

A SOMALI POETIC COMBAT — I

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The article contains a series of three poems, recited by different poets in a polemical exchange. Because of its length and the ease of division, the article is printed in three instalments, the first of which appears in this issue.

Introduction

SEVERAL scholars who have turned their attention to the study of the Somali language and culture have recorded the existence of abundant and consciously cultivated oral poetry. One of the first European authors writing about the Somali language, F. M. Hunter, said in 1880:¹ 'The Somál are by no means devoid of poetic ideas and their verses, if wanting in metre and rhythm, are hardly inferior in sentiment to western prosody'.

Although Hunter overlooked the rôle of alliteration and rhythm,² his assessment of the artistic value of Somali poetry was confirmed in the publications of J. W. C. Kirk,³ M. Maino⁴ and Margaret Laurence,⁵ a Canadian novelist. While Kirk speaks of its 'distinctly poetical style' and Maino compares Somali poetry with that of the bards of Ancient Greece, Margaret Laurence through her translations gives an intelligent and sympathetic insight into Somali poetic diction and imagery.

Apart from its aesthetic value, Somali poetry plays an important, and sometimes sinister, part in public life. Cerulli⁶ has shown how praise songs enhance the prestige of the clans and accentuate existing rivalries, and Lewis,⁷ in his *A Pastoral Democracy*, states that poetry is used as an instrument of publicity in war and peace, both in the traditional pastoral environment and in modern party politics. A good poet is always a great asset to his clan or party, as through his skill he can exercise a powerful influence on public affairs.

When conflict occurs or views diverge, poets become spokesmen for their people: poetic exchanges are very frequent and are either conducted directly at an assembly, with the contestants present, or consist of a series of polemical poems, recited on different occasions in different places; in the latter case, they are carried by messengers and travellers who learn them by heart. In fact the Somali unwritten poetry spreads so

¹ *A Grammar of the Somali Language*, Bombay, 1880, Education Society's Press, Byculla.

² For a discussion of Somali poetic forms and the classification of poems see *An Introduction to Somali Poetry*, by B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis, Oxford Library of African Literature, The Clarendon Press (in the press).

³ *A Grammar of the Somali Language*, Cambridge, 1905.

⁴ *La Lingua Somala—Strumento d'Insegnamento Professionale*, Alessandria, 1953, Ferrari, Occella & C.

⁵ *A Tree for Poverty—Somali Poetry and Prose*, Nairobi, 1954, The Eagle Press, published for the Somaliland Protectorate Government.

⁶ *Somalia*, by Enrico Cerulli, Rome, 1959, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Vol. II, pp. 258 ff. 'Il Vanto delle Tribù.'

⁷ *A Pastoral Democracy*, by I. M. Lewis, Oxford University Press, 1961, published for the International African Institute. A standard work on Somali culture and social structure; it contains an extensive bibliography of publications on all aspects of Somali life.

quickly across vast distances that some people in the nomadic interior believe it to be transported by jinns, or even by God Himself.

Although poetic combats are very frequent, they are hardly at all represented in the existing published sources,¹ which in our view represent only an infinitesimal fraction of what there is to be found in the manuscripts of Somali collectors and, above all, in the memorized repertoires of poetry reciters.

In this article we present a sequence of three poems, which are a fragment of an exchange carried out by three of the greatest Somali poets: 'Ali Duuh, Qamaan Bulhan and Salaan 'Arrabey. Our texts are based solely on oral traditions: the poems have not been published, as yet, by anyone. Indeed, we are not certain whether they have been written down before at all. If not, once forgotten they would be lost for ever.

A Note on the Editing of the Poems

In preparing this article we have encountered some serious difficulties which, were it not for our love of Somali poetry, would have been sufficient to discourage us altogether from undertaking the task.

First of all, we had to venture on to the as yet uncharted seas of Somali local history. Although a great deal of information is available about the history of the Horn of Africa in general, most of it is not detailed enough for the purpose of elucidating references to events which the poets take as a matter of common knowledge in their listeners. Our explanations of such details are based on oral traditions, a field with which we are familiar but in which we have not conducted the kind of systematic research which involves the painstaking checking and rechecking of evidence and the questioning of numerous witnesses. Consequently we have to admit that there are several gaps in our knowledge, such as our inability to identify two clans mentioned in one of the poems. Nevertheless, even though we cannot guarantee the complete accuracy of our versions of minor events, we are confident that in general our outline of the historical background is correct. One might, in any case, hesitate to delve too deeply into old feuds and to touch old wounds at a time when the Somali nation is endeavouring to achieve unity; however, we are convinced that by striving to preserve the Somali national culture in its poetic form, we are in fact contributing to the strengthening of the bonds of common language and heritage² which unite the Somalis.

What we have said about the difficulties of dealing with references to Somali local history applies equally well to topography. Although maps and gazetteers exist, none of them gives enough detail for the purposes of identifying the wells and grazing regions with which the Somali pastoral poets are so much preoccupied. Here again, although we have made an attempt to identify the places mentioned in the poems, we cannot guarantee the correctness of our statements. The risk of making mistakes is further increased by the chaos which still exists in the transcription of Somali place-names on

¹ A bibliography of Somali texts can be found in *Hikmad Soomaali*, by M. H. I. Galaal, edited with grammatical introduction and notes by B. W. Andrzejewski, Oxford University Press, 1956, Annotated African Texts iv, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

² In his preface to *The Somali Peninsula: A New Light on Imperial Motives*, the Prime Minister of the Somali Republic, Dr. Abdirashid Ali Sharmarkay, refers to Somali poetry as one of the national assets of 'inestimable value'. The book was published in London in 1962 by the Somali Government Information Department.

the maps compiled by cartographers who, though otherwise competent, usually had no knowledge of the language and no appreciation of the subtleties of Somali phonetics.¹

At the moment of writing Somali has no official orthography and it is still uncertain when it will have one. The matter has been given attention by the Somali Government, who appointed a Linguistic Committee² to investigate the various possibilities of writing Somali. The findings of the Committee are now awaiting discussion in the Somali National Assembly, which will have to decide what script to adopt. This may take some time and meanwhile we have had to decide for ourselves how to transcribe the poems given in this article.

For transcribing the texts of the poems we have adopted essentially the same system of spelling as in our *Hikmad Soomaali*,³ except for some slight changes and simplifications occasioned by our desire to meet the practical needs of those Somali collectors of poetry who might want to follow our example of documenting oral poetry and who have only ordinary typewriters at their disposal.

Thus we have dispensed with the special consonant letters and we use:

dh instead of q
ch instead of h
c instead of '
' instead of '
'

We also leave unmarked the distinction between *y* and *ÿ*, as any possibility of confusion is eliminated by context.

In representing vowels, we recognize here only five basic qualities, i, e, a, o, u, and no distinction is made between vowels characterized by frontness (a phonological feature explained on pp. 4-11 of *Hikmad Soomaali*) or its absence, thus removing the need of a cedilla or special vowel letters as used by Armstrong.⁴

As in *Hikmad Soomaali*, we mark the length of vowels by doubling the vowel letters, and we also follow here all the reading conventions and the system of word division adopted in that book. For those readers who are not accustomed to any form of phonetic or phonological transcription it is important to note that the vowel letters i, e, a, o, u are not pronounced according to the English orthographic conventions but approximately according to those used in Italian or Swahili. When a letter is doubled it simply means that it is long, and this does not represent any substantial difference in the quality of the vowel.

¹ This problem is discussed in 'Transcription of Place Names in the Somali Republic', by B. W. Andrzejewski, *Proceedings of the VII International Congress of Onomastic Sciences* (Florence, 1961) (in the press).

² Under the chairmanship of M. H. I. Galaal, the co-author of this article. For the discussion of the difficulties in choosing a script for Somali see 'Speech and Writing Dichotomy as the Pattern of Multilingualism in the Somali Republic', by B. W. Andrzejewski, *Report of the C.C.T.A./C.S.A. Symposium on Multilingualism in Africa*, Brazzaville, 1962 (in the press).

³ op. cit.

⁴ 'The Phonetic Structure of Somali', by Lilias E. Armstrong, *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen*, Berlin, 1934, xxxvii/iii, pp. 116-161. A 'broad transcription', using five vowel letters only, is recommended for practical purposes in 'The Problem of Vowel Representation in the Isaaq Dialect of Somali', by B. W. Andrzejewski, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London, 1955, xvii/3, pp. 568-580.

In the spelling of Somali proper names in the English translation or in the notes, we use the system adopted by Lewis in his *A Pastoral Democracy*,¹ which differs only at four points from the one which we use in the transcription of the text, namely that **dh**, **ch**, **c** and **'** are substituted by **ḍ**, **ḥ**, **'** and **'** respectively. This measure is taken as a concession to those readers who do not know Somali, and who might find too great a departure from the established practice rather confusing, particularly in the case of the symbols **ch** and **c**.

Readers who are not familiar with *Hikmad Soomaali* but know the Arabic script, as used for Somali, might find the following conversion table helpful when reading the texts of the poems:

dh	— ḍ
ch	— ḥ
c	— ʿ
'	— ʾ

(hamza)

In translating the Somali text of the poems we have attempted to steer clear of the two extremes of literal and literary versions. A literal translation would be in too great a contrast with the gracefulness of the original, while a literary translation might obscure points which are important for the study of the Somali culture. We use what W. Jabłoński calls 'philological translation',² which is as close to the original as English usage and word-order permit. We have not made any attempt to render in English the aesthetic effects of Somali alliteration and rhythmic patterns, which are closely bound up with the recitation chants.

In a number of places we have clarified obscurities by inserting in the translation words or phrases which are not in the original, but which are implied either in the neighbouring sentences or the whole context of the poem. We have also several times substituted personal pronouns by proper names, on similar grounds. All the insertions and substitutions are placed in brackets.

Historical and Social Background

The poetic combat which we present in this article had a very simple and prosaic background. When the war of the Dervishes ended in 1920³ most of the Somali clans which were involved in it were left exhausted and impoverished. The Dulbahante, among whom Sayyid Maḥammed 'Abdille Ḥasan, the leader of the Dervishes, had the greatest following, suffered very heavy losses, and the plight of the Ogaadeen, who had faltered and wavered in their support of the Sayyid, was even worse. Some of their clans not only endured British and Ethiopian punitive expeditions but were raided by the Dervishes, and at the end of the war were so powerless against attacks that any raiders could loot their herds. In fact, these scattered and unprotected herds were

¹ op. cit.

² 'Zagadnienia przekładów z języków orientalnych', by W. Jabłoński, in *O Sztuce Tłumaczenia (The Art of Translating)*, edited by M. Rusinek, Wrocław, 1955, Zakład Imienia Ossolińskich, pp. 59-84, English summary on pp. 538-540.

³ For an account of this war see *A Pastoral Democracy*, by I. M. Lewis, op. cit., and *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland*, by D. Jardine, London, 1923.

nicknamed 'Spilled Millet' (Haḍuud Daatay) and 'Succour of the Hunters' (Dabad Haaje).

The Isaaq clans, among whom the Sayyid found some staunch supporters but many more enemies, had also suffered from the ravages of the war, but when it ended they found themselves in an advantageous position. A number of Isaaq men who had fought against the Sayyid had been trained by the British and provided with rifles, ammunition, and ponies. Some of them now rose to positions of influence in the Administration; above all, many of them retained the firearms that had been issued to them.

During the period of administrative chaos which followed the war the Isaaq used their superior strength against both the Ogaadeen and the Dulbahante. They looted many Ogaadeen herds, captured some of their wells and water-ponds, and dislodged them from a large part of their grazing areas in the Hawd. The Isaaq onslaught was so powerful that the Ogaadeen could put up little or no resistance, and did not even try to avenge their wrongs. Some of the clans, however, after being looted and pushed southward, developed a modus vivendi with the Isaaq and intermarried with them.

The Dulbahante, who were also pushed out of some of their own areas, were very uncomfortable under the Isaaq pressure, and 'Ali Duuh, who was one of their leaders, recited a poem which was obviously designed to stir up courage and a desire for revenge among the Ogaadeen. He appealed to the sentiment dear to all the Somali pastoralists: the code of honour which does not allow wrongs to pass unavenged. According to this code, when a man is killed his clan must either obtain compensation or carry out a bloody vendetta. When herds are looted they must be claimed back or regained by force. 'Ali Duuh also lamented over the plight of the Ogaadeen who, through their unwillingness to fight, had reached such depths of humiliation as having to hunt wild game for their subsistence, and even to take up agriculture. These two occupations are considered as lowly and degrading by the pastoralists.

His poem received a sharp reply from the leading poet of the Ogaadeen, Qamaan Bulḥan, whose poem contains other sentiments also very strong in the Somali pastoral society. Those who are near to one another in clan genealogy ought, ideally, to help each other and refrain from treachery or fighting. The Dulbahante, who belong to the same Daarood family as the Ogaadeen, had attacked them during the war of the Dervishes, thus breaking the bond of loyalty. According to the poet this was even worse than the behaviour of the Isaaq.

In spite of their defeat the Ogaadeen had developed friendly relations with the Isaaq, and had no intention of starting a fight with them, especially as there was little chance of winning. Making a virtue of necessity, Qamaan Bulḥan appealed to the Islamic teaching about the maintenance of peace among the faithful and about the evils of inciting people to hatred and war.

The third poem, by a well-known Isaaq poet, Salaan Arrabey, denounces 'Ali Duuh as a trouble-maker, refutes some of the minor points in Qamaan Bulḥan's poem and proclaims the glory and excellence of the Isaaq.

No fresh fighting started as a result of this poetic exchange, which continued for some years and in which other poets also took part. It is reasonable to assume that there was an element of 'letting off steam' in the exchange, and everyone was able to bolster up, if not the prestige of his clan among others, at least its self-esteem.

To understand the general trend of the three poems it is necessary to have some knowledge of the genealogical relations of the clans and clan groups mentioned in them. The lists given below omit all the information which is not relevant to the elucidation of the poems.

A. Clan Families

Daarood who include the *Harti* Group
Dir who, according to some Somalis,
 include *Isaaq*
Isaaq (also called *Idoor* by the *Daarood*)

B. Clans and their divisions

(i) Within the *Daarood* Family

(a) *Dulbahante* (in the *Harti* Group)

who include

'*Ali Geri*
Ararsame
Habarwaa
Hagar Aadan
Gorod Hirsi
Shirshoore

(b) *Majeerteen* (in the *Harti* Group)

(c) *Ogaadeen*

who include

'*Ali*
Ammaadin
Bah Ina 'Ali
Dalal
Haarun
Habar Suleebaan
Hirsi
Jeeraar
Makaahiil
Subeer

(ii) Within the *Isaaq* Family

(a) *Habar Habuusheed*

(b) *Habar Magaadle*

who include

Habar Yoonis

(iii) Unidentified clans

Ilma Da'ar
Reer Shala'

C. A territorial group cutting across clan divisions

Huran

who include

Dulbahante

Isaaq (all clans)

The approximate geographical distribution of the clans given in the above lists is as follows:

Dulbahante The Eastern part of the Northern Region of the Somali Republic, i.e. of the former British Somaliland Protectorate.
Majeerteen The Majeerteen Province of the Somali Republic, i.e. the Northern part of ex-Italian Somalia.
Ogaadeen Mainly the Ogaadeen region of the Ethiopian Empire; also the South-Eastern part of the Somali Republic and the Western part of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya.
Isaaq The central part of the Northern Region of the Somali Republic and also the immediately neighbouring territories in the Ethiopian Empire.

Readers who intend to consult the maps, gazetteers and genealogical tables available must bear in mind that Somali has no standardized spelling. They will have to make the necessary adjustments themselves, remembering particularly that our doubling of vowel letters represents length, which is ignored in most works.

'ALI DUUH'S LAMENT

1. Doollo has been taken from the Ogaadeen, the fools
2. If they want to encamp in Dannood and 'Iid, they are forbidden.
3. Other men rule their country, and their two regions.
4. In Daratoole and Faafan, both verdant and fertile,
5. And in the region where there is a watering pond they do not graze any longer;
6. They do not feed milking camels on the *madeed* bushes where the camels are wont to be reared.
7. When the fury of the *jiilaal* season rises, and when fresh grass is exhausted,
8. When in the Hawd camels become thirsty among the *duur* and *danyo* grass
9. (The Ogaadeen) cannot settle by the shallow wells to which they used to travel for water;
10. By God, from the red earth valley of Wardeer they do not get second helpings of water.
11. The remedy would be (to bring the camels to the wells of) Jeerinley and to sing to them (while watering them)
12. But the wells with good water are not for (the Ogaadeen) (any longer).
13. Oh camels, water is not poured out for you again and again from the deep well of the valley of Qarandi;
14. From 'Ammud, (the Ogaadeen) do not get a plentiful supply of stored milk, or milk still covered with froth.

15. Nowadays, in the grazing region of Gaafow shops are set up;
16. The people of the regions of Rakaale and Gargaar have been turned against one another and embittered,
17. They have been fenced off and (the Isaaq) have held celebrations over this,
18. No fierce fighting has broken out at Ordheere, no din (of battle), no (blasts of) gunpowder.
19. (The Isaaq) are now seeking to get Doooh, Doh and Faafan
20. And they have sworn that they would divorce their wives, were they to withdraw (from their positions).
21. The Iidoor have met with the reception which they intended (to have).
22. From time to time men rise and assemble, concerned with (things of) faith;
23. For some (unknown) design on God's part they are sent (into the world).
24. Have not the Isaaq put on white turbans (of splendour and glory) like the Dervishes?
25. (Otherwise) the Makaahiil would not have gone to Doy, and settled in Hiiraan,
26. They would not have migrated to a place where plague attacks them,
27. They would not eat barley and millet in the Haarweyne region.
28. They have abandoned to the Habar Yoonis the grazing grounds of Hagarreye.
29. That they have accepted defeat this proves clearly:
30. The Subeer have received no warnings (of an attack of retaliation) as yet, and have not seen (even one group of their own) people who have run from danger;
31. They have sent no reconnaissance patrols, no harassing attacks, no raiders (against the Isaaq),
32. And yet among the living there is no one mightier (than the Ogaadeen) among both the Dir and the Daarood.
33. God has put out their fire and has dampened (the valour of) their heroes;
34. They are not the weakest among people and yet they have not fought (at all).
35. Have I not put these four (points) one after the other, like the (marked) sticks in the Deleb game?
36. Have I lost the alliteration in the letter *D* with which I began?
37. Have I not set it out clearly? Errors and prevarication spoil a poem!
38. My other complaint concerns the Hirsii, in a matter which I shall explain.
39. (Your own) people were all being attacked and you proved useless to them.
40. The hammering that Bah Ina 'Ali got has left painful scars;
41. They still stagger (dizzy with their) head injuries;
42. They cultivate the fields, because of their extreme poverty;
43. In Damal Aboodi, Deyr, Afmeer and the valley of Garoodi
44. On the day when their families encamped, under (the protection of) a mutual treaty (with the Habar Yoonis), they were robbed (by them) instantly;
45. As if they had been put through a machine, in one evening (they were utterly defeated), and do not get any milk from (their own) camels.
46. Ina Raabbi (their leader) was killed, and he is of the Dalal
47. And yet those who killed that noble leader have not even given them a single old camel (in compensation).
48. Fate has decreed it thus, (otherwise the man who shone like) the Spica Star would not have been forgotten.
49. Even I feel the pain of sympathy in my skin and flesh

50. But (the Dalal) have sat down, wrapping (their cloaks) round their legs and their faces, and have gone to sleep on a mat;
51. They who among (all) people are nearest to him do not feel any pain, and just go on (as if nothing had happened).
52. (Even) the Ilma Da'ar have inflicted a blinding defeat on a (whole) group of warriors;
53. They have not allowed the men who killed their brother to stay (in this world) afterwards;
54. With speed they soon killed (their) elders.
55. One cannot interfere with a man whose father has not begotten weaklings,
56. As it is very likely that his retaliation against you will be worse even than your attack.
57. The Reer Shala' received no reparation for the killing of Kilaas
58. From the men who aspired to kingly clothes and the shawl (of splendour)
59. Yet even though they have not killed any warriors, they sulk
60. And thus are nobler than Hurre who refuses (to do anything about) the death (of his brother).
61. Have I not put these four (points) one after the other, like the (marked) sticks in the Deleb game?
62. Have I not set them out clearly? Errors and prevarication spoil a poem!
63. Have I lost the alliteration in the letter *D* with which I began?
64. My other complaint concerns me and my discourse on my own behalf.
65. This poem people will receive with suspicion, taking it for incitement to fight
66. But I have composed it according to a true conviction and the guidance of the Divine Law;
67. Honesty will prove that there is no sin in it.
68. The camels which were looted in Daahyaale are already giving birth in this *dayr* season
69. But there are no strong (Ogaadeen camels) in Haaman and Daba'adaadeed
70. They do not graze in Derrin and at the entrance (to the valley) of Daad Maadeed.
71. But here is Dahab, the she-camel, and the young white camels;
72. The (sweet) smell of beastings spreads around and yet you have to hunt (wild game);
73. The beautiful camels are not far away and they are your camels
74. Bearing (your) crescent brand marks and (your) ear incision marks on the left side,
75. Grunting and lowing, they have been brought near you (by the Isaaq).
76. They are being driven on towards Dibuhul, towards the watering troughs of Baarjeeh
77. Have I not put these four (points) one after the other like the (marked) sticks in the Deleb game?
78. Have I not set them out clearly? Errors and prevarication spoil a poem!
79. Have I lost the alliteration in the letter *D* with which I began?
80. My other complaint concerns me and my discourse on my own behalf.
81. Fate is like the clouds of the sky, and like the wind:
82. There is no one to do anything about the misfortune, about the debt (of compensation for those who were killed).
83. Vicissitudes of fortune drive on the warriors (whom the Ogaadeen have).
84. Their outraged rights, their looted stock, their weeping women,

85. Their wives shedding tears, (but still) hoping.
86. If you are not weaklings, your chance for revenge has come.
87. I want you to fight, in an issue which should concern you.
88. Arise, you fools, from the place where you (idly) sit, your lips drooping!
 1. Doqonkii Ogaadeen ahaa, Doollo Laga qaad ye
 2. Loo diid Dannood iyo hadduu, degi lahaa Ciid e
 3. Niman baa dalkoodii iyo chukuma, labadii daarood e
 4. Daratoole iyo Faafan oo, wada dirabaaya
 5. Deegaanta haradii ku taal, daaqi ma hayaan e
 6. Deech ka ma madheedhshaan dhulkay, Deleb ku beerrayd e
 7. Markuu duraha jilaal kaco e, doogga La idlaysto
 8. Duurkiyo danyada Hawd markay, Debec ku soo oonto
 9. Laaskuu ku dalandooli jiray, Loogu degi waayay
 10. Alla dawguduuddii Wardheer, ka ma durduuraan e!
 11. Dawadeedu waa Jeeriney, uga dul geeraar e
 12. Ceelkii biyaa diiranaa, Loo ma dawdabo e
 13. Dichda Qarandi. Deerooy mataan, Loo dardari waa ye
 14. Darar kaga ma maalaan Cammuud, diiqo iyo choor e
 15. Maanta na dukaammaa La dhigay, degelkii Gaafow e
 16. Deechdii Rakaaliyo Gargaar, Laysu dacaree ye
 17. Deyr baa ba Lagu meeriyay oo, Loo dabbaaldegay e
 18. Ordheeraan dagaal chumi ka dhicin, dig iyo baaruudi
 19. Dooch iyo Doh iyo Faafan waa, soo dalbanayaan e
 20. Ku na dalaalee naagii inay, dib uga laabmaan e
 21. Iidoorku suu damacsanaa, Loo diyaafadi ye
 22. Hadba dunida duul baw kacoo, diin la soo shira e
 23. Dar Ilaahay uun ba chaggiis, Looga soo diray e
 24. Sow sida Darwiishkii Isaaq, duub cad u ma qaadan?
 25. Makaahiilku Doy u ma kaceen, degaye Hiiraan e
 26. Daacuunku meeshuu ku layn, u ma dalluubeen e
 27. Daal iyo hadhuudh ku ma cuneen, degelkii Haarweyne
 28. Habar Yoonis bay uga durkeen, daaqii Chagarrey e
 29. Dullinnimo inay qaayibeen, wachaw daliilkii yah
 30. Digniini weli ma arag Reer Subeer, duul ka soo qachay e
 31. Dooyiyo dabriyo weerar iyo, ma laha duullaan e
 32. Nin na uunka ka ma dawladsana, Dir iyo Daarood e
 33. Ilaah baa dalkoodiyo sandahay, danabbadoodii ye
 34. Dadka ugu ma liitaan e waa, diriri waayeen e
 35. Afartaa sidii Deleb La riday, maysu dabo joojay?
 36. Da'daan kaga bilaabiyo miyaan, deelka ka habowshay?
 37. Ma daleeyay deylqaafku waa, Kaa dilaa gabay e
 38. Dacwad kale na way Reer Chirsiga, hal aan dareensiyyay
 39. Dadka waa La wada laynayay e, waa u darraydeen e
 40. Dubbihii ku dhacay Bah Ina Cali, doogta weli hayso
 41. Waa wachay la dabandeebayaan, daqarradeedii ye
 42. Wachay dalagga beeraa la qodan, waa dagaagnimo e

43. Damal Aboodi Deyr iyo Afmeer, dichida Gaaroodi
44. Reerhoodu maantay degeen, daawo Lagu boob ye
45. Sidii galab dawaar Loogu rogay, Debec ma maalaan e
46. Ina Raabbi waa tii La dilay, waa na Reer Dalal e
47. Duq na ku ma sangootiyeen kuwii, dahay ugaaskii ye
48. Dan baa tidhi ye La ma duudsiyeen, Dirirkii dheeraa ye
49. Anigu ba dubkaan uga nichiiyo, diirka oogada e
50. Doonyiyo hagoog suu u galay, derimo naw seechday
51. Ma damqado e kii dad ugu chigay, waa durduriyaa ye
52. Ilma Dacar ba duul bay indhaha, dumug ka siiyeen e
53. Nimankii walaalkood durqumay, ka ma dambaysiin e
54. Degdegsiinyo waa tay ciyoon, duqaq u laayeen e
55. Ninkaan aabbihiiis danashyo dhalin, Loo ma duurchulo e
56. Dib baa Looga yaabaa inuu, Kaaga sii daro e
57. Dagaalkii Kilaas uga ma rayn, duulkii Reer Shalac e
58. Dunta boqorka nimankii damcay e, dooni jiray shaalka
59. Bal se kol ay dadaan wachba ba yaanay dilin, doorar na u layn e
60. Geerida Hurraha diidayay, derejo dhaamaan e
61. Afartaa sidii Deleb La riday, maysu dabo joojay?
62. Ma daleeyay deylqaafku waa, Kaa dilaa gabay e
63. Da'daan kaga bilaabiyo miyaan, deelka ka habawshay?
64. Dacwad kale na way aniga iyo, duun u hadalkayga
65. Maansadan dad waa qoonsaday e, diradiraw qaatay
66. Diin run ah daliilkii Sharciga, yaan ka daabacay e
67. Dembi inaanu iga raacihaayn, daacaddaa furi ye
68. Daahyaale geelii La helay, dayrtanuu dhalay e
69. Dundweyn ma jiro Haaman iyo, Dabacadaadeed e
70. Derrin iyo afkii Daad Madheedh, ka ma dareershaan e
71. Dahab waa tan iyo qaalmihii, dayrcadka ahaa ye
72. Dambarkoodu waa urayaa, waa na dabataan e
73. Durmadquruchsanleeyay ma foga, dalawidiinnii ye
74. Iyagoo dildiliihi bishiyo, dacashii haaneed leh
75. Oo wada dunuunucabayay, idin dul keeneen e
76. Dibuchul baa ba Lagu sii wada, dararkii Baarjeed e
77. Afartaa sidii Deleb La riday, maysu dabo joojay?
78. Ma daleeyay deylqaafku waa, Kaa dilay gabay e
79. Da'daan kaga bilaabiyo miyaan, deelka ka habawshay?
80. Dacwad kale na way aniga iyo, duun u hadalkayga
81. Nabsigu waa daruuraa cirkiyo sida dabayshaa se
82. Dakankii wach qaatuu la'yay, deynkii godobeed e
83. Daa'iradu maantay waddaa, duulashii qabay e
84. Chaqa daguugmay duunyada La dhacay, dumarka ooyaaya
85. Naagaha ilmada duugayay, diilalyadu hayso
86. Daa'imo haddaydaan ahayn, dagey abaalkiin e
87. Dagaal waan jeclay chaajo aad, dib ugu aydaan e
88. Doqonyeey ka kaca meesha aad, dacayda laallaadin!

NOTES ON 'ALI DUUH'S LAMENT

A. Argument of the poem

Lines 1-21

The Isaaq have captured several areas and wells from the Ogaadeen, causing them much hardship, especially in the rainless season. They met with hardly any resistance.

Lines 22-34

It must have been God's special decree that the Isaaq should be used as His instrument to afflict the Ogaadeen. Had it not been so, how could one explain their successes, and the passive acceptance of humiliation and defeat on the part of the Ogaadeen?

Lines 35-37

The poet boasts about the excellence of his poem.

Lines 38-60

There is no solidarity among the Ogaadeen. They accept the defeat and degradation of the Hirsi and the Bah Ina 'Ali; they do not avenge the death of their clansmen, such as Ina Raabbi, even though compensation has not been paid. What is more, they do not even show their anger. How contemptible is their behaviour in comparison with that of the Ilma Da'ar who swiftly took revenge! Reer Shala' were better than the Ogaadeen, because even though they did not seek revenge they at least showed their hatred by being unfriendly.

Lines 61-63

The poet repeats his boast.

Lines 64-76

Although the poem may seem to be aimed at instigating people to fight, in fact it is prompted by seeing the extreme outrage done by the Isaaq to the Ogaadeen. After they had looted the Ogaadeen camels they did not even have the decency to move them away out of enemy territory, as is usually done. Instead of sending them to the Isaaq grazing regions they parade them in front of the Ogaadeen, their rightful owners, who have been driven by poverty to hunting wild game and cultivating land.

Lines 77-79

The poet repeats his boast.

Lines 80-88

The misfortunes of the Ogaadeen are summed up and the poet exhorts them to rise against their oppressors.

B. Textual notes

Line 6

Maqeed—a species of *Cordia*.¹

¹ Our identifications of plant names are based on *A Provisional Check-List of British and Italian Somali-land Trees, Shrubs and Herbs*, by P. E. Glover, London, 1947, Crown Agents for the Colonies.

Line 7

Jiilaal—the main dry season, corresponding in time roughly to winter in Europe.

Line 8

Duur—a species of *ANDROPOGON*; *danyo*—a species of *HILDEBRANDTIA*.

Line 15

Some Isaaq clans are very much given to both seafaring and trade. The setting up of trading posts and the erection of any permanent dwellings used to be strongly resented by the nomads of the deep interior.

Line 20

It is a common Somali custom to swear that one will divorce one's wife or wives, if the promise specified in the oath is not fulfilled.

Line 22

The reference to faith (*diin*) is obscure here. Probably the poet allowed himself to be carried away by the alliteration in *d* which the poem follows.

Line 30

The *Subeer* are usually referred to as *Reer Subeer*. The word *reer* has several meanings: family, lineage or clan. The allusion to warnings and refugees implies that the Subeer did not do anything to avenge their Ogaadeen kinsmen, because if they did they would have been attacked by the Isaaq.

Line 35

Deleb is a Somali game not unlike 'Ludo'. It is played with small counters, usually stones, on a 'board' drawn on the sand. Instead of dice four small sticks are used, which are marked so that each has two sides, one 'black' and one 'white'. When the marked sticks are thrown on the ground, the resulting combination of 'black' and 'white' surfaces determines the number of spaces which the player's counter can move. The highest number is gained when all four sticks show 'black'. The poet, when he speaks of 'these four', is vague and ambiguous in a manner very frequent in Somali poetic style. Our interpretation is this: he compares the points in his argument, which need not, however, be necessarily four in number, with this successful high-scoring throw of the four sticks.

Line 36

Literally: 'Have I caused the *D*, with which I began, to get lost'. The poet refers to his strict adherence to the rules of alliteration.

Line 37

'Spoil a poem': lit.: 'Kill a poem from you'.

Line 38

The *Hirsi* are usually referred to as *Reer Hirsi*.

Line 44

The information inserted in brackets is based on oral tradition.

Line 46

The *Dalal* are usually referred to as *Reer Dalal*.

Line 48

The star Spica (α Virginis), from whose positions the seasonal rains are predicted, holds a venerable position in Somali folklore; cf. Note 23/385D, p. 139, in *Hikmad Soomaali*.

Line 49

The poet refers here to his Daarood ancestry which he shares with the Ogaadeen.

Line 52

The *Ilma Da'ar* are probably a clan of bondsmen, who in spite of their lowly position and weakness avenged the death of their kinsman.

Line 57

We have not been able to identify either *Reer Shala'* or *Kilaas*. Their oppressors are also unknown to us.

Line 60

Hurre is probably an Ogaadeen clan leader.

Line 68

We are not certain what *Daahyaale* means; it may be a place-name or the name given to a particular raid; *dayr*—the autumnal N.E. monsoon season accompanied by the lesser rains.

Lines 69-70

Haaman, *Daba'adaadeed*, *Derrin* and *Daad Maadeed* are places in the Isaaq territories.

Line 76

Dibuhul and *Baarjeeh* are places from which the Ogaadeen were dislodged; their defeat was so great that the Isaaq did not have to take the precaution of evacuating the looted camels to the safety of their own hinterland.

A SOMALI POETIC COMBAT—II

B. W. ANDRZEJEWSKI AND MUSA H. I. GALAAL

This is the second article in a series of three. The first was published in the previous issue.

INTRODUCTION TO QAMAAN BULHAN'S REPLY

IN the first part of this article (*Journal of African Languages*, Vol. 2, Part 1, 1963, pp. 15-28) we gave 'Ali Duuh's lament on the defeat of the Ogaadeen. In considering Qamaan Bulhan's reply which we are presenting here, it is important to remember that he was the leading poet of the Ogaadeen, and consequently was regarded as their political spokesman. His position was very difficult indeed: it could not be denied that the Ogaadeen were defeated and humiliated and had to accept peace and a *modus vivendi* with the Isaaq, a step which, though unavoidable, could by no means be regarded as an honourable one.

Yet in this situation it was expected of him that he should give an impressive and well reasoned reply to 'Ali Duuh and thus restore the prestige of his clan, which was now at its lowest level. In his reply Qamaan Bulhan employed a technique very different from that of his opponent. His approach can be best understood in terms of what I. M. Lewis calls 'a duality in Somali notions of power'.¹ While force is generally revered and was usually a decisive factor in interclan conflicts in the past, 'the weak and those who for other reasons cannot have direct recourse to arms are protected by supernatural sanctions. Somali seek strength in everything, and where it is not found in physical force it is sought in the supernatural sphere'.

The sources of spiritual power which Qamaan Bulhan used in the poetic defence of his clan derive from the ideals of Islam, reinforced by what, very probably, belongs to even older layers of Somali culture. In the light of Islamic teaching all Muslims are brothers and ought to help one another and to follow the path of justice and truth. Any intrigue, instigation, double-dealing and hypocrisy are regarded as particularly heinous sins, which are often punished in this world. Injustice done to a brother Muslim is considered even greater if he is bound to the evildoer by bonds of kinship, and the closer the degree of kinship the graver the offence. Thus the transgressor not only has to bear the burden of guilt, but suffers from anxiety that at any moment retribution may come upon him in the form of one misfortune or another.

At this point the moral doctrine of Islam is strengthened by the ideal of loyalty among kinsmen which is at the very root of Somali society. The belief that by harming one's kinsman, or even refusing to help him, one can bring misfortune upon oneself is deeply imbedded in the Somali mores, and is reflected in oral literature. An old Somali proverb says:

Way sokeeye iyo wii' sakaaro iyo wararac damal, saddechda ba cawaagibkooda dhaqsaa Loo arkaa.

'One soon sees the evil consequences of these three: the lament of a near kinsman, the death-cry of a *dikdik* and the thud of a felled tree.'²

¹ *A Pastoral Democracy*, by I. M. Lewis, International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 265.

² In the nomadic interior there is an ancient belief that the *dikdik*, which is the smallest and the weakest among the gazelles, and trees have supernatural power to avenge any harm done to them.

There is even an old belief in the nomadic interior, shared by the Borana Galla neighbours of the Somalis, that the blood of a clansman, if shed on the ground, brings severe drought.¹

In his poem, Qamaan Bulhan assumes a double rôle. Firstly he exposes 'Ali Duuh's motives and censures him from the standpoint of Muslim ethics, accusing him of instigation and double-dealing. He warns him against the evil consequences of such behaviour and in doing this he employs phrases reminiscent of the diction of Somali preachers. Thus, putting on the mantle of piety, he scores a point: he elevates himself above the weakness of his position to a moral height from which he then passes judgment on his opponent and by warning him against supernatural sanctions, he associates himself in some vague way with their source.

His second line of attack is very imaginative: he exaggerates the closeness of kinship ties between his own clan and that of 'Ali Duuh, and thus imputes to him a much greater measure of guilt than he actually might deserve in terms of current ethics. In practice lineages and clans related by common descent often fight and it is only when such ties of descent are very close that the ideals of loyalty and non-aggression are really enforced.² Going even further, Qamaan Bulhan transposes the interclan situation to one which could occur between brothers or paternal cousins and puts himself in a position familiar to everyone: that of a wronged kinsman whose reproaches are designed to reform and punish the evildoer by means of inspiring or intensifying within him the feelings of guilt and fear of supernatural retribution. In this the poet is consistent to the last detail: emotional blackmail to be very effective must contain a certain measure of flattery, which first inflates the victim's ego in order to enlarge the surface for attack. In his poem Qamaan Bulhan asserts in veiled poetic language the vast superiority of the Dulbahante over the Isaaq, by comparing the former to a lion and the latter to lesser beasts of prey. His compliment, however, is immediately followed by an open accusation of treachery and later by an observation that the Dulbahante, as a result of their disloyalty to the Daarood ties, have also been humiliated by the Isaaq.

Qamaan Bulhan's poetic defence of his clan met with great success owing to the artistic effects which he had introduced and the sentiments to which he had appealed. His poem became very popular, and lines 54-57 acquired the status of a standard quotation used in comparable life situations.

QAMAAN BULHAN'S REPLY

1. Oh 'Ali, the Everlasting One has driven on the words of your poem,
2. The rustling winds of summer and the Warm Breeze have carried them,
3. They have refreshed us, like the fresh grass and the abundant milk of the herds;
4. But they have entered (our) flesh and bone, and although words can often bring relief,
5. Not everyone in this respect is the same, and they have made my kinsmen live in bitterness.
6. The men whom you have branded with disgrace have been thrown down.

¹ See Note 23/275F in our *Hikmad Soomaali* (O.U.P., 1956), and 'Ideas about Warfare in Borana Galla Stories and Fables', by B. W. Andrzejewski, *African Language Studies*, III, 1962, pp. 116-136.

² For a detailed discussion of this very complex subject see *A Pastoral Democracy*, op. cit.

7. You have touched and opened old sores on the back of a burden camel.
8. Stop at this point: I shall contend with you and shall state my case.
9. You always kindle fires by which you are not burnt yourself,
10. And setting ablaze a heavy log, you know how to incite people against one another;
11. But maybe the encampment, all in smoke (and flames), will burn the homestead in which you yourself dwell.
12. If in this matter you are sincere and honest, if no sin can be imputed to you,
13. And if your heart is not seeking the flames of Hell,
14. Cousin, why are you rejoicing in our grief? (Our) head wounds have come from you!
15. Fools when they become weak are helped by their brothers;
16. (Seeing) the marks of your stick (on our bodies) people say 'Look!'
17. If you have not done even a little to help me, what is the point of taking up my case?
18. In the days when you yourself were looting our camels, in repeated cavalry attacks,
19. When you were harassing us, like an Amhara band,
20. Why was there no pain of sympathy in your flesh then, instead of your hypocritical assertions now?
21. Between the man who thrusts a sword into you up to the hilt
22. And the man who says (to other clans) 'Attack him from the rear' there is little to choose.
23. Who is a closer kinsman than you to avenge my wrongs and whom do you expect to come to my assistance?
24. When a prowling lion seizes a domestic beast in his gaping mouth
25. And plunging his teeth into it, sheds its blood,
26. Do not the small beasts of prey eat the scraps that are left?
27. It was you who killed me. When did the Isaaq take Doollo from me?
28. How did the glory that once was Daarood's pass to the 'Tail-of-the-old-she-camel'?
29. If they sing triumphal songs over (the capture) of Dibuhul, I shall give them Da'ar as well,
30. And now, is it by (the use of) the sword, the cudgel, and force that they (stay and) drink water and milk?
31. A troop of warriors, if a cow gives birth to a male calf and is being milked for the first time,
32. (Always) want the calf to be slaughtered, while he who owns it refuses.
33. If I fight and injure those who are our neighbours in that region,
34. I cannot understand what advantage this will bring to you.
35. Of (our) girls betrothed (to them), for whom we built the bridal huts, with solemn marriage ceremony
36. And of those (from among them) whom we have married, the children born are (as numerous as) the *dareemo* grass.
37. Do not scare away from me the Muslims, lest Iblis throw you down the precipice;
38. (The abandoned land of) broken watering troughs, where the merchants' agents and hunters roam,
39. The land which God, in His generosity, permeated with flood water

40. Leave to me; they (who have captured it) will be a screen for me against the beasts of prey and the Harti clans.
41. The Ildoor are Dir, and if they launch a raid on us
42. And if all the Harbar Magaadle take their ropes with them,
43. And if the Kind One gives them rifles and ammunition,
44. Then, who is equal with me in descent? The paths which you pursue (in your reasoning) astonish me!
45. You also stay as tribute-payers in the region of 'Aynaba:
46. Well, fight!—(Your) best men were (also) killed, the white-turbanned ones of the Hagar—
47. Or leave us alone! We both bear contempt and shame together.
48. Oh 'Ali, one cannot deal falsely with a man of my age;
49. One can cover up one's words to a senile old man or a young boy,
50. But I can see from the surface through the cover which you are putting on the affair.
51. A man who denies assistance to (his kinsman's) wives when his kinsman is alive, does not inherit them by levirate marriage.
52. God will never favour the man who has sold his brother;
53. In the place where you have killed your paternal cousin, you will yourself fall.
54. (Sometimes) a man comes out with you to look for lost animals, and gets (even) more tired than you,
55. But without wanting you to find them at all;
56. While people think that you and he are companions journeying together, with no secrets screened off from each other.
57. But there will be no place for simulation in the Other World, when the Book is examined;
58. To be a trader's agent and a flunkey is business fit for the Arabs.
59. I have entered between your lips and you have devoured me;
60. (As one day) God will take away my life (I shall now speak the truth): You are more pitiless to me than are the Ildoor!

1. Caliyow dabuubtaada gabay, Daayinkaa waday e
2. Dabaylaa chagaagii bafiiyo, daafigaa siday e
3. Noo dooji dooggiyo sidii, dararta choolaa ye
4. Diirkiyo laftuu chulay hadduu, hadal wach daawayn e
5. Dadka u ma sinna e reer tolkey, dacar ku noolee ye
6. Dibirrooti buu u dhacay raggaa, dabaqadayseen e
7. Daaraan garbaa qoon ku leh ayaad, damaqday Dhuuchow e
8. Dulkaa jooji waan Kula dacwiyi, dood na waan qoran e
9. Dab baad ololisaa Ku ma na gubo, daayin abidkaa ye
10. Intaad dogob shiddaa baad taqaan, diradirayn jaan e
11. Daaskaad fadhdhido sow gubee, degelka qiiqaabi
12. Hadday se daacad chaajadu tahaan, Lagu dambaabayn e
13. Dambaabburada naareed haddaan, dhinacu doonaynin
14. Seeddow, machaad noogu digan, daqarku waa kiin e

15. Hadday debecdo waw hiilisaa, doqon walaalkood e
16. Diiftaa ushaa yay ciddii, 'dayada' haysaa ye
17. Dun na haddaanad ii tarin machaad, iigu dano sheegan?
18. Dooyada fardaa maalintaad, Deleb ku qaadaysay
19. Sidii duul Amchaaro ah markaad, nagu dabraynaysay
20. Intaad haatan ii labadublayn, muu damqado jiidhku?
21. Daabaca ninkii Kugu dhufatay e, daabku Kuu celiyay
22. Iyo ninkii 'duleedshaay' ku yidhi, wach is ma doorshaan e
23. Dakanadayda yaa Kaa chigaad, igu dabayn haatan
24. Aar soo dib jiray neef hadduu, daacuftii geliyo
25. Oo kaga digsiyoo ilkaa, dhiigga kaga daadsho
26. Dugaaggaa yaryari sow ka cuna, duufka hadha ma aha?
27. Aday dilay e goorma Isaaq, Doollo iga qaaday?
28. Machaa libinta Daarood lahaa, Dabacayun siiyay?
29. Hadday Dibuchul uga heesayaan, Dacar na waan siin e
30. Ma wayse haatan daab iyo ul iyo, kaga cabbaan dawlo?
31. Bulsho Daalis oo dibi dhaloo, Loo dambarinaayo
32. Oo kii lahaa diidayay, sidigti doontaa ye
33. Kuwaan derisnay doocheer haddaan, sebenka daadduunsho
34. Wacha adiga duug Kaaga noqon, yaa i degi waayay
35. Gabdhaa doonnan dadabtaan dhisniyo, chidid dariiqaynta
36. Kuwaan dahannay diricay dhaleen, waa dareemada e
37. Muslinka hayga didin yaan Ibliis, dawyo Kaa ridin e
38. Darka jabay dillaalkiyo dhulkuu, dabadku meeraayo
39. Deeqii Ilaahay dhulkuu, chuliyay daadkiisa
40. Ii daa dugaaggiyo Hartay, igaga daahnaan e
41. Ildoor Dir weeye hadduu, duullaan soo bichiyo
42. Dunji Habar Magaadle ba hadduu, dabarka soo qaato
43. Dumbukhiyo rasaastii hadduu, Debecsanuu siiyo
44. Horta yaa ila da' ah wayla yaab, dawyadaad ehuli ye
45. Idinku ba darkii Caynabaa, deris ku taallin e
46. Dagaallama bal doorkii La laa, duubcaddii Hagar e
47. Ammina daaya waa wada qabnaa, daawashiyo ceeb e
48. Caliyow da'daan ahay waqaa, Loo ma duurchulo e
49. Duq gaboobay iyo wiil yar baa, Loo dedaa hadal e
50. Diirkaan ka garan chaajadaa, dabaqa saartaan e
51. Ma dumaalo naagaa ninkii, nolol ku deyrshaa ye
52. Nin walaalki doorsaday Ilaah, derejadaayn waa ye
53. Dulkaad ina'adeerkaa dhigtaad, weli degaysaa ye
54. Baadida nin baa Kula deydeyi, daal na Kaa hadan e
55. Aan doonihaayn inaad hesho na, daayin abidkiis e
56. Dadku na moodi duul wada soodaan, wach u daahsonayn e
57. Dello na ma laha Aakhiro haddii Loo Kitaab deyay e
58. Dillaaliyo mallaal wuchu ba waa, Carabta deynkeed e
59. Dibnihiinna uun baan galoo, way duddubiseen e
60. Allay dili ye Ildoor adaa, iiga sii daran e!

NOTES

A. *The argument of the poem*

Lines 1-8

The words of 'Ali Duuh's poem have brought to the Ogaadeen bitterness and grief, instead of consolation and guidance.

Lines 9-14

The poet accuses 'Ali Duuh of instigating people against one another, a pursuit which one day may end very badly for him. If 'Ali Duuh's sympathy with the Ogaadeen's plight had been sincere, he would not have rejoiced in it.

Lines 15-23

'Ali Duuh's lament must be insincere, as in fact, he not only failed to help the Ogaadeen who are his kinsmen, but attacked them himself and instigated others against them.

Lines 24-28

The Isaaq were victorious only because the Ogaadeen were already prostrated by the Dulbahante attacks.

Lines 29-37

The Ogaadeen now live peacefully with the Isaaq and allow them to occupy the captured land. Even more, their peaceful coexistence is sealed by intermarriage and the offspring of these mixed marriages are now a new bond between the Ogaadeen and the Isaaq. It would be stupid to pursue a shortsighted policy of attacking the Isaaq now, when leaving them in peace would secure an advantage.

Lines 38-40

The region captured by the Isaaq will now stand between the Ogaadeen and any possible Dulbahante attack.

Lines 41-47

This is sad, because, in fact, if the Ogaadeen are attacked by the Isaaq (called here Iidoor), the Dulbahante should come to their rescue, especially now that the Dulbahante themselves have suffered defeat and humiliation at the hands of the Isaaq.

Lines 48-53

The poet exhorts his opponent not to deceive him and admonishes him for his misdeeds, in particular for breaking the law of solidarity among kinsmen.

Lines 54-60

The poem ends with a warning of punishment in the Other World and words of bitter reproach.

B. *Textual notes*

Line 1

'The Everlasting One' is one of the numerous praise names of God, used by the Somalis; for further information see 'The Names of God in Northern Somali', by I. M. Lewis, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xxii/1, pp. 134-40.

Line 2

'The Warm Breeze' (*daafti*) is an obscure and archaic word. It is the name of a wind

which is both warm and gentle. Some people believe that a mystic wind carries the words of alliterative poems and this may be its name.

Lines 4-5

The sense of these two lines is probably this: bitter words of criticism are sometimes like an effective medicine to a person; but people's sensitivity differs and in this case the words of 'Ali Duuh instead of helping the Ogaadeen to regain their strength, filled them with bitterness.

Line 7

When a burden camel develops sores on the back it is usually sent to graze with other camels and no burdens are put on it. This rest cure often lasts for a long time, until the sores heal completely. Sometimes when a burden is put on a camel which has recovered, or if it is hit, the old sores open again. This is very painful and may mean that the camel will never again be fit to carry burdens. The metaphor used by the poet must have been particularly vivid to his pastoral listeners, as the health of burden camels is their major and constant preoccupation, when they have to move from place to place with all their possessions in quest of good grazing.

Line 14

The poet refers to the attacks which the Dulbahante launched against the Ogaadeen. This happened before the Isaaq attacked the Ogaadeen, particularly during the War of the Dervishes.

Line 16

The meaning of this line is that 'people are astonished to see how the Dulbahante, who are kinsmen of the Ogaadeen, have treated them'.

Line 22

This line most probably refers to the part which 'Ali Duuh apparently played in the attack of the Dervishes, whose forces were composed of men from all clans.

Lines 24-5

The poet compares the Dulbahante to a prowling lion and the Isaaq to lesser beasts of prey. This comparison, though it contains reproach against the Dulbahante, is flattering to them and asserts Daarood solidarity.

Line 28

'Tail-of-the-old-she-camel' (*Daba'ayuun*) is an abusive nickname used for the Isaaq.

Lines 29-30

The trend of thought in these two lines is as follows: Since you, the Dulbahante, have betrayed me, I now treat the Isaaq as my friends. They have taken Dibuhul from me, but I am ready to give them even Da'ar; the places which they have taken they now occupy by our permission and treaty and not by force.

Lines 31-34

Warriors, when they stay in a camp, ready for a raid or battle, very often have a reckless attitude towards life and towards the future. When a male calf is born, it is sometimes slaughtered for meat and naturally those who, like the warriors, only think of to-day, are keen on getting a good meal out of it and want to have more milk from

the cow. The owner of the herd, however, prefers not to slaughter the male calf, as he knows that when it grows up and becomes a fat ox, it will be much more profitable to him.

Line 36

Dareemo is a species of *CHRYSOPOGON* grass.

Line 37

Iblīs is the name of the chief fallen angel in the Islamic doctrine who, swollen with pride, refused God's command to bow to Adam. The English spelling of this name is sometimes Eblis.

Line 38

'Merchants' agents' are presumably some of the Isaaq men engaged in trade; 'hunters' are those clans which had been looted of their stock and reduced to such poverty that they had to depend for their subsistence on hunting wild game. Among the pastoralists trade and hunting are not considered to be honourable occupations.

Line 42

When warriors go on a looting raid they take ropes with them for tying and leading off domestic animals.

Line 43

'The Kind One' (*Debe'sane*) is a sarcastic nickname given here to the British administrators, probably on account of their politeness and good manners.

Line 44

'Equal in descent', i.e. of the same patrilineal descent, and consequently bound to come to the assistance of his kinsman.

Line 45

The tribute referred to is the one which the Dulbahante had to pay to the Isaaq in respect of the region mentioned.

Line 46

White turbans used to be worn by the Dervishes, among whom there were many Dulbahante men of the Hagar lineage.

Line 51

In Somali society, if a man dies his brother or his paternal cousin has the right to marry his widow; when this happens a reduced bride-wealth is offered. This is bound up with the duty to offer help and protection, if the need arises, to the wives and children of one's brother or cousin when they are alive. The poet refers here to the fact that the Dulbahante failed to come to the rescue of his clan when it was attacked and consequently cannot expect any help from them now. For information about marriage laws and customs see *Marriage and the Family in Northern Somaliland*, by I. M. Lewis, *East African Studies*, No. 15, East African Institute of Social Research, Kampala Uganda, 1962. (Distribution outside Africa: Kegan Paul Trench Trubner and Co., Ltd., London.)

Line 58

Arab traders normally used Somali agents and protectors, many of whom were from the Isaaq clans. The allusion here is obscure; our tentative interpretation is this: 'You are a Daarood and a noble pastoralist, so do not behave like an Arab trader or his Isaaq flunkey.'

A SOMALI POETIC COMBAT—III

B. W. ANDRZEJEWSKI AND MUSA H. I. GALAAL

This is the last article in a series of three. The first and second were published in Volume 2, Part 1, and Volume 2, Part 2, respectively.

Introduction

THE poetic exchange between the two leading poets of the Dulbahante and the Ogaadeen, to which we devoted the first two parts of this article, was not a mere domestic matter within the House of the Daarood. It concerned very deeply the neighbouring family of clans, the Isaaq, who had just established an ascendancy over their immediate Daarood neighbours. While 'Ali Duuh incited the Ogaadeen directly against the Isaaq, Qamaan Bulhan made an allegation which could not but undermine the prestige of the Isaaq, namely that it was the attacks of the Dulbahante and not simply the might of the Isaaq that caused the defeat of the Ogaadeen.

Salaan 'Arrabey, the leading poet among the Isaaq, had to take up the challenge and enter the poetic lists as the champion of his people. His attack against 'Ali Duuh followed three main lines, in order to show that:

- (a) the Dulbahante were weak and useless to the Ogaadeen as potential allies against the Isaaq;
- (b) they had no sense of loyalty to those who were near kin to them, and consequently could not be relied on by the Ogaadeen;
- (c) 'Ali Duuh was an irresponsible trouble-maker whose behaviour was contrary to Islam.

In dealing with Qamaan Bulhan, it was not necessary for Salaan 'Arrabey to make any personal attack on him, but simply to refute his statements. Salaan 'Arrabey asserts that it was the Isaaq alone who caused the great defeat of the Ogaadeen, the implication being that their power could crush any opponent foolish enough to attack them.

SALAAN 'ARRABEY'S REJOINDER

1. I had no intention, these days, to seek the toil of poetry.
2. I have come to hate it on account of its pursuit of malice and ill-intentioned praise.
3. Save for general themes, I have exiled myself from it.
4. When I cut down my preoccupation with it, people took advantage of my silence.
5. Now I shall discomfit with a retort the man who attacked me.
6. Often in the past I tamed with a leading rope him who had claims to talent and fame;
7. I find that composing verse is as natural to me as milking;
8. No one can vie with me in the coining of new words, which come like dust.
9. In reciting poetry I excel others by (my) distinctive style and chant.
10. One can recognize (good) diction by (its) effortless ease.

11. Once I throw off the upper part of (my) clothes (preparing for a fight), I am firm and resolute.
12. Let me pour out (poetry) and let people take it to the glades of Bur'o and to Herer.
13. A coward who is criticised has no courage at an assembly,
14. But I speak openly and straight to the point at a meeting especially convened for me.
15. Some people think that I have become a senile old man or a simpleton.
16. Have I not made my point with vigour? (Others) let (their) poems stray.
17. Have I not laid the keel for it and provided it with a melody?
18. Every poem has its aim: have I made it lose its way in any place?
19. Have I not put on the (right) road these four points, which I have taken care to alliterate in the letter *H*?
20. For each occasion there is a set purpose, and tonight I utter these few words.
21. A venomous snake, moving by night, is a great danger to a man whom it catches by the heel-tendon.
22. One cannot guzzle *wabeeyo* which has fermented and is bringing up froth.
23. One should not provoke a rhinoceros unless one has a long spear against it.
24. At the appearance of a lion with mouth agape people run away in fright.
25. Some men carry water vessels to a stooping (old) elephant.
26. And when they see that he is meek and mild they put the skin (pack saddle) on him.
27. I used to dig deep pits for some (people). In the heavy clouds and rain,
28. In the roaring sea, in the fury of the gale in which people perish
29. Shall I not drown them? I shall make them lose themselves in the horizon that has lured them.
30. Oh 'Ali, one does not obtain camels in the way you think;
31. A powerful clan can take away in a day (all the herds) of another clan,
32. But it is too late for you to try this.
33. It was you who had to go without the first meat of the looted 'Spilled Millet'.
34. You knew very well about the 'Relief of the Hunters', with which people have become sated.
35. You were chased away when you were hungry,
36. And the Huwan clans witnessed it under the tall shady assembly tree.
37. Did you give up (the looted camels) as a gift? (No), you feared for your own safety!
38. A man who hunts dikdiks, and cannot get (anything else),
39. (Will loot camels) unless he is afraid of death: his gullet is afire (with hunger).
40. The migrant paupers would not otherwise have done without the milch camels, which have (just) given birth:
41. A man who feeds on the meat of wild game would not have left in peace the milch camels suckling their young.
42. You have inherited an inclination for insolence and boasting;
43. If you could find a thousand (horses) and the young men who would jump on them and ride
44. You would have saddled them and simply ridden against a clan one morning,
45. You would not have shouted (your poems) in Heegaale in the heat of the *jilaal* season.

46. When I had chased you from the region where there is shade, you ran away to the Hawd,
47. And (yet) here are (your) young bearded men carrying arms.
48. The two sections of the Habarwaa are in clothes of mourning,
49. The Shirshoore, who are of the same flesh as you, are homeless;
50. Indeed, they had to trek towards Hobyo and the coast.
51. The Ararsame do not (even dare to) inquire about Nugaal and watering at the wells (there).
52. In the heat of the sun, suffering fierce thirst, you trudged along wearily.
53. You do not take even one vessel of water from 'Aynaba in the heat of the *kabiil* season.
54. The Hagar Aadan who used to chant (to their camels, while watering them) have moved out from there,
55. And on you who tell people to rally, the mat pack saddle (of humiliation) has been put.
56. In reciting poetry I excel others by (my) distinctive style and chant.
57. One can recognize (good) diction by (its) effortless ease.
58. Once I throw off the upper part of (my) clothes (preparing for a fight), I am firm and resolute.
59. Let me pour out (poetry) and let people take it to the glades of Bur'o and to Herer.
60. A coward who is criticised has no courage at an assembly,
61. But I speak openly and straight to the point at a meeting especially convened for me.
62. Some people think that I have become a senile old man or a simpleton.
63. Have I not made my point with vigour? (Others) let (their) poems stray.
64. Have I not laid the keel for it and provided it with a melody?
65. Every poem has its aim: have I made it lose its way in any place?
66. Have I not put on the (right) road these four points, which I have taken care to alliterate in the letter *H*?
67. For each occasion there is a set purpose, and tonight I utter these few words.
68. It was the Habar Yoonis who took possession of the watering ponds of 'Iid.
69. Now they have put up their encampments in Hundo and by the ponds of Faaf.
70. It has been reported even to Himid that there was a concentration of encampments, in warlike preparation, in Hutuuti;
71. They launched the warriors, whom they had been massing, against the Reer 'Ali and the Reer Haaruun.
72. The reason why the Reer Ammaadin retreated headlong to the river was that they ran away in fear;
73. They entered the forest of the Shabeelle River, they abandoned the plains.
74. The Reer Jeeraa were completely defeated by repeated attacks.
75. The haughty and proud men have now been licked.
76. We are using to the full the riches of Burqo and the bounty of 'Eelfuud.
77. Only the Reer Dalal are beyond the reach of (enemy) penetration and the ravages wrought upon the Daarood.
78. Now (the Isaaq invaders) show consideration on account of the girls who have been given to them in marriage.

79. One should not be lenient in harming the enemy who has been hamstrung.
80. From here to Hiraan (the invaders) took possession of everything, leaving nothing behind on the dish.
81. You are always given to slander and lies (against the Isaaq),
82. (While, indeed) God gave the Isaaq clanly excellence and nobility.
83. And in the place where you used to encamp, I sport and play;
84. Again and again you are reminded of how I kicked you.
85. The Habar Habuusheed have a reputation for never forgetting injuries and insults;
86. It was you who compared us to women, and yet did I not give your flesh to the birds of prey?
87. And afterwards did you not withdraw from there, despairing, destitute and aching with impotent anger?
88. It would be good for your kinsmen to have herds of strong camels, for which milk vessels are shaped,
89. In fact it is near you on your Eastern side that they (your camels) are stationed and tended (by those who have looted them).
90. The camels looted in the Hagoogane raid are being milked in front of you.
91. While you are inciting the motley clans of the Ogaadeen,
92. The scattered fugitives of the Reer Gorod Hirsi live homeless and in poverty.
93. They go out at dawn and in the early morning (looking for sustenance).
94. If you sympathise with them and yet are not able to help them,
95. Can you do anything with your mouth, uttering frightening cries in the desert?
96. In reciting poetry I excel others by (my) distinctive style and chant.
97. One can recognize (good) diction by (its) effortless ease.
98. Once I throw off the upper part of (my) clothes (preparing for a fight), I am firm and resolute.
99. Let me pour out (poetry) and let people take it to the glades of Bur'o and to Herer.
100. A coward who is criticised has no courage at an assembly,
101. But I speak openly and straight to the point at a meeting especially convened for me.
102. Some people think that I have become a senile old man or a simpleton.
103. Have I not made my point with vigour? (Others) let (their) poems stray.
104. Have I not laid the keel for it and provided it with a melody?
105. Every poem has its aim: have I made it lose its way in any place?
106. Have I not put on the (right) road these four points, which I have taken care to alliterate in the letter *H*?
107. For each occasion there is a set purpose, and tonight I utter these few words.
108. (Your) wheedling of the Majeerteen did not seem proper:
109. In spite of (your) noble treatment (of them) and profuse gifts
110. The Harti know that they have to remember the festering wounds of Mudug.
111. It is well known that fools quickly assent to words of slanderous incitement.
112. Sometimes lack of discrimination brings death upon you;
113. (It is obvious that) they are unreliable and mad
114. If they seek the favour of 'Ali Yuusuf, whom they abandoned in time of war.
115. A man does not readily respond to the claims of kinship, unless he and his kinsmen are born of the same mother.

116. Aiding the enemy, you have thrust down your uterine brothers.
117. On that account you are now dismayed, uttering moans of lament;
118. The hatred of the wronged wrought a curse on the people of Taleeh.
119. You have estranged yourselves from everyone because you agreed on the words:
"Shoot him!"
120. Indeed the strangers have seized your nearest kin.
121. Fate has caught up with you for the harm done to your kinsmen.
122. Although he may know the art of alliterating, when I appear,
123. It is very likely that a bedu who ventures into bush country will get lost.
124. Some things ought to be kept hidden, and covered up with clothes;
125. And this topic was not appropriate, but he goes on babbling!
126. Because of his evil inclinations he leads raiders against those who are asleep.
127. Illusions—the evil spirit of discord—often possessed him;
128. Now a flash of lightning in which there was a mystic voice has appeared to him.
129. Again and again Hilowle beats the rhythm and sings for him songs and choral
refrains.
130. Other people delay their judgments and decisions for a time
131. But the Reer 'Ali Geri used to say 'yes' immediately to things about which they
were not sure.
132. That is how the Habar Suleebaan man of religion deceived them;
133. They were a guiding rope to him during open daylight attacks;
134. Indeed, to guide you he has poured nonsense and lies into you.
135. While you set yourselves up as the destroying angel, you went on stirring up hatred
and evil.
136. You have given your allegiance to the leaders of the Bah Geri.
137. You were among those who deceived and robbed the sultan;
138. The people are still lamenting over the huge wound that you inflicted on them
139. And even today you are pursuing your evil ambition, as always.
140. With the fire and flames which you kindle day and night
141. You will not gain for your enclosure even one she-camel; but you are breaking
people,
142. And it is you who will go with this before God, and to the blaze of Hell.
143. Here I stop. The Other World is inevitable.

1. Haadaaqsi gabay waayadeer, haanso ma lahayn e
2. Hiirtaanyiyo godobtaan ku nacay, hadashadiisii ye
3. Hawaa-la-warran mooyiye si kale, wawga haayiray e
4. Goortaan hammigi gaabsadaa, Layla hiishaday e
5. Marka nin igu haansaday anaw, hilan jawaabtiis e
6. Dhaachaan mid hanaqaad is biday, soo hoggaan baray e
7. Tichdaan hidiyo haaneedsigaan, hoodo ku lahaa ye
8. Hal abuurka Laygu ma higsado, soo habaas bachay e
9. Hoyaalintaan kaga badshaa, haybad iyo luuq e
10. Hasaasaa Laga gartaa, hagarla'aaneed e
11. Mar haddaan hullaabta is ka rogo, soo hankaabsaday e

12. Aan hawadiyo hoosada Burciyo, Herer ha geeyeen e
13. Ku ma hiilo heeriga fulaa, La handabeeyaa ye
14. Anse wachaan hagaag uga marshaa, heel La ii wacay e
15. Inaan oday hangaafa ah noqdiyo, haydhaf La i mood ye
16. Hig ma siiyay? Hawraarta way, kala halleeyaan e
17. Heeraabta maw dhigay intaan, hees na dabo joojay?
18. Maanso ba hog bay leedahay e, meel ma ka habowshay?
19. Afartaa ha'da intaan ka deyay, hiliin ma qaadsiiyay?
20. Caawa na hiyi ba waa hiyi ye, hadal yar baan baanay
21. Halaq gudaya waw halis ninkuu, boqon haleelaa ye
22. Wabeeyo La ma hiisan karo, huurtay oo kari ye
23. Wiyil La ma hunjaalliyo adaan, hooto naw sidan e
24. Laga haarri hoorriga libaach, soo hamaansaday e
25. Rag uun baa maroodiga hunduda, haamahaw sida e
26. Hayinnimo markii Lagu arkay, haragga saareen e
27. Hoobaaq mid waw godi jiray, heegadiyo roobka
28. Badda huguntay hoofiga sabo e, Lagu halaagmaayo
29. Bal maan hafiyo? Hir u laacay baan, ku hadfin doonaa ye
30. Calow Lagu ma helo geel sidaa, u handanaysaan e
31. Qabiilo hindi ihi maalin bay, ka hinjisaa duul e
32. Idinka hoostay meel uun haddaa, holi lahaydeen e
33. Hadhuudh Daatay idinkaa ka qaday, halabihisii ye
34. Dabad Haajihii Laga harqaday, ways hundo ogayn e
35. Waa tii LaGaa hiray adoo, qaba hamuuntii ye
36. Huwan maragga waa tii ahayd, hadhacii waabnaa ye
37. Haddiyad miyaa u bichiseen, naftiinnaw hammadiseen e
38. Nin sagaaro hetaynaya oo, haaban kari waayay
39. Isagaan hunguri waa shiddee, hed uga yaabaynin
40. Haawaydu ka ma maaranteen, heeshiga dhalay e
41. Haleelada ma daayeen nin cuni, hilib ugaadheed e
42. Haraanka iyo faanka ways, ka hiddo raacdeen e
43. Kun haddaad helaysiyo barbaar, halabsatoo fuusha
44. Qoluun baad u heensayn lahayd, hawlyaraan subach e
45. Heegaale ka ma qayliseen, holanka jiilaal e
46. Goortaan hadhka ba Kaa eryaad, Hawd u cararteen e
47. Waa kaa hubkii sida raggii, wada hareednaa ye
48. Habarwaa na waa kaa hengelaa, labadii haamood e
49. Shirshooruhu ba hoy ma leh kuwaad, hilib wadaagtaan e
50. Waa kaa hayaankii ku dhacay, Hobyo iyo cheeb e
51. Ararsame ma haybsado Nugaal, horashadii ceel e
52. Hannas iyo harraad kulul adoo, habaq leh soo guuray
53. Caynaba hadhuub ka ma dartaan, hogo kaliileed e
54. Ka hullele Hagar Aadankii, hooballayn jiray e
55. Aduun baa hayayda u guntan e, heeryo LaGu saar ye
56. Hoyaalintaan kaga badshaa, haybad iyo luuq e
57. Hasaasaa Laga gartaa, hagarla'aaneed e

58. Mar haddaan hullaabta is ka rogo, soo hankaabsaday e
59. Aan hawadiyo hoosada Burciyo, Herer ha geeyeen e
60. Ku ma hiilo heeriga fulaa, La handabeeyaa ye
61. Anse wachaan hagaag uga marshaa, heel La ii wacay e
62. Inaan oday hangaafa ah noqdiyo, haydhaf La i mood ye
63. Hig ma siiyay hawraarta way, kala halleeyaan e
64. Heeraabta maw dhigay intaan, hees na dabo joojay?
65. Maanso ba hog bay leedahay, meel ma ka habowshey?
66. Afartaa ha'da intaan ka deyay, hiliin ma qaadsiiyay?
67. Caawa na hiyi ba waa hiyi ye, hadal yar baan baanay
68. Habar Yoonis waa taa hantiday, haradii Ciideed e
69. Imminkay Hundiyo reer fureen, harawadii Faaf e
70. In Hutuuti qayrada La dhigay, Himidh na Loo gee ye
71. Ku hinqiye colkay humin jireen, Caliyo Haaruun e
72. Wach Ammaadin webigaw herdiyay, harabku waa khoof e
73. Huurkii Shabeelluu galay e, hure bannaankii ye
74. Hoobhoobsigii Lagu idlee, hurintii Jeeraar e
75. Nimankii hawada weyn lahaa, haatan Lagu leef ye
76. Ka hidiidnay hodonkii Burqiyo, hibadii Ceelfuud e
77. Hayruufka Dalal bawga dhiman, hegerbi Daarood e
78. Maanta na hablaa Loo dhisay, ku habranaayaan e
79. Heydaaro cadow Loo ma tudho, heermay boqontii ye
80. Ma hambayn e dunidii hantiye, tan iyo Hiiraan e
81. Aduun baa hinaayiyo u jilan, haawis iyo ceeb e
82. Haadaa qabiilnimo Isaaq, hibo Ilaah sii ye
83. Anigu na halkaad degi jirtaan, ka hawisayaa ye
84. Had ba wacha Ku soo gacan sidaa, Kuu harraatiyay e
85. Hibashada chun waa Lagu yaqaan, Habar Chabuusheed e
86. Waa taad haween nagu chustay e, haad ma Ku cunsiyay?
87. Dabadeed na hoog iyo hungo iyo, ciil ma la hulleeshay?
88. Tolkaa baa horweyn ku habbanyay, haanka Loo tolay e
89. Waa kaa hareertaada Bari, Looga hoy dhigay e
90. Wach hortuunna Lagu maalayaa, kii Hagoogane e
91. Hambannida Ogaadeen intaad, soo hir gelinayso
92. Habqankii firchaday Gorod Chirsaa, caydh hadaadumi ye
93. Iyagaa hiraabtiyo kallaha, hiirta waaberi ye
94. Haddaad ficil hinaasiday asaad, hiilin kari weyday
95. Ma afkaad ku hawl bichi cidlaad, ka hanjebaysaa ye
96. Hoyaalintaan kaga badshaa, haybad iyo luuq e
97. Haaasaa Laga gartaa, hagarla'aaneed e
98. Mar haddaan hullaabta is ka rogo, soo hankaabsaday e
99. Aan hawadiyo hoosada Burciyo, Herer ha geeyeen e
100. Ku ma hiilo heeriga fulaa, La handabeeyaa ye
101. Anse wachaan hagaag uga marshaa, heel La ii wacay e
102. Inaan oday hangaafa ah noqdiyo, haydhaf La i mood ye
103. Hig ma siiyay hawraarta way, kala halleeyaan e

104. Heeraabta maw dhigay intaan, hees na dabo joojay?
105. Maanso ba hog bay leedahay, meel ma ka habowshey?
106. Afartaa ha'da intaan ka deyay, hiliin ma qaadsiiyay?
107. Caawa na hiyi ba waa hiyi ye, hadal yar baan baanay
108. Hiimbaatigii u ma ekayn, Habar Majeerteen e
109. In kastoo habkay gobi lahayd, haddiyad Loo daadsho
110. Hubso dhaha Hartigu waa ogyay, haarihii Mudug e
111. Hiinraaca waa Lagu yaqaan, hiidha doqoneed e
112. Hebednimada qaarkeed aday, Kuu hed noqotaa ye
113. Bal inuu henfede waalanyay, habi la'aantiise
114. Hadduu ku hirtay Cali Yuusufkuu, huqay colaaddii ye
115. Nin na haybta ku ma raaci karo, hooyo aan dhalin e
116. Hogga gelise cadowgaa bahdiin, u hasinayseen e
117. Imminkaa la wada hundanteen, hoh iyo waydii ye
118. Habaarkii la hele Reer Taleech, hiirtii Loo qabay e
119. Ku hulganiid hebeltoogadii aad, dad u heshiiseen e
120. Waa taa shisheeyuu hantiyay, ma-hurtadaadii ye
121. Nabsaa Ku haya hagaradaamo gacal, hadimadeedii ye
122. In kastuu higgaad qabo haddaan soo haabto
123. Wachaw halis ah, badow hayjad galay, inuu halmaamaa ye
124. Chaajada badh baa La hojiyaa, huga La saaraa ye
125. Hasaawuu ba ma ekayn e wuu, hadadafaayaa ye
126. Hulachumada uunkoo hurda yuu, col u horseedaa ye
127. Hoosiisku waa qaadi jiray, belo hudmaysaa ye
128. Waa kaa hillaacii u bachay, haatufka ahaa ye
129. Kol uun ba Hilowle u tumaa, heello iyo jiiib e
130. Dadka hani tashiga waa hojaa, kay had dhow noqon e
131. Wachaanu habsan Reer Cali Geraw, haa dhowaan jiray e
132. Waa wuchuu wadaadkii ku hoday, Habar Saleebaan e
133. Iyagaa hoggaanka u ahaa, hororka waagii ye
134. Waa tuu hanuun idinku shubay, haasas iyo been e
135. Haaligga markaad sheegataad, hulakadaynaysay
136. Waa taad Bah Geri hoodiideen, hanaddadeedii ye
137. Kuwii boqorka hedataynayay e, heshayaad tahay e
138. Haartaad baddeen baa halqigu, hiifayaa weli ye
139. Maanta na hanka aad waddaa, waa halkii abad e
140. Dabkaad hurin habeyn iyo dharaar, halasyadaad oogi
141. Hal na ku ma cheraysid e dadkaad, ku hawiraysaa ye
142. Aduun baa se hor Eebbiyo la tegi, halacii Naareed e
143. Iskaga hadhay e Aakhiro ba waa, La-ma-huraantii ye!

NOTES ON SALAAN 'ARRABEY'S REJOINDER

A. *Argument of the poem*

Lines 1-8

The poet had no desire to take up again the toil of composing poems, an art, however, in which he had achieved distinction and in which he always defeated his opponents: but because his silence might cause people to think that he was old and powerless, he had composed this poem.

Lines 9-20

The poet speaks of the excellence of his poetry in general and of his present poem in particular.

Lines 21-29

People should not be deceived by his present meekness; as before, he can be very dangerous to those who anger him, and he illustrates his powers of retaliation. The fury of his words, like the forces of wind and waves, will overpower his enemies.

Lines 30-55

The poet shows 'Ali Duuh that it is inappropriate for him to recite a lament on the plight of the Ogaadeen. In fact the Dulbahante are in a very similar position—they are very poor and too weak to retaliate against anyone. They were deprived by the Isaaq of their share of animals looted from the Ogaadeen, and many of them were pauperized and reduced to hunting wild game. Moreover they were beaten by the Isaaq and driven out of their customary watering and grazing places. Thus it is pointless for 'Ali Duuh to incite the Ogaadeen to avenge their defeat when his own clan could not rise from the same kind of humiliation.

Lines 56-67

The poet repeats his boast of Lines 9-20.

Lines 68-80

The poet refutes Qamaan Bulhan's assertion that the reason for the defeat of the Ogaadeen was the attack by the Dulbahante (Lines 27-28 of Qamaan Bulhan's Reply). In fact it was the powerful onslaught of the Isaaq, including the Habar Yoonis, which defeated the Ogaadeen and dislodged them from their wells and grazing regions. The poet enumerates the victories of the Isaaq.

Lines 81-95

The poet now turns again to 'Ali Duuh's clan, the Dulbahante. He shows him that reciting insulting poetry or inciting the Ogaadeen is quite useless. In spite of all the verbal attacks on the Isaaq, the Dulbahante have to suffer the same humiliations as the Ogaadeen (as described in Lines 71-75 of 'Ali Duuh's Lament). They live in poverty, while the camels looted by the Isaaq are being paraded in their sight. Not only this, but the camels which they claimed as their share in the Hagoogane raid against the

Ogaadeen have been denied to them, and they can only watch them helplessly. The poet reminds 'Ali Duuh of past insults against the Isaaq and shows how they were avenged. There was no point in him inciting the Ogaadeen if the words were not backed by physical force.

Lines 96-107

The poet repeats his boast.

Lines 108-115

It had come to the poet's notice that the Dulbahante were seeking to ally themselves with the Majeerteen. Now he points out that such an attempt was not likely to succeed and was only a sign of the weak-mindedness of the Dulbahante; the Majeerteen remembered how the Dulbahante had attacked them in Mudug and also how they abandoned 'Ali Yuusuf, a sultan of the Majeerteen, in a war. Moreover the bonds of kinship between them were not so strong, as within the Harti family the Dulbahante and Majeerteen clans had only a common father, but different mothers.

Lines 116-121

In the war of the Dervishes the Dulbahante, who formed the main core of the movement, often attacked their nearest kin, and carried out executions. Now they have to suffer the revenge of fate.

Lines 122-129

Although the poet concedes that 'Ali Duuh is a skilful poet, he points out that his subject matter is both evil and stupid, designed to instigate people against each other.

Lines 130-138

It was lack of good sense and prudence that made the clan of 'Ali Duuh, the Reer 'Ali Geri, join Sayyid Maḥammed 'Abdille Ḥasan and his Dervishes. They betrayed their own kinsmen, the Majeerteen in particular, by aiding a man of a different clan.

Lines 139-143

Inciting people against one another is not likely to make 'Ali Duuh's clan wealthy again, but makes him guilty of a great sin for which he will have to answer in the Other World.

B. *Textual notes*

Line 5

'Discomfit' lit. 'cover (with a lid, as one does to a milk or water vessel)'.

Line 6

'Tamed with a leading rope' lit. 'taught him a leading rope'.

Line 7

Lit. 'I had a gift (from God) for milking and for the verse which I pursue'; *haaneedsii*.

translated here as 'milking' means literally 'milking specifically the left nipples of the udder'.

Line 8

Most Somali poets coin new words, but there are considerable differences in the standard of their achievement. Salaan 'Arrabey is generally regarded as particularly gifted in this respect.

Line 9

'Style' corresponds to *haybad* in the original, which can also be translated as 'individuality, character, personality'.

Line 11

The traditional dress in the Somali nomadic interior consists of two lengths of cloth: one is wrapped round the loins and the other is used for covering the upper part of the body, sometimes also the head.

Line 12

Bur'o is spelt as *Burao* on maps; *Herer* is another name for *Hargeysa* (*Hargeisa*).

Lines 16-19

These lines echo Lines 35-37 in 'Ali Duuh's Lament. The expression 'these four points', lit. 'these four', is taken from the terminology of the *Deleb* game, described in our note on Line 35 of 'Ali Duuh's poem.

Line 21

'A venomous snake' corresponds in Somali to *halaq*, a black venomous snake of which we have not been able to find the zoological designation.

Line 22

Wabeeyo is a poison applied to darts and arrows by the hunter clans: it is produced from the roots of a plant called *waabay*, a species of *ACOKANTHERA*, and prepared by a process of fermentation.¹

Line 25

Although the Somalis do not use elephants for transport, the practice was not unknown to Salaan 'Arrabey's contemporaries; Somali sailors visited India and as Somali merchants are spread all over the Horn of Africa, some of them must have seen the tamed elephants used for transport in Ethiopia by Lord Napier's expedition against King Theodore in 1867-8.

Line 27

'Some (people)', lit. 'one', can have an alternative interpretation: 'someone'. It would then be implied that the poet refers to a particular person, probably 'Ali Duuh.

¹ For further information see *A Provisional Check-List of British and Italian Somaliland Trees, Shrubs and Herbs*, by P. E. Glover, London, 1947, Crown Agents for the Colonies.

Yet another though less likely interpretation of this obscure passage is possible: 'I used to dig a deep pit for (the water of) the heavy clouds and rain'. If this interpretation is correct, the gathering of rain water in a deep pit would symbolize the poet's strength and the depth of his talent.

Lines 27-28

Heavy rain, a gale or a storm at sea are often used in Somali poetry as symbols of the power which a poet wields through his words.

Line 29

The poet refers here to the illusion which people sometimes experience when looking at the horizon, especially during a long and weary journey. They imagine that they see a green valley where there is none. Unlike a *mirage* (*dalanteed*), this is not an optical illusion but a hallucination.

Line 30

'Oh 'Ali'—these words are addressed to 'Ali Duuh.

Lines 33-34

The first meat of looted livestock (*halabe*) has a prestige significance; for 'Spilled Millet' and 'Relief of the Hunters' see the section on the historical and social background in Part I of this article.

Line 36

What is probably meant here is that the Dulbahante who took part in the raids against the Ogaadeen launched by the Isaaq, were cheated and robbed of their share of the loot. At a meeting of the Huwan clans, when they brought their complaint against Isaaq, they failed to get support from anyone.

Line 45

Heegaale is a place in the area occupied by the 'Ali Geri clan of the Dulbahante, to which 'Ali Duuh belonged.

Line 46

Although the poet uses the singular personal pronoun 'I', it is to be understood that he speaks not only of himself but of his whole clan. Such usage, both in the first and second persons, is quite common in Somali poetry.

Line 50

Hoby is usually spelt as *Obbia* on the maps.

Line 53

Kaliil is a short, calm period of light rains which precedes the heavy rains in the spring (*gu*) and those in the autumn (*dayr*). *Aynaba* (usually spelt on the maps as *Ainabo*) is a town and a watering centre in the Eastern part of the Northern Region of the Somali Republic. The Dulbahante were driven out of it by the Isaaq shortly before the poem was composed.

Line 55

The pack saddle is a symbol of humiliation; according to oral traditions, it once happened that after an interclan battle the victors put camel pack saddles on the men whom they had defeated and forced them to eat grass.

Line 69

Hundo is an area in the Ogaadeen country. *Faaf* is a place in the Ogaadeen country.

Line 70

Himiḍ is apparently the name of a British administrative officer, but the degree of phonetic distortion has not allowed us to identify this name. It is possible that *Himiḍ* may be a coined word meaning the British in general. *Hutuuti* is a place in the Ogaadeen country.

Line 73

Pastoralists strongly dislike thick forests on account of the flies and the beasts of prey.

Line 75

In Somali *leef* 'lick' can have the same idiomatic meaning as in English.

Line 76

Burqo and *Eelfuud* are watering centres in the heart of the Ogaadeen country.

Line 80

It is a Somali custom that when a guest is given food he must leave a large portion of it on the plate for the host's household. The action of doing this is described in Somali by one word (*hambo*) and the verbal forms derived from it.

Line 86

'Ali Duuḥ in a poem once referred to the Isaaq as 'women', which is regarded as a great insult.

Line 90

Hagoogane is the name given to a bold and very successful looting raid against the Ogaadeen carried out by the joint forces of the Isaaq and the Dulbahante. The name *Hagoogane* is derived from the verb *hagoogo* 'cover up one's face with a shawl or the upper part of one's clothes, leaving only the eyes uncovered'. People do this either for protection against dust and wind or as a sign of pride and contempt. Raids and battles are often given names in Somali. See also Note on Line 36.

Line 92

Gorod Hirsi, who are also known as *Hirsi 'Ali Geri* or simply *'Ali Geri*, are the section of the Dulbahante clan to which 'Ali Duuḥ belonged.

Line 108

The poet refers here to 'Ali Duuḥ's attempt to win the friendship of the Majeerteen and gain their support against the Isaaq. This he regards as a sign of stupidity for reasons given in Lines 110 and 114.

Line 110

This line refers to an attack launched upon the Majeerteen by the Dervishes, among whose forces there were many Dulbahante people. Mudug is the main region of the Majeerteen country.

Line 114

'Ali Yuusuf was a Majeerteen sultan. We are not certain what war is referred to in this line.

Line 115

Lit. 'A man whom a mother did not bear cannot follow kinship'. The poet refers to the fact that in the Daarood genealogy the Dulbahante and the Majeerteen are descendants of the same father but of different mothers. In such a relationship, the claims of kinship are not as strong as among the descendants of the same mother.

Line 116

'Uterine brothers' corresponds to *bah-* in the original, which can also mean descendants of the same grandmother, great grandmother or any common female ancestor.¹

Line 117

This line echoes Lines 51–53 in Qamaan Bulḥan's poem.

Line 118

The reference here is to the Dervishes who had their headquarters in Taleeh in the Nugaal valley.

Line 119

'Shoot him', lit. 'shoot so and so'; the poet refers to numerous executions carried out by the Dervishes on the people they arrested.

Line 120

'The strangers' to whom the poet refers are the Dervishes who were a force composed of men belonging to many clans. 'Ali Duuḥ and some members of his clan were often fighting against those who were closely related to them in terms of kinship.

Line 122

'He' refers to 'Ali Duuḥ.

¹ For further information see the chapter on 'Clanship and the Paradigm of Lineage System', in *A Pastoral Democracy*, by I. M. Lewis, Oxford University Press, 1961.

Line 123

The following meaning is implied in this line: 'A simple nomadic pastoralist (*bedu*), such as 'Ali Duuh, if he enters into a poetic duel with me, will be completely bewildered and overwhelmed by my eloquence and skill'. Salaan 'Arrabey spent a large part of his life as a townsman engaged in trade, and travelled widely abroad, a fact which was well known to his audience.

Line 128

'Mystic voice' corresponds to *haatuf* in the original, which is an Arabic borrowing (Ar. *haatuf*) meaning 'voice of an invisible speaker', or in Modern Arabic 'telephone'. In Somali this word is normally used when referring either to hallucinations or mystic experiences.

Line 129

According to old Somali traditions *Hilowle* was a spirit of revelry which inspired people with the desire for dancing, singing, abandon and levity. *Hilowle* is also a name of a dance and can occur as a name of a person. It is possible that the poet refers here to a particular man, known as a reciter of poems and songs.

Line 131

'*Ali Geri*—see Textual Note on line 92 above.

Line 132

The man of religion referred to in this line is Sayyid Maḥammed 'Abdille Ḥasan, the leader of the Dervishes. The *Habar Suleebaan* are probably the *Suleebaan* subsection of the Bah Geri section of the Ogaadeen, to which the Sayyid belonged. This line can also have another interpretation: 'That is how the man of religion deceived the *Habar Suleebaan*'. The first interpretation, however, is much more likely.

Line 135

'Destroying angel' corresponds to *Haalig* in the Somali text. This word, whose origin is obscure, may either mean 'the Angel of Death' or may be one of the attributes given to God—'the One Who kills'. The first interpretation seems more appropriate than the second one.

Line 137

'The sultan', i.e. 'Ali Yuusuf mentioned in line 114.

Conclusion

The poetic combat which we have presented in this series did not end with Salaan 'Arrabey's poem. Other exchanges followed, and took new turns as the changing political scene demanded. But later on the situation was radically changed by the growing strength and efficiency of the British administration of the Somaliland Protectorate. Some years after the War of the Dervishes a more or less effective control of firearms was introduced in that area; across the border in Ethiopia, however, the clans still for

some time found it relatively easy to acquire and keep them. Thus the clans under British administration lost their previous ascendancy: the balance of power was restored.

After the last war the trend towards unity among all clans of the Somali nation gathered momentum and culminated in the creation of the Somali Republic, with its ambitious aim of the unification of all Somalis. If 'Ali Duuh, Qamaan Bulhan and Salaan 'Arrabey were alive to compose poetry today, we would most likely find them appealing to sentiments of national awareness and preoccupied with political problems wider than the microcosm of their clan politics. They might even turn, like some of their fellow-poets today, to pan-African issues or world affairs.¹

The poems of men like the protagonists of our combat lose nothing of their value or interest by being set in the narrow and now outdated framework of interclan relations. All over the African continent the past is receding at a fantastic speed, and in the last twenty years ways of life have been completely transformed, even in societies such as the Somali where there is a conscious and articulate appreciation of the old values. Poetry which illustrates these ideas, and at the same time sets out actual historical events, naming men, places, battles and pacts, is a cultural treasure of priceless value to the future Somali scholar. But the treasure is in danger of being lost unless efforts are made at once to collect and write down the poetry before it is forgotten; it is to be hoped that Somalis will never stop composing poetry, but it may not be long before interclan politics and warfare are part of an increasingly remote history.

¹ For a brief account of the interest in world affairs among the Somali people, even in the nomadic interior, see 'Poetry in Somali Society', by B. W. Andrzejewski, *New Society*, London, Vol. 1, No. 25, 21st March, 1963, pp. 22-4.