

***CLANSHIP, CONFLICT AND REFUGEES: AN INTRODUCTION TO
SOMALIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA***

Guido Ambroso

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PREFACE	

The overall aim of this paper (an updated and expanded version of a paper originally written in '94 in Jijiga) is more didactical and information-oriented than theoretical or academic. The first objective, addressed in Parts I and II, is to provide humanitarian workers or interested readers with a concise introduction to Somali society (in particular to the clan system, with the help of genealogical charts in the annexes) and modern history. The second objective, addressed in Part III, is to provide an overview of the clan and demographic composition of the refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia and of patterns of repatriation and reintegration in North West Somalia. The methods and sources employed to compile this report are: observations made by the author during his experience as Protection Officer in Djibouti (1992) and Jijiga, Ethiopia (1993-95) and as Repatriation Officer in Hargeisa, Somaliland (1997-99) and a brief trip to Djibouti (January 2001); UNHCR data/statistics and secondary sources such as reports and surveys conducted in the camps and returnee areas.

On a whole, given my work experience there is more emphasis on northern Somalia and eastern Ethiopia than on southern Somalia. The historical part of this paper and the general introduction to the clan system is mainly based on published works and does not constitute original research. In particular I have drawn heavily on the work of the *doyen* of Somali studies, the British social anthropologist I.M. Lewis and of the Italian historian Angelo Del Boca. On the other hand most of the material on genealogies was collected by my assistants and myself from interviews. Many Somali intellectuals (but fewer ordinary citizens) criticise scholars - and in particular I.M. Lewis - for what they perceive as "clan determinism". While there is no denying that other factors such as economic underdevelopment, failed modernisation, colonialism, nationalism, dictatorship and war have played a significant role in shaping Somali society, we would agree with Lewis's argument that clanship is the most pervasive and enduring feature. It also constitutes the vocabulary and syntax of much of Somali political life.

Disclaimer

This paper reflects only the views of the author and not necessarily those of UNHCR. Information about boundaries, population figures etc. is indicative and does not claim to be definitive. The term *Somaliland* will be used interchangeably with that of North West Somalia and that of *Puntland* with North East Somalia, without necessarily implying a position on the issue of recognition. Information is current to January 2002, except for the details of repatriation and reintegration dating from my work in the field.

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In loving memory of the following colleagues and friends whom I had the fortune of meeting during my career: Nader Hoda, Willie Young, Samson Aregahegn, David Riley and Abdulwahab Mahdi

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PART I: THE CLAN SYSTEM

1. The People, Language and Religion

The Somalis are linguistically, ethnically and religiously, one of the largest peoples inhabiting the Horn of Africa, across four recognised states: the Republic of Somalia, south-east Ethiopia, Djibouti and north-east Kenya. A fifth "state", "Somaliland", is seeking international recognition so far without success. We are therefore back to the five Somali territories of the colonial era which are symbolised in the five-pointed star which appears on every Somali flag, at least in those of the Republic, of "Somaliland", of Djibouti and the ethnically Somali Region Five of Ethiopia. It is impossible to give accurate figures about the population, as counting Somalis – like other pastoral nomadic people – has always proven to be an almost impossible task. The official UN figure for the whole of the Somali republic in 2000 was 8.8 million in one document and a more realistic 6.8 in another¹, out of which some 1.2 million in "Somaliland". This figure is similar to the US Bureau of Statistics estimate of 7.1 million. An extrapolation from the 1975 census with a 3% population growth² would put the figure for Somalia as whole at 6,006,000, out of whom 1,450,000 for Somaliland from which we should deduct at least 600,000 persons who fled Somalia. We would therefore have the somewhat lower figure of some 4.3 million currently living in "Somalia" and 1.2 million in "Somaliland" with a total of 5.6 million in the country plus those in exile since 1975. The ethnic Somali population in Ethiopia can be estimated at 3.5-3.8 million, to whom we have to add some 300,000 in Djibouti and a couple of million in Kenya. If these figures are to be believed, the Somali nation would amount to 12-13 million in the region plus around one million in the diaspora.

Somalis are usually categorised as a "*Hamitic*" or "*Cushitic*"³ people. This definition is mainly based on language, although there are also cultural and racial components. Other Cushitic groups are the *Oromo* (formerly known as *Galla*), the largest ethnic group of the Horn, inhabiting central, southern and western Ethiopia; the *Afar*, who live in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea and other smaller tribes in Eritrea as the *Saho*. The term "Cushitic" is often defined in opposition to the "Semitic" speakers of highland Ethiopia and Eritrea, mainly the *Amhara* and *Tigrean*, who progressively incorporated Cushitic territories in the Abyssinian empire since the end of the 19th century. Somali is hence a Cushitic language (although with many Arabic loan words) spoken and understood, in spite of minor dialect differences, from north-east Kenya through the whole of Somalia and south-east of Ethiopia up to the republic of Djibouti. Somali language, which officially adopted the Latin script in 1972, has a rich heritage of oral history and poetry and culture was, until recently, essentially an oral one.

But, besides linguistic differences between "cushitic lowlanders" and "semitic highlanders", there are also religious and cultural aspects, as the majority of the "Cushites" are Sunni Muslims, while the highlanders mainly adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, an ancient form of Christianity with strong Hebraic influences⁴. The type of Islam traditionally practised by Somalis features marked *Sufi* (mystical) connotations which, with its emphasis on worship of saints, "is particularly well adapted to

¹ "World Population Prospects: the 2000 Revision", Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN, 28/02/01, and *Human Development Report/Somalia*, UNDP 2001

² The 1975 census is quoted in I.M. Lewis (1975, p. 38). The population growth rate of 3% is said to be the average for Africa by human geographer O'Connor (1983, p.53). The last official census for Somalia was conducted in 1975, but the result was considered an overestimate by international observers and reportedly a result of governmental manipulation. Particularly in nomadic societies, numbers equal power and international aid.

³ The term *cushitic* (from "Kush", the biblical name for the lands south of Egypt, i.e. the Horn of Africa) is now preferred to the term *hamitic* which has negative connotations derived from the Bible which reported that Ham's eyes turned red after having seen his father's (Noah) nudity.

⁴ See Ullendorff (1968, 1972)

the Somali clan system in which clan ancestors can readily become transposed into Muslim saints"⁵. This traditional form of Islam is however gradually eroded by the puritanical fundamentalist and anti-sufi *Wahabi* movement, originating in the Arabian peninsula in the 18th century, and spread by Somali migrant workers returning from the Gulf States in more recent times.

Somalis therefore constitute a physically and culturally rather homogeneous people, in contrast to the highly ethnically heterogeneous composition of other African populations like Ethiopians or Ugandans. Why, then, all these bloody internal conflicts that have matched or even overshadowed those of more ethnically composed states? Part of the reason is to be found in the particular social and economic systems that have shaped Somali life since time immemorial.

2. The Economic and Social Systems

The realities of a harsh environment prevailing throughout the majority of Somali territories have made nomadic pastoralism the most appropriate socio-economic response. Although this is still the prevailing mode of production for most Somalis, there has been a general marginalization of the political influence of pastoralists in many African societies, including Somalia⁶. The camel is naturally the most suitable animal in these conditions and it is as highly praised as an economic and social asset as cows are for other African peoples. Camels are usually reared and looked after by men, and often constitute the standard compensation in case of a murder or to the bride's family in case of marriage, while goats and sheep are usually the domain of women and children. Access to water, a key resource in a mainly dry environment, is controlled by the clans. Grazing and watering rights can be given to other clans in times of abundance, but when recurrent droughts hit an area controlled by a particular clan (in the north estimated every 10 years) access can be denied to others and can become a source of conflict. Clans respond to drought by selling their non-essential livestock to the coastal market towns in exchange for cereals and other goods⁷.

Over the years farming has also become increasingly important, first in the fertile regions of the south, between the Shebelle and Juba rivers and then in the northern areas between Hargeisa and Jijiga. The two modes of production, pastoralism and agriculture, are not however mutually exclusive and can co-exist, even if one usually prevails on the other. Finally, urbanisation and the associated way of life came to play a more important part in Somali society, at least since the end of the 19th century, with the advent of colonialism. The social structure that accompanied the prevailing pastoralist way of life, is what social anthropologists have defined as a "patrilineal segmentary opposition". In this system, lacking a hierarchical chain of authority or anything resembling the state or a judiciary, social relationships are defined in terms of kinship based on descent from a common ancestor. In Somali society, as in most pastoral societies, this is traced through the male line, called patrilineal descent. The genealogies, which both Somali boys and girls have to learn by heart as part of their initiation to adulthood, define an individual's place in society as well as political relations. They are in Lewis' s apt definition "what a person's address is in Europe"⁸ and - we may add - their only ID card. The lack of a centralised system of authority is also reflected in the individualism and pride of the Somali character.

Following Lewis's terminology, we find at the top of the genealogical tree the clan-family or clan-federation identified by a common ancestor, usually considered in Somali oral history to be an Arab sheikh who immigrated to Somalia. They normally span 20 to 30 generations from the individual. The main ones are the *Dir*, the *Darod*, the *Hawiye* (pastoralists) and the *Digil-Mirfle* (agro-pastoralists),

⁵ I.M. Lewis, 1980, p. 63

⁶ See Markakis, J. (ed.), 1993

⁷ See Csanelli, 1982, chapter 2.

⁸ I.M. Lewis, 1982, p. 2

roughly speaking from going from north to south. These units, composed of hundreds of thousands of people are however too large to constitute a well-defined corporate group undertaking collective action and acquire political significance only rarely. Further down the genealogical tree (15 to 20 generations from the individual), we find clans and sub-clans (*qolo*) that, although comprising several thousand individuals and varying in size and importance, often assume the functions of corporate political units, especially during the competition for political power. Although clans are frequently headed by a Sultan or *Ugas*, the clan head has no institutionalised authority. Clans in turn are divided into primary and secondary lineages (*jilib*, lit. "knee" and *reer*, lit. "people", 10 to 15 generations from *ego*) that may or may not acquire socio-political significance depending on the circumstances. Thus an individual may speak or act on behalf of a lineage, or clan according to the situation. At times "uterine" alliances may be formed between the children of the same mother when the father had different wives (the Koran allows up to four wives). They are called "*Bah*" or "*Habar*". Because of demographic evolution, a sub-sub-clan can some time grow larger than a clan.

As Lewis (1980) argues, the bottom-line that identifies the most pervasive and frequently mobilised social relationship, is the "*diya paying group*". This unit, 5 to 10 generations from *ego*, with a fighting strength of few hundred to a few thousand men, consists of close patrilineal kinsmen ("*tol*"). They are united by a contractual alliance stipulating that they will pay and receive blood compensation (*diya* in Arabic or *mag* in Somali) together. Thus if a man of the group is wounded or killed, it becomes the collective responsibility of the group to claim compensation or take revenge. This Somali "insurance policy" can be understood by the fact that in the remote and harsh locations where most of the nomads live, group membership is often the only guarantee of protection of life and property. A codified system of compensation (e.g. number of camels to be paid according to the type offence) is the basis of Somali customary law or *xeer* (pronounced "he-er"). In some clans, such as the *Issa*, the *xeer* is more elaborate and authoritative than in others. The *xeer* is a purely secular and contractual legal system that substitutes the concept of detention - which is alien to nomadic pastoralists - with that of compensation as form of punishment. It often coexists with Islamic law (*sharia*), particularly in situations of break-down of law and order and - in "modern" urban settings - with "western" formal legal systems.

This system has however often given rise to endless blood feuds that have been one of the worst plagues of Somali society. For example, if a man is killed or wounded, if the "*diya deal*" does not work, revenge may be taken not just against the offender (who may even be dead), but also against any member of his lineage or clan, depending on the context. The old proverb: "me against my brother, my brother and me against the clan, me and the clan against the world", graphically summarises this social structure of "segmentary opposition". Thus if an injury is committed by a member of a different lineage or sub-clan, compensation or revenge may be sought by all the *diya* paying groups clustering together as lineage or sub-clan at a higher level. If compensation is not accepted, it might cause warfare between entire clans. These circumstances traditionally involved not only individual crimes, but also disputes over watering and grazing rights, especially at times of droughts. More recently they revolved around the struggle for political power and the control of aid assistance. This war-like stance is only partially mitigated by the Somali passion for negotiations, already noted by Burton in 1855.

The absence of institutionalised chain of authority where, in contrast to other parts of Africa, chiefs and religious leaders are often only symbolic figures or *primi inter pares*, has been defined by I.M. Lewis (1982) as "pastoral democracy". Evans Pritchard's definition of the Sudanese *Nuer* as "ordered anarchy" may be equally befitting. The clans' nominal chiefs, variously named as *Garad*, *Ugas* or *Bokor*, represent more a symbol of clan solidarity, often acting as mediators and arbitrators, more than political power and authority. As well, decisions in the council of elders (*shir*) are authoritative only in as much as the conflicting parties are willing to compromise in order to reach a peaceful solution, for the *shir* has no means to enforce its decisions. Thus, in the last instance, rights, authority and power are

legitimated by fighting strength within the lineage system. Similarly to this structural problem of authority, there is one of representation as all Somali adult men are eligible to take part in the *shuur* and are mistrustful of delegating decisions or negotiations to anybody else, as often witnessed by humanitarian workers. This "pastoral democracy" is however less pervasive among the southern cultivators where chiefs and leaders have a stronger political authority and territorial ties can provide a counterweight to kinship.

In the extended Somali family the wife usually accomplishes household duties, such as cooking, collecting firewood and drinking water. She also raises goats and sheep and engages in vegetable gardening. In addition she is responsible for teaching children the paternal genealogy. The father is responsible for family subsistence and, in agricultural communities, does the bulk of rural work. Children are initiated into adulthood by learning the patrilineal genealogy (there may be some exceptions among the modernised urban classes) and through circumcision, with the well-known harmful effects in the case of female excision and infibulation. Dowries that can amount to hundreds of camels are paid by the groom's family, but marriages are often unstable and divorce is common⁹. While marriages outside the diya-paying group are mandatory, marriages outside clans and sub-clan are also common (often to establish alliances), but children and wives "belong" to the father/husband's clan.

We shall now analyze the clan system (see chart 1 for an overview). The first division is among clans of pastoral origin which are considered the "noble" ones (even though some lineages might have adapted to agro-pastoralism) and those of non-pastoral origin. The pastoral clan-families are - as mentioned above - the *Dir*, the *Darod*, and the *Hawiye*, while the *Digil-Mirfle* are agro-pastoralists. Non-pastoral clans include Bantu fishing groups, religious clans (*Shekhash/Shekahl*, *Sharifian*), merchant clans (*Reer Hammar*, *Reer Brawa*) and low-caste/minorities (*Gaboye/Mitgan*, *Tumal*, *Yiber*). From a spatial point of view, all clan-families as well as most clans and sub-clans are oriented from the coast towards the interior and are transnational, spanning across the Somali-Ethiopian border and Somali-Kenyan. This seems to lend credence to the oral tradition reporting that clans were founded by Arabian sheikhs. It also makes it very difficult to establish the citizenship of individuals, particularly in a context where lack of proper identity documents is the norm rather than the exception.

3. **The Dir** (see chart 2)

The *Dir* are a clan-family located essentially in N.W. Somalia, Djibouti, eastern Ethiopia. They are composed of four major clans, *Isaq*, *Issa*, *Gadabursi* and *Bimal* (or *Biyomal*) of which only the latter lives in southern Somalia (together with the smaller *Gadsen*). They rarely act as a united corporate political unit, except in the south where they are a minority. While I.M. Lewis treats the *Isaq* as a clan-family at the level of *Darod* or *Hawiye*, most Somalis, including some *Isaq* I interviewed in Hargeisa, agree that they are genealogically part of *Dir* and that sheikh Isaq was a brother of Issa and (probably) of *Samaron* (*Gadabursi*). However, recently in the Arta (Djibouti) conference, they maintained to be a clan-family directly related to the Prophet's line, claiming the same number of seats as the *Darod* or the *Hawiye*, instead of having to share them with other *Dir*. This would seem to confirm Lewis' contention that while Somali genealogies - being rather univocal among different informers - are less "fictitious" than those in other African societies, they acquire more of a mythical character at the top of the genealogical tree where direct descent from an Arab sheikh confers politico-religious legitimacy and prestige¹⁰.

3.1. **The Issa** (see chart 2.1)

⁹ See Helander, 1992.

¹⁰ See Lewis, 1994, chapter IV.

The *Issa* are a large clan inhabiting the northernmost Somali territory, that is the area between Zeila in N.W. Somalia, the south-eastern part of Djibouti and the area between the Djibouti border and Dire-Dawa in Ethiopia, where the majority of the *Issa* actually live. They are divided into six sub-clans: *Elaye*, *Waladon* or *Hawleqade*, *Holle* or *Furlaba*, *Horrone*, *Urweyne* and *Wardiq*. The first three sub-clans are considered to be the original descendants of Sheikh Issa, while the last three are "those who followed", in other words local tribes who by marriage and alliance integrated in the *Issa* clan system. The largest clan is the *Elaye*, divided into the *Reer Mussa* (*Saad Mussa* and *Yonis Mussa* "Odahgob") and *Mamasan*, the sub-clan of former President Hassan Gouled Aptidon and of newly elected (April 1999) Ismael Omar Guelle. The *Issa* are famous among Somalis for having developed the most systematic code of traditional law, the "*Xeer Issa*". The *xeer* (pronounced "heer") specifies, among other things, how many camels have to be given in compensation for the loss of life, the right arm, the left leg, etc. and stipulates that all *Issa* are equal without exception¹¹. It also prescribes that the *Ugas*, the religious-spiritual leader of the tribe, be chosen from the smallest sub-clan, the *Wardiq*, so as not to arouse the rivalry among the main ones. Although as in a typical Somali "pastoral democracy" the *Ugas* has no institutionalised legitimate power, his spiritual authority is greater than that of the *Ugases* other clans. Since the death of the highly respected *Ugas* Hassan Hirsi in 1994, the *Issa* council of elders has been unable to select a worthy successor.

The *Issa* are the hegemonic tribe in Djibouti. They have stronger economic ties with Ethiopia (especially the port/railway link with Dire Dawa and the *chat* trade, a stimulant leaf widely chewed in the Horn of Africa) than with Somalia. Social links with Ethiopia are also strong as the seat of the *Ugas* is in Dire Dawa. Although *Afar* - a Cushitic tribe related to the Somalis¹² - still occupy important political positions in Djibouti (including the post of Prime Minister), there is no doubt that the *Issas* became the hegemonic ethnic group, holding the portfolios of President and Minister of Defence. In terms of geographical distribution, only the *Mamasan* sub-clan has the majority of its members originating from N.W. Somalia, in the area around Zeila. In addition, lineages of the *Reer Kul* and *Reer Gedi/Yonis Mussa* are also from the regions of Somaliland bordering with Djibouti, but the vast majority of both the *Saad* and *Yonis Mussa* are from Ethiopia, with many also residing in Djibouti. Regarding the other sub-clans, the *Walaldon* and the *Wardiq* are overwhelmingly from Ethiopia, the *Furlabe* and the *Horrone* almost equally split between Ethiopia and Djibouti and the *Urweyne* mainly in Djibouti. The *Issa* are engaged in traditional feuding and cattle raiding with their *Gadabursi* neighbours to the south-east and with the *Afar* to the north-west in the Awash valley.

3.2. The *Gadabursi* (*Samaron*) (see chart 2.2)

The *Gadabursi*, also known as *Samaron*, inhabit the area just to the south of the *Issa*. In N.W. Somalia it is located in western region of *Awdal* around Borama, their most important urban centre, and they over-spill into Ethiopia, almost to Jijiga. The *Gadabursi* are composed of three main sub-clans, of which the first, the *Mahad Asse* are mainly living in NW Somalia's coastal areas, the second, the *Habar Afan*, are about equally divided between Somalia and Ethiopia, while the last one, the *Makahil*, are mainly in Ethiopia. By far the largest lineages of the *Makahil* are the *Jibril Yonis* and *Nur Yonis*. One informer told me that in Borama, when there are important decisions to be made, the *Gadabursi* normally divide themselves into four "parties": the *Habar Afan*, the *Mahad Asse*, the *Jibril Yonis* and the *Nur Yonis*. Given that their areas are fairly fertile, the *Gadabursi* were one of the first northern clans to adapt to cultivation, although often together with some form of animal husbandry. They have traditionally been engaged in feuds with the *Issa* to the west and with the *Isaq* to the east. Politically, they are said to have given low-key support to Siyad Barre and, after his overthrow, they favoured the idea of a united Somalia over the independence of Somaliland. They are considered by other Somalis to have a high

¹¹ See Ali Mussa Iye's authoritative work on the *Xeer Issa*.

¹² The *Afar* straddle between Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia (where the majority actually lives).

rate of educated people and to be a "pragmatic" clan, adapting their ideological stance according to the situation. This is hardly surprising given that they are squeezed between two powerful neighbours, the *Issa* in Djibouti, and the *Isaq*, in Somaliland. Their area has been relatively calm since the Siyad Barre's overthrow in 1991.

3.3. The *Isaq* (see chart 2.3)

Sheik Isaq is said to have been an Arabian sheikh who immigrated to the coast of North West Somaliland some time in the 12 or 13th century and is thought to be buried in Mait, a small town on the coast between Berbera and Bosaso. The *Isaq* are nowadays the most numerous (at least 50%) and influential clan-federation of NW Somalia/Somaliland. They are mostly passionate nationalists and very skilled businessmen, although many retain the traditional pastoralist background.

The first sub-division of the *Isaq*, is between the four sons of sheikh Isaq's Ethiopian wife ("*Habar Habusheed*") and the four sons from his Somali wife ("*Habar Magado*" or "*Magaadle*"), who originated the eight main *Isaq* (sub-)clans. Numerically speaking, the *Habar Habusheed* are smaller than the *Habar Magaadle*. The first son, Ahmed, nicknamed *Tol J'alo* ("who loves his agnates") inhabits region between Hargeisa and the Ethiopian border, particularly in the district of Gabiley. Given their numerical weakness, they often ally themselves with the large *Habar Awal*. In spite of Lewis's claim¹³ that "*Habar Jalo*" is a shortening of "*Habar Tol J'alo*", referring to all the four sons of *Habusheed* including *Ahmed*, all informants I have come across have agreed that *Tol J'alo* refers only to *Ahmed*. The other clan is the *Habar J'alo*¹⁴ - larger than the *Tol J'alo* - inhabiting the region from Burao to the east. With a strong pastoral background, it is engaged in traditional feuding and cattle raiding with the *Dulbahante/Darod* and the *Habar Yonis/Isaq* (see below).

The children of Sheikh Isaq's "Somali wife", the *Habar Magaadle*, are numerically stronger than the *Habar Habusheed*. The *Habar Awal*, the most influential sub-clan, are divided into two main sub-clans, the *Saad Mussa* and the *Issa Mussa* (Somaliland's president Egal sub-clan), inhabiting the areas between Hargeisa and Gabiley and Berbera respectively. The *Habar Awal* (particularly *Saad Mussa*) include the highest proportion of wealthy businessmen and nationalist intellectuals of all *Isaq* clans. The *Saad Mussa* in the Gabiley district have also adapted to cultivation, as their *Gadabursi* neighbours to the west. The second largest clan, the *Habar Garhajis* (or simply *Garhajis*), are a uterine alliance between the *Habar Yonis* (the largest sub-clan) and the *Idagalle*, traditional rivals of the *Habar Awal* to the west and the *Habar J'alo* to the east. They are located mainly between Hargeisa and west Burao (*Idagalle* and *Habar Yonis*) and Erigavo (*Habar Yonis* only). Both sub-clans stretch across the Ethiopian border. Another important descendent of the *Habar Magaadle* are the *Arab/Awal*. Although not the most numerous, they are a cohesive clan with a warring tradition, often holding the balance of power among *Isaq* clans. The normally throw their lot in with the *Habar Awal*. They are located between Hargeisa and the Ethiopian border to the south. Finally mention should be made of the *Ayub*, the smallest clan inhabiting the central regions of NW Somalia.

3.4. The *Bimal* (see chart 2)

The *Bimal* (also known as "*Biyomal*") are a *Dir* clan that migrated from the north-western ancestral areas to the southern fertile regions along the Wabi Shebele. The new ecological context has favoured

¹³ 1982, p. 155.

¹⁴ The *Habar J'alo* are probably only the descendents of Musse. At any rate the two other full-brothers, Ibrahim and Mahammad, did not give rise to any substantial descent. As a result the *Habar Habusheed* are normally categorized only as *Tol J'alo* and *Habar J'alo*.

the adoption of agriculture at the expenses of the traditional pastoralist way of life, and now the majority of Bimal are settled agriculturalists, as their *Digil-Mirfle* neighbours. They occupy the coastal strip roughly from the city of Jesira, some 30 km south of Mogadishu, almost down to Brawa. They are divided into four sub-clans, more or less from north to south, that is *Saad*, *Yasmin (Ismiin)*, *Suleyman (Suleiban)*, *Daud (Dadow)*. The Bimal have proved over the years to be a bellicose tribe, not only against their neighbours, but also against Italian colonial encroachment from the end of the 19th century¹⁵. Finally, the *Gadsen* are a small *Dir*-related priestly lineage inhabiting eastern Ethiopia, considered by some informants as a sub-clan of the *Bimal* and by most others a clan on its own merit.

Finally a brief mention should be made of the *Akisho* clan which is mainly found among the *Habar Awal* and *Gadabursi* in north-west Somalia and, to a lesser extent, among the *Jidwaq Darod* (see below) in the Jijiga district of Eastern Ethiopia. Given their relative numerical and therefore fighting weakness, they enjoy protected status among these larger clans, although they generally pay the "diya" independently. The fact that they appear to be genealogically unrelated to any Somali clan-family, as confirmed to me by a sheikh, seems to support Lewis' (1982) statement that they are of *Oromo* (i.e. non-Somali) origin, even though they speak only the Somali language and not Orominya. However, *Akisho* informers in Jijiga have claimed that they are "true" Somalis, actually the "original" Somalis descendants of *Dir*.

4. The Darod (see chart 3)

The descendants of Sheikh Ismail Jabarti's son, *Darod*, who immigrated from Arabia around the 10th or 11th century, constitute the most numerous and territorially diffused clan-family. They span from Cape Guardafui (the "horn" proper) throughout the Ethiopian Ogaden and many regions of central and southern Somalia, down to north-east Kenya. This geographical distribution across several countries explains why they have historically been at the forefront of the nationalist pan-Somali dream. Their importance is also given by the political prominence that many of its clans held during Siyad Barre's regime

4.1. The *Marrahan* (see chart 3.1)

Starting to examine the *Darod* chart from the left, we can see that *Sede* had two sons, *Faiye* and *Marrahan*. While the former is of no particular political significance, the latter's claim to fame is that it is Siyad Barre's paternal clan. The *Marrahan* gained strong influence in Somali society particularly after defeat in the Ogaden war, when Barre started relying more and more on his clan to exercise his power. As a result, although the *Marrahan* are a relatively small clan, a disproportionate number of its members were former military and security officers. After the *Hawiye/USC* conquest of Mogadishu and of most southern and central regions, the *Marrahan* were targeted for revenge. They inhabit the southern region of Gedo, around Lugh Ganana and part of the central regions between Dusa Mareb and Galkaio. The vast majority therefore is from Somalia, although there is also a small pocket of *Marrahan* near Jijiga.

4.2. The *Absame (Ogaden and Jidwaq)* (see chart 3.1)

From the side of *Kumede*, we have the *Abdi*, of minor importance, and the *Absame*, the father of what is perhaps the largest Somali sub-clan, the *Ogaden*, which has given its name to the ethnic Somali Ethiopian region. Following the defeat the Ogaden war, hundreds of thousands *Ogadenis* came to Somalia as refugees. Given that the *Ogaden* were *Darod* like Siyad Barre who moreover was an *Ogden*

¹⁵ See Cassanelli, 1982

on his mother's side, many of them integrated into Somali society and occupied important positions, including the military. However, after the disintegration of Somalia in 1991, most of them have made their way back to their home areas in Ethiopia. While the vast majority of the Ogadenis live in Ethiopia, some sub-clans inhabit the southern areas around Kismayo (*Makabul* and *Mohammed Zuber* sub-clans) and Bardera (*Awlian*) as well as the north-eastern regions of Kenya. After the collapse of Barre's regime, the *Ogaden* political/military movement, the SPM, split in two factions. Gen. Adan Abdillahi Nur "Gabiow", an ally of Gen. Mohammed Said Hersi "Morgan" (son in-law of Siyad Barre), leads one. The other led by Gen. Omar Jess opposes the Barre faction and is allied with Gen.-Mohammed Farah Aideed. While most *Awlian Ogaden* are found in the southern Somali regions around Bardera and in north-east Kenya, some are also found in the Bale region of Ethiopia (but not in the Ogaden region). Another *Absame/Darod* clan, brother of *Ogaden*, is the *Jidwaq*, inhabiting the area around the city of Jijiga in eastern Ethiopia. It is made up of three sub-clans: *Yabarre*, *Bertire* and *Abskul*.

4.3. The *Harti/Kombe* (*Majertein*, *Dulbahante*, *Warsangeli*, *Geri*) (see chart 3.2)

The *Harti* are a federation of clans stemming from *Kombe*, who inhabit the northern regions of Somalia. Although at times they do identify themselves as *Harti*, usually their socio-political unit rests at the level of their clans, the *Majertein*, *Dulbahante* and *Warsangeli*.

The *Majertein* (see chart 3.3) are a large clan inhabiting the northern part of former Italian Somalia, the autonomous region of "Puntland", roughly from Galkayo to Bosaso. During the democratic period they were politically and intellectually prominent. In 1978, after the end of the Ogaden War they constituted the first opposition movement to Siyad's regime, the SSDF led by Gen. Abdillahi Yussuf. In addition to the north-eastern regions, the *Majertein* are also present in the southern port of Kismayo, around which there has been almost continuous fighting since 1991. After Siyad Barre's overthrow, their area has been a relative oasis of peace in Somalia, at least until 2001. The three main sub-clans of the *Majertein* are *Osman Mahmud*, in the region around the northern port city of Bossaso; the *Issa Mahmud* in the centre around Garowe and the *Omar Mahmud* around the city of Galkayo. The *Osman Mahmud*, stemming from Mahmud's eldest son are reported by Lewis¹⁶ to have been led by a "bokor" (sultan/king), whose authority used to be recognised by all the Harti clans, which nowadays have their own king. Sections of the *Majertein* are also present in the southern port of Kismayo (a mainly *Ogadeni* area) where they are said to be among the more important real-estate owners.

The other two *Harti* clans are the *Dulbahante* and *Warsangeli*, living respectively in the areas around Las Anod and Las Korey, immediately to the west of the *Majertein*, in former British Somaliland. With a strong traditional pastoralist background, the *Dulbahante* were also heavily represented in Siyad's security forces while the *Warsangeli* were essentially a clan of businessmen and seamen. The most important sub-clans/lineages of the *Dulbahante* are the *Farah Garad/Ahmed Farah* and the *Mahamud Garad/Jama Siyad*, from which the *Garads* (sultans) of the *Dulbahante* have been traditionally chosen. The *Warsangeli*, smaller than the *Dulbahante*, are divided into two main sub-clans, from which a very influential *Garad* was chosen. The *Dulbahante* have been engaged over the years in feuding with the *Habar J'alo* and *Habar Yonis Isaq* clans to their west. In recent times, the *Dulbahante* and the *Warsangeli* managed to remain at peace with each and to keep their areas relatively calm. However, the declaration of the "interim state" of "Puntland" (basically coinciding with *Majertein* territory) in early 1998 brought about a tension between geographical membership in "Somaliland" and clan loyalty with the *Majertein/Harti* brothers. As a result particularly the *Dulbahante* have been torn between allegiance between the two "states". Smaller Harti clans include the *Deshishe* and the *Keshkikabe*, at the border between North West and North East Somalia.

¹⁶ 1982, p. 204

Other *Kombe* clans, less numerous than the Harti, are the *Harla*, of little importance, and the *Geri* who, on the other hand, are a relatively large clan inhabiting the region between Jijiga and Harar in eastern Ethiopia. Thanks to the relative fertility of their region, the *Geri* are mainly farmers. They engaged in traditional feuds with the "Somalised" *Oromo Jarso* clan, with whom they often cohabit in the same villages. These feuds acquired a new political relevance within the context of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia's policy of ethnic regionalisation, for their district (Gursum) was contested by the *Oromos* of Region 4 and the Somalis of Region 5.

5. The Hawiye

The *Hawiye* are a very large and important clan-family said by some genealogists to be agnatically related to *Dir* and *Isaq*, through an *Irir* common ancestor. They inhabit the vast central and southern regions of Somalia with small sections living also in Ethiopia and Kenya. Like the *Issa*, they are divided into "allied clans", agnatically unrelated, but who live under *Hawiye* protection and with whom they ally politically, and the true *Hawiye* patrilineal descent groups. These in turn are divided into *Habar Habusheed* (children of an Ethiopian wife) and the *Bah Sherifo* (children of a wife of Meccan origin), although this differentiation is not very important in practice. Their political/military wing, the United Somali Congress (U.S.C.), has largely been responsible for the overthrow of Siyad Barre's regime in 1991.

5.1 The Gorgate (*Habar Gidir, Abgal*) and Gugundabe (*Galjel, Degodi*)

The *Bah Sherifo* give rise to the most numerous and important *Hawiye* clans and sub-clans. From *Gorgate*, the most prolific son, originate the *Habar Gidir* clan, of a pastoralist background, inhabiting the region between Galkayo and El Bur, bordering to the north with *Marrahan* and *Ogaden Darod* and to the south with the *Murusede, Abgal* and *Hawadle Hawiye* with whom they occasionally fight. The *Habar Gidir* have risen to international fame because they are General Aidiid's clan, who belongs to the *Saad* sub-clan, although most of the rank and file of the militia is made up by members of the *Air* sub-clan. Equally important are the *Abgal*, the clan of Gen Aidiid's arch-rival, Ali Mahdi. Of nomadic origin, they settled in the fertile Benadir coast from Mogadishu to Meregh in the 17th century, where they turned mainly into agriculturalists. Their founder, son of Osman Darendolle, is said to have led to the overthrow of the *Ajuran* tyrannic dynasty (see below). Also important is the clan originating from *Abgal's* brother, *Wadan*. They settled in the lower Shebelle valley near between Mogadishu and Afgoi near the *Digil* agriculturalists (see below) where many of the *Wadan*, former pastoralists, turned into farmers employing slave labour. The *Jambele/Hintire* inhabit the fertile Lower Shebelle Valley, where they became agropastoralists like the neighbouring *Abgal* and *Wadan*. In the middle of the 19th century they were led by Sheikh Madow Mahad, said to be a man of great religious knowledge and initiated to the mystical arts of magic and divination. His descendants also waged war against the Italians in 1907. Finally, the third of Sahrifo's sons, *Gugundabe*, gave rise to three main sub-clans: the *Badi Ado* and *Galjel* agropastoralists, known for their love of camels and cattle are located in the Shebelle valley to the west of Bullo Burti and in the Hararge region of Ethiopia, and the *Degodi*, a clan of nomadic pastoralists living in the areas between Northeast Kenya, south Somalia and east Ethiopia.

5.2. The Murusede and allied clans (*Hawadle, Ajuran*)

The descendants of *Hawiye's* Ethiopian wife are less numerous than their brothers on Sahrifo's side. Prominent among them are the *Murusede*, inhabiting the hinterland immediately to the north of the Benadir coast, roughly between El Deere and Haradhere. Also of an agropastoralist background, they sided with their *Abgal* neighbours in the war against General Aidiid, led by warlord Mohammed Kanyare Afrah. Later they switched sides joining Aidiid's camp. In line with their descent from an Ethiopian mother, two relatively small *Hawiye* clans live in eastern Ethiopia, the *Sahwle* and the

Rarene, inhabiting the areas around Babile, near Harar. The same applies to the *Gerire*, an *Hawiye*-allied clan genealogically unrelated, but politically allied), living in the Bale region. Another important *Hawiye*-allied clan, the mainly pastoralist *Hawadle* inhabiting the region Belet Weyne, southwards along the Shebelle, known for their war-like character, especially the three *Ali*, *Yeber* and *Agon* lineages. In fact a Somali proverb states that at the end of times, the *Shekhal* (a religious clan, see below) will be men of war and the *Hawadle* men of religion! The *Ugas* nowadays belong to the *Abdi Yussuf* lineage, now isolated in the Geddo region from the rest of the *Hawadle*.

Also among the "allied clans" are the *Ajuran*, a now relatively small pastoral clan living in Northeast Kenya, bordering with the *Degodi* with whom they are engaged in traditional feuding, but with an illustrious past. *Ajuran's* father is said to have been a stranger named Balad, who married a *Hawiye*, Jambele's daughter, Faduma. *Ajuran's* descendants created the only example approaching a Somali state in pre-modern times, extending from Kalafo in present day Ethiopia to Mogadishu and from Meregh on the coast all the way down to Kismayo. They established a theocratic Muslim government with leaders holding the title of "Imams". They were backed by a powerful army and are remembered in Somali oral tradition for the cruelty and tyranny, maybe because they broke with the Somali tradition of pastoral democracy. The *Ajuran* state, born at the beginning of the 16th century, was finally overthrown by *Abgal*, *Wadad* and *Rahanweyn* clans towards the end of the following century¹⁷.

6. Non-Pastoral Clans

The following clans are considered to be agnatically unrelated to the mainstream pastoral Somalis and are therefore formally outside the clan system. Most clans are also segmented, but less markedly than the "pure" pastoral Somalis. Their perceived ancestral origins place them at different social distances from the core of pastoral Somali culture, as we shall now see.

6.1. The *Digil-Mirfle* (agro-pastoralists)

The southern *Digil* and *Mirfle* (the latter also known as *Rahanweyn*, "the large crowd"), originating from a legendary common ancestor named *Sab* chased from Arabia and allied with an *Oromo* sultan, are mainly from an agricultural and sedentary background¹⁸. They inhabit the fertile regions of central and southern Somalia between the Juba and Wabi Shebelle rivers. Although they consider themselves and are considered by others as "Somalis", they are the furthest removed in culture and language (their particular dialect shows marked variations from standard Somali) from the majority of the Somali population of pastoral background. They reportedly trace their origin to a common ancestor named *Sab*, but they are mixed in composition, including *Oromo* and *Bantu* elements. In contrast to the pastoral Somalis, they attach less importance to patrilineal genealogical segmentation, have some degree of a hierarchic political system and some of respect for institutionalised authority and hold formal land titles. Their dialect is the furthest removed from mainstream Somali language. For these reasons the "pure" Somalis might deride them at times of tension.

The *Digil* are located in the Lower Shebelle region between Merka and Brawa, neighbouring the Bimal/Dir. The largest clan is the *Tunni*, constituting about half of its parent population. Smaller clans include the *Dabarre*, the *Jiddu* and the *Dubdere*. The *Mirfle* "*Rahanweyn*", the most numerous sub-clan, are divided into two main clusters, the *Mirfle Said* and the *Alemo Sagal*. The *Mirfle Said* inhabit the central regions around the city of Baidoa and Bur Acaba (Bay region), while the main sub-clan of the Sagaal, the influential *Geledi* which gave birth to famous sultans and sheiks, live between Afgoi and Brawa and are traditional allies of the Wadan. The distinction of this group from the other Somalis was

¹⁷ See Cassanelli, 1982, chapter 3

¹⁸ The following information on the *Sab* is mainly drawn from I.M. Lewis 1994, p. 30.

symbolised by the fact that, in the immediate pre and post independence period, they formed their own political party, the *Hizbiya Digil Mirfle Somali* (HDMS). Other Bantu groups of farmers, unrelated to the Sab, also inhabit the areas along the Juba and Wabi Shebelle rivers.

6.2. *Shekhal* and *Sharif* (religious clans)

The *Shekhal* (known in Ethiopia as *Shekhash*) are a priestly lineage with segments present both in central and southern Somalia as well as in Ethiopia. They claim that they originate directly from an Arab family, but some Somalis consider them as genealogically related to the *Hawiye*. Although traditionally they were mainly sheikhs and *qadis* (Islamic judges), in recent times they engaged in secular professions. They have acquired political prominence during Barre's times. Another clan claiming direct descent from Arab lineages and traditionally engaged in religious activities are the *Sharifian*, mainly inhabiting the central and southern regions of Somalia.

6.3. *Reer Hammar* and *Reer Brawa* (merchant clans)

In the historic port cities of Mogadishu (also known as *Hammar*), Brawa and Merka, we find other ethnic groups said to be of direct Arabic origin, mixed with Persian, Turkish and Portuguese blood. Given their lighter skin complexion, they are referred to as *adde*, literally "whites". Their traditional occupational background was trade and commerce, rather than nomadic pastoralism. Without any tradition of warfare and lacking protection from their own militia, they suffered greatly during the civil war. They were often targeted by looters and clan militias because of their perceived wealth and their women, considered quite attractive, have often been victims of rape.

6.4. *Gaboye/Mitgan*, *Tumal* and *Yiber* (low-caste clans)

These low-caste clans, also known as *sab*, are considered impure by other Somalis and marriage with them is culturally (though not religiously) forbidden. Other forms of social interaction are restricted. Most clans live in North West Somalia and in eastern Ethiopia, but some are also found in southern Somalia. Although the term *Gaboye* is now often used to describe all three clans, according to Burton¹⁹ who visited the region in 1855, and my informers, they are three distinct clans: *Gaboye* (also known as *Mitgan*, although the term is now considered derogatory), the *Tumal* and the *Yiber*. The origin of their impurity is shrouded in legend. According to one story, two brothers called *Mohammed Gorgate* (*Madiban*) and *Mahmud Gorgate* descendants of *Hawiye*, were starving in the desert and ate a dead animal, in contrast with the Muslim *sharia* precepts. Once they arrived to safety in the city, Mahmud threw-up, while Mohammed retained the food, becoming impure. Other genealogists argue that they originate from before the migration of Arab sheikhs who gave rise to the various Somali clans. Other clues to the origin of their impurity are to be found in the etymology of the word *Gaboye*, which refers to the quiver holding arrows. In fact Burton reported that they were called "archers" by the Arabs and employed poisoned arrows, again in contrast with the *sharia* law, prescribing ritual slaughter. The nowadays disused term *Midgan* refers to leather tannery. The word *Tumal* on the other hand means blacksmiths. If we consider that the *Gaboye* are also engaged in hairdressing, shoemaking and pottery and that the *Yiber* were jesters and sorcerers, we come to the conclusion that these can be also considered occupational groups engaged in trades considered impure by the majority. In this sense they are quite close to the *Roma* of western and central Europe and in fact in Djibouti they are often referred to as "*Les Gitanes*". Furthermore, the link between metallurgy (also traditionally practised by some *Roma*-related groups) and stigma and sorcery is deeply ingrained in many African and European cultures and can be traced as far back as Greek mythology²⁰.

¹⁹ (1987, p. 24).

²⁰ Robert Graves in his classical book on Greek mythology (1955, 1992) wrote that the Greek Smith-god *Hephestos*

The *Gaboye* are divided into the following sub-clans: *Mussa Diriye* (North West Somalia), *Madiban* (North East Somalia), *Hawle* (Jijiga) and *Wardere* (Ogaden). The *Tumal* are divided into *Ali* (North East Somalia) and *Osman* (North West Somalia).

Although they are nowadays few in numbers, the *Yiber*, claiming Israelite ancestry, used to be the most powerful of these clans. Some time in the 12th century, most of North West Somalia used to be ruled by *Yiber* king practising Judaism called Burbael, known by the Muslims as Mohammed Hanif. In Muslim oral tradition he was considered cruel and practising the *jus primae noctis*. This state of affairs was terminated by a Muslim sheikh called Yussuf Khounein, nicknamed *Aw Barkhadle* ("who brought rain") who, after long travels, found himself in North West Somalia, near Hargeisa. He challenged Burbael to prove his magic powers by splitting in two a mountain, which he did. He then asked Burbael to walk into the gorge and closed the mountain killing him. Thus the *Yiber* were usurped but in compensation were given the right to claim *diya* (blood money) in perpetuity. As a result still nowadays, when there is a newly born son or a marriage, the *Yiber* come to ask for charity in exchange. This is seldom refused because the *Yiber* are feared for their power of sorcery or evil eye. This applies particularly to women and *Yiber* are reported to often wait for the father's absence before asking for alms.

Given that the *Yiber* consider themselves to be of Israelite origin, as their name implies, the similarity of their position to that of the *Falasha* or *Beta Israel* in highland Abyssinia is striking. Both engage in similar jobs considered to be "impure" by the majority and to possess evil-eye powers ("*budah*" in Amharic) and are treated as pariah groups. As one informer put it: "We are the Falasha of Somali". Referring to the *Yiber*, Lewis (1982, pp. 264-265) points out that possessing magical powers is consistent with their marginal status in Somali society and their difficulty to defend themselves with force owing to their small numbers. But in contrast to the *Falasha*, the *Yiber* have lost any knowledge of Judaism and practise Islam. None of the low-caste clans pay the *diya* independently, but together with the "noble" clans, such as *Isaq*, or the *Absame/Darod*, with whom they hold a protected status. Consistently with his policy of modernisation and abolition of tribalism, Siyad Barre tried to emancipate these pariah clans and some of their members held important offices during his regime, including the military and a *Gaboye* was appointed Minister of Defence. It should therefore be no surprise that they supported him during the civil war.

(*Vulcanus* for the Latins) was lame and ugly and something of an outcast in the *Pantheon* of the gods. He further stressed the link between the emergence of metallurgy in the Bronze Age, magic and the fact that smithing groups were often held in quasi-captivity to prevent them from spreading the knowledge to enemy tribes. I am grateful to my colleague Mr. P. Papaphilippos for having drawn my attention to this analogy.

PART II: A HISTORICAL SUMMARY FROM COLONIALISM TO DISINTEGRATION

1. The Colonial Scramble for the Horn of Africa and the Darwish Reaction (1880-1935)

The first step towards partition was undertaken by the British to counter attempts by the Egyptians - who considered themselves the inheritors of Turkish claims to the Red Sea coast - to occupy Berbera, Zeila and Harar in order to prevent the power vacuum following their withdrawal. In 1884, the British signed a protection treaty with the *Isaq*, *Gadabursi* and part of the *Issa* clans, replacing the earlier trade agreements instigated by Sir Richard Burton, after his pioneering exploration of Zeila, Harar and Berbera. By this treaty the clans were placing themselves "under the protection" of the British Empire in a period of Ethiopian expansion under Emperor Menelik. The main interest of the British was to see that no hostile power would occupy the coast facing Aden and to ensure a supply of livestock for meat consumption for the garrison posted there to safeguard the Red Sea trade route. The British aims in Somaliland were therefore quite modest, and the resources put to this end were even more limited, both in economic and military terms. Thus the Protectorate was aptly termed "the Cinderella of the British Empire"¹. The administrative capital was the port of Berbera. Besides the reason described above, another British consideration for establishing the Protectorate was the growing French interest in the Red Sea. France, after the acquisition of the ports of Obock and Tajurah from the *Afar* sultans, took possession of the port of Djibouti from the *Issa* Somali in 1859. In 1892 she declared it the capital of the new colony, named *Cote des Somalis*, with an extension of about 100 km around the Tajurah bay.

The Italian motivations and objectives for the occupation of the southern Somali territories were far more ambitious than the British ones. For a start there was the problem of finding an outlet for the Italian massive emigration, especially from the south, that gathered momentum towards the end of the century. The first explorers judged that the areas of southern Somalia between the Juba and Wabi Shebelle rivers might have been suitable for Italian peasants. Secondly, there was the desire to acquire prestige and status symbol associated with colonial possessions for a newly unified country aspiring to the status of a European power. These motives were also behind the colonisation of Eritrea, a protectorate in 1885, turned into a colony with Asmara as its capital in 1890. But the real aim of the Italian colonisation was the Ethiopian empire. Italian moves to colonise southern Somalia started in 1891 with the acquisition of the ports of Alla and Obia from *Majertein* sultans and continued in 1892 with the acquisition of Mogadishu, Merka and Brava from the Sultan of Zanzibar. Thus the encroachment of the Ethiopian Empire, which was going to suffer a serious setback with the Italian defeat of Adwa in 1896, was complete. The ports were technically "leased" to the Italian consul of Zanzibar, Filonardi, who created a homonymous commercial company to manage the new acquisitions. The company however was not profitable and in 1905 the Italian government decided to turn its possessions into a colony. Although Italy now controlled the whole coastal stretch from Cape Guradafui to Brawa, the extent of her possessions inland was a matter of dispute with Ethiopia. Moreover, the gradual occupation of the hinterland was not achieved without fierce Somali resistance (often sparked by Italian anti-slavery decrees)².

Ethiopia constituted the final threat to the independence of the Somali clans. Emperor Menelik, after expanding his possessions in the Oromo areas south-west of Showa, turned his attention to the south-east. In January 1887, two years before being crowned "*negus negast*" (king of kings), the Muslim holy city of Harar was captured on his behalf by his cousin Ras Makonnen, which opened the gateway to the Somali territories. Although highland Ethiopians never asserted full control beyond the city of Jijiga for many years, they occasionally managed to send raiding parties to collect taxes further afield.

¹ I.M. Lewis (1980, 9. 104)

² See Cassanelli (1982, pp. 207 – 228)

Social and economic development in British Somaliland was quite modest not only because of the limited British interest in the protectorate, but also because the introduction of “western” institutions, such as a few missionary schools, sparked a religious reaction, as we shall see. Law and order were maintained, at least in some areas, by about one hundred Somali policemen (“*Illalos*”) and by lineage elders (*akils*), consistently with the British policy of indirect rule. One of the most important developments – however – was the introduction of sorghum cultivation by the Somalis in the less arid areas between Hargeisa, Borama and Jijiga.

Things were rather different in the south, not only because of the higher profile of Italian colonisation, but also because of the more “cosmopolitan” nature of many of the clans inhabiting the southern port-cities. For centuries they had been engaged in long-distance trade and were more mixed in ethnic composition, in contrast with the more pastoral nature of northern society. With the advent of fascism (1922), investment in infrastructure increased substantially, in preparation for the “Italian East African Empire”. Agricultural settlements were established, 6,000 km of roads and 50 water wells were built and by 1939 there were 1,739 pupils enrolled in primary schools, comparing favourably with British and French Somaliland³. Repression and social control also increased with the establishment of a centralised bureaucratic system and the formation of a stronger police force.

Developments in the French "*Cote des Somalis*" and in the Somali territories now under the control of the Ethiopian crown were on the other hand very modest. The only exception was the construction of the famous Djibouti - Dire Dawa - Addis Ababa railway line completed in 1917, which provided a medium of penetration not only for goods, but also for French interests in Ethiopia.

The establishment of missionary schools in the British Protectorate caused fierce resentment among the local population and it is said to have been one of the main causes of the Mad Mullah's "*Jihad*" ("holy war", lit."effort"). Another reason was the increase of Ethiopian tax gathering raids in Somali territories. *Said* Mohammed Abdillahli Hassan (the nickname “Mad Mullah” was a derogatory one applied by the colonialists) was an *Ogaden/Darod* by father and a *Dulbahante/Harti/Darod* by mother. He was religiously affiliated to the puritanical *tariqa* (“brotherhood”, lit. “the way”) of the *Salhiya*, which he contacted during his pilgrimage to Mecca. In 1899 he declared the "*jihad*" against the British and Ethiopian infidels. His brilliant military campaigns and guerrilla tactics that enabled him to briefly capture Jijiga from the Ethiopians in 1900 and to assume control of the Ogden and to successfully withstand the British, and subsequently, Italian military powers for twenty years, have been reported extensively elsewhere⁴. Even after his defeat and death of malaria in 1920, the Mullah was still remembered and cherished by the Somalis as a national hero who first managed to cut through traditional clan divisions and unify Somalis from different clans – with some notable exceptions⁵- under the banner of Islam. Besides religious call, one of the unifying factors was resistance against foreign intrusion. Consistently with the theory of segmentary opposition, a challenge from outside the system brought about a fusion and a reaction by the whole, rather than a segment. The Mullah became a national symbol⁶ after independence and was also remembered as one of the most brilliant exponents of Somali oral poetry, particularly of a polemic nature.

2. The Boundaries Question

³ I.M. Lewis (1980, pp. 90-101)

⁴ See I.M. Lewis (1980, pp. 63-85) and Del Boca (1979, vol. II, pp. 789-801)

⁵ Notably the *Isaq*, apparently more interested in business than in *jihad*, who were accordingly chastised by the Mullah.

⁶ However Cassanelli (1983, p. 253), questioned whether the Mullah could be considered as a “proto-nationalist”, in view of the fact that his objective was the creation of a Muslim theocracy rather than a nation-state.

The concurrent emergence of British and Italian colonialism and Ethiopian expansionism, brought on the political agenda the question of the boundaries between the British Protectorate, the Italian Colony and the Ethiopian empire. The first agreement, that, like the others, had more in mind colonial interests than those of the "subjects", was signed between Britain and Italy in 1891. The protocol, ratified in 1894, defined the respective spheres of influence. In addition to the *Dir* clans, the agreement assigned to Britain also the western *Harti/Darod* clans of *Dulbahante* and *Warsangeli*, separating them from the *Majertein Harti* to the east. This agreement however, did not specify the extent of Italy's and Britain's possessions with respect to Ethiopia, besides a reference to the fact that the *Ogaden* was to be under the Italian sphere and the *Haud* (the south-eastern part of the Ogaden) under the British one. This caused Ethiopian resentment and prompted Britain to send a mission to Addis Ababa in 1897 to settle the question with King Menelik. Conscious of the secondary interest of his government in the Protectorate, the British envoy, Mr. Rodd, had few possibilities of resisting the Ethiopian demands and unilaterally relinquished the British claims to the *Haud*, even though some guarantees for the clans were obtained.

At the same time (1897), Italy was also negotiating with Menelik to demarcate her newly acquired Somali territories from the Ethiopian Empire. The Italian envoy, Major Nerazzini, reached another ambiguous agreement with the Ethiopian *negus*, defining the Italian sphere as extending 180 miles (ca. 300 km) from the coast from the British Protectorate down to the Juba river. The agreement seems to have been signed on the basis of a map drawn and sealed by Menelik, as the text does not give any specific geographical indications, but the original map appears to have been lost⁷. At the time Italy was in a position of weakness vis-a-vis Ethiopia, not only because of the Adwa debacle that had taken place only one year before, but also because of the difficulties in asserting control over her existing Somali possessions. These agreements left legacy of confusion that provided Italy with the excuse to invade Ethiopia and subsequently caused the Ogden war.

In 1906 a tripartite Anglo-Italo-French agreement recognised the Ogaden as lying within the Italian sphere. This alarmed Ethiopia and therefore a subsequent Italo-Ethiopian treaty in 1908 made no reference to the Italian claims on the Ogaden and demarcated the boundary as running from Dollo (therefore including Lugh, assigned to Ethiopia in the 1897 Nerazzini agreement) more or less up to Ferfer and then followed the presumed 180 mile line northwards. When, two years later, an Italo-Ethiopian commission was charged to clearly delineate the boundary on the map, an agreement was reached only from Dollo up to Yet (only one third of the way to Ferfer). At the time the agreement suited Italy which now had a good depth from the coast under her jurisdiction, while Ethiopia could scarcely exercise the control on the territories she was claiming, beyond Harar and Jijiga.

In 1930 a new Anglo-Italian agreement was reached basically duplicating the old one of 1894. But in the south, relations between Ethiopia and Italy over the boundary question were shifting from negotiations to the barrel of the gun. Italy naturally tended to push the furthest possible inland at the expense of Ethiopia, but to the satisfaction of the Somalis. But in November 1934 an Italian military outpost stationed at the Wal Wal wells near Warder, some 100 km beyond the Italian sphere according to the previous treaties, came under attack from Ethiopian soldiers after the Italian commander's refusal to allow an Anglo-Ethiopian commission to demarcate the boundary. Italy was attempting to justify its claims to Wal Wal and Warder on the grounds that it was on the clan territory of the *Majertein* and *Marrahan*, under her jurisdiction (in reality the wells and the area have always been shared or disputed between the *Marrahan*, *Majertein* and *Ogaden* clans). In the end the attack was repelled with casualties on both sides and it gave Italy the needed excuse to wage war on Ethiopia less than one year later.

The boundary question, briefly shelved by the unification under the short-lived Italian Empire (1936-

⁷ See Wolde Mariam (1964, pp. 35-39) and Fitzgibbons (1985, pp. 15-26)

1940), resurfaced at the end of the war. Ethiopia pressed for the "return" of the Ogaden, the Haud, and the "Reserved Areas" administered by the British under the terms of an Anglo-Ethiopian agreement of 1942. The first was still formally attached to Somalia and was administered by British from Mogadishu, while the British administered the latter two, formally under Ethiopia, from Jijiga. Even though the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, favoured a unification of the Ogaden with Somalia, Ethiopia was politically in an unassailable position at the end of the Second World War while British interests in the region were still too weak to risk a showdown with Ethiopia. In spite of fierce Somali opposition shared by all clans, that led to serious riots in Jijiga and Gursum (eastern Hararge), the Ogaden was finally handed-over to Ethiopia in 1948⁸. The Haud followed suit in 1954. As Lewis remarks (1980, p. 130) "... Ethiopia..., in contrast to the position at the time of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in 1935, was now in a position to establish her rule throughout this vast area. The tribute-gathering sorties which Ras Makonnen sent out from Harar and Jijiga at the turn of the century, which had created a basis for Ethiopia's pretensions to sovereignty, had at last borne fruits".

In spite of renewed strong Somali protestations and a British attempt to redress the situation, attempting to "buy back" the areas, in 1956 the Emperor declared in Kebri Dahar that the Ogaden was finally part of "the great Ethiopian family". Meanwhile, in the British Protectorate, political leaders were making preparations for a political union with southern Somalia, as soon as the period of Italian trusteeship expired in 1960. The two territories finally united on the 1st of July 1960, after having gained independence.

After independence, the pan-Somali issue, that is the reunification with Somalia of the other mainly ethnically Somali territories, came on top of the political agenda of the newly born state. The first serious dispute arose around the fate of the North Frontier District (N.F.D) of Kenya that was approaching independence. The British, at first in favour of a union of the overwhelmingly Somali N.F.D., bowed to Ethiopian pressure and blackmailing⁹, by deferring the question up to Kenyan independence in 1962. But President Jomo Kenyatta ruled out any possibility of the N.F.D. joining Somalia and clearly stated that it was an integral part of Kenya. Thus, in spite of the findings of an international commission that the Somalis of the N.F.D. unanimously wanted unification with Somalia, in 1963 the British Colonial Secretary declared that the N.F.D. was going to be part of Kenya. As a result Somalia severed diplomatic relations with the British the same year. During the last years of the Italian trusteeship (1950-1960), the issue of the border demarcation from Dolo up to Ferfer was again raised by the Italians who wanted the boundary to be moved to the north-west thus granting more territory to the Somalis. Both parties rejected a draft resolution on the issue presented by a UN commission in 1959 and that deferred settlement to a later stage. The final stage came in 1977 when the Somalis launched their unsuccessful attempt to "liberate" the Ethiopian Ogaden (see below).

The Ethiopian motives for holding on to the Ogaden were outlined in a 1964 booklet called "Ethiopia's stand", that may be considered as the official Ethiopian position. He quotes two main reasons: The first one relates to the Ethiopian nationality question: "*the idea of Greater Somalia ... threatens to dismember from Ethiopia not only Ethiopian Somalis, but other linguistic arid religious groups as well ... Ethiopia views Somalia's claim on the Ogaden not simply as a territorial claim, but also as a severe challenge to her linguistic and religious complexity and to Ethiopian nationalism*". The second reason is of an economic nature: "*The prospect of petroleum in the Ogaden obviously is important. The valleys of the Wabi Shebeli and Genale have great possibilities of petroleum exploration and agricultural*

⁸ The rebellion against Amhara domination, required the intervention of the Ethiopian army with artillery (Del Boca, 1982, vol. III, p. 43).

⁹ Ethiopia, worried that the unification of the N.F.D. with Somalia might have negative implications for her own Somali territories, hinted at the possibility of siding with the Soviet bloc.

*development*¹⁰.

The legacy of confusion surrounding the various treaties and agreements and the historical reluctance or unwillingness of the colonial powers to protect the interest of their colonial subjects vis a vis Ethiopian military and political strength (the Adwa victory, being "on the right side in the Second World War and Cold War) has aptly been termed "evaded duty"¹¹.

3. From the Italian East Africa Empire to Independence (1936-1960)

The "*casus belli*" for the Italian invasion Ethiopia, was the Wal Wal incident, as we have seen above. The bloody campaigns of General Badoglio who attacked from Eritrea in the fall of 1935 and General Graziani, who moved from Somalia, have been described in detail elsewhere¹². After the occupation of Addis Ababa in May 1936, the brutal government of Marshal Graziani among other things re-shaped the administrative division of Ethiopia. He established five regions, with Addis Ababa as imperial capital: 1) Eritrea, including most of Tigray, with Asmara as capital; 2) Somalia, including former Italian Somalia, the Ogaden and part of Bale and Sidamo with Mogadishu as capital, 3) Harar, including eastern Hararge down to Jijiga; 4) Amhara, including most of Gondar, Gojam, Wollo and parts of Showa, with Gondar as capital; 5) Galla and Sidama, including most of the Oromo territories in south-west Ethiopia with Jimma as capital.

Thus, with the unification of the Ogaden with the rest of Somalia, Somali territorial aspirations were partially fulfilled, even if by the unpalatable means of fascist occupation. The "Trans-Juba", a slice of territory along the Juba river, which formerly belonged to the Kenyan colony, had already united with Italian Somalia in 1925, as part of Italy's modest spoils for being on the winning side in the First World War. One of the priorities of the fascist administration was the construction of roads for the "Empire" that was going to be settled by Italian immigrants who should no longer have to migrate to North or South America. By June 1938, 3,284 km of new roads had been built, including the Mogadishu – Dire Dawa road¹³. In the field of education, according to I.M. Lewis¹⁴, the achievements in Italian Somalia compared favourable with those of the British Protectorate or the French "*Cote des Somalis*". An inter-clan camel-mounted police force called *dubat* was formed to patrol the borders and to occasionally carry out road construction work. In spite of these positive developments, Somalia had to bear the weight of the centralised fascist bureaucracy and 12,000 troops were needed to subdue rebellious clans. Furthermore, discriminatory laws were applied to the non-Italian or non-"Aryan" population with the introduction of the Racial Laws in the motherland and the colonies in 1938.

Given the limited British interest in Somaliland, developments in the Protectorate were less impressive also because public resentment against the introduction of western education was still strong. In 1941 the British moved the Protectorate's capital from Berbera – damaged by the war – to the cooler climate of Hargeisa, also in an attempt to extend the administration to the central hinterland.

During the Second World War, in spite of a few isolated episodes of courage such as in the battle of Keren in Eritrea, the Italian army melted like butter at the onslaught of the British army helped by

¹⁰ See Wolde Mariam pp. 58-59. There has been a lot of talk about oil in the Ogaden and in Somalia. While there are proven gas reserves in the Ogaden and oil should not be far, it is not clear whether oil reserves are commercially exploitable. However in recent times there have been reports of exploratory missions by French and Chinese oil companies which would suggest that there may be some profitability.

¹¹ FitsGibbons (1985).

¹² See Zewde (1991, chapter 4) and Del Boca (1979, vol. II) for more details.

¹³ See Del Boca (1982, vol. III, pp. 159-164)

¹⁴ (1980, pp. 97-100)

Ethiopian irregulars and colonial troops. In Somalia the British offensive launched in January 1941 from Kenya, ended in Mogadishu barely two months later. During the British occupation, the Italian community in Mogadishu decreased from 9,000 individuals in 1941 to 3,680 in 1947 and economic output, especially in the field of agriculture, declined. Part of the infrastructure built by the Italians was dismantled and transferred to Kenya, including the railway Mogadishu-Afgoi-Villaggio Duca Degli Abruzzi (presently Johar) and the great metal bridge of the Wabi Shebelli near Afgoi¹⁵.

In the meantime the Allied Powers decided to submit to the United Nations the question of the disposal of the territories of the short-lived East African Empire. While Italy failed to obtain satisfaction for her demand first to retain Eritrea and then to grant her independence (because of strong Ethiopian opposition), the UN session of 21 November 1949 ruled that Somalia was going to be under Italian trusteeship for a 10-year period. This decision displeased Ethiopia, which had to once again share uncertain boundaries with its former enemy¹⁶, and angered some sections of Somali society. This had been signalled by tragic events of January 1948 that followed an Italian-inspired attack by the *Abgal/Hawiye* on the office of the nationalist Somali Youth League and violent demonstrations by Italian residents in Mogadishu demanding that Somalia be kept as a colony. In revenge, members of the *Darod* tribe, brought by the Youth League from the countryside, killed 54 Italians, wounded 55 and engaged in looting.

The Somali Youth League (SYL) was founded in May 1943 in Mogadishu. Originally called Somali Youth Club, this organisation, initiated by 13 members from different clans, had a nationalist programme that wanted to overcome the traditional clan rivalries. They stressed the need to unify the different sections of Somali society under foreign domination (the "pan-Somali" issue), the need for a modern system of education and the adoption of a Somali script. It was also, in the beginning, marxist in orientation. By 1947, when it changed from Club to League, it numbered 25,000 members and enjoyed growing support from the *Darod* clan confederation and the *gendarmarie* and was naturally opposed to any idea of Italian involvement in Somalia. The *Darod* clan federation was naturally attracted by the pan-Somali issue, as it was the most fragmented, with a large part of its population in Ethiopia, but also with important segments in British Somaliland, Italian Somalia and Kenya. On the other hand, the central and coastal *Hawiye* clan, geographically closer to the Italian centres, was more sympathetic to continued Italian presence.

The Italians, including 5,700 troops, landed in Somalia without any serious opposition and took control of the territory by February 1950. The civil service included 760 Italians and 3,641 Somalis¹⁷. After some heavy-handed intervention to suppress open opposition, the relations between Italians and Somalis, including most SYL members, gradually improved. Respect for law and order improved steadily. Meanwhile the main social and economic developments occurred in the fields of road construction, and education. The number of students attending primary education rose from 3,000 in 1950 to 50,000 in 1959. The Higher Institute of Law and Economics, later to become Somalia's University College, was opened in 1954. As Lewis points out¹⁸ "*these developments did much to dissipate what remained of Somali scepticism over Italian intentions*". They should have also allayed Ethiopian fears expounded by Ms. E.S. Pankhurst that the Trusteeship was just a return of fascism in disguise¹⁹. Public works, water points for pastoralists and irrigation for agriculture, cotton and sugar

¹⁵ See Del Boca (1984, vol. IV, pp. 167-171)

¹⁶ See for example the book written by E. Silvy Pankhurst published in 1951 but presumably written on the eve of the Italian Trusteeship. Ms. Pankhurst, the first of three generations of Pankhurst scholars close to the Ethiopian leadership, argued that the Italian administration was going to replicate fascist oppression and expansionism.

¹⁷ Del Boca (1984, vol. IV, p. 223)

¹⁸ I.M. Lewis (1980, p. 140)

¹⁹ See note 16, above.

production were also developed. However the Italian Administration did not manage to make Somalia economically self-sufficient and to diminish the excessive reliance on the banana mono-culture, exported mainly to Italy. The first local elections, held in February 1956 were won by the nationalist S.Y.L. and a system of local administration was established. The same month a new legal code replaced the old fascist one and in May of the same year the first Somali government was appointed, with five ministries. It was with this mixed record of successes and failures that the Italian administration gave way to Somali independence on 30 June 1960, as scheduled.

Again, developments in the British Protectorate were less impressive because of the marginal British interest and of the more traditional nature of north-western Somalis vis a vis their southern brothers. In the field of politics the British had been following their traditional policy of "indirect rule", appointing "akils" (headmen) as links between the District Commissioners and the local population. Even though the different administrative and judicial systems might have more prudently called for a longer transition period, in April 1960 the Protectorate's legislative council voted to join Somalia in a unitary state on 1 July 1960, the date on which independence was scheduled. However the British actually granted independence to the Protectorate on 26 June, four days before unification, an event that would be recalled four decades later with the rise to power of "Somaliland" nationalists.

4. Democracy and Dictatorship (1960-77)

At the time of independence, it was clear to most foreign and Somali observers that Somalia was going to be dependent on foreign aid for a long time to come as it was still lacking major infrastructures. For example, Mogadishu did not have a proper sewer system or a modern functioning port. Roads and telephone connections between the south and the north were in a dismal state or non-existing. A major problem was the lack of an official language: although Somali was the language of everyday conversation, it had not yet been transliterated. Thus in parliament there was a babel of languages, including Italian, English and Arabic. Another big problem was how to reconcile the different legal and administrative systems left behind by the Italians and the British, based respectively on the Roman-Germanic code and Common Law.

The 1959 general elections in the south were won by the SYL with an overwhelming majority. The main opposition groups were the *Digil-Mirfle* (with their sense of ethnic distinctiveness) party, the *Hizbia Digil Mirfle Somali* (HDMS) and the Greater Somali League (GSL), a radical party with Nasserite tendencies. After independence, celebrated on 30 June 1960 with Aden Abdulle Osman as temporary President, the Prime Minister, Abdullahi Isse was forced to resign after a bloody repression of a GSL demonstration. The new Prime Minister, Dr. Abdirashid Ali Shirmarke (*Majertein*), had the difficult task of forming a new government while pleasing all the different clans of the SYL and its equivalent of the former British Protectorate, the *Isaq*-dominated Somali National League (SNL). Haji Mohammed Ibrahim Egal (former Prime Minister of the Protectorate) of the SNL became Defence Minister and Abdullahi Isse, Foreign Minister; in total, nine ministries went to the southerners and four to the northerners.

The progressive domination of the SYL by the *Darod*, and the sense of frustration and neglect of the north-western regions that were lagging behind in terms of economic development, brought about an abortive coup organised by some British-trained officers in the former Protectorate in 1961. Subsequently Ibrahim Egal and another former minister founded a new party in 1963, called Somali National Congress, an alliance of the northern *Isaq* with the southern *Hawiye* in obvious anti-Darod function. As a result of these pressures and with the growing proliferation of tribal parties, the SYL was turning to a single-party political philosophy. At the same time Somalia severed diplomatic ties with Britain and Kenya over the issue of the mainly Somali North Frontier District whose unification with

Somalia, Britain had failed to champion, as we have seen above. Thus Somalia entered a phase of diplomatic isolation both in Africa (with frequent clashes at the border with Ethiopia) and in the west. This vacuum was going to be progressively filled by the Soviet Union.

The years between 1967 and 1969 witnessed some convoluted, byzantine political manoeuvres that were going to destroy the fragile Somali democracy. Abdirizak Haji Hussein, the founder of the radical GSL, became the SYL leader and in February 1967 was elected Prime Minister. A few months later, he resigned from both posts. Instead, Abdirashid Shirmarke became President and Haji Ibrahim Egal was nominated Prime Minister, in an obvious attempt to placate northern resentment. Egal managed to form a new government amidst a growing clan political factionalism related to the disillusion of the urban elites about the failure of the pan-Somali issue²⁰. While the political system was fully returning into the hands of clan interests, public works and infrastructures were deteriorating. The final blow came when on 15 October 1969 a policeman assassinated President Shirmarke in Las Anod under obscure circumstances. This state of affairs was brought to an abrupt halt when on 21 October the army arrested the Prime Minister Egal (who was going to spend 12 years in prison), all the MPs and the Chief of Police Gen. Mohammed Abshir Musse (a *Majertein*). The constitution was suspended and the army took control of the state without any bloodshed.

It soon became apparent that the strong man behind the coup who became the chief of the newly established Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) made up entirely of military officers, was General Mohammed Siyad Barre, the army commander since 1965. A member of the *Marrehan/Darod* clan, he received military training first from the British and then in Italy. After the coup, Barre wasted no time to announce his programme, which included the fight against nepotism, corruption, clanism, underdevelopment and illiteracy. The need to adopt a Somali script was considered a top priority as that of achieving the unity of the Somali nation. The means to achieve this end was the construction of "scientific socialism" and Somalia was accordingly officially named "the Somali Democratic Republic" (SDR). A nationalisation programme was implemented and the economy became state-planned. Civilians were replaced by young officers who accepted the new credo after disillusion with the democratic regime that betrayed nationalist aspirations. In the sphere of international relations the SDR quickly joined the anti-imperialist camp and, although maintaining an allegiance to the non-aligned movement, it soon came more and more under Soviet influence.

One of the first policies implemented by the SRC was the promised fight against clanism: payment of the *diya* (blood money) became illegal as well speaking in public about clan affiliations. The traditional polite form of address, "*inader*" (cousin) was replaced by "*jaalle*" (friend, comrade). In the field of development, maintenance and new infrastructural works were carried out in Mogadishu and the hinterland. But perhaps the greatest achievement of this period was the bold decision, following the Turkish example, to adopt the Latin script in 1972 and an official system of transliteration for the Somali language, implemented the following year. A subsequent massive literacy campaign was successfully carried out in the cities and the rural areas. The traditional discrimination against women in Somali society was going to be eliminated. In spite of its reliance on the Soviet bloc and China, the SDR was still receiving aid from EEC and Italy in particular. As Del Boca remarked²¹: "*in 1973 the military regime achieved the highest consensus internally, and externally it received widespread support*". With the strength of this consensus, Barre decided in April 1973 on the liberation of the former political leaders, including Aden Abdulle, Abdullahi Isse, Abdirizak Hussein and Ibrahim Egal.

In spite of these positive developments, soon the negative aspects of the new regime and serious problems became apparent. A personality cult centred on Siyad's authoritarian and paternalistic

²⁰ See Lewis (1980, p. 202)

²¹ 1984, vol. IV, p. 442.

leadership, graphically depicted in Nuruddin Farah's novel *Sweet and Sour Milk*, was developed. In 1976, amidst growing economic difficulties, a Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party was finally constituted and Siyad Barre became President of the Republic, Prime Minister and General Secretary of the Party. The omnipotent National Security Service (NSS) crushed whatever of the former individual, political and press freedom remained and opponents of the regime were disposed of with the utmost brutality. In 1974 a severe famine which caused thousands of deaths was fought not only with relief supplies, but also with the forced transfer on Russian Antonovs in 1976 of more than 100,000 nomads to the fertile regions of the south. Although Barre claimed that scientific socialism was not incompatible with Islam, in January 1975 ten clergymen were executed because of their violent protestations against his attempt to emancipate women and their suspected links with "reactionary" Saudi Arabia. But what was going to be his most serious mistake was the decision, made in 1976, to force a solution to the problem of the Ogaden, still in Ethiopia's hands. The main reasons were:

1. the bloody struggle that led to Haile Selassie's overthrow and the establishment of a military junta (*Derg*) led by Mengistu Hailemariam waging the horrific "Red Terror" campaign against the radical students;
2. the apparent crumbling of Ethiopia under the onslaught of secessionist movements (particularly Eritrean);
3. the impatience of the *Ogaden/Darod*-dominated Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) eager to shift from guerrilla to open war²².

5. The Ogaden War and the Decline of Siyad Barre's Regime²³ (1977-87)

When planning the attack of Ethiopia with his army and the insurgent WSLF forces, Siyad Barre committed two serious political miscalculations: he underestimated the extent of Ethiopian nationalism, that he thought weakened by centrifugal forces, and the extent of Soviet commitment to the new Marxist *Derg* regime. He thought that the moment had come when the Ethiopian army, needing to replace its old military hardware, was denied a military consignment promised by the Americans to Haile Selassie: now or never. On 1 June 1977, the WSLF started the offensive by blowing up the bridges of the Djibouti Addis Ababa railway, most probably with the support of Barre's government. After a string of victories, the WSLF managed to liberate the Ogaden up to the Degah Bur and its Secretary General declared on 12 August that the WSLF was claiming not only the Ogaden, but also the Ethiopian region of Bale and parts of Sidamo and Arussi. On 13 September, the Somali army finally passed from covert support to open attack and after fierce fighting managed to conquer the strategic town of Jijiga and the Karamara pass, key to the Hararge region. By the end of September the Somali forces, attacking from different directions, were besieging the towns of Harar and Dire Dawa.

At this juncture the situation was reversed by a series of Somali diplomatic failures while massive military aid was poured by the Soviet Union to Ethiopia. Instead of receiving the promised military aid by the Americans, Somalia was condemned as the aggressor by all the main western powers, the UN and the OAU. The expulsion of all Soviet and Cuban personnel on 13 November (breaking the twenty years friendship pact) did not help to regain western support. On the other hand, between November 1977 and January 1978, with a spectacular operation, the Russians and the Cubans airlifted more than 61,000 metric tons of military material and some 15,000 mainly Cuban troops to Addis Ababa. In January, after heavy bombardment of the Somali positions, the Ethiopian and Cuban troops attacked the Somalis from behind the frontline in Jijiga with a spectacular airborne operation and, after heavy fighting, managed to recapture the city and the Karamara pass. Somali in-fighting also started. At this

²² *Ibid.*, p. 449

²³ The information for this paragraph was mainly drawn from I.M. Lewis (1980, chapters 10 and 11) and del Boca, (1984, vol. IV, part III, chapter 3 and 1993, chapters 1, 2 and 5)

point the Somali troops, lacking supplies, tired and with a failing morale, began their retreat that ended only when they crossed the Somali border. The defeat was announced to the nation in March 1978. Thus the USSR managed to realise the old project of establishing its influence on Ethiopia and to gain control of the Red Sea route, while the Americans progressively replaced the Soviets as Somalia's "protectors". What remained behind were the ashes of the pan-Somali dream and the first cracks in Barre's regime.

The humiliating defeat of the Ogaden war definitively crushed the most cherished dream - pan-Somalism - and revitalised the traditional clan forces that started to mount attacks against Siyad Barre's regime. As a result Siyad Barre started relying more and more on his *Marrahan* clan and allied *Darod* clans, thus reversing his earlier policy of "detrribalisation". The first attack came from colonels Mahmud Sheikh and Abdullahi Yussuf of the *Majertein* clan who, in April '78, marched on Mogadishu with a group of *Majertein* officers. They were frustrated by the leadership of the war and by Barre's decision not to send soldiers from his *Marrahan* clan to the frontline. While the attempted coup was defeated and most of its organisers were sentenced to death, Abdullahi Yussuf managed to escape to Kenya and then to Ethiopia where he founded the first armed opposition group, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front or SSDF, essentially controlled by the *Majertein*. In 1981, the northern *Isaq* formed the Somali National Movement (SNM), supported by Arab states. Both groups could stage guerrilla operations against the army from their bases in Ethiopia quickly granted by the Ethiopian dictator Mengistu.

Siyad's regime countered the growing political and armed opposition by reinforcing the apparatus of repression and in particular the NSS, which was given almost unlimited powers. Arbitrary arrests and executions became common. In addition, feeling threatened by some clans, he relied more and more on his paternal clan, the *Marrahan*, his maternal clan, the *Ogaden* and the *Dulbahante*, the clan of his son-in-law, Ahmed Suleyman Dafle, the head of the NSS. The power of these three *Darod* clans grew to such an extent that it became a common place to say that Somalia was ruled by the acronym "MOD" (*Marrahan, Ogaden, Dulbahante*)! Meanwhile Barre had also to face growing economic difficulties aggravated by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian-Somali *Ogaden* refugees in the war's aftermath. The refugees, thanks to their clan membership (*Darod*), were given the choice of benefiting from international assistance as refugees, or integrating in the society as Somali nationals. The actual number of refugees soon became a bone of contention between the Somali government, claiming that there were at least one and a half million, and the international community providing aid for 700,000 but privately estimating the correct number at less than 400,000 owing to the spontaneous repatriation of many refugees with a pastoral background²⁴.

Barre attempted to counter these difficulties by allowing some degree of liberalisation of the economy to attract western support while at the same time maintaining the single party system and firm control of central power. Towards this aim, he conceded to the US Navy the utilisation of the Berbera air/naval base in 1980, formerly manned by the Soviets. This move helps to explain why the US government and aid agencies financing the UN were turning a blind eye to the fact that the surplus food sent for refugees that was flooding the country was being pocketed by Barre for his entourage and the army²⁵. He also managed to attract large-scale aid from the Italian Co-operation, controlled in Somalia by the Italian Socialist Party in financially questionable "joint ventures" for development projects that seldom worked. Italy supported Barre almost until the bitter end, thereby attracting the hostility of most opposition groups²⁶. By the mid '80s, fearing attempts and plots, Barre closed himself even more in the MOD fortress which showed the first cracks in 1988 when the SNM attacked Burao and Hargeisa.

6. Civil War and the Disintegration of Somalia (1988-91)

²⁴ See Maren (1997) and UNHCR, *the State of the World's Refugees 2000*, pp. 106-110.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Del Boca's book (1993) in a book aptly titled *A Defeat of Intelligence*, on the scandals of Italian Cooperation.

In April 1981, a group of *Isaq* dissidents from Britain and the Arab states, capitalising on the traditional northern frustration, met in London to launch the Somali National Movement (SNM). The movement was financed by *Isaq* businessmen in Arab states and established its operating bases in Ethiopia. Their first chairman was Ahmed Jimaale of the *Habar Awal/Isaq* clan²⁷. The first instance was an act of civil disobedience in 1981 when local people took upon themselves the task to clean up the Hargeisa hospital instead of relying on the state system which allowed it to fall in disrepair²⁸. However at the beginning the struggle received little popular support as the *Isaq* were traditionally more interested in business than politics; at least until 1983 when Barre prohibited the commerce and plantations of "*chat*", to the annoyance of the local population and *Isaq* businessmen. But the most important factor was an event that took place in northern Ethiopia. In March 1988 the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) dealt a crushing blow to the Ethiopian army in the battle of Afabet. As a result Mengistu rushed to sign a peace agreement with Siyad Barre in order to secure the southern front and be able to concentrate on his problems with the Eritreans in the north. In April news broke out that the agreement included a termination of hostilities, the return prisoners and the end of sanctuaries for armed rebel groups in their respective territories.

Deprived of its rear bases, in May 1988 the SNM, under the leadership of the new chairman Ahmed Mohammed "Silanyo", launched a pre-emptive strike and was able to capture in a short time the cities of Hargeisa and Burao. He took advantage of a miscalculation of the army commander, Gen. Mohammed Said Hersi "Morgan" *Majertein/Darod* and another of Barre's son-in-laws), who had not foreseen that the local population would have joined the rebels. Given that the army was unable to recapture the cities with the infantry, it employed heavy artillery and air bombardments, reportedly with the help of South African pilots. By the beginning of June the two cities and many other urban centres in the regions of *Waqooy Galbeed* and *Togdheer*, were almost raised to the ground with an estimated 30,000 victims, according to Africa Watch. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were given asylum in Ethiopia and the persecution against the *Isaqs* continued to such an extent, that UNHCR decided to grant *prima facie* refugee status to all the *Isaqs* wherever they came from. The rebellion subsided until the final overthrow of Siyad Barre in 1991.

The prologue to the final phase in the south came in July 1989 after the murder of the catholic bishop of Mogadishu, probably carried out by security agents because of his alleged contacts with the opposition. As a result, the NSS arrested eighteen Muslim clergymen in an obvious attempt to find a scapegoat and caused popular outrage. A massive demonstration on 9 July was repressed with gunfire by the security forces with many casualties. The demonstration was probably organised with the covert support of a new opposition movement, the United Somali Congress (USC). The USC was formed in 1985 by a group of *Hawiye* intellectuals led by a lawyer named Ismael Jumaale Ossoble, which started with low level guerrilla operations in 1988. A second precipitating event was the arrest on 11 July 1990 of 46 intellectuals and former politicians who signed a manifesto criticising Barre's regime, calling for respect of human rights and for a conference of national reconciliation. They included former President Aden Abdulle Osman and former Prime Minister Ibrahim Egal. Among those who escaped arrest there was Jumaale Ossoble who was in Rome, but he died shortly afterwards of heart attack. The suppression of the "Manifesto group", showed the bad faith of the regime which, under pressure from abroad, had promised to revise the constitution in order to democratise the country.

Meanwhile the U.S.C. was organising itself in Italy and Ethiopia and receiving support from the *Hawiye* in Kenya. The death of Ossoble weakened the political wing of the USC based in Rome and

²⁷ On the formation of the SNM see I.M. Lewis (1994, chapter VIII). Therein he argues that, in spite of its claims to be a "national" movement, the SNM was really dominated by the *Isaq*.

²⁸ I am grateful to the late David Riley for having pointed out this to me.

strengthened the military wing based in Ethiopia. The latter was led by Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidiid, *Habar Gidir/Hawiye* who had received military training in Italy, was imprisoned for seven years after Barre's coup, but then was rehabilitated and nominated by Barre to be his aide de camp and then ambassador to India. The final offensive was launched from the Hiran and Mudugh regions in May 1990. He was helped by the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) attacking from the north-east, led by Col. Ahmed Omar Jess (*Ogaden/Darod*), a personal friend. By the end of August the USC, with a few thousand soldiers and the total support of the *Hawiye* population, arrived within 100 km from the capital. A last minute attempt by Siyad Barre to democratise the country and to organise a reconciliation conference in Cairo with Italy's mediation, was firmly rejected by the USC which now had Mogadishu in sight and moreover was suspicious of Italy's role. Another desperate attempt by Siyad to arm all the *Darod* civilians did not change the situation. While the bulk of the USC troops led by Aidiid were finishing off what remained of Barre's army near Afgoi, on 26 December another section of the USC entered Mogadishu to support the popular uprising of the *Hawiye*. After one month of heavy fighting, on 26 January 1991, Mohammed Siyad Barre fled Mogadishu, after twenty-one years of absolute rule.

At this stage the *Hawiye*, vengeful of what they considered twenty-one years of *Darod* oppression, started the manhunt against the *Darod*. I was told by an informant that they organised a "*Darod* slaughter-house" in the Waberi district of south-western Mogadishu in which the *Darod* were gathered and given to old *Hawiye* women who butchered them with long knives. Other informants could not confirm the location of the slaughterhouse but confirmed that it existed. On 28 January Radio Mogadishu announced that the USC committee had nominated Mr. Ali Mohammed Mahdi as President for a temporary period in order to stabilise the country. An *Abgal/Hawiye* wealthy businessman, Mahdi drew his legitimacy as a President *ad interim* not only from his role as one of the main financiers of the USC, but also as one of the signatories of the 1990 manifesto. This nomination was rejected two days later by the USC military leader, Gen. Aidiid, who could not reach Mogadishu because, suspicious of his friend, he was attempting to disarm Jess' SPM forces with whom he clashed in February 1991 in Afgoi. Fearful of the *Hawiye's* onslaught, the *Darod*, including former *Majertein* and *Ogaden* opponents, rallied together forming the Somali National Front (SNF) in the southern port of Kismayo which Barre was still controlling. As Del Boca²⁹ points out: "*suddenly clan loyalty superseded the hatred for the former dictator and the Darod unity was thus reconstituted*". After having by necessity reconciled himself with Jess in March 1992, Aidiid and Jess attacked Kismayo, which they conquered by the end of April, chasing the non-*Ogaden Darod* (especially the *Majertein*), who started their exodus towards Kenya.

On 11 June 1991, through the good offices of President Gouled Aptidon, a national reconciliation conference started in Djibouti. The conference was chaired by seasoned politicians like Aden Abdulleh Osman, Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal and Abdirizak Haji Hussein, and apparently included main politico-tribal factions: the USC/*Hawiye*, the SSDF/*Majertein*, the SDM/*Digil*, the SDA/*Gadabursi*, the USF/*Issa*. Among other things the conference decided: 1) to launch the final offensive against Siyad Barre; 2) a general cease-fire (excluding Barre's forces) as of 26 July; 3) reaffirm the sacred unity of Somalia; 4) a complicated new system of power sharing appeasing all the clans; 5) to appoint Ali Mahdi as President for a two year period. All looked good on paper, but the conspicuous absence of Abdirahman Tur (the SNM's chairman) and of Gen. Aidiid meant that the programme was doomed to failure. For Tur, who on 17 May announced the independence of the former British Somaliland, objected to point 3, while Aidiid made it clear that he was not accepting Ali Mahdi's presidency. Around this time, Aidiid's forces entered Mogadishu and started preparing themselves for the imminent showdown. The worst chapter of the tragedy was about to start.

²⁹ 1993, p. 76

The 17th century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes held the pessimistic view that, in the absence of a centralised strong state, man becomes a wolf to his fellow man ("*homo homini lupus est*"), that is anarchy and violence would prevail. While a body of anthropological evidence refuted his theory, it seemed confirmed by the tragic events in Mogadishu that started in 1991. By mid '91 Aidiid was strong militarily having seized most of the armaments left behind by Siyad Barre's army while his political position was legitimated by the election as the head of the USC. Financially, the help came from one of his closest collaborators, Osman Atto, who reportedly started receiving funds from the American oil corporation Conoco in exchange for a promise of a monopoly of oil exploration. Ali Mahdi's economic resources were strengthened by the arrival of a consignment of shilling notes ordered in the last days of Barre's regime. Militarily, even if short of weapons he had plenty of manpower because his *Abgal* clan was the most numerous in Mogadishu.

On 15 September, the first battle started with heavy artillery and lasted for three days, when the combatants ran out of ammunition. On 16 November the USC central committee announced that Mahdi's government was no longer recognised and was going to be replaced by a U.S.C. commission. According to Del Boca³⁰ on 17 November Ali Mahdi took the initiative attacking Aidiid's positions. According to an informer, it was Aidiid who took by surprise Ali Mahdi, attacking him from the southern eastern districts, near the new port, en route to the Martini Hospital, while Mahdi was expecting him from the central highway. The violent conflict that raged for 10 days left nearly a thousand dead on the ground. While Aidiid managed to have the upper hand in the first phase, he could not overcome the stiff resistance of the *Abgal* controlling the northern districts who feared to be slaughtered by the *Habar Gidir* if they surrendered. In the meantime the *Murusede/Hawiye* sub-clan sided with Ali Mahdi and the *Hawadle/Hawiye* with Aidiid. The balance of Aidiid's superior firepower and Mahdi's superior manpower meant that neither side managed to achieve a decisive victory, and the war continued with intermitting intensity for about four months, by the end of which an estimated 14,000 persons lost their lives. Mogadishu went in ruins with the artillery firing almost randomly.

Within this context of total break-down of law and order, and with weapons available everywhere, bands of young armed thugs, grouped along clanic lines, ran amok terrorising the part of the population of Mogadishu that was still unarmed. Known as "*moryan*", they were made up of the unemployed, orphans and criminals whose survival depended on the unity and determination of the group. The *moryans* completed the destruction of Mogadishu, looting everything that could have economic value. More horrendously, thousands of women were raped and abused (a common thing was to insert batteries into the vagina) and thousands of men killed on the spot, simply because they belonged to a different for no reason at all. But the main victims were the "*Reer Hammar*" and other merchant clans who, lacking military tradition and a militia of their own, could not defend themselves and were targeted for their perceived wealth. Many of their women were raped and, their northern districts, Hammarweyne and Shingani, completely destroyed. To what extent were the *moryans* manipulated by two rival factions is difficult to establish. But the two USC factions were surely behind the fight for the control of the new and more lucrative prey, international relief assistance.

If the situation in Mogadishu was tragic, it was not much better in other parts of southern Somalia: the plantations and irrigation works left behind by the Italians in the Juba valley were destroyed, in Baidoa an estimated 230 people were dying every day of starvation, and the battle for the control of Kismayo was raging. A ray of hope came in March 1992 when Mahdi and Aidiid signed an armistice at the UN in New York. At this juncture, the UN and other international organisations decided to send massive relief assistance to Somalia that before had been virtually non-existent. But the humanitarian assistance sent by the international community was perceived by the warlords as "fair game" and for every ship that was attempting to unload its cargo in the ports of Mogadishu and Kismayo, a battle between the rival

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99

factions broke up. According to the estimates of many observers, only between 20% and 40% of the assistance reached the needy. The rest was sold by the warlords to businessmen who exported it abroad. Thus the "flooding" of Somalia with food aid, not only did not benefit those was intended for, but also was a further cause of war and was enriching the pockets of businessmen and warlords enabling them to continue buying weapons³¹. This provides the only explanation of the fact that, as a Kenyan pilot told me, at the time when thousands of people were dying of starvation, eight tons of "chat" were airlifted to Mogadishu alone, which were paid for in US dollars, for an estimated value of \$200,000 a day. The *Hawiye* and other clan members who were not part of fighting militias left behind in Mogadishu started their exodus towards Kenya, joining the *Darod* refugees.

7. From Hope to Despair (1992-99)

It is within this context that in July 1992, the Security Council decided to send 500 Pakistani blue berets to Mogadishu in an attempt to stabilise the situation (UNOSM I). The decision, accepted by Ali Mahdi, was immediately rejected by Gen. Aidiid and the violence of the continuing clashes was such that the Pakistani troops not only did not manage to achieve any improvement, but had to remain always in their barracks. In the meantime, Aidiid's forces fought with the remnants of the *Darod* SNF forces for the control of Bardera halting the much-needed relief assistance and in August his USC faction struck an alliance with Omar Jess' SPM, the SDM (*Rahanweyn/Digil*) and the SSNM (southern *Dir*). The new alliance was called Somali National Alliance (SNA). As a result, on 23 November, the UN Secretary General sent a letter to the Security Council stating that in order to stop the looting of assistance and to ensure distribution to the needy, it was indispensable to use military strength. On 25 November, US President George Bush authorised the dispatch of 30,000 US troops (UNITAF) in an operation code-named "Restore Hope". By this time at least 30,000 Somalis had perished of war and famine³², together with many humanitarian workers.

The first US Marines landed in Mogadishu in December 1992 under the media's spotlight in an operation that should have been a promenade towards the bright horizons of the "New World Order". But while one of their objectives was to protect humanitarian aid from bandits and warlords and to provide a secure environment for relief workers in order to enable them to assist the needy, it was unclear to what extent they would have addressed an equally important question, that of starting the reconstruction of a crumbled state. It was apparent that this aim could not be achieved without disarming the warring factions. The forthcoming intervention brought about an immediate reaction by Aidiid who ordered the expulsion of the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance, but later changed his mind and accepted the intervention together with the other warring parties. In the meantime half a dozen countries pledged 10,000 more soldiers, including Italy.

This fact seemed to displease in particular Gen. Aidiid who clearly stated that he did not want the Italian return to Somalia and accused the Italians of neo-colonial aims. But the reasons for his staunch opposition may have been more down-to earth and probably had to do with the alleged refusal by the leaders of the Italian Socialist Party to "reward" Aidiid with a 10% commission on all the projects he would have managed to procure. As a result Aidiid, sued Mr. Craxi, General Secretary of the Italian Socialist Party and former PM, and his brother-in-law Mr. Pier Paolo Pillitteri, mayor of the city of Milan and former president of the Italo-Somali chamber of Commerce, demanding ca. 30 m US dollars in compensation. In November 1991 the Milan Tribunal refuted the allegation owing to "lack of

³¹ This makes it difficult to agree with UN diplomat Sahnun's (1994) contention that an increase in food aid would have helped the situation. On the other hand one can agree with his characterisation of the lack of intervention by the international community after the '88 atrocities, during the repression of the "manifesto group" in 1990 and during the 1991 Djibouti conference as "missed opportunities"

³² Del Boca (1993, p. 148)

evidence" and condemned Aidiid to pay 50 thousand dollars each to Craxi and Pillitteri as trial costs³³.

The arrival of the US and other foreign troops improved the distribution of food and relief assistance. Although the American troops reportedly ordered the warring parties to take their heavy weapons outside of Mogadishu, an order which was apparently complied with by Ali Mahdi but not Aidiid, they did not actively seek to undertake a campaign of disarmament, leaving the task to the UN contingent. In the meantime hopes were raised of a political settlement with the apparently positive outcome of the peace conference opened in Addis Ababa on 15 March, 1993, in which all the warring parties (including Aidiid's) agreed on: 1) the implementation of a cease-fire and the cooperation with the UN forces that were going to replace the US contingent regarding disarmament; 2) the urgent need for rehabilitation and reconstruction; 3) the need for the restoration of property and the settlement of disputes, 4) transitional mechanism of power sharing in which all the clans/faction would be represented.

The UN took over in May 1993 in the ill-fated UNOSM 2 operation. Things started precipitating when on 5 June troops from the Pakistani contingent of the blue berets went to seize the radio station, from which Aidiid's faction was broadcasting defiant slogans against the UN presence, and 23 soldiers were ambushed and savagely mutilated. In the following days the Security Council authorised "all necessary means" to capture the culprit. Subsequently, Pakistani troops fired on a group of anti-UN demonstrators, reportedly because Aidiid was infiltrating armed elements among the demonstrators. This ignited a spiral of violence that soon involved also US elite units supported by helicopters³⁴ causing hundreds of civilian casualties, including the patients of a hospital, but Aidiid was still in hiding. It is obvious that the objective had become more that of punishing Aidiid rather than that of restoring law and order and the confidence of the civilian population that was beginning to unite against the foreign intervention. There was even the paradox of a few asylum seekers who fled the bombardments in Mogadishu labelled "UN" and were recognised as refugees by UNHCR in Ethiopia. A new conference in Addis Ababa in November did not change the situation. What went wrong in this mission that had also the negative consequence of deterring an intervention in Rwanda to stop the genocide unfolding in April 1994? There is a growing literature on the subject³⁵, but we may speculate that there probably was a "window of opportunity" at the very beginning of Restore Hope had the US been willing to enforce the disarming of the factions. But the window closed when this peace-making task was left to the UN contingent, less feared militarily. Subsequently the blind retaliation against Aidiid, turned him into a national hero while popular anti-US and anti-UN sentiments were rising. In the end the final blow to the operation came on 3 October 1993 when an American helicopter gunship was shot down by Aidiid supporters and the bodies of dead pilots were dragged on the streets of Mogadishu. This was broadcast on American TV to the shock of the American public and forced the withdrawal of American troops. Although UNOSOM's mandate was renewed until March 1995, its forces – mainly made-up of poorly paid contingents from developing countries – became even less able to restore law and order until their final withdrawal by the end of February 1995.

Southern Somalia. While some areas of southern Somalia experienced progress in terms of agricultural output and nutritional rates, partially thanks to the more secure environment provided by UNOSOM, the southern port city of Kismayo remained a trouble spot. As we have seen above, on 23 April 1991, Aidiid's USC militia seized Kismayo from Barre's forces (SNF). The city is dominated economically by the *Majertein*, but all the surrounding hinterland is controlled by the *Mohammed Zuber*, *Makabul* and *Awlian* sub-clans of the *Ogaden* in a south-north direction, until it meets the Geddo region, the

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64

³⁴ According to Maren (*op cit.*) these elite units, theoretically under UN command, were actually under US command, ultimately reporting to general Colin Powell, chief of staff.

³⁵ See for example Drysdale (1994), Prunier (1995), Stevenson (1996), Schofield (1996) and – most instructive of all – Maren (1997). Now also Hollywood stepped in with a recent (2002) film called "Black Hawk Down".

Marrahan's stronghold. Taking advantage of the Aidiid-Mahdi fighting in Mogadishu and the temporary split between Aidiid and Jess, Barre's forces reorganised themselves and made a desperate attempt at a comeback, under the command of Gen. "Morgan". On 23 June 1991, Gen. Morgan managed to recapture the city together with Gen. Adan Abdillalhi Nur "Gabiow" (Barre's former Defence Minister and – after Morgan – one of the main culprits for the '88 destruction of Hargeisa and Burao) and Col. Omar Jess. However, following the election of Jess as chairman of the SPM in December 1991, the Ogaden/SPM split in two factions, one led by Col. Omar Jess siding with Aidiid's USC and the anti-Barre camp and the other led by Gen. "Gabiow" with Gen. Morgan and the pro-Barre SNF. Morgan and Gabiow managed to chase Jess from Kismayo. However, after Aidiid and Jess' reconciliation, their joint forces defeated once and for all Siyad Barre's SNF in Wanle Weyn on 29 April 1992 and retook Kismayo in May. The renewed alliance between Aidiid and Jess was formalised on 12 August with the constitution of the Somali National Alliance (SNA), together with the *Rahanweyn/Digil* SDM and the southern *Dir* SSNM who later abandoned the SNA. After defeat, the former dictator finally fled to Kenya and from there to Nigeria, where he died in exile in 1995. In spite of the presence of a UN Belgian contingent the city changed hands another two times between Morgan and Omar Jess in the 1991-1993 period. Since then, it was under Morgan's control until 1999, when a coalition of *Ogaden* and *Marrahan*, allied with Aidiid, once again managed to evict his forces.

Other southern Somali regions underwent untold suffering too. Baidoa in the Bay region became a martyr town with thousands of deaths in 1991-1992 as a result of famine and looting first at the hands of Siyad Barre, then Aidiid's forces. After UNOSOM's withdrawal, it has been disputed between the *Digil-Mirfle's* Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) and its successor *Rahanweyn* Resistance Army (RRA) and Aidiid's SNA. While at the beginning the *Rahanweyn* set up their own administration, in 1996 Aidiid's SNA managed to capture the city and control it in spite of the fact that his mainly *Habar Gidir* militia originates from regions further to the north. But in June 1999, the RRA, led by Hassan Mohammed Nur "Shatigudud", finally managed to defeat Aidiid forces, evicting them from Baidoa, reportedly with heavy Ethiopian support. Also the region of Gedo (bordering with Kenya and Ethiopia), and its capital Lugh, controlled by the *Marrahan/Darod*, witnessed frequent clashes between the local SNF militia, supported by Ethiopia, and radical Islamic groups, such as *al Ittehad* (see below).

Central Somalia. On the other hand the central regions of Mudug and Galgadud, squarely under the control of the *Habar Gidir/Hawiye* have been relatively peaceful. But the region of Hiran, around the city of Belet Weyne, experienced some clashes between the local *Hawdle* and the *Habar Gidir/Hawiye* who were trying to wrest the control of the region from the former. Also the situation in Mogadishu and the surrounding region of Benadir remained very volatile, perhaps because it is still perceived as the key to central, ultimate power. The rivalry between Ali Mahdi and Mohammed Aidiid continued between moments of active conflict and cold war. However, since 1995, further splits appeared in both camps. First a conflict emerged between Aidiid and his main financier, Osman Atto, maybe because the latter was growing tired of pouring money in a conflict that appeared to have no end³⁶. The latter was reportedly behind the death of Aidiid from bullet wounds in August 1996. Since 1997, splits and occasional conflicts also appeared within Ali Mahdi's UCS faction dominated by his *Abgal/Hawiye* sub-clan.

A new 'wild card' was the emergence of radical Islamic groups who introduced *sharia* courts in northern Mogadishu since the end of 1994. Initially these developments helped to improve the situation, but later these groups started clashing with other armed militias. The death of Aidiid in 1996 brought some hope of a resolution of the Somali puzzle among various observers. Although he definitely was not the only warlord with a heavy responsibility for the destruction of Somalia, he was the least inclined

³⁶ Maren, p. 79

towards power sharing. As Maren argues³⁷, “the simple fact about Aidiid is that he was never willing to compromise. He would accept no agreement that didn’t leave him in the position he believed he deserved, head of state of Somalia”. However his position as head of the USC/SNA was quickly filled by his US-trained son, Hussein Aidiid, who continued his father’s pursuit of ultimate power.

Puntland. Contrary to the rest of former Italian Somalia, the north-eastern region enjoyed a period of relative clam and stability, also because it is relatively homogeneous from a clan point of view, by and large coinciding with the area inhabited by the *Majertein/Harti/Darod*. The only major violent clashes occurred at the beginning of 1992, when the SSDF – the historical *Majertein* opposition movement – defeated the *Al Ittehad*, a fundamentalist movement financed by radical Arab groups (see below). As Prunier³⁸ pointed out, the major non-violent conflict was the subsequent one for the leadership of the SSDF and hence of the region. The two main opponents were Col. Abdillahi Yussuf of the *Omar Mahmud*, former officer of the Somali army and founder of the SSDF and Gen. Mohammed Abshir Mussa (*Issa Mahmud*), former commander of the Somali police. Abdillahi Yussuf won the power struggle and on 2 August 1998 he declared the independence of the state of “Puntland”, from Bosaso to Galkayo. However, contrary to the SNM’s declaration of Somaliland’s independence, which was supposed to be total and unconditional, “Puntland” was supposed to be only an “*interim state*”, pending a solution of the Somali quagmire.

This stand was not only dictated by the fact that, contrary to Somaliland, it could not invoke the principle of colonial boundaries as it laid squarely within former Italian Somalia, but also by the deep interests that the *Majertein* had in Kismayo in the far south. As we have seen Kismayo has a strong *Majertein* presence in the urban population and was disputed between Morgan (*Majertein*) and Omar Jess (*Ogaden*). Moreover with the nomination of a *Dulbahante/Harti* as “vice President” (with the top job secured by Abdillahi Yussuf himself) Puntland indirectly laid a claim to the eastern Somaliland region of Sool – predominantly inhabited by the *Dulbahante* – and parts of Sanaag, inhabited by the Warsangeli/Harti. This move was motivated partially by a concern for their “*Harti* brothers” and hence by the desire to extend “Puntland” from mere “*Majerteinland*” to “*Hartiland*”. But another probable motive was to create tensions with Somaliland in order to show that it was not able to control all its territory and therefore pre-empt a possible recognition of the latter by some external power. Externally, Abdillahi Yussuf initially enjoyed a good relationship with Aidiid. However his leadership came under intense pressure since the holding of the Arta reconciliation conference and violent clashes took place in 2001-02 (see below).

8. Conflict and Progress in Somaliland (1991-99)

In January 1991, as the southern *Hawiye*-based United Somali Congress (USC) finally chased Siyad Barre’s forces from Mogadishu, the SNM liberated Hargeisa. In February its troops entered the *Gadabursi* dominated region of Awdal, a clan that had given low-key support to Barre’s regime and clashed with *Gadabursi* militia, but then withdrew. On 18 May 1991 Abdirahman Tur, chairman of the SNM, proclaimed the independence of “Somaliland”, the former British Protectorate, while other Somali leaders were meeting in Djibouti. The decision was made during a *shir* (traditional congress) in Burao at the beginning of 1991, probably also owing to the fact that Ali Mahdi had declared himself president without consulting the SNM. As a result the northerners felt that there was a danger of a repeat of Siyad Barre’s days³⁹. From a legal point of view, Somaliland’s argument for independence was based on the fact that they had been independent for four days between 26 and 30 June 1960 (the day of unification) and that they were simply reverting to the old colonial boundaries. The self-proclaimed

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230

³⁸ 1995, pp. 76-77

³⁹ See Michaelson (1999).

independence and freedom from “southern” domination did not however bring neither international recognition, nor instant peace and stability to “Somaliland”. Cracks started emerging politically for the SNM leadership and along sub-clan lines with the *Habar Awal/Isaq* resenting a perceived *Garhajis/Isaq* (president Tur’s clan). Factional fighting, clashes and occasional looting of humanitarian assistance, although on a smaller scale than in the south, marked the period from the end of 1991 to the beginning of 1993. Particularly intense were the conflicts in the city of Burao at the end of ’91 and in Berbera in April 1992, with Colonel Degah Weyne of the *Issa Mussa/Habar Awal* defeating Abdirahman Tur.

However the situation started improving in February 1993, when clan elders elected Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal as the new president instead of Tur in a reconciliation conference in Borama. Contrary to similar conferences sponsored by external actors, this traditional Somali *shir*, lasted three months and instead of being attended by a few warlords, it saw the active participation of over three hundred people, including clan elders, intellectuals and ordinary people, moreover without any foreign assistance⁴⁰. Egal, the veteran politician of the British Protectorate and united Somalia, managed to achieve a new system of power sharing based not on nationalism, but on the traditional clan balancing. The SNM relinquished power peacefully (one of the rare cases in Africa of a successful liberation movement to do so), although it remained an important political, semi tolerated opposition force. At this time that the UNHCR Office in Hargeisa started becoming operational again and other humanitarian agencies that pulled out in 1992 started moving back in. Proposals for a UNOSM intervention were vehemently rejected by the Somaliland authorities that instead requested assistance to set up their own police force.

Unfortunately the fragile peace did not last long and resentment was brewing among the *Garhajis* (*Idagalle* and *Habar Yonis*) who felt deprived not only of political power, but also of economic opportunities by the rival *Habar Awal*. As some refugees in the Aware camps conveyed to me in December 1994, the *Garhajis* thought that they were not adequately represented in the Borama conference and subsequently in Somaliland’s political institutions. Moreover, former president and SNM chairman Tur, who had declared independence, turned up in a “reconciliation conference” in Mogadishu and struck an alliance with Aidiid declaring that he was now favouring “federation”. From an economic point of view, the introduction of the “Somaliland shilling” in mid ’94 made the *Girhajis* even more suspicious of a supposed *Habar Awal* attempt to dominate the economy. The move was probably dictated more by political than economic reasons, as printing currency is a traditional item of sovereignty. The *casus belli* became the control of the Hargeisa airport that was in the hands of *Idagalle* clan militia charging illegal fees and harassing passengers, particularly expatriates. The *Idagalle* deemed that since the governmental-backed *Habar Awal* were already controlling tax revenues from Berbera, they had the right to do the same in the airport that is located in their *deghan* (clan territory). The government – on the other hand – wanted to control the airport not only to secure revenues, but also to show to outsiders that it was in command of the situation.

The first clash occurred on 14 October 1994, when governmental forces managed to chase the militia from the airport. The show-down came one month later when president’s Egal’s forces launched a pre-emptive strike against the opposition militia that was reportedly reorganising. On 15 November the *Idagalle* militia led by Gen. Jama Mohammed Qalib Yare retaliated by shelling the *chat* market, and other targets. The two sides exchanged several rounds of artillery fire across the dry river-bed that divides the city until the end of December, causing hundreds of casualties. This clash sent some 90,000 refugees across the border to the Aware camps, while UNHCR was preparing for voluntary repatriation. UNHCR Hargeisa had to temporarily evacuate to Borama. The conflict spread also to Burao, with the *Habar Ja’lo* taking sides with the governmental *Habar Awal* against the *Habar Yonis/Garhajis*, the common opponent. At this juncture it appeared that the Mogadishu cancer had reached Hargeisa. In

⁴⁰ On the role of the *shir* and of traditional institutions in peace reconciliation in Somali society, see Ahmed Yussuf Farah (1993) and Micahelson (1999).

Burao too, the *Habar Ja'lo* preferred to set up their own shanty town/displaced camp in Yarowe some 10 km. to the east of Burao, than remain with the *Habar Yonis* in the contested city.

Instability and clashes, particularly in Burao, continued until February '97 when a new reconciliation conference and elections confirmed Egal as President who nominated a new cabinet and redistributed the balance of power. The House of Elders (*Guurti*) and the Chamber of Deputies became the main fora of governance and of settlement of disputes. A Supreme Court was also established and a forward-looking constitution (including the possibility of impeaching the president) was adopted. Peace and stability started spreading in the western regions of the country, where self-help reconstruction activities and private investment grew by the day. In the eastern regions security also improved on a whole, although the situation was more fragile and the government had a more tenuous grip on power. In 1998 two events, one of an economic, the other of a political nature, threatened to disrupt the stability. The first was a ban on livestock exports (see below). The second of a political nature, was the declaration of *Puntland* as an "interim state", as mentioned above. On the positive side (for Somaliland), it should also be noted that the Ertrean-Ethiopian war strengthened the importance of the Berebera port, at least for unofficial trade and food aid.

Numerically and politically, the most important clan in Somaliland are the *Isaq*, inhabiting the central regions of Waqooy Galbeed and Togdheer, who hold 55% of the seats in the local parliament. Among them, the *Habar Awal*, and in particular the *Saad Mussa* sub-clan, are the most numerous and sedentarised and have partially adopted agriculture in the western district of Gabiley. On the other hand the eastern *Isaq* clans such as the *Habar Yonis* and *Idagalle/Garhajis* and the *Habar Ja'lo* and their *Dulbahante* and *Warsangeli/Darod* neighbours to the east have retained pastoralism as the main mode of production. In the western region of Awdal the *Gadabursi* were the pioneers of agriculture at the end of the last century while their *Issa* neighbours, living in the coastal areas neighbouring Djibouti on the other hand have maintained a more pastoralist life-style. The following table summarises the main clans in Somaliland:

Table 1: Somaliland's clans by region

Clan	Main sub-clan(s)	Region(s)	Main districts
<i>Isaq</i>	<i>Habar Awal</i>	Waqooy Galbeed	Gabiley, Hargeisa, Berbera
<i>Isaq</i>	<i>Garhajis</i>	W. Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag	Hargeisa, Salhaley, Sheikh, Burao, Erigavo
<i>Isaq</i>	<i>Arab</i>	W. Galbeed	Hargeisa, Balli Gubadley
<i>Isaq</i>	<i>Habar Ja'lo</i>	Togdheer, Sanaag	Burao, Erigavo
<i>Isaq</i>	<i>Tol Ja'lo</i>	W. Galbeed	Gabiley
<i>Gadabursi</i>	<i>All</i>	Awdal	Borama, Baki, part. Gabiley, Zeila, Lughaya
<i>Issa</i>	<i>Mamasan, Khodahgob</i>	Awdal	Zeila, Lughaya
<i>Harti/Darod</i>	<i>Dulbahante</i>	Sool, Sanaag	Las Anod, Erigavo.
<i>Harti/Darod</i>	<i>Warsangeli</i>	Sool	Erigavo, Las Korey

The relative political and numerical strength of the various clans is reflected by their number of seats in the two legislative institutions, the Lower House and the House of Elders (*Guurti*), each with 82 seats, as illustrated by the following table.

Table 2: Distribution of seats in the Lower House and House of Elders by clan

Clan/sub-clan	No. of seats (Total)	Percentage %
<i>Habar Awal/Isaq</i>	17	10.3
<i>Garhajis/Isaq</i>	23	14
<i>Tol Ja'lo/Isaq</i>	4	2.4
<i>Habar Ja'lo/Isaq</i>	28	17
<i>Arab/Isaq</i>	13	7.9
<i>Ayub/Isaq</i>	6	3.6
<i>Gadabursi</i>	21	12.8
<i>Issa</i>	9	5.5
<i>Dulbahante/Harti/Darod</i>	23	14
<i>Warsangeli/Harti/Darod</i>	11	6.7
Others	9	5.5
TOTAL	164	100

Total *Isaq*: 55.2%

The *Guurti* and the lower house became the main for a for the resolution of disputes and since 2001 some degree of multi-party politics has been tolerated. In terms of administration, the majority of high-ranking officials (ministers and mayors) was appointed on clan lines and considering that the salaries of civil servants ranged between US\$ 8 and 14, at times competence was questionable. But on the whole, Somaliland's government did not rank worse than those of many African countries. Regarding justice, it inherited a mishmash of legal traditions: Romano-Germanic (Penal Code derived from the Italian Penal Code); Anglo-Saxon/Common Law (Criminal Procedure Code, from the Indian Code and Civil Procedure Code, from the Egyptian Code); *Sharia*/Islamic Law, Shafiate School (family law, personal status); Somali *Xeer*/Customary Law (based on compensation or retribution, still widely applied).

From an economic point of view, livestock exports was the main source of revenues estimated at US \$ 155 million in 1996 and 176 in 1997. The revenues were used by the government to pay civil servants and security personnel thereby keeping them away from militia and banditry. However, in January 1998 Saudi Arabia declared a ban on livestock imports from the Horn because of a few cases of Rift Valley Fever, causing economic hardship. The ban was lifted in May 1999 giving rise to a short economic boom, but was re-imposed in September 2000 for the same reason. After livestock, the second source of economic revenue was remittances from the Somaliland diaspora estimated at \$ 93 million in 1997⁴¹. Third in place were agriculture and trade. Somalilanders, and in particular *Isaq*, are very skilled and dynamic businessmen also thanks to their connections with Dubai and the virtual absence of taxation. In Hargeisa it is possible to buy PCs at Dubai wholesale prices. Telecommunication companies also flourished. But there are also other manifestations of a vibrant local civil society. Somaliland is a rare example in Africa of a "country" with a relative degree of freedom of press and the main daily *Jamhuriya*, close to the radical SNM, often runs stories critical of the government. The chief editor is at times arrested but is invariably released also thanks to the support from the Somaliland diaspora for whom the paper is vital source of information. A retired WHO official almost completed a fully equipped maternity hospital through her own fund raising efforts. A group of "returnees" from north America set up a basketball association that could be joined by all players irrespectively of clan origin. The group played regularly in downtown Hargeisa and trained dozens of youngsters not only to play ball, but also to respect religiously the sometime questionable rulings of the referees, a compliance with legitimate authority conspicuously lacking in other spheres of life. Concurrently, urbanisation and its

⁴¹ *Somaliland's Two Years Development Plan* (1998).

related way of life grew and posed a further challenge to pastoralism. It is estimated that in the late '90s the population of Hargeisa reached 250,000 inhabitants, while in the mid '50s, according to Lewis, its population ranged between 30,000 and 40,000. Regarding Somaliland's overall population figures, the estimation by region is the following⁴², to which we have to add between 300,000 and 500,000 Somalilanders living elsewhere in the Horn, in the Middle East, North America and the UK:

Table 3: Estimated Somaliland's population by region:

Region	Population	Percentage %
Awdal	220,000	18.3
Waqooy Galbeed	340,000	28.3
Sahil	60,000	5
Togdheer	280,000	23.3
Sanaag	170,000	14.1
Sool	130,000	10.8
TOTAL:	1,200,000	100

What is the secret for Somaliland's relative success in brining a minimum of peace and stability? In our opinion we can consider three factors. First, the British colonial tradition of "indirect rule" with its "minimalist" approach emphasising self-governance. Second, given its politically and geographically peripheral position vis a vis Mogadishu, it was left in a state of "being neglect" without too many external interferences. Finally, Somaliland could rely on a class of very skilled businessmen and on the political astutness of president Egal.

9. Eastern Ethiopia fom Menelik's Conquest to Ethnic Federalism (1887-1995)

Jijiga and part of the current Somali territory in Ethiopia came under Ethiopian control when Menelik seized it from the ruler of Harar, *emir* Abdallah Mohammed in 1887. Menelik took advantage of the power vacuum in the region when the Egyptians left Harar in 1885. At the end of 1886 his troops started besieging the ancient walled city, a centre of Muslim learning already explored by Burton in 1855, whose original inhabitants speak a semitic language, but claim Turkish origins. The *emir* tried to attack the Shoan Ethiopians on the day of the orthodox Christmas on 8 January 1887, but he was defeated by Menelik who appointed his cousin Ras Makkonen (Haile Selassie's father) as governor: the gates of the Somali territories were opened. In the following years Ethiopia started gradually to assert it authority, but it was only after 1950 that it managed to extend it beyond Jijiga. It also started the policy of giving large plots of lands in these outlying areas to reward loyal or courageous army officials who came to be known as *nafteñas* (armed settlers). These settlers were mainly *Amhara* and *Tigrean* highlanders, adhering to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, formally under the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria until the 1950s, but really alone in practising ancient rites and rituals of Hebraic origin⁴³. This policy is reminiscent of that of the Russian Tsars, who similarly settled their officers, the *cosacks* (also Orthodox) in the Muslim regions of the south of the empire.

⁴² The figures provided here are adapted from WHO/UNICEF estimates of 1,100,000 – 1,200,000 in 1998 . They are also consistent with the figures provided by I.M Lewis's (1993, p. 34) who reported that the population of N.W. Somalia stood at 843,012 individuals in 1975. If we apply a growth rate of 3% (see Part I, Note 1) we come to a total of some 1,450,000 individuals in '99. If we then subtract those who fled since 1975 within the Horn, the Arab states, western Europe and north America, we reach a figure of approximately 1.2 million. Data concerning the regions is less easily comparable, since up to the early '80s the population of W. Galbeed was combined with that of Awdal and Sanaag with Sool. In addition in 1997 the new region of Sahil (capital Berbera) was detached from Waqooy Galbeed. The Somaliland government, on its side, estimates the population at around 3 million.

⁴³ See Ullendorff, 1968, 1973

The aftermath of the Ogaden war heralded the start of a dark period for Ethiopia's Somali population that lasted until the demise of the of the Derg military junta in 1991. Although the repression was less intense than for the northern Eritreans and Tigreans, the counter-insurgency tactics by the Ethiopia army included attacks on villages, poisoning of wells and killings of cattle in order to fight the lingering irredentism of the Ogadeni-dominated Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF). Furthermore, in spite of a land reform, there was also a continuation of the old *nafteña* policy of settling highlander Ethiopians who served in the army in the lowland areas, thereby increasing the hostility of the local population. In this context the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) was founded in 1984 as a splinter group of the moribund WSLF. Another tactic was to support the opposition movements against the Somali government, such as the SNM (*Isaq*) and the SSDF (*Majertein*).

In May 1991 the *Tigrean*-led Ethiopian Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) entered Addis Ababa as the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) entered Asmara, finally overthrowing Mengistu's regime. Contrary to Somalia, the security situation in Ethiopia improved on a whole. One of the most pressing issues was how to address the question of nationalities⁴⁴ as most of the struggle against Mengistu's regime was construed in nationalistic rather than political terms ("Eritrean", "Tigrean", "Oromo", "Somali" liberation fronts). This was settled first in *Proclamation No. 7*, of 14 January 1992, which established fourteen ethnic regions. These were subsequently reduced to nine in the new Constitution approved on 14 December 1994 by the Constituent Assembly that turned Ethiopia into a "Federal Democratic Republic". The nine regions, later called "National Regional States", are: 1) Tigray, 2) Afar, 3) Amhara, 4) Oromo, 5) Somali, 6) Beni Shangul, 7) Southern Nations, 8) Gambela, 9) Harar ("city-state"), plus Addis Ababa (federal capital). The regions, since 1996 called "National Regional States", are by and large ethnically based. They supposedly enjoy a high degree of autonomy and local languages are taught in primary schools, although in practice the central government often interferes in local politics. Their right to self-determination is controversially guaranteed up to secession, subject to a two-thirds majority of the "regional state's" deputies elected in the national parliament, a three years transition period and a referendum with simple majority. This framework was supposed to strike a balance between the main "competing views of national identity"⁴⁵ namely the "unitarian-centralist" one, mainly expounded by the old guard, and the secessionist one of some Oromo and Somali groups. It is interesting to note that the idea of a looser Ethiopian federation was already pioneered by Ras Alula and Emperor Yohannes, both Tigreans, in the 1880s⁴⁶.

Way back in Jijiga, the few months between the fall of the *ancien regime* (January '91), and the establishment of the EPRDF (July '91) were marked by insecurity as some clans used the vacuum to settle old scores, but the situation improved as the EPRDF took control of law and order. The devolution of power to the new regional administration took place quite smoothly, but some problems started emerging. Many *Amhara* civil servants and administrators, perceived as old *nafteña* dominators, were replaced with ethnic Somalis, often irrespectively of their competence. "*nafteña* -bashing" was a favourite topic during the rallies of local politicians in 1993. But the ethnic criteria vis a vis the highlanders became clanic criteria vis a vis other ethnic Somalis, criteria that inevitably became the most important considerations in regional politics and most of the appointees were initially *Absame/Darod*. Secondly the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) started reviving the old secessionist stance and waging a low-intensity guerrilla warfare. Finally a new Islamic fundamentalist group called *al Ittehad* ("the union") also emerged, reportedly with the backing of radical groups and/or

⁴⁴ Ethiopia hosts hundreds of ethno-linguistic groups ("nationalities" in the marxist terminology). Linguists group them in "language families", the most important of which are: Semitic (Tigreans, Amharas, Gurage), Hamitic/Cushitic (Oromo, Somali, Afar, Agaw), Nilotic (Nuer, Anuak, Beni Shangul), Omotic (Konso, Mursi).

⁴⁵ See Triulzi, 1983

⁴⁶ See H. Erlich,

states in the Middle East, and undertook hit-and-run operations against the EPRDF or simply against Christian highlanders. *Al Ittehad* reportedly included fighters from various clans with its stronghold in the Ogaden and across the border in Somalia. Like the ONLF, it wanted to get rid of a perceived foreign/infidel usurper, but their long-term goals differ. While the ONLF is a secular/nationalistic movements, *al Ittehad* was a religious one with the objective of creating a Muslim theocratic state in Somali-speaking areas, not unlike the "Mad Mullah" at the beginning of the century. The capital of the Somali Region, also known as *Kilil Five*, was at first Gode, in the heartland of *Ogaden* territory, the numerically strongest clan in Ethiopia.

The non-*Ogaden* clans of eastern Ethiopia were at best lukewarm at the prospect of secession, fearing *Ogaden* domination. After a meeting near Dire-Dawa on 9 February 1994, they founded the Ethiopia Somali Democratic League (ESDL) whose stated priority was "the need for the unification of the political parties and other factions of the Somalis living in Ethiopia". The move was partially successful as 11 clan-based political organisations, including the non-*Ogaden Darod* ones, came under the ESDL's umbrella. However the ONLF still stood aloof and on 23 February 1994 the president of the regional parliament, an *Ogaden*, was demoted and later replaced with an *Isaq* ESDL member. On a whole, the relative power of non-*Ogaden* clans, particularly *Dir (Isaq, Issa and Gadabursi)* grew. The regional capital was moved from Gode to Jijiga in October, partially because of Gode's remote location and lack of services, but also in order to remove the regional power centre from the centre of the Ogaden. Although the regional administration improved, sporadic actions by the ONLF and *al Ittehad* persisted, including attacks on buses with the selective killing of Christian highlanders. It may be noted that, apart from religious differences, there are also ethnic stereotypes between Somalis and highland Ethiopians: the former consider the latter as secretive, morbidly attached to money and their women with low moral standards. Highland Ethiopians on their side see Somalis as trigger-happy bandits ("*shifta*"), contrabandists and *chat* addicts.

Concerning demographic information, a census originally conducted by the Ethiopian Government in 1994 and repeated again in 1997 owing to some "technical" problems revealed that the total population of Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia (formerly Region Five) was 3,439,860, out of which 3,235,686 persons were ethnic Somalis, the other main ethnic groups being the *Oromo* (76,1232) and the *Amhara* (23,576). Another few hundred thousand Ethiopian Somalis should be living in other areas of Ethiopia, making the total around 3.5-3.8 million⁴⁷. The percentages of the main clans can be estimated as follows:

Table 4: Estimated clan percentages of the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia⁴⁸

Main clans	Percentage
<i>Ogaden/Darod</i>	40-50%
Other <i>Darod (Jidwaq, Geri, Harti)</i>	10%
<i>Dir (Isaq, Issa, Gadabursi)</i>	30-40%
Others (<i>Hawiye, Gaboye, etc.</i>)	10%

From an economic point of view, pastoralism is the main mode of production of the Somali region of Ethiopia and a large part of the cattle exported through the port of Berbera originates from there, hence the livestock embargo was economically damaging not only for Somalia, but also for eastern Ethiopia.

⁴⁷ See Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1998): "The 1994 population census: results for Somali Region, Summary Report". The figure does not take into account the Somali population living in the "autonomous administration" of the city of Dire-Dawa, nor the Somalis living in other urban areas such as Nazareth or Addis.

⁴⁸ This is admittedly a "guesstimate". However it tries to take into account the relative areas and population densities occupied by the clans.

Agriculture is practised in the more fertile areas between Jijiga and Dire-Dawa.

10. The Impact of the Arta Conference and of September the 11th

The end of the Cold War and its bipolar world caused an earthquake in the Horn of Africa. It is not by coincidence that two emblematic leaders such as Siyad Barre and Mengistu Hailemariam were both overthrown in 1991. Regarding western interests, the Soviet threat was soon replaced by the Islamic one. But Ethiopia and Eritrea remained squarely in the western camp, contrary to the forecasts of those who thought that they would have joined the Islamic sphere owing to the fact that both TPLF and the EPLF used to have their bases in Sudan and that there is probably a slight Muslim majority in both countries. In this changed geopolitical context, Somalia began losing its strategic importance. After burning their fingers, the Americans adopted a low profile by supporting multilateral initiatives. Italy became *de facto* the leader of European countries in the search of solutions, despite its past support to Barre, maybe because of a sense of historical responsibility and given its role as chairman of IGAD's partners.

However, even if the influence of the Great Powers declined, the prolonged power vacuum in Somalia facilitated the involvement of external actors at a regional level, particularly Ethiopia and Egypt. Ethiopia's third reconciliation initiative in Sodere in January 1997 and a counter-initiative by the Egyptians in Cairo at the end of the same year managed to produce rival alliances, but not overall peace. It is obvious that Ethiopia, with over a thousand kilometres of border with Somalia, a historically conflictual past relationship and a substantial part of its territory inhabited by ethnic Somalis, is directly concerned. Besides the fear that a re-united Somalia might fuel the Ogaden' secessionist tendencies, Ethiopia's anxiety was also caused by the incursions of the fundamentalist *al Ittehad* (see above). We should also note that Ethiopia had a mandate to attempt to solve the Somali conundrum from IGAD and that it has been extremely generous in with Somali refugees and ethnic Somali returnees.

Meanwhile, some Arab countries - particularly Egypt (who sponsored two reconciliation conferences) - tried to wield their influence, formally on the grounds that Somalia belongs to the Arab League (though Somalis are not ethnically Arabs). What is Egypt's strategic interest in Somali affairs? According to a theory that has wide currency in the Horn and also expounded by Ibrahim Egal⁴⁹, Egypt would have an interest to keep Ethiopia under pressure in order to prevent it from carrying out infrastructural and agricultural works that may involve a diversion of the waters of the Nile. In fact most of the waters that join in Khartoum actually come from Ethiopia with the Blue Nile, rather than from Uganda with the White Nile, because of the strong evaporation of the waters in the southern Sudan marshes. However some progress on this issue was made during two tripartite ministerial meetings in 2001.

A new factor in the geopolitical context was the beginning of the so-called "border war" between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998⁵⁰. The problem of Ethiopia's outlet to the sea increased the importance of Djibouti (that became Ethiopia's lifeline during the war) and Berbera ports. But at the same time it contributed to further destabilise Somalia, as, according to press reports⁵¹, Eritrea sent weapons consignments to Aidiid's faction and helped infiltrating several hundred fighters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, the main armed opposition movement in Ethiopia) who reached Corioley, 120 km. south-west of Mogadishu. This provoked a reaction by the Ethiopia army (already reportedly penetrated in Somalia several times in pursuit of fundamentalist groups) that entered Somalia in co-

⁴⁹ M. Maren *op cit.*, pp. 247-248. See also the *Horn of Africa Bulletin* editorial (Sept.-Oct. 1997): "The Nile: a source of conflict and co-operation".

⁵⁰ Besides border demarcation issues there were also economic ones such as Ethiopia's access to the seaport of Assab and of the parity between the Ethiopian *birr* and the newly introduced Eritrean *naqfa*.

⁵¹ *Indian Ocean Newsletter* (ION), no. 864, July 1999: "Somalia: Africa's Balkans".

operation with the *Rahanweyn* Resistance Army (RRA), founded by the southern agricultural clans to defend themselves from repeated attacks and led by Hassan Mohammed Nur "Shatigudud". This time Ethiopian and RRA troops arrived near Mogadishu and managed to have the OLF expelled from Somali territories.

On 2 May 2000 yet another reconciliation conference (by some counts the 12th) was inaugurated at the initiative of Djibouti's new president Ismael Omar Guelleh in the hillside town of Arta (Djibouti), nine years after the failure of the one held under the auspices of the old president Hassan Gouled Aptidon. But this time the approach should have been different: not the usual three days affair among warlords in a luxurious hotel, but a long *shir* Somali-style with a wide involvement of civil society. The conference lasted five months and hosted over 850 delegates from the various clans⁵². On 13 August the delegates elected a parliament with 225 seats shared as follows: 44 to the *Dir*, 44 to the *Darod*, 44 to the *Hawiye*, 44 to the *Digil-Mirfle*, 24 to "minorities" and 25 to women. The MPs then elected Mr. Abdulkassim Salat Hassan (*Habar Gidir/Hawiye*) as the new president (at the presence of several heads of state and of government in the region) who in turn appointed Ali Khalif Galaidh (*Dulbahante/Darod*) as prime minister⁵³. Both were experienced politicians with a past in Barre's regime. President Hassan's arrival in Mogadishu on 14 October was defined a "hero's welcome"⁵⁴ also thanks to satellite TV (Arabsat) that broadcast the Arta conference deliberations. Finally, at least on paper, the new Transitional National Government (TNG) seemed to achieve the delicate clan balance: a *Hawiye* president, a *Darod* prime minister, a *Digil-Mirfle* speaker of parliament and an *Isaq* minister of foreign affairs.

Unfortunately, soon after the enthusiasm for the president's arrival in Mogadishu, four warlords based in the capital manifested their hostility against the new administration and violence erupted, although one of them (Mohammed Kanyare Afrah) eventually joined the governmental ranks⁵⁵. The newly recruited police force did not manage to extend its authority much beyond Mogadishu. Relations with the leaders of the three other "entities", Shatigudud in the south, Abdillahi Yussuf in the north-east and Ibrahim Egal in the north-west were even more complex given their close relationship with Ethiopia. Shatigudud, who originally attended the Arta conference, may have changed his mind since the constitutional chart issued in Arta foresaw that the government would initially convene in the southern city of Baidoa, the RRA's stronghold, but at the last minute president Hassan decided to head directly for Mogadishu. It is likely that this was perceived by Shatigudud as an attempt to circumvent him. At any rate, over one year after its establishment, the TNG only manages to control parts of Mogadishu and few other locations (like Kismayo that once again changed hand to a pro-TNG alliance), but peace and security still seem a long way ahead. Furthermore, the interim government of Prime Minister Ai Khalif Galayr was voted out following a no-confidence motion passed by the Transitional Assembly on 28 October 2001 on grounds of financial mismanagement and of failing to bring peace to Mogadishu and to the country as a whole⁵⁶. A new PM, Mr. Hassan Abshir Farah (*Majertein* from Puntland) was nominated, but new clashes erupted in the capital, such as on 27 December 2001 when 11 persons died⁵⁷, and elsewhere in the country. The TNG's main success has so far been on the diplomatic front as it is recognised by the UN and by many middle-eastern and western governments.

⁵² At great cost to Djibouti (BBC News Online, 09/08/2000: "Somalia talks money runs out"). For an excellent analysis of the conference, see. K. Menkhaus: "Somali: a situation analysis", UNHCR/WriteNet, November 2000.

⁵³ BBC News Online, 26/08/2000: "Old hand Hassan is new president". Hassan was elected after two rounds in which he competed with Ali Mahdi, Ali Khalif Galaid and Ahmed Adow (*Habar Gidir/Hawiye*) first and then only against Ahmed Adow.

⁵⁴ BBC News Online, 14/10/2000: "Hero's welcome for Somalia's president".

⁵⁵ See, e.g. IRIN/HOA 15/11/2000: "Somali MP assassinated". There was also a kidnapping.

⁵⁶ IRIN/HOA, 29/10/2001: "Parliament votes out interim government".

⁵⁷ BBC News Online, 27/12/2001: "Heavy fighting erupts in Mogadishu".

Regarding Puntland, the establishment of the TNG in Mogadishu caused political tensions⁵⁸. Abdillahi Yussuf, another Ethiopia ally, after having initially authorised the presence of his delegates in Arta, strongly criticised the conference arguing that talks with the rest of Somalia could have taken place only on the basis of Puntland's recognition and in the framework of negotiations at the regional level, the so-called "building-block" approach. This would have indirectly legitimised the power of 4-5 regional leaders at the "clan-family" level (e.g. the *Majertein's* Puntland, the *Hawiye's* central regions, Somaliland, the *Digil-Mirfle* RRA regions in the south and the southern *Darod* regions of Kismayo and Gedo). But instead of the building-block approach, the Arta conference adopted what may be termed as a "clanic-constituent" one, with a certain degree of regional autonomy, but on the basis of the 18 micro-regions of the Barre era and hence to the detriment of the emerging macro-regions⁵⁹. Back in Puntland a conference was convened in the regional capital, Garowe, to elect a new administration in August 2001 after the expiry of Yussuf's mandate. After a long ordeal, including the nomination of an interim president, the delegates finally elected Mr. Jama Ali Jama on 14 November. However on 21 November and again on 11 January, Abdillahi Yussuf's militia attacked Garowe, reportedly with Ethiopia backing, even if this was denied by the Ethiopia authorities⁶⁰. Although ostensibly the conflict had to do with power and sub-clan politics (Ali Jama is an *Osman Mahmud/Majertein* whose power base is Bosaso, while Abdillahi is an *Omar Mahmud/Majertein* from Galkayo), we surmise that Abdillahi Yussuf's violent reaction with the reported Ethiopian backing is also to prevent a possible drift towards the TNG in Mogadishu, if the regional question is solved.

Let us now turn to Somaliland. Contrary to Puntland, the issue is not only power, but also ideology, as the radical SNM nationalism still has a large following among the *Isaq* population of Somaliland and the diaspora. On the other hand Egal, with a long political past in the unitary period, at times appeared less dogmatic and more flexible on the issue. Already before Arta he was often accused in the nationalist local press of fostering political ambitions in a united Somalia. In a BBC interview in November 2000 Egal declared that "as soon as Somalia has put its house in order, we are ready to discuss with them – even reunification – although the time has not yet come"⁶¹. But, besides the regional question, we also need to consider that the appointment of a *Garhajis/Isaq* (a sub-clan that violently opposed Egal's administration in 1994⁶²) to an important ministerial portfolio in the first TNG was perceived as a threat to the legitimacy of the Somaliland government. Egal is therefore between the rock of the SNM radical nationalists and the hard place of the Mogadishu government that seems to try to delegitimise him in own constituency.

Somaliland's relative success in bringing a minimum of peace and stability to its own people deserves support and it is unreasonable to hope that it would commit political suicide on the altar of the Arta peace conference. Moreover, with the recent start of official Ethiopian Airlines flights to Hargeisa and the Ethiopian recognition of the new Somaliland passports, it already enjoys *de facto* recognition. A *de jure* recognition would bring the undoubted advantages of facilitating trade agreements and foreign investments. Nevertheless it might also present some problems. First, and perhaps most seriously, it may create border issues with Puntland that - as we have seen - also claims the regions of Sool and Sanaag. Second, the prospects of "fat cheques" by the international financial institutions might turn make the current relatively peaceful power competition into a more conflictual struggle. Finally, contrary to

⁵⁸ IRIN/HOA, 06/02/2001: "Puntland accuses Mogadishu of inciting protest".

⁵⁹ See *Horn of Africa Bulletin* 2/2000 (quoting the BBC): "Puntland statement on attending the conference" and UN Security Council : report of the Secretary General on the situation in Somalia", 19/12/2000. For an excellent analysis of the "building blocks approach", see Bryden (1999).

⁶⁰ IRIN/HOA, 10/01/02 "Renewed fighting in Garowe", 14/01/02: "Ethiopia says it has no reason to deply troops"

⁶¹ BBC News Online, 13/11/2000: "Somaliland leader warns against union".

⁶² See IRIN/HOA, 16/10/2000: "Somalia: foreign minister appointed" and ION no. 923, 28/10/2000: "Somalia: government which scares Hargeisa".

Eritrea, Somaliland's independence does not have the consent of the "parent state" and Somaliland did not hold a referendum until recently. Eventually, in May 2001 a referendum on independence and a new constitution was held and approved by a 97% majority. However, in the absence of a census and of an electoral register, the validity of the results is questionable although there is little doubt that a majority of Somaliland's inhabitants - with the exception of the *Darod* clans and partially of *Gadabursi* - do favour independence. This decision, as well as some strains with the UN, seems therefore more for internal political consumption than for the international community, and was also a sign of a hardening of the position vis a vis Mogadishu.

In this polarised and tense situation, there have been persistent reports of Ethiopian interventions in support of factions opposed to the TNG, both with military aid and with troop incursions⁶³. Ethiopia has categorically denied these accusations claiming that on the one hand it has legitimate security concerns (Islamic terrorism with bases in Somalia) and that, on the other hand, it has no interest in promoting instability and that its only concern is to encourage the TNG to involve in the peace process the actors and "entities" so far excluded⁶⁴ (i.e. Shatigudud/RRA, Yussuf/Puntland and Egal/Somaliland). It is true that Ethiopia's prime minister Melles Zenawi participated in the ceremony for president Hassan's nomination and that the latter visited officially Addis Ababa. But we should also note that Ethiopia is also deeply mistrustful of the political and economic links of the TNG with the Arab world and of the support received by the Islamic tribunals in Mogadishu⁶⁵. Another motive, so far remote, may be the fear of a return to the "pan-Somali" ideology that led to the Ogaden war in 1977. Moreover, in March 2001, Ethiopia hosted the constituent meeting of the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council, opposed to the TNG. It included most warlords left out by the Arta conference: Shatigudud, Abdullahi Yussuf, Osman Atto, Mussa Sudi "Yalahow" and Hussein Aidiid, who was nominated temporary chairman. The fact that Aidiid was a bitter foe of both Ethiopia and Shatigudud only a couple of years earlier, shows that alliances are not carved in ideological stones, but can shift on the basis of pragmatic considerations. Moreover, the emergence of the TNG and the SRRC opposition shows a limitation of the clan-based model that we have expounded, as most clans can now be found on both sides of the fence. However, clan balancing still plays a major role in political appointments in both TNG and SRRC camps.

At the same time there have also been realignments at the regional level. Relations between Ethiopia and Djibouti, very close during the Ethiopia-Eritrea "border war" (1998-2000), cooled considerably on the issue of port tariffs and on the approach to the Somali question⁶⁶, while those between Ethiopia and Somaliland improved steadily. Conversely, relations between Djibouti and Eritrea, broken during the "border war", are now on the mend while the border between Djibouti and Somaliland was closed for most of the year 2001.

The end of the Cold War brought about a disengagement by the Great Powers from the Somali situation but facilitated a growing involvement of other players in the Horn and the Middle East with a danger of a "middle-easternisation"⁶⁷. The September the 11th aftermath has now thrown Somalia back on the main stage, regrettably in relation to the "war against terrorism". It does appear likely that radical Islamist

⁶³ See, e.g. IRIN/HOA 20/12/2000: "Somalia: government forces clash with militia", BBC News Online, 08/01/2001: "Somalia accuses Ethiopia", IRIN/HOA 23/10/2001: "Abdillahi Yussuf meets Ethiopian officials", BBC News Online, 07/01/2002 "Ethiopian troops 'deploy' in Somalia".

⁶⁴ IRIN/HOA, 10/01/2001: "Ethiopia: Somali interference accusations denied"; 15/01/2001: "Ethiopia strongly rebuts accusations of meddling in Somalia".

⁶⁵ See K, Menkhaus, 2000 (*op cit.*) and IRIN/HOA, 02/01/2001: "Ethiopia and Somalia: an uneasy relationship". of 28/02/2002.

⁶⁶ BBC News Online, 20/01/2001: "Ethiopia rejects Djibouti port charges".

⁶⁷ See Ambroso (2001).

groups linked to the Middle East infiltrated Somalia and the Horn. In fact, already in the mid '90s, the fundamentalist group *al Ittehad* mentioned above was widely rumoured to be funded by some Saudi circles through Sudan. The presence of "Afghani" instructors was also reported, which would indeed suggest some links with *al Qaeda*. Moreover there have been recent statements by Ethiopian officials, Hussein Aidiid and the Italian press that *Ittehad* is still active in Somalia and that its spiritual leader, Sheikh Omar Faruk, "blessed" TNG president Abdulkassim's nomination in Arta⁶⁸. However many observers agree that *Ittehad* is now a "spent force" unable to control any territory and are wary of the consequences, both at the intra-Somali and regional levels, of the possibility of turning Somalia into a western protectorate maybe through some unsavoury and unreliable warlord with external backing. Moreover the US decision, immediately followed by the Ethiopians, to close down all traditional Somali banks such as *al Barakat* because of suspected *al Qaeda* infiltrations, is now seriously hindering the flow of remittances from abroad, another serious blow to an economy already battered by the livestock ban. At this writing (February 2002) we can only hope that Somalia's role in the "war on terror" will not be another chapter in the unfortunate history of perverse relationship between Somalia and external involvement⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ See M. Alberizzi's articles in the *Corriere della Sera* of 28/01/2002 and 03/02/2002, the Ethiopian ambassador to the UN (Abdulmajed Hussein, actually an ethnic Somali) statement quoted in IRIN/HOA of 24/10/2001 and Hussein Aidiid's interview in IRIN/HOA of 01/02/2002.

⁶⁹ We hence agree with Bryden's (1999b) conclusion that foreign political initiatives in Somalia have an even poorer track record than international assistance. But we should also consider that the task of external actors is complicated by the fact that, as Prunier (1996 p. 84) argues, the collapse of the state is "the logical consequence of the vulnerability of the state in a society where it has no roots". While this may indeed call for novel interpretations of sovereignty and a deconstruction and reconstruction of the state along new lines, perhaps on the basis of revived "building-blocks", the state remains a pivotal feature of contemporary international relations and the break-up hinted by Bryden (*ibid.*) might cause as many new problems as solutions to old ones.

PART III: REFUGEES AND RETURNEES IN EASTERN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALILAND

1. Refugee Influxes and Camps

The “classical” definition of refugee contained in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees appeared to be ill-suited to the majority of African refugees who started fleeing after decolonisation: these were by and large not the victims of state persecution, but of civil wars and the collapse of law and order, that is “failed states”. Hence the 1969 OAU Convention expanded the definition of “refugee” to include these aspects. Furthermore, the refugee-dissident of the ‘50s was mainly fleeing as individual or in small family groups and underwent “individual refugees status determination”, that is in-depth interviews to determine their eligibility to refugee status according to the criteria set out in the Convention. But the mass refugee movements in Africa and subsequently in other situations made this approach impractical. As a result refugee status was granted on a *prima facie* basis (face value), that is with only a very summary interview or often simply with registration (in its most basic form just the name of the head of family and the family size).

In the Somali context the implementation of this approach proved problematic. Given that most clans and sub-clans are transnational (*i.e.* they stretch across the borders) – it becomes very difficult to distinguish between *bona fide* refugees from across the border and locals “joining the queue” in order to gain a ration card. Furthermore it is almost impossible to police the long porous borders in order to make sure that only those who cross are considered. In fact, even with lengthy individual interviews, it would be very difficult to distinguish between Ethiopian Somalis and Somali-Somalis. For example for the *Gadabursi* it would entail going at least five steps down the genealogical tree and even then it would be impossible to dispute a claim to be *e.g.* *Mahmaud/Nur/Yonis/Makahil/Gadabursi* (mainly from the Somali side of the border), as opposed to *Farah/Nur/Yonis/Makahil/Gadabursi* (locals from the Ethiopian side of the border some 12 km. away). The following is a recapitulation of the events that led to the establishment of the camps and to changes in their population. UNHCR's main governmental partner for refugees and returnee affairs in Ethiopia was the “Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs” (ARRA), a department of the Ethiopian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

1.1. The 1988 Influx: the *Isaq* Camps (Hartasheikh and the Aware Camps).

These camps were established after the destruction of Hargeisa, Burao and other smaller urban centres in May '88 by the Somali army in retaliation for the SNM's uprising which led to a massive influx of mostly *Isaq* refugees into eastern Ethiopia.

Hartasheikh A and B. Hartasheikh catered in particular for the refugees who fled the destruction of Hargeisa and, to a lesser extent, the rural centre of Gabiley. The flight followed the traditional Somali pattern of clan lines: the inhabitants of the western sections of Hargeisa and of the Gabiley district belonging to the *Saad Mussa/Habar Awal* and -to a lesser extent - the *Arab* clans of the *Isaq*, found sanctuary across the border in an area inhabited by the same (sub)clans. In particular, the *Jibril Aboker/Saad Mussa* (from western Hargeisa and Gabiley) fled to a site called in Somali *Dul'ad* (Hartasheikh A, actually located in the *deghan* of the *Abdallah Aboker/Saad Mussa*), the *Hussein Aboker/Saad Mussa* to a neighbouring site called *Bali Aley* (Hartasheikh B) and the *Arab/Isaq* to Harshin, all located in their sub-clan territory (*deghan*). The *Arab/Isaq* were then relocated in Hartasheikh B. At one point in 1988 Hartasheikh had the dubious honour of being the largest camp in the world, with over 400,000 refugees. In 1991, however, a new counting exercise brought the number down to 250,000.

The Hartasheikh camps hosted a majority of urban population (particularly the highly urbanised and commerce-oriented *Saad Mussa/Habar Awal*) and a minority of agropastoralists. According to a report commissioned by SCF/UK ¹ “*the consensus among refugees and agency staff - and the common sense view - is that it is the better-off town-dwelling refugees who have left the camp. This*

¹ See Ahmed Yussuf Farah (1994)

would mean ... those who owned their own houses. On the other hand “a residual of mainly urban poor remain in Hartasheikh. They expressed a desire to repatriate but lack the means to return and the resources necessary to relocate and sustain themselves... The urban poor will probably prove the most difficult to repatriate”. According to the same source, the other two main groups inhabiting the Hartasheikh camps were local people from the nearby areas and Somaliland agropastoralists from the Gabiley district. Although maybe up to 60% of the camp population was made up of genuine refugees, there were also some locals who managed to get a ration card, even if on a smaller scale than in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji (see below).

Compared with the Aware camps (see below) Hartasheikh was endowed with relatively good services: a school, a clinic, as well as fresh water trucked from the boreholes (dug by UNHCR) in Jerer Valley, some 35 km away (though this was subsequently discontinued). Spontaneous and organised repatriation however reduced the number of refugees in Hartasheikh from 250,000 in 1991 to around 30,000 in 1999 and actually led to the closure of Hartasheikh B that was “consolidated” with Hartasheikh A in mid ’99. This move was fiercely resisted by local refugee leaders who – although given the choice of either repatriating or relocating a few miles to the west in Hartasheikh A – were afraid to lose their power base by being relocated with their neighbours from a different sub-sub-clan. Over the years Hartasheikh changed from a small hamlet of a few huts around a pond to a fully-fledged little town with a flourishing market that became the main centre for informal trade between Berbera port and eastern Ethiopia and will probably survive the eventual downsizing of the refugee operation.

The Aware camps (Camaboker, Rabasso and Daror). The three camps are located to the east of Hartasheikh in the *deghan* of some eastern *Isaq* sub-clans, notably the *Idagalle/Garhajis* (Camaboker and Rabasso) and the *Habar Yonis/Garhajis* and *Habar Ja’lo* (Daror). At the peak of the influx the three Aware camps accommodated over 120,000 refugees in total. Overall the three camps host a larger proportion of rural and pastoral refugees than Hartasheikh, although about 40% of the mainly *Idagalle* refugees in Camaboker (the westernmost of the three camps) are of urban origin², mostly eastern Hargeisa (even though the heart of their *deghan* - clan area - is the city of Salahley). On the other hand the mainly *Idagalle* refugees in Rabasso appear to be by and large pastoralist from surrounding areas from both sides of the border. Finally the refugees in Daror, the easternmost camp, are mainly *Habar Yonis* and to a lesser extent *Habar Ja’lo Isaq*. The main areas of origin are Burao (*Habar Yonis*, but some also originate from Hargeisa) and the neighbouring shanty-town of Yarowe (*Habar Ja’lo*). However, part of the population of Burao and east Togdheer, did not manage to be accommodated in a refugee camp as it became logistically very problematic for UNHCR to operate to east of Daror and therefore further away from Jijiga, the last supply centre. Some of the people who fled this region hence became “spontaneous refugees and returnees”. During the 1988 crisis the three “*Garhajis* camps” hosted a refugee population of some 121,000 persons that decreased to 37,000 in September 1994 as a result of spontaneous repatriation (already noted in the quoted SCF report in 1994), as revealed by the September 1994 revalidation exercise.

The high level of spontaneous repatriation from the three camps was possibly caused by the fact that, owing to the distance from Jijiga (the last resource centre), the quality of services such as water and education was lower than in the other camps. For example the three Aware camps did not receive water from deep wells, unlike Hartasheikh, Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, but relied on surface water collected in the traditional Somali cisterns, the *birkads*. The supply was therefore dependent on the seasonal rains and at times of drought UNHCR was obliged to truck the water from very far afield. The events of November 1994 reversed this declining population trend as the Aware camps received approximately 73,000 out of the 90,000 who fled the renewed fighting in Somaliland, bringing the population up to some 114,000 refugees, although there are indications that the numbers in Daror might have been inflated by locals. These new refugees were once again *Garhajis*, particularly *Idagalle* fleeing the counterattack of Egal’s forces. These eastern camps, further away from the main trade routes, will probably not survive the cessation of humanitarian assistance, unlike Hartasheikh, as

² *Ibid.*

we have seen, and the *Gadabursi* camps, to which we shall now turn. However their remoteness meant that they were also the last ones to be affected by repatriation, which started only in 2001. The estimated percentage of *bona fide* refugees was 50 to 60% like in Haratsheikh, though probably lower in Daror that, given its remote location, was kept less under control during the 1994 influx.

1.2. The 1991 Influx: the *Gadabursi* Camps (Teferi Ber and Darwanaji), Kebre Beyah and Aisha.

Teferi Ber and Darwanaji. At the end of January 1991, after liberating Hargeisa, the victorious *Isaq*-led SNM proceeded west towards the *Gadabursi* territory, a clan that had given low-key support to Siyad Barre's regime, with whom they clashed in the city of Dilla, the first city of the mainly *Gadabursi* region of Awdal as one travels from Hargeisa. The clash led to the destruction of the town and the ensuing exodus of the mainly *Reer Nur/Makahil/Gadabursi* population to Ethiopia gave rise to the camp of *Teferi Ber*³ with some 98,000 people. Many local *Farah/Nur/Yonis/Makahil*, infiltrated the refugee caseload of the mainly *Mahamud/ Nur/Yonis* who escaped from Dilla, located only 15 km away. The SNM then continued westwards towards Borama and a brief stand-off with the local militia - however solved after 24 hours - also sent a few thousand across the border. This led to the creation of the Darwanaji camp, but its population was also swollen by the presence of local Ethiopian Somalis. The camp of Darwanaji, some 20 km from the provincial capital of the Awdal region of Somaliland – Borama – is also dominated by the *Gadabursi*, but is more mixed at the sub-clan level. Although there is a slight majority of *Jibril Yonis* both local and from a few kilometres across the border in Somaliland, the coastal *Mahad Asse*, who fled a local war with the neighbouring *Issa*, are also present as well as other *Makahil* sub-sub-clans. The camp was relatively well serviced with a school, a clinic, and water trucked from the nearby boreholes of Lafa Issa. It is probable that, like Hartasheikh, the two camps will survive the end of refugee assistance as they became important trade centres also owing to their favourable location on trade routes from the north-western Somaliland coast to the Ethiopian interior.

Besides the *Gadabursi*, the two camps also hosted two substantial minority groups: *Darod*, particularly *Absame (Jidwaq and Ogaden)* returnees and low-caste *Gaboye* refugees. It will be remembered that these *Darod* clans used to be very close to Barre's regime during their time as refugees in Somalia, from where they fled in 1991 upon his down-fall upon fear of retaliation both in the south, at the hands of the Hawiye/USC and in the north-west, at the hands of the *Isaq/SNM*. Regarding the *Gaboye*, it is worth recalling that this low-caste occupational group had also given low-key support to Siyad Barre and hence fled their home areas in Somaliland in fear of retaliation by the *Isaq/SNM*. The *Gaboye* and related minority groups hence constituted one of the few groups of *bona fide* refugees, together with some *Gadabursi* sub-clans from Dilla and from the coastal areas. Their repatriation movement and reintegration process will be further discussed below.

We have noted above how, according to several sources, including refugees, former Ethiopian ARRA officials and the quoted SCF report, the camps' population was swollen by the presence of local people during the registration exercise in 1991. Though some of them were Ethiopian Somali *Darod* returnees, it is clear that many local people who had never been refugees before, also managed to "join the queue". Furthermore, during that period some beneficiaries managed to collect more than one card with some leaders who were dubbed "card lords". Finally, the proximity of the two camps with the main areas of origin in Somaliland/Somalia, made it very easy for the refugees to commute and trade across the border who could literally be refugees by day and returnees by night. As a result the terms "refugees" and repatriation became very relative concepts, as we shall see. At any rate, the official caseload of the two camps declined from 215,000 at the peak of the crisis in 1991, to some 77,000 in 1994, after a revalidation exercise (see below). It is estimated that, with the exception of the first few months of 1991, at no time did the "real" refugee caseload exceed 30-40% of the total population holding ration cards.

³ lit. "the gates of Teferi", *i.e.* Haile Selassie, but in Somali the camp was known as *Aw Barre*

Kebre Beyah and Aisha

The remaining two camps in eastern Ethiopia are very far apart and are inhabited by different clans. The first one, Kebre Beyah, was established to cater for those *Darod* refugees (and some returnees) who did not manage to go to Kenya and were scared to go to Hartasheikh for fear of revenge by the *Isaq*. It is the closest to Jijiga and is located in the *Darod* area of the quarrelsome *Abeskul/Jidwaq/Absame*. The local population often tried to profit from the water tankering operation from the boreholes of Jerer valley toward the Hartasheikh camps. Although the trucks did supply water not only to Kebre Beyah camps (about half way to Hartasheikh), but also to local villages, there were frequent threats and occasional acts of violence against the mainly highland Ethiopian *Amhara* drivers for reasons of employment. Endless compensation claims arose as a result of children playing and falling from the back of water tankers. Once a man approached the UNHCR Jijiga office claiming that he fell from the top of a water truck and injured his testicles a few months before and hence seeking compensation! A planned pipeline to substitute the water trucking operation managed by CARE, was first marred by disputes among locals over employment and then by the fact that the contractor, of Eritrean origin, fled after the beginning of the border war in May 1998.

The Kebre Beyah camp, which kept a population more or less stable at just over 10,000 individuals, was the only predominantly *Darod* refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia. The main *Darod* sub-clans present in the camp are: *Absame* (*Ogaden* and *Jidwaq*), mostly returnees, *Harti* (*Majertein* and *Dulbahante*) and *Marrahan*, mainly refugees. It was subsequently discovered that also some of the *Marrahan* originated from a small local lineage and hence were also mainly returnees. It is estimated that the percentage of *bona fide* refugees is between 50 and 60%, mostly from southern Somalia and hence unlikely to repatriate in the near future. The rest was mainly made up of Ethiopian-Somali returnees.

Finally, clashes around the coastal areas between the rival *Gadabursi* and *Issa* clans in the late '80s led to the establishment of the Aisha camp near the Djibouti border. In 1991 other *Issa* fleeing the coastal town of Zeila attacked by the *Isaq*-led SNM were also sheltered in the camp. By the end of 1991 the refugee population in the camps totalled 628,526 refugees. Interviews in the camp revealed that there was also a substantial presence of local people among the card holders. Given the camp's isolation from the other camps and the distance from Jijiga, it never underwent a revalidation exercise and therefore kept the population stable at around 15,000 persons. It is estimated that over time the percentage of genuine refugees declined to 30-40%.

1.3. The 1994 Revalidation Exercise and the New Influx.

As soon as the SNM took over NW Somalia in 1991, many refugees, particularly *Isaq*, started trekking back home. Similarly, many *Gadabursi* started returning as soon as matters were settled between their clan and the SNM. As a result the refugee population appeared much smaller than what the official numbers indicated and the international community started reducing the food ration. In order to clarify the confusion, in September 1994 the Ethiopian government (ARRA and the army), with logistical support from UNHCR, carried out a surprise commando operation to fix the population number once and for all. The operation was carried out simultaneously in all the camps in a very professional manner and lasted from dawn to sunset. The army cordoned-off the camps and, together with ARRA and UNHCR as observer, proceeded to "validate" ration cards with a sticker indicating the changes in family size according to the number of people that were observed in every family *tukul* (tent/hut). The result was an astonishing drop in numbers from 628,000 to 184,900, one of the most successful operations in the long history of failed attempts to count Somali refugees. Or rather, to count the number of people in the camps at a given time without any infiltration from the surrounding population. What – by definition – the exercise is not able to tell you is whether the beneficiaries are "genuine" refugees from the other side of the border or locals who acquired a card and drifted in the camps. That could be done only through individual interviews and even then the result is not guaranteed. It is also possible that some refugees may find themselves legitimately out of the camp during the operation. For example, a group of southern *Hawiye* who, lacking the support of the local

clan network, were particularly impoverished, were rearing the cattle of the majority *Isaq* at the time of the revalidation and had to be re-included at a later stage.

The result of this population reduction was however short-lived because in November 1994, as we have seen in Part II, the so-called “airport war” which ravaged Hargeisa and other areas inhabited mainly by *Garhajis/Isaq*, caused a renewed exodus to eastern Ethiopia. However this time the operation was kept more under control than those of 1988 and 1991 and “only” 90,000 new refugees were registered, including the “left-overs” from the September revalidation. The overall camp population increased to 277,000. The only camp where there might have been a major leak was Daror as its population increased by 37,000, from 12,000 to 49,000. This new influx temporarily put on hold UNHCR’s repatriation plans.

Table 5: Recapitulation of main clans & sub-clans in the camps, areas of origin and estimate of actual refugee presence

CAMP	Main clans and sub-clans	Minority clans	Main areas of origin (excluding locals)	Estim. % of genuine refugees
Hartasheikh A	<i>Saad Mussa (Jibril Aboker)/Habar Awal/Isaq</i>	<i>Hawiye</i>	Hargeisa, Gabiley	50%
Hartasheikh B	<i>Saad Mussa (Hussein Aboker)/Habar Awal/Isaq Arab/Isaq</i>	<i>Hawiye</i>	Hargeisa, Bali, Gubadley	50%
Rabasso	<i>Idagalle/Garhajis/Isaq</i>	N/A	Salahley, Hargeisa	50%
Camaboker	<i>Idagalle/Garhajis/Isaq Habar Yonis/Garhajis/Isaq</i>	N/A	Hargeisa, Salahley, Burao	50%
Daror	<i>Habar Yonis/Garhajis/Isaq Habar Jello/Isaq</i>	N/A	Burao, Odweyne, Hargeisa,	30%
Teferi Ber	<i>Reer Nur/Gadabursi</i>	<i>Gaboye, Darod</i>	Borama, Dilla, Gabiley, Hargeisa	30%
Darwanaji	<i>Gadabursi (various)</i>	<i>Gaboye, Darod</i>	Borama, Lughaya, Hargeisa	30%
Kebre Beyah	<i>Darod (various)</i>	N/A	Somalia "proper"	50%
Aisha	<i>Issa</i>	N/A	Zeila, Lughaya	40%

2. Patterns of Repatriation (1991-99)

2.1. UNHCR’s Repatriation Mandate and Types of Repatriation

The legal basis for UNHCR’s involvement in voluntary repatriation stems primarily from two sources. The first one is its statute, which calls on the High Commissioner to promote durable solutions for returnees, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Voluntary repatriation is considered the most preferable of durable solutions. The second source is from the Conclusions of UNHCR’s Executive Committee which state, *inter alia*, that UNHCR should keep the possibility of repatriation under active review from the outset of a refugee situation, that it should establish the voluntary character of repatriation and that it should assist returnees in their reintegration. States are said to have a responsibility to create conditions conducive to repatriation. In other words, UNHCR should promote repatriation, whenever conditions permit it, verify its voluntary character and provide assistance. However this assistance should not only be confined to the repatriation phase, but should also include the initial phases of re-establishing a livelihood in the country of origin, often devastated by war. An important protection-related feature of voluntary repatriation is the freedom of choice of destination which stems from a fundamental human right, that of freedom of movement.

It is nowadays widely acknowledged that “organised” voluntary repatriation accounts for only a fraction of all repatriation movements taking place. It is therefore important to distinguish between different types of repatriation movements. First of all there is the so-called “spontaneous” repatriation,

that is with no UNHCR involvement, although it would be better to call it “self-organised”, since often there are hidden social networks at work⁴. This was the case in Somaliland between 1991 and 1994. By definition it is difficult to provide precise figures in this respect, but by comparing official refugee numbers between the peak of the refugee population in 1991 and the 1994 revalidation exercise, it can be concluded that over 400,000 persons repatriated spontaneously or dispersed locally⁵. Secondly, there may be situations in which UNHCR may facilitate the repatriation through the provision of limited assistance, normally at the request of individual refugees, without actively promoting it. Sometimes this is called “semi-organised” or “facilitated” repatriation. Thirdly there is a “promotion mode”, when the conditions in the country of origin become conducive, UNHCR might actively encourage repatriation, organise transport, besides providing individual and community based reintegration assistance. This is often called “organised/mass repatriation”, as in the case for the on-going repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland.

It should be mentioned that, particularly in the first two types of repatriation, refugees often return to a less than ideal situation in their country of origin, that may have been devastated by civil war and/or still harbour localised guerrilla groups and conflicts on its territory. In this case, described by analysts as “repatriation under duress”⁶ it is hard to compare the relative weight of “push” and “pull” factors. A case in point was the repatriation of ethnic Somali Ethiopians after the downfall of Siyad Barre’s regime, (see below). Here there is no doubt that “push” factors outweighed “pull” ones. Another landmark was the repatriation of Iraqi Kurdish refugees after the Gulf War in 1991. In this case “pull” factors, that is the call of Kurdish leaders fearful that Saddam Hussein’s forces might have occupied more easily their region if most of the population was in exile in Iran or Turkey, outweighed “push” ones, that is the reluctance of Turkish and, to a less extent, Iranian, authorities to host them.

Until then, the prevailing approach to repatriation by UNHCR had been mainly protection-oriented (the verification of the voluntariness of the repatriation and the provision of legal safeguard through appropriate documentation), while assistance there was normally limited to a modest individual repatriation package and transport to the border. But, as the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, and later of former Yugoslavia exemplified, this kind of limited assistance was no longer sufficient in the context of war-torn societies that underwent massive destruction. In other words, in order to make the repatriation “sustainable”, there was a clear need to initiate reintegration and reconstruction projects even though this gives rise to questions about mandates, inter-agency division of labour, the continuum/contiguuum” debate. This was precisely the case of the repatriation to Somaliland, a territory devastated by civil war, as we have seen.

2.2. Returning to Ethiopia

The UNHCR Sub-Office in Jijiga (the current capital of the Somali Region of Ethiopia) was established to manage the camps that were set up after the massive refugee influx from North West Somalia of May ’88. It was briefly evacuated in May ’91 during the transition between Mengistu’s regime and the establishment of the *Tigrean*-led EPRDF interim government. As we have seen, the approximately 3.2 million Somalis in eastern Ethiopia are mainly *Absame/Darod* (particularly *Ogaden*) and to a lesser extent *Isaq*, *Gadabursi* and *Issa/Dir*. A minority of the population is made up of Ethiopian *Amharas* who settled at the beginning of the century, *Oromos* (the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, related to Somalis) and the military, mainly made up by *Tigreans*. The town and its population may be described as a “spaghetti western” town with the Somalis playing the part of red-skin Indians, the *Amharas* of cowboys and the mainly *Tigrean* military as the cavalry. Livestock, trade and small-scale agriculture are the main economic activities.

In 1991, after the collapse of Barre's regime in Somalia, hundreds of thousand of Ethiopian-Somali refugees undertook a reverse exodus to their mother-land after some thirteen years of exile. The repatriation took place largely as result of the events that led to the collapse of law and order in

⁴ See UNHCR 1999, p. 149

⁵ See table 6 below

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 147

Somalia and it was a spontaneous “self-repatriation under duress”, rather than an organised, assisted one. The urgency was given by the fact that most (ex)refugees were *Ogaden/Darod*, a clan, as we have seen, closely allied with Siyad Barre and therefore a potential target of the *Hawiye/USC* in the south and of the *Isaq/SNM* in the north-west. Although there are no accurate records of the total number of Ethiopian-Somali returnees, it is estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 repatriated between 1991 and 1993, out of whom some 550,000 were assisted by UNHCR with an individual cash grant and a six months food ration upon arrival in Ethiopia. Community-based assistance was also provided in returnee-affected area through “Food for Work” programmes and “Quick Impact” rehabilitation projects.

The Ethiopian Government pursued an open-door policy towards the returnees (as it did towards the refugees) for whom it was relatively easy to re-obtain Ethiopian identity documents or to be reintegrated in the civil service. Furthermore, after regional elections in 1992 and the devolution of power to the new regional administrations in May 1993, most senior positions were initially taken by *Ogaden* returnees. This development can be explained by the fact that on the one hand the *Ogaden*, given their closeness to Siyad Barre in Somalia – as we have seen – were used to the exercise of power. On the other hand the Ethiopian-Somalis who stayed behind grew wary of politics after having experienced Mengistu’s repression.

However, the returnees were coming to a country devastated by civil war and during the delicate transition from the Derg regime to the new EPRDF. As a result economic opportunities, already meagre under the best circumstances, were very limited indeed when the repatriation grant was exhausted. Moreover the returnees were suffering from the “dependency syndrome” developed during the decade as refugees in Somalia when they were “doped” with food assistance⁷. This prompted many to “join the queue” of the refugees who were fleeing from Somalia at the same time and therefore to swell the numbers of the refugees camps, as we shall see, and to turn up at the UNHCR Jijiga office to claim more assistance. From the governmental side, assistance to and returnees was managed by ARRA.

2.3. The Process of Repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland

As in all organised repatriation movements, refugees volunteering for repatriation to Somaliland were registered in the camps in Ethiopia and signed (or thumb-printed) a Voluntary Repatriation Departure Form (VRDF) attesting the voluntariness of their repatriation. Although normally the legal basis for the repatriation programme should have been a Tripartite Agreement (among UNHCR, the country of origin and the country of asylum), this was not possible because of Somaliland’s non-recognised status. As a result separate bilateral agreements were signed between UNHCR and the Ethiopian government on the one hand, and between UNHR and the Somaliland authorities on the other. An information campaign and a fact-finding mission by refugee elders to verify conditions in the areas of origin, also took place. UNHCR’s counterparts in this operation were the ARRA on the Ethiopian side and the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (MRRR) on the Somaliland side.

Once the UNHCR Sub-Office in Jijiga collected enough expressions of interest through signed VRDFs in a camp, it would send a masterlist to UNHCR Hargeisa containing names, VRDF number and –most importantly – clan and sub-clan. UNHCR Hargeisa would then submit the masterlist to MRRR for clearance. The clearance was invariably carried out on the basis of the stated clan or sub-clan membership, rather than on the basis of names, since there was no national census and names were largely irrelevant since many, maybe most, refugees had changed their names when seeking asylum. The clans and sub-clans considered by MRRR as qualifying automatically for Somaliland citizenship were: *Isaq* (all sub-clans), *Gadabursi* (all sub-clans), *Issa* (all sub-clans)⁸, *Dulbahante* and *Warsangeli/Harti/Darod*, *Gaboye*, *Tumal*, *Yiber*

⁷ See Maren (1997, in particular chapter 5 aptly titled “Crazy with Food”)

⁸ The decision to consider all *Issa* and *Gadabursi* as Somalilanders was dictated more by pragmatic considerations, *i.e.* the difficulty in ascertaining their sub-clan to determine their nationality because, as we have

Prior to departure, refugees in the camps received an individual repatriation package in exchange for the ration card consisting of: nine months of food ration per person (150 kg. of wheat, 5 l. of cooking oil, 10 kg. of pulses); thirty (30) US dollars per person, irrespective of age (rounded to 200 Ethiopian *birr*) as travel/repatriation allowance; plastic sheets, jerrycans and blankets according to family size.

The monetary equivalent of an individual repatriation package was estimated in 1997 at around 130 US\$ per person. Furthermore refugees were also transported by truck and escorted to selected destinations in Somaliland by UNHCR and MRRR personnel. The convoys usually consisted of a majority of locally-rented trucks and minibuses (because of clan monopoly UNHCR had to change trucking companies in different *deghans* (clan areas) and about a dozen UN/CARE blue trucks. Upon departure the UNHCR team counted the physical presence on the trucks

Plans to start the repatriation of Somalis in the camps in eastern Ethiopia were initially drawn in 1993 when things started improving after the Borama reconciliation conference. By October 1994 UNHCR was ready to start a “pilot project”, but the eruption of the Hargeisa “airport war” in November froze these plans. After the progressive return to normalcy in 1996 UNHCR finally launched the “pilot project” in February 1997, completing the repatriation of 10,125 refugees by the end of July. In November, under pressure from the donor community, feeling that the “official” numbers were still not reflecting the situation on the ground, UNHCR and ARRA embarked on a new revalidation exercise. Even though this operation lasted several days (as opposed to the '94 one) and several people were observed crossing the border from Somaliland, the numbers dropped from some 277,000 to 242,000, including the 10,125 who had repatriated during the “pilot project” (thereby with a net reduction of some 25,000).

It is at this stage that UNHCR launched the “enhanced” repatriation. The programme had to overcome initial resistances from both sides. On the Ethiopian side, ARRA was afraid of losing jobs of people involved in the camp management and was also very nervous about having to deal with a non-recognised entity like Somaliland. However, after the pilot phase and UNHCR lobbying, their co-operation has been very good and as the political relation with Somaliland improved (see Part II, paragraphs 8 and 10) the repatriation operations flowed more smoothly. On the Somaliland side there was the fear of the impact of reduced food aid in the camps (part of the food was “repatriating” from Ethiopia to Somaliland) on an economy already battered by the livestock ban of January 1998, which caused a temporary halt in the operation. There was also some horse trading involved as the MRRR often made its consent for the start of repatriation convoys subject to an increase of the “incentives” for the police and civilian personnel escorting the convoys and to the implementation of “pet projects”, which often involved exhausting negotiations. But in the end, the repatriation operation managed to re-start and by the end of 2001 the UNHCR teams in Jijiga and Hargeisa together with their respective counterparts managed to achieve the considerable result of closing two and a half camps (Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, plus Hartasheikh B) and almost closing a third one (Daror). The fluctuations in the population figures are summarized in the table below.

Table 6. Fluctuations in camp population figures

CAMP	1991-94 (1988 and 1991 influxes)	Sept. 1994. (revalidation exercise)	1995-97 (Nov. '94 influx)	December 1997 (pilot volrep and Nov. revalid.)	December 1998 (enhanced volrep)	December 2001 (enhanced volrep)

seen, in reality many *Gadabursi* originate from Ethiopia and most *Issa* from Ethiopia and Djibouti. Regarding the *Issa*, there are however some misgivings given their close relation with Djibouti.

Hartasheikh A & B	250,926	43,845	53,760	51,317	31,372	11,642
Darwanaji	117,069	36,855	40,601	39,762	26,596	-
Teferi Ber	98,624	41,301	43,818	45,665	29,769	-
Camaboker	66,615	17,231	36,120	28,065	28,065	19,849
Rabasso	24,181	8,025	28,381	16,818	16,818	9,811
Daror	31,833	12,261	49,355	34,150	34,150	24
Kebri Beyah	12,584	10,100	10,455	11,097	11,097	11,634
Aisha	26,694	15,282	15,282	15,282	15,282	13,982
TOTAL	628,526	184,900	277,762	242,156	193,149	66,942

2.4. The Realities of Repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland

The repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland presented some specific aspects. First of all we should remark that there are a number of "southern" Somalis estimated at around 15,000 for whom the situation in their areas of origin is not yet conducive to repatriation. Secondly, for those able to repatriate (mostly to Somaliland), there was a difference between the "official" number of returnees (i.e. those who surrendered their ration card in exchange for the repatriation package and have signed a VRDF) and the "actual" figures (those who physically board on the trucks and cross the border).

This occurrence can be explained by three factors: 1) the presence of local Ethiopian-Somalis in the camps (including some returnees, i.e. former refugees in Somalia) who surrender their ration card, receive their package, but do not cross the border; 2) the presence of multiple card holders (who cash one card and stay on with the other); 3) split families, with some members who repatriated spontaneously and others who stay in the camp with the ration card waiting for the opportunity to receive the repatriation package. In other words, while refugees might repatriate spontaneously, ration cards don't: they either remain with a family member or they are sold. This is in line with what happened in Somalia in the '80s with Ethiopian-Somali refugees and is also related to the mainly pastoral-nomadic background of the refugees. As a result, even if with notable differences from camp to camp, the overall physical presence in the repatriation convoys from Ethiopia to Somaliland was about 40% in the 1997-98 period. Another important aspect of the operation was the concentration of the movement in the urban areas, and in particular Hargeisa, which accounted for 55% of all "actual" returnees and has received a total of over 10,000 returnees during 1998.

This phenomenon is summarized in the following two tables ("actual" numbers refer to people physically present in the convoys, while "official" to the number of people listed in the ration cards surrendered in exchange for the repatriation package):

Tables 7: 1997-98 repatriation statistics and percentage of "actual" returnees by camp (18/02/1997-14/11/1998; convoys 1 to 68)

CAMP	Official	Actual	% of "official" over total	% of "actual" over total	% of "actual" by camp
Hartasheikh	24,984	13,060	42.3%	52.4%	52.3%
Teferi Ber	18,604	5,201	31.4%	22.1%	27.9%
Darwanaji	15,544	5,303	26.3%	22.5%	34.1%
Total	59,132	23,564	100%	100%	39.8%

Table 8: 1997-98 repatriation statistics and percentage of "actual" returnees by destination (18/02/1997-14/11/1998; convoys 1 to 68)

DESTINATION	Official	Actual	% of "official" over total	% of "actuals" over total	% of "actuals" by destination
Hargeisa	24,424	13,019	41.4%	55.3%	53.3%
Gabiley	5,198	3,019	8.8%	12.8%	58.1%

DESTINATION	Official	Actual	% of "official" over total	% of "actuals" over total	% of "actuals" by destination
Dilla/Baki	7,383	1,126	12.6%	4.8%	15.2%
Borama	22,049	6,368	37.3%	27%	28.9%
Total	59,054*	23,532*	100%	100%	39.8%

* Note: these two totals do not include a statistically insignificant number of people who repatriated to Burao and Berbera in 1998.

In concluding this section we would like to stress two points. First, that UNHCR has been quite successful under the prevailing circumstances to pursue its repatriation policy, the only available option to break the dependency syndrome, by bringing on board both the Ethiopian and Somaliland authorities as well as the refugees themselves. While some donors think that the process was far too slow, they should be reminded that the security situation on the Somaliland side was not really conducive to such a complex operation until the beginning of 1997 (after Egal's second term) which is exactly when the programme finally started. One may object that a mass spontaneous repatriation actually took place between 1991 and 1994, but there is a world of difference between the security situation for local people and for a complex operation mounted by international staff (see for example the extortions to which expatriates were subjected in the Hargeisa airport). Moreover, UNHCR had to overcome the initial reluctance of both Ethiopian and Somaliland officials, complicated by the (then) lack of official relations between the two sides, and the absorption capacity was severely reduced by the livestock embargo that affected Somaliland's economy since 1998.

Secondly, a recent report by the US Committee for Refugees, while encouraging UNHCR to pursue its repatriation policy, states that the programme "has suffered from duplication, fraud and corruption that persist today"⁹. In our discussion on "repatriation realities" above we have highlighted how locals infiltrated the refugees and that some level of multiple registration did take place. It is likely that this was tolerated if not encouraged by the Ethiopian administration of the time, as one official confided to me (he specified that there were truckloads of locals shipped to the registration points). However we should also stress that these occurrences were taking place during the phases of mass influx in a context of *fin de regime* (1988) and actual collapse of Mengistu's dictatorship (February 1991), moreover with the bad example provided by food aid in Somalia in the '80s. Since the EPRDF take-over (May 1991) and the overhaul of ARRA in 1993, there may have been leaks, but no widespread or systematic corruption to our knowledge. We may recall the spectacular success in reducing the population figures of the September 1994 revalidation and that the November 1994 influx was kept much better under control than the previous ones. Moreover, after initial reluctance, ARRA has been very cooperative in the repatriation exercise. What is persisting today and the counting exercise cannot solve is the presence of locals. Given the extreme difficulty in differentiating them from genuine refugees, the only practical option to work towards the closure of the camps was to extend the repatriation package to all card-holders (in exchange for the card). Hence the programme may be described as partially a "repatriation" and partially a "buy-back-the-card" exercise. The operation should be concluded by the end of 2002 with the repatriation of the remaining "Somalilander" refugees and dispersal of local Ethiopian "infiltrates", while continued protection and care and maintenance assistance in two camps is envisaged for the estimated 15,000 "southern" Somali refugees still unable to repatriate owing to the yet unresolved security situation in their areas of origin.

3. Patterns of Reintegration in Waqooyi Galbeed and Awadal Regions of Somaliland ('97-'99)

3.1. Directions and Impact of Return and the Myth of the "Rural Returnee"

Just as the pattern of flight followed largely clan lines (given that - as we have stressed - most clans are transnational) so did the pattern of return. The vast majority of *Habar Awal/Isaq* who found refuge in the Hartasheikh camp returned to the region of Waqooyi Galbeed (Hargeisa and Gabiley) where they are the majority and likewise most *Gadabursi* returned to the ancestral Awadal region

⁹ See US Committee for Refugees (2001), page 6.

(Borama and Dilla). Even Hargeisa, squarely located in the *Isaq* territory, is divided along sub-clan lines that shaped the pattern of reintegration in this urban area. Hence the *Habar Awal* (*Saad Mussa* and *Issa Mussa*) occupy the western and northern part, while the *Garhajis* (*Idagalle* and *Habar Yonis*) the eastern part and the *Arab/Isaq* the southern one. However, as a cosmopolitan capital, there are also non-*Isaq* clans scattered throughout the city, such as *Gadabursi*, *Darod* and low-caste *Gaboye*.

Regarding the actual impact on the absorption capacity of the reintegration areas, we should underline that "official" figures do not convey the true picture. First, most of the impact was actually borne during the time of spontaneous repatriation (1991-94). Secondly, during "organised" phase only 40% of the approximately 60,000 refugees who officially repatriated in 1997-98 were actually seen on the convoys (see tables 7 & 8). Also, "official" destinations as indicated in the VRDFs did not give an accurate picture: Borama and Dilla (the main areas of origin of "refugees" in Darwanaji and Teferi Ber) received theoretically 37% and 12% of all returnees during the period under consideration, but in real terms they received only 27% and 5%. Conversely Hargeisa and Gabiley received "officially" 41% and 9% of the returnees while "actually" the percentages were 55% and 13%. We should however still bear in mind that the greatest impact of all was during the spontaneous or self-repatriation phase. These differences were not caused - as commonly assumed during the period under consideration (1997-99) - by an "urbanisation" of refugees in the camps, i.e. refugees of rural or pastoral origin who got used to easy access to social services in the camps and perceive greater job opportunities in urban areas and as a result decide not to repatriate to their ancestral areas in the bush. To be sure, we cannot exclude that this phenomenon played some role in this period and maybe a greater role subsequently in other camps, such as the Aware camps¹⁰. But the view commonly held by many members of the international community and many "*Hargeisawis*" (Hargeisa dwellers) that this people were illegitimately returning to Hargeisa instead of the countryside was not supported by evidence.

First we can recall how a 1994 survey conducted in the camps by a Somali anthropologist graduated from the LSE concluded that "many urban poor remain in Hartasheikh..."¹¹. Second, an unpublished "Social Assessment of Somali Returnees in Awadal and Waqooyi Galbeed Regions of NW Somalia" conducted in 1998 on a 10% sample of the 11,000 returnees who repatriated during the 1997 pilot phase, found that only 2.2% of the returnees interviewed in Hargeisa were from a pastoral background before the war¹². Third, we should recall how it was precisely urban centres such as Hargeisa and that were mostly hit during the war. Fourth, from table 7 we can note that some 3,000 out of the 5,000 "official" returnees to Gabiley, a small town with less than 10,000 inhabitants that would normally qualify as a rural area, actually repatriated there, a proportion that is even higher than that for Hargeisa. In fact we may assume that most refugees who had some assets, such as land or housing (whether in urban or rural areas) to go back to, had already "self-repatriated", while only the poorest were left behind, for whom UNHCR's repatriation assistance was desperately needed to attempt to rebuild their lives in the country of origin. Finally we should stress that organised repatriation was not the only population movement at play. What affluent Hargeisawis perceived - not without a touch of class bias - as "refugees" congesting slum areas in Hargeisa, included a large proportion of local rural-urban migrants as well as destitute people from both "southern" Somalia and eastern Ethiopia.

Why then the huge difference between "official" and "actual" returnees to Borama and Dilla? The two main reasons were the causes of flight and distance between the camp and the area of origin. First, while the little town of Dilla did suffer heavy damage as a result of the SNM's incursion in the *Gadabursi* area of Awadal, the city of Borama was held by the SNM for only about 24 hours and did

¹⁰ Refugee in the Aware camps (Camaboker, Rabasso and Daror) mainly originate from Burao and the rural areas between Burao and Hargeisa, such as Salahley and Odweyne However there was also a substantial minority from Hargeisa. Repatriation from these camps started only after the period under consideration.

¹¹ Ahmed Yussuf Farah (1994), see page 44 above for the full quote.

¹² See S. Yurasko (1998). In spite of some methodological limitations in establishing the sampling frame, the substantial size of the survey (200 family questionnaires representing about 10% of the population under study, i.e. the 11,000 returnees of the 1997 "pilot repatriation") make the findings broadly reliable.

not suffer any damage. Yet the caseload originating from this city was still granted *prima facie* refugee status, no doubt because the assumption was that the enmity between the *Isaq*-led SNM and the *Gadabursi* would last and provide grounds for a "well-founded fear of persecution". However, at least since the 1993 Borama conference, the two clans found a *modus vivendi* and people started repatriating spontaneously. Secondly, the distance between Borama and the Darwanaji camp was only some 20 km and between Dilla and Teferi Ber even less, some 15 km. Given the highly mobile nature of Somalis and the porous border it was hence possible to be "part-time refugees" and "part-time returnees". This contrasts with Hartasheikh that is almost 100 km from Hargeisa and for whose residents hence it was much more complicated to travel back and forth between the camp and the area of destination. In sum, there was a higher percentage of refugees with a weak claim in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji as compared with Hartasheikh and moreover they were much closer to their areas of origin. Two important exceptions should be noted. In Darwanaji there was also a number of *Mahad Asse/Gadabursi* who fled clashes with the *Issa* and originating from the coastal areas much further afield than Borama. Second, there were, both in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, at least a couple of thousand of *Gaboye* and other low-caste clans originally from Hargeisa who chose these camps for reasons that will be analysed below¹³. They were definitely genuine refugees and "actual" returnees.

3.2. Human Security and Coping Mechanisms: the End of the Refugee Cycle?

After the end of the Cold War, the concept of "human security/insecurity" with its four components, namely physical, social/ psychological, legal and material, was introduced in international relations discourse in addition to the classical concept of security based on the notion of balance of power. This concept can provide a useful analytical framework for examining the reintegration of returnees, defined as "the process which enables formerly displaced persons ... to enjoy a progressively greater degree of physical, social and material security and the erosion of ... of any observable distinctions which set returnees apart from their compatriots"¹⁴. In terms of physical security, we can safely say that returnees in Somaliland were not subject to any punishment, arrest or attack on account of their former refugee status. Their physical security was largely similar to that of all other residents of Somaliland, not least because so many of its people had at some point in time experienced one form or another of displacement. The transnational clan networks, never broken even during the exile, ensured that social capital remained almost intact and that social and psychological security was largely good. This was however mitigated in the urban areas by the perception highlighted above that these were mostly "*reer badiye*" (people from the bush) illegitimately congesting the cities, mainly Hargeisa. Membership of the autochthonous Somaliland clans, the main criteria for granting clearance to repatriate and ultimately citizenship, ensured that legal security, in terms of the traditional Somali *xeer* (based on the concepts of compensation or retribution), was also good. However, members of non-Somalilander "noble" clans (e.g. *Majertein*) who may have been granted clearance to repatriate because of marriage with a local, or members of local low-caste clans (e.g. *Gaboye*) only enjoyed the lesser *de facto* status of "protected" persons, similar to that of Christian or Jewish minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

If the picture for physical, social and legal security was generally good, regarding material security it was much bleaker, if we define it in terms of self-sufficiency. First we should recall that, at least since colonial times, Somalia never really attained self-sufficiency. Second, as mentioned above, the chances are that the last candidates for UNHCR-assisted repatriation are the most destitute, as most people with assets to go back to had already self-repatriated. Thirdly, the level of destruction sustained by Somaliland was high by any standard and given that it is still an unrecognised country, it could not benefit from the traditional development-oriented financial instruments. It was precisely with this in mind that UNHCR designed what some observers thought was a rather generous repatriation package (see above). But these packages were a send-off assistance and hence finite by definition. What were therefore the socio-economic conditions of returnees and the coping mechanisms that have been used to overcome the constraints towards reintegration? To answer some

¹³ See also section 1.6.4 above.

¹⁴ See UNHCR (1999, chapter 1 and chapter 4)

of these questions, in 1998 UNHCR commissioned a survey¹⁵ on the returnees of the 1997 "pilot phase" to an American anthropologist trained at the LSE and who had spent one year in the Rabasso refugee camp in Ethiopia. The following is a summary of the main findings.

Out of the three reintegration areas considered by the study, namely Hargeisa (mostly returnees from Hartasheikh); Gabiley (also from Hartasheikh and - to a lesser extent Teferi Ber) combined with Dilla (Teferi Ber), and Borama (Darwanaji and Teferi Ber), returnees in Hargeisa fared the worst. In spatial terms, many were crowding emerging slum areas such as *Sheikh Nur* (also known as *Kililka Shanad*) and State House¹⁶. Economically, the average income reported was US\$ 668 per year, or 1.83 per day, the lowest of the reintegration areas. Furthermore, Hargeisa returnees reported by far the highest percentages of people relying entirely or partially on assistance from relatives and charity, *i.e.* complete and partial unemployment (33.2%). The most frequent economic activities reported (typically a combination of more than one in a family) included: porter, mason, vegetable seller and other small-scale market activities.

The contrast with Gabiley and Dilla, two neighbouring villages in a rural area, was marked: the reported average income was US\$ 906, *i.e.* over 26% higher, while only 12% of the sample relied entirely or partially on family assistance and charity, that is they were totally or partially unemployed. The main economic activities were market-oriented ones, manual labour and agro-pastoralism (20%). Finally Borama, a town of approximately 50-60,000 (in contrast with Hargeisa with 200-250,000 inhabitants) fell somewhere in between: the average income was US\$ 713 and the percentage of total and partial unemployment was 17.3%. Surprisingly, 21% of the respondents stated they were agro-pastoralists, but this can be explained with the fact that Borama is a small-sized town with an osmotic relation with the surrounding rural areas that sociologists once described as "cities of peasants" where urban and rural activities are often combined. The relatively worse status of Hargeisa returnees was further confirmed by the fact that most of the respondents there said that the most important item of the repatriation package was the food component, while for returnees in the other areas it was the cash grant.

Table 9: average income of returnees and total and partial unemployment¹⁷

Reintegration area	Average income per year (US\$)	Percentage relying entirely on assistance/charity ¹⁸	Percentage relying mainly on assistance/charity
Hargeisa	668	15.2%	18%
Dilla/Gabiley	906	4%	8%
Borama	713	5.3%	12%

What were the reasons for the less successful reintegration in Hargeisa than in the other areas? We may identify the following factors, some of which suggested by the survey:

- Heavy amount of credit taken in the camps: there was a lower rate of multiple card holders in Hartasheikh (the camp were most "*Hargeisawis*" fled) as compared to the others and the single standard assistance ration is enough just for bare survival;
- Lower returnee numbers and spatial congestion in the Gabiley/Dilla and Borama reintegration areas and hence less competition than in Hargeisa;
- Fewer urban poor refugees at the time of flight;
- Closer proximity to the camps and rural areas that allowed returnees to maintain an osmotic relationship with both.

¹⁵ See page 53 and footnote 11.

¹⁶ See par. 31 above for an explanation of this trend.

¹⁷ S. Yurasko (1998).

¹⁸ Assistance from relatives, not from the international community, given that individual assistance was discontinued after return (only community-based assistance was provided, see below).

Two further features of the plight of returnees can be highlighted. The first is that overall 18% of the sample was relying on children under 18 as their main income earner. This disturbing trend means that often children were denied any type of formal education (the study emphasised that the main problem was not access, but the informal fees charged in most schools, since the government is barely able to pay teachers ridiculously low salaries; the same argument applies to health facilities). Secondly, 28% of the sample was relying on (adult) females as their main breadwinner and 22% were female-headed households. Significantly, these households did economically better than those with an adult male. This may look surprising, but unfortunately many Somali men, even if partially employed or unemployed, spend most of their time and a good proportion of the family income in *chat*, the mildly stimulant leaf, widely chewed in the Horn and in Yemen.

Recognising the difficulties in achieving reintegration in a context so deeply affected by years of war and neglect and in line with its changing role in repatriation and reintegration outlined above (par. 2.1), UNHCR launched a Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) scheme with hundreds of projects implemented since 1994. These projects (not including individual assistance/handouts) have been defined as "small-scale initiatives that can be implemented modest cost, with considerable speed and with the participation of the local community"¹⁹ or graphically as "emergency development". They typically include the rehabilitation or reconstruction of a school or a health centre, the repair of a bridge or a road or the installation of a water pump.

While an analysis of UNHCR's QIPs programme in Somaliland is beyond the scope of this paper, we can highlight a few issues. First, as recognised in the case of the Mozambican repatriation, there is a fundamental tension between speed and sustainability of these projects that appear to be quite successful in meeting their immediate objectives, but less effective in their long-term impact²⁰. This is particularly obvious in case like Somaliland where the authorities of an already extremely poor country further hit by the livestock ban are hardly in a position to meet maintenance and recurrent cost of educational, health or water facilities. Moreover, local authorities often favoured particular QIPs, not on the basis of national priorities, but of (sub)clan interests. Secondly, in order to overcome some of these obstacles, there is a need for a high level of inter-organisation joint planning and an efficient division of labour, not always obvious in post-conflict situations. Finally, there is not always a wide consensus on whether QIPs implementation should be correlated with rate of "assisted/official" repatriation or of "self/spontaneous" returns or simply with the level of destruction in various parts of the country. In order to respond to some of these issues, UNHCR, UNDP and the Somaliland government held in July 1999 a three-days Repatriation and Reintegration Workshop with the participation of other international organisations and NGOs as well as line ministries and regional authorities. The results were presented in a two volume Plan of Action containing a list of specific project proposals²¹.

In conclusion we may agree with the preliminary findings of a research in refugee camps in Kenya that Somalis use social networks, mobility and diversified investment to overcome the endemic insecurity of the region²². Social networks were mobilised both at the time of flight (the vast majority of refugees settled in their clan areas across the border) and of return (*e.g.* reliance on charity from relatives once the repatriation package was exhausted). Mobility and diversified investment were two sides of the same coin: staggered repatriation (some family members "self-repatriating" while others remaining in the camp) allowed families to prepare the ground for repatriation while at the same time retaining a ration card enabling access to assistance and services as a safety net. In this sense we also agree with the authors of a book on repatriation²³ that repatriation may end the refugee cycle, but may also start a new cycle of insecurity, particularly in a region such as the Horn, endemically prone to

¹⁹ UNHCR (1999, p. 173).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See Somaliland Republic, UNDP and UNHCR (1999): *Plan of Action for Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration*, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

²² Horst, C. (2002 - work-in-progress).

²³ Black and Koser (eds., 1998)

natural and man-made disasters, and where "self-sufficiency" has never really been attained, at least since colonial times. Hence the notion of "returning home" in a post-conflict context is not the recreation of an ideal past, but adaptation to a transformed environment (in the case of Somaliland even a new "state"!) that may require more "construction" and "creativity" than "reconstruction" and "rehabilitation"²⁴. For this task the social capital of Somalis will still be useful as well as innovative approaches linking the initial phases of return assistance to sustainable development.

3.3. Case Study: the Low-Caste *Gaboye* Returnees in Somaliland

If reintegration, defined as "the erosion of ... of any observable distinctions which set returnees apart from their compatriots" is difficult to attain for Somalis returnees in general, it is all the more so for the low-caste *Gaboye* whose social distance from "noble" Somalis appeared unbridgeable even before flight. While the mythical and cultural origins of their quasi-pariah status have been examined in detail in Part I, par. 1.6.4, here we shall only discuss a few aspects of their current situation. We will recall that although the *Gaboye*²⁵ share most characteristics with other Somalis, they have some cultural stigma that puts them at a disadvantage. In particular, they are strongly discouraged from marrying members of the "noble clans" and – from an economic point of view – their employment has been confined to a number of professions such as hairdressing, blacksmithing, shoemaking, tanning and pottery that are considered "impure" by the majority. Consistently with his modernistic and nationalist ideology, Siyad Barre tried to emancipate them in the '70s and as a result he received their support during the civil war in the '80s. Hence, when the *Isaq*-led SNM took over Hargeisa in 1991, they fled to Ethiopia, mostly to Teferi Ber and Darwanaji instead of Hartasheikh because the latter camp was also in *Isaq* territory.

The parallel with the *Roma* of former Yugoslavia and in particular with the *Ashkelija* of Kosovo springs to mind and in Djibouti *Gaboye* are at times referred to as "*les Gitanes*". Also in the Balkans' context a stigmatised occupational group sided with a modernising dictatorship during civil war (or was at least perceived doing so) and many fled fearing retaliation after the overthrow of the regime by a nationalistic movement (the KLA). But here is where the parallel ends. To the credit of Somalilanders it must be said that, out of the some 2,000 *Gaboye* returnees from Teferi Ber and Darwanaji who repatriated in 1997-99 (mostly to Hargeisa), none have been observed or reported having suffered retaliation or persecution on account of their past. Also encouraging was the fact that – in the *Gaboye*'s own words – they have been able to regain possession of up to 90% of their landed property. Hence we may argue that reintegration has proceeded well, if we define it as the recreation of conditions prior to exodus.

Yet it should not be understated that the social distance from "noble" Somalis of a pastoral background remains great and forms of discrimination persist. Marrying a *Gaboye* remains by and large an unbreakable cultural taboo. Secondly, although their traditional occupations and trades place them among the most productive sectors of the society, they also become a sort of "socio-economic ghetto" as it restricts their social mobility. For example, no jobs in the public sector/civil service are normally available to them and agriculture and cattle are also restricted. In their main neighbourhood in Hargeisa, Dami (next to Sheikh Nur, one of the main returnee areas), *Gaboye* women reported to have been often the object of discrimination when queuing up at water points. Even more worrying is the "vicious cycle of education". We have already seen above how many returnees resort to child labour to make ends meet or because they are unable to pay the informal tuition fees. In the case of the *Gaboye* there is also an internal tendency to send kids to work in the traditional professions at an early age reinforced by the acts of harassment by children of "majority" clans that have been reported by the few *Gaboye* returnees who did attempt to send their kids to school. Finally, in terms of political representation, only one *Gaboye* was sitting in the House of Elders (later augmented by one MP in the Lower House) out of a total of 164 seats.

²⁴ Hammond (1998), in Black and Koser (eds.)

²⁵ We shall use here the term *Gaboye* (also known as *Mitgan*) to encompass also the other related low-caste clans, namely the *Tumal* and the *Yiber*.

The following tables are the result of a questionnaire we designed for the Repatriation and Reintegration Workshop which were published in the resulting Plan of Action referred to in note 21 above. Although the questionnaire was self-administered by *Gaboye* community leaders themselves, rather than on the basis of a random sample and hence has no scientific validity, in our opinion it provides a broadly accurate snapshot of their socio-economic conditions relating to reintegration.

Table 10: Estimates of minority groups population and main activities by region:

REGION	POPULAT.	MAIN URBAN CENTRES	MAIN ACTIVITIES (families)
Awdal	350 families 2,100 individuals *	Borama (160 fams.)	45 = shoemakers; 30 = hairdressers; 65 = blacksmiths; 10=pottery/women; 10 = butchers; 110 = rural areas; 100 = jobless
Sahil	267 families 1,602 individuals *	Berbera (210 fams.) Sheikh (20 fams.)	45 = hairdressers; 40 = shoemakers; 30 = blacksmiths; 15 = butchers; 10 = pottery/women; 20 = other business; 30 = rural areas; 50 jobless
Togdheer	593 families 3,558 individuals *	Yarowe (290 fams.) Burao (130 fams.) Odweyne (73 fams.)	Yarowe: 80 = hairdressers; 70 = shoemakers; 60 = blacksmiths Burao: 40 = hairdressers; 30 = shoemakers; 20 = blacksmiths; Odweyne: 20 = hairdressers; 15 = shoemakers; 20 = blacksmiths
Sanaag	158 families 948 individuals *	Erigavo: 128 fams.	28 = hairdressers; 30 = shoemakers; 20 = blacksmiths; 30 = rural areas.
Sool	229 families 1,374 individuals	Las Anod (all)	40 = hairdressers; 70 = shoemakers; 35 = blacksmiths; 14 = butchers; 10 = tanners; 20 rural areas
W. Galbeed (excl. Hargeisa)	460 families 2,760 individuals *	Gabiley (160 fams.)	20 = hairdressers; 40 = shoemakers; 50 = blacksmiths; 5 = butchers; 5 = pottery; 40 = rural areas.
Hargeisa	1,182 families 7,082 individuals *	City and surrounding areas	300 = hairdressers; 295 = shoemakers; 165 = blacksmiths; 50 = pottery/women; 53 tanners

* Note: the number of individuals calculated on the basis of family size 6, suggested by the minority groups themselves. Total: approximately 20,000 individuals.

Table 11: Main areas of return of minority groups:

REGION	MAIN AREAS OF RETURN
W. Galbeed (incl. Hargeisa)	Hargeisa city (Halwadag/Dami; Gan Libah); rural areas (Gabiley)
Awdal	Borama and surroundings; rural areas
Togdheer	Mainly Yarowe, Burao and Odweyne. Also rural areas.
Sahil	Mostly Berbera, few Sheikh; none in rural areas.
Sanaag	Few displaced in the war; practically no returnees
Sool	Few displaced by the war, practically no returnees.

Table 12: Main problems faced by minority *returnees* in the regions:

REGION	MAIN PROBLEMS FACED BY RETURNEES
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Awdal	1. Loss of working instruments and equipment 2. Loss of their work places (centres) 3. Not enough start capital
Sahil	1. Same
Togdheer	1. Loss of working instruments and equipment 2. Had to face additional displacement 3. Not enough start-up capital
Sanaag	1. No particular problems
Sool	1. No particular problems.
W. Galbeed	1. Loss of their work places (barber shops, workshops, etc.) 2. Lack of start up capital 3. No assistance from INGOs or government
Hargeisa	1. Same.

Table 13: Problems and constraints *specifically faced by minority groups* with respect to:

SECTOR	PROBLEM/CONSTRAINTS
Access to education	The destruction caused by the war caused the loss of working tools and centres. As a result, children of minority families are sent to work instead of school. As well, schools are distant from areas inhabited by minority groups.
Access to water	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition water points are further away from areas inhabited by minorities as no water activities took place in their areas (e.g. Dami in Hargeisa and Jama – Laye, Berbera)
Access to health facilities	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition health facilities are further away from areas inhabited by minority groups as no MCHs rehabilitated in their areas. For example, before the war there used to be a mobile health clinic in Dami, but now not anymore. In addition other areas benefit from private clinics/ pharmacies, but not areas inhabited by minority groups, as they are not engaged in these activities.
Access to judicial process (courts, trials, etc.)	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders.
Access to land/property (urban)	Although most land was lost during the civil war, we regained possession of about 90% of our land thanks to the intervention by the government.
Access to rural land	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition no water activities implemented in rural areas inhabited by minorities.
Access to employment/business	Minority groups have no access to governmental jobs (from minister to clerk) and INGO/ UN agencies jobs (from programme assistant to watchman). In other business areas too they do not get equal opportunities.
Access to other people (social and cultural relations)	Because of cultural prejudice, marriage between members of minority groups and other “noble” Somalis is discouraged.

LIST OF MAIN ABBREVIATIONS: A TASTE OF THE "ALPHABET SOUP"

- ARRA: Administration for refugees and Returnees Affairs (Branch of the Ethiopian Ministry of Internal Affairs dealing with refugees. UNHCR's main counterpart in Ethiopia).
- EPLF: Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (the political-military group which liberated Asmara in May 1991 and, following the 1993 referendum on independence, became the ruling party in Eritrea).
- EPRDF: Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (the *Tigrean*-led political-military group, later joined by other ethnic factions, that overthrew Mengistu's regime in May 1991 and became the ruling party in Ethiopia)
- ESDL: Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (pro-government group of ethnic Somali factions in Ethiopia, mostly non-*Ogaden*, founded in 1994).
- GSL: Greater Somalia League (radical party with Nasserite tendencies advocating the pan-somali" issue in the '60s).

- IGAD: Inter Governmental Authority on Development (group of States of the Horn of Africa, formerly "IGADD": IGA on Drought and Development)
- MRRR: Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction ("Somaliland's" department in charge of repatriation/reintegration. UNHCR's main counterpart in Somaliland).
- NSS: National Security Service (Siyad Barre's equivalent of the KGB).
- OLF: *Oromo* Liberation Front (political-military faction of the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, first allied with the EPRDF in the struggle against Mengistu, but later went into armed opposition also against the EPRDF).
- ONLF: *Ogaden* National Liberation Front (clan-based ethnic Somali political-military faction in Ethiopia, mostly opposed to the EPRDF. Originally known as WSLF).
- QIPs: Quick Impact Projects (small-scale reintegration projects implemented by UNHCR usually through NGOs).
- RRA: *Rahanweyn* Resistance Army (Ethiopian-backed military wing of the *Digl-Mirfle* clan also known as *Rahanweyn* led by Hassan Mohammed Nur "Shatigudud". Mainly operating in the Bay and Bakol regions around the city of Baidoa).
- SNA: Somali National Alliance (alliance of various clan factions under Aidiid Senior against the remnants of Barre's army in southern Somali in the early '90s)
- SNF: Somali National Front (alliance of various *Darod* factions opposed to the USC and SNA, trying to salvage Barre's regime in the early '90s).
- SNM: Somali National Movement (the *Isaq*-led political-military group that liberated Hargeisa, promoting "Somalilander" nationalism, secession from the rest of Somalia).
- SPM: Somali Patriotic Movement (the *Ogaden* faction operating in southern Somalia under the leadership of Col. Omar Jess, as opposed to the WSLF and ONLF *Ogaden* movements operating in Ethiopia)
- SRC: Supreme Revolutionary Council (Siyad Barre's instrument of power);
- SRRC: Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (group of factions, mostly Ethiopian-backed, opposing President Hassan's TNG government in Mogadishu. Main leaders are Shatigudud and Hussein Aidiid).
- SSDF: Somali Salvation Democratic Front (*Majertein/Darod*-led political-military faction that staged the first coup-attempt against Barre in 1978. From 1991 to 2001 ruling north-east Somalia or "Puntland").
- SYL: Somali Youth League (nationalist, anti-colonialist Somali movement that later became the ruling party during the "democratic period" in 1960-69).
- TNG: Transitional National Government (President Abulkassim Salat Hussein's interim government in Mogadishu which resulted from the Arta conference).
- TPLF: *Tigrean* People Liberation Front (political-military group of an Ethiopian ethnic group, originally allied with the EPLF, that later became the EPRDF, merging with other ethnically-based factions).
- UNITAF: Unified Task Force (the US-led military force that intervened in Somalia in December 1992 and was replaced by UNOSOM II)
- UNOSOM I: United Nations Operation in Somalia I (the small mainly Pakistani UN contingent dispatched to Somalia in July 1992 and replaced by the more robust UNITAF in December)
- UNOSOM II: United Nations Operation in Somalia II (the UN military and civil intervention force that took over from UNITAF in May 1993. Formally under UN command, in practice under strong US influence)
- USC: United Somali Congress (the *Hawiye*-led political-military group that actually overthrew Barre's regime in Mogadishu in January 1991. Later split between Aidiid and Ali Mahdi's factions).
- VRDFs: Voluntary Repatriation Departure Forms (the document signed or thumb-printed by repatriation candidates showing their willingness to repatriate, intended place of destination and essential biodata).

- WSLF: Western Somalia Liberation Front (the mainly *Ogaden* armed group that launched the first attacks in the 1977 Ogaden War aiming at the secession of this region from Ethiopia and merger with Somalia. After the '78 defeat it later emerged as the ONLF).

GLOSSARY OF MAIN LOCAL TERMS USED IN THE TEXT

- *Bah*: "group of brothers with same mother" and their descendants, as opposed to other half-brothers with the same father but different mothers (Somali, also known as "*habar*")
- *Bokor*: "king", sultan (Somali, however with a much lower degree of institutional power as compared with Ethiopian or European monarchs)
- *Chat* or *qat*: mildly stimulant leaf widely chewed in the Horn of Africa and Yemen (probably from the *Oromo* language in Ethiopia, but also used in Somali, Amharic and Arabic)
- *Deghan*: "grazing area", clan territory (Somali)
- *Diya*: "blood money", compensation (Arabic; in Somali: "*mag*")
- *Habar*: (Somali, see "*bah*" above)
- *al Ittehad al Islamiya*: "the Islamic Union" (Arabic: radical Islamist group operating in Somalia and eastern Ethiopia with suspected affiliations to *al Qaeda*)
- *Jihad*: "effort", "struggle", "holy war" (Arabic)
- *Moryan*: "young bandit", "thug" (Somali)
- *Naftēña*: armed settler in newly conquered territories of the Ethiopian empire originally from the highlands (Amharic)
- *Negus*: "king" (Amharic; "*negus ha negast*" : "king of kings", emperor, Haile Selassie)
- *Qolo*: "clan" (Somali)
- *Reer*: "people", or sub-sub-clan, lineage (Somali)
- *Sharia*: "Islamic Law", based on the *Quran*, *Sunna* and *Hadith* (Arabic)
- *Shifta*: "bandit" (Arabic, but widely used in the Horn)
- *Shir*: "council", "assembly" (Arabic, Somali)
- *Tol*: "patrilineal kinsmen", relatives from the father's side (Somali)
- *Tukul*: hut, tent (Amharic)
- *Ugas*: "sultan", spiritual leader (Somali)
- *Xeer*: "traditonal Somali law" (Somali, pronounced as "he-er")

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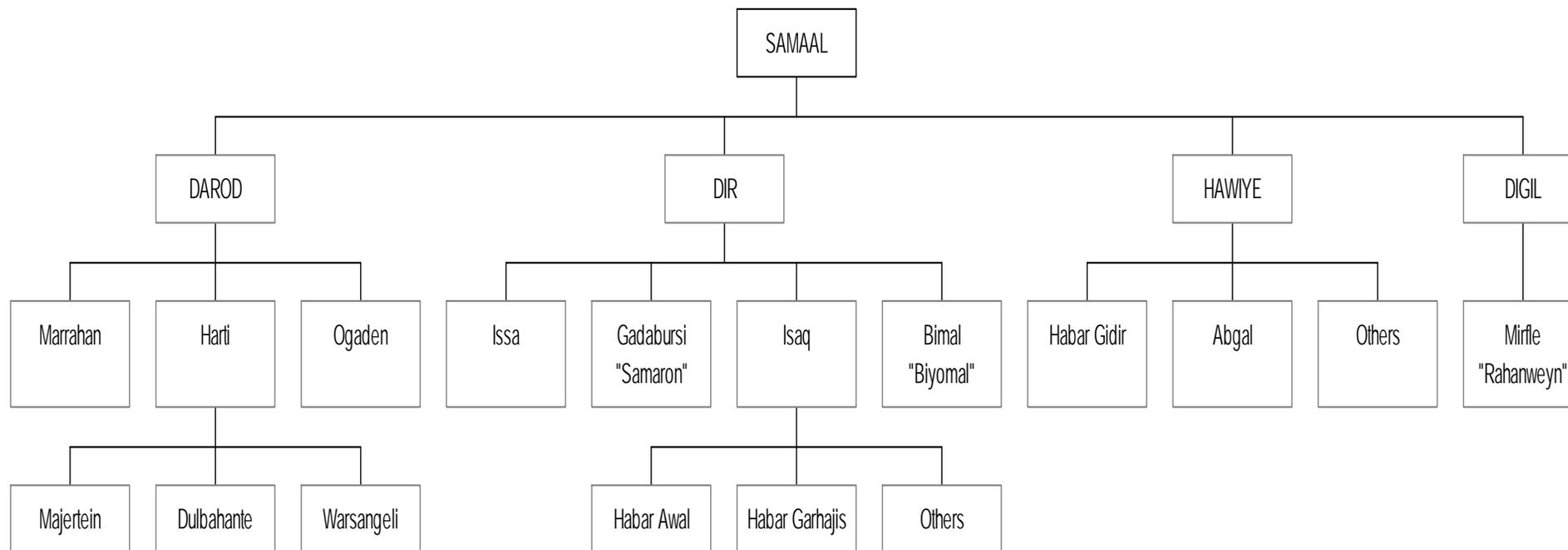
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Integrated Regional Information Network/ Horn of Africa (IRIN/HOA, published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).



GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 1: SAMAAL (GENERAL/OVERVIEW)

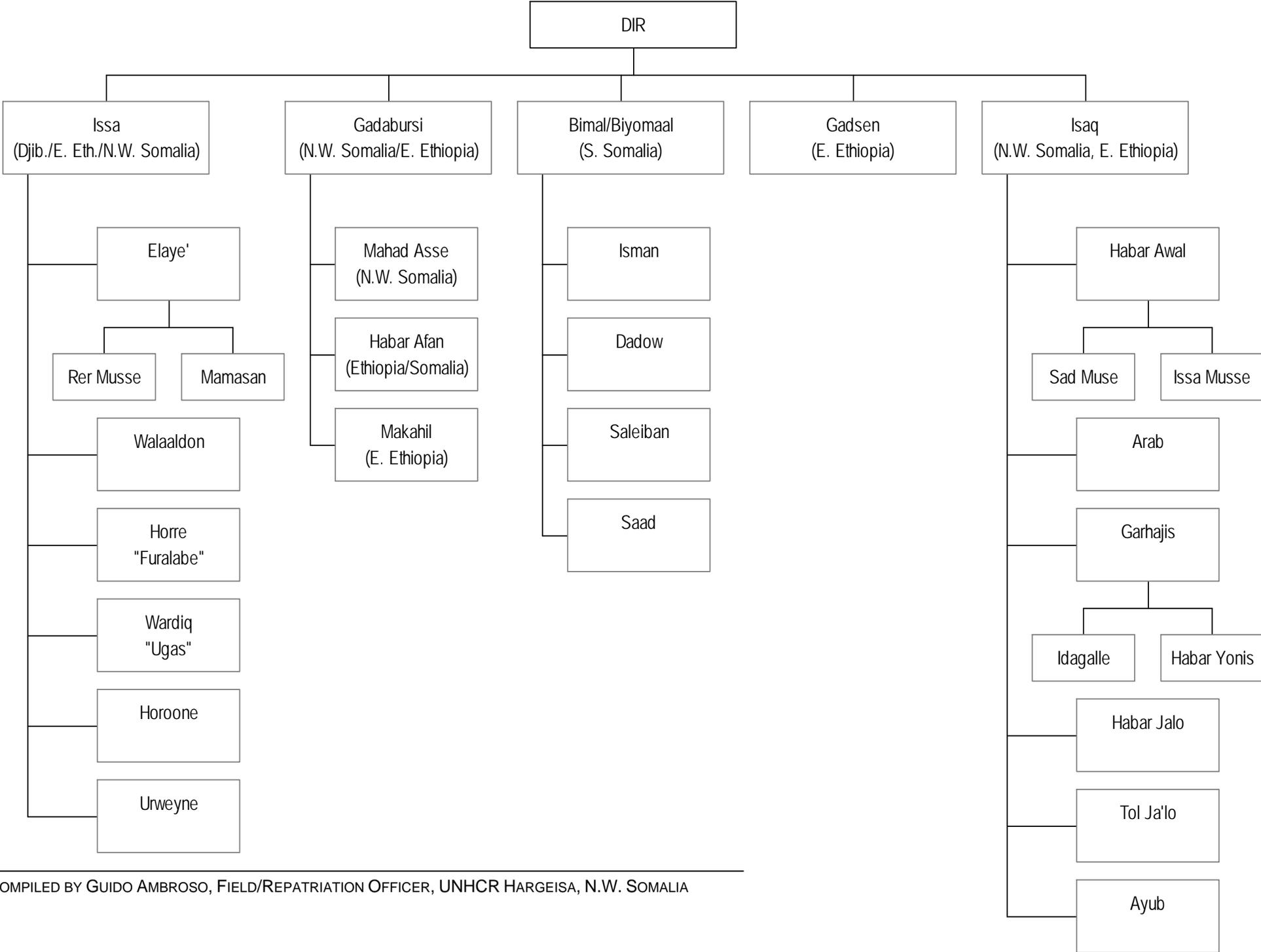


Other Somali - Related Clans:

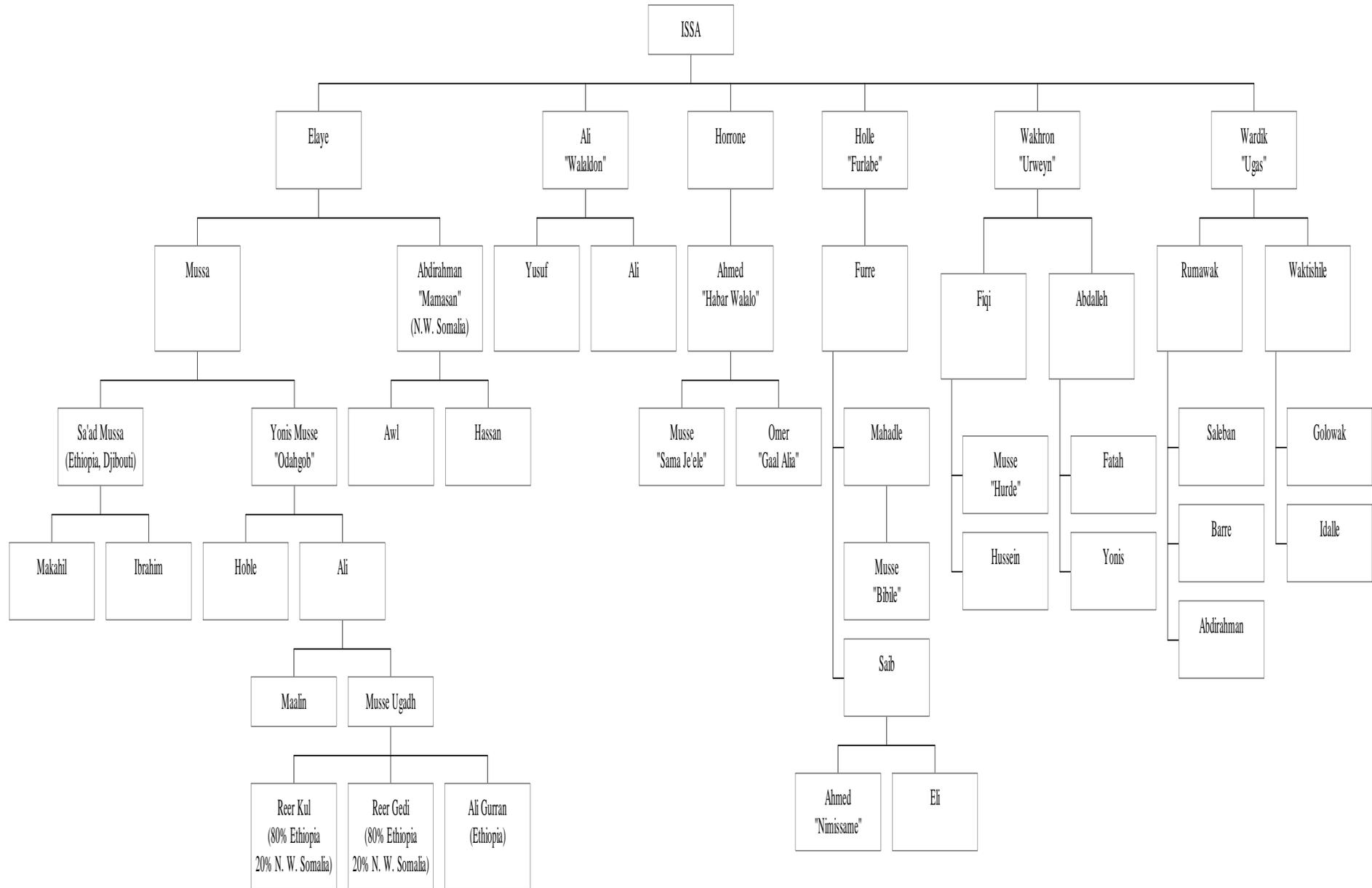
1)	Low-Caste:	Gaboye/Midgan (N.W. Somalia, E. Ethiopia) Tumal (N.W. Somalia, E. Ethiopia) Yibir (N.W. Somalia, E. Ethiopia - <i>Claiming Israelite origins</i>)
2)	Priestly clans	Shekhash/Shekhal (E. Ethiopia/S. Somalia) Sharif
3)	Arabised merchant tribes	Reer Hammar (Mogadishu) Reer Barawe (Barawe)
4)	Somalised Oromos	Jarso (E. Ethiopia) Akisho (E. Ethiopia, N.W. Somalia)

NOTE: this summarizing table mentions only the most important clan-families and clans. See the text for the dispute on whether the Isaq are part of Dir .

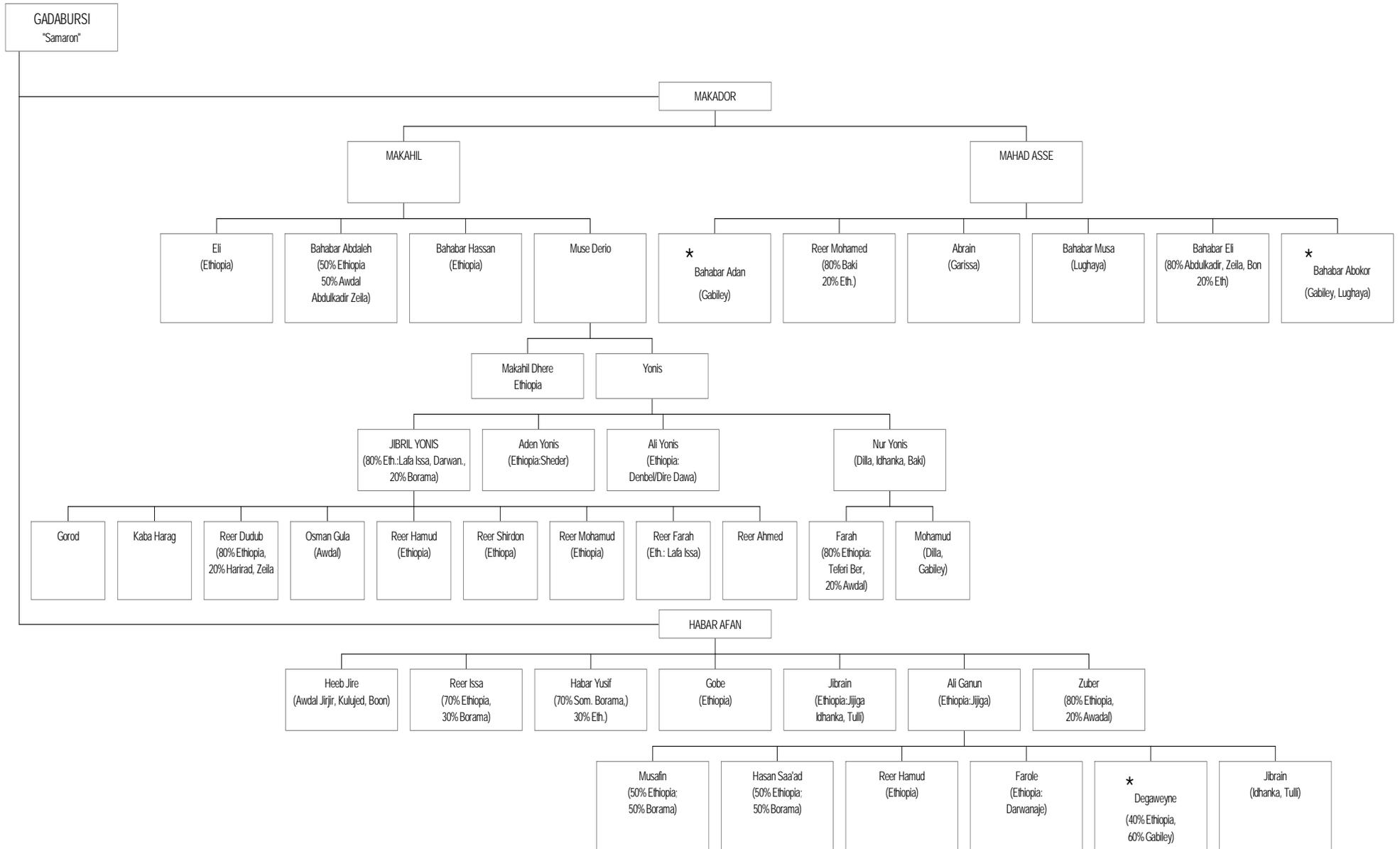
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 2: DIR



GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 2.1: ISSA

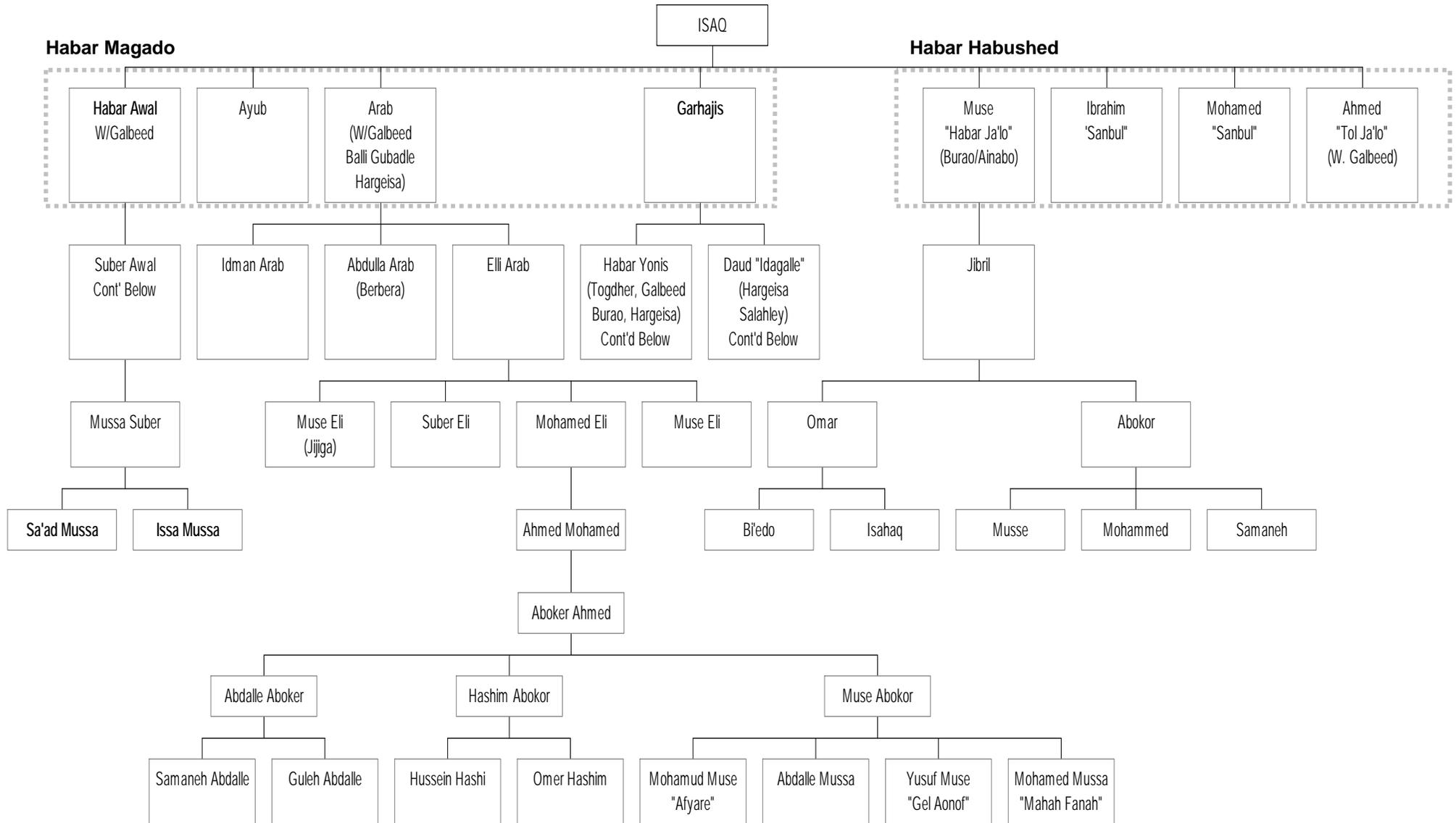


GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 2.2: GADABURSI

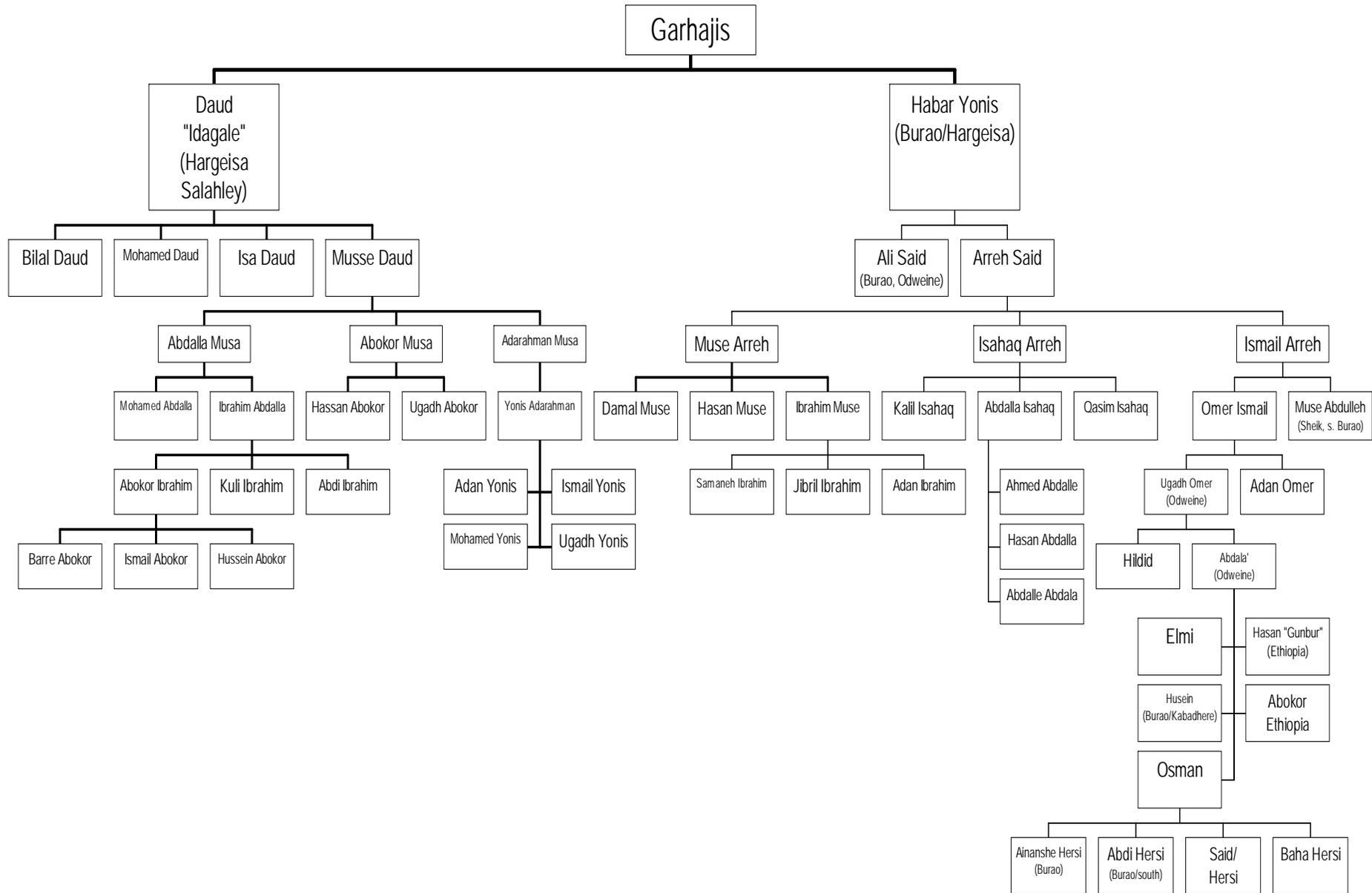


*Bah Samaron (Gadabursi Gabiley Alliance)

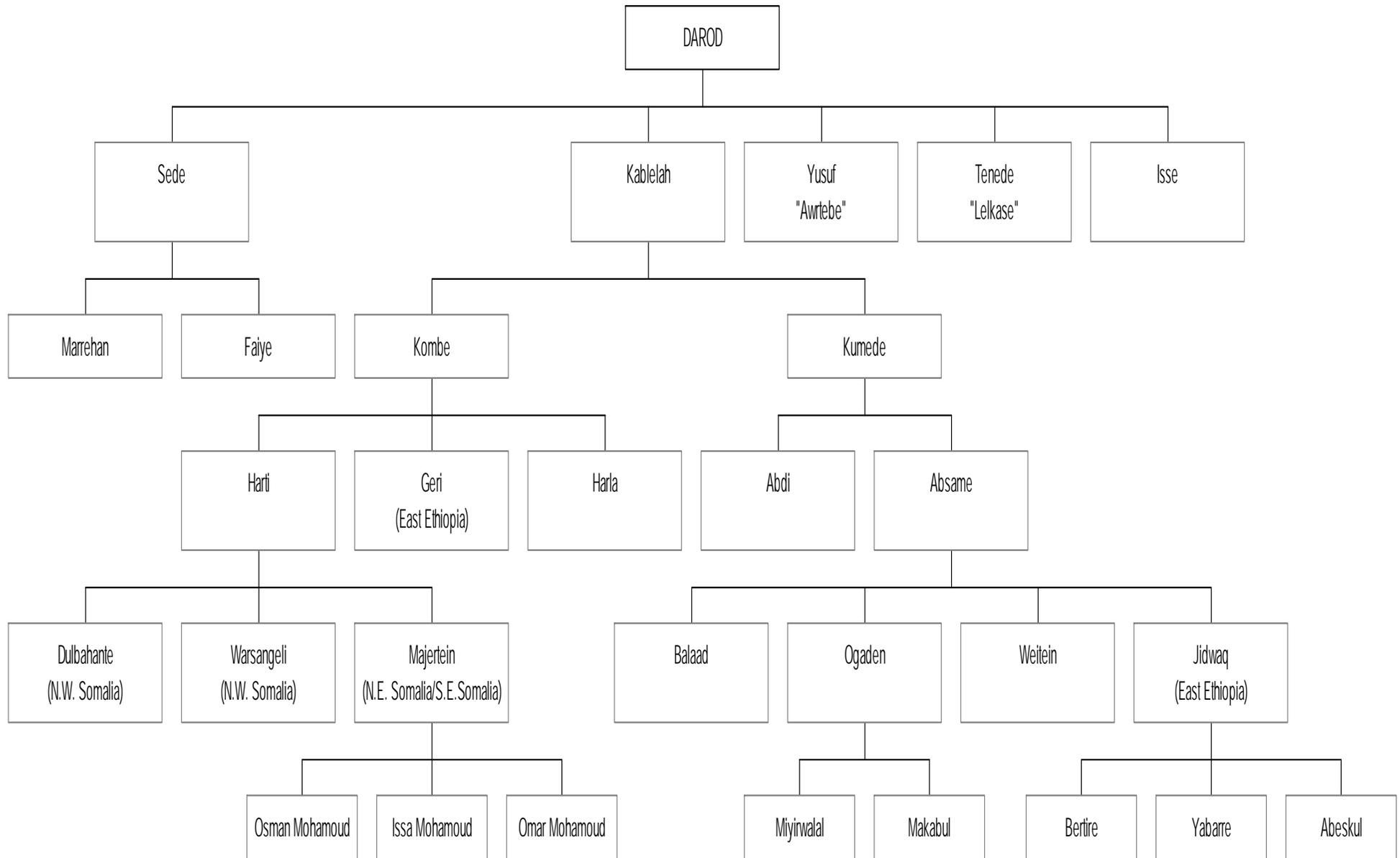
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 2.3: ISAQ



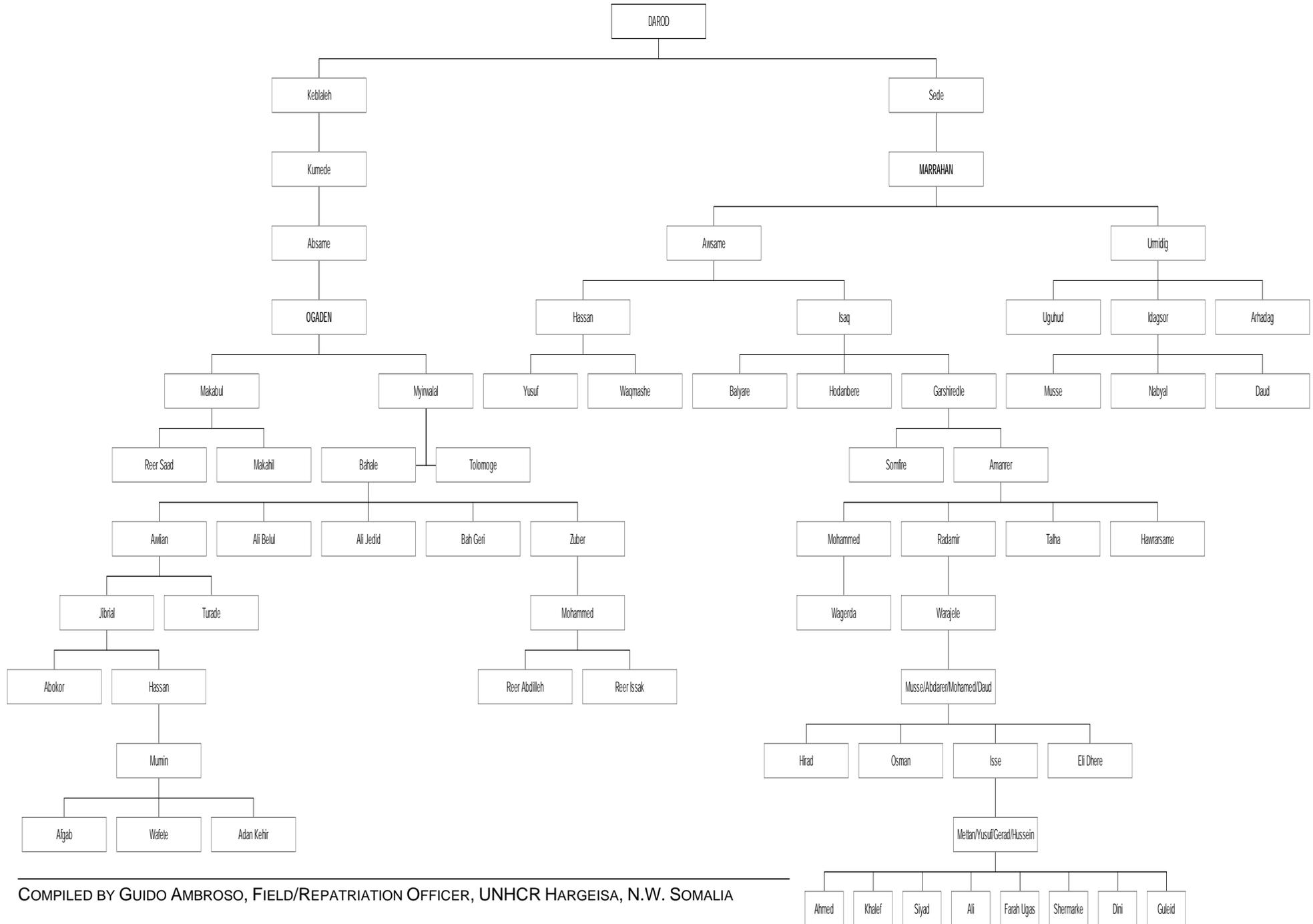
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 2.3.2: GARHAJIS/ISAQ



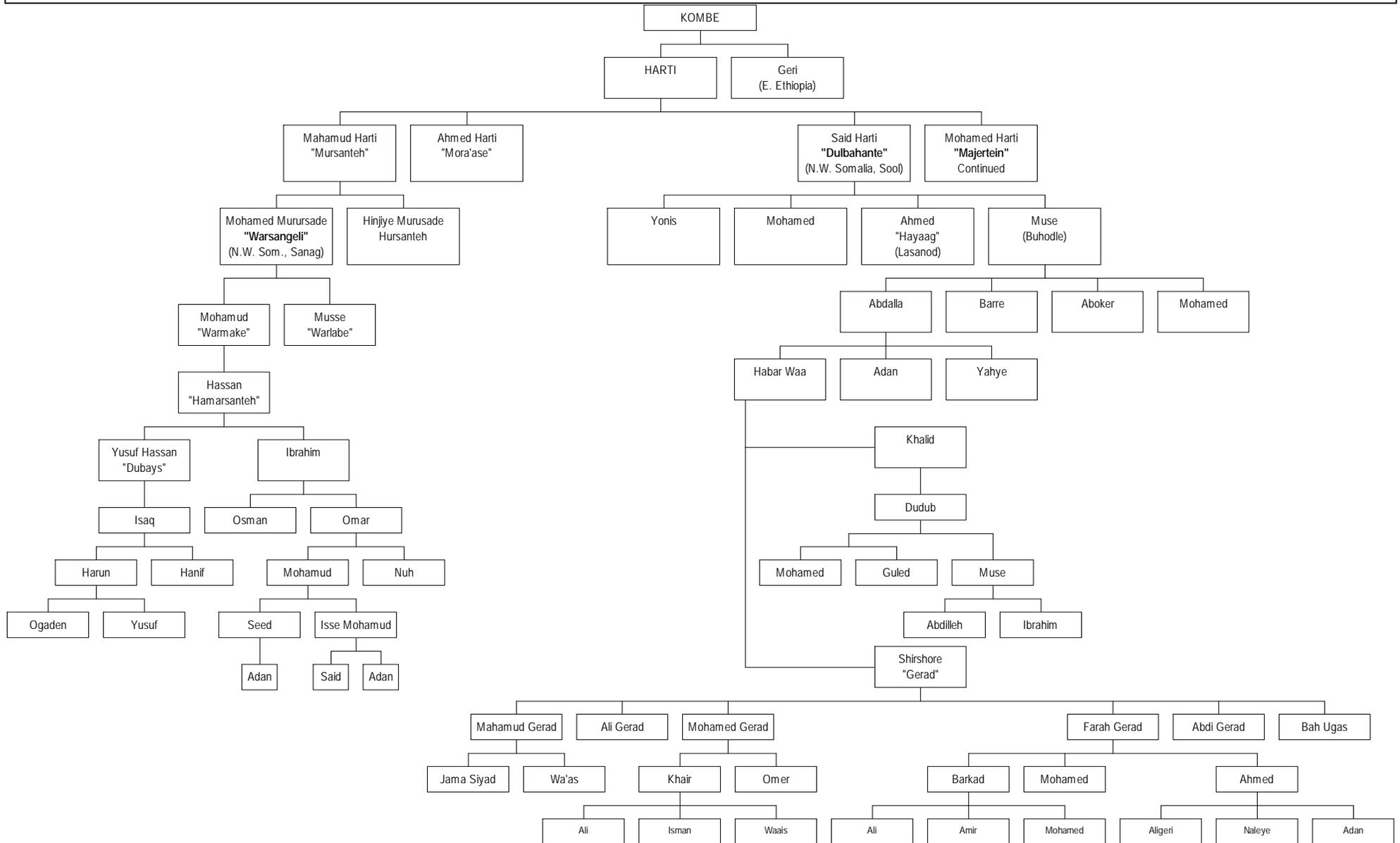
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 3: DAROD (GENERAL/SIMPLIFIED)



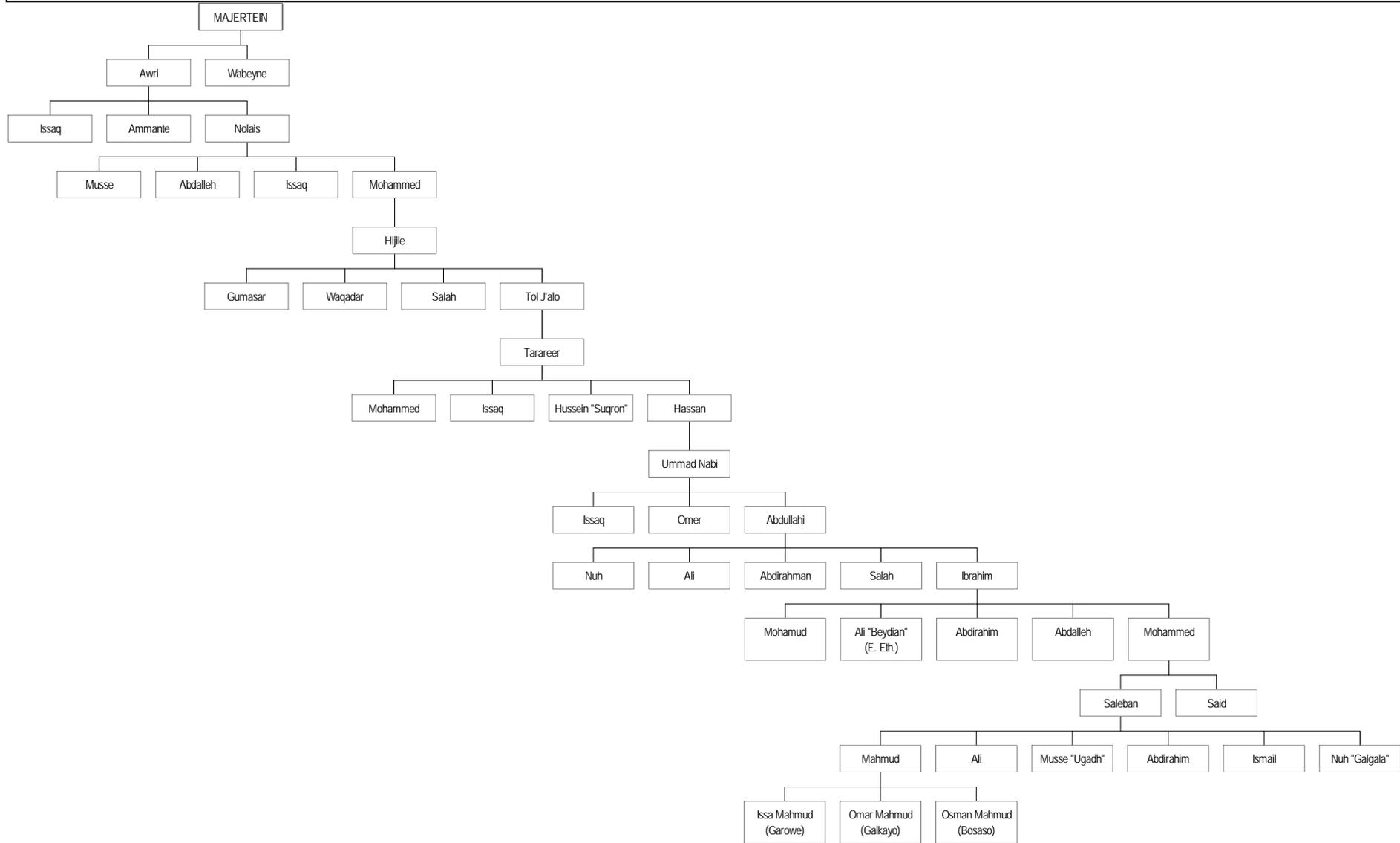
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 3.1: OGA DEN AND MARRAHAN DAROD"



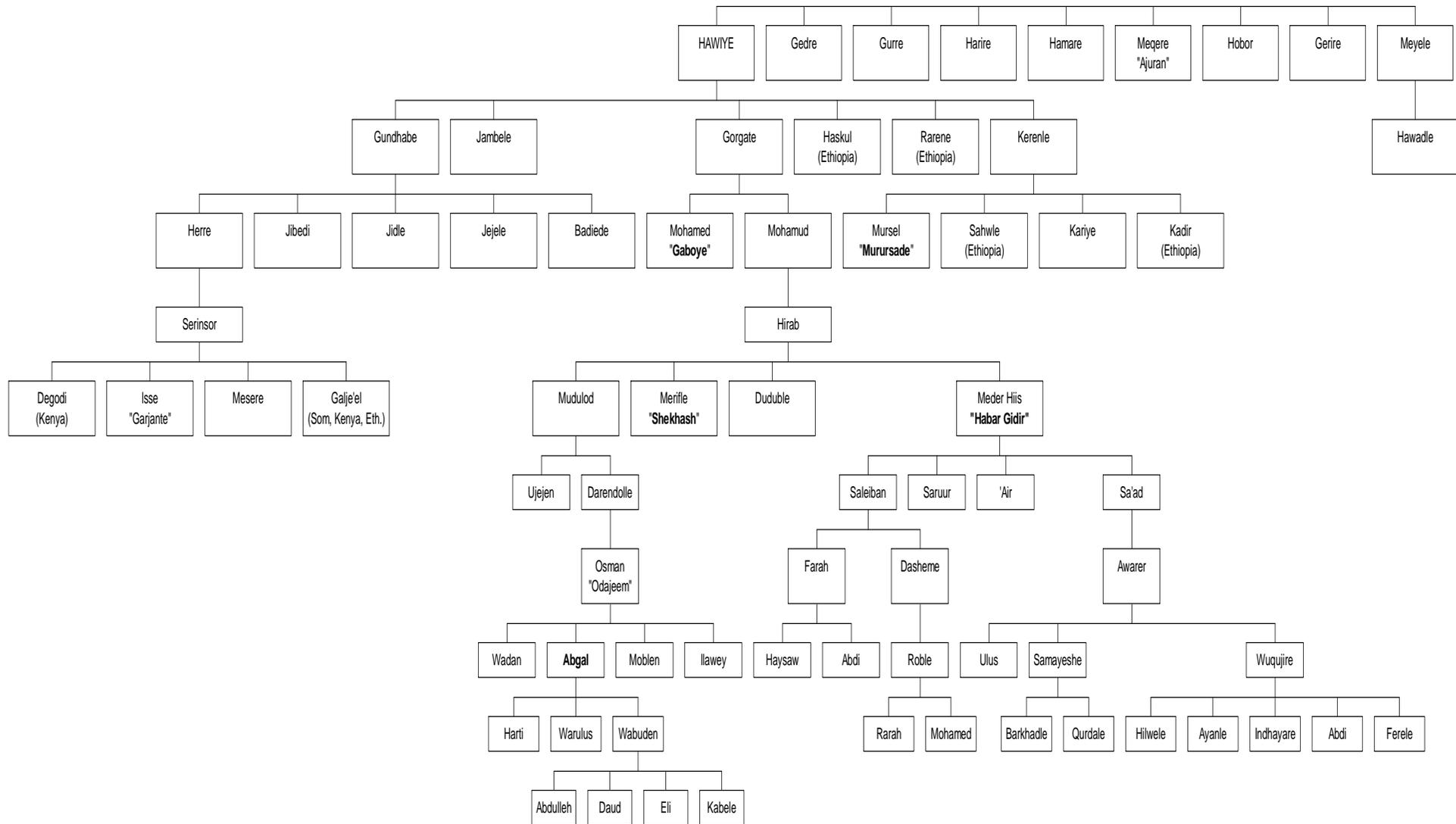
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 3.2: HARTI/KOMBE/DAROD



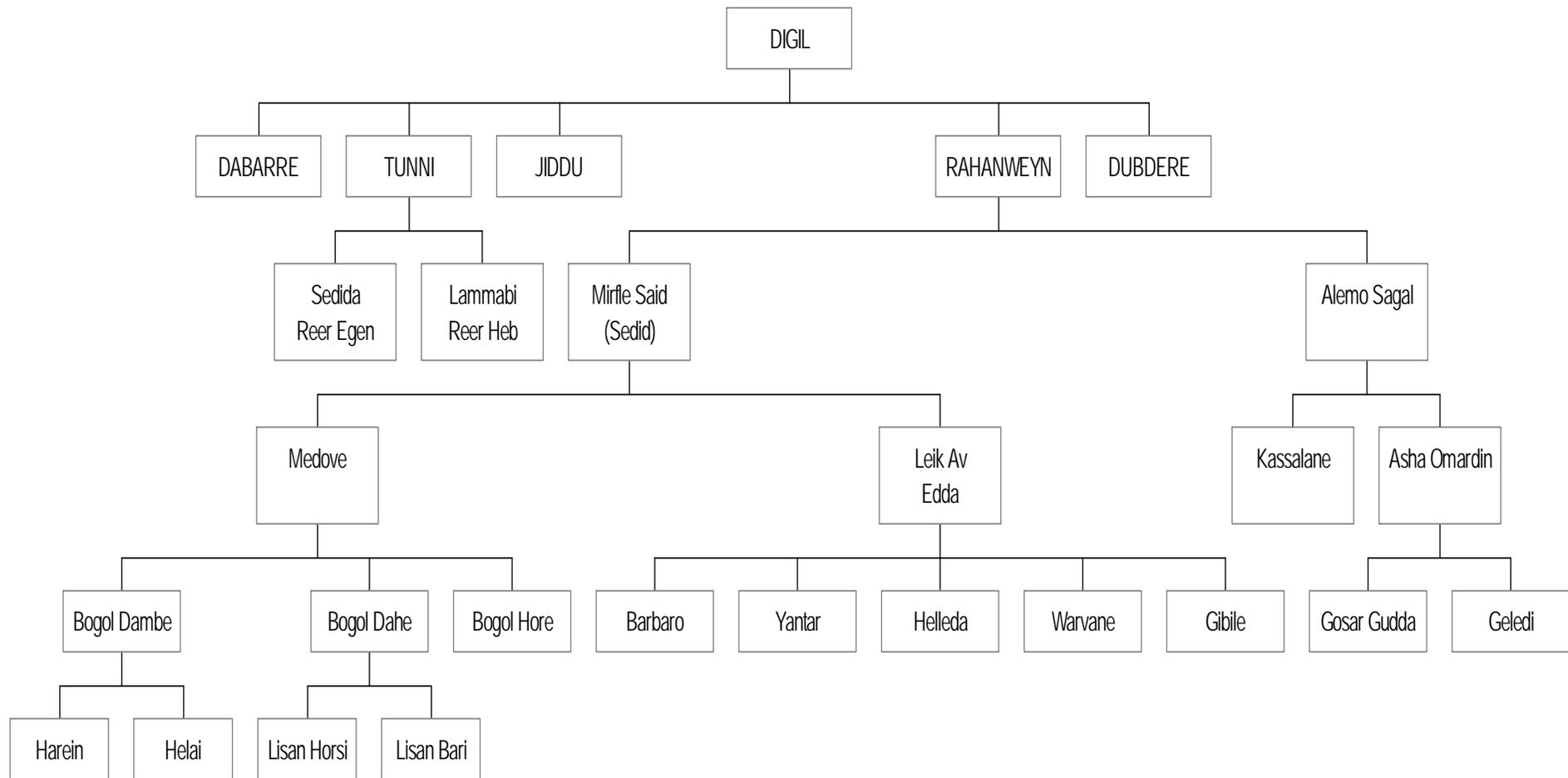
GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART 3.2.1: MAJERTEIN/HARTI/DAROD



GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 4: HAWIYE



GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHART # 5: DIGIL-MIRFLE



Adapted from I.M. Lewis 1955/1994, pp. 34 - 42

GENEALOGICAL CLAN CHARTS # 6: LOW-CASTE CLANS (GABOYE, TUMAL, YIBER)

