A Survey of the Linguistic Development of Sidaama

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Abstract

Most of the written use of Sidaama in the pre-1991 period was a liturgical one. It was the post 1993 period that witnessed a tremendous development. Hence the objective of this paper is describing the linguistic development of Sidaama with a particular emphasis in the last three decades. First of all, a Latin script was adopted for writing the language while before 1993 it was written in Ethiopic script. Moreover, since 1993 it became a language of instruction in the first cycle of primary schools and then it was taught as a subject. In addition, it begun to be used as an administrative and court language. Furthermore, it became a language of mass media, first in radio broadcasts and since 2015 in TV broadcast. A diploma in Sidaamu Afoo began to be offered at Hawaasa Teachers' Training College in 2010. In 2013 a B.A.in Sidaamu Afoo and Literature was launched at Hawaasa University and in 2020 a B.Ed. in the same discipline. The language expanded as thousands of neologisms were incorporated and also several books that deal with literary and cultural wealth of the language were published. The language also witnessed development in the sphere of arts and consequently hundreds of songs were recorded. In addition, a theatre troupe was formed that staged dramas based on various genres.

Keywords: [Ethiopia, Sidaama, Cushitic,. Highland East Cushitic, linguistic development]

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1. Introduction

In this introductory section three items will be discussed. The first part provides a general information regarding the Sidaama language while in the second section important milestones in the development of Sidaama will be discussed. In the third section previous studies on the topic will be raised and that will be followed by a research methodology.

1.1 General Information about the Language and its Speakers

Sidaama is one of a Highland East Cushitic (henceforth HEC) languages that also comprises Hadiyya, Kambaata, Alaaba, K'abeena, Gedeo and Burji. The self-name of the Sidaama langudge is Sidaam–u ʔafoo (lit. 'Sidaama–of mouth) or Sidaam–u k'aale (lit. 'Sidaama–of word)[2] while Sidaama is the ethnonym i.e. the name of the ethnic group. That being said, the self-name Sidaamu ʔafoo is not adopted here since Sidaama is employed as a language name among linguists and has a wider currency among them. Although Sidaama is spoken in a larger area than other HEC languages, it does not exhibit substantial dialect differences (cf. Hudson 1976: 233). Nevertheless, there are two varieties of Sidaama: the ʔaliččo ("highland") dialect as opposed to the gammoojje ("lowland") dialect. The difference between these two dialects is very minimal and it involves a minor phonological difference and few lexical ones. For instance, in the ʔaliččo dialect there is a tendency to use /d'/ whereas the gammoojje dialect prefers /t'/ as in: d'agge vs. t'agge 'legend, story'. Regarding lexical differences the word 'finish' is koša in ʔaliččo dialect and guda in the gammoojje dialect. For further discussion of Sidaama dialects see Fekede and Kebede (2019).

Most Sidaama speakers live in Sidaama Region with Hawaasa as its capital.[3] There are small enclaves of Sidaama populations among the neighboring Arsi

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[2] The Sidaama language was previously known in the literature as *Sidamo*. However, the name *Sidaama* was adopted for two reasons. First of all, up to 1992 the term Sidamo was a misleading one because it was also the name of the province where Sidaama and other languages were spoken. Secondly *Sidaama* is widely used as a glottonym among linguists.

[3] *Hawaasa* is the correct form that I adopt in this paper instead of the erroneously spelled *Hawassa*.

Oromo, Guji Oromo and Gedeo. There are also other ethnic groups such as the Amhara, the Oromo, Wolaitta, Kamabaata, the Gurage, Silte, etc. who live among the Sidaama mostly in towns.[4] The capital Hawaasa is a microcosm of various ethnic groups and hence is known as 'little Ethiopia'.

According to the 2007 national census of Ethiopia, the number of Sidaama mother tongue speakers was 2,925,171 (Central Statistical Authority 2010: 200). In bigger towns Amharic is spoken as a second language by many Sidaamas. Moreover, Amharic serves as a lingua franca for speakers of various languages. Except for Omotic speaking Wolaittas in the west, the Sidaama are bounded by speakers of Cushitic languages: Guji Oromo in the east, Arsi Oromo in the north and Gede'uffa speakers in the south. Sidaama is an ever–green area with varied and wonderful topographical features such as hills, valleys and plains. Topographically it is divided into three zones: ʔaliččo 'the highlands', midlands, and gammoojje 'lowlands'. Most of the Sidaama are subsistence farmers, while quite few of them are pastoralists. Several of them are engaged in trade and government jobs. They cultivate enset (Ensete ventricosum) also known as 'false banana' (weese in Sidaama), wheat, maize, sugar cane, pulses, coffee, qat (Catha edulis), etc. The last two are important cash crops. According to Shack (1966) the Sidaama represent an enset culture. This is because the derivatives of the enset plant form the main staple food.

Based on Kawachi (2007) and Anbessa (2012; 2014) the pertinent grammatical features of Sidaama are summarized as follows. The language has 24 consonant phonemes and gemination is phonemic as in bada 'to separate' vs. badda 'to be bald'. Like other HEC languages, it has five short vowels and five long counterparts. Vowel length is contrastive as in mala 'advice, strategy' vs. maala 'meat'. Sidaama has a rich morphological system. Nouns and adjectives may be marked morphologically for number, gender and case. Verbs are sentence-final and are inflected for tense/aspect, mood, person, number, and gender.

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[4] Gurage is a generic term that refers to various ethnic groups and language varieties that are mainly found in the Gurage Zone.

Sidaama has also an extensive nominal and verbal derivations. The language is canonically head-final with an SOV word order. Adjectives, demonstratives and relative clauses precede head nouns while embedded clauses precede main clauses.

1.2 Milestones in the Linguistic Development of Sidaama

In this paper the linguistic development of Sidaama will be discussed with special emphasis in the last three decades. Two clearly marked periods are observed in the linguistic development of Sidaama: a pre-1991 period and a post-1991 period. The former began in 1933 with the first translation of the Gospel of Mark (Marqoosi Wongale) from English to Sidaama. Most of the written use of Sidaama in the pre-1991 period was a liturgical one. Nevertheless, it was also employed for educational purposes. For instance, Sidaama was one of the 15 languages that were selected during the mass literacy campaigns that took place in the 1980s.

It was the post 1991 period that saw a tremendous development of Sidaama. First of all, a Latin script was adopted for writing it while previously it was written in Ethiopic script.[5] Moreover, since 1993 Sidaama became a language of instruction in the first cycle of primary schools and is taught as a subject from Grade 5 up to 12. In addition, it began to be used as an administrative and court language. Sidaama became also a language of mass media, first in radio broadcasts in 1993 and later on in TV broadcast by having an hour slot on Debub TV and since 2019 its own TV station known as Sidaamu Miidiyi Networke 'Sidaama Media Network' (SMN). A diploma in Sidaamu Afoo began to be offered at Hawaasa Teachers' Training College in 2010. In 2013 a B.A. and in 2020 a B.Ed. in Sidaamu Afoo and Literature was launched at Hawaasa University. The language expanded dramatically as thousands of neologisms were incorporated and also several books that deal with literary

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[5] The inadequacy of the Ethiopic script to represent gemination and vowel length is quite obvious. However, it was the erroneous decision made in the mapping and representation of the seven orders of Ethiopic into Sidaama that proved to be a stumbling block rather than the Ethiopic script itself. For a detailed discussion regarding the use of the Ethiopic and Latin script in Sidaama, please refer to Anbessa (2019).

and cultural wealth of the language were published. Hundreds of songs were recorded in audio and video formats and various dramas were performed in Sidaama.

1.3 Review of Previous Studies and Conceptual Frameworks

There are at least two publications that deal with some aspect of the linguistic development of Sidaama. Zelalem (2008) deals with lexical development and dwells on lexical and terminological standardization. Anbessa (2019) on the other hand deals with the different types of orthographies in Sidaama. The current article differs from the two publications in that it deals with the whole developmental history of the language i.e. from the earliest times up to the present one. In addition, this paper differs from Zelalem (2008) in that it is restricted solely to describing the development of the language without analyzing its standardization. As has been mentioned before standardization of Sidaama is an extensive topic that must be dealt with in a different paper.

In addition to the above two publications, there is a non-academic account. It is a brief report written by Alemu Kirba in Sidaamu Afoo and printed in the Woganke magazine (2015 G.C./2007 E.C.) and that dealt with the development of Sidaama since 1991. [6] The present paper differs from Alemu's report in a number of ways. First of all, this is an academic article and is not a report. Secondly this article is wider in its scope since it treats the development of Sidaama not only since 1991 but rather from the early 20th century up to the present one. Hence, it covers a large span of time. Last but not least this paper is written in English making it accessible to researchers interested in Sidaama unlike Alemu's report that is written in Sidaamu Afoo and is accessible only to literate Sidaama speakers.

The paper is based on a number of data sources. The first consists of various publications collected by the author that deal with the language in particular in the post 1991 period. These includes the Woganke 'our culture' and Fichchee 'Sidaama New Year' magazines and other publications. Moreover, information gathered from people who have studied Sidaama acted as an

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[6] *Woganke* 'our culture' (from *woga* 'culture' plus *-nke* '1PL.POSS' i.e., 'our'). In this article the following grammatical abbreviations are used: 1 = 1st person; 3 = 3rd person; CNV = converb; F = feminine; M = masculine; NMLz = nominalizer; P = perfect; PL = plural; POSS = possessive.   [This is not the place for writing an abbreviations]

additional source.[7] Last but not least the general knowledge of the author regarding the development of his native tongue was also an indispensable one.

The phonetic transcription adopted in this paper differs from the standard IPA in one respect only. Long vowels and geminates are represented by doubling the vowel and consonant, respectively instead of the IPA V: and C: that serve this purpose. Sidaama linguistic items that are transliterated in Latin script are presented as they are.

This paper comprises three chapters. The first one is the above introduction. The second chapter deals with the pre-1991 development of Sidaama while the third and final chapter deals with the post-1991 enormous growth of the language.

2. The Pre-1991 Period

According to Marius Chaine's catalogue of manuscripts (1913), the earliest data collected on Sidaama appears to be that of F.Mondon-Vidailhet while Conti Rossini's (1915) catalog of manuscripts indicates that the other traveler who collected data on Sidaama was Antoine d'Abbadie. It is not sure at all if these two travelers collected data on the actual Sidaama language. Regarding this fact Hudson (1976: 235) writes "There is no report of what this material consisted of – Sidamo, or data on others-called 'Sidaama' languages".

The first real effort in the study of Sidaama started in 1925 with Cerulli's publication of comparative linguistic notes on Sidaama and other two HEC languages viz, Hadiyya and Kambaata. According to Egeland (2016: 40) The first foreign religious body that was established in the Sidaama area was the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in 1928. Assisted by native speaker consultants, they were the first to translate the Gospel of Mark into Sidaama. The Gospel was written in Ethiopic script and was published in 1933 by the British and Foreign Bible Society marking the first instance of Sidaama script (Egeland 2016: 40).

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[7] In this connection Mathewos Wolde Gorgis, Taffese Gebre Mariam, and Aadde Waayyiso Hailu can be cited.

During the 1935-1941 brief Italian occupation of Ethiopia, two works were published on Sidaama. The first one was Cerulli's (1938) la Lingua e la Storia dei Sidamo a comparative grammatical and lexical work on Sidaama and related languages. However, the most important publication on Sidaama during this period is Moreno's (1940) Manuale di Sidamo. This is the first grammatical overview of the language that comprises phonology, morphology, and a syntactic sketch. In addition, it contains various exercises and a Sidamo-Italian and Italian-Sidamo glossary.

> After the defeat of the Italians in 1941, Emperor Haile Sellasie I allowed missionaries to work in areas where the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) was not active. The languages of instruction were Amharic for primary schools and English for secondary schools. After 1948, various missions of Scandinavian origin (Norwegian Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist, Swedish Philadelphia, Finnish Free Foreign Mission) were established. Most of them were located in Hawaasa and their preaching, prayers and religious songs were conducted in Amharic because of the heterogeneous nature of the population in the city.

It can be said that the linguistic description of Sidaama was dormant from 1940 onwards for the next three decades. The study on the language began in earnest towards the end of the 1960s and there are two reasons for this fact. The first and most important development was the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic Mission (Comboni) in 1964. It built schools and clinics in Hawaasa and several rural areas. In order to make their religious sermons and preaching accessible to their audience, the Catholic missionaries began to use the Sidaama language. However, instruction in primary schools was conducted solely in Amharic based on the directives of the central government of that period.

In addition to the liturgical use, the four Gospels and various religious tracts were translated into Sidaama based on an Ethiopic script. For instance, ሁጫቶ ማጣፋቲ [sic.] Huʧʧ'atto Mat'aafaati 'Book of Prayer' (Dominic 1973/1981) and ሞቲጮንከ የሱስ ክርስቶሲ ከራንቾ ወንገለ Mootiʧʧinke Yesuusi Keeranʧo Wongale 'The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ' (Dominic 1974/1982) can be

cited as examples. In addition, since the 1960s students graduating from the department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature began to publish their B.A. thesis on linguistics, literature, and cultural aspects of Sidaama.

In the following two decades i.e., the 1970s and 1980s two factors played a role in the development of the language. The first one is a set of educational decisions taken by the Provisional Military Administration Council (known as ደርግ dərg) and the efforts of the missionaries. The important landmark in the orthographic history of Sidaama was the "Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign" that was launched in 1979 by the Dərg. The 1979 campaign was actually an extension of the 1975 campaign entitled እድገት በጉብረት የዕውቀትና የሥራ ዘመቻ "The National Work Campaign for Development through Cooperation".[8] The main aim of both campaigns was the elimination of illiteracy.

During the 1975 campaign, literacy was conducted in five languages and Sidaama was not amongst them. However, in the 1979 literacy campaign the number of languages was expanded to 15 that accounted for 90% of the Ethiopian population and Sidaama was included.[9] These 15 languages were reduced into writing using the Ethiopic script (Hailu 1993). At the initial stage, the teaching was conducted in Amharic.[10] However, since most of the rural population did not understand the language, teaching in Amharic was ineffective. Hence, later on Sidaama became the language of instruction.

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[8] Although the campaign was announced in October 1974 it was actually launched in December 1975.

[9] Regarding this Moseley and Asher (1994: 274) write, "In Ethiopia, within whose frontiers the largest number of Cushitic languages is spoken, several languages received the status of national languages as part of the literacy campaign undertaken after the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974; these are Afar, Sidaama and Somali".

[10] Cohen (2000: 90) has an opposite view. According to him "…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".

According to Alemu (2015: 12) after the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, questions were raised to use Sidaama for educational purpose. Thus, Mengesha Jifaaro and Daniel Biramo sent a letter in December 1975 to the Därg regime asking permission to conduct Hanafote Roso 'Adult Literacy' in Sidaama language.[11] In 1982, Adult Literacy was taught in Sidaama based on educational primers that were written using the Ethiopic script. These included books on: Sidaama language (Sidaamu Afoo), arts (ogimma), mathematics (Shallago), etc. In addition, supplemental materials for language instruction were also published. These include: xalala waa 'Pure Water' and fidalɛete gawata 'The Fidel Chart'. These efforts marked the semi-official recognition of Sidaama in the then "Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign".

> Teaching primers and other materials were prepared in Sidaama for the adult education program. One of the books is entitled ፈደሌና ጭዪሺሻ ሮሳ fidale-nna ʃʼoy-ʃiiʃ-a ros-a 'Learning fidel and Reading'. The primer was written based on an Ethiopic script. The two scripts that were adopted for Sidaama were discussed in detail in my paper (Anbessa 2019). Sidaama being a Cushitic language has ten vowels: five short (a, e, i, o, and u) and five long counterparts (aa, ee, ii, oo, and uu). One of the major drawbacks of an Ethiopic script is its inability to represent long vowels.[12] Nevertheless it was possible to design a Sidaama orthography based on Ethiopic script that has six orders as illustrated below where C represents a consonant and V a vowel. Note that the 6th order in Sidaama (unlike Amharic) represents a consonant alone without a following vowel.

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[11] Adult literacy is known in Sidaama as *hanaf-o-te ros-o* 'Beginners' Education' (from *hanaf-* 'begin', *-o* ꞈNMLZ', *-te* 'F', *ros-* 'learn') or *golamaass-u ros-o* 'Adult Education' (from Amh. *gʷälmasa* 'adult').

[12] The other weakness of the Ethiopic script is its inability to represent gemination which is contrastive in Sidaama. However, it is possible to overcome even this hurdle by leaving the distinction of the contrasts to the discretion of the native speaker. For instance, a word such as አዳ can be read as *'ada* 'paternal aunt' or as *'adda* 'truth' depending upon the context.

Ethiopic Order	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
CV in Ethiopic	Cu ቡ	Ci ቢ	Ca ባ	Ce ቤ	C(ɨ) ብ	Co ቦ
Sidaama CV	Cu/Cuu	Ci/Cii	Ca/Caa	Ce/Cee	C	Co/Coo

Table 1. Proposed Ethiopic fidäl Grid for Sidaama

In such a system although the vowel in the Ethiopic CV is short, it can represent either short vowels or their long counterparts in Sidaama. This means a word such as ኪሳ can be read as kisa 'to touch' or kiisa 'to compensate'. The length distinction will be left for the discretion of the Sidaama native speaker who can easily achieve this based on the context and his native linguistic competence. The Ethiopic-based script that various Christian missionaries adopted for Sidaama in the 1960s and 1970s worked based on the above fidäl grid. It was an intuitive one and easy to learn.

However those who designed the Ethiopic-based orthography in the 1980s did not want to drop two of the Ethiopic orders i.e. the first order or ግዕዝ Gə'əz that contains the vowel /ə/ and the sixth order or ሳድስ sadɨs that optionally contains the vowel /ɨ/. Note that if the sixth order occurs as a first member of a cluster or comes word-finally in Amharic, then it lacks the vowel /ɨ/. These vowels i.e. /ə/ and /ɨ/ do not exist in Sidaama. Hence the script designers have arbitrarily decided that the first order will represent /a/ and the sixth order will represent /i/. Because of this decision, the third and fourth Ethiopic orders represented Sidaama /ii/ and /aa/, respectively. Based on the above facts, the fidäl grid adopted for Sidaama in the 1980s is presented below.

Ethiopic Order	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
CV in Ethiopic	Cä ባ	Cu ቡ	Ci ቢ	Ca ባ	Ce ቤ	C(ə) ብ	Co ቦ
Sidaama CV	Ca ባ	Cu/Cuu ቡ	Cii ቢ	Caa ባ	Ce/Cee ቤ	Ci ቢ	Co/Coo ቦ

Table 2. Ethiopic fidäl Grid that was adopted for Sidaama in the 1980s

> Such kind of representation is not intuitive and hence created a lot of confusion and was very difficult to learn. For instance, if a Sidaama reader comes across words such as መለ 'advice' and ማጎለ 'meat', based on the above conversion values he must read them as mala 'advice' and maala 'meat', respectively. If he comes across ኪስ and ኪ.ስ he must read them as kisi 'he touched' and kiisi 'he compensated', respectively based on the above fidäl grid. However, this process takes time because the reader is forced now and then to compute the Sidaama phonetic equivalents for the Ethiopic letters. Consequently, this resulted in a slow reading of words, phrases and sentences and resulted in lots of errors. From the personal experience of this author, it would have been better to leave out the Ethiopic 1st order (which only caused confusion) and stick to the remaining five orders as was demonstrated under Table 1.

In addition to Italian Catholic missionaries, various Christian denominations produced religious works in Sidaama using the Ethiopic Script. For instance, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY) of the South Ethiopia Synod published several tracts in Sidaama. Most of them were translated and complied by Fisseha Senkato and amongst them can be cited Sidaamu Faarsa 'Sidaama Religious Songs' (1980 E.C.) and a reader entitled Mittimmate Guma 'the Fruit of Unity' (1978 E.C.).[13]

> There was also another important development beginning from the 1960s. Initially students studying in the Department of Ethiopian Language and Literature were required to write a B.A. thesis as a partial fulfillment to complete their studies. Hence several students wrote their B.A. thesis that dealt with linguistic, literary or cultural aspects of Sidaama. The Department of Linguistics was established in early 1980s and several of its students wrote their B.A. thesis and later

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[13] Yri K. Magne, personal communication.

on their M.A. on various linguistic topics related to Sidaama.[14]

Another important contribution during this period was the publication of Gasparini's Sidamo-English Dictionary (1983). This dictionary which contains 362 pages is probably the best one on Sidaama until today. Regarding this fact Wedekind (1990: 25) writes, "It contains an unusually large number of encyclopedic details about the Sidamo culture, and it is informative beyond the scope of a linguistic lexicon". Other works that can be cited are Gasparini's Grammatica Pratica della Lingua Sidamo (1978) and Macani's A Small Grammar of the Sidamo Language (1990). Moreover, the1987 constitution of The People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was translated into several languages based on Ethiopic script and Sidaama was one of them. The translation was conducted under the auspices of the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities. A two-man team was formed for this purpose and one of them was the author of this paper.

In 1988 a Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was proclaimed. Then the government allowed a little bit of space for publication in major languages. Accordingly, a famous Sidaama author known as Alemu Kirba published 15 short pieces from 1981 Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.) up to 1984 E.C. Thirteen of them were published in የዛሬይቱ ኢትዮጵያ Yezareyitu Ethiopia, a weekly newspaper while two of them were published in a daily newspaper known as አዲስ ዘመን Addis Zemen. Almost all of them dealt with cultural features of Sidaama such as: marriage, funeral ceremony, the Sidaama New Year known as fichchee chambalaalla, etc.

A very important work that was published in Ethiopic-based script during that period was the Sidaama New Testament (1990) ሃሮ ጎንዶሮ haaro gondooro 'New Covenant' (from haaro 'new' and gondooro 'covenant').

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[14] It is difficult to know the exact number of the theses, first of all because of poor record. Secondly, various persons that don't want to be quoted told me that most of the dissertations in the previous library of the Institute of Language Studies (ILS) were either stolen or were lost.

3. The Post 1991 Period

The most dynamic development in Sidaama was observed after the fall of the Dərg regime in 1991. This is because the then Transitional Government of Ethiopia permitted the use of native languages for primary education and other purposes. Later on, this was enshrined in the constitution of 1995 under chapter 3, paragraph 2 as follows: "Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history".

Right of linguistic and cultural equality was one of the main agendas propagated by opposition groups who fought to dismantle the Communist Dərg regime. Thus, the following actions were taken before beginning to use Sidaama for education and other purposes. First in Summer of 1992, a Sidaama language committee that was composed of two Addis Ababa University graduates and local teachers was formed.[15] Then they were invited by the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education. The first task was selecting a suitable script and a Latin script was adopted without any hesitation.[16] According to Yohannes Latamo (personal communication), Afaan Oromoo (a Lowland East Cushitic language) has already adopted a Latin script. Since Sidaama is also a Cushitic language the language committee members of Sidaama adopted the same script with some modifications. For instance, a single glottal stop was written as a geminate and a geminate glottal stop was written as single. For letters written with digraphs gemination was not phonemic save for sh. Hence doubling of the digraphs was not enforced for such letters. These and other orthographical errors which were introduced by Sidaama language team

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[15] The two graduates were Yohannes Latamo and Desalegn Gaarsamo.

[16] Yohannes Latamo, personal communication.

were not amended even after the orthography was used for more than three decades.[17]

Under the supervision of the Curriculum Department of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, the Sidaama language committee prepared literacy materials on various subjects for elementary school, a guidance book for primary school teachers, and syllabi for various subjects. In addition, it has also prepared educational books and a curriculum for the then Awasa Teachers' Training Institute.

Then at each district (wərəda) a training was offered to primary school teachers how to teach in Sidaama. Since this was the first time the language was ever used in formal education, the training familiarized the teachers with the script system and also the books which they were going to use. In June 1993, training in reading and writing in Sidaama was given to civil servants in all districts (wərədas) of the then Sidaama Zone, in order to acquaint them with the use of the language for administrative, judicial, and office-related purposes.

On 10th of Nəhase 1985 E.C. of (16th of August 1993) Sidaama was officially proclaimed as a language of primary education, administration and judicial matters. Since then, the Annual Sidaama Language and Culture Symposium was held on this date.[18] This date has a special place among the speakers of the language because it was a date on which the Sidaama language gained recognition and this paved the way for its development. In addition, the name Sidaama was adopted as an ethnonym and Sidaamu Afoo as an auto-glottonym instead of the misleading Sidamo.

In September 1993, Sidaama began to be used as a language of instruction in most primary schools. In Hawaasa and large towns such as Yirgalem and Aleta Wendo that have a mixed

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[17] The past and present orthographies of Sidaama and their strengths and weaknesses are discussed in an article that was published by this author (Anbessa 2019).

[18] Since 2020 the annual symposium day was moved to June 18 the day on which Sidaama became a 10th regional state.

population, the language of instruction in primary schools was Amharic.[19] Since 1994, Sidaama began to be used in various governmental offices and for jurisdiction. Many literacy materials and various books were published. The lexicon was considerably expanded by the incorporation of neologisms which consequently led to a publication of a tri-lingual Sidaama-Amharic-English Dictionary (Shimelis et.al. 2007). Performing arts which included drama and theatre were produced in the language. Radio broadcasts commenced in 1993 while a three hour per week TV program began in 2016 and quite recently, Sidaama Media Network (SMN) started a daily broadcast. In 2010 a diploma in Sidaamu Afoo began to be offered at Hawaasa Teachers' Training College. In 2013 a B.A. and in 2020 a B.Ed. in Sidaamu Afoo and Literature was launched at Hawaasa University.[20]

In the sections below the main linguistic and literary achievements of the language in various fields in the last three decades will be discussed.

3.1. Teaching of the Sidaama Language and Training of Teachers

Although initially the literacy books were prepared in Addis Ababa, after 1993 the books were revised and rewritten first at the Education office of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and then moved to the Zonal offices. Such kind of arrangement not only saved money but also facilitated the task. In Awasa Teachers' Training Institute training in Sidaama instruction was conducted annually since each year new recruits joined the institute.

Since it will be difficult to provide a chronological account of all activities conducted in training and educational uses of the language, only the major ones will be mentioned. After 1993, people who were trained in Sidaama instruction grew and the language began to be used widely for various

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[19] Since 2000, primary schools that teach native Sidaama speakers in *Sidaamu Afoo* were opened in Hawaasa and elsewhere.

[20] The B.Ed. degree is offered by the Department of Sidaamu Afoo and Literature.

purposes. Hence Sidaama lexical items and phrases to be used for office and educational purpose were selected. In addition, text books, teachers' guidance and syllabi that were prepared for primary education were revised and published. Moreover, training was given for Sidaama language teachers in the Awasa Teachers' Training Institute. Thanks to Irish Aid funding, books for non-formal education were prepared in Sidaama and printed. In addition, literacy books for adults were published under the Functional Literacy program. Furthermore, books to be used for "Non-Formal Primary Education" were prepared.

After 2000, Sidaama language books from grade 5 up to 8 were revised and published. Later on, a book for a Sidaama language (Sidaamu Afoo) was prepared from grade 9 up to 12. In addition, Sidaama became one of the subjects in a secondary school and preparatory schools. Hence a text book, teachers' guide and syllabus were published for this purpose. Moreover, Books on Qarqaru Sayinse (Geographical Science), Sidaamu Afoo (Sidaama Language), Shallago (Mathematics), and Mannimate Guunte, Muuziqanna, Angate Ogimma (Aesthetics) were prepared.

Several ideas were raised/proposed to develop and further strengthen the Sidaama language in Schools. These ideas are listed below.

(i)   Schools were encouraged to use Sidaama both for literacy and administrative purposes.

(ii)   An idea was floated regarding the establishment of Sidaama language clubs in schools.

(iii)   The educational bureaus of the districts and the Zonal bureau were ordered to publish and distribute a newspaper in Sidaama and a journal once in every three months.

(iv)   Schools were required to hold a Sidaama vocabulary competition.

(v)   An idea was also proposed to choose fine literacy books written in Amharic or English and then translate them into Sidaama with the aim of using these translated books in schools.

(vi)   Furthermore, an effort was exerted to identify challenges of Sidaama language instruction and designing strategies in order to tackle them.

(vii)   Awarding prizes to creative language teachers in order to strengthen the value of merit was proposed.

(viii)   In order to strengthen quality language instruction, an idea was floated to require those who teach Sidaama language from grade 5 up to grade 8 to have a diploma and require those who teach it in secondary schools to have a B.A. degree.

(ix)   Exerting a maximum effort in order to establish a department of Sidaamu Afoo and Literature at Hawaasa University was also one of the proposals.

Out of the nine proposals, only a few of them were practical. For instance, finding solutions for challenges in Sidaama teaching and the use of Sidaama as a literacy and administrative language can be mentioned as a successful proposal. The most successful proposal however was the establishment of the Department of Sidaamu Afoo and Literature at Hawassa University. For the first time, courses that deal with the linguistics and literature of Sidaama began to be offered for B.A. degree in 2013 and for B.Ed. degree in 2020. This amply demonstrates the astonishing development of Sidaama within two decades from a hardly written language to a one taught at the level of higher education.

3.2. Annual Symposium

It was on 10th of Nəhase 1985 E.C. of (16th of August 1993) that Sidaama began to be used as the language of the then Sidaama Zone. Hence this day was fixed as a date for the Annual Symposium on Sidaama Language and Culture. On this day various research papers about the language, culture, history, etc. of Sidaama were presented. In addition, a magazine entitled Woganke 'our culture' and which

contained various articles was distributed.[21] Later on a magazine entitled Fichchee was added. As have been mentioned earlier, since 2020 the Annual Symposium on Sidaama Language and Culture was moved to June 18 Based on two reasons. The first one is this is the day on which Sidaama became a 10th regional state of Ethiopia and it was assumed that holding a symposium on the same day on Sidaama language will have a symbolic connection. The second reason is an economical one because holding an annual symposium simultaneously with another event will not require an additional budget and it avoids loss of a work day that could have resulted if the symposium was continued to be held on 16th of August.

3.3. Publications of Pamphlets, Newspapers, and Magazines

After Sidaama became a language of literacy, administration, and judiciary first various pamphlets and booklets were published. Later on, various books and a couple of magazines began to be published. This paper first concentrates on earlier publications which have served as trail-blazers and touches on some of the representative books.

In order to simplify the task, the publications are dealt with chronologically. However, the focus will be in the earlier period. For the middle and later period, only major publications will be mentioned for sake of brevity. The list does not include linguistic-related works such as grammars, dictionaries, proverbs, etc. which will be dealt separately. Most of the newspapers and magazines were published only for a short period of time and then were shut down for financial, political and other reasons.

An explanatory note is essential regarding the date of publication of the various materials. For some of them, the year of publication was written in Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.) with the Sidaama abbreviation M.D. maaro-te diro 'year of mercy' (lit. 'mercy-of year'). This abbreviation itself is a

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[21] The author of this paper took part in several annual symposiums and delivered public lectures on these occasions.

borrowing from Amharic ዓመተ ምሕረት ʔaməä məḫrət 'Year of Mercy'. The Julian Ethiopian calendar lags from the Gregorian Calendar (G.C.) either in 7 or 8 years. Thus, if the year of publication is written solely according to Ethiopian calendar, then it will be difficult to know its Gregorian equivalent. Hence in such publications only the year according to Ethiopian calendar will be provided. For publications that solely contain the Gregorian calendar, the year will be written without the addition of the abbreviation G.C. In publications that contain the year of publication both in Ethiopian and Gregorian calendar or those that contain the Ethiopian calendar together with Sidaama months, first the Ethiopian calendar will be written and after a slash the year in Gregorian calendar will be added.

The first three publications on Sidaamu Afoo were newspapers/pamphlets whose main aim was disseminating information to the public, in particular to urban dwellers. The first ever newspaper written in Sidaama was halaale 'truth' (1985 E.C.) and it dealt with environment, culture, literature, etc. of Sidaama. The newspaper was partly in Sidaama and partly in Amharic and was written by Leegamo Dangiso. It was 4-5 pages in length, was typed on stencil and around 400 copies were printed and sold monthly.

After Leegamo's trail-blazing effort others followed. Thus in 1986 E.C. Solomon Shaammanna published a newspaper known as WAGS Odoo "news from all directions". The word odoo means 'news' while WAGS is an acronym formed from four Sidaama cardinal direction words viz., wodiido 'south', aliyye 'north', galcima 'west', and soojjatto 'east'. The newspaper was written exclusively in Sidaama and dealt with literature, news, culture, etc. Around 400 stenciled copies were distributed monthly. According to Alemu (2015: 18), Solomon solicited contributions in order to publish the newspaper. In 1987 E.C. the newspaper began to be funded by Sidaama Development Program (SDP) and essentially became its mouthpiece since it published the activities of the organization. The newspaper WAGS Odoo continued to be published until 1989.

In July 1986 LUWA was published. The Sidaama word luwa denotes an age grading system that is similar to the Oromo Gada system. This newspaper dealt with news, language, culture, etc. This bilingual newspaper (Sidaama-Amharic) contained 8 pages and was prepared by Solomom Qaqqawo, Desalegn Gaarsamo, and Yohannes Latamo. This newspaper was planned to be published every three months but was published only once. According to Yohannes[22] the newspaper was published in the same printing press where Oromo Liberation Front's (OLF) newspaper was published. Incidentally during that period there was a friction between OLF and the government. Hence anyone who was perceived to have even an indirect connection with OLF was viewed with suspicion and it appears that the printing press was instructed to stop printing the newspaper and that could explain why the LUWA newspaper was published only once.

In 1999, the Sidaama Zone Cultural and Information Office (henceforth SZCIO) began to publish a magazine entitled Fichee during the Sidaama New Year celebration known as Fichee Chambalaalla.

In August 2000 SZCIO published for the first time a magazine entitled Woganke 'our culture' (woga 'culture' and -nke 'our'). Since then, the magazine is published annually on Nəhase 10 (August 16) the day on which the annual Sidaama language and culture symposium was held. Since 2020 the magazine is published on June 18th. The magazine contains various articles which dealt with the language, culture, and literature of the Sidaama. For several years the magazines Fichee and Woganke were published together.

In 2001 Code Ethiopia funded a local newspaper known as Bakkalcha 'morning star' that was prepared by Alemu Kirba. It was prepared every three months and was distributed to colleges, governmental offices, educational bureaus, etc. According to the editor Alemu, the aim of the newspaper was "quenching the thirst for reading materials in the language".

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[22] Yohannes Latamo (*personal communication*).

3.4. Historical and Oral Poetry Books

In 1987 E.C. a history and culture study team was established under Sidaama Development Program (SDP) and since then it has published five booklets in 1989 E.C. The booklets were prepared by the guidance of SZCIO but were funded by SDP. The booklets are listed below.

	Title of Booklet	**Description of Contents**	**Author**
1.	Furra	A brief story of a legendary Sidaama queen of the 15th or 16th century.	Sileshi Worqineh
2.	Takilu Yota	A story of local hero who fought the oppressing feudal landlords.	Solomon Shaammanna
3.	Hayye 'lullaby'	a brief description of lullaby accompanied by a list of 71 lullabies	Desalegn Gaarsamo
4.	Qaletena Qolleete Godo'le	A description of a circle and hockey game.	Haile Sintayehu
5.	Hamaaraanchonna Haarookkise	Mourning poems for men and women.	Yohannes Latamo

Table 3. A List of Historical and Oral Poetry Books

In 1989 E.C. Asfaw Xoosa published a booklet entitled Ma Kulte Sa'u 'What Did They Tell and Pass?' which contained several tales of Sidaama elders and also Sidaama fortune tellers.[23]

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[23] The expression *Ma Kulte Sa'-'u* is composed of *maa* 'what', *kul-te* 'tell-3PL.CNV' (i.e. 'they having told'), and *sa'-'u* 'pass-3PL.PERF' (i.e. 'they passed').

3.5. Educational and Cultural Magazines and Books

Under §3.5 publications that deal with the various domains of education and culture will be presented. In this section two important books on Sidaama culture are included even if they were written in Amharic.

(i) In 1986 books for basic education (hanafo-te ros-i maxaafa) were prepared for first time by Sidaama Zone Educational Office. In the same year the educational books were published thanks to the funding provided by the Irish Aid.

(ii) In 1990 E.C. books for adult education were prepared and began to be used.

(iii) The Adult Education section of Sidaama Educational Institute published a newspaper entitled "Egenno" ('knowledge'). Since it was intended for the pre-literate population, it was written in an easy language and contained "light" messages.

(iv) Another magazine that was published quarterly by Sidaama Educational Institute was called "Cabbichcho" ('light'). It dealt with educational issues. In addition, some magazines were published in special occasions such as school festivals, sport tournaments, etc. Such types of magazines were written both in Sidaama and Amharic.

(v) A Sidaama language book for ninth and tenth grades was published in 2001 and 2002, respectively. In addition, 2002 saw the translation and publication of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia into Sidaama.

The most important achievement in 2002 was the publication of five booklets. The project was funded by the Educational Bureau of Sidaama Zone since it was assumed that these booklets can contribute towards the development of the language and encourage a reading culture. These booklets are listed below.

	Title of Booklet	**Gloss**	**Author(s)**
1.	Woganke Dona	'The Right Way of our Culture'	Alemu Kirba
2.	Heeshshote Nyammo	'The Taste of Life'	Alemu Kirba
3.	Anfohu Kuloe	'Let Tell Me One who Knows'	Haile Sintayehu
4.	Hayye	'Lullaby'	Zinash Tsegaye
5.	Aliitonna Wolootu Diraama	'Drama of Aliito and Others'	Sileshi Worqineh and Alemu Kirba

Table 4. A List of Educational and Cultural Books

(vi) The Cultural and Tourism Bureau of Sidaama Zone published in 2003 an important book entitled የሲዳማ ብሔር ታሪክና ባሕል yəSidaama biher tarikɨnna baḫil 'The History and Culture of the Sidaama'. Around 10 scholars took part in the preparation while 284 persons residing in different districts of Sidaama were interviewed. The book has 402 pages and deals, amongst others, with clan classification, social and political history, and cultural features (marriage, funeral ceremony, the Luwa system, cultural foods, traditional clothes, etc.).

(vii) In 2003 Alemu Kirba published a book entitled የባሕል ቅርሳችን yäbaḫəl Qərsaččən 'Our Cultural Heritage' that dealt with the major cultural features of the Sidaama.

The two books mentioned above are included in the list, although they were written in Amharic. For instance, the first book presents the culture and history of the Sidaama in a very detailed way and it is a fruit of a very large collective effort. Likewise in the second book the cultural features of the ethnic group are discussed in detail. Since these books are written in Amharic, it is assumed that the information will be accessible to many Ethiopians who read Amharic and that is the reason why they are included here.

3.6. Religious Publications

In 2001, the Ethiopian Bible Society published a Sidaama New Testament entitled Haaro Gondooro in a Latin script.[24] In 2002 The Mekane Yesus Publication Office published seven books of which six are liturgical ones while one of them (the 7th in the list below) was a language book for beginners. These are listed below.

	Title of Book	Content
1.	Abraam 'Abraham'	deals with the biblical figure Abraham
2.	Ruuti	The book of Ruth
3.	Yoonaasi	deals with the biblical figure Yonah
4.	Baxiso Dagge	'legend of Baxiso'
5.	Anewa Amme	'Come to Me'
6.	Woyyo-te Maxaaf-i Faarso - Daawit-i honor- POSS.F book- Faarso NOM song David-POSS.M song 'Songs of David'	
7.	Sidaam-u Af-ii ros-u xint-i hanafo-te dhagge[25] Sidaama- POSS.M language-NOM learn- POSS.M old-begin-POSS.F legend 'Sidaama Language Beginners' Legend'	

Table 5. A List of Religious and Language Teaching Publications

In 2004 a book entitled ilama gatinso 'Let us Save the Generation' was published. It was a translation from Amharic into Sidaama and was aimed at providing advice how to fight HIV-AIDS. Another important milestone in the development of Sidaama is a stage-by-stage translation of the Bible. Thus, ሃሮ ጎንዶሮ Haaro Gondooro "New Testament" was translated into the language in 1990. Then the translation of Albi Gondooro "Old Testament" begun in in 1999 in order to prepare a complete Bible translation. The effort bore fruit and the Sidaama Holy Bible entitled Qullaawa Maxaafa was published in 2015 by the Ethiopian Bible Society.

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[24] Note that the New Testament of Sidaama was published first in 1990 in Ethiopic Script.

[25] This is Part 1 of the book and was prepared by Kachaara Bansa.

3.7. Linguistic and Literary Publications

In 1999 a Sidaama-Amharic-English trilingual dictionary entitled Sidaamu Amaarunna Inglizete Qalla Borraasincho was published. This dictionary was the second one published after the famous Sidamo-English Dictionary of Gasparini (1983). It has 627 pages and its main aim was to incorporate the thousands of neologisms which made their way since 1993 when Sidaama became to be used for primary education, administrative and judicial use. In addition to the aforementioned dictionary a grammar booklet entitled Sidaamau Afii Jirte 'Wealth of the Sidaama Language' was published.[26] Amanuel (2010 E.C.) published a trilingual English-Amharic-Sidaama Dictionary. The first online Sidaama-English dictionary was prepared by Yri and Pepper in 2019 and it was based on 3578 entries.

> Shimelis Gizaw under the auspices of the Ethiopian Languages Research Center edited in 2007 a book entitled Sidaamu Afii Maammaashsha 'Proverbs of the Sidaama Language'.[27] The book contains thousands of proverbs that are alphabetically arranged.
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> A booklet entitled "Sidaamu Afii Murgo" that deals with some Sidaama proverbs was prepared and published by Tesfaye Laanqammo. The proverbs were carefully selected and it is hoped that they will provide some important moral lessons.

Another important book that can be included in the list is a book published in 2019 by Mathewos Wolde Giorgis (a young native Sidaama linguist) that is entitled "Sidaamu Afiinni Nabbawanna Borreessa" ("Reading and Writing in Sidaamu Afoo").

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[26] The grammar booklet *Sidaamau Afii Jirte* (1999) was based on the doctoral dissertation "A Grammar of Sidaama (2000)" that was written by the of the author of this paper.

[27] From *Sidaam-u* 'Sidaama-POSS.M', *Af-ii* 'mouth-NOM', and *maammaašša* 'proverbs' (the singular form is *maammaaša* 'proverb').

3.8. Books Funded by Code Ethiopia

Code Ethiopia funded the publication of several books. Amongst them three books that were published in 2001 can be cited. These are: Woganke 'Our Culture' (Taddese Diimoole), Dubbu Saada 'Wild Animals' (Getahun Negash), and Fayyimmate Agarooshshe 'Keeping Our Health' (Zenebe Kasa).

In 2003 Code Ethiopia funded the publication of the following three books: Godo'lete Guma 'The Benefit of Games' (Taddese Diimoole), Loosu Kalaqaancho 'Creator of Work' (Duukamo Duguna), and Roso Xiinxaawate Hayyo 'Methods of Studying' (Getahun Negash). In 2004 too, Code Ethiopia funded the publication of the following three books: Maattuwanke 'Our Folktales' (Alemu Kirba), Balaxannoha Balaxinso 'Let Us Give Priority to Urgent Matters' (Taddese Diimoole), and Qinaado Akkata 'A Favorable Character' (Getahun Negash). After 2004, Code Ethiopia suspended the funding of future publications in the language.

3.9. Sidaama Radio

> The Sidaama radio station was established in 1989 and began its broadcast from Yirgalem. It transmitted educational programs from Monday till Friday. In addition to these, it broadcasted on Saturdays and Sundays for 11 hours each i.e. for 22 hours. The weekend programs were specially devoted to language, cultural features, history, literature, health, agriculture, etc. During its zenith, the weekly broadcast reached 34 hours. Furthermore, the radio station has contributed a lot by helping in recording and preservation of the culture and oral literature of the Sidaama society. The radio broadcasts played an important role in the development of the Sidaama language. Briefly after the establishment of the radio station, writing competition was held in poetry, short story, and drama amongst students who hailed from different schools in Sidaama Zone.[28] Three

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[28] The three themes of writing competition were: *kiiro* 'poetry' (*kiir-* 'count', probably rhyme counting), *harancho k'aalla-te borro* 'short story' (from *harancho* 'short', *k'aalla-te* 'words-of', and *borro* 'writing') and *draama* 'drama'.

winners were selected in each category and the nine winners were given a prize money. Then their creative writings were broadcast on the newly established radio station and were tuned into by a large number of audiences. According to Aadde Waayyiso Hailu who was the manager of the radio station, the radio programs played a crucial role in the development of the written literature of Sidaaama. In addition, it also enabled the introduction of neologisms and their entrenchment.

In addition to the initial radio broadcast of Yirgalem, two new radio stations were added. The first one is the Bansa FM 91.9 station that was established in 2010 and which broadcasts for 49 hours weekly in Sidaamu Afoo. The third one is Shashemene FM 103.4 that was established in 2013 and which transmits mostly in Afaan Oromoo and dedicates 90 minutes daily both for Amharic and Sidaama.

3.10. Sidaama TV

The Sidaama language also enjoys a TV broadcast. Initially it had a one-hour slot on the Debub TV thrice weekly (on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. The program usually covered the news of Sidaama Zone. Sometimes interviews were conducted on local topics and current issues of the zone and the country. Since mid-2018 Sidaama had a slot of few hours on Oromo Media Network (OMN). Then in 2019 it established its own/independent TV station that is known as Sidaama Media Network (SMN). This station broadcasts for 18 hours daily. However, the station broadcasts in different languages and very few hours are devoted to the Sidaama language itself. According to various TV viewers, original programs are very few and even the existing ones are broadcasted repeatedly.

3.11. Publications on Sidaama by Those Studying at Addis Ababa University and Abroad

There were various works written on Sidaama language, history, culture, literature, economy, social anthropology, etc. by students studying in institutes of Higher Education in

Ethiopia and abroad. However, since this paper deals with language, linguistics, and literature of Sidaama the focus will be on theses, dissertations and books that are related to these disciplines. For sake of brevity, various linguistic articles on Sidaama are excluded.

Beginning from the early 1960s Students who graduated from the Ethiopian Languages and Literature Department wrote their B.A. thesis on Sidaama language, literature, and culture as a partial fulfillment for their B.A. degree. Beginning from the early 1980s those who graduated from the Linguistics Department wrote several B.A. and M.A. dissertations on various linguistic aspects of Sidaama. Since most of these dissertations were either lost or stolen and since the aim of this paper is not listing them, only four B.A. and M.A. theses will be listed for illustrative purpose.

	Author	Title of B.A. Thesis
1.	Senayit Lemma	The Morphophonemics of Sidamo (1982), B.A. Thesis
2.	Anbessa Teferra	Sidamo Verb Morphology (1984), B.A Thesis
3.	Abebe Gebre-Tsadik	The Phonology of Sidamo (1986), M.A. Thesis
4.	Anbessa Teferra	Complement Clauses in Sidamo (1987), M.A. thesis

Table 6. A Sample List of B.A. and M.A. Theses on Sidaama

In addition to B.A. and M.A. theses, doctoral dissertations too were written on the language. Anbessa (2000) is the first doctoral dissertation on the language that was entitled "A Grammar of Sidaama". Anbessa (2012) is a published version of the dissertation while a "Sidaama (Sidaamu Afoo)" (Anbessa 2014) was a compact version of the grammar. Kawachi (2007) is a detailed grammar of Sidaama that treats every aspect of the language from phonology up to syntax and pragmatics.

3.12. Songs, Dramas, Theatre, and Film

Many workshops on Sidaama literature were organized by the cooperative efforts of the Educational Office of Sidaama

Zone, the Sidaama Radio and SDP. Moreover, literary competitions were held and prizes were awarded to winners. In addition, their writings were archived as data source for radio broadcasts. The Sidaama Zone Cultural and Information Office (SZCIO) provided occasional training regarding art and drama. It also established a vibrant art troupe known as the Sidaama Art Band (የሲዳማ ኪነት ቡድን yəsidaama kinət budin) which performed cultural and modern shows. In the early years, this art band was financially supported by SDP. The band presented dramas, songs and poems and it has played a significant role in art development by presenting its shows in towns, rural areas, markets, schools and by broadcasting it on Sidaama Radio.

The afore-mentioned art troupe presented plays and dramas which are based on day-to-day life of the Sidaama society and some social issues. The plays were presented during holidays, workshops, symposiums and various social gatherings. In addition, various governmental offices in the zone such as Agriculture, Women's Affairs, Health, etc. selected certain pertinent topics and the troupe presented dramas based on these topics. In addition, the dramas and songs were recorded and transmitted to the public by the Sidaama Radio.

The first Sidaama artist who recorded cultural and modern songs was Adugna Duumo and within a few years he has recorded six cassettes. Likewise, another vocalist named Ma'nammo Teferra recorded a number of cassettes. Moreover, SDP and SDC devised a good strategy to increase the number of Sidaama songs. Accordingly amateur singers composed their own songs and practiced playing modern musical instruments. Then their songs were commented on by the audience. The amateur singers revised their songs and finally they were recorded on cassettes. In this way more than 150 songs were recorded and then transmitted via the Sidaama Radio.

A Sidaama Song Troupe known as Wolliima was established in 1985 E.C. Since then, it played a great role in the development of the language by

staging drama and theatre and also by performing various traditional songs and reciting a figure of speech closer to simile that is known as geewo.

The first Sidaama film is entitled "Affini"[29] and was released in February 2024. The film immediately won a wider acclaim and reputation. The project took a number of years and was funded by the Tourism, Cultural, and Communication Bureau of the Sidaama Regional Administration. Just before the release of the film, Ararso has published a book entitled አፊኒ Affini in 2016 E.C./2023 and that was written in Amharic. The term "affini" refers to one of the basic cultural tenets of the Sidaama whereby elders try to settle conflicts through a democratic procedure. It is a system whereby each complaint is handled in complete neutrality i.e. without consideration to race, gender, age, religion, social status, etc. According to Ararso (2016 E.C./2023: 110-111) "affini" is based on three basic tenets which are the important facets of the Sidaama culture. These are:

(i) halaale 'truth': to be guided only by "pure truth" and sticking to it.

(ii) Respecting each other and hearing attentively the complaint of each side.

(iii) Giving enough time for every argument and passing "a non-regrettable decision".

3.13. The Sidaama Language and the Digital Arena

The digital era is progressing at a whizzing speed particularly in the developed world. However, this is not the case in Ethiopia and many other developing countries. Even within Ethiopia itself, only languages with a large number of speakers (such as Amharic and Afaan Oromoo) that are adapting to advances in internet and the digital technology. Sidaama and other medium-sized languages are just at the beginning stage. For instance, there are only two dictionary applications (Apps) that were developed for the

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[29] The literal translation of *Affini* is 'Did you understand/see?' (from *af-* 'know' and *-tini* '2 PL.PERF').

language. Even these two applications are rudimentary at best because they cover only a few thousand entries.

Nevertheless, there are also encouraging signs. For instance, there are several social media groups that utilize platforms such WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook and that transmit their messages in Sidaama. Such kind of activities will contribute indirectly towards the development and strengthening of the language. That being said, training manpower in Information Technology (IT), programming, software engineering, etc. will enable to develop linguistic applications that will contribute towards the development of the Sidaama language.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The linguistic development of Sidaama can be classified into two stages: the pre-1991 period and that of the post 1991 period. In the pre-1991 period the development of the language for various uses was a stunted one while in the post-1991 period a rapid expansion of the language in various fields was observed. In this paper, the linguistic development of Sidaama was discussed with special emphasis in the last three decades.

Most of the written use of Sidaama in the pre-1991 period was a liturgical one while its educational use was quite a restricted one. It was the post 1991 period that saw a tremendous development of Sidaama. First of all, a Latin script was adopted for writing the language. Moreover, since 1993 Sidaama became a language of instruction in primary schools in particular in the first cycle i.e. from grade one up to four. It is taught as a subject in the second cycle of primary school (i.e. from grade 5 up to 8), in secondary schools, and in preparatory schools. In addition, it begun to be used as an administrative and court language.

It became also a language of mass media, first in radio broadcasts and since 2015 in TV broadcasts. Since 2013 a B.A. and in 2020 a B.Ed. degree in Sidaamu Afoo and Literature was launched at Hawaasa University. The language expanded dramatically as thousands of neologisms were incorporated and also several books that deal with literary and cultural wealth

of the language were published. The language also witnessed development in the sphere of arts. Thus, hundreds of songs (both secular and religious) were recorded initially in audio and later on some of them in video format. A theatre troupe was also formed that has staged dramas based on various genres. Regarding the digital and internet arena, Sidaama is at its infancy and a lot must be done in this respect.

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