

ANTI-COLONIALISM AND CLASS FORMATION :

THE EASTERN HORN OF AFRICA BEFORE 1950

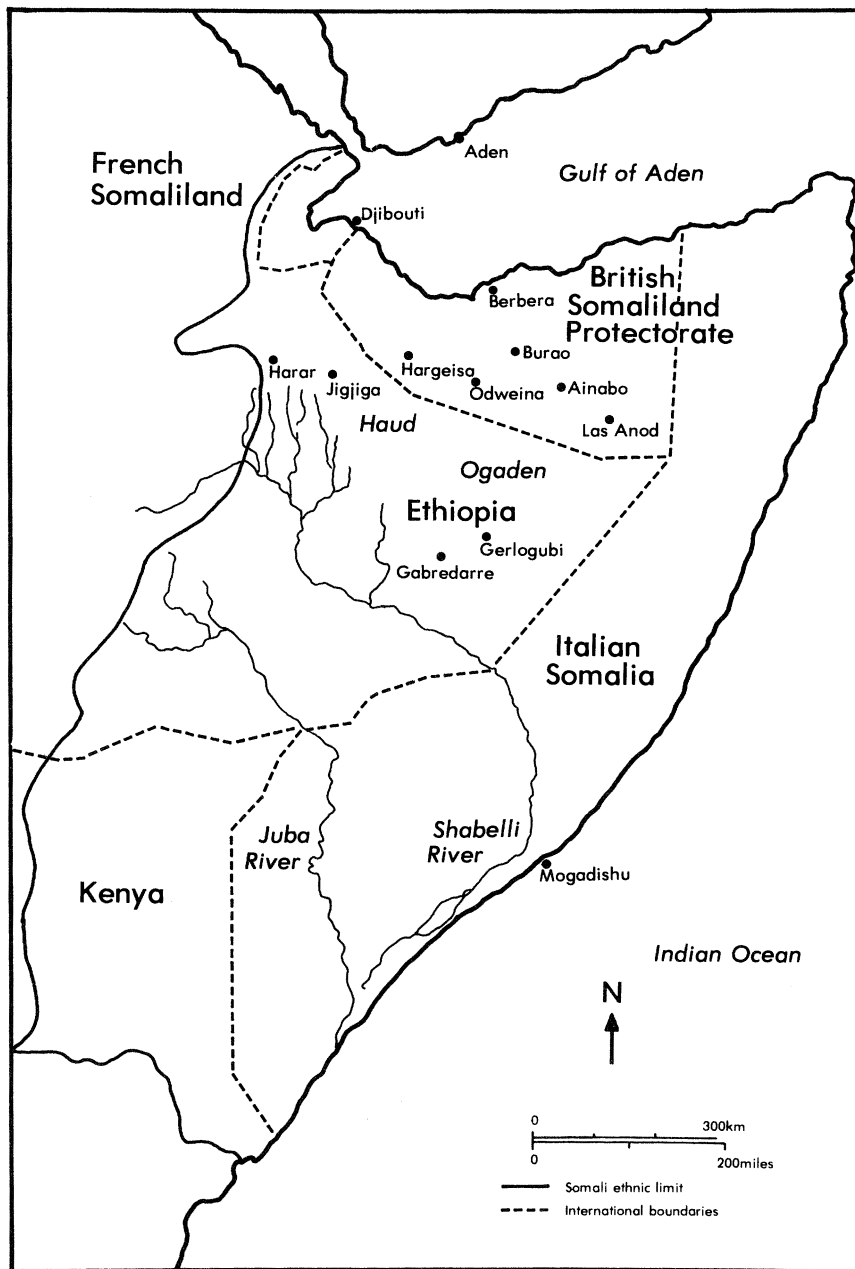
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Nowhere has African adjustment to the postcolonial period entailed more destructive consequences than in the Horn. The conflict over Ethiopian claims to the Somali-inhabited Ogaden, an extensive inland area between the Ethiopian mountains and the Somali rangelands, is rooted in the specific conditions of a region where an African empire and an African nation pursue irreconcilable objectives. Ethiopian rulers vow to maintain the territorial integrity of their empire-state and repudiate the notion that Somali-speaking people, regardless of their current jurisdiction, should be allowed the right of self-determination. Somalis insist that empirical criteria, not the juridical ones preferred by Ethiopia, objectively establish the socio-economic and cultural orientation of the Ogaden Somalis that forms the basis for their nationalist identification with Somalia.

With historical antecedents derived from events of the past century, Somali-Ethiopian confrontations over the Ogaden have invited intervention from abroad by major powers, encouraged the introduction of sophisticated weapons to the region, and in recent years have torn asunder domestic economies to spawn the "wretched of the Horn" - a refugee population in excess of one million. The Somali-Ethiopian conflict is, of course, much more than a "boundary dispute." Somalis believe that unification of Somali-inhabited lands is essential for sustaining the connections between territoriality and their ability to survive as a people without which regional peace and political stability remain unattainable. The Somalis cannot realize their objective of territorial restoration without fundamental alterations to Ethiopia, changes which twentieth-century Ethiopian regimes have consistently regarded as a dangerous threat to their own survival. An Ethiopian state whose rulers permitted Somali self-determination would implicitly consent to its own territorial disintegration, an improbable policy for any Ethiopian government, whether feudalist or revolutionary socialist, to adopt in the foreseeable future.¹

¹I gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Social Science Research Council, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Council for International Exchange of Scholars. Critical assistance was provided by the Somali National Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in Somalia, and by the Anglo-Somali Society of Great Britain. My sincere thanks to I.M. Lewis, B.W. Andrzejewski, David Laitin, and David William Cohen for helpful comments on earlier drafts. A shorter version was presented at the University of Paris conference on "Enterprises and Entrepreneurs in Africa" (December 1981).

The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950



This article attempts to explain why Somalis persistently refuse to accept Ethiopian claims to the Ogaden. While a comprehensive periodization of Somali nationalist development from the 1880s to the 1980s awaits investigation in terms of breaks, transitions, and continuities, my research on the British Somaliland Protectorate (now northern Somalia) and the adjacent Ogaden before 1950 suggests ecological, commercial, and cultural reasons why Somalis came to consider both political independence and territorial reunification essential for their social and economic improvement. The anti-colonial dimension of Somali nationalism reflected intense dissatisfaction over the partition of Somali rangelands by multiple colonizing powers who tried to intimidate, coerce, and conquer its primarily nomadic inhabitants. During the first half of the twentieth century, the tactics, methods, and organization of Somali resistance shifted from a religious-military basis to secular political forms. The article also highlights salient economic and commercial conditions in the eastern Horn, drawing attention to Somali entrepreneurship exemplified by a petit-bourgeoisie of trade truck drivers, coffee shop owners, livestock dealers, colonial clerks, teachers, and interpreters. This embryonic class did not control the means of production, but it did play a key role in helping to establish political organizations that appealed to the concerns of urban and rural Somalis by the late 1940s, notably a broad Somali opposition to the continued presence of Ethiopian state forces in the Ogaden. There have been few efforts made to study Somali class structure and explaining class formation in a pastoralist economy presents special challenges.² Since documentary sources are either inadequate or cover a variety of unrelated issues, the latter sections of the article draw heavily from orally transmitted materials for historical reconstruction.

The advent, spread, and triumph of nationalist organizations across twentieth-century Africa hastened the liquidation of European colonial regimes. Africans articulated demands for decolonization within the boundaries of individual colonial units where nationalists opposed self-determination for ethnic groups within an existing state, but militantly demanded its broader application to eliminate

¹Thorough historical studies of the Ethiopian-Somalia conflict include: I.M. Lewis, ed., *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa* (London, 1983); Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa* (New York, 1982); Harold G. Marcus, *Ethiopia, Great Britain, and the United States, 1941-1974: The Politics of Empire* (Berkeley, 1983); Bereket Habte Selassie, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* (New York, 1980); I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia* (London, 1980); Tom Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1979); Mesfin Wolde Mariam, "The Background to the Ethio-Somali Boundary Dispute," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, II (1964), 189-219; and John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (New York, 1964).

²Recent works include: Dan Aronson, "Kinsmen and Comrades: Towards a Class Analysis of the Somali Pastoral Sector," *Nomadic Peoples*, 7 (November 1980), 14-23; Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, "The Captive Intelligentsia of Somalia," *Horn of Africa*, III, 1 (January-March 1980), 25-37; Jeremy Swift, "The Development of Livestock Trading in a Nomad Pastoral Economy: The Somali Case," in *Equipe écologie et anthropologie des sociétés pastorales*, eds., *Pastoral Production and Society* (Cambridge, 1979), 447-465; and Abdi Gaileh Mirreh, *Die sozialökonomischen Verhältnisse der nomadischen Bevölkerung im Norden der Demokratischen Republik Somalia* (Berlin, 1978).

European colonial rule.³ The retention of the colonial territorial legacy in postcolonial Africa legitimized inherited frontiers as a critical way to define and distinguish one national state from another. Territorial integrity and present boundaries form a symmetrical linkage which accords international juridical recognition - a critical measure of stability and continuity - to empirically weak postcolonial states.⁴

Throughout the eastern Horn the empirical properties of states are especially variable with boundaries as rigid as they are artificial. Rather than promoting stability, "frontier fetishism"⁵ in this region has only provoked constant Somali opposition, particularly over the Ogaden where the correlation of ethnicity and class sustains one of the oldest irredentist movements in Africa. African states are reluctant to consider postcolonial boundary adjustments anywhere, fearing the dire consequences from a multiplicity of claims stimulated by such a precedent. Such changes in the Horn, however, (their implicit "demonstration effect" aside) would fundamentally alter - some would say "dismember" - the empire-state of Ethiopia, the polity at the heart of this volatile region and yet one which enjoys a mystique unique among African states.

With its ancient written languages, Solomon and Sheba mythology, early state systems beginning with Aksum (250 B.C.), court conversion to Christianity after 350 A.D., victory over Italian imperialists in 1896, invasion by fascist forces in 1935, the triumphant restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1941 as "the first to be freed from fascism," and headquarters for the Organization of African Unity since 1963 making Addis Ababa the unofficial "capital of Africa," Ethiopia was long considered a progressive symbol of African independence, "a prestige and recognition which gives [it] a special place in the contemporary African scene."⁶ Recent scholarship, however, has delineated a dialectic of modern Ethiopian history to explain how the state's expansive policies and colonial practices towards various nationalities (including the Ogaden Somalis) have provoked furious internal struggles throughout the country. Indeed, the central paradox of contemporary Ethiopia is the simultaneous search for self-determination by both the Ogaden (its most underdeveloped, unintegrated, and unincorporated territorial sector) and Eritrea, its most politically advantaged and economically integrated province.⁷

³A collection of superb essays is: Donald Rotchild and Victor A. Olorunsola, eds., *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Boulder, 1983).

⁴This argument is developed further in Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, XXV, 1 (October 1982), 1-24.

⁵Lewis, *Modern History of Somalia*, 250.

⁶S.K.B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-41* (London, 1977), 215.

⁷John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Nottingham, 1978); David and Marina Ottaway, *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution* (New York, 1978); Lionel Cliffe, Basil Davidson, and Bereket Habte Selassie, eds., *Behind the War in Eritrea* (Nottingham, 1980); Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London, 1981); John Markakis, "The Military State and Ethiopia's Path to Socialism," *Review of African Political Economy*, 21 (May-September 1981), 7-25; and Mohamed Hassan and Richard Greenfield, "The Oromo Nation and Its Resistance to Amhara Colonial Administration," in Charles Gesheker and Hussein M. Adam, eds., *Proceedings of the 1st International Congress of Somali Studies* (Chico, forthcoming 1985).

Until the 1950s, at least according to the writings of many politically conscious Caribbeans, black Americans and Africans living far from the Horn, Ethiopia enjoyed symbolic significance as "a solid island of freedom in the stormy waters of colonial aggression."⁸ The novelist Daniel Thwaite rhapsodized that Ethiopia was the "shrine enclosing the last sacred spark of African political freedom, the impregnable rock of black resistance against white invasion, a living symbol, and incarnation of African independence."⁹ West Indians saw its invasion by Italian fascists and their eventual expulsion in apocalyptic terms, another indication that the world was divided into good and bad, black and white, in which a black state had survived the onslaught of evil. Isaac Wallace-Johnson, the Sierra Leonean nationalist who led the West African Youth League, acknowledged that "the long resistance of the Ethiopians to Italian imperialists [was] a source of inspiration and hope for a West African struggle for emancipation."¹⁰ Edward Roux cited a similar impact which the Italian-Ethiopian war had in South Africa when Africans "realized for the first time that there existed still in Africa, an independent country where the black man was master and had his own king. They were inspired by the idea of black men defending their own country against white aggressors."¹¹ Traditional Ethiopian chroniclers also depicted wars of attempted conquest as struggles between good and evil, light and darkness, attributing their victories to the might of God and describing Ethiopia's enemies as guided by Satan.

Although the image of Ethiopia as "the only oasis in a desert of rank subjugation from the avaricious hands of foreign domination" contributed to anti-colonialist, nationalist, and Pan-Africanist sentiments, there is little indication that Africans on the continent or throughout the diaspora actually knew (or perhaps even cared) much about the inner workings of the Ethiopian state.¹² Yet an analysis of Somali nationalism and its anti-colonialist component is incomplete without an examination of the manner whereby Somalis experienced Ethiopian state institutions since the late nineteenth century. Somalis in the Ogaden and neighboring British Somaliland had no illusions about a symbolic or abstract Ethiopia. As will be shown, to them identification of Ethiopia as a "bastion of prestige

⁸Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 17.

⁹Daniel Thwaite, *The Seething African Pot* (London, 1936), 207, cited in Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 16.

¹⁰Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 214.

¹¹Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope* (Madison, 1964), 302.

¹²At least one exception was George Padmore, "Ethiopia Today: The Making of a Modern State," in Nancy Cunard, ed., *Negro Anthology*, 1931-33 (New York, 1969 reprint of 1934 original), 612-618. I am grateful to Franklin Knight of Johns Hopkins University for bringing this reference to my attention and for a helpful discussion of Caribbean distinctions between "symbolic" and "factual" Ethiopia.

and hope to thousands of Africans" was appallingly absurd, contradicted by their adversarial relations with "real" Ethiopians.

The historiography of northeast Africa has long reflected a "kings and things" orientation which emphasized the development of centralized polities in the Ethiopian Highlands but ignored the political economies of transhumant pastoralists to the southeast. Recent historical research has modified this imbalance somewhat but the taxonomy of pre-colonial states in the Horn still rests on elusive, often vague, definitions making it difficult to give precise historical answers to the questions, what exactly was "Ethiopia" before 1900, and what was "Abyssinia?"¹³

"Abyssinia" refers to a physical entity in the normally well-watered northern and central highlands, dominated culturally and politically by the Orthodox Christian, Semitic-speaking Amhara and Tigre and ruled nominally by an aristocratic and ecclesiastical hierarchy based at Gondar after the seventeenth century. Whatever analytical term one uses to characterize Abyssinia - a spatial jigsaw of landholdings, an association of semi-autonomous principalities connected to a political center through sporadic payment of tribute and the reciprocal provision of occasional defenses, or a "class-divided" society presenting the classic trinity of peasant, warrior-ruler, and priest - it was *not* a compact political unit.¹⁴

From 1876 to 1916, a conjunction of political, diplomatic, military, and strategic circumstances enabled Abyssinia to remain independent throughout the imperialist partition of Africa. During his reign as Emperor (1889-1913), Menelik II vastly expanded the frontiers of Abyssinia and laid the basis for the modern "Ethiopian" state through a combination of local conquests and international diplomatic maneuvers with European powers. The military success and socio-political dominance of this expansive state by the Amhara-Tigre feudal class depended significantly on their unrestricted access to modern weaponry guaranteed by Abyssinia's exemption from the Brussels General Act of 1890, which otherwise prohibited the sale of firearms to Africans.¹⁵ By 1916, with its nucleus located in the feudal ruling houses of Gojjam, Tigre, and Shoa (Amhara), "Ethiopia" consisted of a number of loosely federated ethnic groups in the highlands ruled by the Abyssinian landed aristocracy through a shifting web of connections, tacit alliances, and collaborative mechanisms. This core was surrounded by subject nationalities on its

¹³For extensive historical treatments see chapters by Tadesse Tamrat, Mordechai Abir, and Sven Rubenson in *The Cambridge History of Africa* (Cambridge, 1975-77), III, IV, V respectively. An important review article is: Harold C. Fleming, "Sociology, Ethnology, and History in Ethiopia," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, IX, 2 (1976), 248-278. Ulrich Braukämper, *Geschichte der Hadiya Süd-Athiopien* (Wiesbaden, 1980) is a pioneering work of historical reconstruction on the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities of southeastern Ethiopia. The scholarship of Fleming and Braukämper was regrettably overlooked by the author of a recent review article which tends (unwittingly perhaps) to perpetuate the "Ethiocentric" bias in the region's historiography: Paul B. Henze, "History and the Horn," *Problems of Communism*, XXXII (January-February 1983), 66-75.

¹⁴Markakis and Ayele, *Class and Revolution*, 21. See also: Donald Crummey, "State and Society: 19th Century Ethiopia," in Donald Crummey and C.C. Stewart, eds., *Modes of Production in Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1981), 227-249.

¹⁵Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia, 1844-1913* (Oxford, 1975), chapter 6.

southern, southwestern, and southeastern peripheries. As an internationally-recognized polity, twentieth-century Ethiopia represented the consolidation, expansion, and transformation of a feudal-military principality (Abyssinia) into a veritable multi-ethnic African empire-state, "the only African state below the Sahara whose boundaries have been determined by an internally induced process of expansion."¹⁶

The survival of Ethiopian independence remains an important theme in African historiography, but "Ethiopia's existence as a 'modern state' does not ... extend beyond the early 1900s into a limitless and ever-remote millennium."¹⁷ In essence, "Abyssinia" survived the imperialist partition of Africa by transforming itself into one of its participants - as "Ethiopia" - for as Menelik warned in his 1891 circular letter to the European powers, "Ethiopia [sic] has been for fourteen centuries a Christian island in a sea of pagans. If the Powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to remain an indifferent spectator."¹⁸

Living on the southeastern frontiers of the Ethiopian empire-state, the Somalis were a national community within culturally and ecologically constructed boundaries. Although they lacked a centralized, hierarchically organized political structure, the unifying factors of a common language and ethnic origins, Islam, egalitarian legal and political institutions to resolve disputes, and nomadic husbandry as their dominant pattern of existence distinguished the Somali way of life and ethos from that of the feudal Christian states of the Ethiopian highlands. The Somali pastoral system alone did not provide an adequate economic base for large-scale political organizations that could, for example, impose stringent land-use discipline on its members. The political entities of the agrarian highlands were larger and stronger than any political structure produced by the Somalis before 1900. Nonetheless, the Somalis were a distinct social category, an ethnic nationality. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the intrusive Ethiopian state and several European administrations provided a colonial framework, historical agents, and political styles which Somali culture never accommodated to and against which they reacted increasingly in organized and unified ways.

Gradually, enclosed within Ethiopia as a result of the colonial "shareout" of the 1890s, the Ogaden was encroached upon by armed Ethiopian soldiers before the turn of the century. In 1892, the British Consul for the Somali Coast Protectorate reported that:

¹⁶Markakis and Ayele, *Class and Revolution*, 30. An exhaustive analysis of the diplomatic negotiations behind the establishment of Ethiopia's borders is: David Napier Hamilton, "Ethiopia's Frontiers: The Boundary Agreements and Their Demarcation, 1896-1956," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford, 1974).

¹⁷Addis Hiwet, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution* (London, 1975), 1.

¹⁸Archivio Storico dell'ex Ministero dell'Africa Italiana 36/13:109, Menelik to Umberto, 10 April 1891, cited by Richard Greenfield, "Greater Ethiopian Nationalism as a Destabilizing Factor in the Horn of Africa," *Analysen aus der Abteilung Entwicklungsländerforschung*, 106/107 (March 1983), 92.

a large Abyssinian expedition has returned from the Ogaden bringing with them as booty thousands of camels and cattle and property of all descriptions. I hear from other sources that they have devastated the people Many people are dying of starvation and an epidemic said to be cholera, but which may be "starvation fever" has broken out, and carried off numerous victims daily.... This state of affairs is attributed entirely to the conduct of the Abyssinian soldiery who eat up everything.¹⁹

In 1901, Captain R.B. Cobbold accompanied an Abyssinian expeditionary force across the Ogaden. The following selections from Cobbold's diary suggest what he witnessed throughout his three month sojourn:

May 28th. Along the Tug Fafan. Yesterday the Commander sent some mounted men to loot a village of the Sheikh Asha; they returned today with much plunder. Fortunately, however, the villagers had fled and managed to drive away their camels, but much grain and household utensils besides many sheep and goats had been captured. The Somalis were very indignant about it, and it certainly is a great shame the way in which the Abyssinians loot the villages lying within twenty miles on either side of the line of march. It matters not whether these tribes are friendly to the Abyssinians or have behaved themselves and paid the tribute due from them to the King, they are none the less subject to plunder as the army has to live on the country through which it passes, whether the tribes be friendly or hostile.

May 31st. (Sassamini) "In front," the Abyssinian interpreter explained, "everyone is our enemy and when we have passed from here all these people also will be our enemies." This I observed was hardly a matter for surprise seeing how persistently and indiscriminately the army looted all the villages on the line of march.

June 5th. (Waradad) The soil of the country we passed through today seemed of unusual richness, being of the ruddy colour so prevalent in Harar and the Ogaden. There was much cultivation of dhourra and traces of a large population but now not a village or a sign of humanity was to be seen. All had fled at the approach of the army, knowing from bitter experience that to stay behind was to be robbed and possibly killed, certainly ill-treated.

June 22nd (Gerlogubi) Singing their hateful songs of murder and rapine and bearing aloft the trophies taken

¹⁹Public Record Office, London (hereafter P.R.O.), FO 403/177, Stace to Baring, 12 April 1892.

from the bodies of the unfortunate Somalis they had killed. How hateful and disgusting it is to think of these brutes with their rifles, shooting down these poor villagers who cannot defend themselves.... We cannot help thinking that H.M. Government will hardly wish us to continue passive spectators of this horrible carnage going on before our eyes.

June 24th (Gerlogubi) Halted. The camp here now resembles a gigantic farmyard after the late raiding expedition. Dotted about are small herds of camels in zaribas ... numberless cows and sheep and goats.... Strings of raw meat hanging on lines, stretched between the tents and handy trees show that the men have now got plenty of food.

Cobbold's sense of outrage rose markedly day by day until on 11 July 1901, while at Hanemleh in the central Ogaden, he made the following entry in his diary:

The horrible looting of the friendly villages goes on. Today for some three hours a constant stream of camels, cows, sheep, and goats passed. The Abyssinians estimate the number of camels at 2000 and probably half the Rer Augaz tribe is now completely destitute. It makes one's blood boil to see such a crime perpetrated by these Abyssinians who set themselves up as being on a par with European nations and fit to treat with them. What will be done with all these camels, goodness only knows, for they are of no use in Abyssinia, the King and Ras already possessing thousands for which they have little use.

All this cruel and barbarous treatment which the Somalis undergo at the hands of the Abyssinians and which, being unarmed (thanks to the British Government) they have to endure without a murmur, will some day react on the heads of the Abyssinians. Some day a reckoning up will come, and with the Somalis armed the possibility of the downfall of Abyssinia would be within the range of practical politics. For the Moslems who would rush eagerly to arms to exterminate their hated enemies would run into huge figures. And if ever a war was popular, this one would be so; I think even women and children would, if permitted, gladly risk their lives in so righteous a struggle.²⁰

From the 1890s until the late 1940s, Ethiopian troops seldom ventured far from their Ogaden garrisons except to conduct haphazard

²⁰Captain R.B. Cobbold's *Diary of the Anglo-Abyssinian Campaign, 1901*, London, Ministry of Defense, Whitehall Library. For a broad analysis of predatory soldiers in Ethiopia, see Richard Caulk, "Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia c. 1850-1935," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, XI, 3 (1978), 457-493.

raids to capture Somali livestock as tribute. "The sovereignty of the Ethiopians over the Somalis was expressed chiefly by means of intermittent expeditions, not far removed from raids," wrote Margery Perham. "Stock was taken as tribute from the more accessible groups, who thereupon raided their nearest Somali enemies in order to recoup their losses. Only in 1934, when the Ethiopians took the neighboring Gerlogubi water holes ... could the Ethiopian government be said to have occupied the Ogaden, though hardly to be administering it."²¹

In the early 1930s, Colonel (then Major) A.T. Curle served alternately as a British consular official and a political officer with the Somaliland Camel Corps. "The Ethiopians have always had an acute inferiority complex regarding the Ogaden," he recalled in an interview shortly before his death in 1981. "They didn't tax the Ogaden normally; the Governor-General of Harar would go down with a large force every three or four years and collect tribute, which meant seizing camels and cattle. But they've always suffered losses because the Somalis would lead them on to lousy water and then let them die in the desert. So they always went down there with a very strong escort."²²

Curle's private correspondence makes it clear that Ethiopian authorities were unwilling even to discuss with him Somali grievances about animal seizures in the Ogaden and within British Somaliland. "Last week, the Abyssinian Government sent a punitive patrol against some people over the west end of our Somaliland border - they killed and burnt everything, 111 men, women, and children were shot regardless of who or what they were."²³ After a similar incident nine months later (in September 1930), the Ethiopian commander denied any wrongdoing and disavowed responsibility for the death of eighteen more Somalis. Curle expressed his anger and frustrations in a letter to his father:

If you could possibly see the vile rabble which composes the Ethiopian army without discipline or control one realizes how foolish this contention is - we have some empty cases of their rifles which prove that they did fire. The more I have to do with them the more hopeless and rotten crowd they seem to be. We have been trying to fix up some agreement with them to respect a certain frontier line but it is hopeless - they are each afraid of being accused of giving away Ethiopia.²⁴

Twentieth century Ethiopian attempts to establish superior-subordinate social relations with Somalis ranged widely from "indifference to bursts of violence," sometimes difficult to distinguish

²¹Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (Evanston, 1969), 338.

²²Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel A.T. Curle, Imperial War Museum (London), Department of Sound Records, Accession #4414/07.

²³Private Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel A.T. Curle (Jedburgh, Scotland), Box 8, A.T. Curle to A.O. Curle, 30 January 1930. My deep appreciation to Mrs. Cecil Curle for permission to utilize her late husband's papers in February 1982.

²⁴Curle Papers, Box 9, A.T. Curle to A.O. Curle, 10 September 1930.

from "official terror."²⁵ The following incident took place in the northwestern Ogaden in mid-1954, witnessed by a Somali psychologist who was a youngster at the time:

An Ethiopian tax collector was killed in the environs of Jigjiga, my home town. The killer was neither known nor apprehended. But for revenge and mass intimidation, the Ethiopian authorities decided to execute ten innocent Somali men. On the day of the execution, every Somali in town - child or adult - was forced to watch the terrifying spectacle. Each victim was made to stand on a pick-up truck with hands tied behind his back. A noose of rope, suspended from a horizontal pole, was then placed around each victim. After a speech of intimidation and warnings to disgusted observers, the driver was ordered to quickly move the truck leaving behind a writhing humanity in mid-air, gasping and sometimes urinating in death.²⁶

Like European colonial systems elsewhere in Africa, the Ethiopian state had to legitimize its presence in the Ogaden. Its attempts at non-coercive control over a "subject population" were preceded by a long period of sheer intimidation as Ethiopian rulers hardly bothered to fashion an ideological defense of their claims to the Ogaden. Ethiopian efforts to dominate the Somali-inhabited rangelands never sought the conversion or assimilation of Somalis, only their segregation, and not until the mid-1950s did Ethiopian hegemony become bound up with ideas about assimilating Somalis into the Ethiopian empire-state. Emperor Haile Selassie, after complaining about his need to use an interpreter, spoke to Somalis at Gabredarre (central Ogaden) on 25 August 1956:

Difference in language often creates misunderstanding and can seriously affect the responsibilities that are being bestowed on you.... Our police whom we have sent among you have come to assist you in keeping order and security.... It is our desire that schools will not only impart education, but also will foster understanding and co-operation among the military, the police and the civilian population.... Acquire the necessary education whereby you will be able to take over the various positions and responsibilities that await you in the Central Government Administration ... lack of knowledge of the national language will be a barrier. You will now have a good chance to learn to read and write Amharic.²⁷

European colonial infrastructures in Africa included school systems, common language usage, and the transportation systems and

²⁵W. Michael Reisman, "The Case of Western Somaliland: An International Legal Perspective," *Horn of Africa*, I, 3 (July-September 1978), 15.

²⁶Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, "Partition of Land and Psyche in Somali Society," *Horn of Africa*, III, 4 (1981), 16.

²⁷Quoted in *Ethiopia Observer*, I, 1 (December 1956), 7.

communications networks which provided nationalist political organizations with a territorial focus and orientation. This facilitated horizontal linkages among an inter-ethnic class of nationalists who sought to amalgamate class forces across a variety of cultural and political mosaics in their struggle to seize state control from Europeans after 1945. Europeans tried to maintain their control in Africa through political, military, judicial, and non-coercive means. Colonialist domination based on racial or cultural stereotypes, the alleged superiority of aliens over materially inferior indigenous groups - what Fanon called "race and economics" - helped legitimize subordination, "reinforced by the 'separateness' of the invaders from the invaded, since their language, culture and forms of social organization were widely divergent."²⁸

The Ogaden Somalis neither sought nor received support services from Ethiopian authorities who considered that their own integrity (and that of the state they represented) depended on safeguarding the center's culture from submersion under culturally inferior but numerically superior groups. With the veneer of imperial power went a chauvinist vocabulary of supercilious, condescending terms used by highland residents to contrast the lowlands and its people with their own cool, mountainous homeland. Somalis were called *barias* (slaves), *shiftas* (bandits), or *shiretam* (from *shiret* - loin cloth), which inferred a characteristic cowardice or feebleness among men (Somalis) who wore long cotton garments from their waists. The Somalis were seen as simple despoilers, as unruly disobedient children.²⁹

Under the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974), Ethiopia never supplied Somalis with an embryonic state system as the basis for political identification. For Somalis dealing with Ethiopians, there was only a sense of cultural disparagement, deep anger over patronizing attitudes, and contempt for their would-be conquerors. Scarcely integrated into the Ethiopian empire-state, never considered equals by their Amhara colonizers, Somalis developed no loyalty whatsoever towards Ethiopia. Amidst the disastrous drought of 1973-1974, a provincial medical officer again demonstrated Ethiopian disregard for Somali victims when he reasoned that "people have always starved down in the desert and help has never reached them before."³⁰ Captain Keseteberhan Ghebre Hiwet, the chief Ethiopian desk officer for Somali affairs in the government of Haile Selassie and a military intelligence officer in the subsequent revolutionary regime, summed it up in a candid interview:

The day-to-day lives of the Ogaden Somalis are so attached to Somalia that even if they get primary education in Ethiopia they then go for higher education to Somalia and get jobs there. Some even hold very high government posts. They observe rules and regulations

²⁸Jack Goody, "Decolonization in Africa: National Politics and Village Politics," *Cambridge Anthropology*, VII, 2 (1982), 8.

²⁹One Ethiopian pamphlet on the conflict with Somalia was written by a leading Ethiopian geographer, Mesfin Wolde Mariam, and entitled *Somalia: The Problem Child of Africa* (Addis Ababa?, 1977).

³⁰Quoted in Jack Shepard, *The Politics of Starvation* (Washington, 1975), 51.

made for the Somali public. They normally cross the border when they need legal help to settle disputes - or else mediators are sent from Somalia. They do not believe themselves Ethiopians, in fact the hatred they have for the Amhara is monumental. During the many operations that Ethiopia conducted to suppress popular revolts in the Ogaden, there was such inhuman treatment of the population that children grow up with a deeply imbedded hatred of the Amhara.³¹

Or as the Somali ambassador to the United Nations remarked in 1978: "colonialism is not a phenomenon solely identifiable by the accident of geography or the color of a man's skin."³²

The Somalis were not, of course, the only Africans divided by colonialist boundaries. But since their determination to reunify their partitioned lands reflected cultural, economic, and ecological necessity, it is important briefly to describe the region in terms of human habitation. Shallow soils, poor drainage, alkalinity, and rockiness render the gypsum and limestone rangelands of the eastern Horn largely unusable for agriculture and offer few alternatives to animal husbandry. The Somali lands contain a series of environmental zones, each with its own properties, and each contributing to the success of nomadic pastoralism. A functional adaptation to these variable lands, Somali nomadic pastoralism historically relied upon a system of regional mobility through the adjacent vegetational zones as Somalis developed ways to use the existing resources.³³

The erratic spacing and timing of rainfall produced the ecological conditions for periodic movements, while the particular mixture of plant species established the range of herding options. In the dry seasons, pastoralists concentrated near their home wells, while in the wet seasons they scattered widely over the rangelands, allowing pasturage near water to regenerate. By means of this rotating or oscillating pattern, the Somalis adjusted to the rangeland's

³¹Quoted in Ricard Greenfield, "The Fate of Harar and the Ogaden," *West Africa* (5 December 1977), 247. A longer excerpt from this interview is found in Greenfield, "Greater Ethiopian Nationalism," 106-109.

³²This line of reasoning puts Somali spokesmen "in the unenviable position of having to stand up in world assemblies to proclaim that blacks too can be imperialists," observed David Laitin, "The War in the Ogaden: Implications for Siyaad's Role in Somali History," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, XVII, 1 (1979), 109. On the other hand, "Ali Mazrui asserts that the only meaning self-determination has ever had for African nationalists is what he calls 'pigmentational self-determination.' The implications of this view are that self-determination claims are seen as legitimate only when there is interracial domination. This might explain why Amhara colonialism in Ethiopia and Americo-Liberian colonialism in Liberia escaped the mandate of the OAU," Edmond J. Keller, "The State, Public Policy and the Mediation of Ethnic Conflict in Africa," in Rothchild and Olorunsola, eds., *State Versus Ethnic Claims*, 276.

³³I.M. Lewis, "The Northern Pastoral Somali of the Horn," in James Gibb, ed., *Peoples of Africa* (New York, 1965), 319-360; Z.A. Konczacki, *The Economics of Pastoralism* (London, 1978), chapter four, "Pastoral Nomadism: The Case of Somalia," 71-107; Robert C. Mares, "Animal Husbandry, Animal Industry, and Animal Diseases in the Somaliland Protectorate," *British Veterinary Journal*, CX, 10-11 (1954), 411-423 and 470-480; this point is made especially well in H.B. Gilliland, "The Vegetation of Eastern British Somaliland," *Journal of Ecology*, XL, 2 (October 1952), 91-124, and in C.F. Hemming, "The Vegetation of the Northern Region of the Somali Republic," *Proceedings of the Linnean Society*, CLXXVII, 2 (July 1966), 173-250.

seasonal ecology through a series of intricate interactions. Hunt's *Report of the General Survey of Somaliland* (1944) likened these migrations "to the pumping of a heart - diastole when it rains and the tribes spread till their grazing needs are satisfied - systole when they contract back to their permanent water holes in dry seasons. The movement is not really irregular, though measured by dates on the calendar it may seem so."³⁴

The Somali nomadic pastoralist economy required adherence to a generally north-south axis, a fluidity of kinship links, and connections to small towns. To sustain their mode of production, Somalis relied on trans-border pastures, water resources, feeder roads, grain-producing areas in the northwestern Ogaden around Jigjiga, and marketing facilities on both sides of the British Somaliland-Ethiopia border. The phrase "ecological integrity of the rangelands" aptly describes the salience between forage, plants, water, livestock, and people upon which Somali life characteristically depends.

Journalists can dismiss the Ogaden as a "wasteland" or an "endless expanse of sand and bush ... a dead country where nothing happens," and Ethiopians may routinely scorn it as a "pigpen fit only for hyenas, infidels, and Somalis."³⁵ Even Somalis seem ambivalent about their land. Sometimes they allege that when "the Prophet, angry and without shoes, passed through our land, he cursed it; hence the scourges of drought, stones, and thistles." Other times, Somalis wistfully refer to it as a "blessed land teeming with mystic herds of camel attended by benevolent genies who lavish gifts of stock on the impoverished."³⁶ Such extravagant prose aside, Somali self-confidence - even haughtiness - springs from a belief that no matter how desolate and forlorn it may appear to outsiders, this is their land, including the wells, pastures, and intermittent streams of the Ogaden which form an integral part of it. "British Somaliland tribes must graze over in Abyssinia," wrote Curle in 1940, "and nothing short of a wire fence will keep them out."³⁷ A Somali elder once explained to me simply that "the wells of the Ogaden provide the 'petrol' for our animals."³⁸ Or as the late Musa Haji Ismail Galaal, a pioneer of written Somali, collector of oral texts, and poet once put it: "if you must know where the Somali lands end and Ethiopia actually begins then observe the movement of our camels."³⁹ In other words, camels - the essence of Somali nomadic pastoralist life - cannot thrive in the cool well-watered

³⁴John A. Hunt, *Annual Report of the General Survey of British Somaliland Protectorate, 1944* (Hargeisa, 1945), 8.

³⁵For example, compare *Newsweek* (30 August 1982) with *The Daily Telegraph* (15 November 1935).

³⁶Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan* (Cambridge, 1982), 12 and 204/footnote 18.

³⁷Curle Papers, Box 19, A.T. Curle to A.O. Curle, 14 June 1940.

³⁸Interview with Sultan Behi Fooley, 24 January 1979 (Mogadishu).

³⁹Interview with Musa Haji Ismail Galaal, 24 July 1980 (Mogadishu). Musa Galaal was a "living Somali encyclopedia" whose knowledge of the past encompassed the experiences and careers of many generations. I am deeply indebted to him for his generosity, encouragement, wisdom, and friendship without which this research would not have been possible. Musa's death on 27 December 1980 left an enormous void in Somali studies.

upland areas of the central Ethiopian highlands where the vegetation, affiliated climate, and disease environment renders it inimical to penetration by them.

Maintaining a usable plant cover was always a feat of environmental manipulation. Camels, sheep, and goats have different biological needs, so conditions appropriate to one species may be quite disadvantageous to another. Europeans facetiously described the Somali as a "parasite living on the camel from which he gets his milk and transport when it is alive and his meat when he dies," although in fact the camels, sheep, and goats were dependent upon the herders' expertise, endurance, and skills.⁴⁰ "The Habr Yunis of the Burao District," according to *The General Survey Report* (1944), "have been known to have watered not less than 116,000 camels in a given 14 days, and the figure of 220,000 is not unlikely."⁴¹

Camels can retrieve water from vegetation directly and store it for several months, but the realization of this capacity required a mixed diet of trees, shrubs, and grasses without which camels simply cease to thrive. The Somali herders by virtue of their strategic treks over hundreds of miles annually were able to achieve the diverse seasonal forage conditions necessary for their animals survival. After a rain, scouts (*sahan*)⁴² would go out and note the distribution and amounts of the new rainfall along with the positions of unfriendly lineage groups. "These scouts 'lie scientifically,'" quipped a British geologist, "in order to obtain the best grazing first for their own sections; it is not unusual for a whole village to move one hundred miles in sixty hours."⁴³ About 25 percent of a camel's food intake should be from a species of plant which takes up salt occurring in the soil, and in northern Somalia these small shrubs are called *daraan*. When *daraan* was not abundant in the Ogaden, Somalis carried salt-laden soil called *carro* to the camels. Nomads can identify (and in fact prefer) the saltier taste

⁴⁰A.C.A. Wright, "The Inter-action of Various Systems of Law and Custom in British Somaliland and Their Relation with Social Life," *Journal of the East African Natural History Society*, XVII, 1-2 (March 1943), 63. David Laitin, who served with the Peace Corps in Somalia in the late 1960s, adds another reason why nomads don't feel parasitic on the camels: "The camel is so defunct, they told me," Laitin recalls, "that the Somalis must help the males to mount the females," personal communication, 9 February 1982.

⁴¹Hunt, *Report of the General Survey*, 1944, 8.

⁴²The names of Somalis and Somali place names are written throughout this article in their anglicized forms, according to the convention used by Somalis when they write in English. Ordinary Somali words are written in the Somali orthography introduced in 1972. For readers who would like to have some idea how such words are pronounced, with some degree of approximation, the following points should be observed: the letter *x* corresponds roughly to the English *h*, but is rather emphatically pronounced. The letter *c*, which is a sound pronounced in the pharynx and which normally evades the perception of English-speakers should simply be ignored. The vowels have stable pronunciations resembling those of Spanish or Italian, and the doubling of vowel letters represents their length. I am grateful to Prof. B.W. Andrzejewski for his advice and guidance on Somali orthography and language use.

⁴³Hunt, *Report of the General Survey*, 1944, 8.

of meat from a camel which has eaten a quantity of carro soil.⁴⁴ "Life in Somaliland is balanced on a knife's edge," acknowledged a British veterinarian who spent 25 years there, "and how many of the Somalis' European advisors could take livestock into the bush and bring them (and himself) back alive and have lush stock to peddle in the markets of Aden to boot?"⁴⁵

At the end of the nineteenth century, while Menelik expanded his claims to Somali-occupied territory southeast of the Ethiopian highlands, British suzerainty was extended over the northern Somali coast ostensibly, as Lord Curzon claimed, "to safeguard the food-supply of Aden, just as the Roman Protectorate was extended over Egypt to safeguard the corn-supply of Rome."⁴⁶ Somaliland was no Nile Delta. The country provided no "corn." What Somaliland offered the merchants, soldiers, seamen, and functionaries at the vital imperial entrepot of Aden was livestock - the sheep, goats, and camels that had been shipped across the Gulf of Aden since ancient times.⁴⁷ The inland boundaries of the British Somaliland Protectorate were defined by agreements with Italy in 1894 and Abyssinia in 1897 when Britain surrendered to Menelik (without Somali consent) "the most fertile grain producing regions in the west of the Protectorate and the important spring and autumn pastures in the south."⁴⁸

Farah Nur composed a memorable poem warning Somalis about the implications of this partition:

The British, the Ethiopians, and the Italians are squabbling,
The country is snatched and divided by whosoever is stronger,
The country is sold piece by piece without our knowledge,
And for me, all this is the teeth of the last days of the
world.⁴⁹

Another Somali who understood the meaning of colonialism was Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hasan (the so-called "Mad Mullah"). From 1899 to 1920, his religious-military movement to expel alien rulers dominated events in the eastern Horn. A militant member of the Salihiyya brotherhood and staunch opponent of Christian colonialism, he

⁴⁴Said Salah Ahmed, personal communication, 25 February 1983. For a complete discussion of camels' feeding habits, see: Hilde Gauthier-Pilters and Anne Innis Dagg, *The Camel: Its Evolution, Ecology, Behavior, and Relationship to Man* (Chicago, 1981), chapter three.

⁴⁵Edward F. Peck, "The Veterinary History of the Somaliland Protectorate, 1924-60," unpublished manuscript, MSS.Afr.s.141, Rhodes House Library (Oxford).

⁴⁶Lord Curzon, *Frontiers* (Oxford, 1907), 41.

⁴⁷Ali Abdirahman Hersi, "The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influences in the Somali Peninsula," unpublished dissertation, UCLA (1977) contains a thorough examination of this early trade.

⁴⁸Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, 28. A detailed analysis of the negotiations over this "vexed Somali frontier" is: Leo Silberman, "Why the Haud was Ceded," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, II, 5 (1961), 37-83.

⁴⁹Cited in B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (London, 1964), 57.

sought to overcome northern clan affiliations (and southern ones as well) through a novel political structure to unite Somalis using Islam as the cementing force. Sayyid Muhammad fought to create a secure enclave where his followers (Dervishes) could practice Islam and safeguard their culture. His activities initially were in self-defence against Ethiopian attacks, but after 1900 Britain and Italy mobilized large forces to defeat him.

In an "open letter" to the English people in 1903, Sayyid Muhammad explained his motivations, simply but firmly:

I wish to rule my own country and protect my own religion.... We have both suffered considerably in battle with one another.... I have with me camels and goats and sheep in plenty.... I will not take your country. I have no forts, no houses ... no cultivated fields, no silver or gold for you to take. If the country was cultivated or contained houses or property, it would be worth your while to fight.... If you want wood and stone you can get them in plenty. There are also many anthraps. The sun is very hot. All you can get from me is war, nothing else ... if you wish peace I am also content. But if you wish peace, go away from my country to your own.⁵⁰

An independent entity organized to provide Somalis with an alternative political identification within the confines of a colonial state was intolerable to imperial powers. Britain subsequently launched a series of costly campaigns against the Dervishes, including a policy of wide-spread distribution of firearms to "friendly" Somalis. This, in turn, ignited a massive civil war of cruel inter-clan reprisals among northern clans. Sayyid Muhammad and his supporters managed to hold off the colonialist armies until 1920 when, in an unprecedented assault operation, the British used airplanes to coordinate a combined aerial, naval, and ground attack in one of the earliest applications of the doctrine of "air power."⁵¹

In tracing the origins of nuclear strategy, Lawrence Freedman gives considerable credit to strategists of the 1920s who insisted that the destructive power of aerial bombardments could by itself end a war in a matter of days, thereby enabling a nation that possessed such a capability to deter aggression from any quarter.⁵² That same set of assumptions about aerial bombings - its element of surprise, great demoralizing effect, mobility to achieve a quick decisive victory, and promise of cost-effectiveness - had persuaded the British government to test its applicability and effectiveness against an acknowledged "rebel of the Empire," Sayyid Muhammad. The

⁵⁰Douglas Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (London, 1923), 122.

⁵¹An important recent study on Somali Dervishism is: Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*. Equally valuable new material on the Dervish movement in southern Somalia is contained in: Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society* (Philadelphia, 1982), 240-251. Older reliable studies include: Robert Hess, "The Poor Man of God - Muhammad Abdullah Hassan," in Norman Bennett, ed., *Leadership in Eastern Africa* (Boston, 1968), 65-108; B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976), chapter seven; and Lewis, *Modern History of Somalia*, chapter four.

⁵²Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York, 1981).

role of the airplane in the defeat of the Dervish partisans was the sort of success that "strengthened the claims of ambitious airmen for a separate and autonomous service commanding a major share of the military budget," especially in Britain where, according to Freedman, "much of the RAF's confidence in strategic bombing derived from its apparent efficiency in controlling wild tribesmen in Somalia...."⁵³

When it was over, Great Britain had spent £6 1/2 million to defeat the Dervishes, an estimated 200,000 lives had been lost, livestock devastated, "all available Government funds [had] been expended on the maintenance of military forces [and] nothing [had] been left for education, for the encouragement of agriculture, for the development, or even a survey, of the country's mineral resources.... It was Somaliland's misfortune that her twenty-one years' war left her with nothing but a few ramshackle Ford cars that have seen better days."⁵⁴ Although Sayyid Muhammad left behind a vital legacy of national resistance to colonialism, the northern Somalis were unable to offer sustained physical opposition to the British after 1920, as clans struggled for the next twenty years to replenish their herds and human population.

The effects of the "Dervish legacy" on the British colonial administration have been summed up by I.M. Lewis:

The expatriate administration subsequently received stern admonitions from London that nothing was ever to be done again that could possibly provoke the Somalis. The spectre of another "Mad Mullah" rising in Somaliland haunted the Colonial Office.... Caution and appeasement were now the administrative watchwords in Somaliland. Modern developments were thus introduced with tact and patience, and soft-pedaled if the prickly Muslim nomads responded unfavorably. No attempt was made to impose direct taxes on the turbulent nomads, for fear of a very strong reaction, and Christian missionary activity was henceforth strictly prohibited. It was firmly and repeatedly dinned into all who served in Somaliland that nothing must ever be done that might seriously antagonize the local population. It was bad enough trying to regulate their endless and often bloody clan feuds without risking wider embroilment. The Somaliland Protectorate, consequently, was ruled with a light, sympathetic touch befitting its situation as a territory with no European population.⁵⁵

Somali informants who watched the British government allow the Protectorate to stagnate through lack of financial aid labelled the

⁵³*Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁴Jardine, *Mad Mullah*, 315-316.

⁵⁵I.M. Lewis, "Confessions of a 'Government' Anthropologist," *Anthropological Forum*, IV, 2 (1977), 229. For an administrative history of the Somaliland Protectorate in the inter-war years, see Patrick Kakwenzire, "The Somaliland Protectorate from 1905 to 1939," unpublished dissertation, University of London (1976). See also Aderemi S.O. Fatoke, "Educational Development and Administrative Control in British Somaliland," *Northeast African Studies*, III, 3 (1981-82), 61-75.

administration "a deaf government" whose only policy was "to have no ideas and spend no money."⁵⁶ Somalis complained even in the 1950s that "for seventy-five years you have been in this land and there is not a chimney or a rail to show for it."⁵⁷ "The British really did nothing for our country," recalled Sheikh Hasan Gheele in 1979, "except to give portions of it away."⁵⁸ British colonial policy in Somaliland during the interwar years was guided by a belief that retrenchment and stern frugality were also ways to counteract the effects of financial collapse that spread over the world in the 1930s. Although the political administration in Somaliland numbered less than fifty officers and civil servants - one of the smallest in the Empire - its annual military expenditures represented 25-33 percent of the total Protectorate budget.

It was the nature of capitalist colonialism to absorb non-capitalist systems into the international market economy and in the process to modify the "penetrated" systems by gradually removing control over the means of production from most members of the colonized society. The diversity of pre-capitalist social formations, organizations of production, and environments obliged colonial powers to try various methods of accomplishing this incorporation.⁵⁹ In British Somaliland, however, there was little experimentation. The scorched plains, erratic rainfall, and general desiccation of the region precluded the population density needed for the production of export cash crops as the basis for tax collections, customs revenues, or capital accumulation. Somaliland was barren of mineral wealth. Its commercial value lay in the production of livestock and their by-products. Until the mid-twentieth century, pastoralist productivity remained under the control of herders who, for the most part, were free to maintain the mobility required for their social and biological reproduction.

To gain access to Somaliland's internally-generated surplus livestock and to assure its perpetuation for export, Somali traders and livestock brokers (*dilaals*) learned to co-exist with both capitalist and non-capitalist social formations. The commodities trade and most livestock shipments were controlled by Parsi family firms (Cawasji Dinshaw, Premji Brothers, K. Pitamber) and a few European companies, notably Antoine Besse Company.⁶⁰ The raising, droving,

⁵⁶Interview with Mohamed Ismail Siad "Jama Telephone," 20 August 1978 (London).

⁵⁷Quoted in Leo Silberman, "Somali Nomads," *International Social Science Journal*, XI, 4 (1959), 561.

⁵⁸Interview with Sheikh Hasan Gheele, 17 January 1979 (Burao, Somalia).

⁵⁹For a brilliant historical overview of this process, see Frederick Cooper, "Africa and the World Economy," *The African Studies Review*, XXIV, 2-3 (1981), 1-86; see also John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping With the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914," *Journal of African History*, XX, 4 (1979), 487-505.

⁶⁰Some of these trading firms are discussed in: R.J. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule, 1839-1967* (New York, 1975); and Richard Pankhurst, "Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden, and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XIV, 3 (1974), 453-497.

and procuring of the animals themselves remained a traditional Somali enterprise that operated through a network of intermediaries who travelled between coastal markets and interior villages where they secured goats, sheep, and camels from pastoralists. Somalis who capitalized on lineage connections, overseas experiences, and knowledge of stock routes, pasturelands, and water resources became guides and protectors (*abbaan*) for non-Somali firms.

In terms of the overseas experience just mentioned, it is important to note that Somalis have been parties to a farflung monetary trading network for centuries, with ancient commercial ties to Asia. Livestock was raised for sale and the trees of Somaliland, which produced scented gums and resins (frankincense and myrrh), were exploited for export long enough ago so that the region was known to the Romans as *terra aromatica*.⁶¹ With the development of shipping from India through the Suez Canal during the nineteenth century and the expansion of the bunkering business at Aden, Somalis travelled abroad in search of seasonal or short-term employment - heaving coal on the wharves at Aden or working as stokers and seamen aboard ships trading between Europe and the subcontinent. By the twentieth century, Somalis had formed small immigrant communities in Aden, Liverpool, Manchester, and Cardiff. Ali Mirreh and Ali Noor, for example, opened boarding houses and restaurants which catered to black American soldiers stationed in England during the Second World War.⁶² Hersi Egeh and his lineage from Berbera who participated in the 1895 Crystal Palace Exposition on "Somaliland in London," were subsequently employed by Carl Hagenbeck's Tierpark Exposition in Hamburg. They accumulated considerable wealth in Germany and then returned to Somaliland in the 1920s and 1930s where they invested heavily in town properties.⁶³

These are but a few examples of individuals whom the Somalis call the *tacabbir* ("the crosser of the sea"), the intrepid migrant who ventures abroad. Some *tacabbir* were never heard from again of course, but others managed to accumulate money which they remitted through insured money orders to relatives in Somaliland. Some

⁶¹Hersi, "The Arab Factor in Somali History," chapter three.

⁶²Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism From Within* (New York, 1973), 182-187. There are numerous other examples of Somali entrepreneurship overseas; for example, newspaper articles about the Somali-owned Aladdin Restaurant in western Massachusetts appeared in *The Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), 25 June 1970, 10 March 1971, 9 August 1974, and 10 April 1979. Special thanks to Bruce Berman for drawing this to my attention.

⁶³Interview with Abdirahman Haji Jamaa Mohamed, 27 October 1982 (Burao, Somalia). Additional information about Hersi Egeh in Germany may be found in Lorenz Hagenbeck, *Animals Are My Life* (London, 1956); and Günter H.W. Niemeyer, *Hagenbeck: Geschichte und Geschichten* (Hamburg, 1972). Those Somalis who participated in the Hagenbeck Exposition are referred to as the *carwo* ("people of the fair").

returned home wealthy, as prestigious entrepreneurs, and others resumed the pastoralist life. Somalis were renowned for their ability to pursue advantages wherever they found them and for a willingness to respond to incentives that demonstrated pragmatic or survival-directed qualities. It may have been the precarious nature of nomadic pastoralist life - the intense competition for pastureland, prevalence of animal predators, uncertainties of rainfall - which encouraged their independence of action, aggressiveness, bravery, and mobility.⁶⁴

Forty years ago, the British journalist Gordon Waterfield offered a caricature of the returned *tacabbir* with a poignancy that applies even to this day:

The Somali is a great traveller and a good trader; his *savoir-faire* enables him to fit easily into the life of the west.... Having earned good money abroad and tasted the pleasures of the west, the Somali returns to Somaliland in his western finery, and after entertaining his friends handsomely he puts on the native *tobe* and goes back to his native village, investing his capital in camels and sheep and takes up again the life that his people have lived in the desert and bush for many centuries.... The man who goes striding through the bush with his camels and armed with a spear may know the slang of British sailors, or the jargon of Chicago, and play an excellent game of football.⁶⁵

We still know little about the mechanics and decision-making processes that motivated the *tacabbir*, and we lack ethnographic details on the creation of a Somali trading class. This is a fruitful area of inquiry, since the shifting between desert and sea played an important part in the evolution of modern Somali political expression.

It is difficult to trace in thorough detail all the trade connections among pastoralist production, the trekking to market for exchanges, the exchanges themselves, and the eventual export from coastal towns.⁶⁶ Among the Somalis, the procedures for exchanging animals involved an intricate bargaining process that sometimes was

⁶⁴This notion is further developed in Robert Edgerton, *The Individual in Cultural Adaptation: A Study of Four East African Peoples* (Berkeley, 1971); and Stephen Pastner, "Desert and Coast: Population Flux between Pastoral and Maritime Adaptations in the Old World Arid Zone," *Nomadic Peoples*, 6 (June 1980), 13-22.

⁶⁵Gordon Waterfield, *Morning Will Come* (London, 1944), 57-58.

⁶⁶Some information may be found in the following: I.M. Lewis, "Lineage Continuity and Modern Commerce in Northern Somaliland," in Paul Bohannan and George Dalton, eds., *Markets in Africa* (Evanston, 1962), 365-385; Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya* (New Haven, 1980), 212-217; Swift, "The Development of Livestock Trading;" and Mirreh, *Die sozialökonomischen Verhältnisse*. For material on Somali intermediaries in late nineteenth-century Djibouti, see Peter D. Coats, "Factors of Intermediacy in Nineteenth Century Africa: The Case of the Issa of the Horn," in Thomas Labahn, ed., *Proceedings of the 2nd International Congress of Somali Studies* (Hamburg, forthcoming 1985).

hidden (literally and figuratively) from nomadic producers.⁶⁷ Animals available for trade were collected from nomadic herding groups and moved to a market town by hired drovers known as *sawaaqi*. These hardy drovers - "the Somali equivalent of a cowboy"⁶⁸ - were experts at herding upwards of three hundred to four hundred animals over a hundred miles to market within a week. The best of them enjoyed a widespread reputation among nomads and traders alike. The *sawaaqi* were usually employed by a coastal merchant or livestock broker (*dilaal*) who paid him a percentage of the final price received for all animals satisfactorily trekked to their coastal destinations. Agreements were made in advance, stipulating how many sheep a *sawaaqi* and his assistants were permitted to slaughter en route for their subsistence and the value of any additional "missing animals" was deducted from the *sawaaqi*'s payment.

The *dilaals* who moved between interior market towns and the coastal ports kept track of available cargos of rice, dates, sugar, cotton cloth, and assorted imports from Aden, giving them an advantageous position as intermediaries between livestock export firms and the nomadic producers in the determination of import-export prices. In times of drought, which are reckoned to occur at approximately seven-year intervals,⁶⁹ the nomads would readily exchange hides and skins at lower prices for essential supplementary foods like dates and rice. Somali *dilaals* and merchants would speculatively buy skins and hides at depressed prices, hold them off the market for up to a year, and then attempt to sell them at higher prices.

The sale of sheep, goats, and camels between *dilaals* generally took place at primary wells near the towns of Burao, Ainabo, Odweina, and Hargeisa. To commence the exchange, the *dilaals* would grasp hands under a small cloth and conduct a series of offers and counter-offers involving the assignment of monetary values to each digit. The top digit equalled 100, the middle one 200, and the third digit was worth 300. The prices were established by alternatively grasping each other's digits until an agreement was reached and the two brokers then shook hands. The seller received cash and commodities which he disbursed to the nomadic producers after deducting his share. The buyer, in turn, relinquished the animals to his *sawaaqi* who proceeded to drove them to the coast for export.

Somali informants insisted that before the 1950s, *dilaals* and *sawaaqi* could amass considerable profits through their respective functions as brokers and drovers, a claim substantiated in a report written by M.H. French of the Imperial Institute after his inquiry in Somaliland in 1948.⁷⁰ Although the livestock export business was by no means vertically integrated, by the late 1930s *dilaals* were found throughout the Protectorate and in the Ogaden conducting

⁶⁷The following four paragraphs are based on extensive interviews with Mohamed Musa Awalleh, 8 August 1980 (Mogadishu) and Musa Haji Ismail Galaal, 19-21 July 1980 (Mogadishu). A brief reference to the Somalis' "secret finger-language" is contained in Hagenbeck, *Animals Are My Life*, 69.

⁶⁸A phrase often used by Musa Haji Ismail Galaal during our conversations.

⁶⁹I.M. Lewis, ed., *Abaar: The Somali Drought* (London, 1975), especially 26-29.

⁷⁰P.R.O., AY 4/907, M.H. French, "The Skin Industry in British Somaliland, 1948" with comments by members of The Hide and Skin Shippers and Agents Association.

sales transactions in rural trade settlements, channelling individual herds into their own under the care of *abbaans* and *sawaaqi*. Since the British colonial authorities customarily collected a *sariibad* grazing tax on animals while at market, it was not unusual for the *dilaal* to advance this money on credit to pastoralists.

In the 1930s and 1940s, following a court conviction for a criminal offense and the levying of a fine, district commissioners would frequently take two dozen armed irregular troops (*illaloes*) and seize camels from the guilty party. The animals were collected at the district headquarters where the owners were required to arrange for payment of the fine in cash (*rupees*). Usually there would be available a handful of prosperous lineage patrons who, as "bank loan officers," would be willing to lend their kinfolk the currency to pay the fine. The animals would then be returned and immediately sold through the normal channels to recoup the loan.⁷¹

Except for the provision of a few dressing stations, sporadic veterinary services, and irregular subsidies for antrypol and pleuro-pneumonia vaccines, British colonial rule in Somaliland brought no transformation of pastoralist productive techniques. In the inter-war years, roads were improved and maintained through the use of pauper and convict labor, enabling at least one district commissioner to drive over 4,500 miles a year across the "reasonably well-maintained" tracks.⁷²

The meat from Somali black-headed Persian sheep "compared favorably to the best Welsh mutton"⁷³ and thanks to shade drying and quicker transport by trucks, Somali kidskins were particularly prized in Switzerland, England, and America, where they were made into fashionable women's gloves and luxury leather goods.⁷⁴ The following table gives some idea of the extent and value of this trade:

Sheep & Goats "On the hoof"			Sheep & Goat "Skins"	
Year	Number	[Declared Value	Number]	Declared Value
1937	85,000	£ 45,000	1.5 million	£ 150,000
1942	160,000	130,000	1.6 million	122,500
1947	150,000	140,000	1.9 million	236,000
1950	119,000	186,000	1.5 million	463,000

Table 1: Livestock and Skins Exported from British Somaliland Ports, compiled from Somaliland Protectorate, *Annual Colonial Reports*.

⁷¹Interview with Philip Carrel and Geoffrey Lawrence, 8 March 1982 (Liphook, England).

⁷²Personal diary of Dudley Walsh, consulted with the kind permission of his son (Nigel Walsh) and daughter (Sheila Knox) in Dalry, Scotland, 4 January 1981.

⁷³Peck, "Veterinary History of the Somaliland Protectorate."

⁷⁴Interview with Sir Gerald Reece, 16 January 1981 (East Lothian, Scotland); P.R.O., AY 4/907, French, "Skin Industry in Somaliland."

⁷⁵*Somaliland Protectorate Annual Report, 1936* (London, 1937), 27.

By the Second World War, the Somaliland Protectorate depended on pastoralist products for over 72 percent of its annual customs revenue, and its status as an adjunct to Aden was firmly established.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and the subsequent war provided Somalis with opportunities for trans-frontier trade when the "general shortages of foodstuffs in the territories occupied by the Italians encouraged a number of retail traders - Arabs, Indians, and Somalis - to take supplies to those areas from British territory."⁷⁵ In February 1937, the Anglo-Italian Transit Trade and Grazing Rights Agreement was concluded by which Somaliland clans would enjoy grazing and watering rights in the Ogaden in return for which the Italians acquired trading rights and facilities in and through British Somaliland. The agreement was for two years and would then be up for review and renewal. Somalis were so eager to share in this trade that "when Jigjiga was first occupied by the Italians every small trader who could obtain goods and the wherewithal to transport them, rushed to Jigjiga and sold them to the troops at enormous profits." Within a year, many small traders who were poor had become comparatively rich, and "many people who never thought of trading previously were taking caravans across the border and doing very well. A sign of the prosperity was a brisk demand for building plots in Hargeisa town."⁷⁶ By 1940, an entire street in Hargeisa was lined with substantial houses and shops built of stone, a strip known today as the *segeta liira*, "the street of the lira."⁷⁷

In 1933, 6 private cars and 49 commercial vehicles had been imported into the Protectorate; in 1937, the figures jumped to 16 and 237 when a total of 51 private and 316 commercial vehicles were licensed to operate, and the number of Somalis directly engaged in the "conduct and maintenance of these vehicles cannot number less than 600."⁷⁸ Although they faced stiff competition from experienced Parsi firms, at least 150 Somali-owned trucks (primarily Bedfords, Dodges, and Chevrolets) were operating through British Somaliland before 1940, and there were "many instances of stock-owners having sold the bulk of their livestock to invest in motor vehicles."⁷⁹ Ahmed Haji Abdullahi "Hashish," Haji Jamaa Mohamed "Mia-teyn," and Yusuf Odowa Armiye were among the more prominent owners who ran profitable enterprises which transported skins, sheep, and goats to Berbera and then returned carrying merchandise, mail, food-stuffs, and passengers.⁸⁰

Somalis who had taken advantage of employment opportunities and occupational alternatives emanating from Aden took jobs as government clerks, interpreters, butchers, teachers, and petition-writers

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁷ Interview with Mahamoud Ahmed Ali, 30 October 1982 (Burao, Somalia).

⁷⁸ *Somaliland Protectorate Annual Report, 1937* (London, 1939), 13.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸⁰ Interview with Mohamed Shirre Mohamed, 19 July 1980 (Mogadishu); and interview with Deria Faarah Abdi "Haji Balbal," 31 July 1980 (Mogadishu).

at the garrison-entrepot. For younger males, these enterprises offered escape from the hardships and subordination in the pastoralist sector. Others became coffee shop owners in Somaliland, the so-called *geedeeye* ("one who puts up trees," in other words, a bush restaurant), and by 1942, itinerant Somali traders could be found in virtually every village and in the vicinity of livestock where they bartered tea, cloth, dates, rice, and sugar to pastoralists grazing herds in the Haud and Ogaden.⁸¹ Although some goods still moved by camel caravans from the lands of one clan to another under the guarantees of the protectors (*abbaan*), the substantial increase in trade truck traffic was evident throughout the eastern Horn.

During the Italian occupation of Somaliland (August 1940 - March 1941), Somali truck owners cleverly avoided confiscation by dismantling their vehicles, separately burying the engine, wheels, and other parts in the sand. When British forces re-occupied the Protectorate, the Somalis dug up the parts, reassembled them, and the so-called "out-of-the-earth" trucks resumed operation. An eyewitness likened the spectacle to "seeing a dusty corpse get out of the grave and drive off!"⁸² With spare parts and garages non-existent in the Protectorate, "the Somalis had to tie their old trucks together with bits of rope," reminisced a district commissioner, "and plugged radiator leaks with dates."⁸³

Traders, truck owners and drivers, and town-dwellers generally welcomed the British return to Somaliland, since the Protectorate had suffered destruction, devastation, and insecurity under the Italians. Somalis recalled the fascist occupation as a time of increased livestock confiscations, arbitrary beatings, the burning of several *jamaaca* (the settlement areas for *tariqas*) and severe food shortages due to a British coastal blockade. The nomadic producers evidently experienced less privation, since 1940 and 1941 were years of above-average rainfall, although some nomads insisted that when the Italians ruled the Protectorate "there was not even enough cloth available to wrap the dead."⁸⁴ The Italian "interlude" created additional opportunities in the retail trade for an emergent Somali petit-bourgeoisie when several Parsi and Banyan traders abandoned their shops and fled the Protectorate for good.⁸⁵

As Somalis moved to townships before 1940, they formed social clubs and welfare societies to assist themselves and destitute people without regard for clan attachments. Known as the Nadi Hadiyat ar-Rahman ("Gift of God Club") in Berbera and Burao and the Khayriya ("Blessed Association") in Hargeisa, these clubs, whose

⁸¹D.C. Edwards, *A Survey of the Grazing Areas of British Somaliland* (Hargeisa, 1942), supplement by E.F. Peck, 29. The word *geedeeye* is derived from *geed* ("a tree"), since many of the coffee shops were situated under a tree, or were constructed from tree branches, where the owners would offer seats to their patrons.

⁸²Interview with Gordon Waterfield, 27 May 1980 (London); and P.R.O., WO 230/5a, Report by General Arthur Chater, 24 June 1941.

⁸³Interview with F.J. Chambers, 24 February 1982 (Aymesbury, England).

⁸⁴Interview with Sheikh Ali Haji Ibrahim, 8 January 1979 (Hargeisa, Somalia).

⁸⁵This paragraph compresses a vast amount of detailed recollections obtained in interviews with the following: Sheikh Umar Askar, 4 January 1979 (Hargeisa, Somalia); Ahmed Hasan, 7 January 1979 (Hargeisa, Somalia); and Sheikh Mahamoud Ahmed Dhibleh, 13 January 1979 (Burao, Somalia).

members included a number of *tacabbir*, were not uniformly antagonistic to colonialism, but did criticize the British for their meager support of social services, confronting the colonial secretary with a petition for redress of grievances when he visited the Protectorate in 1936.⁸⁶ Club members actively promoted an interest in secular education while they simultaneously supported Koranic schools and exhorted Somalis to overcome clan divisiveness in the name of Islamic unity. Yet with several club members drawn from the administrative salariat, there are suggestions that they were beginning to see themselves as a class apart. "We were anxious to erect better meeting places than the *geedeeye*," recalled a prominent Nadi member, "and insisted on appropriate privileges as government civil servants such as better allowances, shorter time in rank, and provision of better lighting for our buildings. We were also concerned to find suitable servants to serve us tea at our club functions."⁸⁷

In the towns, traders, coffee shop owners, personal servants of British government officials, truck drivers, and *tacabbir* demonstrated new interests and aspirations. Young townsmen began chewing *qaad* (*catha edulis*), a shrub whose leaves and shoots contain weak α -amphetamines (cathine and cathinone) which produce a euphoric, stimulating, exciting but finally depressing effect when chewed.⁸⁸ Truck drivers carrying goods and passengers to and from towns as far west as Jigjiga (adjacent to a major *qaad*-growing district in eastern Ethiopia) began to rely on *qaad*-chewing to keep them awake during the long trips, so fresh sprigs were more readily available to town-dwellers. In 1928, approximately 750 bundles were identifiably imported into the Protectorate, and by 1936 the "known" amount had increased five-fold to 4,000.⁸⁹

Chewing *qaad* became especially popular among small groups of poets known alternatively as the *buugaan buug* or *qaraami*, who emphasized social solidarity and community of purpose through their poems (often recited with instrumental music); their themes included romance, extra-marital flirtations, consumer expectations, and political matters. Chewing *qaad* for hours became an important ritual of friendship and mutual trust which engendered social cohesion through the custom of chewing together from a common bundle of twigs. Before the War, nomads sometimes referred to these residents collectively as the *kabacaa* ("white shoes," in other words, their European shoes and trousers), or occasionally, more pejoratively, as *nasraani* ("Christians"). By the late 1940s, when Governor Gerald Reece tried

⁸⁶Interviews with Mohamed Shirreh Mohamed, 24 December 1978 (Mogadishu); and interview with Sheikh Ali Haji Ibrahim and Sheikh Abdirahman Kaarie Mahamoud, 8 January 1979 (Hargeisa, Somalia).

⁸⁷Interview with Mahamoud Ahmed Ali, 30 October 1982 (Burao, Somalia); and interview with Sheikh Mahamoud Abdi Samad, 11-12 January 1979 (Burao, Somalia).

⁸⁸*Qat* or *khat* are anglicized versions of *qaad* as written in the Somali orthography. For information on *qaad* (*catha edulis*), see A.S. Affara, "The Medical, Social, and Economic Implications of Qat Chewing in the Middle East," unpublished dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1962; Derek W. Peters, "Khat: Its History, Botany, Chemistry, and Toxicology," *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, CLXIX (5 July 1952), 17-18 and (12 July 1952), 36-37; "Special Issue Devoted to *Catha Edulis* (Khat)," *Bulletin on Narcotics*, XXXII, 3 (1980); and B. Shahandeh, R. Geadah, A. Tongue, E. Tongue, and J. Rolli, eds., *The Health and Socio-Economic Aspects of Khat Use* (Lausanne, 1983).

⁸⁹*Somaliland Protectorate Annual Report, 1930* (London, 1931), 17; and *Somaliland Protectorate Annual Report, 1936* (London, 1937), 13.

to proscribe *qaad*-chewing, his efforts simply stimulated its consumption as "chewing" became symbolic of one's refusal to accept colonialist authority.⁹⁰

Conditions in British Somaliland began to change dramatically in the 1940s. The allied powers expelled the Italians from northeast Africa and placed Italian Somalia, the British Somaliland Protectorate, and Somali-inhabited areas of Ethiopia (the Haud and Ogaden) under a loosely-unified military administration. In the Protectorate, nearly all documents from the pre-War period had been destroyed either before the British evacuation or during the Italian occupation, so when military officials interviewed civil servants and officers who had worked in Somaliland before 1940, they were forcefully reminded about an essential fact of Somali life: livestock which grazed in or were exported from the Somaliland Protectorate were bred, sustained, and herded through ecological zones far across the Protectorate's southern and southwestern boundaries, the lands under Ethiopian jurisdiction since the late nineteenth century.

Throughout an extensive tour of the Protectorate shortly after his arrival in 1943, Governor G.T. Fisher appreciated the links between open boundaries, access to wells and pastures, and the livelihood of the pastoralists. "Somali products, if freely exchanged throughout the region," he observed, "go far to meet the people's food requirements ... and from a social and economic point of view the only hope of improving the living standards of the nomads is to create a united Somalia."⁹¹ A comprehensive study of grazing area deterioration (*The Glover-Gilliland Report*) revealed that "grazing facilities in the British Somaliland Protectorate were insufficient for the people's needs for the greater part of the year," and that without assured access to other areas, pastoralist life was threatened whenever herding groups were compelled to use the dry season reserves of other groups during the rainy season.⁹² "To anyone versed in desert pasturage," warned another official, "that is economic suicide."

Fisher admitted that British Somaliland "was never either an economic, ethnological, or administrative entity, merely a geographical expression which it would be a mistake to revive," and advised that "the pressing need for improvement of land use by controlled grazing will only be possible if it embraces the other trans-border areas."⁹³ There was already evidence that animals

⁹⁰Interviews with Umar Mahamoud Abdurahman "Dheere," 22 January 1979 (Mogadishu); Musa Haji Ismail Galaal, 24 July 1980 (Mogadishu); Deria Faarah Abdi "Haji Balbal," 31 July 1980 (Mogadishu); and Mohamed Shirreh Mohamed and Musa Haji Ismail Galaal, 19 July 1980 (Mogadishu). For examples of the new poetic genres and their significance, see John W. Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleeloooy: The Development of the Genre "Heello" in Modern Somali Poetry* (Bloomington, 1974), 47-69; and Mohamed Farah Abdillahi and B.W. Andrzejewski, "The Life of 'Ilmi Bowndheri, a Somali Oral Poet Who Is Said to Have Died of Love," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, IV, 2-3 (June-December 1967), 191-206.

⁹¹P.R.O., WO 230/5a, Gerald Fisher, "Draft Memorandum," 26 May 1943.

⁹²Quoted in P.R.O., CO 830/5, British Somaliland Protectorate, *Agricultural Department Report*, 1947; and Gerald Fisher, *The Pastures of British Somaliland With Special Reference to the Glover Report and Future Policy* (Hargeisa, 1947).

⁹³P.R.O., WO 230/96, Fisher to Jameson, 6 August 1943; and Fisher to Jameson, 26 August 1943.

were destroying the young grass as soon as it appeared, allowing "no respite from grazing [which] accounts for the extensive denudation in the vicinity of the wells."⁹⁴ When John Hunt conducted an exhaustive survey of the geomorphology, stock wealth, place names, grazing areas, and clan positions in the Protectorate in the mid-1940s, he acknowledged that while rising livestock numbers might be considered a sign of prosperity in a colony whose major exports were animals, the concomittant deterioration in grazing conditions threatened to approach the point of diminishing returns.⁹⁵ A pasture officer reported that "sheep in droving herds are among the main causes of surface pulverization, especially in gypsum soils which can lead so quickly to soil erosion."⁹⁶ The agricultural department's Annual Report for 1947 was explicit and prescient: "it cannot be stressed too strongly or repeated too often that pastures *in the widest sense* form the crux of these problems in a country whose soil and vegetation are on the brink of irretrievable ruin" [emphasis added].⁹⁷

The British had re-invested very little state revenue into Somaliland so that "after fifty years of colonial rule there [were] no great commercial undertakings, few expansive installations, no concentrations of capital," and, cracked Fisher, "remarkably little except sun, sand, and Somalis." The civil affairs branch of the military administration doubted "whether any British territory has benefited so little in the provision of social services as Somaliland has under British rule: educational, medical, agricultural, and veterinary services exist merely on a token basis."⁹⁸ The British had made a nominal attempt to develop Somali collaborators in indirect rule through a system of stipendiary elders called *cuqaal* (singular, *caaqil*). Until the early 1930s, the qualities of "bravery, hospitality, and verbal eloquence" usually distinguished an *caaqil* among Somalis, but by the Second World War they were being selected simply on hereditary lines, exerted little influence in towns, and lacked credibility among the nomads.⁹⁹ Most administrative posts were monopolized by immigrant Indians in a Protectorate whose entire budget for education never exceeded £1,800 before 1941 and where, by 1949, there were only 306 Somali bank deposits in a Protectorate whose economy was still largely based on livestock, not money.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Edwards, *Survey of Grazing Areas*, 12.

⁹⁵John A. Hunt, *A General Survey of the Somaliland Protectorate, 1944-1950* (London, 1951), 171-177.

⁹⁶H.B. Gilliland, "An Approach to the Problem of the Government of Nomadic Peoples With Special Reference to Experience in Eastern British Somaliland," *South African Geographical Journal*, XXXIX (April 1947), 52.

⁹⁷P.R.O., CO 830/5, British Somaliland Protectorate, *Agricultural Department Report, 1947*.

⁹⁸P.R.O., WO 230/96, Fisher to Jameson, 6 August 1943; and WO 230/5a, Civil Affairs Branch to War Office, 27 May 1943.

⁹⁹Interview with Mahamoud Ahmed Ali, 30 October 1982 (Burao, Somalia). In the Somali orthography, *cuqaal* corresponds to the anglicized *aqils* or *akhils*.

¹⁰⁰P.R.O., WO 230/5a, Fisher to Arundell, 1 May 1943; see also "Interview by A.M. Kirk-Greene of F.D. Hibbard and Randall Erskine Ellison," MSS.Afr.s.1332, 4 July 1969, Rhodes House Library (Oxford).

The anti-colonialist agitation in British Somaliland after 1945 was not a spontaneous expression of shared grievances by a homogeneous group. "Community of language and culture does not necessarily give rise to political unity," reasoned Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, "any more than linguistic and cultural dissimilarity prevents political unity." It was more important to find out "the relation of political structure to the whole social structure."¹⁰¹ Effective political mobilization depends upon the solidarity and consciousness of a group with shared interests and concerns. If inequalities exist between individuals who interpret this inequality as part of a pattern of collective discrimination, if the group maintains an adequate communications network, and if it also possesses a social awareness that leads them to define the situation as illegitimate, then that is the stratum most likely to contemplate collective political action.

In British Somaliland, it was a town-based petit-bourgeoisie, the beneficiaries of inter-territorial commercial expansion making the most of the opportunities that did exist, who came to understand that the threatened *re-partition* of the Somali lands (instead of the proposed *re-unification*) could reduce material resources under their control. Relatively speaking, they were Somalis with higher incomes, status occupations, a better education, and wider ranges of experiences, and yet whose lineage connections obliged them to maintain a stake in livestock production and in the prosperity of the pastoralist society. They were a diverse occupational set - neither bourgeois, proletarian, nor nomadic - with petty productive property which they worked alone or with assistance from family members or hired laborers (*geeljire*) for their livestock.¹⁰²

The Second World War provided them with a more favorable milieu for broadening their concerns and exchanging political ideas through a network of inter-territorial linkages sustained by the truck drivers whose camaraderie and rapport with Somali policemen facilitated their movement throughout the eastern Horn. Impatient, aggressive, "well-organized and disciplined to an unexpected degree," the new breed of Somali political leaders was a far cry from the effete, ineffectual *cuqaal* of the pre-War era.¹⁰³ Drawing financial support from traders, merchants, truck owners, a small number of Sudanese-trained Somali teachers, and social and political action groups of *tacabbir* in England and Aden, they soon demanded a leading part in the transfer of power.

Initially calling themselves the Somaliland National Society (SNS) after their takeover of buildings abandoned by the moribund Khayriya and Hadiyat ar-Rahman in 1944-45, they changed their name three years later to the Somaliland National League. In 1946, they merged with the truck drivers of the two-year-old Somali Transport Company (STC), a self-help organization led by Mohamed Jamaa "Urdooh," a boisterous ex-customs official with a reputation for intimidation tactics that included constant demands to administration

¹⁰¹Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eds., *African Political Systems* (London, 1940), 23.

¹⁰²The term *geeljire* (pl. *geeljirayaal*) also means "camel herder" of any kind, not necessarily a hired one.

¹⁰³P.R.O., CO 537/3641, Fisher to Chief Civil Affairs Officer, 1 April 1947.

officials that they make full disclosures to explain their annual expenditure of Protectorate funds. The appeal of the STC accelerated at the end of the War, owing to the disbandment of Somaliland military units and reduced requests for movement of troops and provisions. "There are now some 2,000 drivers without regular employment," read one report, "and they are in a political body modelled along the lines similar to the SNS."¹⁰⁴

Local British officials in the Horn vigorously supported post-war boundary rectifications to create a "United Somalilands," but the Foreign Office encountered stiff opposition to such plans. France and the Soviet Union denounced it as a simple scheme to expand the British Empire. Ethiopia demanded restoration of its authority over the Ogaden and drew decisive American support for its "territorial integrity" after Sinclair Oil Company signed an exclusive concessionary agreement with Haile Selassie in 1946 that permitted oil drilling in the Ogaden. Fisher was resigned thereafter to the demise of a "United Somalilands" since "the mere suspicion of the presence of oil in the Ogaden must make it unlikely that the Emperor will agree to any exchange of territory until he is quite certain that he is not giving away any potential source of revenue."¹⁰⁵

The fears and alarm about the possible return of Ethiopian rule to Somali territory spread throughout the eastern Horn. "Under the Ethiopian government influence we are still suffering the worst enslavement," said a group of Ogaden Somali elders in a petition to the civil affairs officer. "We are fed up with the Ethiopians and want to be rid of them," they added. "We mean them to leave our country. If the powerful nation Great Britain does not take necessary steps in subject [sic], it means we shall be compelled to lay our souls for peril in purpose of self-defence."¹⁰⁶ In southern Somalia too, the Central Council of the Somali Youth League considered the matter very seriously, and warned "in case you decide that Ogaden returns to Abyssinia the people in that province are ready to fight until the last man."¹⁰⁷

With Britain's financial status reversed from creditor nation in 1939 to debtor in 1946, Parliament had another good reason not to allocate funds for an expanded colonial commitment.¹⁰⁸ In 1947-48, when the most militant members of the Somaliland National League

¹⁰⁴P.R.O., CO 537/3641, "A Note on Native Societies in the Somalilands," Secret, 27 June 1947.

¹⁰⁵P.R.O., CO 537/3641, Brigadier G.T. Fisher, "Somali National Societies," Secret Report 82/S/500, 10 July 1947. See also Harold G. Marcus, "The United States and the Ethiopian Recovery of the Ogaden in 1948," in Geshekte and Adam, eds., *Somali Studies Congress*.

¹⁰⁶P.R.O., CO 537/3641, Somali Youth League Central Committee to Civil Affairs Officer, Jigjiga (Reserved Areas), 16 June 1947.

¹⁰⁷P.R.O., CO 537/3641, R.H. Smith to Headquarters, Civil Affairs Bureau, 6 August 1947.

¹⁰⁸As early as September 1945, however, Prime Minister Clement Atlee considered turning over responsibility for Somaliland to another European power altogether: "British Somaliland has always been a dead loss and a nuisance to us. We only occupied it as part of the scramble for Africa.... The French are on the spot in French Somaliland. Why not let them have it if they like? It will be a sop to their pride, and may help them to put up with the loss of their position in the

became convinced that Britain would capitulate and allow the Somali lands to revert to their *status quo antebellum*, they formed an underground faction called the Anti-Partition Party which was prepared, if necessary, to assassinate British officials to make their anger and frustrations most emphatic and unambiguous. Their concern over the future status of all Somali territories, including the historical grazing (and now putatively mineral-endowed) lands of the Ogaden and Haud claimed by Ethiopia convinced them that any form of alien rule was unacceptable, unjust, and perpetuated through duplicitous means.¹⁰⁹

British officials disliked these activists whose sworn oaths not to reveal their clan affiliations caused "worry to civil affairs officers in their capacity as judicial officers as it is necessary in court cases to record the tribe [sic] of the accused and witnesses. When asked for their tribe [sic], members now state simply that they are Somalis."¹¹⁰ The Protectorate administration tried unsuccessfully to undermine the spread of nationalist consciousness through subsidies to rump political "parties" based exclusively on narrow clan affiliations.¹¹¹ In 1947, Major E.H. Halse, the deputy commissioner of police, alarmed at the rapid growth of the SNS whose Berbera chapter already boasted 1,000 members and "intended to open a banking account," reiterated that the Society sought "to stamp out all tribal influence and amalgamate all Somalis." Some members promised Halse that someday they would take over the government, although one member, a Haji Yassin Mohamed, reassured him that "perhaps our children's children will be the government." Unconvinced, Halse warned that "other elements consider it will be much sooner than that."¹¹²

The historical context from which a politically-conscious stratum developed in British Somaliland suggests an emergent class linked to international demands for livestock and its by-products, and inter-territorial transportation opportunities in the eastern Horn. Born in the pastoralist nomadic sector (for the most part), but with subsequent commercial, urban, and overseas experiences, the Somali petit-bourgeoisie was an amalgam of truck owners, traders, clerks, teachers, drivers, and livestock brokers. Living in the still puritanical atmosphere of British Somaliland, this stratum has been alternatively called "the new intelligentsia," "the urban sophisti-

Levant. There would, of course, be sentimental objection to giving up a piece of the Empire, but otherwise it would be to our advantage to get rid of this incubus." P.R.O., CAB 129/1, Memorandum by Atlee, 1 September 1945, C.P. (45) 144, cited in William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (New York, 1978), 557-558.

¹⁰⁹Interview with Yusuf Haji Adan, 28 August 1980 (Mogadishu).

¹¹⁰P.R.O., CO 537/3641, "Memorandum on Native Clubs in Somalia," no date (February-March 1947?).

¹¹¹Interviews with Sheikh Ali Haji Ibrahim, 8 January 1979 (Hargeisa, Somalia); and with Sheikh Mahamoud Abdi Samad, 11 January 1979 (Burao, Somalia). Both men referred to these so-called "clan parties" identified as "Awaliyya," "Hawayiyya," "Gerhajiyya," and "Zubayriyya" (a sub-branch of the Habr Awal).

¹¹²P.R.O., CO 537/3641, Major E.H. Halse, "Somali National Society" (Secret Memorandum), no date (March 1947?).

cates," or "the transitional generation."¹¹³ They were another example that "the petit-bourgeoisie is like a chameleon, taking its color from its environment."¹¹⁴ The small size of the Somali proletariat and the predominance of the urban petit-bourgeoisie with its relative - never absolute - isolation from pastoralist production created the circumstances in which a tradition of class struggle in Somaliland was far weaker than nationalist politics. By 1950, this northern Somali petit-bourgeoisie was not a dominant class whose members owned and controlled the means of economic production. At least, not yet.

¹¹³B.W. Andrzejewski suggested the first two terms; the third one was coined by Said S. Samatar, "Gabay-Hayir: A Somali Mock Heroic Song," *Research in African Literatures*, XI, 4 (Winter 1980), 450.

¹¹⁴Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott, eds., *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum* (New York, 1981), 187.