
The Arabic Grammarians and Centers of Wällo: Biographical Data and Reflections

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Abstract

Arabic has a strong presence in the Ethiopian past and present despite limited publicity. Ethiopia is one among the best centers of Arabic scholarship though the current trend shows an alarming decline both in quantity and quality of classical Arabic education in the country. In fact, there is compensation in the wider public presence of communication and reading skills in Arabic especially in major cities. We have very little, near to none, research productions on the issue of Arabic in Ethiopia though the language has a historical, liturgical and communication significance in the Ethiopian landscape. The present paper gives a humble biographical data of Arabic agents in the past history of the country giving at least a list of Arabic traditional learning centers namely the identity of the great Arabic grammarians of Ethiopia who taught the language in the near past. The current reality of Arabic is also given some emphasis by sighting important learning centers of the language in a selected region (Wällo) known for its Arabic scholarship as a case study. The study follows a qualitative methodology and bases on personal observation of the researcher (himself a product of local Arabic scholarship), data obtained from one very important unpublished Arabic manuscript and another published work by famous local Arabic and Islamic scholars of Ethiopia as well as oral data furnished by notable Muslim scholars. The study is made from manuscript study background and does not qualify as a sociological study with relevant methodological framework in the field.

1. Background

The Arabic language presence in Ethiopia predates all European languages that were introduced in the country. The name *Häbäša* shows the strong tie between the country and the Arabs (Mohammed Seid: 2019: 11). An Arab writer, Dr. ʾUmar ʾAbd al-Fataḥ (undated), reiterates that some tribes of the Arabs, called *Häbäšät* or *Häbäšät* immigrated to the country giving even its name as *Häbäša* thereby making a standing influence upon the name and history of the country. Western writers acknowledge its affiliation to Arabic:

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“The traditional and indigenous designation for the country was later on reinforced by its Arabic designation (Gori, *E Ae*, Vol. 1, 2003: 62). The Axumite Abyssinian colonial presence in Yemen (524-590 AD) had resulted language contact influences (See Haggai 2007: 13).

The Christian Arabic literature, through the Coptic church of Egypt, has a strong cultural influence upon the development of Christian theological teachings and literature as well as to the production of historical and hagiographical texts which is started approximately from the end of the 13th century (Gori, *E Ae*, Vol. 1, 2003: 302; Ullendorf 1965: 136-157). A massive translational work from Arabic was done during the Ethiopian period of intellectual development initiated by Emperor Zarýa Yaÿeqob in the mid fifteenth century (Ullendorf 1965: 146). In fact, the Ethiopian church was directly dependent upon the patriarchate of the Arabic speaking church in Alexandria until 1958 in which Ethiopia was able to detach itself from the bondage of the foreign Church (Haggai 1990: 86). The Archbishop and his retinues were using Arabic not only for communication but also for liturgical purposes. The Amharic version of the Bible was made from Arabic equivalent; the Christian kings of Ethiopia used Arabic as a diplomatic language in their correspondence with foreign and domestic entities. In our recent history, the last prime minister of the Imperial regime, Aklilu Habtewold, was a fluent speaker of Arabic (Gori, *E Ae*, 2003: 302; Mohammed Seid: 2019: 15).

On the other hand, when Islam was introduced into the Ethiopian land in 615, following the migration of the first followers of the Prophet, the Arabic speaking group that stayed in Ethiopia for 16 years and the subsequent religious and renewed commercial relationship between the Arab speaking communities and the Abyssinians is but a natural flow. Such historic interactions have produced a real impact upon the languages of Abyssinia in their relationship with the Arabic language. Leslau (1990) has documented the many interactions of Arabic on Ethiopian Semitic languages.

The 16th and 17th centuries might have seen a growth of Arabic due to the ascendancy of Muslim power to be followed by a decline in the Arabic and Islamic intellectual legacy as witnessed from local sources. The beginning of 19th century, however, brings a wind of change in the rank of the Muslims and a kind of revival of Islam was observed and through it Arabic language breathes new momentum. *Faqih* Zubair, Muftī Dawud, šayò Muḥammad Šafī, Sayyid Bušra Ay Muḥammad, šayò Jaÿfar Buko, Ğamal Al-Dīn al-Annī, the šayò-s of Dana (Šayò Aḥmad Ādam, šayò Muḥammad Yašīn and Šayò Muḥammad Zain), šayò ẒAlī *naḥwiyya* and šayò Kammalaw Muḥammad to

mention but few brought a new momentum to Arabic language through their Islamic awareness intellectual movements. The many Arabic grammarians mentioned in this research are the products of the school of change championed by the above mentioned scholars directly or indirectly (See Mohammed Seid 2019: 28-29, Endris Mohammed 2016: 102-116).

Gori, (*E Ae* 2003:302-303) mentions four ways of spreading spoken and/or written Arabic in Ethiopia:

1. Arabic speaking communities of traders and immigrants of Arab origin settled in Ethiopia;
2. Religious and cultural language of Ethiopian Muslims;
3. Communication language for peoples living bordering the Sudan and between Ethiopian Muslims of different origins;
4. Communication language in the markets;

We may add other ways of spreading Arabic: the Arabic media (State radio and recently Television broadcasts), though not vital agents, and modern institutions like Addis Ababa University as well as private and Muslim mission schools (*Madrassa*'s) especially in major Ethiopian cities and Muslim regions like Harar, Afar and Ogaden. So far, no exhaustive research is available as far as the standard bearers of Arabic language teaching in Ethiopia is concerned in whose circle Arabic is considered as a key instrument for the understanding of the religion of Islam and its main texts. Sara writes on "Arabic Grammar Traditions in Gibe and Harar: Regional Continuity vs. Specificity of Scholarship" based on a field research by a Humboldt University group around Jimma in the historical Gibe region (*E Ae*, 19 (2016), pp.113-134). Gori mentions the contribution and biographical data of two eminent Arabic grammarians of Ethiopia, *šayḫ* Abd al-Basīḥ b. Muḥammad b. Ḥassen al-Mīnasī, and *šayḫ* Muḥammad Amīn b. Ḥabdallāh of Harar (*E Ae* 11, 2008). The present research, as mentioned above, is a humble attempt to introduce the biographical data of some most famous Arabic experts of Ethiopia and the texts studied under their supervision.

2. The Arabic Disciplines

The Islamic teaching and curriculum in Ethiopia, unlike many Muslim countries like Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan, is not primarily given by the vernaculars as main references. The Arabic, either in written format or communications, is essentially the main body of teaching and curricula. The vernaculars of Ethiopia are used only as backgrounds i.e. in translations so that the Arabic as a language or the many Islamic literatures written in Arabic can

be understood by the students or the faithful. This is not to underestimate the role of local languages used in teaching Islam or Arabic in Ethiopia. The country is rich in local *Manzuma* and related literatures using indigenous languages in what are known as *Īaēamī* literature (Mohammed Seid 2019: 16). Here also we find the use of at least Arabic script instead of the local script in the bulk of such literature as well as the employment of many literally Arabic words or Arabic loan words that make a kind of hybrid language.

The following are the Islamic disciplines given in Arabic in Ethiopia in its puritan and standard pattern for centuries, yet, using Arabic as the fundamental means of instruction proving its strong presence in the country (See Hussein: 1990: 103-104). The average time invested by students from primary to advanced (graduation) level, a total of 19-23 years, is indicated as estimated by informants involved in the research data collection process.

- *al-lafz Al Qurān* 'Reading skill' [2-3 years];
- *fiqh* 'Islamic jurisprudence' [4-5 years];
- *Ilm al kalam* 'theology' [2 years];
- *naḥw* 'Arabic grammar' (Under *naḥw* there are specialized streams of *sarf* (morphology), *Īaruḍ* (prosody), *maĪyanī* (allegories), *bayan* (eloquence), *badīĪ* (science of metaphors), and *balāga* (rhetoric), *manṭiq* 'logic' (see Gori, *Ae*, 11, 2008) [3-4 years];
- *Hadīō* 'Prophetic traditions' [4 years];
- *Tafsīr* 'exegesis' [2-3 years];
- Practical sciences: *Īilm al-nuēūm (miqat)*, *Īilm al-Hisab*, *Ṭṭb* (Astrology, mathematics and medicine) [2 years].

3. The Learning Centers and the Arabic Grammarians: the Case of Wällo

Wällo is traditional Islamic centre which can be considered as the heart of Islamic scholarship and mysticism in Ethiopia. Unlike most scholars of Harar, Bale and Arsi the Wällo '*Ulama*' play a great role in the dissemination of Islam in general and Arabic language in particular beyond their immediate birth places and ethnic groups. We find the '*Ulama*' of Wällo in any part of the Ethiopian landscape. The learning centers are sometimes attached to the names of the scholars (Ĝamal al-Dīn of Anna) or the name of the scholar is attached to his particular specialization (Šayō '*Alī Naḥwiyya*). The documentation of the Arabic grammarians and teachers of Arabic in Ethiopia in an exhaustive and chronological setting is beyond the scope of this preliminary information. The researcher limits himself by giving a partial list

of the known grammarians of Wällo leaving the in-depth study for future researchers.

1. Šayò Sayed b. Faqih Zubair ỲAlī of Yaêêu (d. 1242 *hiêra*, 1826-27), born in Gaugur, in a locality of Mandara (Yaêêu); he is author of about forty treatises among which a commentary on *Āêurrumiyya* and *Alfiyya* of Ibn Malik is worth mentioning. He is the student and successor of Muḥammadšafi, the *Muêahid* and was a student of Muftī Dawud who taught him *fiqh*. Šayò Muḥammadšafi has given his daughter, Ayesha, to him in order to facilitate his succession (šayò Širaê Maḥmūd); he has produced eminent students: *Saif al-Haq* ĞaŸfar Buko (1793-1860), Ğamal al-Dīn Muḥammad Anna, šayò Aḥmad Wābālo (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, pp. 229-230).
2. Šayò Bāšīr Dāilāmāle (a village in Wārābabo); he was a saintly prolific scholar and writer who taught *fiqh* Arabic and its auxiliaries. He produced works in *balāga* like the *Tashīl al-Ÿibarāt fī fann al-IstŸarat*; he was a contemporary of Ğamal al-Dīn Muḥammad of Anna (d. 1882). Among his best students was šayò Nazīr (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, pp. 156-157, Muḥammad Wale 2004: 203-206).
3. Šayò Nazīr Dāilāmāle: he was an expert in morphology; šayò ỲAbd al-Wahhab of Oda and šayò Nazīr were among his students (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 402).
4. Muftī Muḥammad Aman of Ğille, Dawway (d. 1397 *hiêra*, 1976-77). He studied *fiqh* locally and went to al-Azhar University staying abroad for a total of 22 years. He has written a commentary on *Āêurrumma* entitled *al-Maqasid al-wafiyah fī šarḥ al-muqadimat al-āêurrumma*, published in Cairo (See Hussein Ahmed, 1988: 96;. He came back to his country and taught even though he was not given his degree from *al-Azhar* as he was not in good mood with the authorities despite his expertise in both Arabic (Islamic) textual and rational sciences (Muḥammad Tag al-Din: p. 390; informant: šayò ỲAbdallah Idrīs, a graduate of *al-Azhar* University).
5. Šayò ỲAlī Malkabālo, in the district of Riqqe; he was a student of Muftī Dawud. He taught for long years and died in 1274 *hiêra*, 1857/58 (See, Muḥammad Tag al-Din).
6. Qaḍī Aḥmad Ğarado: he was an expert and teacher in *Hanafīfiqh*, *Tafsīr* and Arabic grammar. He is the son of ĞaŸfar Bukko [1793-1860] (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 100).

7. Šayò ÝAlī *naḥwiyya* (ÝAlī b. Zainu): He is the teacher of šayò Aḥmad Qallu (d. 1944) [father of Muḥammad Tag al-Din], šayò Kammalaw Muḥammad, šayò Aḥmad Dabat. He was born in Garado but taught and buried in Bille Agar; he was expert in *naḥw* and morphology though he also taught *fiqh* (Ḥanafī) and *Tafsīr*; šayò ĞaÝfar b. Ādam, šayò Ādam Abit of Bake were among his students; he is also remembered for his best hand writing; he received *Zikr* (spiritual initiation) from šayò Bedru, Falla. He hates drum beating in *Mawlid* ceremonies as a proof of the diversity of the perspective of the Wällo ÝUlamáy; he died in 1337 *hiëra* [1917-1918] after living a long age of 120 years; that means he was born ca. 1798 (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, pp. 269-270; Muḥammad Wale 2004: 174).
8. Šayò Muḥammad Tanī, a grammarian from Garfa and is considered among the best teachers of Arabic grammar and syntax; he died in 5 *Raëab*, 1318 [Monday 29 October, 1900]. Al-Ḥaëë Ilyas and šayò Grañ were among his students who succeed him in the field of Arabic teaching (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 362).
9. Šayò Dawud Būšanī of Wārawayu, Wällo: he was a scholar of Arabic grammar who produces scholars like šayò Ādam Gūfu (d. 1960, 1380 *hiëra*) who was a famous teacher of the *fiqh* of *šafiÝi* (Muḥammad Wale, p. 106-107). Since šayò Ādam Gūfu studied *fiqh* under šayò Muḥammadsadiq (d. 1905) and took *Zikr* from the founders of Dana (I and II) we can estimate that Šayò Dawud Būšanī was their contemporary (See Muḥammad Wale, p. 106-107)
10. Šayò ĞaÝfar b. Ādam: born in Goha, Abba Dima Agär (Qallu); he is a Ḥanafī who studied Arabic grammar under ÝAlī b. Zainu (*šayò ÝAlī Naḥwiyya*). šayò Kammalau, the king of *naḥw* him self, used to say that “no student would come to us if he was living now”. He died in 1338 *hiëra* [1919/20] (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 166).
11. Šayò Maḥmūd (b. Sulayman) Qorare: originally from Ifat and was married to the sister of Ğimma Abba Ğifar II and lived in Ğimma until Emperor Menilik II reprimanded the latter about the growing fame and multitude of the students of the šayò and ordered the closure of his learning centre fearing a kind of armed resistance after the Emperor heard of a rumor of that sort; the šayò moved to Gomma with his wife, who was denied a mule by her brother, Abba Ğifar II, and was obliged to walk bare footed with harsh

- difficulties; she even rejected the request of her brother to be divorced from *šayò* Maḥmūd Qorare (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 396). This actually shows the intensity of the worries of the Emperor and the appeasement strategy of Abba Ġifar II. *šayò* Maḥmūd Qorare was expert in all fields of Islamic teachings. He had been also in Yemen and Mecca and was able to mobilize many students; *šayò* Aḥmad Nure of Bätäho, and *šayò* Kamal Bašīr were among his best students; he was a class mate of Jawhar b. Hayder and died in 1339 *hiêra* [1920/21] (Muḥammad Wale, 2004: 111; Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 396).
12. *Šayò* Ālī b. Birru b. Nämie, best known by his nick name *šayò* Grañ; he is from Bataho in origin but resides in Grañ, Dawway. He received his Arabic knowledge from *šayò* Muḥammad Ōanī. He was also a student of Jawhar bin Haydar (d. 1919) in *fiqh* (Informant: *šayò* Abdala Idrīs); he was affiliated to al-Tiēanī order though he was also the student of al-Ḥaēē Kabīr (d.) in *'usulal-fiqh* (Muḥammad Wale, 2004: 98). He taught Arabic for several years and graduated many students, he died in 1357 *hijra* [1938/39]. *Šayò* Aḥmad Dalāti (d. 1399 *hiêra*, 1980-81) are among his best students (Muḥammad Taē al-Dīn, p. 283; Informant: *šayò* Ābdalah Idrīs, *šayò* Kassim Muḥammad Tag al-Din).
 13. *Šayò* Aḥmad *Manṭiq* (Qāṭe: Tähulädäre): he is the tutor of *šayò* Oda (*šayò* Abd al-Wahhab Ābd al-Ġalīl Mustāfa, a famous Ḥanafī teacher and mystic (see Hussein, 9, *PICES*, p. 101), *šayò* Cale and *šayò* Ādam Qaṭe; his father's name is Muḥammad or Surūr but popularly known by his especialization. He follows the school of *Šafi'ī* in jurisprudence and was a known in Arabic grammar and *Manṭiq* (logic). He has got the blessing of the *šayò* of Dana and received *Zikr* from him (Muḥammad Wale 2004: 166). *Šayò* Ālī b. ĀUmar and *šayò* Aḥmad Nure were among his best students (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 117).
 14. *Šayò* Aḥmad ĀUmar Mūsa Wādaêo (Därä) [1298-1372 *hiêra*; 1880/81-1953], the father of *šayò* Muḥammad Wale. He lived in Därä, bordering Wällo and Šäwa. He is originally from Boräna (Wällo). His students were from Boräna, Bāgemdér and Gurage lands. His works represent his Arabic expertise. I mention here only those textbooks related to Arabic grammar, rhetoric and prosody:

šarḥ matn al-Kaḥfi, fī [Yilmay] al-Ārūd wa al-qawafī;
manḥal al-Šaḥfī fī Yilmay al-Ārūd wa-al-qawafī;
Darar al-biḥar;
Ḥulasat baḥraq fī fann al-sarf;
Nazmal- baḥraq al-Kabīr;
Nazm al- Āērumiyya;
Nazm al-Sullam al-bayan (with commentary);
Šarab al-wardi fī tarēamat al lammiyat al- wardī;
 (Muḥammad Wale, pp. 86-87, Muḥammad Tag al-Din, pp. 104-105).

15. Šayò Arabu, popularly known also as the šayò of Agamsa, Qallu. He was black and is sarcastically nick named as šayò Arabu, the Arab. His proper name is Muḥammad. My informant, šayò Ābdallah Idrīs, now 82, is also his student. He used to teach from sun rise to sun set even avoiding coffee break and used to say “I am *waqf* for teaching”; he even once declined to marry for fear of disruption of his career, šayò Ahmed MuĀrīb, šayò Muḥammad Amīn of Ġisr, šayò Yesuf Argoba, šayò Aḥmad Ṭawīl were among very productive Arabic grammar teachers who studied under him; šayò Arabu was a student of šayò Kammalaw Muḥammad (Informant: šayò Abdalah Idrīs, šayò Muḥammad Ġama, šayò Sayyid *nahwiyya*).
16. Šayò Kammalaw Muḥammad: he resided in Ardina Agär, Qallu; he has produced more than 80 efficient Arabic experts like al-Ḥaēē Muḥammad Ōani Ḥabīb, šayò Muḥammad Tag al-Din; he is given an eulogizing epithet as “the KaĀba of Arabic literary experts and Sībawayh of the time” by Muḥammad Tag al-Din writing his note about the biography of his mentor (pp. 304, 307). Many notable personalities in the Islamic scholarship of Ethiopia take their training in Arabic disciplines from him (šayò Muḥammad Yasīn Bāšīr, the šayò of Mislay, Wārāhimāno (d. 1969) who among other productions wrote a commentary on Āērumiyya is a case in point (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 326). Šayò Kammalaw was a wealthy man unlike many of the ŸUlamay of the country (Informant: šayò Ābdalah Idrīs). Šayò Kammalaw (Qallu, Ḥanafī, bearer of the flag of Arabic grammar, he has oratorical gifts and big communicative skill, elegant in his dressing (pp. 305-306). He is a king of Arabic grammar though efficient in *fiqh*, Ḥanafī. He does not know how to write. He died in *Īū al-Ḥiēēa*, 1367, *Ṭəqəmət* 6, 1941 in Ethiopian calendar [1948] at the

- age of 74 (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 306). He was succeeded by his son, *šayò* Muḥammad Awol (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, pp. 304-307). The teacher of *šayò* Kammalaw was none other than *šayò* ʾAlī b. Zaynu b. Ibrahīm ; he studied *fiqh*, *sarf* and *Tafsīr* under him (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 306).
17. *Šayò* Tamam: he succeeded *šayò* Arabu of Agamsa. He is a class mate of the live *šayò* of Ġisr (*šayò* Muḥammad Amīn); *šayò* Seid *naḥwiyya* of Dessie studied under him (Informant: *šayò* Seid *naḥwiyya*).
 18. *Šayò* Muḥammad Awol Kammalaw (the son of the great grammarian, *šayò* Kammalaw Muḥammad) succeeded his father as a teacher of grammar, he died in 1386 *hiēra*, 1966/67. He resided in Abba Ṭibe Agär.
 19. *Šayò* Yimam Ḥassen: popularly known as the Maguale *šayò*; Maguale is found in Däbräsina district, Boräna, Wällo. He is known for his piety and excellent hand writing. He teaches Arabic grammar for long years himself was a student of *šayò* Kammalaw and *šayò* ʾAlī *naḥwiyya*. He has produced scholars known for teaching *naḥw*: al-Ḥaêê ʾAbd al-Ḥamīd Kamal of Boräna, *šayò* ʾAdam Kurat, al-Ḥaêê Ġunaid Garawi. He died in 1386 *hiēra*, 1966/67 (Informant: *šayò* ʾAlī ʾAbd al-Latīf; see also Muḥammad Wale 2004: 177-178).
 20. *Šayò* Bäšīr Gatiri was one of the best teachers of Arabic grammar; among his students were *šayò* Muḥammad *faqih* (author of *Misk al-Azfar*), al-Ḥaêê Aḥmad Därra (Muḥammad Wale, p. 157).
 21. *Šayò* Aḥmad Nure (b. 1838): he was a prolific *šayò* but he is known for teaching Arabic and related specialized fields: *balāġa* and *manṭiq*; he learning centre was found in Bätäho, Qallu until he moved to Dassie as a result of his quarrel with the local chief; he was a student of *šayò* Muḥammadsadiq (d. 1905) in *fiqh* and *šayò* Aḥmad *manṭiq* as well as *šayò* Maḥmūd Qorare in Arabic grammar, logic and related fields; he died at an age of 110 in Dessie, 1367 *hiēra* [1947/48] and was buried in the public cemetery of Dawdo, Dessie. *Šayò* Muḥammad Ōanī Ḥabīb, the late leader of the Muslim population of Ethiopia, and *šayò* Muḥammad Taê al-Dīn (a friend and class mate of *šayò* Muḥammad Ōanī) are among his best students (Muḥammad Wale 2004: 110-111).
 22. *Šayò* Kamal Bašīr
He is from Boräna and was an exceptional expert of *naḥw*; he was a classmate and friend of *šayò* Kammalaw Mohammad; *Šayò*

- Kamal's hand writing was so beautiful and his son, *šayò* 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, uses his manuscripts to learn and teach Arabic grammar; *šayò* Kamal Bašīr died during the Italian invasion of 1936 (Informants: *šayò* Sirag Mahmud, *šayò* Ādam Mūsa).
23. *Šayò* 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kāmal (Borāna)[d. 1987 E.C., 1994/95; 1415 *hiēra*].
The son of *šayò* Kamal Bašīr and like his father he dedicated his life for the teaching of *nahw*. He told his student, *šayò* Ādam Mūsa (a long time, ca. 30 years, Imam of Arab Gānda moque, Dessie) that he was an eleventh scholar from the scholarly lineage of his family from his father's line. *Šayò* 'Abd al-Ḥamīd was a student of the famous teacher and expert of Arabic grammar and specialized fields named *šayò* Imam Maguale (Informant: *šayò* Ādam Mūsa).
24. *Šayò* Aḥmad Surūr of Qāte (Tāhulādare): he was an expert of his time in Arabic grammar (Muḥammad Taê al -Dīn, p. 117).
25. *Al-Ḥaêê* Kabīr Aḥmad b. Abdurahman b. *al-Ḥaêê* Idrīs b. 'Abd al-Raḥman (1295-1390 *hiēra*, 1878-1970/1971); he is considered as an Imam of *fiqh*, Ḥadīō and Arabic disciplines. He committed the whole Qur'ān in memory (*ḥafīz*) and was expert in the science of the holy text; he lived in Gādo; Šarf al-Dīn Garfa and *šayò* Grañ (Dawway) were among his eminent students. He has a lineage to Muḥammad Dawud through his mother (Muḥammad Taê al-Dīn, pp. 120-121).
26. *Šayò* Ibrahīm b. Yasīn al- Maêâte: he is a prolific scholar in many Islamic disciplines. His knowledge of *Tafsīr*, Arabic, logic and rhetoric is remarkable; he has produced eminent scholars like *šayò* 'Alī Dulati, *šayò* Šaraf al-Dīn, the jurist, *šayò* ŸUmar 'Alī Gālāmsō (Muḥammad Wale, p. 169; Gori, *Eae*, 11, 2008).
27. *Šayò* Muḥammad *šayò* (Dodota): He lived near Bati around Gārfa. He was known for his piety and was a teacher of *nahw*; he is a student of Jawhar b. Hayder (himself also an expert in *nahw*, 'Arabic grammar').
28. He met with Ğawhar b. Haydar (d. 1919). He has produced proficient students in many Islamic disciplines including Arabic grammar. *šayò* ŸAbd al-Wahhab of Yaêêu (the son of *šayò* Aḥmad Nure—*šayò* Limo), *šayò* Muḥammad Makīn, the son and successor of *šayò* Cale, *šayò* Aḥmad al-Hadī, *šayò* Seid Sulula, al-Ḥaêê Aḥmad ŸUmar (Qobo) are among his best students.

29. *Šayò* Bedru (Cəsa)
He is considered as the teacher of Wällo: Aḥmad Munawwar (the son of *šayò* Cale), al-Ḥaêê ÝAlī Gura, *šayò* Adam Cəsa and *šayò* Muhammad *Nūr* Cəsa are among his best students; he taught Arabic in Yaêêu in a village known as Cəsa in a district of Sodoma (Informant: *šayò* ÝAbdalla Idrīs).
30. *Šayò* ÝAbd al-Wahhab *šayò* Nurye ÝUmar
The son of a one time physician of Emperor Minilik, *šayò* Nurye ÝUmar is known for his teaching service of Arabic grammar in a village near Gora Arba, Yäêêu. He is a student of *šayò* Muḥammad *šayò* of Dodota; he has produced an eminent expert of *naḥw* who composed an *Alfiyya* of his own, *šayò* Muhammadnūr (Informant: *šayò* ÝAbdallah Idrīs).
31. *Šayò* Muḥammadnūr: a student of *šayò* Abdulwahab *šayò* Nurye ÝUmar: He has composed '*alfiya*' of his own in which he said:
waqadēayt qasidatan safiya
fayiqatan sawayifal Alfiyya
He is known as *šayò Daraq waira* and was a classmate of *šayò* Arabu (Informant: *šayò* ÝAbdallah Idrīs).
32. *Šayò* Muḥammad Seid (Därri)
He was a student of *al-Ḥaêê*Aḥmad Därra (d. 1970/71) but graduated and got '*iēaza*' (permission to teach) from *šayò* Minas; he is the teacher of *šayò*Muḥammad Awol Zobel [b.1956-] (writer, traditional medical practitioner and expert in Arabic grammatical and specialized sciences), *šayò*Muḥammad*négus* (an aging and ailing Arabic and traditional medical expert) and a one time president of the *šarīÝa* 'Supreme Islamic Court' of Ethiopia, *šayò*Širaê Maḥmūd (an informant here) were among his students who eulogizes his master as a man of great piety and a refined scholar of Arabic sciences especially, *balāga*, *manṭiq* and Ýarūd; *šayò* Aḥmad Dalāti, *šayò* Cəka (Gurage), *šayò* Muḥammad Ḥassen Manayo, once Imam of the Nūr mosque of Addis Ababa [he teaches currently different disciplines at home and in another mosque], *šayò* Muḥammad ÝAlī of Wärä Himāno and is currently teaching in the sacred mosque of Mecca is a student of *šayò*Muḥammad Seid (Därri) and sheikh Minas; *šayò* Muḥammad ÝAlī who writes commentaries on Muslīm and Nasaýī , is a result of local scholarship as he also studied Buðarī and Muslīm under *šayò* Muḥammad Zain of Dana; his father popularly known as

- šayò* Talanta, Lägähida, is a student of *šayò* Minas in *fiqh* too (Informant: *šayò* Širaê Maḥmūd).
33. *Šayò* Aḥmad Ṭawīl: He is a student of the *šayò* of Agamsa (*šayò* Arabu) and his learning centre was near Sänbäte (Šäwa). The researcher once started learning *sarf* under him (1988) though for a very brief time. He has graduated sheiks like *šayò* Muḥammad Sulṭan and *šayò* ŸUmar Yesuf (Informant: *šayò* Muḥammad Sulṭan, Imam of Ṭa'if mosque, *šayò* Omar Yesufe, a teacher at Arab Gända mosque, Dessie, who died in 2020).
34. *Šayò* Yesuf Céra
My informant, *šayò* 'Abdalla Idrīs, claims that he was his classmate. *Šayò* Yesuf studied *fiqh* under *šayò* Agar Chore (*šayò* Óalīl); he studied *naḥw* under *šayò* Agamsa. His teaching centre was at a village named Céra, Argoba, and he then moved to Wallaga and was buried there (Informant: *šayò* 'Umar Yesuf).
35. Muftī Raya (b. 1322 *hiêra*, 1903AD): His full name is *al-šayò* Muḥammad Širaê b. *šayò* Muḥammad Seid b. *šayò* Abū Bakr al-Ġabartī of Anna; he was the follower of *šafiŸi* Law, *šazilī* in order and was a famous *faqih*, *muḥadiô* and *naḥwiy*; his teacher in Arabic grammar was *šayò* 'Alī Birru Nāme (Muḥammad Taê al-Dīn, p. 424).
36. *Šayò* Guba Wäde (his full name is Ibrahīm b. Abdurazaq b. Ādam; but known by his nick name *šayò* Ibrahīm Ṭirso. He has extraordinary knowledge of Arabic grammar; some claim that he was *Sībawayh* of Abyssinia. He has composed works in verse on Theology, principles of *ḥadīô* (with commentary), logic (with commentary), *Taômīs* of *burda*, a commentary on *Lamiyat Ibn al-Wardī* (Muḥammad Wale, p.170). He has composed *Alfiya* of his own in which he eulogized his work saying: *fa'iqatan alfiyat al-Aêhūrī fī al-bašti walbaha'i wazzūri* (Muḥammad Wale, pp.169-170; Informant: *šayò* ŸAbdallah Idīs). He studied the *fiqh* of *šafiŸi* under *šayò* Sharafudiin Garfa, he was also a student of Jawhar bin Hayder for seven years (Muḥammad Wale 2004: 170).
37. *Šayò* Muḥammad Arab b. *šayò* Aḥmad Mustāfa: he was known for his piety and knowledge of Arabic grammar, rhetoric and prosody. He is the student of *šayò* Aḥmad Dārra and died at a very young age, in 1937/38, 1356 *hiêra* (Muḥammad Wale: 2004: 105).
38. *Šayò* Idris Boranī: he is an established scholar in Islamic theology, but especially in Arabic grammar, syntax and related fields; he is the student of Jawhar b. Hayder (Muḥammad Wale: 2004: 130-

- 131). Once he quarreled with the *šayò* of Gäräwi (*šayò* Ḥassen) over a recitation of a word from the Qur'an [2:112] (*laysu sawāyan*, or *laysu sawāya*) while he was in his teaching centre at Kälala, Borāna. He left his centre because the assembly of *ŸUlamay* over the issue sanctioned both recitations fearing both giants; one is a celebrated saint and the other a sharp grammarian and linguist. He was unhappy with the decision and left for Addis Ababa to facilitate his correspondence with the scholars of Mecca and Egypt in which he secured a letter confirming his position; other local scholars also wrote him a letter of support. However, he died before he turned back to Wällo and was buried at Guläle Muslim cemetery in Addis Ababa (Muḥammad Wale: 2004: 132). This incident shows the degree and sophistication of Arabic discourse in Ethiopia.
39. *Šayò* ‘Abd al-Basīṭ b. Muḥammad b. Ḥassen (*šayò* Minas, d. in 1413 *hiēra*, 1992-1993): He was born in the village known as Minas (Borāna) in 1908, he studied under al-Ḥaēē Aḥmad Dārra for 15 years mastering all the branches of Arabic grammar and subsequently taught the subject for 45 years in his birth place, Minas, and 15 years at Addis Ababa; he is the *šayò* of many contemporary Muslim scholars of the country (See Gori, *EAE*, 11, 2008). *Šayò* Ṭayyibšayò Muḥammadnūr used to replace his teacher, *šayò* Minas while he left for Addis Ababa (Informant: *šayò* Siraē Maḥmūd).
40. Al-Ḥaēē Ibrahīm b. *šayò* ‘Abd al-Salam: he was a prolific scholar; he taught jurisprudence, rhetoric and Arabic grammar at Céka, Šäwa; he died in 1977 (Muḥammad Wale, 2004: 118-119).
41. *Šayò* ŸAbdallah Borane: his father’s name was Hamza, he was a prolific scholar: he taught *fiqh*, *balāga*, *naḥw* at his birth place Abaloganda, šum gädäl (Borana); he used to teach sheiks going to their own centre unlike many others. He also used to go to Dessie for litigation; he studied under *šayò* Ahmad Dārra; he is a son of *šayò* Minas’s elder sister; *šayò* ŸAbdala Borane finally resided in Dessie and was teaching at Shawabar mosque (Informant: *šayò* Siraē Maḥmūd) [The present researcher also know *Šayò* ŸAbdallah Borane teaching at Šäwa Bär mosque].
42. *Šayò* Aḥmad Ergoya
Student of the famous *šayò* insarf, *šayò* Ibrahīm Ardibo. His centre was, at Asälal. He died during the military regime of Ethiopia (Informant: *šayò* Ōani Aḥmad).

43. *Šayò* Ibrahīm Ardibo; his father's name is Mūsa; he studied *naḥw* under *šayò* Agamsa. Expert in *naḥw* and especially *sarf* and his learning centre was at Ardibo, Tähulädare. He died in the 1990s (Informant: *šayò* Seid *naḥwiyya*).
44. *Šayò* Muḥammad Tag al-Din b. *šayò* Aḥmad Qallu (1915- 2010); *šayò* Muḥammad Tag al-Din had taught Arabic grammar and other disciplines in Kombolča for more than 60 years; he has many works that show his Arabic proficiency and the very material for this research is the product of his scholarship. Only one is published from his works; he has also composed a dirge in high standard Arabic when *šayò* Kammalaw, his teacher and a close friend of his own father died (Muḥammad Tag al-Din, p. 307; Informant: Kasim Muḥammad Tag al-Din).

4. The Arabic Grammar and Syntax Handbooks

(Sources: *šayò* Sani, *šayò* Kassim Taê Al-Dīn, Gori, *EAE* 11, 2008)

Arabic grammar and syntax, *naḥw*, and its branches of *sarf* (morphology), *'arūd* (prosody), *ma'anī* (allegories), *bayan* (eloquence), *badī'* (science of metaphors) and *balāḡa* (rhetoric) are the major subject extensively offered in Wällo and other parts of Ethiopia. The following are the standard texts uniformly taught to the pupils:

a. Proper *Naḥw*

Al-Muqaddima al-ĀEURrumiyya by Abū Abdallah Muḥammad b. Dawud al-Šanhaēīb. ĀEURrum (d. 1323);
Mulḥatal-i'Yrab by al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1054);
Kašf al-niqāb, šarḥ mulḥat al-i'Yrab; šarḥ al-Fawākih al-ḡaniyya 'alā mutammimat al-aḡurriyya by YAbdallah b. Aḥmad al-Fakihī (d. 1564);
Al-alfiyyat by Ibn Malik (d. 1273);
šarḥ al-masalik li-Ālfiyyat ibn Malik by Abu Muḥammad 'Abdallah b. YAbd al-Raḥman b. YĀqīl; *Muēīb al-nada'y alā qaṭri al-nadā* by YAfif al-Dīn YAlī b. Aḥmad al-Fakihī al-Makkī *al-ša fi'Yītal-naḥwī* (d. 1564);
Muḡnī al-labīb Yan kutub al-aYarīb by Abdallah b. Hišam (d. 1360)
Mulaēamī by Jami (See also Gori, *EAE*, 11, 2008).

b. *sarf* (morphology)

Matn al-binā' (author: unspecified);
Al-'Izzī by 'Izz al-Dīn Abu al-Faḍa'il 'Abd-al-Wahhab b. Ibrahīm;

Al- Maqsūd fī al-tasrīf (Anonymous);
Lamiyyat al-af'āl by Ibn Malik
Marah al-arwah by Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Mas'ud (beginning of 14th century);
Al-ṣafiya by b. al-Ḥa'ib (d. 1249).

- c. 'arūd (prosody)
Al-kaḥf fī 'ilmay al- 'arud wa al-qawafī by Aḥmad b. 'Abbad al Qina'ī (d. 1454);
Al-Ramiza al-ṣafiya fī 'ilm al- 'Yaruḍ wa-al-qafiya al-Qasīda al-ḥazra'īya by Muḥammad al-ḥazra'ī;
Al-ṣafiya al-Kafiya fī 'ilm al- 'arūd by Abū al-'Irfan Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ṣabban (d. 1792)
- d. *balāḡa* (rhetoric): *ma'anī* (allegories), *bayan* (eloquence) and *badī'* (science of metaphors)
Matn al- Jawhar al-maknūn by Abd-al-rahman al- Al- Aḥḍarī; Samarqandiya;
Talōīs al- miḥṭah by al-ḥaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338);
Šuruḥ al-Talōīs al-Taftazanī (d. 1389/ 1390, commentary, both short and long);
Miḥṭah al- 'Yulūm (the third section) by Sakkakī;
Tuḥfat al-Iōwan (with its commentary);
Ḥašiyat al-Damanhurī al-Kubrā 'Ālāmatn al-Kafi by Muḥammad al-Damanhurī.
- e. *manṭiq* 'logic'
ṣammat (with the commentary);
sullam al-munawraq by Abdurahman Al- Aḥḍarī ;
Isāḡua'ī by 'Aōir al-Dīn al-Abharī;
Tahzibal- manṭiq by Sa'īd al-Dīn Taftazani;
Al-riṣalat al-ṣamsiyya by Na'ēm al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Alī (Katibī), d. 493 *hi'era*;
Al- basayir al-nasriyyah fī 'ilm al- manṭiq by Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar b. *Sahlan al-sawī* (See also Hussein Ahmed 1988: 94- 106).

5. Current Centers of Arabic Language

The centers of Arabic language teaching in urban Ethiopia are much disorganized and without any firm institutional backing and curriculum. The effort at government level through Addis Ababa University is worth mentioning. The Arabic language started as non-credit course during the reign

of Emperor Häilä Sellase under the department of Ethiopian languages and continued to be given under the military regime, then under the Foreign Language and Literature Department, supported by the Libyan Embassy at Addis Ababa; currently the Arabic unit has reached into the mainstream curriculum teaching students in the BA program and two batches are already graduated with BA in Arabic which is a tremendous success (Muḥammad Seid Abdella, 2019: 21-22). Samara and Jijiga Universities also started Arabic noncredit programs in 2012. The Aweliya Mission School has pursued Arabic teaching curriculum though not very effective; the College under Aweliya Mission School has shown an initial success in teaching Arabic but was short lived and is now on the verge of collapse. Some Arabic experts teach the language on personal level during the night shift for various students at Awoliya Mission School (Primary) compound at Addis Ababa. The *Al-Misbah* Arabic teaching school which was run by a promising young man, Abd Al-Manan Kebede, is no more in place for the last three years. The Sindibad School, Addis Ababa, has Arabic teaching experience (since 2000) and it continues its service as an organized school. The staggering Madrasas in Harar and Dredawa also teach the ABC of Arabic for primary and secondary school students though now at the verge of collapse. The situation in Ġiêiga, Somalia Regional State, is no more promising though very few individual efforts are seen intermittently; Jimma and Dessie have no any *Madrasa* that teach Arabic as a language proper. However, the much gain for Arabic especially in cities is the informal teaching as a vehicle for Islamic teachings. At least several Muslim children learn how to read Arabic and recite the Qurʿān as part of their religious obligation as the language has obvious liturgical services which makes Arabic in Ethiopia a respected guest for many households.

It is worth mentioning that the Arabic grammar and syntax studies we experience in Ethiopia and its close affiliate technical disciplines are almost studied at a tertiary and advanced level in the context what we can name graduate studies at higher universities. According to šayò Abdallah Idrīs, šayò Muḥammad Jama and šayò Sayyid *naḥwiyya* (all from Wallo) the number of Arabic grammar students is usually less than the other Islamic disciplines as the disciplines require usually graduation from other disciplines; we can generally make an estimate for the minimum students enrollments to be 40 and a maximum of 200.

The Arabic language has strong and formal presence in the rural Ethiopia although in gradual decline. The names of the scholars who still follow the traditional classical Arabic curriculum and teach hundreds of students is given in this preliminary research hoping it gives a way for a detailed research in the

field. An emphasis is given on some traditional centers of Arabic in the country. We can name the list given here (that of Wällo) as the School of *šayò* Kammalaw because almost all are graduates of the school of his best student, *šayò* Agamsa, through the latter's student, *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn of Ğisr.

One of the Arabic grammar scholarly pedigree is, thus, as follows: 'Alī b. Zaynu → *šayò* Kammalaw Muḥammad → *šayò* Arabu (*šayò* Agamsa) → *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn of Ğisr. Currently, the following Arabic grammarians are the remnants of the past classical Arabic legacy in Ethiopia.

1. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Amīn (*šayò* Ğisr): He has taught Arabic disciplines for more than 60 years around Harbu (Ğisr) near Kämīssie of Wällo. Now he has retired and succeeded by his son, *šayò* Muḥammad Awol; he is also known and revered for his piety and mysticism (Informant: *šayò* Muḥammad Awol Hamza).
2. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Hashim
He is the student of *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn (*šayò* Ğisr). His center is found in Yäêêu, in a district known as Sodoma (Informant: *šayò* Sayyid *Nahwiya*).
3. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Zein (Dure)
He is also a student and graduate of the school of *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn (*šayò* Ğisr). He teaches *nahw* in the birth place of *šayò* Muḥammad Šafī, Dure, near Haiq.
4. *Šayḥ* Soqa (*šayò* Hussen Seid). After the retirement of his mentor, *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn, several students are rushing towards him, now the number of students reach 200 (Informant : Muḥammad Sulṭan, a student at Soqa, a district around Wäladi, near the shrine of Jama Nəḡus). *Šayò* Soqa is the functional successor of *šayò* Muḥammad Amīn of Ğisr.
5. *Šayḥ* Ambo Wuha (Muḥammad Qallu)
He is teaching around Manz. An informant (Muḥammad Sulṭan) counts 160 students of Arabic grammar under the *šayò* of Ambo Wuha.
6. *Šayḥ* 'Umar Wälläga
The student of *šayò* Muḥammad 'Amīn of Ğisr and is currently teaches Arabic grammar in Wallaga (Informant: *šayò* Abdela Idris).
7. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Zein (Ifat)
He resides and teaches in Ifat, Qore , near Shewa Robit.

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8. *Šayḥ* Kādiêo
He teaches *naḥw* at Chagni, Hawi zone (Goêêam) (Informant: Zaynu Mohammad, *šayò* Hamid Musa).
 9. *Šayḥ* Aḥmad Arab
He resides and teaches in Manta Wuha (Informant: Muḥammad Sultan).
 10. *Šayḥ* Hussen Dawucha
Current leader of Arabic teaching and resides in the place of the famous *šayò* of Dorāni (*šayò* Ibrahīm Hussen) in Hara (Hardibo) around Haiq (Informant: *šayò* Muḥammad ŸAlī Arrenze, *šayò* Abdella Idris). *šayò* Hussen studies *ḥadiò* under *šayò* Muḥammad RafiŸa at Anwar Mosque, Addis Ababa.
 11. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Yassin (Qunno)
A pupil of *šayò* Muḥammad Taê-Al-Dīn, and he was teaching Arabic grammatical sciences after graduation; he died in 2014; student of Muhammadnur Césa in Arabic grammar (Qassim Muḥammad Taê-Al-Dīn, *šayò* Abdallah Idrīs).
 12. *Šayḥ* ‘Usman Habru: he is currently teaching in a locality called Asalal, Yaêêu (*Šayḥ* Saayyid Nahwiya).
 13. *Šayḥ* Ibrahīm Buqe: he teaches in Qatte, Tahuladare district (*šayò* Sayyid *naḥwiyya*).
 14. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Arab
He teaches in Dārra, North Shewa. His uncle *Šayḥ* Arabu was a proficient Islamic legal expert and a student of Mufti Raya. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad now teaches in his uncle’s teaching center.
 15. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Awol
The researcher knows the *šayò* in person and witnesses his proficiency in Islamic studies. He has composed a poem in *muhmal* (undotted Arabic Letters) but do not want to exceed 56 lines of verse in respect of the *šayò* of Cale (Sayyid Ibrahim) who composed 56 lines in his poetry written using only undotted Arabic alphabets. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Awol is a proficient writer who composes a seven volume commentary on the *ŸUmdat As Salik*, a handbook of *fiqh* of the *šafiŸi* Law which the researcher is helping in typing and subsequent publication (Informant: *šayò* ŸUmar Yaḥya).
 16. *Šayḥ* Ḥassen Kadiêo,
He was a student of *šayò* Muḥammad Taê al-Dīn, *Ḥanafi*, *fiqh* and studied under *šayò* Muḥammadnūr (the *šayò* of Dārāq Wäira, originally from Wārähimano); he currently teaches

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- Arabic grammar in the village of Kadiêo (Informant: *šayò* Muḥammad Ğama).
17. *Šayḥ Muhammed Awol Minaya*: he teaches Arabic grammar in the village of Cafare (Borana). He was a student of sheikh Minas and *šayò* ʾAbd al-Ḥamīd of Borāna, Mākanāsālam.
 18. *Šayḥ Seid Quṭbu*: student of *šayò* Minas, he is teaching at his birth place Caqata after he got *iêaza* ‘certificate of teaching’ (Informant: *šayò* Siraê Maḥmūd).
 19. *Šayḥ Nūrḥussen*: the son of *šayò* ʾAlī Birru Nämie is still alive and teaching Arabic grammar at his father’s center in Grañ (Informant: *šayò* Siraê Maḥmūd).
 20. *Šayḥ Ğamal Qille*: Borana, Kalala; he studied under *al-Ḥaêê Kabīr*, *šayò* Minas. Al-Ḥaêê Muḥammad Wale was his student; he taught *fiqh* and *ʾIlm al Miqat (nuêūm)* though now he is aged (Informant: *šayò* Siraê Maḥmūd).

6. The Arabic Teaching Methodology

The teaching procedure is almost similar in every centre. The texts are arranged according to their levels of complexity: from Introductory to middle and advanced levels. Students have a primary tutor and they first read the text under study with the tutor and manage to grasp the main concepts. As part of a peer teaching process they rehearse the portion they learn from the tutor and it is in the final stage that they present themselves to the main teacher for surety and blessing. The assessment is done among the students and the tutor in the process of teaching without the need for formal examinations. The oral conjugation (*Iḅrab*) is a special local development which is learned by memory; after completion of the study, the most able are given *iêaza* ‘certificate of teaching and qualification’ (Informants: *šayò* Abdallah Idrīs, *šayò* Siraê Mahmud).

Summary

The article deals with the place and status of Arabic in Ethiopia from a historical and current perspective giving emphasis on the identity of the Arabic language agents in the country as well as the subjects under study. In so doing, it gives some light on how Arabic transcends the vicissitudes of time and regime change in Ethiopia making itself a language mainly studied for its liturgical and theological role especially in the traditional centers of Arabic teaching and a more pragmatic and secular functions in the track of its development in the cities as a communication instrument. In both cases, the

article shows the Arabic presence in Ethiopia as something integral to the cultural, historical, commercial and political past and present of the country despite institutional limitations in promoting the language.

The list of teachers of Arabic grammar, syntax and morphology is presented in a clear wakeup call for academicians especially linguists, philologists as well as historians to give a concentrated attention to Arabic in Ethiopia. Such an indication and study helps in documenting the diverse Ethiopian intellectual and cultural legacy through different language medium. It is to be reminded that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been under Arabic speaking patriarchs until 1959 and many Ge'ez literatures are translated and adopted from Arabic including the Holy Bible. As such the Arabic study in Ethiopia will definitely help our understanding of history and especially the intricate nature of our cultural past and present. The introductory list also indicates how much Arabic study was deeply rooted in the Ethiopian educational and cultural system and such exposition also has a diplomatic value depicting Ethiopian image as intellectual repository of not only Ge'ez civilization but also Arabic.

The teaching personalities in Arabic are more concentrated in the rural Ethiopia. However, their influence is also noted in the urban circles. It is a rare phenomenon in the Ethiopian context that we found an Urban born literates in Arabic until very recently in which we can count young generation of Arab phones who are more of the product of Middle Eastern Arabic and Islamic colleges. It is exactly in the opposite direction from the other Islamic world reality that we observe in Ethiopia as great learning cities like Cairo, Bagdad, Damascus, Medina, Samarqand, Tehran are the seats of Islamic education while by contrast no great city in Ethiopia has an Arabic proficiency; Harar might be an exception. Why? This might need further historical study. Cities in the past were the seats of governments and their entourages and the Muslim presence in the Ethiopian political spectrum of urban Ethiopia was limited and so is their intellectual presence. The Muslim educators tend and opt to live in rural Ethiopia as most of them see city life to be morally corrupted and politically non accommodative. However, the present and past urban classical Arabic literates of Ethiopia are but the products of rural Arabic centers. In fact, graduates of Al Azhar University serve as journalists in government Arabic Press and media though most of them have a strong domestic education even though they got their degree from Al Azhar and other foreign Universities like University of Bagdad and more recently Medina University of Saudi Arabia.

Nowadays, classical Arabic study as a language is very scanty in cities. The rural Arabic literates are active in cities not as such in the field of language

study but in Islamic studies embodied by Arabic language. It is this way that the link between the rural and Urban Arabic is established as the religion of Islam is studied thorough the Arabic medium. The present urban Arabic educators are less connected with the rural Arabic scholars both in spirit and curriculum adopted.

As far as the teaching method of Arabic is concerned the century old rural classical Arabic follows standard texts that are mainly thought by memory. It uses internationally recognized books in the field and is very effective as far as structural knowledge of the subject is concerned. However, it lacks communicative approach and gives little attention to Arabic writing skills too. In contrast, the recent Arabic teaching in Ethiopia is methodologically diverse or rather it does not follow a uniform pattern. It is mainly taught to beginners or to formal first degree courses like we observe at Addis Ababa University which is more organized and follows a modern curriculum. There are few Arabic schools that follow and model modern Arabic teaching institution in different part of the country but not very consistent and formal.

What is surprising for Wällo linguistic landscape is that Amharic is considered as a language of religious and Arabic language teaching (if not writing) even for non-Amharic mother tongue literates. That is, if the sheikh takes his education for an Amharic speaker educator, he never switches to his mother tongue in respect of the legacy of his master and the glosses transferred. However, using the Ge'ez alphabet in writing is not the culture of the Wällo Muslim scholars. In fact they use the Arabic script in writing panegyric (Manzuma) and the fundamentals of Islam to the larger audience which further enhances Arabic presence in Wällo Amharic and scholarship (Wetter 2012).

In sum, Wällo has a long history of Islamization as we witness from the biological genealogy of scholars that mainly tend to associate themselves to the lineage of Prophet Mohammed. The Arabic presence in Wällo has helped a lot in preserving Islamic knowledge, culture and commerce in Wällo. Many market languages are associated with Arabic too. The cosmopolitan culture we observe in Wällo is partly connected with the deep cultural traits and spiritual legacies that teach diversity, equity and equality irrespective of religious, ethnic and cultural differences.

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Informants

No	Name	Age
1	řayò Abdela Idris	83
2	řayò Adem Musa	84
3	řayò Kasim Muĥammad Tag al-Din	62
4	řayò Muĥammad Sultan	56
5	řayò řiraĕ Mahmud	66
6	řayò 'Alĭ 'Abd al-Lařĭf	53
7	řayò Hamid Musa	52
8	řayò Ôanĭ Aĥmad Wudu	54
9	řayò Muĥammad Ali Arrenze	55
10	řayò Omer Yesuf	60
11	řayò Muĥammad Jama	76
12	řayò Sayyid Naĥwiyya	58
14	řayò ŸUmar Yahya	53

