308.

of the school population, were Kebenas. The remaining 15% of the students were a mixture of Amharas, Oromos, and Tigreans. Numbers of male and female students were equal, and girls were achieving results similar to boys'. As in other urban schools in the SNNPR, it was the children of government workers who were thought to achieve the best results, as opposed to students from a particular background. In this school the principal, members of staff and students discussed the question of introducing teaching in a local language. In Welkite, the principal argued, the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the town would make the introduction of materials in any of the Gurage languages problematic. He also argued that the Gurage students were as fluent in Amharic as in their own languages (all of the students from the other groups in the urban environment also spoke Amharic). The principal added that even in the rural areas in this part of the Gurage zone there was a high percentage of people who could speak Amharic. He thought that it would be good to introduce one of the Gurage languages as a subject, but not as the MOI. The principal felt, however, that the kind of linguistic development which the reform was stimulating was positive, because it enabled local issues to be discussed in the local languages <sup>11</sup>. Teaching staff and students agreed that it would be good to have a written form of a Gurage language taught in the school, but teachers stated that they would prefer to continue teaching in Amharic <sup>12</sup>. Students agreed with their teachers; some said that they had heard that in other areas where teaching in the local languages had been introduced the students had found it more difficult to understand their subjects. This, they stated, was because the vocabulary needed for teaching the complexities of a subject was did not exist in any of the local languages. Many Gurages living in the Rift valley towns of the Oromo region had complained about the enforced use of Oromifa, and had been successful in brining back Amharic MOI to the urban schools.

Because the Gurage languages are Semitic the most suitable script is the Ethiopic script, in which Amharic and the other Semitic languages of Ethiopia have been transcribed. The principals and staff of all schools visited in the Gurage zone argued that for Ethiopian children the Ethiopic script was

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<sup>11</sup> GUZ1.1

<sup>12</sup> GUZ 1.2

easier to learn because they were familiar with it. In Selam Bar E. & J.S., the principal argued that the Roman script was difficult to write, and that it was difficult for children to learn English because of its erratic spelling and grammar. In the Gurage zone students do not learn any languages in the Qube, and so they do not know how to read it. The principal was not concerned that, since all the other local languages of the SNNPR were being transcribed in the Qube, the students in Welkite would not be able to read the other languages of the SNNPR; he did not see a great need for the students to learn any of the other regional languages. Instead, he argued, the most important languages for students to know were Amharic and English, since these were used in further education. In the Gurage zone there are no economic incentives for people to become literate in the local languages because the zone administration continues to use Amharic; none of the Gurage languages present themselves as a zone-wide lingua franca that would be suitable for administrative use.

#### Mesken

The largest town in the Gurage zone is Butajira, which lies on the eastern side of the Gurage highlands on the western edge of the Rift valley, just below the escarpment. In Butajira similar attitudes were expressed to those in Welkite. 85% of students in Makicho E.S. in Butajira were Mesken Gurage, with the remaining 15% being made up of Kembata, Amhara and Oromo students. Male and female students were equal in number. The principal argued that the linguistic diversity of the area and the widespread use of Amharic as a lingua franca within the urban environment meant that it would be difficult to use the local language for anything more than one subject. He argued that Amharic was the first language for almost all of the people in the town. As in Welkite, the principal and the staff felt that the Ethiopic script was easier for the students to learn; the Roman script was difficult and English was a complicated language. Staff felt that it was already difficult enough for students to be learning two languages and that it was not necessary to introduce a third language, which would only complicate the the processes of education. While staff agreed that for the speakers of Cushitic and Omotic languages elsewhere in the region it was a positive step to have education in their languages, they felt that, since the

Gurage languages were Semitic, Amharic was suitable for them <sup>13</sup>.

Different views on the introduction of local language teaching materials may, however, be held by Gurages in the internal rural areas of the zone; the populations in Welkite and Butajira may simply be displaying the same tendency to favour the continued use of Amharic which has already been observed in many of the heterogeneous large towns in the SNNPR. In Butajira the administrative staff discussed the attitudes that they believed were prevalent in the neighbouring rural areas. While they felt that the introduction of local languages might be more favourably received in rural areas, they continued to argue that the Gurage were a Semitic-speaking people and that this made them different from the other ethnic groups in the SNNPR. Teaching staff in Butajira again stated that, even in rural areas of the Gurage zone, many people spoke Amharic and that there were many Gurages for whom Amharic is effectively their first language. There had, according to all informants, been no great demand on the part of the local population in the zone that the local Gurage languages should be developed for use in the primary education system.

#### Silti

The Silti-speaking area of the Gurage zone covers three woredas, Silti, Lanfaro and Dalocha <sup>14</sup>. A small number of Siltis also live in Kokir Gedebano woreda. There are no significant towns in the Silti area, and the homogeneity of the population contrasts with other areas of the Gurage zone, where, even in the rural areas, members of different language groups frequently live side by side. The Silti are the only Gurage group to have had their language introduced as a MOI for primary education.

By contrast with Welkite and Butajira, where girls were almost equal in number to boys in the primary schools, the numbers of girls in the schools in the Silti-speaking area were very low. In Woleya 6 E.S., outside the town of Kibet in Silti woreda, girls accounted for less than one third of the total number of students <sup>15</sup>. The ratio of male to female students in Alkasu E.S. in Silti woreda,

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<sup>13</sup> GUZ2.1- GU2.3

<sup>14</sup> Woredas 9,10 & 11 of the Gurage zone as they appear in Map Six, Appendix One, p306.

<sup>15</sup> GUZ3.1

was similar; there were 465 boys and 200 girls <sup>16</sup>. In both schools the staff agreed that the reasons for low female attendances were cultural. The great majority of Silti Gurages are Muslim and are less likely than Christians to send their daughters to school. Preparation for marriage is seen as a more important activity for girls in Silti; they are encouraged to concentrate on learning household skills. In Silti, however, the schools were actively trying to encourage girls to attend school by teaching home economics, and by hiring girls who had completed grade twelve as teachers. Female teachers were playing an important role in the process of encouraging female participation in education by providing an example to the girls. They were concerned to show that teaching is a respectable occupation for women. Schools in many of the kebeles in Silti had held public meetings with parents in order to promote female literacy and education, and to discuss the introduction of the local language <sup>17</sup>.

Most of the school staff in Silti had initially been worried by the introduction of teaching materials in the local language because it was new and they were not sure how it would affect the children's education. Many had received very little training in the use of the language. In order to overcome this problem, the MOE zone offices hired students who had graduated from grade twelve in the Silti-speaking area. The Gurage zone authorities responded to this recruitment of Silti-speaking teachers by requesting the funds to pay them from the regional offices of the MOE in Awassa. The Regional administration is under considerable financial strain, and so no more money was available for this purpose. Often such processes of locally-driven are rendered ineffectual by lack of funds, but in the Gurage zone the administration was determined to hire more Silti-speaking teachers in order to give the introduction of the language a chance of success. As a result, the three woredas in the Silti-speaking area levied an additional annual tax of five birr per peasant household in order to pay the teachers <sup>18</sup>. These teachers were not well-trained; they had only three to five days training, but they were producing good results

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<sup>16</sup> GUZ4.1

<sup>17</sup> GUZ3.1, GUZ 4.1

<sup>18</sup> GUZ0.1



with the students using Silti MOI materials. All the staff in the schools agreed that the training was inadequate and that they needed to have further training programmes. However, their worries were entirely related to the teaching learning process and all of the staff accepted that education in Silti MOI was beneficial to the children.

The parents in the areas around Kibet and Alkasu were happy with the introduction of teaching materials in Silti MOI: they felt it was easier for their children to learn in their own language. There was no great concern about children being unable to make the transition to learning in Amharic because the two languages are Semitic <sup>19</sup>, and use the same script; it is generally thought that it is easy to change from Silti to Amharic. As in other areas of the Gurage zone, neither school staff nor parents were concerned about the students being able to read and write (or even speak) the other languages of the SNNPR, and, consequently, they did not think that it was a disadvantage that Silti was the only local language in the SNNPR which was not transcribed in the Qube <sup>20</sup>.

In the Gurage zone there is a clear difference between the attitudes held in the Silti area, where materials have already been introduced, and in areas where other Gurage languages are spoken and materials have not been introduced. There are many reasons for this difference of opinion. It may be that the positive benefits of the introduction of the local language teaching materials have convinced those informants who were interviewed in the Silti area that the policy is suitable. Those in other areas may result simply because local language teaching is something to which they are unaccustomed. If local languages were introduced elsewhere in the Gurage zone it is possible that their use would also become popular with the local population.

It appears, however, that the different attitudes in Silti and elsewhere in the Gurage zone relate to differences in historical patterns of contact, and of situation within the Ethiopian state. The Silti Gurage are less likely to leave their homeland area than the other Gurages. While population pressure forced many Gurages out of the highlands in the central part of what is now the Gurage zone

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<sup>19</sup> Of the Gurage languages, Silti is one of the most similar to Amharic. Chart 1, Appendix 2, p310.

<sup>20</sup> GUZ3.1, GUZ4.1

21, the Silti-speaking area never experienced the levels of overcrowding felt elsewhere in Gurage. This was partly because the Silti were able to expand into the Rift valley. But it is partly due to fortunate circumstances in Silti; good soil in the area, and the comparative lack of erosion. Silti remains one of the most fertile parts of the Gurage zone.

When taxation in money was introduced in the 1940s<sup>22</sup>, the Silti, unlike the other Gurages, were able to produce a cash crop; namely *berebere*. The flatter, hotter land in Silti provided ideal conditions for this valuable crop. The value of *berebere* is that, although it cannot grow in the colder highlands it is an essential part of the northern Ethiopian diet. *Berebere* is, for example, the spice used to make the most traditional accompaniments to *injera*, that is *doro wat* and *shuro wat*. Silti farmers were able to produce the crop and sell it in the relatively accessible Mercato in Addis Ababa. Migrant labour, therefore, never became as important a feature of the domestic economy in Silti as it has been, and continues to be, in many other parts of Gurage.

As a result of pressure to leave the highlands, the other groups of Gurages came to depend on the use of Amharic. Traders and seasonal labourers brought the language back to the Gurage homelands, and the tendency to adopt the language was reinforced by the actions of the Amharic-speaking Ethiopian state in the twentieth century. Many Gurages have, moreover, been enthusiastic to learn Amharic and to adopt the other aspects of Amhara society, many are Orthodox Christians. The perceived differences between themselves and the northern Ethiopian Christians are relatively small, and they seek incorporation into the structures of northern Ethiopian society and the Ethiopian state. As a result, levels of spoken Amharic are lower in Silti than in other parts of the zone. This must be balanced, however, against the fact that the two languages are very similar; it is relatively easy for Silti-speakers to understand Amharic. Silti-speakers, therefore, feel less need to learn Amharic than do the other Gurages

The Silti are also the largest single group of Gurages and the size of their population may encourage them to use their own language in education. Many

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21 Chapter One, p69-70.

22 Chapter One, p69.

informants from the other Gurage groups argued that their populations were too small to be viable as separate linguistic units.

### **Conclusion**

The Silti are in contrast with other Gurage groups in that they have a less fundamental connection to the Ethiopian state, and, therefore, less desire to use the national language. This is partly because they are Muslim, and are therefore less likely either to be accepted within, or to adopt, the cultural values of northern Ethiopians. Levels of overcrowding and soil degradation are much lower in Silti than elsewhere in the zone, and so there has been less pressure on the Silti to leave their homeland. The cash crop production of *berebere* also enabled the Silti to remain at home, while the introduction of taxation in money forced the other Gurages into permanent and seasonal patterns of economic activity, including trade and wage labour. The Silti also prefer the use of their own language because they have a large, homogeneous population, and inhabit a contiguous territorial block. The decision by the zone authorities to introduce Silti MOI for primary education, and to continue primary education in the remainder of the zone in Amharic fits, therefore, with patterns of spoken Amharic in the zone, and with established attitudes and patterns of contact with the Ethiopian state. For these reasons, the population in the zone were generally happy with the decisions that had been made about language use.

## **Conclusions: Language, Identity and the State.**

### Attitudes towards language use as responses to contact with the state.

This thesis seeks to outline the attitudes held by ethnic groups in the SNNPR towards the introduction of their languages for the purpose of primary education. Their attitudes are explained with reference to a historical background of contact between the Ethiopian state and the south-west, which stretches back several centuries. The conquest of the south-west by Emperor Menelik in the late-nineteenth century signalled the beginning of a concerted attempt by the central state, under various configurations, to incorporate the south-western periphery into the state. Centralist policies were a strong feature of the governments of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the Derg, a period covering six decades. The policies of these governments, and their implementation in the south-west, created a particular political climate in the region and implanted the characteristics of northern Ethiopian society (those of the state) into local urban elites. Amharic was introduced in the south-west as the language of the state, and attitudes towards Amharic and the local languages have developed against this background.

In this thesis I have assumed that examining attitudes towards language use in primary education will help to illuminate the attitudes that certain ethnicities hold towards the state. For many rural people, primary education is a highly visible manifestation of the state: when they discuss the use of different languages in education they are strongly influenced by their attitudes towards the state. Their attitudes towards the use of Amharic are formed directly in response to their perceptions of the state, and their attitudes towards their own languages have also been formed partly in response to the language policies of successive governments. Since languages are commonly regarded as the primary markers of identity, questions about the status, and uses, of a language relate directly to the status of the group which speaks it.

Peoples' attitudes towards language use are formed in response to a range of factors, and these vary in the different kinds of environments under focus in the field-work. Two factors, urbanisation and literacy, both of which are direct results of the actions of the state, were found to have a profound

influence.

The populations of the large urban centres (Awassa, Arba Minch, Soddo, Dilla, Hosanna) are heterogeneous and Amharic-speaking. Many of these town's inhabitants prefer their children to be educated in Amharic. In Awassa, Arba Minch, Dilla and Hosanna, all of which are zone capitals, the authorities have solved this problem by allowing schools, or sections in schools, where Amharic continues to be used as the MOI. In Soddo, which is not a zone capital, no Amharic education is available, even though a substantial proportion of the parents in the town would prefer Amharic MOI. In Soddo the proportion of the population who do not speak the local language is, however, relatively small, and so there is less opposition to the exclusive use of the local language in education than there would have been if such a policy had been adopted in the more heterogeneous towns.

In Soddo roughly 75% of the population in the town are Walaitas. In Hosanna a similar proportion are Hadiyas. In Hosanna, where education in both the local language and Amharic are available, 80% of students choose to study in the Hadiya MOI sections of the schools. In general the proportions of students who prefer education in the local languages in the larger urban centres corresponds to the proportion of the population that the local ethnic group represents. It is the established urban groups (Amharas, Gurages) who are most concerned that their children should learn in Amharic. It would be reasonable to assume that, if education in Amharic were provided in Soddo, only a small proportion of the population would prefer education in Amharic.

Some medium-sized towns (Yirga Alem, Yirga Chefe) also have heterogeneous populations that would prefer primary education in Amharic. In these towns, however, Amharic education has not been provided, and a large proportion of the population remains dissatisfied with the use of local languages. The reason offered by the zone authorities for the refusal to allow Amharic education in these towns is that they are not zone capitals. In Sidama, Gedeo and North Omo zones, the zone authorities held the opinion that Amharic education was only permitted in the zone capitals; this, they argued, was the regional policy. The regional authorities in Awassa, however, argued that the zone governments had the right to decide which languages were used

in any areas of the zones.

Durame, the capital of the K.A.T. zone, is a medium-sized town with a homogeneous population of Kembatas. Many Kembatas living in the town, however, speak Amharic and would prefer its use to Kembata MOI. These Amharic-speaking Kembatas fall into two categories: government workers and Kembatas who have recently returned from the Rift valley. Although Durame is a zone capital, the zone authorities have insisted that education must be in Kembata MOI. They argue that, since the population of the town consists almost entirely of Kembatas, they should use their own language. The great majority of the population in Durame would, however, prefer Amharic.

Government workers in all of these towns prefer education in Amharic, because they are not convinced of the opportunities that will accrue from the use of local languages. The towns with a higher administrative status (regional and zone capitals) contain large numbers of government workers, and this is why they have, in general, allowed some primary education to continue in Amharic. Although it is almost exclusively populated by Kembatas, Durame has a very high proportion of government workers, since it is a new town that has largely developed for the purpose of administration.

Durame, moreover, has a very high literacy rate, which reflects the large proportion of government workers in the town. In all of the towns with high literacy rates which were visited in the field-work the population was strongly against the use of a local language. But a high literacy rate was not always a result of the administrative status of the town. Another example of a town with a high literacy rate is Yirga Alem, which does not enjoy any administrative importance. Instead, in Yirga Alem, it is the historical patterns of development of the town that have given its heterogeneous population its Amharic-speaking character. Durame and Yirga Alem contrast with one another; where Durame is a new administrative town with a homogeneous population of Kembatas, Yirga Alem is an old town with no administrative importance which has a heterogeneous population dominated by Amharas. The populations of both towns have, nevertheless, very high rates of literacy and contain substantial numbers of people who would prefer primary education in Amharic.

In direct contrast with many of the larger towns in the region, the rural

areas of the central, densely populated zones of the SNNPR (Sidama, Gedeo, Kembata, Hadiya, Walaita) have populations that are enthusiastic about the use of the local languages. From the 1960s onwards the state, and missions, introduced Amharic primary education into these areas, and they have the highest rates of rural literacy in the SNNPR. But education in Amharic was often of little practical benefit to local people: the opportunities that arose from it were limited. The use of an unknown national language in the primary education system underlined for rural populations their less than-central position in the state, and erected an often insurmountable language barrier against students when they entered school. The exclusive use of Amharic, over time, created a desire for education to be provided in a language which local children were able to speak. In these rural areas education, because it is being provided in the local languages, is now geared towards the local environment, and its value not only to students but to the community as a whole has, therefore, increased.

In areas of low rural literacy (Alaba, GGD), attitudes that are a result of the patterns of domination of the state and the use of Amharic, and not the experience of education, continue to shape the attitudes held towards education by the local population. In these areas most people think that the primary function of education is to learn Amharic and, therefore, education in any other language appears contradictory. Attitudes to education are bound up with ideas of the state, and those parents who send their children to school do so precisely because they seek incorporation into the structures of the state. But in these areas of low literacy the vast majority of the population, who have never been exposed to education, continue to harbour a strong distrust towards the state, and this is reflected in a general lack of enthusiasm for education.

In both Alaba and GGD there are also questions of whether the language that is being offered as a local language for primary education is, in fact, the language spoken by the population. In Alaba, the local population succeeded in rejecting the use of Kembata MOI materials on the grounds that it was not their language. The K.A.T. zone authorities, who denied the population of Durame Amharic MOI, allowed both the Alaba and the Tembaro to continue using Amharic. This decision was made on the grounds that it is the right of each nationality to choose the language that will be used in the primary education

system.

In many parts of North Omo zone the population argued against using GGD as a written language. But here, by contrast with Alaba, the population feel they do not have a choice about the use of languages in the primary school system. People regard the use of GGD as a result of a government policy which there is little point in questioning. They have no awareness of any rights they may be able exercise under the new constitution, and therefore do not exercise these rights. The use of GGD is unpopular for several reasons. Firstly, substantial sections of the population do not regard GGD as their language. Secondly, in GGD the use of local language in primary education is felt to be a policy imposed by the government. Thirdly, in this area people regard learning Amharic as the primary reason for education, and local languages are thought not to be expressive enough for use in education. Local people fear that using a local language will increase their marginalisation in the state.

The Gurage zone appears in this thesis as a special case. While the Gurage zone belongs to the SNNPR, conditions in the zone differ dramatically from those in the other densely populated central areas of the region, which are the primary focus of discussion in this thesis. Amongst the Gurage levels of spoken Amharic are very high. The widespread use of Amharic as a lingua franca has developed partly in response to the linguistic diversity of the Gurage zone. The importance of Amharic to the Gurage is also a response to historical circumstances. The high levels of overcrowding in Gurage forced the population to go outside of their homeland to obtain work. Work is available in the nearby towns of the Rift valley and in the national capital, but is entirely dependent on the use of Amharic. For many Gurages, therefore, education in Amharic is profitable, because there are many opportunities that are available to them directly as a result of its use.

Conditions in the Silti-speaking area are different from elsewhere in Gurage. The Silti Gurage have had much less contact with Ethiopian society than the other Gurages, and as a result have less need to learn Amharic. Here, with less desire to be incorporated into the state, and with a larger homogeneous population which has little need of a lingua franca, the population are keen to use their own language.



All of the reactions to the introduction of local languages for primary education displayed by these sections of the population of the SNNPR must be understood in terms of the extent of contact which they have had with the state. Enduring patterns of incorporation and marginalisation emerge. Areas that have been historically incorporated into the structures of the state continue to be so, while those areas that have been peripheral remain so.

Urban populations in the south-west generally owe their existence to the state, and are firmly incorporated into its structures. Theirs is an Amharic-speaking environment. For them, Amharic is the language of opportunity, since large proportions of the populations of the towns are engaged in occupations that depend on the use of Amharic. Many Gurages are, similarly, also concerned to maintain their patterns of direct incorporation with the state, since these lead to substantial, and essential, opportunities. For urban populations and many Gurages Amharic education ensures their continued incorporation within the state.

Those groups of people who have had sustained contact with the state, but have never achieved the degree of incorporation of the Gurage or the urban populations of the south-west, have realised that there are few tangible benefits that arise from contact with the state and education in Amharic. In these areas the population are, consequently, concerned with developing the local environment, and not with incorporation in the state. The geopolitical reforms of the 1990s have assured their position within the state by giving them representation at the highest level of government, and structures of local government that can facilitate local development. The use of local languages, in the present political climate, appears as the best means of asserting group identities, and of providing education that is geared towards local development.

Those peoples who continue to occupy peripheral positions in the state, either because of their small populations or because of the areas they inhabit, have attitudes that blend distrust of the state with a desire to gain access to the benefits of the state. Perceived threats and benefits reflect a historical lack of contact with the state. At times the members of marginalised ethnicities may perceive their tenuous position within the state as being a result of their inability to speak the national language, and some may, therefore, prefer education in

Amharic. But the attitudes of peoples that have been, and continue to be, marginalised in the state are usually characterised by resentment. So although some individuals seek incorporation within the state, the majority remain hostile towards it.

The historical pattern of core and periphery relations in the south-west has survived from Menelik's era, in spite of the present redefinition of political structures. The underlying dynamics of Ethiopian society appear to prevail in the face of government policies. Areas that were of importance to the state over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continue to be of importance to the state, while those areas that have historically been of little importance remain peripheral. In the south-west the large urban centres continue to be the core of the regional government. The more populous groups of people in the central, densely populated, highland areas of the region also continue to represent a rural core, while the peoples that live on the periphery, often in *qolla* areas, (South Omo, Konso, Derashe, Bench-Maji, GGD), and indeed some of those living in the Rift valley (Alaba, Mareko), continue to occupy a peripheral position in the state.

At first glance the redefinition of politics and power in Ethiopia in the 1990s may appear to be a radical exercise concerned with extending political rights to previously marginalised sections of the population. But viewed in relation to the long-term historical development of the relationship between local polities and the state, it appears instead to be a familiar readjustment. Although the central government no longer seeks to enforce the characteristics of the north on the other peoples of the state, they are still held within a state structure in which northern Ethiopian characteristics predominate; Amharic is still the national language. In some respects this new structure could be seen as a return to the kind of relationship that was characteristic prior to the nineteenth century conquest. Over the long-term it is possible to present the relationship between polities in the south-west and the central state as consisting of a series of fluctuations between attempts by the state at incorporation, and periods when south-western polities are effectively self-governing within the state.

The timing of these fluctuations reflects the nature of the central state in any given period; at times when the central state is particularly powerful it

attempts to draw south-western polities into a tighter relationship; but when the state is weakened by internal divisions it has little option but to allow them greater freedom of action. The recent geopolitical reforms may, therefore, reflect a period when the central state has been weakened by protracted civil wars, and no longer seeks to enforce a high degree of control.

While the reemergence of historical polities in the south-west may appear to be a return to the situation of the early-nineteenth century, it is impossible to argue that the nature of the identities of the ethnicities in question have been maintained in the intervening century.

#### Questions about identity.

The patterns of contact that the state formed with the peoples of the south-west contributed, over the course of the twentieth century, to a fundamental erosion of their cultures and social structures, and thereby effected those peoples' formulations of self-identity. State actions transformed many of the larger ethnicities in the south-west into constituent parts of the Ethiopian state. Local languages often remained as the main feature which differentiated the members of one group from another. Language became, for the state, and for its constituent peoples, the most convenient defining characteristic. Successive Ethiopian governments have assumed that language is the most suitable characteristic for defining groups of people in the state.

Language also came to be accepted as the primary marker of identity for scholars who attempted to study the peoples of Ethiopia. But language does not always establish the group to which an individual belongs. There are sections of the population for whom the ancestral language (mother tongue) is no longer employed as a first language (language used most commonly), although their identification with the ancestral group may still be very strong. An ancestral language may only be spoken in the home amongst members of the immediate family, or it may be used only for a restricted set of traditional functions. Some individuals may not be able to speak or understand to any great extent the ancestral language of the group, with which they identify.

An example of this type are the Amharic-speaking Kembatas, who had been living in the heterogeneous areas of Rift valley where Amharic is widely

used as a lingua franca, and as a first language for individuals from all backgrounds. Many of these Kembatas do not speak their ancestral language, but they have continued to adhere to a Kembata identity. Such is the extent of identification between languages and the ethnicities they represent that even those Kembatas who did not speak Kembata often argued that the language was still the most suitable characteristic for defining the group.

Many Gurages do not use their ancestral languages very widely, even though they inhabit their ancestral homeland. In the Gurage highlands, it appears that Amharic is as commonly spoken as a first language as are the Gurage languages. For the Gurage the adoption of Amharic has been encouraged by the proximity of the Gurage highlands to the national capital, Addis Ababa, and the willingness of many Gurages to embrace, and participate in, the culture of modern Ethiopian society. But this is not to say that they are willing to give up their Gurage identity.

The Gurage have a conception of themselves as a single people in spite of their substantial internal differences. Any attempt, therefore, to argue that Gurage identity is based on linguistic, religious or cultural similarities is misleading. The mentality and lifestyles of Gurages also vary greatly. Many Gurages are concerned with modernity and are highly successful in the urban environment; others, on the other hand, are strongly attached to their land and their traditional lifestyles and occupations. Nevertheless, it is possible to discuss the Gurage as a single entity. There must, therefore, be other factors which unite the Gurage, and indeed, while this is most conspicuous in the case of the Gurage, this is also true of other peoples of the SNNPR.

Often what appears to give each of the ethnicities under discussion in this thesis a real sense of unity is a sense of shared history. This may, or may not, include an awareness of a historical narrative which concerns the group in question. Where such narratives exist, they are often primarily concerned with the struggles in which the group has engaged with other groups of people, including the Amhara (the Ethiopian state), in order to preserve its own identity. While the present configuration of ethnic or linguistic groups in the south-west of Ethiopia is known by local people to be the result of historical processes, many of the members of these groups have only a vague perception of the historical

details. This has, of course, partly been the result of the lack of a written language in which to record their histories, but it is also because it is the idea of conflict and encroachment, and the maintenance of identity in spite of these processes, that matters to these peoples, and not the historical details.

The peoples of the SNNPR have, as well as a sense of a shared history, a strong sense of a shared future. Government reforms have provided a more substantial foundation upon which they may conceive of their futures as being shared, since they now have political or administrative territories of their own, each with an infrastructure that facilitates the expression of their collective identity and acts as the vehicle for the future development of the group.

As a result of geopolitical reform, the identities of the region's peoples will become increasingly political, since local identities are now represented by political units at the level of the state. Each group of people is now governed by a local political structure. It will, to be sure, take on aspects of the current national climate in Ethiopia, but it will also, in all likelihood, come to reflect more closely the nature of the local ethnic group than any previous structures of local government.

The distinctions between ethnicities will be sharpened by these processes. The creation of linguistic zones will encourage the homogenisation of the internal populations of these areas, and the standardisation of local languages will reduce dialectal variation. People will perhaps develop more defined perceptions of their identities than was previously necessary. The use of local languages in primary schools will further consolidate these tendencies, because children are likely to adopt and use the forms of language in which they are educated, and to adhere to the identities they represent. In border areas identities may become less blurred, as students in neighbouring zones learn in different languages and identify with the ancestral groups represented by the languages they use. The reforms of language use will help to enhance and define local identities, just as the political redefinition of the state has ensured the political positions of these groups of people.

### Questions about language and government policy.

Government language policy in Ethiopia has, historically, encouraged the extension of the use of Amharic, and has restricted the use of other languages. Peoples speaking languages other than Amharic have been regarded as less than equal citizens of the state; Amharic-speakers are the core citizens of Ethiopia. Even during the period of the National Literacy campaign the fact that adult literacy in local languages was not combined with the provision of primary education in those languages demonstrated a continuing reluctance on the part of the government to endorse their use fully, and implied that local languages were still lower in status than Amharic.

The linguistic reforms of the present government are part of a programme of reform which is intended to alter the status of Ethiopia's constituent groups of people, in an attempt to give them political and social equality, with regard to the respective sizes of their populations. The use of local languages in the regional education and administrative systems has forced the rapid (and perhaps incomplete) standardisation of these languages. The implication of linguistic development is that these languages are now prepared for official roles within the state. The new policy is intended to redress the existing imbalances in language policy, to the benefit of the speakers of local languages.

But this is not always the manner in which the reform is received. The reform has both intended and unintended consequences; it is at once a success and a failure. This is because for different sections of the population there are particular sets of historical circumstances and present practical considerations that influence its success. The question remains; are the reforms of the government responses to existing needs in the education system and desires of the local population, or is the government attempting to lead development in a particular direction? The answer to this question differs in particular areas.

It is possible to argue that the major policy changes towards language use in the Ethiopian education system are merely reflections of the political agendas of the governments of the day. Within this analytical frame, Haile Sellassie's replacement of European languages with Amharic can be seen as part of his drive to create national unity and cohesion by encouraging the

adoption of the characteristics of the northern highlands as national characteristics. The Derg's National Literacy campaign can be regarded as an attempt to replace existing policies with ones in keeping with Soviet nationality theory. Similarly, the present government's introduction of local languages could be seen as merely a public demonstration of its overall political agenda of granting regional autonomy, an agenda upon which the government bases its own legitimacy. If this form of argument is correct then we must conclude that policies are driven by political expedients and will, therefore, encounter success only where the desires of the population happen to coincide with the political agendas of the day.

But one could alternatively argue that the introduction of Amharic in the 1950s was a response to a problem of language use in education in Ethiopia. In this early stage of the Ethiopian state education system, students were confronted by a language barrier imposed by the use of English. The provision of schools was heavily biased towards Amharic-speaking areas, and the introduction of Amharic removed the language barrier, and made primary education more accessible.

The Derg's project of introducing local languages for adult literacy can be seen as a premature attempt to address a different kind of language problem: the low levels of adult literacy, which present a barrier to the development process. But many Ethiopians did not understand the processes of education, let alone the uses of different languages in education. Influenced strongly by historical patterns of language use, most people continued to regard learning Amharic as the main purpose of education. The policy of introducing the local languages for adult literacy, adopted by the Derg, failed because the population of rural areas was not prepared for their use, and because local languages were not concurrently introduced for primary education.

In spite of the intentions of the present government, some Ethiopians still feel that they have been forced to accept unsuitable linguistic policies. Some inhabitants of North Omo zone, for example, have been forced to use GGD. In this area those who wish to send their children to school would prefer Amharic, which they regard as the proper language of education. The Amharic-speakers of Yirga Alem and Durame also prefer education in Amharic, since many do not

speak the local languages. They feel that Amharic provides opportunities for their children which will be lost if they are educated in a local language. To these sections of the population the Ethiopian state may seem as unresponsive and repressive as ever. In these cases, to be sure, it appears that political agendas, rather than the desires of the population are dictating policy.

But groups of people elsewhere in the SNNPR have been able to successfully challenge the language policy through the structures of local government. The Alaba successfully resisted the use of Kembata MOI. In some of the larger towns of the SNNPR the population have been given the opportunity to choose the language in which their children receive education. Elsewhere in Ethiopia urban dwellers, including Gurages in the Rift valley towns, have also demanded the use of Amharic in primary schools, with some success. In many urban centres, it would seem that not only is the introduction of local languages unpopular, but that its enforcement in the face of public discontent contradicts the ethos of the reform, which is to provide children with education in the language with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

What then are the factors that affect the ability of groups of people to secure their choices of language in education? In the case of urban dwellers, so one might argue, it is their literate status, and involvement in government, that have enabled them to influence choices about language use. But some highly literate urban populations (Durame, Yirga Alem) have been refused Amharic education. Literacy rates alone, moreover, do not explain the relative successes and failures of rural groups of people to achieve their choice of language in education. The Alaba, for example, are no more educated or literate than the inhabitants of GGD, but they were successful in rejecting the use of the local language, whereas the inhabitants of GGD were not. It seems that rather than any factors arising from the nature of particular groups of people, it is the attitude towards the reform adopted by the zone government that influences choices about language, and it is largely at zone level that decisions are made.

The regional authorities have little to say about how choices about language use should be made. In the SNNPR the regional authorities chose to use Amharic as the language of regional government, and to provide education in Awassa in Amharic. But Awassa as well as being the regional capital is also



the capital of the Sidama zone, and the decision to use Amharic in the town's schools had implications for the formation of policy in the Gedeo, Hadiya and North Omo zones. These zone governments regarded the use of Amharic in Awassa's schools as a precedent for the continuation of Amharic education in the other zone capitals in the SNNPR, and Amharic education was provided in Dilla, Hosanna and Arba Minch. Other urban areas in these zones, including Soddo, were, however, denied Amharic education in the face of public protest. The regional authorities were unwilling to intervene because they argued that it was up to the zones to decide. But many regional staff thought that those sections of the population that preferred the use of Amharic should be allowed to have their choice. Zone staff, however, argued that they were following a policy established by the regional government.

The freedom of decision-making power that may be exercised by the zones in the SNNPR is demonstrated by the different stances adopted in other zones. In the K.A.T. zone the same authority which allowed the Alaba and Tembaro to reject the use of Kembata MOI in favour of the use of Amharic, denied that choice to the Amharic-speaking Kembatas of the zone capital. In Durame officials were not aware of any regional policy stipulating the use of Amharic MOI in zone capitals. Here staff argued that the choice was made according to the terms laid out in the Constitution. Decisions about language use, they argued, had to be made by the nationalities in question. Thus while the Alaba rejected local language use, the Kembata accepted it. The use of Kembata MOI, moreover, was very popular. The urban population of Durame was the only section of Kembata society that was unhappy about using Kembata MOI. The zone authorities were unwilling to allow Amharic in the town because they felt that it was contrary to the overall development of the use of Kembata, which they supported, even though many of them would have preferred Amharic education for their own children. In their enthusiasm to promote the use of Kembata MOI the zone authorities enforced it rather rigidly.

The Gurage zone has adopted a highly appropriate and effective stance towards the reform. Here decisions were made on the basis of surveys which concluded that the Silti were the only linguistic group that desired the use of their language in primary education. The Gurage zone has, consequently, been

particularly successful in catering for the desires of different sections of the population. Zone officials stated that their primary concern was that the use of a local language should not be enforced; it should only be introduced where the population clearly favoured its use.

Government sponsored linguistic development can not succeed in the face of public opposition, and so the other zones of the SNNPR would do well to introduce Amharic wherever the population strongly favours it. The reform is successful only in those areas where the local population want to use the local language. In those areas where the population is unhappy about the use of a particular language, it has a profound affect not only on the processes of education but also on the attitude towards the government adopted by the local group of people. It would appear that zones require guidance in implementing reforms of language use in education, since the policy in some cases is clearly being diverted at zone level.

While in some areas the use of local languages has been unpopular, in most areas of the SNNPR where local languages have been introduced their use have proved successful. During the era of the Derg the provision of education in rural areas throughout Ethiopia gradually increased, and many more people who did not speak Amharic entered the education system. Missionary activity, from the 1960s, also caused many more people to become literate in Amharic. These local language speakers were faced by the difficulties of learning in a language that they were unable to speak.

The generation of state and mission-educated Ethiopians in the south-west has now reached maturity, and many describe the difficulties they faced in obtaining an education exclusively in Amharic. They describe the reluctance of missionaries to switch from the use of local languages (which were only allowed for oral use in the very early stages of education), to Amharic. Many mission students dropped-out after Amharic was introduced. In state schools the picture had been very similar. A large proportion of students dropped-out during grade one and it was common for at least half of those who had managed to stay the year in school to give up. Many of the students performed so badly in the end-of-grade tests that they were not allowed to continue. Usually, at least half of those who remained had to repeat grade one. Sometimes as little as

10% of the previous years' intake at grade one entered grade two the following year. Only a small proportion became educated.

Many teachers emphatically support the use of local languages in primary education because of their personal experiences as students. Teachers argued that, although the reform presents them with certain difficulties, these are worth grappling with, since the net result is that students are better able to understand what they are being taught. Dramatically increasing graduation rates from one grade to the next since the introduction of local language teaching materials testify to the increased ability of students to understand, and consequently, to succeed.

The long-standing problems of language use in primary education in the south-west (the exclusive use of Amharic) explain, to an extent, the reactions to the reform of the peoples of the SNNPR. In rural areas where there has already been some provision of education, by the state and by missions, and a certain degree of literacy has resulted, the population is now ready to appreciate the use of local languages. But in areas where there has been little education available, and literacy rates are low, the population still favours the use of Amharic because they do not yet understand the benefits to be gained from education in the local languages. For many people education still means learning to speak Amharic.

It can be expected that after a certain amount of time, as the provision of education increases in these areas, that the population will come to appreciate the difficulties of learning in an unknown language. They will also realise that language is being used as a vehicle for transmitting different kinds of information, many of which are not dependent on the use of Amharic. It would be reasonable to expect that, in the long term, these peoples will begin to demand education in their own languages. The government has already stated that Ethiopia's constituent groups of people have the right to pursue such demands. Consequently, it is likely that increasing numbers of Ethiopia's languages will need to be developed for the purposes of primary education.

## GLOSSARY

### Amharic words

*neftennya* - Northern Ethiopian soldier.

*gebbar* - Peasant.

*gult* - Grant of land from the Emperor to members of the nobility.

*rist* - Plots of land divided for peasant households by the local nobility.

*dega* - Highland (or cold) climatic zone.

*weyna dega* - Intermediate (or temperate) climatic zone.

*qolla* - Lowland (or hot) climatic zone.

*zabanya* - Guard.

*ensete* - The false banana - source of food and building materials for southwestern peoples.

*teff* - Indigenous cereal crop in the Ethiopian highlands.

*injera* - Most common foodstuff in Ethiopia, a sour pancake made from *teff*.

*berebere* - Ethiopian hot spice.

### Commonly used abbreviations

SNNPR - Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region.

K.A.T. - Kembata, Alaba, Tembaro zone of the SNNPR.

GGD - Gamo- Gofa- Dawro- a composite language used in North Omo zone.

MOE - Ministry of Education.

REB - Regional Education Bureau

ICDR - Institute of Curriculum Research and Development.

BESO - Basic Education Support Overhaul Project (Awassa).

TTI - Teachers Training Institute

SIL - Summer Institute of Linguistics.

SIM - Society of International Missionaries.

MOI - Medium of Instruction - language in which subjects are taught.

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Ato Tilahoun Gamta (Department of Foreign Languages, AAU) 8/2/96, 10/2/96

Dr. Baye Yimam (Department of Linguistics, AUU) 16/5/97

Ato Takkele Taddese (Department of Linguistics, AAU) 15/5/97

Ato Yilma Workineh (MOE, Addis Ababa) 21/3/96

Ato Negasa Ijeta (MOE, Addis Ababa) 19/3/96

Ato Melaku Wakuma (MOE, Oromo Region, Addis Ababa) 19/3/96

Ato Tesfaye Tsegaye (Non- Formal education Panel, MOE, Addis Ababa)  
27/2/96

Ato Daraje Tarafa (Director ICDR, Addis Ababa) 22/1/96

Ato Kedir Ibrahim (Curriculum Adviser ICDR, Addis Ababa) 22/1/96, 23/1/96

Ato Berhanu Wadaju (Director ICDR, Oromo Region, Addis Ababa) 15/3/96

Ato Emanuel ( Geographical Department, Election Board, Addis Ababa) 3/2/96

Ato Lulseged Erkihun (Language Department, Election Board, Addis Ababa)  
4/2/96

Ato Teshome Yehulashet (Ministry of Culture, Department of Linguistics,  
Addis Ababa) 26/2/96

### **Interviews with staff of SIL and BESO**

Dr, Ernst August- Gutt (SIL, Addis Ababa) 18/3/96

Miss Mary Breeze (SIL, Addis Ababa) 22/3/96, 15/4/97

Mr Mike Middleton (SIL, Addis Ababa) 15/4/97

Miss Lydia Hoefl (SIL, Korete, Amaro, SNNPR) 16/4/97

Dr. Linda Pursely (BESO, Awassa, SNNPR) 17/2/97, 18/2/97

### **Interviews In REB Awassa**

Ato Kebede Sima (Director, ICDR, SNNPR, Awassa) 22/4/96

Ato Daniel Kabiso (Assistant Director, ICDR, Awassa) 23/4/96, 17/2/97, 17/4/97

Ato Bahru Shikur (Geographical Department, MOE, ICDR, SNNPR, Awassa)  
17/2/97, 19/2/97, 18/4/97

Ato Getachow Assefa (Teacher Training Institute, Awassa) 19/2/97

Ato Getachow Mamo (Curriculum Department, MOE, ICDR, SNNPR, Awassa)  
18/2/97, 18/4/97

### **Interviews in administrative offices and schools in the SNNPR**

The names of informants will not be given to protect the identities of those informants who did not wish to be named.

Schools are listed by name, town or village (where applicable) and woreda.

Interviews are organised according to zone and by office or school.

Each zone is represented by a letter(s). (e.g. SZ - Sidama zone)

Each administrative office or school has a numbered series. (e.g. SZ1 - Gebeya Dar E. S.).

Each interview has its own number (e.g. SZ1.1 - interview with principal at Gebeya Dar E.S.).

The following list includes all formal interviews conducted during the field-work in offices and schools in the SNNPR.

Informal interviews are not listed.

### Sidama Zone (SZ)

SZ0.1 - SZ0.4 Zone office, Awassa 18/2/97, 17/4/97  
SZ1.1 - SZ1.10 Gebeya Dar, Awassa 20/2/97  
SZ2.1 - SZ2.8 Bete Kihnet, Awassa 21/2/97  
SZ3.1 - SZ3.9 Midra Genet, Morocho, Shebedino 24/2/97  
SZ4.1 - SZ4.12 Yekatit 25, Abosto, Dale 24/2/97, 25/2/97  
SZ5.1 - SZ5.6 Mekana Yesus, Yirga Alem 25/2/97  
SZ6.1 - SZ6.6 Meskerem 2, Yirga Alem 26/2/97  
SZ7.1 Woreda office, Yirga Alem 26/2/97

### Gedeo Zone (GZ)

GZ0.1 Zone office, Dilla 27/2/97  
GZ1.1 - GZ1.12 Dilla, Dilla, Wenago 27/2/97  
GZ2.1 - GZ2.4 Sisota, Wenago 27/2/97  
GZ3.1 - GZ3.6 Chichu, Wenago 28/2/97  
GZ4.1 - GZ4.6 Abiyot Fere, Yirga Chefe, Yirga Chefe 28/2/97

### K.A.T. Zone (KZ)

KZ0.1 - KZ0.5 Zone Office, Durame 3/3/97  
KZ1.1 - KZ1.13 Durame, Durame 3/3/97, 4/3/97, 18/3/97  
KZ2.1 - KZ2.6 Zatoshodera, Kedida Gamela 5/3/97  
KZ3.1 - KZ3.3 Juree, Kedida Gamela 6/3/97  
KZ4.1 - KZ4.8 Alaba Idget, Kulito 7/3/97  
KZ5.1 - KZ5.9 Fundame, Kacha Bira 17/3/97  
KZ6.1 - KZ6.6 Hambo, Durame 18/3/97  
KZ7.1 - KZ7.5 Guba, Alaba 21/3/97  
KZ8.1 Kedida Gamela woreda office 6/3/97  
KZ9.1 - KZ9.6 Kacha Bira woreda office 17/3/97  
KZ10.1 - KZ10.2 Alaba woreda office 7/3/97

### Hadiya Zone (HZ)

HZ0.1 - HZ 0.4 Zone office, Hosanna 19/3/97  
HZ1.1 - HZ1.7 Mosito, Morsito, Kontob 19/3/97  
HZ2.1 - HZ2.6 Hosanna No.3, Hosanna, Limu 20/3/97  
HZ3.1 - HZ3.10 Umaro, Lange, Soro 20/3/97  
HZ4.1 - HZ4.7 Shone, Shone, Badewacho 21/4/97  
HZ5.1 - HZ5.2 Kontob woreda office 19/3/97  
HZ6.1 Badewacho woreda office 21/4/97

North Omo Zone (NOZ)

NOZ0.1 - NOZ0.3 Zone office, Arba Minch 31/3/97  
NOZ1.1 - NOZ1.6 Dorze, Dorze, Chencha 1/4/97  
NOZ2.1 - NOZ2.6 Lante, Arba Minch Zuria 2/4/97  
NOZ3.1 - NOZ3.5 Siqala, Arba Minch, Arba Minch Zuria 3/4/97  
NOZ4.1 - NOZ4.7 Ligaba Beyene, Soddo, Soddo Zuria 10/4/97  
NOZ5.1 - NOZ5.5 Busha Offa, Offa 10/4/97  
NOZ6.1 - NOZ6.6 Bedessa, Bedessa, Damot Woyde 11/4/97  
NOZ7.1 - NOZ7.4 Kusti, Sawela, Gofa Zuria 22/4/97  
NOZ8.1 - NOZ8.8 Meshakara, Gofa Zuria 23/4/97  
NOZ9.1 - NOZ9.3 Areka, Areka, Bolosso Sore 24/4/97  
NOZ10.1-NOZ10.4 Boditi, Boditi, Damot Gale 25/4/97  
NOZ11.1-NOZ11.5 Woreda office, Soddo Zuria 10/4/97  
NOZ12.1 Woreda office, Offa 10/4/97  
NOZ13.1 Woreda office, Damot Woyde 11/4/97  
NOZ14.1-NOZ14.3 Woreda office, Gofa Zuria 22/4/97  
NOZ15.1 Woreda office, Bolosso Sore 24/4/97  
NOZ16.1 Woreda office, Damot Gale 25/4/97

Konso Special Woreda (KW)

KW0.1 Woreda office 7/4/97  
KW1.1 - KW1.5 Karati, Konso 7/4/97  
KW2.1 - KW2.4 Gocha, Gocha 7/4/97

South Omo Zone (SOZ)

SOZ0.1 - SOZ0.3 Zone office, Jinka 8/4/97  
SOZ1.1 - SOZ1.8 Jinka, Jinka 8/4/97  
SOZ2.2 - SOZ2.5 Gorgocha, Bakogazer 9/4/97

Gurage Zone (GUZ)

GUZ0.1 - GUZ0.2 Zone Office, Welkite 28/4/97  
GUZ1.1 - GUZ1.6 Selam Bar, Welkite, Goro 28/4/97  
GUZ2.1 - GUZ2.5 Makicho, Butajira, Mesken & Mareko 29/4/97  
GUZ3.1 - GUZ3.12 Woleya 6, Kibet, Silti 30/4/97, 31/4/97  
GUZ4.1 - GUZ4.9 Alkaso, Silti 31/4/97  
GUZ5.1 Woreda office, Mesken & Mareko 29/4/97  
GUZ6.1 - GUZ6.2 Woreda office, Silti 30/4/97



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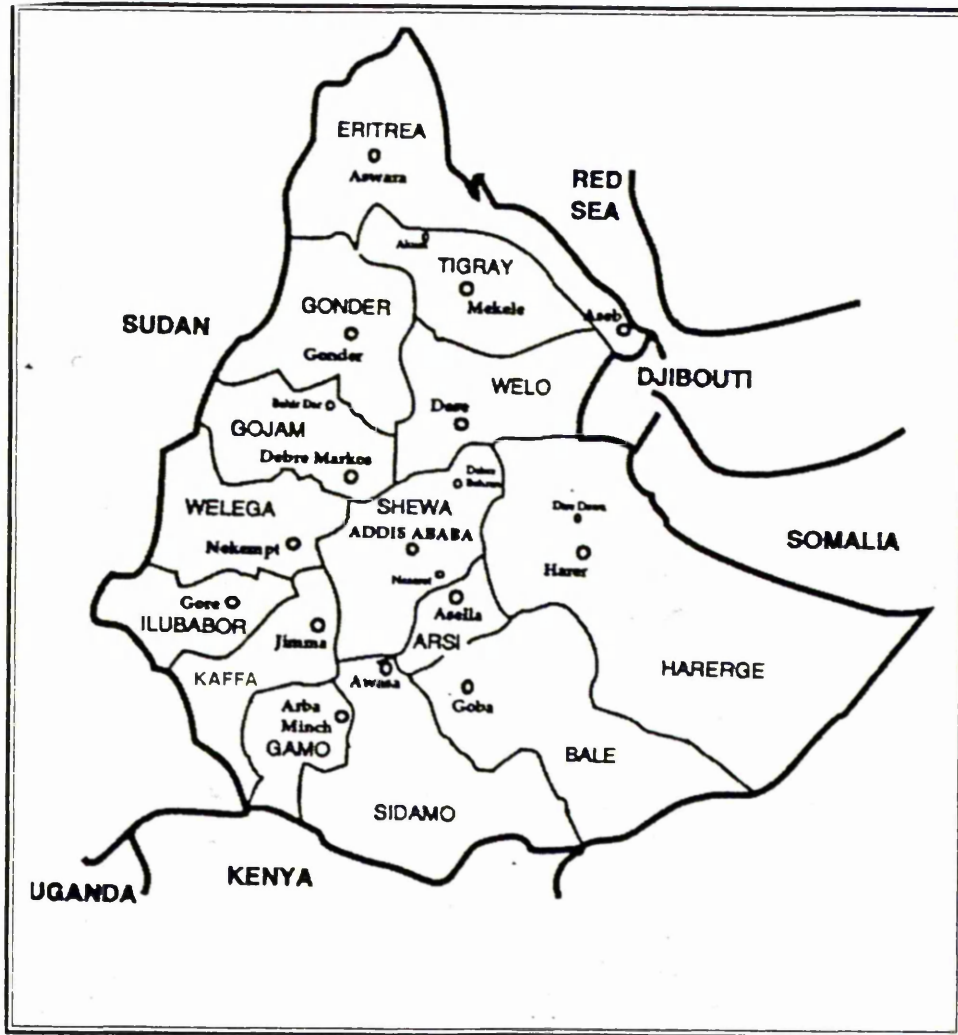
## APPENDIX ONE

# MAPS

MAP ONE : POLITICAL DIVISIONS - HAILE SELASSIE'S GOVERNMENT	p301
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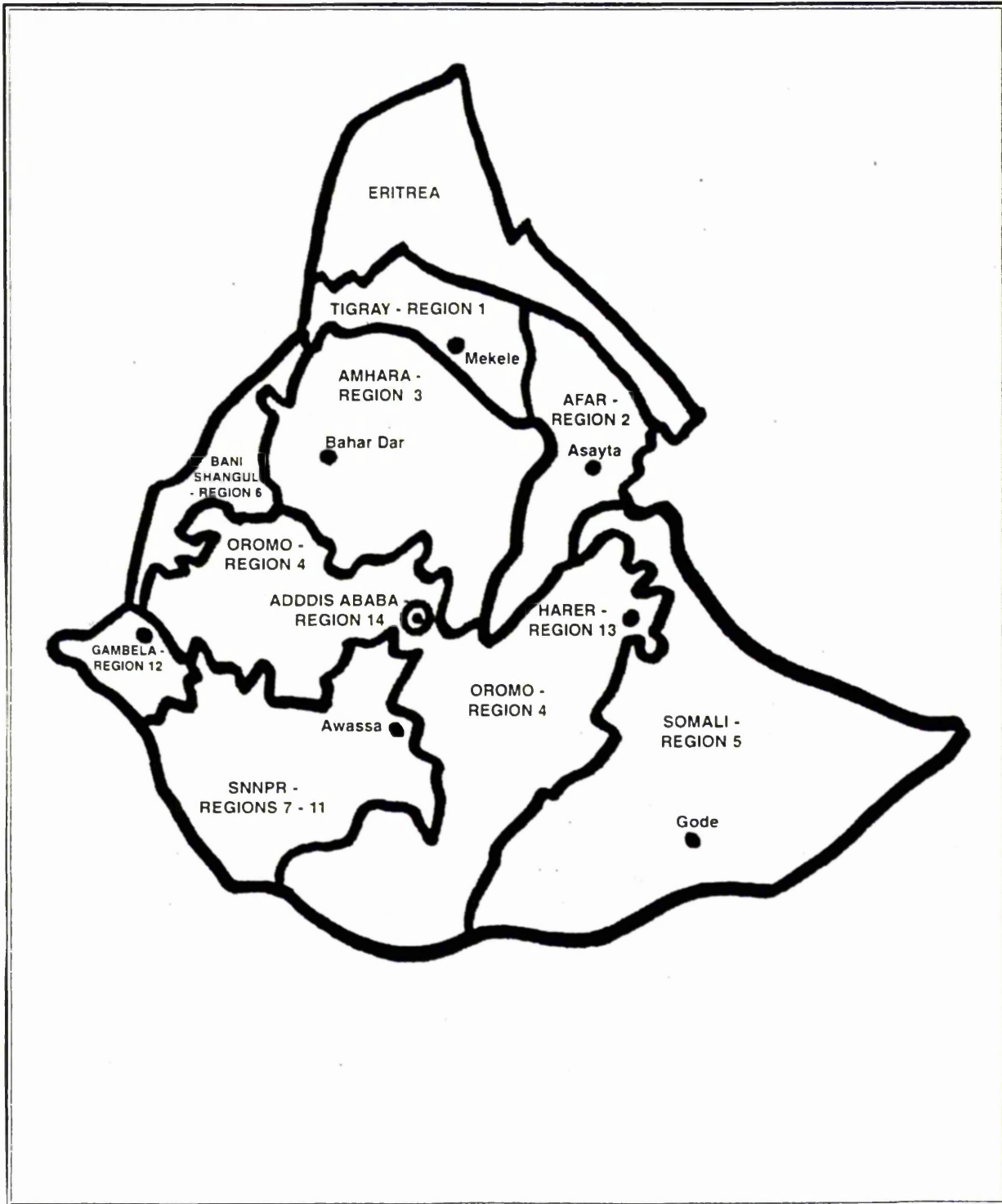
MAP ONE

ETHIOPIA'S POLITICAL DIVISIONS : HAILE SELASSIE'S GOVERNMENT



**MAP TWO**

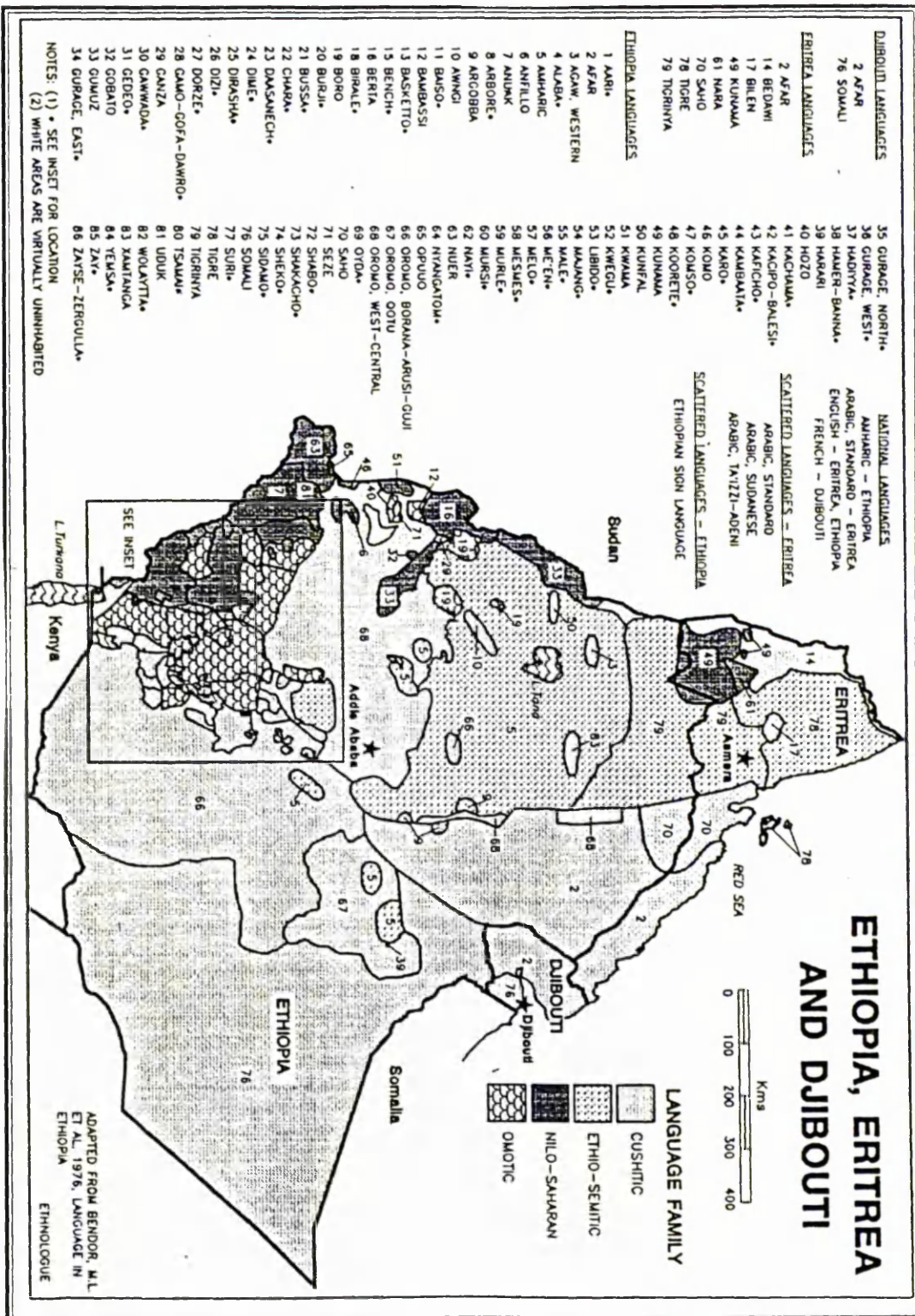
**ETHIOPIA'S POLITICAL DIVISIONS : MELES ZENAWI'S GOVERNMENT**



# MAP THREE

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGES IN ETHIOPIA

### (SIL - ETHNOLOGUE)

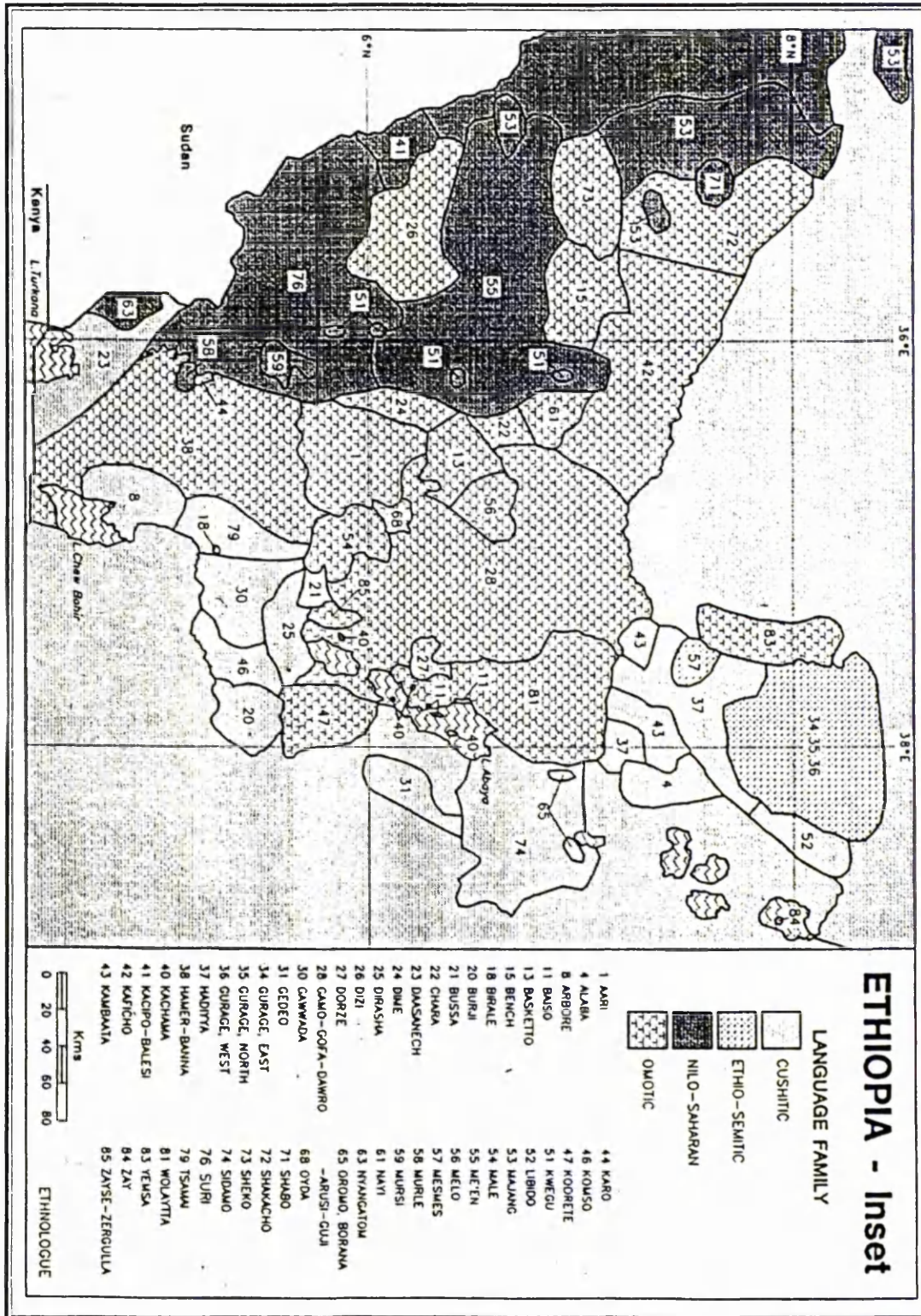




# MAP FOUR

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGES IN THE SOUTH-WEST

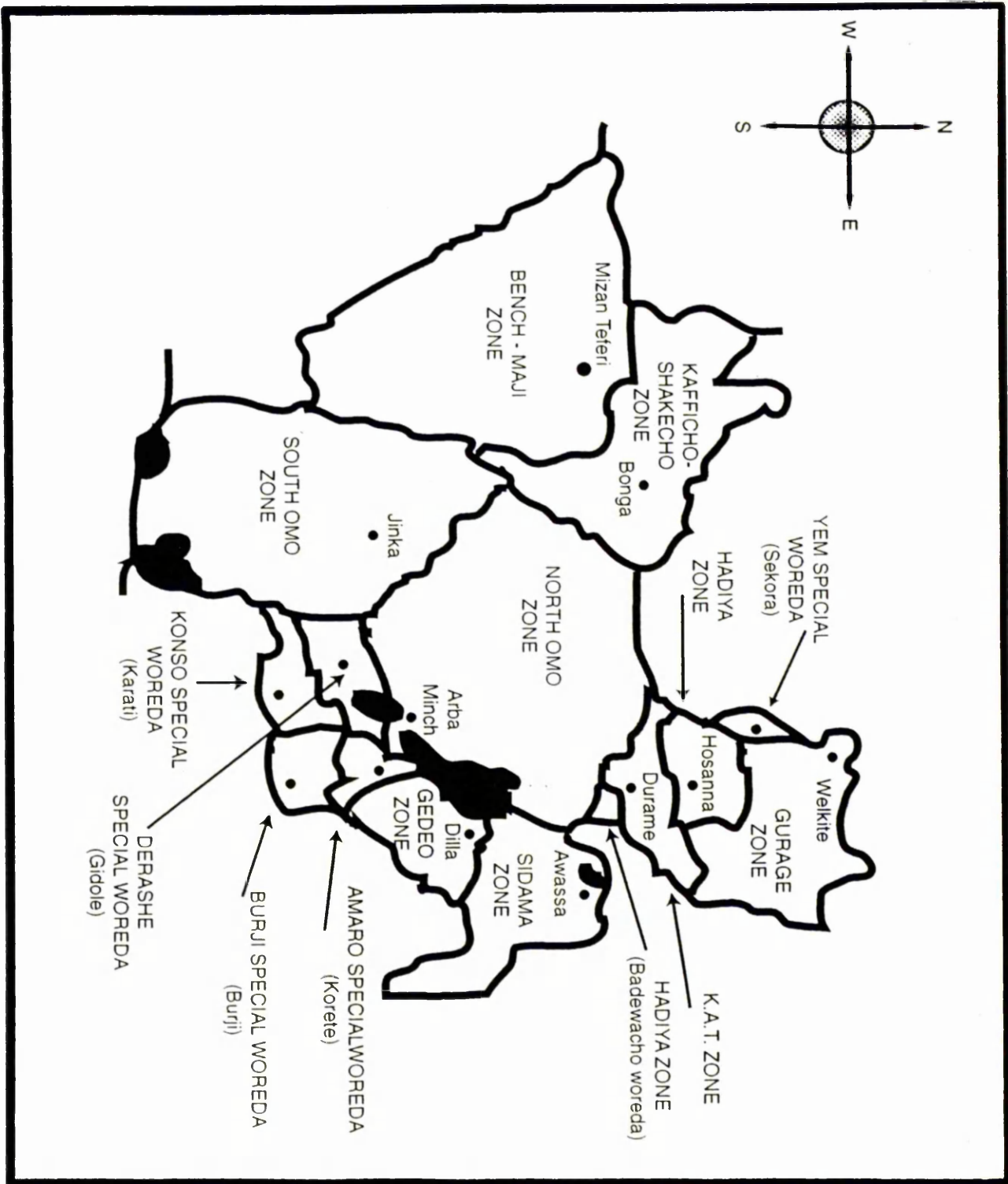
### (SIL - ETHNOLOGUE)



**MAP FIVE**

**THE POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF THE SNNPR**

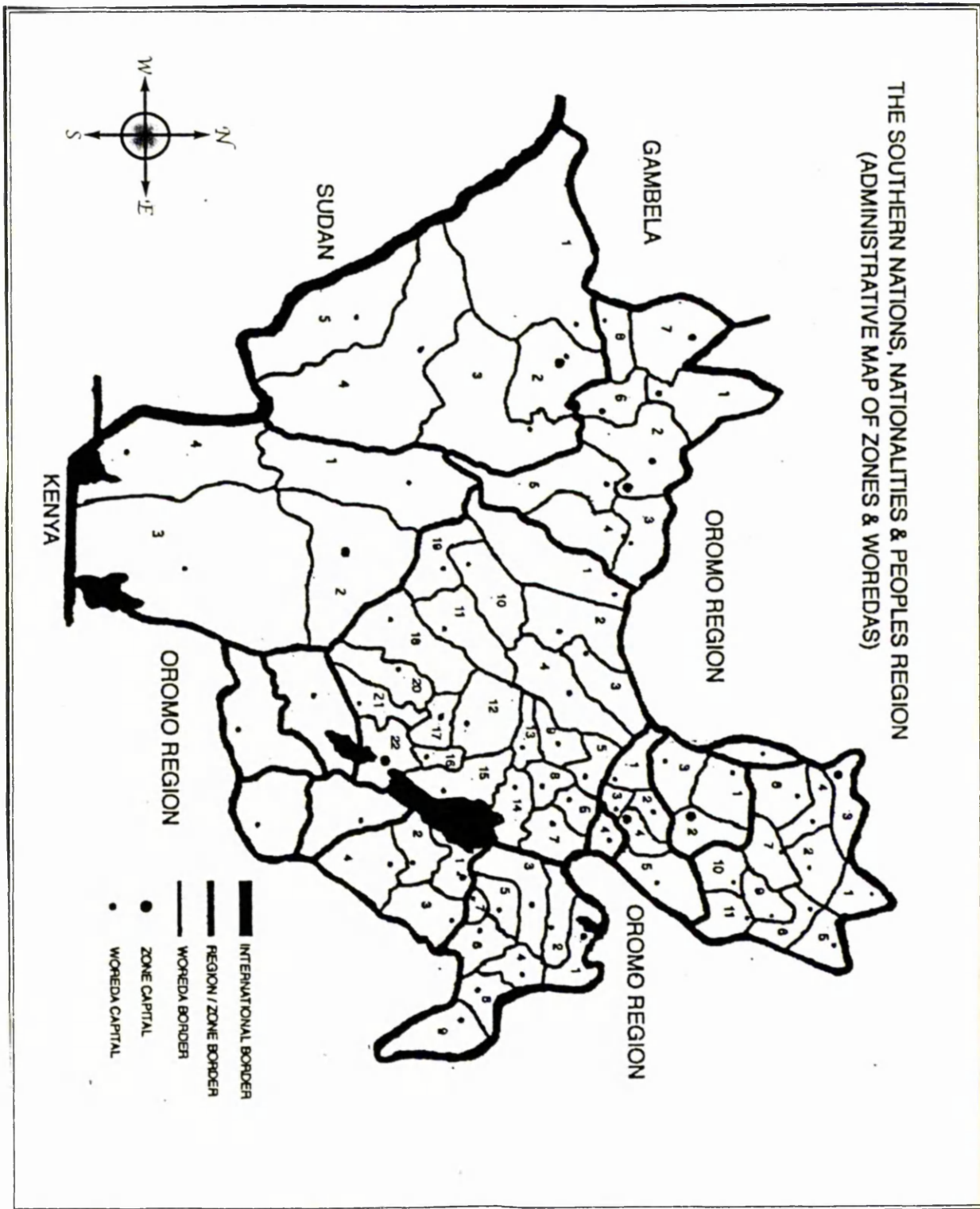
**(ZONES & SPECIAL WOREDAS)**



MAP SIX

THE POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF THE SNNPR

(WOREDAS)



## THE WOREDAS & WOREDA CAPITALS OF THE SNNPR

### SIDAMA ZONE (AWASSA)

- 1) AWASSA ZURIA (AWASSA)
- 2) SHEBEDINO (LEKU)
- 3) DALE (YIRGA ALEM)
- 4) ARBEGONA (ARBEGONA)
- 5) ALETA WENDO (ALETA WENDO)
- 6) HARGERER SELAM (HARGERER SELAM)
- 7) DARA (TEFERI KELA)
- 8) BENSAN (DAYE)
- 9) ARORESA (MEJO)

### GEDEO ZONE (DILLA)

- 1) WENAGO (WENAGO)
- 2) YIRGA CHEFE (YIRGA CHEFE)
- 3) BULE (BULE)
- 4) KOCHORE (CHELEKTU)

### K.A.T. ZONE (DURAME)

- 1) OMOSHELEKO (MUDULA)
- 2) ANGACHA (ANGACHA)
- 3) KACHA BIRA (SHINSHICHO)
- 4) KEDIDA GAMELA (DURAME)
- 5) ALABA (KULITO)

### HADIYA ZONE (HOSANNA)

- 1) KONTOB (MORSITO)
- 2) LIMU (HOSANNA)
- 3) SORO (GIMBICHU)
- 4) BADEWACHO (SHONE)

### NORTHOMO ZONE (ARBA MINCH)

- 1) ELLA KONTA (AMEYA)
- 2) ESARA TOCHA (TOCHA)
- 3) MAREKA GENA (WAKA)
- 4) LOMA BOSSA (BALE)
- 5) BOLOSSO SORE (AREKA)
- 6) DAMOT GALE (BODITI)
- 7) DAMOT WOYDE (BEDESSA)
- 8) SODDO ZURIA (SODDO)
- 9) KINDO KOYISHA (BELE)
- 10) MELAKOZA (LEHA)
- 11) GOFAN ZURIA (SAWELA)
- 12) KUCHA (SELAN BAR)
- 13) OFFA (GESUBA)
- 14) HUMBO TEBELA (TEBELA)
- 15) BOREDAN ABAYA (BERBIR)
- 16) CHENCHAN ZURIA (CHENCHAN)
- 17) DITAN DERMALO (WACHA)
- 18) ZALAN UBAMALE (BETO)
- 19) BASKETO (LASKA)
- 20) KEMBA (KEMBA)
- 21) BONKE (GERESE)
- 22) ARBAN MINCHAN ZURIA (ARBAN MINCHAN)

### SOUTHOMO ZONE (JINKA)

- 1) SELAMAGO (HANAN)
- 2) BAKOGAZER (JINKAN)
- 3) HAMER (TURMI)
- 4) GELEB (OMORATE)

### BENCH-MAJI ZONE (MIZANTEFERI)

- 1) SHEKO (SHEKO)
- 2) BENCH (AMAN)
- 3) MEINIT (BACHUMA)
- 4) DIZI (TUM)
- 5) SURMAN (MARDER)

### KAFFICHO-SHAKECHO ZONE (BONGA)

- 1) GESHA (DAKAN)
- 2) GIMBO (UFFAN)
- 3) MENJAWAN (ADIAKAKAN)
- 4) TELLO (FELEGE SELAM)
- 5) DECHAN (CHIRI)
- 6) CHENAN (WACHAN)
- 7) MASHAN (MASHAN)
- 8) YEKAN (TEPI)

### GURAGE ZONE (WELKITE)

- 1) KOKIR GEDEBANAN (GURANDAN)
- 2) EZHAN & WELENE (AGENAN)
- 3) GORON (WELKITE)
- 4) CHEHAN (EMBEDIR)
- 5) SODON (BUEI)
- 6) MESKEN & MAREKON (BTUAJIRAN)
- 7) GUMER (EREKIT)
- 8) ENEMOR & ENER (GUNCHEREN)
- 9) SILTI (KIBET)
- 10) DALOCHAN (DALOCHAN)
- 11) LANFARON (TOTA)

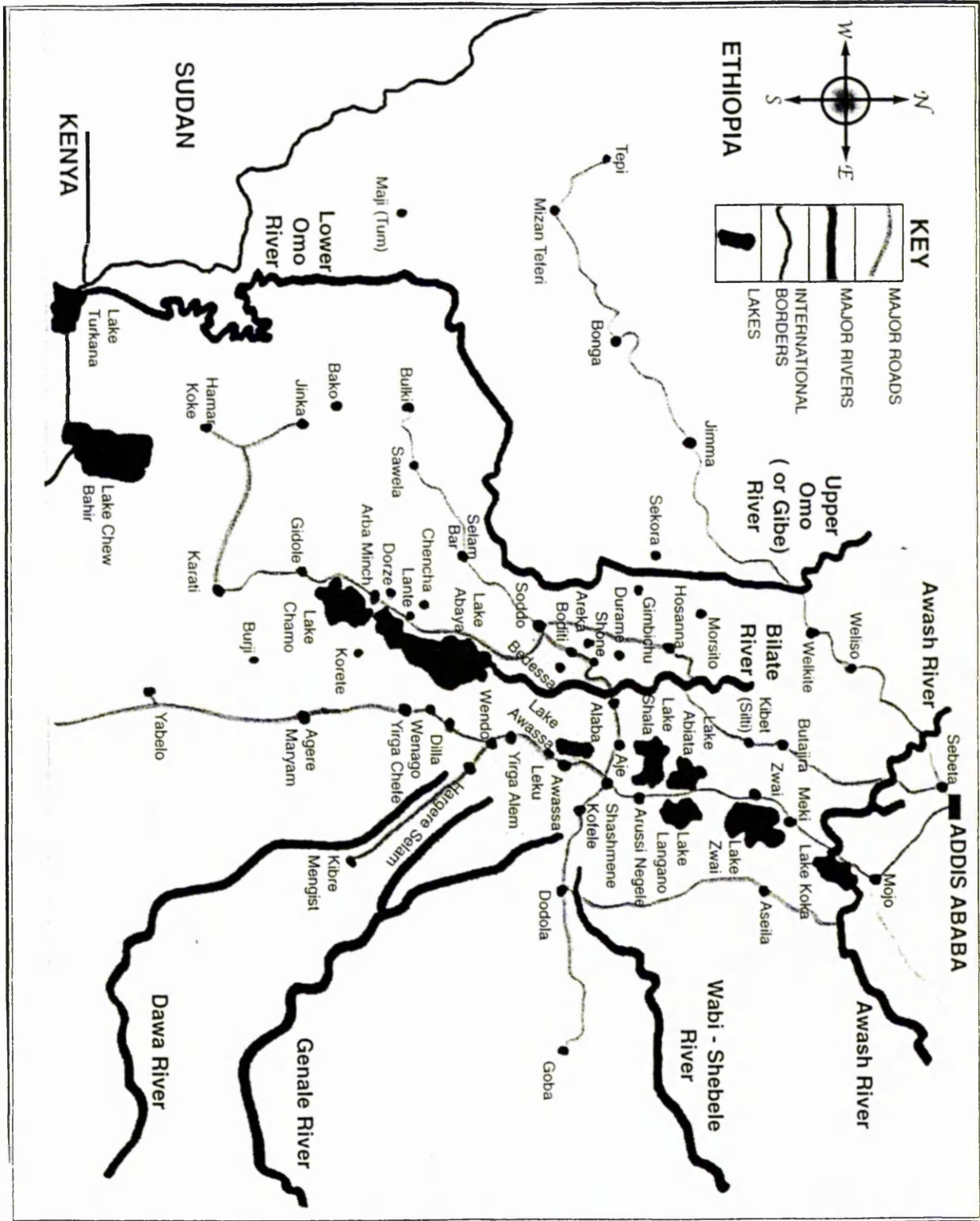
### SPECIAL WOREDAS

- 1) YEM (SEKORAN)
- 2) AMARON (KORETEN)
- 3) BURJIN (BURJIN)
- 4) DERASHE (GIDOLE)
- 5) KONSON (KARATI)

THE INFORMATION THAT WAS  
USED TO COMPILE THIS LIST,  
AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE MAP  
WHICH WAS ADAPTED IN THE TWO  
FOREGOING MAPS,  
WAS PROVIDED BY  
ATO BAHRU SHIKUR,  
GEOGRAPHICAL DEPARTMENT  
(ICDR)  
AWASSA, SNNPR.

**MAP SEVEN**

**TOWNS, ROADS AND RIVERS IN THE SOUTH-WEST**



APPENDIX TWO

CHARTS DEMONSTRATING THE  
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN  
ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGES

FROM  
M.L. BENDER ET. AL. EDS.  
LANGUAGE IN ETHIOPIA  
(OXFORD 1976)

CHART ONE : THE ETHIO-SEMITIC LANGUAGE FAMILY	p310
CHART TWO : THE EAST CUSHITIC LANGUAGE FAMILY	p311
CHART THREE : THE OMOTIC LANGUAGE FAMILY	p312
CHART FOUR : THE NILO-SAHARAN LANGUAGE FAMILY	p313

**CHART ONE**  
**THE ETHIO-SEMITIC LANGUAGE FAMILY**  
**(BENDER ET AL EDS, 1976 p29)**

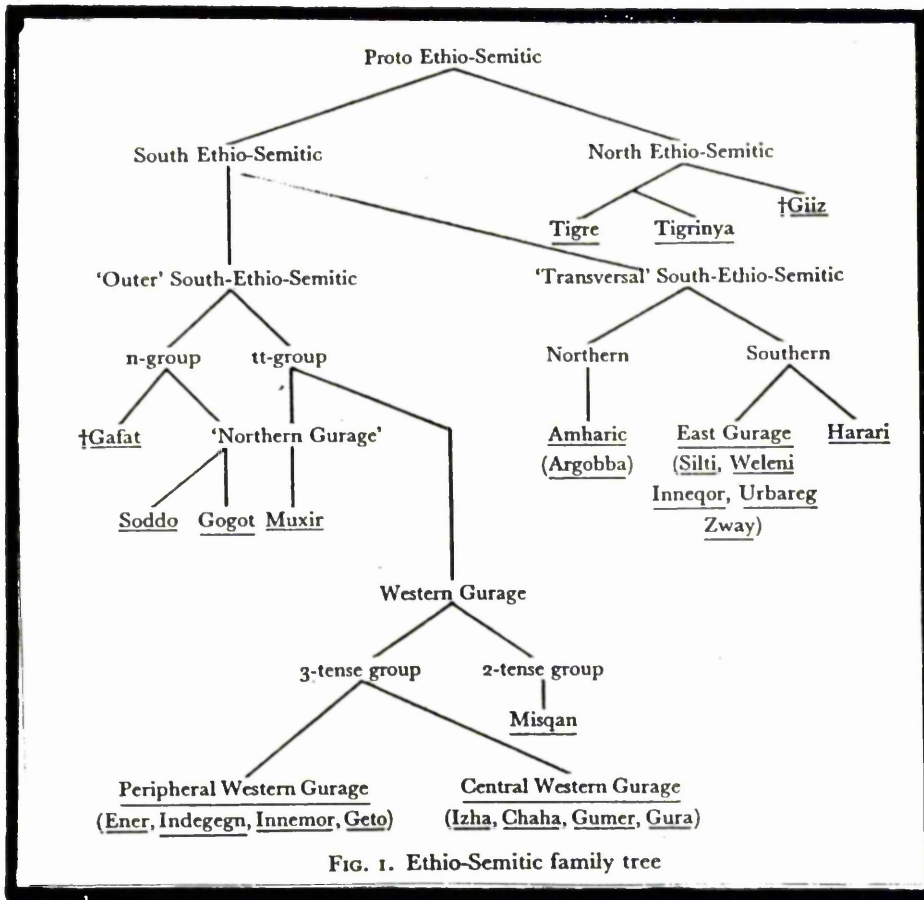


FIG. 1. Ethio-Semitic family tree

# CHART TWO

## THE EAST-CUSHITIC LANGUAGE FAMILY

(BENDER ET AL EDS, 1976, p43)

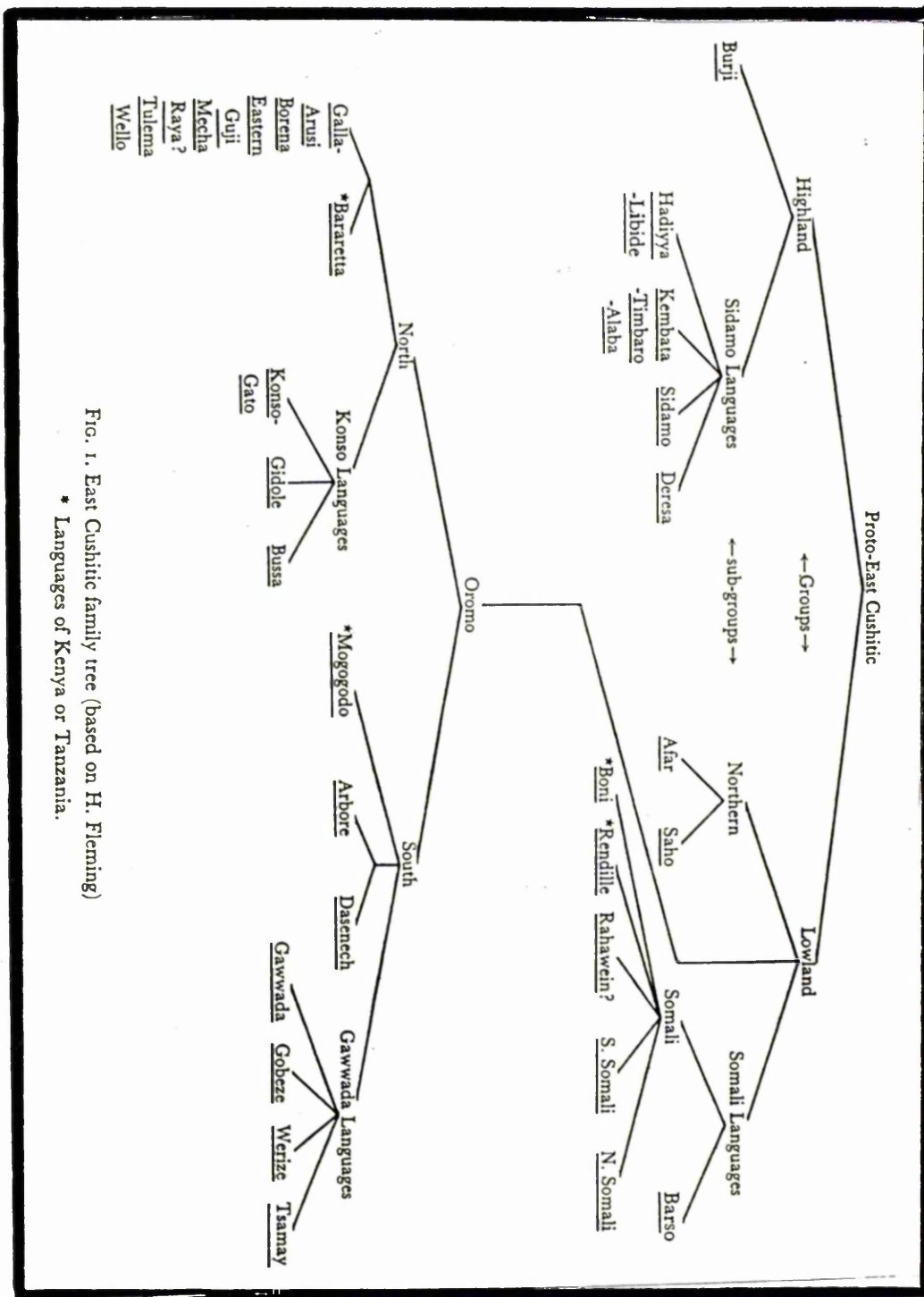


FIG. 1. East Cushitic family tree (based on H. Fleming)  
 \* Languages of Kenya or Tanzania.



**CHART THREE**  
**THE OMOTIC LANGUAGE FAMILY**  
**(BENDER ET AL EDS, 1976, p47)**

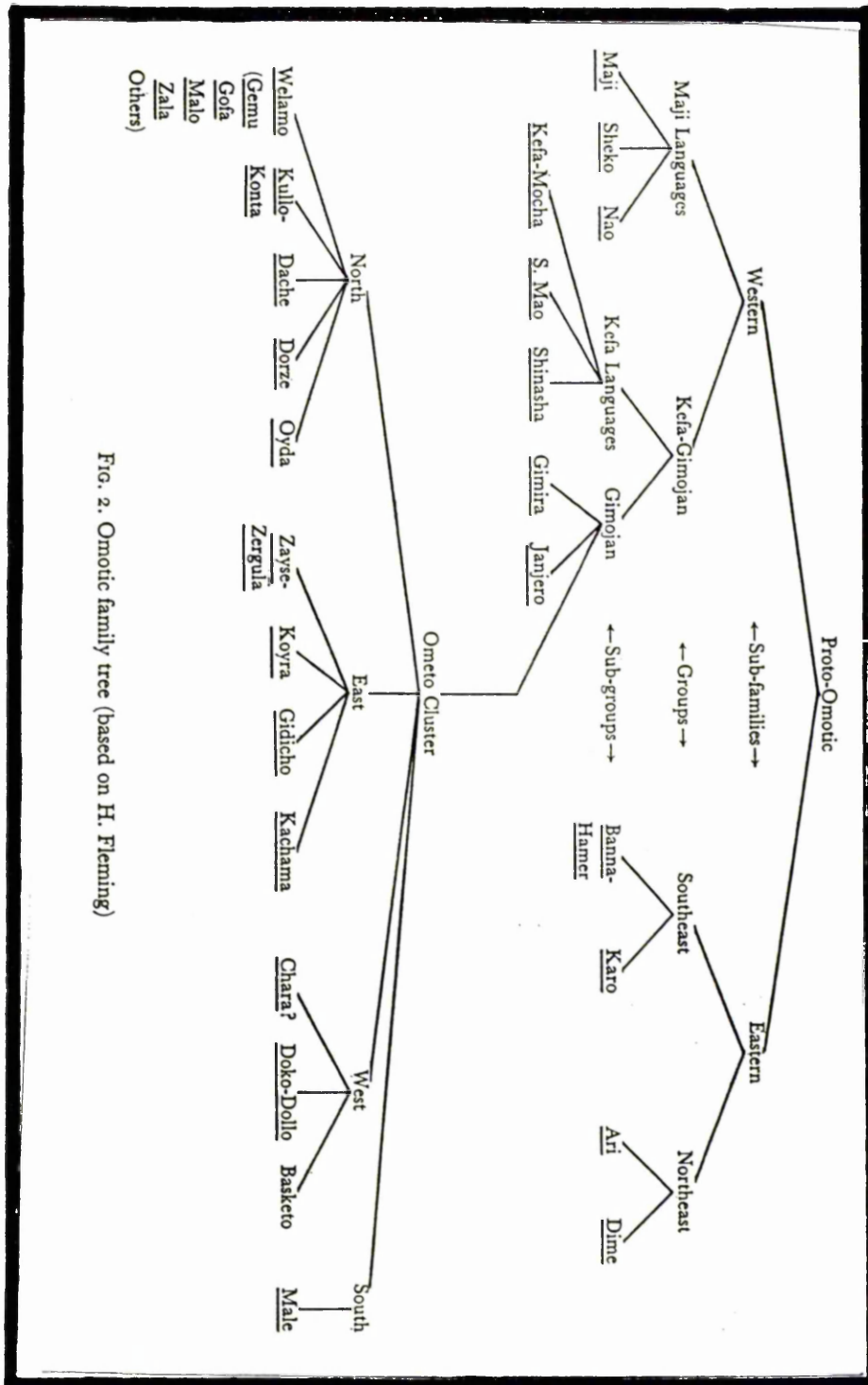


Fig. 2. Omotic family tree (based on H. Fleming)

# CHART FOUR

## THE NILO-SAHARAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

(BENDER ET AL EDS, 1976, p57)

			Nilo-Saharan (8)				
Berta (12)	Kunama (65)		Koman (23)		Nara-Surma (22)		Turkana-Nilotic (27)
Wetawit	Kunama	Northern Mao	Gumuz (79)	Peripheral (77)	Koma (20)	Nuclear (35)	
Ingassana	Ilit	Northern Mao	Gumuz-	Northern Koma	Langa	Central (35)	
			Sese-Disoha	Southern Koma	Langa	Central Koma	
			Also: many other regional varieties			Uduk	

Figures in parentheses are group averages.

Fig. 3. Classification of Nilo-Saharan languages based on basic vocabulary (adapted from Bender 1971)

See internal structure  
in Fig. 4

		Nara-Surma (22)		Turkana-Nilotic (27)	
Nara		Surma (27)		Turkana	
		Central Surma (32)			
Nara	Mescengo	Murle-Zilmamu (40)	Kwegu-Nuclear (45)	Turkana	East (45)
		Murle	Nuclear (57)	Burun	Mabaan-Jumjum (60)
		Zilmamu	M'c'en Mursoid (67)	Burun	Mabaan
			M'c'en Mursi	Jumjum	Nuer
			Tirma		Anyyak-Shilluk
					West (51)
					Nuer
					Anyyak-Shilluk

Figures in parentheses are group averages.

Fig. 4. Classification of Nara-Surma and Turkana-Nilotic languages based on basic vocabulary (adapted from Bender 1971)

