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the poetic voice of the politically powerless

Axmed Cali Abokor



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ISBN 91-506-0936-X

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Layout: TiiaRiitta Hjort af Ornäs  
Map drawn by Kjerstin Andersson

Printed in Sweden by Reprocentralen HSC, Uppsala 1993  
Cover printed by MO Print AB, Uppsala 1993



Dedicated to  
my parents  
who raised and educated me under difficult conditions  
and to my wife  
who is always supportive and sympathetic

The activities of the Somali Camel Research Project have been in operation for about a decade. The project has been based at the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts (SOMAC), and financed jointly by this institution and SAREC, the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries. The project placed an emphasis on localized research activities rather than short-term expatriate inputs. Inherent values in the project have been Somali-based research, long-term perspectives, development based on small-scale projects, and a multidisciplinary approach. Project coordinators have been Mohamed Ali Hussein and Mohamed Said Samantar in Somalia. The Swedish coordinator has been Anders Hjort af Ornäs assisted by Christer Krokfors.

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# Editor's preface

*Somali pastoral work songs: The political voice of the politically powerless* is the author's MA thesis submitted to the Folklore Institute, Indiana University, USA. This study has been carried out as part of SCRP activities. The book contains a unique collection of a kind of Somali poetry hitherto not published: work songs performed by the Somali pastoralists in connection with daily routine work. In the traditional Somali poetry, work songs represent a low-status genre because they are performed by low-status members of the pastoral communities (women, young men). The author's analysis of the content of these songs shows that they are important means of communication and therefore should be up-graded as an qualified genre of Somali poetry. The first chapters of the book give the social context within which the work songs are performed, the latter chapters contain numerous examples of work songs related to specific work routines. Thus the book can be both a general introduction to the daily life of Somali pastoralists as well as a collection of poetry which is of interest to researchers of oral literature.

Because of the civil war in Somalia it has not been possible to be in continuous contact with the author during the editorial process. In spite of the free hands given by the author for editing, only minor changes have been undertaken.

Uppsala, September 1993

Christer Krokfors, Research Assistant, SCRP

# Author's acknowledgements

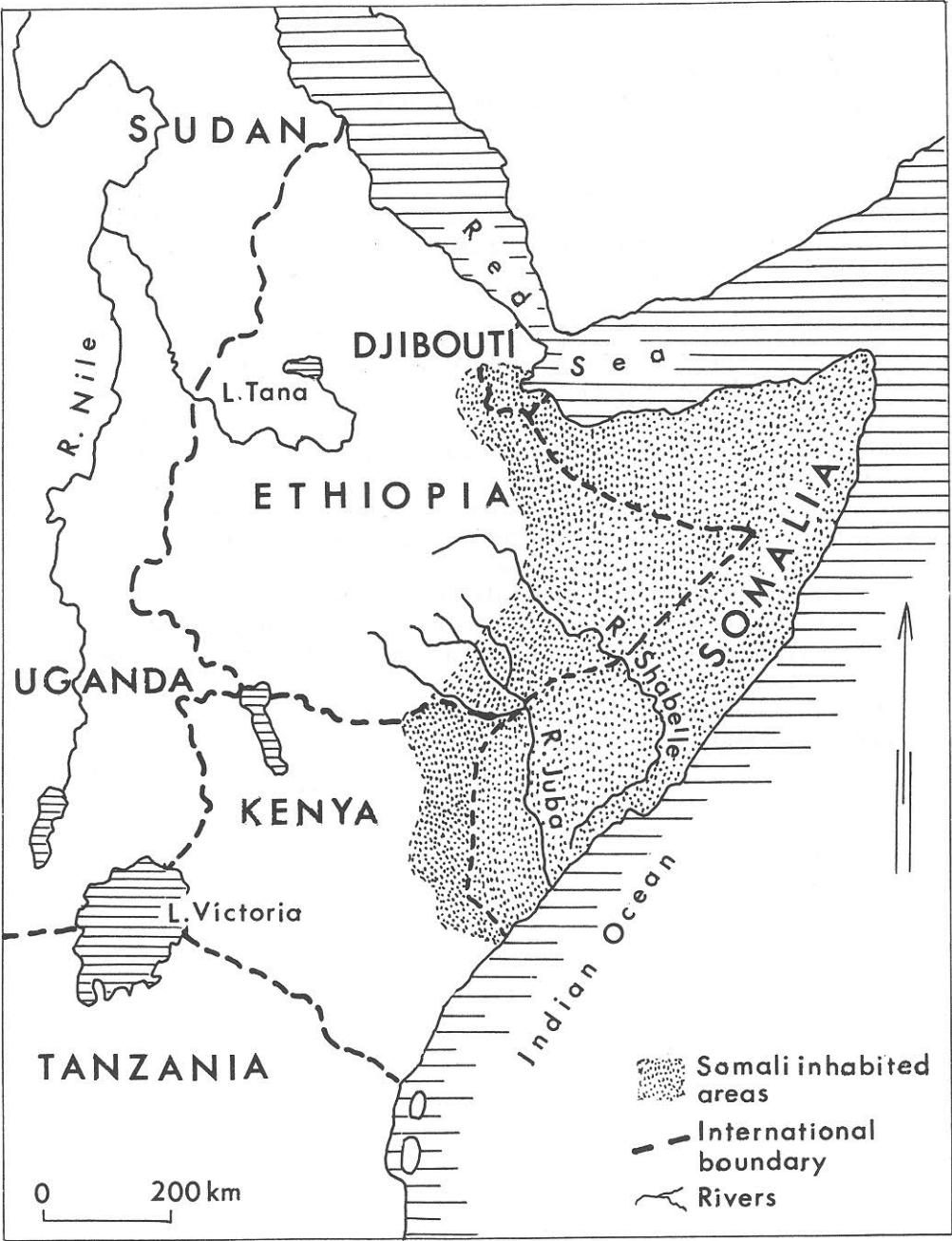
Many thanks are given to all those who have passed on to me something of their knowledge about the various aspects of Somali oral literature. Special thanks to my informants, particularly women who offered me what they considered in their accounts very sensitive poems that reflect their inner feelings. I would also like to express my thanks to friends and relatives in Buuhoodle for their assistance, hospitality and interest in my research work during my fieldwork in June and July, 1989. Since it is not possible to mention all their names, I say to them all: Thank you.

I am also indebted to my M.A. supervisory committee, Dr. Henry H. Glassie, Dr. John H. McDowell, and particularly my adviser, Dr. John W. Johnson, for his guidance and advice on the preparation of this thesis. Without Dr. Johnson's appreciable assistance and encouragement, this thesis would not have obtained its present form. Perfection cannot be claimed, however, and any flaws or inconsistencies found are entirely mine. I would like also to thank my colleagues and professors in the Folklore Institute for their highly valuable and encouraging criticism and suggestions.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Somali Camel Research Project for enabling me to come to Indiana University for my graduate studies. Without that kind assistance my dream of higher education would not have been fulfilled. Many thanks are also extended to the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts for allowing me to pursue this training program.

Axmed Cali Abokor

Map 1. Farthest extent of Somalis in East Africa



## CHAPTER ONE

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# Historical and social setting

### Introduction

Somalis are often referred to as "a nation of poets" because of the remarkable influence of the poetic word, which plays an important role in shaping their feelings, thoughts and actions. Unlike western societies poetry is not the craft of a few aesthetic minded groups whose role in society is marginal. Rather it is a powerful medium of communication employed to record and convey ideas in order to influence and persuade the opinions of others.

The power of the poetic word places a talented poet in a prestigious and influential social position, sometimes alongside important national leaders (Johnson 1974:ix). A poet's position usually corresponds to his poetic ability. His task is to defend his group from rival poets, to register and commit to verse the important events of his people in his historical age. A good poet in Somalia, especially in the pastoral life, fulfils the role of the western journalists (Samatar 1982:3), and his poetry is used to publicize events and serve as propaganda for or against a person, a group or a matter (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:5).

Unfortunately most of the research so far undertaken by Somali and foreign scholars in Somali poetry has been focused on the study of *maan-so*, the Somali category denoting serious poetic genres, while the *heeso*, another Somali category denoting non-serious poetry has been neglected (Abokor 1989:5). This local classification of Somali poetry influenced the interest of earlier researchers and led to ignorance of the study of the *heeso* category. For this reason, my attention in this study is mainly directed toward the *heeso* category, which can be demonstrated to have its own importance and influence in the social contexts of such poetry. The local classification is based on gender and age prejudice that plays an important role in Somali cultural life. Aesthetic criticism, however, does not parallel social behaviour and an investigation into the *heeso* category will fill a large gap in our knowledge and give a holistic view of Somali poetry.

The songs provided in this study will reveal, like other types of pastoral poetry, that they are artistically and intellectually sophisticated. Also ethnographic information about their cultural contexts and social settings that can help understanding of a non-Somali reader will be provided. This information throws light on the people's values and attitudes, beliefs and practices, and their material culture, which are often relevant to folklore studies (Dorson 1972:4).

Most of the data has been collected during my fieldwork research in the Buuhoodle area of the Somali Democratic Republic in June and July, 1989. This

information was collected by interviewing informants and observing the performance of most of the songs in their working situations.

As a native of Buuhoodle, who has been engaged in collecting pastoral poetry for the last twenty-five years, and who has friends and relatives in the area, I had an easy access to data on some aspects of the culture. Also in my boyhood, I witnessed and participated in some of these experiences, and therefore, share with the people many of their beliefs. But I have encountered difficulties in obtaining some controversial but important songs women compose to their husbands. Such topics are conventionally considered personal secrets that cannot be exposed to a third party. Although I realize that a great deal of valuable information was withheld, I am confident that the material I gathered will be sufficient to illustrate the main objectives of this study.

Chapter two discusses in detail how adjustment to environmental conditions creates a division of labour in pastoral life in order to meet the different feeding requirements of their herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. Also pastoral attitudes that relate intelligence to physical strength are discussed. Moreover, the extent to which such notions influence social relations and institutions are explained. Chapter three examines the role of oratory, particularly the influence of poetic work, among the Somali northern pastoralists, and shows how poetry is utilized as an effective means of persuasion. The ethnic categorisation of this oral tradition is also treated, which shows a normative hierarchy of prestige of genres, that is normally based on the social status of the performer, rather than the subject matter. Chapter four deals with pastoral animal work songs, their classification, the working situation they are associated with, the groups who perform them, and their poetic structure. Chapter five displays how women, often regarded by adult men as lower in status and intelligence, utilize singing situations as communicative forums that give them a traditionally licensed opportunity to convey their ideas which are not allowed elsewhere. The concluding chapter shows how folklore forms can be used as means of defining and interpreting social roles and responsibilities. It also reveals that ethnic categorisation of Somali poetry is primarily based on the status of the performers rather than the artistic quality and the message communicated.

To understand the significant influence of Somali poetry, particularly the pastoral poetry, it is important to have an idea about the cultural background and the social conditions which give rise to it and from which people draw their inspirations.

## The people

The Somalis, who are one of the dominant ethnic groups on the Horn of Africa, are regarded as belonging to the Afro-Asiatic Language Group like their neighbours the Afar, Saho, and Oromo (Lewis 1980:4). They occupy a wide territory which extends from Djibouti to northeastern Kenya (see map). Somalis have both ethnic and cultural unity and are bordered the north by the Afar of Djibouti, the west by the Oromo of Ethiopia and the south by the Boran Oromo of Kenya. Although there is so far no official census, the Somali population is roughly estimated to be about six million, in which nearly two



thirds live in the Somali Democratic Republic. The rest are scattered in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Arab Gulf countries.

Although the Somalis are proud and conscious of their nationhood and highly value Arabian connections, they strongly consider themselves a separate nation with both Arabian and African ancestry. The belief in Arabian connections led some clans to claim that they had blood relationship with the lineage of the Prophet Muhammed (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:5). Since clear historical evidence for such claims is weak, the genealogical claims demonstrate a deep attachment to Islam and the long-standing cultural and commercial connections between the Arabs and the Somalis (Hersi: 1977:18).

As Muslims, Somalis adhere to the Sunni legal tradition of the Prophet and the teachings of the Muslim jurist Shafi'i. The religious duties such as the confession of the creed ("There are no gods but God, and Muhammed is His Prophet"), the daily five prayers, fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, alms giving to the poor, and the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia are practiced.

In the past especially before the European colonization, Somalis had no strong central authority that united them as a political entity. They lived as separate independent clan groupings which at times had bitter *wars* over access to wells and pasture. Also conflicts occurred between certain Somali clans and their non-Somali neighbours. These *wars* reached their climax when the strong Muslim state of Awdal under the leadership of Ahmed-Gurey was established in the 16th century. Ahmed-Gurey united the different antagonistic clans, both Somali and non-Somali, settled most of their differences, and led them against the threat of the Christian Abyssinians, who before his leadership, occupied most of the Muslim lands, including the port of Zeila (Lewis 1980:25). Under the leadership of Ahmed-Gurey, the Muslim army was reorganized and equipped with far more efficient weapons of *warfare*.

He waged holy *war* against the Abyssinian occupation. He gained many victories and were able to push the Abyssinians back to Lake Tana. But the Muslim army was later defeated when Ahmed-Gurey was killed. Abyssinians regained their power after they received assistance from a number of European countries.

The Somalis, particularly those clans who lived in the northwestern part of the country, were involved in these *wars* and became strong participants. This led the Somalis to expand to the West and intermingle with the Muslim Oromo, each maintaining their own identity. Despite constant conflicts and the absence of central authority, Somalis never lost their nationhood. Wherever they were they believed and considered themselves to be a single nation with many clan divisions. This nationhood was for the first time fully demonstrated during the nineteenth century during the European colonization of Africa. The partition of Somalia into five different territories and their colonization by the British, Italian, French and Abyssinians inspired the Somalis to seek their unity and to struggle for independence in an attempt to bring the whole Somali people under one government. The introduction of different administrative systems, different languages, demarcation of boundaries, restricts of the movement of people, and last but not the least, the opening of Christian missionary schools, generated the rise of many organized and non-organized resistance groups who fought for the freedom and unity of the Somali nation.

In July 1960, the first independent Somali state appeared when the former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland attained their freedom and united

establishing the Somali Republic. This newly independent state considered itself as the homeland of all Somalis and assisted other Somalis in their struggle against colonialism. Djibouti, the former French Somaliland became independent in 1977, and the other two Somali territories are parts of Ethiopia and Kenya. Although still controversial, the establishment of separate states in which Somalis live is not now officially a menace to Somali nationhood in the Somali Democratic Republic. The idea of cooperation rather than unification has developed for the last two decades and has gained momentum.

## The language

Language is regarded as one of the principal features that manifest Somali unity in culture and traditions. Linguistic classification has determined that Somali belongs to the eastern branch of the Cushitic sub-family of the Afro-Asiatic group (Greenberg 1973:49). As in other Cushitic languages like Oromo, its substantives and verbs employ a number of affixes in a variety of combinations that produce multiple meanings for the same roots. Also it has tonal features of stress which Somali shares with Oromo and Rendille, and which indicate differences in tense, gender and number for certain words. The richness of vocabulary in Somali poetry in part results from the derivation system of the language resulting from the combination and re-combination of affixes with roots. Through this process a large number of verbs and nouns are produced with different affix combinations. Vocabulary is generally divided into common words of everyday usage and archaic words frequently used in poetry and commonly known by the pastoralists but mostly unintelligible to the contemporary young urban generation. Many of the Somali elders consider the lack of the knowledge of the meaning of such words a weakness of the youth in urban populations, and many youth earnestly desire to learn them. Apart from poetic endeavours, archaic vocabulary is often given new meanings and used as technical terms meeting the demands of modern political and social change. Somali social pressure demands that the "purity" of the language be maintained in modernization and it is considered best to avoid the usage of loan words whenever possible. The re-combination of existing morphemes is usually employed to denote ideas and concepts newly introduced to the Somali way of life. The following are typical examples. *Wargeys* is a newly coined word denoting for newspaper. It consists of *war* (news) and *geys* (carrier or transmitter). *Dayaxgacmeed* is also a new concept and stands for satellite, and consists of the combination of *dayax* (moon) and *gacmeed* (made by hand).

Radio broadcasters, school teachers and oral poets play an important role in the coinage and diffusion of the usage of the new terms. It is also the practice that, if a corresponding word is not found in Somali, there is no hesitation to borrow a foreign term. Scientific and technical terms are usually sought from Arabic and European languages, chiefly Italian and English. Poets use newly invented words and loan words in their poetry.

Somali is spoken in nearly all the Somali territories and is composed of a number of dialects which are generally grouped into three main categories. Within each dialect various sub-dialects exist (Lamberti 1986:13). The common or standard dialect which is understood nearly all over the Somali territories,

the central dialect which is spoken on the coast in the south and in the central regions, and the "May" dialect which is spoken in the area between Shabeelle and Jubba Rivers are considered the main dialects.

Somali was unwritten until 1972 when the question of which script to be taken was finally decided by the Somali government. The Latin script was chosen as the official script of the language. Since the beginning of this century, many attempts were made to write the language through the adaptation of both Arabic and Roman alphabets to Somali phonology, and also unique Somali orthographies were invented. All efforts failed when a lot of disagreements developed between the various factions that supported different scripts. Somali is now the official language of instruction and communication in the country.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# Somali northern pastoralists

In general there are four main economic systems in the Somali Democratic Republic. Animal husbandry is regarded as the principal economic mode, and is practiced in nearly all regions of the country. Although it is assumed that up to now the life of the Somali people chiefly depends on animal husbandry, more than half of the population are directly or indirectly involved in this economic way of life. Agriculture is second in importance, and the land between the rivers of Shabeelle and Jubba and other places which get better rainfall are cultivated. The urban population are engaged in business and a small scale industry, and a small number of people are permanently involved in fishing along the 3300 km long fish-rich coast of Somalia.

Nomads regard pastoralism as the most appropriate way of life and as an economic mode that can adjust to the requirements of the ecological and climatic conditions that prevail in the country. The Somali northern pastoralists, like their colleagues in the other regions, keep camels, cattle, sheep and goats. They move from place to place with their livestock to meet various environmental conditions. To understand more about the people's social relations and values, let us discuss the climatic conditions that govern and limit their ways of life.

### Ecology

Generally the northern region is classified as semi-desert with low rainfall and poor vegetation, which impel the pastoralists to constant movement as a means of saving themselves and their stock from the harshness of the environment.

The region is divided into three main topographical divisions, Guban (coastal area), Ogo (the highland area) and Hawd (interior area). The Guban is the hottest and poorest pasture but with better water resources. It is not considered a favourite grazing area except when it gets enough rain in November. The Ogo or highlands lie farther inland from the Guban with an altitude which stretches from 6000 meters and falls to about 3000 meters (Lewis 1961:33). It gets better rainfall than other zones and its water wells are usually located in the dry river beds.

The Hawd lies even further inland from the Ogo, and is divided into wide plains with less water resources, thick divided into wide plains with less water resources, thick bushes with tall trees, and wide valleys. Although most of the Hawd area does not possess permanent water, it is known for its excellent pasture and rich grasses that feed the livestock. It is a favourite place for

grazing and keeping the stock especially during the rainy seasons. Its several valleys and natural pools flood after rains and keep water for some time, which meet the water needs of the people and the stock. When these pools dry up, shallow water wells are dug in their place and they are owned by individuals or groups. Water from such wells can satisfy only a small number of animals and humans. Wells with permanent water are usually closer to the mountainous areas, and are owned collectively by clans rather than individuals. Artificial tanks (*berkedo*)<sup>1</sup> have been introduced and their construction has been in practice for the last thirty years. They are cement lined to keep thousands of gallons of water after they have been filled by rain.

This topographic division of the region gives one an idea of the availability of water and pasture upon which the survival of the pastoralists and their stock chiefly depend. On one hand, where there is permanent water there is poor pasture. On the other hand, where pasture is abundant, there is not enough water resources. It is hard to find enough permanent water and good pasture in the same place at every season. The Nugaal<sup>2</sup> area, which is considered topographically to be included in the Hawd, has permanent water and good pasture if it gets enough rain annually. In addition, the distribution of rain is not even and even different places have different grazing qualities. Some areas are more valued than others. All in all, everything depends upon the extent of the rainy seasons and dry seasons.

Throughout the northern region, the three topographical divisions share four main seasons, two wet (*gu* and *dayr*) and two dry (*xagaa* and *jiilaal*). The *gu*, the most important rainy season, begins usually in April or May and generally coincides with the southwest monsoons (Lewis 1961:36). The *gu* is the happiest time for the pastoral nomads, and it is known as the season of plenty (*barwaaqo*). Heavy rains fall nearly everywhere and enough green grass grows that give the animals good nourishment. Most of the pregnant animals give birth and provide abundant milk. Both the nomads and their stock relax from the long trip going back and forth between the water wells and the hamlets. Many social activities occur during this season. Marriages are arranged and performed; ad hoc clan councils (*shirar*) are called to discuss and finalize pending clan affairs; animals are killed for sacrifices and religious ceremonies. It is the season of satisfaction and relaxation, marriages, and decision making.

However, the pastoralists know that their happiness is short-lived and either June or July the strong dusty winds will blow, quickly drying up the grass and vegetation and the *xagaa* season will commence. This change of season leads to the movement of animals for better water and pasture resources. After the *xagaa*, comes another rainy season, the *dayr* with a mild rain that falls at November. For a short period it provides fresh grass and rest from watering animals.

The *jiilaal*, the worst and hardest season, occurs just after the *dayr* season, and usually starts in December and continues to April. If the rains of *dayr* are widespread, the effect of the *jiilaal* may not be so serious. If not, the pastoralists and their stock will be in difficulty and their survival in danger. These remarks indicate the important role the rotation of the seasons and the distribution of rain play in the survival of the pastoralists and their livestock. However, if heavy rains fall in every part of the country, the movement of the pastoralists will not be restricted. Because they know that different places have different

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<sup>1</sup> Notes are listed as endnotes, page 81

grazing qualities, some areas are more favoured than others. Also it is apparent that pastoral movement occurs both in wet and dry seasons, and it is accomplished in order to conform to the climatic conditions that prevail. Other factors such as disease and inter-clan conflict have their effect on the pastoral movement, but the distribution of rain and the availability of pasture and water are normally considered the primary causes of this movement.

The grouping of the four seasons into dry and wet governs the activities of the pastoralist, creates a division of labour and impels the division of the stock into separate grazing units. In the rainy seasons or time of peace and prosperity called *nabad iyo caano*, "peace and milk", the management of the stock is different from the time of drought called *col iyo abaar*, "feuding and harshness"

### Family encampment, reer

As mentioned before, the separate nomadic encampment, caused by climate conditions are intended to meet environmental requirements. Camels and other stock are grouped into two different units. The scarcity of water and pasture forces their maximum utilization. Because different animals have different grazing and watering needs, one has to divide manpower and stock so that they can settle in a place where their needs can be met.

The nuclear family (*qoys* or *reer*) usually consists of the husband, his wife or wives, young children, unmarried girls, flocks of sheep and goats, a few burden camels for transport and a small number of milch camels. This is considered the basic unit of a Somali pastoral family, or a family grazing unit. The encampment may be larger than this and the families and stock of the husband's sons, brothers and other close kinsmen may be included. Usually the size of a nomadic grazing hamlet, a *reer*<sup>3</sup> may be between one and five families (*qoys*). The nomadic hamlet is also known as *xaas* ("weak side of the family") because the people and the stock of the hamlet are considered weak in comparison with the camel camp.

The routine nomadic tasks of the hamlet are divided among its constituent members. Married women are responsible for rearing the children, all activities related to sheep and goats except watering, including herding, milking and treating the sick; loading and unloading of burden camels; erecting and dismantling the nomadic collapsible house; and making nearly all the utensils needed in nomadic life like milk and water vessels, woven mats for shelter and bedding, and erecting poles (*dhigo*) for the domicile. Young daughters and unmarried women help them in their work. The unmarried women shepherd sheep and goats while the younger daughters tend the youngest stock (*maqal*).

These tasks are considered the daily obligations of women whether young or married, and those who fail to execute them in the required manner are seriously criticized and blamed if not punished. But those who perform them skilfully are highly honoured and admired.

The tasks of men in the hamlet are regulated according to their age and strength. The oldest in age and the most experienced is normally the head or the elder of the hamlet. His daily duty is to coordinate and decide all matters concerning the hamlet with the consultation of the men and to participate in clan councils. Other men's duties include digging water wells and watering



animals in the dry season, and making thorny fences for the hamlet to protect the animals from the wild beasts. The composition of the hamlet occasionally may change. Some close male relatives may leave the hamlet, and others may replace them. The weakness in endurance and lack of resistance of cattle, sheep, and goats and their need to be watered at least once a week prompts the pastoralists to keep these animals closer to the water wells. Such areas known to be of poor grazing affects the nourishment of the stock and compels the pastoralists to constant movement.

Although each nuclear family is economically independent and has its own livestock, several families of kin depend heavily on each other and neither can survive without the help of the other. They share the meat if one kills an animal, they eat together if they buy rice and sorghum from towns, and sometimes they share the milk they get from the stock. Other family members of their lineage group usually cluster close together, and at times of hostility they concentrate in a place in order to strengthen their defensive power.

## Camel encampment

Camel husbandry is normally separated from the hamlets, and camels are herded by the camel-boys (*geeljire*) who are young, unmarried men. The age of the camel herders usually ranges from eight to thirty years. During certain times of the year they live only on camel's milk. Their strong resistance and endurance to climatic conditions gives them an ability to go without water for long periods of time.

The main purpose of separating camels from the hamlet is to let them wander in a wide area and graze as much as possible. This entails keeping them in places distant from water wells which the flocks of sheep and goats and cattle cannot reach for grazing. Such places have abundant grass and are considered favourite camel grazing areas.

Like the members of family hamlets, camel herders go in groups of agnates consisting of five to ten herding units. Each herd may be owned by a man or several men. The animals graze in the day time and in the night are kept in a circular corral constructed with thorny bushes. The herders sleep at night in an open compound at the centre of the corral taking turns to guard the animals with watchful eyes. Although camels are individually owned, much of their husbandry is performed in a collective manner. They are protected from wild beasts and raiders and marauders. They are collectively watered and the water wells are cooperatively dug. They are usually considered common clan property and agnates have joint rights and responsibilities to them. While sheep and goats have individual brands designating individual ownership, camels have clan brands designating collective clan ownership.

Along with its economic value, camel herding provides an opportunity for many social benefits. The separate encampment and the difficult tasks tied to camel husbandry are by the pastoralists considered an excellent training school of socialization for young boys. Sending them at an early age to camel camps bears witness to this notion. Youth are mostly trained by their older brothers or uncles. Through observation and participation the youth are supposed not only to learn but also to excel in skills of camel husbandry. As a primary requirement, the youth are taught to go without water and live only on camel's

milk; to demonstrate endurance during dry seasons when milk is only at the subsistence level; to possess courage and not be frightened away by wild beasts and raiders; and to have enough physical strength to do hard work related to camel husbandry. As the age of the youth increases, their roles and responsibilities increase. At the level of boyhood (*wiilnimo*) which extends from eight to fourteen they are expected to excel in livestock herding and driving. At adolescence (*kureynimo*) which extends from fifteen to twenty, they are expected to be competent in milking, making fences, watering, and looking for lost animals. After the age of twenty (*barbaarnimo*) they reach full manhood, can take up weapons and become the head of a herding group, shouldering all responsibilities including its protection. During this stage or shortly after it the camel herder is supposed to marry and then hand over his responsibilities to those younger than him. Although there are no formal rituals for these processes they are locally recognized.

In addition to animal husbandry the camel herder is taught the art of oratory which the pastoral nomads highly prize. He is taught to be articulate and to learn the craft of composing different forms of poetry and songs. This informal training school is expected to produce the typical camel herder, known as "a man of courage, a man of wisdom and a man of wealth". These are traditional values by which a man's ability and credibility are measured. Pastoral poetry which will be examined in the following chapters is often employed to elaborate on these cultural values.

Because of its economic and social significance the camel is considered the backbone of the pastoral life. As Said Samatar illustrated many Somalis—even in urban settings—consider camel husbandry to be the most honourable profession of men (Samatar 1982:12). What cattle are to the Nuer of the Sudan and the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, camels are to the Somali pastoralist. They are a source of prestige and wealth and, at the same time the cause of contention among clans. Somali poetry displays their value and importance.

Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, a great poet and freedom fighter, contrasted the values of livestock in one of his poems (*ibid.*:12):

He who has goats has a garment full of corn;  
A milch cow is a temporary vanity;  
A he-camel is the muscle that sustains life,  
A she-camel—whoever may have her—  
is the mother of men.

Somali love and devotion to camels is generated by the milk it provides, its meat, its use as transport; its carrying the pastoral collapsible house, and its bringing water from distant wells, its endurance, and its payment as blood-money and bridewealth. Because of these values the camel is vulnerable to attacks and is the cause of inter-clan conflict.

## Social organization

As mentioned earlier, Somali northern pastoral nomads, like others in other regions of the republic, have no powerful institutionalized central system of government. Unlike many African societies, they are not strongly attached to



chieftain authorities. The absence of a central power offered them an extreme sense of pride and individual freedom. They regard themselves as the masters of their affairs and recognize no other superior power except God.

Instead there is a strong belief that acknowledges kinship ties as a cooperative unit rather than as a superior authority. This kinship which unites a number of clans and lineages is considered to represent their common descent and is sometimes led by a traditional leader (*sultaan*, *boqor*, *garaad*, *ugaas*). At the clan level the leader symbolizes the clan and its interests. His office has no executive powers, and in such an egalitarian society where individuals as well as groups enjoy independence, leaders employ persuasion rather than coercion. However, the offices of the clan leaders are highly respected and known to exist for peace and prosperity among the clans. It's main task is to mediate inter-clan conflicts with the help of the elders of its lineage groups and segmentations.

The existence of this kinship system and its divisions as an alliance defines the political and legal rights of the individual and determines his roles and responsibilities. The different groups and segments who consist of close kinsmen are united and governed by unwritten treaties and agreements (Lewis 1980:11). Although every adult has the right to speak for his group, usually the segments are led by elder men who occasionally call for ad hoc clan meeting, held preferably under a big shady tree, that can seat a number of elders.

The treaties and agreements locally known as *xeer*, "traditional law", are either inherited from past generations or are newly regulated and accepted by common consent. They pledge the mutual support of their members and place more emphasis on strengthening the bonds of the people and their collective responsibilities. It is not only the blood relationship that binds them together, but the terms of the treaties which play an important part in consolidating their bonds. The sharing of several offences committed by members of the clan or group is considered another basis of the relationship. Homicide (*dil*), wounding (*qoomaal*) and insults (*qadaf*) are considered the most common and vital ones. In order to satisfy the offended, their payments are normally measured in terms of camels. In this regard, members of a lineage who possess a common treaty (*xeer*) are supposed to share in the payment and the receipt of these offences.

The purpose of these collective responsibilities is to establish a peaceful and neighbourly atmosphere among different groups and lineages. But the pastoralists are fully aware that the traditional law would not guarantee an everlasting peace and unexpected disputes and quarrels that can jeopardize stability can occur at any time in this demanding environment. In this regard the pastoralist usually rely on their strength rather than an agreement, and might becomes the overwhelming authority (Lewis 1961:3).

Might and strength are measured in terms of the number of male members of every lineage. Obviously lineages or family groups do not grow at the same rate. Some multiply more quickly than others. For example, when two brothers marry, one may have only one wife while- the other may have as many as four at a time. Therefore more wives will provide more sons. The polygynous marriage and other factors such as the effect of war and disease play an important role in the expansion and creation of an uneven development and an unbalanced growth. When the need of the exercise of force comes, usually the larger lineages (*laan-dheere*) try to have superior political status over their

smaller (*laangaab*) rivals. But whatever his position of strength may be the ideal for a pastoralist is neither to admit defeat nor to give up and surrender himself to his opponents. Rather he is taught to struggle as long as he lives. These ideas bear witness to the warlike nature of the Somali pastoralists, who believe that conflicts never end, when some are resolved others arise. Access to the little resources of water and pasture are not the only things that create feud. The seizure and raiding of camels and the revenge of past unredressed wrongs are other significant factors that lead to bitter hostilities. A panel of elders normally try to mediate and settle disputes, but they cannot prevent their occurrences. However, they are summoned to arbitrate rival groups whenever need arises.

## Marriage

Marriage, in Somalia in general and with the pastoral nomads particularly is not considered only a matter for two individuals involved. Rather it is regarded as an important means of establishing social links. In this regard, elders from the couple's families usually exercise a remarkable influence over the choice. Each side examines and ascertains whether the other side possesses the qualities and requirements of making an affinal relationship.

As mentioned the wet season, particularly the *gu* when heavy rains fall, fresh green grass grows, livestock provides abundant milk, and people relax from the tedious labour of the dry season, are considered a favourite period of marriage. Camel herders usually encamp closer to the hamlets to dance, sing and select the girl each would like to marry. In order to attract attention herders often boast of the richness and strength of their family. But a girl's response is usually vague and metaphoric which requires considerable intelligence on the part of the suitor to decipher the hidden message. Traditionally, overt love and sexual contact before marriage are not admissible and high value is placed on the virginity of the girl. Although the physical features and the power of oratory of the suitor play an important role and may delight the girl, the willingness of the suitor's family to pay camels as bridewealth (*yarad*) remains the main factor upon which that choice normally depends.

Formal marriages occur when elders from both sides meet and discuss their affinal relationship, although exceptions are not ruled out. After each side expresses its pleasure and acceptance, and the terms involved are finalized, the groom's family pays the first marriage gift (*gabbaati*) which could be horses, money or other valuables. Then the payment of the bridewealth follows which is often paid in terms of camels. The number normally depends upon the richness of the groom's family, the manner of the marriage arrangement and the character of the two respective families. However, the generally accepted standard is to return half of the number of the bridewealth to the groom's family which is locally known as *yaradsooran* (the division of the bridewealth). Usually the wedding takes place at the bride's family, and they can stay there for months and sometimes years.

Marriage does not become legal until a religious ritual (*nikaax*) is conducted by holy men which join a man and woman in a legal marriage and give the husband the full rights and responsibilities of all children (Lewis 1961:340). Also personal property (*meher*) separate from the bridewealth, is religiously

sanctioned for the bride and usually offered to her if she is divorced or after the husband's death. Marriage between close agnates is traditionally restricted. This restriction is intended so as not to weaken the agnate relations, because marriage has its own conflicts and can jeopardize relations. Instead, marriage between distant lineages is favoured and encouraged. Also marriage between affinities is favoured.

Divorce, although frequently occurring, is strongly discouraged, because it undermines the affinal relationship that it aimed to establish. As the marriage was a social link between two groups, so the divorce is as discrediting the link between the lineage or group. In this regard, divorce does not normatively occur without the consultation and agreement of the two sides, and neither the divorced wife nor the children are left unprotected (Hassan 1974:20).

## Sex and age groups

Environmental requirements force the pastoralists in the north and other parts of Somalia to be engaged in intense competition for access to the available resources. This competitive system upon which their survival depends, impels them to divide their grazing encampments and their labour force. There is a strict division of labour in which a certain age group and certain sex group is assigned to a particular type of work (see above). As the livestock are divided according to their power of resistance to climatic conditions, so the people themselves are grouped in accordance with their physical strength and endurance. By social norm, men and women are classified according to their respective strength, and women are placed in an inferior social position. There is a widely held assumption that since women are weaker in terms of strength than men, they ought to be lower in status than men. The division of labour between the male and the female is on the first hand based on this assumption. All activities that are not considered to require strong muscles, such as caring for the children, house management and tending sheep and goats, are considered women's domain; while laborious and muscular work such as digging wells, watering animals, making fences for livestock, herding camels and warfare are regarded as the profession of men. Up to a certain extent this division of labour might be justifiable. But even the art of oratory, which does not require strength of muscle, is deprived from women, who are not allowed to express their feelings and thoughts as men do. Women orators and poets are not normally appreciated by either their male parents or by their husbands and sons. Specifically, women are not socially permitted to talk about anything concerning the relations between men and women. This deprivation would seem to indicate that they are deprived of certain privileges men enjoy. The whole socialization process and early upbringing of men and women are different, and females are taught to be submissive to males.

Together with gender, the pastoralists as well as the other Somalis, then, group people together by their approximate ages, *fac* or *asaag* (Hassan 1974:21). As they grow older, they move from one group to another.

Although such passages have no rituals, they are widely recognized informally and socially sanctioned. Each age group applies to both the male and females, and they have different tasks. Childhood (*carruurnimo*) is the first

age group which extends from the infant level to puberty. Minor tasks such as tending juvenile stock are assigned to them.

The second age group extends from the age of twenty into the thirties and is known in Somali as *dhallinta*, youth. A lot of work is assigned to them and their social expectations are strength and endurance for the young men and obedience and chastity for the young women. The third age group is the adulthood *waayeel* and patience and wisdom are expected from men while submissiveness is expected from the females. A member of an age group who fails to achieve and maintain the accepted standards is metaphorically described as "lagging behind" his/her age group. It is implied that he/she is weaker than his/her colleagues and it is interpreted as an insult as well as a curse.

This social categorisation both in age and sex illustrates the social inequalities by which adult men dominate both the young men and women. Even the display of oratory by the young men or women is not acceptable and sometimes considered a humiliation by the male parent and relatives. However, young men and women express themselves socially in recreational and work songs. Elder men consider such genres low in status. The following chapter examines the important factors upon which elder men base the classification and evaluation of Somali pastoral poetry.

## CHAPTER THREE

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# Classification and role of pastoral poetry

### Significance of oratory

The preceding chapters have illustrated the extent and manner in which a pastoral nomad adjusts himself to the ecological and climatic conditions. The possession of a good amount of livestock and of physical strength have been viewed as the primary requirements for survival and success in this demanding environment. Also, the spoken word or the power of oratory plays a distinct role in influencing and shaping peoples' actions. A man of distinction in this pastoral environment is expected not only to aspire to wealth and to be an excellent fighter, but also to demonstrate an outstanding power of oratory. The validity of this notion is supported by the following Somali proverb:

*Waran lahow, weedh lahow, oo waxtar ahow.*

Be a man of the spear, a man of words,  
and a man of generosity.

This traditional bit of wisdom argues that oratory is parallel to wealth and the possession of weapons, and thus they seem to play nearly similar roles. In certain aspects oratory is considered an asset and provides prestigious social positions which neither wealth nor weapons can provide (Samatar 1982:33).

Although the significance of the spoken word is widely accepted and highly valued, it is also recognized that words from different men are not equal in importance. As the main purpose of the spoken word is to communicate and transmit information for persuasion, its effectiveness chiefly depends upon its "markedness" and stylistic features. Those who demonstrate the ability to carefully construct rhetorical expressions and fuse pleasure with thoughtful ideas are regarded as qualified orators and public speakers. They are usually known as "gifted" men, who through the power of oration are able to influence the opinions of others.

The Somali pastoral nomads are regarded as a nonliterate community who have no institutionalized central authority. There is a strong belief in Somalia that men are equal and each one is the master of his own affairs. In such a community the spoken word is naturally used as the main medium of persuasion, and those who yield power and influence in society use this form of persuasion rather than physical coercion (*ibid.*:24). In Somalia, poetry is recognized as having more persuasive power than prose. Moreover, certain genres of poetry are seen to possess more power than others. Stated

differently, the more the spoken word is stylized as poetry, the more it gains power and recognition. Thus stylized spoken words produce different verbal expressive forms recognized by the community (Abrahams 1977:80). These forms possess different dramatic elements and provide different aesthetic dimensions as well as produce different social effects.

In the Somali pastoral life the art of oratory is not merely the display of artistic talents. It is pragmatic and related to argumentative skills which are essential for the protection and defense of one's properties and rights. Oratory is both a prestigious and dangerous craft, and local belief among the elders is that only adult men should have the privilege of exercising its powers. Women and youth, they believe, may abuse such powers, and men of experience and qualification are the only ones traditionally entitled to participate in "serious" or high level clan assemblies where important issues are deliberated. The skills of oratory both in prose and poetry are usually displayed on such occasions and considered an appropriate means to discuss cases or control conflicts between individuals or groups in order to avoid disastrous results. The use of force is normally resorted to only when the power of the word fails to accomplish anything.

As stated above, oratory among women and youth is played down and considered by male elders as immature and not able to contribute anything substantial. This notion indicates social status, which assigns high quality oratory to the adult males. In this regard men of oratory are very popular and rise to important social positions. Through the influence of their oration they become public speakers, lineage or clan elders, jury members or recognized spokesmen for certain individuals or groups. Achieving such prominent social positions requires age and the ability to generate high quality oratory. Different styles of oratory are imbued with different powers of persuasion, and certain poetic genres are employed for specific social messages. Let us now turn to poetry in the next section.

## Poetics

Poetry in Somalia consists of metric and alliterative structures in the words, and rhythmic structures in the musical delivery. The musical aspects of Somali poetry are outside the scope of this work, but it is important to note that all Somali poetry can be, but does not have to be, put to music. Indeed, musical delivery enhances the persuasive aspects of the poetry. Turning to the metrics of Somali poetry, Somali vowel lengths, of which there are two (long and short), determine the metrics of all genres. The key to understanding meter is the occurrence of sets of vowel lengths (*semes*) on a line of poetry. These scansion patterns are elaborated in more detail in chapter four. The application of these socially accepted poetic rules, vital to the effectiveness of the forms, are strictly observed. Any poem that does not conform to these rigid rules loses its persuasive power and thus is disregarded by the listening public. The interplay as well as the integration of these artistic structures and the provocative expressions give potential power to individual poems in these genres. They produce particular pleasure and stylistic satisfaction that draw attention to and cause people to act or interact in a desired manner. Although the expression of the private emotions of the poets is apparent in the poems,



the connection of the poems to social situations gives more importance and promotes its social appeal.

Nearly all poetry is used in public acts such as religion, marriage and maintenance of civil order and has a social purpose (Samatar 1982:56). Poetry is regarded as a powerful vehicle for persuasion and publicity that spreads rapidly across the country. To appeal to emotions and heighten the effect of poetry, poets utilize familiar pastoral images drawn from ordinary everyday experience, and those considered known and communal are emphasized rather than the ambiguous and personal. Experiences the nomads can associate with are usually preferred and produce widespread effects. Realizing the prestigious social position of poets and the influence of their works, many aspire to become poets. Since there are no formal schools where interested individuals can acquire the art of poetry, performance which has universal appeal serves as a training ground. By participating and observing, they learn the techniques of composition, memorize texts, and carefully study how the merits of high quality of poetry is judged by the participants. Along with the fusion of aesthetics and the message, the quality of a poem is determined by the social occasion and the status of the performer.

## Classification and evaluation

Somali oral poetry, particularly the pastoral poetry is considered one of the major Somali cultural achievements which has interested many scholars beyond Somalia's borders (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:2). It is a powerful medium of communication with widespread social impact. It is an integral part of people's life designed to influence the opinion and actions of others. The stylized structure, the beautification of language, and the rhetorical expressions employed in it give poetry a special power of appeal and distinguish it from other forms of oration.

Although poetry in general is recognized as the most prestigious and powerful form of oratory, there is a normative hierarchy of prestige among the many genres, some being considered more significant and thus more influential than others. Moreover, the age, gender, and social status of the performer, together with the social occasion, contribute to the overall prestige of certain genres. Each genre has its own aesthetic and social function, but some are regarded as higher in status than others. In this regard Somali oral poetry, particularly the northern pastoral poetry, is generally divided into two categories, classical and modern. Classical poetry is older and has a unified scansion system within each genre. The modern poem, called *heello*, resembles Indian song patterns, from which it is derived, and is not the concern of the present volume (Johnson 1974:18). Classical poetry is further divided into *maanso* and *heeso* categories. The *maanso* category, denoting serious poetry, includes the genres of *gabay*, *geeraar* and *jiifto*, all composed by male adults and all dealing with important political and social matters. The three forms differ in the above mentioned hierarchy of status, and each one is regarded as appropriate in dealing with certain subject matters. The *gabay* is regarded as the highest in prestige. Although it can fulfil the functions of the others, it is usually employed in serious argumentative debates between individuals or groups. The *geeraar*, second in importance, is usually related to feuds and wars

and boasts the accomplishments of good warriors, and the praising of horses and camels. The *jiifto*, also known as the *masafo* is employed for the expression of deep feelings related to religious teachings or the exposition of man's deep agonies and melancholy. The distinction of topics among all these genres is not exclusive but inclusive, as any one of the three can be used for most of the stated functions. The composers of all three forms are called *gabyaa* (or *gabayaaaa*), "poet", a term related to the word *gabay*, thus indicating the status of the *gabay* as highest.

The *heeso* or "song" category, which is characterized as "non-serious" or "trivial", consists of recreational and work songs. They are normally associated with rhythmic activities and composed as well as performed by women or young men. The composer of any of these forms is called *f*, "singer". There is a common belief among northern male pastoralists that the element of entertainment in this category overrides the social element or the didactic function, and in this aspect, songs are considered "trivial". It is the thesis of the present work, however, that *heeso* are not trivial at all, but offer a medium of expression for youth and women on topics they are not permitted to deal with in *gabay* form, from which they are excluded. We will have more to say on this subject later. It is true that every verbal expression, *gabay* included, has its own entertainment value, but since women and male youth are assumed to be inferior by male adults, their poetry is considered lower in status and value. This evaluation reveals the different social positions of the *gabayaaaa* and the *heesaa*. The social significance of the genres in each poetic category and the meanings they provide correspond to the social status of their composers. If the same message is conveyed through any genres of the two categories, it is assumed that they will provide different persuasive powers, and the *maanso* category will be much more forceful than the *heeso*.

Since genre categorisation offers different meanings and different power of oration, it is important to understand the fundamental factors that play distinct roles in determining the "seriousness" and the "triviality" of the poetic categories.

## Poetry, gender and age

The grouping of the pastoral community by gender and assignment of separate roles and responsibilities to each have also led to the assumption that women are not equal in intelligence with men. This notion arises from a belief generally held by the male pastoralists which maintains that biological differences between females and males bring about differences in intelligence. This idea asserts that men are generally smarter than women. Men usually equate women's intelligence with that of immature young men. Allegations of this kind are used to give power to men and formally exclude women from public demonstration of their intellectual and artistic abilities when the sexes are mixed.

For example, nearly all family decisions are made by men, and women are rarely consulted. Even the deliberation of important matters that concern women such as the marriage and divorce, are dealt with by men, and women are not usually given the opportunity to express their ideas. The issue is not only the assumption of the lack of intelligence on the part of women, but also



the deliberate denial of their self expression in the presence of men. Women are expected to be socially obedient and subordinate. The possession of low level intelligence that helps them to perform their routine tasks is what is acceptable to many men. But demonstration of high level intelligence is viewed as intolerable and considered detrimental to the authority of men. Distinct and highly respected qualities are traditionally considered the specialities of men, and women's claim of such qualities or their demonstration is unacceptable as far as pastoral standards are concerned. The existence of such gender prejudice is revealed by several Somali proverbs, two examples of which are listed below:

*Geeisimo, deeqsinimo iyo aftahanimo,  
ragga na waa u amaan, haweenka na waa ku ceeb.*  
Courage, generosity and oratory are praises to men,  
but a disgrace to women.

*Kal caano galeen iyo kas ba kala dheer.*  
Intelligence is very far away from the place where milk is present.  
[Milk here being associated with women.]

This kind of gender characterizations in Somali folklore indicate social relationships in which one group dominates the other and the rationalization of this domination without the use of outside force, but through social norms and cultural institutions (Williams 1977:227).

Both men and women are fully aware of the existence of this social inequality, and their distinct roles are recognized, if grudgingly, by both sides. Since open arguments and confrontations between the sexes are socially avoided, women usually employ singing in working situations as appropriate forums to express their feelings, transmitting messages through their songs. Men tend not to treat the messages conveyed through this manner seriously, because they consider songs as "play" and thus socially meaningless when they are composed by women in a working situation.

Much of the focus of pastoral life is placed on the relationship and the interaction between youth and adults. Where youth are considered physically the most active group, they are socially expected to demonstrate obedience and endurance, while adults, particularly men, are required to show patience and wisdom. The young are expected to be loyal to the authority of adults; and challenging them is socially unacceptable. The recognition and execution of these norms is paramount for the maintenance of social order and the success of their economic activities. But the demand of youth for more freedom of expression and personal ownership and the adult's refusal of the same usually undermines a harmonic atmosphere in social relations. The youth are not allowed to argue or challenge male adults openly and in public places. Display of the power of oration on the part of youth, especially with proverbs and poetic genres considered "serious" (*gabay, geeraar, jiifto*) is regarded as humiliating by adults. Only through the those forms considered trivial, like the genres in the *heeso* category, are youth permitted to express their feelings and thoughts, but still keeping in mind not to utter anything that can undermine the authority and the respect of adults.

Singing in recreational and working situations are excellent opportunities for youth to demonstrate their artistic skills and to communicate with each

other. For them these situations are also expressive events that allow them to make known what is prohibited for them to say in other social situations. However, whatever they say, until they reach the age of manhood and gain more experience and maturity, is considered trivial and without social merit by adults. Their age is the major factor that governs the status and the quality of their artistic product. The focus of the evaluation is not the text but the age of the performer.

Around 1925, one of the most prominent Somali poets of all time, Cali Dhuux, composed a famous *gabay* called Guba, "The Burning" (as in inciting to war). Following this poem, many excellent poems were composed as "answers" to Guba in a typical Somali tradition called a Silsilad "Chain [of Poems]" (Andrzejewski and Galaal 1963:29). Many *gabayss* were composed in this series over a twenty-year period. In the 1940s, an excellent *gabay* was composed to Cali Dhuux in this series, but was ignored by him, because the poem had been composed by a very young man. In fact, Cali Dhuux liked the poem, but criticized the poet because of his youth.

## Poetry in context

As mentioned earlier Somali oral poetry, particularly pastoral poetry, is generally associated with specific occasions and social situations. This relationship gives the verbal act its significance and social function. In pastoral life almost no poetry is composed or performed without a social purpose or association to a particular occasion. The different significance of genres is governed by the social importance attached to the occasion for which the poem is intended.

Certain occasions, particularly those in which male elders participate as audience, are regarded as prestigious, and poetry performed for those occasions is recognized as "serious". The criticism of the quality of a particular poem is thus concerned not only with its structure but also with its social context. But other occasions, such as ones in which women and youth participate, are considered lower in status than those in which men participate, and therefore poetry delivered at such occasions is viewed as "trivial" by adult men. Although the performers and the audience appreciate the artistic product of such occasions, male adults do not recognize its poetry as forceful and useful. They assume that the lack of the very strictest observation of scansion patterns, association to rhythmic activities like dance and work, and the inferior social status of the performer contribute to the triviality of the songs. This idea is further evidence that the evaluation of Somali pastoral poetry is generally based on a judgment of social status determined for the whole population by adult men.

Folklore forms are stylized verbal expressions that embody or reflect a group's norms and ideals (Abrahams 1977:19). The manner of delivery of a Somali poem also plays an important role in the way it is evaluated and in the way it elicits social effect. The success or failure of a performer depends, to a considerable extent, on his or her ability to demonstrate strategies socially acceptable for the delivery of different genres (Bauman 1977:11). Some of these strategies are considered more complex and vital than others, and the display

of structural competence plays a distinct part in the consideration of the "seriousness" or "triviality" of the genre.

*Maanso* or "serious" poetry is normally performed by elder men. The strategy here is for serious poems presented in public performances to be composed, discussed, and rehearsed by the poet and his supporters in private before it is delivered. Composition prior to performance of *maanso* poetry is very common in the Somali pastoral context. This act gives the poet an opportunity to consider the suggestions of his supporters and edit or revise whenever it becomes necessary. Only on rare occasions, a Somali pastoral poet may be compelled by certain circumstances to compose during performance. Poetry delivered in this manner is called *kedis*, "unexpected poetry". In all other aspects of serious poetry, the expected role of the poet or reciter is to deliver an already prepared text. Unlike Lord's formulaic theory (Lord 1971:120), this fact illustrates the existence of a fixed oral text, and its verbatim memorization and word-for-word reproduction is socially expected. Somalis claim that the verbatim memorization operates in some forms of their oral poetry. The extent of his verbatim memorization is under extensive investigation by John W. Johnson and Axmed Cali Abokor. Preliminary research already indicates that verbatim memorization is not just a social claim, but also a structural reality to a large degree with Somali serious poetry.

As a required display of competence, the poet or reciter is expected to demonstrate the power of his memory. Some are known to have powerful memories, like the Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan's famous counsellor and memorizer, Huseen-Dhiqle, who had the reputation of memorizing many poems hundreds of lines long after hearing them only once or twice (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:45). Substitution of some words (albeit which still fit the scansion), line interpolation, and some degree of faulty memory in few lines are considered normative and acceptable. But deliberate correction and conscious change of the poems in this category is not only unacceptable but intolerable, suspicions of which cause heated debate and argument. Some of the main strategies associated with the *maanso* category of serious poetry are: strict conformity to scansion rules, care taken to make the topic thought provoking and forceful; accrediting the name of the composer; sometimes accrediting the name the person from whom the reciter learned the poem if it was not the poet himself; and an attempt at verbatim memorization of the text.

In performing the *heeso* category, considered trivial by the adult male power structure, both memorization and improvisation are operative. Some lines of songs are constantly repeated because of their significance and usefulness to various social occasions, while others are expanded and ornamented to meet new demands. Also new songs are composed which are usually parallel to social and economic change. Unlike the serious category, the existence of multiple variants is noticed and composers are usually anonymous. Some of the main strategies associated with the *heeso* category of trivial poetry are: lack of fixed texts, association with rhythmic and musical patterns, anonymity of the composer, and the feeling that the focus of such poetry is on rhythm instead of the verbal message.

In recent times, particularly in the middle of this century, a large number of contemporary Somali urban dwellers, especially the educated class, have begun to demonstrate their opposition to what they consider the biased traditional evaluation of Somali oral poetry. They believe that the poetry of women and youth has been undervalued. They strongly hold that the art of

creativity is not confined to any particular group, and that the criterion of judgment should be based on the merits of the poem rather than on the status of the individual or the group. Such progressive and pragmatic ideas, although still controversial, recognize the *buraanbur* and the *heello* as serious poetry (Johnson 1974:13). The *buraanbur* is a genre of poetry traditionally composed and performed only by women. The *heello*, or modern song, was derived from recreational poetry and was modelled on an Indian song. The latter is performed by both the young men and women, sometimes together. This position has been strengthened by the dominant roles both genres (*buraanbur* and *heello*) have played and still play in the political and socio-economic development of the Somali people.

Although the criteria for evaluation of Somali poetry is still hotly debated, especially in modern times by all these segments of society, there is a widespread conviction within the growing urban population which advocates that both the artistic work and the social effect of the poem should be the focus of quality, rather than the social status of the performer. In this regard the following chapters will examine both the aesthetic and social dimensions of the *heeso* category in order to illustrate its depth and richness, which is my concern in this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### Animal work songs

This chapter will be solely devoted to the demonstration of literary dimensions and social significance of northern pastoral animal work poetic genres. But before entering too deeply into this topic, it seems useful to mention some remarks about recreational genres since they belong to the same Somali poetic category of heeso. The pastoralists, both young and adult, regard recreational genres or dance songs as isolated activities that do not possess the same importance as work genres. The social position of the former is marginal while the latter's position is integral and important in the people's way of life. A Somali Moslem leader or respected elder encourages and appreciates work songs, while he may denounce and even curse recreational songs.

Dancing is usually performed by young men and women in the evenings during the rainy season after the animals have been milked and the work of the day is completed. Parents and other adults rarely participate in dancing in the nomadic context, although it is not uncommon to see many older people dancing on festival days in urban contexts. In the agricultural communities in Somalia, which is out of the scope of this volume, there does not appear to be such a negative feeling about dancing among adults. Although dancing is restricted in everyday contexts, special occasions among the nomadic communities, such as weddings, provide the young with more scope to meet, dance and exchange love songs. Such occasions are opportunities for youth of opposite sexes to learn about each other and to encourage some of them to make choices about whom to marry. The gathering together, the display of competence in dancing, composing, and singing, and the exchange of views about social and political issues, attract the youth in large crowds. But for adults, both male and female alike, social mixing and the overt expression of deep feelings of love are considered unethical and sinful. Adults, particularly males, thus employ their traditional authority to discourage such behaviour and to bring it under control.

Pastoralists usually undertake these measures to maintain social control and to avoid the occurrence of a number of undesirable consequences that often develop during the occasions where dancing is allowed. There is a strong belief among the pastoralists that banter, boasting, and arguing exchanged by singers often develop into insults and serious conflicts that frequently cause bitter feuding and fighting either between individuals or groups. Moreover, those who spend much time in dancing and then become popular in singing, particularly the unmarried women, ruin their reputation and weaken their prospects of a good marriage. Finally, it is felt that when youth spend many hours of their rest time dancing, the accomplishment of the tasks of the following day will no doubt be adversely affected. To this end, pastoral adults

generally are opposed to recreational forms and consider their performance non-serious and even damaging.

Although adult male pastoralists regard both recreational and work songs as trivial in their content, they do recognize the social significance of work songs and the important role they play in executing labour vital for the survival of the pastoral community. They strongly realize that songs which accompany the rhythmic movements of work are essential to the accomplishment of gestures involved in work. Moreover, it is strongly believed that the animals themselves are effected in a positive manner by singing. There is a belief, for instance, that animals to which people sing, drink more, and it is also believed that animals actually recognize the voice of their owner which has a calming effect on them. The following lines from a camel watering song expressed the ambiguity of feeling pastoralists have toward work songs which are classified as "trivial" but which are essential to the accomplishment of work.

*Aamusnaantu na waa ardaalnimo,  
Orka dheerina waa arwaax goyn.*  
Silence is foolish,  
But loud singing is suicidal.

These are the reasons why nearly all nomadic labour is accompanied by singing. The rhythmic movement and its musical pattern as well as the forceful ideas embodied in the verbal element make the work and the singing situation more attractive and artistic. This attractiveness creates a feeling of enjoyment that is felt to lessen the monotony of the work and to encourage the performers to work harder and together. The rhythm of the song controls the pace of the work. In this regard, unlike recreational forms, adult pastoralists generally accept and encourage singing during work. This acceptance provides the performers of the work songs with a traditional license of expression which gives them more scope to communicate controversial ideas safely, a freedom which is not allowed elsewhere (Timpunza Mvula 1987:293). Both individuals and groups then utilize singing situations as a forum to express their views on political and social issues. Through the songs, they argue, negotiate, and challenge, in order to persuade others and effect change in their roles and statuses. Although Bascom's (1954:294) seems correct in isolating a function of social control for folklore, it is obvious that Botkin's (1935:592) idea of negotiating that control with folklore is also valid.

Since the pastoral nomads are an egalitarian society and the power of persuasion is generally employed to influence others, open confrontation and provocative argumentation is usually avoided in order to maintain civil order. Indirection and metaphoric expressions are used as devices to achieve specific goals, which frequently carry ambiguous and veiled meanings (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:44). Understanding of veiled speech needs a considerable amount of competence on the part of the listener to carefully comprehend the hidden messages of the songs.

Several scholars in African oral literature have mentioned that the significance of African work songs lies on the rhythmic movement rather on the verbal element. They described the verbal element of this art as "meaningless" and less developed with "repetitive fixed formulaic structures" (Finnegan 1970:239). Like other types of Somali oral poetry, the verbal



elements of the pastoral work songs are very meaningful. The words and the messages they convey are more important than earlier scholars have emphasized, and the significance of the song and its social appeal chiefly depends upon its verbal element rather than on the rhythm. its primary function is not often entertainment, hut social interaction.

The words of each song comply with a metric, alliterative, and formulaic structure that frames and identifies its poetic genre. Both verbatim memorization and formulaic improvisation operate in, this oral tradition. Songs of particular importance are usually repeated, expanded and ornamented to meet the needs of new situations. New songs parallel to the economic and social change of the community are also frequently composed. Unlike the classical category, the authors of these songs are always anonymous. In order to avoid the responsibility of accusations, poets of work songs usually disclaim authorship by turning the personal into impersonal. This mechanism is consciously employed by the poets to obtain enough security when they bring sensational conflicts into the public arena. Although songs are generally used as means of persuasion, they obviously reflect nearly every aspect of the socio-economic life of the pastoralists. Their traditional values and the economic system of animal husbandry are admired and glorified. The songs also warn against dangers involved in this demanding life and instruct, educate, and guide the young to accepted ways of success. Thus the songs are used both to validate and to change the existing norms and ways of behaviour. They are excellent means of defining, understanding, and interpreting the social positions of the groups and their roles and responsibilities in society.

Although work songs usually accompany the rhythm of tasks, the genres differ in scansion, in the occasions they are sung, specifically the type of work performed, and by the groups which perform them. These ideas will be further developed below, when the songs are being analyzed. The songs analyzed in this thesis are related to animal husbandry, to child care, to women's household chores, and to the manufacture of household utensils, all activities which are common in the pastoral way of life. Thus it is clear that work songs are composed and sung by different age and sex groups.

Apart from the work situations to which the songs are related, and the groups which perform them, the structural characteristics which differentiate work songs are the musical pattern and the scansion, the latter of which is based on patterns involving vowel length. The smallest unit in Somali scansion is the short vowel, called the mora. Somali long vowels then have two moras. The line pattern of each genre is fixed according to the occurrence of semes, a monoseme representing the temporal duration of a short vowel (one mora), a diseme representing the temporal duration of a long vowel (two moras), and sometimes even a triseme which requires a combination of a long and a short vowel to produce three moras. The resulting rhythm of this scansion, together with its musical structure help to define the genre.

All the songs of each genre are normatively required to comply with the scansion pattern. Those songs which deviate from this pattern are seriously criticized. Several genres may bear the same scansion pattern, but they differ in musical setting. Demonstration of the acoustic texture of the songs would have been very helpful to my work, but lack of knowledge of musicology did not allow me to undertake this interesting endeavour.

Since animal husbandry is considered by the majority of Somalis as the most dominant economic mode in the country, there is no doubt that this way of life will greatly influence people's values and attitudes. The work songs provided in this chapter, will offer a deeper understanding of the social and economic significance of animal husbandry, the various feeding and herding requirements of the animals, and the extent to which the songs have influenced and still continue to influence the thoughts and actions of pastoral people. As the songs will illustrate, different species of livestock have separate generic work songs that accompany each working situation with that animal. Although I have collected the songs from Las Anod and Buuhoodle districts of the Northern Region of Somalia, most of them are also known in several other regions. Studies conducted by me and other researchers have already revealed this fact. Thus it is clear that many of these songs are popular across several regions.

### Heesaha Geela (camel work songs)

Camels is considered by pastoralists and a large number of the urban population to be the most prized beast in the Somali domesticated menagerie. Its physical endurance and resistance to drought and disease, as well as its social and economic value, have made it, as Mohamed Abdillahi Rirash has stated, "the standard unit of measuring everything valuable in Somali pastoral life" (Rirash 1988:66). He describes this value in the following proverb:

*Geel waa geel; in goysaa na waa geel.*

[The value of] camels is measured [only by] camels;  
the value [of any other animal]  
can be measured by [the standard of] camels.

Since camel ownership is considered the symbol of wealth and prestige, pastoral poetry, particularly camel work songs, deals with this animal a great deal. As is the case with any domesticated animal, songs address the camel's usefulness as well as the hardships and risks involved in its herding and management. Generally among the northern pastoralists, the camel is the focus of six different important working situations that are directly related to the care of this most important animal. In fact, it is an overarching and general rule that a specific work genre is associated with each culturally defined form of labour in Somali society. The camel songs are divided into the following categories: *aroorka* for driving camels to water points; *shubaasha* for watering camels; *rakaadda* for watering camels a second time; *fulinta* for driving camels to grazing areas; *carraabada* for driving camels to corrals; and *raridda* for loading burden camels. The latter genre is usually but not exclusively sung by women. All the other genres are performed by either young or adult men, because camel herding is the profession of men rather than women. While watering and re-watering songs are either performed by groups or by pairs, depending on the watering situation, the other songs are usually sung by individuals. For example, driving the herd to and from watering sites may be sung by several individuals who do not attempt to coordinate their singing.



Milking and corral construction are two important working situations that have no genre assigned to them. At the time of milking all disturbances that may irritate the animal are avoided and a quiet and peaceful atmosphere is sought. In all other working situations, singing is considered necessary for the accomplishment of the work. Whether singing is done by individuals or groups, certain lines and fixed formulaic utterances are repeated for emphasis and to help the singers memorize the lines. Complicating matters, some songs are recognized as appropriate to a particular work situation, while others may be sung at any work situation. However, the musical accompaniment of all genres is different, while the scansion patterns of different genres may be identical. The *raridda*, burden camel loading song, is an exception to this rule, as its scansion pattern is unique and different from any other genre. To illustrate the structure of the songs, the strategies employed by poets to communicate ideas and instruct others, and the style of performance of these camel work songs, let us turn to descriptions of the various genres.

### *Heesaha aroorka (driving camels to watering points)*

Camels are usually herded in grazing areas distant from watering points. In the dry season, when they become thirsty, they are driven to watering sites by young, unmarried herdsmen. This journey to a watering location, whether a well, or a artificial water tank (*berked*) can take a number of days and nights depending upon the distance. Lack of better grazing for the herd and the scarcity of milk or other food supplies for the herdsmen effects their physical strength. In the mornings and afternoons when the heat of the sun is not so severe, the herds are driven. At noon they relax under shady trees. At night the herds are kept in previously constructed corrals along the way to the watering sites.

The driving of thirsty camel herds is tedious and exhausting. Although the herdsmen suffer from hunger, thirst and fatigue, they are required to lead the animals in the right direction. In order to fulfil such a task, several persons must constantly move to and fro to keep the herds moving in an orderly fashion. The execution of such work is accompanied by whistling, shouting, and singing. Usually they do not sing loudly because of hunger and thirst. The songs are recited rather than sung, and whistling is more common than singing. Pastoralists generally believe that singing helps them to temporarily forget their exhaustion and make the herds feel that they are being cared for, that matters are under control. The themes of the songs are like other camel work songs, such as the importance of camel herders and the risk and rewards involved in its husbandry. The following five herding songs collected from Abdi Ahmed Aliin 1989 will elaborate on these themes.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
Any man who owned Suur<sup>4</sup>  
Failed to sleep well,  
A curved dagger and,  
A long spear, he carries  
[for protection].  
Any man who owned Suur,  
Failed to sleep well,  
A curved dagger and,  
A long spear, he carries  
[for protection].

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
(Halley) Suur ninkii dhaqay  
(Helley) seexan waayoo,  
(Helley) soodh la goday iyo  
(Helley) siiqa la horsocay.

(Helley) Suur ninkii dhaqay  
(Helley) seexan waayoo,  
(Helley) soodh la goday iyo,  
(Helley) siiqa la horsocay.

This poem shows that the camel herder must always remain vigil against the dangers of the bush and against raiding parties.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
For the sake of arguing the issues,  
A trusted judge and,  
Other elders are absent,  
But, to fight for its protection,  
Other kinsmen and  
I are always prepared.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Xaajadeeda na,*  
*Xaakin tegay iyo,*  
*Xaajiyow maqan,,*  
*Xarbigeedana,*  
*Xayn kaleetiyo,*  
*Anaysaga xidhan.*

This poem reveals the pastoral roles and responsibilities of different age groups in which elders are assigned to issues relating to resolving conflict, while the youth must be prepared to fight for the protection of the animals. The poem, in this sense, is an enculturating device.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
When you are ready to be watered,  
And have been on a long trek,  
Let some check that none are missing,  
Let some give you assistance,  
Let kinsmen meet you,  
And come to your assistance.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Adoo soo tuban,*  
*Oo tub soo maray,*  
*Mid ku tiriyiyo,*  
*Mid ku taakula,*  
*Tolku kula kulan ,*  
*Oo ku taageer.*

This poem implies that camels are not considered personal property, but are owned by the clan or lineage. If the owner doesn't get help from his extended family, he is unable to fulfil his obligations to them. Again, this poem is acting as an enculturating device.

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
The search for an ideal wife,  
And the marriage of an elegant woman,  
You, [my camel], can consummate  
When you are paid [as bridewealth]

*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Wobalaayey wobalaa,*  
*Naag la gaatiyo,*  
*Gaari xidhanta ba,*  
  
*Adaa gooyoo,*  
*Lagaa geeyaa*

This poem implies that, in order to have a truly successful and prestigious marriage, the proper procedure must be followed by contacting the bride's family and paying a goodly number of camels as bridewealth. The payment of camels is considered to be the most decisive factor in achieving an honourable marriage.

Wobalaayey wobalaa,  
Wobalaayey wobalaa,  
Whether I depart at midnight,  
Or leave (in the heat of) noon,  
I will arrive (at the well) before you.  
Relay on me [at any cost].

Wobalaayey wobalaa ,  
Wobalaayey wobalaa ,  
Kolaan habeen gudo,  
Ama aan hadh tago,  
Kaa horreeyaye,  
Kay isku hallee.

This poem implies that, whatever dangers he encounters by leaving in the night or in the heat of day, the herdsman will be reliable and will prepare for the arrival of the camels.

Compared to other work songs, repetition of lines in this form is minimal. Its formula is also not frequently repeated as it is in other work songs.

### *Heesaha Shubaasha (watering songs)*

Somali pastoralists often consider watering herds as the most exhausting work of animal husbandry. The extent of the work usually depends upon a number of circumstances related to the watering sources and to the systems by which water is drawn from these sources. These systems are traditionally divided into two categories, dawlis and dareer<sup>5</sup>. Water wells with small openings measuring 20 to 60 metres deep are commonly found in the Hawd area where water resources are usually minimal. In the towns of Widhwidh<sup>6</sup>, Walwaal<sup>7</sup>, and Wardheer<sup>8</sup>, good examples of these types of wells can be found. Long ropes and buckets made of either leather or plastic are used as means of drawing water for both people and animals. This system of dawlis is a very tiresome task, and water is usually drawn by two strong and competent men. In the rainy season, these wells fill with dirt and debris and must be laboriously dug out and cleaned each dry season.

The dareer system is generally applied to wells with wide mouths measuring about 20 metres deep. Such wells commonly found in the Oogo area of central, northern Somalia have more water than the dawlis wells, which can be also found in the Oogo Region. A group of men, four and eight, depending on the condition of the well, stand in cue from the top of the mouth down to the surface of the water. Ropes are not used in this system. Instead the bucket is handed from one person to the next. When the bucket has been emptied after the water has been poured into the trough, it is returned by the same process.

During the severe dry seasons when the wells become overcrowded with people and animals, conflicts between individuals or groups arise that often develop into inter-clan feuds. Herdsmen compete for the access to water. The combination of exhaustion and insecurity usually escalates tensions among pastoralists. But for the last three decades these tensions have been considerably reduced, as the Somali government has provided water pumps to

extract water from some wells. Moreover, the public has constructed artificial cement-lined tanks, *berkedo*, that can hold thousands of gallons of rain water. The system of dawlīs, with ropes and buckets, are used to extract water from these *berkedo*, which are mostly located in areas with little water resources. The area between the wells of Walwaal in the Ogaadeeniya in Ethiopia and Caynabo<sup>9</sup> in the Nugaal Valley in north central Somalia (about 300 km) used to have no permanent watering sites. At present there are more than a dozen locations where man-made water tanks are now constructed. These tanks have reduced water problems to a great extent, although they have caused other problems such as over-grazing and overstocking.

The people of the Buuhoodle district, where I have conducted most of my research work, chiefly depend on the water of these artificial *berkedo*. Most of the data were collected at occasions when herdsman were watering their animals from the *berkedo*. *Berkedo* are constructed in different sizes. Their length ranges from 30 to 100 meters, and their depth is usually between six and 20 meters. Their breadth is usually about 15 meters. Their openings are covered by grass in order to protect water from the evaporation caused by the strength of the winds and the heat of the sun. Also *berkedo* are protected with thorny fences to keep out both animals and people. Usually a *berked* has only one entrance gate that animals come through in groups when they are being watered. The herds are normally kept outside about a few hundred feet away. The young herdsman and an adult, usually the owner if he is present, are assigned to watch the animals. Two strong, unmarried men are usually entrusted to carry out the watering. Using a plastic bucket and a rope, they take water from the *berked* and pour into troughs, made from a barrel that has been cut into two equal halves. When the troughs are filled, they call for those who are watching the herds to let about half a dozen animals come for watering. The watering animals are referred to as *hormo*. This process is repeated until all the animals are watered.

Throughout, rhythmic work is accompanied by songs sung by a main singer and answered by his co-worker. The main singer ensures the continuation of the singing during the work and fills the bucket by dipping it down into the water sideways. The other man's duties are first to take the bucket to the trough and pour the water into it and to communicate to those who are watching the herds. Both men need to be muscular and vigilant and to be excellent singers. A few relatives and visitors usually observe the work and sometimes influence the performance. The composition of this audience effects the choice of songs. If young women are in the crowd, for example, the workers sing of love and marriage. If elders are present, other topics are chosen.

Generally, pastoralists prefer to water herds early in the day so that they can return safely to their homes during the daylight. But if the size of the herd is large, it may take many hours to water. The singers do not stop singing except when they are interrupted, because their rhythm keeps the pace of the work and prevents accidents. These men usually sing alternatively, the lead singer composing a verse and his co-worker repeating it. After some lines, the co-worker may take the initiative and compose a few lines of his own, which are repeated by the main singer. This method is continuously repeated. This strategy of repetition is employed for several reasons.

It encourages singers to memorize previously composed poems. New songs are composed during performance. New lines can be "thought about" while

old lines are repeated in a sort of "automatic pilot." When both singers perform a poem they both have memorized, the "lead" is lost only when a line is repeated by the second singer. In other words, it is possible for each singer to sing each unique line of the poem until it is finished. If memory fails one singer, he may simply repeat the previous line until the first singer sings the next line, and so on without stopping and interrupting the rhythm of work. When a new line is being taught to the second singer, the latter simply repeats the lead singer's lines throughout the poem. When the second singer wishes to take the prerogative, he does not repeat the previous line; he sings a new line and the first singer may then repeat it or continue the poem with the next line. These work poems, and consequently the work itself, proceed most smoothly when two men know each other's poems. It is often said in Somalia that hard work must be augmented by good composition skills, or at least, good memorization skills, so that the lead singer does not tire out, either from the work of watering the animals or from the work of initiating the lines of poetry.

The singer's relatives, visitors and bystanders are often enthusiastic participants in the overall process of animal watering situations. They watch how such tasks are carried out. Their discussions about a variety of topics and the questions they frequently ask the singers play a significant role in the selection of songs delivered at that occasion and the new lines composed during performance. Also the individual animals in the separate groups of the herd being watered at different times (*harmooyin*) often remind the singers of varied experiences associated with these animals. A young camel received in bridewealth will inspire some lines of poetry. A burden-camel recovered after a looting raid will likewise inspire the poet. A productive she-camel will be praised by the workers when her turn comes to be watered. In this respect most of the themes of the songs demonstrate the difficulties, exploits and expectations of the camel herdsman. Also the songs show directly or indirectly the deeper feelings and views of the herdsman about a number of political and social issues. The following camel watering songs, I hope, will illustrate some of these ideas.

## First singer

Woobabayahow haa  
 Woobabayahow haa  
 My death,  
 My death,  
 And family destruction,  
 And family destruction,  
 Leads to a barrenness of sons.  
 When a wife dies,  
 When a wife dies,  
 New preparations,  
 Lead to another marriage,  
 Your death, [my camel],  
 Your death, [my camel],  
 (Leaves) empty vessels and,  
 Leads to starvation,

## Second singer,

wobayeeey haa,  
 wobayeeey haa,  
 my death,  
 my death,  
 and family destruction,  
 leads to a barrenness of sons  
 leads to a barrenness of sons.  
 when a wife dies,  
 new preparations,  
 lead to another marriage  
 lead to another marriage  
 your death, [my camel],  
 [leaves] empty vessels and,  
 leads to starvation.  
 leads to starvation.

Woobabayahow haa  
Woobabayahow haa  
Helley geeridaydana,  
Helley geeridaydana,  
Helley guryo ba'ay iyo,  
Helley goblan laga qaad;  
Geerida haweenna  
Geerida haweenna  
Guud la fidho iyo  
Helley guursi laga qaad;  
Helley geeridaadana,  
Helley geeridaadana,  
Gaawo madhan iyo,  
Helley gaajo laga qaad

wobayeey haa,  
wobayeey haa,  
geeridaydana  
guryo ba'ay iyo  
goblan laga qaad;  
goblan laga qaad;  
helley geerida haweennai  
helley guud la fidho iyo  
helley guursi laga qaad;  
guursi laga qaad;  
geeridaadana,  
gaawo madhan iyo,  
helley gaajo laga qaad,  
gaajo laga qaad.

This poem reveals that survival in the pastoral life depends chiefly on the labour of men and the economic value of camels. Without these two things, life would be very difficult, if not impossible, in the Somali countryside. All other types of livestock play a marginal role to the camel.

*First singer*

Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
For your sake [my camel],  
For your sake [my camel],  
People have fought,  
And killed each other,  
For your sake [my camel],  
For your sake [my camel],  
Sharpened daggers,  
Sharpened daggers,  
And knives were made.  
For your sake [my camel],  
For your sake [my camel],  
Dried, hard places,  
Dried, hard places,  
Have been dug [for water],  
Have been dug [for water],  
And were not abandoned,  
And were not abandoned,

*Second singer*

woobayey haa,  
woobayey haa,  
woobayey haa,  
people have fought,  
and killed each other,  
and killed each other,  
for your sake [my camel],  
for your sake [my camel],  
sharpened daggers,  
and knives were made.  
and knives were made.  
woobayey haa,  
woobayey haa,  
dried, hard places,  
dried, hard places,  
woobayey haa,  
have been dug [for water],  
and were not abandoned,  
and were not abandoned.

*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Helley daraaddaa baa,*  
*Helley daraaddaa baa,*  
*Helley laysu dilayoo,*  
*Laysu wada dooxay*  
*Helley daraaddaa baa,*  
*Helley daraaddaa baa,*  
*Amley danantiyo,*  
*Amley danantiyo,*  
*Helley daabcad loo tumay.*  
*Helley daraaddaa baa,*  
*Helley daraaddaa haa,*  
*Dirriyo engegan,*  
*Dirriyo engegan,*  
*Helley loo dalooshoo,*  
*Helley loo dalooshoo,*  
*Helley looga daba tegey.*  
*Helley looga daba tegey.*

*woobayey haa,*  
*woobayey haa,*  
*woobayey haa,*  
*laysu wada dooxay,*  
*laysu wada dooxay,*  
*helley laysu wada dooxey,*  
*daraaddaa baa,*  
*daraaddaa baa,*  
*helley amley danantiyo,*  
*daabcad loo tumay,*  
*daabcad loo tumay,*  
*daraaddaa haa,*  
*daraaddaa ha,a*  
*helley dirriyo engegan,*  
*helley dirriyo engegan,*  
*woobayey haa,*  
*loo dalooshoo,*  
*looga daba tegey,*  
*looga daba tegey.*

This poem deals with the difficulties herdsmen face in raising camels. They die for their animals, and they work hard to find water, especially in digging wells deep enough in dry, hard places until they find the water.

#### First singer

*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Woobabayahow haa.,*  
*Woobayey haa,*  
 I have matured,  
 My beard has grown out.  
 I am no longer young,  
 But Goray's<sup>10</sup> water vessels,  
 The water vessels of Goray  
 So I not fail to lift them,  
 Having sex with women,  
 Having sex with women,  
 And marriage, I abandon,  
 But Goray's water vessels  
 But Goray's water vessels  
 Having sex with women,  
 And marriage, I abandon.

#### Second singer

*wobayey haa,*  
*wobayey haa,*  
 I have matured,  
 I have matured,  
 my beard has grown out.  
 my beard has grown out.  
 I am no longer young,  
 so I not fail to lift them,  
 so I not fail to lift them,  
 so I not fail to lift them,  
 having sex with women,  
 and marriage, I abandon,  
 and marriage, I abandon,  
*wobayey haa,*  
 so I not fail to lift them,  
 and marriage, I abandon,  
 and marriage, I abandon.



*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobayey haa,  
Helley gabow baan ahay,  
Oo gadhkay maray,  
Helley oo ma geda yari,  
Wadaamaha Goray,  
Wadaamaha Goray,  
Yaadan gabin baan,  
Helley, galmo dumar iyo,  
Galmo dumar iyo,  
Guur isaga nacay,  
Helley wadaamaha Goray,  
Helley wadaamaha Goray,  
Galmo dumar iyo,  
Helley guur isaga nacay,*

*wobayey haa,  
wobayey haa,  
gabow baan ahay,  
helley gabow baan ahay,  
oo gadhkay maray,  
helley oo gadhkay maray,  
oo ma geda yari,  
helley yaadan gabin baan,  
helley yaadan gabin baan,  
yaadan gabin baan,  
galmo dumar iyo,  
helley guur isaga nacay,  
helley guur isaga nacay,  
wobayey haa,  
yaadan gabin baan,  
guur isaga nacay.  
guur isaga nacay.*

This poem is utilized as an indirect message to parents and other elders, by young herdsmen who want to get married. The poem implies that the youth is working hard and does not have time for women, but the opposite is really the message of the poem.

*First singer*

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Wobayow haa,  
A man from a small clan  
If he rears Tagoog*

*He cannot defend her,  
It is dangerous to keep them,  
It is bad judgement for him,  
It is bad judgement for him,  
He cannot defend them,  
It is bad judgement for him.*

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Wobayow haa,  
Tol yar nin ihi,  
Oo Tagoog dhagay,  
Taag uma hayee,  
Helley waa u tawsoo,  
Helley waa u tawsoo,*

*Second singer*

*wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
A man from a small clan  
A man from a small clan  
If he rears Tagoog  
He cannot defend her [from  
enemies]  
It is dangerous to keep them,  
It is a bad judgement for him.  
It is bad judgement for him.  
He cannot defend them,  
It is dangerous to keep them,  
It is bad judgement for him.*

*wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
helley tol yar nin ihi,  
helley tol yar nin ihi,  
oo Tagoog dhagay  
helley taag uma hayee,  
waa u tawsoo,  
waa u tawsoo,  
waa u talo xumo.*

Waa u talo xumo.  
Waa u talo xumo.  
Taag uma hayee  
Waa u talo xumo.

waa u talo xumo.  
helley taag uma hayee,  
helley waa u tawsoo,  
waa u talo xumo.

This poem implies that a camel is protected not only by the individual Owner, hut by his kinsmen, and those who belong to weak clans are always subject to raids from other clans stronger than them, in which the weaker may be victims and lose their lives. To be protected by one's clan, a person must be ready to reciprocate when others in his clan are in need. For example, if one has many milch-camels, they must be shared with one's kinsmen. Contributions of blood money and bridewealth must also be shared among one's clan when it is needed.

First singer

Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
My great white camel,  
My great white camel  
When the star has set,  
When the star has set,  
Did guests not come to you?  
Did guests not come to you?  
were you not milked again?  
Were they not served?  
Did guests not come to you?  
Were you not milked again?  
Were they not served?  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,

Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Xayle guud weyn  
Helley xayle guud weyn,  
Helley xiddigoo dhacay,  
Xil ma kuu yimid?  
Helley xil ma kuu yimid?  
Oo ma lagu xigay?  
Helley oo ma la xil baxay?  
Helley xil ma kuu yimid?  
Oo ma lagu xigay?  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,

Second singer

wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
my great white camel,  
my great white camel,  
when the star has set,  
when the star has set,  
did guests not come to you?  
were you not milked again?  
were they not served?  
were you not milked again?  
were they not served?  
were they not served?  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa.

wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
xayle guud weyn,  
xiddigoo dhacay,  
helley xil ma kuu yimid?  
xil ma kuu yimid?  
helley oo ma lagu xigay?  
oo ma la xil baxay?  
oo ma lagu xigay?  
helley oo ma la xil baxay?  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa.

This poem is a panegyric to a milch-camel, which is very productive. There is a custom that when a particular star sets around 11 o'clock or midnight, camels are not re-milked. If late guests appear, however, they must be given food, and failure to do so is considered disgraceful. Somalis say that, unlike other beasts, camels may be re-milked after only one hour, and this poem praises this quality.

*Heesaha Rakaadda (camel re-watering songs)*

After the first watering of camels, the herd is usually left for some time to relax. This gives the herdsmen time to count the herd and ensure whether some are missing or not. About an hour later, the animal is watered again, and the same process of watering is repeated. But the songs and their musical pattern differ slightly from those of the first watering songs. The pitch of the re-watering songs is lower and the voice seems to be emotionally more appealing.

Although the repertoires of watering songs and re-watering songs overlap, different songs are considered more appropriate for one occasion than the other. The following songs collected from different re-watering performances illustrate some of the feelings and expectations of the herdsmen.

*First singer*

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
You will be absent [from water]  
for thirty [days].  
You will be absent [from water]  
for thirty [days]  
You will go to a waterless thicket,  
You will be [thirsty] as before,  
You will be [thirsty] as before,  
So drink [enough] water now!  
So drink [enough] water now!  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,*

*You will be absent [from water]  
for thirty [days]*

*You will go to a waterless thicket,  
You will be [thirsty] as before  
So drink [enough] water now!*

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Soddon inaad qadi  
Helley soddon inaad qadi  
Sool inaad tegi,  
Helley sidi inaad noqon,  
Sidi inaad noqon,*

*Second singer*

*wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
  
you will be absent [from water]  
for thirty [days]  
you will go to a waterless thicket,  
you will be [thirsty] as before  
you will be [thirsty] as before  
so drink [enough] water now!  
so drink [enough] water now!  
wobayow haa,  
you will be absent [from water]  
for thirty [days]  
you will go to a waterless  
thicket,*

*you will be [thirsty] as before,  
so drink [enough] water now!  
so drink [enough] water now!*

*wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
wobayow haa,  
soddon inaad qadi,  
helley sool inaad tegi,  
sidi inaad noqon,  
helley sidi inaad noqon,*

*Sidaa biyaha ku cab,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Soddon inaad qadi,  
Sool inaad tegi,  
Helley sidi inaad noqon,  
Sidaa biyaha ku cab,*

*sidaa biyaha ku cab,  
wobayow haa,  
soddon inaad qadi,  
helley sool inaad tegi,  
sidi inaad noqon,  
sidaa biyaha ku cab,  
sidaa biyaha ku cab.*

This poem emphasizes the physical endurance of camels, including their ability for refraining from drinking water for as much as a month.

First singer

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
When you are ready for watering,  
When you are ready for watering,  
The man who asks about your  
number,  
The man who asks about your  
number,  
Is the man who tires out [first],  
And whose strength has left him,  
And whose strength has left him,  
When you are ready for  
watering,  
The man who asks about your  
number,  
Is the man who tires out [first],  
And whose strength has left him,  
The man who asks about your  
number,  
Is the man who tires out [first],  
And whose strength has left him,*

*Woobabayahow haa,  
Woobabayahow haa,  
Helley adoo soo tuban,  
Helley adoo soo tuban,  
Nin ku tiriyaa,  
Helley nin ku tiriyaa,  
Helley waa nin tegayoo,  
Waa nin taag gabay,  
Waa nin taag gabay,  
Helley adco soo tuhan,  
Helley nin ku tiriyaa,  
Waa nin tegayoo,  
Waa nin taag gabay,  
Helley nin ku tiriyaa,  
Waa nin tegayoo,  
Waa nin taag gabay.*

Second singer

*wobayey haa  
wobayey haa,  
wobayey haa,  
when you are ready for watering,  
the man who asks about your  
number,  
is the man who tires out  
[first],  
Is the man who tires out [first],  
and whose strength has left him,  
and whose strength has left him,  
the man who asks about your  
number,  
is the man who tires out  
[first],  
and whose strength has left him,  
and whose strength has left him,  
Is the man who tires out  
[first],  
and whose strength has left him,  
and whose strength has left him.*

*wobayey haa,  
wobayey haa,  
wobayey haa,  
adoo soo tuban,  
helley nin ku tiriyaa,  
waa nin tegayoo,  
waa nin tegayoo,  
waa nin taag gabay,  
helley waa nin taag gabay,  
nin ku tiriyaa,  
waa nin tegayoo,  
helley waa nin taag gabay,  
waa nin taag gabay,  
waa nin tegayoo,  
helley waa nin taag gabay,  
waa nin taag gabay.*

This poem indicates that watering camels is very tiresome and difficult. The general custom in Somalia is to hide tiredness or weakness. It is shameful to be seen as weak.

First singer

*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Woobabayahow haa,*  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
To a grassy plain,  
Cultivate your vigilance,  
Cultivate your vigilance,  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
O you boy who drives [the camels]  
To a grassy plain,  
Cultivate your vigilance,  
To a grassy plain,  
Cultivate your vigilance,

*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Woobabayahow haa,*  
*Helley wiilka fuliyow,*  
*Helley wiilka fuliyow,*  
*Fedda cawqliyo,*  
*Feejiga ogow,*  
*Feejiga ogow,*  
*wiilka fuliyow,*  
*Wiilka fuliyow,*  
*Helley fedda cawqliyo,*  
*Feejiga ogow,*  
*Helley fedda cawqliyo,*  
*Feejiga ogow,*

Second singer

*wobayow haa,*  
*wobayow haa,*  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
to a grassy plain,  
to a grassy plain,  
cultivate your vigilance,  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
O you boy who drive [the camels]  
to a grassy plain,  
cultivate your vigilance,  
to a grassy plain,  
cultivate your vigilance,  
cultivate your vigilance.

*wobayow haa,*  
*wobayow haa,*  
*wiilka fuliyow,*  
*fedda cawqliyo,*  
*helley fedda cawqliyo,*  
*helley feejiga ogow,*  
*helley wiilka fuliyow,*  
*helley wiilka fuliyow,*  
*fedda cawqliyo,*  
*feejiga ogow,*  
*fedda cawqliyo,*  
*feejiga ogow,*  
*feejiga ogow.*

This poem emphasizes the duty of young Somali camel herders to be vigilant against the three main dangers in camel herding. Camels get lost in the countryside; they may also be raided by rival clans; and good grazing land must be found for them.

*Heesaha Fulinta (songs for driving camels to grazing areas)*

Shortly after re-watering, the herd is taken away from the water wells or tanks to a grazing area. Reaching their destination may take several hours or days depending on the distance. Although the herdsmen are tired and hungry, they have been trained to endure long treks and exhausting work with little sustenance. They are expected to be vigilant against theft or the loss of any of the herd. They drive their herds, singing and whistling individually, with low, serious and repetitive voices. Because of the extent of the exhaustion they are not expected to sing loudly or to coordinate their songs with each other in a chorus. The combination of their singing, whistling and the various noises of

camel bells produces an exciting musical pattern. The following songs are examples of the songs sung by individuals driving camel herds to grazing areas.

Fortune abounds for him  
who tends you till it rains.  
And grass becomes green;  
Then he may dance at night.  
Fortune abounds for him,  
Who tends you till it rains.  
And grass becomes green;  
Then he may dance at night.

*Cawo badanaa,  
Cagaar doogliyo,  
Cir nin kugu simay,  
Oo cayaar guday,  
Cawo badanada,  
Cagaar doogliyo,  
Cir nin kugu simay,  
Oo cayaar guday.*

This poem is meant to inspire the exhausted herdsman driving animals from the wells to the grazing area. This poem is almost a prayer in its tone.

Three hundred and,  
Eighty nights:  
Your period of pregnancy;  
A pauper never waits  
To take you forth [for sale] ;  
But I keep you [safe with your herd].  
Three hundred and,  
Eighty nights:  
Your period of pregnancy;  
A pauper never waits  
To take you forth [for sale] ;  
But I keep you [safe with your herd].

*Seddex boqol iyo,  
Siddeetan habeen,  
Oo sidkaa yahay,  
Sabool sugi waa,  
Oo ku soo saar,  
Aanse kugu simay.  
Saddex boqol iyo,  
Siddeetan habeen,  
Oo sidkaa yahay,  
Sabool sugi waa,  
Oo ku soo saar  
Aanse kugu simay.*

Camels do not give milk during pregnancy, and this poem implies that a poor man cannot keep pregnant camels for the usual thirteen months of their pregnancy. Otherwise, he will have no food for the long dry season. The sale of camels is painful to any Somali, and the sale of a pregnant camel is considered foolish in the extreme.

A foolish man  
Becomes satiated during the rains  
And pays out [hard earned wealth]  
For incompetent women or  
divorcees.  
A foolish man  
Becomes satiated during the rains  
And pays out [hard earned wealth]  
For incompetent women or  
divorcees.

*Garaadlaawuhu,  
Gugii dheregyoo,  
Garmaxidhatiyo<sup>12</sup>  
  
Garooob kaa dhiib.  
Garaadluwuhu  
Gugii dheregyoo  
Garmaxidhatiyo,  
  
Garooob kaa dhiib.*

This poem implies that during the ease of the rainy season, a herdsman may become forgetful of the hardships of the dry season and squander his hard earned wealth on a poor match for marriage.

*Heesaha Carraabada (songs for driving camels to the corral)*

Generally young herdsmen are entrusted with looking after the herds when the camels are grazing during the day, but the older, more responsible herdsmen are, nevertheless, close by, ready to supervise routine activities. The expected roles of the older herdsmen usually include defending the herds if attacked by raiders or wild beasts. Before sunset, the herds are driven back to their corrals which are usually about two hours distance. Throughout this walk, the driving of the herds is accompanied by different songs sung individually and very loudly by the young herders. In every herding unit, there are usually about two youths learning their duties from the older brothers and performing work reserved for them. The mixing sound of different loud songs, whistling, and distinct camel bells create a particular atmosphere that actually influences the herds and lets them know that grazing is over and it is time to go to the corrals. The herds are accustomed to this pattern of behaviour and follow the instructions of the young herdsmen. It is commonly believed that camels can recognize the unique sound of each camel bell in its herd as well as the voices of the herdsmen. There may be some truth to this belief, as it is observable that strays most often are reunited with the herd at the close of day. Moreover, this particular context offers young herders an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their singing abilities and to express their feelings and views. Since they are often very tired, thirsty and hungry at other working situations, and the degree of exhaustion and hunger are relatively milder at this occasion, they usually have more scope to display their competence. The singing continues until the herds reach their corrals. Like other working situations, the songs glorify camel husbandry and warn against the dangers involved in it. The following songs have been collected from this herding context in which camels are driven home at the end of day (*carrabo*).

If a large she-camel,  
Does not give birth in the  
rainy season,  
Nor after that,  
Good<sup>13</sup>, which is milked, or  
Goodir<sup>14</sup> do not give birth,  
Then, people are close to death,  
And feel great thirst.

*Haddaan garab weyn,  
Gugii kaa curan,*

*Aan gadaalka na,  
Good la maaliyo,  
Goodir Kaa dhalin,  
Waa la go'ayoo,  
Waa la guban yahay.*

This poem implies that if a goodly number of milch-camels do not give birth during the rainy season, enough milk for the family and for the herdsmen will not be available, and this fact will cause suffering and impoverishment and suffering during the dry season.

Young white she-camels,  
calves of the old stud:  
A boy who does not care for them,  
Cannot easily find  
The best of women,  
But only finds an abandoned one,  
Or a widow,  
cannot easily find [a good wife].

*Qaalma dayrcada  
Oo duqii dhalay,  
Willan daba socon,  
Doorka naagaha,  
Mid dayacan iyo,  
Dumaal mooyiye,  
Doonis kuma helo,  
Mid dayacan iyo,*



But only finds an abandoned one, Or a widow.	<i>Dumaal mooyiye, Doonis kuma helo.</i>
---	--

This poem implies that only nomads that devote their lives to the rearing and caring for camels can be successful in finding the best women for marriage.

A man who is not loyal [to his kinsmen], A man who is not loyal, Or not physically strong, Or not physically strong: [His herd] is taken by others, People fail to leave his herd be. A man who is not loyal, Or not physically strong. [His herd] is taken by others, People fail to leave his herd be.	<i>Tolkii niman dhaqan,  Tolkii niman dhaqan, Tiirrise u dhalan, Tiirrise u dhalan, Looga taliyoo, Looga tegi waa, Tolki niman dhaqan, Tiirrise u dhalan, Looga taliyoo, Looga tegi waa.</i>
--	--

This poem implies that a person who is not loyal to his extended family and to the cultural norms of the clan will in turn not be served by that clan. The poem also implies that a person needs to be physically strong to survive in the countryside.

Except by an armed man, Who goes out for raiding, Except by an armed man, Who goes out for raiding, You, [O camel] cannot be obtained, Simply as a gift or by [performing] religious practices.	<i>Dab nin qaatoo, Duula mooyiye, Dab nin qaatoo, Duula mooyiye, Diinka Eebbiyo, Deeq lagugu waa.</i>
---	---

This poem implies that camels cannot be obtaining simply as a gift or as payment for religious services. Only those who put their lives in danger can obtain or defend their ownership of the precious animal.

### *Heesaha Raridda Awrta (camel loading songs)*

In Somali pastoral life the camel is the principal means of transportation (Abokor 1987:18). It is appropriate to the constant movement of nomads in an inhospitable climate. Only male camels are used for transport. The nomadic collapsible house and its utensils are carried on camel back. Camels are also used to bring drinking water from wells situated in distant places. The beast is also used to bring maize, sorghum, rice, and other foodstuffs from towns. Its loading and unloading is more associated with women than men. Generally men load and unload burden camels when they are fetching drinking water from distant wells, and women load and unload them when the portable house is being moved to a new site. Whoever is loading the camel sings for it. Camel loading songs differ greatly from other camel songs in scansion as well as in music. Unlike others, loading songs do not have a fixed introductory formulaic utterance. The songs are individually sung either by a woman or a man. They

show the extent this beast is loved by the pastoralists and its significance in their life. The following songs collected from a woman named Caasha describe the value of the burden camel.

When I was born,  
When I was born,  
And you were cared for,  
Hardships [of labour] were no longer  
worrisome.

When I was born,  
When I was born,  
And you were cared for,  
Hardships [of labour] were no longer  
worrisome.

*Markii lay dhalay,  
Markii lay dhalay,  
Adna lagu dhaqaal-eeeyaa,  
Dhibba layska meel dhigay.*

*Markii lay dhalay,  
Markii lay dhalay,  
Adna lagu dhaqaal-eeeyaa  
Dhibba layska meel dhigay.*

This poem implies that when the singer was born, labour was shared between her and the burden camel, and the hardship of work on her family was eased.

The burden camel is the orphans'  
helper;  
It is the pillar of the world.  
The curses of women and,  
The evil eye of humans harm it.  
The burden camel is the orphans'  
helper;  
The burden camel is the orphans'  
helper;  
It is the pillar of the world,  
The curses of women and,  
the evil eye of humans harm it.  
The burden camel is the orphans'  
helper;  
It is the pillar of the world.  
The curses of women and,  
The evil eye of humans harm it.

*Awr geel waa agoon-  
koris,  
Waa adduunyo tiirkeed,  
Erayga naagoodiyo,  
Isha aadanaa u daran.  
Awr geel waa agoon-  
koris  
Awr geel waa agoon-  
koris,  
Waa adduunyo tiirkeed,  
Erayga naagoodiyo  
Isha aadanaa u daran.  
Awr geel waa agoon-  
konis  
waa adduunyo tiirkeed,  
Erayga naagoodiyo  
Isha aadanaa u daran.*

This poem reinforces the fact that pastoralists consider the camel to be of great importance, including in the area of transportation, and they give much consideration to its protection from such afflictions as the evil eye.

Except for you, [camel], and  
your kind,  
Except for you, and your kind,  
Can any other animal be mounted,  
Or loaded while it is seated?  
Except for you, and your kind,  
Except for you, and your kind,  
Can any other animal be mounted,  
Or loaded while it is seated?

*Adigiyo filkaa mooyiye,  
Adigiyo filkaa mooyiye,  
Ma wax kalaa la fuulaa?  
Oo fadhi lagu gureeyaa?  
Adigiyo filkaa mooyiye,  
Adigiyo filkaa mooyiye,  
Ma wax kalaa la fuulaa?  
Oo fadhl lagu gureeyaa?*

Camels alone are the only animals that can be used both for riding and for carrying burdens. The important thing that this poem mentions is that the camel is the only animal which can be loaded and mounted while it is seated.

A camel which has strength,	<i>Awrkii tagoogo leh,</i>
A camel which has strength,	<i>Awrkii tagoogo )eh,</i>
And a man who has strong kinsmen:	<i>Iyo ninkii tolleh,</i>
People seek their assistance.	<i>Baa la taartaa.</i>
A camel which has strength,	<i>Awrkii tagoogo leh,</i>
A camel which has strength,	<i>Awrkii tagoogo leh,</i>
And a man who has strong kinsmen:	<i>Iyo ninkii tolleh,</i>
People seek their assistance.	<i>Baa la taartaa.</i>

This poem implies that a camel which is very strong and a man who is from a large clan (thus a strong clan), are both helpful in difficult situations.

As the strap at your belly	<i>Sida caynku kuu gubay,</i>
hurts you,	
As the strap at your belly	<i>Sida caynku kuu gubay,</i>
hurts you,	
[The wounds] on my foot hurt me.	<i>Baa cagtu ii daloo-shaa,</i>
As the strap at your belly, hurts you,	<i>Sida caynku kuu gubay,</i>
As the strap at your belly, hurts you,	<i>Sida caynku kuu gubay,</i>
[The wounds] on my foot hurt me.	<i>Baa cagtu ii daloo-shaa.</i>

This poem is a gentle reproof to a complaining camel, which is suffering from the tight belt holding the burden on its back. The poet simply states that he understands the camel's complaint, but he too has a wound on his foot. The wound on the man's foot is caused by travelling with the camel long distances.

### Heesaha Lo'da (cattle watering songs)

Although many families have cattle, Somali northern pastoralists usually regard cattle ownership as inferior in comparison to camel herding. The different feeding requirements and demand of more labour for cattle discourages many pastoralists in keeping them. Unlike camels, sheep, and goats, cattle must be watered at least twice a week both in the wet and dry seasons. This demand requires more labour than that for any other animal. The endurance of cattle is poor, especially with regard to poor grazing areas and disease, factors which discourage its husbandry.

But the nutritious milk and butter of cattle are highly valued by pastoralists. Particularly in the Buuhoodle area, cattle are kept for milk and butter rather than for meat. It is also kept for its value in trade at markets.

The quality of beef is not good in that area, and cattle are rarely killed for ceremonies, for serving guests, or for sacrifices. Unlike other livestock, cattle is not carefully watched when grazing. They are turned loose for grazing in the morning and return home in the evening to be milked.

During watering, the rhythmic work is accompanied by songs sung by two men. Camel and cattleworking songs are similar in context and even in length,

but the songs dedicated to these two species differ in their musical pattern and their scansion. Cattle songs describe both the risks and rewards of the animal and compare them to those of camel. The following songs, collected from Abdi Ahmed Ali and Farah Mohammed Nuur in the natural context of watering cattle in Anglo (near Buuhoodle), illustrate these ideas.

*Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
[My cow] with clean breasts,  
[My cow] with clean breasts,  
The day she gives birth,  
The day she gives birth,  
She is like the abundant  
green grass,  
This in known to all the people!  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,*

This in known to all the people!

*She is like the abundant green  
grass,  
[My cow] with clean breasts,  
The day she gives birth,  
She is like the abundant green  
grass,  
This is known to all the people!*

*Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Helley naasa-maydhane,  
Helley naasa-maydhane,  
Maalintuu dhalo,  
Helley maalintuu dhalo,  
Waa naq meel maray,  
Oo la wada maqal,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heeleley heeleey,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Oo la wada maqal,  
Waa naq meel maray,  
Helley naasa-maydhane,  
Helley maalintuu dhalo,  
Waa naq meel maray,  
Oo la wada maqal,*

*heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
[my cow] with clean breasts,  
the day she gives birth  
the day she gives birth,  
she is like the abundant  
green grass,  
this in known to all the people!  
heelleyaahee,  
[my cow] with clean breasts,  
[my cow] with clean breasts,  
the day she gives birth,  
she is like the abundant green  
grass,  
she is like the abundant green  
grass,  
this is known to all the  
people.  
heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
this is known to all the  
people!  
this is known to all the people!*

*heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
naasa-maydhane,  
maalintuu dhalo,  
maalintuu dhalo,  
helley waa naq meel maray,  
helley oo la wada maqal,  
heella yaallow,  
helley naasa-maydhane,  
helley naasa-maydhane,  
maalintuu dhalo,  
helley waa naq meel maray,  
helley waa naq meel maray  
oo la wada maqal,  
heelleyaahee,  
heelleyaahee,  
oo la wada maqal,  
helley oo la wada maqal.*

In this poem, the cow is compared to green grass, because each is abundant during the rainy season. As the green grass provides nourishment for the cattle, so the cow provides milk for people, which, for a cow, begins on the day she first gives birth.

First singer

Heeleley heelleey,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 The woman who drinks your  
 fresh milk,  
 The woman who drinks your  
 fresh milk,  
 Grows fatter and fatter,  
 And is quickly satisfied,  
 Grows fatter and fatter,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 O my brownish cow,

The women who drinks your  
 fresh milk,  
 Grows fatter and fatter,  
 And is quickly satisfied,  
 And is quickly satisfied,

Heeleley heelleey,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 Helley Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 Helley naag dhadhamisaa,  
 Naag dhadhamisaa,  
 Waa dhex weyntoo,  
 Waa dhex weyntoo,  
 Waa dhergi og tahay,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 Heeleley heelleey,  
 Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 Naag dhadhamisaa,  
 Waa dhexweyntoo,  
 Waa dhergi og tahay,  
 Waa dhergi og tahay,

Second singer

heellayaahee,  
 heellayaahee,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 the women who drinks your  
 fresh milk,  
 grows fatter and fatter,  
 and is quickly satisfied,  
 and is quickly satisfied.  
 heellayaahee,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 O my brownish cow,  
 the women who drinks your  
 fresh milk,  
 grows fatter and fatter,

grows fatter and fatter,  
 and is quickly satisfied,  
 and is quickly satisfied.

heellayaahee,  
 heellayaahee,  
 dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 naag dhadhamisaa,  
 helley waa dhex weyntoo,  
 waa dhergi og tahay,  
 waa dhergi og tahay,  
 heellayaaabow,  
 helley Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 helley Dhiinow dhaydaa,  
 naag dhadhamisaa,  
 helley waa dhex weyntoo,  
 helley waa dhex weyntoo,  
 waa dhergi og tahay,  
 waa dhergi og tahay.

This poem discusses the qualities of cow's milk, stating that people who drink it grow fatter and healthier than camel herders because of the fat in cow's milk. Somalis tend to believe that the fatter one is, the healthier he is, though this is not always the case.

First singer

*Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
O my short-horned blackish cow,  
O my short-horned blackish cow,  
You're not as good as a camel,  
You're not as good as a camel,  
But you never run dry of milk,  
But you never run dry of milk,  
And you give more time for  
milking,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
And you give more time for  
milking,*

*Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Helley geesayare gorod,  
Helley geesayare gorod,  
Geel ma dhaantide,  
Geel ma dhaantide,  
Helley waadan gudhinoo,  
Helley waadan gudhinoo,  
waadan gaagixin,  
waadan gaagixin,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,  
Heellayaahow,  
Heellayaahow,  
Heellayaahow,  
Heellayaahow,  
waadan gaagixin,  
Waadan gaagixin,*

Second singer

*heellayaahée,  
heellayaahée,  
heellayaahée,  
O my short-horned blackish cow,  
you're not as good as a camel,  
you're not as good as a camel,  
but you never run dry of milk,  
but you never run dry of milk,  
and you give more time for  
milking,  
heellayaahée,  
O my short-horned blackish cow,  
O my short-horned blackish cow,  
you're not as good as a camel,  
you're not as good as a camel,  
but you never run dry of milk,  
but you never run dry of milk,  
and you give more time for  
milking.*

*heellayaahée,  
heellayaahée,  
heellayaahée,  
geesayare gorod,  
helley geel ma dhaantide,  
helley geel ma dhaantide,  
waadan gudhinoo,  
waadan gudhinoo,  
helley waadan gaagixin,  
waadan gaagixin,  
heellayaahée,  
geesayare gorod,  
helley geesayare gorod,  
helley geel ma dhaantide,  
geel ma dhaantide,  
waadan gudhinoo,  
helley waadan gudhinoo,  
waadan gaagixin,  
waadan gaagixin.*

The poet's view of cattle, as opposed to camels, is clear in this poem, but good traits of cows are mentioned here. If camels are not milked immediately they are ready to be milked, their milk recedes. cows give you more time for milking; their milk will not recede.

First singer

*Heeleley heelleey,  
Heeleley heelleey,*

Second singer

*heellayaahée,  
heellayaahée,*



The boys who care for you,  
The boys who care for you,  
A water vessel or a spear,  
A water vessel or a spear,

Either, will he [the cause of]  
their death.

*Heeleley heelleey,*  
And as for your calves,  
And as for your calves,  
Either, will be [the cause of]  
their death  
*Heeleley heelleey,*  
*Heeleley heelleey,*  
The boys who care for you,  
A water vessel or a spear,

And as for your calves,  
And as for your calves,  
Either will he [the cause of]  
their death,  
Either will he [the cause of]  
their death.

*Heeleley heelleey,*  
*Heeleley heelleey,*  
*Wiilashaada na,*  
*Helley wiilashaada na,*  
*Wadaan iyo waran,*  
*Helley wadaan iyo waran,*  
*Miduun baw weda,*  
*Heellayaaahew,*  
*Weylahaaga na,*  
*Waraabiyo weyd,*  
*Miduun baw weda,*  
*Heeleley heelleey,*  
*Heeleley heelleey,*  
*Wiilashaada na,*  
*Helley wadaan Iyo waran,*  
*Weylahaaga na,*  
*Helley weylahaaga na,*  
*Miduun haw weda,*  
*Miduun baw weda,*

*heellayaahee,*  
The boys who care for you,  
a water vessel or a spear,  
either, will be [the cause of] their  
death,

and as for your calves  
and as for your calves,  
a hyena or starvation,  
a hyena or starvation,  
either, will he [the cause of]  
their death.

*heellayaahee,*  
*heellayaahee,*  
the boys who care for you,  
either, will be [the cause of]  
their death  
a hyena or starvation,  
a hyena or starvation,  
either, will he [the cause of]  
their death,  
either will he [the cause of]  
their death.

*heellayaahee,*  
*heellayaahee,*  
*heellayaahee,*  
*wiilashaada na,*  
*wadaan iyo waran,*  
*miduun baw weda,*  
*weylahaaga na,*  
*helley weylahaaga na,*  
*waraabiyo weyd,*  
*helley waraabiyo weyd,*  
*miduun haw weda,*  
*heellayaahee,*  
*heellayaahee,*  
*willashaada na,*  
*miduun baw weda,*  
*waraabiyo weyd,*  
*waraabiyo weyd,*  
*miduun baw weda,*  
*miduun baw weda.*

The weekly watering requirements of cattle create a lot of difficulties for the security and physical health of the herders. The grazing requirements create even more problems for the calves of the cattle. First, enough water must be found and negotiated for in order to keep the cattle healthy. Second, calves do not go as far afield for grazing as the adult cattle. Their fate at being unattended alone in the corral is also mentioned in the poem, as hyenas often break in and devour them.

## Heesaha Adhiga (caprine songs)

The husbandry of sheep and goats (caprines) is one of the favourite occupations of the Somali northern pastoralists. Somalis have a collective word for sheep and goats, *adhi*, which we have translated with an innovative collective noun "caprine", taken from a Greek word. Almost every pastoral family owns a flock of these animals. Without them the life of the pastoral household is always in difficulty. Different families have different sizes of flocks; the rich ones can possess several hundred of animals. Generally the husbandry of any number below one hundred (locally known as *tiro*) is considered by the pastoralists as below the poverty level. The implication is that such a number would not meet the food needs of the household.

Sheep and goats have more immediate utilization than camels and cattle. They provide milk, meat and butter as towns and exchanged for food, clothes and other family needs. In this aspect they are reared both for consumption and for the market. But their poor resistance to the climatic factors of the pastoral environment undermines their economic importance. They require weekly watering, and always must be kept closer to watering sites. Unlike camels they cannot endure long journeys. In long and severe dry seasons when grazing conditions are relatively poor, a good number of sheep and goats usually die.

The husbandry of sheep and goats is generally regarded by the pastoralists as women's responsibility since the tasks related to their husbandry do not require heavy work. In general, one of the measurements of the position of a married woman in the pastoral life is the size of her herd of sheep and goats and the ways she manages their feeding requirements. The fulfilment of this obligation often leads to the division of the two species into separate flocks in order to meet their different feeding demands. Furthermore, although the young of both species are herded together, they are often separated from the adults to graze in different places. Whereas young girls from eight to ten years of age look after baby sheep and goats, the unmarried women from puberty until marriage are entrusted to look after adult sheep and goats. The only task associated with sheep and goats performed by men is watering. All these separately defined tasks are accompanied by songs of different genres, one to each task. The songs sung by women are sung individually and not in groups. In addition to their use as work songs and their element of entertainment, these songs are often used as a medium of metaphoric and veiled communication between the sexes. Let us illustrate five of these genres in order to provide a deeper understanding about their significance.

### *Heesaha Waarabinta Adhiga (watering songs for caprines)*

Although the husbandry of sheep and goat is regarded by the Somali pastoralists as a woman's responsibility, it is the men who water them, because watering is considered a tiresome task that demands more muscular activity. But caprines' watering songs are not generally given the same status as camel and cattle working songs. The songs that accompany the work show the weakness of the livestock during the dry seasons as well as their usefulness during the rainy seasons. The following examples of men's watering songs

throw light on the rearing and management of sheep and goats. They were collected in a natural context from Abdi Ahmed Ali and Si'iid Mahmuud 'Ilmi.

First singer

*Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
A well to which I came:  
A well to which I came:  
Don't be anxious about it.  
But the grass growing away from it,  
To which the children  
Won't permit you to go [and graze]:  
Don't blame me [for that].*

*Heey Helley heelleey,  
Heey Helley heelleey,  
Ceelan kuu galay,  
Helley ceelan kuu galay,  
Ciil kuma qabtide  
Cawska dibedda ah,  
Ee carruuruhu,  
Kaa celceliyaan,  
Haygu ciil qabin.*

Second singer

*heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow.*

*heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,*

In this poem, the singer addresses the flock. Don't worry about the water to which I bring you; worry about the grazing area near the well, which is always over-grazed. This poem actually criticizes irresponsible women who allow her children to over-graze the area immediately around the wells and the camps. Note that the second singer did not know this poem and continuously sang only the formula.

First singer

*O, God, [since] the caprines,  
Did not fill,  
The milk vessel,  
[used for] milk storage,  
Last night they half filled it!  
[Their] water vessel,  
I have sworn that,  
I will not fill,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Their water vessel,  
Their water vessel,  
I have sworn that,  
I will not fill,  
I will make it half full.*

Second singer

*heellayaalow,  
last night they half filled it,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
[their] water vessel,  
I have sworn that,  
I will not fill,  
I will make it half full.  
heellayaalow,  
the milk vessel,  
[used for] milk storage,  
they did not fill it!  
last night they half filled it,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
I will make it half full.*

*Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,*

*Helley Allow adhi,  
Isha dhiilkii,  
Dhitayga ahaa,  
Helley ii ma dhoorine,  
Helley wayga dhimay xalay,  
Anna dhamasada,  
waa ku dhaartoo,  
Dhaamin maayoo,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Anna dhamasada,  
Anna dhamasada,  
Helley waa ku dhaartoo,  
Dhaamin maayoo,  
Helley waa ka dhimayaa,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,  
Heellayaalow,*

*their water vessel,  
I have sworn that,  
I will not fill it,  
I will make it half full.*

*heelleyaalow,  
heelleyaalow,  
heelleyaalow,  
wayga dhimay xalay,  
anna dhamasada,  
helley waa ku dhaartoo,  
helley dhaamln maayoo,  
helley waa ka dhimayaa,  
heellayaalow,  
isba dhiilkii  
dhitayga ahaa,  
helley iima dhoorine,  
wayga dhimay xalay,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
waa ka dhimayaa,  
anna dhamasada,  
waa ku dhartoo,  
dhaamln maayoo,  
waa ka dhimayaa.*

The poet laments over a half-filled milk vessel from his caprines. Thus, he says, he will only half fill their water trough. The poem is possibly a veiled warning to the keepers of the caprines (not really to the caprines themselves) to herd them in a better grazing area, or for some other reason unknown to the collector.

First singer

*Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
when you are frail,  
When you are frail,  
And news of trekking is heard,  
Painful worry and,  
Painful worry and,  
Anxiety trouble me,  
Anxiety trouble me,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heellayaalow,  
when you are frail,  
And news of trekking is heard,  
Painful worry and,  
Painful worry and,*

Second singer

*heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
when you are frail,  
and news of trekking is heard,  
painful worry and,  
painful worry and,  
anxiety trouble me,  
anxiety trouble me.  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
when you are frail,  
and news of trekking is heard,  
painful worry and,  
painful worry and,  
anxiety trouble me,*

Anxiety trouble me,  
Anxiety trouble me,

anxiety trouble me,  
anxiety trouble me.

Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Haddaad weyd tahay,  
Helley haddaad weyd tahay,  
Oo war soo dhaco,  
Helley oo war soo dhaco,  
Helley walbahaar iyo,  
Helley walbahaar iyo,  
Helley welwel hay dilay,  
Helley welwel hay dilay,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heey helley heelleey,  
Heellayaalow,  
Haddaad weyd tahay,  
Oo war soo dhaco,  
walbahaar iyo,  
Walbahaar iyo,  
Welwel bay dilay,  
Welwel bay dilay,

heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
haddaad weyd tahay,  
haddaad weyd tahay,  
oo war soo dhaco,  
walbahaar iyo,  
walbahaar iyo,  
welwel bay dilay,  
welwel bay dilay,  
heellayaalow,  
heellayaalow,  
haddaad weyd tahay,  
helley walbahaar iyo,  
helley walbahaar iyo,  
helley walbahaar iyo,  
helley welwel hay dilay,  
helley welwel bay dilay,  
welwel bay dilay.

Nomads do not like to move their animals when they are weak, but when the rain is poor, they have no choice and must move to new grazing areas. Here the poet laments this situation.

### *Heesaha Kaxaynta Adhiga (songs for driving caprines)*

Sheep and goats are usually herded by unmarried women, and if the family does not have any unmarried women at the time, young boys of the age of about fifteen are compelled to undertake such responsibilities, although it is against the normal customs of pastoral life. The boys generally hesitate to carry out such work, because they fear ridicule from their age group in the pastoral community. For this reason, it is common for even married women to take the responsibility of herding the family's caprines. Normally, sheep and goats are herded together (thus the collective Somali word *adhi*, which we have translated as "caprine"). Only when grazing becomes poor, particularly in the dry seasons, are the species, separated to meet their different grazing requirements. When the caprines are actually grazing, the shepherds do not sing for them. But during long journeys, like driving to and from water points, or moving from one place to another, working songs are employed. The singers normally address either the sheep or the goats in their songs. If a majority of the herd is composed of sheep, the poem will be addressed to them, and vice versa.

Driving sheep and goats to and from watering points, as we stated above, is one of the routine tasks done by Somali pastoral women. The songs sung individually by women on these occasions ostensibly concern the husbandry of caprines and their vulnerability to harsh climatic conditions. The following songs describe these ideas. The first two songs are addressed to goats and the

last two are addressed to sheep, and were collected from a woman named Faadumo.

*Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
In the month of Habaradhi,  
In the month of Habaradhi,  
Though they be kept 'neath  
shady trees,  
Though they be kept 'neath  
shady trees,  
Still birds of prey behind them fly,  
And devour the frailest ones.*

*Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelleey bisha Habaradhi<sup>15</sup>,  
Heelleey bisha Habaradhi,  
Heelleey geed la hadhiyaba,  
  
Heelleey geed la hadhiyaba,  
  
Heelley haadku daba socay,  
Heelleey oo hargaha guray.*

During the last month of the long dry season (*jiilal*), called *habaradhi* in Somali ([the month of the] old female caprine), the oldest and frailest goats die and are consumed by vultures on the harsh Somali plains. This poem commemorates this fact.

*Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
O [my goat], who sounds like  
a galloping horse,  
O [my goat], with [horns]  
like the quiver of an army,  
O [my goat], with the beard  
of a noble man,  
O Garo<sup>16</sup> [my goat], your  
joy [arrives]  
When the rain of *Gu*  
Begins to fall in the evening,  
And you are shepherded by  
young girls.*

*Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelleey heladheeleeey,  
Heelley gurdan faraslaay,  
  
Heelleey gabooyo coleey,  
  
Heelleey gadh nin gobaleey,  
  
Heelleey Goroy maaddaa,  
  
Heelleey waa haddu gugu,  
Heelleey galba hooraa,  
Heelley gabdho raacaan.*

In this poem, the woman praises her goat, which she has named *Garo*, a name denoting a brownish colour in its front and white on its hack. The goat is said to greet *gu*, the long rainy season, with much joy and happiness.

*Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
O Daylo <sup>17</sup> [my sheep], why have,  
Those who know the land,  
O Daylo why have,  
Those who know the land,  
In the place of bad parasites,  
Allowed you to graze,  
Selected it for you?  
In the place of ad parasites,  
Allowed you to graze,  
Selected it for you?*

*Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Maxaa Dayloy, xeehoy xee?  
Dalyagaannadu, xeehoy xee?  
Maxaa Dayloy, xeehoy xee?  
Dalyagaannadu, xeehoy xee?  
Meesha dulinka le, xeehoy xee?  
Kuu dejenoo, xeehoy xee,  
Kaaga dooreen,  
Meesha dulinka le, xeehoy xee,  
Kuu dejenoo, xeehoy xee,  
Kaaga dooreen,*



The poet criticizes the bad judgment of men who made the decision to move the herd to this place. The poem may be directed to the singer's husband in a veiled manner.

*Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
O you fat ram,  
O you fat ram,  
The huge fat leg,  
The huge fat leg,  
The ewe does not have,  
How did you get it?  
I have it [because],  
I don't give birth,  
And I don't lose my blood.*

*Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Xeexayaalow, xeehoy xee,  
Wanow fegedow, xeehoy xee  
Wanow fegedow, xeehoy xee  
Lugta fegedda ah, xeehoy xee,  
Lugta fegedda ah, xeehoy xee,  
Aan laxdu lahayn, xeehoy xee,  
Maxaa kugu ladhay?  
Waxa igu ladhay, xeehoy xee,  
Waanan dhalinoo, xeehoy xee,  
Waanan dhiig bixin.*

In this poem, the shepherd is singing to her ram, asking how the male can be so much more healthy than the ewe? The ram answers that he does not have to give birth. Actually, she is singing to her husband, and answering for him as well! She sings of her lot in life as compared to his.

### *Heesaha Maqasha (work songs for baby caprines)*

Pastoralists also sing while working with baby sheep and goats. Normally these songs are sung by young girls when these babies are being driven to their corrals or when they are on long journeys, the herders sing for them. The songs are normally composed by the adult women, and the young herders memorize them. Youth are not expected to compose at this age, but the memorization of such poetry is a part of the pedagogical system. Later they will perhaps compose their own songs. Most songs of this type do not address issues related to the animals. Rather they discuss and describe social issues in a veiled manner. The examples shown below demonstrate women's dissatisfaction about the lack of information on pastoral events and the behaviour of a man who has many wives. Two of these songs have different musical patterns and formulae.

*Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
We have moved,  
We have trekked,  
O God the victorious,  
Settle us in a better place,  
Where our kinsmen live,  
Where our kinsmen live.*

*Heehobeey, hoobaalayow  
Heehobeey, hoobaalayow  
Heehobeey, waa guurnayee  
Heehobeey, waa geeddinee,  
Heehobeey, Guullow Allow,  
Heehobeey, guri roon na gee,  
Heehobeey, oo gacal fadhiyo.  
Heehobeey, oo gacal fadhiyo.*

*Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
O you uninformed kids,  
O you uninformed kids,  
Were you given the news?*

*Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
Heehobeey, hoobaalayow,  
Heehobeey maqaleey warlaay,  
Heehobeey maqaleey warlaay,  
Heehobeey ma lagu waramay?*

Of the raids that occurred,  
Of the spears that were thrown,  
Of the boys that were killed?  
Who could tell me about them?  
Could my brother?  
He is away, below the river,  
And in Waaleed.<sup>18</sup>

*Heehobeey waxa weerar dhacay,  
Heehobeey waxa waran la riday,  
Heehobeey waxa wiil cad go'ay,  
Heehobeey yaa ii warramay?  
Heehobeey ma walaalkay baa?  
Heehobeey webi hoose iyo,  
Heehobeey Waaleed ka yimid.*

In this poem, the shepherd is singing to the kids, asking them if they have heard the news of warfare. In line nine, the kids answer the shepherd, saying they have no news, because their brother is away in a place named Waaleed, a place unknown to the informant of this poem. The point of this poem is that it is being sung on trek, and the shepherd is causing fear in the kids in order to make them move along more quickly.

*Hoobaley hobaaleeyoy, edegso;*

*Hoobaley hobaaleeyoy, edegso;*

This is the way a polygamist  
acts, go into [the corral]!  
This is the way a polygamist  
acts, go into [the corral]!  
The polygamist came in and  
shouted, go into [the corral]!  
In the middle [of the night]  
he goes to a different wife;  
go into [the corral]!  
This is the way a polygamist acts,  
go into [the corral]!  
The polygamist who mistreats  
an elegant wife; go into [the corral]!  
[when he's done, ] he puts away  
the bedding; go into [the corral]!

*Hoobaley hobaaleeyoy,  
edegso;*

*Hoobaley hobaaleeyoy,  
edegso;*

*Godadle<sup>19</sup> waa geddiisiyey,  
edegso;  
Godadle waa geddiisiyey,  
edegso;  
Godadle soo galyoo guuxyey,  
edegso;  
Gelinba reer gaadhyey,  
edegso;*

*Godadle waa geddiisiyey,  
edegso;  
Godadle gaari caarcaar show,  
edegso;  
Gogosha na laalaabyey,  
edegso.*

This song is sung to baby sheep and goats as they are being driven to the corrals. It describes the extent of dislike women have for their husbands who practice polygamy, calling such a man *godadle*, the man with many holes (houses).

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### Household work songs

Pastoral women are normally entrusted with the execution of nearly all household activities. Some of these activities are related to food preparation, like churning of milk (*lullidda*) and pounding of grain (*mooyaha*). Other work, like weaving mats (*samaynta*), is essential for bedding and for covering the collapsible house for protection from the heat and cold.

Although the completion of some of this work, like the weaving of some mats, takes months and sometimes years, the singing of poetry helps, among other things, to lessen the burden of the work and encourage its continuation. The songs that accompany these tasks usually concern the tools of the work, either in admiration or in complaint if they fail to produce the required results. Moreover, the pastoral women who perform these routine tasks employ the singing situations as forums to which social conflicts are brought, discussed, and solved without undermining existing social relationships. Since pastoral women by convention are not allowed to discuss certain social matters openly with men, they employ the singing of poetry as a mechanism to make their voices heard and to introduce change in the existing order. Since they are in charge of the household workplace, this territoriality gives them more freedom of expression than they are allowed in other places.

Examples from the four most common pastoral household work songs provided below were sung either by groups or individuals. Each genre has its unique musical pattern and scansion, which is associated with a particular form of work. These poems were collected, for the most part, from a woman named Faadumo.

#### Heesaha Kebedda iyo Aloolka (weaving songs for the mats used to cover the top and sides of the portable house)

The *kebed*<sup>20</sup> is one of the highly valued mats used for covering the top portion of the portable house in the life of the northern Somali nomads. It is woven from the fibre of an acacia tree Somalis call *galool* (*Acacia bussei*)<sup>21</sup> which has many uses in pastoral life. It is used also for making ropes; its bark is used as a dye and an insecticide in protecting fibre milk vessels; its inner wood is boiled as a medicine; its wood makes a very good charcoal; its large and strong roots are used as the top most poles in the nomadic house; its branches are used for the main support poles in the same house, as well as for weapons like clubs and spear shafts. The *kebed* mat is used for decorative but mainly protective

purposes. Several designs in its weaving are distinguished by different patterns and colours.

Generally a *kebed* measures four meters wide and two meters long. When it is being woven, its ends are tied between two poles. Mat making is usually ceremonial, and the event is planned and organized for about a half dozen women. Most of the work is done in the day time, particularly in the afternoons. The completion of a normal *kebed* usually takes between four days to a week, if the same work is done every day (Fullerton and Adan: 1986:10). The women who work on the *kebed* do not leave the family of the *kebed* owner until it is completed. They are the guests of the owner and the singing, teasing, and laughter involved in the event makes the work lighter and more delightful. The songs that accompany the work usually praise the beauty and use of the mat.

Although the *kebed* is not woven in the Buuhoodle area, it is very commonly used and highly valued there, and songs about it are common in that place. The musical accompaniment, the topics, and the scansion of *kebed* songs are similar to those of the *alool*<sup>22</sup>, another type of mat very common in Buuhoodle area. The *alool* is made of straight thin reeds of a particular grass known as *duur* (one of several grasses in Somalia, principally *Andropogon Kelleri*). The weaving of the *kebed* is commonly practiced in the Northwest of Somalia around Hargeysa, while the weaving of the *alool* is more commonly practiced in the northeastern part of the country in the Togdheer region.

*Kebed* songs are usually composed as couplets, the first couplet being sung by the soloist and the rest of the women repeating it, accompanying her as a choir. Often the first couplet becomes the chorus utilised throughout the poem, but just as often, the women simply repeat each couplet that the soloist sings. Usually, this first couplet is repeated several times so that the choir of women can memorize it. It is also the case that the solo position is shared by a number of women. Favourite couplets are often repeated. The songs given below have been collected from several performances in which they appeared both as *kebed* and *alool* songs.

From the very tallest tree, your fibre comes,  
You are the true fiber of the highest *galool*,  
Chorus: Repeats the same lines.

You and your colourful designs cover the house,  
Today have I not I gathered sisters [to weave you]  
Chorus: Repeats.

You are the produce of Saaxil<sup>23</sup>, and you're beautiful,  
With delight we put you up on the top of the house.  
Chorus: Repeats.

It is intended to accompany a newly married woman,  
Where are my relatives whom God the Omnipotent did not  
afflict [with problems]?  
Chorus: Repeats.

A woman who fails to cover her house with you:  
Her slaughtered animals will be taken away by wild beasts<sup>24</sup>

Chorus: Repeats.

A woman who fails to cover her house with you:  
Her husband will be hurt by the winds.

Chorus: Repeats.

O lazy woman, tugging on mats which are not there!  
The thunder will surely bring rain!<sup>25</sup>

Chorus: Repeats.

We can't eat grain [every day]; it is very tough,  
Is the sour milk of [your] camels available?<sup>26</sup>

Chorus: Repeats.

The meat of a male camel is tough and can't be cut,  
Is the meat of a nine-year-old milch-camel not available?

Chorus: Repeats.

Goats that have long horns, tails, and skinny chins:  
We can't make fire [for the meat] of old goats.

Chorus: Repeats.

*Geed ba geedka u dheer laga garaacyey,  
Galool mudhay mullaaxdiisiiyey.*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Baranbarshaaleey buul shareeraay,  
Ma maantaan bah kuu helaayey?*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Saaxil laga keenyey wada susuurey,  
Siyaab aqalka loo saaryey.*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Gabadh la rarayaan raacinaayaa,  
Alla ayaan Roonahaay dhibineey?*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Naagan daar ridhaney docadalooleey,  
Wan loo dilaay dugaag guraayey.*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Naagan daar ridhaney docadalooleey,  
Alla ninkeedii dabayl rooryey.*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

*Raraan jirin jiidday jiipta huruddoy,  
Alla jabtoy jawdu waa roobeey.*

*Jiib: ku celin.*

Koronkor cuni maynoo kari ba maynee,  
Alla karuur geel ma la hayaayeeey?  
Jiib: ku celin.

Qaalin waa seedoo sari ba maynee,  
Alla siddeed-jir aan irmaanaaneey.  
Jiib: ku celin.

Dib iyo gees dheerey daaman-yagadhey,  
Ri duq ah dab u shidan maynooy,  
Jiib: ku celin.

### Heesaha Harrarka (weaving songs for another mat used to cover the portable house)

Most of the covering mats used to cover the portable house of the northern pastoralists are called *harrar*<sup>27</sup>. All houses are covered with *harrar*, while only some houses have *kebdo* and *alool*, the latter pair being more expensive.

*Harrar* are made of a particular fibre called *maadh*. The *harrar* (also called *caws*) is used both for decoration and protection against sun and wind. Different designs of decoration are made on the *harrar* in order to enhance the beauty of the house.

Unlike the *kebed*, the *harrar* is woven by only one woman, and its completion takes several months and sometimes years. It is usually woven in the evening after the milking of animals. However, when work is near completion, special singing occasions are held, attended by both married and unmarried women. In this organized ceremony, called *tidic*<sup>28</sup>, the ceremony of "plaiting", the women weave and wrap the upper edge of the mat in order to protect it from damage and to keep it from unravelling. This tiresome work is accompanied by songs sung by a soloist, accompanied by a choir. The mat is praised and personified and given the power to express ideas that reflect the wishes and dreams of those who made it (Fullerton and Adan 1986:8). Examples of these songs are provided below to demonstrate how women employ singing situations as forums to communicate in order to introduce change or uphold certain traditional values. The songs were sung in several performances and seem to be popular over a wide area.

Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy  
Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,  
O my mat who [always] rejects the pauper,  
May you not be sold at market,  
May you not be sold at market,  
May you not be valued for a mere thirty (shillings),  
May people not enquire who made you,  
May people not enquire who made you,  
May an incompetent woman not manage your affairs,  
May an incompetent woman not manage your affairs,

hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,  
hoyal,

May a fool not sleep on you  
 May a fool not sleep on you.  
*Ay hooyalow hooyee,*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyalee.*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*

*Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,*  
*Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,*  
*Cawskanow sabool diidow,*  
*Waqaan suuga lagu dhigineey,*  
*Waqaan suuga lagu dhigineey,*  
*Soddon lagugu baayicineey,*  
*Yaa sameeyey lagu odhaneey,*  
*Yaa sameeyey lagu odhaneey,*  
*Waqaan sumbo ku rogaanroagineey,*  
*Waqaan sumbo ku rogaanroagineey,*  
*Saawir cagaha kula dhicineey,*  
*Saawir cagaha kula dhicineey,*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyey*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyey.*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*

Three things are really ignorant,  
 Three things are really ignorant,  
 And three are valueless,  
 And three are valueless:  
*Ay hooyalow hooyee,*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyalee,*  
 Three are valueless,  
 Three are valueless:  
 A gun without bullets,  
 A gun without bullets,  
 A new white dress without shoes,  
 A new white dress without shoes,  
 Beauty without elegance,  
 Beauty without elegance,  
*Ay hooyalow hooyee,*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyalee.*  
 Three are valueless,  
 Three are valueless.  
 The wealth of a miser,  
 The wealth of a miser,  
 A virgin from a small clan,  
 A virgin from a small clan,  
 Beauty without elegance,  
 Beauty without elegance,  
*Ay hooyalow hooyee,*  
*Ay hooyalow hooyalee.*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*

*Saddex waa badownimo eey,*  
*Saddex waa badownimo eey,*  
*Saddex na waa barkumataaleey,*

*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*  
*hoyal,*



<i>Saddex na waa barkumataaleey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyee,</i>	
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyalee,</i>	
<i>Saddex waa barkumataaleey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Saddex waa barkumataaleey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bundukh aan saanad loo sidaneey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bundukh aan saanad loo sidaneey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bafto kabo la'aaneedeey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bafto kabo la'aaneedeey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Qurux lagu basari yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Qurux lagu basari yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyee,</i>	
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyalee,</i>	
<i>Saddex waa barkumataaleey -</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Saddex waa barkumataaleey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Xoolo lagu bakhayl yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Xoolo lagu bakhayl yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bikro lagu bah-gaah yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Bikro lagu bah-gaah yahayey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Qurux lagu basari yahay ey,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Qurux lagu basari yahay ey</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyee,</i>	
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyalee,</i>	

<i>Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>who would examine men and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine women and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine camels and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine horses and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyee,</i>	
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyalee,</i>	
<i>Who would examine horses and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>And slaughter the slow, brownish one?</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine women and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>And slaughter the ignorant one?</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine men and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>And slaughter the coward?</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Who would examine camels and evaluate them!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>And slaughter the one who does not produce enough milk?</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyee,</i>	
<i>Ay hooyalow hooyalee,</i>	

<i>Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Hoobiyo hobaaleeyoy,</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Ragga yaa galoo gura eey!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Dumarka yaa galoo gura eey!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Geela yaa galoo gura eey!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>
<i>Faraska yaa galoo gura eey!</i>	<i>hoyal,</i>

Ay hooyalow hooyee,  
 Ay hooyalow hoyalee.  
 Faraska yaa galoo gura eey!  
 Xamar girif gawraca eey,  
 Dumarka yaa galoo gura eey!  
 Waxmagarato gawraca eey.  
 Ragga yaa galoo gura eey!  
 Alla giiriyaale gawraca eey.  
 Geela yaa galoo gura eey!  
 Gabna olosa gawraca eye.  
 Ay hooyalow hooyee,  
 Ay hooyalow hoyalee.

hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,  
 hoyal,

## Heesaha Lulidda (milk churning songs)

Certain kinds of food preparation in the northern pastoral life are accompanied by work songs. Churning milk to produce clarified butter is one of them. The milk of livestock, particularly cows, sheep and goats, is stored in a vessel called *haan*<sup>29</sup>. It is made of the fibre of a particular thorny bush called *qabo* (*Euphorbia qabo*)<sup>30</sup>. Nearly all northern pastoral milk and water containers, as well as several milking vessels, are made of the fibre of *qabo*. The *haan* rests inside a cylindrical basket called *saab*<sup>31</sup>, made of thick bent sticks, which protects the vessel from damage, helps, keep it upright, and aids in its transportation. On the top, the *haan* has a lid which is firmly tied shut when the woman is churning.

Inside this cylindrical *saab* basket, the milk container is rocked to and fro and thereby churned. This operation usually continues for a period of about two hours. While churning, the woman often sings in order not to feel the exhaustion of the work. In her song, the woman may personify the vessel, either praising it when it produces butter or blaming it when it fails. She usually wishes to produce butter in a short period of time, so that she can go on with her other work. Many women begin this chore around four in the morning, churning yesterday's milk and finishing the work around sunrise. If the work is unfinished by this time, when other tasks are pressing, the woman will return to churning sometime before noon.

Because churning is performed individually, churning songs are sung by individuals, and the woman has more scope to express her personal feelings. Other adults and children, however, are, usually within earshot. Songs delivered on such occasions often concern conflicts between spouses and co-wives. Like other work songs composers of the songs are usually anonymous, thereby disclaiming responsibility for the content. The following songs were collected from a woman named Faadumo, but they also appeared in other performances in a wide area around Faadumo's home, indicating their popularity and the extent of verbatim memorization within this genre. Variants are not identical line by line, but certain couplets, quatrains, and other numbers of lines are identical, word for word. In this genre, as in other work songs, the order of strophes is not prescribed, but the words within some strophes appear to be memorized, because tape-recorded texts of induced natural contexts from different women produce identical, word for word, strophes. Some strophes,

however, in any single performance may not appear in any other performance, and may be the composition, perhaps even formulaic, spontaneous composition of individual women. The whole question of composition and structure of Somali work songs remains to be more thoroughly researched at a future time.

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,  
Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,  
O vessel with the small bottom,*

The morning is late,  
A hot-tempered old man has come  
People are waiting on us,  
People are waiting on us,  
why haven't you made butter yet?  
Our brown cows have [already]  
returned [from the fields],  
Our brown cows have [already]  
returned [from the fields],  
The camels have [already] left  
[for grazing],  
The camels have [already] left  
[for grazing],  
The sheep are hurting from the  
heat of the sun,  
The sheep are hurting from the  
heat of the sun,  
Why haven't you made butter yet?  
Our brown cows have [already]  
returned [from the fields],  
Our brown cows have [already]  
returned [from the fields],  
The camels have [already] left  
[for grazing],  
The camels have [already] left  
[for grazing],  
The sheep are hurting from the  
heat of the sun,  
The sheep are hurting from the  
heat of the sun,  
why haven't you made butter yet?  
You were not a gift from my  
relatives,  
You were not a gift from my  
relatives,  
And I didn't weave you myself,  
And I didn't weave you myself,  
You are only a patched up cast-off,  
You are only a patched up cast-off,  
I found you [abandoned] in an  
empty camp.

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,  
Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,  
Naa hoy dhigdhigo dhabar  
yar,*

*Waagii dharaarow ye,  
Oday dhagar qaba yimid e,  
Waa layna dhawrayaa ye,  
Waa layna dhawrayaa ye,  
Sow ma na dhanaanaatid?  
Dhiineey lo'dii timid e,*

*Dhiineey lo'dii timid e,*

*Geelii dhabbaha qaadye,*

*Geelii dhabbaha qaadye,*

*Idihii dharaarsada e,*

*Idihii dharaarsada e,*

*Sow ma na dhanaanaatid?  
Dhiineey lo'dii timid e,*

*Dhiineey lo'dii timid e,*

*Geelii dhabbaha qaadye,*

*Geelii dhabbaha qaadye,*

*Idihii dharaarsada e,*

*Idihii dharaarsada e,*

*Sow ma na dhanaanaatid?  
Gacalkayna ima siinin,*

*Gacalkayna ima siinin,*

*Gacantayna kuma tolanin,  
Gacantayna kuma tolanin,  
Waa gorofaan<sup>32</sup> xooleeyey,<sup>33</sup>  
Waa gorofaan xooleeyey,  
Oo guri ka soo qaaday.*

In this poem, the woman is complaining to her churn, because the milk has not yet turned to butter. (Actually, the churning produces a sour milk, which is then cooked. Clarified butter rises to the top of the liquid in the process of cooking.) The woman personifies her churn, telling it that she has other duties to attend to. The hot-tempered old man in line 5 is the woman's husband. Cows are allowed to graze very early in the morning before the sun comes up, and they generally return to the camp after dawn for milking. At this same time, the camels are just leaving the camp for their grazing. The sheep need to be let out of the pen for grazing. Finally, she threatens the churn, saying that it is not special to her. If it doesn't produce soon, she will throw it away.

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
 O vessel, you are not my parent,  
 And you are not a son that I  
 have borne,  
 Neither are you an elder kinsman,  
 Neither are you [important]  
 like the dawn and the heavens,  
 Don't make me cast you out,  
 Don't make me throw you in the  
 dump,  
 Don't let water become your  
 nourishment,  
 Don't let yourself become a  
 home for pests,  
 O charming sister, make  
 [butter] for me  
 O charming sister, make  
 [butter] for me.

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Naa waalidkay ma ihid e,*  
*Oo wiilan dhalay ma ihid e,*

*Oo wabar i xiga ma ihid e,*  
*Waagiyo cirka na ma ihid e,*

*Oo yaan ku bawlixin e,*  
*Yaan bawdka ku dhigin e,*

*Oo biyo sed kuu noqon e,*

*Baranbaradu kugu xayan e,*

*Baayoy Bulloy ii bax.*

*Baayoy Bulloy ii bax.*

This poem is also a complaint to the churn. The woman again personifies it, but she says that the churn is not special to her. If the churn, which is made of reed fibres, is used for milk, the oily smell of clarified butter and sour milk keep away the insects. When churns wear out, they are used for water containers and become more vulnerable to insects.

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
 O, my sister, our community,  
 O, my sister, our community,  
 This a community of insults,  
 May I not be suspected  
 [of hording] the butter,  
 May not I be suspected  
 [of hording] the butter,  
 May they not spread rumours  
 against me,

*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Hobaalayey hiyoy haanta,*  
*Naa baayo beesheennu,*  
*Naa baayo beesheennu,*  
*Waa beelo ceebeed e,*  
*Yaan subagga lay bidine,*

*Yaan subagga lay bidine,*

*Yaan suuqa lay marin e,*

May he not beat me severely,  
May he not divorce me,  
May he not divorce me,  
O charming sister, make [butter]  
for me.  
O charming sister, make [butter]  
for me.  
I suspect that you are not  
untouched,  
I suspect that you are not  
untouched,  
But there are no finger-  
prints on you,  
The knots of the rope have  
not been untied,  
was the opening in your lid used?

*Yaan sararta lav goyn e,  
Yaan soo bax lay odhan e,  
Yaan soo bax lay odhan e,  
Baayoy Bulloy ii bax,*

*Baayoy Bulloy ii bax,*

*Ma fayooobid oo ogi ye,*

*Ma fayooobid oo ogi ye,*

*Faro kugu ma yaalliin e*

*Hilaygii na lama furine,*

*Ma furtaa lagaa dhuugay?*

Again the churn is personified in this poem. The woman is appealing to her vessel not to let the community suspect her of stealing butter from the churn. To understand the images in this poem, one must understand the structure of the churn. The lid of the churn is tied down to keep the milk from spilling. There is also a small hole in the middle of the lid which has two purposes. Air pressure builds up during the process when fresh milk is churned into sour milk from which butter is extracted. This hole must be plugged during churning or the milk will spill out, but it is periodically opened to let air escape. The woman also dribbles fresh milk into this hole to test the contents and see if the milk has turned sour. At the end of the poem, the woman says she suspects someone, perhaps her children, of stealing butter from the churn. Although her knots are untouched, the small hole in the top of the lid has been opened. These lines are actually a subtle insult to the churn, because it has produced such a small amount of butter that the woman says she suspects theft.

## Heesaha Mooyaha (mortar pounding songs)

Although pastoral nomads normally live on the milk and meat they get from their livestock, they exchange these products in towns for agricultural produce such as maize and sorghum. Agricultural products are usually sought during the dry seasons when milk output becomes low. The pastoralists make a variety of dishes from both maize and sorghum, but as everything is done by hand the preparation of these dishes is associated with monotonous and time consuming work. Pounding the corn with mortar and pestle is one of the important processes for preparing these dishes.

Pounding is usually performed by pairs of married and unmarried women. The early morning or late evening is regarded as the most appropriate time for such tasks. The songs women deliver in these working situations often reflect the social relations and institutions of their community. A number of subjects are normally discussed and negotiated, such as marriage, divorce, and gender relationship. The following songs, which are common among northern

pastoralists, concern these topics. The first is sung by a mother who advises her daughter about marriage. The other two songs are sung by two different unmarried women expressing their views about marriage. The songs were collected during several performances and are very popular. When one woman is singing, the other takes the role of the chorus and repeats the formula. The first poem was performed by a woman named Faadumo; and the second poem, by a woman named Cibaado. The third poem is taken from the unpublished collection of Muuse Xaaji Ismaaciil Galaal.

## Soloist

My dear, my dear;  
 My dear, my dear;  
 O, my young daughter,  
 If I intend to compose a poem,  
 If I want a pounding poem;  
 [Let me] begin to recite it;  
 Trees will sway sideways;  
 A mare will whinny [from fear];  
 The camel will cry out,  
 But I will continue my poem!  
 My dear, my dear;  
 My dear, my dear;  
 O, my young daughter;  
 When I take the pestle,  
 Take the pestle of the mortar;  
 And stand over it;  
 And work on the sorghum;  
 I crush a thousand hulls,  
 My dear, my dear,  
 My dear, my dear, :  
 O, my young daughter,  
 If you fail to bring [bridewealth]  
 camels for me,  
 If you fail to bring [bridewealth]  
 camels for me,  
 And other animals to be milked,  
 Just remain at home,  
 Let your hair remain untied,  
 Serve only your father,  
 Work only for your mother,

## Chorus

My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,

My Dear,

My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,  
 My Dear,

*Gacalo Gacaloy;*  
*Gacalo Gacaloy;*  
*Gabadhayda yareey,*  
*Haddaan gabay maago,*  
*Gabay mooyaha maago,*  
*Aan gunuunuc bilaabo,*  
*Geedo waa lulushaan,*

*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*  
*Gacaloy,*

*Geenyo waa danantaa,  
Geelu waa ololaa;  
Anna wayska gabyaa.  
Gacalo Gacaloy,  
Gabadhayda yarey,  
Haddaan kasha qaato,  
Kasha mooyaha qaado,  
Aan korkusa istaago,  
Ka shaqeeyo hadhuudhka,  
Kun hal baan ka dilaa,  
Gacalo Gacaloy,  
Gacalo Gacaloy,  
Gabadhayda yarey,  
Geel haddaan kugu waayo,  
Geel haddaan kugu waayo,  
Iyo guuyo la maalo,  
Iska joog gurigiinna,  
Iska guudad xidhnaw,  
Aabbahaa u adeeg;  
Hooyaadaa u aqdaam.*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy.*

When Somali girls are ready to marry, they braid their hair in thin strips from front to back to announce their intention to marry. After that, they always cover it in public. It is this practice to which the poet refers in line 25.

The following two songs are exchanges of two unmarried women who are pounding sorghum. In their songs they discuss the right to marry.

**Soloist**

My dear, my dear,  
My dear, my dear,  
You are like my right arm,  
I worn you against four [men],  
I advise you to reject them,  
An amulet I will write [for your  
protection],  
Don't marry the brave man;  
Don't marry the short man;  
Don't marry the tall man;  
Don't marry the coward;

Don't marry the brave man;  
when your camels are looted,  
He will run after them first,  
And battle will slay him first,  
And he will leave you without a son,

Don't marry the short man;  
When the camels get mange,  
The sores will be out of reach,  
He will cure [only] the camel's hoofs,

**Chorus**

My dear,  
My dear,  
My dear,  
My dear,  
My dear,

My dear  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,



Don't marry the tall man,  
When hunger attacks,  
He will be asleep in the house,  
He will say to you, I am dying,  
He will say, I am sick,  
He is not sick; may he become sick!  
Let a sharp dagger slice his liver!

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,

Don't marry the coward,  
In a place his colleagues abandoned,  
He will stay forever,  
He will bring you shame,  
The man who follows the one true God,  
The man who says his daily prayers,  
If you don't find either of these,  
Just remain at home,  
Let your hair remain untied,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear.

*Gacalo Gacaloy,  
Gacalo Gacaloy, '  
Gacantay midigey,  
Afar Kaaga digaa,  
Kaaga dayriyayaa,  
Kaaga Diin dhigayaa,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy.*

*Ninka geesi ha guursan,  
Ninka gaaban ha guursan,  
Ninka dheer na ha guursan;  
Fulaygiina ha guursan;*

*Gacaloy  
Gacaloy  
Gacaloy  
Gacaloy*

*Ninka geesi ha guursan;  
Marka geela la qaado;  
Gudubbuu ka ordaa;  
Goob xun baa la dhigaa;  
Goblan buu ku badaa;*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Ninka gaaban ha guursan;  
Marka geelu cadhoobo;  
Garbasaarka ma gaadho,  
Gonduhuu ka dhayaa;  
Ninka dheer ha guursan;  
Marka gaaajo timaaddo;  
Guriguu is goglaa;  
Go'ayey ku yidhaa;  
Waan bukaa ku dhahaa,  
Ma bukee ha bukoодо,  
Beerka caaro ha goyso,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Fulaygiina ha guursan;  
Meel faciis ka teguu,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Weligii fadhiyaa,  
Foolxumuu Ia joogaa,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Ninka Waaxid yaqaan,  
Ninka weyso ku taal;  
Haddaad labadaa weydo,  
Iska joog gurigiinna,  
Iska guudad xidhnaw,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy.*

This poem is overtly comical, because if the listener follows the singer's advice, she will never marry at all. But the real warning here is directed against the coward. The informant also explained that the lines about the religious man are recent additions to an otherwise very old poem.

Soloist

Chorus

My dear, my dear,  
My dear, my dear,  
You are like my right arm,  
I warn you against four [men],  
I advise you to reject them,  
An amulet I will write [for your protection],  
The father of a motherless son,  
The husband of an elderly wife,  
The man who lives with his mother,  
The man who has many sisters,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,

The son may grow up and leave,  
The wife may be divorced,  
The sisters may marry,  
The worst curse of all is his mother,  
Because she will never depart,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,

Though he be a water porter,  
Or a broker carrying a rope,  
choose a man who is free,  
choose a man who never seen a woman,

My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear,  
My Dear.

*Gacalo Gacaloy,  
Gacantay midigey,  
Afar Kaaga digaa,  
Kaaga dayriyayaa,  
Kaaga diin dhigayaa,  
Habarlaawe nin haaya,  
Habar weyn nin lahaa;  
Habartii nimay joogto,  
Hablo kay la dhasheen,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Habarlaawe koryaa,  
Habarweyn la furyaa,  
Hablo guursada aa,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Hooggu waa habartii,  
Aan geesna kaaga hadhayn,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,*

*Muu hadhuub ku biyeeyo,  
Muu hoggaan la wareego,  
Horbannaan ha ahaado,  
Oo yaan lagaaga horrayn,*

*Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy,  
Gacaloy.*

The singer in this poem warns her friends against four types of men, but the lines are a bit confusing. In the first warning, she advises against marrying a man whose first wife died or was divorced (children in Somalia normatively remain with their fathers when divorce occurs). When his first wife's son grows up, he will move away and not be a burden to the second wife any more; therefore, if you have to marry such a man, a solution will eventually be found. In the second warning, she advises against a man who is already married (in Islam a man may have four wives at the same time). But if she must marry this man, he may eventually divorce the elder wife and leave the second wife in charge of the household. In the third warning, she advises against a man with a lot of sisters. In Somalia, blood kin are more cherished than in-laws, including one's wife. But again, the sisters will marry and leave the brother's compound, leaving the wife free of them. The fourth case is different. If the woman's mother-in-law lives with her husband, she will never leave and will always be a problem to her daughter-in-law. Finally, the singer advises the listener to marry a man who has never been married before, even if he has a profession of low status, like a water porter or an animal broker.

### Heesaha Carruurta (lullabies)

Singing for babies is a common practice in the northern pastoral life. Mothers usually take care of their children although they are often helped by their sisters, mothers, mothers-in-law or grandmothers. The care of children is usually considered by the pastoralists as a woman's responsibility.

A woman generally sings for her children when she is busy with the execution of some important obligation, like making mats. The song is meant to soothe and entertain the child. Also a pastoral woman often sings for her child when she wants to make him sleep. It is commonly believed by the pastoralists that singing helps both the children and mothers to feel more happy. But for the pastoral women, singing is normally considered more than entertainment.

Women express their deep feelings for the care and love for their children. But also they employ singing as a mechanism to express their views on important social issues that reflect and affect women's traditional roles in the pastoral community. They express their feelings about gender prejudice, where a woman is usually placed in a subordinate position. Separate songs for sons and daughters express the hopes mothers have for their children and the expected obligations for each when they grow older. Both personal composition and verbatim memorization operate in this oral tradition. Some songs have appeared in several performances, and this fact indicates their popularity among the people.

Topics of most of the songs collected generally concern three subjects related to the life of sons. Some songs admire the child and compare him with anything valuable to a pastoralist. Some are blessings and concern the son's protection from all evil and destructive things. Others demonstrate the child's expected obligations when he grows older and reaches the age of manhood. The following three songs describe these ideas. They are regarded as common songs and are known by nearly all the northern pastoralists. The word *hooyo*, "mother", like the word *abbe*, "father", is normatively used also by the parent when addressing their children. A son or daughter calls his/her mother *hooyo*, and the mother calls her son or daughter *hooyo* as well. Likewise, a son or daughter calls his/her father *abbe*, and they each are called *abbe* by him. The lullabies have two musical patterns. The first is known as *galbeedi*, "western", and is usually utilized by the western pastoralists. The *galbeedi* has longer lines than the *reer bari*, "eastern settlement", which is used by the eastern pastoralists. The following song is from the *galbeedi* pattern and is a praise song for soothing a crying son, and was collected from a woman named Ardo in Buuhoodle.

*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
 O son, you have cried, listen to me,  
 The many praises I sing to you,  
 O son, listen to them; they  
 are clothes and money,  
 O son, listen to them; they are honey.

O son, listen to them; they  
 are camels,  
 O son, listen to them; they  
 are horses,  
 O son listen to them carefully,

*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
 O son, praising you exhausted me,  
 O son, what do you lack; what  
 makes you worry so?  
 O son, why do you confuse me?  
 O son, why do you drive  
 yourself mad?

*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hooyo dhawaaqdaye bal i dhegeyso,*  
*Hooyo amaanta waxaan dhuraayo,*  
*Hooyo 'dhegeyso waa dhar*  
*iyo lacag e,*  
*Hooyo dhegeyso waa malab*  
*la dhuraayo,*  
*Hooyo dhegeyso waa deeble*  
*geel e,*  
*Hooyo dhegeyso waa dhiinle*  
*faras e,*  
*Hooyo dhegeysoo dhego u*  
*yeelo.*  
*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeyaa hobehey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hooyo banaaxigii igadhamaaye,*  
*Hooyo maxaad weydaad u*  
*waan*  
*Hooyo maxaad anna ii wareerin?*  
*Hooyo maxaad adna is u*  
*waali?*

The following poem is sung with the musical pattern of the *reer bari*. It confers various blessings pastoral mothers hope for their sons. It was also collected from the woman named Ardo from Buuhoodle.

*Hobeheey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeheey hobeheeyaa,*  
 I beg God that you will never suffer,  
 May you not encounter severe  
 problems,

*Hobeheey hobeheeyaa,*  
*Hobeheey hobeheeyaa,*  
*war Allow aadan iilan hooyo,*  
*War dhadhaab culus laguma*  
*saaro,*

May your mother never weep a day,  
 May you visit another co-wife  
 and stepmother,  
 Your grandmother who raises you,  
 Your grandfather who carries you,  
 Your paternal uncle who keeps you,  
 May you not lose your parents,  
 May you not lose your renowned  
 father,  
 May you not lose your supporting,  
 mother,  
 May you not lose your many  
 brothers.

War dharaar hooyadaa ma oydo,  
 war afiyo aayo aad u meerto,  
 War ayeeydaayoo ku korisa,  
 War awoowgaayoo ku qaada,  
 War adeerkaayoo ku haysta,  
 War ha waayin labada waaliid,  
 War ha waayin wardheerow  
 aabbe,  
 war ha waayin waxsiiso  
 hooyo,  
 war ha waayin walaalo  
 dhawrah.

The following song shows the type of expectations pastoral women hope for their sons when they grow to manhood. This song was collected from a woman named Faadumo, also from Buuhoodle.

Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 I hope you live to a ripe old age,  
 O you, who will be a man of wisdom,  
 One whose hair will turn gray,  
 Like the elders, one who  
 dresses well,  
 Around the valley of Nugaal,  
 One who mediates conflicts,  
 One who grows a long beard,  
 One whose hair will turn gray,  
 Hoobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hoobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 If you reach [maturity], and  
 grow older,  
 When God the victorious decides so,  
 When you herd your camels,  
 When raiders attack you,  
 You can only die once.  
 May God come to your assistance,  
 Don't flee from your camels.

Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Gabow gaatiyow hoo'waa  
 Gartow gabangaabsadowaa,  
 Cirradu gaashaysayowaa,  
 Guntiga feedhaha  
 geshowaa,  
 Nugaal godan goonyaheeda,  
 Gartii raagtaba ridowaa,  
 Gadh weyni ka soo baxyowaa,  
 Cirradu gaashaysayowaa,  
 Hoobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hoobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 War haddaad gaadhidoo  
 gabowdo,  
 Haddii Guulle Alle yeelo,  
 War haddaad geeliinna raacdid,  
 War haddii guluf kuu yimaado,  
 War maruun baad go'i lahayd e,  
 War llaahay ha kuu gargaaree,  
 war guntoo geela hawga carrarin.

Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 when you reach [maturity] and  
 grow older,  
 When you decide to marry,  
 My kinsmen are honourable;  
 marry among them.  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa.  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa.

Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
 War haddaad gaahidoo  
 gabowdo,  
 War haddii guur kuu mallobo,  
 Hooyo tolkay waa gobee  
 ka guurso.  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa.  
 Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa.

*Heesaha Gabdhaha (lullabies for daughters)*

As has been mentioned in the previous chapters, the northern pastoral nomads favour the birth of a son over the birth of a daughter. The songs composed to each gender also reflect this attitude. Although pastoral mothers sing for both their sons and daughters, the songs composed for sons seem to be more elaborate than those composed for daughters. This is an important factor that reflects the social attitudes of the pastoral nomads, in which sons are considered more important than daughters. But women also admire their daughters in verse and demonstrate the hopes they have for them when they grow older. One of the strongest expectations mothers have for their daughters when they become older is to be married by a man who can offer a goodly number of camels as bridewealth. Obligations are also often mentioned as instruction to baby daughters. The following song describes some of these ideas, and was collected from the woman named Faadumo.

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
My newly born daughter,*

*My newly born daughter,  
My daughter, speak softly,  
Men are sitting around [us],  
Men are sitting around [us]  
They are eligible to marry you,  
They have brought [many]  
camels [as your bridewealth],  
They have brought [many]  
camels [as your bridewealth],  
My daughter, speak softly,*

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
My daughter, [men] have  
offended me,  
My daughter, [men] have  
offended me,  
A family who has no daughter,  
Has no camels to milk,  
And has no horses to ride,*

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
My daughter, [men] have  
offended us,  
A family who has no daughter,  
Has no camels to milk,  
And has no horses to ride.*

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa,  
Naa godoy gabadh  
dhalatayeyaa,  
Naa godoy gabadh dhalatayeyaa,  
Godoy gaagabi hadalkaa,  
Rag baa goonyaha fadhiyaa,  
Rag baa goonyaha fadhiyaa,  
Geyaan bay kuu yihiin e,  
Aday geel kaa wadaan e,*

*Aday geel kaa wadaan e,  
Godoy gaagaabi hadalkaa,*

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Godoy weynoo gafeenee,*

*Godoy weynoo gafeenee,*

*Naa ardaagaan gabadhi joogin,  
Hooyo geel laguma maaloo,  
Hooyo gamaan lagu fuulimaryo,*

*Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Hobeeheey hobeeheeyaa  
Godoy weynoo gafeenee,*

*Naa ardaagaan gabadhi joogin,  
Hooyo geel laguma maaloo,  
Hooyo gamaan lagu fuulimaryo.*

This chapter dealt with the classification of different types of genres according to their working situations and the groups who perform them. Also it illustrated both their structure and context, indicating that work songs are framed artistically and have their social significance. While such poetry may be considered trivial by the male population of Somalia, it cannot be considered trivial by social observers, because a great deal of social interaction and communication takes place in its verse.



## CHAPTER SIX

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### Summary

In this study the significance and persuasive power of the Somali northern pastoral work songs have been examined. These songs along with the recreational songs locally known as *heeso*, have been characterized by pastoral male adults as simple and trivial. But the examples of folklore forms and the descriptions provided here indicate that the evaluation was primarily based on the social status of the composers rather than the subject matter and the messages the songs convey.

The study throws light on the nature of the Somali pastoral society and depicts its socio-economic context which gives rise to these folklore genres. Since oral literature is an integral part of the culture of this community, the examples of songs provided give a penetrating picture about the people's attitudes and values. They reveal that adjustment to harsh climatic conditions led the pastoralists to pursue animal husbandry as their main mode of economy. The pastoralists commonly believe that their survival in this demanding environment depends on constant movement with their livestock in search of better grazing and water resources. This movement creates the separation of their livestock into different grazing units in order to meet the different feeding requirements of the herds. Camels are usually herded separately from the rest of the herd and kept in distant places, while cattle, sheep and goats are kept closer to watering points. The separation of the livestock normally depends on, among other things, the resistance of the species to different climatic difficulties.

The separation of livestock in the pastoral life leads to the division of labour among nomads according to their age and sex. The tasks assigned to each group usually are considered to correspond to the groups' physical and intellectual abilities and adult men, who are politically dominant, use these attitudes to determine the social position of women and youth in this interrelated network. Women are thus regarded by adult men as weak and simple in comparison to men and thus are assigned to tasks that do not require much strength, like the herding of sheep and goats. Young men after puberty and older unmarried men, both of whom are considered physically strong but intellectually immature, are entrusted with camel herding, which is regarded as the most difficult and dangerous of all pastoral routine work. Adult men who are considered physically strong and intellectually mature are the sanctioned decision makers and leaders of pastoral families, and they coordinate all herding activities. Also with the help of other elders, they are responsible for clan affairs and are entitled to participate in assemblies in which clan issues are discussed.

In this segmented pastoral society that lacks an institutionalized central authority, nomads consider themselves masters of their affairs and respect no other superior power except God. The persuasive power of the poetic word is usually employed as a means of maintaining social relations before resorting to compulsive authoritative means. To nomads versification is a vital medium of publicity and propaganda for or against individuals, groups, or subject matters. Because of its persuasive power, poetry is used as a vehicle of both creating and mediating conflicts.

But the adult male power structure that dominates the pastoral activities creates a normative hierarchy of prestige among many poetic genres in order to maintain social relations and validate their authoritative power. Pastoral poetic genres have been classified into two categories. The *maanso* category which denotes serious poetry is restricted to those poetic forms that are composed by male adults. They are considered by adult men to be more serious, informative and influential than the *heeso* category usually composed by women and young men. The quality and prestige of a poetic work is normally considered to correspond to the social status of its composer or performer. This notion indicates that the criterion of judgment is not based on the merits of the content of the poem. This important aspect of the poem must not be overlooked; the social status of the composer alone cannot determine the quality of the poem. The association of the genres under consideration in this volume with work and with play is considered by the adult male population to contribute to the overall triviality of their rhetoric. Working and singing, however, cannot be separated in Somali society, and they are part and parcel of the accomplishment of this form of Somali economic behaviour. Moreover, the contribution of the *heeso* category of poetry to the social communication between of the politically powerless and the powerful elevates these genres, in my view, to a position of great social importance, in spite of the minority view of the politically powerful. The other reason the political elite consider *heeso* as trivial is that they are used for entertainment, but the element of entertainment also exists in those genres considered serious by that same elite.

Although the *heeso* category is dismissed by men as simple and weak artistically and intellectually, it is significant and artful to those who create and perform the genres in it. The situations in which these songs are sung are used as socially accepted communicative events that give the performers a safe and licensed freedom of expression not permitted elsewhere. The events give them more scope to argue, persuade, and negotiate change in their positions and roles in society. As an isolated event from everyday life that gives certain members of groups opportunities to come together, the working situations are employed as creative and communicative forums in which messages are conveyed through songs. As politically disenfranchised groups, women and young men, who compose and perform work songs, usually disclaim the responsibility of accusations in these songs by turning the personal into the impersonal by making authorship anonymous. This strategy is deliberately employed to make their voices heard and at the same time to avoid personal responsibility and social conflict. Moreover, to enhance the effectiveness of their artistic works, they employ indirection and veiled speech with multiple meanings and interpretations. Somali poetic messages usually have different levels of meanings and require a considerable period of time to decipher the hidden intentions. These strategies reveal the social use of language, not only as literary expression, but also as a reservoir of people's attitudes, cultural

values, and life goals. The usage of pastoral images that are familiar and identifiable by the groups, the alliterative and metric structure, and the repetitive and formulaic style, as well as the various musical patterns, are employed to make the songs more appealing and enhance their persuasive power. Most of the songs seem to be memorized because of their continued relevance to the working situations. Others are expanded and ornamented to meet the demands of new situations and are parallel to social and economic change.

Work songs also show how folklore forms can be used as a means of defining and interpreting the different roles and responsibilities of members within the community as a whole. The songs also exhibit how the various strategies employed by the subordinate groups argue, negotiate and introduce change in order to enhance their roles and status. The prominent Somali poet and philosopher Samatar Baxnaan used two Somali words to describe work songs in order to explain their importance in Somali society and how they are able to accomplish their goal of communication. Samatar used the Somali word *cabasho*, "complaint" together with *cayaar*, "dance/play". Work songs to him are a way of voicing serious complaints in a playful manner.

# Endnotes

- (1) *Berked* (pl. *berkedo*). A man-made, cement lined water tank, mostly constructed in areas of scarce water resources.
- (2) *Nugaal*. A valley that stretches between the mountainous range along the northern coast and the Hawd plain in the southern area of the North in Somalia.
- (3) *Reer*. A group of family encampments, whose constituents are usually between one and five nuclear families.
- (4) *Suur*. Name of a beautiful white milch camel. Somalis often use the name of an animal collectively to connote any animal of that species. The choice of name is often dependent upon the alliteration of the poem.
- (5) *Dawlis* and *dareer* are categories based on the meaning of these words. A *dawlis* is a long rope tied to a water bucket, used to draw water from deep wells or tanks. *Dareer* is a line or cue of men who pass water buckets from the source of water to the watering site.
- (6) *Widhwidh*. A town in Buuhoodle district which has wells in which the system of *dawlis* watering is used. (See note 5 above.)
- (7) *Walwaal*. A place that has deep water wells in the Ogaadeenia region of eastern Ethiopia.
- (8) *Wardheer*. A town in Ogaadeenia (see note 7 above), which has deep water wells, and is considered one of the best watering sites for watering camels.
- (9) *Caynabo*. A small town in the Nugaal Valley (see note 2 above), which is a well-known watering site for animals.
- (10) *Goray*. Name of a milch-camel, usually given to those which are tall and of, a dark colour. "Goray" means literally, "male ostrich". (See note 4 above.)
- (11) *Tagoog*. Name of a milch-camel, usually given to those which are tall and strong. "Tagoog" means literally, "foreleg". (See note 4 above.)
- (12) *Garmaxidhato*. Incompetent women who can't dress well.
- (13) *Good*. Name given to milch camel whose colour is blackish. The word good literally is used for a very dangerous, black snake in Somalia. Very dark camels sometimes are given this name, especially if they are short. (See note 4 above.)
- (14) *Goodir*. Name given to milch camel whose body is long. Goodir is actually the Somali word for the kudu, an East African antelope. Giving a she-camel this name is a compliment and implies youth, strength, largeness in size, and beauty. (See note 4 above.)
- (15) *Habaradhi*. The last month of the dry season of *jiilaal*.
- (16) *Garo*. A name given to a goat whose front and back colour are different. (See note 4 above.)
- (17) *Daylo*. A name given to a sheep whose back lower part of her body is blackish. (see note 4 above.)
- (18) *Waalced*. A place considered far and unreachable.

- (19) *Godadle*. Plural of *god* (hole) added to *le* (possessive suffix) which denotes a man with several houses or wives..
- (20) *Kebed*. A woven mat made of fibre of a tree and utilized for covering and ornament.
- (21) *Galool*. An acacia tree whose fibre is utilized for making ropes, mats, etc.
- (22) *Alool*. A large mat made of vertical reeds woven together with leather strings or ropes.
- (23) *Saaxil* is an archaic name for Berbera, the important northern port in Somalia.
- (24) The beasts will take away the food she is preparing because the house is not properly covered by mats.
- (25) In other words, after the rain is announced by thunder, it is too late to weave mats to protect the house.
- (26) This line, and the next two, are comments to the host. The guests are subtly asking to be fed with the best meat and milk for their labour with the weaving.
- (27) *Harrar*, often called *caws*. A woven mat made of grass used for protection, decoration and bedding.
- (28) *Tidic*. The wrapping of the upper edge of the *harrar*.
- (29) *Haan*. A big vessel used for storage of milk, churning of milk or for storage of water.
- (30) *Qabo*. A particular thorny plant whose fibre is used for making woven vessels.
- (31) *Saab*. Cylindrical basket used to support woven vessels.
- (32) *Gorof*. An old worn-out vessel.
- (33) *Xooleeyn*. To maintain an abandoned vessel.

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Somali oral literature forms a complete literary tradition composed of poems, proverbs, metaphors and tales of wisdom. This book contains a unique collection of a kind of Somali poetry hitherto not published: work songs performed by the Somali pastoralists in connection with daily routine work. In the traditional Somali poetry, work songs represent a low-status genre because they are performed by low-status members of the pastoral community, like women and young men. But the examples of folklore forms and the descriptions provided in this volume indicate that the evaluation was primarily based on the social status of the composers rather than the subject matter and the messages the songs convey.

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