



THE CAMEL IN SOMALI ORAL TRADITIONS

Axmed Cali Abokor

Translation: Axmed Arten Xange

THE CAMEL IN SOMALI ORAL TRADITIONS

by

Axmed Cali Abokor

Translated from Somali
by Axmed Arten Xange

Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts
in cooperation with
Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1987

Cover drawing after embroidery by Fatuma Sheikh Omar

This book is a translation of Suugaanta Geela published by the Institute in 1986.

ISBN 91-7106-269-6

Printed in Sweden by
Motala Grafiska, Motala 1987

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

For centuries livestock have formed the backbone of the Somali economy. Camels are especially highly valued by Somali herdsman and are loved more than any other animal. This comes forth in the following few lines by the famous Somali poet Sayid Maxamed Abdille Xassan:

"A she-caml is a mother
To him who owns it
Whereas a he-camel is the artery
Onto which hangs life itself..."

The practical uses of the camel have been eloquently described by Somalis in their extensive oral poetry, handed down through generations from father to son. It forms a complete literary tradition composed of poems, proverbs, metaphors and tales of wisdom.

Oral literature has been one of the subjects studied by the "Somali camel research project", a bilateral undertaking between Somalia and Sweden (the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts, SOMAC, and the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, SAREC). This project covers many aspects of camel pastoralism, ranging from the humanities to the social and natural sciences.

Axmed Cali Abokar, a distinguished Somali scholar, and a member of the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts, started to collect oral camel poetry in 1982. The analysis of this vast material has shown that camel poetry relates to various aspects, such as camel milk and meat for food, the camel's extraordinary ability to endure hot climatic conditions, honour and prestige expressed in camel ownership and management. In short, camel poetry is as interdisciplinary as any scientific subject can be. This was aptly stated by a leading Somali administrator: "Here, everybody is a professor of the camel".

Uppsala, September 1987

Maxamed Cali Huseen and Anders Hjort af Ornäs
Project coordinators, Somali camel research project

C O N T E N T S

A PERSPECTIVE ON CAMEL POETRY IN SOMALIA (T Hjort)	i
INTRODUCTION	iv
FROM THE TRANSLATOR	ix
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY	1
The Economic Uses of Livestock	3
I Milk	4
II Meat	10
III The Camel as a Transport Means	13
IV The Hardiness of the Camel	24
The Social Uses of the Camel	31
I The Communal Ownership of Camels	31
II The Blood-Money	37
III Brideprice	40
IV Honour and Prestige	44
CAMEL HUSBANDRY	47
I Love of Camels	47
II Tending Camels	53
III The Difficulties in Camel Husbandry	61
IV The Physical Task	61
V The Security of the Camels	63
The Camel as Cause of Conflict	69
Looting Camels	73
The New Oral Literature and the Camel	79
NOTES (Appendix I)	88
BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF POETS QUOTED IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT (Appendix II)	91

A PERSPECTIVE ON CAMEL POETRY IN SOMALIA

Tiiariitta Hjort

The Art of Poetry in Somali Society

The traditional Somali way of life is a pastoral one. Even today more than half of the Somalis base their living on livestock raising. People are on the move looking for water and pastures with their herds. The amount of material possessions is minimal as everything has to be carried with when moving across the country. In this kind of lifestyle every material item means more weight to carry. Therefore it is natural that the kind of artistic expression given by people to their inner experience of life is the oral one. When the geographical circumstances of Somali culture are added to the influence of Islam with its nonexistence of pictorial art, we can understand how the beauty and eloquence of the Somali oratory has flourished and developed through the centuries.

Oral tradition has an essential role in the social life of the Somali people. Until the 1970's the virtually analphabetic culture has encouraged its members to develop their ability to memorize long poems and practice the oral art of speech. Even in modern times, Somalis find it strange that westerners are so bound to their written texts and unable recite by heart. Through the centuries oratory has been a central feature in social relations of the pastoral Somalis. The vast reservoirs of oral tradition have resulted in knowledge of events in the remote past, such as migrations, genealogies, conflicts over wells and pastures between clans, etc., being preserved in the memory over generations. Later these events were recorded in connection with the writing of the history of the Somali people. With the help of local oral tradition, historians have been able to fill in many gaps in reconstructing the past of this pastoral people.

In Somalia oratory is never just "art for art's sake" but is bound to and part of the social life and network building. Both prose and poetry are connected with special social situations. A traditional poem has always a special message: a story to tell or an argument to advance (Samatar 1982, 57). Prose oratory in its turn is used in negotiating the content of social relations: it is an essential part in the gatherings of men. The traditional jurisprudence process is based on rhetoric; conflicts are discussed before a panel of judges, the so-called *heerbeegti*, which is made up of elder men. Both the disputing parties are trying to convince these judges with the help of an orator. In this way conflicts are usually settled through discussion. In these "court-cases" the conflicting parties seldom speak themselves unless they happen to be socially esteemed speakers. Instead, in most cases they have a "professional" orator to speak for them and defend them (Samatar *ibid.* 33, 54).

Speakers are judged on rigid criteria, a fact which often leaves out the possibility for younger men to become socially accepted and respected orators. A good speaker has to know the customary law and traditions as well as earlier cases in matters he is dealing with. In addition, he

has to have a clear mind to remember the arguments of his opponent as well as to be able to convince his audience of the validity of his own argumentation (Samatar *ibid.* 32). When possessing such abilities, those who master the art of oratory have great influence and power in the pastoral society. A poet can well be called "the public relations man of the clan" (Samatar *ibid.* 3) who exercises great power when bringing an elder or even a whole clan into disgrace or estimation.

As for poetry, there are only a few great bards who occupy a prominent place in society. But they also have great power in controlling social relations. Poems are often composed to influence public opinion in situations of conflict. A poet can take a position for or against one or the other of the disputing parties. In this way poetry can be an instrument both to precipitate and sustain feuds and a means to bring them under control (Samatar *ibid.* 4). A good poet thus knows his power to influence people's opinions and to stir emotions for or against a cause.

But in influencing public opinion, poems also have an informing function. A good poem has a structure that makes it easy to memorize. A well-remembered verse can spread through wide areas rapidly, broadcasting the message it bears. In this way poems have an important informative role in a society without newspapers, radio or television. In addition poetry is a very powerful means of propaganda for the desired ends. A poem can give a view of a special situation that is intended to benefit one or the other side of reality. Composing poems is therefore a very conscious task in which there is no place for improvisation. When a poet is reciting a new poem it is only after a thorough process of composing and moulding his message according to the rules of the special social situation as well as the poetic tradition and form.

The very form of the art of poetry has been a factor distinguishing prominent poets from less talented ones. Somalis consider a line to be poetry when the units of which it is composed are alliterative and balance one another with rhythmic regularity. Poems are chanted rhythmically but it is difficult to distinguish how the rhythm is produced. Even the most elaborated poets and reciters are unable clearly to express the complex rules of Somali verse (Samatar *ibid.* 62-63).

The distinguishing feature of Somali poetry is a very well-developed alliteration with rigid rules. The lines in the majority of poems consists of the hemistichs and in each hemistich at least one of the words has to begin with a chosen consonant or with a vowel. Only identical consonants are regarded as alliterative whereas all vowels can be alliterative with each other (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964, 42; Samatar *ibid.* 59). The art of alliteration has been an ever-developing and enriching element in Somali poetry and contributed to the preservation of many ancient words and synonyms as well as making the composition of poems an intellectual exercise.

But the nature of poetry gives not only the poets but also the audience intellectual dilemmas to solve. As mentioned above, Somali poetry always carries a message but the meaning is often hidden. To find it is a special challenge. Somalis know where to look for the hidden meanings in poetry even though considerable intelligence is often required to decipher them (Samatar *ibid.* 57).

Even if poets exercise considerable social and political power, their work is by no means individualistic or independent. A poet is

always an interpreter of his time and his society, which gives his poetry its special flavour. In utilizing poetry society may be said to participate in forming it. Throughout all the different period of history people living at a certain time share a collective experience of their era and this is the experience to which the poet gives expression. Thus a vast amount of Somali poetry not only deals with specific social situations but also expresses the everyday situations and emotions of the pastoralists. Being an expression for the collective experience, poems rapidly become what might be described as "common property". Well-known poets have their own reciters through whom their poems travel long distances and pass from mouth to mouth among the public (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964, 44-45). This "jungle telegraph" system is highly efficient as the pastoralists travel throughout the length and breadth of the country. Competence to memorize long verses is socially esteemed. Verses of poetic form suitable for memorizing are, accordingly, the most valuable ones.

But even if recited by everybody a newly composed poem is not owned by everybody. Somalis are careful to identify both composer and the original situation when reciting a specific poem. However, in the course of time poems become moulded and their origins are not always remembered after a long time, a process met in all oral folklore. But as for professional poets, they are careful to preserve the "copyright" to their works. The audience is also very capable in distinguishing the works of different poets and disputes over the purity of versions are by no means infrequent. In the same way the public is very critical in accepting poems and all mediocre works are mercilessly discarded and forgotten (Andrzejewski and Lewis *ibid.* 44-46; Samatar *ibid.* 64-67). But poems of high quality remain vital common property for many generations.

Life and culture through the camel

Many of the modern Somali poets have chosen the camel as the symbol of their nation and its independence from the colonial powers. Somalis say that their culture has survived and flourished during the centuries thanks to the camel. This animal gives the pastoral Somalis everything they need for survival in the extremely harsh ecological circumstances. It is the camel that makes it possible for them to live in balance with their environment generation after generation. So it is not surprising to find the Somali nation compared with the camel. Behind the modern allegories there is a flourishing and rich oral tradition that goes back to time immemorial praising this huge animal and giving expression to the diversity of life when camel-herding.

Having a long coast line in the Horn of Africa, Somali has had sea-faring contacts with the Arab Peninsula since ancient times and has been involved in long-distance trade through its coastal towns. It is also probable that the camel first arrived in the country over the sea from Arabia. For centuries Somalis have been primarily pastoralists, with an emphasis on camel herding. Camel pastoralism has been the most highly esteemed way of life and neither has it lost its value in modern Somalia.

Agriculture is concentrated mainly to the south and to the riversides along the Shebelle and Juba rivers where durra, beans and maize are the

most important crops. Camel herding, in its turn, predominates in the northern and central drylands. In the northern, coastal and mountain areas, sheep and goats are raised together with camels. Cattle are bred in areas with more plentiful water and regular rainfall, e.g. in the riversides and southern parts of the country.

Historically, clans were divided between camel herders and cattle breeders. The latter were in the majority, regarding agriculturalists as inferior. In the social prestige order, camel herders were considered to have the highest position. No wonder there are today more camels than people in Somalia, the country in fact having the biggest camel population in the world.

In their folklore the Somalis praise the camel for its superiority to other animals in the hard ecological conditions. And it is true that no other domestic livestock is so well adapted to the semi-desert environment of Somalia as the camel. It has a tremendous ability to withstand high temperatures and retain the liquid balance in its body. It can go long periods without drinking, as it is able to preserve water in its body. Normally the camel wants to drink about once a week, but it is able to survive without water for up to a month. As for pasture, the camel does not compete with sheep or cattle. Where the latter accept even the dry grasses on the ground, camels predominantly browse bushes. They are constantly on the move, biting one twig here and another there, thus utilizing the vegetation evenly. When on the move the camel walks softly with its big soft two-toed feet, keeping trampling at a minimum.

Female camels have an extraordinary milk-producing capacity. They can be milked for nine to eighteen months after having given birth. One camel is able to give 12 litres of milk a day. And its milk is of a unique quality compared with that of other domestic animals. For centuries Somalis have known that man can live on camel's milk alone. Moderate droughts normally occur in Somalia every six to eight years and every third becomes extremely severe. Millions of people have survived these hard periods thanks to camel's milk, four litres of which is enough nourishment for an adult man for a whole day. Its richness in vitamin C is one striking feature. This is a vital quality in times of drought when no vegetables are available. Another feature of camel's milk is that it will not get spoiled as fast as milk from other domestic animals but turns into sour milk through a natural process. And in that form it can be enjoyed for several weeks.

No wonder Somalis praise the camel for their existence and consider it to be the highest property one can have. As the basis of pastoral lifestyle, social life is concentrated around the camel, too. The huge majestic animal has become the very symbol of society, social relations and man's emotions.

In pastoral society the wealth of a person is estimated in domestic livestock, among which the camel is regarded as the most valuable. The different social transactions, the most important of which is marriage, are made in livestock. As one camel is worth a great number of other animals, the camel-owner has a privileged position in Somali society. Wealth is equal to power and thus the man with many camels is high up in the social ranking order. The importance of the camel as an animal with social prestige is persistent; even the modern urban Somali men

still have camels in the countryside. The boundary between pastoral and urban life is far from being sharp in the Somalia of today.

Success and competence are indicated by ownership or control of large camel herds. This also implies popularity and being in control of wide social networks, too. In addition, it gives economic security. Camel-herding families can feel safe even in times of drought when people with another kind of subsistence base are experiencing trouble. Whichever aspect we look at, food security or wealth and power, the independence and individual quality is intertwined with economic and social bonds creating networks of dependencies on collective groups. The camel plays a crucial role as an aphorism for this lifestyle, symbolizing for instance the bonds of the clan group and the independence inherent in a subsistence based economy.

As people are so dependent on their camels for their subsistence, especially during severe droughts, their relationship to these animals has a tendency to become very affectionate. Life with camels is a kind of life where the well-being of every animal is of vital importance. In camel poetry we can clearly see this love and the deep appreciation that herders have of their animals.

But social power is not only expressed in wealth and physical force. A man with an honoured position also has to prove his worth. An aphorism says that a man who cannot defend his camel with words (in the same way as with arms) has lost his right to live in the desert (Samatar *ibid.* 31-32). Somalis inseparably link poetry with camels. To know the tradition and share in the oral art seems a prerequisite for becoming a socially respected camel owner. But then the oral tradition encompassing the camel is like a bottomless well from which the waters flow that lead the desert to burst into bloom. It is just as essential part of the Somali culture as its subject, the camel, itself. Without oral art the harmony in society would be unthinkable. The beauty and eloquence of prose and poetry is the property of people far from being marginal or belong to the professionals alone. Just the opposite, oral art belongs to the everyday life of the pastoralist as much as their camels, wells and pastures.

Literature

- Andrzejewski, B.W. and Lewis, I.M. 1964, Somali Poetry. An Introduction Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Bulliet, Richard M. 1975, The Camel and the Wheel. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
- Cassanelli, Lee V. 1982. The Shaping of Somali Society. Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People. 1600-1900. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hjort, A. and Mohamed Ali Hussein, 1986, Survival in Arid Lands. The Somali Camel Research Projekt SIAS, Uppsala.
- Samatar, Said S. 1982, Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism. The case of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hasan. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

INTRODUCTION

The collection and preservation of Somali oral literature are important subjects that require urgent attention. This rich literature was transmitted to us orally from generation to generation of Somalis and a considerable part of it has already been lost and forgotten completely. The cultural and historical life of the Somali people is vividly reflected in this ancient oral data.

Whenever research is to be conducted on any specific subject on Somali life the existing oral literature is an essential reference material for the researcher. A research work lacking the full utilization of this vast oral data would certainly be incomplete.

The present collection of oral literature on the Somali camel is the result of an extensive research work already conducted on the oral literature created by the preceding generations concerned with camel husbandry. A considerable amount of this oral data had been accumulated over the centuries in various regions of the country, being composed in different periods of time. Only a small fraction of this oral information is at present available, but it still has its important historico-cultural values. It is necessary, for instance, that we should know the benefits of camel husbandry to the pastoral society.

The Objectives

It is not the aim of this work to record here all the oral literature existing on the camel, whether created in the distant past or in more recent times. The objectives of this research consisted generally of the following points:

- 1 - to record the oral literature which indicates the important role camels play in the life of the pastoral society in Somalia,
- 2 - this particular oral literature describes both the benefits and problems involved in camel husbandry, comparing it with the other types of livestock raised by the pastoralists.
- 3 - the oral literature recorded here does not compare camel husbandry with the other professions such as fishing and agriculture. It is intended that the next research work on the camel literature be devoted to this interesting comparison.

The Oral Literature

The oral literature on the camel that had been collected during the research period is not all included in the present work, but a part of it only, which is as follows:

- 1 - a selected examples from the existing vast literature on camels.
- 2 - this selected literature indicates specifically the vital economic uses of the camel, such as production of milk, meat, as transport means, etc., and also the social uses of the camel, such as its being paid as brideprice, blood-money, the prestige it gives to its owner, communal ownership, etc. The problems involved in camel husbandry had also been described in the present work.
- 3 - the examples of the selected oral literature are in the form of work-songs, camel loading-songs, dance-songs, poems and sayings, proverbs, riddles, etc.

- 4 - this oral literature totals, in the original text, to 1200 lines of verse selected from about 3000 lines of verse that had been collected. This data is subdivided into 632 lines of verse of songs, 517 lines of poems and 51 lines of sayings.
- 5 - the material is recorded according to topics, and not according to poetic genre or type. The reason for this arrangement of the material was to collect together under one specific topic the oral poetry composed by different poets from different regions of the country. It was necessary, for instance, to divide the lines of a poem into more than four different topics which it dealt with.

The Poets

Special efforts were made to identify the authors of the oral literature included in the present work. This investigation revealed the following points:

- 1 - it was impossible to identify exactly the authors of most of the oral poetry since these poems are now regarded as folk literature known in almost all over the country. It is believed that this folk literature is too old to trace it back in time.
- 2 - the authorship of some of the oral poetry is also disputed, and we have taken the majority opinion in this respect.
- 3 - the authors of the more recent poems are known more or less, with the exception of few cases. The name of the author is indicated in the introductory paragraph of each poem of verse in the text, as well as in annex II to the book.

Notations

There are in the original a number of terms and phrases with special meanings that may not be clear to some readers, especially the young Somali generation who are not generally familiar with the life of their pastoral compatriots in the countryside. Such terms, which refer to names of people, animals, places, domestic articles, weapons, etc., are explained in the notations attached to the book as annex I.

The Collection Work

The collection of oral literature is a difficult task and the researcher in this field has to be patient and careful. This unwritten record is preserved in the memory of people who heard it in different versions from diverse sources. In order to verify the authenticity of an item of oral data one interview with an informant is not always enough. It is essential to investigate the given piece of information from different sources and places so as to arrive at a reliable conclusion. In this way, which obliged the researcher to spend much time and effort, correct information on individuals and the oral data they possess could be obtained. This point would show that the examples of oral literature included in the present work were in fact obtained by this method from widely different sources and individuals. The names of the most knowledgeable informants with whom we consulted are recorded in annex III to the book.

Some of the examples of oral literature included in the present work were obtained from existing documents both published and in manuscripts, which are indicated in the bibliographic list attached as annex IV.

Caution

As was stated earlier, thorough research and study of oral literature is a difficult task. In the present book not all the available oral literature created by the Somali people on the camel is recorded, but only a small fraction is included as an illustration. Indeed, so much remains to be searched for and collected that it could be sufficient material for many more books on this subject. The material collected already would serve as an example only, a modest beginning in this vast field, in view of the limited possibilities available to us.

It is hoped, however, that the considerable research work that remains to be done in this fertile field would in future be carried out by researchers who have been inspired by the present work.

Finally, we would like to emphase at the start that any errors found in this collection, whether concerning the authorship of some of the oral poetry included in this work, or the explanations given, the ultimate responsibilities would be equally shared by us and our informants.

Ahmed Ali Abokor

FROM THE TRANSLATOR

In undertaking the translation of this material there were a number of existing problems to be borne in mind, which were presented by the special characteristics of the Somali text to be translated. As the reader would realize, the major part of the material contained in the original consisted of a considerable amount of oral literature concerned with the Somali camel, collected from various regions of the country over a long period of time. Few Somali scholars, if any, have ever attempted to translate into a foreign language this extraordinarily rich material which is in the form of poems, proverbs, sayings, work-songs, etc. I was well aware that it was not going to be an easy task for me to translate these into a foreign language. It is true that poetry and humour cannot exactly be translated from one language into another. Nevertheless, relying on my general knowledge of camel husbandry in our country, as well as the assistance given to me by the collector of the material, my colleague, Mr. Ahmed Ali Abokor, the Director of the Department of Language Development, I was encouraged to make the attempt at translating the Somali text of 193 typed pages into the English language, which came to 97 typed pages in the translation.

Some of the major problems encountered by me while engaged in the translation of the original text and the way I sought to overcome these difficulties were as follows:

- 1 - since a word-for-word translation would be impossible in this kind of text, I adopted the method of giving free translation, rendering the general meaning of words and phrases, at the same time retaining as close as possible the spirit of the original.
- 2 - in translating from one language into another a certain degree of the spirit of the original is unavoidably lost. This is particularly so in the case of translating Somali oral literature into a foreign language, mainly because of the characteristic differences between the English and Somali languages. Somali is essentially the language of a pastoral society with a rich oral data handed down from generation to generation; whereas English belongs to a scientific and technical society.
- 3 - as translator I have aimed at always using simple English words and sentences in rendering the meaning of particularly difficult terms and passages in the original, especially the poetic texts. Wherever it was possible the poems, songs, etc. in the text are rendered in a poetic form, or measured language. This was, no doubt, the hardest part of our task.
- 4 - index numbers have been indicated over specific words or phrases as in the original, where they refer to the notations at the back of the book, concerned with Somali proper names given to, for instance, people, animals, plants, places, etc. In this respect the following should be borne in mind:
 - a) in the text different poets often use the same female camel name (e.g. Suub - notation 8), Teeyo - notation 11) in their poetry. In the translation a cross-reference is made to these notations so as to avoid repetition.

- b) female camel names (e.g. Baar - notation 85), Dhool - notation 1) Waris - notation 91)) are also given to Somali women. It has been clarified in the notations whether a woman or a camel is referred to.
 - c) in cases where the index numbers refer to the explanation in the common Somali language of certain terms in the original with special dialectological meanings, or of an archaic nature, it was thought to be unnecessary to indicate this point in the translation, since such extra linguistic explanation is primarily intended for the Somali readers of the original. This approach has shortened the total number of the notations in the Somali text of 796 to 109 items in the translation.
 - d) Somali plant names are given in the original, as well as in the translation, not in their scientific terms, but the traditional ones, since searching for the botanical names would be beyond the scope of this work.
 - e) the camel and topographical names are spelt according to the new Somali orthography, whereas the personal names of the poets quoted in the original are written in their Latinized form in the translation for the benefit of non-Somali speaking readers.
- 5 - the figures in the round brackets in the margin indicate the number of quotations from Somali oral literature included in the chapters of the original, as well as of the translation, which comes to a total of 296 quotations.
- 6 - the translator has frequently consulted with the collector of this oral literature on the Somali camel for the clarification of the meanings of certain poetic terms and expressions which were at times not clear in the original. He was very obliging and his kind assistance was highly appreciated in this respect.

In conclusion, I would like to point out once more that I have tried in my translation to be as close as possible to the original text, paying special attention to the poetic texts. I leave to the reader to judge for himself the degree of my success or failure in this task.

Mogadishu
11 March, 1986

Ahmed Artan Hanghe
(The Translator)

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The Somalis are among the peoples of the world who are engaged in animal husbandry and it is estimated that 60% to 70% of the total population of the country lead the life-style of herdsmen. Historically it is unknown when exactly animal husbandry began as a way of life in our country, but it is believed that it existed as long as the Somalis themselves have existed. The system of animal husbandry was handed down from one generation to the next and there was no other economic system extensive enough that could have replaced it completely. The present generation of Somali herdsmen love their profession as avidly as did their forefathers. The latest estimate (1976) shows that there are in the country 5.5 million camels, 26 million sheep and goats and 3.7 million cattle. It is important to ask the question as to why the majority of the Somalis prefer engaging themselves in animal husbandry to fishing in the long coastal areas of the country, or to farming in the fertile land along the rivers.

The experienced elders and the Somali intellectuals are agreed among themselves that in the old days stockkeeping was a better way of life economically for the Somalis than fishing and farming. It is considered that this was the main reason why most Somalis became herdsmen.

The climatic and other specific ecological conditions existing in the country also contributed to the peoples' love of animal husbandry as a profession. The country mostly has a hot climate and rainfall is minimal. Usually there are two rain seasons of short duration. The physical features of the land are divided into the long coastal area, generally with hot weather, and surrounded mostly by high mountains, with forest and flat lands. Water is scarce in most parts of the country, although there are the two rivers (Juba and Shabelle), which flow during the rainy seasons, and waterwells are dug elsewhere in the country to supply water for the people and animals during the dry seasons.

It may be seen here that the hot weather conditions in the coastal area and the shortage of water supply have somehow adversely affected fishing activities. Similarly, it could be said that uncertain rainfall has lessened agricultural activities in the country generally. The land along the rivers is mostly occupied by virgin forest which needs modern equipment to clear it for cultivation. This is one of the factors hindering agricultural development in this part of the country. A small number of people are presently engaged in farming although they also keep livestock and thus practise a system of mixed farming.

Due to the hot climatic conditions, except in the rainy seasons of plenty, the ancient Somalis considered animal husbandry to be more profitable for them than engaging in agriculture, which depended mostly on the uncertain seasonal rainfall. It does not mean, however, that the rains do not normally come for the whole year, but that they are not distributed equally in all parts of the country, some regions getting more rainfall while elsewhere it may be less.

While the farmer is settled and cannot move about, the herdsmen are often constantly on the move in search of water and pastures for their animals. This is one of the reasons why animal husbandry was considered to be more profitable than fishing and farming. In spite of the

scarcity of rainfall and the occurrence of droughts, water and pasture for the animals were always available in certain parts of the country, due to its extensive land area. There were rich pasture lands far away from the waterwells which, due to the existence of conditions harmful to the animals, could only be utilized during severe droughts.

The animals that are raised by the Somalis are, as mentioned earlier, camels, cattle, sheep and goats, horses and mules. These animals are valued differently and they are not equally owned or possessed by everybody. Their values depended on the comparative strength and hardiness of the individual animal, as well as its usefulness to man. Horses and mules are used only as transport animals, while all the other types of domestic animals produced milk and meat upon which depended the life of the herdsmen. Nevertheless, camels were and still are the highest valued animal because of its greater usefulness than all the other types of livestock, except horses.

Before the monetary system of exchange was introduced in the cities the Somalis used the barter system of exchanging commodities and livestock. Since the camel was the highest valued animal it was recognized as the basic exchange unit for the other types of livestock. Generally a good camel was equal in value to five cattle or thirty sheep and goats. Horses were the only domestic animals valued higher than camels.

The preference of camels to the other categories of livestock does not mean, however, that only these animals are loved. The fact is that Somali herdsmen do love all the types of domestic animals they keep. All the same, the camel is the most loved animal. It is the cherished desire of the Somali nomad or a rural family to own camels whenever this is possible, for these animals are considered to be the highest valued property. This does not mean that every person or a family owns camels. There are many families who may have some burden camels, other families may have few milch camels and still other families who have no camels at all. It is possible that some of these families may own many of the other types of livestock. But this does not mean that the latter families dislike owning camels. The reason for them not having camels may be that the particular environment in which they live is unsuited for camel-breeding. Those families who own numerous cattle, sheep and goats are, of course, well aware of the high value of camels, but due to other reasons they do not own camels.

The main reason why camels are priced higher than the other animals is that the former are more suited to survive in the harsh ecological conditions of Somalia. In other words, camels are adapted to difficult conditions where other types of livestock would perish mostly, or could exist in a poor state.

This superior strength and adaptability of the camel to difficult environments is what gives these animals higher values than all the other types of livestock and the special love people have for the camel. Thus, the camel is the one animal which gives people all the benefits and values which all the other categories of livestock combined could give.

THE ECONOMIC USES OF LIVESTOCK

The various categories of livestock all have certain economic uses and values for the people and for that reason the animals are raised. Without those values people would certainly not have cared so much to keep camels. As the types of livestock differ so does their usefulness in quantity as well as quality. It is possible that different types of domestic animals may all give the same benefits to people, such as production of milk and meat. Yet, not all the animals produce these commodities in the same quantity, some of them giving more, while others give less.

The domestic animals raised by the Somali herdsmen, such as the camel, are ultimately valued according to the usefulness of the individual animal. On these animals as a whole the survival of the people is based, and without them the nomad's life-style would have been impossible. The camel is, in fact, the basis for this pastoral economic life-style which rests as a whole upon animal husbandry.

The economic usefulness and importance of camels is indicated by the great desire of the nomads for possessing these animals, which they value higher than all the other types of livestock.

The man, or his family, who does not own camels always feels insecure economically, even if he possesses many of the other categories of domestic animals. On the other hand, the owner of camels is more contented and satisfied in life than the one who do not own these important animals. The economic value derived from camels is what gives personal security and satisfaction to people.

The other types of domestic animals also have the same economic uses as the camel, except its being a vital transport means. Milk, meat and hides and skins are also derived from most other domestic animals. Yet, camels are valued much higher than all the rest, not only because they are used as an important transport means for the people, but also for the camel's greater economic uses. Also, it is because of the camel's natural ability to survive in difficult ecological conditions that the Somali nomadic society valued these animals higher than all the rest of the domestic animals. In order to clearly understand the economic benefits camels have for the Somali nomadic community, and also the vital importance these benefits have for the existence of the people, it is essential that we examine these benefits closely one by one, with a view also to realizing the effectiveness and the part these benefits play in the economic life of the country as a whole. The role and the economic value of the camel are indicated by the rich oral literature created over the centuries by the pastoral Somali society. This popular literature, which has been handed down from one generation to another and which was preserved in this way for posterity always had the principal objective of explaining the great importance of the camel in the life of the people. In every generation pastoral poets living in different regions of the country described in their oral literature the vital role camels had and still have in their lives.

I. Milk

The female camel provides milk during the calving season, while the male is chiefly used for carrying loads. Milk is the principal diet of the Somali pastoralists, and camels are the type of domestic animal that give more milk than the other categories. This is another reason why camels are loved more than the other types of livestock.

Similarly, cattle and goats produce milk for the people. Yet, camel milk is preferred to milk from the other animals.

It is possible to find a cow that produces more milk than the best milk camel does. However, camel milk is preferred to cattle or goats' milk for the following reasons:

- a. first, camel's milk can be preserved for a much longer period than cattle or goats' milk.
- b. secondly, camels can be milked more than three times a day, whereas cattle and goats can be milked only twice a day.
- c. thirdly, camels could be ready for milking within an hour of the previous milking or suckling period, whereas it takes a much longer period for cattle and goats to be ready for the next milking.
- d. should the calves be let free to suckle their mothers (either during the day or night) then no milk could be had from the animals for the people.
- e. should a newly-born camel calf die, or if it is slaughtered on purpose, its skin is removed and while it is still fresh put onto a living calf belonging to another lactating camel, so as to hoodwink the foster-camel and make her accept the artificial adoption or fostering (igadh, in Somali). This fostering method is not possible in the case of cattle and goats.
- f. camel's milk is considered as the highest delicacy given to honoured guests. On the contrary, cattle and goats' milk is not regarded as respectable food and is not given as such unless there is dire necessity to do so.

Somali oral tradition has described in greater detail the importance of camel milk to the life of the nomadic society. As an illustration we shall quote here the following few proverbs:

- (1) A mouthful of camel's milk keeps you going for half-a-day

This proverb indicates the nourishing quality of camel's milk, that a single mouthful gives a person enough energy to keep walking for half-a-day. It also explains that a person who habitually drinks camel's milk has more physical strength and stamina than milk from other types of animals can give.

- (2) Milk sufficient only from camels you get
wherever you go
they, too, would go with you

This proverb points out that it is only the camel that supplies sufficient milk to people. It also indicates indirectly that the other types of animals produce much less milk than camels and is inferior in quality. The particular word "sufficient" here means also that only camel milk is fit for honoured guests, whereas milk from the other types of the domestic animals is not fit for such purposes, and it is offered only in the case of extreme necessity.

In the second part of the proverb it is also pointed out that the camel is the only animal that accompanies man wherever he goes, enduring such difficulties as physical fatigue, hunger, thirst, etc. It is reported that the camel is the only domestic beast that produces milk even when it is hungry, thirsty or sick.

- (3) ... milk pure and healthy
that I drink with appetite great
you, my camel beloved, always gave....

This work-song sung by camel herders during the watering of the animals, describes the love people have for the camel and the enjoyment they get from drinking its milk.

- (4) ... milk warm and sweet
from teats large the camel gives
a gulp of milk
that nourishes the body only it has
God created the camel so bounteous....

This work-song, which is in the May dialect of southern Somalia, describes the strength and vitality a person gets from drinking fresh camel's milk. The song also praises the camel for its bountifulness that God has given to this animal which is so useful to man.

- (5) ... you, white-furred she-camel mine
late at night
when stars mostly went out
guests unexpectedly arrived
were you called upon then
for a second milking session that night
succour to give and honour mine to save....

This work-song chanted by the camel herders during the watering of the animals describes the advantages camels have over the other domestic animals. Although cattle and goats also produce milk it is only the camel that could be milked several times a day during the lactating period. A camel could, in fact, be ready for a second milking within an hour or two from the previous milking period. The other domestic animals are incapable of such high productivity.

The song also points out that it may happen that late at night, when the cattle and goats have already been milked, honoured guests might arrive at the home of a nomadic family, and they have to be fed. In such cases it is only the camels that are ready for immediate milking for the guests, thereby preserving the personal honour of the head of the family. The tradition among the Somali pastoralists is that they do not offer sour milk to their guests unless no fresh milk is available.

(6) The points explained above are also described in greater detail by the following work-song, which is also in the May dialect. The song compares camel's milk, particularly the milk produced from the animal in a second milking session with the milk obtained from cattle and goats. It is emphasized in the song that it is only camel milk that a host could offer at short notice to his guests who might come to him late in the night, so as to satisfy them and thereby preserve his honour. Thus, it is the ability of the camel to be milked almost at any moment to quench the hunger and thirst of people with its sweet, nourishing milk, and it is because of this special quality that the camel is renowned and loved among the pastoralists.

Here is the work-song:

... she, the dark-brown camel
fails never abundant milk to give
even when calves suck her dry
your appearance graceful
is appreciated highly by all
you, the dark-brown camel mine
should late in the night
guests honoured arrive
at household that no camels has
cattle multi-coloured and tiny-footed goats
unable they are
for a second-milking session
the guests to satisfy
it's you black-camel mine
that I with stick strike anytime at night
to raise you for a second-milking session
the guests honoured to feed....

(7) The bringing up of children is an important duty which is given special attention by the parents, particularly during their infancy. If, for instance, a year-old, or less, child is weaned from the mother's breasts, due to her being undernourished to produce enough breastmilk for her child, or because of her being ill, such a child could survive only if it is given animal milk in place of that of its mother. In this critical period the best milk for the child is camel's milk. This is because the survival of the other types of domestic animals is unreliable, not to mention their producing sufficient milk for the children for all times, as briefly explained by the following work-song:

... the four-footed babe
who only knows its father
it is you, the camel, that rears it....

(8) During the severe droughts it is the camel which sustains the people with its products since the other types of the domestic animals are likely to perish altogether, apart from their producing neither milk nor meat for the people. This point is described in the following poem, the author of which is unknown to us:

... ever-ready are camels for milking sessions
even if from the heavens no rains come
in seasons of plenty
as in droughts severe
their milk all and sundry satisfies....

(9) It is reported that a well-known Somali poet called Samatar Bahnan and his wife one day quarreled, because she wanted some of the family camels to be given away to her relatives. Her husband objected to the idea. He wanted to make his wife realize that her personal well-being was due to their possessing the very camels she wanted to give away, and also that these animals were the principal wealth of the family, which supplied them with the abundant milk that filled up all the vessels in the wife's hut. Sumatar pointed out to his wife in the following

poem that camels were objects that no sensible man could so easily throw away:

... that day when at Aqallaale place
of thirst people perished
women with babies vomiting
and no drop of water was there to give
you, wife, instead
had vessels full of camel milk sour
in your hut stored
on burden camel
that I provided you with as well
and whenever you drank some of it
filled up once again the vessels were
with cattle and goats
one pays creditors
but with camels
one keeps as insurance for life
giving them away to no one
not to one's own father even....

(10) The excessive love of the pastoralists for camel's milk as the staple food for the people and also how hunger is quenched immediately after drinking this precious liquid is described below in the poem composed by the poet Omar Hussein Istelliye:

... when the jiilaal (dry season) colds
with severe hunger arrive
you then drink milk fresh
from Dhool (1) beloved
to realize how soothing and invigorating it feels
ejecting even thorns sharp
that in childhood days
in your body were lodged
perspiration hot you then shed
blinding for a while your sight
you, men, who own only sheep
beware, only camels are real wealth....

(11) Poet Abdi-Gahayr in his following poem also illustrated the importance camel's milk has for the herdsmen. He says:

... for breakfast and dinner as well
milk fresh and sour-sweet from Qiyaas (2) and Qoran (3)
with nourishment wholesome
our body we sustain
all other food brings you ill-health and unhappiness....

(12) During the severe droughts and the hot summer period it is certain that people would suffer from hunger and thirst if they own no lactating camels and more so should they have no camels at all. In such conditions people would possibly have to kill their animals for food in order to survive, or else sell them for cash with which to buy food. This point is illustrated by the following work-song:

... you, the long-kidneyed camel mine
in the summer hot
when you didn't calve
giving us no milk at all
we survived by cooked food meagre
suffering from hunger severe....

(13) Somali pastoralists believe that their family life depended on the labour of the head of the family, the man, his wife and camels which are considered as the real wealth of the family. The absence of any of these three principal factors makes the family life incomplete and insecure economically. Here the fact should be noticed that camels are placed alongside the head of the family and his wife. This is due to the great importance these animals have for the people. The following work-song illustrates how difficult life would be when these three important factors are missing, emphasizing in particular the fact that it is essentially camel's milk on which the nomadic family survived:

... my demise brings forth
destruction of homes and sonlessness
while wife's demise remarriage brings forth
new locks on an old hed growing again
but your demise, O camel mine
empty vessels and hunger painful brings forth....

(14) As it has already been pointed out camel's milk is a basic food item for the pastoralists. The following ancient Somali proverb describes the various ways this important commodity is utilized by the people:

... camel milkyield butterfat
it's also a solid food
it's a cause for trouble, too....

(15) The following work-song describes the enormous difficulties and deprivations involved in tending camels and the fact, that the camel herder gets the fruits of his labour only after the animals lactate and produce abundant milk for the people. Until then the camel herder should provide for himself with food in the form of grains from the cities, gathering wild fruits etc.:

... the family that owns Qaayib (4)
till she lactates in season proper
calves plentiful producing forth
till then on diet meagre
people would perforce to survive
wild fruits roasting
or what may perchance to them comes....

(16) The work-song below is a special camel song which describes the fact that during the lactating season milk is derived from all four teats of a camel, sufficient to feed four persons plus the calf:

... you four-teated camel mine
with milk nourishing
four people you could feed
the calf as well
hungry they never going....

(17) The work-song mentioned below is specially sung by camel herders when they are watering the herd. The song describes that a man who does not drink camel's milk would not be healthy and strong and that such a man would be unable to perform an arduous task when he is called upon to do so:

... without a full belly
of your milk nourishing
strength and stamina mine
forever I lose
helpless a man to become....

(18) The lines below, from a verse composed by poet Ismail Mire, explain that milk is by far the important product derived from camels as well as from some of the other domestic animals. The verse also points out that should a camel become barren and unable to produce milk any longer, then it would be slaughtered for food for the people or got rid of in some other way:

... should camel virgin calves
and barren and fruitless becomes
even bit of milk failing to yield
she should know a sharp knife would
its throat slit open one day....

(19) The following lines from another camel-watering song also illustrates the fact that the camel is most loved mainly because of the life-sustaining milk it produced:

... lather-topped milk
the camel gave in the season last
cherished memory it imprinted
in herdsman's mind
and they drove on the herd
to pasturelands faraway

(20) In a certain period of the year camels would have to be taken to better pasturelands faraway from the rest of the nomad family which in such cases foregoes the supply of camel's milk. The following work-song describes the difficulties the family had to face in such times:

... no sin great commit would I
this to say:
after you gone away, O Danqad (5)
to pasturelands faraway
milk lathered and rich
none of us drank anymore

(21) Similarly, a nomadic family who has not some camels in lactation would certainly find themselves in economic hardship, in the dry seasons especially, as described in a work-song:

... should gray-coloured virgins
or adult she-camels mature
in this season failed calving
starvation and ruin all of us would face....

(22) Newly-born babies and the mothers are fed with camel's milk to gain strength and stamina quickly. This watering work-song explains how camel milk is vital to mother and child in such cases:

... camels feed orphan sons helpless
with milk vital
to them a mother true the camel is

(23) The work-song quoted below concerns the making by the nomadic Somali women of the fibre mats (kebed) with which the portable nomad's hut is covered. The song describes that the nomads prefer camel milk to almost all other kinds of food, including cereals:

... on millet meals we feed not
for it soon cooks not
camel's milk curded offer us would you

(24) When a nomadic family moves their encampment to better pasture-lands it is their custom to carry camel's milk in skin vessels called "sibraar" so that people could drink from it while on trek to quench hunger and thirst. It is considered that camel's milk is the best food item for a traveler to take as provision for a long journey. Milk from cattle and goats is not suitable for this purpose, for the following reasons:

a. it could not be preserved for a long period as camel's milk could be.

b. milk from the other animals does not quench thirst as quickly as camel's milk does.

c. drinking camel's milk gives one instant restoration of physical strength and lightness, whereas a sense of heaviness in the body and desire for a rest is the sensation one gets as a result of drinking milk from the other animals. The following verse by poet Yusuf Abdi Gurey describes how camel milk is the best provision for a traveler:

... should the sibraar's aren't filled up
with Seenyo's (6) milk fresh
travelers would not venture out
scouting for distant pastures
he who in the spring
milks foster-camels lactating
thirst severe feels not

II. Meat

The second important economic value derived from the camel is the production of meat as food for the people. As the camel is larger in size than all the rest of the domestic animals, it produces meat in greater quantity. The meat of a mature camel could feed several families composed of many members and they may still be able to keep some extra meat in reserve.

It was and still is a Somali tradition that whenever it is intended to organize a large public meeting to which a great number of people are invited, camels are slaughtered for the occasion since only camel meat would be enough to feed a large number of people. Also camel

meat is generally considered to be the best delicacy to be offered to honoured guests. The meat of other domestic animals does not carry with it such high prestige as does camel meat. Another reason why camel meat is valued higher than other types of meat is, as stated earlier, that it could be preserved for a long period.

A considerable amount of Somali oral literature describes the high value of camel meat and the reasons why it is preferred to meat of other domestic animals. An old proverb says, for instance:

- (1) ... a lot of meat and talk is always found
around a camel's carcass....

As the proverb illustrates, people are usually attracted to the place where a camel is slaughtered so as to partake of the meat which is enough to feed several neighbouring families. Hence, a lot of talk and noise is heard in such places.

(2) Speaking about food excessively is considered to be improper behaviour among the Somali pastoralists generally for one would appear to be immoderate and gluttonous. Yet, people do explain and describe the choice parts of camel meat. The following work-song illustrates this point:

... fillets and ligaments strong
steak and fat rich
milk sour-sweet
- all these Jaawo (7) bestows to man free....

- (3) Poet Abdi Gahlayah in the following lines describes the ability of a camel to feed great many people with its abundant meat:

... should fate at last strikes down a camel
soon they unskin it all
fat flanks, belly and chest-meat
in choice chunks cutting up
a whole clan Suub (8) can feed with flesh....

- (4) In the lines of verse that follow the food products derived from the camel are compared with those obtained from other domestic animals:

... butterfat from cattle is best obtained
fees religious (sadaqa) goats are fit for
feeding guests honoured Ibil (9) is fit for....

- (5) The lines quoted below are from a work-song in the May dialect which describes the physical strength attained by a man who habitually eats choice parts of camel meat such as the chest-meat, the marrow, etc.:

... he who breaks the bones
the marrow therefrom to drink
or the chest-meat of a camel feeds on
strongest of men he would be....

- (6) Another work-song in the May dialect also explains the nourishing quality of camel meat and its best parts:

O Saluugla' (10)
of many sorts is your meat
ligaments strong you have
flank-meat as well
he who feeds on these well-roasted
thirty days without food one could remain
weakness he feels never
nor his strength manly diminishes
objects with you comparable God created not
in butterfat production as well
three-fold you all other animals surpass....

(7) Poet Ahmed Aynosh in his following lines also explains in greater detail the various types of camels raised by the Somali pastoralists. The poet praises the camel for its ability to give a great amount of meat, which he describes as a huge mound or a mountain enough to feed a large number of people. Poet Aynosh compares this with the small amount of meat people obtain from other livestock which is sufficient for a few persons on one occasion only:

... the loss one may forego
of ten other animals minor
but not Teeyo (11)
that mountains of meat gives
sufficient whole family for days to feed
steak and fat abundant
Teeyo, you have
thigh-bones full of marrow rich
Teeyo, you have
vessel red-bordered and decorous
full of meat in ghee preserved
Teeyo, you have

(8) Camel herders say that in the middle of a camel's hump there is a piece of fat called "ammaan", praise, which could be eaten raw. This is another reason why camels are valued higher than the other types of livestock kept by the Somali pastoralists, which have no such special delicacy. The verse below is in praise of the "ammaan" piece:

... should for the family feast
fat, castrated burden camel be slaughtered
should daggers sharp pierce through
the hapless animal's stout throat
should butchers onto it jump soon
its vitals should they cut up quick
and the "ammaan" and the liver eaten fast
the privileged meat that's eaten raw
only Bayl (12) in the hump has it hidden
mindful of this men must always be....

(9) Frequent droughts in Somalia cause great hardship to both the pastoralists and their beats in the countryside. Camels are more adapted to these harsh ecological conditions than the other domestic animals. In such difficult periods mature camels as well as calves may be slaughtered so as to supply meat for the people. This is described by the camel song quoted below:

Salwo's (13) young calf
could be roasted should need be
in droughts severe
in the desert waste

(10) Poet Hashi Indhole explains in the following verse the various ways camel meat is utilized as well as the existence of numerous camels in the countryside which are the chief wealth of the people:

... steak coarse piece of meat it's
bones with tall ends these are
meat frozen in fat
dish special it's
O God, our creator
what richness in camel's meat
how like a season of plenty

(11) In the following lines of verse, poet Askar Ali explains also that honoured guests may arrive at the home of a pastoral family unexpectedly who need to be fed according to the ancient Somali tradition of hospitality to travelers. Unlike the other animals, camels could be milked almost at any time during the lactation period so as to feed the guests and thereby preserve one's prestige in the community. The poet says:

... when relatives numerous upon you called
or guests arrived unexpected
when no cattle milk
nor goats slaughtered
sufficient for the occasion proved
in such moments it behoves you
camel mature to kill all to feed
or else milk offer them
from foster-camels in lactation
prestige yours is thus preserved then
as relatives and guests as well
with food befitting are served
and satisfied they depart in peace

The pastoralists do not generally put camel hide to good use. This product is used in limited ways such as making sandals, as roof-cover for the portable nomad's hut, etc. Cattle hide is preferred to that of the camel since the former is more colourful, softer and thus easier to work.

The hide is stretched out as soon as it is removed from the carcass so as to dry in the sun. It is then used as roof-covering for the nomad's hut. On other occasions the hide is torn into fine strands which are used as ropes. It is seldom used as bedding due to its coarseness.

III. The Camel as a Transport Means

Camels are divided into the two categories of milch camel and burden camel. Milk is derived from female camels when they are in lactation

whereas male camels are used as transport means. Traditionally Somalis do not use female camels as transport means, mainly because male camels are often available for this purpose. Another reason for this is the great love and respect Somalis have for milch camels in general. Even a man who owns only one milch camel may never use it as a beast of burden.

While female camels are loved for the vital milk derived from them as well as for their reproduction ability, male camels are also loved for they are the principal transport means for the pastoral community. A male camel may be chosen as a stud sire and not used as burden camel.

At the young age of four or five a male camel is trained and domesticated as a burden animal and it is taught to follow and obey the trainer. It would not be possible to train an adult animal.

Training young male camels for use as burden beasts is a difficult job, as it was stated earlier. During the initial period the animal is quite unmanageable: it frequently kicks, jumps and bellows wildly at the approach of the trainer. During this training period people are not allowed to ride the animal nor is any fragile load put on it. A light load of mats and carpets which it easily carries is put on the young camel under training for the first time. An object that makes a loud sound is also not loaded onto the beast so as not to frighten it. The young camel jumps, kicks and runs off with the load on its back which often tilts to one side and then falls off the animal. When a young burden camel is frightened and runs off with its load, it may disturb the other burden beasts in the train among which it is placed, causing all the animals to stampede chaotically. In such a wild stampede elderly people and young children, baby-goats, etc. who usually ride on the burden camels whenever the nomad camp is removed to a new place, may be in danger of falling off and get seriously hurt. Usually a young burden camel under training is led on separately by a strong trainer. However, should this be impossible the young camel is placed first in the camel train and the more domesticated animals are tied to it at the rear.

Training a male camel usually takes a period of from one to two years. After this period the animal becomes one of two types: a very quiet and obedient, or a capricious beast that has to be handled with due attention at all times.

After several years the animal normally becomes fully domesticated. The burden camel is then ready to be loaded with the fragile household articles. Elderly people, small children and baby-goats also ride on it as it is quiet and reliable then. It is also used to fetch drinking water for people and animals from distant waterponds, carrying large containers for storing up water for a long period. Such a burden camel is loved dearly and its owner seldom gives away, nor sells it. As transport means it is vital for the nomad family who frequently moves about in search of new pastures and then both people and household goods have to be transported on camelback. When water has to be drawn from far off waterwells and a long trek has to be made, the burden camel can stay without feeding for a week or more without losing its strength. The animal is ideally adapted to such rigors and is extremely reliable.

In other instances a burden camel is castrated and fattened so as to make it healthy and strong as well as producing a great amount of meat when slaughtered for food.

During the drought period, when other types of livestock lose their normal weight and become too lean to supply the people with meat of good quality, fattened and castrated he-camels are usually slaughtered for food, so that the pastoral family may go through the difficult drought period safely. Fattened camels hardly lose any weight and usually preserve the fat they put on in the previous season of plenty, no matter how severe a drought may be. It is the fat and meat obtained from the camels that make it possible for the herdsman's family to pass through the famine period when no milk nor meat from other sources is available. Should a man have no fattened male camel in his herd he would be forced to slaughter the most loved fat she-camel he owns in order to supply the family with sufficient meat during the drought. Otherwise the man may be forced in such circumstances to kill for food the only burden camel he uses as transport means. This would leave the family without a burden camel when the necessity arrives to move the camp to new pastures, or to fetch drinking water from the waterpools which may be situated at a long distance.

A burden camel is also used for carrying trade goods from the countryside to the cities and vice versa. In such trips the animal may cover hundreds of miles without feeding or drinking water on the way. In the old days, and to a certain extent even now, burden camels were the chief transport means between distant cities in the country, carrying merchandise such as grains and cloth for the nomad community in the countryside or from one city to another.

Male camels are also trained for riding purposes by the men. The camel is saddled like a horse and a man rides it on his travels or on scouting for new pasture-lands for the herd. A riding camel is not led on the leash like a burden beast but it is allowed to run at full trot like a horse. It covers great distances, traversing deserts without feeding or resting for a long period, resisting both severe heat and cold. A riding camel was also used in the old days for carrying urgent messages between distant settlements in the countryside and was thus an important means of communication. Like horses, men ride on camels when attending important ceremonial occasions so as to show off the gracefulness of these animals. Similarly, riding camels were used in warfare and it was the fastest and the highest valued animal the nomads possessed, except the horse. In certain pastoral communities living in areas far from modern transport means the riding camel is used still and it has its former value and prestige.

The burden camel is kept separate from the herd and is never allowed to graze along with it. The animal is usually shackled at night near the family hut and is allowed to graze around it during the day, having its forelegs tied closely together with a strong rope so that it may not stray. In the daytime the leg-shackle is loosened so as to allow the beast to graze freely. In such conditions the burden camel needs no one to look after it for it would not go far from home. Thus it is less troublesome than the other domestic animals and only in the evening requires someone to lead it home for the night. Should it break the shackle, a burden camel may go astray and get lost especially when it is hungry or thirsty, but it often stays to graze with the other camels even though it is not shackled.

Among the nomads it is the tradition to tie up at the same place whenever one sees a burden camel that has cut off its leg-shackles,

even though the finder does not know who owns the astray animal. The finder may also drive the beast to the nearest settlement so that it may be kept there safely. No burden camel with loose shackles is left unattended and everyone is obliged to keep it secure.

The foregoing are the various ways male camels are used by the nomad community and it would be very difficult for them to survive without these animals. Removal of the encampment from one place to another, fetching water from the waterpools and travelling to and from the cities are part of the daily routine of the nomad's life and these activities are all made possible by the use of burden camels.

Beside the camel, Somali nomads use donkeys as means of transport, but not as extensively as the former. Horses are used only for riding purposes.

(1) In Somali oral literature there are numerous songs in praise of burden camels. In the following verse the well-known poet Ismail Hayd explains how as a means of transport the burden camel connects the countryside where the pastoral community lives with towns and cities, comparing it with an ocean-going ship:

... living ships camels are for the world
between Hargeysa (14) and Jigjiga (15) they ply
laden with merchandise from many lands
bringing fame as great as Marseille to Adari (16)
verily indispensable for life is the camel
that stout-headed slave of an animal

(2) Poet Ahmed Aynosh in his following verse praises the usefulness of the burden camel comparing it with the small ability of the donkey as a beast of burden:

... when in the season dry and hot
from Garduur (17) people removed
to better pasturelands faraway
donkeys much loaded won't carry
he-camel powerful
on which all is loaded up
you, Teeyo (11), for the people produced

(3) Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, the famous Somali nationalist, explains in the following song the fact that a best burden camel cannot be compared with the weak donkey in relation to their load capacity:

... a donkey with two tiny vessels on it
in the hot sun driven
of this little load it thinks
as though a mountain huge it carries
the truth the donkey should be told:
equal it never could be
to the powerful burden camel

(4) The great love the nomads have for the burden camel is illustrated in the following camel song sung during the loading of the animal:

O beloved camel mine
how I wished
coffee beans fragrant to feed you with
white cloth your head to decorate with
to a pretty maiden to wed you
a fat ram for you to kill

(5) Since the burden camel plays an important role in the economic life of the pastoral community the animal is treated tenderly and it is addressed to as a human being by its owner. The work-song below illustrates this and is recited during the loading of camels:

... should I improperly loaded you
placing the burden loosely on you back
to my hands you came as a gift cheap
in my herd not born and bred lovingly by me

(6) A good burden camel is always looked after carefully by its owner since it is in danger of being stolen by other men or killed by wild beasts in the forest. During the severe drought period when the other domestic animals become weak and perish, a thoughtless housewife might advise her man to slaughter the only burden camel they had so as to supply the family with meat to enable them go through the hard times. A burden camel is in fact seldom killed by its owner for food, which is explained in the following song, which is sung while loading a camel:

... may your throat graceful
pierced never by daggers sharp
nor on benches high
your flesh laid out
not over your carcass
ladies elderly crowded

(7) A large part of the hard work that has to be done in a pastoral family is carried out by the man, the head of the family, with the help of his burden camel. The two of them share in such tasks as moving the household effects to a new location with better pastures for the people and animals, trips to the cities for purchasing and selling goods there, etc. These tasks could only be carried out by the man and his burden camel assisting each other, particularly during the difficult dry seasons. This collaboration between man and his burden camel is described by the work-song quoted here:

... the night I was born
and you were cared well
for labour hard destined we both were

(8) The hard work and deprivations shared by a man with his burden camel is also described by the work-song that follows:

... in protest you bellowed loud
as the girth ropes hurt you
pierced through are my feet, too
by trekking prolonged in the bush

(9) In the work-song that follows a man addresses his burden camel as a person, asking the animal to be patient with him for they are

both responsible for serving helpless children with the water on the back of the animal, drawn from distant waterholes:

O Dhuubow, the slender camel mine
to distant wells we proceed
water to draw therefrom
for children thirsty and helpless
offsprings ours they're
thoughts of rest and food
let's for a while put aside

(10) The work-song that follows which is in the May dialect also describes how the burden camel is indispensable for the livelihood of the pastoral society, especially in such tasks as drawing drinking water from faraway waterponds, in transporting elderly people and small children when the nomad family is moving to a new location. Here is the song;

O Da'arre (18) dear
children too small to walk
invalids feeble as well
onto you are loaded all
to new pastures to take
in faraway lands
water, too, you carry
for them to survive

(11) After years of constant employment in transporting heavy loads, particularly the large water containers, a burden camel may develop large scars on its back, resulting in the permanent incapacitation of the animal. The song quoted below is addressed to the burden beast, telling it that helpless invalids, little children and the livestock are all waiting for the water the camel brings on its back from faraway wells:

...milch camels weak with thirst
women enfeebled by suckling babies
youngsters numerous, too
are all at home
waiting for the water you bring

(12) In the following song the fact is confirmed that the burden camel is the backbone of the nomad's life in Somalia:

... orphans rears the burden camel
pillar of strength to the world it is
women's words malicious
envious eyes of man as well
harmful all are to the camel
against these it must always be guarded

(13) The life of the nomadic community in Somalia is generally oriented to the two principal seasons of the year existing in the countryside: the rainy season and the dry one. During the rainy season there is plenty of pastures and water for the livestock and consequently plenty of milk, the basic diet for the people, is available. In contrast during the dry season fodder and water for the livestock become scarce

in most parts of the land and, therefore, insufficient milk is derived from the animals to feed the people, who then have recourse to cereal foodstuffs. In this situation a burden camel is most essential, first of all to fetch water from the waterholes, for drinking as well as for cooking cereals. This point is described fully by the song that follows:

... should the herd give milk no more
nor Dhooble (19) from the wells water brings
then no meal at home to be had

(14) The owner of a burden camel considers that this animal is a gift from God to him so that he may be able to survive in the difficult ecological conditions in his country:

... in God's care
on burden camel's service
on earth exists family mine

(15) When a nomad family moves camp to a location where better pastures and water are available for the livestock a considerable amount of organizational work and planning is essential on the part of everybody in the family. The trek on such occasions may be long and difficult, hence the importance of careful planning. The following verse by poet Omal Hussein (Istelliey) explains in greater detail the difficulties resulting in such a trek and the great role played by the burden camel in transporting household goods and other things essential to family life:

... when the rains suddenly fall
on Sud (20) and Gaaroodi (21) places
and at midnight it's decided
the camp to remove to pastures new
and on burden camels mature
the reins are firmly secured
by the hut beasts being shackled up
their forelegs together tied
upon the white-furred mighty he-camel
loads heavy are placed soon:
mats, rags all and sundry
the Almighty made him obedient to man
in many ways to serve him
as they urge on the animal
he heaves up his hinder quarters stout
on him all things are loaded again -
vessels various hanging on the sides
ablution-water containers
utensils multitude and of many sorts
water tanks huge and heavy
hut frames eight in number
pillars main that prop up the hut entire
hide roof-covers in Adari (16) made
with ease the camel carries all these
children and the elderly ride him, too
unshackled, he stands erect

with grace and strength enormous
they assist the animal up to stand
invoking God's name
Koranic verses as well
from early dawn to midday
the camel plods on laden full
they strike camp at last
in desert lands on the way
as people and beast exhausted need a rest
they shackle up the camel once more around
before reloading to graze a while
nothing on earth is to the camel comparable
unique an animal it is, indeed

(16) Poet Abdi Galayah compares the burden camel with an elephant in describing the great capacity of this important animal:

... Already at the age of nine
heavy loads he-camel carries
so lightly it bears the burden
as though nothing is on it at all
he who knows its value true
nothing there's on earth
he-camel to compare with
O Suud (20), camel mine
verily a desert ship you are
for the Somali race entire

(17) The camel work-song that follows explains that fetching drinking water on camelback from waterholes is a vital task made possible by the use of the camel. For without water the people and the livestock would perish during the dry season:

O camel mine
in the desert waterless
where no one to another gives a drop
children thirsty and helpless
are calling out for you and me
with water to supply in time

(18) Another work-song also describes how extremely difficult it is for the burden camel when it is employed in drawing drinking water for the people and the livestock from faraway waterponds:

... the camel rested not yesterday
tied up it was
to the pillars all last night
it's exhausted and hardly walks erect
measuring the earth with its steps heavy

(19) The owner of a burden camel treats it with tender love as though it was a human being and avoids the animal being hurt unnecessarily. The following, which is chanted during the loading of the burden camel, describes the great love that exists between a man and his burden camel:

... the night when I missed you
or sickness strikes you down
inflamed is my heart with sorrow

(20) Man and his beast of burden work together so as to maintain the life of the nomad family. The two of them often get exhausted by the great labour they perform together and look forward to a rest and recuperation at the end of the day. This is described by the following camel-loading song:

... he who might relieve you of toil great
is among the herd in the Hawd (22) grazing
he who might relieve me
his mother I haven't as yet married

(21) The man, realizing the fact that his burden camel is his chief helper in supporting his family, takes a good care of the animal and never misuses it, so that it may live and serve him longer. Another camel-loading song quoted below explains this point:

O camel mine
how I wished
that old lady to kill
burning all the odds and ends
she onto you always loads
letting you with the herd to graze
in the forest free
with the lactating camels
browsing at night in peace

(22) Professional cameleers believe that it is not necessarily the heaviness of the load which a camel carries that hurts it most. Rather it is the incorrect loading that is more harmful to the beast. This point is illustrated by the following two lines from a loading song:

... ill-loading ends you being left behind
for the load may oft fall off and reloading require
while tardiness in loading does no harm

(23) A thoughtless cameleer may ill-treat his beast of burden, employing it in fetching drinking water from wells or loading on it too heavy household effects during long treks. In such conditions the animal may be kept moving all day long without feeding and at night it may be tied up in the cold winds, not allowing the beast to graze even then. The great suffering of the camel is described by the work-song mentioned here:

God decreed Dhoomaale (23) to suffer always for man's sake
at night in the cold severe it's tied
daytime with burden heavy it plods on

(24) The rainy season is the period when the pastoral community in Somalia have plenty of milk and meat produced by the livestock. This is the period when life in the countryside is pleasant and carefree. In the song that follows, the vital role of the burden camel is compared with this season of plenty and comfortable living:

O blessed camel mine
you're as beauteous
as the rain that brings forth
pastures rich
beneficence to people and beasts alike

(25) A man who owns a mature burden camel considers himself as possessing an object of real wealth and he is usually highly respected in his society for that reason. This particular point is illustrated by the following camel-loading song:

O camel mine
prosperous is he
who owns you
healthy and strong
as you attained the age of ten

(26) Should a man own no burden camel he would be forced to ask his neighbour who has one to assist him in transporting his family and household effects to new pasturelands whenever this is necessary. Usually the neighbour agrees to help, but only after he has removed his own family and livestock to the new location. Sometimes the man who has no transport camel may be unable to move his family to the new location and he is left behind when everybody else has gone away. The difficult situation in which a man with no burden camel may find himself in, is described in detail in the following verse by poet Ali Askar:

... when drought severe scourged the land
when goats and weaker livestock starvation faced
and rain-thunders flashed in places faraway
from Guban place where one lived
and to the rainland the camp to move
decision unanimous is made
he who burden camel has not
last of all moves he by loaned means
the burden beast blessed
your possessions all and sundry
in no time takes on
to the pasturelands new

(27) Poet Ali Askar also describes in greater detail how the riding camel was important in the old days, especially in the parts of the countryside where no horses were available:

... should you desire at times
to faraway places travel to
where you be on the way
for days and nights long
under trees taking no rest
nor in other shelters at all
hurrying on from dawn to dusk
where the destination to reach
takes you many days
on such a venture you saddle up
the camel for riding trained

kicking hard at the flanks stout
the animal to urge on
within half-a-day there he takes you
may God give us camels more and more
for verily they're man's true pride

(28) The great difficulties experienced by a man who has no transport camel, especially during the dry season when it is necessary to move the nomad's camp to new places where water and fresh fodder are available for the livestock, or to fetch drinking water from distant waterwells, are explained in the camel-loading song that follows:

... when in the spring heat
life's hard for the people
he who beast of burden has not
would not survive at all

(29) Very often a nomad has to fetch drinking water on camelback from a distant waterhole for his family and livestock. Under such circumstances the man has to hurry the camel so as to cover the long trek as short a time as possible and to bring in the vital water to the people and animals waiting for it at home, as illustrated by the camel song quoted below:

O camel mine
you've a right to complain
of the nightstop we must make
before reaching waterwells yonder
I've a right, too
to toil great to put you through
for my beast of burden you are

(30) Usually the fastest and strongest burden camel is used for drawing drinking water since it is able to withstand the rigours of the long trek. Night travel, moving on before daybreak in the thick forest, daylong non-stop journey is common in such cases so as to arrive at the destination at the right time. The following camel-loading song describes these arduous tasks:

... saddling the camel instantly
other men decided
without further ado I agreed to it

(31) The nomad Somalis have special techniques and long experiences in loading pack camels so that the load may not fall off the animal during the prolonged trek. The poet Yusuf Abade had composed a lengthy poem concerning with these special techniques as well as the great capacity for work of burden camels which carry heavy loads for a considerable period of time. The following verses from the above-mentioned poem explain these points:

... should many tons of goods
on the camel be loaded up
it takes him not long
to the destination the goods to deliver safe
sooner than tomorrow or the day after

that's the reason why
eight water vessels huge
on the beast are placed
our provisions he carries more

IV. The Hardiness of the Camel

Due to its extraordinary ability to endure to extreme climatic conditions the Somali pastoralists preferred the camel to all the other species of the domestic animals they raise. There is a considerable amount of oral literature concerned with the stamina and adaptability of the camel to difficult environmental conditions, compared to the other types of livestock reared by this pastoral society.

(1) Frequent droughts in the country, particularly in the grazing areas, often cause great hardship to livestock in general. Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan the famous Somali nationalist composed the following work-song in which he compared camels with cattle, goats and sheep, pointing out that camels are far more superior than the other types of livestock because of their natural hardiness and adaptability to severe ecological conditions:

O God the victorious
bestow camels never to man
who's unable to manage them well
by inferiors goats are kept
not much value have they
for in droughts severe
worthless goats are
no better cattle are
without maintenance constant
it's Gooha (24)
that life sustains eternally....

O pride of the home
antelope-like she-camel
noblest of animals all surely she's
the furry-necked she-camel
with belly huge
sour milk abundant produces she
you, curly-furred camel mine
the tribe's foundation you're
woe to the man
who ever slaughters you for food

(2) Sometimes camels may calf during a drought period when the other types of livestock, such as cattle and goats, all perished in this difficult time. It is the milk from the lactating camels that enables the nomadic family to survive and go through the hard period. The calves that are born in the drought period are also nourished by their mothers' milk until they reach the next rains when they would grow strong and healthy. This is explained in the work-song quoted below:

... in drought season severe
when goats all perish
when cattle calf no more
it's Suub (8) the camel beloved
that milk abundant
for the people produced

(3) In the following verse the well-known poet Omar Hussein (Istelliye) points out that the real wealth of the Somali is the camel which is valued higher than the other species of livestock such as cattle and goats:

... to women and children
of use goats are
in seasons of plenty
when "karan" rains come
milk curd abundant goats give
economic use beyond the home
they have not
useful cattle are milk to supply
when pastures and water are plenty
as droughts come round they perish all
mind you men
who as property take ewes
in camels real wealth lies

(4) During the rainy season when fresh pastures and water are plentiful for the livestock in the countryside they all produce milk in abundance for the people. In such conditions all the animals are useful and productive. In the drought time, however, it is only the camel that sustains the life of the people with milk and meat, thanks to its adaptability to difficult ecological situations. The poet Salah Malaydiray describes this in his following verse:

... in the season of plenty and prosperity
when frogs in the ponds croak with joy
equally productive are
all four categories of livestock
in droughts severe though
real security in camels remains

(5) The hardiness and special ability of the camel to live in extreme climatic conditions and the greater economic uses of this animal compared with the other domestic animals raised by the Somali pastoralists are illustrated in the following verse by Abdi Galayah:

... when hard times come by
and from dire want people may die
when no provisions obtained
neither from town nor countryside
when not even an ear of corn
in the good earth grew
cattleman would then be doomed
only Suud (20) the camel beloved
milk abundant gives
to people to survive

(6) The camel's extraordinary resistance to extremely difficult ecological conditions existing in the Somali countryside is described also by the following ancient proverb:

... drought affects not camels
whereas other livestock perish all
under its severity

(7) This point of the camel's superior adaptability to harsh climatic conditions is described also by poet Ahmed Aynosh in his verse that we quote below:

... in the season dry and hot
when goats perish all
and cattle, too, are
of no use at all
as their weird carcasses laid
on the way to the waterwells
as heaps of bones in the backyards strewn
it's only Teeyo (11) the camel
that bowl-full of milk gives
to the people to sustain

(8) This economic use of the camel as a source of milk for the pastoral society in Somalia, particularly during devastating droughts in the countryside, is also vividly explained in the verse that follows, composed by the poet Ismail Hayd:

... when droughts devastating come round
scourging the land entire
when goats become skeletons lifeless
cattle is no much better any more
it's then Weehad (25)
that your life sustains

(9) The following verse by an unknown poet also illustrates the greater economic value of the camel especially during hard times such as when droughts destroy the other types of livestock raised by the Somali rural community, like goats and cattle:

... when drought hard comes forth
burning out life on earth
when goats are feeble
winds sweeping them off their feet
rich is, indeed, the man
who in such times severe
hundred camels owns
for single rib's meat
himself to feed suffices
may God bestow us camels yet more
for verily best on earth they are

(10) Very often in the dry seasons the weaker livestock such as cattle and goats perish due to lack of sufficient fodder and drinking water as well as from disease which breaks out frequently in the countryside during drought periods. The camels are then the principal source of

economic survival for the rural population in Somalia. This work-song, which is in the May dialect, explains the points indicated above:

... when times hard come by
and pastures scarce become
when cattle multi-coloured
goats feeble, too
around the camp had fallen
vanishing together all
it's you, camel mine
that survival to the people gives
strength and bodies lively
restoring to them once more

(11) It is one of the important, natural characteristics of the camel to stay for a considerable period of time without drinking water no matter how the animal is used in difficult tasks. The following camel-song chanted during the watering of the animal is concerned with this point:

... yesterday's sun heat
that fleetfooted antelopes to death scourged
we traveled along with
Seenyo (6)
neither she
nor its herd-companions
shade under trees ever sought
the rays infernal to escape

(12) Somali cameleers believe that a camel could stay for thirty days or more without drinking water, which indicates the extraordinary sturdiness of this animal. The camel-watering song quoted below is concerned with this:

... beware, camel mine
in the Sool (26) you'll soon be grazing
away from the wells
for thirty days and even more

(13) Young camel herders often meet with considerable hardship in looking after these animals in difficult ecological conditions in the countryside, particularly during the dry seasons. The watering song that follows compares the endurance of camel herders with that of the camel itself:

... in seasons dry
strength is preserved only
in the best camel breed
as well as man
in the prime of live

(14) The following verse composed by poet Omar Hussein (Istelliye) is also concerned with the great endurance of the camel and the poet compares this important animal with a living granite rock:

... should camels be not
as firm as bedrocks mighty

men wouldn't leave them alone easily
surely, they're living rocks
by God's wishes in the desert strewn

(15) During the dry season when the other types of livestock become too weak to move about due to lack of sufficient fodder and water, the camel is able to conserve its strength and it is seen running, kicking and playful all the time. The camel song that follows illustrates this point:

... playful are virgin camels
with the stud sire they flirt
even in drought season

(16) Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, the great Somali patriot, points out in the following verse that the high value placed on camels is due to their strength and adaptability to the difficult ecological conditions in the Somal territories:

... highly priced camels are
for their usefulness to man
to desert lands faraway
they're taken to graze
there the animal without water thrives

(17) The proverb that follows also describes the belief of Somali camel herders that these sturdy animals could stay more than thirty days without drinking water at all:

... a camel that stays for a month
without drinking water
could surely stay a day more

(18) Somali camel herders also believe that white-coloured camels are able to resist thirst and heat much more than camels of other colours, as described by the following verse composed by the poet Samatar Bahnan:

... white camels would not let you down
in droughts harsh
should they strong in body be
equal to diamonds in value they're
black camels weaken soon
hard times unable to withstand

(19) Poet Mohamed Ali Benaley explains the vital uses of the camel to the rural community of Somalia, comparing this important animal with the powerful elephant:

... when sun scourged life on earth
in the season dry and hot
goats feeble and lifeless become
when cattle on the wayside lay dying all
with no use to man any longer
the black stud sire was then in heat
with Mudha (27) mated he
white-furred calves that sired he
milk plentiful produced they in turn

to the large-footed elephant
in strength camels are related to
nothing on earth, in truth, exists,
that I can with camels compare

(20) When a camel stays without drinking water for a month or a longer period the animal suffers from the effects of thirst and the physical signs of these adverse effects are loss of weight, the belly of the camel shrinks, becoming smaller in size, and general visible weaknesses of the beast. This is described in the camel watering-song:

... here to the wells
the camel for watering came
after a month's absence
smaller its belly became
from thirst severe
take it not as an astray animal
nor neglected nomad's beast

(21) The camel watering-song below also describes the traditional belief held by Somali cameleers that the white-coloured camels are more resistant to heat the thirst, than the black camels:

... black camels
and town wife
have uses temporary
whereas light-brown camels
and youth stout-muscled
assets permanent they are

(22) Poet Yusuf Jama explains that during the rainy season, when pastures and water are plenty for the livestock, life among the pastoralists is contented as the people have sufficient food as well as leisure time to relax. During the difficult dry season, however, it is the camel upon which man depends for his survival:

... livestock all are useful and prosper
in the season of plenty
when droughts come in the end
you, Baryar (28), to people bestow
milk gushing forth
like waterwells outflooding

(23) The reason why camels are valued higher than the other types of livestock kept by the Somali nomads is the subject discussed in the following camel watering-song:

... weakling animals goats are
noblest is the horse
best of people is a son
best of beasts is the camel

(24) The following verse by an unknown poet explains the advantages of the camel over the other species of domestic animals raised by the Somali rural society; the chief advantage of the camel being its adaptability to harsh ecological conditions:

... when at Turmag (29) in the spring last
drought struck us merciless
livestock entire destroying
when Xay (30) further could not move on
lifeless were goats all
camels saved people then
for these parasite-carriers at times are valued
more than men themselves

(25) The camel watering-song that is quoted below also points out the extraordinary adaptability of the camel to extremely difficult climatic conditions in the Somali countryside where the other types of livestock often perish altogether or get debilitated by droughts:

... when autumn rains fail
and dry season prolonged
you Dugul (31) gallop around playfully
but beware, camel mine
trample not on people underfoot

(26) Poet Yusuf Abade also points out that camels have an extraordinary ability to survive through the severest drought conditions and that these animals are able to forego feeding and drinking water for a considerable period of time:

... he who camels has not
sound sleep never knows
cattle and shortpaced goats are unable to travel
from Sibi (32) to distant waterwells
while camels for thirty days or more
without water could stay alive
other beasts such stamina have not
that's why in desert lands camels thrive

(27) Sometimes an extremely severe drought takes place in the Somali countryside which destroys even the hardy camel, not to mention the weaker categories of livestock such as cattle and goats, as described in a watering-song:

... in the last drought disastrous
camel mine barely escaped death
owners of cattle and goats modest
through the ordeal hardly survived they

(28) Camels are not only resistant to difficult ecological conditions but they are also capable of withstanding many kinds of disease that destroy the other types of livestock raised by the Somali nomads. This is explained by a camel watering-song:

O Werdi-Xariglay (33)
in the season dry
calves many you bring forth
disease weakening you never

THE SOCIAL USES OF THE CAMEL

Camels have not only economic uses but they have also other important social uses. All the categories of livestock have economic uses in general. Camels, however, have much greater social values than the other types of domestic animals. These social uses of the camel may not, however, be as obvious as the social uses of the other animals. It is because of its higher social uses that the camel is preferred to the rest of the livestock. Hence, every man in the pastoral society aspires to own these important animals so as to attain a respectable position in his society. A man who owns no camels always feels that the man who has them is above him in social status no matter how wealthy the former is in possessing the other types of animals. Indeed, the camel owner is highly respected in his society because of his possessing these favourite animals. Thus, it is the desire of all men to have camels, due mainly to the high social value placed on them as well as the greater economic uses these animals have. For the owner, camels are a kind of life insurance since he knows that they are a real wealth which would be utilized in case of need. For this reason, camels and their owners are accorded high respect and prestige in the pastoral Somali society. In this society the camel owner is respected much more than a man who owns numerous cattle and goats. Of course, a man is always evaluated according to the type and number of the livestock he owns. A man who has numerous camels is respected in his society much higher than one who owns fewer or has many cattle and goats. Thus, the more camels a man possesses the higher would be his prestige in society. Even if such a man is of low intelligence or is a fool, the fact that he possesses many camels would more than compensate for his intellectual shortcomings. People would see him to be a man of substance, who might one day be of some help to his society.

Therefore, the social uses of the camel are self-evident and society has placed on the camel the greatest values which no other category of livestock possess.

I. The Communal Ownership of Camels

An important fact is that the economic uses of the camel as well as the many problems of looking after it are shared by the owner and his society in many ways. From here originated the special term "tolley", tribally owned, as Somalis called the camel. The close relatives of the camel owner are the immediate beneficiaries of his camel wealth, for they share in the milk and meat produced by these animals. The proprietor enjoys the prestige of ownership only. These beneficiaries are obliged to assist their benefactor in the management of his camels since they have an interest in doing so. Thus, the camel are the only type of livestock that unites the Somali people whether related by birth or unrelated at all, to cooperate in camel husbandry and to share in the economic benefits derived from these animals.

Managing camels is a difficult task that no man could undertake single-handedly. The owner of camels always needs the cooperation of his society to assist him in looking after and defending his animals.

A considerable amount of oral literature has been created concerning the idea of common ownership of camels, some examples of which we shall quote here as an illustration:

(1) An ancient Somali saying declares that camels were first discovered in a day called "ila", meaning "with me". This implies that these animals could not be managed properly by one man only and that the owner always needs the help of somebody else in order to carry out the difficult task of camel management. This involves a set of regular duties to be carried out by the camel tender, as the following:

- a) milking the camels, which requires two men so as to obtain the maximum amount of milk from the animal.
- b) watering the camels, which requires several strong men to draw water from wells so that many camels could be watered in a short time.
- c) tending the camels, which needs several men to drive the animals to suitable pastures and to provide their security.
- d) butchering camels, which is a task that requires the services of two men at least.
- e) looting camels, which needs the cooperation of several men in planning a raid and driving off the looted animals.
- f) retrieving looted camels, which needs the strength and intelligence of many men to recover the looted animals, etc.

(2) An ancient Somali proverb says:

... camel herders together tend their herd
but separately at the same time

The moral of the proverb points out the fact that camel herders need to cooperate with one another in looking after their herd, which may be numerous, when they come together in a particular grazing area. At the same time, individuals have to take special care of their own animals in the combined herd.

(3) Another Somali proverb declares:

... a tribe is like a slaughtered camel

There is a special way of dividing up camel meat among the people when the animal is killed for food and certain joints have to be given away together to someone or family. Similarly, cooperation among the members of a Somali pastoral tribe is necessary for their well-being, going together like the portions of camel meat. This is the point the proverb emphasizes.

(4) The camel watering-song quoted here illustrates the close comradely collaboration among the camel herders belonging to a particular tribe in the everyday task of carrying out their duties, specially the security of their herd:

... when camel's carcass for cutting up lies
of the beast around the well for watering crowds
all in such tasks a hand should give
for in common ownership camels are held

(5) There are three main reasons for camels being commonly owned which oblige a clan member to participate in the difficult task of caring for the animals, as well as sharing in the benefits derived from them. The three reasons are: the legal ownership of the camels, the vital economic uses camels provide for the people and the universal love people have for these beasts. The following work-song explains the communal ownership of camels among the Somali pastoral society:

... one man camels safeguards
for he owns them legally
another man does so
for the benefits he from them derives
while a third man does so, too
for the love he for camels has

(6) During the rainy season when camels calve and produce plenty of milk many people come to live around camel camps so as to utilize the abundant milk supply. But during the dry season when camels need more men to safeguard their security or water the animals at the waterwells the camel owner may not obtain sufficient workhands to assist him in these tasks. Few responsible persons may, however, come to his help. The following camel watering-song describes this:

O May (34) the brownish camel
where are the men
who in the season rainy
when camels calved
milk abundant producing
around you crowded?

(7) One of the difficult tasks that face the owner of a large herd of camels is watering them in the dry season. The close relatives and the in-laws usually help the camel man in this arduous work. Thus, camels unite a man with his relatives and his in-laws to cooperate in the management of his herd, as explained in a camel watering-song:

... skin bucket huge and heavy
is by brothers together drawn out
or by son with his uncle maternal
from waterwell deep in the ground

(8) It often happens that a stranger who neither knows the camel owner nor ever enjoyed the latter's hospitality as a guest, comes to help him in the difficult work of watering the animals. This is another example of how camel husbandry unites unrelated people to cooperate. The unknown composer of the following camel watering-song explains this point:

... married to the owner's daughter am not
neither do I own
single camel in his herd
nor as guest honoured have I
a night in the owner's home spent
by chance he found me around
had to oblige the man
as he help needed then
his herd numerous to water all

(9) Another difficult task the camel owner had to face is the security of the animals which are coveted by all men. One needs the backing of the men of one's tribe or close relatives to guarantee the security of the camels. Otherwise it would be impossible for a man to keep these animals single-handed as many men would want to take them from him by force. It is said that the only fence that could securely hold camels is a strong tribe, as also illustrated by a watering-song:

O black-statued camels
no fence is strong enough
to contain you secure
but the strength of my tribe
and men in your defence united

(10) The security of camels is better guaranteed by the united strength of the tribe to which the camel owner belonged. This prerequisite is the point explained in the following watering-song:

... unless relatives
and brothers loving
with spears sharp
camels defend not
quarrels on camels never end
through concord temporary
they may somehow achieve....

(11) Poet Elmi Arab, in the following lines of verse, also emphasizes the fact that the safety of camels could be maintained when the owner has the full backing of his relatives or clan:

... he who into strong tribe isn't born
enemies to ward off
retains camels not for long

(12) The management of camels is ideally carried out by several young brothers who unite their strength for this purpose. Other men related or otherwise could also manage their herd efficiently by cooperating among themselves since this task is beyond the ability of one man. The watering-song that follows describes this:

O Dhebi (35) mine
your well-being depended upon
brothers several strong
by the same man sired all

(13) Elderly men are unable to carry out the many arduous tasks of maintaining camels due to their advanced age. Should an elderly man be, for instance, seen watering alone his herd at the waterwells it would mean that he has no sons or close relatives to help him in this difficult work. A man's own sons and close relatives are the source of manpower needed to manage camels efficiently. The following camel song discusses this point:

... white-bearded man
who his herd waters alone
hasn't he sired sons
hasn't he but daughters?....

(14) A father and his several sons together may also manage their camels properly. The father usually advises his sons in the best ways of caring for the animals since he is more experienced than they and they should obey him. This family cooperation in tending camels is described in the work-song quoted here:

O camel mine
father and sons his
brothers as well
could best care for you

(15) The economic benefits derived from camels such as the production of milk, meat, etc. are utilized by not only the immediate relatives of the owner of camels, but also by various social groups like the neighbours, guests, travelers, the poor and many others. It so happens that these groups obtain more benefits than the owner from the animals. No other type of livestock is as beneficent to so many people as the camel is. This particular point is explained in the following verse by Farah Ali Gammute:

... when the milking-vessels red were filled
with Geydho's (36) milk fresh
children and the hungry are first fed
myself and relatives close as well
may stay without milk after all
for feeding myself before others did so
a taboo strict is to me
as gazelle's flesh is to me a taboo
others to have their fill first
the rule for me from childhood this was....

(16) As the economic benefits of camels are shared in by various social groups the difficult tasks of safeguarding these animals must also be shared with the owner. Since camels are valued much higher than the rest of livestock men covet these animals and they do everything possible to acquire them. Thus, camels have many enemies among the pastoral society and always need strong men to defend them.

A considerable amount of oral literature has been created concerning camel husbandry, as pointed out earlier, and particularly as to how these useful animals are maintained by the cooperation of many men sharing equally the benefits derived from the camels as well as the difficulties in safeguarding them. Acquiring these beasts and properly maintaining them always breeds bitter enmity among men.

There is a well-known general knowledge test among the Somalis which asks the following questions:

- a) what is a camel's pen? answer: many men who should safeguard the security of the animals, sharing equally in the benefits and difficulties.
- b) what is men's bedspread? answer: peace and tranquility, because a man could sleep anywhere if there is peace around him and he is not guilty of any offence against others.
- c) what is the sauce for a millet-meal? answer: hunger, because a hungry person would eat any food he could find without bothering

about the sauce for it. This is particularly the case of the Somali nomad whose chief diet is milk and meat, who would willingly revert to grain food when his staple food is not available.

(17) It is the tradition among the nomad society in Somalia that a camel herder should be assisted in every way possible in the arduous task of tending his camels whenever he needs help from his own relatives as well as outsiders. This is because the economic benefits obtained from camels are shared by the community as a whole. The following Somali proverb describes this:

... even though you be the 12th person
in the order of inheriting a camel
still you ought to fight for it

(18) A clear example of communal ownership and exploitation of camels is the fact that burden camels are utilized by the owner as well as by his neighbours who may have no transport camels of their own. Whenever the nomad family is to move to a new place where better pastures and water for the livestock are available, the owner of a pack camel allows his neighbours to use his beast to transport their household effects, young children, invalids, etc. to the new place. This is usually done after the owner has moved his own family. A person who refuses to do this favour to others is considered to be dishonest and society takes a low opinion of him. Somali tradition also has it that even a pack camel is sometimes slaughtered in the absence of the other domestic animals in order to feed honoured guests. The proverb mentioned below is concerned with this point:

... give away a pack camel either alive or its flesh

(19) It is said that once a man had five sons who left their parental home when they all grew up and became men. They went in their separate ways and all became herdsmen. After a long period the father wanted to visit his sons in order to see how each of them established his own life. He first went to his elder son who had many head of camels and advised him thus:

"my son, you would not be able to manage properly all these camels; you should live among your own tribe who would defend and share with you the difficult task of managing the animals, as well as the benefits derived from them."

The father then went to his second son and found him possessing many heads of sheep and advised him thus:

"son, you have sheep, the cause of miserliness; keep them to graze in flat lands where they would thrive well."

The father then went to his third son who had numerous cattle which gave much milk and he advised him thus:

"son, you own cattle which are productive only during the rain season; you should be hospitable and give to your neighbours as much milk as you could so that in the following year when you go broke they might return your favours in kind."

Then to his fourth son the father went, whom he found possessing many heads of goats and advised him thus:

"my son, your children would not be wanting in milk; keep the animals in the valleys, felling for them as fodder the top green branches of trees. You should never attend the debates of the elders under the tree, because of your low social position."

Finally, the father went to his fifth son who owned numerous horses and advised him thus:

"son, you have no property, but you have elegance; these animals may be of use to you the day the alarm is sounded. So you should keep them with a strong harness all the time."

The father's advice to his sons shows that camels are the highest valued livestock among the pastoralists and that the society as a whole profit from these important animals in one way or the other. His advice indicates also the fact that camels require the collaboration of many to manage and to defend them. The story related above also points out that camels are in reality communally owned since many people beside the legal proprietor derive economic benefits from these vital animals.

(20) Among the Somali pastoral society it is considered a great disadvantage not to possess camels, for a person without them would find himself in one way or another at the mercy of others. This point is described by the following watering-song:

O Bayla (37), the impatient camel
woe to him
who possesses you not
not his clan family does not

II. The Blood-Money

The livestock that are paid by one clan family to another when a member of the latter family is murdered by a member of the former is known in Somali as "mag", blood-money. Camels are usually paid in such cases to the relatives of the victim for these animals are considered to be proper compensation that could satisfy the grieved party and heal the enmity existing between the two sides. Cattle and goats are not paid or accepted as blood-money among the Somali pastoralists. The number of camels to be paid as compensation for the murder of a man is fixed by custom at one hundred head of camels, which usually satisfied the relatives of the deceased. Among the Somali pastoralists, feuds are common and frequently result in murder cases and the grieved party taking revenge. Due to their high social and economic value the payment of camels as compensation for murdered men often resolves bad blood existing between communities and individuals. No other category of livestock could play this role.

(1) Poet Abdi Galayah, in the following lines of verse, illustrates instances of families and individuals coming to terms and forgetting old enmity with the payment of blood-money in the form of camels to the injured party:

... no man dares lightly camels take
as our real wealth they constitute
as compensation for murders between clans committed
as highest acceptable price camels are paid
peace and concord in place of enmity to bring
should you be a hostage taken for misdeeds great
Qawl (38) safes you as ransom she's paid
surely Qalas (39) to man's life is equal in all respects...

(2) The following song in praise of camels is in the May dialect of southern Somalia and it also describes a feud that took place between two clan families, which resulted in a clash in which persons were killed and others suffered serious injuries. The payment of cattle and goats was made to the victimized party in compensation. But this payment in the form of less valued livestock could not successfully resolve the conflict as it was considered unacceptable to the grieved party under the circumstances. However, when camels were paid to the injured party in place of cattle and goats the two sides were able to settle their differences and peace and cooperation among them was restored. Here is the song:

... men quarrelled their temper losing in anger
spears, bows and arrows poisonous they took up
brave ones their lives lost
women, too, participating in the fight fierce
fearsome clubs heavy
with poisoned tips wielding
when no men of substance were left alive
other Muslims then intervened
among disputants peace to make
blackheaded sheep
goats and cattle as well
to the grieved party were in compensation offered
all these were rejected outright
as unequal a price to man's life
concord to achieve was impossible
Galool (40) he-camel strong
along with virgins multi-coloured
were then to the plaintiffs
in compensation offered
who then themselves asked thus:
why not we now to our senses come?
why not arbitration towards peace accept?
for isn't you, dark-brown camel mine
that made me forget
my brave brother's death

(3) Poet Omal Hussein (Istelliye) also points out that payment of camels as blood-money to an injured party usually resulted in peaceful settlement of bitter disputes between groups involving murder cases, the two sides concerned in the conflict agreeing to live in peace and harmony after the blood-money has been paid in the form of camels:

... when relatives close quarrel and fight
in the fray men are murdered
elders wise and men of religion
as mediators are appointed
heated debate conducting
where justice lies to find
they finally decision make:
to the grieved party
camels selected in compensation pay
then from the camel pen are chosen
lactating she-camels graceful
those that but once calved
black-headed virgin ones
pregnant camels beautiful
along with Seeri (41) and Luuli (42)
burden camel fat and strong
the best calves in the herd
when all this wealth in good faith
to the grieved party paid
men shake hands to promise
peace and harmony among them
to observe henceforth

- (4) The camel watering-song quoted below also relates an incident in which a respected man was killed, creating bitter enmity between the relatives of the deceased and those of the culprit. The payment of camels as blood-money to the berieved party had, however, restored concord between the two sides:

O camel mine
the blood price you are
to the relatives acceptable
of a respected black-bearded man
whom our clan had slain

- (5) In the following verse poet Askar Ali also explains that long-standing enmity existing between two Somali clans because of men murdered on both sides is usually resolved by payment of blood-money in the form of camels:

... should you murder commit
slaying black-bearded brave men
their clan would revenge seek
you find refuge nowhere
sure death to escape
you're everywhere pursued
by enemy in strength
your life nothing could save
but a herd of camels best
as bloodmoney you paid
as sure guarantee they are
for peace and concord among men

- (6) Another well-known Somali poet, Omar Hussein (Istelliye), similarly explains in the following verse that the highest acceptable blood-

money among the pastoral society in Somalia is the payment of camels:

... when clans quarrel
their members murdering
hundred-head camels
along with their stud sire
to the bereaved in compensation paid
for the men slain
the bitter enmity as well
forgotten forever by all

III. Brideprice

This is the property paid by the bridegroom to the parents or relatives of the bride, known as "yarad" in Somali. This is an ancient tradition strictly observed even today by the rural society of Somalia so as to pay due respect to both the bride and her relatives. The amount of brideprice to be paid usually depends upon the extent of the wealth possessed by the bridegroom. The higher the brideprice the greater would be the honour it carried from the point of view of the recipient. Often a close relationship and cooperation is established between not only the bride's family and that of the groom, but also between their clans or tribes through the marriage. Among the pastoralists, camels constitute the highest brideprice payable. The more camels the groom gives the greater would be the respect he receives from his in-laws. Similarly, a bride for whom many camels were paid as her brideprice is accorded with greater prestige in society, than a girl for whom fewer camels or none at all were given.

The other types of livestock such as sheep and goats are also paid and accepted as brideprice, but do not carry high honour as camels do. Parents who have marriageable daughters always expect to receive a high brideprice in the form of camels for their girls. This means that marriage among the pastoral society is a costly affair and only the man who owns many camels can afford it.

The payment of camels as brideprice is thus another social use of these important animals among the pastoral society. In the case of a girl whose hand could not be had in marriage by any other means, a man could easily possess her with the payment of camels.

(1) Due to its high value, few men are willing to give away their camels easily. Since men consider women having higher values than camels they are willing to give away the latter in order to have the former in marriage. The following camel watering-song also illustrates the fact that camels are the highest brideprice which wins the hand of an ideal bride known as "gaari" in Somali, who is often wooed by several suitors at the same time:

... you're, my camel dear
the highest price
able to procure for me
the costliest ideal woman
that many men desire for

(2) Daughters of chiefs and respected men are usually sought after by suitors and this makes their brideprice much higher than girls from ordinary families. Only the owners of many camels could afford asking the hand in marriage of a costly bride. The following verse by poet Abdi Galayah describes this point:

... nobleman's daughter
who at the age of sweet seventeen
her long braids lets down
charms feminine to show
only he her hand wins
who as brideprice pays
Suub (8), the camel graceful

(3) Suitors are careful to ensure that the bride of their choice fully deserves the camels they paid as brideprice. The girl should be beautiful physically and be of noble birth, as illustrated by the following camel song:

... the bride for whom
Baari (43) the camel is given
as brideprice
unusual she ought to be
a clan chief's daughter, perhaps

(4) Poet Abdi Galayah also points out the fact that camels could procure for a man the costliest bride among the rural society:

... the prettiest and costliest of brides
secluded and guarded over though she be
by father jealous
readily her hand is given to him
who virgin camels as brideprice brings

(5) A work song in the May dialect describes how a prospective suitor offered numerous goats and cattle as brideprice, but the girl's parents rejected him outright. Instead, they gave their daughter quite readily to a man who paid them a handsome brideprice in camels:

... a costly bride there lives
whom no man could approach
as white as cotton-cloth she is
whom goats and cattle couldn't procure
whose hand suitors numerous sought
circling around her hut
for days countless
who scorned men with money bags full
it's you dear
black-humped camel mine
with appearance so gracious
who won for me
such a bride proud to wed
for her am willing to pay
hundred-head camels
their stud sire comprising

(6) Similarly, a watering-song points out that only if a young man in search of a bride brings along the best camels he owns he is then able to win the hand of the costliest girl in the pastoral society. On the other hand, a man of modest means could not even dream of marrying such a girl in that society.

... he who as bride price brings not
virgin camels white-coloured
by a famed male sired
the best of women procures not
unless he takes in
his deceased brother's wife (44)

(7) The man who decides to pay his camels as brideprice does so only if he is satisfied that his wife-to-be really deserves such a high price. Otherwise no man is prepared to give away his best camels for a slovenly woman. The camel watering-song that follows explains why:

O camel mine
I won't give you away
for a slovenly woman
who for me prepares not
bedding comfortable and clean
for you deserve not
so to be disposed of

(8) The men of the pastoral society have intense love for their camels and often a man finds himself torn between two loves: love for his camel and that which he holds for a woman he wishes to marry. He has to choose between them, as described in the camel song below:

... you Gosol (45) graceful mine
I won't ever pay you
for a woman lowly born
or for a widow
who twice before gave birth
or for a spinster greying fast

(9) Among the nomads it is considered to be a great disadvantage having no sons of your own and having daughters instead of sons is considered to be better than having no children at all. The song below concerns this point:

O Good (46) the gracious camel
misfortune great is sonlessness
to marry I must soon
a daughter to have at least

(10) Choosing a suitable bride is often a serious affair for a young man in the pastoral society. His success in this quest almost always depends upon whether he owns camels and also whether he is willing to pay them as brideprice, as illustrated by the following verse composed by Askar Ali:

... when you a man become
beardless in the prime of life
to marry the desire strong comes
at last a girl you meet

who your heart away steals
alone you could not decision take at once
though over the matter you thought for long
elders wise their advice to ask
in the end you're obliged
counsel prolonged they hold
men respectable participating
for you camels would win
the desired end
honour great as well

(11) Among the pastoral society every father expects to receive camels as brideprice when he gives away his daughter to a man in marriage. This point is underlined in a verse composed by poet Hirey Jama:

O Kinsi (47), daughter darling mine
am bringing you up tenderly
feeding you lovingly
with milk delicious and wholesome
in containers for you kept apart
so that as the time comes
your hand to give to him
whose herd of camels best
for me brings as brideprice

(12) It often happens that a man offers the best camels in his herd as brideprice for a girl whom he considers to be the best of women and he decides to marry her. Such a man realizes the fact that it was only possible for him to get this ideal wife because of the best camels he paid to her relatives as brideprice. Thus, the men of the pastoral society believe that a good wife could only be obtained as a result of paying good camels for her. Hence, these important animals should be taken good care of by all men. This particular point is explained in a verse composed by poet Elmi Arab:

... a girl slender and shapely in body
whose waist you may measure up
with a hand's span
with breasts like cones solid
with hair over the shoulders cascading
with legs long and straight
with cool-black lips
not red in colour
with rows of teeth wellset all
who's as fair as light electric
who's far from slovenliness
who neatly dresses always
with no loose ends in her skirt
who's as industrious and intelligent
as woman can be
who glides along with grace feminine
by which men's admiration she wins
who's respected by relatives and neighbours alike
who's obedient to parents
their advice wise to mind taking
who her mother helps

in keeping well the home
whom they named Tawlan (48)
for her beauty captivating
who partakes not the midnight rustic dance
to which other girls run off
of whom man of modest means
may never dream of marrying her
who tends well the herd
counting as she drives them into the pen
whose age's ten plus seven years
that girl's hand you win
only by as brideprice paying
the best camels in the herd
Toga (49) and Teeyo (11) in lactation including
her father talks not to him
whose camels best does not bring
O men
take care of these beasts precious
in the best pastures tending them

(13) Among the pastoral community it so happens that parents refuse to give in marriage their daughter to a suitor because of his failure to pay them camels as brideprice. The parents may readily give away the same daughter to another suitor who pays them his best camels as bride wealth. This advantage of the camel-owning man over the one who does not have them is described in a verse by poet Ahmed Aynosh:

... that woman costly
whom man of modest means
could not attain
Teeyo (11) the camel procures
with facility for him

(14) In the case where the bridegroom has some physical or other personal defects these are almost always overlooked by the girl's relatives and they give away their daughter in marriage once he brings along the best camels in his herd as brideprice, as explained in the following camel watering-song:

... he's a short man, they say
he has no camels, they didn't say
he's an ugly man, they say
he's a coward, they didn't say

IV. Honour and Prestige

Among the pastoral society a man who owns a hundred head of camels is considered to be a wealthy person and the more camels one has the wealthier he is. To acquire a hundred or more camels is not an easy matter, though, and it is still harder to safeguard them. The man who owns camels is accorded considerable honour and prestige in his society and his opinion and advice is always sought. This honour and prestige of the individual is based upon the fact that he possesses camels which the society values highly. Whether in peace or at war with others the

society in general has vested interests in these animals. There are often numerous people such as close relatives, religious leaders, de-stitutes etc., staying around the camel compound with the owner, who all benefit from the produce of the animals in one way or the other. In cases where the camelman's clan members murder someone belonging to another clan he has to contribute to the blood-money payment to the grieved party by giving away some of his camels. This is another example, as stated earlier, of the communal ownership of camels and their high values. All men desire to acquire camels due to the high prestige and honour these animals confer on a man.

A camel owner usually behaves proudly and he may be seen covering up his face with his upper cloth, or shawl, a sign of personal pride among the camel owners. Such a man is often abusive in language towards others but society usually condones his defects and misbehaviour due to his having numerous camels and for the prestige he enjoys because of this fact. His advice and opinion in the clan councils always carry more weight than those of men much wiser than him. He enjoys this high position of respect because of his camel wealth which society greatly values.

(1) The following lines of verse by an unknown Somali poet describe the excessive pride and arrogance of the owner of many camels:

... owner of hundred-head of camels
himself considers a Bashe ((0)
in councils he boasts of wealth and wisdom
though a mere upstart he is

(2) A well-known poet, Ismail Mire, in the lines of verse quoted below describes the lowly social position and poverty of a man who owns no camels. The poet maintains the views that such a man would be unable to live among the rural camel-owning society and he would be forced by circumstances to seek employment in the coastal towns and cities of the country

... he who owns not Shira (51) and Heemaal (52)
of honour and prestige devoid he is
delicious fermented milk from (53)
enjoys never he
to the coastal cities faraway
he would travel to
where on fishing survives he
or for the whitemen he works
with tea serving them

(3) Poet Abdi Galayah, in the lines of verse quoted below, also explains the excessive pride of a man who possesses many camels:

... when in the compound spacious
Qadow (54) pleasantly bellows
when Qaabil's (55) milk fresh and warm
to relatives and guests is with honour offered
with laughter and pride great
my face with a shawl I cover up

(4) The herdsmen are usually divided into the following three professional groups based upon the livestock category they tend:

- a) the camel herder who is characterized as a strong and intelligent man, able to participate in the affairs of men. He is usually brought up among the camels which shaped his life as a brave, patient and generous man. The other herdsmen are not bestowed with these good qualities.
- b) the cattle herder is characterized as half-a-man because he is brought up among the cattle which are feeble animals. He is usually considered to be a miser.
- c) the goat herder is characterized as a non-man because tending goats is not seen as a man's job, but a woman's.

Thus, camels are the most highly valued animals among the pastoral Somali society, which confer the highest honour and prestige to the owner.

CAMEL HUSBANDRY

As was explained in the foregoing sections, camels are the most economically useful animals to the Somali pastoral society and because of this they are the highest valued livestock. It is considered that a family who does not possess camels would be subject to economic hardship and would enjoy no social prestige at all. All men would, therefore, aspire to acquiring these vital animals by all means possible. The man who has camels takes great care not to lose them or to give them away easily, and these animals become hard to come by. The greatest curse among camel herders is said to be: "may you get no camels, nor sire sons"!; and the best benediction is: "may God grant you camels and sons"!

I. Love of Camels

Due to the important economic and social uses of camels the Somali nomads hold special love for them. The man who owns camels always endeavours not to lose them to other men, come what may. Such a man is considered to be niggardly in camel matters. The following quotations from Somali oral literature illustrates this intense love for camels by the pastoralists and their preoccupation to preserve these valuable animals:

- (1) An old Somali proverb declares thus:

... give away camels never
but seek to get them from other men

The moral of this proverb reflects of how dearly camels are held by the man who possesses them and also the great risk men went through to obtain these animals. Thus, it was the highest ambition of men in the rural society to acquire camels by every means possible.

- (2) The well-known poet Haji Aden Ahmed, "afqallo", in the lines of verse quoted below, points out how great was the Somali love for his camels and also to the considerable dangers men went through in obtaining them:

... into the deep sea
or in the dry land
wherever camels I may obtain
there to go am ready
my life risking in doing so

- (3) Another ancient Somali proverb that we quote here illustrates the excessive love a man holds for his camel:

... he who doesn't let a camel
peacefully to die along
has no love strong enough for it

The meaning of this proverb is that a man may simply let a sick camel die in peace out of the great love he has for the animal, avoiding to utilize as food its flesh all together. A dying animal that has not been slaughtered according to the Islamic rites becomes unholy to the Muslim.

(4) It often happens that when the Somali pastoralist has to decide whether to perform certain religious rites such as the daily prayers, or to attend to some urgent work on his camels, he readily carries out the latter first and puts off the prayers for another time. This point is illustrated by a camel watering-song:

... when Suub (8) the camel thirsty
for a drink comes along
postponed are my prayers religious
in some other time to be said

(5) When a camel suffers from severe thirst or it is too hungry, the animal groans loudly and protests under pain. In such cases its owner sympathizes with and feels for his animal as he might for a human being in similar circumstances. This excessive love of the Somali herds-men for camels is illustrated in a work-song:

O Good (46), camel mine
to sleep last night I couldn't
because of groans pathetic yours
bedding throwing aside all

(6) As we have said earlier, men are never willing to give away their camels easily and the camel song quoted here also stresses this:

O Mayro (56), the slender camel
he who tended you lovingly
his life endangering for your sake
to part with you he never wishes

(7) Generosity is a virtue strictly observed by the Somali pastoral society but when it comes to giving away camels for some reason or other they are very judicious indeed, as observed by poet Hashi Ali (Indhole):

... to honoured in-laws
you may camels give
to your own son also who
one day when you pass away
your earthly wealth inherits
on no other occasions may men
so lightly camels give away

(8) Goats and cattle are usually given away as expendable gifts to friends and outsiders alike, whereas camels are considered as man's real assets and his social security which he preserves with care. The poet Samatar Bahnan illustrates this point in the following verse:

... in compensation goats and cattle you pay
but camels precious as security preserve
giving them to no man
to your own father even

(9) The owner of camels may decide to marry but he realizes that he is required to pay the best of his animals as the traditional brideprice to the girl's parents. It often happens that such a man prefers to stay a bachelor for life, rather than parting with his camels. The intense love for camels is described by the poet Abdi Galayah:

... bachelorhood isn't good for man
yet, cool towards women fair
have I chosen to remain
for my beloved camels
to part with I loath
this precious wealth to preserve
my main reason being
he who knows camels values true
jealously ever safeguards them

(10) The choice between women and camels which a Somali herdsman has to make when intending to marry and the preference he often gives to the latter is described also by the work-song quoted below:

... already am old
desires many have I in life
haven't married yet, though
so as not to part with
camels mine beloved

(11) As was explained earlier, to acquire camels was and still is the ambition of all men in the pastoral Somali society. It is not easy, however, for any man to achieve this difficult ambition of possessing numerous camels in his lifetime. It is still more difficult for the owner of these important animals to safeguard them since they are coveted by all men in that society. One has to put all his energy in providing the security of his camels at all times, otherwise he is sure to lose them, as emphasized by the Somali proverbs quoted here:

... no man should ever be complacent with
the possession of camels and to
enjoy their benefits alone

... no camels means no milk
no milk means no life

(12) The natural ability of camels to survive in difficult ecological conditions has been explained earlier in this discussion. It is chiefly because of this reason why these animals are loved so much by the Somali herdsmen whose economic life depends upon these useful beasts. Camels are able to endure almost any climatic conditions in their natural habitat, only death is unavoidable, as it is the case with all the other living things in the world. This is emphasized in the following camel watering-song:

O camel mine
you grow old never
ever beautiful and strong
indeed immortality you deserve
death never knowing

(13) Another camel song describes the difficulties a man has to undergo in the quest for the beasts:

... he who owns not camels
in misery himself would find
always on the move aimlessly

(14) It is only the brave man who is able to obtain, rightly or wrongly, these precious animals, not the faint-hearted coward, as emphasized in the camel watering-song that follows:

O Good, (46), mine
the brave man strives
till his days to an end come
to possessing you

(15) In the following lines of verse the poet Mohamed Ali Benaley describes that it often happens among the Somali pastoralists that a man may categorically refuse to give some of his camels to his own brother so as to assist him in his economic needs:

... senseless would be
he who for camels comes to me
to mutual gainful deals I agree
but not even a brother mine should ask me
with these animals precious to part
should he cares retaining
brotherly love mine for him

(16) The extraordinary love the owner has for his camels begins from the very moment when the calf is born and this tender human sentiment grows up with the animal. The poet Abdi Galayah illustrates this strong attachment between the Somali and his camel:

... camel calves cute are
for me children beloved
in my lap they fall sleep
kisses numerous on them I plant

(17) Very many men who own numerous herds of camels prefer, as stated earlier, to remain confirmed bachelors, rather than paying some of their beasts as brideprice should they decided to marry some day. The poet Abdi Gahayr also describes this point:

... never have I camels mine bartered
with women charming
for I loath being thus robbed

(18) Among the pastoral society camels are often equated with men in value and this point is illustrated by a Somali proverb:

God, men and camels are prayed to
for their bounties limitless

(19) That society equates women with cattle and they are both considered to be feeble physically as described in the proverb quoted below:

... generous are men and camels
niggardly are women and cattle

(20) In the following lines of verse the famed Somali poet-nationalist, Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, equates the lactating camel with a life-giving mother and the burden camel the poet compares with the main artery in the human body:

... a she-camel is a mother
to him who owns her
whereas a he-camel is the artery
onto which life itself hangs

(21) The poet Abdi Aw Adan compares the great love the owner of camels has for them with such vital human organs as the heart, the backbones and with loving parents:

... by the grace of God
as dear as our hearts camels are
the backbone and limbs of our body
parents loving and kind
giving us all we desire for
only from death camels cannot shelter us

(22) Some camel owners neglect their useful animals and they do not derive the maximum benefits from them, which they ought to. On the contrary, the better these beasts are tended the more economic uses they have for the owner and for many others. Poet Adde Samakab describes the various stages a growing camel goes through until it reaches full maturity:

... in the year of its birth
to a tree trunk strong
the calf is tied to train
in the year that follows
it pesters the mother much to suck
the fibre muffles off the teats cutting
in the year that follows
thick furs the calf grows
part of it throwing out as a sign of growth
in the year that follows
with the stud sire it keeps company
pregnant it soon becomes
in the year that follows
milk abundant it produces
sufficient many children to feed

(23) The Somali pastoralists are all Muslims and they strictly observe the fundamental tenets of the Islamic religion such as the daily prayers which should be performed five times a day. It is difficult, however, for the camel herder to perform this daily religious rite while engaged in the troublesome task of camel husbandry. Also there is always a shortage of water for ablution necessary for Islamic prayers.

It is said that once there were two brothers who together tended their camels in the countryside. One of them used to perform the five-time daily prayers and the other did not. The latter disliked his praying brother, especially in the evening when they were so busy in driving the herd into the stockade for the night. One day the non-praying brother told his religious-minded brother the following:

"Look, my dear brother, with your frequent prayers you're neglecting our camels as you spend a lot of time this way. Your prayers and tending the camels cannot be reconciled. You better stop praying, or if you cannot, then at least stop the evening prayers when we're too busy driving the animals into the pen. If you cannot do this, then at least stop your mumbling noises after prayers."

Although this request is improper and against Islamic dogma, it illustrates the fact that it is difficult for a religious person who wishes to observe the obligations of faith and its rites, such as the daily prayers, to engage in the troublesome occupation of camel husbandry. Camels are often kept in pasturelands where water is scarce and without water for ablution the daily Islamic prayers would not be valid.

(24) The owner of camels sometimes gives away some of his animals as a gift to individuals whom he holds in great respect and honour such as his in-laws or close relatives in the belief that they would one day repay him in kind. Because of their great values no man is ever willing to part with his camels without recompense. This is described by poet Hashi Ali (Indhole):

... never should I my camels give
to priests and others
who my confidence enjoy not
for camels are given to man
who in kind is able to repay
like in-laws honoured
to no one else would I
ever Warays (57) give away
beloved camel mine

(25) Poet Khalif Hared Mohamed, one of the Somali men who greatly loved camels, describes the natural beauty of these useful animals:

... flat feet Saruur (58) the camel has
elongated eyes sharp as well
neck stiff and slender it has
flanks and udder separated apart
as the Creator desired to
four toes and chest padded it has
hips huge and the tail hanging thereon
ears that look like a file metallic
the camel in price surpasses
all other wealth on earth
accursed would be the man
who ever a camel barterers
with a cow valueless

(26) Due to the intense love men hold for their camels, generations of Somali poets praised these beloved animals in oral literature. The following verse by poet Yusuf Abade describes the extraordinary graces of camels:

... graceful is the camel indeed
padded feet flat it has
with splinted toes toughened
ladder-like tall thighs
over which the tail restlessly swings
hips divided apart it has
huge hump on its back sitting
a belly that stretches out
from the udder to the chest

flanks and ribs massive it has
straight strong back as well
where three-figure marks are branded on
curved slender neck it has
with ears always cocked
nose-bridge straight it has
with lips in the middle cleft
with jaws mighty
camel ruminates pastures rich
eyes it has twain
as bright as light itself
sight as fast as rocket
sinews strong and firm it has
God bestowed bountiously
on Sulub (59) the camel gracious
all these charms natural
Surdho (60) the camel captivates me
as it along majestically moves by

(27) Poet Qawdhan Duale points out below also that a man how owns no camels would be obliged to exist in misery all his life. The poet also defines the economic uses the camel has for man:

... milk and hump-meat the camel to people gives
with milk its calf it feeds, too
fermented milk delicious
from lactating camels young we enjoy
by Allah, miserable would always be
the man who no camels owns

II. Tending Camels

Maintaining camels is much more difficult than acquiring them and it requires sufficient manpower to guarantee the security and the welfare of these useful animals. Camels need elderly men experienced in tending the animals and young herdsmen to graze and safeguard them from would-be looters, as well as from beasts of prey. The elders advise the young cameleers on the best pastures and water resources to which the herd is to be taken in the different seasons of the year. The most important tasks connected with camel husbandry which the herdsman has to perform regularly are the safeguarding of the camels, watering them at the water-ponds when thirsty and tending the animals in the pasturelands.

The animals are kept at night 'in a thorn fence so as to protect them from the wild beasts attacking them. These tasks could be carried out by men experienced in camel husbandry and whose profession it is. There is a considerable amount of Somali oral literature concerning with camel management some examples of which we shall quote here as illustrations:

(1) Specifically two important factors should be considered in maintaining camels: first, the camelherder should be well experienced in his profession and he must be an able-bodied, brave man. Secondly, there must be among the herd the best possible stud sire chosen to produce

good quality offsprings. Camels would not flourish without these two factors, as is illustrated by a camel watering-song:

... should not an elder tend
or stud sire best provided for
who else but
the Almighty could create
the hard-natured camel?

(2) The availability of rich pasturelands is also essential to camel welfare as is described in a watering-song:

... thirty names diverse
and nine complexions
and eight toes the camel has
differently men their camels maintain:
one man keeps them
in lands barren and poor
where the herd of thirst severe perish
another man takes them
to pastures rich
to the riverbanks to water from
white-furred and well-fed
this man's camels always become

(3) The following camel watering-song also is concerned with camel grazing, pointing out the ideal pastures for the animals:

... unless camels are taken
to pasturelands rich
in the "jadeer" shrubs
thickets of the "xagar" as well
the herd tranquil won't be

(4) Another watering-song explains the necessity of planning beforehand as to where to drive the herd to and in what season of the year for grazing purposes:

... when lightning swift heralds
where rains are falling
neglected would be Haweys (61)
unless at early dawn
or at dusk late
to that rainland the camel isn't driven to

(5) Camels that are not well-cared for by the owner are always recognizable by their physical debility, as illustrated by the following watering-song:

... haven't they let you alone, camel mine
where the "mareer" shrubs abound
freely to graze at night
or in the evening to browse
why so lean and lifeless
with belly and flanks emaciated

(6) By instinct camels themselves know where they could thrive well and where they could not. The following lines of verse by poet Awad Farah concern a dialogue between man and his personified camel that protests to the man for neglecting his beast and failing to drive it to good pastures, where the camel may thrive well:

Madiix (62) and I today argued -

she (camel) said: in dry stream-beds
at wells empty you kept me for long
my life destroying thereby

I said: well-cared you were always
though to pastures rich
of late I took you not

she said: to the rainlands rich take me

I said: Abyssinian enemies are there
who won't let us in peace

she said: with cracking Martin (63) rifles
fight them off you ought to

I said: well-armed strong foe they are

she said: then to the salt-licks
in the savanna lands to go I need

I said: exhausted you'll reach there
as faraway that destination is

she said: to anywhere take me
where I could well thrive
no more shall I protest then

I said: ideal place for you Aynabo (64) would be

she said: beasts of prey plenty there are
for my calves I fear

I said: bonfires at night I'll kindle
predators away to keep

(7) In the long poem that we quote here, poet Abdi Galayah describes the various ways of tending camels which require considerable labour and self-denial on the part of the camel herder:

... should I for many months take care
of camels mine beloved
from time to time taking them
to places with pastures rich
when they need comfort more
should I to the salt-licks drive them
parasites brushing off the animals always
sick ones from the herd separating at once
to nurse them to health
with ram's fat tail feeding them
debilitated the herd would be

unless for them I cared well
should I the animals safeguard always
to go astray never to let
from beasts of prey saving them
their welfare should I ever promote
neglecting never these beasts precious
increasing in number the herd
my aim always being
none of it never giving away
as brideprice for woman slovenly
should I a bachelor ever to remain
should I sleep out at night
in the camel pen comfortless
should I put aside elegance showy
should I be on the move always
leisured life to myself denying
for the sake of camels mine beloved

(8) Camels very often go astray and get lost in the forest due to the negligence of herders who play around with girls or amuse among themselves, forgetting thereby to mind the animals carefully. A camel watering-song emphasizes this particular point:

... that lad lazy
who likes caressing
female abdomen cosy
his manners snobbish showing off
by Allah such a lad wayward
enjoys never Xii's (65) milk sweet
with bubbles warm and rich on top

(9) Camels are not well tended also by herders who are not willing to take the animals to faraway pasturelands, for they prefer always staying close to the family encampment with their girlfriends and wives, as described by the following camel song:

... that lad snobbish
with hairs dyed white
daily by girls coiffeured
how indispensable Minaw (66) is
for his survival on earth
he knows not
by Allah such a lad
mindless fool he is

(10) Camel herders who are unmindful of looking after the animals properly are also criticized in the following camel watering-song for they spend their time in amusing themselves, in dancing with girls and playing games among themselves:

... that lad loafer
who to the dance square
in the evening runs off
his herd neglects

his life endangering
for he may starve to death one day
disgrace and shame unto himself bringing

(11) Very often young camel herders are attracted by the councillors' meetings in the encampment where communal affairs are debated. By spending much time in listening to such long debates the herders forget and neglect the animals under their charge, which may go astray and get lost in the forest. Also the herders may spend considerable time in playing the traditional chess games (shaxda) and thereby forget about their herd. These shortcomings of the herders are described in a camel watering-song:

... that young lad
who his herd lets untended
time precious spending
on game of chess useless
or elders' debates long listening to
milk sweet and warm
from untended animals
he never enjoys

(12) A wise camel-herder always takes his animals to the best available pastures where they thrive and prosper well. He avoids driving his herd to rough, stony grounds which may damage the animals' feet, as described in the camel-song below:

... verily camels thrive not
on terrain rough
on land barren and poor

(13) A married man who prefers to be at home for most of the time cannot properly tend camels, which is a full-time occupation. Similarly, a young man whose mother shelters him from facing the difficulties of life cannot be a good camel herder, as emphasized in the following camel watering-song:

... a married man
home comforts unable to forego
cannot camels tend well

(14) The green, fresh leaves on the topmost branches of trees are the ideal camel fodder, particularly during the dry seasons of the year. The high plateau with dense forest is the best camel grazing area where the animals thrive well, as described in the camel-song quoted here:

... when camels feed on
the "himir"
and "hareeri" trees
glossy colours the animals assume

(15) Persons physically weak such as priests, very young boys, elderly men, etc. are unfit to tend camels well which is an extremely arduous job. The following camel watering-song describes how healthy and strong young men could properly manage camels:

... priests elderly
and litte kids
cannot camels water
or tend them well

(16) The grazing habit of camels is different from that of cattle and goats and these animals are therefore kept in diverse ecological surroundings, as emphasized by the camel-song that follows:

... where the goats graze
you, Ayro (67), thrive may not

(17) Ali Mohamed Farah describes the ideal grazing areas in the country for camels in the different seasons of the year:

... from childhood days
to mature age mine
have I my life entire dedicated
to Caweer's (68) welfare
leisure and comfort foregoing all
for my camel's sake
to the pasturelands driving the herd
to the forest virgin
to the salt-licks
to the savannas as well
to nibble away leaves green
grasses tall and fresh
where shrubs rich abound
often late at night
my camel beloved I drove
to these ideal spots
away from goats' grazing domain
unfit for the herd to live
on terrain stony and rough
allowing the animal never to tread
that may its flat feet pierce through
often in early dawn
the herd have I driven to
the waterponds cool

(18) The fact that camels always need the services of strong men to safeguard the security of the animals has already been pointed out elsewhere in this work. The camel owner also needs God's blessing in maintaining these vital animals. The above points are emphasized by the ancient Somali proverb quoted below:

... camels need men and God to safeguard them

(19) As was stated earlier, camels bestow great honour and prestige to the owner. A man who leaves no camels for his children when he passes away is considered to have lived in vain and that his offspring would have no secure future. The following Somali proverb underlines this:

... he who leaves no camels for his son
foresees his own death

(29) Experienced camel owners always give special attention to providing the best stud sire for the herd so that he could produce good quality offspring. A stud sire that causes physical damage to the females on mating seasons is not favoured, as illustrated in a camel watering-song:

... stud sire that on mating
she-camels hurts
as harmful to the herd he is
as grazing ground barren
as stones that pierce through
camel's feet

(21) The best grazing grounds for camels are usually located faraway from the population centres and pastoral settlements. The wild beasts thrive also in such isolated areas alongside with the camels and they are a permanent danger to the herd. These points are emphasized in the camel song quoted below:

... like the shaggy beast of prey
that for seasons many
in the wilderness lived
camels love much in the dust to bask

(22) Earlier it has been stated that managing camels required strong men in sufficient numbers to safeguard the security of these animals, to defend them from the many enemies, both men and wild beasts, aspiring to possess camels by all means possible, and to look after the general welfare of these useful animals such as grazing, watering, etc. The camel song quoted below emphasizes this:

... should disease killed not
the first-born herdsmen brave
or enemies seized them not
by Allah, Cawl (69)
soon would be driven to
the best pasturelands available

(23) It is an important part of camel management to take the herd to the place where salt-licks are available, which may be at a long distance. On such occasions it is a difficult task driving the animals which do not produce much milk then due to the long trek and lack of grazing facilities. This is described in a camel song:

... until to the saltlicks
to the waterponds cool
camels are driven
the herd fills not the vessels
with milk abundant
nor tranquil would the beasts be

(24) The choice of a stud sire for the herd is an essential part of camel husbandry, as was stated earlier. Special attention is given to the pedigree of the male camel to be chosen for this purpose as well as to its physical appearance, for the aim is that his offspring will be of good quality in all respects. In the following poem Samatar Bahnan describes a suitable stud sire for his herd and how he always cared for this important male camel:

... stud sire mine
as lovingly I treated you
as parents my own
in the best pastures grazing you always

priests religious requested I
talesman protective for you to write
white-furred virgin ewe as his price payed I
unsuited decrepid he-camel never allowed I
virgin calves mine to mate
with sticks hard beating him off
whenever he tried
Dhaayin (70) to mate with
for only you, Dhegajeex (71)
are fit to mate
with Dhebi (72) the camel mine

(25) At the waterwells many herds of camels gather to be watered during the dry seasons of the year. The wells are often situated in treeless places and the camels may suffer from the heat of the burning sun. The camel herder ought to ensure that his animals should not suffer in this way. The following lines of verse by poet Abdi Galayah explain this point:

... the day when Dhudi (73) dear
with thirst severe groans loud
emaciated and lifeless becoming
her suffering so much I loath to see
to the cool shade I drove the beast

(26) Experienced camel herders always take their beasts to the wells where clean and abundant water is available and they avoid giving dirty water which may cause them sickness. This particular point is emphasized in the watering-song below:

... intelligent animals camels are
with the nostrils they first feel the water
should they in it notice dirt
up they raise the long neck
in rejection outright to drink

(27) Mother-camels are known to have intense love for their young calves in feeding and training them so that they soon grow up, as illustrated by the following camel watering-song:

Caweer (68) the mother-camel
with her calf lovingly plays
amidst the shrubs green

(28) Camel herders are mostly a hardy lot who are respected and praised by their society for their great ability in their difficult profession. Some of them are, however, criticized for their inefficiency in managing their herd, as in a camel watering-song:

... one lad excells in conversation homely
another excells in strength physical
in milking his herd

(29) As it was stated elsewhere in this work, camels are grazed in special pasturelands where the beasts thrive well. Rough, stony terrain is unsuited for this purpose, as described by the following dance-song:

... camels thrive not
in rocky ground rough
though there calves may be born
as stones pierce the beasts' back
as they on it lie

III. The Difficulties In Camel Husbandry

As many are the benefits derived from camels, so are also the difficulties encountered by the owner in maintaining these animals. It could be safely said that camel husbandry is much more difficult than other occupations like farming and raising other types of livestock. The usefulness of camels, however, is much greater than the difficulties involved in their maintenance. The major problems are concerned with the provision of sufficient herders for the animals whose responsibility it is to carry out the daily work of grazing the beasts and to provide their overall security. Also camels endanger the security of the society who owns them as the animals are coveted by all men. Difficulties are also encountered by the owner of the other types of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats but these animals do not normally pose such a serious security risk to the society as camels do.

IV. The Physical Tasks

Many of the activities of man need physical exertion and cause him bodily fatigue. Camel husbandry entails considerable exhaustion and strain on the herdsman but it requires less mental work. In this occupation more muscle power is used than mental. The regular tasks carried out by a camel herder, in addition to those mentioned in earlier sections of this work, are as follows:

- a) searching for camels lost in the forest
- b) constructing the stockade in which the herd is kept at night to protect them from the wild beasts
- c) driving the herd to new pastures whenever necessary
- d) milking the lactating camels for the people, etc.

Tending and watering camels are much more arduous tasks than doing the same work with the other types of livestock. The camel herdsman face severe hunger and thirst during the dry seasons of the year when they have to carry out these tasks. Much less difficult is the job of the cattle and goat herders compared with the camelmen. Cattle and goats usually are kept in areas close to the water ponds, whereas camels go further afield in search of suitable pastures.

(1) A considerable amount of oral literature had been created by the Somalis in connection with the arduous occupation of camel husbandry which the herdsman have to face. As an illustration of this point, the following camel watering-song is quoted:

... until the skin off comes
the palms of the hand
and the ligaments in man's ribs asunder break
satisfied camels won't leave the wells

(2) Another watering-song describes recurrent pain and exhaustion felt by the camelmen as a result of the hard work of watering numerous herds:

... until sweat drops off my temples flow
sure I can't be
whether I faithfully served you
beloved camel mine
your fill of water giving at least

(3) A camel watering-song describes how tedious this task is and causes the camel herder to complain of the permanent pain he feels in his body:

... with more water fill up my belly huge
demands of me the camel beloved
while am nursing the hurting backbones mine
that in accidents past I broke apart

(4) How the camel herder utilizes all his musclepower when drawing water from the deep waterwells is illustrated in the camel song below:

... the shoulders I strain
one at a time
putting out with my arms strong
the waterbucket huge and full
for you, camel mine
your fill to drink

(5) When there is a large herd to be watered more men would be needed to do the job quickly. Fewer men would be unable to carry out this big task as they would soon get exhausted, leaving the animals bellowing with thirst around the wells. This is described by the following camel watering-song:

... already our ribs we broke
with exhaustion severe
yet the herd won't go away
wanting more water to drink

(6) Camels could stay for a considerable time without drinking water, but when the animals are taken to watering they need to drink a great amount of it, sufficient to keep the animals for a long period, as is explained by a camel song:

... how huge the camel belly
for water it has
from dawn to dusk
it goes on and on drinking more

(7) During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan the believers refrain from eating food and drink from dawn to dusk and people spend most of their time resting. For the camel herders, however, there would be no rest even during this fasting month since the animals have to be tended all the time. The following camel watering-song illustrates this:

... even in the Ramadan month
when men neither eat nor drink
camels need to go far
after rains and pastures rich

(8) Among the camel herders it is the custom to severely criticize anyone who shirks his share of the arduous job of tending the animals, which is described by this camel song:

... accursed is the young fellow
who his obligations shirks
in days critical
when much to do there is

(9) As already pointed out, watering camels at the deep waterwells from which the water has to be drawn by pulling up skinbuckets at the end of long ropes is extremely hard work. Part of this job is to keep the animals from rushing to the trough all at once and to let a few of them at a time to drink. The man who is assigned to do this control work is kept extremely busy as he has to check the onrushing beasts, running after them all the time. Yet, inspite of his difficult assignment this man is criticized severely by his workmates for letting too few or too many animals to the trough at a time, as explained in the following watering-song:

... hard is the troughman's lot
yet, he's cursed always

V. The Security of the Camels

Where there are camels there is always apprehension and insecurity felt by the herdsman since all men covet the acquisition of these important animals. The man who does not own camels always aspires to obtain them even at the cost of endangering his own life. On the other hand, the possessor of these beasts is aware of the fact that other men are always attempting to take them by any means from whoever has them. Thus, the camel owner always tries to safeguard the security of his animals. Unless one is prepared for the hard life envolved he would be unable to maintain camels, nor would he derive any economic benefits from these animals. This is a profession that demands skilfulness and personal bravery on the part of the herdsman. Camels should be protected not only from other men but also from the beasts of prey, from harmful insects that often attack the animal and cause disease, etc. The above being examples of the constant dangers the camel herder has to face.

(1) A considerable amount of Somali oral literature deals with the difficult life of the camel herder and as an illustration we quote the following proverb:

... he who camels has
lives not in peace

(2) The fact that the cameleer has to be vigilant over the security of his herd is described by the following watering-song:

... he who Suub (8) the camel owns
sleeps not tranquil
to defend it he has
with clubs heavy in hand

(3) Poet Abdi Hersi in the following poem describes in greater detail the very hard life of a camel herder and the permanent worry he has about the security of his animals:

... late at night
when creatures slept all
wandered alone have I
in the forest deep
domain of snakes poisonous
man-eating lions as well
with clubs heavy in hand
dust-clouds kicking up with my feet
as though burying
departed relatives beloved mine
Seeshi (74) place in haste crossing
all this I went through
beware you, men
no wealth in the world exists
that to camels equals

- (4) The camel watering-song that follows also explains that it is much easier for man to acquire camels than to maintain them:

... acquiring you, camel mine, easier it is
than keeping you for long

- (5) In the following poem, Ali Mohamed Farah describes the harsh life of the Somali camelmen and the trials and tribulations they go through to retain these vital animals:

O camel mine
oft have I from you chased away
hoards of hyenas hungry
lions with mane thick as well
oft have I to the waterponds driven you
barefooted and halfclad in shreds
stones sharp the flesh cutting
off my shoeless toes

- (6) Poet Samatar Bahnan in the lines below explains how he safeguards the security of his camels, defending them from would-be looters as well as from the beasts of prey:

... vigilant am I always
thieves canny to foil
predator lions as well
intent on the herd to steal or attack
battles bloody oft I partook
my herd defending
what else there is for me to do in life
than camels to save
for this purpose created am I

- (7) In daytime camels are taken to graze in the pasture areas and in the evening when the sun goes down the animals are driven into the stockade for the night. This is a difficult job which needs sufficient men to drive in the animals, otherwise they may go astray and be killed by the wild beasts. The worries of the herdsmen in such moments, especially when they are few in number, is described in the following camel watering-song:

... nightfall already approaches
lonely kid is the herder
stockade for the herd
at night unable to build
for an adze sharp he has not
in Allah's mercy we're all

(8) Drinking water for the animals is often drawn from deep water-holes with skinbuckets tied to long ropes which entails hard manual labour for the herdsmen, as it is described in a watering-song:

... difficult is water to draw
from the holes crooked and deep
where frightened other men are
the risk I took
and for the herd the water drew

(8) The extremely difficult occupation of tending camels often causes permanent physical injuries to the herdsmen and many of them die as a result. In his following poem, Farah Ali Gammute describes the precarious existence of the camelmen:

... like the ostrich wild
that in Riinji (75) and Garane (76) graze
water to drink long forsook I
for my camels sake
that friends took me for dead
hyenas notorious lurk around always
the herd to attack anytime
oft times in evening late
while on my journey nightly
called upon have I been
predators to chase away
that best of the herd destroyed

(10) The difficult ecological conditions existing in the country compel the camel herder to drive his animals from time to time to wherever he could obtain better pastures for them. Thus, the camelman has to be on the move frequently from one place to another with the beasts and this entails extremely hard work for him in tending, driving and safeguarding the animals, as described in the following poem:

... he who camels and goats tends
from hunger severe suffers
for on the move in the desert waste
such men would always be
like hunters homeless

(11) As it was pointed out earlier, the camel herder or owner has to be a brave man ready to risk his own life for the safety of his herd. Should the camelman be a coward or a weakling other men would be tempted to take away his animals in no time. The camel watering-song that follows illustrates this point:

O Birmad (77), camel mine
calf of Xiito (78)
he who's afraid of weapons iron-made
coward faint-hearted he is
begging others his lot would be for life
he's of no use to you

(12) Among the camel-owning society the brave man is highly honoured for he is always ready to defend his camels even at the cost of losing his own life. Most of the men of that society are strong-willed and they share this personal character. This point is described in a camel song:

... should I in the thick of fight
camels mine defending
behind other men myself hide
may Allah condemn me
in the field to be slain

(13) Thieves very often raid camels in the late evening when the herds-men are thought to be not so vigilant. In such cases the herdsmen may be overcome by the looters and the animals taken away from them, unless they are always ready for such a surprise attack. The following watering-song points out of how important it is for camel herders to be always on their guard against surprise attacks by camel thieves:

... in evenings late
when camels follow suit the setting sun
raiders may the herd attack
driving off Caweer (68) the camel beloved
as booty precious for them
its owner should not then runaway
his own life to save

(14) Bloody battles often take place between camel raiders and the defending men, in which many on both sides lose their lives, this being the subject of the camel watering-song below:

O camel mine
with the neck slenderly built
wherever you are on earth
testicles of men are cut off
other vitals of the male as well
and are seen strewn about
relics of battles bloody

(15) Bitter enmity may sometimes develop between two neighbouring tribes where one group possesses numerous camels, while the other group does not own them. The latter may try to take away by superior force the camels of their neighbours, killing their men as well. Thus, camels are often the cause of tribal warfare, as described by the camel song below:

... it's you Qaayib (4)
that among the tribes
who hitherto in harmony together lived
bitter enmity inflamed
one another destroying in battles bloody

(16) The camel watering-song that follows describes how a brave camel-owner is determined to defend one of his beloved animals when he is attacked by raiders:

... for a spear-stab
that pierces not my heart
by Allah I won't
ever abandon Tiir (79)
to the enemy 'in the field

(17) The following folksong illustrates the great risk taken by camel-owners who often lose their own lives in defending their animals, particularly the brave men for whom death holds no terror:

... for three reasons
having camels hate I:
carrying bloody shields after a fight
camel's bellowing cries in battle fields
brave men's death in its defence

(18) The following lines from a popular poem by an unknown poet also describes the dangers to which a camel-owner is often exposed to:

... he who owns camels his life risks
as diamonds and pearls
with difficulty they're acquired
without trials and tribulations
no man Dhoor-wiil (80) could own

(19) The camel-owner has two chief worries in his lifetime towards which all his efforts are directed. The first of these is the security of his herd so that he may not lose them to other men. The second chief apprehension is the possibility that he may one day find himself to be a poor man without the camels which he regards as his highest social security. These points are illustrated in the camel song below:

... he who aspires in life
camels more to acquire
his life has to risk
he who less of them owns
hunger his companion would be

THE CAMEL AS CAUSE OF CONFLICT

As pointed out elsewhere in this work, camels are considered to be the highest wealth among the pastoral Somali society. For this reason these animals are coveted by all the men of that society, making them the cause of perpetual conflict and serious tribal warfare in the countryside. For men regard the camel to be an object worthy of sacrificing a man's life for.

(1) A considerable amount of oral literature has also been created on the camel as a cause of bitter enmity among men of diverse clan groups. As an illustration we shall quote here some of this oral data. The camel watering-song that follows describes how the men of two unrelated clans became bitter enemies because of their desire to possess each other's camels:

... it's because of you, Deero (81)
that clans by blood unrelated
who neither share pastures nor territories
oft times to war went one another to destroy

(2) In modern times the camel-owner needs to have fire arms in order to guarantee the security of his herd, as illustrated in the camel watering-song quoted below:

... only he who bullets has
his herd could safeguard

(3) In the perpetual struggle among the camelmen for the acquisition of these useful animals many brave men have lost their lives, while others may achieve their goal only through bloodshed. This point is explained by the following camel song:

... should not men be willing to die
their blood precious shedding
would they be able then
their camels to maintain?

(4) On rare occasions a camel-owner may give away few animals to a close relative as a gift. But the commonest way the men of the nomadic society acquired camels was always by taking them from other men by force. A camel watering-song illustrates this point:

... with dagger sharp
in fighting fierce
not by requesting for it
could a man Daawad (82) possess

(5) The camel-owner could not defend his herd alone but he needs the assistance of his clansmen in this difficult job. Should the clan be not strong numerically they would be of no use to the man, who may have to face single-handed a superior foe from a major clan, intent on taking his animals. This point is described by a camel song:

... to the strongest men Feyd (83) belongs
for a horseman in a raid
camels as his fair price may seize

(6) One peaceful way of acquiring camels is when the animals are paid as blood-money or compensation for a man murdered by the members of another clan. In such cases, the camels are collected from the culprit's clan and paid to the clan or close relatives of the deceased man, who then share among themselves the camels thus received. Men of weak character may come to acquire camels in this peaceful way rather than looting them from other men, risking their lives. Such men are considered cowards in their society, as described in the camel watering-song quoted below:

... the young man
who risks not his life
nor with others contests
for possessing camels precious
is such a worthless man
for camels waiting
as blood-money to him to come?

(7) The well-known poet Abdi Gahayr also explains in greater detail how it is extremely difficult for a man to safeguard his camels unless he is willing to risk his own life for this purpose:

... men never easily acquired
Boga (84) and Heemaal (52)
unless one's fully armed
to defend Baar (85) unable he would be
oft in the battle field
scenes gruesome remain behind
corpses of the brave here and there are strewn
bitter tears for beloved ones fallen are shed
as two clans in deadly conflict meet
where hundreds lay slain
as possession of Baarax (86) is always the cause
of this enmity and destruction enormous

(8) One of the ancient Somali traditions strictly observed today by the pastoral society is the very high respect a man accords to his in-laws. Yet, even here serious conflicts arise between a man and his in-laws because of camels. This point is illustrated by a watering-song:

... among three men all in-laws
who high respect for one another hold
who everything equally share
it's you, the camel
that among them friction severe causes

(9) Poet Ali Mohamed in the long poem quoted below also underlines the fact that the greatest worries of the camel-owner lie in safeguarding his herd, which are coveted by all men. The poet also recounts what it takes to guarantee the safety of his animals:

... the camel for whose sake
with spear sharp I tore off
other men's muscles strong
the camel whose owner in battle I slew
for it to fight challenging him

remaining in the hands of even
respected relatives of mine
the camel that I by force acquired
by Martin (63) rifle-fire explosive
the camel whose twin calves I carried
on my back day and night
the camel after which I plodded on
when other Muslims soundly slept
the camel that I stopped
from grazing in evenings and nights late
so as onwards to drive it
never in my life
have I entertained
other men may possess
the camel with the blooms ostrich-like
by my side milking it
to you of no much value
Maahir (87) may well be
for you only saw it
around the compound grazing
unaware of what it really costs for a man
that camel to acquire
he who through wades not
corpses of the brave
that camel never possesses he

(10) The camel watering-song quoted below also illustrates that so many brave men lose their lives in bloody fights for the acquisition of camels, especially in these days when fire arms are available to the camelmen:

... in the field of battle
where men one another slew
where bullets whistle around
where much blood was spilt
Xayaad (88) always bellows loudly

(11) The enmity among the men of the pastoral community caused by camels has a very long history and men have fought over these useful animals ever since as they were discovered by man. Due to their high social value camels became the bone of contention between men, as described in a watering-song:

... ever since camels were discovered
over them men quarrelled and disagreed

(12) The fact that the camel-owner could only maintain and guarantee the security of his animals in these modern times by the possession of effective fire arms is underlined by a watering-song:

... may Almighty God never camels bestow
to him who's unable to defend
with fire arms forceful

(13) It very often happens that a party of raiders are tempted to loot camels, unaware of the fact that the animals are in fact well

defended by a superior force. In such instances the raiders suffer defeat and the survivors flee in disarray. This point is illustrated by an ancient Somali proverb which declared:

... looking for camels to loot
leads to broken skull

(14) Men who steal or loot camels are aware that this is a crime forbidden by their religion as well as by the moral conventions of their society. Yet, men commit this crime all the same knowing full well that they stand condemned in the eyes of their society. The following proverb explains this point:

... a camel that isn't yours
begets no holy calf

(15) Success and failure are always the companions of men who intend to acquire camels by force as described by an old Somali proverb:

... he who's on the warpath
is urged on either by
desire for camels
or by his own death

(16) A camel-owner may make a gift of a few of his herd to a Sheikh who blesses the animals by reading verses from the Quran. This is not, however, a common way of acquiring camels, which is almost always through force of arms. This point is illustrated by a camel song:

... only the man
with fire arms powerful
may Diiqa (89) possess
not by priest's blessing

(17) The poet Ali Mohamed Farah describes his frequent encounters with camel-raiders who attempted to take away his herd and to murder him:

... oft have I thieves foiled
who on me bullets showered
withstanding the siege serious
my herd to safe

(18) Sometimes raiders on horseback may loot camels and run off with a numerous herd. In such instances horsemen are needed to give chase and retrieve the looted animals. Horses do not, however, thrive well in grazing areas suitable for camels and not all herdsman own horses. It is seldom that camels looted by mounted raiders are won back by men on foot, as illustrated in the camel song that follows:

O Suub (8), beloved camel mine
from mounted for swift
enemy on foot as well
may Allah merciful save us

(19) A man whose camels were looted by his superior enemies may for a long time seek revenge and wait for a favourable opportunity, as described by an unknown poet:

... as long as other men my camel possess
never would I the spear lay down
nor peace insincere accept

(20) Ismail Mire, who used to compose inflammatory poems instigating men to acquire camels by force, composed the following lines in his old age, describing how, in his younger days, he sacrificed his own life in obtaining these vital beasts. The poet lamented that in his advanced age he is no longer able to loot camels from other men:

... when I was able to throw the spear
at its target straight
fit I was then camels to possess by force
unless am able for them to fight
shameful it is camels numerous possessing
when on horseback
in a raid swift the herd I drove off
and that now am crumbled with age
like Dhool (1) my aunt
mention not to me, my boy
memories of bygone days
for to the core it hurts indeed

(21) The following camel watering-song emphasizes the fact stated earlier that all men covet camels and that these important animals are the cause of perpetual conflict among the pastoralists, which makes them one day to belong to one man and the next to another:

... to no particular man camels belong
no one could sincere be about them

LOOTING CAMELS

It has already been stated that camels are the cause of conflict and bitter enmity between men in the pastoral society due to the considerable economic and social importance these animals have for that society. The owner of camels tries to safeguard them, whereas the man who has not endeavours to acquire them by all means possible. Looting camels has, therefore, become a frequent occurrence among the pastoral community in Somalia.

One single man or a group of men could take camels by force, using modern fire arms. Many lives are often lost in bloody battles between raiders and defenders of camels and either party may carry the day. Fighting for camels has always been the principal occupation of the pastoral men. These men are well aware of the fact that looting camels is a serious crime forbidden by religion, yet they commit this wrongdoing voluntarily and even boast of it. The strongest man has the right to loot camels, they reason.

(1) The wellknown poet Abdi Gahayr, who used to engage in camel-looting in his younger days, was once warned by religious men of the terrible punishment that awaits in the hereafter the man who takes the property of another unlawfully. In reply the poet composed the following verse explaining his reasons for taking camels by force:

Idinbacasa's (90) calves
useful they were also
to the saints ancient
he who camels has not
in the hereafter is not at all praised
with you to pray I could not
for even a packcamel I own not

(2) Poet Ali-dhuh is reported to have looted some camels belonging to religious men for which act his tribesmen condemned him severely. Defending his actions, the poet composed the following verse, pointing out that the greatest religious authority in the country, Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, had permitted the looting of camels, specially during a holy war (Jihad) (99):

... the Sayid, the wise one
who knows more
than all other men religious in the land
did saction Waris (91) by force to take
Xula (92) he won't take
should this act unlawful be
laws superior camels govern
above other animals all
any preacher religious
camels to acquire desires
though pious pretends he to be
should Hajis ambitious
other men's camels raided not
I, too, would have done the same

(3) Another poet, Farah Adan, also supports the views that religion does not prohibit looting camels and that the great religious leader, Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, used to take camels himself by force from his enemies, specially during holy wars (99):

... that priest
who in Xadeed (93) lives
in Dervish headquarters
who camels by force acquired
who on horseback fast
to Xodayo (94) the herd drove
who in religion highly learned
Haj pilgrimage performed he
in times numerous
lawful for me, too, it is
Xaawis (95) with packcamels mature
by force to acquire

(4) We have stated earlier that the camel-owner needs to have strong men, arms and horses to enable him defend his animals effectively. Without these essential factors no one could provide security for his camels.

It was reported that a man named Duale Ali (Fagase) boasted of possessing numerous camels and horses, and that he belonged to a strong tribe who would be ready to assist him in defending his herd should Sayid Mohamed and his Dervish forces attempt to loot his animals. Duale pointed out also that the Sayid and his men were afraid of attacking his property for the above reason. Here is Duale's verse concerning these points:

... the Sayid dared not our camels touch
neither the lowborn nor thieves dared
with priest's blessing
with praise-songs many
Fanax (96) flourishes not
brave men and horses fast
camels precious could maintain
cowards are the Dervishes
their boastful leader Mohamed
should he obligations Islamic
holy war in sincerity invoked
why force strong shouldn't he send
against Ararsame tribes arrogant
their territory to invade
their herd numerous looting
why shouldn't he feed well
councillors in his camp hungering
then with pride whistle around
like lords of the whitemen?...

(5) Some time after the defeat of the Dervish movement, poet Ismail Mire with a group of men decided to raid the camels belonging to certain clans located in a distant place. But after a long march the raiders could not find their target in the forest and had to give up the search. The following verse by Ismail describes the hardships they en-

countered in their fruitless enterprise, pointing out that such is the lot of the man who desires to steal camels from another man. The poet did not, however, give up the hope that Allah may still grant his wishes someday to find camels to loot:

... beloved camel mine
that in midday sun scourging
at all times I guarded over
the camel dear
whose droppings dry I followed suit
when in the forest it was lost
as a sign of its whereabouts
searching for it everywhere
that camel at night I drove without rest
in evening late as well
that camel after which
mighty men grew thin
that camel for whose sake
stones razorsharp my sandals pierced through
slashing the feet severe
for whose sake
the loincloth to the waist I tightly tied
that camel after which
so much we hungered for
only on fruits wild feeding
that on "gob" and "dheen" trees grew
that camel for whose sake
the stomach I filled up
with grasses poisonous
of more than sorts ten
for whose sake
anything edible I chewed and swallowed down
to stay alive a while
for whose sake I butchered
burden-beasts huge
with their broth to feed it
for whose sake water vessels I threw away
when the burden-beast that carried these
for food I slaughtered already
for whose sake
the burden-beast gentle
its back bruised badly
from afar water fetching
men may think unattainable it is
that camel ever to possess
O Allah the gracious
prayers all to you are for mercy addressed
even the unwise know
Yours is the decision final
that we're wiser now
from wrongdoing we ought to refrain
when Garawo (76) the lightning follows suit
often months-long trek arduous

the camel at last comes
to where rainclouds the earth soaked
pastures rich growing again
may Allah merciful
in this place bless us all
from far away Caynabo (64) place we came
filling our hands empty
with gifts bounteous His
for which thankful we would always be

(6) It is said that poet Adan Arab had a little son who often cried for camel milk which the boy liked very much. The father composed the following poem, telling his son that camels which give milk could be acquired by man only through difficulties which are comparable with the great benefits derived from these important animals:

... he who goes not through
raids furious for camels to loot
who fetches not water for the thirsty herd
on camel-train tedious
from riverbed faraway
whose spine isn't thin and bent with toil
after journey arduous
who oft travels not
at dusk and in the chill of dawn
destination far on time to reach
whose packcamel strong
that carries water vessels heavy
falls not onto the ground with exhaustion
who eats not meat underdone
on bonfire in haste roasted
who builds not stockade strong at night
for Dhuubo (97), the camel precious
who like thickets wades not over
corpses of the brave and the mortality wounded
who sings not warsongs loud
blows not whistles in battle fields
who wins not more than his share of the booty
as recompense for his valour great
such a man never camels acquires
when my son cried to be fed
for camel milk sour and fresh
his meaning I comprehended not at first
his point I now see:
for his father disgrace it is
by force camels not to win for the son
so as milk he may not ever miss

(7) It is reported that a party of camel-raiders one day attacked a herd belonging to poet Adan Arab's clan who bravely defended their camels, defeating the raiders. Many lives were lost on both sides in the fierce fighting and Adan Arab then composed his following verse in which he warns other would-be-raiders of the great risk they would run into should they ever attempt to steal his clan's camels:

... our herd colourful
disaster great caused
to many men ambitious
for on its trek much blood was oft spilt
of those who were tempted
to loot that herd precious
by flames mighty surrounded
death certain those men surely urged on
our herd well defended to possess

(8) It has already been stated that Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan and his Dervish followers used to take camels by force from those Somali tribes who refused to participate in the holy wars (Jihad) he led against the British Colonial Administration in Somaliland in the beginning of this century. It is reported that a party of the Sayid's Dervishes on one occasion looted some camels and the owners went to the Sayid and asked him the return of their looted camels. In his following poem the Dervish leader refused to return the stolen animals and he explains the great difficulties his men had to go through to acquire camels for use in their campaigns, as well as his reasons for refusing to give back the beasts to their original owners (99):

... the camel beloved
whose sake Jihad I launched
in season dry in Dhooddi (98) place
whose sake meals and rest I forsook
whose sake oft travelled I
in the chill of night
"dhuyuc", "dhuundhas" and "jiiq" trees
all pierced through my flesh on marching long
whose sake in the bush wandered I
thorns sharp my clothes tearing off
whose sake vigil nightly I kept
till daybreak came
that camel I won by force of arms
in battle fierce
its owner vanguishing
that camel never shall I give back
to the man treacherous
who my cause just betrayed
siding with infidels unclean
no matter how loud
supplications his to me
that camel never to give back I swore
madman I would be so to do

(9) In the following lines of verse, the author of which is unknown, are concerned with advice given by a man whose camels were looted from him by stronger men. The poet says that he would try to recover his animals by force someday and tells the men who took away his herd to graze well the animals while they still possessed them:

... to pastures rich the camels always take
where the "dhimbil" tree abundant grows

tend well the herd please
for to both of us it belongs
should you a calf young for food slaughter
mind you!
your crime it increases

THE NEW ORAL LITERATURE AND THE CAMEL

The examples of quotations from Somali oral literature indicated in the preceding chapters of this work are illustrations of the part played by camels in the life of the pastoral society as well as the evaluation of these animals by the poets of the past generations who composed this rich oral poetry. Men of great poetic talent had pointed out over the centuries the difficulties as well as benefits involved in having camels in their society.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, or even earlier, foreign cultural influence penetrated the life of the Somali society, coming in various forms such as religion, commerce, colonial domination, etc. Although these foreign influences had brought about certain changes in the country in general, such as the establishment of new towns, new professions etc., the traditional life-style of the pastoral society was not greatly affected.

After World War II the Somali people, wherever they were, felt the extremely inhuman oppression of colonialism. Leaders came forward and mobilized the people for the hard struggle for national liberation and independence. Outstanding poets produced patriotic poetry in which they expressed powerful sentiments of national liberty and unity of all the Somalis, which was a new theme in the oral literature at the time. There were no such sentiments among the Somali society which was divided traditionally into clans and tribes with no cooperation between them. This visible, divisive situation existed since there was no central national authority in the country at that time.

The patriotic poetry was new only in content but not in form. The idea of national liberty and unity was difficult to understand for most of the ordinary Somalis who saw it as something impossible to achieve. However, the poets used their poetic talent in convincing the people of the possibility of attaining social change and progress through national independence.

In their patriotic poetry the poets used the camel as a symbol of national independence, knowing the fact that in the eyes of ordinary Somalis camels constituted the most valuable object in their possession. This comparison between camels and national liberty increased still higher the traditional social values of these useful animals. The following quotations are given as examples of this new patriotic oral literature:

(1) Among the prominent Somali poets who created the militant poetry utilized by the political parties in the country in their campaigns for national independence was Mr. Yusuf Haji Adan, who often composed poems containing symbolic objects with hidden meanings understandable only to the Somalis. Such poetry was meant for the agitation and political orientation of the masses. Poet Yusuf used the image of the camel as representing the freedom of the country, realizing the high social values placed on these beasts.

The following song, composed by poet Yusuf in about 1940, describes the image of a hungry man who is refused permission to milk his lactating camels so as to satisfy his severe hunger:

... am a starving man
milch camels his
forbidden to milk
vessels empty carrying in hand

(2) The following lines are from a popular song called "Soomasliyey Toosa", Somalis, Rise up!, believed to have been composed together by Ali Mire Awale and Yusuf Haji Adan in the 1940's. Being aware of the great value the camel has for the Somalis the authors of the song compared the camel with national independence:

... for the sake of a camel looted
tens of your compatriots you murder
yet, you throw no stone
for your motherland's liberation!

(3) Ali Hussein was another well-known poet who took part in the political agitation of the Somali Youth League party for national independence. In his numerous poems he, like many other poets on the period, used the image of the camel which the poet saw as the most precious possession of the Somali.

In the poem quoted below, the poet compares the colonialists with a ferocious hyena and liberty with a beautiful she-camel:

... you, hated hyena
who my beloved virgin camel killed
felling it on the ground helpless
its intestines tearing apart
one day I shall succeed somehow
your power to break unamendably
I swear your face to slap hard
it's the owners of the camel you devoured
who're asleep soundly
else you dared not
their herd to attack
should I call in
the brave youth of this land
whom you ill-treated yester-years
many of whom starved
thin with disease deadly
who're full of anger against you now
avenge themselves they shall
for crimes heinous against them you committed
vengeful are men by others wronged
their vendetta poisonous
serious my words are
even furious a fool kindles fear terrible
once enraged mad becomes he's
harm enormous to his adversary causing
I swear your blood red to spill
you wait a while
till disaster untold befalls onto you

(4) When in 1960 national independence was finally achieved many Somali poets composed numerous poems and songs dedicated to the historic mo-

ment in their lives. The most popular works of this happy occasion were those in which the newly attained national liberty was symbolically compared with a favourite she-camel which gave much milk to the people, or with a herd of camels looted by thieves but which were retrieved later by the owner. Poet Hussein Aw Farah had then composed a very popular song called "Maandeeq" (100), contentment:

... now that she has given birth
to twin calves cute
let's milk our camel Maandeeq
now that she's for milking ready
with the udder swollen huge
let's milk our camel Maandeeq

(5) The great poet Abdullahi Sultan (Timade) wrote numerous patriotic poems in connection with the struggle for independence and unification of the Somali territories under different colonial administrations. When in 1960 the independence and unification of the two Somali territories formerly under Britain and Italy was achieved, the Ethiopian government reacted to this event with open hostility and attacked the new Somali state. Poet Abdullahi criticized in his following poem the Ethiopians for opposing Somali independence, which he compared with a stolen herd of camels retrieved by force of arms by its rightful owners. The poet tells the Abyssinians that the Somali people had won their national freedom through hard struggle from the two colonial administrations of Britain and Italy who are much more powerful than they and were ready to fight against them, too, so as to safeguard their national liberty and unity:

... the camel colonialists from us looted long ago
whose footmarks we followed suit ever since
whose memory worried us all for years
after which we followed tirelessly
to wherever it went
for whose sake
we journeyed at nights long
through thorny bush trekking
coming at long last face-to-face with
those who dispossessed us
for whose sake
fierce a fight waged we
ducks wild with fear crying loud
the camel whose defence
men multitude in the field had' fallen
feed for reptiles carnivorous
for whose sake
infidels against us allied
from whom we won our liberty at last
through sheer force superior
not as a gift from them to us
that day historic
when loin-clothed men brave
on one side of the field stood by
side by side to fight

when by Allah's grace
victorious our people were
the camel for whose sake
poems in praise I sung
for whose sake
the "galool", "maraa" and "xidig" trees
as fodder for it oft I felled
for whose sake
hunger and thirst severe suffered I
when the time came at last
for it a calf to bring forth
with the udder swollen large
for milking session ready
foolish is the man indeed
who ever tries taking from me again
this precious beast mine
when we had no missiles that fly far
nor shot-guns powerful
the camel for whose sake
lions mighty-breasted I dared to face
that camel beloved to abandon
among ostrich hens weakling
is unthinkable for me indeed

(6) In the early 1960's some poetic works appeared which were critical of the national government of the day and the way it ran the affairs of the people. One of the authors of this critical poetry was Mr. Mohamed Ismail (Qasim) who in his following verse also compared national freedom with a favourite camel for which the owner sacrificed his own life, in the hope that it would someday give him an abundant supply of milk. The owner's hopes were, however, dashed as the animal proved to be barren and gave no milk at all, because people mismanaged the beloved camel. By this symbolism the poet advises his compatriots to continue their struggle for complete national independence and unity and to remove from positions of power those individuals who are inefficient, replacing them with capable leaders:

... that camel beloved
which I hoped the vessel would fill
with milk abundant one day
whose teats muffled I
so as the calf may not such
that camel for which
water fresh I fetched
from wells deep in the earth
songs sweet singing for it
for which I oft felled as fodder
top branches of trees in blossom
the camel to pastures rich I drove
in gaaroodi (21) and labagar (101)
on which hump huge grew
which I with fire cured
from "guudaan" and "garaabiide" diseases
stud sire unsuited

with that camel to mate rejected I
they say that camel beloved is neglected now
they say woman elderly leads it on
to waterponds unwholesome
where monkeys drink from, too
they say it's tethered on mountains rough
domain of hyenas wild
they say its teats dried up already
full of milk which used to be
they say with fists its udder is knocked hard
so as more milk to yield
its flanks bitten, too
so as the yield to increase
gobaad (102) now grazes amidst ostrich hens
camels never barren become
should they be by brave men tended
ignorants and kids are now made
in-charge of the herd
by Allah I swear
either I'll be subjugated once more
or I'll myself avenge
as men always designs have
against one another

(7) Poet Adan Arab, who was a pastoral man, was also among the Somali poets who were dissatisfied with the way the government managed the new independence won by the people through hard struggle. In the following lines from a long poem he describes his dissatisfaction, expressing the feeling of a large part of the public at that time. He pointed out that he who owns camels may not need the government altogether as he himself was disenchanted with it them:

Dawaar (103) supplies my family needs
when in autumn it lactates
Aloos's (104) rear teats
that milk abundant produced always
and the herd I own I rely
let the hungry and vagrants the government beg

(8) Ali Elmi Afyare, who is a well-known poet, pointed out that national independence could satisfy all the people if it was properly managed, in the same way as a favourite lactating camel satisfies a whole family with its abundant milk. In the following lines the poet expresses, like many other poets of the period, his discontentment with government inefficiency, comparing liberty with a favourite camel:

... when maandeeq(100) the camel beloved
abundant milk produced for all
few people drank all of it
not once but many times more
dispossessing the hungry and the brave
who for the camel fought hard for long

(9) The following poem, also by Ali Elmi Afyare, again describes the disappointment felt by a large section of the Somali public with the way the

hardwon national independence was being mismanaged by those who were entrusted with the leadership responsibility:

... leaders elected proved to be
worse than colonialists of old
whom we with clubs drove away
worse still than hyenas wild
the camel beloved tied up they
in barren desertland
where it starved and limped on
its strength and colour losing
its calf forsaking
its udder they knocked hard for milk
but blood yielded she
instead of milk fresh
to the extreme the animal ill-treated they
when no drop of milk the camel gave
abroad journeyed leaders other nations to beg
much debt incurring
disgrace untold unto us they brought

(10) When on 21 October 1969 the Revolution took place in the country and the armed forces had taken over the leadership of the nation, poet Ali Elmi Afyare composed the following lines of verse, expressing high hopes in the future of the country brought about by the progressive revolutionary government. He compares liberty with a beloved she-camel:

... when at long last
by the armed forces power was taken
with the council supreme at the head
should the truth be stated
are not the virgin camels for milking
ready once more
is not the vessel cleaned up
for maandeeq (100) the camel's milking session
drank did you not them
milk fresh in abundance
gratitude is due truly
to the revolution blessed
to its leaders brave

(11) The policy of the revolutionary government and the practical steps it took to manage the affairs of the nation better than before were all welcomed by the people who in a short time saw the encouraging results of this sound policy. Poet Ali Elmi Afyare, expressing the enthusiasm and sympathy of the masses towards the revolutionary government, composed a poem in which he once more makes the comparison between a beloved camel and national freedom:

... our camel dear
whose foreteats were cut off before
vessels large with milk has now filled up
when in the "hareeri" thickets it browsed free
in green treetops tall
in pastures rich when it grazed
in the Haws (22) lands homely

milk abundant the camel yielded then
its udder bursting forth
it could no longer hold
satisfying starving calves
hungry Hiirad (105) as well
you, leaders of the Revolution blessed
indeed saved our Flag glorious
that so low descended before

(12) In the following poem Ali Elmi Afyare explains that camels still have their traditional social values although the Somali society has undergone considerable changes brought about by such modern trends as urbanization, industrialization, agricultural life, etc:

... milk sour and fresh as well
with which you the stomach fill
with the lather cool on top
Seenyo (6), the camel produces
hide, steak, fat and butter clarified
meat broiled for long to preserve
when you for food slaughter camel
as fat as oryx wild
the best in all the herd
for many days the meat suffices
families more than nine
traveling guests honoured, too
when between men enmity erupts
when men weapons deadly employ
one another to destroy
bullets flying about wild
blood flowing from combatants fallen
in such cases camels care paid
as compensation to the grieved side
peace is then soon restored
enmity and illwill among men forgotten
yet, herders and the owner alike
on alert must always be
the herd to safeguard
verses from the Quran they recite
the land entire to bless
where the camel thrives well
fees religious (sako) the owner ought to pay
so as Suub (8), the camel
may prosper well forever
for this camel much higher is valued
than cash in hand
than cotton and silk in the market exchanged
than buildings multi-storeyed
no other wealth on earth
comparable with Dhaameel (106), the foster-camels
except deadly missiles that fly far and kill
and machinery automatic
no use for me to wear, though

trousers colourful and watches
crazy are Somalis, indeed
who camel importance ignore
for our wealth in these beasts lies

(13) In a popular poem poet Guhad Abdi Gahayr advises his compatriots to fight for and regain their independence from the colonialists. Like many other poets he used the comparison of a camel much loved with national freedom:

... our rights regained we at last
with our success amazing the enemy
of enemy designs vigilant be always
negligent never you be
Maandeeq (100), the camel dear, safeguarding
now that she's in lactation
her milk abundant you ought to enjoy
peace among yourselves at all costs maintain
in the interests of you all it is
old wounds forget and one another forgive
against the enemy be united
of his intentions hidden be watchful
as an example others are looking at you
anything shameful commit never

(14) When poet Guhad realized that the leadership of the country was on the wrong course, and the high hopes of the people in the newly achieved independence were dashed, he composed a verse in which he expressed his lamentation:

... when Maandeeq (100), the camel calved at last
snakes two treacherous followed her suit
on her pathway one of them lay
the way for the camel to block
her milk to guests honoured was offered not
neither the calves their mother sucked
beyond the compound the camel never went
circling aimless all day long
she yields no milk at all
for she goes nowhere to graze

(15) Mohamud Abdullahi Isse (Sangub) is also among those Somali poets who utilized in their poetic works the image of the camel which represented national independence. In the following song, the poet explains how the people are determined to defend at any cost their hardwon freedom, so as to benefit from it:

A) Dheebea (107) would trek prolonged make
bachelors trusted driving you oft at night
in the evening late as well
urging you into the stockade secure
with sticks sharp striking you hard
women and children all in your defence
fire arms forceful would take up
young and old sweating out
know that once for all.

no one ever dares to deny
your origin ancestral
marks on your body branded
never obliterating therefrom
nor your nature pure to delute
all are sworn this identity ever to preserve
in protest Dheeha (107) bellowed loud
truth would soon out come
in protest Dheeha bellowed loud
something serious in the offing is seen
in protest Dheeha bellowed loud
secure would be the land dear
in protest Dheeha bellowed loud
the land begets the people

B) Dheeha would trek prolonged take
over mountain cliffs crossing at night
mighty men would build
stockade secure for you
around the Hawash (108) valley
the joyous Dhaanto (109)
soon they would happily dance
your milk abundant the kids would satisfy
for your sake harder would be
the slap on enemy's face
blood of the hero would then
the dear earth fertilize
where fruits of freedom would grow forth
birthright mine you're not
should I my duty towards you failed

(17) Mohamed Gal Hayow explains that it takes great efforts to acquire camels. Similarly, national independence is attained through difficult struggle and requires to be properly managed and its material benefits shared among the people equally. Comparing the camel with liberty, the poet declares:

... should camels improperly be managed
disease and neglect would soon destroy
parasites destructive in the udder infesting
similarly liberty
dearest possession in the world
is easily lost
unless it be safeguarded jealously

N O T E S

NAMES OF CAMELS AND TOPOGRAPHICAL PLACES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

1	dhool	female camel name, or a woman's
2	qiyaas	female camel name
3	qoran	"
4	qaayib	"
5	danqad	"
6	seenyo	"
7	jaawo	"
8	suub	"
9	ibil	"
10	saluugla'	"
11	teeyo	"
12	bayl	"
13	salwo	"
14	hargeysa	city in northern Somalia
15	jigjiga	city in western Somalia
16	adari	"
17	garduur	place name
18	dacarre	male camel name
19	dhoooble	"
20	suud	female camel name
21	gaaroodi	place name
22	hawd	land in a high plateau in western Somalia
23	dhoomaale	male camel name
24	gooha	female camel name
25	weehad	"
26	sool	dry land with tall trees
27	mudha	female camel name
28	baryar	"
29	turmag	place name
30	xay	cow name
31	dugul	female camel name
32	sibi	place name
33	werdi-xarigla'	female camel name
34	may	"
35	dhebi	"
36	geydho	"
37	bayla	"
38	qawl	"
39	qalas	"
40	galool	male camel name
41	seeri	female camel name
42	luuli	"
43	baari	"
44	dumaal	a Somali custom which allows a man to marry his deceased brother's wife
45	gosol	female camel name
46	good	"
47	kinsi	female name, girl's

48	tawlan	female name, girl's
49	toga	female camel name
50	pasha	title of honour given to Turkish officers
51	shira	female camel name
52	heemaal	"
53	shamaal	"
54	qadaw	"
55	qaabil	"
56	mayro	"
57	warays	"
58	saruur	"
59	sulub	"
60	surdho	"
61	haways	"
62	madiix	"
63	martin	old rifle model in use in Somalia earlier in the century, and also its bullets
64	caynabo	place name. and also a waterwell
65	xiis	female camel name
66	minaw	"
67	ayro	"
68	caweer	"
69	cawl	"
70	dhaayin	"
71	dhegajeex	male camel name
72	dhebi	female camel name
73	dhudi	"
74	seeshi	place name
75	riinji	"
76	garane	"
77	birmad	female camel name
78	xiito	"
79	tiir	"
80	dhoorwiil	"
81	deero	"
82	daawad	"
83	feyd	"
84	boga	"
85	baar	"
86	baarax	"
87	maahir	"
88	xayaad	"
89	diiqa	"
90	idinbacasa	"
91	waris	"
92	xula	"
93	xadeed	"
94	xodayo	place name
95	xaawis	female camel name
96	fanax	"
97	dhuubo	"
98	dhooddi	male horse name

- 99 - it is reported that Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan authorised his Dervish forces to loot camels belonging to those Somalis who allied themselves with the colonial administrations in Somalia and thus opposed to his movement. The Islamic Shariya law sanctioned the taking by force of the property of the infidels as well as Muslims who sided with them during a religious war (jihad). The Sayid declared that he was waging such a war against the infidels and, therefore, he justified the seizure of the property of his enemies, no matter what religion they believed in. Poet Ali-dhuh (IV.2) and Farah Adan (IV.3) refer to this position of the Sayid regarding camel looting.
- 100 maandeeq female camel name
- 101 labagar place name
- 102 gobaad female camel name
- 103 dawaar "
- 104 aloos "
- 105 hiirad male name, man's
- 106 dhaameel female camel name
- 107 dheeha "
- 108 hawash a valley in western Somalia
- 109 daanto a traditional dance

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF POETS QUOTED IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT

As the history of the Somali oral literature has not yet been properly collected and recorded, the same also applies to the biographies of the poets who created this oral literature over the centuries. It is possible to find a considerable amount of poetic works of a certain poet, but it is quite difficult to reveal anything about his life-history.

We have made special efforts to obtain as exact information as possible of the life-history of the following poets with regard to the date and place of birth of each poet, the social-group into which he was born, or among whom he was known, and the topics of his poetry. In different sections of the present work quotations from the poetic works of the poets in question are cited, as mentioned, also in the Introduction.

1. Adan Arab

Born in the first half of the 20th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions of Somalia. He composed many poems on the social values of camels and the great difficulty men went through in maintaining these animals.

2. Askar Ali

Born towards the end of the 19th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. He composed considerable amount of poetry about the great importance that camels had to the life of the Somali pastoral society.

3. Ahmed Aynosh

Born in the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His numerous poems are about the great love the poet had for camels and their usefulness to society.

4. Ayjeh Ali Benaley

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. He wrote a large amount of poems in connection with camel husbandry.

5. Abdi Gahayr Warsame

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. His numerous poems were on camel husbandry.

6. Abdi Aw Adan

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the Nugaal region of Somalia. He had composed numerous poems showing the great love of the poet for camels.

7. Abdi Hirsi

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His many works of poetry were concerned with the high social values of camels.

8. Abdi Gahayr

Born about the middle of the 20th century and grew up in the Mudug and Galguduud regions of Somalia. He wrote many poetic works in connection with the socio-economic benefits derived from camels and the great difficulties in camel husbandry.

9. Abdi-Idan

Born in the early 20th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. His many poems were concerned with national independence which the poet compared with a favourite camel.

10. Abdullahi Sultan (timade) - (1920-1973)

Born and grew up in the north-western region of Somalia. He composed numerous poetic works dedicated to the struggle for national independence which he compared with a beloved camel.

11. Adde Samakab

Born in the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal region. His poetic works were concerned with the poet's great love for camels.

12. Ali Mohamed Farah

Born about the middle of the 20th century in the Nugaal region of Somalia. The socio-economic uses of the camel were the topics of his poetic works.

13. Ali Mohamed Adan

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in the Hawd and Ciid regions of Somalia. His poetic works were on the subject of camel husbandry and the difficulties involved in that occupation.

14. Ali Adan (Ali -dhuh) (d. 1962)

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions. The importance of camel husbandry as well as the difficulties involved in that occupation were the main subjects of his poetic works.

15. Ali Hussein (1913-1976)

He lived in Mogadishu for a certain period of his life. His numerous poetic works were concerning with the struggle for national independence which the poet compared with a beloved camel.

16. Ali Elmi Afyare

Born early in the 20th century and grew up in the eastern region of Somalia and lived in Mogadishu for a number of years. His numerous poetic works are concerned with the struggle for national independence which he compared with a favourite camel.

17. Awad Farah

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the Hawd and Carro-ciideed regions of Somalia. His poetry was concerned with the love of camels and how to maintain these useful animals.

18. Elmi Arab

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal region. His poetic works dealt with the social and economic uses of the camel.

19. Omar Hussein (Istelliye)

Born towards the end of the 19th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. He composed a considerable amount of poetry regarding the important role of camels in the life of the Somali pastoral society.

20. Duale Fagase

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Hawd and Carro-ciideed regions. His poetic works dealt with camel husbandry and the difficulties involved in occupations of this nature.

21. Guhad Abdi Gahayr

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the north-western regions. His numerous poetic works dealt with the struggle for independence which he compared with a beloved camel.

22. Ismail Mire (d. 1950)

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions. His many poetic works dealt with the great love he had for camels and the hardships involved in maintaining them.

23. Ismail Hayd (Aflow)

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the north-western regions. His poetic works illustrated the benefits derived from camel husbandry.

24. Farah Ali Gammute

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in Doollo region. His poetry illustrated the love he had for camels and the hardships involved in maintaining these beasts.

25. Jama Farah Adan

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the Togd-heer region. Love for camels and the hardships men went through to maintain them were the subjects of his poetic works.

26. Kahlif Hared Mohamud

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. Love for camels and the benefits derived from them were the subjects of his poetic works.

27. Mohamed Ismail (Qasim)

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. His numerous poetic works dealt with the struggle for national independence which he compared with a favourite camel.

28. Mohamud Abdullahi (Sangub) (b. 1940 -)

Grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His numerous poetic works dealt with the struggle for national independence which he compared with a beloved camel.

29. Mohamed Gal Hayow (b. 1940 -)

Grew up in the Benadir region. His many poetic works dealt with the struggle for national independence which he compared with a beloved camel.

30. Qawdhan Duale

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in the north-western regions of Somalia. He composed a considerable amount of poetic work dealing with the benefits derived from camels and the hardships involved in camel husbandry.

31. Sayid Mohamed Abdille Hassan

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions. He was the leader of the Dervish movement who fought against the British colonial forces in north-eastern Somalia. His great poetry dealt with the struggle for national independence and the vital role camels played in the economic and social life of the Somali pastoral community.

32. Samatar Bahnan

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions. His numerous poetic works illustrated the benefits derived from camels as well as the difficulties involved in keeping these beasts.

33. Salah Malaydiray

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Sanaag region. His poetic works dealt with the socio-economic uses of the camel.

34. Sahardid Mohamed

Born in the 1940's and grew up in the north-western regions. His poetry was concerned with the struggle for national independence which he compared with a favourite camel.

35. Hirey Jama

Born about the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Nugaal and Doollo regions. Love for camels was the main subject of his poetry.

36. Haji Adan Ahmed (Afgalo)

Born in the middle of the 19th century and grew up in the Sanaag region. His numerous poetic works dealt with the struggle for national independence which he compared with the occupation of camel husbandry.

37. Hashi Ali (Indhoole)

Born about the beginning of the 20th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His poetic works were concerned with the poet's great love for camels and the benefits people derived from these animals.

38. Yussuf Abade

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His numerous poetic works were concerned with camel husbandry and the hardships involved in that occupation.

39. Yussuf Jama

Born towards the end of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His poetic works dealt with the important role of camels and their superiority over the other types of livestock.

40. Mohamed Ali Banaley

Born about the end of the 19th century and grew up in the western regions of Somalia. His poetry was concerned with the great love the poet had for camels and their maintenance.

