

# **The Partition of Knowledge in Somali Studies: Reflections on Somalia's Fragmented Intellectual Heritage**

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This article is a preliminary and exploratory examination of three distinct traditions of intellectual production in Somalia: the Western secular tradition, the Islamic religious tradition, and the indigenous Somali poetic tradition. Historians who seek to reconstruct Somalia's past have found valuable knowledge in the products of each of these traditions, and analysts of contemporary Somalia have argued that Somalis must draw on the wisdom and experience of all three if they hope to escape from their current national crisis. Unfortunately, most scholars of Somali Studies (myself included) draw their assumptions, pursue evidence, and conduct their research from within only one, or at most two, of these intellectual traditions. As a consequence, our understanding of Somalia has been limited by the fragmentation of knowledge as it is produced, transmitted, and received by successive generations of Somali Studies students and scholars.

This partition of knowledge and understanding can be seen very clearly in the discordant narratives of history and identity that have surfaced during the past two decades of civil war in the Horn of Africa. Yet it has been operative, I would argue, for much longer in both academic and popular intellectual circles. It therefore seems worthwhile to examine the character of each of these three distinct knowledge systems and the historical circumstances that kept them separated, or partitioned, over the course of the past century. We can then reflect on the consequences for understanding contemporary Somalia.

## I. The Partition of the Horn and of Western Knowledge

The Scramble for Africa not only divided the Somali peninsula into five different territories, it also resulted in an intellectual partition of the region. As the partition initiated the process of creating separate colonial identities for each of the Somali colonial territories, Western scholars working in three different European languages and academic traditions began to produce the knowledge base that would become the foundation of the Western secular tradition of Somali Studies. As a result, the Somali population became both “subjects” of different colonial states and “objects” of study by different colonial researchers. Within each Somali territory, virtually all research was conducted by nationals of the colonizing power. Only rarely did visiting journalists or explorers from other European countries publish significant writings about Somali life in those colonies. As a result, early Western scholarship on Somali history and society was partitioned. Colonial administrators, ethnographers, and experts proceeded to write about “their own” (i.e., British, Italian, French) Somalis.

It is worth noting that the production of knowledge about Somalia was not always so fragmented. Prior to the European partition of Africa, the “discovery” of African peoples and cultures, and the production of knowledge about them, had been a multi-national Western enterprise. Over the course of the nineteenth century, for example, the Somalilands were visited and described by German, Italian, French, British, and Eastern European travelers, each of whom contributed to the cumulative Western understanding—or in some cases misunderstanding—of the Somalis. Despite their diverse assumptions and cultural predispositions, the cosmopolitan travelers of the nineteenth century frequently read and cited each other’s work. Over time they produced a composite portrait of the Somalis that quite reasonably saw them as a single people or *ethnie*, albeit divided into different clans or “tribes.” Modern-day Somali Studies has seen a return to multi-national scholarship on the region, but there are still residual traces of the national colonial scholarly traditions, and Somali Studies scholars working in Italy or France are not always widely read by those working in English-speaking countries.

The consequences of this intellectual partition of research were profound. Not only did colonial-era writers (with a few notable exceptions) work almost exclusively within their own languages and depend upon sources (administrative reports, fact-finding missions, ethnogra-

phies) produced by their co-nationals, but their Somali counterparts—interpreters, civil servants, policemen and soldiers, students—also inherited those habits, working with the imperial language of their particular rulers. Even today, most foreign scholars of Somalia have tended to work with colonial records and historical documents produced within one, or at most two, of these colonial literary corpuses. Western-educated Somalis—including many of those currently producing important scholarship—typically find themselves in the same situation, unable to work with valuable archival records about their own people because the records are in French, or Italian, or English.

Apart from this linguistic partition of knowledge, there were substantive differences in the subjects that colonial scholars chose to investigate. Researchers in French, British, and Italian Somaliland asked different questions and found different answers. For example, the Italians produced several very valuable studies of land tenure systems and of the formation of multi-clan communities in the riverine areas of their colony,<sup>1</sup> but to my knowledge, British officials published nothing similar in their Protectorate, even for the farming districts around Boraama. We have studies of grazing patterns and pasture reserves in the British Protectorate records,<sup>2</sup> but nothing similar for the vast pastoral areas of Hiran and trans-Juba, which were governed by the Italians. Naturally, as one would expect, published writings on Somalis during the colonial era reflected the imperial objectives of each administration: agricultural development in Italian Somalia, the management of livestock resources for export in the British Protectorate, and the facilitation of Red Sea trade for French Somaliland. Nonetheless, the focus on these agendas shaped future scholars' understanding of the distinctiveness of each colony because colonial writings became the primary sources and helped frame the central questions that subsequent generations of foreign and Somali scholars would pursue. When coupled with different educational systems, civil service practices, and forms of military recruitment and training, these colonial traditions of knowledge production resulted in a fragmented "official" record of Somali society and history.<sup>3</sup>

The partition of colonial knowledge about Somalia may be more than simply an inconvenience for contemporary scholars working in the Western tradition. It almost certainly hindered Somalis from constructing a coherent secular national ideology in the era of independence movements, which in the Somalilands as elsewhere drew heavily on imported Western ideas of citizenship and state. The absence of

a shared pool of colonial knowledge—like the absence of a common colonial language and educational system—meant that post-World War II Somali nationalists tended to rely more heavily on regional identities (and on their shared Islamic heritage) to mobilize political support than was the case in many other African countries. It meant that the process of constructing a Somali national consciousness had to confront the additional challenge of a multi-centered colonialism and a fragmented political/intellectual milieu.

We still need serious research to determine whether the different colonial heritages of the partitioned Horn limited the process of nation building in the years leading up to independence. It may be that different colonial intellectual traditions (ideas about governance, education, the role of law and religion in public life, etc.) affected the capacity of Somali leaders to work together effectively in a Western-style parliamentary system. We can also ask if the distinctions between “hierarchical” agro-pastoral societies in the south and “pastoral democracies” in the north genuinely separated the political cultures of each region or were these distinctions primarily the product of colonial categories and scholarship that Somali intellectuals internalized? We know that the pan-Somali idea, which became a prominent part of the platform of the Somali Youth League and other parties in the 1940s, had been stimulated in part by the Italian Fascist project for a “Grande Somalia” in the 1930s and by British Foreign Secretary Bevin’s proposal to create a Greater Somalia after World War II. But is it possible that the persistence of the irredentist idea in Somali public discourse from 1943 onward can be explained partly by the absence of any other secular nationalist ideology capable of mobilizing Somali anti-colonial sentiments across the divided peninsula? Might pan-Somalism have been a substitute, so to speak, for a territorial nationalism built in response to a shared colonial heritage?

## **II. Islamic Knowledge and Somali National Consciousness**

The knowledge produced by colonial and foreign scholars and by Western-educated Somalis represented only one intellectual tradition in the Horn. There is an even longer tradition of Arabic writing on Somalia,<sup>4</sup> which saw the Somalis as part of the *umma* (community of believers) and wrote them into the universal history of Islam. In fact, it appears that Muslim scholars and sheikhs were instrumental in constructing the genealogies that connected virtually all Somalis

in the Horn to one of two common ancestors, a major contribution to the notion of a single Somali nation and, in one sense, a forerunner of modern pan-Somalism.<sup>5</sup> Though the precise mechanisms by which Somalis living in different regions of the Horn came to see themselves as part of a larger whole are unclear, we can speculate about what happened from circumstantial evidence.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, intellectual currents of religious reform from the wider Islamic world had reached the literate Muslims in the coastal towns of Somalia. Notions of an *umma* in need of spiritual renewal were percolating throughout the region, and their proponents viewed Somalis collectively as Muslims ripe for reform. For the pious, Somalis were first and foremost Muslims, whatever their clan affiliations, and Islamic discourse saw clans as vehicles to spread the faith.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, major population movements and political realignments in the Horn of Africa had intensified local conflicts over land and resources, and the task of mediating these conflicts typically fell to men of religion.<sup>7</sup> We can infer that the convergence of these two processes began to transform the intellectual outlook of at least some Somalis. Those who had traveled abroad for education or pilgrimage began to “re-imagine” the different clan communities of the peninsula as members of a more inclusive *umma*, while local sheikhs literate in Arabic were the first to record in writing the genealogies of the clans among whom they lived and worked. At the same time, the expansion of Sufi orders (*turuq*) helped further the identification of local Somalis with their co-religionists elsewhere in the peninsula and beyond.<sup>8</sup> This trend was most dramatically seen in the dervish movement of Maxammad Cabdille Xasan, who used Islamic appeals in an effort to unite his countrymen against the infidels. It is also evident in the more peaceful proselytism of Sheikh Aweys and other Sufis who sought to implement their own versions of Somali solidarity in an Islamic framework. These Muslim intellectuals lived and worked in circumstances in which Somali society was in considerable flux, and they provided conceptual maps to help members of those societies navigate changing social, political, and religious relations, adding to the local *xeer* in the process.<sup>9</sup>

While the process of forging a more inclusive Somali genealogy appears to have begun well before the onset of European rule, colonial authorities built upon the work of these earlier Muslim genealogists. The first generation of European administrators and ethnographers set to work collecting the written genealogies that literate Muslims

had produced. By the 1910s, British and Italian officials had effectively confirmed the idea that the Somalis constituted a single ethnic group, even if they resided in different colonies. This chronology suggests that the amalgamation of local genealogies into a coherent “total genealogy” was the joint product of Muslim intellectuals and early colonial administrators, mediated by those local Somali informants who were consulted in the process.<sup>10</sup>

During the colonial era, Muslim scholars, both Somali and Arab, continued to write for their own audiences on subjects ranging from how to live under infidel governments to histories of saints and schools of learning. Some religious writers were encouraged and even subsidized by the colonial authorities. Several became ardent spokesmen for Somali national independence in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Though typically ignored by European colonial experts and neglected by later generations of foreign scholars (including Western-educated Somalis), Islamic discourses provided a continual thread of social commentary, an alternative voice on governance and public morality.

One reason that the Islamic voice has been relatively silent in the historiography of Somalia is that much of its discourse took place in Islamic schools and mosques, or at pilgrimage sites around the tombs of deceased saints. These sites were not readily accessible to European authorities, who in any event had little interest in them as long as Muslim intellectuals stayed out of politics. Scholars of Islam have recently begun to pay attention to the “spaces” that Muslims carved out for themselves under European colonial rule, often with the tacit support of the authorities. Lamin Sanneh, for example, has noted how Islamic schools, Shari'a courts, and the Islamic press flourished under British rule in northern Nigeria, partly because the authorities ignored them, but also because they tacitly recognized Islamic institutions as positive influences for the establishment of security, literacy, administration, public charity, and the rule of law.<sup>12</sup> Cheikh Anta Babou, my colleague at the University of Pennsylvania, has recently shown a similar process at work in colonial Senegal, where the founder of the Muridiyya Order, Sheikh Amadu Bamba, systematically created “sacred” spaces for the instruction, employment, and service of his adepts, keeping both the French colonial authorities and the traditional Wolof royal elite at arm's length so they would not “corrupt” the Muslims under his authority.<sup>13</sup>

One consequence in the Somalilands of this *modus vivendi* between the colonial authorities and moderate Islamic leaders was to enable a

Muslim civil society to develop. Under the umbrella of colonial secular administrations, Islamic schools, Shari'a courts, and agricultural cooperatives (*jamaacooyiin*) flourished. Objections to infidel rule were for the most part peaceful and confined to Muslim circles. However, as independence approached, many of these Islamic intellectual currents joined the public discourse over Somalia's future. Lively debates over the official Somali script (in the 1950s and again after independence), the role of Islamic law in the Somali constitution, and, later, Siyaad Barre's Family Law brought religious convictions out into the public political arena. At these moments, historians can detect the existence of strong religious sentiments fortified by an elaborate intellectual tradition. When the Somali state collapsed, these long-gestating Islamic discourses bubbled to the surface once again.

A great deal of research remains to be done on the evolution of Somali Islamic thought and practice during the late colonial and early independence eras, when the "partnership" between religious authorities and the state began to erode. Clearly the capacity of Muslim preaching to challenge state policies has been a constant thread in the 20th-century history of Somalia. But that was not the only purpose of religiously based scholarship and commentary. If we think of Islamic intellectual and associational life solely as forms of resistance to European colonial rule, we deprive them of a creative and autonomous history of their own. We fail to appreciate Islamic knowledge as an independent stream of creative ideas and engaged commentary on the state of affairs—that is, as a distinct source of knowledge production whose antecedents date back well before the European era.

### **III. The Oral Poetic Tradition**

The tradition of oral poetry (and other types of Somali oral literature) constitutes a third important stream of intellectual production and discourse. For Somalis, poetry is not only a cherished form of artistic expression and popular entertainment, it is also a major vehicle for social commentary on events of interest to the community. Poetic discourse seems to intensify in times of unrest or dramatic societal change, when the public has much to discuss and debate. Historians have long noted, for example, the explosion in poetic production which accompanied the dervish wars and their aftermath (1900–1930), as Maxammad Cabdille Xasan sought to rally Somalis against colonial invasion or as he and his local rivals exchanged often brilliant poetic insults and

diatribes. We can also point to the popular poetic songs (*heello*) that emerged as urbanization began to impinge upon Somali consciousness in the 1940s and 1950s and to the poetic criticism produced by disillusioned intellectuals following Somalia's independence in the 1960s.<sup>14</sup> In each of these eras, the poets liked to contrast older values and ways of behavior with the troubling new circumstances they saw around them. They frequently spoke metaphorically of the "end of the world" as they knew it, and warned their listeners about the dangers of abandoning the old ways.

With its capacity to capture the popular mood and to shape public opinion, Somali oral poetry can certainly be considered a major form of intellectual discourse. In fact, I would suggest that the poetic tradition, especially in its pre-1970 rural context, constituted a third stream of knowledge production in Somalia, with a different audience and different set of objectives than Western and Islamic discourses. Poetry offers scholars an alternative reading of many events in Somali history. Even after the introduction of recording technologies in the 1950s and the Internet in the 1990s, poetry remains a universally popular form of communication among Somalis, both at home and in the diaspora.

One way that the oral poetic tradition constitutes a set of alternative discourses on history and society can be seen in the poetic chains and oral commentaries on those chains.<sup>15</sup> These extended exchanges or debates between poets from different clans or with varying points of view sometimes ran parallel to Western colonial debates, sometimes intersected with them, and not infrequently dealt with separate issues altogether. Very few foreigners were conversant with these poetic discourses, in part because they unfolded in a language (Somali) and in a medium (alliterative oral poetry) that outsiders did not know, and in part because Somalis deliberately confined their commentaries within their own networks.

Recently, Lidwien Kapteijns and Maryan Omar Ali have shown how women's oral poetry and songs constitute a distinctive and complex corpus of popular commentary that reflects many changes in Somali social life over the past century, even if they did not fundamentally challenge the patriarchal nature of Somali social relations.<sup>16</sup> Jama Mohamed, on the other hand, uses oral poetry to reveal populist undercurrents in Somali thought that were not always evident in the writings or speeches of Somali political elites. In a series of articles on popular movements in the British Protectorate after World War II,<sup>17</sup> Mohamed suggests that poets constituted "subaltern" voices, commenting on

society from the perspectives, for example, of drought-stricken herds-men, impoverished urban migrants, or incarcerated freedom fighters. These dissident poets not only critiqued the abuses of the colonial system but also frequently chastised Somalis for not taking advantage of opportunities to improve their living standards or incomes. Mohamed's analysis suggests that in oral poetry we often find discourses that are disjoined from the written narratives of Somali history. Indeed, while most Western-educated Somalis appreciate their oral poetic tradition, its distinctive insights often fail to find their way into modern scholarly writings—perhaps because many of the best examples of Somali oral poetry express parochial or clan-based sentiments that are unpalatable to modern elites (both Western- and Islamic-educated), or because much of the classical poetry is too obscure for researchers to draw upon readily as source material. The result is yet another division in Somalia's intellectual life, another "partition of knowledge."

What can Somali Studies specialists learn from paying attention to oral poetic commentary? For one thing, we learn that many Somalis experienced the effects of early European rule only indirectly, in the form of inter- or intra-clan warfare, of increasing livestock raids, or of population displacements resulting from the arming of certain clans by the British or Italians to fight the dervishes. Much of the oral poetry composed in the 1910s, '20s, and '30s reflects shifting relations of power or territorial control between clans.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, most Somali oral poetry before the nationalist era is not about Europeans at all, even in cases in which academic historians know that European expansion lay behind the conflicts. Poetry was a discourse that took place among Somalis, and as such, it gives us unique access to popular opinions about small and great events that mattered at the community level.

Somali oral poetry is also a good place to look for changes in historical consciousness,<sup>19</sup> as new subject matter, fresh genres, and newly-coined words can be taken as evidence of changing Somali perceptions of the world around them. One can also find several historical examples of poetry that in hindsight appear prophetic of conflicts to come.<sup>20</sup> Yet even this grassroots intellectual tradition is limited as a tool for understanding the Somali condition. We need to remember that poetic narratives (considered collectively) contain the entire spectrum of opinions that Somalis can hold on an issue; and because Somali oral poetic conventions are themselves quite conservative, they may be good for preserving and transmitting poems through several generations, but they make it harder to detect philosophical or ideological changes

in Somali worldviews. It is also important to realize that on many occasions throughout the 20th century, Somali poets—in their role as upholders of traditional values—used verse to bemoan the conditions of their society and to predict disaster if their listeners did not change their ways. This may be more of a poetic convention than a piece of evidence that the poet's world had really changed.

Since the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, poets have continued to compose verse both in the Horn and abroad. While at least one noted Somali scholar has recently lamented that the nation's poetic tradition has been grievously damaged by the past two decades of war,<sup>21</sup> others are more sanguine.<sup>22</sup> Hopefully, young Somali scholars will take up the challenge of collecting a representative sample of this post-1991 poetry and analyze its uses of the past, its sentiments toward nation and clan, and its overall literary merit. My sense is that some of the most popular poems (just as some of the most popular songs today) are those that lament the recent fate of the Somali nation and call for the restoration of Somali unity and pride. While nostalgia for the old days and appeals to keep the spirit of nationalism alive are typical of the sentiments found within diaspora communities everywhere in the world, in the Somali case we might also be seeing at work a continuation of the poet's role as social critic, reminding the audience of old virtues that are in danger of being eroded and of leaders who are losing their way. Before 1990, poets frequently challenged the misuse of state power and the distortion of nationalist and pan-Somali ideologies by unscrupulous leaders. Now, with the collapse of the state and the prevalence of regional and clan narratives, many poets have become critics of fragmentation and parochialism, and champions of reunification.

Circumstances have changed; will the role of the poet as social critic change as well?

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Among the casualties of the Somali civil war are deep wounds to Somalis' sense of unity and a shared national past. In the years since the demise of the central government, Somali politics has settled into a series of regional debates and claims for recognition by "minorities" and other marginalized communities. Over the past two decades, what has kept the idea of the Somali nation alive is the attention focused on the various "national" reconciliation conferences. These have served to sustain the idea that a strong state is essential for the renewal of

Somalia—not a bad idea, but one which tends to underestimate the deep levels of mistrust that many contemporary Somalis feel toward centralized power of any kind. To foreign observers like myself, it appears that the most vocal advocates for the return of a strong central government are those who would like to be in charge of it. There are also a handful of genuine nationalists writing from the diaspora with sentiments that may be widely shared by their fellow Somalis in the Horn but with scant capacity to implement their vision of a strong but drastically reformed state.

However, the alternative intellectual traditions whose voices Western scholars have largely neglected also contain visions on which a restored national unity can be built. Somali Islamic intellectuals have contributed much to the building of a national consciousness, even if some of today's more radical spokesmen appear to be abandoning Somali solidarity for religious orthodoxy. While many Somalis remain wary of “imported” Islamist ideas or skeptical of the Islamists' claims to have left clan loyalties behind, they might well appreciate the long record of religious appeals for justice, public charity, and the rule of law that Somali Muslim intellectuals have delivered to their fellow citizens over the past century.

Similarly, the “poet intellectuals” have long championed the values of fairness and accountability, using their verse to chastise leaders who crossed the line into hubris and authoritarianism. Indeed, it seems that Somali poets as a whole have retained the respect of the many audiences that now make up the Somali nation in the Horn and in the diaspora, even though some of them were discredited by their initial support of the Siyaad Barre regime. But poets have always been better critics of excess in the exercise of power than they have been architects of alternative political models; better at building consensus within their clans for local agendas than at building consensus around national goals; and even today, better at reminding their contemporaries of the virtues of national unity than they are at exposing the costs of that nationalism when it has turned to expansionism. It is also crucial to realize that neither the Islamic nor the oral-poetic tradition speak in the idioms of state and citizenship familiar to the international legal community. Consequently, they have appeared to international observers as incapable of filling the void created by the collapse of the colonial/postcolonial political order.

In other words, each of these intellectual traditions remains incomplete in its diagnoses and prescriptions for today's sick nation. Each

retains a sizable following and a certain intellectual vitality, which helps explain the absence of a shared Somali response to the crisis of the 1990s. These various interpretive traditions have served to underpin the variety of strategies that Somalis have adopted to help them cope with the immediate disruptions of war. They have also obstructed the emergence of even a medium-term strategy for rebuilding the state. There is simply no shared historical understanding of what a state should be or do. With the discrediting of the national narrative espoused by the Siyaad regime, the Islamists and the poets found ready audiences for their messages, but they have been unable to rally the entire nation behind their visions. They continue their parallel discourses, but they are not yet in conversation with one another.

What is needed is a healthy dialogue (or “trialogue”) amongst the practitioners and partisans of these distinct intellectual traditions. Yet the segmentation of knowledge about Somalia has made it difficult for those operating within one of the paradigms to embrace the wisdom and insights of the others. I am not certain if there is a realistic way to unify this fragmented knowledge any more than there is a realistic solution to the problem of Somali political unification. Even if we as scholars can find ways to bridge the divides among Western, Islamic, and local Somali knowledge, it is not at all certain that politicians have the will or the capacity to follow suit. Yet we must at least continue the effort.

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## Notes

1. I am thinking here of the writings of Massimo Colucci, Ernesto Cucinotta, and more recently, Marco Guadagni.
2. Many of these reports are cited in Jama Mohamed, “The Political Ecology of Colonial Somaliland,” *Africa* 74 (2004). See also John Hunt, *A General Survey of the Somaliland Protectorate, 1944–1950* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1951).
3. A comparative study of colonial museums in Mogadishu, Hargeisa, and Djibouti would be revealing, telling us what each colonial power valued as expressions of the cultural and historical heritage of “their” people, and what artifacts or documents were worthy of preservation and display.
4. Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, “Arabic Sources on Somalia,” *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 14 (1987): 141–172; and Scott S. Reese, “The Arabic Writings of Somalia,” in *The Islamic Writings of Eastern Africa*, v. IIIA, within *The Arabic Literature of Africa*, edited by J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O’Fahey (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003).
5. One could argue that the notion of a single Somali people was already implicit in the patrilineal genealogies that all Somalis kept and that (certainly by the start of the twentieth century) converged in what Lewis has called a “total genealogy.” This was the belief that all Somalis were descended from a common founding ancestor—a national family

- tree, so to speak. I. M. Lewis, *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1957).
6. Scott S. Reese, *Renewers of the Age: Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008).
7. See, e.g., Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society* (Philadelphia, 1982), ch. 3–5; and Bernhard Helander, “Somalia,” in *Islam Outside the Arab World*, edited by David Westerlund and Ingvar Svanberg (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 39–55.
8. As Helander (1991, p. 46) notes, “members of the *jamea* (Sufi religious settlements) often chose to replace their clan genealogies with religious ones known as *silsilad* (literally, “chain”) consisting of sheykhhs within the order who taught the founder of the settlement and his teachers in turn, right back to the Prophet Muhammad and even to earlier biblical prophets. These genealogies, while constructed, often replaced the clan genealogies (equally constructed) and were often committed to writing, thus acquiring a certain sanctity. This was probably an important factor in explaining why even secular Somali genealogies also claim descent ultimately from the Prophet’s Quraysh lineage. The entire process helped instill the idea of a people with a common ancestry and religious heritage.”
9. This appears similar to the ways in which the *Xeer Ciise* evolved to help stabilize social relations in fluctuating demographic and political circumstances, as reconstructed by Ali Moussa Iye, *Le verdict de l’arbre* (Dubai: International Printing Press, 1990).
10. As I have shown elsewhere, it appears that Muslims literate in Arabic also served as the main informants for the nineteenth-century European travelers who first recorded the local histories and oral traditions of the Somalis. Lee V. Cassanelli, “Tradition to Text: Writing Local Somali History in the Travel Narrative of Charles Guillain (1846–48),” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 18, no.1 (2006): 57–71.
11. Scott S. Reese, “Tales which Persist on the Tongue: Arabic Literacy and the Definition of Communal Boundaries in Sharif Aydrus’ *Bughayt al-Amal*,” *Sudanic Africa* 9 (1998): 1–17.
12. For example, Lamin Sanneh, “Shari’ah Sanctions as Secular Grace? A Nigerian Islamic Debate and an Intellectual Response,” *Transformation* 20, no. 4 (October 2003): especially pp. 235–36.
13. Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad. Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913* (Ohio University Press, 2007), ch. 6.
14. For the role of poetry as a form of commentary on historical events, see Francesco Antinucci and Axmed Faarax Cali ‘Idaajaa,’ eds., *Poesia orale somala: storia di una nazione. Studi somali no. 7* (Rome: Soc. Coop. Editoriale e Libraria, 1986); John W. Johnson, *Heellooy: Modern Poetry and Songs of Somalis* (London: HAAN, 1996); Ali Jimale Ahmed, *Daybreak is Near: Literature, Clans and the Nation-State in Somalia* (Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1996); and Mohamed Abdillahi Rirash, “The Making of the Somali Crisis as Reflected in the Somali Oral Poetry of the 1960s and ’70s,” paper prepared for the Fifth Congress of the Somali Studies International Association, Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass., December 1993. For the role of poetry during the dervish wars, see the excellent studies of Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and Yaasiin Cismaan Keenadiid, *Ina Cabdille Xasan e la sua attivita letteraria* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1984).

15. See, e.g., Ali Jimale Ahmed, *Daybreak is Near: Literature, Clans and the Nation State in Somalia* (Red Sea Press, 1996).
16. Lidwien Kapteijns and Maryan Omar Ali, *Women's Voices in a Man's World* (Heinemann, 1999).
17. Jama Mohamed, "The 1944 Somaliland Camel Corps Mutiny and Popular Politics," *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000): 93–113; and "Constructing Colonial Hegemony in the Somaliland Protectorate, 1941–1960," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1996, ch. 7.
18. See Antinucci and 'Idaajaa' 1986; and Yaasiin Cismaan Keenadiid 1984.
19. See, for example, John W. Johnson 1996; and Kapteijns and Ali 1999.
20. See, for example, Rirash paper, 1993.
21. Said S. Samatar, "A Nation's Literary Death Tops Its Political Demise," Online at WardheerNews.com (17 May 2009).
22. See, for example, Rahma Bavelaar, "The Poetics of Displacement. Somali Oral Verse in Exile," Online at Wardeernews.com (26 June 2006).