

# Benadiri People of Somalia

with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu

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PhD

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## ABSTRACT

The study is on the people known as Benadiri (Banaadiri) who live in a string of settlements along the southern coast of Somalia, and about their distinctive history and identity which have to date not been extensively covered in the literature on Somalia.

Chapter 1 is approached chronologically, providing an historical outline from sources, from the first century CE to the modern era. Historical references are supplemented by oral traditions and evidence from material culture. Geography and the influence of the monsoon trade on the coastal civilization are noted, including foreign intrusions, contacts, and migrations that have left their mark. Subsequent chapters are approached thematically. Mogadishu (Muqdisho) as the major settlement is taken as generally representative of Banaadiri town culture, and is here given its locally-specific name of Hamar (Xamar), its people being the Reer Hamar. Original material on lineage structure and descent patterns, and cultural expressions through festivals and ritual, has been gathered in the course of this research mainly from Banaadiri in diaspora. It is supplemented by experiential data from my having previously lived among the people. The binary nature of the urban polity is discussed with reference to moieties, notions of descent, and social stratification. Also considered is the stone-town environment and its influence on the way the community sees itself in relation to others. Regarding religious life, community adherence to Islam and to Sufism is described, as are Sufist traditions of 'sainthood', and some local Islamic practices. New hagiographical material is presented on the late-Sheikh Abba al-Shashy, a leading theologian of the Mogadishu *'ulama*. Finally, attention is given to the disintegration of the Somali state in 1991 and how the continuing turmoil has impacted on Banaadiri people, creating a struggling community at home, and widespread displacement and dispersal into exile.

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## Preface

Much of what has been written about the Somali people's culture, history and social institutions is concerned with the pastoralist tradition of the dominant and politically powerful population<sup>1</sup> who occupy the vast northern, north-eastern and central rangelands, namely the clans of the Darod, Hawiye and Isaaq, and for which the large body of work by I.M. Lewis is the principle authority. Allied to the nomadic clans are Somalis from the southern agro-pastoralists of the Digil and Rahanweyn-Mirifle who occupy lands between the two rivers (Juba and Shabelle), and who are probably the second most populous category of the population.<sup>2</sup> Although there are important dialect and other differences, the people of the nomadic and agro-pastoralist lifestyles divide themselves into what are usually labelled 'clan-families', with each clan-family further subdividing into clans, whose members regard themselves as belonging to a genealogical structure whereby all individuals trace their origins through many generations to founding fathers, and eventually to one single ancestor – Samaal. This is what has become known as 'the total genealogy' as a description of the Somali case, and diagrams illustrating this clan structure are widely available in the academic literature, which are adaptations of Lewis's representation<sup>3</sup> of all the main branches. In consequence, Somali society has gained the reputation, mistakenly, of being that unusual thing in Africa, a nation with a common language, culture, religion and past.

The 'total genealogy' model as defining Somali society has been challenged in recent decades, with the constituent parts presented in a more nuanced way. The two big southern agricultural clan-families, for example, consist of many federated small groups, different from the descent structure of the large pastoralist clans on whose clan structure the total genealogy is based. Whilst the latter are well represented in the academic literature, the Digil and Rahanweyn-Mirifle clan-families inhabiting the inter-river areas of southern Somalia have received relatively little scholarly attention in English, exceptions being Luling's seminal work on the Geledi of Afgooye, and the late Bernhard Helander's study of the Hubeer.<sup>4</sup> In-depth studies of the complicated

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<sup>1</sup> 'Between 60% and 70% of the population are nomadic or have nomadic affiliation' (Lewis 1993:10).

<sup>2</sup> This is arguable: their village settlements are more densely populated than the rangelands where nomadic clans predominate.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis 1957:89.

<sup>4</sup> Luling 2003; Helander 2003.

federations and seemingly disparate origins and historical experiences of these lineages are lacking,<sup>5</sup> and overdue for further investigation, but are receiving welcome renewed attention by scholars who are themselves from those groups.<sup>6</sup>

In the years since the collapse of the unitary Somali state in 1991, the issue of Somaliness has been shown to be much more varied, and Somali society a more diverse entity than was previously held to be the case.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the two main economic and cultural divisions mentioned above, there are important minorities, especially of southern Somalia, about whom current published information is incomplete. The social position of these groups has come into sharper focus in consequence of recent upheavals in the country and evidence of their vulnerability and victimisation. Of these minorities as they are perceived within the context of the civil war, Cassanelli gives the following definition:

As currently used by both Somalis and foreigners, the term "minorities" refers to any clans or communities that do not belong genealogically to one of the four major "noble" clan families of Darod, Hawiyya, Isaaq or Dir. "Noble" in this sense refers to the widespread Somali belief that members of the major clans are descended from a common Somali ancestor, and that the minority clans have a different-usually mixed-parentage, with some Asian, Oromo or Bantu ancestors.<sup>8</sup>

Such groups include some whose status was traditionally inferior, like the Jareer of the farming villages of the southern inter-river area, with group names such as Shiidle, Shabelle, and Mushunguli,<sup>9</sup> who are physically distinct and clearly of different ethnicity from the majority Somalis, and who are considered to be descended from former slaves or who may also be mixed with a much earlier population group who pre-date the

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<sup>5</sup> Of Italian sources, the classic work by Colucci is recognised for his contribution to coverage of these inter-riverine clans, and they appear in genealogy lists in various early Italian colonial sources.

<sup>6</sup> In this context are two academics, Mohamed Mukhtar, and Abdi M. Kusow, working in North America.

<sup>7</sup> The theme of variations on Somaliness was the timely topic for a Somali Studies International Congress, see in Lilius 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Cassanelli in *Victims...*, 1994:9.

<sup>9</sup> Eno 2003:1.

coming of the nomadic Somalis to this area.<sup>10</sup> Also in the ‘minority’ category are the occupational specialist groups such as potters, leatherworkers, hunters, blacksmiths, professional herbalists and healers (some with names such as *ugaaryahan*, *eyle*, and *tumal* that are clues to their customary occupation or trades).<sup>11</sup> They are found dotted throughout the clan system, north and south, and traditionally lived in a client relationship with their patrons from the majority clans and with whom they could neither intermarry nor share food. This is, of course, a reference to their status in a pre-modern society, where traditional client-patron relationships were the norm. Nevertheless, the longstanding historical social prejudice followed these groups into independence, where their status and the general social attitudes towards them continued to be defined by the politically powerful clans. Today, in the present repositioning that is a result of the total collapse of the society, they are collectively struggling to find terminology that they are happy to associate themselves with – one of which is Madhiban, used largely by southern occupationally designated groups, another is Gabooye used in northern Somalia (Somaliland).<sup>12</sup>

Other minorities of southern Somalia, though not considered of inferior status, but ‘different’, are the people of the ‘stone towns’ and adjacent villages of the southern Somali coast – the Banaadiri; and the people of the fishing communities from the far south – the Bajunis, who live on the island archipelago and in mainland settlements of the parallel coast, from Kismayu to Ras Kiamboni on the Somali-Kenyan border.

Of the Bajuni, their lives have been lived distinct from the Somali mainstream, both in terms of their lifestyle as fishermen, and their language, which is a dialect of Swahili rather than of Somali. An important study of the Somali Bajuni islanders by Grotanelli<sup>13</sup> is the most comprehensive study of these people as far as I am aware, though additional and sympathetic contributions have been made in journal publications.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Luling devotes a chapter to discussion of these inter-river populations of southern Somalia. She refers extensively to the earlier work of the Italian Cerulli. Francesca Declich’s research is also concerned with similar agriculturalist minority groups, such as the Gosha, along the Juba River.

<sup>11</sup> Ugaaryahan are a minority group of southern Somalia who are hunters by tradition, as is suggested by their name, which derives from the Somali word *ugaar* or *ugaadh* meaning ‘game animals’, therefore ‘hunters of game’. Eyle, likewise traditional hunters, are known for hunting with dogs (*ey*, dog), whereas Tumal (*tumo*, to hammer), were known for blacksmithing.

<sup>12</sup> *Field Notes*.

<sup>13</sup> Grotanelli 1955.

<sup>14</sup> Elliot, Allen 2008.



Of the Banaadiri Somalis of the stone towns of the southern Somali coast, Banaadiri urban culture and lifestyle has developed in ways that reflect their geographical position on the shoreline and their exposure to influences from overseas. Nevertheless, the port towns have throughout history provided access to the interior of the country, and been a gateway for important material and intellectual exchanges with a wider world. With this dual aspect and sedentary lifestyle, the political, religious, linguistic and economic social strands of the Banaadiri are differently nuanced from those of the herders and farmers of the interior.

This study is about the people, who live along the Banaadir (Benadir) coast of southern Somalia, on the Indian Ocean, stretching geographically from Warsheikh to Kismayu, but culturally from Warsheikh to Baraawe<sup>15</sup> – a distance of approximately 300 km – in a mixture of ports and once thriving and sophisticated city-states, interspersed with small and sometimes remote fishing villages. The string of towns and villages clinging to the shoreline encompasses the larger settlements of Muqdisho (Mogadishu), Marka and Baraawe (Brava) and such small village settlements as Jesira, Danaane, Gandershe, Jilib-Marka, Munghiye, and Torre.

Banaadir is a geographical designation that pre-dates European colonial occupation of this part of the Horn of Africa, and the name is derived from the Arabic *bandar*, plural *banādir* for ‘port’ or ‘sea-city’. Arab geographers applied the term Banaadir to the East African coast of southern Somalia in the same way that they applied *sawahil* (‘coastal’) to the East African coast further south (from today’s Kenya to northern Mozambique). During the colonial period, from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century the Italians continued to use the term Banaadir in its geographical sense for this part of their colony, as did successive Somali governments post-1960 to define a regional administrative unit. The territorial limits were not the same in every case.

The Banaadir settlements have a documented history that, though references are intermittent, can be traced back at least two thousand years. Like similarly poised communities of the eastern Indian Ocean who have participated in the maritime trade that has rested on the twice yearly monsoon winds since ancient times, Banaadiri socio-economic life has developed in ways different from that of their fellow Somalis of the

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<sup>15</sup> Though Kismayu is also an important place of settlement of the Banaadiri groups, other groups lay claim to being its original inhabitants. Personal conversation with Cassanelli advised not to include it in this study.

interior, and reflects the intellectual and religious currents that have washed over this shore, helping to shape the urban polity found here.

The people who have their roots here refer to themselves as ‘Banaadiri’ – the ‘People of the Ports’, and Banaadiri is the term we shall use most frequently here for the people of these communities who form a society with shared history and culture and traditions. Muqdisho,<sup>16</sup> or Xamar (Somali spelling for the more conventional English rendering: ‘Hamar’), is the largest of the Banaadir stone towns and will be the chief point of reference for investigating some common cultural strands that are characteristic of the Banaadiri as a whole.

My study is written in fulfilment of a PhD requirement, but much of the thought behind it goes back far longer, from my first encounters with Muqdisho in the early 1960s, and in subsequent years living with my family in quarters of the city (Shingani from 1966-69, and from 1972-89 in the Sheikh Sufi neighbourhood) where my neighbours and my children’s playmates were Reer Xamar. This study is dedicated to the memory of Sheikh Abba and to the families of his kinsmen of the Sheikh Sufi *xaafad* (neighbourhood) of Muqdisho.

### **Acknowledgements**

In the six years of part-time research and writing that it has taken me to complete this study, there have been many people along the way who have provided me with assistance, friendship and encouragement, and to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge their contributions and to thank them all, whilst emphasising, of course, that the responsibility for this work and any errors in it are mine alone.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Martin Orwin, for his continuing interest and support for this work; his advice and assistance on Somali and Arabic transliterations, and his patient attempts to standardise my often-idiosyncratic rendering of Somali, and Arabic transliterations. .

Special mention goes to Mohamed Osman Omar, a generous friend of more than forty years, who first introduced me to Reer Xamar culture and to his Sheikh; and for help

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<sup>16</sup> For the sake of consistency I will use the Somali spelling for place names; personal names are rendered in Anglicised form except where the person’s own spelling preference – Italianised, Somali etc. – is known; Somali words and terms used are explained at first mention, and the reader is further referred to the Glossary.

with the translation of *af-Reer Xamar* material. His never-tiring interest and readiness to offer assistance in other ways too numerous to list has greatly facilitated my research. I am grateful also to Khalid Maou of the Reer Faqi for constructive criticism and advice at every stage, and for sharing with me his own unpublished research material on marriage traditions. These two persons, now senior elders of their people, like many others of my “informants” are friends of longstanding, from whom I have learned much, often in private conversations. I have not given the names of such sources in every instances.

I am particularly indebted to the late Sheikh Abba, whose position as one of the leading members of the learned clerical class of Muqdisho and the Banaadir coast, and in view of a pre-existing acquaintanceship, was an obvious person for me to seek out when I began this project. He gave freely of his knowledge during our contacts and from which I benefitted greatly, while being painfully aware that I could hardly scratch the surface of the great accumulation of his learning. He was a scholar who had knowledge in many fields, and a pride in, and love for the civilisation of which he was a product. Thanks also go to his surviving son, 'Abdurahman Ahmed Mohamed, for discussions I had with him after the Sheikh's death, and to Sheikh Ahmed Iman, of the Muqdisho *'ulama* and compiler of the hagiography that is part of the subject matter of Chapter 4.

To other informants, one's indebtedness is complex, and ranges from lengthy interviews to passing remarks, and to simply being included in everyday family and community events. In acknowledging the debt to and reliance on informants, I am also acutely aware of the dangers to balanced reporting in being unduly influenced by an informant's own perspective. Of the many Reer Xamar in the diaspora with whom I have contact, a wealth of detail on cultural practises has been gathered as a result of interviews with many Somali Banaadiri asylum seekers, both male and female. The identities of this latter group remain anonymous, though as sources they are identified in footnote references by number (e.g. IN2), and in more detail under *Oral Sources* in the Bibliography. Whilst acknowledging that interviews with refugees or displaced persons need to be treated with care because of the risks of distortion or exaggeration inherent in the context in which they are presented, empirical information on such things as clan practises and belief and inherited lifestyles are in a different category of knowledge from oral testimonies of emotional and physical stress suffered while in Somalia, and are inherently more reliable.

At the same time as acknowledging my debt to all of the above; they are not responsible for the use I have made of their information.

In working with Italian language texts, particularly some early twentieth century sources in rather difficult Italian, I thank Roberto Valent for his help. Thanks also to Alessandro Gori for his prompt response in helping me to access his work on Somali hagiographic material, and to Sara and Jakob Kern in Rome for happy times spent with them on the occasions I needed to consult Italian library archives, and to Mari-Lù Bonnani in Rome for sharing her recollections of Muqdisho from the 1950s and 60s. For my rendering of French translations from Guillain's texts I thank my good friend Marianne Biel for her help.

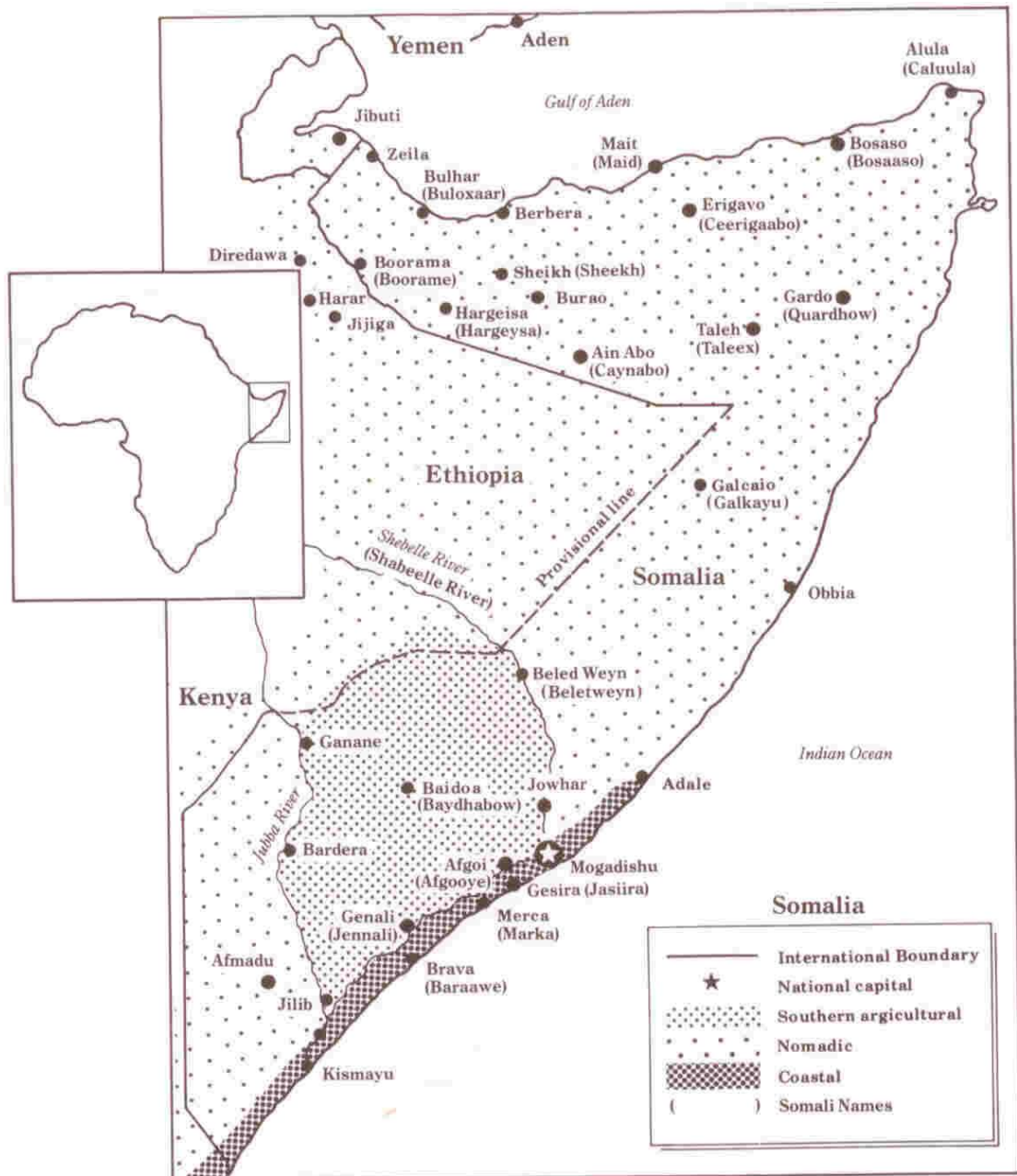
Regarding sources in Arabic, I have relied largely on those Arabic texts which exist in translation, the main exceptions being the hagiography of Sheikh Abba that I have presented in this dissertation, and 'Aydarus's history of Somalia as an important local source on Banaadiri life. For the first I wish to thank Tara El Elman for her care over the initial translation into English and her notes of explanation. For translations of extracts from 'Aydarus's *Bughayat* I am grateful to my daughter Zeinab Adam Valent and her Arabic teacher in Jerusalem, Rula Qabani. I give additional acknowledgement to Zeinab for her interest in my work and for the many valuable discussions we had. In this last category, too, is Andrea Baker.

Dr Virginia Luling has most generously shared and discussed with me her own findings, and experience over many years, of minorities of southern Somalia. From her scholarly approach to the collection and documenting of culture I have learned a lot. To Lee Cassanelli and John Johnson, established scholars in the fields of African history and Folklore respectively especially as these relate to Somali studies, my thanks for discussions along the way, and to John for his generous comments on two core chapters, and 'crash course' on distinguishing characteristics of legends and folktales.

Additional sounding boards have been Suleiman Mohamoud Adam who can always be relied upon for incisive comment and sound judgement, and Professor Ioan Lewis to whom all those with an interest in Somalia owe so much, and who I am honoured to count as a friend. Thanks also to Stuart Schwartzstein, longterm friend from Somalia days, for his encouraging support for the project.

In the last two months of completing this study there are two persons to whom I am particularly indebted. The first is Dr Ahmed Sharif Abbas of the Shingani moiety and a leading British member of the Somali diaspora. He has given unstintingly of his time in reviewing this material, providing incisive comment and additional detail; he also made available his considerable array of contacts in assisting me to verifying certain points, for which I am most grateful. Second is my nephew Mohamud Aboker Hassan who has been on hand to help proofread these chapters; in addition I should like also to recognise Mohamud's considerable knowledge of Somali clan history and politics, and encourage him to commit some of this to writing.

**Map 1 Showing Banaadir Coast (coastal)**



Reproduced from Johnson et al 1986, with permission.

## **Introduction**

The study is on the people known as Banaadiri who, in spite of having a long and documented history of settlements along the southern coast of Somalia, have to date not been extensively covered in the literature of that country. This study aims to provide an account of their distinctive history and identity, and documents aspects of the social, cultural, religious and economic life which help to define the people and have shaped their world view. With the work that I have done in collecting together information on the Banaadiri coastal group of Somalis, and their significance as part of the larger socio-political construct that has become known as Somalia, I hope that some gaps have been filled, and that this contribution may stimulate others to further research, to correct, expand on, and add to the themes in this dissertation.

Central research questions which this study addresses are: Who are the Banaadiri Somalis? What has been their contribution to the shaping of Somali history and society? What is their position today?

### **The Setting**

Living in settlements that have not moved geographically for centuries, the Banaadiris are essentially people of an urban culture, with communities that until recently were self-governing. The social units found in these communities, and of which the largest urban centre of Muqdisho is taken in this study as representative, are settlements with small indigenous and distinct populations and an economy based on trade.

Reflecting the geographical location, their history and world-view is tied to both the African hinterland and along the East African Indian Ocean littoral southwards, and northeast across the Indian Ocean to Arabia, Persia and beyond. The Banaadir coast is situated at the western reaches of the great trading arc that connects the coastlines of East Africa, southern Arabia, and India in a twice yearly movement of ships, goods and

people that have been carried out on the natural and unfailing phenomenon of monsoon winds that blow from the northeast roughly from November to March and from the southwest from late April to September (See Map 2). Being part of this ancient maritime trade has informed the lives and social organisation of the people in some quite fundamentally different ways to those of the majority of Somalis of the African hinterland and interior.<sup>17</sup> The Banaadir coastal settlements, in common with those of the Swahili coast to the south, have been mentioned in accounts of seafaring traders and travellers who left records of their contacts with this coast from as early as the beginning of the first millennium CE.<sup>18</sup>

These settled urbanites should not however be viewed as disconnected from the overall Somali population, but as a segment thereof, Banaadiris are as much a part of Somali society as are the pastoral and agro-pastoral units, with whom, as will be seen and as would be expected, there are overlapping traditions and common historical experiences. Ethnic and cultural boundaries are not impervious, and in the case of the coast people's immediate neighbours from the villages along the lower Shabelle, for example, through trade exchanges and intermarriage over many centuries. some shared customs developed.<sup>19</sup> With Somali groups overall, there is a shared language and religion. In religion especially, it may surprise some to learn of the large number of holy men who were key in spreading Islam to the interior, and who are recognised as *awliya* (sing. *weli*, and generally translated as 'saint') throughout Somali-inhabited regions, as coming from the Banaadir stone-town communities.

**THE TOWNS:** The three main Banaadir towns of Muqdisho, Marka and Baraawe have a long history of being thriving ports. When the first Europeans in the form of the Portuguese came to East Africa in 1498, in a contemporary description of some of the ports of the Indian Ocean littoral, Muqdisho ranked superlatively as a place of great trade and merchandise, very large, rich and beautiful, while within these towns lived a people whose culture could also well stand comparison with the Portuguese.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A few northern towns along the Somali coast of the Gulf of Aden, such as Zayla' and Bossaso, have similarly been part of an ancient maritime trade as the Banaadir ports, but the people are ethnically and culturally an extension of and not distinct from the surrounding clan society.

<sup>18</sup> Huntingford's *Periplus* 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Cassanelli 1982:158

<sup>20</sup> Strandes 1971:79.



On a day in late April 1964, some four and a half centuries later, my own first view of Muqdisho was also from the sea, from the deck of the Lloyd Triestino ship *Europa* which, because the old port was too shallow, had to anchor out at sea. It was sunrise, and we awaited the lighters and their crews to come alongside the ship to unload the cargo and passengers, and take us to shore. ‘Unload’ applied equally to the five disembarking passengers at Muqdisho, since we were lowered like cargo over the side of the ship in a wooden-based basket to the waiting deck of a lighter and the outstretched arms of its crew. The tension of the ropes holding up the cloth sides of our basket were released by the winch operators above just a split second before its base hit the bobbing deck of the barge, causing the two or three who made up each load to roll out on to the deck and perhaps into the arms of a complete stranger, though the surprise at having landed safely outweighed other surprises. I heard later that it was not unknown for this precarious procedure to result in broken legs due either to a mistiming of the operator releasing the basket, or to an unpredicted swell of tide lifting the barge towards its impending load, causing the two to crash.

On the short boat ride to shore, Muqdisho appeared at this distance as a sparkling white city with three- and four-storied stone buildings – the origin of the term ‘stone towns’ that is often used for the towns of this coast - and the minarets of mosques standing out against the skyline, interspersed with palm trees. April is the season of the big rains, the *gu*, so the foliage was in bloom, and Xamar, the local name by which I would come to know Muqdisho, was looking its best.

Xamar (conventional English spelling: Hamar) is the local name for the old town quarters of Muqdisho (Mogadishu), and ‘Reer Xamar’ refers to members of the old city population. The origin of the name may be lost in the mists of time, and has many competing explanations, some of which are related in later chapters.

Once on shore and being driven in the dark green fiat taxi to the hotel, the view beyond the waterfront was of newer Italian colonial buildings constructed in the previous half century, either reproducing the old Arab style architecture that the colonists had found

there, or influenced by their own favoured Art Deco style.<sup>21</sup> There were tree-lined avenues, named for Italian heroes, monarchs and dictators,<sup>22</sup> and the beginnings of suburban sprawl to accommodate the new influx from the countryside since independence four years earlier. The suburbs, some the equivalent of shanty towns, would continue to expand throughout the twenty-five more years that the city was home to me, and to a population of around one million others by the time I left in the late 1980s.

Of Baraawe, a Portuguese historian of the sixteenth century<sup>23</sup> had said it was a town of good houses of stone and whitewash, a place of trade, and governed by elders. It was some time in the late-1960s when I had my first breathtaking sight of Baraawe, and not from the sea but from inland, down a steep winding road of compacted red-hot red sand that contrasted so sharply with the pristine white buildings reminiscent of my first glimpse of Muqdisho but on a smaller scale. Beyond the stone town was the shimmering Indian Ocean – a view so striking that one forgot to notice the smaller more modest dwellings of mud and thatch that hung around the fringes of the old town.

Marka, close to Muqdisho and a town I frequently visited over many years of living in Somalia, was to me the old lady of the ports, and exuded a confidence and certainty about its place in history. It was one of the original ports ceded to the Italian Filonardi trading company,<sup>24</sup> and retained its importance throughout the colonial period and beyond as the main export port for the plantation crops (bananas, grapefruit and limes) of the Lower Shabelle hinterland. The old quarter, far from being a secluded enclave as was the case with the old quarters of Shingani and Xamar Weyne in Muqdisho, was itself the city, and was on full display. Fine old stone houses, with heavy carved wooden doors and window shutters, and decoratively plastered walls, were the property of the town's rich merchants and of their progeny, and were what the inhabitants interacted with as they went about their daily business. More recently-built villas and

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<sup>21</sup> I was again reminded of this complementarity of Mussolini's modernist architects of the 1930s when many years later I was visiting another of Italy's former possessions, the Eritrean capital, Asmara, which in today's tourist literature is styled an 'art deco gem'.

<sup>22</sup> The names remained on people's tongues, though this was four years into independence, and the reassignment of street names, officially at least.

<sup>23</sup> Barbosa 1866:15.

<sup>24</sup> The Benaadir coast was leased to Italy on 18 August 1892 from the Sultan of Zanzibar; the running of the colony was initially given to the Filonardi Company (Società Filonardi)

administrative buildings of the Italian colonial years stood surprisingly comfortably alongside them, and together represented the authority of the town, past and present

Kismaayo, which in view of its geographical location on the southern Somalia coast, may be classed as a Banaadir city, is not included in this study except peripherally. Whilst it certainly does have an established community of people whose lineage links are to other indigenous families of the Banaadiri coast, Kismaayo is of later founding than the stone towns to the north and south. Its history is somewhat differently nuanced, with strong connections to the traditions of the Bajuni people of this coastal stretch, and to the livestock trade of the hinterland.<sup>25</sup>

By the second half of the twentieth century, following independence and increased urbanisation, the Banaadiri population that was indigenous to the stone towns began to be outnumbered by incomers from the countryside, and formed only a small minority in these larger port towns.

**THE VILLAGES:** Interspersed with the stone towns are remote and not so remote villages that remained almost totally Banaadiri in population well into the 1980s and retained much of the traditional ways of life. The people here eked out a living as fishermen and weavers. The traditional hand-woven *banaadiri* or *alindi* cotton cloth for which the Banaadir had been famous for centuries remained the mainstay of many of these villages such as Gandershe, and Jilib Marka, even though in other respects they had become isolated backwaters.<sup>26</sup> Road networks are often poor, and Jilib Marka, for example, is most usually reached along the sands from Marka, for brief periods each day between tides, and otherwise by travelling circuitously inland and then along dirt tracks towards the sea.

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<sup>25</sup> According to tradition it is an original settlement of the Bajuni people (Grotanelli 1965); it further owes its prominence to its relations with the pastoralist populations of the immediate interior as a centre of the livestock trade (Cassanelli 1982:75). It does not feature in the literature of the Middle Ages that I am aware of, or indeed until it was a part of the Omani possessions in the seventeenth century controlled from Zanzibar, and then ceded to British control as 'Jubaland' in 1887 before becoming part of Italian Somalia in 1925.

<sup>26</sup> Personal knowledge from visits.

Some of these villages are the sites of the tombs of venerated ancestors of different Reer Xamar groups, in which case, and once a year, they became the focus of great activity and feasting as religious pilgrims come from other Banaadiri communities to the local saint's shrine to pay homage (see chapter 4 on religious practices). The numerous small settlements that dot the Banaadir coastline were probably established originally as points of exchange, to supply the nomads of the interior with imported dates, rice and metal artefacts in exchange for incense, ivory and beeswax from far upcountry, for export to the wider world beyond.<sup>27</sup>

THE PEOPLE: The people who have their roots here and who call themselves 'Banaadiri' belong to old-established populations of the coast. In addition to identifying themselves to each other by lineage, they may also speak of themselves as coming from a particular town or village, as in 'Reer Marka' (coming from Marka) or 'Reer Baraawe' (from a Baraawe family). *Reer* is most usually translated as meaning 'family', but in context can be understood as referring to family, clan, lineage, household, or group.

In common with populations of dynamic ports elsewhere, it can be expected that exposure to travellers, traders, proselytisers, adventurers and colonisers may have encouraged in the people a tolerance and an ability to absorb new influences. Some of these expectations are discernable in the social organisation and material culture of the Banaadir people, and are explored in more detail in Chapter 2. The synthesis of inward and outward perspectives can perhaps best be illustrated in the Africanness of the language(s) of the people, and the religious underpinning of Islam that came from abroad. The linguistic situation is not straightforward, in that in parts of the Banaadir the local dialect is a variant of the Somali language that is spoken by Somali-speakers throughout the Horn, from Djibouti in the north, to the Northern Province of Kenya in the south, and west to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.<sup>28</sup> Whereas in parts of the coastal region and the islands, namely the settlements from Baraawe to the border with Kenya, variants of Swahili are the indigenous languages. Nevertheless, in both the case of Cushitic Somali and Bantu Swahili, these are languages of the African continent.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hersi 1977: 107-8, 155; Cassanelli 1982: 27, 72-75.

<sup>28</sup> Lamberti 1984.

<sup>29</sup> See Nurse & Spear 1985: Ch. 2 on discussion of Swahili, Bantu and Cushitic languages of Eastern Africa.

Arabic, though widely understood, came from abroad. It is the liturgical language, and the most obvious linguistic influence from outside, as is clear from the large number of Arabic borrowings. The influences that came by sea, however, did not begin with Islam, as will be seen from pre-Islamic historical references.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This is not a traditional ethnographic study of a culture as in the model where a complete outsider attains a professional knowledge of another way of life, or where there is a clear divide between the self and other. Nor is it that of what Lila Abu-Lughod famously styled the ‘halfie’, written by one who comes with some inherited affiliation or knowledge of the culture, but whose cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, parenthood, and education.<sup>30</sup> Neither of the above apply to me and my relationship to the subject of research; my own social location is as a feminist from a Western culture who experienced everyday life in another culture by virtue of marriage. My position, therefore, is not of the classic ethnographer. My home life was not within the subculture that is at the centre of this study, but I feel that my affiliations with the social mainstream has been an immense advantage in pursuing and shaping this research, and in helping me to identify and access reliable and valuable informants in the Somali diaspora. The greatest restriction has been the inability to spend time in Somalia in the turbulent days since the start of the country’s protracted civil war in 1991. In the course of writing this material, I became increasingly conscious of the limitations on a person from one culture properly understanding and reporting on another culture. I also became aware of the need to revise a previously held assumption that the amount of relevant material for investigating the southern Somali coastal culture in history was scarce, and as a rider to that, the untapped potential for further research on every aspect of Banaadir society for which this study only skims the surface.

The study is a record of information that I have been able to assemble, but without providing any theoretical analysis, although inevitably the act of writing and recording does itself involve the writer in interpretation. It is not constructed around a particular

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<sup>30</sup> Abu-Lughod 1991.

discipline and its epistemology, although it does address some traditional ethnographic topics such as kinship, ritual and religion. In whatever way the material is classified, however, I hope I have managed to capture something of the particular culture and history of the people of the Banaadir stone towns, and that the material will stand as a contribution to informing future research and acquainting people with this segment of Somali society.

## **The Chapters**

The first chapter is approached chronologically, providing an historical outline from sources, to provide a backdrop for what follows. Later chapters are organised by theme, and two of these deal with the internal workings of Banaadiri society, and its account of itself and its traditions. Here the Reer Xamar of Muqdisho are taken as the main point of reference. A further chapter looks at the intellectual and religious life of the community and how the universally accepted tenets of Islam are elaborated in local forms of piety and religious practice. The final chapter describes briefly the still-evolving situation and the challenges facing the Banaadiri as part of the wider society, but also explicitly as a small and politically weak subset, in the wake of the collapse of the Somali state and a devastating civil war.

### **CHAPTER ONE – BANAADIRI HISTORY FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO 1900 CE.**

This deals with documentary records of the coastal settlements in history, compiling information from a range of sources, in an attempt to provide a comprehensive historical time line for the Banaadir coast, and by implication to identify the various influences that have helped to shape the urban polity and lifestyle. From travellers' tales and other references we know that there has been continuous settlement along this coast for over 2,000 years. There are no known local chronicles or publications to refer to for the Banaadir until the twentieth century, so information is primarily from an outsider perspective. Oral history is an important complement, though by its very nature, the longer the time depth to which it refers the more unreliable it becomes.

These reservations notwithstanding, several important eyewitness accounts punctuate a two-thousand-year time span, the first in a trading manual (*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) written around 100 CE. Of visits to this coast by the Ancient Egyptians, we can only conjecture: although certainly the trade goods produced by ‘the Land of Punt,’ a name to which Somalis like to lay claim (but not only Somalis), and which found their way to the kingdom of Queen Hatshepsut in the second century BC were products found in the Horn of Africa. Somali oral tradition speaks of the settling of the Banaadiri towns by Arabs fleeing wars and persecution from the first century of Islam and after, with most local legends of origin dating to around 1,000 years ago. Such legends are repeated in like format for other communities of East Africa who likewise claim Arab descent. Local legends and their parallels with the historical material are considered. What is not in question are the religious ideas that came with earlier travellers, and which had a most profound impact on the population in the small city states of the coast. The way in which Islamic practice infused daily life in Muqdisho in the Middle Ages is vividly recorded in our next eyewitness account, by the inveterate Arab traveller and diarist, Ibn Battuta. In spite of these important milestones along the road from antiquity, there are long periods when nothing seems to be mentioned in contemporary written sources about this part of the Indian Ocean coast.

Of internal sources for these early periods we have to look to objects to help fill the gap, though the Banaadir coast is notoriously short on archaeological investigation. Beginning with Portuguese entry into this arena at the end of the fifteenth century, followed by other Europeans seeking new trading markets, then the colonisation first by the Omani Arabs and then the Italians, the recording of life, politics and commerce of the area become more extensive, if still, as with earlier reporting, by foreigners. Throughout much of the period considered in this short history, the stone town communities of the Banaadir have retained a way of life and a distinctive social identity that are the subject of subsequent chapters.

**CHAPTER TWO – SOCIETY AND KINSHIP PATTERNS.** Here we look at the social structures and polity of the coastal communities, and focus specifically on the Reer

Xamar of Muqdisho, which is the largest and best documented of the Banaadiri settlements. Whilst reference is made to the available literature, the material in this chapter relies heavily on ‘field notes’ and information gathered in the course of this research. The legends of Arab ancestry – and which almost completely disregard any reference to a pre-Islamic era – is a common thread that runs through the traditions of all Somali groups, and the Banaadiri are no different in this regard. Different, however, is the structure and makeup of the urban polity, which consists of many freestanding lineage groups, unrelated by blood, but held together by shared traditions and lifestyle. Concepts of ethnicity and identity are discussed. The distribution of the many Reer Xamar descendent groups by locality is reported on, and also the binary characteristics of the social units, including the dual social stratification into *gibil cad* and *gibil madow*. Reference is made to the built environment and its significance in the shaping of urban cultural practices. The chapter also contains some diagrams on lineage divisions and groupings, and on genealogies.

CHAPTER THREE – LEGENDARY HISTORY. Standing in parallel with the material of the preceding chapter on social organisation, this section contains some legends of origin, and information on specific festivals and rituals collected from a range of sources. Defining traditions as practised by the Reer Xamar include marriage customs, and the local festivals of *shir* and *istaqfurow*. Some stories of founding heroes as illustrative of people’s own view of self are presented. Societies and their traditions are evolving entities that are affected by political, social and technological changes. The problem with the evolving nature of culture is that elements which may once have been important may become altered as a society seeks to re-evaluate and redefine itself. In Xamar and other towns of the Banaadir, and in Banaadiri communities in the diaspora, traditions are remembered, ancestors still venerated with commemorative celebrations, prayers and feasting, and wedding rituals enacted, and are the subject of this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR – ISLAM, SUFISM, AND THE FIGURE AND ROLE OF SHEIKH ABBA AL-SHASHY. Still on the subject of defining traditions, aspects of Banaadiri local Islamic religious practice, including those relating to ‘sainthood’ and veneration of ancestors are discussed. Somalis overall are Sunni Muslims, Sufism among Somali



Muslims is well developed,<sup>31</sup> and nowhere more so than among the Somali Banaadiri communities. Sufi practices among the Banaadiri are described in this chapter, and reference is made to the recurring tensions with factions who consider themselves adherents of Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ and oppose some local religious practices of the Banaadiri. Information is presented on the range of *awliya*, their lineages, their adherence to different brotherhoods, their places of burial – and hence the places of pilgrimage. In local religious tradition, pilgrimages, know as *siyaaro*, are made annually to the shrines of revered ancestors; the *siyaaro* is distinct from the universal Muslim practice of the *hajj* ritual pilgrimage to Mecca that is the fifth pillar of Islam. Some of these Somali *awliya*, such as Sheikh Uways or Aweys (both spellings are used, as found in material by referenced writers or as preferred spelling by local Banaadiri) of Baraawe, have achieved fame and become widely revered beyond the limits of their own community, whilst for others their memory is kept alive by their immediate family and lineage. A major part of this chapter is devoted to the life and work of Sheikh Abba, an eminent Banaadiri theologian of the late twentieth century who is remembered for being a bulwark of protection against the assaults on persons and way of life of his community, in the wake of the 1991 civil war. This latter topic of the impact of the civil war on Basaadir communities is the focus of the final chapter in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE – POST-1991 PERIOD OF CIVIL STRIFE. The rapid unravelling of the Somali state in 1991 and the subsequent and unending turmoil of a civil war have impacted on all sections of society, but significantly so on Banaadiri communities. In the absence of strong clan affiliations with the armed factions that replaced the Barre dictatorship, the unarmed Banaadiri people found themselves vulnerable to attack by lawless militia and marauding bands. This short concluding section examines the social and economic violence that has been carried out against this community, creating displacement and flight into exile, and a struggling community that has remained *in situ*. It considers the challenges to identity, to the community’s integrity and the very threat to cultural survival of the Somali ‘people of the ports’.

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<sup>31</sup> Orwin2004: 716.

## Literature Review

In spite of there being references from earliest times to the places and people from along the southern Somali coast, the references are scattered and mention is commonly interspersed with or incidental to studies around other groups and topics. In the course of researching this community, valuable written sources have been many, and are summarised as follows.

Of standard historical and geographical documents which make mention of this coast and its inhabitants, the earliest reliable document is the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, an original Greek text of the first century CE. Later Arab sources from the early part of the second millennium are al-Mas'udi, al-Idrisi and Yaqut, which I have consulted from secondary sources. Of later material, the most famous traveller's account is that of Ibn Battuta from the fourteenth century, for which there are many translations into English, and these are mentioned in context. Then there is further valuable small detail some time later from Portuguese histories and documents of the sixteenth century, among which the name of the historian Barbosa stands out. As an Omani possession from 1696, some tangential information can be gleaned in the context of administrative affairs during the time that the Banaadir coast was governed from Zanzibar. Useful sources thereafter for the later modern period are accounts by European and American visitors to the coast for purposes of investigating commercial potential, for mapping of the area, and in connection with policing the abolition of the slave trade. Then with the sale of the Banaadir ports by the Omanis to the Italians in the 1890s, historical information is uninterrupted and the social narrative becomes more discernable in the record.

The purpose for gathering information during the Italian colonial administration was, like colonial interests everywhere, concerned with questions of how best to manage their colonial subjects and implement economic and social directives of their home government. Nevertheless, as a derivative of such research, colonial officials or the scholars employed by them produced a corpus of literature on history and society on whom later writers acknowledge their dependence. As a source of ethnographic material on Somalia overall, and with attention given to the Banaadir, the work of Enrico Cerulli,

a distinguished orientalist scholar who served in the colonial administration, has been the most influential. The body of his work is extensive: between 1916 and 1946 he published over thirty articles on Somalia<sup>32</sup> covering language, history and culture, and this was eventually collected together in a three volume work *Somalia: Scritti Vari Editi ed Inediti*, published in 1957. His work on Muqdisho and the coastal communities has yet to be surpassed. (Similarly noteworthy, and emanating from the same colonial context, is Grotanelli's documentation of the southern coastal culture of the Somali Bajuni. Though the Bajunis feature in the history of the Banaadir and Swahili coasts, they are outside of the scope of this study.) Giuseppi in his *Genti di Somalia* (1922), was the first to present a documentation of the lineages of the Reer Xamar of Muqdisho, as far as I am aware. His book has been of particular relevance to my own investigation of the descent structure and social histories of the Banaadiri of Muqdisho specifically. Whilst Caniglia's scheme differs in some respects from my own findings (and it is not unusual to find competing schemes existing for the same lineage<sup>33</sup>), his mapping out of the freestanding descent groups of the Reer Xamar provided a useful basis from which to investigate the features of Banaadir urban social organisation.

As has been noted by previous researchers on southern Somalia although the material produced during the Italian colonial administration had its own agenda it is not without merit. In addition to the work of Cerulli and Caniglia described above, the works of Robecchi Bricchetti, Corni, and Stefanini are worthy of mention, and are referenced in the text or the bibliography.

An important twentieth century indigenous source on Banaadiri lineages and society is an Arabic text, *Bughyat al-amal fi tarikh al-sumal* by a local historian, 'Aydarus Sharif 'Ali. 'Aydarus, himself from a Shingani family of Sharifs, was commissioned by the Italian colonial administration to write a history of the Somalis, but fortuitously for this research, the book, published in Arabic in Muqdisho in 1950, is devoted largely to a history of his own Banaadiri people (235 of the 290 pages). The book could be criticised for being short on references, but this weakness must be set against the writer's undoubted advantage of having a shared heritage with the people about whom

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<sup>32</sup> Cassanelli 1983:32.

<sup>33</sup> For example findings of the Joint Fact-Finding Mission Report of the British and other European govts, 2000, and Reese's findings in 1996 give different schemes for the Asharaf lineages.

he writes. Well educated and an ‘insider’,<sup>34</sup> he was well qualified to write a book on the history of the Banaadiri people if not on the history of Somalia. To deal first with the book’s shortcomings, the writer was a local businessman and historian from Shingani with his own expected bias in reporting history. In addition, the work is slight on references, even though he describes it as being based on what is written in books, on archaeological evidence, as well as on traditional stories.<sup>35</sup> It repeats common misconceptions as to how Marco Polo, for example, got his information. But in my opinion there are some critical factors which outweigh its shortcomings and make it a valuable source of information on internal Banaadiri life and culture. First, his lineage affiliation, which is that of Asharaf-Reer Xamar, means that he represents a voice largely absent in the reporting of Somali ethnography and history. His presentation on a Banaadiri past contains material not found elsewhere. Even though his ‘written and archaeological’ sources in general are not clearly identified, he would certainly have been able to draw on personal knowledge of traditions, and as a member of the respected and well connected Saada (Asharaf) community, it can be assumed that he would be in a position to consult with knowledgeable elders of his day, and access manuscripts in private hands that might not so easily be disclosed to an outsider.

In using texts in Arabic that are specific to this study, such as ‘Aydarus, I have employed the assistance of Arabic speakers and translators, who are acknowledged by name in the Preface. Another book by a Banaadiri author and engineer, Nuredin Hagi Scikei, concerns stone town architecture in the Banaadir port cities. Published in 2002, Scikei has compiled a carefully referenced dual language (Italian and English) study on Banaadir stone town architecture and building techniques, and their comparison with those of Yemen. Both these works by Banaadiri writers are revealing of their authors’ perception of self that favours an Islamic identity and Arab cultural elements.

There are several sources in Arabic which have a contribution to make to the story of the Banaadir, and these have been consulted in translations and are identified in the text as well as in the bibliography. Most significantly, works containing specific references to the east African coastal communities in the twelfth and thirteenth century are by

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<sup>34</sup> In the text, he lists his education and also his illustrious Asharaf family genealogy.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. unnumbered Preface.

mediaeval Arab geographers and historians, whose information was acquired either first hand or through other people. For these, a debt is owed to Freeman-Grenville (1975) for his invaluable collection in translation of the principle documents on which knowledge of the East African coast prior to 1500 CE is primarily based.

There are two works concerning Islam and Arab culture which I have found especially instructive. The first is *Muqaddimah* by the fourteenth-century Arab scholar, Ibn Khaldun. His discussion of ‘the various kinds of sciences’ and ‘methods of instruction’, and of dynasties and authority in state formation, find application in aspects of Banaadiri society. For example, the value placed on and rigour demanded for the study of different fields of traditional Arab scholarship are reflected in the combined learning of the Muqdisho *uliima* (see my Chapter 4). The conditions and aspects of authority in the city-state, and of making a living in the context of what he calls ‘sedentary civilisation’, also find resonance in Banaadiri urban social organisation.<sup>36</sup> Also in this general category is Hitti’s *History of the Arabs*, first published in 1937 and which has not since been out of print. It has been a constant reference source on Arab culture, Arab scholarship and religious movements.

It is impossible to embark on any research on the Somali people without consulting the exhaustive body of work by the leading social anthropologist and recognised authority on Somalia, I.M. Lewis. His work is remarkable for what it can reveal on all aspects of Somali society, and for providing an overall national and clan framework within which to situate and reflect on the position of any Somali group, large or small, central or at the margins. In this particular instance I have found his work on Somali ‘saints’ and ‘sainthood’ particularly informative. His engagement with the nature of ‘saints’ and ‘sainthood’ among Somalis, which he has continued to return to throughout his distinguished academic career. is represented in the collection of essays (1998), some previously published but hard to access material, plus new material especially written for the collection.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Rosenthal (trans.) 2005 edn. Of Ibn Khaldun’s *An Introduction to History*.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis 1998 is a compendium of his collected essays on Islam among Somalis.

Contemporary scholars writing in English who have turned their attention to the Banaadiri, to a greater or lesser extent, include Cassanelli, Alpers, Hersi and Luling. Cassanelli's history of some southern Somali groups in *'Shaping...'* (1982) helps to redress the balance of earlier historiography in English that is heavily weighted with information on nomadic Somali groups, and he reminds us of longstanding and substantial links between coast and interior. The complex mix of minority and majority ethnic sections of Somali society is again succinctly captured in his monograph (1994) that considers the position of minorities in Somalia in the wake of the 1991 civil war. A collection of papers by Alpers in the 1980s provided some intriguing glimpses into the Banaadiri community that had been practically unnoticed in the literature. Luling's *Somali Sultanate* (2003) is a model in-depth ethnography of a city-state in the Somali interior (an unusual though not a unique occurrence),<sup>38</sup> whose social structure and polity has much in common with the Banaadir coastal towns, and which historical commercial contacts are documented therein.<sup>39</sup> Hersi (1977) investigates the Arab factor in Somali society overall, and takes the traditional mainstream Somali view that the people of the ports are essentially an Arab group. In the two decades since the collapse of the Somali state and the ensuing civil unrest, opportunities for research in Somalia have been absent, so the work done by Scott Reese in this period on the religious lineages and learned *uliima* of the coast is commendable. Reese's journal articles on the religious lineages and the role of religious scholars in the social processes, culminating in his book, *Renewers of the Age: Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir* (2008), have been especially welcome additions.

In addition to the work by Lewis, already mentioned, other scholars with a particular interest in the Sufi traditions of Somalia and the Banaadir include B.W. Andrzejewski (1975, 1983), Brad Martin (1976, 1992) and Said Samater (1992) who have explored the lives of individual 'saints' and Sufi brotherhoods. Similarly the recent work of Alexander Gori (2003) contributes new hagiographic material not previously published on two Somali sheikhs, and a suggested framework for considering this particular genre of record. For information on Islamic practices in the Horn of Africa the pioneering work by J.S. Trimingham (1952) on Islam in Ethiopia (but which includes the wider

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<sup>38</sup> Another is Lugh, inland towards the border with Ethiopia, more connected in trade and orientation to Baraawe

<sup>39</sup> Personal correspondence email 25 Mar. 2008 '...the Geledi are very much influenced by the Reer Hamar - I realise this more and more'. See also Luling 2002:3.

Horn of Africa) is cited, and also his work on the Sufi orders in Islam (1971) for helping to unlock the intellectual and organisational dimensions of Sufism. Valuable though Trimingham's work is, and whilst what he had to say in 1952 on Islam in Somalia has generally been used as the yardstick by later scholars, it is respectfully suggested that a reassessment, encompassing a more open-minded approach to local Somali Islamic practices, would be welcomed.

Archaeological investigation of the Banaadir coast is practically non-existent, though the Banaadir coastal towns make a few cameo appearances in the work of the eminent archaeologist, Neville Chittick. The 'founding' of Muqdisho and Baraawe as stone towns, in or around the tenth century are cited in the exhaustive two volume document on his excavations of the founding of the Swahili town of Kilwa. Chittick engaged in a small scale study in Xamar Weyne itself, lasting but a few days, in the 1970s and written up under the title 'Mediaeval Mogadishu' (1982). The findings are referred to in context, but the limited scope of the investigation could do little more than confirm the early existence of settlement here, and some finds of domestic items. Unfortunately, it can be safely predicted that Somalia, including the Banaadir coast will remain archaeologically unexplored for years to come.

For information on the Banaadir port towns during the Portuguese period in East Africa, the work by Justes Strandes is a critical contribution, because although the Banaadir coast was never conquered by Portugal, it was integral to East African Indian Ocean mercantile trade, and so of significance to Portuguese activities in trying to control the commerce. Strandes consulted source material in the archives in Lisbon, and provides information and commentary on a mass of Portuguese records of military engagements, treaties, correspondence, and contacts with the people of the Swahili and Banaadir coast at a certain period in their history. The work was written in German and completed in 1899 and not translated into English until 1960, but has become an indispensable source of information for the two hundred years of Portuguese domination.

Travellers' tales from the first and fourteenth centuries have already been cited. In later material from the nineteenth century, it is again the travel narratives that provide contemporary accounts of life at the coast, relations with the interior and with the Omani Sultanate at Zanzibar, and commercial activities, including the slave trade and European efforts for its abolition. Significant among these are reports by two British officers, Lieutenant Christopher (1843), and Captain Owen (in Coupland 1938), and an extraordinary three volume work with an additional folio of drawings and prints, by the Frenchman, Captain Charles Guillain. His *Documents sur l'histoire, la géographie, et le commerce de L'Afrique orientale* (1857) is an immensely detailed work, which contains several chapters dealing with his visits to Muqdisho and other settlements of the Somali coast, as well as inland to Afgooye. Unlike the earlier account of Muqdisho by Ibn Battuta that is widely quoted in translation in the literature on Somalia, Guillain's material is relatively little known, and for this reason I have included more details from his work in the next chapter on history.<sup>40</sup>

The link between the settlements of the Banaadir and Swahili coasts has been an important aspect of the region's history. In situating the Banaadiri as part of a wider Indian Ocean coastal community, therefore, I have also been drawn to, and extrapolated from the findings and opinions of those scholars writing about the Swahili communities of the East African coast. Research into the Swahili past has indeed attracted considerably more attention from scholars than has the Banaadir. Important among these are Middleton, Prins and Pouwels. John Middleton's (1992) interpretation of Swahili society and Prins's (1967) engagement with the complexities of a stratified society have been especially useful in informing my thinking, and I have found in their work valuable comparisons with Banaadiri society for reflection. Pouwels for his discourse on the history of Islam at the coast, and his collection of brief biographies of the Shafi'i Ulama have also suggested a broader base from which to think about Banaadiri social and religious history.

There are three additional notes to make before ending this short review of the literature. The first concerns the work of the Arabist, R.B. Serjeant. His studies on the

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<sup>40</sup> Of interest to some, perhaps, a biography of this remarkable traveller has been written by Michel Reuillard (1995).



Yemen Arab communities of Hadramawt with whom some of the Somali patrician families have legendary links, has thrown up fascinating parallels of ritual practice and these are referenced in the study when relevant. Second, the incidence of small Indian communities in all of the port cities is acknowledged, and the presence of Indian merchants over centuries is noted in passing, but the India connection has been given little significance in the literature on Somalia to date. Some current research into India-East Africa connections in a recently published collection of papers, *India in Africa-Africa in India* (2008)<sup>41</sup> highlights the longstanding relationship over millennia rather than centuries, and future research in this direction may yet reveal important new data on what must have been two-way traffic of people as well as goods. Third is the quantity of written material about and by the Banaadiri people themselves that has appeared since the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 and the resulting Somali diaspora. Much of this material is on the Internet, on what may be termed ‘partisan’ websites, usually in Somali but often also in English. As might be expected, the content on these sites varies greatly in quality and accountability. Of the print material, a collection of papers and documents, published in 2010, which is noteworthy for the distinctive Banaadiri perspective on recent events that it presents (reflected in its title), is *Somalia: The Struggle of Benadir People & The Betrayals of History*. Compiled and edited by two senior members of the Banaadiri educated elite, Ahmed Sharif Abbas and Khalid Maou Abdulkadir.<sup>42</sup> And from the same authors is a manuscript in preparation that compiles the biographies of one hundred Banaadiri personalities who have made a difference in the community’s and the country’s history.

### **Note on Language and Spelling**

Somali words are given in Somali spelling. In using Somali words, the spellings follow ‘standard Somali’ as found in dictionaries and most published works and newspapers. The dialect speech of the Reer Xamar is a variant of southern Somali, but is not yet standardised as a written medium (and *af-Xamari* as the dialect is styled by linguists, probably will remain a medium of oral communication); it is only used here in the spelling of some names and in transcription of some Reer Xamar rhymes and sayings. All Reer Xamar dialect speakers will also understand and speak ‘standard Somali’.

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<sup>41</sup> Hawley (ed.) 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Abbas, A.S, & K.M. Abdulkadir, 2010.

I have elected to use Somali spellings for place names: Muqdisho (not Mogadishu), Baraawe (not Brava), Marka (not Merca), and Banaadir (not Benadir). These spellings, however, will not apply in quoted texts, where the authors' spellings are retained. For readers not familiar with Somali orthography, most of the letters are pronounced in English as might be expected. Single vowels are given their full value (as in Italian), double vowels indicate a lengthening but not a changing of the sound of the first vowel, as in 'Banaadir', and 'Afgooye'. Some sounds are more difficult. The letter 'c' stands for the 'voiced pharyngeal fricative' known in Arabic as 'ayn', but unfamiliar (and almost unpronounceable and inaudible) to most speakers of European language. The letter 'x' stands for the 'voiceless pharyngeal fricative', an 'h-like' sound as in the Somali spelling of 'Xamar' and 'Axmed' and usually rendered as 'h' in standard English usage. As more readers of English will be familiar with the use of the apostrophe ' for 'ayn' in transliteration, and h for its voiceless equivalent, for the ease of reading, I have chosen to use these. For Somali personal names, therefore, except in the case of interviewees and others who have a preferred Somali spelling for their names, these are rendered as 'Ali, 'Abdi Mohamed and Hassan, rather than Cali, Cabdi Moxamed and Xassan. The presence of *ta* and *ka* at the end of Somali nouns indicate the definite article. For the word 'Somali' itself, I follow Standard English usage rather than the phonetically more accurate 'Soomaali'. I wish it were not so complicated! A fuller account of standard Somali pronunciation can be found in Orwin (1995).

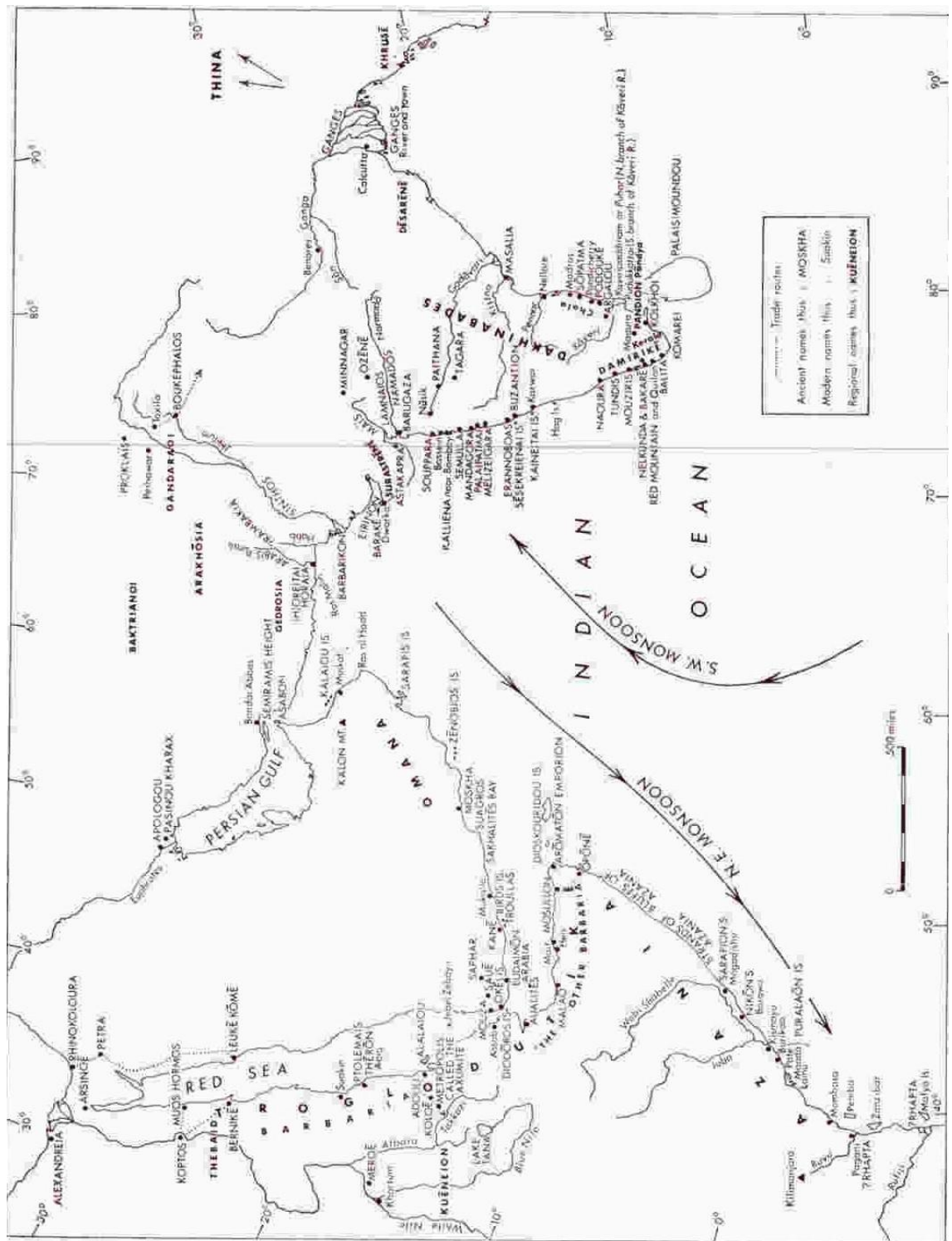
For names and Arabic words for which there already exists an accepted English spelling, as in qadi, Koran, sheikh, and Muhammad (when referring to the Prophet Muhammad), I have used these rather than their Somali spellings. For these Arabic transliterations I have been guided by the spellings used in the extensive glossary in Trimingham's study of Sufi traditions.<sup>43</sup> One anomaly which the careful reader might pick up is my spelling of Asharaf. This is the spelling that my Asharaf friends and informants prefer, and I have used it.

Somali and Arabic words used in the text are listed in the Glossary.

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<sup>43</sup> Trimingham 1998:300-14.

**Note on use of ‘Somalia’:** Since the overthrow of Mohamed Siad Barre’s regime in 1991, and the turbulent aftermath, the territory known by the name of Somalia has fractured into many separate, federal, autonomous or semi-autonomous political units, and two decades later many parts are still without effective administration. However, I use the term Somalia to refer to the territory comprised within the former state except where otherwise specified, and recognise that some Somalis may today wish to dissociate themselves from being citizens of Somalia.



Map 2. Indian Ocean showing direction of Monsoon Winds (Huntingford's Periplus)

# Chapter 1

## Banaadiri History from Earliest Times To 1900 CE<sup>44</sup>

The Banaadir coast of southern Somalia has a documented history of at least two thousand years, with towns that have a built environment of great age, older than anything to be found in the interior of the country. This chapter will look at the Banaadir coastal settlements in history, from earliest times to the end of the nineteenth century, and attempt to provide a comprehensive historical time line for the Banaadir coast and, by implication, the various influences that have helped to shape the urban polity and lifestyle.

The history of the Banaadir coast before the first century CE is largely a matter of conjecture, while what took place beyond 1896, when the Banaadir became a colony of Italy, is modern history and a matter of record (not dealt with here). The narrative that can be constructed for the period in between is uneven in detail, with relatively long stretches when no direct sources of information are available. Historical evidence from the most recent past is linked directly or indirectly to colonial activities and interests in this region. They include records of French, British and Italian activities, primarily those of reconnaissance missions in search of commercial and colonising opportunities. The first Europeans to enter this area of the western Indian Ocean had been the Portuguese, at the end of the fifteenth century. Although they did not establish a colony along the Banaadiri part of this coast, their records of failed attempts and hostile relations with the local populations provide a further contemporary source, though again from an outsider perspective. Before this period the people of the Banaadir lived in a setting out of sight of Europe, but linked to the Arab world and, to a lesser extent, Asia.

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<sup>44</sup> CE stands for *Common Era*, which has become common preferred usage to replace AD, an abbreviation for *Anno Domini* with its Christian-specific connotations. CE and AD have the same value. The word 'common' simply means that it is based on the most frequently used calendar system: the Gregorian Calendar. AH is used here for dates according to the Islamic calendar, Al-Hijra, which begins with the date in 622 CE when the Prophet Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina, and set up the first Islamic state.

With only intermittent references in the literature, what we know of life and events prior to the fifteenth century is very limited. There are two important exceptions to the obscurity of this early period with eyewitness accounts that bring the picture into sharper focus. The first is by the unknown writer of a trading manual (*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) written some time in the first century CE. The second is a vivid account of life in Muqdisho some 1,200 years later by the inveterate Arab traveller and diarist, Ibn Battuta.

Internal written sources have yet to be brought to light, though early mosque and gravestone inscriptions to be found in Muqdisho and Baraawe must count as local sources of history. Two early documents originating on the East African coast shed some light on the history of the coast in the Middle Ages, and there are intermittent references to the Banaadir by Arab geographers from around 1200-1300 CE.

Complementing written references are the oral traditions of the people. These include stories of the settling of the Banaadiri towns by Arabs fleeing wars and persecution from the first century of Islam and after. Such legends, as we shall see, are repeated in like format for other communities of the East African Swahili coastal communities, Zanzibar, Comoros and Madagascan islands.

All of the above will be dealt with in more detail below, but first, since I know from experience that great store is placed by Somalis on the belief that their land was linked in trade to pharaonic-Egypt, it seems necessary to see if some credence can be given to it, particularly with regard to the Banaadir.<sup>45</sup> Some local manifestations of the belief include the tradition that present day Somalia is the place referred to by the ancient Egyptians as 'The Land of Punt'; the ubiquitous use of the name by small and large local trading enterprises; the choice of the name 'Puntland' for a recently constituted autonomous region of Somalia; and finally a mural that adorned the walls of the Muqdisho National Museum when I lived there, reproducing an Egyptian temple painting 'proving' the ancient Egyptians came here.

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<sup>45</sup> Huntingford 1980: 11-12 & 198-9.

OF EGYPT. The ancient Egyptians knew about the Horn of Africa chiefly as a source of frankincense, which was highly prized for use in their temples and for mummification. Temple records refer to trade with this part of the world, most famous in the records of a trading expedition sent during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut in the fifteenth century BC to Punt.<sup>46</sup> The expedition was to procure ‘myrrh, fragrant gums, resin and aromatic woods’, and is recorded on the walls of the temple of Dair al Bahari at Thebes.<sup>47</sup> Hatshepsut’s successor, Thutmose III sent a similar mission in 1479 BC which brought from the same land the ‘usual cargo’ of ‘ivory, ebony, panther-skins and slaves’.<sup>48</sup> Place names, were often applied very loosely by early geographers and travellers, which has allowed, for instance, both Ethiopia and Somalia on the African side of the Red Sea, and Yemen on the opposite coast, to lay claim to being the place spoken of as ‘Punt’ by the pharaohs. Frankincense in particular, of the sought after products by ancient Egypt, was and is to be found in all three places, though some of the other products such as ivory and leopard skins would have been from the African side. The aromatic frankincense resin (*foox*, or *luubaan* in Somali) is an important cash crop to the present day in Somalia, but of the Red Sea (more precisely the Gulf of Aden) coast regions.<sup>49</sup>

Knowledge of this area by early geographers of the classical world, such as Herodotus and Strabo, writing in the fifth and first centuries BC respectively, seem only to know of the African coast of the Red Sea as far as Cape Gardafui, but with no mention of places along its Indian Ocean littoral.<sup>50</sup> Indeed on Strabo’s map of the world, the world in the south ends at the Somali Horn (see Map 2.). If the East African coast was unknown to ancient Egypt, any goods from this coast finding their way to Egyptian markets, if not traded directly, must therefore have been exchanged in entrepôt ports of the Red Sea.

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<sup>46</sup> Hatshepsut’s dynasty: 1472-58BC.

<sup>47</sup> Hitti 2002:34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Hitti 2002:36.

<sup>50</sup> Huntingford’s translation of *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (PME)* cites Herodotus’s and Strabo’s reports on Africa in the sixth century BC (*PME* p1-2), and from 300 BC (pp166-172) respectively.

Having said that, several points may be worth noting in this regard. First is that by 100 CE or thereabouts, trading voyages from Egypt were certainly rounding the Cape, being ‘drawn by the current’, and ‘made in July’, to trade with markets to the south.<sup>51</sup> One of the first trading stations along that course was Opone, identified as the Ras Hafun promontory, about eighty miles south of Gardafui.<sup>52</sup> According to Huntingford, the name has descended from the ancient Egyptian name for the region, Pun-t.<sup>53</sup> There seems no reason why the seasonal trade routes written about by the author of the *Periplus* in 100 CE had not been part of the way of life here for centuries earlier, the period of which cannot be estimated. One further point of interest concerns the seasonal nature of maritime trade and a natural phenomenon. Mention is made in meteorological and oceanographic literature of the presence of an especially strong ‘Somali Current’ along Somalia’s Indian Ocean coast. The current is notable for its high speeds and dramatic variations during the monsoon seasons.<sup>54</sup> In view of this, the comment of the early pilots of ships being ‘drawn by the current’ beyond the protected waters of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden into the open waters of the Indian Ocean acquires special import.

From speculation about the history of the Banaadir in the first two millennia BC we move onto firmer ground, drawing on more authoritative sources to help move the story forward.

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**BANAADIR INDIAN OCEAN TRADE AND THE MONSOON WINDS.** In this part of the world, every November to March<sup>55</sup>, the strong monsoon winds, aptly named ‘trade winds’, blow steadily from the northeast, and then the process is reversed, and

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<sup>51</sup> Huntingford 1980:28.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Huntingford 1980:94. Ras Hafun is in the semi-autonomous region of present day Somalia called ‘Puntland’.

<sup>54</sup> There are many references in meteorology and oceanography literature to a ‘Somali flow’ or Somali Current’, describing surface currents during the summer months (northern hemisphere) caused by the blowing of the southwest monsoon along the coast waters for about 1,500 km, with velocities reaching up to 14 km per hour off Somalia. See for example Seasonal reverse in the Somali current, *Lively Data: January 26, 2010*; <http://www.avisioceanobs.com/es/casero/index.html> (accessed 21/08/10), See also: Benny 2002.

<sup>55</sup> The times of the monsoons are: southwest from March to September; northeast from the end of November to February.



from April till September they blow in the opposite direction. The western shores of the Indian Ocean follow an almost straight line from Zanzibar in East Africa, across the mouth of the Gulf of Aden, to the Gulf of Oman in the northeast, so that the monsoon winds run parallel to the East African coast and south Arabia before the coast bends eastwards and then south-south east down the length of India. The southern limits of the monsoon winds in the western Indian Ocean is at the tropic of Capricorn.

This reliable natural phenomenon of the monsoon seasons would have been known to mariners from across the Indian Ocean littoral from the early days of sailing ships. From it arose the seasonal coming and going of traders from Arabia and India to East Africa, knowing that the wind that blew them steadily down the African coast in one season, after a short season of trading, would blow them back again in another.<sup>56</sup> Beyond the tropic of Capricorn, off the coast of what is today Mozambique, the monsoon wind peters out. In the days when seafaring vessels were dependent on sail, any ship venturing beyond this point would have to struggle back against a southward-flowing current, called Aghulas.<sup>57</sup>

If geography alone were not enough for it to be safely inferred that the East African coast would have been part of the wider Indian Ocean trade, the ancient nature of these contacts is confirmed in a navigational guide of the first century CE. This most important of early records is the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, ‘periplus’ meaning circumnavigation, and ‘Erythraean Sea’ being the Greek name for the Indian Ocean. The work is a merchants’ handbook to the Indian Ocean and contiguous waters - the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf – and describes significant landmarks, and the towns where trade was done. There have been various translations<sup>58</sup> but little is known about either the author (perhaps Greek or Egyptian) or where it originated (although likely to have been from an Egyptian port on the Mediterranean (e.g. Alexandria) or the Red Sea coast of Egypt, and estimates to its dating also vary (80 CE, 100 CE or even 130 CE).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Coupland, 1938:16.

<sup>57</sup> Hall 1996: 131n2.

<sup>58</sup> Including by Hjalmar Frisk (1927), and by W Schoff (1912).

<sup>59</sup> Huntingford 1980: 11-12; 198-9.

Important here, however, is that it is the first known eyewitness account of the Indian Ocean towns along the East African coast. It is not until this document, at the beginning of the Common era, that we have records of the existence of named towns of the Banaadir, and glimpses of everyday life at that time. Although the *PME* chapters 12-18 covering the sailings from Cape Gardafui to ‘the last marts of Azania’, pertinent to this study, are barely a paragraph each in length, these have been augmented and illuminated by the summaries and commentaries of the translator, providing valuable information on life here at this time.<sup>60</sup> There are descriptions of the Somali coast from Zeyla’ on the Red Sea coast to Baraawe on the Indian Ocean littoral and then beyond to Zanzibar, and to a place called Rapta, the last market where trade was done. Significant landmarks such as the promontories, the river mouths and harbours are noted, some notes on the people and their forms of government, and trade items that were bought and sold in ‘these far-markets’.

The northern coastal stretch, from Aualites (present day Zayla’) to Aromaton Emporion (Cape Gardafui) and its hinterland is referred to as the Land of the Other Barbarians. Barbaria meant ‘the land of the Berbers’ (not barbarians), and presumably is how today’s port of Berbera got its name.<sup>61</sup> The country from just south of Cape Gardafui to the Lamu archipelago (Puralaon Islands) was Azania. ‘Azania’ may derive from a Greek verb meaning ‘to dry, parch up’, in which case would accord with the dry, barren nature of much of the stretch of coast from the Cape to Muqdisho, or it may be from an Arabic word ‘*ajam* for foreigner, or ‘not Arab’.<sup>62</sup>

On the northern coast of Somalia, five ports are listed from Zayla’ (named Aualites) to Cape Gardafui or ‘the Mart Of Spices’ (Aromaton Emporion). All these places exported ivory, tortoiseshell, spices and incense.<sup>63</sup> It is unnecessary to comment further on the *PME* notes to this stretch of coast, which is not part of my study.

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<sup>60</sup> See Huntingford 1980: 26-18, 86-99, 148.

<sup>61</sup> The people of the Somali coast were known to all medieval Arab geographers as Berbers, but differentiated from the Berbers of North Africa.

<sup>62</sup> Huntingford 1980:62.

<sup>63</sup> Huntingford 1980:83.

From the Mart of Spices, the land turns away to the south. There is some discussion about the tides around the ‘precipitous headland’ of Gardafui, and the dangers at certain times.

A local sign of approaching storm is the greater disturbance in the depth of the sea and a change of colour. When this happens, all take shelter.<sup>64</sup>

South of the Cape is just such ‘a place of shelter called Tabai[?]’. Some trading could be done at Tabai. Then from Tabai, ‘drawn by the current,’ the next market is Opone [Ras Hafun].<sup>65</sup>

The voyage from Egypt to all these marts beyond the straits is made in the month of July...[S]ome traders sail direct to these parts, others exchange their goods while sailing along the coast.<sup>66</sup>

From Opone to the next trading post, *PME* describes a 700-mile stretch of somewhat featureless coast where there was ‘no trade and nothing to attract traders, save perhaps the need to put in for repairs or to shelter from a storm’.<sup>67</sup> The description of this part of the coast resonates with my own impression of this same stretch on an April day 2000 yrs later. From the deck of the Lloyd-Triestino ship at sunrise that day, the ‘Mijerteyn’ coast was like a lunar landscape of craggy rocks, and no sign of habitation (though my husband assured me there would be villages and settlements just behind the coast).<sup>68</sup>

Next is reached the trading stations of the Banaadir stretch of coast, named the courses of Azania:

[At] the courses of Azania, the first called Sarapion’s, then that of Nikon after which there are several rivers and several other roadsteads separated

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<sup>64</sup> *PME* Ch. 12.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> *PME* Ch.14.

<sup>67</sup> April 22-23, 1964.

<sup>68</sup> 23/04/1964.

by several courses and stations of a day's journey each.”<sup>69</sup> Beyond this the coastline is described as being more lush<sup>70</sup>

Let us try to untangle this information: Sarapion may be Muqdisho with Nikon being Baraawe ‘one hundred miles to the south’ (Huntingford’s commentary),<sup>71</sup> Muqdisho and Baraawe are indeed 112 miles/180km apart as the crow flies, but distances in the *PME* are imprecise, referring to ‘courses’, ‘strands’, bluffs and ‘stades’, and it may be that present day Marka, between Muqdisho and Baraawe could be a candidate for one or other of these places. Marka, as one of the few towns of the Banaadiri having a natural harbour, was more important in earlier centuries, and was the first capital of the Italian colony at the end of the nineteenth century. Where the coastline is described as becoming richer in foliage, this would accord with the location of the mangrove swamps that characterise coastal vegetation for the Lamu archipelago and beyond. Before that, the only permanent rivers (Juba and Shabelle) end just north of Kismaayo, on the Somalia stretch, so the *PME* reference to several rivers and roadsteads a day’s journey apart may refer to creeks and seasonal rivers.

Most of the natural features and some of the ‘marts’ mentioned can be given their modern names, but questions of identification are of relatively minor importance compared to the descriptions, albeit very brief descriptions, of the inhabitants and their political regime. The inhabitants of the coast are described as having ‘separate chiefs for each place’. These places are reported to have been under some kind of foreign domination by kingdoms on the Arabian side of the Red Sea, the kingdom of Mapharitis in the case of the Banaadir section, and the kingdom of Ausan in the case of more southerly marts of the coast and islands.

Both Ausan and Mapharitis were states of ancient Yemen, in the area of Aden (for a map of these kingdoms and country names from *PME* see Huntingford’s translation 1980), that were later absorbed into the Himyarite Kingdom or Himyar of ancient

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<sup>69</sup> Serapion and Nikon are Greek names and not distorted forms of local names (Huntingford *PME* p 3).

<sup>70</sup> *PME* Ch. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Huntingford 1980:95.

Yemen.<sup>72</sup> It is not clear what kind of arrangement was in place, whether for example the Arab influence was primarily concerned with the control of trade and collection of taxes, or whether it extended to active political rule. The *PME* at chapter 31 notes that ‘Azania is under Kharibaēl and the Mapharitic chief.’<sup>73</sup> However, it appears that tribute was paid to a king in Mouza (Mocha), who had local representatives, and at chapter 22 the ruler of Maphirites is called Kholaihos.<sup>74</sup> That some of the merchants and agents knew the language ‘through residence and intermarriage’ are indicative of more than a transitory association. Whether these agents and the ‘chiefs’ who ruled on behalf of the Yemeni sovereign were sent from Mouza or were indigenous is not explained. The author sometimes speaks of the Azanian coast as also including the Ausanitic section of coast as far south as Rhapta, with common patterns of trade and trade goods.<sup>75</sup>

...the last part of Azania [is] called Rhapta... where there is a great deal of ivory and tortoiseshell...each place likewise has its own chief. The Mopharitic chief rules it according to an ancient agreement by which it falls under the kingdom which has become first [most important] in Arabia. Under the king the people of Mouza hold it by payment of tribute, and send ships with captains and agents who are mostly Arabs, and are familiar through residence and intermarriage with the nature of the places and their language.<sup>76</sup>

Imported goods to the East African coast are listed as including ‘lancets, hatchets, daggers, awls, and glass’, traded by the merchants from Mouza (the place is now inland, and replaced by today’s port of Mocha) in exchange for ‘ivory in great quantity, rhinoceros horn, tortoise-shell, and a little palm-oil’. Tortoiseshell was also an item of export, which the author explains was ‘cut up for boxes, plates, cake dishes and other similar things.’ Ships also came from the Indian coast of the Indian Ocean, ‘bringing to

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<sup>72</sup> This is not the last time we shall come across Himyar in connection with the people of the Banaadir. In relation to the period of current interest, the Himyaritic Empire was the last of Yemen’s ancient kingdoms. It was also the only one to nominally control most of the territory of modern Yemen. Himyar emerged near the end of the second century BCE but became a powerful state only in the first century CE, when it defeated the more famous Sabaean kingdom (Slavin 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Huntingford 1980: 37

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32 and 37.

<sup>75</sup> The location of Rhapta is not certain, but believed likely to have been near the mouth of the Rufiji river (Tanzania), Strandes 1971:310.

<sup>76</sup> Huntingford 1980, *PME* Ch 16.

those far-side market-towns the products of their own places'. It is further recorded in a simple and chilling phrase, that from near Ras Hafun were obtained 'slaves of the better sort which are brought to Egypt in increasing numbers' (*PME* 1980:28), a trade which was to continue for the next 2,000 years.

The *PME* includes information for traders to the Nabatean city of Petra, on a route inland from one of the Red Sea ports.<sup>77</sup> The Nabateans ruled the area that is today's southern Jordan around 200BC to the first century CE, controlling the caravan routes from the Red Sea to the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. On a visit to Petra in 2009, the tourist literature spoke of traders from Somalia coming to trade their goods of skins and ivory with the Nabataeans.<sup>78</sup>

The *PME* is a short work giving sailing directions and information about navigational hazards, harbours, imports, and exports. It illuminates aspects of life along this coast, and the contacts between Arabia (and by extension Asia) and East Africa that had evidently existed for ages past, and which are nowhere else revealed in the literature in such detail until several hundred years later. It would be late mediaeval times before the Banaadir coast was 'discovered' by Europe. Meanwhile the ebb and flow of life in these settlements continued unaffected by the currents of European history.

As footnotes to the ancient dhow trade and which finds resonance today: the piracy off the Somali coast that makes newspaper headlines in Europe and elsewhere today, was a characteristic of these shipping lanes as recorded in the *PME* 2,000 years ago: which speaks of 'the piratical habits' of the people of the Azanian coast.<sup>79</sup>

Second, the seasonal arrival of dhows from Arabia sailing into Mombasa harbour was a regular annual sight, even up to the late twentieth century, and which I witnessed on

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<sup>77</sup> Huntingford *PME* ch 19 (at p31 referring to Petra and the king of the 'Nabataio').

<sup>78</sup> [I nabatei stipularono accordi commerciali con I minei e I sabei dell'Arabia meridionale, assicurandosi in tal modo il monopolio esclusivo non soltanto dell'incenso ma anche delle spezie che venivano inviate per mare in Arabia dai mercanti somali, etiopi e indiani.] P 179 *Lonely planet: Giordania, 5<sup>th</sup> edition in Italian*. Source not stated, and question raised as to name for 'Somalis' at this time].

<sup>79</sup> Huntingford 1988: 29-30, 146-7.

visits to that town in the 1980s. An account from 1939 of the last days of sail in the Western Indian Ocean by Alan Villiers replicates the voyage from the Gulf of Oman to the East African coast that Arab mariners have been undertaking for millennia. It captures the life and skills of the dhow sailors, the multifaceted aspects of the sailings, and the mariners' relationship with the ports visited along the route.<sup>80</sup> Engaged as a crewmember by a dhow master from Kuwait, Villiers (himself a merchant seaman) sailed down on the northeast monsoon in one season, returning on the southwest winds of the next. The cargo of goods and people have a timeless ring: on the outward voyage were dates from Basra and merchants and families (including around one hundred bound for Muqdisho) who were travelling to trade or reunite with relatives in East Africa. On the return journey the dhow was loaded with mangrove poles. Though the dhow trade is now only a memory in many places of the coast, the following two lines from a Zeyla' love song conjures up memories of the annual arrival of the dhows, *viz.*:

*Reer Saaxil iyo Reer Suur baa yimi*

*Doonyaha Bombay ma bir baa ku go'an?*

Those [the dhows] from Saaxil and those from Sur have come  
Where are the boats from Mumbai – are they in shackles [they are late, so  
what is holding them]?<sup>81</sup>

Note: Saaxil (literally 'coast') usually refers to the Indian Ocean coast of E Africa; Sur is a dhow-building port of the Gulf of Oman. The singer is actually bemoaning the late arrival of her lover, a sailor.

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<sup>80</sup> Villiers 2006, first published 1940.

<sup>81</sup> Abdullahi Yusuf/ Suleiman Mohamud, London 19/05/08.

To pick up the story again from that first eyewitness account, there follows a somewhat dark period for several centuries (c. 100-650 CE). There are no direct references for what is happening along the most westerly shoreline and market towns named in the *PME*. But a cursory look at the literature on trade and navigation in the Indian Ocean in those centuries confirms the dominant position of Arab and Persian merchants, from which it can be inferred that commerce, and probably sporadic immigration, continued unabated in the western Indian Ocean in the pre-Islamic era.<sup>82</sup>

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POST-ISLAM AND LOCAL TRADITIONS. It is to the period from the late seventh century that local traditions from the Banaadir (and Swahili) coast now begin to connect, with references to upheavals driven largely by the religious energy that was rippling out from Arabia with the birth of Islam. Written references, though somewhat random, help to draw a clearer picture of life along the coast. Mentions of East Africa by Arab geographers at various times are supplemented by information from two documents that originate at the coast, as well as what can be learned from mosque and tombstone inscriptions. Pottery and coins discovered in the soil also add to what we know. Then in the fourteenth century we have a dazzling account by the Arab traveller Ibn Battuta of his stay in Muqdisho. We shall look at each of these aspects in more detail.

Mediaeval geographers, namely al-Mas'udi of Baghdad (tenth century historian and geographer), al-Idrisi (geographer of the twelfth century), and Yaqut (geographer of the thirteenth century) provide helpful though intermittent information on our area of study. These classical sources have been reviewed by numerous writers, including the Frenchman Charles Guillain in the nineteenth century, J.S. Trimingham in the twentieth, followed by some brief translations of original sources by Freeman-Grenville.<sup>83</sup> These sources are relied on here. By the early tenth century CE we learnt from al-Mas'udi that Islam was practised along this coast to as far south as Qanbalu (Pemba?). By the mid-twelfth century Marka and also Muqdisho were Muslim (al-Idrisi). The latter place was

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<sup>82</sup> Hasan, Hadi, *A History of Persian Navigation*, Methuen: London 1928 (pp. 62-65); (For the Persian conquest of Yemen/South Arabia in this period see Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, pp. 24-4). See: Vincent, William, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients in the Indian Ocean* (2 Vols.) p 329; Cardell & Daviies: London 1807.

<sup>83</sup> Guillain 1856, Vol.I. ; Trimingham 1964; Freeman-Grenville 1962.



the most important place on the coast in the early thirteenth century according to Yaqut, who regarded it as the frontier between Barbaria and Zanj.<sup>84</sup> East Africa had been called Azania by the Greeks, but later the term Zanj was used by Arabs to denote both the people and the land. Zanj (also transliterated as Zenj or Zini) is from the Arabic for 'land of the Blacks'. Arab descriptions of Zanj have been inconsistent, but the name was used by medieval Arab geographers for the coast of East Africa, and it is the origin of the place name Zanzibar.

The birth of Islam in Arabia (considered 610CE when the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation; Islamic calendar begins 622CE the year of the emigration, *hijra*, of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina) and its spread beyond the Arab world engendered new kinds of travellers coming to East Africa, some who were seeking to spread the new religion, others to settle on the coast for reasons of flight from persecution. The first Muslims who came to East Africa were likely to have been merchants, like their Arab, Persian and Indian predecessors. The trading stations where they had settled became centres for the diffusion of Islam.<sup>85</sup> From as early as the first century of Islam there occurred migrations, of both individuals and groups, who came in search of non-Muslim communities among whom they could proselytise.<sup>86</sup>

Following the Prophet's death in 632 CE and during the period of the first four Caliphates (632-661CE in what became known as the 'reign of the rightly guided') the main body of the Arabs were spreading Islam throughout the Middle East and the whole length of northern Africa.<sup>87</sup> Hersi dates the first migrations of Muslim missionaries, both individuals and groups, who came to the Horn of Africa coast in search of potential converts, to this period.<sup>88</sup>

Then, in the succeeding years of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, to the end of the tenth century, disputes arose over the line of succession from the Prophet. The growth

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<sup>84</sup> Chittick 1965:275. Hersi 1977 is particularly useful as reporting on some previously neglected sources in Arabic.

<sup>85</sup> Trimmingham 1963:138.

<sup>86</sup> Hersi 1977:76.

<sup>87</sup> Coupland 1938:22.

<sup>88</sup> As an historical marker, it may be interesting to reflect that almost at the same time, in the farthest markets of the old Roman Empire, that Christianity was beginning to convert Anglo Saxons in England. In 597 CE, St Augustine had been despatched from Rome on a proselytising mission to England, where Christianity was still only practiced by small pockets of the population (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Part 6 1932:638).

of political complications resulted in revolts and civil wars. Some immigrants to the Banaadir and Swahili coasts from the Arabian Peninsula dating to this time were, according to tradition, seeking refuge from the inhospitable political or religious climate at home.<sup>89</sup>

Of these political and religious migrants, first we hear of Omani sheikhs, Suleiman and Sa'id, of the house of Azd, who in about 695CE had led a rebellion against the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik (regnal years 684-705CE) and had been defeated. The Sheikhs fled overseas with their families and followers 'to the land of Zinj (Zanj)', though at what point in the Zanj they settled is not known.<sup>90</sup>

Not long thereafter, in about 740 CE as a result of a schism among the Shi'ites, a body of Arab schismatics known as Zaidiyah [in the Portuguese sources referred to as Emozeids] sought refuge in East Africa and settled in the neighbourhood of Shungwaya, on the border between present-day Somalia and Kenya. The place referred to in the literature is something of a mystery and has been equated to Port Durnford<sup>91</sup> and today called Bur Gao. It may, however, refer to a more general area of settlement in southern Somalia rather than a specific town. (See below for a fuller explanation of Shungwaya).

Then in about 920, according to one oral tradition, 'seven brothers from Al-Ahsa' on the western side of the Persian Gulf near Bahrain, fleeing from religious persecution, founded Muqdisho and Baraawe.<sup>92</sup> This tradition is told, with minor variations, up and down the Banaadir and Swahili coasts, and related accounts have been quoted as surviving in Tumbatu (Zanzibar), Kilwa Kivinje, Kilwa Kisiwani, the Comoro islands and Mozambique.<sup>93</sup> Common content is of seven brothers, or a father and his six sons, sailing from 'Shiraz' for Africa sometime in the tenth century and being responsible for founding settlements at separate places, from Muqdisho to the Comoros Islands. A version of the tradition was recounted to me personally by two sisters of the 'Amudi lineage of the Reer Xamar of Muqdisho. They were recounting what they considered their own tradition of origin, and associated their descent with the brother who had

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<sup>89</sup> Hersi 1977:77-78.

<sup>90</sup> Coupland 1938:22; Hersi 1977:84 provides further Arabic sources.

<sup>91</sup> Kirkman in Strandes 1971:311.

<sup>92</sup> Coupland 1938:23. Also cited by others.

<sup>93</sup> Chittick 1965:276.

stopped at Muqdisho and founded the city. Another brother stopped at Baraawe, they said, and the remaining brothers continued down the coast, settling at different places on the way, with the last one going to the Comoros.<sup>94</sup>

The origin myths of the Banaadiri, not unexpectedly, contain contradictions and inconsistencies. Thus, oral sources that I have consulted speak also of thirty-nine families from twelve tribes coming from Al-Ahsa, though of unspecified century. This last story is by far the most significant for a range of Banaadiri lineages as representing their ‘founding fathers’. It is the root from which around half the Reer Xamar lineages of Muqdisho today construct their histories, as will be explored later, in Chapter 2. Given the nature of origin myths (in that they are usually transmitted orally from generation to generation and with the potential thereby for distortion), one is tempted to conclude that the Al-Ahsa immigrations, rather than being accounts of two successive colonisations, are but facets of a single legend.

These oral histories of founding fathers arriving in ships, though characteristic of fable in their telling, are similar enough despite differences in the degree of elaboration as to be seen to embody the memory of a substantial immigration of Arabs and/or Persians from the Persian Gulf area. Whether these traditions date to one time or represent the conflation of memories of movements at different times is irrelevant to perceptions of self.

WRITTEN TRADITIONAL HISTORIES: THE KILWA CHRONICLES. The two written documents of any antiquity which derive from the eastern coast of Africa are versions of the so-called ‘*Chronicle of Kilwa*’, one in Arabic, and the other in Portuguese. Kilwa is a town on the Swahili coast of what is today Tanzania. The documents record remarkably similar histories to the oral traditions recounted above. The surviving Arabic version (AV) is a manuscript of an abstract of a lost history of the Kilwa colony.<sup>95</sup> A second version is a translation, probably of the first, by a Portuguese historian João de Barros who was documenting his country’s colonial activities in the

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<sup>94</sup> IN15, IN22.

<sup>95</sup> Coupland (1938) in a note to page 23 gives the history of the document’s survival and of how a copy of the original abstract came to be acquired by the British Library.

sixteenth century.<sup>96</sup> The period covered by the *Chronicle* is c. 10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century; the writing of the Arabic summary is thought to date to c. 1520 and the writing of the Portuguese translation to 1552.<sup>97</sup> The emphasis of the *Chronicle* is on the history and dynasty of rulers of the Kilwa colony. The two versions differ in some details of names and dates, and de Barros's version (BV)<sup>98</sup> contains some details not found in the Arabic manuscript. Both have been compared by G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville in his *Medieval History of the Coast of Tanganyika*,<sup>99</sup> with further analysis by Chittick who compared the historiographic content with the archaeological findings as set out in his seminal two-volume work on his excavations at Kilwa.<sup>100</sup> Based on the manuscripts' regnal lists, Chittick dates the founding of Kilwa to the late tenth century.<sup>101</sup> Key to my study, however, is what the document may reveal about the towns of the Banaadir during the period covered by the *Chronicle*.

The Banaadir towns are therein treated as having the same history of settlement as the towns to the south, with the founding of Muqdisho and Baraawe predating that of Kilwa by a little over seventy years (BV).<sup>102</sup> The story of the founding of Kilwa is related in the *Chronicles* in much the same way as the traditions of Arab and Persian settlers to Muqdisho already described. The story of the people of Al-Ahsa, with seven brothers, or a father and six brothers, journeying to Africa in seven ships, or three ships, is redolent of traditions of Banaadir immigrations from 'Shiraz', though with some quite colourful details and variation in motivating circumstances.

In AV, the reason for departing their country was a prophecy which came to the father in a dream, of a rat with an iron snout gnawing at the walls of their town and destroying everything. He interpreted the dream as foretelling the imminent destruction of their land, and he took measures to save himself and his relatives. In de Barros's version (BV), the reason for exile was due more to family rivalry and prejudice.

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<sup>96</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1962: 34-49 & 89-93.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>98</sup> I have opted to use AV and BV as abbreviations for the Arabic and Portuguese (Barros) versions of the *Chronicles* respectively as shorthand when comparing or differentiating the two.

<sup>99</sup> Cited in Chittick 1965..

<sup>100</sup> Chittick, *Kilwa*, 1974, 2Vols.

<sup>101</sup> Actually 'ante 957 AD' (Chittick 1965:27).

<sup>102</sup> See Freeman-Grenville 1962:33; Cerulli 1957. Vol. I:18.

The attraction of East Africa was ‘because of the fame of gold which was to be found there’ (AV). From the Chronicle (BV) it is clear that Islam had already reached Muqdisho and Baraawe, and perhaps from different sects, for on reaching the coast they found that Muqdisho and Baraawe had already been settled by Arab Muslims. But being themselves Persian Muslims [possibly Shi’a?], ‘who among the followers of Mohamed differ from the Arabian,’ felt they would not be able to get along together, and decided to continue on down the coast. In any case, their leader’s intention had been to found a new town ‘of which he should be lord and not subject to another,’ (BV) so Kilwa proved a better prospect, as this town, though there was already evidence of Muslim families living there, was ruled by an infidel from whom it became possible to buy the island.

The Arabic manuscript tells us:

[T]he first man to come to Kilwa came in the following way. There arrived a ship in which there were people who claimed to have come from Shiraz in the land of the Persians. It is said there were seven ships: the first stopped at Mandakha [?Manda]; the second at Shaugu; the third at a town called Yanbu; the fourth at Mombasa; the fifth at the Green Island [Pemba]; the sixth at the land of Kilwa; and the seventh at Hanzuan [Anzwani = Johanna in the Comoros (Chittick 1965:276)]. They say that all the masters of these [first] six ships were brothers, and that the one who went to the town of Hanzuan was their father. God alone knows all truth!<sup>103</sup>

Migration legend in the Portuguese translation:

[N]early 400 years after the era of Mohamed, a king called Sultan Hocen reigned in the town of Shiraz in Persia. At his death he left seven sons. One, named Ali, was held in little esteem by his brothers, as his mother

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<sup>103</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1962:33.

was a slave of the Abyssinian race, and their mother was of noble lineage of Persia. As this son was a man who made up in personal qualifications and prudence for what he lacked in lineage, to avoid the insults and ill-treatment of his brothers, he set out in search of a new country...[He] assembled his wife, sons, family, and a few men who followed him in this enterprise.

There are several other traditional histories of the coast, including of [Ma]Lindi, Mombasa and Pate, but no similar chronicles (as is so far known) for any of the Banaadir towns. In the history of Pate, covering a period from 1204 to the late nineteenth century and which is comparably rich in detail, it is recorded that some time during the reign of Sultan Muhammad of Pate (d.740AH)

... all the countries beyond Kiwayu, *viz.* Kiunga, Tula, Koyama, Kismayu, Barawa, Marika, and Mukadisho. He installed a governor at Mukadisho<sup>104</sup> for in those days this was an important place.<sup>105</sup>

Despite often confused and confusing messages that the different accounts present the reader with, these local ‘origin myths’ appear deeply embedded in the cultural memory of both Banaadir and Swahili stone town communities and may be seen as symbolic of an identity uniquely their own, one which sets them apart from other surrounding peoples. Whilst such legends cannot be used to accurately reconstruct history, they nevertheless contain elements that refer to events at a particular point in history, and frequently to verifiable figures of history.

At this point we will pause briefly to try and arrive at an understanding of two recurring themes in the literature of these settlements, namely ‘Shungwaya’, and ‘Shirazi’, surrounding which there is either mystery or controversy.

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<sup>104</sup> All these places are to the north of Pate in order. The first four are Bajuni settlements; the last three are the traditional Banaadir ports of our study.

<sup>105</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1975:248.

**Shungwaya:** This town, or area, appears in all the studies of East Africa that I have consulted. Its precise location, however, remains a mystery that historians seem not to have resolved. Most sources, though by no means all, place it on the southern Somali coast near its border with present-day Kenya, at or around Bur Gao.<sup>106</sup> Equally undecided is what Shungwaya was or represented. Although Shungwaya has vanished without trace, and where it was and what it was remain a puzzle, the historicity of such a place seems beyond doubt. It appears in a wide range of the traditions of a large number of disparate peoples: Garre and Tuni Somalis, Bajuni, Mijikenda and Kilindini of the north Kenya coast and islands,<sup>107</sup> and was known to the Portuguese who, in 1686, planned an expedition ‘to Shungwaya on the mainland north of Pate’ to recruit mercenaries for their actions against Faza.<sup>108</sup> The hypothesis of a Bantu-only Shungwaya put forward by some east Africanist scholars (for example by Spear, as quoted in Pouwels), does not resolve our questions about what happened to the breakaway Shi’ite Zaidiyahs who appear in early accounts in relation to Shungwaya but who have disappeared without trace. If earlier Muslim families settling on the Banaadir coast were Shi’ites, they have been completely absorbed into the dominant Sunni local religious culture of the coast, or migrated inland to become absorbed into the local indigenous clans. However, Hersi suggests a more important role for the Zaidiyahs than they have been credited with so far, and that ‘[t]he excessive reverence with which 'Ali, Fatima, and their Sada [sing. Seyyid] and Asharaf [sing. Sharif] descendants are held among the Somalis today reveals a strong Shi’ite influence in the past which centuries of Sunnite teachings could not wipe out altogether.’<sup>109</sup>

**Shirazi:** The so-called ‘Shirazi traditions’ are very widespread in oral as well as in published form. During the Abbasid period Shiraz was, the capital of Fars, and at an earlier period a canton of Fars on the east coast of the Persian Gulf.<sup>110</sup> The name features in oral traditions, purporting that groups of immigrants came from Shiraz and founded many coastal towns some time from around the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. The same is recorded in the Kilwa Chronicle, and Chittick’s archaeological work at Kilwa has led him to identify the earliest recognisable Islamic period (Period II

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<sup>106</sup> Pouwels (1987:10ff) considers the puzzle of Shungwaya at great length and cites a number of references by other authors to Shungwaya.

<sup>107</sup> See the legend of Fumo Liongo in Middleton 1992:29-30.

<sup>108</sup> Strandes 1961:204.

<sup>109</sup> Hersi m1977:115.

<sup>110</sup> Hitti 2002: 170n1, 325.

– 1200-1300) with a phase of Shirazi rule in that city.<sup>111</sup> Of ‘Shirazi’ legends for Muqdisho, the most popularly quoted origin of the name of the city is *Maqād* (Ar. seat) and *Shah* (king, or ruler), ‘seat of the Shah’. The recorded names (such as al-Naysaburi, al-Shiraz)<sup>112</sup> of thirteenth-century residents, and to be found on gravestone inscriptions, suggest their ancestors’ origins to have been in Persia.

Some scholars, however, object to the association of the period with Shirazi traditions on the grounds that there is little mention of the Shirazi in written form before the early sixteenth century. This is particularly the position of the historian Randall Pouwels.<sup>113</sup> In view of what the people believe about their origins, and of the predominance of the mercantile trade in the Indian Ocean by the Persians and Arabs from the time of *PME* to at least the early Middle Ages, as well as pottery finds of Persian origin (see later) it would seem unwise to discount Shirazi influence, even if by another name and even if it cannot be assigned to a single significant episode.

In reality, of course, complex social and cultural transformations were taking place over decades and centuries, as part of the historical process in this part of East Africa.

In all of the above, however, one important part of the equation is hardly to be seen. It is clear that the legends of origin are from a perspective that supports claims of a non-African and prior-Arab ancestry among core communities of the stone towns of both the Banaadir and Swahili coasts. They make little mention of what we have seen to be pre-existing pre-Islamic populations that had been trading in earlier millennia. Though we know little of the contemporary processes of transformation, the ideas and practices that accompanied the spread of Islam must be seen as part of the historical continuum. The pre-existing populations of the settlements were not unaccustomed to having strangers in their midst, and had acquired their identity in response to the coming of Asian/foreign merchants rather than being wholly composed of them. Middleton says of the Swahili in this context: ‘The adoption of an Islamic identity and cultural elements is a more likely process than the actual migration of large numbers of people who either founded new towns or conquered existing ones by force of arms and ships [and for which we have no

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<sup>111</sup> Chittick, *Kilwa*, Vol. I 1974:14.

<sup>112</sup> Other inscriptions identify origins as ‘al- Hadramawt’, and ‘al-Mis’r. See Cerulli 1957 Vol.I:2-9; and for additional reference to Naysabur in local legend see p. 187.

<sup>113</sup> Pouwels 1987:18.



evidence]. Such cultural adoption would explain some of the complexity of ethnic and “clan” mingling to be found throughout the coast.’<sup>114</sup>

Drawing on elements from the earlier sources identified in the preceding discussion, it is to the tenth century CE that Cerulli dates the rise of Muqdisho as an ‘Arabian colony’. As a result of successive immigrations at different times and from different places,<sup>115</sup> he cites the immigrations from Al-Ahsa as ‘the most remarkable’, probably occurring ‘during the struggles of the Caliphate with the Karmatians’. In what appears to be in the interests of reconciling the different origin myths, Cerulli proposes that ‘the foreign merchants [i.e. the Arab/Persian immigrants] were ... obliged to unite themselves politically against the nomadic (Somali) tribes that surrounded Makdishu on every side, and eventually against other invaders from the sea. Therefore a federation was concluded in the same xth [sic] century A.D. and composed of thirty-nine clans: twelve from the Djid’ati tribes; six from the ‘Akabi, six from the Isma’ili and three from the ‘Afifi tribe.’<sup>116</sup> Despite other traditions for certain ‘founding families’ dated by local historian ‘Aydarus to the thirteenth century,<sup>117</sup> Cerulli’s version has acquired wide acceptance among Banaadiri and non-Banaadiri Somalis alike.<sup>118</sup>

‘Aydarus’s *History* speaks of a thirteenth-century wave of immigrants from a-Shash, a ‘prosperous village and district in Transoxiana.’<sup>119</sup> This version was also told to me by a leading scholar and elder of the Shanshiye lineage.<sup>120</sup> The Shash were thrown out by the ruler of Samarkand who pursued a scorched earth policy and dispersed in different directions.<sup>121</sup> The shrine of a-Shash is, according to the aforementioned elder in Tashkent (for more references for this see section ‘His Ancestry’ in hagiography of Chapter 4).

From the frequent and specific references in the two versions of the *Kilwa Chronicle* it is clear that Muqdisho was a place of consequence to the flow of life in the region at the

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<sup>114</sup> Middleton 1992:15.

<sup>115</sup> Cerulli 1957 Vol.I:135. This Italian ethnographer of the last century devoted more time than any other to the study of the Banaadir coast.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, pp. 39-40, 135.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Aydarus, *Bughayat*, p45-46.

<sup>118</sup> It is further referred to in Chapter 2 of this study.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Aydarus 1959:45-46.

<sup>120</sup> Sheikh Abba, Hamburg interview.

<sup>121</sup> Brad Martin, *JAHS*, Vol. 7, 1974.

time, having been ‘founded’ before the other towns of the coast. As trading at Muqdisho and Baraawe had existed here for centuries earlier, ‘founded’ may better be interpreted to mean that it was Islamised earlier than those of more southerly settlements. The *Chronicle* maintains that the people remembered as ‘Shirazi’ came from the Banaadir coast, not directly from the Persian ports (BV) Muqdisho’s position as the most northerly port of the coast and the first stage on the sea route from Aden, would have given it a strategic advantage in also being able to control the onward trade from East Africa with Arabia.

Chittick dates Muqdisho’s rise to prominence to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Chittick’s period II 1150-1300),<sup>122</sup> and connects it to its role in the development of the gold trade at Sofala, indicated in the Kilwa Chronicle BV, (Freeman-Grenville 1975:89):

[T]he first people of the coast who came to the land of Sofala in quest of gold were the inhabitants of the city of Magadaxo.

Sofala was the last of the trading stations on the East African coast and the southern extent of the seasonal monsoon trade. Sofala equates to present day Beira, in a province of Mozambique that still carries the name ‘Sofala’. The gold was mined in the interior and brought to the coast (along with ivory) by locals, and exchanged for ‘cloths and other things which they did not possess’. The merchants from Muqdisho had been able to gain control of the trade by gradually settling on the coast at Sofala ‘that there might be a race of them there’ (BV). If, as may be deduced from this, the merchants from Muqdisho had established a permanent settlement for their operations at Sofala, this would have been in accord with existing practices and patterns of Arab and Persian traders<sup>123</sup> throughout the Indian Ocean. Arabs had been accustomed to the voyage to southern India and Ceylon/Sri Lanka and even as far as China even before the rise of Islam. Commercial relations between Europe and Asia depended almost wholly on Arab ‘carrying-trade’, bringing the goods of the East to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea and

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<sup>122</sup> Chittick 1974 Vol.I:12-13.

<sup>123</sup> Regarding use of Arab/Persian, although there may have been clear distinction in Persian and Arab cultural influences to begin with in the immigrant populations of the coast, these elements are indistinguishable, and it will be simple to speak of these influences in general as Arab, since this period from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries Persia was part of the Arab Empire (until its breakup in 1258).

thence overland to the Mediterranean. In this cause, little Arab trading settlements grew up here and there like miniature coastal ‘colonies’, whereby spice and other luxuries desired by Europe could be sent out from these places.<sup>124</sup>

Monopoly of the Sofala gold trade was eventually seized by Kilwa probably during the reign of Sultan Daud, based on Chittick’s list of dated reigns for the latter part of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century.<sup>125</sup> Seizure of the monopoly appears to have been achieved by first copying the Muqdishian ‘moors’ by creating a settlement, then on the one hand bribing the ‘Moorish young men’ of Muqdisho with quantities of cloths per head, and on the other promoting Kilwan intermarriage with local ‘Kaffir’ women: ‘By this entry the Moors of Kilwa took possession of that trade’ (BV in Freeman-Grenville 1975:91).

A further source of recorded history for this period are a collection of Islamic inscriptions, which are the oldest local written records of the history of the region, and contribute their own narrative. These inscriptions, while covering roughly the same time span as the aforementioned *Chronicle*, predate the actual writing of the *Chronicle* and thus have their own integrity.

Muqdisho possesses three of the earliest mosques built on the coast, and attested to by the inscriptions therein. These are the Friday Mosque built in AH636 (1238CE), the Fakhrudiin and the Arba’-Rukun which both date to AH667 (1269CE) some thirty years later. The first is especially noteworthy for the long Arabic inscription above the main entrance (telling of when construction began and paying tribute to all its benefactors, especially one ‘the son of Mohamed son of Abdulaziz’),<sup>126</sup> and the unusual style of its round minaret, as such minarets are not found south of the Banaadir coast.<sup>127</sup> The only mosque in the region with an earlier inscription than those of Muqdisho is the Kizimkazi Great Mosque of Zanzibar, with a date of AH 500, equivalent to 1107 CE and predating any other inscription on the coast.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Coupland 1938:18-19.

<sup>125</sup> Chittick 1965: 204.

<sup>126</sup> Caniglia 1922:20-1.

<sup>127</sup> Chittick 1965:285.

<sup>128</sup> [http://www.archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site\\_id=7832](http://www.archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=7832) last accessed 13/02/2010

Earlier than the mosque inscriptions is the dedication on a gravestone to a man with the surname al-Khurasani ('from Khurasan', a province of Persia),<sup>129</sup> dated AH 614 (1217CE). A further inscription, in the mosque of Arba'-Rukun, mentions one Khusrau bin Mahammed al-Shiraz, of which Chittick, who have we have seen has devoted some attention to the 'shirazi' legends says: 'This is the only epigraphic mention of the Shirazi known to me.'<sup>130</sup>

During the Italian colonial period, plaster casts were made of all the Islamic inscriptions that could be found in Muqdisho, for the Garesa Museum – later the National Museum – and recorded in a catalogue published in *Catalogo*, Museo della Garesa, 1934. The museum record is unlikely to have survived the devastation of the ongoing civil war, since the National Museum building is in the old part of the city that has seen continuous fighting since 1991. Cerulli transcribed and reproduced many of the inscriptions found in Muqdisho in his *Somalia Scritti*.<sup>131</sup>

Freeman-Grenville compiled his own record of Arabic inscriptions of the East African coast, and recorded forty-three for Muqdisho, four for Marka, and three for Baraawe.<sup>132</sup> At least, a conclusion drawn from these markers is the confirmation of Muqdisho as a nucleus of migrant Muslims in the mid- to late-Middle Ages.

Whilst dated inscriptions are in a category of their own in bringing the past to light, other aspects of the material culture include the architecture, pottery, and coinage. There has been little archaeological investigation in recent years (one could say for obvious reasons) along the Banaadir coast of Somalia, or even in earlier decades compared to the work at coastal settlements of similar age further south. As most archaeological evidence to date has been acquired almost totally by chance, clearly there are tantalizing reasons for in-depth work here when the circumstances allow. For what has been identified, reliance is placed mainly on the important contributions on the archaeology of the coast by Freeman-Grenville and Chittick, though references are to other published works as have been consulted.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Khurasan came under the rule of the first Ummayyad Caliph at around 670CE (Hitti 2002:194) .

<sup>130</sup> Chittick 1965: 285.

<sup>131</sup> Cerulli 1957 Vol.1: 2-10.

<sup>132</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1988XV 102-108. Handlist of Arabic Inscriptions of Eastern African Coast

<sup>133</sup> See: Freeman-Grenville 1963 and 1975; Chittick 1965, 1974 & 1982; Strandes 1971.

Finds of coins and ceramics (Chinese and Persian ware) from the twelfth century at Muqdisho, Marka and Baraawe provide further evidence of increase in trade and commercial wealth<sup>134</sup> This period is also marked by increase in use of ‘stone’ for building.<sup>135</sup> Coins of Muqdisho – copper and silver coins struck with Arabic legends have been found in towns along the coast, particularly at Muqdisho and Kilwa.<sup>136</sup>

In spite of a small number of Chinese coin finds from earlier periods, there is no record of any direct China link with East Africa before 1417CE and the voyages of Cheng Ho to Muqdisho and Malindi in 1417-19CE and 1421-22CE and it is likely that the early-dated coins came through an intermediary.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, although Chinese documents from the ninth to the thirteenth century indicate knowledge of Somalia and the Horn of Africa, and the east African coastal trade, this information could have been acquired through intermediaries.

To digress slightly, regarding these Chinese written references, a document by one Tuan Ch’eng-Shih, of the ninth century CE<sup>138</sup> refers to East Africa, believed to be Somalia, as the land of Po-pa-li in the south-western Ocean. In a later manuscript, Pi-p’a-lo is the name given in the translation of a work by Chau Ju-Kua on Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>139</sup> (The products such as frankincense, ivory and ambergris, and the animals such as ostrich, zebra and giraffe that are described, could of course apply to a much wider area than present day Somalia.) All that is reported on concerning external commercial contacts, and the descriptions of characteristics of some tribes from the interior could have been gleaned in Indian ports from sailors and merchants who had been to this coast. The descriptions at times are so fantastical, that one is inclined to think of them as mariners’ tales embellished by sailors who may have been there. Such accounts are of the presence of sorcerers who can change themselves into birds or beasts, mysterious huge flocks of birds that disappear overnight without trace, and fish washed up on the shore ‘measuring two hundred feet in length and twenty feet through the body’.<sup>140</sup> However, whether from first-hand knowledge or, as

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<sup>134</sup> Chittick 1974:12-13.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Stone’ refers to the coral rag – the fossil coral that is quaried along this coast for building material (further information with reference to architecture is in Chapter 2).

<sup>136</sup> Strandes 1971:82.

<sup>137</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1963:31ff-

<sup>138</sup> Freeman-Grenville 1975:8.

<sup>139</sup> Chau Ju-Kua trans.: Hirth 1979:128-9.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

seems, more likely, from Arab or other intermediary sources, some references to Pop'a-lo and the Zanj coast south of the Juba river strike a note of familiarity: 'The inhabitants pray to Heaven and not to the Buddha'; the ministers and the king's courtiers 'wear jackets and turbans'; the king lives in a solidly built house – actually described as 'a brick house covered with glazed tiles' - rather than one of grass thatch; the familiar 'great numbers of cattle, sheep and camels' are again mentioned.<sup>141</sup> Of the Zanj coast:

The climate is warm and there is no cold season. The products of the country consist of elephants' tusks, native gold, ambergris, and yellow sandal-wood. Every year Hu-ch'u-la [Gujerat] and the Ta'shi [Arab] localities along the sea coast send ships to this country with white cotton cloths, porcelain, copper, and red pepper to trade.'<sup>142</sup>

If it is the case that the presence of coins from a particular place and time may have been brought by intermediaries, it is equally the case that a lack of coinage from earlier periods or from expected places does not necessarily indicate lack of trading. For example, there is very little coinage evidence of contact with India,<sup>143</sup> and likewise of coinage of the Umayyads and Abbasids.<sup>144</sup> Other coins from rulers 'probably of Muqdisho' for the thirteenth and fourteenth century were found at Kilwa<sup>145</sup> and it is likely that Muqdisho minted its own coinage from c.1300 CE for several hundred years thereafter<sup>146</sup> so foreign coins are hardly likely to have been used as currency here. Goods were usually traded for goods. Coin finds from later than the fifteenth century are illustrative of foreign trade contacts that are already well known, so not of interest for comment here.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 128-132.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 126-7.

<sup>143</sup> Only two Indian coins of an earlier period are known – the one from Mogadishu is of Shah Firuz al-Bahmani dynasty (1397-1422); and four from Ceylon/Sri Lanka, likewise found in Mogadishu, are of the twelfth to thirteenth century.

<sup>144</sup> Freeman-Grenville lists only 9 for Pemba and 1 for Somalia.

<sup>145</sup> Chittick 1965:286.

<sup>146</sup> In 1957 Freeman-Grenville according to his own account was given access to a collection of 7,635 pieces of coinage in the hands of a private collector in Muqdisho who had been collecting coins in Somalia over a twenty-year period. The collection included twenty-three rulers "as yet unknown to numismatics and to history, and establishes a reasonable hypothesis that Mogadishu minted its own coinage from c.1300 to c. 1700." (Freeman-Grenville 1963:31ff).

The obvious significance of coin finds is that they can help to substantiate the actual existence of contacts that may otherwise be considered legendary. The actual minting of coins presupposes the existence of a recognised polity or state that guarantees a value greater than that of just the metal currency, and a confidence in the stability of the institutions that support the currency.

A local history on the Banaadiri, mentioned above, that speaks of the pre-modern period is the *Bughyat al-Amal* written by Sharif 'Aydarus 'Ali. Although it was not compiled until some time in the 1940s, and published in Muqdisho in 1950, it is extremely useful as a source in the context of this study. (See review of literature in the Introduction of this study.)

Of early thirteenth-century migrations, 'Aydarus tells of a wave of immigrants from a-Shash, a 'prosperous village and district in Transoxiana'.<sup>147</sup> Transoxiana "That Which Lies Beyond the River", is the historical region of Turkistan in Central Asia roughly corresponding to present-day Uzbekistan and parts of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Its cities, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, were great centres of Muslim civilization during the European Middle Ages, and at that time part of the Persian Empire.<sup>148</sup>

This tradition is embedded in the 'origin stories' of the Shanshiye people of Xamar Weyne, as will be seen in a later discussion of the genealogy of some of their celebrated sheikhs.

From 'Aydarus we learn of three ruling houses of Muqdisho from around the twelfth century CE, as follows [pp83-6]:

1. The Government of al-Xilwaan

In the 5th century Al-Hijra (11<sup>th</sup> century CE) the ruler of Muqdisho was Mohamed Shah al-Xilwaan who came from a place named Xilwaan in Iraq. When he came to Muqdisho the name of the city was 'Marka' and he changed it to Xilwaan naming it after the place where he came from. He called himself

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<sup>147</sup> 'Aydarus 1950:45-46.

<sup>148</sup> Hitti 2002:323; Encyclopaedia Britannica online.

Shah meaning King in the 'ajami language [ *'ajami* = non-Arab or Iraqi]. The 'ajami language was the language spoken in Muqdisho before Arabic. When people spoke to him they bowed to him and said 'as you order we will obey'. The governor before Xilwaan was Abu-Bakar Fakhrudiin.

Though the Xilwaan leadership was rich as they owned much silver and gold they were very miserly and did not use it to buy goods. They hid the gold and silver under the floors and in the ground. They wore cheap clothes, ate hard stale bread, and sometimes went hungry because they didn't want to use their gold to buy food.

There is a saying by the people of Banaadir: 'He who does not want to spend or invest is a Xilwaan'.<sup>149</sup>

The Xilwaan government ended in the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> century al-hijra. It is said that there was a bad drought – no food, no crops and the animals died, the few available sheep and goats became too expensive to buy (one of these animals cost 1 Rial, the equivalent of 1000 Rials at the writing of this book) [1950]. There was nothing to eat. The Xilwaani governed Muqdisho for half a century, and then the Sowsan came to power.

## 2. The Sowsan Government

The Sowsan came to power in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century al-hijra.

Sowsan was the name of the leader. He re-named Muqdisho from Xilwaan to Sowsan. He did not stay in power long because he was very harsh and oppressed the people. He was selfish and cared only about himself. The people hated him. His reign was also plagued by a very bad drought.

## 3. The Shirazi

After Sowsan the Shirazi came to power, at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century al-hijra. Shiraz was the leader's name and he named Muqdisho Shirazi. He behaved more like a merchant than a leader; he liked money, bought land and

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<sup>149</sup> PR2.



foodstuffs; he too was a greedy man, and buried money and food under tombs. His government also collapsed due to greed and bad drought.

According to the writer this leader ‘did one good thing’ – he built a mosque named Al-Hanafi in Shingani, ‘which is where the Savoia restaurant now stands’. I recall that the Savoia restaurant and hotel was on the north (Shingani) side of the main thoroughfare leading down to the ocean, and still standing until the mid-1970s before giving way to a modern commercial building development.

In 604 AH, Mohamed Ali came from Egypt to Muqdisho and became Governor of Muqdisho. During his rule many buildings and mosques were constructed. During this period the following mosques were built:

1. Mohamed al-Awal (Mohamed the 1<sup>st</sup>) Mosque
2. Mohamed al-Taani (Mohamed the 2<sup>nd</sup>) Mosque
3. Arba’-Rukun [‘of the four corners’] Mosque

He built the last mosque of his reign in 667 AH.

The year 667AH (1269CE), it is noted, is the date of the inscription in Arba' Rukum mosque. But it is the only date in 'Aydarus's narrative of the thirteenth century that equates with any of the other sources that we have looked at. There is no mention as to what Muqdisho was called in this period but Muqdisho is mentioned by name in Yaqut, who says of the people of the town, that they do not have a king, but they have leaders chosen from among their worthy citizens, and that each group has its own sheikh.<sup>150</sup> The account that 'Aydarus gives for thirteenth-century Muqdisho, from the Xilwaan to the Mohamed Ali governments, is presumably constructed from oral traditions, as there are no mentions of his dynasties in any of the other sources that we have looked at.

In drawing to a close the historical time line of the pre-modern era, the last major source of information on the Banaadir is the first eyewitness account since the *PME* twelve

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<sup>150</sup> Yaqut, IV, 602 AH (transcribed in Cerulli 1957:19 *nI*).

hundred years earlier. It is the description of Mogadishu and its Sultan by the Arab traveller from Tangiers, Ibn Battuta, who visited the town in 1331. By this time the name of Muqdisho (with whatever spelling) was well-established, and the three large mosques of the town already built. Ibn Battuta stayed in Muqdisho for four or five days, during which time he had a chance to observe religious ritual, administrative and legal procedures, and to collect a wealth of detail on aspects of everyday life.<sup>151</sup> It was in January of that year when the young lawyer – he was still not yet thirty – boarded a ship at Aden, in Yemen, that was sailing to East Africa on the northeast monsoon, as a result of which we have this most illuminating account of life in Muqdisho in the eighth century of Islam.

Since Ibn Battuta's account of Muqdisho has been so ubiquitously quoted in material on Somalia, I will confine myself to first quoting from 'Aydarus on Ibn Battuta (because he is a local voice, though his comments add no insights), and then to highlighting one or two points from Ibn Battuta's observations on life at that time that would not have otherwise been known. First 'Aydarus:

Ibn Battuta talked about Muqdisho, saying that “it is a very big town, they have many camels, they slaughter and eat many camels per day; about 200 camels are slaughtered in one day. They also have many goats and sheep and most of the families of Muqdisho are commercial traders. They are good people and rich people ... Ibn Battuta went on to say: The people of Muqdisho were generous and when visitors arrived they were fought over who would provide them the hospitality of lodgings and food. The person who gave food to the traveller [on arrival] would be the person who invited him to stay with him as a guest. Al-Sheikh was the highest ranking official in the town to provide hospitality to a visitor. If a visitor [having visited the town previously] had come to do business with a specific merchant of the town - he could go to stay with that person. The ruler of the town was called Sheikh and not Sultan as was the custom in Egypt. ('Aydarus 1950:85-86)

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<sup>151</sup> Ibn Battuta was from Tangiers and had travelled from his home to perform the holy pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325, where he stayed for some years before beginning his travels, which eventually took him to the equivalent of nearly fifty modern countries (Hamdun & King 1975:ix).

Of the several standard references to Ibn Battuta's travels, I have consulted the following translations of his visit to Muqdisho: Gibb 1929; Freeman-Grenville 1962; Hamdun and King 1975, and from which the following summaries are drawn.

Muqdisho is described as an enormous town, whose inhabitants are merchants. That there were camels in quantity is already noted by 'Aydarus, as is the ritual for greeting and trading with visiting merchants. Local merchants or their representatives competed to host the visiting traders, with a view to acting as middle-men to sell his goods and buy on his behalf and thereby to profit. Travelling with Ibn Battuta were merchants who had traded here before, and already had their local contacts. These merchants were free to trade with and stay with hosts of their choosing. Ibn Battuta, as a legal scholar, was treated with great deference and given the hospitality of the ruling Sheikh himself, and was lodged in the dormitory of the religious students, in what might be likened to the dormitory of a seminary. The Sheikh of Muqdisho, Abu Bakr b. Umar by name, who received Ibn Battuta is not otherwise known, unlike the Sultan of Kilwa whom Ibn Battuta visited next, and whose name appears in other sources.

As an observer of events, Ibn Battuta has the ability in his writings to make the past come to life again, for example in describing the Sheikh's attendance at Friday prayers, stopping on the way in the courtyard of the mosque to say a prayer at his father's grave. The suit of clothing that was brought to Ibn Battuta to wear at Friday prayers included 'a silk wrapper to tie around the middle instead of trousers (which they do not know).' Then after the congregational prayers, the Sheikh and his entourage walked home under canopies of coloured silk, each canopy surmounted by a gilded bird. 'Before him drums and trumpets and pipes were played, the *amirs* and the soldiers were before and behind him, and the *qadi*, the *faqhis*, and the *sharifs* were with him'. In his conversations with Ibn Battuta the Sheikh used Arabic, but otherwise spoke in the dialect of Muqdisho. 'He is by race a Berber.' We also learn that the Qadi's name was Ibn Burhan al-Misri (son of Burhan the Egyptian).

On Saturday, following the devotional activities of the preceding holy day, there is an interesting account concerning legal proceedings and civil court measures, some aspects of which stand comparison with the Xooshan procedure for hearing petitions and

complaints that was extant in Xamar Weyne as late as the 1970s, described later in Chapter 2.

Then the sheikh goes into his house and the *qadi*, the *wazirs*, the private secretary, and four of the leading *amirs* sit for hearing litigation between members of the public and hearing the cases of people with complaints. In a matter connected with the rules of the *shari'a* [religious law] the *qadi* passes judgment; in a matter other than that, the members of the council pass judgment, that is, the ministers and the *amirs*. In a matter where there is need of consultation with the Sultan, they write about it to him and he sends out the reply to them immediately [a written reply presumably in Arabic] on the back of the note in accordance with his view. And such is always their custom.<sup>152</sup>

Other details of everyday life that we learnt about included the use of *ghee* in cooking, fish dishes, and the description of a fruit that was obviously a mango (which Ibn Battuta seems not to have come across before); the style of dress including the wearing of the loincloth (already noted) instead of trousers, and fringed turbans; the elevated social position of the *sharifs* in the town's hierarchy is noted, and local customs that reminded Ibn Battuta of how things were done in Yemen. In Muqdisho 'are manufactured the cloths named after it which have no rival, and which are transported as far as Egypt and elsewhere,' [a reference to the local *alindi* cloth].<sup>153</sup>

Separated by more than half a millennium of history, all the foregoing would find parallels with life in the Xamar enclave of the twentieth century, and connect with the continuum of life here that is described in subsequent chapters on society, traditions, and religion. After Ibn Battuta's descriptions, we have no detailed information about the Banaadir towns until the arrival of the Portuguese almost two centuries later.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Hamdun & King 1975:21

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p16. *Alindi* hand woven cotton cloth is still produced in towns and villages of the Banaadir.

<sup>154</sup> Thirteenth-century information from Marco Polo about East African and Indian Ocean communities during his travels in the East are to be ignored. In his secondary information with regard to Mogadishu, this relates actually to Madagascar. But his erroneous account has often been repeated as if it were correct and as if he himself had been to these places. This is the case, for example, in the *Bhugyat al-Amal* by 'Aydarus, and needs to be corrected.

### **Problems From Within and Without.**

In the early part of the modern era a combination of factors both internal and external saw the decline of Muqdisho as a trading centre. In the sixteenth century the Muzaffar dynasty was in power along the coast. Traditions are vague and contradictory, but from the early sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries the Muzzafar, claiming mixed Persian-Somali ancestry, ruled the coastal towns.<sup>155</sup> The Muzzafars were in alliance with (or an extension of) the powerful Ajuran Confederacy which at its height was established throughout the southern Somalia plains between the rivers and down to the coast. The Ajuran governed through a network of their imams, from regional centres at various places in the interior, with obvious implications for the caravan trade. Sometime in the later seventeenth century at Afgooye, the commercial hinterland of Muqdisho, the Ajuran sultanate with which Muqdisho had been allied, and on which platform the trade to the interior rested, was overthrown by the nomadic Hawiye Somalis.<sup>156</sup> The prosperity of coastal trade, according to the historian Cassanelli, had been dependent on commercial centres such as Afgooye and Awdhegle (along the lower Shabelle river parallel to the coast), whereby goods were traded and distributed to the far interior. The Somalis of the interior, and the different clans protected their segment of operation, each with its own territorial and clan interests in mind. The traders from the coast did not venture beyond the safety of the entrepôt towns with which they had friendly relations.<sup>157</sup> In the opinion of Cassanelli, the defeat of the Ajuran, and the attendant disarray and squabbling among the pastoralist clans effectively disrupted the trade to the interior, and the prosperity of Muqdisho suffered as a consequence.

It is to this period at the end of the seventeenth century that significant changes are attributed that would affect identities and repositioning of the ruling coastal families to the present day. With the successful defeat and dispersal of the Ajuran by the Hawiye clans of the interior, an imam of Abgal descent and of the Yaquubi lineage was installed in the Shingani quarter of Muqdisho.<sup>158</sup> This signalled the beginning of a process of Abgal subsequent penetration into the town, and establishment of a power base within

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<sup>155</sup> Cerulli 1957:13-14, 62-64.

<sup>156</sup> For a fuller account of this period and the Ajuran domination of large parts of southern Somalia, see Cassanelli 1982:84-118.

<sup>157</sup> See Cassanelli 1982:149-61 for a fuller description of the southern Somalia caravan trade, especially in the 19th century.

<sup>158</sup> Guillain 1856:141, and discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

the urban polity that was essentially loyal to the nomadic Abgal clan of the coastal hinterland.<sup>159</sup> The power base would be consolidated through the intermarriage of Yaquubi kinsmen with powerful local merchant families of the Ba Fadal and Abdi Samad.<sup>160</sup> According to Cerulli it is also around this time that name changes for some of the old-established leading merchant families of the town occurred, and ‘the clans [*sic*] of Makdishu changed their Arabic names with new Somali appellatives’<sup>161</sup> and ‘the appearance of Abgal-Darandolle names in the previously Arab- and Persian-dominated genealogies of the town’s leading families.’<sup>162</sup> These may be simplification of a more complex process of the forging of closer links between groups that saw themselves as ‘different’. It is also not surprising that today many of the non-patrician families of the town who are part of the urban polity, and whose lineages are referred to as *madow*, trace descent to the various Hawiye subclans (see next chapter).

The threat from without came with the interference by the Portuguese to the sea trade. By the end of the fifteenth century the Portuguese had discovered for themselves the sea route to India by circumnavigating Africa, and with their discovery came an intention to control the trade of the Indian Ocean as much as their superior strength in ships and arms would allow.

The Portuguese fleet that first arrived in these waters was commanded by Vasco da Gama. On Christmas day 1497 they passed that stretch of the South African coast that is till today known as Natal. In April 1498 the fleet rested in Malindi on the Kenyan coast for nine days before sailing northeast for India. In the 200 years of Portuguese domination in East Africa that followed, further accounts of life in Muqdisho and the Banaadir coast become available as recorded by Portuguese historians, then subsequently by other Europeans in search of trade and conquest.

**PORTUGUESE PRESENCE.** On this first journey, whilst they may have seen the waterfront buildings, minarets and navigational towers of Baraawe and Muqdisho, the Portuguese had no direct contact with the Banaadiri coastal communities. On their return journey from Calicut, on 2 January 1499 da Gama’s fleet sighted the East African

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<sup>159</sup> Abgal are a section of the Darandolle branch of the Hawiye, and Yaquubi (also known as Islaw in Muqdisho) is a subclan of Abgal.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>161</sup> Cerulli 1957:I:136.

<sup>162</sup> Cassanelli 1983:73.

coast, and although at first they thought they were near Mozambique, they were actually off Muqdisho.

The town appeared large and was surrounded by ramparts; it had many buildings of several storeys and a large palace in the middle.<sup>163</sup>

And from another account:

In the morning (3 January) we reconnoitred the coast, so as to find out whither the Lord had taken us, for there was not a pilot on board, nor any other man who could tell on the chart in what place we were ... We found ourselves off a large town, with houses of several storeys, big palaces in its centre, and four towers around it. This town faced the sea, belonged to the Moors, and was called Magadoxo. When we were quite close to it we fired off many bombardments, and continued along the coast with a fair wind. We went on thus during the day, but lay to at night, as we did not know how far we were from Milingue [Malindi] wither we wished to go.<sup>164</sup>

The arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean was felt perhaps most keenly by the Arabs, who for a long time had had a commercial monopoly, establishing permanent trading settlements right across the trading arc, from Aden and the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, India, and even as far as China,<sup>165</sup> as well as in the markets of East Africa.<sup>166</sup> It soon became apparent that the newcomers were not only troublesome competitors, but that their ultimate aim was nothing less than to suppress completely the previous trade and ways of trading.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Strandes 1961:27.

<sup>164</sup> The extract is from a translation by EG Ravenstein (for the Hakluyt Society 1898:87-8) of the *Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama, 1497-1499* by an unknown author who may have served on de Gama's vessel.

<sup>165</sup> Coupland 1938:18-19.

<sup>166</sup> The Arabs did not only trade in their sea-towns but sent out caravans to buy and sell in the interior of these lands. (See Coupland 1938:50; Cassanelli 1982:149ff.) The Portuguese never attempted itinerant trading.

<sup>167</sup> Strandes 1971:48.

The Portuguese presence along the East African coast was from the outset characterised by arrogance and aggression. That a particular state or city was inhabited by Muslims, or because it did not choose to submit itself to the Portuguese on being summoned to do so, were sufficient reasons for the Portuguese to destroy the towns of East Africa. The imposition of treaties, collection of tribute, construction by force of a fort at Kilwa, the storming and plundering of Mombasa in 1505, the sacking of Baraawe shortly thereafter are all examples of the uncompromising Portuguese approach, and a matter of record.<sup>168</sup> Their first recorded contact with the Somali coast in 1499, and the unprovoked bombardment from the sea as they passed by was thus in character.<sup>169</sup>

In 1506 Baraawe was attacked and looted by the fleets of Tristão da Cunha and Alfonso de Albuquerque. Though the local inhabitants defended the town with a courage and determination which the Portuguese had not heretofore encountered on this coast, their arms were no match for the superior power of the Portuguese.<sup>170</sup> After three days of occupation and plunder, which included cutting off ears and hands of women in order that bracelets and earrings could more quickly be snatched, the Portuguese set fire to the town. Before leaving, the customary dubbing of knights took place in the open space outside the Great Mosque of Baraawe – at the spot where a few days earlier Tristão da Cunha had been wounded in the leg by an arrow of the defending Bravanese population.<sup>171</sup>

Unlike Muqdisho and Marka, Baraawe maintained contacts with the south during the Portuguese presence there, and their dealings with the Portuguese may have been designed to forestall further attacks and destruction of their town. For example, in March 1529, when Nuno da Cunha (son of Tristão) arrived in Malindi following his conquest and destruction of Mombasa, he was met by envoys from Baraawe who offered the surrender of their town and payment of an annual tribute to the Portuguese.<sup>172</sup> They were in close proximity to the occupied towns of the Swahili coast and islands (Baraawe to Malindi: *c.* 250 nautical/300 statute miles), and spoke a dialect of the same Swahili language<sup>173</sup> so would be aware of conquests and destruction there

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<sup>168</sup> See accounts in Strandes 1971 chapters III-V from Portuguese documents.

<sup>169</sup> Strandes 1971: 27 and editor's note :31: Goes p107 and Castanheda I p150.

<sup>170</sup> Strandes 1971.

<sup>171</sup> Strandes 1971:68-69.

<sup>172</sup> Barros IV (I) p. 305.

<sup>173</sup>The Swahili dialect known as Chimini is still the indigenous language of Baraawe people today.



almost as soon as they happened. On a later occasion emissaries from Baraawe offered the vassalage of their town in the hope of thereby obtaining protection against incursions to their city by their Galla (Oromo) neighbours.<sup>174</sup>

For information of the government of the coastal settlements at this time, an account written *c.* 1517 by Duarte Barbosa says:

Each separate town and village [along the Somali coast] appears to have had its own sultan who shared power to a greater or lesser extent with other influential inhabitants ... The town of Baraawe on the other hand was ruled more like a republic, being governed by its elders.<sup>175</sup>

In fact, a German atlas of 1753 adds ‘Republic’ to the name of Baraawe.<sup>176</sup> The combining of the different towns and villages of the coast into states did not seem to have occurred at all. Barbosa noted that many of the towns were undefended from the seaward side, though they were walled on the landward side.

A further attack on Muqdisho is recorded for 1542 in connection with Turkish [Ottoman Turkish<sup>177</sup>] vessels that had begun to appear in this part of the Indian Ocean which the Portuguese considered their preserve. A flotilla of small vessels under the command of João de Sepulveda and a crew of 100 reinforced by men from Malindi sailed up the coast to attack Turkish vessels that were anchored at Muqdisho. Sepulveda apparently landed at Muqdisho and destroyed the town and the Turkish vessels. This is the only account of this encounter, and written by Sepulveda himself.<sup>178</sup> Considering Sepulveda’s small forces, and contemporary accounts of Muqdisho’s great size, it is unlikely that the town was actually destroyed, even if the Portuguese were able to land and set fire to the boats along the shore.<sup>179</sup> The only other contact that might have

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<sup>174</sup> Strandes 1971:251.

<sup>175</sup> Barbosa 1866:15.

<sup>176</sup> Strandes, the translator of the Spanish version of Duarte Barbosa’s ms, opines that Barbosa’s record assisted the compilers of the early atlases, especially that of Abraham Ortelius of Antwerp, 1570 and on which later European atlases up to the mid-eighteenth century were based..

<sup>177</sup> Whilst referring to these incursions as ‘Turkish’, it is acknowledged that Ottoman Turks had been expanding their empire throughout the sixteenth century, to include much of Arabia. Subjects of the Ottoman Empire were often referred to as Turks, whether actually Turkish or not, and those operating in the waters off the Horn may have been subjects, flying under the Turkish flag.

<sup>178</sup> Strandes 1971:111 quoting Parte I A, Maço 72, doc. No. 87.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

occurred is one where in 1532 Muqdisho was visited by Dom Estevam da Gama, son of Vasco, who came there to buy a ship.<sup>180</sup>

In the 200 years of Portuguese domination of the Swahili coast, until their ousting in 1698 by Oman, the Banaadir ports had never themselves been occupied by the Portuguese and, indeed, apart from a few days when Baraawe was sacked, there seems to be no evidence that any Portuguese ever set foot on land here. Even though their successful colonisation of parts of the East African coast did not extend to Muqdisho, their establishment of garrisons and forts to the south diminished the importance of Banaadiri ports in favour of the Swahili ports contributed inevitably to the decline of Muqdisho's external trade. The presence of Portuguese gunboats along the shipping lanes presented a constant threat to others seeking to trade there, and must inevitably have contributed to the decline of the northern ports.

Given the lack of any lasting Portuguese influence, it is worth underlining that their relationship with the Banaadir ports was not one of settlement. Nor was it their habit to open up trade routes to the interior from those places where they did business. There are no findings of linguistic borrowings that could support substantial contacts over time. Though Baraawe was the northern limit of the Captain of Mombasa's district,<sup>181</sup> there is no record of Portuguese settlers. Even if one were able to point to the occasional man of Portugal defecting to these towns and converting to Islam, that they might have had any real effect on racial characteristics is dubious.<sup>182</sup> Hence, any reference to Banaadiri people, including those of Baraawe, having racial or cultural connections to the Portuguese should be discounted.<sup>183</sup>

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**TURKISH INTEREST.** For information on Turkish activities along the Somali-Banaadir coast, references in the literature are few, and dependent largely on Portuguese

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<sup>180</sup> Cerulli 1957 v.1:136.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>182</sup> Coupland estimates that the number of Portuguese colonists north of Cape Delgado in the most peaceful and prosperous years cannot have been more than one hundred. 1938: 70.

<sup>183</sup> The myth is perpetuated in literature compiled for and behalf of the UK Home Office departments dealing with asylum applications from Somalia and may be in danger of becoming accepted fact. Non-Banaadiri Somalis frequently refer, pejoratively to a Banaadiri-Portuguese connection, and even some Benadiri people seem to believe it.

accounts of clashes with Turkish ‘intruders’. In addition to Sepulveda’s account of Turkish incursions being the reason for the Portuguese attack on Muqdisho in 1542, written accounts of Turkish interests here are reflected only through the recorded exploits of a Turkish ‘adventurer’, Amir Ali Bey (or in Portuguese texts: Mirale Beque), *bey* being a Turkish military title. He came sailing down the African coast in 1585,<sup>184</sup> and on reaching Muqdisho, Amir Ali Bey sent ashore an envoy with the message that he was the vanguard of a large Turkish fleet. He was acting, he said, on the Turkish Sultan’s order, and his mission was to conquer all the princes and their towns right along the coast. How far he penetrated southward is not certain, but from the onset of the southwest monsoon in 1586 he sailed back to the Red Sea with booty to the value of ‘150,000 crusados’, and forty to fifty Portuguese prisoners, from which it may be inferred that he successfully attacked quite a few settlements.<sup>185</sup> ‘So violently were the Portuguese hated that everywhere he was received with open arms, and so unprepared were the Portuguese that a poorly armed Turkish vessel with only eighty men on board had been able to threaten the entire Portuguese rule along this coast.’<sup>186</sup>

In 1588 Amir Ali Bey returned with five ships, and the first town off which he anchored was again Muqdisho, where he was warmly welcomed as being an ally against Portuguese tyranny.<sup>187</sup> He continued his journey successfully as far as Malindi, where he was not welcomed, and then on to Mombasa where he established himself. But this time the Portuguese were more prepared, and having received intelligence of the Bey’s intended expedition had ordered reinforcements from their colony at Goa. With the arrival of the reinforcements, the Portuguese easily stormed and took back any Turkish entrenchments in their possessions.<sup>188</sup>

The only other concrete evidence of Turkish connection to Muqdisho is in the design of some Muqdisho coinage from the sixteenth century, which bears the *tughra*, a decorative monogram characteristic of Turkish coinage.<sup>189</sup> One must agree with

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<sup>184</sup> Accounts based on the Portuguese sources are related in Coupland 1938:58-61, and in Strandes 1971:117-23 & 144-6.

<sup>185</sup> Strandes 1971:130.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. These Turkish incursions led to the Portuguese decision that Mombasa should be permanently garrisoned, and to the building a decade or so later of Fort Jesus (p. 144).

<sup>189</sup> Freeman-Grenville, 1963:38.

Freeman-Grenville's proposition that it is likely that there are Turkish sources still to be explored that could throw more light on these contacts

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OMANI RULE. As part of a new-found Omani energy under Iman Sultan bin Seif (1649-1688) in which the Portuguese were ejected from Muscat and the whole Arabian seaboard in 1650, Oman turned its attentions in 1652 to displacing the Portuguese from the Muslim coast of East Africa. In his favour were appeals from local leaders for the Sultan to rescue his fellow Muslims from the tyranny they were under, and also by periodic rebellions of the local populations.<sup>190</sup> The series of wars over several decades continued under the sons of Iman Sultan bin Seif. During the wars Muqdisho along with other towns of the Banaadir that were not under Portuguese occupation could be used to garrison Omani troops.<sup>191</sup> The Portuguese defeat was finally signalled by the successful two-year siege of Mombasa in 1698, thus giving way to Omani control of the Banaadir and Swahili coasts from just north of Muqdisho (at Warsheikh) to Sofala in the south.

While all this was going on at the coast, the situation in the Banaadir interior was also in disarray, with the defeat of the Ajuran dynasty by the Hawiye, and the encroachment of the nomadic Somalis closer and closer to Muqdisho, and as noted earlier, Cerrulli dates the changing of the names of the *gibil cad* stratum of lineages from Arab to Somali names to these events. This is generally subscribed to in my experience by the Reer Xamar themselves, especially from the *gibil cad* lineages, as demonstrated in some internet source quoted in Chapter 2 of this study, and my own interview with Sheikh Abba in 2005. It may also be that at this time the *gibil madow* stratum of lineages experienced population expansion due to adoption of refugees from the Ajuran sultanate, and the reason for some Reer Xamar descent groups claiming Ajuran origins (see next chapter).

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<sup>190</sup> Coupland 1938:65, 67.

<sup>191</sup> Cerrulli 1957 Vol. 1: 136.

For the next two hundred years, the Banaadir coast was a possession of Oman, governed first from Oman, and then from Zanzibar when in 1832 the then-Sultan, Seyyid Sa'id, decided to move from Oman to Zanzibar. The move signalled the potential for a more visible Omani involvement in the life of the coast and its islands. In practice, however, there seems to have been little direct Omani involvement at Muqdisho, Marka and Baraawe in the early 1830s, and Sultan Seyyid was able virtually to ignore the region 'because it was not actively hostile to him'.<sup>192</sup> In 1837 he sent his first official to Baraawe, probably as a collector of customs dues. By 1840 he became more attentive to his Banaadir possessions because British, American and French vessels had started to trade there, and the Seyyid had rights to tax the goods traded at his ports. Soon he had sent flags to all the different ports on the coast to which he laid claim, and in 1842 despatched Ali ibn Muhammad to be both governor and customs master at Muqdisho.<sup>193</sup> With the Seyyid setting up garrisons and appointing local *luwalis* or representatives in the main coastal towns, including at Muqdisho, Marka and Baraawe,<sup>194</sup> from the reigns of Seyyid Sa'id and hereon, right up until its colonisation of the Banaadir by the Italians in the 1890s, the political life of Zanzibar becomes a useful mirror against which to reflect on the activities of the Banaadir coast.

'Visitors' to the coast, those seeking to explore potential commercial opportunities for example, needed to seek permission from the Omani Sultan. The French captain, Charles Guillain, who spent time exploring the commercial opportunities of this coast in the mid-nineteenth century, reported on the rule from Zanzibar as he saw it. He said that it was not very easy to say exactly what authority the Sultan in Zanzibar had over Muqdisho and other towns, but describes the Omani possessions here as a kind of protectorate, whereby the protected town is 'dependent but not subject', removing from the indigenous rulers the attributes of sovereignty vis-à-vis the outside world, while leaving intact their internal power, and how they regulate their relations with neighbouring populations [of the interior], who in any case were independent from Sultan Sa'id.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Nicholls 1971:298.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Guillain 1852:527

The Banaadir ports were subject to taxation under the Sultan of Zanzibar, and Guillain refers to a letter (with the Arabic date equivalent to 6 April 1843), stipulating the items and the amount to be taxed. Among them were: any sheep that arrived in Muqdisho (presumably from the interior); merchants who came from Zanzibar to buy ivory would be taxed on their purchases and also be required to pay for their moorings.<sup>196</sup> This securing of taxes due to him at every port was the primary, almost the only, direct administrative function of Seyyid Sa'id's overlordship. Beyond this, the merchants and citizens of the northerly towns of his empire appear to have gone about their business unimpeded by micro-management from abroad. Little in the way of public works was effected. In each of the towns he installed a governor, sometimes a local Sheikh, sometimes a man of his own from Zanzibar or Muscat.<sup>197</sup> But the Seyyid's financial ability to provide his representatives with military support was limited, and in 1846 only two or three soldiers apiece were installed at the Banaadir ports.<sup>198</sup>

Perhaps the best-remembered name among Somalis from the period of Omani rule is that of Sultan Barghash Sa'id, son of Sultan Seyyid Sa'id and the third of the Omani sultans to rule Zanzibar.<sup>199</sup> It was some time during his reign (1870-1888) that a large and well-appointed customs house and Luwali's residence was built on the Shingani side of the divide between the two moieties of Xamar. For most of the twentieth century, both under the Italians and after independence, the building served as the Somali National Museum, and was still thus at the start of the 1991 civil war. When I lived in Muqdisho the building was habitually referred to, locally, as Sultan Barghash's palace, and as a result it was commonly, but mistakenly held to have been the Sultan's actual home, though Barghash never lived there, and as far as records can tell, he never personally visited Muqdisho. References in the literature to any Omani Sultan actually setting foot on Banaadiri soil are hard to find.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 541-2.

<sup>197</sup> Coupland 1938:331.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> List of Sultans of Zanzibar 1806-1902

Sa'id ibn Sultan	14 September 1806–19 October 1856
Majid ibn Sa'id	19 October 1856–7 October 1870
Barghash ibn Sa'id	7 October 1870–26 March 1888
Khalifa ibn Sa'id	26 March 1888–13 February 1890
'Ali ibn Sa'id	13 February 1890–5 March 1893
Hamid ibn Thuwayni	5 March 1893–25 August 1896
Khalid ibn Barghash	25 August–27 August 1896
Hamud ibn Muhammad	27 August 1896–18 July 1902.

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GUILLAIN AND THE BANAADIR COAST. As with *PME* and Ibn Battuta in earlier times, where travellers' tales briefly illuminated otherwise shadowy periods of history, it is again the travel narrative of a visitor to this coast that brings to life the people and politics of Shingani and Xamar Weyne in the early 1840s. While nineteenth century, reports of Europeans who visited this coast during Omani rule are several,<sup>200</sup> the work of the French sea captain, Charles Guillain, is in a category of its own, both because of the period he covers and the amount of detail he provides.

Guillain's mandate was to promote French commercial interests in the Indian Ocean and to identify import and export opportunities in the region for his country's Indian Ocean island possessions, namely Bourbon (later renamed Réunion) and Mayotte (an island of the Comoros archipelago). It was ostensibly in this capacity that he visited the Somali coast during his 1846-48 voyage to East Africa. Fortunately for historical record, this seafarer, in charge of the brig *Ducouedic*, seems to have been at least as interested in ethnographic, linguistic and historical investigation as in the commercial possibilities of the Somali coast. He stayed in Muqdisho for two weeks on two different occasions, spent several weeks visiting Marka and Baraawe, and a string of Banaadir coastal settlements en route.<sup>201</sup> He also travelled to Afgooye and the Shabelle river valley. Although, by the very nature of his mission, Guillain would spend much time talking to local merchants and their political patrons, he did not confine himself to them and, as a result, provides informed commentary on life and politics at that time.

His personal observations during his travels, and his investigation of historical sources on the area were published in Paris eight years later under the title: *Documents sur l'histoire, la géographie et le commerce de l'Afrique orientale*, an immense three volume work with an additional folio of pictures and drawings. Guillain was present at a time of serious Shingani and Xamar Weyne hostility, and he reports on these tensions,

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<sup>200</sup> A useful resource list can be found in Cassanelli 2006.

<sup>201</sup> Jesira, Danane, Gandershe(ikh), Jilib [i.e. Jilib Marka], on one visit, and Warsheikh, Muqdisho, Marka, Baraawe, Munghaye, Golweyn, and Torre on another.

and on further tensions between the coast and the Somali clans of the immediate hinterland. Already by this time the Abgal Hawiye had succeeded in penetrating and exercising control of Shingani quarter of the urban enclave. Of particular interest to this study are the chapters in the second and third volumes that provide information on Muqdisho and the Banaadir towns and villages.

The first of the three volumes of the *Documents* is devoted to nearly 500 pages of translation and commentary on early history for East Africa and the Horn from Biblical, Arabic and Portuguese sources and from the pre-Christian era to the rule of the Omani Arabs. Volumes Two and Three contain the narrative of his explorations of the coast from Mozambique to the northern Horn of Africa. Guillain believed the history of the ports and their people to be important for an understanding of the present, and the potential for the future – and recognised more than most that there was a history here prior to the European presence. Yet, as the historian Cassanelli points out, ‘his work is hardly mentioned as a source of information in recent critical (and otherwise comprehensive) surveys of the use of travel narratives as a source for African history of a certain period.’<sup>202</sup> Guillain’s material is only cursorily dealt with in the literature on Somalia, and not widely used in English texts.<sup>203</sup> Because of that, it seems fitting to provide some summaries in English, which give a flavour of his observations.

Before visiting the Banaadir coast, Guillain had first to visit Zanzibar and explain his mission to, and seek permission of Sultan Seyyid Sa’id, the ruling authority along the coast. He clearly found Sultan Seyyid charismatic, and devotes a whole chapter to him. (153)<sup>204</sup>

(502) Captain Guillain arrived at the Banaadir coast at Warsheikh, then sailed south, along which stretch of coast ‘there is nothing to suggest that one will come across a city such as is Mogadishu.’ He had a letter of introduction to Sharif Sid Hadad [Seyyid

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<sup>202</sup> For an historian’s view on the value of Guillain’s text, see: Cassanelli 2006.

<sup>203</sup> An exception, even though recent, is the aforementioned 2006 text by Cassanelli.

<sup>204</sup> Note on numbering in this segment: These numbers in parentheses refer to Guillain’s text and are for ease of reference. Somewhat curiously, the pagination in Guillain’s volumes go from low to high, with lower numbers beginning in Vol. 3.



Hadad] who was to be their host. The Sharif, as is clear from his name, was from the Asharaf lineage, and was from Shingani. (505) The stone house where they were to stay had, by good fortune, a flat roof overlooking the bay and the whole town, and from which they were able to communicate ‘all that [we] might need to demand from the ship whether with respect to itself or in the interest of our personal safety’. They had prearranged to keep in touch with the ship and had agreed which flag signals to use to express their needs and if they were in danger. Any anxieties were quickly allayed; the people in Mogadishu were almost too friendly, he noted, in that there was an excess of visitors all the time wanting to socialise with them. At the same time, the situation in the town was tense. There was a local problem in Shingani that was dividing the population: two people had been killed during a feud a few days before Guillain’s arrival, and the ‘tribe’ of the victims was demanding blood money from the perpetrators. In conversation with their host, they quickly found out that there was also a rupture between the two parts of town, Shingani and Xamar Weyne. The cause was not immediately clear, but whatever it was, nobody from Shingani would be seen in Xamar Weyne ‘even to just take us there.’ In consequence:

We were told by our host not to go out of the town unless we had some guards with us. For the time being we followed their advice and all we had to do now was to find some food and go to bed.<sup>205</sup> ...The next morning we were up early and told our hosts we wanted to go and look around. This idea was not welcomed, but Sid Hadad decided that since we were determined to do it he would go with us. In the days that followed he did not bother at all doing this. (509)

In exploring the town to the northeast, they visited an old mosque, identified as ‘Abdulaziz mosque, which had been partly refurbished, but the inscription referring either to its founding or refurbishment was unreadable; on the way, they came across some gravestones, all the same rectangular shape, but without inscriptions. (509)

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<sup>205</sup> Guillain usually speaks in the first person plural.

The next meeting of note is with Imam Ahmed, Sultan of Shingani, who came to see them at their lodgings. This gentleman was from the Yaquubi subclan of the Abgal, not from an original Banaadiri lineage. Imam Ahmed, too, advises that they be very careful and not venture too far without chaperones. Guillain is not inclined to take the warning seriously, and notes that what he had seen of the place so far the exhortations were unjustified, the dangers exaggerated, and were intended in his opinion to keep him and his party in Shingani, along with any benefits that might accrue from their being there. (510) Imam Ahmed declined their offer of food and drink, explaining it was not the tradition to have anything unless they were in their own house, and in any case he was 'not allowed to eat fish,' from which it must be presumed that fish is what was on offer. This last would indeed suggest the Imam's relationship to the clans of the interior, who do not eat fish, unlike the Banaadiri for whom fish is a favoured part of their diet. The visit gave Guillain a chance to observe how the people treated their Sultan, and he describes three different manners of greeting, depending on the rank of the citizen.

It is typical of Guillain that in writing up what he observes he infuses it with his own views on the human condition, charitable or other. After Imam Ahmed left, Guillain sent some gifts over to him:

... one was a dagger, one was an accordion, some coloured glass, some red cloth, and some various cotton cloth all of which was bought in Bombay, and had cost 80 piastres in total. Although these were appreciated, I am sure he would have preferred cash, because he sold the whole thing for 30 piastres. However, he reciprocated by sending me a cow and three sheep, which altogether were worth about 6 piastres or 7. Anyhow, we did better out of his present than he did out of ours: our people in town used the sheep and our people on the ship used the cow. That was our second day in Mogadishu.

(512) The next day they determined to go to Xamar Weyne, a party of eight or nine of them, and on arrival at the gate of the town got taken to Sheikh Muumin bin Hassan's

house. Though not the actual chief of Xamar Weyne – who resided somewhere in the interior - Muumin was in charge. He was very welcoming, and told them he was well aware that people had tried to stop them from coming to Xamar Weyne, but he was very glad they had disregarded the advice and had come anyway.

He did not try to arouse any bad feelings against the others [of Shingani] as he was talking to us about them. He just laughed and ... said the people of Shingani were not only against the people of Xamar Weyne, they could not get on with each other. He was referring to the situation of the people who had been killed in the days before.

They were served coffee, made in the local way, but not to the liking of this Frenchman. In all, however, both parties enjoyed each other's company immensely, with the Sheikh inviting them to come again. He apologised for not being able to come and visit them in Shingani, 'not because he was in any way worried for himself, but did not want to give them an excuse for making trouble'. From then on Guillain went almost every day to Xamar Weyne to meet Muumin, gathering from him 'all sorts of information about the country.'

(511) He describes Sheikh Muumin in glowing terms, as refined and very kindly, extremely quick and highly intelligent. In appearance he was not very tall but very broadly built, about fifty-five years old, very muscular and incredibly strong; there were stories of his performing extraordinary feats of strength, both now and when he was younger. Guillain says he saw the Sheikh lift some man from off the ground by biting on the man's belt and lifting him with his teeth. In any event, this 'fatherly figure' clearly won the heart of Guillain, who said that of all their experiences with the people in Muqdisho the most pleasant were 'the relations we had with our friend Muumin,' He was not so generous in his comments on their host Seyyid Hadad whom he felt should have protected them against the constant flow of people who came into their house whenever they felt like it, with all kinds of reasons, and with things they wanted to sell to them.

Beyond these anecdotes, Guillain collected a large body of material that has helped shape later academic studies that have reported on changing power structures for the coast and the interior in the early modern period. Critical information in this regard includes Guillain's commentaries concerning (i) the demise of the Ajuran/Muzzafar dynasties and ascendancy of the Hawiye in Muqdisho, and (ii) his information on the causes and situation regarding the hostilities between Shingani and Xamar Weyne. These two items are dealt with in summary, parenthetically, below

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(i) The Abgal-Yaquubi incursion on Muqdisho leading to the installation of the Abgal chief, Omar Djellule is related by Guillain from oral accounts told to him. He says he is unable to specify the period precisely, but

... the story has it that some Abgal invaded the territory of the Ajuran along the coast where Mogadishu is, and - for whatever reason - the town fell into the hands of their chief, Omer Djellule. (141)

At the time it was under the ruler of the Ajuran-Muzzafar dynasty and was held to be very prosperous. Two reasons for the Abgal invasion are hinted at: one being envy of the riches for which the town was famous, and the other due to treachery by disaffected notable residents of the town, who felt maltreated by the then-Muzzafar sultan, and took refuge amongst the Abgal and made them the instrument of their revenge. In consequence after a protracted war the city fell into the hands of the chief of the Abgal, Omer Djellule, and ever since his descendants have retained their authority with the title of 'sultan.'<sup>206</sup>

(ii) Regarding what he was able to gather about the basis for the hostilities between the two moieties of Muqdisho Old Town at the time of his visit, and considering his

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<sup>206</sup> Cerulli (1957:39) dates the name change to the period of Hawiye ascendancy in Muqdisho in the seventeenth century, though Guillain is less specific, saying that at a certain point, but which is difficult to pin down, there was a name change in the lineages from Arab to Somali names.

apparent friendship and time spent with the Xamar Weyne leader, this probably reflects Sheikh Muumin's perspective. Guillain says the rift between Shingani and Xamar Weyne was over succession following the death of Imam Mohamed, father of the current Imam of Shingani, about five years earlier [around ?1840-1]. He relates that a nephew of the deceased by the name of Ahmed bin Mohamud, decided to contest the leadership, and he was recognised by the people of Xamar Weyne but not Shingani, which is why there have been ongoing hostilities between the two sides (527). The present Imam's uncle, Yusuf [presumably also an uncle of Ahmed bin Mohamud] came with an army to Muqdisho to sort out the rivalry between the two cousins, but Ahmed bin Mohamud did not like the solution that was offered to him, and as he felt threatened by Yusuf's followers, he left Xamar Weyne and gave the authority to Muumin. 'He has been living in the interior ever since,' so that is why Ahmed and Sheikh Muumin were the ones sharing leadership in Xamar Weyne. (509, 527)

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(519-50) About the existent power structure, Guillain says that the town's leaders accepted the authority of Sultan Sa'id of Zanzibar (as it is described earlier), at least on the surface. Oral traditions were collected on Muqdisho and its inhabitants. (524) Local legend says that where Muqdisho is 'today' there was a pre-existing town, but the present town was founded by Muslim leaders, and dates from 295 AH (c.907CE). [This 'founding' date broadly agrees with the date ascribed in the Kilwa Chronicle.] (519) About Muqdisho in general, the population of the town and its environs, were estimated to be 5,000 including the slaves. A little less than three-quarters of the population lived in Xamar Weyne and the rest in Shingani. There were a number of Abgal families, and Hindu and Arab merchants. A list of the local Xamar Weyne and Shingani lineages was collected from Sheikh Muumin, and information on their history (520-1); along with a list of ten in the line of the Abgal Yaquubi sultans (525). Imam Ahmed had also promised Guillain his genealogy that consisted, he said, of over thirty names, but Guillain forgot to remind him of it. At any rate, mention of such lineage lists suggests that they were as important then as now, for framing individual identity in Somali tradition. The name of Hamar/ Xamar was said to be linked in origin to Himyar. (519)

From Guillin's visit to the Banaadir coast, it is a short step to the purchase of the ports by Italy later in the century, beyond which there is a body of recorded sources for the history of the Banaadir coast and its formal incorporation into a larger political unit with the name of Somalia. In this interim period, probably the most developments concern the centuries-old slave trade and, particularly, the British involvement in policing of the East African coast to eradicate the practice.<sup>207</sup> In these efforts, the name of Captain W.F. Owen looms large.<sup>208</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century there was relatively little dispute in Europe that slavery was iniquitous and there were various efforts to stamp out the slave trade in these waters. The power of the Royal Navy was used to this end, and treaties suppressing the slave trade had been signed between Britain and the sheikhs of the Persian Gulf earlier in the century.<sup>209</sup> In 1845 Sultan Said of Zanzibar, under pressure to do the same, finally agreed a treaty to abolish the transport of slaves between his dominions and other countries.<sup>210</sup> The total abolition of the sale of slaves would seriously affect Sa'id's East African revenues, and whilst the abolition agreement may have resulted in some change in the kind of trade that took place in the ports in relation to the outside world, it did not put an end entirely to the slave trade. It might be noted that those of the southern Somali Bantu village communities, concentrated between the Juba and Shabelle rivers, are largely the descendants of people who were brought as slaves in the nineteenth century from Bantu ethnic regions further south but remained to work on the plantations in Somalia rather than being exported.<sup>211</sup> Historically, Islam accepted the institution of slavery of non-Muslims (in other words, of the quintessential 'other') and it was not considered to be immoral, just as had been so in classical Rome, in ancient Judaism, and in early Christianity. As noted earlier, domestic slavery undoubtedly continued in this region well into the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

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<sup>207</sup> For the slave trade in East Africa see Nicholls, Chapter IX, 1971; Coupland, Chapter VII, 1938; Alpers 1975.

<sup>208</sup> Nicholls 1971:297 and *passim*.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter IX.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-31, 238-9.

<sup>211</sup> Eno & Lehman 1003:7. According to this source: 'Between 25,000 and 50,000 slaves were absorbed into the Somali riverine areas from 1800 to 1890.' For a description of nineteenth century cultivation along the Lower Shabelle by local pastoralist groups who had turned their hand to agriculture and were using existing sedentary cultivating groups and imported slaves as labour for commercial production of grain, sesame and cotton, see Cassanelli 1982:161ff.

century, but the inclusion of slaves as an economic 'item of trade' gradually came to an end.

Many of the contacts between coast and interior at this time appear to have resulted from an upsurge in missionary activity by disciples of Sufi brotherhoods. Some of these proselytisers were itinerant holy men spreading Islam to the interior. Some established permanent religious settlements dedicated to a life of devotion and adherence to one or other of the Sufi philosophies. Much of the energy for this religious revival emanated from the Banaadir coast where, as we shall see in Chapter 4, the port towns of Muqdisho and Baraawe had long been important centres of Islamic religious learning.

Trade along the caravan routes to the interior continued as it had for centuries from the coast to the markets along the lower Shabelle, where goods were traded, often through local *abbaana* (commercial brokers or agents), and longer-term alliances were established. The shared traditions and inter-marriage that were the outcome of such contacts are described by Cassanelli,<sup>212</sup> and social organisation in the city-states of the hinterland that resemble those of the coastal towns are attested to in the fascinating study by Luling of the Geledi (Afgooye) city state from the nineteenth century.<sup>213</sup>

Much of the early contact between the coastal communities and the rural and nomadic communities of the interior was part of a segmented system of trading, as described earlier, and beyond the immediate hinterland was second-hand, and did not involve much direct contact. The development of market towns further inland, therefore, was more likely the initiative of the pastoralist clans, and developed for the same reason that the old commercial towns along the coast had - in response to the need for such things as 'outlets for pastoral produce, suppliers of important foodstuffs, and occasional refuges [from drought]'<sup>214</sup> But a pre-colonial Somali political entity did not exist, and the occupants of what was to become known as Somalia and Somaliland were divided into several distinct communities which rested on membership of kinship/descent

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<sup>212</sup> Cassanelli 1982:158.

<sup>213</sup> Luling 2002.

<sup>214</sup> Cassanelli 1982:72-3.

groups. The word *Somali* itself does not appear in known documents before the fifteenth century, when it appears in an Amharic text coinciding with the reign of *negus* Yeshaq, 1442 to 1429.<sup>215</sup> Political hierarchies have nevertheless existed, as we have found with reference to the Ajuran and the Hawiye confederacies, but for the most part the Somalis of the interior and the Somalis of the coast seemingly led separate lives in the pre-colonial period, except for associations through commercial trading and those proselytising from the coast.

The divergent and separate development that has characterised the Somali communities of the Horn is more nuanced concerning the nomadic pastoralists who have lived in the immediate environs of the coastal towns. Most particularly it is the Hawiye, who over centuries have inhabited the countryside behind the coast, and have by virtue of this proximity featured most strongly in the history of the Banaadir towns, especially Muqdisho and Marka.<sup>216</sup> Early written sources, quoted by Turton speak of the Hawiye being associated with an area almost certainly the Shabelle River, and with their capital being the Banaadir port of Marka, and suggesting that they have been in the area for 700 years.<sup>217</sup> We have spoken earlier of the seventeenth century assault from the interior on Muqdisho by a subclan of the Darandolle branch of the pastoralist Hawiye clan family, ‘excited by exaggerated traditions of the wealth of Muqdisho,’ and their chief (the earlier-encountered Omer Djelluli) establishing himself in the Shingani quarter of the city.<sup>218</sup> Corroborating these contacts, Sheikh Mahamed Ahmed Sheikh Mahamud (Sheikh Abba), a Banaadiri theologian, and scholar of Banaadiri history, is quoted as saying:

The first Somalis from the interior to have any dealings with the Xamari were the Abgal-Reer Mataan, (particularly the Yaquub of the Reer Mataan) and they settled in Shingani ... As well as the Yaquub, there was also the Is-Xijwaq who came and settled at [a place called] Gubta. Later there were

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<sup>215</sup>Cerulli 1957 I: 111.

<sup>216</sup> Today, and for some time past this was: the Hawiye in the case of Muqdisho, the Biyomal around Marka, and the Tunni in the Baraawe hinterland.

<sup>217</sup> Turton 1975:519-37.

<sup>218</sup> These ‘...exaggerated claims...’ is reminiscent of recent happenings, and the targeting of the urban people of the Banaadiri by the Hawiye, in search of wealth, since the state’s collapse in 1991.



also the Muse Abkood, Habar Ceyno and Hillabi Mohamed – these were from the Murasade [Hawiye]. We called all these Hawiye groups the Xamar Daye, and we the Xamari.<sup>219</sup>

Compared to relations between the coastal communities and the settled communities of the Lower Shabelle river valley, which seem to have been amicable in character, some evidence suggests that relations with the nomadic were more contentious. But by the end of the nineteenth century things were to change again and Banaadir would be incorporated into a political unit, as a colony under the Italian flag, becoming known as Italian Somalia. This further weakened political and economic ties between the Banaadir and Swahili coastal settlements (now colonised by other European powers), and the civilization with which it had traditions and a documented history as long as any in the region in common.

When the Sultan of Zanzibar entrusted the management of the Banaadir coast to Italy in August 1892, it was deemed to include the ports of Warsheikh, Muqdisho, Marka, and Baraawe, with a hinterland of ten nautical miles<sup>220</sup> at Baraawe, Marka and Muqdisho, and at Warsheikh with a surrounding area of 5 nautical miles,<sup>221</sup> and was first leased to the Italians, for a period of ‘25 European years’, ‘renewable’, to be administered politically and juridically in the name of the Sultan of Zanzibar<sup>222</sup> (who was at the time Sultan Ali ibn Sa’id; see list of sultans in footnote 116, above). The running of the colony was initially given to the Filonardi Company (Società Filonardi) of Italy.<sup>223</sup> Subsequently, in 1905 [13 January], Italy acquired outright possession of the Banaadir ports for a payment of 144,000 pounds. The ‘Benadir Colony’ was an Italian foothold in Europe’s ‘scramble for Africa’. Along with other acquisitions on the Somali coast and Horn of Africa interior, the Italians were eventually able to establish control of

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<sup>219</sup> Interview with Sheikh Abba on the History of Mogadishu by ‘Abdishakuur Cilmi Hasan and posted in Somali on the Markacadeey website in April 2003, downloaded by me 19/08/2003 and translated by Suleiman Mohamud Adam..(Full text with my English translation available on request.)

<sup>220</sup> A nautical mile is about 1,852 metres or 1.15 statute miles.

<sup>221</sup> Cassanelli *Shaping* ch 6; also for Italian colonial period generally see del Boca 1979:51-93; Lewis *Modern History* 1988:40-115.

<sup>222</sup> Omar 2006, quoting Italian Colonial documents (Law No. 373 of 11-Aug-1896). The Zanzibari Sultan was by now Sultan Khalif.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

contiguous territory which became the colony of Italian Somalia, with Muqdisho as its capital.

The Italian colonial period lasted until 1941, when the territory was captured by the British in the Second World War. It was returned to Italian administration in 1950 for a further ten years, under a UN trusteeship, with a commitment to bring the colony to independence.<sup>224</sup> Following independence in 1960, the colonial capital and main Banaadiri port of Muqdisho became the capital of the Somali Republic. It was, however, the Somalis from the majority pastoralist clans inland and to the north, the Hawiye, Isaaq and Darod, and not the original people of the ports, who were to hold sway in the capital city and who dominated national politics for the remainder of the twentieth century to the present.

Migrations from the Arabian Gulf to the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa throughout the centuries have undoubtedly influenced the culture and traditions of the people of the coastal communities. Seafaring traders who came on the trade winds, some of whom may have stayed to try their luck on the African coast, known group migrations to the African coast of missionary merchants, refugees from political and religious upheavals in Arabia have all been part of the story. The Arabs and their culture have had a striking impact on the Somalis of both city and countryside, but not surprisingly considerably more for the former. In the case of the Banaadiri urbanites in particular, the ideas of origin and historical ties to some specific parts of Arabia, and some physical characteristics that suggest a mixing over time, have created ambiguities of identity, both for the way this Somali group perceives itself and as it is perceived by other Somalis. But to categorise the Banaadiri as 'partially Somalized Arab communities' as have some writers, and despite this being a preferred interpretation among some educated Reer Xamar groups who maintain websites in the diaspora, such a position serves to perpetuate a separation and marginalisation of the Banaadiri communities in the life of the nation. It also fails to take account of the ability of indigenous groups to absorb and assimilate people, as well as ideas as a result of human migration.

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<sup>224</sup> For Italian colonial period generally, see del Boca 1979:51-93; Lewis *Modern History* 1988:40-115 (see later edition).

This short history of the Banaadir coast from sources, mostly external sources, has attempted to identify significant influences from the past that have helped shape the distinctive culture of the urban communities of the Somali Banaadir coast. Some of these topics will be revisited in the following chapters. In juxtaposition, the next three chapters will report on Banaadir society as may be interpreted from the people's own oral histories, social organisation, as well as local approaches to spirituality. Throughout the periods of overlordship, colonialism, and national political upheavals, the stone town communities of the Banaadir retained their own identity, formed a culturally unique social entity, and continued about their business in ways that at one point in time are recognisable in another, and at each point along the continuum are the end product of the historical process to which they relate.

## Chapter 2

### Society I. Social Organisation and Stone-town polity

*Genealogy is grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. (Foucault, 1971<sup>225</sup>)*

Against the backdrop of history, the next two chapters will look at Banaadiri society as reflected in its social organisation, economy and cultural traditions, and how these contribute to defining the ‘we’ over the ‘I’, and the ‘us’ over the ‘other’ in creating a community and social cohesion. Before discussing the organising processes and practices in Banaadiri society in detail, probably the first question to be addressed is: Who are the Banaadiri?

#### Defining the boundaries – people and place

The name Banaadir is generally taken to come from the Arabic *bandar* (pl. *banādir*) for ‘port’ or ‘sea-city’, and hence Banaadiri refers to the ‘people of the ports’. It is a name which pre-dates European exploration and colonisation of this part of the Horn of Africa, Arab geographers applied *banādir* to the East African coast of southern Somalia, in the same way that they applied *sawāhil* (meaning ‘coastal’) to the coast further south from today’s Kenya to northern Mozambique, and in earlier times seems primarily to have been a geographical designation. During the period of Omani rule from Zanzibar, ‘Banaadir’ is what identified the colony’s northern coastal possessions. As an ethnic designation it may also have gained currency at that time.<sup>226</sup> In everyday speech the ‘people of the ports’ refer to themselves as Banaadiri, and also use some more locally specific names such as Reer Xamar, Reer Marka, or Reer Baraawe, as in ‘people of Xamar, Marka, Baraawe’, whilst subscribing to the collective identity for themselves as Banaadiri as distinct from others. The notion of a Banaadiri identity and

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<sup>225</sup> In: Rabinow 1984:76.

<sup>226</sup> Regarding Swahili, and if parallels can be drawn, this was not used as an ethnic name before the eighteenth century, when the Omani Arab rulers of Zanzibar referred to their local subjects along that coast as Swahili, while calling themselves Arabs or Omani (Middleton 1992:1).

the designated name is not new, as illustrated in this popular 1950s chant of the Banaadiri Party that was one of the parties contesting the pre-independence elections.

Anigoo Banaadir ohoo, beledkeyga loo bururee,  
berrigaan u soo baxayee bus ameeey ka buubtaayee.  
Waxa leey tibloohaayaa, taladeeyda loo diiday,  
ina leey tumaay ku tashteen oo teenka leey saaro.  
Waxaan la oohaayeeey, ilmada iiga qubaneysaa,  
istiqlaal nin loo diidaan ahay oo la adoonsadayeeey

The political mantra is given in full above. The original is full of strong metaphor, and an interpretive translation is given below:

I am a Banaadiri, whose land is being grabbed by everybody  
Today I am coming out to demonstrate, and may cause the dusty winds to  
blow/rise  
My reason is that I am being ignored and my advice rejected,  
They have discussed me and agreed to strike and annihilate me [from the new  
politics]  
I lament and am shedding tears, and the reason for my sorrow is because  
My independence is threatened and they want to deny me my rights.<sup>227</sup>

In attempting to define the Banaadiri people, it is useful also to point out who they are not. We have already seen that their geography, history and cultural influences have much in common with the Swahili people of what we know today as the

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<sup>227</sup> Translation and interpretation by Dr Sharif Abbas and this author.

Kenyan and Tanzanian coast and the Lamu island archipelago. Indeed, they are frequently included as ‘Swahili’ in academic studies of the latter.<sup>228</sup> I have never, however, heard a Banaadiri refer to himself or herself as Swahili.

‘Benadir’ is the name by which the Omani-ruled territories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were eventually ceded to the Italians, and during the colonial period, from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries the Italians continued to use the term in its geographical sense for this part of their colony, as did successive Somali governments post-1960 to define a regional administrative unit. The administrative boundaries were not the same in every case, and the borders often encompassed a range and a change of ethnic and cultural groups.

In this study, reference to the Banaadiri is to the old established Somali communities living in the oldest parts of the Banaadiri towns and adjacent villages southern Somalia’s stone town. A local term that is used by the inhabitants of the old stone town quarters of Muqdisho is *saraha*, which itself refers to the stone buildings (*sar* means ‘building made of stone’), because these were once the only places built with stone, and the people who inhabit them are an urban people. Excluded from the term ‘Banaadiri’ are *urbanised* town dwellers, recent settlers from the inland areas who have been accommodated in the urban setting. The newer arrivals of the last 100 years, who come from a different tradition and who retain links to the interior are not, in the context of this study, considered to be Banaadiris. These late-comers to the towns are a mixture of incomers from the neighbouring countryside and further afield, ordinary people attracted by the prospect of economic improvement, opportunist merchants from politically powerful clans of the interior, and traditional representatives and educated élites who inherited national power following Somalia’s independence in 1960. These latter have their links and loyalties to other traditions. Thus, not all inhabitants of a recent or contemporary Banaadir geographical or political entity belong to the Banaadiri culture group that is the subject of this study

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<sup>228</sup> Pouwels 1987: viii; Nurse and Spear 1985: 59; and others.

Nevertheless, a rigid delineation of any ethnic or cultural group - save perhaps from a remote island community - should be avoided, because cultural boundaries are flexible and porous. The historical trading of the people of the ports with inland markets along the Lower Shabelle and the Juba valleys has already been noted. Bonds forged through marriage and a variety of influences which resulted in some shared traditions, as well as political affiliations, produced a realignment or dual alignment by some smaller groups of the interior with the Banaadiri.<sup>229</sup> Among these are the Begedi and Geledi who inhabit the coastal hinterland at Bariire, Awdhegale and Afgooye, and the Tunni sections of the Digil that inhabit the Baraawe environs. Indeed, two lineages of the Begedi, the Ba Sacad (or Aba Saad) and Ba Jibil (or Aba Jibil) consider themselves to be Reer Xamar lineages.<sup>230</sup>

### **A people's view of itself**

In spite of the anomalies and contradictions that occur in the myths and legends of a people, what is transmitted from generation to generation may be seen as idioms by which people express their cultural identity and heritage. Such myths and legends, says Middleton, 'are social constructs, and the intellectual problems that a society attempts to resolve by them throws light on the structure and history of that society.'<sup>231</sup> In the case of Banaadiri society, its view of itself is discernable in the legend of the founding of the more important towns of the Banaadir by thirty-nine families – a story which we have already come across in the preceding chapter. This tells of immigrant families having come from Arabia sometime between the tenth and twelfth centuries, with names that indicated their places of origin or tribal affiliation in Arabia. Versions of the story of the founding families that are found in the literature<sup>232</sup> and that one has heard retold are

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<sup>229</sup> In 1841 it was to the Sultan of Geledi that Muqdisho turned for mediation in a dispute over the succession of the sheikh in Shingani, and later in the nineteenth century it was with the Geledi sultan at Afgooye that Zanzibar negotiated the building of a fortress and customs house [Garesa] in Muqdisho (Luling 2002:22-3).

<sup>230</sup> Dr Abbas, (17/10/10); and Dr Luling, who says 'Some of them live among the Geledi' and so may be thought of as such (Correspondence 7/11/10).

<sup>231</sup> Middleton 1992:28.

<sup>232</sup> See footnotes 56 and 57 in chapter one.

fairly consistent with the following, which is an extract from a retelling by a young man of the Reer Xamar that was posted on the internet, and quoted here as written:<sup>233</sup>

The Banadir ...are people with their roots in ancient Arabia, persia [*sic*], and south and central asia ... who crossed the Indian Ocean to the easternmost part of Africa and established centers of commerce which linked that continent with Asia. The first Banadir communities were established in what is today southern Somalia about one thousand years ago; their reputation as the settlements of a prosperous and peace-loving people is set down in the written accounts [of] foreign travelers... "The Banadir Coast" as proper name for coastal northeast Africa was used well into the 20th century... The Banadir port city of Hamar eventually became Mogadishu, Somalia's capital; the Banadir continued to live in ancient stone homes their forebears built in Mogadishu's old quarter. Although there has been some intermarriage and influence from African peoples over the centuries, the Banadir today very much remain a light and few dark-skinned minority whose economic livelihood, unlike most of Somalia's people, is based on commerce... [The] first group of settlers originally resided in Al-Ahsa on the Persian Gulf, near Bahrain, and Saadah (Asharaf) families from Yemen. Furthermore, they were exclusively composed of 39 families, led by seven brothers. These 39 families belonged exhaustively to four clans in different proportions. There were 12 families from the Muqarri clan, 12 families from the Jid'ati, 6 families from the Aqabi, and 6 from the Ismaili clan. Successively, other groups emigrated from different regions in the Arabian Peninsula at different times. Among the followers of the first group of settlers consisted of members from the clans of, in alphabetical order, the Abdisamad, Alawidin, 'Amudi, Asharaf, Ba-Fadal, Ba-Hamish, Ba-Jamal, Bakri, Ba-Muqtar, Ba-Sadiq, Hamdan, Omarudin, Shamsudin, Shawish, and Wali... As Benadiris gradually lost their Arab identities and become Somalized, they replaced their original Arab family names with new ones,

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<sup>233</sup> <http://community.benadir-islam.com/his.html> (accessed 05/04/2003).



mostly reflecting their occupational roles within the society.<sup>234</sup> As a result, to list a few, the Saada Became Asharaaf, Muqarri became Rer Faqi, Jid'ati became Shanshiyo, the Aqabi became Rer Sheikh, the Afifi became Gudmane, and both Ba-Muqtar and Shawish became Rer Manyo, meaning the seafaring people, and so on and so far.

What does this tell us of what Banaadiri believe about themselves? In this account emphasis is placed on those events which concern the origins of Banaadiri ruling families and, as we shall see, is key to an understanding of the overall structure, ranking and hierarchies in the traditional urban setting. Stories of founding fathers arriving in ships in the early part of the Islamic era is a theme we have come across already, in the preceding chapter. The reference to some intermarriage and influence from African peoples indicates that this was an already properly settled area, and helps to explain away some paradoxes and ambiguities of history ('founding') and of society ('belonging'). But the social boundaries are also indicated, in statements about a livelihood based on commerce (presupposing sophistication; different from the 'other'), living in stone-built houses (in contrast, presumably, to ones of less durable construction), and Arab/Islamic family names of pedigree. These may be interpreted as representing 'civilization', validating the immigrants' sense of superiority and justifying political authority. The process of settlement and incorporation, and the final transformation of the social relationship between the autochthones/first inhabitants and the people referred to as 'Benadir' is symbolised by a name change. Although legends such as this cannot be used to accurately reconstruct history, they may nevertheless be considered as containing elements that refer to historical events.

### **The town**

The traditional internal organisation of the Banaadir towns has of course been affected by modern day developments, particularly the social and political changes of the twentieth century throughout Somalia. But evidence of the old patterns of descent and social ranking can still be discerned, or are remembered by older residents, and traditions that contribute to social cohesion are retained in many everyday rituals and annual festivals.

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<sup>234</sup> Cerulli, Vol.1, p 39 (not quoted) appears to be the source for this.

In the following discussion of the organising processes and practices in Banaadiri society I have taken Muqdisho and the old inner city population as the main point of reference. Muqdisho, as the largest and, according to the historiography, the oldest of the Banaadir settlements, can be expected to exhibit the broadest range of elements that illustrate social formation in the coastal settlements. It is also the Banaadiri town of which I have greater knowledge than of other towns and villages of the region.

Until just over a hundred years ago Muqdisho, and its alternate name Xamar, was comprised of only the two areas of Xamar Weyne and Shingani, with all other districts being of later construction. The local Banaadiri name for Muqdisho was, and is today, 'Xamar', and I use this name when referring to the Old Town quarters that have existed for hundreds of years. Historically Xamar had the characteristics of a city-state, politically and economically important along this coast, with a large population in comparison to settlements in the surrounding countryside, and operating independently of it. Its inhabitants, the Reer Xamar, 'the people of Xamar', exercised power here for centuries, but are today in a numerical and political minority in the significantly larger urban area of Muqdisho. Although it has become commonplace both in the literature and in conversation today for Muqdisho and Xamar to be used interchangeably to refer to the whole of the modern city, Xamar in this study is only the old town.

Historically, Xamar protected itself and its polity from outsiders with a wall. Whether it was a wall in the normal sense, or whether the fortifications were rather a connecting up of the outer houses, is not clear. However, in the early modern period, the Portuguese records refer to the city being walled on the landward side. It was a walled city at the time of Guillain's visit in 1846 and is pictured as such in one of his photographs. It was so in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the wall being talked about and pictured by Robecchi Bricchetti in the report on his expedition of 1891 for the Italian Geographical Society.<sup>235</sup> And writing about his first impressions of Muqdisho in May 1913, the Italian colonial officer Stefanini tells us

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<sup>235</sup> Robecchi Bricchetti 1899:113-4.

A wall surrounds all the city and opens itself to the outside through four doors [gates]: one towards the sea on the north east side going to Itala and Obbia [Adala and Hobbiyo]; the Gardens door [possibly near the Arba' - Rukun mosque and garden]; the Market door, from which are the roads leading to the interior and, particularly, to Afgoi, the Scidle and the Dafet [Afgooye, Jowhar and Dafet]; and finally, the Mursola door to the south, leading towards Gesira, Merca and Brava [Jesira, Marka and Baraawe]

‘Out of the city and surrounding the sorghum market the Italians have built a cluster of rectangular huts with sloping roofs, arranged in a regular fashion (like a chess board), and maybe to the detriment of aesthetics and ‘picturesqueness’ of the city but they all have the advantage of ‘hygiene’/sanitation. On the north of Scingani there are an old tower and a mosque’.<sup>236</sup>

In 2006 an elderly woman of the Gudmane lineage told me that her grandfather had been responsible for locking the gates of the city at sundown in the early Italian period. The old practice had been that all non-citizens must leave the town before dark, unless they were vouched for as a guest of a citizen and were to stay at his house.<sup>237</sup>

There are several explanations for the origin and meaning of Xamar, as also for Muqdisho and noted in the previous chapter, but not always very convincing. To both names are ascribed etymology deriving from Arabic roots, a popularly expressed view among Somalis for ‘Xamar’ is that it comes from the Arabic word for ‘red’ (*ahmar*), because of the reddish earth that occurs along parts of this coast. Also featuring ‘red’ is a legend (related in full in the next chapter) that Xamar Weyne was built after a large cache (*weyn* means ‘big’ in Somali) of red gold was left in mysterious circumstances to a poor man and his wife. An explanation favoured by Xamari people themselves is with reference to the neighbouring country of Yemen, and which pre-dates the name ‘Muqdisho’; this explanation traces its origin to the ancient Himyarite or *Hamyari*) empire of southern Yemen of approximately 300 BC- 100CE, later to become Hadramawt. In this case, Xamar (Hamar) is said to be a name that was brought with

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<sup>236</sup> Stefanini 1922:21-2.

<sup>237</sup> IN36.

them by the people who settled here from that place. A version of this legend as told to me is in Chapter 3. It will be recalled that the Banaadiri author 'Aydarus also proposes a Himyar origin for the name.<sup>238</sup>

### **Descent structures: Free-standing versus 'total genealogy' model**

Before discussing some details of social organisation among the Banaadiri, brief consideration must be given to the relationship of the Banaadiri lineage system to the overall and better-known organising principles of the Somali clan system. Legends of Arab ancestry – and which almost completely disregard any reference to a pre-Islamic era – form a common thread running through the traditions of origin of almost all Somali groups, and the Banaadiri are no different in this regard.<sup>239</sup> Individual patrilineal genealogies, known in Somali as *abtirsiimo*, are stored and memorised by individuals, from the person's given name through the first name of the father, then grandfather, and so on to some distant and eminent founder ancestor. These commonly contain upwards of thirty generations. Many Somalis are from an oral tradition, and these long lines of ancestors are stored in memory alone, but for the Banaadiri, who have been a literate people with a written tradition that uses Arabic, genealogies can be kept as written records, along with other important documents that tell of their past.<sup>240</sup> Thus it is unusual, and arguably unnecessary, for the average townsman to memorise more than two or three generations of ancestors. But figuring personally in a shared pedigree and in a common past with others of the same lineage is a powerful aspect of identity for all Somalis.

The main difference between the descent pattern among Banaadiris and that of the majority of the Somali clans is that Banaadiri people belong to a collection of lineages which are free-standing and do not converge at a single common ancestor. In contrast, for the large Somali clans of the interior of the country ancestry is traced back through the subdivisions, divisions, and clan-family units, eventually converging at a

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<sup>238</sup> 'Aydarus 1950: 36.

<sup>239</sup> An obvious exception is the 'Bantu'-Somalis of the inter-river areas of southern Somalia whose traditions of origin are African.

<sup>240</sup> Oral genealogies were collected and recorded in texts by many earlier writers, examples being Caniglia (1922) in Italian, and Hunt (1951) in English. Written genealogies in Arabic from the Banaadiri have been collected by Cerulli (1957) and Reese (2008) among others.

common apical ancestor, Samaal, considered the ‘father of all Somalis’.<sup>241</sup> With this descent pattern, often referred to in the academic literature as the ‘total genealogy’ model (as detailed most prominently by Lewis and discussed earlier in this study), a blood relationship, however distant, of all the major clans who are descended from a common ancestor is self-evident.<sup>242</sup> As the separate Banaadiri lineages are unrelated by blood to each other and do not link to the ‘total genealogy’ model, this deviation of the urbanite groups places them outside the segmented clan system that informs the thinking and sense of self of the overwhelming majority of Somalis, and is a factor which has led historically to the marginalisation of urban minorities and exclusion from the national political core.

Among the Banaadiri the roles and functions that criss-cross lineage and descent group boundaries, and shared traditions and values which bind the town communities together in a nexus, seem at least as important as cohesive forces as agnatic descent is important elsewhere. Banaadiri descent groups are not purely agnatic, as each one of them has historically acquired non-agnates through such processes as adoption, federation and the acquired membership by former slaves and others. In this study, therefore, ‘clan’ is used sparingly, and I have elected to use ‘lineage’ and ‘descent group’ in most instances as providing a better ‘fit’ for describing Banaadiri social relationships. Whilst Banaadiris themselves use the term *qabiil* (an Arabic borrowing, meaning ‘clan’), a simple translation will not always do, as sometimes it is applied to a particular lineage, sometimes to the Banaadiri as a whole, sometimes to a collection of people (*reer*) from a particular town.

The stories surrounding the eponymous ancestors of the large Somali clans are often mythological in their telling, with stories of *masala* (carpet) travel, and ‘the man in the tree’, even though there may be shrines to their memory and named ancestors from

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<sup>241</sup> Lewis 1957:71-73 (it should be appreciated that with his intimate knowledge of Somali society, Lewis has also frequently written about the exceptions and variations to the majority case). Cassanelli 2020:53-64; Mansur 1995:117-34.

<sup>242</sup> This model has in more recent non-specialist writings (primarily since the civil war which began in 1991 and the reportage on immigration and asylum seekers) been taken to apply to all sections of Somali society, and the term Banaadir used, mistakenly, as if it were synonymous with a clan name.

overseas. One such example is the founder ancestor of the Isaaq clan, for whom there is a shrine at Mait on the northern Somali coast where he is believed to be buried. His direct line of descent is counted as being from 'Ali bin Talib, husband of Fatima, and from their son Hussein, in consequence of which he is styled by his descendants as a *seyyid*, like the *sharifs* of some Banaadiri lineages.<sup>243</sup> Whilst legends of origin of Banaadiri groups may be considered equally legendary, the early part of many such lineage lists are of ancestors who were born on Arabian/Persian soil, and contain elements that correspond accurately to people and events from history, to upheavals in the Arab world following schisms as a consequence of disputes over Prophet Muhammad's succession, or to local wars and dispersal into exile in different directions included to the Banaadir coast.<sup>244</sup>

Before leaving the topic of lineage and descent structure of the large clan families of the Somali interior, who are generally presented in the academic literature as being the foundation for understanding Somali society, attention should be drawn to the correspondence between the ostensible time of arrival of the 'thirty-nine founding families' of the stone towns with the time depth of defining genealogies recited by large clan confederacies of the Somali interior. These clans are: Isaaq, Darod, Hawiye, Gadabuursi and Digil-Mirifle, and are among the Cushitic peoples of the Horn of Africa (along with their close ethnic neighbours the Oromo).<sup>245</sup> The family histories of these clans contain around thirty to thirty-five generations of ancestors (at least the largest and most important segments do, though the span of smaller segments may get telescoped or foreshortened), before arriving at their founder ancestor.<sup>246</sup> Remaining within the same idiom of oral tradition, based on a calculation of an average four generations per century, this takes the 'founding' of the clans and their notions of origin to eponymous Arab ancestors to around the twelfth century. By this reckoning, what the predominantly pastoralist groups have glaringly in common with the coastal Banaadiri, is that their genealogies are of similar time span before reaching the earlier or higher level of the family tree, before it crosses to Arabian soil. It may also be noteworthy that whereas for a settled people with a long tradition of writing (in Arabic), it is enough that the lists of ancestors are kept as documentary records, but for a pre-literate nomadic

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<sup>243</sup> The reader is referred to a recent study of Somali hagiographic material by Gori (2003:55; 92), which contains copies and commentary (Arabic and Italian text) on two such biographies of Sheikh Isaaq.

<sup>244</sup> Refer to Chapter 1, and to footnote 86 in Chapter 4.

<sup>245</sup> See for example Baxter, Hultin, Triulzi, and others (in Baxter 1996), and Heine (1978).

<sup>246</sup> See Hunt 1951; Lewis 1994:101 and others,

society, who must carry everything with them, and having only space on their pack animals for material essentials, the ability to memorise large amounts of information is a highly developed facility.<sup>247</sup> The difference between oral and written traditions may explain the stark contrast between the ability of a nomad Somali to recite his genealogy over twenty or thirty generations of ancestors, whereas the average Banaadiri will be able readily to name only the immediate three or four paternal ancestors, and would have to consult with learned elders and written records for more detail on his ancestry.

All this begs the question of whether the system of lineage ancestors as past personal history originated with the city populations before being transmitted to and adopted by the populations of the interior, along with Islam. As earlier discussed, neither tradition makes mention of any people or of practises indigenous to Africa that reach back to the first millennium on Somali soil, despite evidence to the contrary of settlements here. Traditions regarding the timing of the arrival of the founding fathers and founding families to Somalia overall is remarkably similar, leading to a conclusion that the genealogies are historically only a post-Islamic adoption.<sup>248</sup> If an overlay on the already existing pattern of clan alliances, it may be of interest to enquire whether an earlier platform of social organisation (if any) may find parallels with the organising principles of related societies such as the Oromo who have correspondingly inhabited the Horn region from as long as is known.<sup>249</sup>

### **Social organisation in Banaadiri communities**

In discussing social organisation, whilst my study does not analyse through the anthropologist's lens, anthropology has provided useful terminology for describing clan structure, and the nature of social relationships. I have looked to the literature of that

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<sup>247</sup> Somali pastoralist's oral poetic tradition has been well documented: See Andrejewski & Lewis (1964); Samatar (1982). Johnson (1996 and 2010).

<sup>248</sup> Correspondence with Prof. J Johnson: 'Your argument here is not as speculative as your writing suggests...The influence of Islam and Arabic culture on local populations was strong all over sub-Saharan Africa. In West Africa, matrilineal societies were converted to patrilineal societies in a matter of two or three generations because of Islam.'(10-Feb-10).

<sup>249</sup> The indigenous Cushitic peoples of the Horn have been widely studied, including by Baxter (1996); Heine (1978); and Lewis (1994).

discipline for assistance in my attempt to explain what I have observed, and what I have had described to me by participants of the social processes under discussion.<sup>250</sup>

The material that follows combines empirical data accumulated over many years of living in close association with Banaadiri culture, specific data collected in the course of this research, and reference to written sources where this could be found. Each and every type of evidence, of course, presents its own inherent strengths and weaknesses, and I have been conscious of having to constantly make choices about on which type of evidence to hang one's thesis. Just as not everything one reads is the truth, not everything one gathers from hearsay and oral testimony is fact, and an unawareness of the value of various types of evidence can lead one into embarrassing errors. No doubt any such errors in what follows will be picked up by Banaadiri readers, and will, hopefully, lead to future more rigorous discourse of the topics being examined.

**BANAADIRI DESCENT GROUPS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION:** There are over two dozen descent groups that collectively form the Banaadiri urban-based compositions. The kinship groups comprise those who trace descent directly to Arab forefathers, and those whose family connections are to the Somali interior but whose ancestors are commonly held to have transferred allegiance to the urban polity at some earlier unspecified period from one or other of the Somali clans of the interior. Of the first group, who consider themselves to be the founding families of the stone towns, some trace descent to a particular place in Arabia and some to illustrious and known Arab figures from history. The descent groups which follow more indirect routes to Arabia do so via connections to the clans of the interior, whose own oral traditions also reach back to Arab progenitors. The Morshe lineage for example, contains traditions linking it to the Ajuran, whose founding father is said to be Balad, and the Bandhawow to one or other of the Hawiye subclans from the immediate coastal hinterland, and eventually to the clan family's Arab founding father. These

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<sup>250</sup> Firth (1964, 1969, 1981) has been consulted for a leading anthropologist's views on aspects of social organisation, and IM Lewis for terminology specific to the Somali context.



legendary figures are believed to have arrived from Arabia some time during the early part of the second millennium CE.<sup>251</sup>

Some descent groups are more numerous in one settlement than another, as with the Duruqbo in Marka, the Shekhal with Gandershe and Jesira, and the Hatiimi with Baraawe. Figures 1. and 2. show the distribution of lineages for Xamar and for the Banaadiri overall. The ties of kinship and of common ancestry extend across the towns and villages and the marriage bonds that exist across these boundaries are an obvious illustration. Individuals and families who relocate from one town to another will habitually live in association with and within the compass of the local Banaadiri community.

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<sup>251</sup> Lewis 1957.

REER XAMAR LINEAGE CHART

'CLAN'		HOME TERRITORY	LINEAGES	LINEAGE SUB-DIVISIONS
Reer Xamar	gibil cad	S <sup>1</sup>	- Ashraf	- Sharif Hassan*
		S	- Abakaarow	- Sharif Husseyh
		XW	- Shaanshiye	
		S	- Reer Sheikh	
		S	- Baa Fadal	
		XW	- Gudmane	
		XW&S	- Reer Faqi	
		S	- Amudi	
		M	- Duruqbe	
		G&J	- Sheekhaal <sup>2</sup> Gendershe & Jesiira	
	M	- Gaameedle		
	gibil madow	S	- Saddex Geedi	
		M	- Shukureere	
		XW	- Bandhawoow	
		M	- Reer Ahmed Nuur	
		XW	- Morshe	
		S	- Reer Maanyo/Jaaji	
		XW	- Qalin-shuube	
		XW	- Dhabarweyne	
		XW	- Iskashaato	
S		- Abakaarow		
?M	- ?Caaliyo Mohamed			
			- Mursolo <sup>3</sup>	

<sup>1</sup>According to British et al Report...  
 The Ashraf elders sub-divided the Ashraf in the following way:  
 - Hussein Reesharif Magbuul, Sharif Ahmed, Sharif Baalawi,  
 - Hassan Mohammed Sharif, Sharif Ali, Sharif Ahmed, Ashraf Sarman)

**KEY**  
 G = Gendershe  
 J = Jesira  
 M = Marka  
 S = Muq Shingani  
 XW = Muq Xamar Weync

<sup>1</sup> The Shingani quarter of old Muqdishu is the traditional Ashraf district, but Ashraf are also found throughout the East African coastal settlements.  
<sup>2</sup> Not to be confused with the Sheekhaal Looboge - also known as the Martile Hiraab Hawiye who are part of the Hawiye Soomaali majority clan (see Issa-Salwe 1996:2)  
<sup>3</sup> This name occurs and reoccurs in the early Italian colonial period literature as a 'reer xamar' group, though it is not recognised today by the Reer Xamar. It may be that this is an urbanised Xamari group of Abgal origin.

Figure 1. Reer Xamar Lineages Chart

Primary towns of settlement	Other towns and villages with established populations
<p>XAMAR</p> <p><i>Reer Shangaani</i></p>	
1. Abakarow Qaar & Hatim Sheegta)	(B araawe- Some related to Hatim)
2. Abdi Samad	
3. Amuudi	
4. Ashraf	(Marka/Baraawe)
5. Baa Fadal	
6. Faqi Ali	
7. Reer Faqi	(Marka/Baraawe)
8. Reer Maanyo	(Marka)
9. Reer Sheikh	
10. Reer Xaaji	
11. Sedax Geedi	
<p><i>Reer Xamar Weyne</i></p>	
1. Askarey	¿who are these?
2. Bandhawoow	
3. Baxamiish	
4. Dhawarweyne	
5. Gudmane	
6. Indho weyn	?who are these?
7. Iskaashato	
8. Moorsho	
9. Qalmashube	
10. Reer Cali Muuse	
11. Reer Faqi	(Marka/Baraawe)
12. Reer Shiikh Muumin	
13. Shaanshiyo	(Marka)
<p>JAZIIRA IYO GANDASHE_(coastal villages between Xamar &amp; Marka)</p>	

1. Shiikhaal - Jaziira – Baa Xassan	(Marka)
2. Shiikhaal - Gandarshe	(Marka)
<b>MARKA ( 12 koofid)</b>	
1. Ahmed Nur.	
2. Asharaaf: Ba Alaawi Bin Xassan	(Xamar, Baraawe)
3. Carab-ta Marka.	
4. Duruqbo.	(Xamar)
5. Gaameedle.	
6. Guudmane - Reer Khadhiib	(Xamar)
7. Haatim.	(Baraawe)
8. Khalin-shuwe.	
9. Reer Maanyo.	
10. Seekhaal Jasiira & Gandershe	(Jesira & Gendershe)
11. Shaanshiyo	
12. Shukureere	
<b>BARAAWE</b>	
1. Ashraf	(Xamar/Marka)
2. Bida	
3. Hatimi	(Marka)
4. Reer Faqi	(Xamar/Marka/)
5. <u>Tunni</u> Baraawe: originating from the Tunni <i>shangamas</i> ('five spears'):of Da'afarad, Goygal, Daqtiro, Hayo , Werile	
The towns of Jilib Jamaame and Kismayo also have established communities of the Banaadiri lineages but are outside the scope of this study. Thirty lineages and sub-lineages are named here, not counting repetitions .	

<sup>1</sup> Information according to: *An Introduction of Benadir Clan, History, and Culture*, posted on the internet (date), by [benadir@sprint.ca](mailto:benadir@sprint.ca) , which does not seem to exist

**Figure 2. Reer Xamar lineage distribution by settlement**

### **Xamar - A town of two halves (aspects of duality)**

Xamar, which I refer to variously as ‘the Old Town’, ‘the enclave’, and ‘Xamar’, is where the Reer Xamar, ‘the people of Xamar’, are most concentrated, though they are also local to the other towns and settlements of the Banaadir coast (see Figs. 1 & 2), and some families, for reasons of history, will be found in all the main district towns of the southern interior, most commonly as traders and shopkeepers.

Xamar was once a self-contained unit with its own wall that separated it from the ‘other’, with its own sense of identity, its own mechanisms of self-government, and its own citizenry. Evidence of all of these was still discernable in the modern, post-independence era when I lived in the city. It has often been styled an old Arab town, even, ‘an Arabian colony.’<sup>252</sup> But despite observable Arab influences in the culture, the term ‘Arab’ needs to be interpreted with care. It is difficult to attempt a reconstruction of historical antecedents of the population concerning who may be the most recent and who the most ancient settlers. But drawing on the urban sociology of the present day and the recent past, and not least on the oral accounts and the participants’ own beliefs of descent, the town’s civilisation exhibits elements of two culture areas, one African the other Arabian.

There are clear influences from Arabia in religious adherence, in some cultural practices, and similarities in architecture, as are discussed later in this chapter, that are attributable to intellectual currents and to more deliberate proselytising influences in the post-Islamic period. To claim the town to be an Arab settlement, however, is in danger of disregarding the existence of a population here prior to the legendary founding in the tenth century, and to any indigenous component or home-grownness in the community’s character. There are nevertheless many people of the stone towns, both old and young, who would prefer to style themselves Arab, and this emotional attachment is reflected in some cultural-political websites and blogs of Banaadiris in the diaspora which emphasise Arab-Persian heritage.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> See Hersi (1977:75ff.) and Cerulli (1957: 135).

<sup>253</sup> Some of the more radical of these sites promote a name change of the country from Somalia to what they believe would better reflect the ethnic diversity of the population. A leading proponent of this view

Linguistically, local speech in most Banaadir towns and villages is Somali, with Swahili prevailing in Baraawe and the Banaadir villages to its south.<sup>254</sup> Somali and Swahili are Cushitic and Bantu languages respectively in their roots, and despite the presence of many Arabic borrowings, are indigenous to the African continent.<sup>255</sup> Although Somali is the everyday spoken language, Arabic has long been the language of record among Banaadiris, carrying with it not only the weight of religious authority, but also implications of education, sophistication, and urbanity. Ibn Battuta (1331) noted that Muqdisho had its own language, though the sheikh (sultan) also knew Arabic.<sup>256</sup> Nearly six centuries later, an early twentieth-century Italian official noted the importance of Arabic in the Banaadir as ‘the language of religion, culture and commerce’.<sup>257</sup> It will be appreciated that the Somali language was not a written language before 1972 with the adoption of an official orthography using Latin script. The use of English and Italian as languages of education is a colonial legacy of only the past hundred years.

The everyday dialect spoken in the enclave has been identified by linguists as being a version of the group of southern Somali dialects labelled ‘Banaadiri’.<sup>258</sup> Within the *af*-Xamar dialect (*af* meaning ‘language’) there are further variations. The differences do not appear to interfere with mutual comprehension among Banaadiri-Reer Xamar from different parts along the coast (not including the Swahili spoken in Baraawe), but there are differences of opinion about the extent of the divergence. Some variations that occur throughout the Banaadiri communities revolve around lexical choice, but as the communities become increasingly dispersed from a core group of speakers,

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is Nuredin Haji Scikei, a Reer Xamar civil engineer domiciled in Italy, author and activist. See <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/6-1-2006-97966.asp> [last accessed 06/12/09]

<sup>254</sup> A branch of the Swahili language is also spoken by the Bajunis from this most southerly part of the Somali coast. Among some speakers of the Baraawe dialect of *mini*, is held the view that it should be considered a language in its own right.

<sup>255</sup> Nurse and Spear, 1985:58-9 diagram of proto-languages, and discussion of languages of the coast, including at Baraawe and Muqdisho, and the occurrence along this coast of Swahili place names, including within the old town of Muqdisho (Shingani – though it is not universally accepted that *shingani* is of Swahili origin: see Chapter 3, legendary tales no.3).

<sup>256</sup> Gibb 1929:111.

<sup>257</sup> Carletti 1912:63.

<sup>258</sup> See Lamberti 1984:167-170

such small differences may not survive.<sup>259</sup> Some recognisable preferences in *af*-Xamar Somali is the use or substitution of ‘w’ for ‘v’ and sometimes internal ‘b’, as in the proper names Baraawe (commonly spelt Brava in English language texts and maps), Bandhawow (Bandhabow), and Awookar (Aboker), and the preference for dialect words when speaking of relationships: *awooto* or *awatey* rather than *ayeeyo* (grandmother); and *abkoow* rather than *awow* (grandfather). Some other comments or ‘preferences’ expressed by informants in passing: ‘Reer Xamar say “Ikar” not “Abikar”, and “Xamar Weyne” not “Xamarweyn”; “Jija” is a shortform of Khadija.’<sup>260</sup>

But the discussion of linguistic differences does not end there. Some interviewees/informants refer to a Shingani dialect being spoken by the ‘Shanta Shingani’ (the five lineage groupings identified with the Shingani quarter), or by the Reer Marka and which I have heard referred to by locals as *may doonte*.<sup>261</sup> There is disagreement by native speakers on the significance of these differences and on its distribution. Some Elders with whom I have spoken say there is no such thing as ‘Shingani dialect’, and the *af*-Xamar variations are all mutually understandable.<sup>262</sup>

To cite the linguist Lamberti again, in his map of Somali dialects he is quite clear about putting the dialect he refers to as ‘*Af-Ashraf*’ in a different category altogether from the ‘Benaadiri’ dialects into which he fits *af*-Xamari.<sup>263</sup> His labelling of this dialect variant as ‘*Af-Ashraf*’, however, is unhelpful as it is spoken not only by and not by all Asharaf, and not only in Shingani. He says it is ‘among the most conservative and thus interesting Somali dialects’. On this point, one is reminded of what has been noted by Nurse and Spear in their investigation of the Miini variant of Swahili that is spoken by Baraawe Somalis. ‘Miini does not show the innovations undergone by the others [northern Swahili dialects] subsequently, and it also retains a number of archaic

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<sup>259</sup> Informant IN26: ‘all the people in Waberi talk the same whatever their clan’; IN38: ‘... in K4 where I live we just speak Somali’.

<sup>260</sup> IN50;IN45.

<sup>261</sup> PR2; IN21.IN47.

<sup>262</sup> Discussing this topic recently in London between senior community members from both moieties, consensus was that differences are so small (maybe 3-4% variations from main Reer Xamar dialect) as to be negligible (Khalid Maou 13/02/10)/

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

northern features, as would be expected of such an isolated community.<sup>264</sup> While Lamberti has done more than any other to situate the Banaadiri dialects within the framework of the Somali language, more investigation is clearly called for. Lamberti does not consider the historical implications of the *may doonte* and how some people, who are in all other respects part of the same culture area as other Banaadiri dialect speakers, come to be speaking so differently as he suggests. It is an aspect needing more extensive analysis than has so far been devoted to it, and something to be pursued while there are still people left who speak it, because it is of course of interest not only to linguists.

MOIETY DIVISIONS. The two quarters (as in ‘districts’), or moieties of the town are known as Shingani and Xamar Weyne. In anthropological terminology, moiety systems classically divide a society into two categories determined by descent.<sup>265</sup> This pattern is discernible in the case of Xamar, where the spatial division of the Old Town into the two distinct quarters of residence correlates to the distribution of lineages, such that each lineage belongs either to one moiety or the other. Thus the ‘Amudi lineage, for example, and the Reer Sheikh (Shiik) belong to Shingani and not to Xamar Weyne, just as the Bandhawow and Qalinshube belong to Xamar Weyne and do not belong to the Shingani moiety, even though, exceptionally, an individual from one might live in the other. This territorial division is repeated throughout the descent groups, The one distinction is the Reer Faqi lineage who, for reasons that one must suppose are linked to their function as the community’s legal experts and as such must be seen to be neutral, belong historically to both moieties, (Their role is considered in more detail later in this chapter). Whilst the boundary between the quarters may have altered over time, perhaps due to demographic changes or political power, lineage membership in one half or the other remains constant, even if marriage across moieties might cause individual displacements. Being from either the Shingani or Xamar Weyne moiety is a primary level of lineage identity.

This dual organisation of the town into moieties also exists in other old stone town communities of the Banaadir, and such divisions also exist in some of the old city-states

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<sup>264</sup> Nurse 1985:57.

<sup>265</sup> Barfield 1997 For further reading see: Maybury-Lewis & Almagor 1989.



of the hinterland along the Shabelle River.<sup>266</sup> The moiety is a well-established characteristic of the settlement pattern in the Swahili stone towns,<sup>267</sup> as too are other dual aspects of the social structure that is found in Xamar.<sup>268</sup>

Within the city enclave the kinship groups occupy specific localities in each moiety, with the effect that neighbourhood names take on descent group associations. If someone says that he/she lives in the street called 'Abdalla Shidey, the place of Xooshanta, or the neighbourhood of Doondhere, Geeska Abarow, Koodka, ey, Masjit Jaamaa', 'Adeyga, or Awow Aweyska, any member of the community will know precisely where that is, which lineage group is in the majority there, and by extension the person's likely descendent group. For example, the majority of Qalinshube live in the ward known as Raqeyga, the Gudmane in Marwas, the Shanshiye in the neighbourhood of Sa'ada, and the Reer Faqi in Da'aarey. This pattern of descent group locality can be seen throughout the enclave, and was a factor in the organisation of the community into 'the Four' and 'the Five' alliance groupings that are discussed below.

Since in the stone towns it is common for members of the same descent group to live adjacent to each other, as already described, the consecutive plots together constitute a well-defined area of social spaces and zone of activity for the lineage families that inhabit them.<sup>269</sup> Despite this contiguous nature, ownership of territory in the town is not usually lineage owned, but family owned. Exceptional instances are where plots or buildings have been gifted for common use, as is often the case with small neighbourhood mosques or community centres.<sup>270</sup>

In the absence of research-based statistics, estimates of the population at any one time is inevitably imprecise. Traditional units of settlement underwent significant changes in the post-independence decades as the community responded to the expansion of the city

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<sup>266</sup> See Luling 2002:96.

<sup>267</sup> Middleton 1992:80; Pouwel's description of the Swahili towns (1987:33-34).

<sup>268</sup> See especially Prins's study: *Didemic Lamu* (1971).

<sup>269</sup> Some parallel may be seen with reference to the land settlement patterns of agro-pastoralists of the inter river areas; see Helander *Slaughtered Camel* p 42-3.

<sup>270</sup> See later, regarding a community building in the Reer Faqi neighbourhood, the Saada building of the Shanshiye, and the Awotoo Eeday mosque.

and creation of new outer suburbs intended to cater to the increasing urbanization of the national population. Many of the Old Town inhabitants bought land and properties in the now expanding city, and young families moved out of the overcrowded enclave.<sup>271</sup> In the last two decades of war and turmoil the community retrenched to its historic quarters or became part of the national internal displacement and dispersal overseas. From available historical data Shingani has consistently been the smaller of the two quarters. An estimate of the mid-nineteenth century gives Shingani one third of the population and Xamar Weyne two thirds of a total population of approximately 5000

Mogadishu is composed mostly of stone houses, remaining from the ancient town that was founded by the Arabs, and has mostly fallen into ruin. Also it has some smaller housing with flat roofs, and some round houses made of mud and sticks and not like the stone houses...

The total population of Mogadishu and its environs, as far as I could judge, is 5,000 including the slaves, little less than three-quarters of which live in Hamar Weyne and the rest in Shingani. It contains a number of families of the Abgal, and Hindu and Arab merchants....<sup>272</sup>

From the Italian ethnographer Caniglia a little over half a century later, we learn that in 1917 the population indigenous to Muqdisho, has doubled to around 10,000, excluding his categories of Somali 'immigrants' from the countryside and local troops, continuing to show the same approximate one-third: two-thirds population split by moiety. (See Fig. 3.) A census was taken of Xamar Weyne residents by the Italian Trusteeship administration in the period leading to independence, but I have not been able to consult the census. A member of the community who was a young man in his late teens and trained as one of the enumerators for the Xamar Weyne district told me that he was instructed to exclude families of Indian descent residing in the enclave.<sup>273</sup> With regard to dating of the two parts of the settlement, according to local stories, Shingani is said to be later, probably by 200-300 years than Xamar Weyne.

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<sup>271</sup> Personal knowledge.

<sup>272</sup> Guillaín 1852:520

<sup>273</sup> Informant PR2.

	Jacüb e Bafadäl	Asceräf	Amüdi	Rer Soek e Sëdda Ghedi	Rer Magno	Rer Fachi	Dabarüena e Scianscia	Mürsöcia	Iscaściät	Mürsöcia	Bandabò e Guzman	Gesira (1)	Somali immigrati	Arabi	Indiani	Truppe indigene	TOTALE
Liberi . .	210	140	150	180	175	140	274	180	200	320	440	113	820	490	110		3942
Libere . .	230	145	150	290	160	180	396	150	200	410	480	139	580	400	80		3990
Liberti . .	80	155	170	90	110	10	267	160	220	—	140	—	10	40	—		1432
Liberte . .	80	160	200	90	110	10	200	195	300	—	190	—	20	40	—		1595
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1591	1591
TOTALE	580	800	670	650	555	340	1137	685	920	730	1250	252	1430	970	190	1591	12550

**Figure 3. Statistics for indigenous population of Mogadishu, c. 1920 (Caniglia)**

Even the Xamar Weyne quarter of today may have its earliest foundation, beginning approximately a kilometer to the west, in the area known as Xamar Jab-Jab, ‘broken Xamar’ The archaeologist Neville Chittick in his report on ‘Mediaeval Mogadishu’ considers it a possibility that this site may have been settled in an unspecified earlier period and abandoned.<sup>274</sup> Unless settled prior to the thirteenth century, this would not explain the oldest recorded mosques being in the Xamar Weyne quarter, a few kilometers further east; and for what reasons might it have been abandoned? Was it perhaps due to such mediaeval curses as famine or plague outbreak, or earthquake or other?<sup>275</sup> It being the site of a much earlier pre-Islamic, town is also speculated on by Caniglia, who recounts a tradition that the inhabitants died of hunger in a famine, and another that one ‘Agi Hali Baharé of Serasi (Haji ‘Ali Bahari al-Shirazi?) settled at Xamar with some survivors of Xamar Jab-Jab.<sup>276</sup> Such natural conditions as a water supply, soil fertility, and human factors such as kinship and political allegiance, and numerous other considerations must always have played a part in non-random local settlement patterns.

**TWO TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN.** The migration stories that are embedded in the legends of origin of those who consider themselves the founding families of the stone towns are those which post-date Islam, and have already formed part of the historical narrative. In the case of these genealogies, the names of illustrious figures in history

<sup>274</sup> Chittick 1982:48.

<sup>275</sup> Discussion with Khalid Maou 12/02/10, and Abdulaziz Hussen March 2010.

<sup>276</sup> Caniglia 1917:172.

from the early days of Islam are often evoked in the ancestral chain, as for example with the Asharaf, for whom ancestry is traced to the Prophet Muhammad, through his grandsons Hassan and Hussein, sons of his daughter Fatima and her husband and cousin of the Prophet, Ali abu Talib.<sup>277</sup> For another founding family, the Shanshiye, a lineage ancestor is Abdulrahman Bin 'Awf, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad, and one of the Ten Companions of the Prophet assured of entering Paradise. A genealogy of Sheikh Abba of the Shanshiye<sup>278</sup> can be found in Chapter 4, and a story about Bin 'Awf in the next chapter. The origins of the Reer Faqi lineage is in Yemen, among the Qhatani or Banu Qhatan tribe.<sup>279</sup> But in the tradition quoted earlier (page 96), from a 'tribe' called 'Muqarri', which seems to derive from the Arabic for 'reader' and with a slight stretch of the imagination may relate to their inherited position as legal experts. A hand-drawn genealogy of the Reer Faqi that was provided to me by Khalid Maou Abdulkadir of the Reer Faqi in 2006 (see page 118). It contains names of a primary ancestor, founding ancestors of the two main branches of the lineage, and several levels of successive descendants to the most recent.

The question of whether the founding families came in large enough numbers to have been able to preserve a genetic makeup distinct from that of the local population that they found there or whether the genetic influence of indigenous Somalis was more significant remains an open one (and could perhaps now be put to the scrutiny of DNA testing). The prevalence of light-skinned members, however, is an observable characteristic that has been frequently noted in the literature, from early Arab sources, viz. 'the inhabitants [of the Banaadir sea ports] were all foreigners and not black',<sup>280</sup> to present day writers.<sup>281</sup> This characteristic is one which is also seized upon by dominant Somali groups as indicating the 'foreignness' of the Banaadiris; a pejorative comment often made in this connection, even by quite educated members of the dominant groups, is '*Carab waaye*' ('they are Arabs'), when referring to the Banaadiri. But articulating what characterises the 'other' in derisory ways is never a one-way street. A term often heard among Banaadiris in informal talk when referring to people from the countryside is *lama go'le* 'wearers of two sheets.' The two sheets wrapped around the body and reminiscent of the more familiar (to the foreigner) Indian dhoti are commonly worn by

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<sup>277</sup> This is in common with Asharaf communities that are found throughout the Islamic world (see Hitti 2002:179), and as will be related orally by any Somali Asharaf, young or old.

<sup>278</sup> Obtained 29/10/05.

<sup>279</sup> Cerulli 1957 v.1 :20 and *passim*.

<sup>280</sup> Quoted in Hersi 1977:103.

<sup>281</sup> Nurse & Spear 1985:5.

some southern groups of the interior, and is in sharp contrast to the townsmen's own 'best dress' of embroidered shawls, robes and turbans. A *maahmaah* (saying) that I was told<sup>282</sup> arose in the late 1950s when some elected Deputies from countryside constituencies arrived dressed in suit and tie to take their seats in the new interim parliament expresses urban feelings of superiority.

It is easy to put on the dress of a townsman: it is not easy to become a townsman.

*Waa sahal si dhar magalo loo xirto wase dhib si dhal magalo loo noqdo*

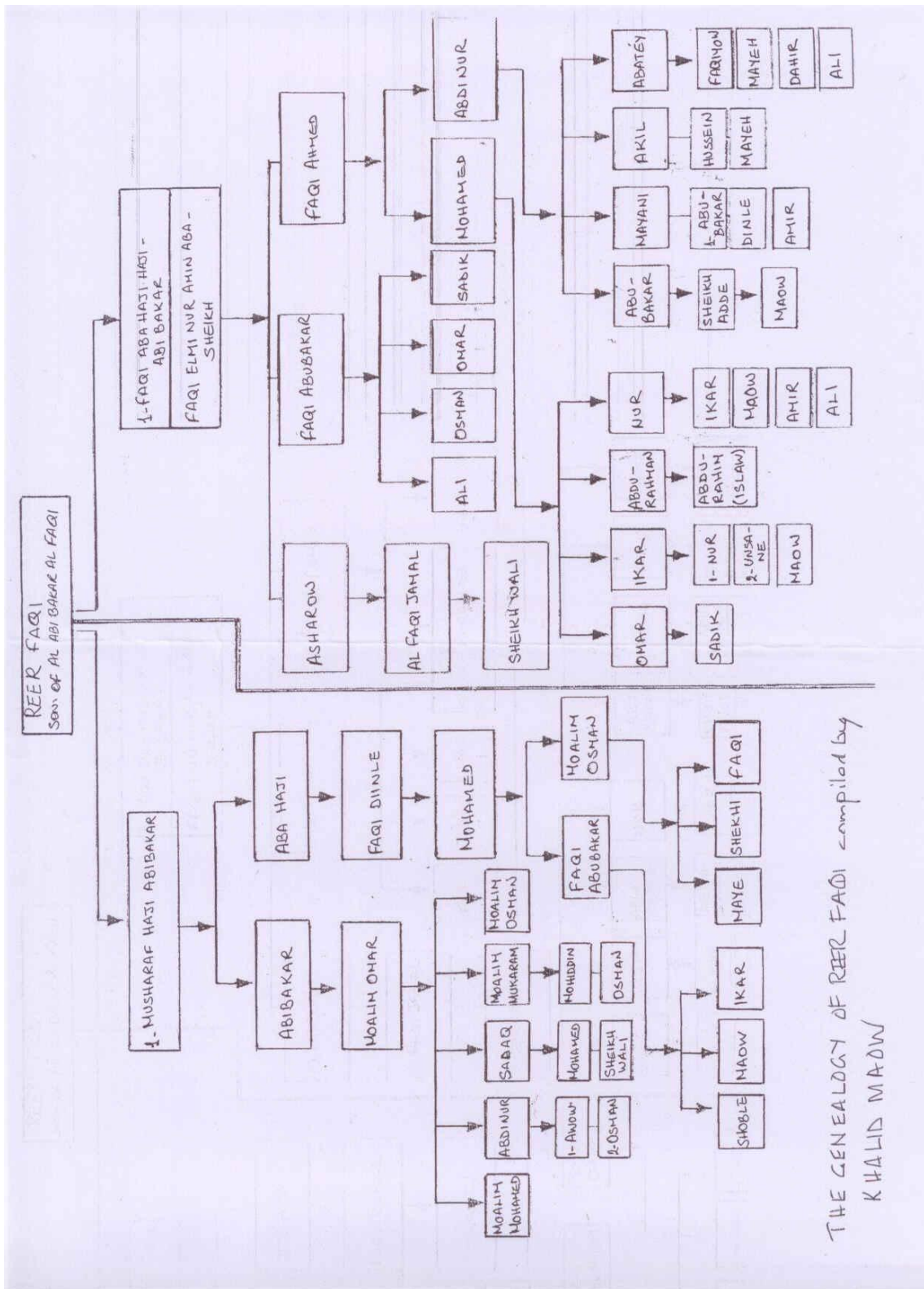
The people of these coastal lineage groups have been there for a very long time, with claims to family histories as long as those of the dominant Somali clan groups. The genealogies for these 'founding families' can be divided into two parts, with the lower (most recent) section containing names of ancestors who were born in the Banaadir, and the upper or more ancient part which lists ancestors who are from a tribe of Arab or Persian provenance. The linking ancestors who are the bridge between settlement on the Banaadir coast and origins on foreign soil will often be the first in the line to carry a name which indicates the lineage's place of origin or tribal roots, as in al-Shaash, al-Naysabur, al-Shiraz.

Among these so-called founding families are the 'patrician' lineages. In using the term 'patrician' (and non-patrician) I am guided by Middleton's descriptions of the similarly structured stone town societies of the Swahili coast,<sup>283</sup> to distinguish the towns' ruling families who have formed a virtual aristocracy that is associated with lineages of pedigree, often based on religious scholarship and from whom the ruling elites have been drawn. On that basis this would clearly include the Asharaf, Reer Faqi and Gudmane among the Banaadiris. Non-patricians would include the descent groups comprised of the more recent entrants to the town, and of course the client class. However, the line between patricians and non-patricians, except at the extremes as mentioned, may be unclear.

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<sup>282</sup> PR2.

<sup>283</sup> Middleton 1992:90ff. It is also a term elected to be used by Reese in his dissertation (1996) and later work on Banaadiri religious classes.



THE GENEALOGY OF REER FAQI compiled by KHALID MAOW

Chart: Genealogy of the Reer Faqi

A second set of Reer Xamar descent groups are those who trace their origins to Islamic founding heroes more indirectly, via Somali clans of the interior. Their stories of origin are less consistent, and the recounting of a family tree may be contracted to only a few generations before speaking of 'once belonging to' one of the clans of the interior. As might be expected, such a relationship is most usually to one or other of the Somali clans or sub-clans of the interior that have been most closely associated with the urban settlements, either through proximity of residence (Hawiye subclans such as Hawaadle, Murursade, and segments of the Abgal) or historical events surrounding invasion and rule of the towns at different times in their history.

An example of such indigenous descent groups is the Morshe, who claim an earlier attachment to the Ajuran.<sup>284</sup> Reese also says: '[Morshe] claim to be an offshoot of the Ajuuran clan...[from] elements of the Ajuuran who settled on the coast, mixing with foreign Arab traders'.<sup>285</sup> As we have seen from the historical narrative pre-dating Omani rule, an Ajuran dynasty dominated large tracts of southern Somalia from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, including at the coast, viz.:

The imams [of the Ajuran], it is said, lived at various places in the interior and were surrounded by personal followings of advisers and slave soldiers...[E]mirs were posted to govern the various districts of the realm, which included vast grazing areas and some of the more important trading centres along the Indian Ocean littoral (Cassanelli 1982:90).

The eventual demise of the Ajuran dynasty came as a result of rebellions by Hawiye pastoralist groups, and accordingly the Ajuran people were scattered throughout the country.<sup>286</sup> Some of the surviving remnants, clansmen or members of their private armies may have sought refuge in or remained in the Banaadir towns and may explain the popular account, so commonly attested to by Morshe informants, of Ajuran ancestry for this descent group,

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<sup>284</sup> IN6.

<sup>285</sup> Reese 1996.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

A tradition relating to another non-patrician group, the Dhabar Weyne, tells of their origins being on the northern coast of Somalia where their ancestors were employed as guards and porters to accompany Arab settlers and religious travellers who wished to make their way from the mediaeval Red Sea port city of Zayla' (Saylac) overland to the Banaadir coast. These guides settled in Xamar, along with their patrons, at the completion of their journey.<sup>287</sup> Having been selected initially 'because of their strength', they chose for themselves 'the family name of Dhabar Weyne', the literal meaning of which is 'large/strong back', implying an ability to carry heavy loads.<sup>288</sup> This account is from one source only (as footnoted), even though written, and from somebody whose output on Banaadiri culture is quite prolific. However, I have no information on the author that would enable a judgement on his reliability as a source. Whilst recognising that as evidence of a tradition the foregoing account must be viewed with scepticism, it is included here as an example of the legendary stories of lineage history that abound among Banaadiri groups, but which do not seem to have translated into an inclusive and agreed narrative of 'the history of the tribes of Banaadir' in the way that some other social groups of the Somali have been able to do, or, looking further afield, in the manner for example of the Jewish people's believed and accepted narrative of their history and identity.

As to the identity of composition of other non-patrician descent groups within the urban polity, some, though not all, are concentrated around crafts such as weaving and smithying, not unlike the trade guilds in mediaeval towns of Europe. Because of the attractions and dynamics of town life, there would always be newcomers to the city, families and individuals, who did not belong either to one of the founding family lineage groups or who did not coalesce around a particular trade. Unrelated elements, individuals and lone families, were able to be accommodated within the structure of the town's alliance arrangements in Xamar Weyne and Shingani, and to form new descent

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<sup>287</sup> Abdi-Aziz Omar Funsu, *Ancient Ethnic Banaadir Communities*, Somali Banadiri Association Council (Somalischer Treffpunkt GKZ e.V.) Passau, Germany.

<sup>288</sup> Coincidentally, the name 'Askari' (meaning 'soldier' or 'guard') occurs as a sub-lineage name for a related *gibil madow* group.



groups.<sup>289</sup> The organising principle of these alliances, which became known as the Four and the Five is described more fully below.<sup>290</sup>

Fabricated descent is a common theme in the literature of anthropology. Descent claims are often fictitious, perhaps more often semi-fictitious, in that new genealogical claims are continually made to add weight to tradition.<sup>291</sup> Descent for example from the Prophet Muhammad's Quresh lineage imbues a person, clan, or nation with genetically inherited *baraka*, as we see with reference to 'religious lineages' discussed in a later chapter.

An earlier theoretical emphasis (by anthropology) on simple lineal descent has given way to recognition of the wide variety of non-unilineal descent arrangements, allowing for choice and variety in the membership and affiliations of kin groups.<sup>292</sup> Whether or not such mechanisms can be applied to Banaadiri descent group structures is of course of academic interest. Important in practice, though, is that the history that people construct is a social fact that affects their way of life, and colours their worldview. Whilst the traditions do not exclude the possibility of a pre-existing population being largely similar in modes of production and of somewhat cosmopolitan character as might result from both maritime and inland contacts, the collective memory does not seem to be able to shed any light on earlier times. The (thus far) impenetrable curtain that came down some time towards the end of the first millennium may suggest that a remarkably powerful influence occurred along this coast that caused people to forget, or not wish to remember, what went before. Was it that the processes of religious conversion forcibly constrain and suppressed earlier traditions? Were the inhabitants of the towns such as Muqdisho formed of and ruled by local dynasties of Arabs who became Somalized/Africanized, or by local chiefs strongly influenced by Arabic culture

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<sup>289</sup> PR1.

<sup>290</sup> This explanation, of loose fragments coalescing to constitute new lineages finds a parallel in Prins's analysis of the formation of new lineages in Lamu, giving as example the Famo, who are counted as descendants of shipwrecked sailors and local women.

<sup>291</sup> 'Such claims of are all over sub-Saharan Africa – indeed throughout the Islamic world' Personal correspondence with Prof. J Wm Johnson, 02/03/10; see also Middleton's chapter on 'Kinship, Descent and Family' 1992:95.

<sup>292</sup> Firth 1964:59 and ch, III.

(and both schools of thought exist)?<sup>293</sup> As far as the people themselves are concerned, the characters actually existed and the events in their traditions of origin took place, and in the context that such traditions affect people's view of themselves and the ways in which society affirms itself, it is not of primary concern to make any judgement on what is or is not historical fact. Even so, as Pouwels suggests, it is often the case that several types of historical data complement each other, and which would constitute some basis for reconciling beliefs with facts.<sup>294</sup>

**SOCIAL RANKING AND DUAL STRATIFICATION** A further binary division is one based on social stratification. The distribution of the lineages into *gibil cad* meaning 'white skinned' and *gibil madow* 'dark skinned' is inextricably bound up with legends of origin, and where historically the higher status *gibil cad* lineages have been those who consider themselves descended from the founding families of the town and who identify ancestors from the Middle Ages who came directly from Arabia.<sup>295</sup> The *gibil madow*, on the other hand, are in large part those groups of mixed descent who assert closer links to the clans of the interior. (Refer to Fig. 1. for *gibil cad/gibil madow* affiliations)

The essential element for a lineage's patrician status was the perceived purity of pedigree, which pre-eminence has in turn resulted in the *gibil cad* holding to prestigious hereditary office. Such functions have included serving as prayer leaders in the mosques, exercising legal authority as *qadis* in the courts, ritual specialisation roles, and supervision of community-wide festivals, *Gibil madow* lineages have traditionally had a lower ranking, and this is manifest in such things as occupations and marriage prohibitions. In contrast to the prestigious and more cerebral vocations traditionally

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<sup>293</sup> Opposing views of origin by Banaadiri themselves, and also expressed by writers such as Hersi, Pouwels, and others.

<sup>294</sup> Pouwels 1987:17.

<sup>295</sup> *Gibil cad* and *gibil madow* pertain to social ranking and not to an individual's skin tone. Dark and light complexions are found in both sets, though persons who are very light are almost certainly *gibil cad*, and a very dark person is almost certainly *gibil madow*. (The point is often made by other Somalis that there are also some very light people in their groups, which is true - except that then other factors come into play, such as facial features.) But in any case, Somalis from other cultural traditions generalise a light skinned characteristic to all Banaadiri, in the same way that the latter will refer to 'the other' Somalis as *madow*.

reserved for *gibil cad* lineages, *gibil madow* descent groups were primarily engaged in skilled and unskilled labour, providing services to the community. Occupationally they are most often engaged in skilled work that includes weaving, silversmithing (more recently also goldsmithing<sup>296</sup>), fishing, and non-skilled manual activities such as portering. On choice of marriage partners, the sanctions against marriage of a *gibil madow* to a member of the *gibil cad* were imposed by the latter, who retained the upper hand in the power structure. Except for Reer Maanyo (said to have been among the founding families of legend) all *gibil madow* groups acknowledge a descent structure that incorporates forefathers from the Somali clans of the interior. The ambiguities of a dual origin, in contrast to what some may consider more ‘immaculate’ or unbroken genealogy among *gibil cad* to the time of the Prophet, seems to have been the primary factor for this social stratification. In the more rigid social order of former times up to the recent past, such lines of differentiation were strictly adhered to, as may be perceived from oral testimony relating to family histories of marriage arrangements. Later in this chapter we shall put some flesh on to the traditional social and economic activities of the two groups.

Other factors contributing to social elevation but less linked to ‘hereditary’ status have included religious learning and wealth. Notions of piety are ascribed to *gibil cad* religious lineages such as Asharaf and Sheikhal, who are believed to have an inherited religious grace, but religious prestige is not inevitably tied to social ranking. Individuals from any group can and do become esteemed theologians and teachers of religion. A leading Banaadiri *weli* (‘saint’) of the last century (Sheikh Uweys, of more later) was from a low status group. Wealth, too, may confer social standing, particularly in a community whose economy is based largely on trade and commerce. Whilst social standing may provide some advantage in business, success does not depend on social standing, and some remembered names in business among the Banaadir (Haji Maow of the Bandhawow, for example)\_ were of *gibil madow* descent.

The ranking of lineages is today a sensitive issue, and I have encountered a reluctance among some leadership figures – influential voices in the community – to discuss this

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<sup>296</sup> Only in twentieth century was gold jewellery produced locally; previously only silver jewellery was made locally while gold jewellery had to be imported. IN3; IN46.

fact of history, both in acknowledgement of its diminished significance and its inappropriateness to present day social values. The reticence to discuss the historical nature of the division may be further understood in the context of the present time of social catastrophe, where elders are concerned to hold together the community in the face of divisive efforts by more powerful political interests.

If we divert our eye for a moment to neighbouring communities, we find similar patterns of social stratification of patrician and non-patrician families in the Swahili stone towns of the coast. Among the Geledi and Bagedi clans of Afgooye and Aw Diinle of the Lower Shabelle, *gibil cad* and *gibil madow* designations are a factor defining descent categories and according social status.<sup>297</sup> These communities' own social histories are of towns with mixed populations of patrician families, adopted and assimilated others, and slaves.

OTHERS. Primary membership in a lineage group as described above does not, however, take account of all of the people who are accepted members of the urban polity. Present in all of the Reer Xamar lineages, are those associated groups of indeterminate origin. They do not form separate descent groups, but have been grafted on to existing lineages, and carry the name of the lineage to which they have become attached. All lineages have within their number some such citizens. The position they occupy in the community and the family is one based on patronage. They are the main source of labour, and are typically engaged in domestic service and have specific functions that they perform in the everyday lives of the community, on ritual occasions and at festivals. They are the people who perform such ritual tasks as *kobirow* ('marriage teacher') which is described in detail later, practitioners in the art of the *mingis* 'possession cult' exorcisms, and engage in what are considered low status occupations such as butchering, attending to essential, but 'unclean', tasks of washing the dead, performing circumcisions, and midwifery. They do not marry from among the city's acknowledged lineages and descent groups. An Italian ethnographer, Giuseppe Caniglia, writing in the 1920s, assigns the name *arifa*, or 'commoners' to these Reer Xamar citizens.<sup>298</sup> The commoners are adopted into the lineages, and according to Caniglia's classification all of the lineages he listed comprised *liberi* and *liberati* –

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<sup>297</sup> Caniglia 1922:62ff; British, Danish, Dutch Joint Fact-Finding Mission to Nairobi 2000:42 quoting Banaadiri elders.

<sup>298</sup> See also Middleton 1992: 24.

‘free’ and ‘freed’ (Fig. 3.), those with basic citizenship rights and those who are or were once in some sort of client relationship.<sup>299</sup> Caniglia was writing in the first quarter of the last century, which post-dated some social reforms that included the freeing of slaves.<sup>300</sup> In the contemporary context, many of these *arifa* continued to consider themselves dependant on their former patrons, remaining within the community, continuing their traditional occupations and client roles, and continuing to carry the name of their patron’s lineage.<sup>301</sup>

Recruitments to a descent group or clan through various mechanism such as adoption and absorption, either of individuals or of small groups grafted on to the main stock is a common feature among some Somali clans of the interior. Some such annexes to the clan composition are identified as *martii*, meaning ‘guest’. An example of a ‘guest group’ of the Hawiye is the Sheikhal Lobogi religious lineage of the Hawiye,<sup>302</sup> and among the Rahanweyn agro-pastoralists, adoption is a well-established mechanism for incorporating newcomers, and is referred to as *shegat*.<sup>303</sup> Amongst the Reer Xamar, in the case of the Yaquub, we have an example of absorption of a complete descent group into the urban polity of Muqdisho. Historically we have followed the transition of the Yaquub from being a segment of the Abgal clan of the interior, acquiring for themselves by force Imamship status in the Shingani quarter of the city, to integration as one of the five – the *shanta shingani* – lineage alliances of the Shingani moiety.<sup>304</sup>

The old city state of Xamar, a local metropolis and centre of commercial activity for many centuries, would always have attracted strangers, just as in turn the people of the city have themselves pursued up-country trade and some had settled there. The city community has found ways of accommodating newcomers and strangers, migrants from the interior to the coast, and travelers, traders and adventurers from overseas, creating a cosmopolitan society not found elsewhere in Somalia. When I lived in Muqdisho the Old Town had room for not only the small clusters of Arab and Indian families (the

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<sup>299</sup> See Caniglia’s population table, Fig. 3.

<sup>300</sup> Accounts of the extent of slavery in Muqdisho at the close of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century can be found in Robecchi-Bricchetti (1899) Reese (2008), and Besteman (1995).

<sup>301</sup> Informant Ahmed Mohamed of Fadiga Solicitors. A glance at the literature on the history of slavery will find parallels, not least in the experience of slaves in the American south who, when freed, took the name of their former masters.

<sup>302</sup> Correspondence with Issa Salwe on religious lineages.

<sup>303</sup> Processes of adoption and federation among the Digil-Rahanweyn confederacies have been described in studies by Helander (2003), Luling (2002), and Lewis in an Appendix to the 1998 PB edn. of *Peoples...*

<sup>304</sup> See Fig. 4. of the administrative units later in this chapter.

latter with their own Shi'a mosque) but also at least one Jewish trader of Middle Eastern origin,<sup>305</sup> and a Turkish family of cobblers. These 'strangers' who lived among the Reer Xamar did not belong to any of the kinship groups, but they were bound up with the economy of the community, being largely traders and shopkeepers, while a few worked as skilled carpenters and plasterers. Of the Arab and Indian families, most of these were at least third generation residents; they were predominantly Muslims, although a few of the Indians were Hindu (referred to by the people of the enclave as *banyaans*). After the 1991 civil war none remained.

Whilst having attempted in this section to identify some of the markers that have helped shape a distinctive Banaadiri cultural identity, it would be wrong to give the impression that all these elements of social composition are extant, and that life in the city enclave is somehow ossified. The old social order of rigid stratification amongst Reer Xamar has undergone significant changes in the last century, with old lines being blurred and traditional prohibitions fading. National political movements of the late colonial period de-emphasised clan and lineage loyalties in favour of nationalist principles of equality and unity. Indeed the influence of prominent Banaadiri politicians and political activists in the independence movements of the 1950s was out of all proportion to their percentage of the national population (see later: Leadership and Governance). Independence brought better access to education, both within and outside of the country, and contact with the philosophies of progressive social movements. Rhetoric on the evils of 'clanism' was widespread for a period during the regime of Siad Barre in the 1970s and 80s. Latterly, a civil war has impacted on our city community internally, and created a diaspora, challenging still further the notions of 'self' and prompting a rethink of alliances. The concluding chapter in this study will address in more detail the impact on the Banaadiri of recent national political developments.

## **Leadership and government**

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<sup>305</sup> The distinction is made between this 'local' Jew, Maya Samuel, and the Italian Jews or Jewish converts to Christianity who came in the context of Italian colonisation and settlement. I last saw Maya taking coffee at the New Stanley in Nairobi in January 1991 with fellow Muqdishans, who, like him, had fled to Kenya in the early days of the civil war and the fall of Muqdisho.

A basic problem for such a port town as Xamar, with a cosmopolitan population and constant flow of people coming in and passing through was to create unity out of diversity, and one society out of the many ethnic/cultural groups. As we have seen, the character of the city's population was a core of established descent groups, but who were in fact often spread throughout several villages and towns of the region, and moved between them since marriage and kinship bonds transcended the precincts of a particular town. In addition there was the frequent arrival of strangers to the town, and the necessity of integrating groups of such newcomers with the established social order. The dynamics of the situation clearly demanded some kind of mechanism for maintaining social order and the unity of the town, with instruments and procedures for handling tensions and accommodating immigrants. Though far more research into this aspect is needed, some of these institutional measures for maintaining order and dealing with change are discussed below.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP. Regarding traditional leadership, each descent group has its own chief, styled *malaakh*, or 'sheekh' (the terms *suldaan*, *garaad* and *ugaas* are also used as leadership terms among Somali clans overall). He is a source of knowledge about the history of his own lineage and its linkages to the others, and he is the chief representative of his group in the wider community. In Somali society in general 'sheikh' does not automatically imply political leadership as is the case in many Arab-Muslim countries. But it is not to be discounted that the title of sheikh, indicating religious attainment, is a good qualification for leadership, and that among the Banaadiri at times religious and political leadership converge in one person. Indeed, indications are that the conflating of political and religious leadership in the Banaadir stone towns was the historical norm. In the city state of Muqdisho at the time of Ibn Battuta's visit (1331), the most prominent person in the community, overseeing and guiding both legal and religious procedures, and the one to whom all visitors deferred was the Sultan, Sheikh Abubakr. By the mid-nineteenth century the leadership in Shingani was split between a Hawiye sultan and an Asharaf sheikh, whilst in Xamar Weyne leadership was deputed to Sheikh Muumin.<sup>306</sup> In Caniglia's list of Reer Xamar lineages (1917), all the groups he mentions have a sheikh as their leader. According to the Portuguese document of Barbosa, all the city-states were governed by a sheikh. The

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<sup>306</sup> At the time of Guillain's visit to Muqdisho in 1846.

surrender of political leadership by traditional lineage heads to secular forces may be quite a modern progression, the effect of first colonial rule beginning in the late nineteenth century, then independence and the institutions of the modern state in the second half of the twentieth century.

On the manner of succession of the *malaakh*, as with other leadership roles in the community, this is not automatically hereditary. However, on account of their privileged position and nurturing within a leading family, it is highly usual for the sons or close male relatives of a *malaakh* to be chosen to inherit the position on the death of the incumbent, or at least to be seriously considered for taking on the cloak of responsibility. The close kin will naturally look to the family of the *malaakh* for a suitable successor – as indeed may happen when choosing successors for other important functionary offices, and this is reflected in the names of some of the sub-lineages, where families have acquired a kind of dynastic succession. Examples of this are found among the Qalin Shube which has a sub-section called *Reer Malaakh*, and the Gudmane a sub-section called *Reer Khatiib*.

Challenges to such leadership succession, however, appear to be not uncommon, and have been recorded by earlier writers. Guillain, for example, tells a story regarding a dispute over competing claims for the the sultanship of Xamar Weyne some time in the first half of the nineteenth century (related in the previous chapter).<sup>307</sup> A similar internal dispute is reported on as occurring some seventy years later, this time over the election of a *khatiib* ('prayer leader') to one of the congregational mosque of Shingani involving the Asharaf and 'Amudi, and is translated in full below:

In 1337 al-Hijra (1918 CE) there was a quarrel between two tribes, the Asharaf and the al-'Amudi, who were both from Shingani. They used all to pray in the same mosques, but after this quarrel the Asharaf built their own mosque and named it Sheikh Ahmed mosque. The disagreement had been caused by the Asharaf removing from office the *khatiib* who was

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<sup>307</sup> Another fractious succession story of the sultan of the Geledi is related in Luling *Sultanate*...



from the 'Amudi group - and they had no right to do this because he had been chosen by the elders of both groups. This conflict continued for many years (sic). In 1339 al-Hijra [1921 CE] the Italian overnment of that time intervened, and Mr. Carlo Avolio who was director of the Municipality, together with the other people of Muqdisho and surrounding area, and many religious leaders of the *'ulama* tried to resolve the problem between the two. Finally they succeeded by having the 'Amudi family pray for twelve Fridays in the Sheikh Ahmed Mosque of the Asharaf. After the twelve Fridays passed, the Asharaf returned to pray in the original Friday mosque. The 'Amudi's accepted the new *khatiib* to be chosen from the Asharaf , and peace was made between them.<sup>308</sup>

The chiefs of lineages along with other elders are responsible for regulating relations within their own group and their group's relations with other groups. An important functions of elders throughout the Somali system is, as Lewis notes, 'the adaptation of traditional norms to meet new situations,' and we see this in action time and again.<sup>309</sup>

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS. Historically Xamar protected itself from outsiders with a wall, and would have had some rules governing who remained inside the wall and who did not. Some indication of the regulation governing exclusion has already been reported on above regarding the locking of the gates at sundown and the eviction of non-residents, Ibn Battuta noted that visiting merchants had to be accommodated in the home of a citizen if they were to stay overnight, otherwise would have to return to their ship each day after trading. Guillain tells us that he and his party had to have a letter of introduction to the Sharif of the town. According to one of my informants, the custom was that 'newcomers to the city coming in from the sea and people coming in from the land were asked "Do you wish to trade, do you wish only to pass through or do

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<sup>308</sup> The writer stated that there are original documents signed by the Asharaf and the 'Amuudi resolving this issue ('Aydarus p 40).

<sup>309</sup> Lewis, 1994: 98. That has included having to deal with targeting killings, maiming, rape and abduction of their people, and seizing of assets, whilst being themselves unarmed. It is a subject which I shall dealt with in more detail in the final chapter.

you wish to stay?”” If the latter, one must assume some further procedures were in place and the aspiring citizen committing to a set of rules and regulations.<sup>310</sup>

At the micro level of community, we have seen how kinship units usually settled individually in their own residential areas or wards, presupposing thereby a relative harmony and understanding between neighbours. In the face of inevitable social and economic rivalry across the wards there were overarching and countervailing institutions that helped make the town a unit. Most important among these (but not exclusive to the stone town communities) is Islam, the religion of all people regardless of their genealogy, regardless of length of settlement, or ethnicity of origin. Part of the cement of this common bond was the Friday mosque belonging to all townspeople, and community observance of holy days and other religious obligation such as the Ramadan fast. Religious bonds extended also to the Sufi traditions of *tariqa* membership, acknowledgement of various religious functionaries and notables who guard and guide community rectitude. Seasonal festivals and rituals that are pinned to the solar calendar and therefore, as noted elsewhere, belonging to a pre-Islamic era though having acquired a religious overlay, were further cause for community-wide celebrations.

### **Coalition arrangements – the four and the five**

For perhaps two hundred years, though the actual dating of the event is unclear,<sup>311</sup> administration within the enclave has rested on a system of alliances that are generally referred to as ‘the Four’ and ‘the Five’.<sup>312</sup> Within each moiety, lineages are organised into units where several descent groups combined forces for the smoother running of the community. Four such collaborative units were established for Xamar Weyne and five for Shingani. The four of Xamar Weyne are: M’orsho, Iskaashato, Dhawar Weyne, and Bandhawow. The five of Shingani are: Yaquub, Asharaf, ’Amudi, Seddex Geedi, and Reer Maanyo. Although the Somali word most often used when discussing this

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<sup>310</sup> AH 14/03/10.

<sup>311</sup> This timescale is according to an elder quoted later.

<sup>312</sup> The section is based largely on information collected from Reer Xamar elders and who I have judged to be knowledgeable, Some I have been able to contact in person in the Somali diaspora in the course of this research, and others through correspondence and telephone contacts with some who remain in the city. The institution has been mentioned by earlier writers, but lacking an explanation.

arrangement was *iskaashato*, meaning ‘cooperative’ (pl. *iskaashatooyin*), I refer to these units as coalitions or alliances, which in English more accurately reflect their socio-political purpose rather than being organised for the purpose of economic cooperation (It will be noted that *Iskaashato* remains the name given to one of the coalitions).

The organising principle that is behind the coalitions has not, as far as I am aware, been explored in previous studies. Whilst ‘the four’ and ‘the five’ are terms that sometimes find their way into descriptions of Reer Xamar society and culture,<sup>313</sup> no attempt is made to explain the essential nature of these groupings. This is in spite of the most obvious contradiction of there being many more individual descent group than is suggested by a four-five split across the moieties

The purpose of these alliances was to promote collective responsibility and collective action and to curb misbehavior by individuals and small groups.<sup>314</sup> As an organising strategy, it sought to rationalise the many disparate groups that make up the community by combining them into manageable units. It brought together descent groups with physical proximity in the enclave, so for example the lineages that formed the Morshe coalition lived adjacent to each other and near to the Jaamaa’ mosque, whereas the Bandhawow coalition comprises lineages that lived in the vicinity of the Marwas mosque. In both Xamar Weyne and Shingani some alliances included a mix of both patrician and non-patrician groups whilst others did not. Whatever the rationale, whether by design or accident, the instances where *gibil cad* and *gibil madow* descent groups were combined into one unit must have been a strengthening factor, pulling closer together the warp and the weft in the fabric of the polity.

It is difficult to find answers to some of the questions of how the enclave was governed before the colonial period, and we can only guess at some of the regulations and revenue tasks that were to be affected and by whom.<sup>315</sup> Certainly, however, regulations would be needed for safeguarding of public order, maintenance of walls and gates, upkeep of wells and so on (An interesting aside on wells in the enclave is that these were situated in the mosques, where water was needed for ablutions, but water for

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<sup>313</sup> Most recently in a short handbook on Somali Society by Lewis (2008:9-10).

<sup>314</sup> PRI.

<sup>315</sup> We know from Guillain that taxations on the import and export trade were imposed from Zanzibar during the nineteenth century.

domestic use was brought in on donkeys from wells outside the walls).<sup>316</sup> Justice would have to be administered, celebrations regulated, and strangers protected, all of which must have been the responsibility of some governing assembly or ‘house of elders’ in the days when the enclave operated as a separate entity from the surrounding countryside. Whilst it is not explicitly recorded, from evidence that can be seen from the traditional roles associated with the different lineages, leadership and power were largely in the hands of the *gibil cad*

The division into and composition of the Four and the Five are shown in Fig. 4. In different periods and in different accounts, whether written or oral, the composition of the coalitions may differ somewhat, and over time some lineages have changed their allegiance, moving from one *iskaashato* to join another. Such changes may have resulted because a group or subgroup moved to another town, or may be due to internal spats. The information as presented, therefore, is representative rather than definitive of the organisational pattern.

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**Fig. 4. Showing the composition of the Four and the Five**

This is a composite from documents and Field Notes and interviews.<sup>317</sup>

Xamar Weyne coalitions

1. BANDHAWOW– Bandhawow

Comprising the sub-lineages of Amin Khalfo, Bahar Sufi, Quruwaay, Oontiro, Sheebo, Ahmed Nuur, Ali & Mohamed

Gudmane<sup>318</sup>

Ali Mohamed

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<sup>316</sup> Interview with Sharif Abbas 24/10/10.

<sup>317</sup> Compiled from Field Notes, abridged edition of 'Aydarus 1999:75, and PR1.

<sup>318</sup> The alliance of the Gudmane GC (*gibil cad*) lineage with the GM (*gibil madow*) lineages in this collective has given rise to the Gudmane being conflated as a structural sub-lineage of the Bandhawow descent group by Reese 1996:165.

2. MORSHE- Morshe

Comprising the sub-lineages of Ajuran [GM], Sawad [GM] Marehan [GM] Reer Waamiin [GM] and Shukuureer [GM].

Shanshiye [GC] (later joined Dhabarweyne coalition)

Baa Hamiish [GC],

Reer Burfuule, who are a Shiidle group [GM],

3. ISKAASHATO- Reer Sheikh Muumin

Indhaweyne

Askare

Shamsidiin

Aydaruusi

Reer Manyo

3. DHABARWEYNE- ‘Abdi Yusuf

Oor Male

Habr Cayne

Qalin Shube

Shanshiye

Shingani Coalitions:

1. YAQUUB - Reer ‘Ali Imaan

Faqi ‘Ali (a Shanshiye sublineage)

Abakarow (of the Reer Baraawe – Hatimi)

Baa Fadal

‘Abdisamad

2. ASHARAF - Reer Nadiir  
Reer Saqaaf (all are Asharaf sublineages)

Reer Mahdali

3. ’AMUDI- Omer ‘Ma’alin’ ’Amuudi  
Ahmed ’Amudi - Reer Shaamo  
Reer ‘Abdallo  
Reer ’Usmaano

(all are ’Amudi lineages and sublineages)

4. SEDDEX GEEDI - Adan Dhere  
’Awareera  
Reer ‘Abdulle  
Reer Sheek Salah  
Indhaweyne  
Reer Shiikh  
Baa Siddiq (a sublineage of Reer Shiikh? Or a  
Seddex Geedi group?)

5. REER MAANYO- Reer Ma’ow  
Reer Shawish  
Reer ’Umar  
Reer Aafi.

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The following notes on the establishment of Xamar Weyne coalitions are from notes of an interview with a member of the local council of elders.

About two hundred years ago the elders who represented all the groups met to discuss matters concerning behaviour in the community that was spiralling out of control. Out of the discussion it was decided to establish

*iskaashatooyin* ('cooperatives'), and it was agreed that the town should be organised into four zones or quarters, and that the people should be known collectively by the name of their zone. All members of an *iskaashato* should help each other and cooperate in their responsibilities and for problem solving and so on.

One zone was named Morshe, and the people within that area were a mixture of *gibil cad* and *gibil madow*.<sup>319</sup> Morshe, you see, is originally the name of an area and not of a clan. The people who lived within the Morshe area were from many different groups, and some were very small; for example 'Ali Hashi was only one person. In the Morshe area these were the main groups: Ajuran [GM], Shashi [GC] Sawad [GM] Marehan [GM]<sup>320</sup>. Others that were part of this *iskaashato* were: Baa Hamiish [GC], Reer Burfuule, who are a Shiidle<sup>321</sup> group [GM], Reer Waamiin [GM] and Shukuureer [GM].

Another zone was named Bandhawow. This zone was organized in the same way, and it also had two *gibil cad* groups. The first *gibil madow* people to settle here from the interior were the Amin Khalafo; others were the Baha Sufi, the Quruway and the Ontire. The two *gibil cad* who lived in this area were the Gudmane [GC], and the Ali Mohamed [GC]; the Ahmed Nuur [GM] are also from this zone.

A third zone is Dhabar Weyne. This area is where Bar Halwa is today, and is near the justice courts. This zone had no *gibil cad* members. The Dhabar Weyne claim to be from the Hawadle and Murusade clans of the Hawiye. ...

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<sup>319</sup> Abbreviated in this section to GC = *gibil cad*; GM = *gibil madow*

<sup>320</sup> This is not the Darod Marehan, but a subclan of the Hawiye-Gorgate (as is the Silis).

<sup>321</sup> Shidle are Somali-Bantu farmers from the Jowhar area.

The fourth *hero* of Xamar Weyne was called Iskaashato.

...

The names of the zones is how the names of some *gibil madow* clans came about.

...

Members of each quarter shared things like *diya* [compensation payments] for their group. Things did not always go well. If a *gibil madow* group did not agree to abide by the rules of the cooperative, the leaders would go to the leaders of the clan that the *gibil madow* came from. There was a period when the Aba Sheikh subclan of the Shanshiye kept behaving badly and incurring fines which the whole Morshe *iskaashato* had to contribute to. Some members of the cooperative refused to pay their share because it was happening too often, and many of them left and went to settle at Jesira. After that the Shanshiye made a pact with the Dhabarweyne [i.e. changed their membership group].<sup>322</sup>

It is difficult to say to what extent the Four and the Five that were established to underpin social order still retain significance in the depleted community numbers since the civil war, and in the changed circumstances of families in the diaspora. Younger informants that I have spoken to are vague about the background to the coalitions, but they will always know to which one they belong.

In the years following independence, some internal procedures for community regulation continued to operate, as for example the hearing of petitions each afternoon at Xooshanta , a kind of open air civil court. But the laws and regulatory procedures of the modern Somali state would take precedence. As an adaptation to the new order, traditional leadership and participation in civil political leadership were differently allocated, with traditional legal and spiritual leadership being maintained at the local level, and a secular class of representatives being sent as Deputies to the national

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<sup>322</sup> Though Shanshiye is described as originally belonging to the Morshe cooperative, in a later version of the Four and the Five by 'Aydarus, Shanshiye appear in the Iskaashato.



civilian parliament.<sup>323</sup> This was a common pattern for division of duties following independence, where traditional leaders looked after village and community affairs and their educated kin were sent to a seat in the national parliament.<sup>324</sup>

At the present time (post-state collapse) the position of the urban Reer Xamar is that of a small minority in the overall political landscape of Somalia, and is of little or no political significance in overall state administration.<sup>325</sup> This, however, was certainly not the case in the period leading up to national independence. Indeed the role that was played by Benadiri townsmen, motivating and encouraging participation by the wider southern Somali ethnic mix in the aspiration for self-rule, was significant, with four of the thirteen founder members of the Somali Youth League Party which led Somalia to independence in 1960 were Banaadiris (see final chapter).

### **Roles and Functions**

The organising framework, the spatial arrangements, ancestry and rank as described above, are all interconnecting threads in the social character of the Banaadiri stone town communities. A further facet that has had functional significance and been part of the historical continuity has been the traditional pattern of occupations and functions of the different descent groups within the urban situation. In terms of what Firth calls 'ordered action' as a process by which a society is kept in being and its members kept in relation with one another,<sup>326</sup> it is of interest here to give some attention to some ordered activities within Reer Xamar society that have traditional or hereditary association with particular descent groups. As already hinted the activities engaged in were often linked with social position, but too rigid an interpretation implying that a person did only what

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<sup>323</sup> As a journalist for the Ministry of Information in the 1960s, reporting on national and international politics, I personally knew people from both sides of this equation.

<sup>324</sup> Additional information on the role of the Banaadiri in the independence struggle can be found in chapter 5.

<sup>325</sup> This statement reflects current 'think tank' analyses of minorities and where power lies in Somalia today, and is not intended as a position statement. Reer Xamar of the diaspora will be keen to point out that 'minority' can be equally applied to the fictionalisation that has characterised current power struggles of the dominant clans of southern Somalia.

<sup>326</sup> Firth 1964:45.

was assigned for him by his social position is to be avoided, and recognition given to the more nuanced and spontaneous nature of the human condition.

CONCERNING LAW. Taking the Reer Faqi as an example of hereditary function, this lineage held a position as the community's legal experts, steeped in religion and Islamic law. The name Faqi derives from the Arabic *fiqh* (religious law). The dispensing of justice in Muslim communities is considered a religious duty, and in the early days of Islam was entrusted to the *faqih* (theologian) class, who thus became *qādis* (judges).<sup>327</sup> This essentially describes the position of the Reer Faqi lineage in a Banaadiri context, as inheritors of the role as *qādis* of the society.<sup>328</sup> As guardians of the law it is important that members of this class of experts be seen by all sections as impartial and even-handed. In respect of this neutrality, and unlike other descent groups who are, as we have seen, associated by residence with either the Shingani or Xamar Weyne moiety, Reer Faqi live in and belong to both moieties. In the religious life of the community, the Reer Faqi are not adherents of the Sufi brotherhoods that are the bedrock of Reer Xamar religious practice, and belong neither to the dominant Qadiriyya *tariqa*, nor to any other of the brotherhoods that have their established followings. For reasons of preserving neutrality, at the annual local festival of *shirta*, with its ritualised contest between community descent groups, Reer Faqi do not raise their own band of young men to take part in the contest, although they do perform a blessing over the festive event before it begins. In the congregational mosques at Friday prayers, for reasons that are unclear but may be in recognition of their standing as among those who help keep the community in a state of righteousness, it is customary for the *khatib* to ask the question: '*Cullumada Reer Faqi yaa ka jooga?*' meaning 'What scholar is there here of the Reer Faqi?' This question is asked prior to the *ducas* (supplications to God) being conducted and only on the presence of a Reer Faqi being confirmed will the prayers proceed. It is enough that even only one is present so long as he has come of age.

At community level, a civil court presided over by the Chief Qadi (a Reer Faqi), and designed to sort out disputes within families and between neighbours, used to be held on

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<sup>327</sup> Hitti 2002:326.

<sup>328</sup> See also Cerulli, who refers to Reer Faqi also by the name Banū Qatan, and their rise to the position of hereditary qadis. 1957 v.!:17-8, 136 .

a daily basis at Xooshaan in Xamar Weyne. I am not sure how long this was in existence, but in my early years of residence in Muqdisho during the 1960s it was a daily opportunity for citizens from the enclave to get advice on various matters, but mainly family matters concerned with divorce, inheritance, and disputes with neighbours. Xooshaanta was the open area in Xamar Weyne behind Abdalla Shidey Street. There, every afternoon after *asr* and before *maghrib* prayers, the Chief Qadi would be joined by the lineage chiefs for the purpose of hearing and recommending on the petitions that were brought before them. They sat every day except Fridays and during the month of Ramadan. This practice died out after the *coup d'état* of 1969 that brought Siad Barre to power.<sup>329</sup> A further institution that was available for resolving community issues was a building in Da'arey neighbourhood known as Reer Aw Faqi, and owned by the Reer Faqi lineage group. This would be put at the disposal of any group when disagreements and differences needed more discussion.<sup>330</sup>

CONCERNING RELIGION. A further group with hereditary power are members of the lineages of the Sharifs, who represent the line of the sons of Fatima daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. They are distinguished from other Muslims by the use of the titles *sharif* (noble) and *seyyid* (lord) which may be used interchangeably (the plural of each, respectively, is *asharaf* and *saada*), and are found throughout the Muslim world.<sup>331</sup> Among all Somali clans there are some groups that are regarded by themselves and by others as being particularly religious. Sometimes they are separate lineages and sometimes appear as sections that are embedded in larger clans.<sup>332</sup> They can be identified by names such as *fogi*, *sheikhal* and *asharaf*.<sup>333</sup> Amongst the Reer Xamar, there were three: Sheikhal Gandershe, Sheikhal Jesira, and Asharaf. The first two are named for the towns where their core population is settled, and the third, the Asharaf, are the most influential and most numerous among the Banaadiri, being present in all the towns of the coast. Asharaf lineages of the Banaadir stone towns use the collective name of Ba Alawi, and are said to have migrated to the Banaadir from Tarim in

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<sup>329</sup> Informant no. KM

<sup>330</sup> Informant: Khalid Maou, journalist and elder of the Faqi lineage.

<sup>331</sup> Hitti 2002:440 *n.8*.

<sup>332</sup> Lewis 1998 xiii, 18.

<sup>333</sup> Lewis 1994:149.

Hadramawt.<sup>334</sup> Asharaf have been the most influential lineage in the Shingani moiety over at least two centuries. When Guillain visited in the mid-nineteenth century he was given a letter of introduction by the Sultan of Zanzibar to the leader of Shingani, a *sharif* by the name of Sharif Haddad.

Whilst it can be expected that Asharaf will be among the town's '*ulama* (learned men)\_at any one time, not all *sharifs* will necessarily be more learned in the Islamic sciences or more pious in their devotions than the rest of the population. Nevertheless, the Asharaf are assumed in Somalia to be especially endowed with *baraka*, and are held in high esteem by other Somalis who, as a sign of respect, will often kiss their hand.<sup>335</sup> Robecchi-Bricchetti (1899) estimated that in Muqdisho out of a total population of 6,000 - 9,000 the Asharaf numbered no more than 200 -300, but were influential out of all proportion to their numbers. Another Italian, Chiesi, wrote that the Asharaf on the coast constituted a virtual aristocracy and maintained an economic position as traders, with links throughout East Africa and the Indian Ocean, as well as large numbers of followers and retainers.<sup>336</sup>

Though respected as a religious lineage, and often relied upon as teachers of religion, both within the enclave and for Somalis in the wider community, in practice they, along with the other Reer Xamar, commonly earn their living as traders and shopkeepers.<sup>337</sup> Some of the more prominent commercial families of the coast have historically been from the Asharaf, with a network of trading interests and marriage ties in similar communities across the region. In Muqdisho in the second half of the twentieth century, the brothers Sharif Zein and Sharif Abo were among heads of such prominent commercial and property owning families.<sup>338</sup> Whilst we are here talking mainly about the Asharaf in the context of the descent structure of Xamar society, it should be mentioned that of all the descent groups that are integral to Banaadiri coastal culture, the Asharaf are the group that is very widely disseminated in Somalia. As well as being established along the coast, Asharaf are also settled in rural areas and urban centres of

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<sup>334</sup> A fifth generation descendant of the Prophet Mohamed by the name of Seyyid Ahmed al\_Muhajir bin Isa (820-924CE) who is buried near Tarim has a shrine dedicated to him in Baraawe. According to legend, he travelled to Baraawe where he spent time in missionary work before returning to Hadramawt. (Informant, Mohamed Ibrahim) See Sheikhs Fig. 7. in Chapter 4.

<sup>335</sup> Hersi 1977:115 quoted earlier; Scott Reese, 1996:208.

<sup>336</sup> Chiesi 1909 (quoted in Reese 1996:208).

<sup>337</sup> See quote from Sheikh 'Ali Maye's autobiography in Chapter 4.

<sup>338</sup> Personal knowledge.

the southern interior at Baidoa, Hudur, and Bulo Hawo, in the Baay, Bakool and Gedo regions respectively. These Asharaf communities are most usually from the Hasan branch of Asharaf lineages (see Fig. 1.),<sup>339</sup> and have acquired a reputation as mediators among the clans with whom they live.<sup>340</sup> Lewis also observes that ‘there are many religious clans known as Ashraaf in Somaliland,’ and in view of the importance of Muqdisho as a centre for the diffusion of Islam, ‘may constitute one of the original nuclei from which Asharaf blood has spread.’<sup>341</sup>

CONCERNING TRADES AND SKILLS. Beyond the religious and esoteric aspects of the ritual and spiritual life of the community, the economic activity which sustained secular life rested on the productivity and skills of the work force. A range of commercial and skilled occupations appropriate to an urban setting have earlier been identified, with trading, fishing, construction, carpentry, tailoring, weaving, and working with fine metals as among traditional activities carried out in the enclave. These sources of livelihood are in marked contrast to the traditional economic platform for majority Somali groups, who are engaged primarily in animal husbandry and farming.

Specific trades, occupations and functions were lineage linked, and the names of the descent groups are often a clue to some of these traditions, as we have already seen with reference to the Reer Faqi (from *fiqh*) with their acknowledged expertise in Islamic jurisprudence. Other examples are Reer Maanyo (‘people of the sea’), who were the fishermen, and Qalin Shube (*qalinshube*: ‘silver pourers’) who were the original silversmiths. There is today a high level of crossover of activity among the lineages, but even though traditional conventions have in practice become less marked, there is still a strong psychological association of lineage group with vocational activity which, among the skilled trades, is not dissimilar to the system of mediaeval guilds in Europe. Although not everybody from a group will be so employed in the traditional way, the Asharaf for example will still be associated with religious teaching, and the Shanshiye with tailoring. I know tailoring shops in Stratford, East London today, run by Reer Xamar people from this lineage, who brought their skills with them into exile.

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<sup>339</sup> The legend of Sarman, founder of one of the Somali Asharaf Hasan lineages is told in Chapter 3.

<sup>340</sup> Lewis 1998:18.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

Trades such as weaving, fishing, smithing, as well as such service occupations as portering, and domestic service are all traditionally engaged in by groups classified as *gibil madow* or by assimilated outsiders. The division of labour by descent group among Banaadiris, however, should not be confused with and is not comparable to the type of patron-client relationship that is found among the Somali herder clans.<sup>342</sup> Many such distinctions have with time diminished in importance or are today elided and excused in acknowledgment of the rightness of a classless and democratic polity, but structurally serve to illustrate the elements that have bound the Reer Xamar townspeople together in an interdependent nexus or whole.

The family is the basic unit of production for skilled labour activities, with all adults and, where appropriate, children contributing to the labour needs. An example that I draw on is from my notes of 1968 whilst engaged in an informal study for the newspaper on which I was working. This example concerns the production of the traditional hand-woven *alindi* cloth. Muqdisho had long been famous for its cotton cloth, which was sold as far away as Egypt, even in the Middle Ages.<sup>343</sup> This was a cottage industry in which the whole family was involved. The various preparatory tasks, from spinning, dressing the thread, drying the thread, winding the starched thread on to shuttles, are undertaken by women and children of the family, and the process of weaving is men's work. In former times the cotton was grown and spun locally, but by the 1960s spools of ready-spun thread in all the favourite colours (red, yellow, purple, black, white) were imported from India. But to further prepare the thread, it is necessary to starch it by soaking it in a tub of flour water, to stiffen it and make it easier to work with. The starched thread is then stretched out to dry on forked stakes put in the ground at regular intervals in front of or around the house. It was the young children of the family who ran from post to post, back and forth or round and round, hooking the yarn on the stakes, to dry. After this the women wound the skeins of dry starched thread on shuttles, colour-by-colour, ready for their menfolk. There have been many examples in the literature showing the pit looms that are characteristic of the artisan weaving industry, where the warp thread is stretched out on the ground in front of the loom, and the weft is thrown from hand to hand. The narrow width of the finished cloth is dictated

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<sup>342</sup> In the wider Somali society, occupational specialists such as Midgan, Tumul, Yibir – the shoemakers, blacksmiths and herbalists respectively – have their status unequivocally defined by occupation, as indeed is common in some other sub-Saharan ethnic groups, notably in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and among Tuaregs.

<sup>343</sup> Mentioned by Ibn Battuta, in Hamdun and King, 1994:13-25.

by the stretch of the arms to no more than the distance that can comfortably allow the shuttle to be efficiently thrown from hand to hand. The simple handloom allows only for geometric patterns to be created. The finished piece is then halved and the two long edges joined, to produce a piece of woven fabric half the original length and twice the width, for use as a *ma'awiiis* (a skirt-like garment) for men, or *guntiino* (a sari-type drape) for women. The width edges of the cloth are finished off with a coloured woven border and fringe (*tarash*) to prevent fraying.

As well as the diffusion of religion from the coast to the interior, the Banaadiri took their trading and crafts upcountry. In consequence, and at least until the state of civil war in 1991, families from the coastal lineages were established in all the market towns and settlements of the southern Somali interior (and maybe a few are still to be found there). Afgooye, Genale, Buulo Burti, Mahadei Weyne, Balcad, Jowhar, Beled Weyne, Diinsor, Bur Hakaba, Baidoa, is to name but a few of the district towns and villages where I encountered families from the coast on my travels upcountry throughout the 1960s-80s. They were most usually engaged as shopkeepers, tailors, and artisans. When in 1986 my work took me to Hudur, capital of Bakool region in the far interior near the Ethiopian border, it was with surprise that I encountered two young men of Reer Xamar descent in the market place busily weaving *tarash* on their hand looms.<sup>344</sup>

### **Urban Life and the Built Environment**

The social structure of the community is closely bound up with the physical structure, which is characterised by a network of narrow passages and alleyways between stone buildings several storeys high. There are a few open spaces where the large congregational mosques are located, but houses are built close together, and the largely unpaved streets are just wide enough for donkey carts but not cars to pass through, and in places, by leaning out of the upper storey windows, neighbours on one side may touch hands with neighbours opposite. Many small local mosques that are interspersed with domestic buildings are almost indistinguishable from them, except perhaps for a row of shoes on the steps to the entrance of one. Typically the houses are occupied by

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<sup>344</sup> *Tarash* as I have described, refers to the coloured hand-woven border used as edging on hand-woven cloth; it was particularly popular as a decorative border on the white cotton tobos or sheets that are traditional everyday attire among some Rahanweyn clans of Baay and Bakool Regions.

several generations of the same family, and what may long ago have started off as a single storey dwelling, will have acquired additional floors to create another family unit as the family expanded, thus two or three generations may be occupying different floors of the same three or four storey house. The usual flat roofs provide a further common and versatile space, for talking, sleeping, cooking and hanging clothes to dry (and can have additional useful purposes as for a semaphore exercise in 1846). Part of the ground floor fronting on to the main street will often be a small shop, maybe run by the family of the building, or rented out. Huddled between the coast and the post-independence modern commercial and public buildings of the city, Old Xamar has a visual and physical definition that keeps the community within well-defined boundaries. Elements of community rituals and festivals are elaborated with reference to the surroundings, as for example the tradition of carrying a young bride to her husband's home (which would be predictably close by), through the labyrinth of streets, On the seaward side of the enclave there are three beaches (*xeeb*), and these too are of importance as social spaces: Aw Uweys is the site of the shrine of Sheikh Uweys al Qarni where an annual *siyaaro* ceremony is held, Maanyo Aayey (women's beach) and Manyo Nimeedka (men's beach), are associated with performance of other important community rituals.

Such stone towns as Muqdisho have occupied the same land for perhaps 1,000 years, and although it is not proposed that the buildings existing here into the present century are the same ones of earlier centuries, and although not everybody agrees with Cerulli's dating of Muqdisho as a tenth century town, the point is that this is a town with a long history, one which is seen in the architecture and character of Old Xamar. Cerulli's dating is founded largely on the information provided by the Kilwa Chronicle, and on the oral traditions offered by genealogies. In July 1980 Neville Chittick carried out a limited excavation in the vicinity of the Jaama mosque, chosen because it is the area of the earliest dated mosque in Xamar and hence an area of early settlement.<sup>345</sup> At about 1.5m deep, the floor of a collapsed building was found, at roughly the same level as the floor of the Jaama mosque (which as has already been noted, is below ground level today) and presumed to be of a similar date. At a higher level, the excavations revealed a well-preserved *mofa* bread oven and much associated charcoal. Some coins and imported pottery shards were also found. Taking his findings overall, Chittick

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<sup>345</sup> Chittick 1982:61.



concluded that there was not firm evidence of the existence of a town on the site before the late twelfth century, and expresses doubt at the earlier dating by Cerulli that the town came into being in around 900 CE. However, says Chittick, in the absence of anything earlier than the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries in the two small trenches dug in Xamar Weyne, it does not mean that there is no such material elsewhere.<sup>346</sup> By the fourteenth century we have a picture of a city-state that is distinctly Muslim in character, and the Portuguese in the following century spoke with some surprise of the impressive features of Muqdisho's buildings.

Archaeological investigation of the city is almost non-existent,. The notable exception by Chittick is of such limited scope and leaves unanswered many questions, not least about the extent of the city's boundaries in earlier times. Future archaeological investigation will undoubtedly have much to reveal about this and other ages old Banaadiri stone town settlements.

This coast for a distance of at least one thousand miles is protected along most of its length by substantial coral reefs. Not surprising, then, that coral has been the main building material for mosques, palaces and houses of the old stone towns of the Benadir.<sup>347</sup> Fossil coral comes from the coastal foreshore, and when quarried forms rough uneven blocks suitable for load-bearing walls and is known as 'coral rag.' Reef coral (live coral) is softer and was often used for decorative features, such as tracery or mihrab niches.<sup>348</sup> All the older mosques and buildings in the heart of the two moieties were constructed from coral rag.

**THE FRIDAY MOSQUE.** The Friday Mosque is important for Muslims everywhere and the focus of community religious life is the obligatory weekly

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<sup>346</sup> More recent work by Professor Mark Horton (University of Bristol) in similar towns as Muqdisho reveal evidence of Islamic settlement prior to the tenth century CE (Seminar presentation on 'The Archaeology of Islam in Eastern Africa', 16 March 2010 at SOAS).

<sup>347</sup> Similarly built environments are found along the Red Sea coast of Arabia, in Yemen, and the Persian Gulf. On the East African coast of the Indian Ocean it became established as the primary building material for monumental buildings. See, Dictionary of Islamic Architecture/Coral.

<sup>348</sup> <http://archnet.org/library/> accessed 24/02/06.

communal prayers that are held each Friday in a designated place of worship known as the congregational or Friday mosque. Friday mosques are where prayers are said in company with others of the faith, and where the meeting is presided over by the *khatiib*. All other prayers may be said alone or with small groups of fellow Muslims wherever one happens to be at the time of the five times daily call to prayer of *fajr*, *dhuhr*, *asr*, *maghrib* and *isha*. It is not the practice in Somalia, neither among urban nor rural clans, for women to be part of the congregation at Friday prayers; women may be found visiting the mosque and praying there at other times.<sup>349</sup>

“The three earliest mosques of Xamar referred to in Chapter 1: Jaama’ (Friday) Xamar Weyne, Fakhruddin and Arba’-Rukun, dating to the mid-thirteenth century<sup>350</sup> are all in the category of Friday mosques, and at the time of writing remain in use, despite the violence and continuing destruction of Muqdisho in the period since 1991.” They are all in the Xamar Weyne moiety, which may suggest that Shingani is of later construction. The presence of these stone buildings attests to the prosperity of the city, and to its established Islamisation by the thirteenth century.

From the available evidence of date inscriptions, the Jaama’ appears to have been the first congregational mosque of the city. In the case of the Swahili towns of a similar age – and which have been more closely studied and extensively written about than those of the Banaadir – moieties were typically separated by an open stretch of land on which stood the congregational mosque.<sup>351</sup> Considering the commonality of historical influences along the adjacent East African Banaadir and Swahili coasts, one may speculate that it is likely that in Old Xamar in earlier times and with a smaller population, Shingani and Xamar Weyne would also have been separated by an open space containing a congregational or Friday (*jaama’*) mosque that could serve the whole community. There was indeed an open space between the moieties at the time of Révoil’s visit to Muqdisho in 1882, which was at the time a market. In Révoil’s view of this, the distinctive domes of Faqr al-Diin mosque can clearly be discerned on the Xamar

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<sup>349</sup> During the Siad Barre regime a women only mosque was established in Muqdisho, behind the old Chinese Embassy and near the Guriga Xaweeynka (Women’s Building).

<sup>350</sup> See previous chapter, and references: Cerulli 1957: I 8-10; Chittick: ‘Mediaeval Mogadishu’ in Wilson and Allen 52-4; and Stefanini p24.

<sup>351</sup> Middleton 1992:70.

Weyne side of the divide.<sup>352</sup> By the mid-twentieth century, the Jaama' was situated firmly in the western moiety, and had been overcome by newer layers of sand such that its floor was below ground level and its minaret was no longer visible from afar. It continued to be the congregational mosque of the people of the lineage groups living nearby – the Morshe and Shanshiye.

Population expansion over the centuries would inevitably necessitate the need for more Friday mosques to be built, but so too would lineage group rivalries. Indeed, at the time of Charles Guillain's stay in Muqdisho almost two decades prior to Révoil, the serious rift between Shingani and Xamar Weyne that he reported on would have precluded any praying together of the two moieties; and in the more recent past we learn from 'Aydarus of disputes over the leadership at the Friday mosque in Shingani.

According to 'Aydarus, by the first quarter of the twentieth century Friday prayers were being conducted in nine mosques of the enclave as follows:

Nuur il 'Eyn, built by Shariif Muhsen bin Salim Al Jineedi

Sheikh Aweys, built by a Sharif named 'Aqiil bin Abi-Bakar Al Jamaal al-Leiyl

Masjid al-Nuur, built by Muhsen bin Salim

Friday mosque, built by Mohamed Ahmed al-Abi

Ai-Rawda Mosque, built by Hashim bin Abi-Bakar Al-Jamaal al-Leiyl

Masjid al-Rahma, built by Shariif Mohamed bin Nadir al-Saqaf

Al-Nuur Masjid, built by Sheikh Salim 'Abdallah bin 'Omar Ba 'Omar

Masjid al-Riad, built by al-Nahad and their followers

Another mosque, built by Khamiis bin Haidar and followers.<sup>353</sup>

He also mentions the old Friday mosques of Jaama' and Marwas in Xamar Weyne. It may be inferred from that the listing is primarily concerned with the main mosques and mosque builders of Shingani moiety, which was the moiety of the writer. In perusing the names, we can observe, either from the inclusion of the title 'sharif' or such

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<sup>352</sup> Reprinted in Cerulli 1957 Vol. I. Fig. XIV.

<sup>353</sup> 'Aydarus 1950:39-40

prominent Asharaf family names as al-Leiyl and Nadir, the part played by Asharaf as community mosque builders.

**Other mosques.** In addition to the congregational mosques of the town was the abundance of smaller mosques, usually built by someone of the family that prays there.

'Aydarus records that (at some unspecified time in the past) there had been '114 mosques not including the *zawaayas*'<sup>354</sup> (*zawaaya* literally means 'corner', but also refers to small mosques,<sup>355</sup> which is how 'Aydarus is using it here). At the time of his writing there were forty-five mosques belonging to the Reer Xamar community, and this number represented only a fraction of what had existed, but 'over the years as a result of different authorities taking over the town, the mosques were either destroyed or had collapsed and had become fewer and fewer.'<sup>356</sup> At the start of the 1990s, that number had reduced further, to less than forty: twenty-five mosques in Xamar Weyn and thirteen in Shingani (see list of mosques, Chapter 4, Fig 6).<sup>357</sup>

Each descent group has its own favoured and conveniently situated small mosque for everyday use, usually it will have been constructed as a result of the largesse of one of the ancestors of the group, as with for example the mosque in the Reer Faqi neighbourhood of Da'aaray that locals refer to as 'the Reer Faqi mosque'. Awooto Eeday ('Grandmother Eeday') mosque is the neighbourhood mosque for the Shanshiye. It was here that Sheikh Abba spent much of his day in the last quarter century, for prayer, teaching his students, and talking with people. According to his son 'Abdirahman, the mosque was built by an old woman of the Reer Sheikh Muumin, and is on the site of yet an older mosque.<sup>358</sup> The long-established immigrant residents from the Indian community also had their own mosque. Immigrant Indian families of the Ithn-Ashari *shi'a* sect lived and worked amongst the Reer Xamar, and had their own neighbourhood within Xamar Weyne.

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Trimmingham1971:314.

<sup>356</sup> 'Aydarus 1950:49.

<sup>357</sup> Information from Khalid Macow, London, 11/2004.

<sup>358</sup> Interview 12/10/2009.

## Colonial plans and loss of property

Colonial plans for their capital following the acquisition of the Banaadir ports by the Italians would mean not only expansion of the boundaries of the town, but loss of property and assets by local citizens, as attractive sites were appropriated and existing structures demolished in the interests of ‘modernisation.’

Of the period during the colonial half of the twentieth century, to quote Nuredin Hagi Scikei, an engineer who has written about the architecture of the Old Town, Xamar ‘had a disastrous relationship with the Italian colonizers.’<sup>359</sup> Although there were some who recognised the importance of preserving the character of the old quarter of Muqdisho, others were more concerned with ‘cubist innovation and the external aspects of the new quarter.’ For example, in March 1940, the Vice-Governor of Italian East Africa, Guglielmo Nasi, from his headquarters at Addis Ababa, ordered the complete destruction of the medieval quarters of Muqdisho. Nasi’s justification was that it would be impossible to convince the world that the Fascist ideology of Benito Mussolini had brought civilization if they left the ancient city standing. But the director of the technical office in Muqdisho, named Tumidei, was vehemently opposed to Nasi’s directives, and his response to the vice-governor was unequivocal. He felt that the conservation of traditional elements of a city that the Banaadiri had built up over the centuries was for the better, and argued that the elimination and supplanting of the mosques and the old buildings of historical or characteristic interest by new buildings, would change the local character of Mogadishu, ‘judged by many [to be] singularly pleasant in comparison to other city centres of the Empire’.<sup>360</sup> Nevertheless, persisted Nasi, even if Tumidei’s point of view could be considered to have some merit, it was in conflict with the political necessity to safeguard certain values and principles ‘in defence of the race’.<sup>361</sup> Two decades earlier, Stefanini, respectful of the Banaadiri

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<sup>359</sup> Scikei, 2002:40.

<sup>360</sup> If the reader wants more information on these people fuller references can be found in Schikei 2002. . On Nasi, however, some additional biographical information may be of interest to the general Somali reader:

Guglielmo Nasi was a military man. In 1928, he was sent to the Italian colonies as Chief-of-Staff for the Colonial Troops. In 1936, during the Second Italo-Abyssinian War, Nasi commanded the left column of three columns during general advance from the southern front in Somalia. Later he became Vice-Governor of Italian East Africa. In World War II Nasi led the Italian conquest of British Somaliland in August 1940. He successfully invaded British Somaliland and forced the defending British and Commonwealth forces to flee by sea to Aden. He held out against Britain’s counter offensive for almost the whole of 1941 before surrendering his stronghold in Gondar.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

architectural heritage, had advised that a detailed plan be made of the city, in which ruins were marked, and so that, in diggings of foundations from now on', the materials that came to light should not go missing or fall into the hands of people who simply considered them curiosities and who do not understand their historical significance.<sup>362</sup> Nevertheless, the area between the two moieties (described earlier) and parts of Awow Aweyska were demolished to make way for new and wider boulevards during the colonial period.

An aerial map of the First Town Plan for Muqdisho (1929)<sup>363</sup> identifies existing buildings, those designated for demolition, and the radial street plans for the expansion of Muqdisho. (Fig.5). On the map the separation of the moieties can be clearly seen, but if there had once been open land separating the two, it had in the last half century already been paved over and assigned the name of 'Corso Vittorio Emanuel III', a name appearing on colonial maps but which I never heard used by anybody.<sup>364</sup> Along this *corso*, between new public buildings constructed to accommodate government offices, including the post office, some original buildings of significance remained.<sup>365</sup> On the eastern (Shingani) side of the road stood the Garesa (the old garrison building dating to the time of Omani rule and originally built for the representative of the then-Sultan of Zanzibar), and near to it a small mosque. On the western, Xamar Weyne side of the divide the Fakr al-Diin Mosque remained.

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<sup>362</sup> Stefanini, Giuseppe, *In Somalia*, Le Monnier: Firenze 1922:31, quoted in Schikei.

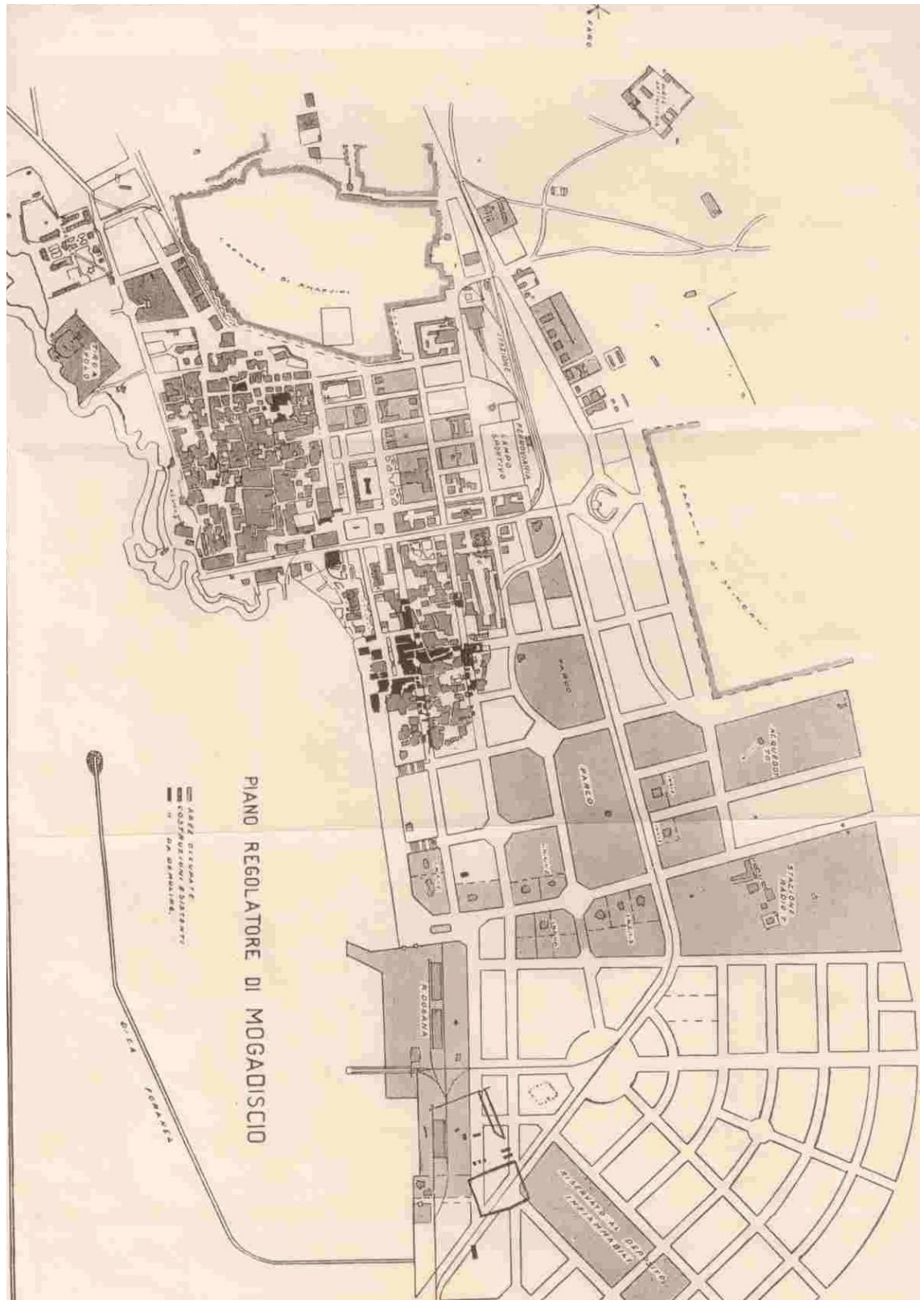
<sup>363</sup> Corni V, II 1937:239.

<sup>364</sup> According to Abdulaziz Hussen, engineer and writer: Accounts which I got from Rer Hamar elders refer to this 'open land' being cleared by the Italian Colonial Regime to make way for the construction of what was then called "Citta Europea." In the past, this was the most important land all over Mogadishu because it was next to the natural port and the biggest market of Mogadishu. Native properties on this land were demolished at the time of De Martino [1910s] and more so later on by the fascist governor Rava [1930s].

On other physical changes to the Old Town that took place during the colonial period, he goes on to say: Again the separation of Awow Aweyska from Xamar Weyne was the result of the colonial asphalt road which demolished the properties along its way. (Personal correspondence May & June 2008.)

<sup>365</sup> The old post office in Xamar Weyne was replaced in 1980 by a new building on the Primo Luglio Boulevard.

Figure 5. Muqdisho Town Plan 1929. Corni 1937



As the colonial administration got into its stride, the urban Reer Xamar lost control over the physical barriers to pastoral migration. From the early 1920s, the Italian administration began a military build-up in preparation for its assault on Ethiopia, which brought thousands of pastoral troops to the coastal population centres.<sup>366</sup> Then, '[i]n 1928, when the Principe d'Piedemonte came to visit, the governor ordered the walls of Mogadishu pulled down' (Hamud Sokorow, quoted in Reese).<sup>367</sup>

Colonial plans for the Benaadir Colony notwithstanding, the ancient quarters of the city somehow survived, and retained an integrity that had an historical depth of at least 800-900 years, and for which there is as yet no evidence of a built environment of similar age anywhere in the Somali interior. However, the changing demography of the city as a whole that followed colonial occupation imposed new and different perceptions of land tenure and spatial organisation on the indigenous town structures, and by the late 1980s (prior to the devastation of the city overall since 1991), Xamar Old Town had become but a small section of the capital city of Muqdisho.

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In Summary, the Banaadiri's Reer Xamar community displays a high degree of unity. Factors such as urban lifestyle, dialect, local religious practices, political structures, festivals and traditions distinguish it from the nomadic and agro-pastoralist traditions of the interior of the country. Yet a city wall, distinctive cultural traditions, and loyalty to the city-state have not constituted a complete firewall between town and countryside; distribution of religious shrines, language, and lineage histories attest to this.

As with mainstream Somali groups, lineage membership is the most important means of identification of an individual. Urban genealogies are as important a part of identity as with the better known and documented concerns with genealogies of other Somali

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<sup>366</sup> See Scott Reese 1998:1-17 for a discussion of the relationship between town and countryside from the late 19th century through the colonial period.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.



groups. The internal social structure that has always existed in the enclave has become more public in the aftermath of the civil war as people try to rearrange their lives and loyalties, and attempt to accommodate their group needs and gain influence in the newly evolving polity of southern Somalia. An example of this is some ‘falling-out’ of *gibil cad* and *gibil madow* lineages as they vie to achieve the recognition of their respective leaders by the new regimes and the outside world as representative of the Reer Xamar. The educated classes of the generation immediately beneath the current layer of traditional ‘elders’ have been particularly vociferous in identifying the internal tensions.

Transcending rivalries that might exist, and regardless of the historical social and economic standing of the different descent groups, or antiquity of settlement, or wealth, or traditions of origin, there are strong unifying factors across the community: festivals that mark the seasonal changes, traditions surrounding rites of passage such as marriage, the solidarity engendered in the adherence to religious practice, the Islamic religion itself that enshrines discipline and equality, identity with the community’s revered ancestors who are honoured in annual visits to their places of burial. Some of these local practices are discussed in more detail in the following two chapters.

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### **Addendum to Chapter Two: Additional Field Notes on some descent groups**

These notes on selected lineages and descent groups are based on information collected largely from interviews with refugees or displaced persons, individuals who are from the Somali-Banaadiri diaspora community. These random notes have not found a place in the narrative of the present structure, sometimes because they lack sufficient corroboration and additional investigation, sometimes because they stray too far from the central theme. It will be seen that the information for each lineage is uneven in content, but is included here not as any definitive statement or assertion about Banaadiri community subsections, but because of the potential for further investigation and research by interested others. Corroborative or contradictory information from written sources and independent oral ones is pointed out in some instances. The groups are listed alphabetically.

#### **’AMUDI – *gibil cad* – Shingani**

The ’Amudi are a very small group. One informant estimated their population at around 500, compared to some larger lineages that ‘may have up to 3,000’ Descent is from Hadramawt. Legend says there were two brothers, Omar and Ahmed, who came by sea

in about 1000 Hijra, 424 years ago [compare this with legendary information related in Chapter 1]. Prominent personalities in the late twentieth century included Shamow, businessman, hotelier and property owner ; Amin Amir artist and cartoonist, his cartoons provide continuing political commentary and appear on several Somali websites; musician and playwright Nureyn. Bin Qaar, businessman owned Cinema Hadramawt and large building in downtown commercial area. Very There are four subdivisions (according to two informants) but confusing and contradictory information on how they segment.

Omar (Ma'alin)

Ahmed

Shamow

Sheikh 'Amudi

Osmanow

Abdallow

There are two smaller divisions, Aw Nasir and Mohamedkay (Yebdaale) which appear to be subdivisions of Shamow.

AND/OR: The 'Amudihave four subdivisions:

Shamow

Sheikh Aw Ali

Shaamudi (Sheikh 'Amudi?) and

Omar Maalin.

Informants from interviews: IN15; IN22; IN48; IN 47

**ASHARAF Priestly Lineages – *gibil cad* - Shingani.** The Asharaf are acknowledged among Somalis as specifically religious or priestly in character (the Sheikhal are another such group). The singular of the name is Sharif, which as is well known, signifies a descendant of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. The Asharaf of Somalia therefore ultimately claim this descent. There are a number of Asharaf sublineages – one in Baraawe, another in Marka, another in Muqdisho, another in the Lower Jubba, and another among the Rahanweyn of Saraman. (Lewis *Peoples...*). Scott Reese mentions the al-Leyl Asharaf lineages of the Somali interior. The 'a-Leyl' appear often in east African references, e.g. in writings about the Asharaf of the Kenya coast where they are referred to as Sharifu. In Lamu the two Sharifu lineages are Ahdali and Hussein. Ahdali is a name I have come across from Shingani Asharaf people. A group called Mahdali is also mentioned by some writers (see Pouwels, *Horn & Crescent*). Middleton says of the Sharifu – 'their ancestry is more "immaculate" than that of anyone else.' (Middleton 1996:99). My own sense is that some consideration should be given to a possible connection to the original Zaides. The Zaides (referred to in Chapter 1) preceded the main proselytizing Arab-Muslims, and were probably from the Shi'ite persuasion. In any case, Asharaf descent is from Ali, and Banaadiri Asharaf from the Hussein lineages style themselves Ba Alawi (the tribe of Ali), suggesting an original identification with the 'dynastic succession'<sup>368</sup> of shi'ites rather than the non-dynastic

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<sup>368</sup> This is a reference to the Islamic leadership succession following the Prophet Muhammad's death.

Sunnis. Pouwels notes that the Zaidis were the most liberal sect of the Shi'ites. If this is so, it is very conceivable that they would, in diaspora and exile become assimilated with the Sunnis of the Banaadiri coast and religious settlements of the interior.

According to Pouwels, the religious war that had been lost in Ethiopia in 1520 saw the migration of some Banaadiri, Hadrami, and Yemeni clans to the Swahili towns of Pate and Lamu. 'Many of these new arrivals were clans of *shurafa*' (sharifs) and *mashayikh* who had fought beside Ahmed Gran.. (Pouwels 1987:40; see also Martin 1975:376-7). There seems no reason why some from the same defeated armies might not equally have settled along the Banaadir part of the coast.

Accounts of the formative beginnings of coastal Islam suggest the presence of small groups of a schismatic nature (see Freeman-Grenville's selected documents), and that these may have included Shi'ites, Kharijites and Ithna' Ashari muslims.<sup>369</sup>

Members of the Asharaf usually marry from within the group. In my experience it is not unknown for an Asharaf man to take a wife from another group, but Asharaf families are extremely protective of the tradition of females marrying a Sharif.. Anecdotal information shared with me by an Asharaf female colleague with whom I was working in 1984, was what she said was the concern among Asharaf elders that in the prevailing political and social climate a trend had developed of Asharaf young men choosing to marry girls from the non-Banaadiri clans whom they had met in high school or the workplace; this left the Asharaf girls with no one to marry.<sup>370</sup> Middleton gives an interesting explanation for a similarly stricter adherence to marriage conventions for women than for men, based on perceived status, and that an Asharaf wife would not be able to take orders from a man of lower rank. Whilst this reasoning, conscious or subconscious, may also apply to Banaadiri Asharaf, I have not heard it articulated. In the port cities, the largest concentration of Asharaf was from historical reference, and up to the late twentieth century, to be found in the Shingani district of Xamar. Asharaf bin Hassan and the Asharaf Alawi. are the only two Asharaf lineages represented in Marka.( Most of the Asharaf of the Hassan are designated in the literature as living in the countryside rather than at the coast.) People from Marka, if asked to list the Reer Xamar clans of that town will often cite Asharaf Bin Hassan and Alawi as two separate 'subclans' in this context. The leader of the Marka Reer Xamar community is an Asharaf by the name of Sharif Degaweyne (still alive)<sup>371</sup>. He has been the Reer Xamar community leader in Marka since 1995. Sharif Degaweyne succeeded Sharif Ibrahim, by community consensus. The holder of the office before Sharif Ibrahim was (nick)named Sharif Ilka Dahab ('Golden Tooth'). Feminine of Sharif is Sharifa, and is sometimes used as a girl's name rather than title.

Further reading: Reese Informants from interviews: IN4;13;17;21;29.  
'Aydarus  
Martin

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<sup>369</sup> See: Hersi, 1977: 87 and f/n ref; Cerrulli, vol I 1957:26; Sharif 'Aydarus 1950:42.

<sup>370</sup> The period of Siad Barre's Scientific Socialism (1970s-80s) de-emphasised clan connections among the youth, and opened up educational opportunities, in the city in particular, and a mixing of young people from previously rather separate communities.

<sup>371</sup> Dr. Ahmed Sharif Abbas.

**BAA FADAL – *gibil cad* - Shingani.** They are not a very numerous group. They are usually of particularly light complexion. As well as being from the Shinagni moiety, they are found in Afgooye and in ‘Number Fifty’ on the Marka Road.. Four sublineages: Abud. Aw Ali, Aw Mir, Reer Aw Ikar.

Founding ancestor is Sheikh Baafadal.

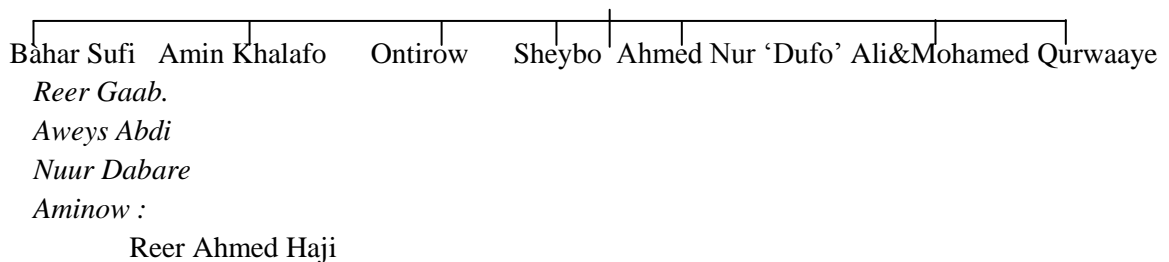
Informants from interviews: IN16; 47.

**BANDHABOW pronounced BANDHAWOW – *gibil madow* – Xamar Weyne.**

Traditional specialist weavers of *alindi* cloth. This is a cottage industry involving the whole family. The process is described earlier in Chapter 2. This group has strong Abgal marriage ties. However, according to Caniglia (1922) “ The ‘tribe’ of the Bandabò is the most numerous among those existing in the city. It is constituted largely of freedmen of the Shidle [a Bantu-Jareer client group] who had come to the city in search of work.” The primary *weli* of the Bandhawow is Sheikh Ahmed Haji; all the Reer Xamar commemorate him, but the Bandhawow especially. The Sheikh is buried in the countryside between Muqdisho and Afgooye; a few Bandhawow families live there and look after the site of his shrine.

*The Lineage and Sublineages of Bandhawow. Compiled from various sources: interviewees, primary informants and written source (e.g. Caniglia)*

#### BANDHAWOW



The term *malakh* is used for their chief. The head of the Bandhawow in the early twentieth century was Sheikh Ali Ahmed, ‘a man of fifty years approximately’ (Caniglia 1922). Reese says of the Bandhawow lineages that two are of supposedly Arab origin, while the other six are said to be descended from Somali. The Yemeni lineages are the Bahar Sufi and Gudmane, while the Somali lines are the Amin Khalifow descended from the Hawiye, the Ahmed Nur descended from the Isaaq, Sheybow from the Ajuran, Khurwaye from the Badecade, and Ontirow descended from the Ogaden. [Reese 1996, p 169], from interview with Haji Mohamed Dhere and book by Sharif 'Aydrus Bughyat.] One of Reese’s main informants was a well known and well educated man of the Bandhawow, though he does not mention him as a source in

this context. The Gudmane, however, are not a Bandhawow sublineage, but one of the *gibil cad* ‘founding families’, whose original Arab ancestral line is said to have been the Afifi. The Gudmane do, however, belong to the Bandhawow coalition described in Chapter 2; see also below. In Xamar Weyne moiety, the Bandhawow live mainly in Awow Aweyska ward. Some Bandhawow legends of origin are recounted from sources, in Reese [1996:167 &2008:66]. Refer to my Chapter 3 for some *Shirka* rhymes concerning the Bandhawow. Personalities: the lawyer, *Avv.* Mohamed Rajis, political representative of the Reer Xamar at reconciliation conferences during early 2000s during which he died in Nairobi; married into the Bandhawow but his origin is debated.

Further reading: Caniglia Informants from interviews: IN2; 16; 28; 31; 41.  
 Reese  
 'Aydarus

### **DHABARWEYNE – *gibil madow* – Xamar Weyne**

Traditional occupation as porters, hence the name meaning ‘large/strong back/backside.’ According to Reese, descent is from elements of the Hawiye subclans of Hawadle and Murusade.[Reese 1996] See alternate legend of origin in Chapter 2. Illustrious personality was the twentieth century politician Haji Mohamed Hussein, a founding member of the SYL and Member of Parliament following independence. This personality is frequently, though mistakenly thought to come from the Bandhawow group.

Internet source: Abdi-Aziz Omar Funsu Funsu Informants from interviews: IN48

**DURUQBO – *gibil cad* – Marka** The Duruqbo are particularly to be found in Marka. Moreover, this Benadiri port city is the site of the shrine of an important Reer Xamar *weli* of the Duruqbo - Sheikh 'Ali Maye, who was himself from the subclan. Sheikh 'Ali Maye's son is also a venerated ancestor, whose shrine is in Muqdisho, near ex-German Embassy. Chapter 4 contains more information on Sheikh 'Ali Maye. Two direct descendants, a brother and sister, were known to me in Muqdisho, both well educated and holding responsible positions in the civil service.

Further Reading: Cerulli Informants from interviews: IN17; 21.  
 Gori

**REER FAQI – *gibil cad* – Xamar Weyne and Shingani.** The lineage is also known as Bani Qahtaan (Cerulli; Reese) *Fiqr* (Ar.) is knowledge of law. Reer Faqi live in both moieties. Aboker Faqi and Abdi Nur Faqi are the two main subdivisions, and Elmi is the next level in the descent hierarchy (Caniglia). Musharaf Haji and Abati Shobley are more recent ancestors in this Reer Faqi-Elmi lineage line (this is according to a Reer Faqi man I spoke with by telephone). Abati Shobley is one of three sons of Musharaf Haji. The Reer Faqi is the Reer Xamar subclan that has acquired prominence as *qadis* (judges) in the traditional Islamic courts, which operate in Arabic. Famous ancestor: Faqi Aboor (see Chapter 3). A genealogy of the Reer Faqi is presented in rear pocket of

this study. The distinguished Italian ethnographer of the last century who can be credited with accumulating more information than any other on the Reer Xamar generally and the Reer Faqi in particular was Enrico Cerulli. His main informants are said to have been from the Reer Faqi lineage, and in my experience this is sometimes used as a criticism by other Reer Xamar to charge Cerulli of presenting a Reer Faqi bias in reporting on Reer Xamar culture and society.

Sheikh Abubakr Sheikh Muhiyiddiin (Reer Faqi, of the Musharaf Haji lineage), Senior Qadi and high-ranking cleric for twenty years. He is the one who supplied rare and precious documents to Cerulli which enabled him (Cerulli) to reconstruct the history of the Arabs in the Benadir. A primary document of which was the Book of the Zeng, but the antique documents came from the archives of the grandfather, Mu'allim Mukarram, died 1850.

Further reading: Cerulli Informants from interviews: IN8;25;37;42.  
Reese

**GAMEDLE – gibil cad – Marka.** A clan of Marka, very small group. In Muqdisho usually live among the Shingani moiety [IN40]

**GUDMANE – gibil cad – Xamar Weyne.** They are found almost totally in Mogadishu. The town's ritual and religious specialists. According to their own traditions, they originate, as with other Reer Xamar groups, in the Arabian Peninsula, having migrated to the southern Somali coast about one thousand years ago. According to their own tradition, too, the original name of the Gudmane was 'Afifi', presumably after the name of the place in Arabian (present day Iraq) from which their forefathers are believed to have come. The Gudmane are known as a religious group, and they have an important role in the community's cohesion via ceremonial rituals for example presiding over ritual slaughter at festivals, locking the gates at sunset when there was a wall around the town (reported on earlier). Some further information about the Gudmane from my own notes and from Caniglia:

*'... for as long as I can remember the Imam of the Masjid ('mosque') Jaamac, khadhiibka (the imam) was from Gudmane. The present Imam ... is Osman Khadhiib, the son of the previous Khadhiib... Khatiib/Khadhiib in Arabic means the person that makes speeches (khudba)... Osman Khadhiib and I went to school together...' Personal correspondence PRNo.2, 11/11/02, Osman Khadhiib has since died. I do not know if his successor has been confirmed.*

*The [Gudmane] has plenty of imams - people well-versed in religion, who are mostly in charge of the conduct of prayers which are celebrated each Friday, sacred day for the Muslim. On these occasions they read and comment on the Koran and ask God to provide health to the Hamarweyne neighbourhood.' (Trans. From Giuseppe Caniglia, Genti di Somalia, Bologna: 1922:75.)*

Informants from interviews: IN26.

### **MORSHE– *gibil madow* – Xamar Weyne**

They are mainly weavers. The second smallest group of Xamar Weyne moiety after the Qalinshube. Origins: Claim decent from the once-powerful Ajuuran. Reese says: '[Morshe] claim to be an offshoot of the Ajuuran clan...[from] elements of the Ajuuran who settled on the coast, mixing with foreign Arab traders.' [Reese 1996] According to one source there are two branches : Malakh and Omar.

Another says the Morshe are divided into four branches:

Reer Eebow,  
Reer Bansalah,  
Reer Malow,  
Reer Aw Gabay

Or:

Reer Mahamud Ebow,  
Reer Malaq,  
Gobote,  
Dinle Amin  
Maad Amiin

Faduma Qasim Hilowle, a well known singer is from the Morshe through marriage (adopted into it). The traditional leaders come from the Reer Malakh subdivision, and are known by the title 'Malakh.'

Informants from interviews: IN6; 43; 44; 48.

### **REER MAANYO– *gibil madow* – Shingani**

Origin: Both Ba-Muqtar and Shawish became Reer Manyo, meaning the seafaring people. [Benadiri website] They are among the thirty nine founding families.

Four Sublineages: Reer Ma'ow  
Reer Shawis  
Reer Omar,  
Reer Aafi.

The ancestor of the Reer Ma'ow is Hassan Mahamud, for whom a *siyaaro* is held every year.

The leaders of the 4 groups are:

Reer Ma'ow: Sheikh 'Ise Sheikh Mahamed

Shawis: Haji 'Abukar Shukow

Reer Omar : Haji Karama

Reer Aafi: Bani Berow

Banaadir website:

Informants from interviews: IN50

### **REER SHEIKH MUUMIN – Xamar Weyne**

Refers to a family name, the descendants of Sheikh Muumin. It is not one of the 'founding families', though its history in the enclave is one of influence. In the lineal

structures that I have come across, the Reer Sheikh Muumin features as a *gibil cad*, an indication of higher status. Two French visitors to Xamar in the nineteenth century, Guillain and Revoil, both met a Sheikh Muumin, though he may not be the person from whom the lineage gets its name. (Chapter 1 records Guillain's contacts with Sheikh Muumin; Révoil met Sheikh Muumin in 1882 (Révoil 1885, *Voyage chez les Benadirs...* Vol 49 p 28). Beyond this association with the urban polity of Xamar, however, Reer Sheikh Muumin is a well-known name among Somalis for the ancestor *weli* of that name whose miracles are documented by Lewis ( *Saints...* 1998).

Further reading:     Guillain  
                          Révoil  
                          Lewis

**REER SHIHK/SHEIKH – *gibil cad* - Shingani** (full name is the Reer Sheikh 'Abdulasis).

Origin: The Aqabi became Reer Sheikh [Benadir website]. The Reer Sheikh are descended from Sheikh 'Abdulasis who is buried in the district called 'Abdulasis, near the old port of Muqdisho – the site of the famous old mosque of 'Abdulasis

Sublineages:   Reer Maqsumi  
                  Reer Haji Abukar  
                  Reer Sadiq,

Significant people: Dr Mohamed Omar Bashir, a dentist, and Sheikh Alwan. Both in London now.

Banaadir website:

Informants from interviews: IN23; 48.

**SADDEX GEEDI – *gibil madow* – Shingani**

The Saddeh Geediy are derived from one or more clans of the Abgal. 'I remember one or two families lived in Shingani, especially with the Reer Shiikhs, and others lived in Bondhere.' Origin of the Seddex Geedi name [passed to me by Virginia Luling as told to her]: In the days when Shingani was the only existing town in Muqdisho, and it was settled by families of the 'Amudi, Asharaf and Reer Shiikh,, three Somali nomads from the countryside approached the town. (The three may have been from a mixture of Hawiye subclans: Abgal, Habr Gidir and Ujejen ). The travellers stopped on the outskirts of Shingani to rest, and were approached by some 'Amudis who asked them who they were. The three replied, saying "*waxaan ahay saddex geedi*" ('we are three travellers'), The three travellers became attached to the 'Amudi lineage, serving and defending them. Their descendants became known by the name of Seddex Geedi.

Saddex Geedi are composed of three branches:     Aden Dhere,  
  Baa Sadiiq  
  Reer 'Abdulle

There are two others, possibly subsections of one of the above:

                  Reer Indho Weyn (associated with Morshe coalition)

                  Reer 'Awaale (who are descended from the Habar Gedir 'Ayr.

Sources: Luling; PR2; IN48.



## SHANSHIYE – *gibil cad* – Xamar Weyne

Origin: The Jid'ati became Shanshiye [Benadiri website]. The lineage structure for this group appears very complex, and subject to contradictions. A straightforward personal genealogy of a leading contemporary Sheikh of the Shanshiye is included in Chapter 4, and chart of a subsection of the lineage. The lineage has produced important religious figures, among whom Sheikh Sufi is preeminent, and frequently mentioned in the literature (Reese, Martin, Andrzejewski)

Sublineages: Abasheikh  
                  [Abdalle] Imanka  
                  Warmooqe  
                  Amiin Imanka  
                  Abkay  
                  Amiin Sadiiq. [Dr Ahmed Mohamed, Interpreter at Roelens]  
OR  
                  Faqi 'Ali  
                  Warmooqe  
                  Abasheikh  
                  Abdalle Imaanka  
                  Amiin Imaanka

The Shanshiya are divided into two groups: Ali and Faqi.

The Ali consist of: Abdalla Imankay  
                          Ahmed Imankay  
                          Amin Imankay  
                          Imankeen.

The Faqi are divided into: Amin Sadiq  
                                  Ahmed Sadiq  
                                  Ibrahim Sadiq  
                                  Abashiekh  
                                  Warmooq

Other subsections to receive mention are: Abakarow; Reer Aw Sharifow.

The Reer Suja'ow were an important family with a business in Afar Irdood in the late twentieth century. Suja'ow are from the Abasheikh sub-lineage.

There is clearly much overlap in the above, and no clear distinction of depth of ancestry.

*Siyaaros*:

Sheikh Sufi is commemorated in a building near Koodka called Saarta Sac'adda; Sheikh Mahamed Faqi Yusuf *siyaaro* is held in Bondhere, in the mosque called after him, near Monopolio; Sheikh Abdulqadir *siyaaro* held by the Yawele family; Sheikh Faqi Yusuf of the Abakarow sub-subclan is buried in Bondere district. His descendants are known as the Reer Faqi Ali.

Further reading:  
Andrzejewski  
Reese  
Martin

Sources: PR8.  
Informants from interviews: IN1; 18; 21; 27.

**QALINSHUBE– *gibil madow* – Xamar Weyne**

Perhaps they are the smallest in this moiety, The Qalinshube ward in the enclave is known as Raqeyga (for the tamarind tree that is at the entrance to the ward). Traditional occupation is as silversmiths and goldsmiths. Their shops used in the 1960s to be in Raqeyga when I first lived in Muqdisho; later they moved to a specially built goldsmiths complex at Afar Irdood (a short distance away) during the Siad Barre regime.

Sublineages: Haji Abdi [Abrone]

Haji Ibrahim

Baqashow.

The head of the subclan, known as the Sultan, is drawn from the Haji Abdi. The incumbent during the first decade of the civil war was Khalif Doro, but he is now dead.

Informants from interviews: IN23; 45.

## Chapter 3

### Society II. Ritual, Tradition, and Heroes

It goes without saying that societies and their traditions are not static but evolving entities that are affected by political, social and technological changes, and that cultural expression at one moment in time is the successor of what went before, and will in turn become the ancestor of what is to come. Because of this evolving nature, the problem for ethnography is to try and describe the essence of a cultural element whilst at the same time recognising its mercurial nature. Elements which may once have been important and acknowledged to be so may, with the passing of time and the impact of new challenges, become altered in their level of importance as a society seeks to re-evaluate and redefine itself. Most recently for example, the threat to security in Somalia since 1991 and the rise of militant Islamism are both factors which have impacted on Banaadiri living conditions and to the scaling down or discontinuation of traditional religious and social practices. Among diaspora communities of Banaadiri that are a result of that turmoil, old traditions may not survive beyond the current generation, though for the time being there is evidence of these traditions being kept alive, with ancestors venerated at commemorative ceremonies, and some wedding rituals retained. To what extent they are influenced in performance and content by the new realities is probably too early to judge.

In gathering together the material in this chapter and evaluating its authenticity, just as in reporting on historical and social ‘facts’, the questions arose about where the material or information was produced, by whom, and for what purpose. The reliability of information on festivals and ceremonies have in their favour that they are public events of importance, and are necessarily known directly to a great number of persons, Even so, an individual’s reporting of a particular event may come with its own bias, as can be perceived in some of the accounts below. Inclusion of certain stories and legends that may be less widely known has depended on my own judgement about the reliability of source, the authority of the author or informant, the intention in providing the information, and whether the account finds resonance with other parts of the social narrative.

The accounts of rituals, traditions, and heroes described here are in part from a baseline of 1965 and my early encounters with local tradition as I remember them to have been. It is supplemented in the first instance with information acquired from interviews with refugees or displaced persons over a period from May 2002 (when I first began interviewing asylum seekers). Whilst Xamar is again the point of reference, it should be appreciated that community festivals and social practices are common to the Banaadir overall. Personal recollections of traditional practices (some vaguely and some vividly remembered) have been checked against written sources where these exist, and independent oral ones, for corroboration or otherwise discarding. Of oral sources, many are older members of the community living in the diaspora and some still in Muqdisho. Of written sources on Banaadiri traditions, the most extensive is 'Aydarus's *Bughyat al-amal*. Since there is no account in English of this work, and as it is extremely hard to find in its original Arabic, and hence difficult for persons to consult, a selection of legends from his work are retold here.<sup>372</sup>

In contextualising this material on ritual in particular, the layout of the city with its confined spaces and multi-level dwellings, the ocean and bays, and influences that have penetrated the towns from different directions are each discernable in how Banaadiri ceremonial life is articulated. The sea for example, central to the performance of some specific rituals in the Reer Xamar calendar such as *Istaqfurow* (described below) that occurs during the season of high winds and tidal waves, would find no relevance in the tradition of the interior. The enactment of the annual ritual of *shir*, with its mock warfare and ritualised banter between competing groups in the town finds echoes in traditional festivals of the old city states of the immediate hinterland (the annual *istunka* 'stick fight' of Afgooye),<sup>373</sup> and some marriage traditions (discussed later) have parallels with marriage rituals in neighbouring Yemen and the customs of the Hadramawt<sup>374</sup> (from where several of the Banaadiri lineages claim descent), but are not found at all amongst the Somali communities of the interior.

Some community festivals are pinned to the solar calendar, in contrast to the purely Islamic observances, which would indicate their being of pre-Islamic or non-Islamic

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<sup>372</sup> For my retelling of these tale in English, I have relied on first translations from Arabic by Z. Adam-Valent and Rula Qabani, later reviewed by Sharif Abbas and Mohamud Aboker.

<sup>373</sup> Luling 2002: Chapter 14.

<sup>374</sup> Serjeant 1962: 472-498. Some of these similarities are highlighted later in this chapter.

origin. Nevertheless, all such rites and traditions have acquired and include deference to the Islamic religion, with a place for the recitation of Koranic verses. Some ceremonials occurring within a rite may also be only relevant to an urban setting where narrow streets are to be navigated and families of the same lineage live in close proximity to each other. On the common cultural traditions of the Reer Xamar, those that I present below are among those which appear to me as an outside observer to be unifying and common practises specific to Banaadiri cultural identity. Not all participants would agree with me in this, however,<sup>375</sup> and a hint of appropriation by a section of a particular tradition may be discernable in some instances.

### **Marriage Customs**

Whilst marriage (*aroos*) is an important right of passage for both male and female, it is especially so for women (who are often quite young girls in the case of a first marriage), where virginity and by extension the purity of the lineage is perpetuated. Elaborate and costly weddings are common for a girl's first marriage, though are rarely performed for later marriages, and the conventions about which families will and will not intermarry are much more closely adhered to for a girl's first betrothal. Marriage is a strategic exercise and involves the heads of families – if not the heads of the lineages. In these general aspects, the Banaadiri wedding is not different from marriage requirements among pastoralist and settled agricultural Somali communities.

On more specific detail, some of the ceremonials that are part of Banaadiri tradition and that are particular to the coastal groups are not found at all among other Somali groups. Some of the more eyebrow-raising (at least to a Western mind) traditions such as those relating to child betrothal (*alkun*) and what I refer to as the marriage teacher (*koobirow*) described below, if not dying out may be elided in discussion with Reer Xamar today. For reasons of present circumstances as already noted, as well as to the natural process of change, it can be expected that the elaborate wedding ceremonies of the past will not be found in like form today.

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<sup>375</sup> Personal correspondence with PR6, 23/05/2008.

Although many such elements may be omitted, traditional elements that seem invariably to be retained, where possible, include the scarf (*shaash*) ceremony, henna adornment,<sup>376</sup> poems composed in praise of the bride, lavish hospitality and gift giving, and some of these elements are described below. More archaic features, such as the role of *koobirow* may be dying out, with first marriages happening at an older age, and more open attitudes to or opportunities for a young bride to inform herself in other ways of what to expect will happen to her or be expected of her.

For some of the specific rituals of the traditional Reer Xamar marriage, there are strong parallels with older practices of the Hadramawt in southern Yemen, from where several of the Banaadiri lineages claim descent. Notes on marriage customs by the late R.B. Serjeant of SOAS, on the Hadramawt wedding of the mid-twentieth century, bear striking similarities with Xamari wedding traditions, and are clearly variations on a common model. The henna ceremony, the head shaving, and – perhaps most noteworthy of all – the institution of ‘marriage teacher’ were features of the Hadrami tradition and practiced likewise in Banaadiri communities.<sup>377</sup>

The arrangement of (the preferred) cousin marriages begins with the agreement of the families concerned, that their children should be betrothed for a later marriage when they come of age. It involves verbal agreement between the parties, and the intention will be known to other members of the lineage and to close friends that this female infant has been ‘promised’ as a future wife for that male infant. This is known as *alkun*, and there are two common forms that *alkun* takes: The first is when a daughter is promised shortly after birth; it is a non-binding commitment and offered as a sign of respect to the family to whom the newborn girl is being promised. As such an agreement is not sealed with a reading from the Koran, and circumstances and time allow for the reversal of the agreement. The second type of *alkun* is a more binding commitment that is sworn to over the Koran; it is an agreement that probably has some material benefit for one or other or both parties, rather than being just a show of respect.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Refers to floral and geometric designs painted with henna on different parts of the body.

<sup>377</sup> Serjeant 1962: 472-498.

<sup>378</sup> Sources for marriage information include: Khalid Maou unpublished notes on Reer Xamar marriage customs, with author’s permission to quote; interviewees PR12; PR13; interviewees IN15; IN16; IN22; own participatory observations.

As children, the betrothed know that they are so, especially when they go to school or out to play in the neighbourhood, and may be teased by their playmates if or when their future spouse passes by.<sup>379</sup> Traditionally marriage would take place at around the age of thirteen or fourteen for girls (or as soon after the girl had reached puberty as was practicable), and in the case of boys, it would be two or three years older. In the post-independence decades the age of marriage varied greatly among most Somali groups, and it seemed as if material considerations (desire for a higher standard of living, education, house, furniture, etc.) may have raised the age of marriage (see Lewis).<sup>380</sup>

In preparation for the marriage, the bride to be will be indulged by her female relatives and friends in some beauty treatments, one of the most important being the '*elan saar*' (putting on henna) ceremony. In this pre-nuptial beautification the girl is elaborately painted with henna - hands and lower arms, soles of feet and lower legs, and sometimes 'across the chest'.<sup>381</sup> The application of henna (*'elan*) and of a darker dye, called *qaddab*, used often to take two or three days, prior to the wedding day. Decorating and beautifying the bride-to-be in this way, along with other beauty treatments, such as the application of *huruud* (a locally made mudpack), and attention to the hair and eyes,<sup>382</sup> are all part of the transformation and transition of the girl to woman.

In recognition that the age of marriage was usually in the early to mid-teenage years, and the first-time virgin bride was young and inexperienced, a 'marriage teacher', known as *koobirow*, provided the bride-to-be with practical help, and performed certain rituals connected to the nuptials. The *koobirow* is an older, experienced woman and is from the client group of citizens. Her tasks included tutoring the bride in the ways of being a good wife and of pleasing her husband, and on the day of the wedding carrying the bride on her back to the groom's house. It is a role that is again only relevant to a girl's first marriage, bearing in mind that sexual relations and intimacies were not subjects for discussion within the family in these conservative societies. The *koobirow* remains at the house of the newlyweds for the first seven days that the bride must stay indoors, and it was common practice that she would be expected even to spend at least

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<sup>379</sup> PR2.

<sup>380</sup> The breaking down of traditional practises referred to by Lewis, and applying to the period of radical social change in the 1970s and 80s may have found to have been reversed in later decades as Somalis all over reverted to traditional certainties and support systems in the face of national state collapse.

<sup>381</sup> IN15; IN22.

<sup>382</sup> IN15.

the first night beneath the wedding bed, advising and giving words of encouragement to the bride in this first experience of intercourse.<sup>383</sup> It was also the *koobirow* who would report to the families the next morning and show them the bloodied sheet as proof of consummation. By the mid-seventies in Xamar Weyne, although the figure of *koobirow* remained a feature of the ceremonial, educated and now slightly older newlyweds did not always conform to custom. I am told by a friend's daughter<sup>384</sup> that when she married in Muqdisho in 1979 it was the habit for young couples to pay the *koobirow* to sit outside the bedroom door on the wedding night rather than stay in the room.

A parallel custom is described by Serjeant, writing in 1962 on marriage custom in Hadramut and drawing on his notes from 1946.<sup>385</sup> He speaks of 'the tire-woman' (*al-kawbarah*)' whose job it is to conduct the virgin bride to her marriage bed and undress her in preparation to receive her husband. The Arabic name for the person whom Serjeant styles as 'tire-woman' is *al-kawbarah* which is sufficiently similar to the Reer Xamar word *koobirow* to have the same derivation,<sup>386</sup> as are their corresponding functions similar. He speaks too of 'the viewing' of the bed linen after consummation, and also of other similar wedding customs that are among those of Reer Xamar, such as head shaving and henna parties. The following extracts from Serjeant's descriptions of Hadramawt society and wedding practices in particular in the late 1940s, are quoted for their remarkable resemblance to what was generally true of Xamar in the 1960s and 70s, and will almost certainly be recognisable to an older generation of Banaadiri.

They do not consider it decent to talk openly about the defloration of the bride ... In Aden ... a custom still obtains, though not of course among educated young men who would not tolerate it. There even to this day the tire-woman [the Hadrami *kawbarah*] ... sits below the marital bed which is of a type imported from India and called *nāmūsiyah*, standing quite high above the ground, while the marriage is actually in the process of consummation-in the case of a virgin bride-and giving instruction to the bride. Later the *kawbarah* takes the sheet and displays it to the near relatives assembled in the bridegroom's house', she then ululates as a way of informing neighbours that the marriage is consummated.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Mohamed Osman Omar; Khalid Maou.

<sup>384</sup> PR12 interviewed London 2008.

<sup>385</sup> Serjeant 1962: 472-498.

<sup>386</sup> Dr Martin Orwin (conversation with).

<sup>387</sup> Serjeant 1962:495.



In the narrow streets of Xamar Weyne and Shingani it was the tradition for the new bride to be carried on the back of her *koobirow* to her husband's home. I have been told that the *koobirow*, who is from the former client class, would usually be attached to a particular family, and acted as tutor for different generations of the same family. This function will not of course be her only role in life.

I am unable to say to what extent the old traditions of the *koobirow* are continued in the enclave today, but in 2007 a Reer Xamar friend in London mentioned to me that he and his relatives were collecting money to send to Muqdisho for a family wedding that was being planned, and that in the itemised list of expenses for which contributions were being sought was 'payment to *koobirow*'.

Symbolising the bridegroom's transition and new status as a married man is the head shaving (*xiirmo*) and donning of the *koofi Baraawe* – *koofi* being the embroidered white fez-shaped hat, and *Baraawe* because that town has a reputation for making the finest such hats. This ceremony is most usually done at the start of the wedding, in the afternoon before the *nikaax* (marriage contract ceremony)' takes place. As described to me,<sup>388</sup> during the shaving ceremony a cloth or rush mat is placed on the floor; men circle in anti-clockwise direction and with the right hand throw money on to the mat, as contributions to the payments of expenses to people such as the barber and musicians.<sup>389</sup> It is not always possible to say how common or rare a particular practice may be, as individuals are usually recounting what happened to them but which might not have happened in every case. Serjeant describes a similar situation from Hadramawt which he refers to as 'the gratuity of the tray'. He says that the ceremony is performed when a man is marrying for the first time. While the shaving of the groom's head is in progress people throw presents of money into the metal tray or bowl that has been set down in the middle of the room.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> PR2.

<sup>389</sup> Prof. John Wm. Johnson of Indiana University comments: 'Within the Moslem communities I have lived, it is always the woman's head which is shaved. As far as I know, this act symbolized rebirth and is taken from the 8<sup>th</sup> day ceremony of a child's life, when his or her head is shaved and he or she is given a name. Such reversals are not unheard of, but somewhat uncommon. Compare the wearing of the veil by Twareg men instead of their women' (Personal correspondence 20/11/2010).

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

After the *nikaax* the newly weds settle into a week of pampering by relatives and neighbours. On the first morning of her new life the bride receives a gift from her husband/her husband's family of clothes, fine fabrics, and perfumes Serjeant describes the same custom among Hadrami, which he refers to as *subhah*, morning gift, and gives an interpretation of its significance:

The *subhah* is the gift made to the bride after intercourse is presumed to have taken place for the first time...[the gift] is made in compensation for the loss of virginity...[I]n Hadramawt nowadays this gift is a large trunk, with clothes, perfumes, a watch even, and all manner of things.<sup>391</sup>

In subsequent days food and companionship will be provided to the newlyweds on a daily basis, and the bridegroom will be free to go out with friends who come to collect him and take him on a round of lighthearted visits to neighbours and relatives, where he is feted and advised. It will be a further seven days before the bride is allowed to leave the marriage house, though she will rarely be without female company in the form of friends and relatives during this time, but such visitors will discretely depart when the bridegroom appears.

*SHAASH SAAR - PUTTING ON THE HEADSCARF.* *Shaash-saar* is the culmination and final rite of passage of the young girl to womanhood and marital status. This is a women only ceremony, where the bride and her friends and women who are close kin gather at the end of the seven days of the wedding when the bride comes out of seclusion. The occasion is enhanced by singing and dancing, and poems are usually composed by women relatives and friends in praise of the new bride, highlighting character and disposition and the good fortune of the bridegroom in his choice of partner.

The special scarf – the *shaash* – is held above the bride/s head while her friends dance and clap in celebration. The scarf is black and red silk, and named *shaash mumbey* (Mumbey being recognisable as Mumbai) because it has traditionally been imported from that Indian trading city which has always been known to the Reer Xamar by its

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., p. 485.

indigenous name.<sup>392</sup> This special scarf, which is easily available in the marketplace in Somalia is the symbol of a woman's marital status, and is never worn by unmarried girls. (See below, where a reference to this is made in one of the rhymes.) At this ceremony, the braids of girlhood are loosened and hair restyled in the fashion of adult women, and the *shaash*, which was held over the bride's head by her girl friends as they sung and danced around her, is now tied on her head. The tying is done by a mature married kinswoman, chosen for the task because of her own long and successful marriage and who has not been divorced.<sup>393</sup> She will remind the girl that her mother and grandmother before her put on the *shaash*.

The *shaash mombey* headscarf, worn by women, and the white embroidered *koofi*, worn by men, are traditional symbols of marriage and would never be worn by Banaadiri unmarried persons. In the wider Somali society they do not carry the same significance and were not acquired via the same ceremonials and rites of passage, and thus are treated more casually. In the case of the *shaash*, this became something of a fashion item amongst young city women of other clans in post-independence decades, and became available in a wide range of colours in addition to their traditional black and red.

A final comment may perhaps be made on how social transformations that were taking place in Somalia in the 1960s and 70s were colliding with customs hardly known outside of the enclave. The *koobirow*'s role in accompanying the young bride to her new home has already been touched on. Customarily, and as I was still able to observe in the late 1960, the virgin bride was carried on the back of the *koobirow*, under a cloth canopy held by friends, as she made her way from her father's house to the home of her new husband. This journey was not a long one, and the procession wound its way through the narrow streets of the old city, accompanied by a noisy party of female relatives and friends of the bride, ululating, singing and dancing to the beating of drums. The procession took place at night. As the procession proceeded through the alleyways, residents could cast perfume and flower petals on the parade from an upstairs window. Such bridal processions, appropriate to and previously restricted to the confines of the

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<sup>392</sup> Though until recently known in the West as Bombay but always, from far back, called Mombey by these coastal trading communities who have for centuries been part of the Indian Ocean trading arc. (I interviewed a young man from Marka whose grandfather had been known as Sharif 'Mombeylow'. because he was the main importer of the *shaash* (IN4).

<sup>393</sup> PR13.

old stone town quarters began to break out from these boundaries by the 1970s. A common sight and sound in Muqdisho in those years would be an evening motorcade of the town's yellow and red taxis, and sometimes including a coach, loaded with ululating women, and girls dressed in their finery and wearing an abundance of gold jewellery. The favoured route for the wedding motorcade followed a route to include Xamar Jab-Jab, the coast road near Martini hospital, sometimes as far as Lambar Afar to the west, and along the Lido beach road past 'Abdul Aziz neighborhood to the east. Family and community life was no longer wholly centred on the Old Town, More affluent members of the community, and young married people began to move out of the enclave and to invest in homes in the newer, developing suburbs, and in changes in lifestyle that went with it.

## Festivals

### *ISTAQFUROW or ISTAQFURLOW*

The word *Istaqfurow* is from the Arabic *Astaqfuru*, 'asking forgiveness'.<sup>394</sup> The names are taken from a verse in the Koran the whole of which is as follows:<sup>395</sup>

*Astaqfuru Rabukum, Innahu Kaana Qaffuura*  
*Yursilo Samaa calaykum Mitraaran*

Ask Allah forgiveness, for He is forgiving  
He will send rain from the sky

This is an annual event in the early part of the year when there are seasonal high winds and high tides. It is held at the beach near to Uweys al-Qarni mosque, a mosque which itself is so close to the water that at high tide it is lapped by the waves. Animals are slaughtered and prayers are said, in search of God's forgiveness for transgressions, to ask for the calming of the winds so that ships can sail, and for the rains to come.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> *Astaqfurow* is used in everyday situations as in: When someone says something that is untrue, the others says 'withdraw your statement' or 'ask Allah's forgiveness "*Astaqfuru Allah dheh*".' PR2. Also used in this sense by Swahili in Mombasa (Ann Iddi in conversation 30/11/10).

<sup>395</sup> Mohamed Osman.; Mohamud Aboker.

<sup>396</sup> IN26; IN32.

People go in procession to the sea, and it is the Gudmane lineage who make the first sacrifice.<sup>397</sup> It has religious characteristics, and through the recitation of Koranic verses and sacrifices to Allah it is perceived to be a religious festival by the celebrants (see the account below). However, the Istaqfurow festival probably pre-dates Islam, in that it addresses a natural phenomenon of a particular season, consonant with the solar calendar around which great festivals and ceremonials arose, and which have come down in many cultures in modified form to this day – not least in the way that some of the most important ecclesiastical feast days in the Christian calendar are survivals of ancient solar festivals. Of ritual practices in general, for the participants, much is often taken for granted and most people might have difficulty giving an explanation for their own festivals and their origins. Whilst Istaqfurow may not be accepted as part of universal Islamic practice, it has acquired religious elements in its performance, and incorporates a belief in God, as will be seen from the following account of the festival. This narration is in considerable detail, and in addition to describing the events of the feast day, tells of the legend of a revered ancestor. Uweys al-Qarni is a well-known name among the *awliya* of the Banaadir (see Chart at page 210*ff.*), and identified in our story as having special significance for the Dhabar Weyne and Bandhawow lineages of Xamar Weyne. His fame among the Banaadiri is attested to in the story by the number of people who come to his festal memorial, and by the number of animals needed to feed the gathering. Interestingly, the transcription refers to the high waves caused by the monsoon winds as ‘tsunami’, a word which few had heard of before the tsunami of 26 December 2004 that swept across the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to the Somali East African coast. This narration is reproduced courtesy of Omar Shekey,<sup>398</sup> from a version by his mother, translated into English by his uncle.

### **The Veneration of Istaqfurow (Repentance) among the Benadir of Southern Somalia**

*Description of the Istaqfurow festival by Hajjiya Murrey Hajji Hussein*

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<sup>397</sup> IN26.

<sup>398</sup> From Omar Shekey, Columbus, Ohio 23/08/2007.

Talking about the history of the Benadir and of the city of Mogadishu, in particular, without visiting the Istaqfurow and the venerated Uweis-ul-Qarni is not possible. Regarded as one of the most ancient and most respected annual commemorations in the Benadir, the Istaqfurow is predominantly a religious ceremony which brings together the indigenous people of the Benadir in a moment of repentance to Allah. It is a moment of prayers, where people come out in the open in thousands upon thousands, to implore forgiveness from Allah. Throughout the centuries, all along the Benadiri coast, from Mogadishu, Merka, to Brawa, people turn to Istaqfurow, once every year, to pray to Allah to protect them from the effects of famine, and from the high waves caused by the south-east [actually north-east] monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean, the tusinami [sic].

It is said that centuries back, once upon a time, a certain Aweys Mahad Ali Samo of the Dhabar Weyne tribe went to the beach in Hamar Weyne to take an early morning bath and cleanse himself with the warm waters of the ocean. He used to go there every morning to carry out his morning prayers long before the sun showed up in the horizon. After the prayers, he prayed to Allah to save his people from the ravaging effects of the devastating famine in the land.

One morning, however, Aweys Mahad saw the figure of a heavenly man come out of the “duluk”, a bushy green plant that grows thick along the beach. When he stopped, the man approached,

*“Al-Salamu Aleika. Magaceyga waxa la yirah Uweis-ul-Qarni. Sadax maraan ka gala 100ka jiilal. Waxan ku weydisana lama shey. Kow, ma i ziyara nay? Lama, waxan raba duluukta xehtan ku talo in aad goysid. Lamadan shey ma i samay kartaa?”*

(May peace be upon you. My name is Uweis-ul-Qarni. I observe three times out of the 100 days of the dry season. I request you to fulfill two matters for me. First, will you observe [commemorate] me? Second, I want that you cut these shrubs that grow along the beach. Can you do these two matters for me?)

Aweys responded,

“With the Help of Allah, I promise to commemorate your name once every year and to cut the *duluk*”.

When Aweys Mahad turned back to his people, he shared with them about his encounter with the heavenly Uweis-ul-Qarni and the two promises he made to him. He requested his people to build a mosque at the site of the miracle and to pay homage to Uweis-ul-Qarni once a year. The first to accept the message were his wife Khadija Ali Mahad (Dhabar Weyne) and his son-in-law Aw-Gafo Abrone (Bandhabo). And the next morning, the two men set out to cut the *duluk* and to build a mosque at the site.

As soon as they began the work, the roots of the bush gave way to some construction work. More excavations and they saw a minaret. Then they called the whole town folk for help. By the end of the excavations, three mosques, which had been buried underground for years, one next to the other, sprang out into the open. The first mosque was named after Uweis-ul-Qarni, the second after Sheikh Abdulkadir Jeylani, and the third after Awo Sheikh Mumin. The three mosques, known as the three brothers, symbolize the religious tradition of the Rer Hamar people who believe that the three mosques are there to protect them from evil, famine, and from the high waves of the Indian Ocean, the tusinami.

On Istaqfurow day, the ceremony starts in the early hours of the morning. Immediately after the morning prayers, the elders of the Dhabar Weyne and Ban Dhabo tribes set out for the cattle market to purchase some 300 - 500 goats which are fenced in an open area at the beach in Hamar Weyne. In most cases, most of the meat and the rest of the food are brought by people who want to donate to Uweis-ul-Qarni. Visitors from all over the Benadir Coast and its immediate hinterland bring in gifts as donation to Istaqfurow. The women with the help of several men prepare the kitchen.

Distinct among the whole group remain the “kitab” (scholars) and “ulumma” (priests) in their distinctive robes, reading the Holy Qoran on the shrines of Farado-bin-Ali mosque which is located in Hamar Weyne at the top of the desolate cliffs overseeing the Indian Ocean. There they continue commemorating the special occasion with repentance and prayers to Allah and with praises to the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him. They spend the whole night on the altars of Farado-bin-Ali mosque, reading the Holy Quran in isolation, far from the distractions of the town.

Thousands upon thousands come to the beach to pay homage to Uweis-ul-Qarni on this special day. At noon, the Qatib from the Gudmane tribe slaughters the cattle in the presence of all the elders, scholars, and priests of the Rer Hamar tribes. With their beautiful and distinguished robes, they move round and round the slaughtered goats while they solemnly beg Allah to forgive their sins. They chant in chorus,

*“Istaqfurow Rabakum, inaho kaana tawaba, yursilu mni samaa caleikum midraaran”* (Pray for forgiveness from Allah, Allah will bring you more rain from the skies.)



While part of the fresh meat is distributed at the beach to the elders and priests, the rest is cooked with rice and served to all with vegetables, milk and “sharbeed” drinks [sherbet, sweet drinks]. It is a day of supplication where the rich and poor sit together and pray together in commemoration of the venerated Uweis-ul-Qarni.

In the late afternoon, the priests, scholars, students, and elders, all dressed up neatly, walk around the city several times in groups, chanting, “O people, pray for forgiveness from Allah, Allah will bring you more rain from the skies.” Group after group, they walk in the narrow alleys of Hamar Weyne to remind the people to beg forgiveness from Allah.

In this way, the Rer Hamar lived in harmony, peace, and prosperity with their environment. They traveled for trade across oceans and mountains, they settled inland, along the banks of the Shabelle and Juba rivers, as far as Harar, and all along the coasts of East Africa. Their elders became known for their impeccable art to make peace at all times, with Islam as their sacred belief and backbone of their culture and tradition. They flourished united.

*(Account by Haajiya Murrey Haji Hussein, June 1998. Translated by Abdulaziz Haji Mohamed)*

### *SHIRKA FESTIVAL*

This is the festival of the summer solstice which is celebrated throughout Somalia and known most generally as *dabshid* (*Neyrus* in Persian) – and occurs in Muqdisho at the same time as *istuunka* in Afgooye, and is so similar as to be the same.<sup>399</sup>

This festival is enacted in the streets of the old city enclave of Xamar Weyne and the nearby streets that border the old town quarter. The men gather in groups by lineage, and wear different coloured shirts and matching headbands to identify their affiliation.

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<sup>399</sup> See Luling 2002:240ff.

They carry long sticks that they thrust up and down in rhythm as they chant and shuffle through the designated streets of the neighbourhood. The different groups have a repertoire of rhymes with which to tease their rivals and inflate their own reputations. The crowd of onlookers also sing songs in support of the contenders in this ritualised competition. Some examples are given below. *Shir* starts and ends at the Jaama' mosque near the Morshe neighbourhood.

In 1894 Filonardi, in a letter to his brother about how happy he was to be in Somalia as the colonial administrator, gives his own account of this ceremony.<sup>400</sup>

The 16<sup>th</sup> of August is the beginning of the Somali year; on this day, it is the custom of the menfolk to come out in different tribal groups, well armed, and make feint against each other. Prior to the feast, the elders came to me to ask for permission to hold this extraordinary feast and for a permit to carry arms; they assured me that at the end of the feast, all arms to be brought back in custody.

It meant that all the citizens (about two thousand persons) would be armed during one day. It was a test and I tried it.

I gave the permission and I made sure that the Arab soldiers would not mix with the citizens, and gave notice that two gunshots would be fired to indicate the beginning of the permission for the arms and two other shots would indicate the end of the permission. The first shots will be at 9:00 in the morning and the second will be at 7:00 in the evening.

Filonardi tells how he took his seat on the terrace of the Governor's residence to enjoy the event as follows:

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<sup>400</sup> Filonardi Archives 1894, ISIAO, Rome, in Omar 2001:254.

The four [*sic*] tribes of Scingani quarter, strong, of about two hundred young people, dressed like warriors; the elders walked in the front of their respective tribes, inspiring the youngsters to sing and dance...

To my astonishment, and my emotions were great when the groups paused in front of me, raising their arms towards me, chanting “Ao-Filo” (‘ao’ meaning father and Filo being short for Filonardi) and there was a chorus of good wishes for my power.

My satisfaction was immense, I would never have hoped so much and was unable to stop some tears. I did not therefore work for nothing, and if in Italy it is not recognised, luckily the Somalis recognise [my work].

Later on, the four tribes of the Hamarweyn followed the same ceremonial. Being the most populated and richer quarter, the various groups were more, greater in number and were better equipped, it was a splendid show.

Throughout most of the last century the event took place in much the same way, except that it would appear from Filonardi’s account that real arms were carried, but this was never the case when I lived there. The event was discontinued after 1991, except for one year in 2003 when there was relative calm in Muqdisho following the appointing of a new administration.<sup>401</sup>

At the start of the *shir* festivities, the Reer Faqi elders, in keeping with their position of neutrality in the community, are called upon to bless the occasion. The impartiality expected of the Reer Faqi in overseeing order in the community, as noted in the previous chapter, precludes their participation in the *shir*’s mock rivalries. The ritual

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<sup>401</sup> I was shown a video of this occasion by PR14 and PR13 at their home in London, Ramadan 2004.

blessing involves the preparation of *kun* ('one thousand'), referring to 1,000 verses from the Koran which get written in charcoal ink on *loox* (wooden boards).<sup>402</sup> The *kun* seek from God 'protection from difficulties, unity, prosperity, and good health and peace for the following year'.<sup>403</sup> The writing is then washed from the *loox* with clean water and the water collected in a bowl, before being passed around the 'combatants' who take a mouthful that they then spray on others of their group and thus transferring the blessings contained in the holy water. Water that is collected from washing over holy Koranic verses and itself becoming holy water occurs elsewhere in ceremonials (an instance of which is related in connection with performance of miracles, in Chapter 4).

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### ***Shirka Rhymes and other Rhymes***<sup>404</sup>

The excitement that surrounds local festivals generates much singing and chanting of rhymes to accompany the dance and the mock contests. Here is one for young girls who, though they sing that they do not yet know how to do the dance, they are actually bemoaning the fact that they are forbidden to join in the dance because of their status of being unmarried. It is in the Reer Xamar dialect:

*Shirow shirow ma aqan*

*Shaash ma ii fuulo*

*Shareca dhaqan aan ku jiraa*

I don't know the *shir* dance

I have not put on the *shaash* [i.e. I am not married]

[And] I must obey tradition.

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<sup>402</sup> *Loox*- long narrow board of wood traditionally used in Somalia at *dugsi* (religious school) for teaching of Arabic and Quran.

<sup>403</sup> Correspondence with Khalid Maou September 2009.

<sup>404</sup> Rhymes collected from informants and interviewees. IN30; 26; 31. Translations: Mohamed Osman Omar and PR15.

As we have seen above, the Shirka festival at the summer solstice is a time for different lineage groups of the enclave to engage in mock combat, in a display of group strength of numbers and family pride. Light-hearted banter accompanies the occasion, with each kinship group singing its own praises and poking fun at their adversaries. The teasing rhymes that follow leave no doubt as to which rhymes are directed at self and which at rival groups.

*BANDHAWOW iyo Baxarsuufi*

*Boqor waayee u baneeya*

Bandhawow and Bahar Sufi

They are kings [so] make way for them

*REER MOORSHO malaayga waa merfiyaan*

*Makaboygana waa u muudaan*

*Kingoygana waa maqaar fiiqaan*

*Muslimiin maakin maxaad mudeen*

The Morshe family – they haul out the fish

For the Makaboy\* they dive (i.e. go to great lengths to catch it)

Of the Kingoy\* they skin it (i.e. prepare it for eating)

Do you think they are Muslim?

\* These are types of fish that are not eaten by Reer Xamar; if caught in the nets are usually thrown back into the sea, hence the rhyme insults the reputation of the Morshe.

*SHANSHIYA aan aha-yee*

*Shar ka yaabi mayo*

*Shiidle iyo Shabeellaa*

*Sheekada jiritaa*

I am a Shanshiye

No problem is a surprise [to me] (I am not daunted by difficulties)

[Not like] the Shidle and Shabelle\*

That's what we say.

\* Shidle and Shabelle are 'Bantu-Jareer'-Somali clans often treated with disdain.

A characteristic of Somali rhyme is alliteration, and this verse and the next alliterate in 'sh', as others are in 'b' or 'm'.

Following is a song of the Shanshiye, who are well known as tailors. The rhyme was collected from an older man of my acquaintance who said he learnt it from his daddy and used to sing it as a very young lad while learning to sew buttons and button holes on shirts – a first step in any tailor's apprenticeship! Friends and acquaintances of the Shanshiye group whom I have know in their civil service careers were still able to turn their hand to the tailoring that they had been trained in as youngsters.

*Aana Shanshiye waaye or Shaanshiyaan ahayee,*

*Sheqadeey sharqaan waaye*

*Iyo shaati shuuteyskiisa*

*Maxaa la igu shawraa*

*Shabeel camal la igu shiishaa*

I am Shanshiye

My profession is as tailor

And can make a shirt that pleases

I am not to be plotted against

Or hunted like a leopard (i.e. I am not to be taken lightly.)

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### **Seven Legendary Tales**

Earlier chapters have discussed in some detail the people's traditions of origin, how they came to be where they are today, and some shared understandings of the processes and beliefs that have over time bound together the people of the Banaadir in a common cultural identity.

The following stories are illustrative of the people's sense of their roots, and encompass some popular ideas about historical events and cultural heritage, as these may have been passed on from generation to generation. Such stories may be assumed to evolve in the retelling, changing to keep pace with the newer concerns of the audience and to assimilate events of more recent occurrence. Legends generally, including stories that explain the origin of names, classified as 'etiological legends', are often taken as factual by their tellers or listeners. These are in contrast to folktales, which are fictional narratives, intended as entertainment.

## 1. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME XAMAR

Hadramawt is a recurring theme in the legends of origin of the people of the Banaadir city-states, and oral legends speak of connections to the ancient Kingdom of Himyar in what is today known as Hadramawt in south Yemen. The Himyarite Kingdom or Himyar (anciently called Homerite Kingdom by the Greeks and the Romans)<sup>405</sup> was a state in ancient south Arabia dating from 110 BC, and was the dominant state in Arabia until 525 AD. For many years it was also the major intermediary linking East Africa and the Mediterranean world. This trade largely consisted of exporting ivory from Africa to be sold in the Roman Empire. Ships from Himyar regularly travelled the East African coast, and the state also exerted a considerable amount of political control. The *PME* describes the trading empire of Himyar and its ruler Charibael (noted earlier in Chapter 1). One reason given for its decline was because of the intertribal warfare and the disunity of the families of Qahtan, and their eventual dispersal.<sup>406</sup> The occurrence of the names Himyar and Qahtan, and Himyarite ‘political control’ of the trading cities of East Africa resonate with earlier postulations, but information on this period as it may relate to Somalia and the Banaadir ports has not been systematically collected.

Though for both the interior of the country and the Banaadir coast, oral traditions of origin are predominantly post-Islam. An exception is the following story, told to me by Sheikh Abba,<sup>407</sup> of how Xamar got its name:

Two brothers from Arabia – Afrikish bin Sabah bin Hushub bin Yuurub and Qoreeb bin Sabah al-Himyari – wanted to journey to find the country Dul Qarneyn (Two Horns) where the sun rises, and where there is a wall at the end of the world. After they and their party of soldiers walked for a long time, they reached sand dunes that moved and shifted like the waves, and they could not go backwards or forwards, and could not even stand up. They thought men could not survive there because of the movement of

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<sup>405</sup> See History chapter, and Huntingford’s *PME* 1980: 32 & 37.

<sup>406</sup> <http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/376938> The article cites a number of academic works as sources.

<sup>407</sup> Hamburg, 29 Oct 2005.



the sand. But after one week, on Saturday, the sand dunes stopped moving, and a man came along and went across the dunes to the other side. They were told that it happened every week that the dunes stopped moving, and if they waited till next Saturday they could cross. They called this place Wadi Sabti.

But they were running short of food, and they did not know what they would find at the other side, so they decided to go back. Then the two brothers continued on their journey for another six months, after which time they came to a place where they found people who did not speak their language. One brother, Afrikish, settled here, and this place later became Morocco or Tunis, and they gave it the name Afrikish, after the first brother who stayed there.

Then the other brother, al-Himyari, continued on his way. (This was before 250CE). He travelled south, and when he finally finished travelling, the place he settled he called it Himyir, which is where the name Xamar comes from.

The next two stories concerning the naming of the two Xamar moieties, and the final story in this chapter concerning the legend of Warsheikh, are free retellings by me from translations from the Arabic as they occur in 'Aydarus' *Bhugyat*. I have not heard these stories recounted orally anywhere else.

## 2. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME XAMAR WEYNE

*[According to 'Aydarus 1950: 34]*

The name Xamar Weyne comes from the story, as follows:

A man with a limp came to Xamar Weyne from the eastern side seated on a camel (for he was lame), with his wife who was leading the camel. They arrived in a red place called Malmala, which was the name of the place where there is now a garden and the Arba'-Rukun mosque, in the centre of town. The man descended from the camel and he and his wife did their ablutions in preparation for the *maqrrib* prayers. Before it was the time of *maqrrib*, four good men came to them and greeted them saying 'Peace be with you'. They conversed for a while before they all prayed together. After prayers the four men, who were strangers to the town, asked the man and his wife to invite them for food. The couple told the men that they were also strangers, so all six of them were strangers to the place. Nevertheless the man with the limp said to the four men, "You shall be our guests, Welcome," then he turned to his wife and asked her to slaughter the camel and cook it for all of them to eat.. His wife said "This is the only animal we have, and it is our transport. How can we kill it?" But the husband insisted, and the four men said "If you don't have anything else, then kill it". So that is what happened, and after eating and talking until they were all quite full, the husband and his wife stretched the camel hide on the ground so that the four men could sleep on it. Their guests were very grateful to the man with the limp and admired him for his generosity, even though he had nothing. In the morning the man and his wife and the four men got up to pray the early morning *fajr* prayers. After the prayers the man and his wife went back to sleep and so did the four men. After some time the husband said to his wife, "Go check to see if our guests are all right because I don't hear any sound from them". The wife went to check and did not see the guests but saw the skin was still there in the same place and on the skin were lots of small red pieces. She did not know what they were and took some pieces to show to her husband. He told her, "It's red gold." Then the man with the limp went to the camel skin and found that it was full of red gold. The man and his wife invested the gold in building the town which is now called Xamar Weyne. The name comes from *ahmar* [ Ar.] meaning 'red' because of the red gold, and *weyn* which means 'large' or 'a lot'.

### 3. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME SHINGANI

[According to 'Aydarus 1950: 36-7.]

Shingani is located to the east of Xamar Weyne. Its name was given by scientists and scholars called “Naysaboriene” who came to this land and lived on it. They named it after a quarter in the city in Naysabor where they came from, which was called Shingani.

Naysabur (also spelled Neyshābūr and Nīshāpūr) is a town which at the time of the Abbasids was historically in north-eastern Iran but what has become part of northwestern Afghanistan<sup>408</sup>. In the tenth century the famous Khurasan trunk road which connected Baghdad with places such as Samarkand, Bukhara and the frontiers with China went through Naysabur.<sup>409</sup> Whether the town has or had a quarter named Shingani is for substantiation. Interestingly, however, in consideration of common oral histories, the presence of the name, spelled Shingani, is also found for that of a ward of the city of Zanziba, and for the island of Shanga in the Lamu archipelago.

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Banaadiri traditions, as we have seen, often feature Arab or Persian or Iraqi elements; There is frequent occurrence of Arabic prefixes to names, such as *Al* and *Baa*, the first seems to indicate Omani origin, whereas *Baa* seems to point to Yemen and Hadramawt.<sup>410</sup> Of lineage ancestors who reach back to Arabian soil and to figures from history, one of these is Abdulrahman bin 'Awf, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>411</sup> He is a putative ancestor of the Shanshiye lineage, whose ancestors include the *weli* Sheikh Sufi, a figure who is frequently cited in the religious literature on Somalia,<sup>412</sup> and also of Sheikh Abba who's hagiography is a theme in Chapter 4. Although, as one of the Ten Companions of the Prophet who were assured of entering paradise, Bin 'Awf seems to have had some frustrations and setbacks on his path towards a righteous end. The following tale of his tribulations is both didactic and entertaining.

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<sup>408</sup> Hitti 2002: 330; Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>410</sup> Prins, 1971:13.

<sup>411</sup> Stories collected from Elder (Sh.AMSh.M; 29/10/05. From an oral telling by Sheikh Abba

<sup>412</sup> Martin. (1974); Andrzejewski (1974),

#### 4. A STORY OF ABDURAHMAN BIN 'AWF<sup>413</sup>

*[This is a story about an ancestor of the Shanshiye lineage.]*

'Abdurahman b 'Awf was from the lineage of the Prophet's mother – the Hashemites. The Prophet blessed him, and he was among the ten chosen to go straight to Heaven. However, he heard that the poor man who is not ashamed to be poor will be first to go to Heaven, but because bin 'Awf was a rich man, he would have to crawl there. He didn't like the idea of crawling on all fours to Heaven, so he decided to do something about it. He had been doing good business trading in camels, but because he wanted to walk upright to heaven, he decided to lose his wealth. If he bought a camel for 100 dollars he would sell it also for 100 dollars and kept only the rope that had been tied around its neck. Then somebody came along who offered to buy the rope for a pile of worthless black stones, which bin 'Awf was pleased to accept. Then a terrible disease of the skin swept the country, and it was found that the best cure was to rub the infected parts with the black stone. bin 'Awf's worthless black stones were now so valuable that the people paid for them in gold, and so his wealth returned. Now with the gold he decided he would buy dates and would send them to Iraq – because, as everyone knows, Iraq grows the most and the best dates, so he would not be able to sell them and they would rot. But it happened that in Iraq at that time a bush fire came and destroyed the whole date harvest, so everybody bought bin 'Awf's dates. It seemed that he could only get rich, not poor, and he would have to think very hard about how to get rid of his money. Finally he came up with a solution, and bought 30,000 slaves, to whom he promptly gave freedom. At last bin 'Awf was a poor man, and proud of it.<sup>414</sup>

#### 5. THE ANCESTOR AW FAQI ABOOR

*[This is a story of an ancestor of the Reer Faqi lineage.]*

A highlight of the Reer Faqi year is the annual *siyaaro* for their ancestor, Aw Faqi Aboor. Faqi Aboor was born in Somalia, but from Yemeni ancestors from the Hadhramawt region, and the city of Tarim. Though not the primary, ancestor of the Reer Faqi, he is perhaps the most celebrated. His shrine is in Muqdisho, on the western

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<sup>413</sup> Abdurahman b. Awf's life is well documented, and there are many stories told about him. He was a contemporary and friend of the Prophet Muhammad (Hitti 2002:178).

<sup>414</sup> Retold from an oral telling by Sheikh Abba, translated by Mohamed Osman Omar.

edge of Bondhere neighbourhood not far from Villa Somalia. His dates are not precisely known, though the legend surrounding him points to his having lived some time during the period when the Portuguese were menacing these waters (1499-1706). He is remembered for the somewhat eccentric steps he took in protest at and to avert possible foreign invasion. He requested to be buried alive for seven days with only a copy of the Koran to sustain him.<sup>415</sup> If, as is generally said of him, he lived roughly 500 years ago, the dating does put him within the period of the Portuguese presence in East Africa, but also makes him one of the earliest of the Banaadiri *awliya* to be still remembered today. The area where he is buried would have been at that time open ground outside the city wall. The tomb (as existed in late 1980s) is simple. There is no ornamental mosque that is generally found in conjunction with the tombs of *awliya*, and is in keeping with his wishes.<sup>416</sup> I have been told that the customary seven-day *siyaaro* for this *weli* was extended to fifteen days [at an unspecified time] ‘when people in Muqdisho began to experience many natural disasters such as monsoons and famine and diseases’.<sup>417</sup>

The rituals that accompany the annual commemoration of lineage ancestors, and described in the next chapter, contain common elements such as marathon readings of the Koran, speeches regarding the history of the ancestor and his teachings, and feasting, but perhaps with some additions or variations significant to the ancestor being honoured incorporating traditions of his lineage. In the case of this *siyaaro* the *daf* (‘tambourine’), a musical instrument that is associated with the Reer Faqi, is played.<sup>418</sup> On the night of the last day the entire Koran is read. Light food is always on hand, including such typical Reer Xamar accompaniments as coffee beans roasted in sesame oil, popcorn, and cakes, but on the last day an animal, either a cow or goat, is sacrificed, and a feast of rice and meat and a variety of side dishes and condiments is served. Women are needed throughout to prepare food. They do not attend the religious sessions during the fourteen days but do attend on the closing day. For a recently married young woman of this lineage it is almost a rite of passage to visit the shrine at this time. In the same spirit, pregnant women visit, and newborn and infants may also

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<sup>415</sup> The tall mounds of earth in which the termites live scatter the Somali landscape.

<sup>416</sup> According to Khalid Maou.

<sup>417</sup> Correspondence with Khalid Maou.

<sup>418</sup> *Daf* is played at weddings and other celebrations and said to be tradition to the Reer Faqi (Note from Khalid Maou 25/06/09). However, by the 1950s it featured as part of the musical accompaniment to popular secular music of Somalia (Johnson 1996:76).

be taken along to the shrine as one of their earliest outings.<sup>419</sup> The annual *siyaaro* for Aw Faqi Aboor continues to be commemorated by his kinsmen in diaspora, and follows the traditional pattern for such occasions – large gatherings of people, readings from the Koran, feasting, and music.<sup>420</sup>

As this is oral legend, it is perhaps not surprising that while the essence of the story stays the same, some details in the retelling vary from person to person. The following narrative is a synthesis of the essential elements of the story as collected.<sup>421</sup>

Faqi Aboor gained the name *aboor* (termite) in the following way: A fleet of ships was about to attack Mogadishu. They were the Portuguese ships. He sent birds – six eagles - to attack them, and the birds had pieces of paper with inscription from the Koran tied to their legs. Then the Faqi asked to be buried for seven days as if he were dead, with nothing but a copy of the Koran for company. He would read and pray and so avert the danger from abroad that was threatening to attack his country. Reluctantly the people complied with his wishes. When at the end of seven days they dug him up, they found him still alive, reading his Koran, but with one of his legs having been eaten by termites (*aboor*). So that is how Faqi Aboor got his name. As for the attacking fleet, Faqi Aboor's plan had succeeded, each eagle having sunk a ship with its landing, and only one ship remained to take back the news of the event.

Variations in the details include the extent of the Faqi's physical damage resulting from his extreme act, and the species of bird (I have heard both eagles and pigeons named), and even who the intending invaders were (I have heard younger people say they

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<sup>419</sup> Khalid Maou; IN36.

<sup>420</sup> Diaspora communities continue to honour this ancestor in ceremonial gatherings. In London in 2009 the actual saint's day was commemorated at Lea Bridge Mosque, East London on the 9<sup>th</sup> August (15 Sha'ban 1430).

<sup>421</sup> Synthesis of the information collected from interviews IN33; IN32; IN35 and in correspondence with Maou and Luling. This legend is also found in Cerulli 1957:30. A remarkably similar story reported in Reese (2008:48) is of a Reer Faqi sheikh in AH 1112 having saved the town from British aggression and caused ships to be sunk 'by the strength of God.' In my next chapter is the story of a female *weli* who is remembered for having frustrated British plans for appropriating a piece of sacred land in Baraawe, during the British ten-year administration 1940-50. A common theme in these legends seems to be the thwarting of attempts at conquest by foreigners.

thought it happened when the Italians colonised Somalia<sup>422</sup>). Portuguese ships would probably have been a familiar sight in the waters off the Banaadir coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, even though they were never a presence here.<sup>423</sup>

## 6. THE STORY OF SHARIF SARMAN

*[This is the story of the Father of the Asharaf Sarman lineage.]*

The Sarman are a sub-lineage of the Hassan branch of the Asharaf, and are associated geographically with the southern Somalia interior between the rivers Shabelle and Jubba, where the majority of people are from the Digil-Rahanweyn clan confederacies. In form of livelihood they are largely herders, like the people from the clans amongst whom they live, and in appearance are indistinguishable from their neighbours, having married, it is said, from amongst them. They can be expected to speak the local *af-Maay* dialect of Somali.<sup>424</sup> I give the following story from notes taken in conversations with an Asharaf elder.<sup>425</sup>

It is said that Sharif Sarman, who was from the Asharaf Hassan branch of this illustrious lineage, first arrived from Arabia many centuries ago on the northern coast of Somalia. He was journeying through the country on his way south, teaching the religion as he went. He reached a village somewhere in the heart of the countryside, where there was a well and a tree. He rested here for a time, and would sit under the tree and teach the ways of Islam to the people who came from all around. He became loved by the people, for his knowledge and what he taught them, and they would call him by the name of the tree under which he sat, which was a *sarman* tree [this is a type of acacia].<sup>426</sup> When he was ready to continue his journey south, the village folk had grown so fond of him that they begged him to stay with them, and the chief arranged a good girl of the village for him to marry. That is the story of the ancestor Sharif Sarman, the founder of the Asharaf Sarman lineage, of how he got his name, and why his descendants today are found in the Baay and Bakool regions of central

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<sup>422</sup> IN33; IN36.

<sup>423</sup> Only two brief attacks were recorded for Muqdisho (1499 and 1542: see Chapter 1).

<sup>424</sup> Information based on my own period of residence in this area (three months in 1986), and previous and subsequent visits.

<sup>425</sup> Dr, Sharif Abbas, Oct/2010.

<sup>426</sup> Som. *sarman* is *L. acacia bussei* according to Corni Vol II:360; M. Aboker (veterinarian) agrees it is of the *acacia* species but not *bussei*, which in Somali is *galool*.

Somalia, not far from the Sarman cluster of wells near Baidoa, where the Sharif was persuaded to stay.

## 7. A LEGEND CONCERNING WARSHEIKH

*[Retold from a telling in Arabic <sup>427</sup>]*

Warsheikh is on the Banaadiri coast, north of Muqdisho, and the northern limit of the Banaadir settlements. It is a place of pilgrimage to the shrines of several Banaadiri sheikhs. Geographically it is the first place on the long stretch of Somali coastline south of Ras Hafun to afford some kind of shelter for small boats. Perhaps of more significance to the story that follows is Warsheikh's location. It is situated close to where the River Shabelle reaches near to the sea on its journey from the Ethiopian highlands and through the arid Somali interior, before bending southwards and running parallel to the coast. The closeness of this bend in the river suggests a high water table.

The village of Warsheikh gets its name from two words: *war* meaning 'talk' and 'sheikh', therefore it means the "word of the Sheikh"

The legend says that four sheikhs came to the land and entered at a place where a well-known sheikh was buried, somewhere between Jesira and Danaane, and there they lived as recluses. The first Sheikh was called Sa'ad bin Da'uud, the second Sheikh was called 'Ik-Waaq,<sup>428</sup> the third was called Is-haaj-Waaq and the fourth was called Sheikh Musa Iley (*iley* is a name given to somebody who has lost his eye(s)).

After three years the four sheikhs came out of seclusion in the year AH1034, and went to Muqdisho. In Muqdisho they met some ignorant and jealous persons who went to the king of Muqdisho and told him that the four sheikhs were wizards who wanted to put a harmful spell on the city. The king believed them and put the sheikhs in prison. Whilst in gaol the sheikhs planned their escape, using their miraculous powers. The first Sheikh was to open the door of the prison, the second sheikh was to make

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<sup>427</sup> 'Aydarus 1950: 93-94.

<sup>428</sup> Whether or not of significance here, 'Waaq' is the Cushitic/Somali pre-Isamic name for 'God'.



sure that the guards did not see them, the third sheikh was to make the land roll up after them so that nobody could follow, and the fourth sheikh was to make sure that they did not lose sight of their ablutions [that they always remembered to pray]. After their successful escape they arrived in an empty place, a village now called Ada'id Xaxar, in the early morning. The fourth sheikh [whose responsibility, we recall, was to ensure the ablutions] found water not far from the shoreline, and he and the other sheikhs prayed the *al-fajr* [morning prayers] together. Afterwards the sheikhs went off into the bush (*baadiye*) where they found neither water nor food. There they came across some people who were from the nearby countryside. One was a woman who said her name was 'Asha and her tribe's name was Wa'daan. They identified themselves as sheikhs who were just released from prison and asked the woman if she could give them food. The woman agreed, but told them that "we have food but not water." They said "But you have water near to you. Follow in our footsteps and get the water from the place near the sea where we ourselves prayed." So she fetched a big water jug and followed them. The people called after her: "Where are you going 'Asha?" "I am going according to the word of the sheikh" she replied. As she walked behind them she repeated "I am walking according to your words, Sheikh," and it is from her chanting thus that the village [where water was found] was named 'Warsheikh'.

Other legendary tales of the four sheikhs of Warsheikh are told by 'Aydarus, along with stories of later religious teachers of the town, which point to Warsheikh's one-time importance as a centre of religious learning.<sup>429</sup> Warsheikh is an important place of pilgrimage to the site of religious shrines for Banaadiris, and the traditions of such pilgrimages, called *siyaaro*, are in part the subject of the next chapter.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> 'Aydarus 1950: 94-6.

<sup>430</sup> On 15/11/2010 the Somali website Hiiraan online reported the desecration of four sheikhs' tombs in Warsheikh by the conservative Islamist fighters of Al-Shabaab. The named sheikhs were: Sheekh Abiikar Mixdaar, Sheekh C/raxmaan Sheekh Cumar, Sheekh Mahamud Shar-maqabe, Sheekh Muxumud Sheekh 'Abdi [http://www.hiiraan.com/news/2010/Nov/wararka\\_maanta14-11575.htm](http://www.hiiraan.com/news/2010/Nov/wararka_maanta14-11575.htm) (accessed 17/11/2010).

## Chapter 4

### Islam, Sufism, and the figure and role of Sheikh Abba al-Shashy

*Islam is the blueprint for social order, with a set of rules divinely ordained and independent of the will of man, and which defines the proper ordering of society, and to be implemented throughout social life.*<sup>431</sup> Brian Morris

The perspective that is suggested by the above quotation, and which expresses the textual tradition, tends to imply that Islam exists independently of, and outside of, any social context. Yet, as Morris himself also notes, and as will be seen in some examples in this chapter, the implementation and manifestation of Islamic practice may be extremely variable. In addition to, and as Lewis expressed in his eloquent essay on mystical Islam and the social order: ‘in a Muslim culture, the study of Islam tends to throw as much light on the social structure as the study of the social structure does upon religion’.<sup>432</sup> This chapter, then, looks at aspects of local Islamic practice that are characteristic of religious expression in the social and religious life of Banaadiri Somalis. In this context, I shall further consider the role of the sheikh in the social and religious community, and take as a focal point the life of Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Mahmud al-Shashy of Muqdisho, Sheikh Abba.

In considering the role of Islam in Somalia, the significance of the location of Somalia and the Banaadir coast on one of the great trading routes of history cannot be underestimated. Some of the cultural and intellectual ideas that accompanied trade have been discussed in earlier chapters, and can be seen for example in the stone structures of the towns and the architecture that characterises them, in some ritual practices, and in the many linguistic borrowings. Arguably the most significant of these influences, at least since the Middle Ages, has been that of the Islamic religion. Whilst caution may be needed in dating the first arrival of Islam to the Banaadir coast, considering the continuous trading history between Arabia and the Horn of Africa from pre-Islamic times, exposure to the new religion, at least by people of the coastal settlements of both the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean coasts of the Somali Horn, is likely to have been

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<sup>431</sup> Morris: 2005: 82

<sup>432</sup> Lewis 1998:1.

early. The local ‘commercial colonies’ that already existed along the Banaadir coast with early historical links to the Himyarite Empire of southern Yemen, that developed into Muqdisho, Marka and Baraawe were important in the introduction and spread of Islam (its establishment here having been noted by Yaqut<sup>433</sup> and al-Idrisi<sup>434</sup> in the tenth century). As Muslim city states, their founding is most usually referred to as being in the early part of the second millennium CE.<sup>435</sup> One Somali source is bold enough to maintain that ‘Islam came to Somalia well before it reached Madina.’ and continues, ‘This is supported by the fact that the Prophet's disciples entered Somalia before they went to Abyssinia and four of the disciples are buried in Mogadishu.’<sup>436</sup> By the early tenth century CE, according to al-Mas'udi, Arab historian and geographer, who travelled from Oman down the East African coast (c. 916) as far as the island of Kanbalu (?Pemba), ‘in the Zanj sea’, there existed there ‘a Muslim population, and a royal family’.<sup>437</sup> If we accept the sailing distances from the *PME*, the island thought to be Pemba is some nine or ten ‘courses’ to the south of what is thought to be Muqdisho (‘each course being a day’s run’), therefore approximately ten days sailing to the south, along this well travelled section of the East African coast,<sup>438</sup> suggesting not for the first time, that there are still many historical gaps to be filled. To summarise what has already been noted with reference to Islam, contemporary references to an Islamic presence, indeed dominance, along the Banaadir and Swahili coasts occur increasingly from now on, supported by evidence from later recordings of inscriptions and archaeological exploration and, beginning with accounts of the Shirazi migrations in the latter part of the tenth century.<sup>439</sup> By the early thirteenth century we find Muqdisho referred to by Yaqut (1222) as the most important city on the coast, ‘being the first stage down from Aden.’ He regarded it as on the frontier between Barbar and Zanj.<sup>440</sup> We have already seen that thirteenth century inscriptions in the oldest stone

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<sup>433</sup> Cited variously in Chapter 1; see also in Ferrand 1903:24-6 & 35.

<sup>434</sup> Cerulli 1935:335-43; Trimmingham 1952: 62.

<sup>435</sup> Corni 1937:50; Rasseti quoted in Caniglia 1922:13; Guillain 1856:524, 908.

<sup>436</sup> Translation of personal correspondence with a Sheikh of the Muqdisho *'ulama* PR9: *Somalia Islamka waxaas soo gaari, Madiina intaay gaarin ka hor. Waxaa Daliil u ah, Asxaabta intaay Xabashta ay tagin ka hor Somalia ay soo galeen iyo afar Asxaab aa Xamar ku duugan*, quoting from an unpublished manuscript (Al-Geth Hata' - fii Tariikhi as-Somal) to which he had access.

<sup>437</sup> Freeman-Grenville, *Selected Documents...* 1975:14-7. Al Mas'udi was an early Arab geographer, whose most famous great work of travel and geography is *Meadows of Gold*.

<sup>438</sup> *PME* 1980:95-7.

<sup>439</sup> Chittick 1965:275-294 and 1974. Chittick's account of the Shirazi dynasty in East Africa is based on two versions of a local history ‘The Kilwa Chronicle’, discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>440</sup> Chittick 1974 Vol 1 p. 23.

mosques in Muqdisho <sup>441</sup> indicate that Islam had by then already taken root, and by the following century, a detailed eyewitness account tells of Muqdisho as a flourishing Muslim city-state with a Sultan who was literate in Arabic.<sup>442</sup> By the time Europeans, in the shape of the Portuguese, came along at the end of the fifteenth century, they recorded that ‘Magadoxo’ was a town ‘belonging to the Moors.’<sup>443</sup>

Islam itself, in whatever form, was certainly the established religion along this coast by the late Middle Ages. Somalis, including the Banaadiri, are Sunni Muslims and predominantly are followers of the Shafi’ite religio-juridical school of thought,<sup>444</sup> although all four schools within Sunni Islam (Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi’i) have a history of being taught in Muqdisho.<sup>445</sup>

### **The Sufi Orders.**

Sufism is a strong seam running throughout Somali Islamic local practice, As an Islamic mystic philosophy Sufism arose in Arabia in the ninth and tenth centuries as a way of seeking closer personal relationship to God through self-discipline and ritual prayers. It is thus a significant part of the historical experience of Muslims. Many books have addressed Sufi teachings and its organisational dimension called a *tariqa*, and often referred to as a ‘brotherhood’, or ‘order’.<sup>446</sup> The origin of the term ‘Sufism’ is said to come from the Arabic word *suf* for wool, referring to the simple cloaks the early Muslim ascetics wore.<sup>447</sup> In its early local beginnings in Arabia, small circles of disciples and followers clustered around the personality or memory of some inspiring teacher and before the close of the twelfth century the self-perpetuating fraternities began to appear, each with distinctive doctrines and services. The Order, or *tariqa* (*turuq* pl.) meaning ‘the way’, in the sense of ‘the right path’, was usually named for the

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<sup>441</sup> In Cerulli, *Somalia*, Vol. I 8-10; See also Chittick: ‘Mediaeval Mogadishu’ in Wilson and Allen 52-4; and Stefanini p24.

<sup>442</sup> Gibb 1929:110-12.

<sup>443</sup> Da Gama 1898: 88.

<sup>444</sup> Shafi’ite school founded by Muhammad Idris al-Shafi’i b 767 – the dominant religio-juridical school of thought among Muslims in East Africa, Egypt and the near East, including southern Arabia. See: Encyclopaedia of Islam.

<sup>445</sup> Aydarus 1950:38.

<sup>446</sup> One of the older standard works according to Morris is A.J. Arberry, *An introduction to the history of Sufism*; Oxford 1942.

<sup>447</sup> Hitti, *The Arabs*, 2002:433.

founder, and the founder himself became the centre of a cult, invested with divine or quasi-divine powers, and the headquarters of his order developed into a place of devotion. Such orders were often referred to as the dervish brotherhoods (dervish originally referring to a religious mendicant) and as an ‘ascetic protest.’<sup>448</sup> One of the earliest orders to be established on such a principle was the Qadiriyya, founded in Baghdad by ‘Abdal Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166).<sup>449</sup> The Qadirite order (widespread among Somalis) is recognised as a teaching order, and one of the most tolerant and charitable, and claims followers throughout the whole Muslim world.<sup>450</sup> Other early brotherhoods include the Rifa’ite, founded by an Iraqi, Ahmed al-Rifa’i in the twelfth century,<sup>451</sup> and the Mawlawite order, commonly known as the whirling dervishes, founded in the thirteenth century.<sup>452</sup> While early Sufi orders seemed to be focused on Iraq, where in Baghdad much of the early devotional literature originated, other independent fraternities developed at different times and in various countries, for example the Hamadsha brotherhood in Morocco (Crapanzano 1973), and the Sanusi in Libya (Martin 1976), with doctrines and services ranging from the austere to the liberal.<sup>453</sup> Though usually spoken of as a mystical expression of the Muslim faith, the influence of the *tariqa* movement across the Islamic world has influenced the lives of the ordinary person no less than a mystical elite.

Although Islam had already begun to establish itself along the Banaadir coast by the time of the flowering of Sufi mysticism and the founding of the earliest Sufi fraternities in twelfth and thirteenth century Arabia, the introduction of the brotherhoods to the religious life of Somalia and the Horn were a later importation.<sup>454</sup> According to Trimingham, the Qadiriyya was the first order to be introduced, and was brought by Arab immigrants from Yemen and Hadramawt to urban centres of the Horn such as Masaawa in present-day Eritrea, Zayla’ (Zeila) in northern Somalia and Muqdisho in

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<sup>448</sup> Morris 2005:102.

<sup>449</sup> ‘*al-Jilani*’ indicating that Jilani is where he is from. Jilani is the Arabized version of Giilani (Persian spelling), an Iranian town south of the Caspian Sea (from: <http://www.islam.co.za/abdalqadirjilani/> accessed 01-03-09. El-Zein suggests that personal names among the Islamic communities of East Africa who claim to originate in Arabia are a fertile ground of exploration.

<sup>450</sup> Hitti 2002:437.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.* p. 437. Rifa’ite, founded by an Iraqi, Ahmad al-Rifa’i, d.1183.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.* Mawlawite centres on the philosophies of the Persian poet Jalal-al-Diin Rumi who, in opposition to general Muslim practice, gave prominence to music in the ceremonies of his order.

<sup>453</sup> For a general account of early Sufi orders and the religious aspects of Sufism, see Nicholson 1914, and Arberry 1950. For more recent accounts of brotherhoods in Africa, see Martin.1976.

<sup>454</sup> Trimingham 1952:234.

the south.<sup>455</sup> The same writer tells us that ‘One Sharif Abu Bakr ibn’Abd Allah al-Aydurus, who died at Aden in 1503 CE is said to have introduced the Muslim order of Qadiriyya into Harar’, and that by 1503 it was the ‘semi-official’ *tariqa* of Harar.<sup>456</sup> The literature is not specific as to when Sufism took hold among Somalis, but if the Qadiriyya was a thriving brotherhood at Harar by 1503, for reasons of geography and maritime history alone, the assumption must be that coastal Somalis (of both the Indian Ocean coast and that of the Gulf of Aden) would have been exposed to contemporary religious philosophies from Arabia before the peoples of the far interior. Harar after all is over 300 km inland, and was a city-state largely dependent for its contact with the outside world on the centuries old caravan trade that linked it with the main trading port of Zayla’. These trading routes traversed the twelfth-century Muslim states of Awdal, Ifat, Dawaro, Hayda and Fatajar.<sup>457</sup> Similarly, the Baardheere *tariqa* settlement in southern Somalia, though established somewhat later, by Sheikh Ibrahim Hassan Yabbarow in 1819,<sup>458</sup> is also inland by approximately 250 km from the coastal town of Baraawe, which was already well known as a centre of religious learning. The view expressed by Martin, who has written extensively on Islam and Muslim brotherhoods in East Africa is that that Qadiriyya influence ‘had been in Somalia since at least 1500.’<sup>459</sup>

As an aside, and to underline the social and geographical factors supporting the likelihood of *tariqa* influences in the Somali Horn earlier than at Harar: Between the coast at Zayla’ and the inland city of Harar there had been several small Muslim states (see above) since at least the fifteenth century.<sup>460</sup> Knowledge of a Muslim city state in the interior prompted the celebrated British Arabist scholar, traveller and prolific writer Richard Burton to undertake his journey from Zayla’ in search of Harar in late 1884. Travelling along known trade routes, recommended by his local guides, it took him approximately one month to reach Harar, and roughly half the time to journey back to the Somali coast at Berbera, though he reports that local couriers were said to be able to do the journey in four to five days<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., pp. 234 & 238. Sharif Abu Bakr al-’Aydurus is a prominent saint of Aden whose dates are given elsewhere as 1447–1508.

<sup>457</sup> Trimingham 1952:62, 64 & *passim*.

<sup>458</sup> Cassanelli 1982:135 n.32 contains an exhaustive list of sources on the Baardheere *jama’*a.

<sup>459</sup> Martin 1992:12.

<sup>460</sup> Trimingham 1952:70-5 and *passim*.

<sup>461</sup> Burton 1966:99ff & 98n.

Among the scholars already cited who have contributed to the literature on Islam in Somalis, the general view is that it was not until the nineteenth century that there is evidence of other orders being introduced. By the nineteenth century, there is clear evidence in the interior of southern Somalia of a flourishing of Islamic missionary activity and of the founding of new settlements, based around *tariqa* principles.

### Religious Settlements

One of the characteristics of the Somali-speaking regions at this time was of itinerant sheikhs, often charismatic characters and followers of various Muslim brotherhoods, criss-crossing the countryside seeking new converts and adherent to Islam and the *tariqa* 'way'.<sup>462</sup> Some of these holy men or *wadaads* would establish a *jama'a* (*jamaaca*), which is a religious community or settlement, where converts might choose to live. Biyooley near the Ethiopian border, and Balad Amin near Afgooye were established by the Banaadiri Sheikh Aweys,<sup>463</sup> and at Balad al-Rahman by Nurayn Ahmed Sabr,<sup>464</sup> at Baardheere in the Banaadir hinterland, as mentioned earlier; and among northern Somali clans, *jama'as* were established at Sheikh, Xaaxi, Gatiitaley, and Kolonkol (the latter now in Ethiopian Ogaden).<sup>465</sup>

As already noted, the Qadiriyya is the most widespread of the Sufi brotherhoods in Somalia, and is especially so among the Banaadiri, who can boast a long line of *'ulama* belonging to the Sufi brotherhoods, and whose fame established Banaadiri cities such as Muqdisho and Baraawe as religious centres that attracted scholars and apprentices from further afield. One of its more famous pupils of the nineteenth century was Sheikh Zayla'i who was eventually to have a religious order named after him.<sup>466</sup>

Second to the Qadiriyya in its following is the Ahmadiyya *tariqa* (also known as Idrisiya) named after Sayyid Ahmed ibn Idris al-Fasi (b. 1758 in Morocco, d.1837 in

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<sup>462</sup> Cerulli Vol 1. 200-204; V3 168-76;1957: 187-90; Trimmingham 1952:240-3; Cassanelli 1982:194-5 .

<sup>463</sup> Reese 2008:129 & n92.

<sup>464</sup> Colucci 1924:80 n1.

<sup>465</sup> Informants (Suleiman Adam, Abdullahi Yusuf) and personal knowledge.

<sup>466</sup> See Martin's chapter on this Sheikh (1992).

Asir, Yemen) who acquired his fame as a teacher in Mecca.<sup>467</sup> The Ahmadiyya Order is popularly said to have been introduced to Somalia in 1870 by Sheikh 'Ali-Maye al-Duruqbo (d.1917),<sup>468</sup> a Banaadiri man himself, who was influenced by al-Fasi's principles while on a visit to Mecca in the mid-nineteenth century. However, it is also asserted by one of my correspondents from the Xamar Weyne 'ulama that it was Molana 'Abdirahman (an Arab and disciple of al-Fasi, who came to the Banaadir in the last quarter of the nineteenth century) who was actually the first to introduce the Ahmadiyya *tariqa* in Somalia.<sup>469</sup> This is also the finding of Reese, who says 'Shayk Maulan 'Abd al-Rahman' [*sic*] is attributed with having been the main force behind the advent of the Ahmadiyya order on the Banaadir coast.'<sup>470</sup> Whatever the argument, Sheikh 'Ali Maye, who is buried in his hometown of Marka, was undoubtedly an important religious scholar of his time, and actively engaged in the work of promoting the Ahmadiyya *tariqa* in Marka and through missionary work in the interior; he further founded several agricultural settlements during his lifetime.<sup>471</sup>

The Qadiriyya and Ahmadiyya have large followings throughout Somalia including being the most widespread among the Banaadiri communities.<sup>472</sup> Others, such as the Alawiyya, have only a small number of adherents. In the case of the Alawiyya, this has a narrow lineage-based 'constituency' among the Asharaf families of Shingani and other stone towns of the Banaadir.<sup>473</sup> The order is also found among the *sharifus* of Lamu and Mombasa, and according to Pouwels' account of the 'ulama of East Africa, this is the oldest religious order of the coast. He dates its introduction to the seventeenth century, having been brought by 'the Hadhrami sharifs [of the Alawi family of Tarim, in Yemen]'. It emphasises literacy and learning in the literature of Sufism and the traditional Islamic sciences.<sup>474</sup> If this date were to be accepted and given the common

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<sup>467</sup> He did not found a *tariqa* but a number of his students branched out with new orders, including 'Ali Maye, who developed a number of agricultural settlements in Somaliland in his name (Lewis 1998).

<sup>468</sup> This is according to Cerulli 1957 V.I p190; 242-3, and is based on a short biography of Sheikh 'Ali Maye that was in his possession; it is repeated by Trimmingham 1952: 242-43, and others.

<sup>469</sup> Personal correspondence with PR9, Nov/06, viz.: '*Somalia Ahmadiyya waxaa keeni Molana Abdirahmaan.*'

<sup>470</sup> Reese, *Renewers...* 2008:10n & 115.

<sup>471</sup> Gori, *Tadkhira Shaykh 'Ali*, 2003: 238-244. More recently, a rediscovered hagiography of Sheikh 'Ali Maye has come to light, and is examined by Alessandro Gori.

<sup>472</sup> In Somalia overall, there are several other orders represented and these include the Salihiiyya, which is an offshoot of the Ahmadiyya, Dandarawiyya, and Rifa'iyya (see Martin Orwin, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2004:716ff).

<sup>473</sup> 'Aydarus, 1950:40; Reese, 2008:10, n28 also names the Asharaf-'Alawiya as one such family-based *tariqa*.

<sup>474</sup> Pouwels 1989:xvii.



traditions of origin of the sharifs of the Banaadir and Swahili coasts, this would make the Alawiyya one of the earlier orders to be established in Muqdisho.

Two 'local' *turuq* of Somalia, in that they are named after Somali *awliya* are those known as the Aweysiyya, the followers of the nineteenth century Banaadiri sheikh Aweys of Baraawe, and the Zayla'iyya, followers of Sheikh 'Abdulrahman of Zayla' who did most of his missionary work among the northern Somalis and in the Ogaden (d.1299/1882CE).<sup>475</sup> Both were adherents of the Qadiriyya 'path', and each in time acquired their own following. Their orders may be considered offshoots of the Qadiriyya.

The five volume regional studies by J Spencer Trimingham on the penetration of Islam in Africa, published in the 1950s and 60s, remain prominent in bibliographies of studies on Islamic Africa. For the English-speaking reader his work on the history of Islam in the Horn of Africa remains the most detailed source, even though considered somewhat controversial in some aspects, and criticized by other Arabists and scholars of Islamic Africa such as Serjeant and Martin.<sup>476</sup> And for those who are familiar with the Somali social context, some of Trimingham's descriptions may be hard to recognise, and his often immoderate or pejorative comments to be open to discussion. For example he says of *tariqa* followers in the religious settlements of the south that they were 'chiefly Somalised Bantu together with outlawed members of Somali tribes', of 'dispossessed racial elements.'<sup>477</sup> The Italian government, he continues, encouraged the *jama'a* process of settlement 'since they introduced a stable element ... whose influence would be in the interests of law and order and against rebellions.' Whether this is opinion or based on documentary evidence is not clear, but in at least one case from the period the reverse was true. The Salihiyya *tariqa* whose charismatic leader Seyiid Mohamed 'Abdille was named by the British 'The Mad Mullah'), the religious fervour of the mystics helped fuel a twenty year insurrection against alien British rule in northern Somalia.

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<sup>475</sup> Zayla'i's *manaqib* was eventually published in Cairo in 1954 (Martin 1992:13).

<sup>476</sup> See: Martin (1970). *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1, pp 374-378; Serjeant (1959) *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 22, pp 607-608.

<sup>477</sup> Trimingham 1963:239.

In any case, these religious communities were a feature of the landscape before the advent of Italian colonialism in the 1890s, and Trimingham himself acknowledges that before spreading inland to Baardheere on the Juba river in southern Somalis in 1819, the Qadiriyya order 'had long been established along the [Banaadir] coast' (Trimingham 1965:204). The people of the Banaadir, however, are not Bantu ethnic, and the Baardheere settlement of the hinterland was established by a sheikh of the Hawiye clan, Sheikh Ibrahim Hassan Yabbarow (see above). It comprised among its followers members of the illustrious Asharaf religious lineage, two of whom (Sharif 'Abdirahman and Sharif Ibrahim) were members of the leadership in the mid-1830s.<sup>478</sup> The establishment of religious settlements that occurred along the lower Shabelle river valley in the mid- to late-nineteenth century were in areas suited to agriculture, and where the indigenous villages of the Bantu-Somali client class were located. But primarily the *jama'a* founders appeared to be seeking a peaceful environment in which they could pursue the practices of their faith, devote themselves to teaching and prayer and at the same time sustain themselves by farming.

While *tariqa* is an esoteric and philosophical concept (for The Way or Right Path), the *jama'a* refers to the community of followers or disciples. Of life in these religious communities, there is naturally an emphasis on religious devotion, spiritual reflection and study of the Koran and the Prophet's sayings. During the 1970s and 80s when I lived in the Sheikh Sufi neighbourhood of Muqdisho, local residents (men) held *dhikr* sessions every Thursday evening (already Friday by the Muslim calendar). A similar practice is noted by Ugo Ferrandi among local merchant residents of Luuq almost a century earlier, who during the 1890s held *dhikr* ceremonies Thursday evenings 'in replication of practices of the coast', by merchants who had settled there.<sup>479</sup>

The impression I have of the way in which the *jama'a* is constituted in practice is that it is somewhat differently nuanced between town and countryside. In the urban settings of Banaadir, *jama'a* community life is virtually inseparable from the existing physical entity that is circumscribed by the old town quarters. Xamar, Marka and Baraawe,

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<sup>478</sup> The founding dates of the various *jama'as* are listed in an unpublished report prepared in 1953-4 for the United Nations Trusteeship Council, provided to Lee Cassanelli by the late A.A. Castagno (1982:195 n23) but which I have not seen.

<sup>479</sup> Ferrandi 1903:11-12 & 35.

operated for centuries like city-states, and the *tariqa* philosophy permeated to the total population quite naturally. In the interior of Somalia, where the majority of the population were from a rural or nomadic pastoralist tradition, the influence of the *tariqa* principles saw the development of a new kind of settlement that was established for the express purpose of pursuing a community life founded on religious principles. These religious communities were largely self-contained and economically self-sustaining, and the *jama'a* operated according to collective community interests, much as one would expect of an urban polity, though not, as Trimingham suggests, according to collective ownership principles.<sup>480</sup> Families were usually given a piece of land to cultivate for themselves, and those from pastoralist clans usually brought their livestock with them, and continued to own them, though grazing and watering of stock may have been practiced communally.<sup>481</sup> Membership in the religious settlement typically consisted of the sheikh and his entourage, and a larger number of participants from nearby clans whilst some may have been attracted from further afield.

### **Banaadiri Religious Tradition**

From even the most casual contact with Muqdisho it can be observed that this is a Muslim city with a long tradition. In the town there are mosques and minarets, both old and new, the oldest ones having been recorded in the journals of earlier travellers, and integral to life in old Xamar right up to the present day. Following (Fig. 6) is a list of the active mosques in the two moieties at the end of the twentieth century. In an earlier chapter, in the section on The Friday Mosque, a similar exercise compiled for the first half of the twentieth century lists twelve congregational mosques of the Old Town in use at that time.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Remarkably, in a society known principally for its loyalty to clan, these settlements drew adherents from many different clans, and though members of a *jama'a* kept ties to their clan, loyalty to the *tariqa* overcame clan rivalries to a large extent. Regarding economic aspects, families brought their own livestock to settlement, and were given their own piece of land to cultivate; these things were not owned collectively. [Information provided by Suleiman Adam; Habiba Sirad]. Among my own friends and acquaintances who grew up in one or other of the Somaliland settlements, the terms '*tariqa*' and '*jamaaca*' seem to be used interchangeably to refer to the religious philosophy, and to the place, as in: 'He/she is from the *tariqa*,' meaning 'from the religious settlement'.

<sup>481</sup> Information from member of a *tariqa* family, Habiba Sirad.

<sup>482</sup> See Chapter 2.

**Figure 6. Mosques of Xamar**<sup>483</sup>

The table lists active mosques of the Xamari community in the late twentieth century. There are many more mosques in Muqdisho overall.

<b>Xamar Weyne Mosques</b>	
'Abdulkadir	
'Adayga (Aw Musse)	
Ano Qube	
Arba'-Rukun	
Aw Dhawariyo	
Aw Haji Bawasan	
Aw Mukhtar & Aw Sheikh Omar	Twin mosques
Aw Osman Hassan	
Awooto Eeday	(Shanshiye)
Fakhrudiin	
Faraj Bin 'Ali	
Haji Abati Shoble	
Haji 'Ali Abow Hussenka	
Jaama' Xamar Weyne	13 <sup>th</sup> C. Friday mosque
Jaama' Marwas	
Mohamed Al Tani	
Nuruleyn (Sharif Aghil)	
Pakistan Mosque	Shi'a community mosque
Sharif Hashim	
Sheikh Aweys	
Sheikh Uweys ul Qarni - Aw Sheikh Mumin – Sheikh 'Abdulqadir	Triple mosque
Sheikh Ibrahim	
Sheikh Idris	
Sheikh Muhiddin Ma'allin Mukaram	

<sup>483</sup> According to Khalid Maou 11/11/2004.

Sheikh Rumani Ba 'Alawi	(Reer Faqi)
Sheikh Sufi	Situated outside the enclave

<b>Shingani mosques</b>	
Aa- Kampay	
Aa- Mojow	
Aa- Muqfi	
'A bdulaziz	Situated outside the e
Aw Faraj Bin 'Ali	
Awo Sharif 'Ali	
Jaama' Shingani	Friday mosque
Ma'la	
Rowda	
Sheikh Ahmed	
Sheikh Mohamed 'Abdisamad	
Sheikh Omar & Sheikh Nureini	Twin mosques
Sheikh Said Bin Isse	
Wafle	

## 1. The Veneration of Ancestors

The veneration of inspiring and inspired founders of the *turuq* and their inheritors and disciples that is a feature of the Sufist tradition, is not, as already noted, a characteristic of all of Islam. Sufism has had a troubled relationship with both Sunni and Shi'ite Islam, and doctrinally has frequently been treated with some degree of suspicion. But the original feeling common to both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims that the invocation of saints was an idolatrous form of worship, had by the twelfth century been reconciled with orthodox principles, by making the distinction between *asking for blessing*, and *worship*. The distinction is explained by El Zein, writing about a similar religious heritage among Swahili, as follows:

The distinction is made between worship – which is only given to Allah (and whose supremacy is recognised in the recitation of the *shahada*, stating that there is but one God) - and supplications to saints and ancestors for blessings (or *baraka*). In asking for blessings of a saint or ancestor the assumption is that one is still addressing one's requests to Allah, through the saint, otherwise it would be considered idolatry (*shirka*).<sup>484</sup>

This has not prevented reformist Islamic movements of one kind or another over the centuries from often going to great lengths to eradicate practices that seem to them incompatible with what they consider to be orthodox Islam. Such movements, of which the teachings of the eighteenth-century Wahhabi sect are an example, stress a return to the simplicity of a 'traditional' Islam,<sup>485</sup> The Wahhabis engaged in the destruction of sites associated with early Islam, destroying the tombs of saints, including that of Sharif Hussein bin 'Ali in Karbala in 1802.<sup>486</sup> A famous case in Somalia of the challenge to Banaadir religious practices is the murder in 1906 of Sheikh Aweys al-Baraawe by adherents of the reformist movement led by Seyid Mahamed 'Abdulle Hassan.<sup>487</sup> More recent resurgence of religious conservatism and corrective censure

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<sup>484</sup> El Zein 1974.

<sup>485</sup> Trimmingham 1998:105.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Bemath 1992:44, and Samater 1992:54.

against Banaadiri expressions of spirituality have already been touched on, and are referred to again in the conclusion to this study. In the meantime, we are concerned with examples of local Islamic religious culture as practised among the Banaadiri, and how religious beliefs are articulated according to the social history.

A point on which Sufism often draws the criticism of the conservatives is that it is based on emotionalism and feeds on ignorance,<sup>488</sup> even though some of the proponents of the *tariqa* way were among the most learned and respected scholars of their day. Sufist thought was the creation of intellectuals, in such places as Baghdad and Basra, and in other great centres of learning in the Muslim world, in the twelfth century onwards, and Sufism is credited with having produced two of the great intellects of Islam: al-Farabi and al-Ghazali.<sup>489</sup> In the case of the Banaadiri Somalis, they are at the same time urbanites and have had a tradition of literacy in Arabic among their elites from at least the late Middle Ages. There is a great deal of evidence in the literature of learned local sheikhs of the *turuq* with reputations of scholarship in the religious sciences (*‘ilm al-diin*) that have attracted students from far afield. We mentioned earlier that Sheikh Zayla’i, who was eventually to acquire his own *tariqa* following, was drawn to Muqdisho for his religious training. Historical personages noted in the records of the *’ulama* of East Africa and emanating from the Banaadir include many sheikh from Baraawe.<sup>490</sup>

**WELI, SAINT OR SHEIKH.** *Weli* (pl. *awliya*) is the Somali version of the Arabic loanword *wali* (pl. *awliya*), usually translated in English as ‘saint’, the more precise meaning being ‘friend of God’. Linguists may consider the English use of ‘saint’ to be possibly misleading, not least because there is no formal canonization of saints in Islam as in the Christian tradition. Discussions on the precision of meaning notwithstanding, the sociological correspondence of ‘saint’ and *weli*, as Lewis has pointed out,<sup>491</sup> renders the use of saint in translation as entirely appropriate. I will use *weli* in preference to saint where possible, except when sense seems to dictate the use of ‘saint’.

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<sup>488</sup> On this point, Lewis takes to task the anthropologist Ernest Gellner who proposed that the cult of saints is a product of rural illiterates and of ignorance (Lewis in *Saints...*, 1998:xvi citing Gellner 1981:21ff, p160).

<sup>489</sup> Hitti, 2002:436, 431-4.

<sup>490</sup> See Pouwels for sketches of the lives of the following nineteenth-century sheikhs from Baraawe: Sheikh Muhyiddin bin Sheikh bin Abd-Sheikh bin Abdullah al-Qahtany and, and Sheikh Abdulai bin Abdul-Ghany al-Amawy(sic).

<sup>491</sup> Correspondence with Martin Orwin.

Correspondingly, for what is often referred to in the literature as the Sufi tradition of the ‘the cult of saints’, a more accurate description, as we shall see, is ‘the veneration of ancestors’.

In Islam *awliya* are persons who are believed to be especially chosen by God, whom they serve with supreme devotion ‘through prayers, meditation, vigils, fasting, secluded retreats and good works’.<sup>492</sup> As well as popular acclaim of personal piety, performance of miracles (*karaamaat*) also marks out a *weli*,<sup>493</sup> and these miracles will be recorded in the *weli*’s religious biography. Another description of *awliya* is of ‘men believed to have been specially favoured by God during their earthly life, who continue after their death to provide a link between Him and the material world. They are believed still to inhabit the places where they died, and also to visit other places where they have signified their presence by appearing to the believers in a dream.’<sup>494</sup> Stories of such appearances frequently attach to saints in the Somali tradition.

In their lifetime, most *awliya*, though not all, were sheikhs of the *tariqa*, members of the *’ulama*, the clerical class. The title of Sheikh in the Somali social context is used for religious leaders, though there is some overlap with its usage for political leadership (see earlier, Chapter 2); by their personal standing these religious figures are often in a position to act for the community in political and secular matters. Some of these sheikhs have become renowned for their virtues and great piety, and for their many works of kindness and mercy to those in need, that they are venerated as saints after their death and their tombs receive visits from pilgrims.<sup>495</sup> Many of the characteristics mentioned here are illustrated later in this chapter with reference to the hagiography and commentary on the figure of Sheikh Abba.

**AWLIYA IN THE BANAADIR TRADITION.** The importance of the veneration of ancestors among the Banaadiri can be seen from the accompanying chart (Fig. 7), which is by no means exhaustive, and which lists around thirty venerated ancestors whose

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<sup>492</sup> Andrzejewski, 1983:1.

<sup>493</sup> Hitti, *Arabs...*2002:438.

<sup>494</sup> Trimingham, 1965: 247.

<sup>495</sup> Andrzejewski 1983:1.



memory is honoured annually. The types of *awliya* in the Banaadir tradition can conveniently be divided into two categories: First there are the important *tariqa* sheikhs who were either the founders of a *tariqa* or their prominent followers and successors in the local tradition. Some of these, of course, such as the original *tariqa* founders, were from another place and time, though their memory is honoured in ritual annual celebrations locally. Second there are the venerated lineage ‘ancestor-saints’ whose memories are kept alive by members of their own family – and each descent group has their own list. In practice, however, even with this division there is overlap. For example Sheikh Sufi al-Shashy of the Qadiriyya and Sheikh ‘Ali Maye al-Duruqbo of the Ahmadiyya are saints of their *turuq* as well as ancestor saints of their respective lineages. The memory of Sheikh Ahmed Haji of the Bandhawow, Sheikh Faqi Muhyiddin of the Reer Faqi, and Sheikh Muumin for whom the Reer Sheikh Muumin lineage is named, are not just kept alive by their kin, but are among illustrious lineage ancestors who are honoured by other lineages of the Banaadiri, and often beyond. A few of the venerated ancestors carry the title ‘*Aw*’ (‘the respected’, ‘the revered’) rather than ‘sheikh’, as with [Sharif] Aw Osman of the Asharaf, and Aw Faqi Aboor of the Reer Faqi. It has been pointed out to me,<sup>496</sup> and indeed has been my experience, that there is no sense of rivalry between and among the different Banaadiri brotherhood followings, and each will assemble behind their own *tariqa* flag or banner, in procession at the annual *siyaaro* of the lineage *weli* being honoured

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<sup>496</sup> Dr Ahmed Sharif Abbas.

Figure 7

CHART: AWLIYE OF THE BANAADIR

(Listed alphabetically, in no order of precedence)

ANCESTORS being venerated	TARIQA	LOCATION OF SHRINE	LINEAGE	DATES	NOTES
Sh. Abi-Bakar bin Mixdaar		Warsheikh		b=born, d=died d. 1823	Moved to Warsheikh from Muqdisho, Taught at al-Taqwa mosque. [Aydarus 1950:95]. Shrine destroyed along with those of other sheikhs Nov.2010 [hiraanonline website]
Aw Hiltir		Near Jowhar or Ball'ad	Banaadiri-associated clans of Lower ShCabelle		Levitational sheikh
Aw Osman Hassan (Aw-Osman)		Marka (Marka-caddey)	Asharaf		Marka has the reverential nomenclature: Marka-caadey, Minin Aw Oman ('white Marka, house of the Venerable Osman')
Aw. Faqi Aboor			Reer Faqi		
Sh Hassan Buraale		Jesira	Sheekhal Jesira	d. pre-1856	Mentioned by Guillain at p65; described as hermit sheikh and venerated by the indigenous people
Sh. 'Abdulqadir			Shanshiyo		Ancestor of the Yawele family. Siyaaro performed by the Yawele family (or subclan) of the Shanshiya 'even here in London'.
Sh. 'Abdirahman Zeyla'li				d.1882	Not from the Banaadir but was taught by Banaadiri 'ulama in Muqdisho.i
Sh.' Abdulasiis		Muqdisho	Reer Shiikh		Shrine is the site of one of Muqdisho's oldest and most distinctive 'tower' mosques; mentioned by Guillain.
Sh. 'Abdulqaadir al-Jeylani	Founder of Qadiriye tariqa	Anniversary celebrations in his honour throughout Somalia		b.1077 d.1166	Born in Jila, Iraqi. Founder of the Qadiriyya brotherhood, buried in Baghdad. Disciples from Somalia include Sh. Aways and Sh. Sufi.

ANCESTORS being venerated	TARIQA	LOCATION OF SHRINE	LINEAGE	DATES b=born, d=died	NOTES
Sh. Abu Bakr Sh. Muxiyiddiin		Muqdisho – Bondheere district, below and east of Villa Somalia	Reer Faqi	d. 1850 aged 67	First Qadi of Muqdisho [Cerulli,]
Sh. 'Ali Maye al-Duruqbo	Ahmadiyya tariqa	Marka	Duruqbo	d. 1917,	A leading convert to the Ahmadiyye brotherhood; active in gaining followers throughout Somalia following his return from Arabia in 1870.
Sh. Aways Ahmed al-Qaadirya al-Baraawe	Q	Bioley	Tunni & Reer Baraawe	b. 1847 d. 1909	Went to Baghdad to study, and became a convert to the Qaadirya sect which he then promoted in Somalia. 'When I was young I used to hear that when people go for siyaara to Bioley they carry with them pistols and shoot in the air, and that in Bioley people can get married just for the duration of the siyaara and divorce afterwards the Siyaaro.
Sh. Axmed Xaaji			Bandhawow	A 19 <sup>th</sup> century <i>weli</i> , contemporary of Sh. Sufi	Buried approx. 16km inland from Muqdisho at War 'Abaale(1) on the way to Afgooye. The time of the pilgrimage is usually the 12th day of the month of Soofur (After Ramadan). He wrote a book. <sup>2</sup>
Sh. Bafadal		Shingani	Baa Fadal		Founding ancestor of the lineage. <i>Siyaaro</i> was held in the Islamic month Muharram; the Reer Xamar name for this month is <i>Seko</i> or <i>Anshuro</i> .
Sh. Cabikar Muxdaar			Abba Weyne/ 'Amudi		'Abba Weyne are a small group; co-habit with the 'Amuud.
Sh. Hassan Mahamud			Reer Maanyo		From the Reer Ma'ow subclan

<sup>1</sup> Luling has a slide of this shrine – dating from her fieldwork in 1966 (personal correspondence).

<sup>2</sup> According to Khalod Maow.

ANCESTORS being venerated	TARIQA	LOCATION OF SHRINE	LINEAGE	DATES b=born, d=died	NOTES
Sh. Mahad Nuur Diinlow			Dhabar-weyne ?Abgal		
Sh. Mahamed 'Boqol Soome'		?Kismayu			A follower and pupil of Sh. Ahmed Haji (the latter a Bandhawow <i>wel/</i> ); 'he had a large number of followers', and for most of his life was an itinerant preacher 'in the interior area near Baraawe and Kismayu'. 'Boqol Soome' is a nickname literally meaning 'a hundred days of fasting', suggesting that this <i>wel/</i> was famous for his fasting - and by extension asceticism and meditation of things holy.
Sh. Mahamed Sh. A'li Maye		Muqdishu - Bondheere	Duruqbo		Son of Sh. 'Ali Maye; shrine at Bondheere behind Dumbuluq and below area of former German Embassy.
Sh. Muxamed Faqi Yusuf;		Muqdisho - Bondhere	Shanshiye		From the Abakarow sub-lineage of Shanshiye. Siyaaro is held in Bondere, in the mosque called after him, near Monopollo and Sinal.
Sh. Mukhtar		?Marka	Duruqbo.		This person is Reer Marka, but there is a mosque in Muqdisho in Abdalle Shidey area called Mosque Sh. Mukhtar. Duruqbo.
Sh. Mumin bin Cabdullahi		Muqdisho - Kamar Weyne	Reer Sheikh Mumin	18 <sup>th</sup> C.	A 'carpet' ( <i>masala</i> ) traveller See Lewis on this saint 1998:84
Sh. Mungani or Mugana Aways			Reer Faqi		
Sh. Muumin bin 'Abdullahi		Muqdisho - Kamar Weyne	Reer Sheikh Muumin		

ANCESTORS being venerated	TARIQA	LOCATION OF SHRINE	LINEAGE	DATES	NOTES
Sh. Muxiddiin Moalim Mukarram		Muqdisho	Reer Faqi	b=born, d=died d. 1919 age 57?	
Sh. Nuruddin Ahmed Saadir					
Sh. Qaasim Muxyidiin Baraawi			Reer Aw Qutub	d. 1949-54 (?) see Andrzej1983:45	A disciple of Sh Aweys and Sh. Sufi, and one of Abba's teachers
Sh. Sharif Nadir		Mahadei	Asharaf		
Sh. Shinyaalow		Outskirts of Kismaayo	Ashraf		Sharif Shinyaalow's tomb in Kismayu and his siyaaro around the time of the Hajj.
Sh. Shuuto			Shanshiyo		
Sh. Suufi (Shaikh CCabduraxman Shaikh Suufi)	Q	Muqdisho	Shanshiyo	b. 1254AH d. 1903	Buried in Sheikh Sufi quarter of Muqdisho, in the grounds of the mosque that bears his name. Siyaaro is commemorated in a building near Koodka called Saarta Sa'adda.
Sh. Uways al-Qarni		Xamar Weyne			Tomb and mosque are in Xamar Weyne close to the sea
Sharif ' Aydaruus		Muqdisho - Shibis	AshSraf		Shrine at area of Maxafal in Shibis district of Muqdisho, where Prophet's Birthday is also celebrated.
Sharif Khalif Ba 'Alawi al Nadiri		Shingani	Asharaf		

A fifth generation descendant of the Prophet Mohamed by the name of Seyyid Ahmed al\_Muhajir bin Isa (820-924CE) who is buried near Tarim has a shrine dedicated to him in Baraawe. According to legend, he travelled to Baraawe where spent time in missionary work before returning to Hadramawt.

Some schemes concerning saints in the Somali tradition identify several other categories. Lewis for example, who has written extensively on Islam in Somalia, identifies four types: eponymous ancestor saints, the inherited saintliness accorded to members of religious lineages, local Somali saints, and pan-Islamic saints.<sup>497</sup> I consider the crossover is such, however, that the two classes as suggested above, of *tariqa weli* and descent group *weli*, are sufficient to encompass the range of *awliya* in the Banaadir list. ‘Eponymous ancestor saints’ such as the above-named Sheikh Muumin, are revered for their position as lineage and clan founders. Beyond the Banaadir, Sheikh Isaaq and Sheikh Darood, founding fathers of two of the great northern pastoralist clan-families, and Sheikh Samaroon of the Gedabursi are in this category. They are venerated both by their descendants and the wider community, but their kinsmen do not claim any special *baraka* or saintly inheritance themselves on account of their ancestry.

The ‘local Somali saints’ who are venerated for their personal reputations for piety and who range from quite localised figures to nationally famous saints, and revered beyond the margins of their clan or *tariqa* affiliation, also fit within my scheme. The fame of some of these local saints has spread even beyond the Somali culture region to neighbouring communities, as in the case of Sheikh Hussein of Bale, whose shrine is in southern Ethiopia, where Somali and Oromo cultures meet,<sup>498</sup> and Sheikh Aweys of Baraawe whose fame is recognised as far away as Tanzania<sup>499</sup>

The ‘Pan-Islamic saints’ drawn from the wider Muslim calendar of saints (the likes of ‘Abdulqadir al-Jeylani and their eminent successors) have been incorporated into the Banaadiri religious cultural practice. Though their shrines may be elsewhere, they are often geographically localised at places where their apparitions are said to have appeared.

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<sup>497</sup> Lewis, *Saints...* 1998:xiii.

<sup>498</sup> This sheikh is discussed in detail in Lewis 1998~83-87.

<sup>499</sup> An essay on the extent of this Sheikh’s influence and that of the ‘*Uwaysiyya*’ in East Africa is by Christine Ahmed (1989).

Religious lineages are scattered throughout the Somali clan system, with names like *faqi*, *fogi*, *ashraf* and *sheikhal*, as noted earlier.<sup>500</sup> The religious lineages among the Banaadiri are the Asharaf and the Sheikhs of Jesira and Gandershe. The males of these lineages, by virtue of their heredity, tend to be regarded as religious experts, and are looked on to provide various services to the community within their expected competencies, such as religious leadership, healing, and Qoranic teaching. Not all member are remembered as *awliya* on their death, and the Sheikhal and Asharaf follow the pattern of the other Banaadiri lineages in having ancestor ‘saints’ and *tariqa* ‘saints’. Since payment for such religious services, as mentioned, is made on a voluntary and charitable basis, in practice most members of religious lineages are also occupied on a daily basis in generating income from other sources.

SIYAARO – VISITATING SHRINES. The shrine of a *weli* is the focus of an annual pilgrimage on the date of his death if known, otherwise on a date fixed by convention. The shrine usually consists of the tomb where the saint is buried, typically beside a mosque— either an existing mosque that has some significance for the sheikh and his lineage, but often in the compound of a mosque that has been specially built beside the tomb.<sup>501</sup> A resident sheikh and his entourage –usually people who are descendants of the sheikh – maintain the shrines, and the family members attending to the shrine are in part supported by the gifts of the pilgrims.

There was an occasion in 1983 when I drove into the village of Gandershe. A tall thin elderly gentleman of the village, who spoke in Italian and in appearance was clearly Reer Banaadir, came over to enquire of me and my travelling companions. He took us on a circumnavigation of the shrine of ‘his sheikh’, which was situated at the edge of the village, on a rock protruding into the bay. The shrine was decorated with pieces of coloured cloth tied on to a string line and fluttering in the breeze – presumably left by visiting pilgrims. As he was

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<sup>500</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>501</sup> The tomb of Sheikh Sufi is within the grounds of the mosque named for this *weli* and which is in the neighbourhood of Muqdisho also named for him and where many of his lineage descendants reside. The recently deceased Sheikh Abba of the same Shanshiye lineage and the same *tariqa* lineage as is also buried there.

the guardian of the shrine, it was proper for us, as visitors, to make a donation to him towards his custodial duties and the shrine's upkeep. Gandershe at that time was inhabited almost totally by families of the Reer Xamar-Sheikal Gandershe, whose livelihood was in fishing, and in weaving the *alindi* cloth which they marketed in Muqdisho.<sup>502</sup>

The annual *siyaaro* (another Arabic loan word), literally 'visit', referring to the practice of visiting the shrines of venerated ancestors, can probably be styled in English a religious pilgrimage, except that in Islam the only way in which 'pilgrimage' is used is as it refers to the annual *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca and which is a once in a lifetime obligation of all Muslims if circumstances permit. At *siyaaros*, which are a kind of festival, several hundred to thousands of people congregate for several days at the shrine, and marathon recitals of praises to the Prophet (*nabi-amaan*) and praises to the *weli* (*weli-amaan*) are held. People bring food, and animals to be sacrificed. The sick and those with requests, ordinary people just partaking of the spiritual communion, as well as the very poor who come for the free food, all gather at the location. Tombs of highly venerated saints are said to glow at night and such a saint is referred to as *weli siraata*.<sup>503</sup>

Something of the atmosphere of these great festal occasions is captured in this description of the *siyaaro* for Sheikh 'Ali Maye al-Duruqbo in the town of Marka, commemorating the anniversary of his death on the fifth day of the Muslim month of Safar:

Thousands go on *siyaaro* to his tomb at Marka from all parts of Somalia. The festival lasts fifteen days and culminates in a great *dhikr* on the actual night of the 5th Safar, when they form an immense circle and, to the accompaniment of singing, recite their formulae ... accompanied by rhythmic swaying of their bodies until daybreak.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Field Notes from the period; recently checked against recollections of Mohamud Aboker Hassan who was with me on that visit.

<sup>503</sup> Diriye 'Abdullahi 2001:63.

<sup>504</sup> Trimmingham 1953:242.



A second shrine in Marka is that of the *weli* Aw Osman of the Asharaf religious lineage, and for whom the town is affectionately named by the people of the Banaadir: *Marka cadaay, minin Aw Cusman* – ‘White Marka, House of Aw Osman’ (‘white’ among Banaadiris is a metaphor for ‘shining’ or ‘beautiful’).

The Banaadiri saint whose *siyaaro* perhaps attracts the largest number of visitors is Sheikh Aweys of Baraawe (1847–1909) who is buried in Biyooley, a small town northwest of Baydhabo towards the Ethiopian border. Much of the missionary work of this *weli* was in taking Islam to the interior. He was from the Qadiriyya *tairiqa* and his tomb ‘is the scene of a great yearly *mulid* ‘which lasts for three days’.<sup>505</sup> And from my own recollections:

In the 1970s when I lived in the Sheikh Sufi *xaafad* (neighbourhood) of Muqdisho, each year at the time of the annual *siyaaro* for Sheikh Aweys the lane outside my gate would be full of excitement as pilgrims, male and female, clambered on to large trade trucks – as many as eight would be lined up there for the purpose of transporting the pilgrims to Biyooley, the site of the Sheikh’s shrine, in the far interior.<sup>506</sup> Flags fluttered, and colourful appliquéd and embroidered *tariqa* banners would be on display (reminiscent of the trades union banners that were a familiar site at large labour union rallies in the UK in those decades). Some pilgrims wore strips of coloured cloth on their arms or as headbands.

The shrines and sanctuaries of saints and ancestors are extremely numerous among the Banadiri, and are scattered throughout the coastal towns, and immediate hinterland, as well as further upcountry. The geographical range can be linked not just to the settlement pattern along the coast as might be expected, but also to settlement inland as a result of not just trade but the missionary activities of some of these antecedents, and

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<sup>505</sup> Trimmingham, 1965: 241.

<sup>506</sup> It can be expected that similar groups would have been assembling in other Reer Xamar neighbourhoods of the city, and Banaadiri towns and villages far and wide.

reflecting the crucial role played by men of God of the Banaadir in the general history of Somali Islam.

Since none of the original Sufi orders that established themselves among the Banaadiri in recent centuries originated in the region, the tombs of the founding *tariqa* sheikhs are to be found elsewhere – in Baghdad in the case of the Qadiriyya founder, and Asir in Yemen in the case of Ahmadiyya's al-Fasi. Annual commemorations will nevertheless be held locally, often, as noted earlier, at a place with which the founder-*weli* is associated. When an anniversary commemoration is held at a place other than the saint's shrine, this is known as *xus*, the exception being that of the annual celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, which is referred to among Somalis only as *mowliid*. In Muqdisho there is a famous place named Maxafal where in the last half century *mowliid* was celebrated by the Banaadiri, especially by the Asharaf. Sheikh 'Aydarus of the Asharaf is buried here, and it is he who established this place in his lifetime as the site where the Prophet Muhammad's birthday would be celebrated. I have been told that the sacredness of the place is because the Prophet Muhammad had appeared there to an Asharaf Sheikh, possibly Sharif 'Aydarus (bin 'Ali al-Nadiri – he of the *Bughyat al-Amal*) who is himself buried there, in a gated tomb. The gates are opened on special anniversary occasions.<sup>507</sup>

Visionary experiences by the intensely religious seem to be a not uncommon occurrence in the Sufi tradition. From the *manaqib* of Sheikh Zayla'i it is related that whilst studying in [Muqdisho, and having already seen the Prophet Muhammad forty-four times previously, he saw him again at the door of Sheikh Sufi's house, at which, he 'lost the power to stand, and fell over in a faint.' He was helped to recover by Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Mahad,<sup>508</sup>

The tradition of veneration of ancestors is important enough that each person will know his or her most venerated [lineage] sheikh(s), and some others that are part of the overall

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<sup>507</sup> According to Dr. Ahmed Sharif Abbas, who is a direct grandson of this Sheikh.

<sup>508</sup> Martin 192:16.

canon of religious figures.<sup>509</sup> By the early 1990s and the civil war in Somalia, Banaadiri local religious expressions came under social and political pressures and community events such as visits to shrines were scaled down or discontinued. In the early days of civil war, the lawlessness and lack of security were the primary reasons for suspending once-public community activities. More recently, with the rise of militant conservative Islamist factions (some of whom have engaged in the destruction of sacred shrines of Banaadiri ancestors), the commemorations that were once held openly in Muqdisho and elsewhere where saints are buried, have been driven underground; small groups are more likely to gather quietly in the home of a leading lineage elder to mark the occasion.<sup>510</sup>

Women are not excluded from the Sufi tradition, as we see from the literature on the mystics, one of the more famous being Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (*ca.* 717-801CE), of Basra, 'a mystic woman of noble life and lovely character,'<sup>511</sup>. In fact, Mysticism was the only Islamic religious sphere where women could find a place.<sup>512</sup> In Baraawe there is the shrine of Dadu Ma-Siti - 'Grandmother Lady Siti' ('Ma' is the Swahili short-form of 'Mana', used like Lady or Mrs. It will be recalled that the local language in Baraawe is Chi-mini, which is related to Swahili), and a *siyaaro* in her honour on account of a miracle performed.<sup>513</sup> In the reported destruction of six tombs of venerated ancestors in Warsheikh on 14/11/10/, one was a woman, Fadumo Sheikh 'Abdurahman.<sup>514</sup>

## 2. The Sheikh

The second theme from Banaadiri Islamic religious culture to be examined is the role of the sheikh, with particular reference to a leading local sheikh of the Muqdisho

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<sup>509</sup> Correspondence with PR2, 11/11/02.

<sup>510</sup> IN25; IN37.

<sup>511</sup> Hitti 2002:439 quoting from Nicholson 1905:67.

<sup>512</sup> Trimmingham 1998:18.

<sup>513</sup> Information from Dr. Khalif Mowlana of Baraawe (21/11/10). She is said to have used her powers of prayer to thwart the intentions of a District Commissioner who had wished to change the use of a local religious site, during the period of British Administration (1940-50). Dr Mowlana says she is buried in a place where there are several other saints' shrines, and her *siyaaro* is attended by all sections of the community of all ages.

<sup>514</sup> See earlier, and footnote 431.

Qadiriyya *tariqa*, Sheikh Abba al-Shashy. He was a significant figure in the social and political life of the Reer Xamar in the turbulent years of the civil war in Somalia that has wreaked havoc on the social order, not least among urban cultural minorities of the stone towns. In Islam there is no organised clergy with a hierarchy and centralised institutions—no popes, no archbishops, no bishops—and all adult (male) Muslims are equal in status and, if necessary, capable of leading the prayers. However, in practice acknowledgement is accorded the religious scholars, who usually carry the title of Sheikh, and who constitute the Muslim clerical community, referred to as the *'ulama* 'learned men' (Som. *culiimo*).

Sheikhs are greatly respected men of religion who have achieved a high level of learning in the field of Muslim theology and law - knowledge of the Koran and *shari'a* law - and classic Islamic texts. Arabic is the only liturgical language among Muslims, and in Somalia as in other Muslim countries Arabic is the main language of worship and theology. Poems and sacred literature originating with local sheikhs and theologians will generally also be composed in Arabic. Arab religious classics are widely read in Somalia among the *'ulama* in particular,<sup>515</sup> and the titles of some of these will be mentioned in bibliographic and hagiographic narratives when their studies and spiritual training are described. Manuscripts containing compositions by and about Somali sheikhs are treated with great respect, especially after the death of the author, and are carefully preserved by his descendants or by the members of the religious brotherhood of which he was a member.<sup>516</sup> Andrzejewski remarks that 'the owners of the manuscripts tend to regard photocopying or even perusal by strangers as a form of profanation', and while such an attitude can be well understood, 'it seriously impeded scholarly research'. I can concur with this view, and have had great difficulty trying to obtain copies of prayer poems and praise poems that are, and that I know to be part of the corpus of the written heritage, and surely worth the attention of local scholars. In acknowledging this gap, I am reminded of being forbidden to touch or browse through copies of the sacred Koran that were being sold in the Xamar Weyne market when I used to frequent the place.

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<sup>515</sup> Andrzejewski 1983.

<sup>516</sup> I have been told by members of Sheikh Abba's family of a large collection of several hundred books and manuscripts in his library; I was told by Aw 'Abdurahman that a copy of my own seminar paper on Sheikh Abba presented at SOAS in March 2006 had been added to the collection of the Sheikh's papers.

In the religious traditions of the Sufi brotherhoods the authority of the sheikh is founded on an inherited saintly genealogy consisting of the teachers and celebrated *tariqa* predecessors of the sheikh, The spirituality of the founders of the Sufi orders is held to be handed down through successive sheikhs of the *tariqa*, and this inherited spirituality or charisma is referred to as the chain of divine blessing (*silsilaat al-baraka*).<sup>517</sup> A sheikh's spiritual genealogy, thus, in contrast to his family genealogy, consists of predecessor saints who have played an important role in the development of the *tariqa* and connects with the founder of the particular Sufi order. Ultimately the Prophet himself is the last link in this blessed chain.

The sheikh starts first as a student and through hard work and perseverance progresses from the first stage of his spiritual journey, under the tutelage of acknowledged experts, to the accumulation of considerable knowledge in the Koran and Islamic jurisprudence, and to advanced philosophical and mystical stages of spirituality. Still, as already indicated, he is not part of an organisation that pays him a salary: rather he is an individual professional in much the same way the local tailor is a professional in the community. And while the tailor makes and sells clothes, the sheikh meets all the services required of him for free, and people decide themselves what they may offer him in kind or cash. In his autobiography Sheikh 'Ali Maye, whom we have already met, noted that on marrying and becoming responsible for supporting a wife and children, *'I designed clothes and we lived from that...then I worked in commerce and I travelled to Zanzibar several times.*<sup>518</sup> Such learned men as 'Ali Maye, who have exhibited extraordinary piety in their lifetime, who have been responsible for bringing others to the faith, and who may be considered to have brought about miracles (believed to be a mark of having found great favour in the eyes of God), are themselves eventually venerated as *awliya* .

### **Hagiographic Literature - The Lives of Sheikhs as History**

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<sup>517</sup> However, Trimingham p 237, describes the chain of tradition as having two divisions: *silsilat al-baraka* (chain of benediction) which connects the sheikh with the founder of the order, and *silsilat al-wird* (chain of initiation) which connects the founder with the Prophet. (Also proposed/repeated by Lewis, 1998:10).

<sup>518</sup> Reese 2008:117, quoting from Gori 2003:335.

The literary genre used to record the lives of sheikhs is referred to as hagiography or *manaqib* (Ar.). The usual meaning of *manaqib* is ‘divine graces’ or ‘partial miracles’,<sup>519</sup> hence the emphasis in the account is of a sheikh’s virtues and works of merit. Within it will be recounted and recorded the qualities, virtues and characteristics of the notable religious figure, and which are sources of pride. It details his charismatic attributes and his miraculous powers especially of healing. These ‘spiritual biographies’ are written in a reverential manner, and are usually compiled by a sheikh’s disciple(s) (*muridi*). The hagiography typically tells of the sheikh’s training and scholarship, the miracles he has performed, his converts to the sect, and the strength of his following. By conservative Islam the content is dismissed as folkloric at best, if not heretical. Until recently this genre of record, with its adulatory manner, was typically viewed to be of little import, often attracting derisory comments even from academics.<sup>520</sup> Current attitudes however to this field of literature are more open-minded, as captured by Thomas Heffernan, who argues that hagiographies are texts that almost by definition have broad social relevance within the communities that create them, and are reflections of what its members regard as important.<sup>521</sup> The hagiography, viewed within the context of the time and place, the accounts of the subject’s interactions with events and with people, offer clues to contemporary history, and the community’s moral and social framework. At any rate, the usefulness of such accounts as important sources for commentary and local contemporary history is self-evident, and an example of this will be seen with reference to the hagiography of Sheikh Abba, which is the subject of the next section of this chapter, where the Somali civil war and a period of great social turmoil form the backdrop for much of the period of the Sheikh’s religious leadership

A recent and welcome contribution to the study of Somali hagiographic literature is by Gori, an Italian researcher. He analyses four texts written by local authors, in Arabic, which are devoted to two Somali holymen: Sheikh Isaaq bin Ahmed, and Sheikh ‘Ali Mahamed Maye.<sup>522</sup> His study classifies hagiography in the Somali tradition into two types: the ‘genealogical hagiography’<sup>523</sup> and the ‘brotherhood hagiography’.<sup>524</sup> The

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<sup>519</sup> Martin 1992:13.

<sup>520</sup> Lewis 1998:55.

<sup>521</sup> Heffernan 1988:5; Reese 2008:27.

<sup>522</sup> Gori (2003).

<sup>523</sup> Ibid pp. xi & p26ff.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., pp. xii & 28ff.

‘genealogical hagiography’ is devoted to the life of Somali clan founders, and records the legendary episodes of their life, emphasising their miracles, devoutness and learning, all of which are common content of any hagiographic narrative. In addition, the ‘genealogical hagiography’ highlights the clan ancestor’s links to prestigious forefathers of noble Arab lineage; and example is given of Sheikh Isaaq, eponymous founder of the Isaaq clan of Somaliland, whose biographers connect the Sheikh to the Qureshi lineage of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>525</sup> The second type of hagiography in the scheme, the ‘brotherhood hagiography’, is dedicated to scholar-saints from the Sufi tradition who have been particularly influential in teaching and in winning converts to the particular religious principles of the Order they espoused. In the case of the ‘brotherhood hagiography’, the narrative of the sheikh’s life, within the framework of the *tariqa* tradition, and the account of his deeds and his virtues not only serve to preserve the memory of the particular saint, but also presents him as a ‘good model to be followed by his disciples [and] all the devoted faithful.’ Expressed in the context of the brotherhood, the brotherhood is also praised.<sup>526</sup>

**THE FIGURE AND ROLE OF SHEIKH MAHAMED SHEIKH AHMED  
SHEIKH MAHAMUD AL-SHASHY<sup>527</sup> (1935-2008<sup>528</sup>)**

For the latter part of the twentieth century Sheikh Mahamed Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Mahamud al-Shashy, popularly known as Sheikh Abba, was a leading member of the Muqdisho 'ulama, a follower of the Qadiriyya tariqa and a foremost sheikh of Xamar Weyne. The following commentary considers his role in the community, and how this reflects contemporary events. In this, I rely mainly on the hagiography written in his lifetime by one of his disciples, Sheikh Ahmed Iman, but also on some personal memories of the Sheikh, correspondence with his hagiographer, meetings with his surviving son, and interviews with a range of people from the Xamari and Banaadiri communities who knew him.

My own acquaintance with Sheikh Abba began in 1975 when I was introduced by one of his kinsman with whom I was collaborating on some research on Muqdisho Old Town. Sheikh Abba was already at that time an acknowledged resource on local history,

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>526</sup> See also essay by Andrzejewski (1974) on the veneration of Sufi saints.

<sup>527</sup> Al-Shashy refers to Shash, a place name in Arabia from where his lineage ancestors came.

<sup>528</sup> Died during Ramadan, August 2008.

and I was taken to meet him at his home in Xamar Weyne. In the years when I lived in the Reer Xamar neighbourhood of Sheikh Sufi, during the 1970s and 80s, he was a familiar figure in the *xaafad*, visiting kinsmen and participating in religious occasions. In October 2005 I visited the Sheikh in Hamburg, to consult him in connection with this research study. He was at the time on a brief visit to relatives and to members of his community in diaspora in Europe. It was Ramadan, and during the daytime fast he was available to talk with the multitude of men and women who crowded at his door. Some, like me, had come long distances to see him, and in the waiting area of the house where he stayed, I met others who had travelled from England, and from Italy and Sweden as well as from other places in Germany. It was at this time that I was given a copy of his hagiography, in Arabic.<sup>529</sup> References in the following section to lines and paragraphs are to the translated English text of the *manaqib* that is appended at Annex I.

Sheikh Abba was born in 1935 in Xamar Weyne to a family from the Shanshiye or al-Shashy lineage of the Reer Xamar. Until his death in August 2008, the Sheikh lived all his life in Muqdisho, in Xamar Weyne. The hagiographic account of his life that is reproduced here<sup>530</sup> was written by one of his followers, Sheikh Ahmed Iman Mahamed al-Shashy, and is dated 16 Jamadi Ula 1418 AH (17 September 1997 CE). The hagiographer refers to himself as the Sheikh's 'humble pupil', and is also from the Shanshiye lineage, as indicated by the suffix to his name. He is a sheikh of the *tariqa*, and was a constant companion of his mentor in the latter years of Sheikh Abba's life. He kept careful minutes of all the Sheikh's meetings, and was with the Sheikh when we met in Hamburg.

HIS ANCESTRY. Sheikh Abba's hagiography opens with his personal genealogy (which corresponds to what Gori terms 'genealogical hagiography'), listing sixty-four generations of ancestors in the paternal line. It features forefathers from different places and tribes of Arabia, and of different talents, as are signified by the Arabic prefix 'al-', 'of' this-or-that place or profession. Genealogies and ancestry that trace a person's origin to putative Arab forefathers are a defining element of personal identity for the

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<sup>529</sup> In the years since the collapse of the Somali state in January 1991 Muqdisho has been out of bounds for independent travel to the country, but has been contactable by telephone and internet.

<sup>530</sup> Appendix I contains full text in English and Arabic, and other related material on Sheikh Abba.



town-dwellers of the Banaadir, as for all Somalis. Reflecting the long history of literacy (in Arabic) among the coastal communities, these lineage genealogies (these *abtirsiimo*) that are so significantly committed to memory among the nomadic clans, can be kept and recorded by literate elders in the habit of keeping written records, perhaps thereby dispensing with the need for every individual to memorise these often very long family trees. And it is true that among Banaadiri it is not usual for citizens to have instant recall of more than one or two generations past, compared to Somalis from the pastoralist tradition who will be able to recite thirty or more of their ancestors

In perusing the Sheikh's genealogy, we find there a large number of ancestors who carry such honorific titles as sheikh (religious leader), *al-faqi* (man of religious learning), and *hajji* (man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca). Of some named ancestors in the genealogy, further comment can be made where it has been possible to collect oral history that attaches to them, and in instances where they are figures from recorded or remembered history. It may be found helpful to include here the Sheikh's genealogy from Appendix I (i) for ease of reference.

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*(line one)* Genealogy of Sheikh Abba

... our father, al-Sheikh Mohammad (known as Abba) bin ['son of'] Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Mahmood) bin **Sheikh 'Abdul Rahman (al-Tibby)** bin Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Mahmood bin Sheikh Ahmad bin **Sheikh Amin bin Imanka** bin AbuBaker bin Ali bin Haramain bin Haji Yousuf bin Sheikh Abaly bin Omar bin Sheikh Mohammad bin Mualim Omar bin al-faqi Qasim bin al-faqi Ismaail bin al-faqi Haji Yousuf bin al-faqi Mohammad bin al-faqi Omar Muhiyadin bin al-faqi Ahmad bin al-faqi Qasim bin **AbuBaker Qaffal al-Shashy** Mohammad bin Ali bin Ismaail bin Ahmad bin Mousa bin **Jadaa bin Maymoona** bin Osman bin Asim bin 'Abdulrahman bin Muslim bin Daoud bin Suleyman bin Ibrahim bin Jibriil bin Asad bin Osman bin Qasim bin Mohammad bin **'Abdul Rahman bin 'Awf** bin 'Abdul 'Awf bin Harith bin Zahra bin Kallab bin Murrah bin Kaab bin Luay bin Ghalib bin Fahr bin Malik bin Alnathir Bin Kinana bin Khazeema bin Madraka bin Alyas bin Mudhar bin Nazar bin Muad bin **Adnan**

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A lineage ancestor of recent depth (three generations) is Sheikh 'Abdurahman 'al-Tibby', (line number 3), selected because of his being styled 'al-Tibby'<sup>531</sup> (this Sheikh 'Abdurahman is not to be confused with Sheikh 'Abdurahman al-Sufi; also a close kinsman but from another subsection of the lineage. Sheikh Sufi, however, will feature prominently in Abba's hagiography).<sup>532</sup> With regard to Sheikh 'Abdurahman 'al-Tibby', we can suppose from the nickname 'al-Tibby' (from Ar, *tabeeb*; doctor), that this ancestor may have been a healer in the established family tradition (see later).

The ancestor 'Abubakar 'Qaffal' al-Shashy (line number 8) is the first to carry the name al-Shashy ('from Shash'). His nickname (al-Qaffal) according to Reese means 'the repatriated one',<sup>533</sup> though another meaning that has been suggested to me is 'the journeyer' from the Arabic for a caravan journey. He is the first to carry the now-familiar suffix (al-Shashy, which identifies what is believed to be the place of origin of Shanshiye lineage. Shash, or Chach refers to what is now known as Tashkent. Abba's own biographer gives the following information on Abubakar al-Qaffal al-Shashy: *Al-shashy refers to his original village that is located in the area behind the river near Ebn Omar Island* (see biographer's footnotnote in translation p.270). The story that migrants from Chach found their way to Muqdisho finds historical support in an Arabic text (by the 14th century Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun '*Kitab al-Ibar*') which notes that in 604 AH (1207-8 CE) the population of Shash was ordered by its sultan to evacuate the town in the face of an imminent Tartar invasion from the north. According to a variant reading in an Egyptian edition of Ibn Khaldun's text, these Shashy refugees, many of them skilled weavers and cap-makers, dispersed into the 'lands of Islam...to Cairo, Baghdad, and Mogadishu'<sup>534</sup> The name al-Shashy, and its more familiar Somalised

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<sup>531</sup> From the same Shanshiye lineage, they are from different subsections - Abdalla Imanka and Amiin Imanka - see below.

<sup>532</sup> Sheikh Sufi is well represented in the literature on Banaadiri religious culture (Brad Martin, Andrzejewski as noted earlier).

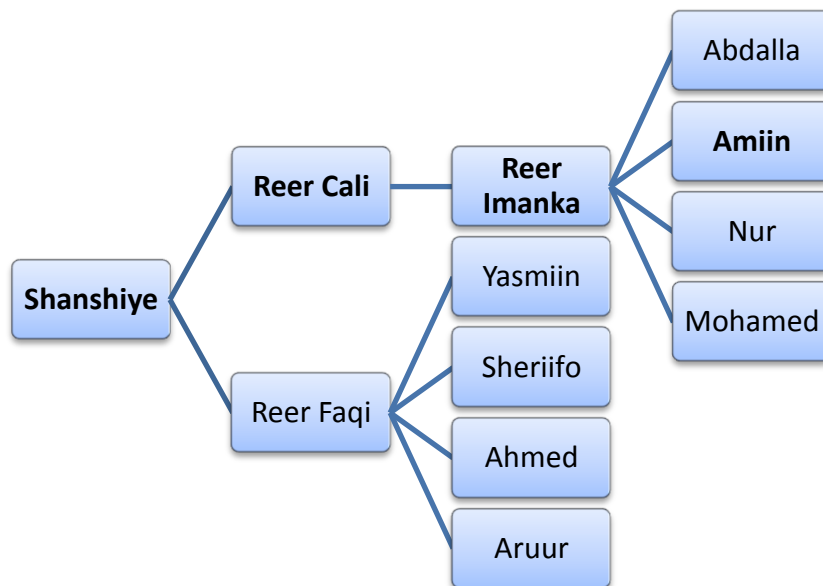
<sup>533</sup> Reese 2008: 232. This ancestor also appears in the genealogy of Sheikh Sufi, recorded in Reese.

<sup>534</sup> Full ref.: In his *Kitab al-Ibar*, Ibn Khaldun notes that the population of Shash (now Tashkent) in Central Asia was ordered to evacuate the town around 604AH/1207-1208 by the Khwarizmshah Qutb al-

equivalent ‘Shanshiye’, was eventually adopted by the twelve families of al-Jidaati lineage who were among the thirty-nine immigrant families of earlier legend (in Chapter 2.)

Five generations earlier than Abubakar al-Qaffal is an ancestor Jadaa\_bin Maymoona (line number 9), who, the hagiographer tells us in a footnote, came from Sham (i.e. Syria),<sup>535</sup> and settled in Muqdisho in 149 AH (766 CE).

Imanka (line number 5) marks a main points of segmentation of Shanshiye descent structure (see below), and his son Sheikh Amiin (line number 4) is one of four sons of Iman who gave their names to sub-lineages, Amiin Imanka is a name I frequently heard evoked at Reer Xamar weddings in Muqdisho when the groom was from this segment of the Shanshiye lineage. His relatives would proudly chant ‘he [the groom] is Amiin Imanka’. According to ‘Abdirahman Sh Abba (son of Sh Abba) Amiin Imanka is credited with being the first to the ancestors to have gained a reputation for skill in traditional healing,<sup>536</sup> and which the hagiography notes has been a lineage specialisation through fourteen generations




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Din Muhammad II. Shash lay in the path of an invading force of Qara Khitay Turks. These may have been set in motion by the movements of Mongol armies beyond them. According to a variant reading in an Egyptian edition of Ibn Khaldun’s text, these refugees, many of them skilled weavers and cap-makers, dispersed into the ‘lands of Islam...to Cairo, Baghdad, and Mogadishu’ (Brad Martin, JAHS, Vol. 7; 1975.

<sup>535</sup> The early Arabs referred to Greater Syria as Bilad al-Sham (Encyclopaedia of Islam).

<sup>536</sup> Interview with Abdirahman Sheikh Abba 2009.

### Shanshiye Descent Structure (partial)

This shows a simplified descent structure for the main sub-lineage division and the position of Amiin Imanka, compiled by me from oral and written sources.

One of the most illustrious names in Abba's genealogy is that of 'Abdulrahman bin Awf (Awf) (line number 12). Bin Awf was a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad in an early convert to Islam<sup>537</sup> A 'morality tale' concerning this ancestor is recorded earlier and in which is implied the renowned wealth of Bin Awf as cited in Islamic historical accounts of his life, viz.:

Bin Awf was one of the group of ten of his Companions (known as the Sahaba) to whom the Prophet Mohammad promised paradise. Abdulrahman bin Awf was the eighth person to embrace Islam, he migrated twice to Abyssinia. Abdur-Rahman distinguished himself in both the battles of Badr and Uhud, suffering more than twenty wounds at the latter. Starting with nothing, he went on to enjoy tremendous success as a merchant, becoming the richest of the Companions. From his great wealth, Abdur-Rahman financed the Muslim armies, contributed to the upkeep of the family of Muhammad after the Prophet's death and was universally renowned for his fabulous generosity.<sup>538</sup>

Preceding 'Abdurahman bin Awf in depth of ancestry are those which predate the Islamic era. The genealogy now asserts the link to one of the major Arab houses. The last name in Abba's line of descent (and hence the original ancestor) is Adnan (line number 15), who is the traditional ancestor of the Adnani Arabs. Both Bin 'Awf and the Prophet Muhammad were Adnani Arabs, and we can expect that the Sheikh's *abtirsiimo* in this level of greater depth will not show much divergence from the genealogies of the famous.

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<sup>537</sup> Hitti 2002:178.

<sup>538</sup> See: <http://www.islamfortoday.com/companions.htm>; downloaded 20/05/09.

Clearly, and as is often the case with histories based on oral transmission, there may be competing versions and divergence in chronology which are difficult to reconcile, and may remain so even if other documents, published or unpublished, were to come to light. Historical verification of the information as presented is not, however, within the compass of this study. The genealogy as a record of descent, and transmitted down the generations, however imperfect, presents a continuum and serves important social function in legitimization of the group about which it speaks, and in maintaining the solidarity of the group.

HIS LIFE. Following the genealogical hagiography of Sheikh Abba are several pages of narrative account of his life, where the emphasis is on his spirituality, personal virtues, and his spiritual lineage.<sup>539</sup> The *tariqa* cultivates a sheikh's attachment to a spiritual genealogy in contrast to the blood ties of lineage, though as we can see from the above, prestige may be acquired from both.

The life history of Sheikh Abba that we shall now consider, written in the customary worshipful style, is representative of what Gori categorises as the 'brotherhood hagiography'. Brotherhood hagiographies act like links in the chain of the history of the *tariqa*, and the good deeds and life of the sheikhs, and thereby providing a moral and spiritual compass for the *tariqa* members and followers. Though hagiographies of saints are usually written some time after a sheikh has died, and in some instances even centuries later, this partial biography was written during the sheikh's lifetime, so strictly speaking it may be inaccurate to call the manuscript a hagiography or *manaqib*. However, in consideration of the correspondence of style and content with the character of the hagiographic genre it seems fitting to refer to the document (Appendix I (ii)) as such.

In the beginning, Abba's birth and destiny were foretold by Sheikh 'Abdurahman Sheikh Sufi al-Shashy, popularly known as Sheikh Sufi (paragraph 1). He was one of the learned and prominent religious teachers of his day, from the same *tariqa* and from the same Shanshiye lineage

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<sup>539</sup> Sufism, as we have seen, lays stress on the religious genealogies of saints and the transmission of blessing through earlier *awliye* of the *tariqa*, and is comprehensively discussed in the Somali context by Lewis in *Saints...* 1998:9-10 and *passim*.

...a blessed boy will be born of the al-Shashy who will come from the family of the father Amiin Imanka, and will be widely known in the Islamic countries

Abba was not born until 1355AH, some thirty-three years after Sheikh Sufi's death in 1322AH (1904CE). The *manaqib* tells us (paragraph 1) of auspicious happenings surrounding his birth:

...the city of Mogadishu was lighted up with his beam, and the air was fragrant with the scent of his coming. There were celebrations among his kinsmen, and the sheikhs of Mogadishu brought congratulations to his grandfather Sheikh Mohamoud, who gave much charity on that blessed day – more than even was his habit - and thanked God for His good grace.

Such references to perfumed air and glowing of holy places are consonant with what are recurring phenomena in Islamic Sufi traditions. The propitious nature of the event is underlined by the responses of the people who surrounded the newborn, such as acknowledgement of the special event by the sheikhs who came to congratulate his grandfather, and the clamour among the women to nurse and suckle the baby.

We know that Abba was born into a religious family (*viz.* the long line of sheikhs in his personal genealogy), which is described as 'a virtuous house of science and generosity' (paragraph 1). When he was only five years old his father died, and so his grandfather Sheikh Mohamoud oversaw his upbringing, and became a central figure in his childhood. We are given the impression of a very close bond between the two, and an affectionate image is sketched of the grandfather and grandson being hardly ever apart, with Sheikh Mohamoud holding the boy by the hand and taking him with him wherever he went 'teaching him by example and nurturing his spirituality' (paragraph 3).

Of Abba's early years, his grandfather Sheikh Mohamoud looms large as a figure of example. With the early death of Abba's father, Sheikh Mohamoud took charge of his

education, training him in ‘the principles of astrology, theology, medicine, history and heredity’ (paragraph 2). It was during these early years that the boy Mohamed acquired the nickname ‘Abba’, ‘the Father of everyone’, and what started as a term of endearment was to stay with him the rest of his life, and in the words of the hagiographer, was to fulfil itself in later years. As a learned member of the local *'ulama* Sheikh Mohamoud would of course know from whom his grandson could obtain the best quality of tutoring, and arranged for his more advanced learning in the Koran to be with different specialist fellow-sheikhs of the community. Under their tutelage he seemed to have been a model student, and Abba’s ‘exceptional virtue’ we are told, ‘was recognised by his teachers’. Training by his grandfather continued in the art of traditional healing and divination, skills for which Sheikh Mohamoud was well known and which were ‘inherited from his fathers up to the fourteenth’ (paragraph 3). Abba ‘began to treat people [‘s illnesses] the same way as his grandfather’, and it was in relation to these skills that Abba was to demonstrate early on his own mystical inclinations. An incident is related at paragraph 3 of the *manaqib* of how he effected a cure to someone whilst substituting for his sick grandfather. One day one of the sons of Sheikh Mahmud who was suffering some insanity was brought to Sheikh Mohamoud to be treated, but the latter was ill at the time and recovering from a fall. When the sick man’s companions took him home again without having been treated, the patient’s father asked ‘But wasn’t the grandson Abba there?’ ‘Yes’, they said, ‘but he’s only a child.’ The father told them to go back to the boy, and bring some of the water that he used for washing the earthenware dish, even if no verses of Koran were written there<sup>540</sup> – ‘for he has his grandfather’s gifts’. They did so, and the patient was cured.

The traditional specialisation in healing arts is a recurring theme in the lineage’s tradition, starting with the ancestor Sheikh Amiin Imanka three or four centuries earlier (noted in the above section). In the past, of course, and before the arrival of Westernized medicine, use of herbal and traditional cures, drawing on a body of accumulated knowledge over many centuries, were the norm in many societies, and among Somalis the sheikh was traditionally the keeper of such science and knowledge.<sup>541</sup> Some elements of this knowledge were gained from Islamic written sources. Predictions and

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<sup>540</sup> The reference is to ‘holy water’ (*tahlil*) which may be blessed by the ink from a Koranic text or prayers; it is drunk or sprinkled as a blessing, to cure sickness, protect crops, etc.

<sup>541</sup> Diriye 2001:60.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

divinations (*faal*) using knowledge of stellar constellations and the lunar and solar calendars also have a long tradition among Somalis, and not only by sheikhs.<sup>543</sup>

Following an auspicious start in childhood, Sheikh Abba, like his grandfather before him, was eventually to become renowned for his ability to heal. The post-1991 civil war period in Somalia made heavy demands on the Sheikh to minister to kinsmen and others who had suffered psychological trauma.<sup>544</sup> A surviving son of Sheikh Abba, Aw 'Abdurahman,<sup>545</sup> continues the tradition, as was evidenced by the large number of people waiting to see him on the two occasions in London in 2009 when I met with him.<sup>546</sup> The scenes at the house were reminiscent of when I had gone to meet his father a few years earlier. Rooms had been set aside for the 'requesters' and well wishers,<sup>547</sup> with comfortable seating, colourful floor rugs and curtained doorways, all shoes left in the hallway outside. Hospitality was never grudging, and it was customary for flasks of sweet spiced tea and homemade cakes and biscuits for which the Reer Xamar are famous, to be available for waiting guests. A large proportion of the people coming to discuss their issues were women, and the steady stream would typically last from 10am to sundown.

Before reaching adolescence and before he had completed his early Koranic training, Abba's grandfather died. It was not the first time he had lost someone close to him, but the special place that Sheikh Mohamoud had occupied in the boy's life, made his passing the more painful. His mother now comes more sharply into focus as a source of support, encouraging him out of his misery and in the continuation of his studies (*manaqib* paragraph 2). His mother was Faduma Mahamed 'Abdi, also from the Shanshiye lineage,<sup>548</sup> and is remembered as being an accomplished poet. It is said that she composed many *amaan* (praise songs) to her son in the Somali language. I have not

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<sup>543</sup> Galaal 1970. (a), 1970 (b). The author was a Somali folklorist who collaborated with a number of western scholars on Somali poetry and folk literature in the last century. Some of his work is in mimeograph form and only found in private collections.

<sup>544</sup> Testimony from interviews of Reer Xamar who have been exiled since the civil war (see later).

<sup>545</sup> The Reer Xamar who were present frequently referred to him as 'Aw', a respectful way of addressing someone.

<sup>546</sup> Since his father's death, though he has not assumed his father's leadership role in religious matters, Aw he continues the counselling and therapy for which his father was famous. (Appendix \_ notes from interviews).

<sup>547</sup> Well-wishers included religious leaders from other local East London Muslim communities.

<sup>548</sup> Information on his mother and children I have collected from various family members.



collected any of her poetry, but she is credited with the two lines of rhyme below,<sup>549</sup> and which expresses something of her son's religious precociousness.

*Jaro ma dheelow, Jeega xiir ka goostow,*

*Ka jiriyee Jaamacda aas jiraa.*

He does not play *jar* [Somali checkers], He does not cut his hair at the nape  
[following current fashion]

You may seek him out at the Jaama' Mosque.

There is the strongly held belief among Somalis that the holiness that surrounds a person of religion is recognisable early in life. Among the nomads, for example, there is a saying that if the thorn of an acacia tree grabs the cloth of such an *arday* (student) as he passes by, the impious tree will shortly wither and die.<sup>550</sup>

The whole of Abba's theological training was completed in Muqdisho - just as was that of his illustrious forebear, Sheikh 'Abdurahman Sufi (paragraph 5). The point is not lost that Muqdisho was and remained an important seat of Islamic learning in East Africa.<sup>551</sup> From the *manaqib* of the famed nineteenth-century Shaikh Zayla'i, we learned that Muqdisho was renowned for the learning of its scholars,<sup>552</sup> and clearly maintained that status well into the twentieth century. Here it was possible to study the range of valued intellectual activities developed by Arab and other Middle Eastern scholars in the first centuries of Islam.<sup>553</sup> Foremost among these sciences were theology, tradition, jurisprudence, philology and linguistics, and in the practical sciences, medicine,

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<sup>549</sup> Recited by her grandson at one of our meetings.

<sup>550</sup> Diriye 2001:61.

<sup>551</sup> This was true also of at least one other town of the Banaadir, that of Baraawe. Reese lists over fifty 'townsmen' who were prominent Qadiriyya religious leaders at the time of Sheikh Aweys Mohamed al-Baraawe three or four decades earlier than Abba (Reese 2008:223-5) .

<sup>552</sup> Martin 1992:15.

<sup>553</sup> Hitti 2002: Ch. 27 (363ff).

astronomy, alchemy and mathematics - and then the science par excellence, the Hadith, consisting of the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad, and from which the pious Muslim can find answers to issues political, religious or sociological.<sup>554</sup>

Abba was able to attend classes by what seems like an overabundance of learned men of the local *'ulama*, from whom he was introduced to the classic texts in Arabic and tutored in the standard subjects listed above. The hagiography lists many of his teachers from this period, and for some, their particular specialisation (see Appendix I (iii) ) Among the classic texts that he studied were the work of the Arab geographer Yaqut, the history and philosophy of Al Khaldun and for theological and linguistic study, al-Bukhari.

In the preparation of Abba towards a life of religious devotion and the fulfilment of expectations of one marked out as extraordinarily favoured of God, as signalled both before and at his birth, much is owed to the dedication of his grandfather, who took charge of his nurturing and education in the early years, laid the groundwork for his later learning, and provided him with a role model for a life of service and devotion. Even as a boy, we are told, Abba became accustomed to the all night prayer sessions that the religious sheikhs engaged in on a regular basis and which are a feature of Sufi mystic emotionalism.

In his personal life, he was married to a girl from the same Shanshiye lineage, named Bibi Isman Addow, with whom he had seven children, three boys and four girls. Of his three sons, two predeceased him, including the eldest who according to people who knew him, had been most likely to pursue a life of religious devotion. His surviving son is sought out as a practitioner of traditional medicine, but Sheikh Abba's *tariqa* successor is still to come.

**FULFILMENT OF DESTINY.** With the training he had received and the knowledge he had acquired, and consonant with Qadiriyya tradition as a teaching order, Abba's course was set for his life as a religious scholar and theologian. His mosque was the Awooto

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid., p 392-3.

Eeday in Xamar Weyne, where he succeeded his mentor and kinsman Sheikh ‘Abdul Majeed Sheikh Mohammad Sheikh Sufi to the position of leading cleric, and from where he was to carry out most of his pastoral work. The combination of what his hagiographer refers to as ‘inherited knowledge’ (presumably the knowledge of traditional medicine for which his family had acquired a reputation), his taught knowledge, and his continued devotion throughout his life to the pursuit of learning, had each contributed in various proportions to his effectiveness and eminence among his people.

The compiler of the Sheikh’s life speaks of this *manaqib* document as a brief summary, with the promise of a detailed book about what there is to tell, still to come (penultimate paragraph). But even with this sketch, a comprehensive framework can be constructed for Abba’s role and contribution to the community’s religious and social wellbeing, along with a sense of the surrounding historical events. Although, as earlier discussed, material in this genre may be judged to be more parable than fact, the more so if the material is collected some time after the subject’s death, in the case of this account, the material was compiled and written during Sheikh Abba’s own lifetime and available for scrutiny by contemporaries. It may hence be considered to provide a fairly accurate benchmark against which the promised or any later biographical material may be compared.

Teaching and a commitment to learning as a central theme of his ministry are clearly demonstrated in the account. He established a Koranic school attached to his beloved Awoto Eeday mosque, where the pupils were girls as well as boys. The ultimate popularity and success of the school may be seen in a collection of photographs from the award ceremony of 2008 (appended).<sup>555</sup> It has been a feature of Sufism since the earliest founders for influential sheikhs to attract to themselves a circle of disciples and followers, in the manner of a theological seminary, with new converts and students at various stages along the path of religious learning. A record of this aspect of Abba’s

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<sup>555</sup> An award ceremony at the end of Ramadan 2008, shortly after the Sheikh’s death, was posted on the Markacadeey website Pictures of the young pupils and graduates, their prizes for excellence, and some of their teachers (sheikhs of the *tariqa*), as well as the camera shots providing a tour around the school, with its polished woodwork and bright chandelier lighting, capture an occasion that was clearly a homage to the lately-deceased Sheikh. The pictures form Annex II ii and can be found in the rear pocket..

work is not neglected in the biographical account, which speaks of the *tariqa* under his leadership as having produced an array of teachers, librarians and cataloguers of historical documents (paragraph 8). A supporting pillar for the acquisition of knowledge, and an ongoing activity to which he also devoted his energy, was the preservation of old manuscripts, mainly the compositions of his predecessors, and the financing of their publication. These manuscripts as far as I have been able to ascertain were published at printing presses in the Arab world,<sup>556</sup> there being no functioning local printing presses for at least two decades, inevitably adding to the financial burden and constraints. The estimated number of similar unpublished manuscripts to which he was custodian is quoted as being in excess of three thousand, which would represent a massive archive of heritage material. In consideration of the ongoing civil war and attendant threat to their loss, concern must be expressed for the safekeeping, preservation and cataloguing of such an archive. Sheikh Abba himself had a particular interest in history, and a manuscript of his still-unpublished history of Somalia is contained among such papers.<sup>557</sup>

Awoote Eeday mosque, near his house in Xamar Weyne, is where Sheikh Abba spent much of his day, for prayer and teaching, and being available to talk with people. References to his teaching regime, his converts, his work on reforms in social behaviour, introduction of a strict regime of regular weekly prayer meetings and setting goals for Koranic learning such as the tradition of *hifaz* (memorisation of the complete Koran), retreats and meditation (paragraph 8), are all suggestive of a period of religious renaissance and community renewal under his leadership. In regard to the disciplines the Sheikh introduced around principles of conduct and rectitude (paragraph 8) the implication is that religious observance had become lax. In carrying on the *tariqa* traditions of his predecessors, we are told he was engaged in ‘preserving old customs, and reforming others’.<sup>558</sup> He is credited, for example, with reforming the enactment of some traditional festivals (expressed as ‘fun that Xamaris used to have’), and ridding

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<sup>556</sup> During the period 2005-8 when I was compiling this research, I was made aware of his visits to Saudi Arabia and to Yemen, where he had gone to publish books, among other things.

<sup>557</sup> Correspondence with PR9, March 2006, and conversation with 'Abdirahman Mahamed Ahmed 31/01/2009.

<sup>558</sup> Nawrooz is mentioned. This is the name (though Somalis say ‘Nayroos’) often used by Banaadiris for the festival known throughout Somalia as *dabshid*, ‘light-fire’, and occurring in early August (Cerulli 1957:220; Muusa Galaal 1968:45ff). Nawrooz is derived from the Persian, though in Iran it is a spring festival.

them of vulgarity that had crept into the celebrations. They were replaced, we are told, ‘with loud glorifications in the streets of Xamar Weyne’. Details as to what these vulgarities were are not stated, nor, precisely, the phase when reforms were implemented. However, we know that for the period of most of his adult life we are dealing with the second half of the twentieth century.

The profound ideological transformations that were taking place in Somalia at this time, from an old world to a new world view, which reached into virtually every community, must inevitably be considered as context for the Sheikh’s reforms. Demographic, economic, and intellectual changes were taking place, first during the period of an emergent independent Republic in the 1960s where many foreign influences were coming into play, and again as the nation experimented with ‘scientific socialism’<sup>559</sup> a decade later. It would not be surprising if such significant turning points in society produced increasing tensions, as more flexible and younger members experimented with new lifestyles and world views, and powerful political elites created cultural confusion with the imposition of systems that may have seemed to undermine the basic faith. Equally, in such circumstances, and whether from a state of anxiety over the unsettling changes affecting society, religious revivals and an effort to call the community back to traditional ways of life that were inevitably fading, may have been felt by the pious as necessary for the culture to survive the traumas.

From personal recollections of the early years of independence in the 1960s and into the 1970s the tension between the socially liberal and the religious conservatives at least in the capital where I lived, were palpable, and came into sharp focus on issues such as wearing of Western style dress, parties and dancing at Lido night club, and the popularity of a type of explicit mixed-sex dance routine that formed part of the entertainment of the national theatre group. Epitomising religious tensions was the public execution by firing squad in Muqdisho in January 1975 of ten sheikhs who had spoken out and involved in public protests against new ‘liberal’ social legislation on Family Law that they considered to be in conflict with Islamic teaching.

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<sup>559</sup> Scientific Socialism, based on Marx and Engels’ Soviet model of state control was adopted by the Siad Barre regime following a military *coup d’etat* in 1969, and led to a complete restructuring of the society.

If reform and revitalisation of the *tariqa* were the main concerns of his earlier decades, and important though these may have been, what was to become a significant aspect of Sheikh Abba's life and for which he may eventually be best remembered was acquired in the seventeen years from 1991 up to his death. These were years of turmoil and civil war in Somalia (still unresolved at the time of writing), when an enormous weight of responsibility for his community was thrust upon him.

As we have seen from previous chapters, the Banaadiri urbanites comprise a discrete community which is unarmed and with weak lineage connections to the dominant clan groupings. As such, they presented an easy target for abuse and humiliation by members of the powerful warring factions struggling for supremacy. In Muqdisho in particular, armed militia bands loyal to the various warlords and acting outside of any rules of law targeted vulnerable minorities and politically weak sections of society.<sup>560</sup>

In the post-1991 civil war period in Somalia Sheikh Abba became the first recourse for advice and protection for many Reer Xamar families. The heavy demands on the Sheikh during this period, to minister to kinsmen and others who had suffered physical and psychological trauma<sup>561</sup> are clearly referred to by the biographer (paragraph 10) when he says:

... many people resorted to him seeking protection in the civil war time. He welcomed them in his house ... fed them all without discriminating ... although [himself] destitute and cramped.

He presided over and maintained a crowded house, feeding people and providing material assistance,

... helping the needy ones, resolving the disputes, treating the ill and aiding the weak ones.' (paragraph 7.)

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<sup>560</sup> Cassanelli 1993.

<sup>561</sup> Attested to in testimony of Reer Xamar interviewees exiled since the civil war and seeking asylum. Many rape victims have spoken of being taken by mothers to the Sheikh for prayer and counsel; others, individual young men who had been abducted, tell of the Sheikh as having helped to raise ransom money and negotiate their release. See next chapter.

Though ethnically from a group that was targeted for persecution by the controlling but uncontrolled majority clans' militias, his standing in his community and his fame as a healer were said to have provided him some personal immunity in the civil war years, as influential warlords and leading members of their factions sought him out for their own needs.

WILDERNESS PERIOD. Assuming the cloak of protector, however, had not come easily. When the Somali civil war erupted in early 1991, Sheikh Abba was in a period in his own life of meditation, and living the life of a recluse, a period of self doubt and of wrestling with his demons.

He was living in great seclusion ... He sometimes passed forty nights awake, and fasted during the day [in his devotion] He used to pray a lot, pass nights reading the Holy Koran, and fasting as the Prophet Daoud.<sup>562</sup> ... He was glorifying Allah ... going every night outside the city to where no one lives except beasts, and performing his prayers there and then coming back before dawn, sad that the morning had brought an end to the pleasure of praying and worshipping.

What I refer to here as Abba's 'wilderness period' is described in some detail (paragraph 1), and interpreted by the hagiographer as having been a necessary phase of preparation for the accomplishing of his 'great work' for which he had been born. It was during this time that the Somali state began to disintegrate, and because of the condition of the moment and (says the biographer) thanks to divine intervention, Sheikh Abba was required to come out of his seclusion. The 'great work' to which the compiler refers is without doubt the role that he was to play in protecting and negotiating the position of his community after the complete breakdown of law and order that had been triggered by the ousting of President Mohamed Siad Barre and his regime.

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<sup>562</sup> This is a reference to the Prophet Daoud [David] who is said to have fasted every other day.

The overarching social circumstance that ensued was a violent and destructive armed struggle among competing clans and clan factions for political dominance, in which the control of Muqdisho was always seen as the big prize.<sup>563</sup> In the chaos of the city, the Reer Xamar, unarmed and politically weak, experienced targeted attacks on their homes, with occupation and theft of property, looting of personal possessions; attacks on persons, with killings, abductions and rape, perpetrated by a combination of lawless bands of armed militias, and opportunist gangs that roamed the city, unchecked and unaccountable.<sup>564</sup>

The endeavours of the Sheikh during this period are recorded: his philanthropic works, his counselling and administering of healing therapies, and the religious teaching ‘that filled his days’:

You see people from everywhere head for him and crowd at his door all day and evening. Some seek his treatment, some beg for his charity, some want him to resolve their dispute with others, and others wish to learn from his knowledge

Perceptible in the narrative, also, is the sense of emergency and urgency of the dilemma of people:

Many people sought his protection. He presided over and maintained a crowded house, feeding people and providing material assistance.

Whilst the significance of his role may seem to be overplayed by the adorational tone of the writing, *viz.*: ‘Supplicants crowd at his door as to a spring of pure water’, the facts are that much of what is suggested here is consonant with accounts that have found a

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<sup>563</sup> See Drysdale’s essay ‘The Fatal Attraction of Mogadishu,’ in Drysdale 2001:vii-xxv.

<sup>564</sup> Information from a range of literature compiled in the context of asylum seekers by international and UK specialist organisations, government departments, NGOs, and from my own work on Somali ethnicity in the period since the 1991 civil war. See especially reports by the Joint British, Danish and Dutch governments (2000), and Amnesty International Annual Reports on Somalia.



place in recent writings,<sup>565</sup> and in testimony that I have listened to from Banadiri people who are now part of the Somali diaspora.<sup>566</sup> The information available from these sources confirms his interventions, both on the part of individuals from the community, and politically in attempting to promote dialogue between factions in the civil war. Regarding his engagement with national issues, and his standing in wider circles, and despite the primary religious purpose of the *manaqib*, we are nevertheless informed that his opinion and advice were sought by representatives of a more secular world, both local and foreign (paragraph 11). His standing among the leadership of the powerful local warring clan factions may perhaps be illustrated by an incident in 2006 when he was kidnapped in Muqdisho by a zealous militia band who no doubt thought they might be able to extract a handsome reward for his release – but whose bosses ordered the Sheikh’s immediate release when his capture was brought to their notice.<sup>567</sup> Other anecdotal information suggests that his reputation as a healer had been an insurance against his personal safety and hence his ability to be a protective shield, in that leaders of the majority clans have sought his treatments, and his standing as a leadership figure had brought leaders of warring factions to seek him out on wider issues.

Whilst many people, from all clans, with means to do so, fled the country in these years, Sheikh Abba remained living in Muqdisho to the great relief of the Reer Xamar community. Though he made frequent trips abroad, for purposes of performing the *hajj* pilgrimage for example, or to attend Islamic council meetings in other Muslim countries, and to seek charitable donations for the ongoing community support work that was required back home, he was always under immense pressure to return quickly, and the people would say ‘we don’t feel safe when he is away’.<sup>568</sup> In like vein, his biographer says:

I believe that if he had travelled and resorted to where others did, a lot of people would have starved, as his staying home at the summit of the crisis had a great advantage and public benefit.

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<sup>565</sup> Some relevant texts and publications are cited in the next/concluding chapter.

<sup>566</sup> Information acquired largely from interviewing over one hundred red asylum seekers from Somalia since 2002 in the context of providing expert opinion for use in court hearings.

<sup>567</sup> Communicated to me orally at the time.

<sup>568</sup> Quoting from comments by interviewees.

The evidence is that this Sheikh had been among the leaders, and arguably the leading one of Reer Xamar elders and religious teacher in Muqdisho throughout his active life until his recent death, a respected religious scholar, a man who was looked to for advice when people were in difficulties, and a charismatic figure with a large following and influence that reached well beyond his immediate community, and one who sacrificed personal safety and comfort in the interests of public service. [In my own personal contacts with Sheikh Abba I became aware of his particular interest in history, and he was helpful in referring me to useful sources for my own research. I am aware of the existence of his own still-unpublished history of Somalia, referred to earlier.]

Sheikhs such as Abba are, in the Somali social order, also elders of the community, and responsible for the group's own internal affairs, and for regulating the relations of their own group with other groups, as is evidenced in this example of a life. Integral to these functions is the necessity and ability of elders of the group to adapt traditional norms to new situations.<sup>569</sup> Probably at no time in the recent past has this duty on the part of Reer Xamar elders been more severely tested than in the past two decades, but the role is absolutely consistent with normal conventions. And the degree to which the sheikhs and *malakhs* are able to cope with evolving demands may be the single most critical factor in either the survival or demise of their community integrity.

### **3. *Awliya* of the Banaadir Tariqas (Turuq)**

Whilst the existence of the *turuq* as a feature of the religious landscape of Somalia is frequently addressed in the academic literature, as yet, many of the local Somali religious leaders of their time are little known. Among the notable exceptions are Seyid Mahamed 'Abdilla Hasan of the Salihiyya brotherhood and Sheikh 'Aweys Mahamed al-Baraawe of the Qadiriyya Order, who were contemporaries and leaders of their respective (and opposing) brotherhoods in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both have received mention already in this study, and are well established in the literature. The names of a handful of others of differing origins but who left their mark among Somalis down the centuries, such as Sharif Yuusuf Aw Barkhadle, Sheikh Muumin and Sheikh Husein Walamoge have become known through the writings of

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<sup>569</sup> See Lewis 1994: 98.

several scholars of the past century.<sup>570</sup> More recently the work of Scott Reese on the Asharaf of the Banaadir, and Alessandro Gori's studies of hitherto unexamined hagiographic material on the Seyid, Sheikh Isaaq, and new sources on the biography of Sheikh 'Ali Maye al-Duruqbo of Marka have immeasurably increased the available material on Somali religious leaders. Of the vast majority of the vast number of Banaadiri *awliya*, however, written documents, if they exist, have as yet not reached the public domain. The chart that appears as Figure 7 lists over thirty sheikhs and *awliya* of the Banaadiri. It containing scraps of information gathered mainly from oral sources, from kinfolk of the ancestors being spoken of. In some instances corroboration amplification is needed, but what is clear is that the Banaadiri in diaspora, especially of an older generation, are carrying with them a great deal of information in need of capture, and everybody, whatever age, will know of his or her 'own sheikh(s)'. Even though the list at Fig.8 is only partial, it may be met with some surprise that there are so many *awliya* of the Banaadir. devout If the number of shrines that are held in reverence is an indication of religious obedience, the number of religious settlements that appeared to exist in the early twentieth century in the coastal hinterland and beyond may be seen to reflect the significance of the urban '*ulama* in taking religion to the interior, Some of the more prominent Banaadiri *awliya* are briefly sketched below.

SHEIKH AWEYS AHMED AL- BARAAWE (1847-1909). This sheikh was from humble background and from the Tunni clan. Most references to Sheikh Aweys (or 'Uweys) in the academic literature speak of him as coming from the Tunni of the hinterland, even the Tunni Torre;<sup>571</sup> however, according to Said Samatar, who is the only Somali scholar to have written extensively (if somewhat equivocally) about this sheikh,<sup>572</sup> says Aweys 'seems to have belonged to an urban, well-to-do family' (Samatar 1992:52). He studied under the religious elite of Baraawe, then was encouraged by Sheikh Sufi of Muqdisho to travel to Baghdad for study (1870). On his return to the Banaadir in 1882 and until his death in 1909 was extremely active in missionary work, gaining converts throughout southern Somalia and the East phenomenon African coast to Tanzania. This charismatic sheikh attracted many

<sup>570</sup> Cerulli (1923 and 38), I.M. Lewis (especially in *Saints and Somalis* 1998) and Andrzejewski (1974 and 1975).

<sup>571</sup> There are two main communities of Tunni – agriculturalists and postoralists living in the hinterland behind the southern Benadir coast, and those urbanised Tunni who are from Brava. The Tunni Torre is a third group composed of people of Bantu origin, possibly ex-slaves and/or former clients of other Tunni groups.

<sup>572</sup> Samatar 1992: Chapter 3.

followers and converts to the Qadirite way, and to what became known as the 'Uweysiyya branch of the Qadiriyya. He established two *jama'a*: an agricultural settlement 50 km inland from Muqdisho, which he named Beled Amiin ('Town of Peace'), and a retreat at Biyooley, in the southwest of Somalia near the Ethiopian border, where he is buried. His shrine was one of the first to be destroyed by militant al-Shabaab insurgents in December 2008.<sup>573</sup> During his lifetime, his success in attracting disciples to the Qadiriyya Brotherhood, and his brand of Sufism brought him into conflict with the leader of the Salihyye *tariqa* in northern Somalia, Sayiid Mohamed 'Abdille Hasan.<sup>574</sup> Their bitter conflict was played out in the exchange of vitriolic poetic compositions, but ended with the assassination of Aweys at his retreat in Biyooley by followers of the Salihyye Sheikh. His shrine at Biyooley 'is the scene of a great yearly "mulid" ['anniversary celebration', though this word is only used among Somalis for the celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday] which lasts for three days.' (Trimingham 1965:241) He was a prolific author of learned mystical treatises, and is now venerated as probably the most important saint in southern Somalia (Samatar 1992:12,15). He was a freedman of the Tunni tribe born in Brava, and did much to spread Islam in the interior (Trimingham 1965: 241). One of his miracles concerning Muqdisho and purportedly ridding it of immoral practices is described by Reese (2008:113-4). A brief discussion on the 'Uweysiyye in southern Somalia and East Africa is in G B Martin's, *Muslim Brotherhoods* (1976:156-176).

Further reading:        Trimingham  
                                       Samatar  
                                       Martin  
                                       Ahmed

**SHEIKH SUFI: SHEIKH 'ABDURAHMAN SHEIKH 'ABDULLAHI AL-SHAASHY** (B. 1829 [1254AH] D.1905). Sheikh Sufi was from the Reer Xamar –Shanshiye lineage, and the Qadiriyya *tariqa*. Sheikh Sufi is buried in the cemetery in Mogadishu that bears his name, also the mosque beside his tomb. When I lived in the Sheikh Sufi neighbourhood (1975-89) it was the favored mosque and burial site by Reer Xamar families for their deceased. Some attention to the life of Sheikh Sufi can be found in the

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<sup>573</sup> Reported on several internet news networks 29/12/2008. Downloaded from <http://clipmarks.com/clipmark/89BD9BF0-B399-4254-8805=13117B65A4FC/>

<sup>574</sup> The Seyid waged *jihad* against infidels – namely the British - but also against Somali Muslims who refused to join his cause.

work of Andrejewski (1974:15-54). A prominent member of the Muqdisho *'ulama* during his lifetime, and one of those under whom Sheikh Zayla'i studied (Martin 1992) Is credited with having encouraged Sheikh Aweys to travel to Baghdad and apprentice himself to the leading clerics of the day. Sheikh Sufi's genealogy is reproduced in Reese (2008:232).

Further reading:     Andrzejewski  
                           Martin  
                           Reese

AW FAQI ABOOR . The most celebrated of the Reer Faqi ancestors. His story, recounted in chapter 3, is the stuff of legend, and many versions are told, though the spirit of the story is consistent of his odd actions to ward off foreign aggression, His dates are uncertain, but since his actions are linked to the Protugese, presence which effectively came to an end with their evacuation of Mombasa in 1729, and a last failed attempt to retake the town in 1769, we are probably looking at a date not later than the early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century for Faqi Aboor.

References;     Oral sources  
                           Cerulli

SHEIKH AHMED HAAJI. Frequently-named ancestor *weli* of the Bandhawow, buried at Warabaale<sup>575</sup> on the way to Afgooye, about 16km from Muqdisho. The time of the pilgrimage is the 12th day of the month of Soonfur (after Ramadan), However, I have also been given this date for the *siyaaro* of another *weli*.

References:     Oral sources .

AWLIYA OF THE ASHARAF. The Asharaf lineage and sub-lineages seem to have more remembered ancestors than any other Banaadiri group. Prominent among them are: Sharif Aydaruus, Sharif. Osman Hassan (Aw-Osman), SheikhSharif Shinyaalow, Sheikh Sharif Nadir and Sheikh Sharif Khaliif al-'Alawi al Nadiri, to name but few. One of Aw Osman's distinctions is that the town of Marka where he is buried is

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<sup>575</sup> Name according to Luling (correspondence 4/11/05), who says: 'I have a slide of his shrine - dating from 1966'. Khalid Maou says he wrote a book.

affectionately known among the Banaadiri as *Markacadeey*, *Minin Aw Osman* (Beautiful Marka, home of Aw Osman); in the case of Aw Osman's *siyaaro* this is enacted in two parts– the 'high' and the 'low' which are several days apart.<sup>576</sup> Sheikh 'Aydarus's shrine in Mogadishu is located in the Shibis district, at a place called *Maxafal*, where the Prophet's birthday celebration (*mowliid*) is held each year, and overseen by the Asharaf clan. The site is important as the venue for this celebration because it is a place where the Prophet's 'light' is said to have appeared.

Further reading: 'Aydarus  
Reese

SHEIKH 'ALI MAYE AL-DURUQBO. He was *tariqa* sheikh of the Ahmadiyya, buried in Marka. References to his teaching, his *tariqa*, and his influence are referred to earlier in this chapter. See earlier in this chapter. His life story, an autobiography that was collected by the Italian scholar Cerulli in the early part of the twentieth century, and lodged in Italian government archives, has been freshly studied and analysed by Alessandro Gori from a new generation of Italian scholars.

Further reading: Trimingham  
Cerulli  
Cassanelli  
Gori

There is clearly much more work to be done towards a systematic documentation of the lives of *awliya* in the story of Somali society, not just because they are of interest in themselves, but in how they echo evolving conditions and provide a response to contemporary exigencies and demands.

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<sup>576</sup> IN10, (a descendent of this *weli*)

In drawing this chapter on religion to a close, it is evident that without attention to the Islamic dimension in the Banaadiri social structure, a large part of the life of the community would be incomprehensible at least, and incomplete at best.

On the subject of hagiographies in the Somali tradition, it is not clear when these began to appear in written form. Gori and Reese seem to date this to the late nineteenth century and the period when such sheikhs as 'Ali Maye, Sheikh Aweys, Sheikh Sufi, Seyid Mahamed 'Abdille Hassan were all actively engaged in promoting the different orders in what might be termed a period of religious renaissance and renewal through the teaching of the Sufist mystical philosophies. On written literature in general, Lewis says: 'Despite [the Somalis'] long Islamic history ... as far as is at present known, most of the local religious literature is of comparatively recent origin; and little seems to have been produced, or if produced, to have survived from before the nineteenth century. Such Arabic manuscripts and a few published works written by Somali sheikhs usually take the form of hagiologies.'<sup>577</sup> Even the documents cited by Gori regarding the founding clan ancestor Sheikh Isaaq were written only relatively recently. Given the long established oral component of the nomadic tradition, however, it is not impossible that Sheikh Isaaq's *manaqib* and related narratives were part of oral literary tradition for many centuries before that. In the urban tradition, in contrast, Arabic has been in use in the Banaadir towns for over six centuries, and there seems no reason to discount the probably of hagiographic literature existing prior to the documents of more recent provenance.

Of Somali literature in Arabic, most consists of manuscripts, a small proportion has appeared in printed books and pamphlets, and more information concerning this literature can be found in Cerulli (1957), Andrzejewski (1974 and 1983), Mohamed Haji Mukhtar (1987), Alawi Ali Adan (1992), Martin (1976 and 1992) and Said Samatar (1992). The Banaadiri archive referred to in the above commentary merits further attention.

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<sup>577</sup> Lewis, *Saints...* 1998:47. A collection of Somali Islamic literature was documented by Lewis and Andrzejewski between 1955 and 1957, and copies deposited 'in appropriate libraries' some time later (1997 at LSE).

## Chapter 5

### Period of Civil Strife post-1991

*In situations of social conflict individuals manipulate for their own advantage.*

Barfield 1007:436.

Much social change and upheaval is taking place in Somalia and among Somalis in diaspora as a result of a civil war that began in January 1991 with the overthrow of the twenty-one year old dictatorship of Mohamed Siyad Barre. Some ways in which this event and its aftermath have impacted on Banaadiri society have been implicit in earlier discussion. This chapter reflects on some challenges faced by the Banaadiri communities in the two decades since that event which signalled the complete collapse of the Somali state as it had existed since independence from colonial rule in 1960. What ensued (and still continues at the time of writing) was the complete breakdown of law and order, with no functioning government, and with armed factions competing for power. In such a situation, the Banaadiri as an unarmed and politically weak entity in the Somali national tapestry have suffered disproportionately.<sup>578</sup> They have been subjected to physical attacks from dominant and so-called secularist clan factions, and from assaults on their cultural identity from various conservative Islamic religious factions.

#### **The concept of one nation is challenged**

Before the civil war, Somalia had acquired a reputation of being almost unique in Africa, as a country united around one religion, one language, one culture and one set of traditions. Somalis had for over a century been celebrated by outsiders - explorers, politicians and other worthies<sup>579</sup> - for their egalitarian character, with foreigners and Somalis alike using colourful descriptions such as: 'every man his own sultan', 'a pastoral democracy', and 'a nation of republicans'. In post-independence decades the country's leaders, politicians and diplomats nurtured and promoted this image in

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<sup>578</sup> Cassanelli 1993; British, Danish and Dutch Governments' Joint Fact Finding Mission report 2000; Perouse de Montclos. 1997.

<sup>579</sup> Burton in 1884, and Lord Lytton in 1966.



international circles (in the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity now called African Union, the Arab League and the now-defunct Non-Aligned Movement) as the country made its way as a modern state in a larger world. One of the underlying tenets of the new Republic in 1960, and symbolised by the five-point star on the national flag, was to unite all Somalis – separated by colonially-imposed boundaries in five different countries, and by colonial patronage of one clan over another (commonly categorised as the colonial policy of ‘divide and rule’) – under one flag. This compelling picture, became the benchmark both for presenting Somali society to the outside from within and for understanding Somali society from without. The situation in reality was considerably more nuanced, and the claimed egalitarianism had resonance only in some specifically defined contexts such as among the nomadic clan-families who represent but one swathe, albeit an important swathe, of the national fabric. This idealised picture of society began to unravel as the state collapsed into chaos, disfunctionality, and warring factionalism, which followed the ousting of the ruling dictatorship. The war drove most clans to close ranks against “outsiders”, with ties of blood through paternal descent lines being the primary markers of identity and loyalty. A remark from one of my Asharaf interviewees from Baydhabo, and which must surely have been the experience of others, was:

*People we’d lived amongst in harmony for always [in this instance Rahanweyn clans] and had been part of the community, turned against us [Reer Xamar families] when tribal conflicts erupted after the civil war. This was one of our [her group’s] biggest surprises.*<sup>580</sup>

With the collapse of law and order and the absence of state institutions to protect individual rights, it was only the collective strength of the clan that could ensure an individual any protection from attacks on persons and on property. As part of this process of the unravelling of the state, there arose the terms ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ as ways for defining the politically strong and the politically weak groups. A widely used working definition for this categorisation for reporting the civil war was constructed by

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<sup>580</sup> IN13.

Cassanelli, as quoted in the Preface at page 7. By that definition, Banaadiri were clearly a minority group, and found themselves targeted.

### **Maltreatment, Displacement and Exile**

It is impossible to ignore the rips in society and the immense suffering of the Somali people from all sections and all affiliations as a result of the civil war. But the following focus is mainly with respect to the changing fortunes and challenges faced in that context by the people who are the subject of my study.

Regarding physical attacks on civilians, the extent of human rights abuses against Banaadiri communities has been unequivocally established in reports by United Nations specialist agencies, international human rights organisations, and in Western governments' asylum-related literature.<sup>581</sup> The list of violations is long: looting and occupation of property, physical violence including rape and murder; in the case of young men in particular, abduction for forced labour and conscription to clan-based militias; and use of other controlling mechanisms such as extortion and 'protection' rackets by gang leaders; and economic exclusion. Economic exclusion has been one of many serious socio-economic problems facing unarmed and politically weak social groups, and it has been an additional weapon of human rights abuse and subjugation of minority clan members since the collapse of the Somali state. All economic sources such as the seaport, airport and commercial activities are controlled by whichever clan - Habr Gedir, Marehan, Abgal, etc – is dominant in a particular area. Those who do not belong to the controlling group work only as underpaid servants if they work at all.

Illustrative of such abuses is the following extract from an essay in a collection of conference papers concerning the Banaadiri experience. The essay gives a voice to Banaadiri themselves, and is by a young student, Roweda Salim, who is herself from that community but has grown up with her exiled family in North America. She interviewed Banaadiri men and women in diaspora who had fled the civil war in

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<sup>581</sup> Such sources include UNHCR and OCHA; Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch; UK Home Office Country Guidance Reports for use in assessing asylum claims; JFFMR 2000.

Somalia. Her subjects had been victims of the civil war, and all wished to remain anonymous, but their accounts are no less compelling...

They were still scared of the perpetrators who were half way across the world who could no longer hurt them. Every person I talked to told me that [they knew of] at least five other people who had been directly harmed physically and emotionally.

...I talked to a group of women from the neighbourhood of Sheikh Sufi [this is a Reer Xamar neighbourhood of Muqdisho] who had been directly and indirectly victimised during the civil war. For over two hours they told me of their experiences and the acts of violence they had witnessed. They shared with me their stories of countless other victims. However there was an overall general feeling of shame for the women who had been raped and it struck me that that was the shared feeling among the people of our community.

Like the other interviewees, the gentleman in one of my interviews was very adamant about keeping his identity secret. Prior to the interview he was very candid about the terror and pains he and his family sustained. He made it clear that the women and the elderly were especially targeted as they were considered weak. However, when the tape recorder was turned on the interviewee did an about face and began to tell me stories about what had happened [not to him, but] to his relatives. The gentleman became scared, ashamed, and doubtful about doing the interview.

Voicing the horrific acts that his wife and daughters had to face became impossible for him to do. To bring a father to a point where he had to helplessly watch his daughters being violated is a crime in itself. On more than one occasion, when he had to tell a personal story, he would become overwhelmed by his emotions and as if to shake off the pain he would wipe his face with his hands...[in appearance] he reminded me of my father...and he made me realise it

could have been me that these things had happened to and this could have been my father sitting there and telling his story to a group of strangers...

These cases are only the tip of the iceberg... Fathers could not protect their wives and children, women could not keep masked assailants from violating their bodies, their homes, and their family heirlooms.<sup>582</sup>

It is a powerful essay in which the author challenges her community to take a moral stance, urges them to remain steadfast in the pursuit of justice even though that might seem currently unattainable, and in that context, calls attention to the imperative for documentary evidence to be available.

It has also been my own experience of this community, which is characterised by conservative behaviour, that people will wish to preserve anonymity when, for some reason, they need to speak openly about personal matters. Yet the necessity to recount their experiences to strangers has often have been a painful reality as part of the asylum process, and where frequently the norms of one culture are used to make a value judgement on behaviours of another.

I have interviewed more than a hundred persons from Somalia who have fled the turmoil in that country in search of refuge elsewhere. Accounts of daily life and of physical abuses such as those reported on by Ms Salim are unremitting and unimaginable. *Every single day you will face a new problems. You are always caught unaware and they are all unexpected*, said one<sup>583</sup> A woman whose first husband had been killed, and also her second husband (who was a brother of the first),<sup>584</sup> spoke of having witnessed two husbands being killing; a child she had been holding in her arms at the time of one attack was wounded and needing a limb amputated as a result. Four brothers had been killed, the family had been forced to pay ransom money, and after the

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<sup>582</sup> Roweda Salim Maou Haji, 'Human Rights Abuse in Somalia,' in Abbas & Abdulkadir 2020:491-495.

<sup>583</sup> IN8 Male 30-40 yrs

<sup>584</sup> A practice known in Somali as *dumal*, and customary among Somalis and many cultures of the Middle East, whereby a dead man's brother or next of kin has a duty to marry his widow, as it is important that children are raised by the family of their father, from whom clan identity is derived.

last brother-in-law was killed, she and her mother had been left to support the remnants of the family.<sup>585</sup>

For women, loss of close male relatives means loss of heads of household, decision-makers for the nuclear and extended group, and any protection that the family might have been able to rely on.

### **Religious Tensions**

A further issue for Banaadiris to confront since the demise of the unitary state has been the challenges to local Islamic religious practices. In the absence of law and order, Islamic militant groups such as Al Ittihad al Islami<sup>586</sup> were amongst those self-appointed groups who found opportunities to fill the vacuum. Among Banaadiri experiences of Al Ittihad activities has been the suppression of the traditions of ritual visits to saints' shrines since the civil war.<sup>587</sup>

The rise of the religious-based Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and their control of much of the Banaadir coast and inland as far as Jowhar and Baydhabo during 2006 reportedly brought a degree of stability and better security for a period,<sup>588</sup> It was accompanied by a strict interpretation of *shari'a*, forbidding certain Sufi practices, and the Courts' administration closed down cinemas, and commercial enterprises that dealt with entertainment. Before the civil war the Banaadiri had been prominent in the entertainment industry, both in the area of performing arts and in technical production of film and music videos.<sup>589</sup> A potential source of livelihood was hence curtailed since, even if their control of business had been usurped in the civil war, musical talent and technical skills in this industry had been marketable. If actions by the ICU were tantamount to an assault on the particular cultural and religious traditions among

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<sup>585</sup> IN13.

<sup>586</sup> Al Ittihad al Islami had been operating somewhat clandestinely in Somaila well before the civil war. A history of its rise and activities is comprehensively set out in an article by A. Duale Sii'arag, available on the internet at: [http://wardheernews.com/articles/November/13\\_Alittihad\\_Sii'arag.html](http://wardheernews.com/articles/November/13_Alittihad_Sii'arag.html). The site is a portal for serious articles on Somalia and the Horn of Africa. However, since most Somali-managed websites contain an element of 'partisanship', it is useful to keep this in mind when accessing information from these sources.

<sup>587</sup> PR2; IN13; internet news networks.

<sup>588</sup> See Lewis 2008:85-60.

<sup>589</sup> Personal knowledge of studios and artists.

Banaadiri, and on economic survival, worse was still to come. Since 2008 the extremist militant group calling themselves al-Shabaab (meaning ‘Youth’) has become a powerful force in southern Somalia, well armed and operating a Taliban-like militia. This group has been branded a terrorist insurgency by Western governments, and purportedly having links to al-Qaeda. Al-Shabaab has engaged in the desecration and systematic destruction of the shrines of *awliya*, among which has been that of Sheikh Aweys in Biyooley, and who was himself murdered as a result of a wave of religious intolerance one century earlier. The murder of the Banaadiri Sufi leader Sheikh Aweys in 1909 and destruction of his *jama'a* by the leader of a rival *tariqa* who disliked Aweys’s more liberal approach to religion has been noted in the previous chapter.

Instances of aggressive and combative Islam are not infrequent in Somalia, as has been recorded in the literature. They include the conflict between the Bardheere religious settlement and the Geledi Sultanate in the nineteenth century.<sup>590</sup> The subject of Islamic militancy in the history of Somalia is succinctly described in a recent article by a Somali historian Abdirahman Abdullahi (Baadiyow),<sup>591</sup> who reflects on the common traits between al-Shabaab and earlier militancy as being: exclusion of other Islamic groups; assuming for themselves the monopoly of religious legitimacy; an excessive use of violence against other Muslims, and finally the selective application of *shari'a*.<sup>592</sup>

### **Patterns of Dispersal**

In the early days of the civil war when Muqdisho collapsed into chaos, many residents of the city left town in search of safety. The capital city was a cosmopolitan mix of people from all clans. The first instinct was for people to head for the ‘home territory’ of their clan, where they could expect to find relatives, extended family, and clan support. For the Reer Xamar this meant heading for the other Banaadiri towns of the coast, and to the villages of the immediate hinterland such as Afgooye and Awdhegle where they would probably have family who had settled there to trade, and where, as we have seen,

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<sup>590</sup> In Cassanelli (1983).

<sup>591</sup> Abdirahman M. Abdullahi specializes in the history of Islam in the Horn of Africa, and is a Trustee of Muqdisho University.

<sup>592</sup> Abdullahi, 01/02, 2010. As far as I am aware, this article is only available on the internet, but appears on several Somali-run sites. See: [http://www.hiiraan.com/op2/2010/jan/islamic\\_militancy\\_in\\_the\\_history\\_of\\_somalia.aspx](http://www.hiiraan.com/op2/2010/jan/islamic_militancy_in_the_history_of_somalia.aspx).

a history of trade and some marriage ties had developed over centuries. In these early years of the conflict, sometimes families moved back and forth, returning to the city when there seemed to be periods of relative calm, but where some would find that their houses had been squatted, or otherwise appropriated:

*In 1992 and again in 1997 our family moved to Afgooye due to attacks on our house and on family members [IN39].*

In another account, a woman of the Gamedle said her family had moved first to Aw Dhegle from Shingani, then returned to Muqdisho in 1994 after US /UN combined forces who were operating in the country<sup>593</sup> had air-dropped leaflets in the villages and towns of the Lower Shabelle encouraging people to return to the city [IN40].

Another, a young girl of the Baa Fadhal said her family fled from Shingani at the outbreak of war to her grandmother's village of Konton ('Fifty'), a roadside village between Afgooye and Shalambod [IN12].

A young man of the Bandhawow from via Roma in Xamar Weyne told me he had lived in Marka for four years (1992-96) after fleeing attacks on the home in Xamar by militias. He said that in Marka the family had stayed with his maternal aunt who lived there [IN41].

Interestingly, for those venturing overseas in this early period, a favoured destination was Yemen. For many Banaadiri, there was a feeling of affinity with what they believe to be the historic home of some of their ancestors. One such Banaadiri from Marka who escaped to Yemen with his family told me: '*Yemen is a poor country, and we were not so welcome, but we are light skinned, and men can blend in fairly easily.*' He added that women, because they are usually veiled and their lives centering mainly on the home, could be unobtrusive [IN14].

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<sup>593</sup> UNOSOM and Operation Restore Hope initiatives 1992-4, Drusdale 1995 85-6, 156-7.

## Political participation

There is little doubt that members of the major Somali clans ('majorities') have regarded the 'minorities' of the working definition with condescension, even as foreigners - and have felt it unnecessary to incorporate them in any but a token way into the major clan coalitions that have, in name, governed the country since 1991. Cassanelli suggests that such cultural attitudes (however misplaced) 'influenced the conduct of the factional militias (all of which were recruited from the major clans) during their struggle for territorial control of the south after 1991.'<sup>594</sup> Reflecting on the issue of individual rights versus clan rights, other voices argue that the majority/minority clause is a false premise on which to base a solution to the Somali crisis. The argument goes that, in contradiction to the democratic rights of the individual as being supreme, clan rights have been given precedence over individual rights of suffrage, and upheld by those who have been in power since independence and who invoke the questionable majority/minority clause in their own interests.<sup>595</sup>

Perhaps the final outrage for the Banaadiri political class was the allocation of seats in the '4.5 formula' for the composition of the Transitional Federal Parliament of 2004. The 4.5 formula was developed at the last peace conference in Kenya (that began at Eldoret and then relocated to Nairobi) in the early 2000s. It gives equal quotas for representation in government to the four major clans and a half-point to the fifth group, comprised of a cluster of 'minority' clans

The four major clans are considered to consist of the Hawiye, Rahanweyn, Dir and Darod. The remainder of the population, called 'the fifth', encompass a widely disparate collection of 'clans', not only the Banaadiris, but also the many groups of traditionally lower status that are found living with and among the dominant Somali clans, historically as clients, as well as the ethnically distinct 'Bantu' Jareer, and the Bajuni.

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<sup>594</sup> Cassanelli 1995:11.

<sup>595</sup> See letter to the UN Chairman of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Eldoret (Kenya) in February 2003: <http://www.benadir-watch.com/IgadFirstLetterFebruary102003.pdf> .



The Transitional Somali Parliament (still extant as the basis for Somalia's administration) has 275 representatives. Thus each major clan has 61 seats, and 31 seats for the rest to distribute among themselves. It may be academic, and there are no reliable statistics on the different socio-ethnic groups in Somalia, but it is generally accepted that population density per square kilometer for nomadic pastoralists, who range widely over vast tracts of rangeland with their animals, is much lower than can be expected where people are living in urban settlements, or as sedentary cultivators in village clusters.

It is ironic that Banaadiri, who were so prominent in the independence struggle of the nation in the 1940s and 50s have little or no meaningful representation in the politics of Somalia today. Today, post-state collapse, the position of the urban Reer Xamar is seen to be that of a minority in the overall political landscape of Somalia, and of little or no political significance in overall state administration/ Yet during the years of the colonial administration, the Banaadiri people played a formidable role in the formation of the three important national liberation movements in the country, namely the Somali Youth League, the Benadir Youth Union, and the Hizbia Dastur Mustaqbil Somalia. The number of prominent political activists from among the Banaadiri townsmen in the independence struggle was out of all proportion to their national distribution. Four of the thirteen founder members of the first pro-independence political party in Somalia, the Somali Youth Club (SYC) established in 1943 and which later metamorphosed into the Somali Youth League (SYL) and took power at independence in 1960, were Banaadiris, namely: 'Abdulqadir Sakhawuddin, Haji Mahamed Hussen, Mahamed 'Ali Nuur, and Dhere Haji Dhere.<sup>596</sup> Although it had been for those early nation builders a matter of principle to eschew 'tribalism' and to refuse to acknowledge a clan identity, their respective clans were of course known to their people then, and are widely known

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<sup>596</sup> The full list is: Yasin Haji 'Usman, 'Abdulqaadir Sakhaawuddiin, 'Usman Geddi Raage, Mahamed Farah Hilowle, Mahamed 'Usman, Mahamed Hirsi Nuur, Dahir 'Usman, Haji Mahamed Hussen, 'Ali Hassan Maslah, Mahamed 'Abdulle Hassan, Mahamed 'Ali Nuur, Dhere Haji Dhere, Khaliif Hudda Ma'alín.

to successive generations.<sup>597</sup> A forthcoming book on the life of Haji Mohamed Hussen speaks of him and his friend and colleague Sakhawudin tirelessly travelling to the village communities of the coastal hinterland organising meetings and speaking at rallies.<sup>598</sup> Persons I have spoken to from some northern Somaliland clans remember Haji Mohamed Hussen coming to what was then British Somaliland to speak at political rallies.<sup>599</sup>

### **Dealing with the challenge intellectually**

Unexpected though the state's total collapse may have been, a look at recent history of nationalisms could probably have predicted it. To quote Benedict Anderson, even "many 'old nations,' once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms".<sup>600</sup> One of the major realisations to emerge from the collapse of the Somali state, and as demonstrated by the fracturing of the state along socio-ethnic lines, has been the challenge of 'sub-nationalisms' within its borders, with different 'nationalisms' wishing either to shed their 'sub-ness' and create their own separate identity, as with the self-declared Somaliland state, or wrest a meaningful autonomy within a federal state arena, as with separate clan groupings in the northeast rangelands or central inter-river clans, or, as with the Banaadiri, merely wishing to have their legitimate citizenship recognised.

With the new reality, a process of rethinking began to surface, and this has been most evident in a body of thoughtful literature that has appeared. In the period of national disintegration articles and books began to be written, asking what had gone wrong, and exploring and exploding some of the old certainties. Some were concerned to reassess identity, some with repositioning of the individual or the group, some with promoting

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<sup>597</sup> Information on SYC founding and early activities from unpublished ms on the life and times of Haji Mohamed Hussen by 'Abdulaziz Hussen, in preparation (2009). For further information on SYL see Samatar 1993 (on SYL founders [3]; on SYL election results:[4]).

<sup>598</sup> Unpublished ms as above.

<sup>599</sup> Suleiman Mohamoud Adam, Mohamed Aboker Hussein.

<sup>600</sup> Anderson 2003:3.

the image of the group by profiling culture, or members who achieved distinction in their lifetime, whilst others documented the diaspora experience.<sup>601</sup>

### **Meeting the Challenges of Survival**

It has been nearly impossible for external agencies to collect reliable information on Somalis generally but my work with refugees and the range of my personal contacts both inside and outside of Somalia has allowed me some anecdotal insight. Reflecting on a point made earlier regarding the degree to which the sheikhs and *malakhs* have been called upon to cope with evolving demands for the survival of their communities, the following voices find resonance.

*'Our Sheikh travels often to Saudi Arabia to collect funds to help our people'*  
[IN1. Female 29-30yrs]

*'My Sheikh is here [in Dubai] and talked a lot about the situation. He cannot stay out [away from Mogadishu] for a long time as many of our people only feel happy when he is also there. He is an encouraging factor.'* [Correspondence 3/9/2003 from Reer Xamar Elder in Dubai.]

*'After the civil war [started] my father sometimes travelled to Muqdisho to get advice from our Sheikh'* [Young man from a Reer Xamar family living in Mahaddei, an upcountry town. IN10, Male 20-30 yrs]

*'Our Chief travelled round the villages to visit his people.'* [IN2, Female, 30-40yrs. From a village of the Lower Shabelle region.]

Another informant told me that her local Imam gave protection in his house to the family after the men were killed; he helped them set up a market stall selling grain; he

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<sup>601</sup> A list includes: Osman *Road to Zero*; Scikei on *Architecture* and article on Yemeni-Arab heredity; Ahmed (ed.) chapters in *Reinventing Somalia*; Maow and Abbas (eds.) on *Somalia Banadir*; Abbas, on 100 Banaadiri personalities (in preparation); Kusow & Bjork (eds) on Somali diaspora communities.

had advised that because young women were more vulnerable to rape from the controlling militias she should stay home and her mother should assume the more public role at the market.[IN13 Female 30yrs]

Certainly a Banaadiri community remains in Somalia today, which, in common with other Somali groups, is propped up by kinsmen in the diaspora. The vast majority of Somalis today exist largely on money transfers from family members abroad. The *hawala* money transfer system is based on trust and is a long-standing practice used in countries like Somalia where there are no formal banking institutions remaining. ‘[I]n 2006 the flow of money was estimated to be between 750 million and 1 billion \$US annually.’<sup>602]</sup>

But probably the most important asset which the Banaadiri communities have is their strategic location. The capital of the Banaadir is also the capital of a nation. Even though, along with all other Somali communities, they have become much dispersed as a result of the long years of civil strife, the Banaadiri continue to occupy the heart of the port towns as they have done for centuries, and continue to adapt to the challenges as is their past record. To end on an optimistic note, quoting from a respondent to one of my questionnaires: ‘When peace comes back, the fishing will start to flourish, the *alindi* textile will come back, the inland and overseas trading will flourish again.’<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Lewis2008:134.

<sup>603</sup> PR6 17/09/2010.

## CONCLUSION

The preceding final chapter on how recent developments in Somalia have impacted on Banaadiri communities brings the study full circle to what was the initial motivation for this undertaking. It was the situation in which Somalia found itself in the last decade of the twentieth century, and a troubling sense that there were some things here that were in danger of being lost unless they were written down. If you write, you remain, yet the Banaadiri were among the most under studied and least written about of Somali groups. With what appeared to be a diminishing population in Somalia and increasingly large numbers of the community being widely dispersed into exile, to record something of the culture acquired a sense of urgency. It may be judged presumptuous of me to suppose that I could be part of that process of preservation, but that is how it was that I set about writing the culture. The result is this ethnography.

When undertaking this project, the main point of concern was that southern Somalia, especially Muqdisho, was now in the grip of a violent civil war, and was out of bounds for primary research. The limitations that this imposed on data collection in the field, and access to places and to people there, had to be overcome. In this I was able to draw on my knowledge from over twenty years of residence in Somalia, which, as has been noted, included personal observations and contemporary field notes which I had kept. New interviews that were conducted with a range of refugees and émigrés in the UK and elsewhere, who were from the community in question, and the contacts made through internet and telephone with people on the ground are at the heart of the research. Also important has been my ongoing work with Somali asylum seekers, concurrent with this research, which brought me face to face on a continuing basis with persons most recently resident in the Banaadir communities. Research strategies also involved attendance at relevant academic conferences and seminars. Included among these was the Somali Studies Conference in Columbus Ohio 2007, where I was able to meet with Somali specialist scholars and obtain feedback on my early lines of investigation. Overseas travel was also undertaken for library archive searches, and, when opportunities arose, to meet with significant individuals who were known to have knowledge of local tradition. Concerning information on the Banaadir from written

sources, whilst this is quite scattered and often in small pieces, a presupposition that little was available proved only partly true, as can be seen from the range of sources consulted, in translation or in the original, in French, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic and English, and even in Greek in the case of the earliest quoted record, the *PME*,

With regard to theoretical framework, my thesis does not fit easily within a specific discipline. It is a culture study that is descriptive rather than theoretical, and is not framed within anthropology or sociology, or indeed in any of the other social sciences. In conceiving the project, it was clear that it would have relevance across several disciplines, but needed to be informed by some theory. In the early days of my research I attend classes and seminars in anthropology. These sessions, and recommended reading lists of the course tutors helped familiarise me with current ethnographic discourses and epistemology, and their influences are discernable. But readings around history and religion have also been important, and it is perhaps not too much to hope that an interdisciplinary approach has been able to render a holistic view of a society,

### **Key findings**

From an examination of historical and contemporary sources, a key conclusion that the thesis emphasises is that, in spite of periods about which the literature is silent, and in spite of the need for scepticism towards the ‘historical’ claims made in local legends, it is clear that the settlements and people of the Banaadir have a very long history, with complex origins. From the eclectic mix of written sources and oral traditions of the people, which are further illuminated with reference to neighbouring histories, we have a historical continuum that paints a picture of habitation here and a people who already had established trade connections to a wider world by at least as early as 100CE. That is not to say that the people who inhabit the stone towns today are genetically the same as those of two thousand years ago, but rather that they are the inheritors of a rich and complex past. This historical backdrop, as my introduction sought to establish, provides the frame of reference for subsequent core chapters which set out defining characteristics of the social and religious climate of the coast.

In presenting the stone town communities (with Muqdisho as the primary representation), I have tried to describe something of the essence of Banaadiri society as the people themselves see it. The physical setting is carefully delineated, and the social organisation explored. What is revealed is a particularly interesting political system that is organised using several features of social structure: kinship units, territorial units, and associational group units. The interplay of these elements is central to an understanding of everyday relations and the maintenance of order within the town. The patterns of alliance and administrative devices that I describe are as reported to me and understood by the Banaadiri people of the present time. I have described these features in some detail, as information on them is not found elsewhere, and indeed the sum of the features is not present among other Somali groups,<sup>604</sup> although parallels are to be found in Swahili stone-town civilisation. The criss-crossing of threads of ancestry, moiety affiliation, alliance, hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, function together to establish solidarity among the residents and distinguish and differentiate them from the ‘outsiders’ around them. But behind the notions of descent and believed history lie internal tensions, in particular with reference to social division as defined by descent group. This social stratification of the lineages has not been discussed in earlier studies as thoroughly as it might have been, and perhaps with good reason, since the issues of class and past injustices continue to be sensitive subjects. We have already seen that historically, and unlike the substantial slave populations of the stone towns (suggested for further attention), both *gibil cad* and *gibil madow* are freemen,<sup>605</sup> with citizens rights, even if certain groups among them occupy positions of relative prestige within the society at large. As *gibil cad* lineages have traditionally occupied these positions of prestige and power, it is perhaps not surprising that their voices are more discernable in the ethnographic narrative. Today, the hierarchies that were once recognized as important may seem irrelevant, when community integrity is itself under threat as a result of national political events. And whilst the basis for past inequalities and the uncertain pedigrees of *gibil madow* groups may be regarded as of only academic interest, nevertheless the historic basis for the differentiations present more research possibilities.

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<sup>604</sup> Some minor exceptions have been noted as existing in settlements of the Lower Shabelle, and as most probably emanating from contacts with coastal culture.

<sup>605</sup> This is in contrast to the ‘noble’ and ‘sab’ division of patron and client that existed in the nomadic tradition until quite recently.

The descent groups that comprise the urban polity are seen to be many. They are free-standing and non-convergent entities, and not connected by blood, though, as noted, they act together by processes of choice and decision in a coherent system. This parallel lineage structure, and in some cases what appear to be formation of descent groups that are non-linear and which allow for some choice of membership, are features that are in sharp contrast to the better-known convergent genealogies of the nomadic and agro-pastoralist tradition. In the case of the latter, the eventual convergence of the lineages at a single apical ancestor, is the unifying symbol for the Somalis of these dominant culture groups. I have felt it important in this study to draw attention to the two contrasting descent patterns. This is partly because the descent model of the townspeople has previously not been considered in the context of ‘total genealogy’ and partly because of the questions that the comparison raises about old certainties, and discussed in context earlier. Although the alternate convergent structure of the dominant Somali clan groups has acquired general acceptance as the model on which ‘Somaliness’ is founded, its origins are unclear. A more sceptical approach may find it not unreasonable to argue that patrilineal genealogies such as those that are so carefully nurtured by the coastal people—long lines of purported ancestors that stretch almost seamlessly over to Arabian soil, containing characters that are interwoven with recorded Arab history, unpunctuated by the abrupt appearance of founding clan ancestor of recent progeny—may have been the precursor of a structural model adopted by pre-existing populations of the interior, maybe as late as around eight hundred years ago, at the same time that Islam was making inroads among indigenous people of the Horn. Further, I have suggested that the non-convergent descent structure of the coastal tradition is what has allowed it flexibility for accommodating newcomers and incomers to the town community, and indeed for new descent groups to form.

The ethnographic material I have collected for inclusion, such as stories, rhymes and accounts of ritual performance, are examples of self-representation and are examined for what they are able to tell us of perceptions of self, social positioning, and value systems. Local voices are again heard in testimonies in the concluding chapter, bringing the study up to date on the effects of a “collapsed” State on a particular sub-section of society.



Further inputs to an understanding of local social content are the two original documents collected in the course of this study: one a personal genealogy chart, and the other a religious biography of a leading Sheikh of Xamar. The biography, as we have seen, is felt to be particularly important as it is an example of the religious genre of hagiographic writing. In addition to what it has contributed to our understanding of the position of learned men of religion in the society, the document incorporates information on contemporary events, making it valuable as a historical record, and a reminder of longstanding literacy in Arabic among the Banaadir learned class.

### **Research agenda for future scholars**

The thesis concentrates on what I determined to be most central to an understanding of the historical and evolving social and religious life of the people of the Banaadir coast, and their relationship to the wider ethnic region. But as with any piece of research, one has to add a final full stop, and inevitably leave some things tantalizingly inconclusive.

Unlike some other societies of the Horn and Africa, and notwithstanding the life-long dedication of individual scholars such as Lewis and Andrzejewski, there has never been the critical mass of scholarly interest in Somalia in English that there has been with some other cultures of Africa, and especially not of the urban culture of the Banaadir coast. Whilst this study makes a small contribution towards redressing the balance, the area is demanding of more enquiry.

The brief notes that follow are intended to assist those who may be interested in taking things forward, and to help them think about where they might begin. The suggestions are keyed loosely to the foregoing text by chapter.

#### *Chapter 1.*

My investigation of Arabic sources have, of necessity, been of secondary sources in translation. Arabic references on Somalia have to date been most comprehensively addressed by Hersi in his unpublished thesis (1977), but one swallow does not make a summer. A start may be to engage in a focused comb through the substantial corpus of

references that are footnoted in Hersi's study. Recommended to me by Sheikh Abba, but which I refer to only cursorily, is the work of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslim geographer and scholar, Yaqut (Yaqut ibn Abdullah al-Rumi, also Yaqut ibn Abdullah al-Hamawi). His famous textbook *Mu'jam al-buldan* ('*Dictionary of Countries*') covers the history, ethnography, and myths related to the places in the Islamic empire of his time, and from which elements of Banaadir society claim historical links. The original Arabic text has been translated into German and probably other languages (not English).

I have made tangential mention of Banaadiri – Indian contacts, in that they were in common markets of the monsoon trade, albeit at opposite ends of the Indian Ocean littoral. There is general awareness of African slaves moving in one direction, west to east (as most typically illustrated with regard to the Sidis of India), and of Indian merchants travelling in the opposite direction for trade and often to settle along the African coast. In reality a much more complex exchange existed, and this is receiving welcome new attention, viz.: (i) Research emanating from an ongoing series of seminars at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, under the direction of Shihan de Silva, and (ii) the forthcoming special issue (February 2011) of *Africa. the Journal of the International African Institute* (IAI), entitled *Print Cultures, Nationalisms and Publics of the Indian Ocean*, which is entirely devoted to Indian Ocean studies, and (in its own words) 'provides an overview of emerging trends in the rich field of Indian Ocean studies and draws out their implications for scholars of Africa.' The new discourses that are occurring, and the new sources being uncovered, are to be monitored and engaged with.

A systematic study of the Turkish archives may prove fruitful for a certain period, to compare and contrast with what is found in Portuguese histories on the early modern period.

Revisiting accounts from some previously underused diarists and chroniclers have, in the context of this study, helped illuminate Muqdisho's changing fortunes in the gold trade of Sofala for example, and on feuds between the moieties at a certain period in

their history. More analysis and mining of these earlier writings, in particular the 3-volume work of Guillain, may prove worthwhile, and could include, in parallel, efforts to collect remembered oral indigenous narrative to compare with or underpin these accounts.

## *Chapter 2.*

Regarding local literature, we know that the inhabitants of the urban settlements were possessing of a literate elite. Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century spoke of the *qadis* of Muqdisho and their Sultan sending written questions and answers back and forth in the interest of resolving awkward or difficult disputes and judgements. But of local written records from the period we have nothing extant. Bearing in mind that the chronicles which shed light on life along the more southerly section of the coast in the late Middle Ages originate in related settlements (Kilwa and Pate), the question is posed: Was it a common practice for these city-states to chronicle their histories and their rulers? If so, where are those from Baraawe or Muqdisho? The potential for compiling a ‘sultans list’ for Muqdisho may already be possible by extrapolating from known chronicles, inscriptions and coin finds.

The degree of dependence on slave labour of Banaadiri town society in earlier times and until the relatively recent past is not specifically profiled in this study, and is hard to discern from existing local oral narratives. It is a topic with more research possibilities. Sources in English that are relevant to the history of slavery in this region are many, as drawn upon by Alpers (1975), whose bibliography can be consulted. See Eno (2003), who is from the Somali Bantu-Jareer, and writer of their history; see also the portrait in Luling (2002) of the Jareer as an essential element in Geledi society as recently as the mid-twentieth century; see also the work of Francesca Declich, in English language and Italian language journals for articles on former slave groups of southern Somalia.

As for preservation of texts, Sharif 'Ali 'Aydarus's *Bughyat al-amal fi tarikh al-sumal* ('The expectations and aspirations on the road to a Somalia'), Mogadiscio, 1950, published under the Italian Trusteeship administration, has been relied on by me and

others before me for an internal perspective on Muqdisho life and traditions. It is a rare and out-of-print book, and the few copies that I personally know of are discoloured and in poor condition. Its preservation, reproduction and possible translation into English would be a worthy undertaking. One of my primary informants, a scholar and writer, is a second generation direct descendant of the author of *Bughyat al-Amal* and could participate in such a project. Further to the preservation of texts, consideration could usefully be given to how the present guardians of surviving manuscripts that are known to exist may be assisted to preserve these records, with the assurance that such manuscripts in private collections of local elders would remain the property and heritage of the particular family and community.

In the Addendum of Chapter 2, can be found information fragments on lineage groups, and on leadership and ancestry as presently remembered in oral accounts. I have included these notes not only for their relevance here in demonstrating the complexities of the urban composition, but for their potential as a starting point for further investigation and compilation of descent group detail.

### *Chapter 3.*

The examples of oral and performance aspects of urban culture are but a sample of material on festival, ritual and legends that is awaiting further documentation. Useful work has been done by Mohamed Abdi Mohamed ‘Gandhi’ (in French) of the University of Besançon; see also Alpers (in Bibliography).

Reporting change: Whilst cultural expressions may retain continuity with prior forms, they are reported on here as they are remembered by their participants, and relate therefore to the broad present. Since the processes that generate culture have everything to do with historical processes, this leads inevitably to change over time, as part of gradual or sudden transformational forces. In consideration of the major social upheaval and dispersal that the Banaadiri people have experienced in the past two decades, the community in diaspora offers opportunities for exploring the extent of conservation or reformulation of the cultural narrative as a determinant of identity.

#### *Chapter 4.*

My commentary on the hagiography of Sheikh Abba establishes the social and religious context and purpose, and provides a broad sweep of the manuscript's content. This important document awaits a more exhaustive analysis, not only for its specificity but for what it represents in the wider context of this Islamic religious genre of writing among Somalis. The full text as collected by me is available in Arabic and in raw translation into English. Both forms call for further work.

#### *Chapter 5.*

The more recent experiences of the Banaadiri community during the prolonged civil war raises the important issues of human rights and dispersal, both having a global dimension. It is suggested that useful starting points for thinking further about ethnically based violence and diaspora issues in the Somali case, are the following two publications which are in whole or in part authored by Somalis who are part of the diaspora and/or are Banaadiri: Abbas & Abdulkadir (2010) is about the Banaadiri experience in the civil war; Kusow & Bjork (2007) maps out the social and cultural contours of the Somali diaspora using case studies.

#### *General.*

My study has thrown into sharp focus the common past of the Banaadir and Swahili coastal people. It is clear that for centuries, until the late modern era and the restructuring of the continent as a result of colonial partitioning, that Banaadir and Swahili coastal settlements were closely linked through their common histories, patterns of social formation and economic arrangements. The extent to which the Swahili and Somali coastal people can be considered to form a cultural and economic continuum, now divided by an international boundary, can usefully be given more prominence in new academic papers. The parallels will find resonance among scholars researching Swahili civilisation. Relevant resources for comparing traditions, family connections, and religious brotherhoods along the shoreline and islands off the Banaadiri and Swahili sections of the coast include: Bang's scholarly study, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (2003); *Swahili modernities: culture,*

*politics, and identity on the east coast of Africa*, by Caplan and Topan (2004); and a further look at el-Zein (1974).

Archaeological investigation is probably the most promising for uncovering new information for periods where there are sparse written sources to rely on. Unfortunately, prolonged political instability in Somalia means that any useful archaeological work along the Banaadir coast will have to await.

Maritime issues: An interesting incidental ‘discovery’ that this research points up, and not given attention in the accounts of maritime trade here since the *PME*, is the peculiarity of an especially strong seasonal current off the Somali Indian Ocean coast. The implications of this natural phenomenon and its possible effects on the patterns of movement of goods and people in the age of sail has probably not been fully explored. To what extent this given is factored into the present day pirate industry is also an interesting and moot question. Consulting the experts at Greenwich maritime museum and college might be a useful starting point.

### **Reflections on some of the existing literature**

The literature review of the introduction gives a sense of what I personally found to be most useful and which influenced my own thinking. The review is not exhaustive, and I continue, at the time of completing this study, to be directed towards additional unexplored and relevant texts.<sup>606</sup> Where I have relied on the interpretations of established scholars, as in providing an historical survey and in discussing local expressions of spirituality, I have acknowledged these. However I have not always agreed with their interpretations. Where I have reservations these will have been discernable to the careful reader, and I have suggested a rethinking in some instances where such things as historical time of writing, personal biases or assumption may have coloured the views of the writer.

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<sup>606</sup> Bang (2003); Geertz (1968).

Without distracting in any way from the immense scholarship of Trimingham's writing in interpreting Sufism, his account of Islamic practises in the Horn of Africa is as an 'externalist' of Islam, and of half a century ago. His interpretation of the ethnic composition of the religious settlements of southern Somalia and the Italian colonial administration's encouragement of these as a peaceful influence, hardly acknowledges their significance before the Italian's came on the scene, nor of anecdotal accounts of their being a safe haven for people fleeing Italian oppression and forced labour in the building of the new colony. Trimingham's perspective has tended to be repeated by later scholars, but it is suggested that further systematic study of local sources and contemporary material in the Italian archives of the florescence of the *jamaa*' religious settlement movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would complement existing written accounts.

I have suggested above and earlier that the pattern of social alliance that the Somali *abtirsiimo* represents does not seem to occur on Somali soil until some time near the cusp of the first and second millennium CE, and raises the question of it being adopted from traditions of settlers from Arabia and proselytizers of Islam, possibly displacing earlier notions of allegiance and identity.

Two academics with Somali ethnicity, Hersi and Samatar, themselves both from subsection of politically dominant northern and rangeland clan families, may arguably be seen to reflect 'internal' traditional perspectives when writing of the Banaadiri generally (Hersi 1977:30), and the Banaadiri saint Sheikh Aweys (Samatar 1992).

Finally, any researcher is largely dependent on his/her informants when pursuing primary research, and even the most eminent scholars may not be immune to adopting an interpretation which reflects the priorities of the informant(s). I have heard said by friends from the non-patrician Banaadiri groups, for example, that Cerulli's close association with some Reer Faqi elders led to his overemphasis of the importance of Reer Faqi in Reer Xamar community life. In this regard it is apposite to end with a quote from Middleton, whose work on the Swahili people of East Africa, as previously acknowledged, has influenced my own approach to this study of the Banaadiri:

[Y]ou can do utterly nothing without people telling you what they want to tell you. And they decide how to do it ... People tell you what they want you to learn.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>607</sup>1999 interview in the journal *Current Anthropology*, and quoted in an Obituary: 'In Memoriam: Renowned Africanist Scholar John Middleton', in March 27, 2009.



## Appendix 1 (i)

### Hagiography of Sheikh Mohamed Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Mohamud known as Sheikh Abba (raw translation into English of primary source material)

In the Name of Allah

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

### Revealing the Hidden Secret in the Translation of Sheikh Abba

All praise be only to Allah, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon whom no Prophet will follow, our Prophet Muhammad and His Companions, and His followers.

*This is a summary of the translation of our father Sheikh Abba – may Allah preserve his life – Amen.*

**His kinship:** he is the expert scientist, perceptive writer, distinguished historian and legal scholar, who follows Al-Shafey's creed, Al-Ashari's faith and Al-Qadiry's doctrine. Al-arif Billah<sup>◇</sup>, our father, Al-sheikh Mohammad (known as Abba) bin\* Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Mahmood bin Sheikh Abdul Rahman (Al-Tibby) bin Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Mahmood bin Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Amiin bin Imanka bin AbuBaker bin Ali bin Haramain bin Haji Yousuf bin Sheikh Abaly bin Omar bin Sheikh Mohammad bin Mualim Omar bin Al-faqi Qasim bin Al-faqi Ismaail bin Al-faqi Haji Yousuf bin Al-faqi Mohammad bin Al-faqi Omar Muhiyaddin bin Al-faqi Ahmad bin Al-faqi Qasim bin AbuBaker Al-Qaffal Al-shashy<sup>608</sup> Mohammad bin Ali bin Ismaail bin Ahmad bin Mousa bin Jadaa<sup>609</sup> bin Maymoona bin Osman bin Asim bin

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<sup>◇</sup> the believer in Allah

\* son of

<sup>608</sup> Al-Shashy refers to his original village that demotes to the area behind the river near Ebn Omar Island. Al-Muheet Dictionary – Second Section – page 276. The mentioned Al-Sheikh Abo Bakir Al-Shashy is one of the ..... as he is a student of Al-Sheikh Abo Haneefa.....

<sup>609</sup> Jadaa: He came from Sham and settled in Mogadishu in year 149 (Islamic calendar).

Abdulrahman bin Muslim bin Daoud bin Suleyman bin Ibrahim bin Jibriil bin Asad bin Osman bin Qasim bin Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman bin Auf bin Abdul Auf bin Harith bin Zahra bin Kallab bin Murrah bin Kaab bin Luay bin Ghalib bin Fahr bin Malik bin Alnathir Bin Kinana bin Khazeema bin Madraka bin Alyas bin Mudhar bin Nazar bin Muad bin Adnan.

*Para 1.*

**His birth and growth:** Before the Sheikh was born, his grandfather Sheikh Abdul Rahman Suufi Al-Shashy had foretold his birth, saying: A blessed boy will be born to the Al-Shashy tribe, who will come from the family of the father (ancestor) Amin Emanka, and will be widely known in the Islamic countries and will have great standing.

God has confirmed what Sheikh Suufi had foretold, and affirmed what the Al-Shashys had anticipated. So, the boy referred to as the blessed, was born into a virtuous house of science and generosity, on the first of Rabi' Al-awwal 1355AH<sup>o</sup>. Whereupon, the city of Muqdisho was lighted up with his beam, the area was fragrant with the scent of his coming, the Shashys cheered about the rise of their full moon.(?) Congratulations were brought to his grandfather Sheikh Mahmood from the sheikhs of Muqdisho. His grandfather gave charity on that blessed day, even more than he usually gave, as thanks to God for His grand grace.

*Para 2.*

Following his birth, his mother breastfed him for days; and then virtuous ladies from all around the tribes of Xamar were happy to breastfeed him. He was popular with his kinsfolk from childhood. All girls, boys and adults competed to hold him, as all wanted to gain his blessing. They called him 'Abba', which means the father of everyone. Then their delight with that nickname became fulfilled, as he grew to be the sanctuary of the poor, guardian of the powerless, destination of scholars and intention (?) of the greats. His father died when he was just about five, so his grandfather assumed responsibility for him. He taught him and provided him with the best education. He took care of him,

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<sup>o</sup> Anno Hijra – Islamic Calendar

encouraged him and protected his piety. He preferred him to all of his progeny and held his hand, taking him wherever he went, so that they were never apart, whereby the child was influenced by his grandfather[‘s habits] of night time prayers, and began performing nightlong worship from a young age, and he increased in glorifying Allah, following his grandfather’s pattern. Just before Abba came of age, his grandfather gauged his intellect and his readiness for learning. He taught him the principles of astrology, spirituality, medicine, history and ancestries. He also granted him a general certificate of accomplishment; devise (?) him what he had inherited from his fathers up to the fourteenth. He took Abba to teacher Yousuf Al-shashy to teach him Quran, but the teacher passed away before finishing his study. Then he shifted to the school of the teacher Haidar (Rear Faqy) where he learnt some of Quran. Then he memorized it in the mosque of (Ay Aiday) where he was studying with a group of readers. His good character rose to the level of virtue and glory. He received the divine secrets from his kind grandfather, whose leg broken as a result of a fall from a carriage while on their way to treat one of their relatives who had become insane. Therefore, he couldn’t walk, so they carried him home. During his grandfather’s illness he started to treat people the same way as his grandfather. One day, one of the sons of Al-sheikh Al-arif Billah Mohammad Yousuf Al-shashy, became insane, so they went to the grandfather asking him for treatment, but his illness prevented him. Hence, they went back to Al-sheikh Mohammad and told him the story. He said: wasn’t his grandson Abba there? They answered that he was too little and didn’t know how to treat. He said: Go to him and bring the water with which he washed the earthenware even without verses of Koran written on it, because the treatment is inherited. They did so and the patient was cured. That confirmed the prospect of the vitreous sheikh.

### *Para 3.*

One year after his poor health, he passed away and Abba was awfully miserable, because he took care of him after the death of his father. He felt such a sorrow to loose who he had used to get along with. But, his fondle mother supported him and cheered him up. She encouraged him to work harder and continue to learn. She composed poems in him in Somali language, which demonstrated her intelligence, as she praised him with what he deserved. In her poems, she mentioned his virtues and the science, knowledge and generosity that he inherited from his grandfathers, and also mentioned

the morals that she taught him. Once he was a young man, his mother wedded him to a chaste girl, from his relatives, who begot his seven children: three boys, who looked like their father in the shape and character, and four chaste and virtuous girls. Before the mother passed away, she entrusted some of her good relatives to take care of him. When she met the disease that put an end to her life, he gave her all he could of care and love until she passed away pleased about him and wishing him all the best in both lives.

*Para 4.*

He was so well-liked by his kinfolk, respected by the young and old, loved by all who saw his pleasant look as if he was a magnet that attracted people's heart by a secret placed in him by God. Even sheikhs of tribe respected him and kissed his hand when he was young. They asked him for advice in solving their problems and followed his sharp views. They were proud of him amongst the other tribes, and appointed him as their own sheikh. He became so famous that he became the sheikh of all Somali tribes among whom he reconciled if disputed. He helped their weak ones, treated the poorly, and solved their problems. He was like a kind father that wished them what would please them.

*Para 5.*

He never travelled for learning knowledge. He studied merely in Mogadishu, just like his grandfather Al-arif Billah Al-sheikh Abdul Rahman Suufi. He learnt from its scientists, mainly from his father the expert scientist and perceptive writer Al-arif Billah Sheikh Abdul Majeed bin Al-sheikh Mohammad bin Al-sheikh Suufi known as the generous giving sheikh who filled the place of his grandfather in custody and religious teaching. So, Abba persisted in attending his meetings and got benefited from his knowledge in forensic disciplines such as syntax, morphology, belief, rhetoric, logics, jurisprudence interpretation, mysticism and hadeeth<sup>♦</sup>. He took care of Abba and preferred him over all the other pupils although very young.

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<sup>♦</sup> hadeeth: Prophet Mohammad's speeches

*Para 6.*

One of whom Abba learnt from was Al-sheikh Omar Rear Shekhal Aw Hassan who taught him Al-safeena<sup>∇</sup>, and Al-sheikh Mohammad Yehia Aldeen bin Muallim Mukaram, from whom he listened to Matin Abi Shuja<sup>\*</sup> and Alminhaj ela Salat Almusafir fel Fiqih<sup>♠</sup>. He also learnt some ((Al-ershad wa Al-minhaj))<sup>∴</sup> from Al-sheikh Abo Bakir Muhi Al-deen Mukaran and Sharif Hussain Omar Askar, who taught him Al-alfiya<sup>°</sup>. He learnt from Al-sheikh Khaleefa Farih Noor (Al-Awjadini) the principles of Saheeh Al-bukhary, Saheeh Muslim, Sunan Al-nisaey, Sunan Al-tarmudhy and Waraaqat, also Qatir Al-nada, Alfiat Ibin Malik and Al-sheikh Qasim Al-barawy, who taught him Al-sullam and Al-maqoolat Al-Ashra<sup>≈</sup>. Al-sheikh (Rear Aw Qutub) taught him some summaries. The first teacher that granted him Al-qadiria certificate of teaching and practicing was his sheikh Al-sheikh Ahmad Muhi Al-deen (Bafadhil). He was also granted Al-naqshabandia certificate by Al-sheikh Mahmood Abdul Mutajaly Khaleefa Al-azhary, who taught him Al-hukm, a book by Ibin Atta Allah. He was also granted a general certificate of reading, reviewing and checking the origins and studying the conflicts of Al-suna books, by Al-hadat Al-kabeer<sup>◊</sup> Al-daey Ela Allah Mr. Alawy Al-Maliky, and transferred him to the principles of Al-sheikh Al-ameer in the basics. This certificate is held in reserve with us and it is recorded in the first section of Mujama' Al-zawaed.

*Para 7.*

The fine knowledge that he received from these gracious teachers that filled his heart with knowledge and wisdom, and the inherited and taught knowledge that he collected made him a source of wisdom that promoted him to be eligible to give fatwa<sup>°</sup> and compose. He started teaching religious lessons in the mosque (Ay Aiday) where his generous giving sheikh was previously teaching. He studied the interpretations: Tafseer

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<sup>∇</sup> Al-safeena: means the ship (a book called Al-safeena)

<sup>\*</sup> Matin Abi Shuja': name of a book that consists of a series of lessons, for more info visit

<sup>♠</sup> The method of passenger's prayer in jurisprudence

<sup>∴</sup> Al-ershad wa Al-minhaj: Guidance and methods

<sup>°</sup> Al-alfia: Alfiat Ibin Malik is a famous book that summarizes the Arabic grammar in 1000 verse.

<sup>≈</sup> All the above mentioned are names of famous books

<sup>◊</sup> Al-hadath Al-Kabeer: a title that means the big event

<sup>°</sup> fatwa: religious opinions

Al-jalalain no less than four times, and Rohul Bayan, in addition to some of Al-hawashy<sup>\*</sup> and of Hadeeth: Riadh Al-saliheen in four stages, and Arbaeen Al-nawasy, Saheeh Al-bukhary, Mujamaa Al-zawaed and Al-jamer Al-sagheer by Al-sioty. From syntax he studied Matn Al-ujroomia, Mandhoomat Al-amreety, Sharh Al-ujroomia by Al-sheikh Khalid and Alfiat Ibin Malik. From morphology he studied Lamiat Al-afaal. From Logics he studied Al-mantiq Al-salim. From jurisprudence he studied Matin Al-taqreeb by Abo Shujaa, Al-safenatain and Al-tahreer by Sheikh Al-Islam Zakaria, Mandhoomat Al-zabad and Al-irshad wal Minhaj. From Sufism he studied Mandhoomat Tabarak Thu Al-ula and Takhmeesa by our grandfather Al-sheikh Abdul Rahman Sofi, Al-hakam by Attaa Allah Al-eskandary, Ehiaa Uloom Al-deen wa Bidayat Al-hidaya by Al-ghazaly, Al-risala Al-qasheeria. From medicine he studied Tasheel Al-manafe. From the science of the universal clock he studied Lalie Al-tal. From belief he studied Al-snosiya wa Jawharat Al-tawheed and Aqeedat Al-awam. From the prophet praising he studied Al-bardha wa Al-hamziya by Al-buaisary. In addition to that he studied all these arts in depth; he was so busy with helping the needy ones, resolving the disputes, treating the ill and aiding the weak ones.

*Para 8.*

A huge number of people that can't be mentioned in this piece of paper got benefited from his knowledge. A lot of them got graduated from his school and became teachers in different aspects of arts, some of them can even classify the legal books, and others are still studying at his school and call for Allah. The number of his students is increasing day after day. He has a lot of followers, who were certified by him to follow the path of Sufism sheikhs, and whom he linked and guided to Allah. He gave them the religious education, advised them to fear of God, obey Him, be morally good and follow their honest ancestors. He ordered them to increase praising Prophet Muhammad, praise and blessings of Allah be upon him, and increase invoking the word of monotheism and all the other glorifications. He collected them in a circle in which they repeated loudly all these glorifications in a specific number each night after the Eshaa prayer. He also ordered them to read the invocation of Al-tareeqa Al-Naqshabandia loudly for the divine compliance every Monday and Thursday after Asir prayer. He used to order them to memorize the Holy Quran, and one day he suggested them that forty of them should

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<sup>\*</sup> Al-hawashy: notes

record their names and promise to memorize Quran. They accepted his suggestion and all of the forty started memorizing Quran. Almost ten of them have already finished memorizing and the rest are just about to. May Allah easy their assignment and protect who was the reason of that. He now fills the place of his grandfathers, follows their path, reviving what he learnt from them, leads the prayers in the mosque of (Ay Aiday). He gives them the religious directions in some times upon request. The mosque is now adorned with him as he populated it with glorifications and all kinds of prayers even more than before. It is now crowded with prayers in the time of the five prayers as they sometimes pray on the rooftops especially in Ramadan. Although he added and smartened up his grandfathers' tareeqa, he never changed a single thing. He confirmed each basis of their tareeqa and refreshed them. He is the souvenir of his grandfathers. They would have been so proud if they were alive, as the prayers for rain that his grandfather Sheikh Sofi used to perform in Spring and Autumn seasons, whereas he was going to the ancient mosques of Hamraween district for around forty days in certain times and ending reading the Holy Quran twice a year within forty days each time in order to protect the country and push misfortunes away. All these practices are still constant in the same way as before with the virtue of Abba's efforts to revive them. Without him, all these customs would have been ignored. He also published on his own expense manuscripts such as Al-tamshia by Ismaeel Al-makary, E'anat Al-talib Al-nawy by Abo Bakir Al-nuzaily, and Al-jawhara Al-samia which was composed by his grandfather Al-sheikh Sofi. His objective with doing that good deed was to revive their inheriting. He is also willing to publish some of the others of which number are three thousand and two hundred and fifty books.

*Para 9.*

There is no doubt that he is one of the religion's sources, pivot of scientists, protector of our religion, the reviver of Sunna<sup>•</sup>, killer of heresy with sharp evidences and bright proves. He pulled the sword of truth out of its scabbard in defence of it. He is gentle in the situations that require that, hard in hard situations, angry if the sanctities of Allah are profaned, does not revenge for himself if unjustified, jealous of his religion, does not keep silent before a falsity and does not fear of blames for God. He destroyed falsity

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<sup>•</sup> sunnah: religious customs

and removed bad deeds from our region. He replaced the fun that Hamries<sup>◊</sup> used to practice in Nawrooz<sup>◊</sup> with loud glorifications in the streets of Hamraween. His plan succeeded as all his good willing plans do. Over three hundred Christian men and women, most of which are men, have converted to Islam with his help.

*Para 10.*

You see people from everywhere head for him and crowd at his door all day and evening. Some seek his treatment, some beg for his charity, some want him to resolve their dispute with others, and others wish to learn from his knowledge. None of them get frustrated. He satisfies them and grants them what they wish for. So many people resorted to him seeking protection in the civil war time. He welcomed them in his house that was crowded with them, fed them all without discriminating any of them, although destitute and cramped. He also helped his family, neighbours and others by giving them money, food and water with an electric squirt that is still benefiting all people. I believe that if he had travelled and resorted to where others did, a lot of people would have starved, as his staying home at the summit of the crisis had a great advantage and public benefit. This affirms his braveness and love to his people, nation and home. He deserves to have his name recorded in the first pages of history as life lacks people like him.

*Para 11.*

Journalists, experts and historians from Arabs and Non-Arabs headed to him in the days of the crisis asking him about the country's situation and history and asking for his advice about restoring the country. They were admired by his thoughts and knowledge, and surprised of the gigantic number of people that he welcomed although each one of them had a different need. They were surprised of how he could remember each one's situation and wants, as they were around six hundred. They admitted that this was over human's ability and that God helps him to do these charities.

**Requesters crowd at his door**

**as a crowded pure water spring**

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<sup>◊</sup> Hamry: people of Hamraween district

<sup>◊</sup> The solar new year that some nationals such as Hamries, Persians, Kurds and others celebrate.



In the beginning, he liked to isolate himself and glorify his God in total submissiveness to purify him from the human frivolity. He sometimes passed forty nights awake, and fasted during the days in order to habituate himself to devotion. He broke fasting with just water and three dates and continued his prayers till his requests were complied and permitted to go out. Most of the times he was permitted to go out before the end of the time he intended to lock himself to worship. From that point the divine secrets that no one except Allah knew, were revealed to him. In the other days he used to pray a lot, pass nights reading the Holy Quran, fasting as prophet Daoud<sup>°</sup>. He even sometimes continued two or three days with just taking water with a date to break fasting with. He was so attracted to his love to God and Mohammad praise be upon him. He was glorifying Allah loudly during the night at the beach, going every night outside the city to where no one lives except beasts, and performing his prayers there and then coming back before dawn unhappily, because the pleasure of prayers and worshiping had to end by the morning. This attraction persisted till God stopped him with his mercy, so he woke up from his dizziness, communicated with people and benefited them. Here, we notice the divine wisdom that required this, as the public interest was considered since people needed his help in resolving their problems. With this pleasant character the representatives of God of earth are recognised. God educates them and takes care of each movement they make in their life, and cheers them up in their loneliness. You don't get bored from their meetings where God is glorified. He is one of whom God has said about: (The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration)<sup>◇</sup>. Anyone follows him, adheres to his custom and learns from him is a winner. The looser is the stickling stubborn like scarabs that can't stand good fragrance.

**Whoever has a bitter mouth**

**tastes bitterness in pure water**

**No harm if sunshine in horizon**

**is unseen by a blind person**

This is a simple summary of his scented life of which details can't be summarized in books and tomes. We look forward to write a detailed book about his blessed life with

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<sup>°</sup> Prophet Daoud was fasting every other day.

<sup>◇</sup> a verse from the Holy Quran (sorat alfatih – verse 29)

the help of God. Finally, I ask God to preserve his love to us, and make us his faithful followers.

*Para 12.*

May Allah preserve his life and protect him from illnesses and evil. Finally, gratitude and praise to Allah and peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, His Companions, and His followers.

By his poor<sup>•</sup> pupil

Ahmad Othman Mohammad Al-shashy (Ahmad ....<sup>°</sup>)

16 Jamadi Ula 1418 a.h 17/9/07

computer input by Mohammad sheikh Ahmad Sheikh Mohammad Al-<sup>°</sup>

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<sup>•</sup> describes himself as poor or low compared to his sheikh.

<sup>°</sup> The final page's edge words are missing I did my best to link the sentences together, but I can't cover names....

Hagiography of Sheikh Abba (Arabic text)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

كشف السر المخبأ في ترجمة الشيخ أبابا

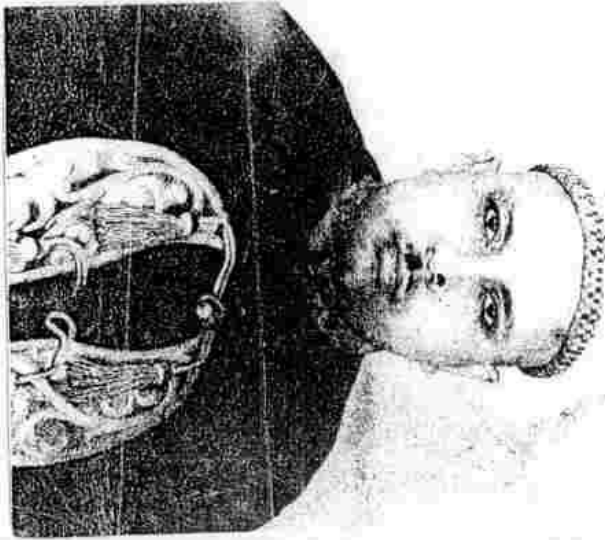
الحمد لله وحده، والصلاة والسلام على من لا نبي بعده، سيدنا محمد وعلى آله

وصحبه، وآل أبي سفيان وحزبه.

أما بعد، فيهداه تبارك من توجه والدنا الشيخ أبابا -رحمته الله بغيره، آمين-

لنسه، هو العالم العلامة، والخطير الفقيه، والمؤرخ الكبير، والفقيه البحر، الشافعي  
 مطهر، والألمعي عظيم، والقادي طريفة. العارف بالله والدنا الشيخ محمد (المشهور  
 بالشيخ أبابا) بن الشيخ أحمد بن الشيخ محمود بن الشيخ عبدالرحمن (الطلي) بن الشيخ  
 أحمد بن الشيخ محمود بن الشيخ أمين بن مالك بن ابوبكر بن علي بن  
 حزم بن حاج يوسف بن الشيخ أبابا بن عمر بن شيخ محمد بن معلم عمر بن الفقيه  
 قاسم بن الفقيه إسماعيل بن الفقيه حاج يوسف بن الفقيه محمد بن الفقيه عمر يحيى  
 الدين بن الفقيه أحمد بن الفقيه قاسم بن (١) أبي بكر الفقيه الشافعي (رحمه) محمد بن  
 علي بن إسماعيل بن أحمد بن موسى بن (٢) جمعة بن يعقوب بن عثمان بن عاصم بن  
 عبدالرحمن بن مسلم بن داود بن سليمان بن إبراهيم بن جزييل بن أسد بن عثمان بن  
 قاسم بن محمد بن عبدالرحمن بن عرف بن عبد العوف بن حارث بن زهراء بن كلاب  
 بن مرة بن كعب بن لؤي بن غالب بن فهر بن مالك بن النضر بن كنانة بن خزيمة بن  
 مدركة بن إلياس بن مضر بن نزار بن معد بن عدنان.

(١) أبي بكر الفقيه الشافعي: - ومعنى الشافعي نسبة إليه، والله يراه النسبة بت رواه النهر قريب  
 جزيرة ابن عمر قاسم الخطيب جزء الثاني صفحة (٢٧٦) والشيخ أبو بكر الشافعي المذكور من  
 عتق الأحكام الأربعة فهو تلميذ الشيخ أبي حنيفة رضي الله عنه، ويكنى أبي بكر الشافعي،  
 (٢) جمعة: - وهو الذي نزل في تظهير عام ١٤٩ هجرية ووجه من التمام.



المرحون على ما يقع تب من خلف الناحية وحلاوة الطاعة، واستمرت هذه الجليلة مدة حتى حقه الله الطاعة، فبعضنا من سكر ذنوبنا، فليس حتى المصير، ومن لنا بالأخطاء المكنة الإجابة التي انتصت ذلك حيث نرضى حتى معالجة العبد الذي يخافونه، فإنه من قسط حوائجهم وإصلاح أمورهم، ويحبه الدلائل الباهرة، يهرف أرباباً، أنه قال: على أربابنا، يولي فرينهم، يوزعهم في حركتهم، ويكتفونهم، ويؤسبهم في حلالهم، ويحرمهم في حرامهم، لا يفتي مجلسهم، ويؤذونهم، يذكر المذنب، ولا ينسى، عاينك أن الشرف لهم، فبهم يوزعون، كل منهم في حوائجهم، في رزقهم، من كل المصروف، وقد نزل من شدة إيمانهم، والبر، وعلقت وثائقهم، بالأخرة، فتمردوا، ولكن الملائكة، لما أتوا، بكثرة الرأفة، الطيبة، ووصل بعض بالسحاب، أصبح الكافي<sup>١٠</sup>.

ومن يك ذا هم غير مريض  
يعد من أمة الله الأبرار<sup>١١</sup>.

ما غير نفس الضميمة في الألف ظاهرة  
أن لا يرى جوهها من ليس ذا العسر .  
فيه تارة يسيرة من جوده المبرور، فهو لا يفتح هذه المسألة، بل هو استقيمتها، لطلال بنا الكرامة، والبر، والبر، عذبات من الكتب، والتاريخ، والأثر، لا تسبح لنا ذلك، ويطلب بنا من هذا القام، أن نكف عن القائل، بما روي أن عنه، أنه في الغريب، لأفضل، أن أمره، كما كتب، وأما من قال: أن ذلك، محضاً، إنه ما صدق، من أمثاله، ونحن، أسأل الله، قال: إن يديننا، أن عقوبته، وعقوبتنا، من يديه، المخلصين، المؤمنين، له، إنه صريح، قريب، عجيب، اللامرات<sup>١٢</sup>.

فإنم أن جوده، وإقبال، حوره، وعقوبته، من كل ما، وكفه، غير اعتاده، ويوقه، لا يخفى، ويرضاه . وأخر، جوارنا، أن نطلب، في رب العالمين، ووصل، إلى من، سبحانه، محمد، وعلى، آل وصحبه، وسلم.

حزونها غليظة، أظفر، أحمد، عثمان، محمد، الشافعي، (أحمد، بنور)

في ١٩ من جمادى الأولى ١٤١٨ هـ، محرم ١٢٧٠ - ١٢٧١ م

وكتبها بالكمبيوتر، محمد، شيخ، أحمد، شيخ، محمد، الشافعي

جوانه، وشأنه، يقول، أن يولد، الشيخ، عمر، بر، لأنه، جده، الشيخ، جبار، من، أصول، الشافعي، لقائل، سؤاله، فهو، القيلة، الثانية، من، بعض، ولد، جبار، يخرج، من، أسرة، الأرباب، أحمد، بن، مالك، وشيخ، سجد، في، نفس، اللسان، إصلاحاً، ويكره، له، شأن، عظيم، وذلك، سابق، أنه، ما، يفتخر، به، الشيخ، سويلو، ويحق، ما، كانت، الشافعية، ترفع، به، وذلك، قولاً، الباعث، إياه، بهيوة، الشريعة، حمداً، العود، الذي، بيت، علم، وكريم، يورث، أهله، السبل، كثيراً، من، كبار، في، أول، شهر، ربيع، الأول، سنة، ٢٠٥ هـ، أميرة، حور، ت، مدينة، حلق، يورث، ظهور، ورثة، راجح، أرجو،ها، ببيت، حور، في، واستجرت، الشافعية، بطلب، من، صهر، وزالت، أن، جده، الشيخ، عمود، الصالح، من، قبل، الشافعي، القليلة، واستطاع، على، القراء، من، هذا، اليوم، للبارك، آخر، عاقبة، يحمي، حركاً، في، مجال، علم، ما، أو، لا، من، هذه، الأمة، العظمى، ويؤيد، ولده، أرغمه، أنه، أهله، ثم، أساء، فوات، فضل، من، سهر، قتال، آخر، صحنه، بالأخص، وقال، حور، في، قومه، جد، ساء، بالصفات، والصفات، كذا، والتفرد، من، حوائجهم، وكل، واحد، منهم، يريد، أن، يورث، ذلك، لنفسه، لتصل، له، ورثته، ويؤيد، وأما، أهل، إمام، ساه، حور، في، به، إياها، لكل، اعتبار، على، علم، بوجاهة، اللقب، حقيقياً، إذ، صحنه، أنه، لتمام، القدر، أن، وسأوى، الصغار، ويعظم، رجال، العلماء، ويؤيد، كالمعلم .

توفي، أبو، وصيه، حسي، صحن، تفرس، ثم، حمله، فأنقذه، ورثه، أسمن، يرتد، وكان، رضي، به، ويومع، بأنه، يورث، إلى، آخر، ما، يملك، على، سائر، أو، لا، ويؤيد، بيده، يذهب، به، صحن، يذهب، حور، في، علمه، وصحنه، حيث، لم، يكن، يبارك، حتى، تأخر، به، ويعود، على، ما، كان، يفتخر، به، من، القديرات، ساه، في، حور، اللال، وهذا، يقع، الصغر، ربما، يفتي، سداً، الليل، ويكثر، ذكر، أنه، هناك، ولعمرة، عظمة، وتقول، أن، ينام، للشيخ، تفرس، فيه، بعد، اللال، وتطلب، التقدم، ففلسه، يسأله، علم، اللقب، والقبول، الوحدانية، والفتن، والتاريخ، والأشياء، وأما، حور، فإنه، في، حور، عظمة، تفرس، أنه، مورثه، إياها، من، أبي، إلى، الرابع، بعد، عنهم، ويؤيد، به، أن، يعلم، يوسف، الصالح، ليلته، هو، أن، يكن، العلم، تومي، قبل، أن، يكمل، دراسته، ثم، تكون، أن، حور، يعلم، حور، دور، وهي، صحت، علم، بعض، القدر، أن، ثم، حلف، على، سجد، إلى، أبي، أيدي، صحت، كان، يبارك، مع، بعض، القارئ، هناك، من، حور، . ثم، يزال، وهو، على، هذه، السجدة، العظيمة، مرض، إلى، أسد، الفيل، والشمو، وهو، يخرج، غير، أخوه، اللقب، لول، حور، اللال، ويشتي، الأسرار، من، جده، اللقب، به، حتى، أصبت، يد، مع، استوت، من، غيرة، حور، إلى، أهل، إنجوت، من، حور، فيها، إلى، حور، بعض، الأثر، في، السلب، بالحور، فلهذا، علم، بكر، الذي، سجد، إلى، حور، فإنه، مرجح، به، يد، مع، اللقب، كما، كان، يذهب، حور، وتؤيد، وهو، يورث، أن، من، بعد، تفرس، الشيخ، الحور، في، أنه، علم، فهو، يوسف، الشافعي، بأن، إلى، حور، يفسد، من، حور، صحن، حور، في، الرضا، حور، حور، أن، الشيخ، محمد، وأخوه،



له اللغة قال فهم المذاب والله أن يقولوا أنه به سفر لا يعرف كيف يعالج، فقالوا انفسهم اياها وحلوا  
به ما تعلم النسخة به فوسم هو كقوله عزان عليه انا عطا ورثة، فقلنا ذلك نفس المرض، وظلنا  
بأنه من أن النسخ الاول فهم به فاسؤلوا اليه انهم ان كان ذلك حلالاً

ويعرفه سعة النقل إلى حوار، انه لم يجد عليه حجاباً فاستدلوا به كان فاسم ابيه في اللغة  
والمراد والتلخيص ما ثبت بالرسالة لانه قد من كان يستغنى به الكسب، انه المراد بسجدة عنه فمع  
المراد بسجدة وثبتت طوبى وسفته على صحفة اليهود والسجدة في العلم وما كانت فيه السجدة بلغة  
المراد ساقطة من العلم من اهلته من العلم والعرف والكرم وما يقول اليه اسم، كما كانت  
حقه على من كان الاعمال، وتوزع برفه وتحت بنا عليه من اقرمه انكسب له أو لا له السجدة بوزن ابيه  
الشيء ساقطاً وشيئاً وأربع مئات كبريات وطعامات، ويقول أن مدارق الدنيا أوسد به بعض إقليم أقلها  
ليستوي ثم وضع خالهم وحين برحت مرض موبها لم يفتقر في الخيام بعقبا والعاية بها حتى وثقنا انه  
ياضبة منه وفاقها له ما قضى له من الحرف والسجدة في الدينين

عجز في عفة اليتيم غير ان في قوة غيره الصغر والكبر ووجه كل من رأى طلة الخيبة كانه مستأمن  
خبر القلب بسر أو بعد ان يراه كما أن شريح خيطه كانوا غير موت وبشكلون بينه وهو من عضو  
جانبه، ويذكره على مشاكهم ويستخرجون من أروهم يستخرجون براه الفهم ذكرنا بقصوره به على  
سائر العالمين وعلومه شيمة اللطيفة بليل بلال بلع صفة ويذكر على سائر الكمال حتى سار شيمة  
ليصبح العالمين الصوريه يطرح ذات فهم يذابا اعلموا وراسمه من علمهم ويعالج مبراهم وعلم كمالهم  
والفهم الزبائل هو كقوله الرحم لهم حسب لهم كل ما يستعملون

لم يسر قط العلم القول بالعلم من مقدسه كما تعلم وجه حصة المراف به أن النسخ الجليل حرم  
موسى وأجد العلم من علمه، وكان شيخ حرمه والله الهام اللامع وياخر الشهادة المراف به ساق النسخ  
عبدانهم من النسخ حمدة بن النسخ مولد للممهور بالشيخ العلاء الكافي يقسم حده في الولاية والفتنة  
المرور في الدنيا الملازم علمه حتى اترقى من سهل علومه واستفاد منه كل من من العلوم الشرعية كالعلم  
والصرف والقطعة والولاية والخلق والتميز والصفحة واللمسة، فكانت إمكانه يجمع به ويستقله  
على سائر الاجيال مع صفوة

ومن أخذ منهم العلم النسخ من زهر جيران أرحم الذي رواه عليه السنية والشيخ حمدة بن النسخ  
بن مسلم كرم الذي استبح منه ربح من شماع والنجاح إلى صلاح الناس من الله والشيخ ابو بكر يحيى

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بالاخر ما كان لكل الصالح وكرم العلم من العلم الذي في بيته، فهو حديم جلافة اشخاص ينال  
رحم، ولم اذكر في كتابهم رحالاً

وروى بالشي الصلوات من كل جانب ومروبه ومروبه عليه من كل صبايح وسامه، فقالوا ليس من  
الاصلاح وقلنا برهم مهوره، وجلا برب الإصلاح به وين، آخره وقد يربح أن يؤكده العلم بما علم منهم  
بحر العلم، فليس هو الصواب بلهنا بلهنا بربهم، اكرم اولى الله على الجوارح على النسخ، وأدولهم آدم  
المرتب الاولية كان ختمهم على حرة المنتظمة لهم ويختمهم ويختمهم ويختمهم المظنور جون أن يفرق بين  
أعد منهم حتى يقع ما فهمهم مع ما كان به من سلف، فقالوا ذلك العهد، كما كان يسمع الاقارب  
والقرون وتكون في الاصلح عليهم وإيمانهم ما يكفهم ولو استبدون به وقومهم يترجمون للماء بواسطة  
أنه قولها بصفة الصفة الله من القرون حتى يربنا هذا ما زال فقههم جمع القاسم، وأنشأ العهد أنه  
أوسار لاحته إلى حبة لرائس ثلاث كقرون من الخمر وكان يفتقر في وملكه أهم اعتماد الأربعة فهدنة  
مطيلة ومستطمة علة، وهذا يدل على حماة وجه لغة ورثة، ويعلمه فهو جدير بأن يسلم ابيه من  
الصححة الأولى من الارباع بالارباع على الصلح

وقد كان المستحقون والجراد والقرود من الاحباب والمهرب يقولون اليه أنهم هذه الامة يستصرونه  
أحوال البلاد وزاوية ويستجرونه أيضاً يعالج بأصلاح الوطين، فيجوزون بالأكوان السباية والمنة  
الغير كما جلا، استخرجوا هذا المنة المائل الذي استخرجهم كل يوم مع أن لكل منهم حاجت الخاصة  
وكيف يركب احوالهم المصلحة في فكر وورقة، بعضهم هو لا، الفهم من لا يخلق من تنفيذهم هو الزاير، بلان  
مهما تولى ذلك العلم وأن الله يوتى من العلم عليهم الأعمال الخيرية

وروس العقائد في ياله

والجمل المثلث كبح الرجم  
كان في بداية أمة رب العقائد يعطى بفضه لا كما ربه يفتخر تمام، وتذكر في القصص من الروايات  
التي ترويها وقد استعرق أربعمه يوماً أو ثانياً، فهو كالمؤمن جوارحه موقوفة الله على العبادات، وقد علمهم  
على الله ثلاث عجائب من الصبر والصبر، هكذا قال أن يبلغ برأه، يؤمؤ أن به يشكوه، كما كان في قلب  
أحوايه، يؤمؤ أن ذلك قبل الله الذي حرمانه من حاصله له من الاكثرت، والأكرار والأحوال سالا  
علمه، لا أقمين كان في حجر أهم الملهو كبح العقيدة، حتى إليه بالقرية والمصلحة، ويوسف منهم يوم العقدة  
يرسل عيون أولادهم يعجز حلالاً من الله، راحة من فرقة، كما علموا كلمة ومجاليها، وهذا نص  
الفرح رسولهم، جعل الله طيعه وسلم، يصيح بالذكر الله من حروف اللؤلئ من حوائطهم، ويكسرهم  
على كل إلى حلال، الله صوت لا يسكن، أحد يوسى الروحون، ويأتى صوابه، علمهم ثم يرفع قلوب على

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## Appendix 1 (iii)

### Abba's teachers as listed in the hagiography

#### (Sheikhs of the Muqdisho 'ulama in the mid- twentieth century)

Sheikh Mahamuud Sh. 'Abdulrahman Sh. Ahmed [Abba's lineage grandfather]: early teacher and guardian

Sheikh 'Abdul Majeed (nicknamed 'The Generous') Sheikh Mohammad Sheikh Sufi [grandson of *weli* Sheikh Sufi Sheikh of the Awooto Eeday mosque in Xamar Weyne) : assumed the role of Abba's mentor and guardian after the death of his grandfather, teaching him religion and 'science'

Sheikh Omar of the Rear Shekhal Aw Hassan taught him Al-safeena – ('means the ship - a book called Al-safeena' *note from translator*)

Sheikh Mohammad Yahya Aladiin Moalim Mukaram: introduced him to Matin Abi Shuja ('Matin Abi Shuja' is the name of a book that consists of a series of lessons, for more info visit <http://www.sunna.info/books/shouja.php> *translator's note*) and also 'Alminhaj ela Salat Almusafir fel Fiqih' ('the method of passenger's prayer in jurisprudence' *translator's note*)

Sheikh Abubakar Muhidiin Mukaram: taught him Al-ershad wa Al-minhaj ('guidance and methods' *translator's note*)

Sharif Hussein Omar Askar, taught him Al-alfiya ('Al-alfiya: Alfiat Ibin Malik is a famous book that summarizes the Arabic grammar in 1000 verses,' *translator's note*).

Sheikh Khalif Farah Noor (Al-Awjadini?): from whom he learnt the principles of Saheeh Al-bukhary, Saheeh Muslim, Sunan Al-nisaey, Sunan Al-tarmudhy and

Waraqat, also Qatir Al-nada, Alfiat Ibin Malik ('names of famous books,' *translator's note*).

Sheikh Qasim [Muhyidiin?] Al-Baraawe, a Sheikh of the Reer Aw Qutub - taught him Al-sullam and Al-maqoolat Al-Ashra ('names of famous books,' *translator's note*). This Sheikh also taught him some summaries.

Sheikh Ahmad Muhyidiin of the Ba Fadhal (He was Abba's sheikh) from whom he received his al-Qadiriyya teaching certificate.

Sheikh Mahmood' Abdulmutajali Khalif Al-azhari: granted him his Al-naqshabandia certificate, and also taught him Al-hukm, a book by Ibin Atta Allah

He was also granted a general certificate of reading, reviewing and checking the origins and studying the conflicts of Al-suna books, by Al-hadat Al-kabeer ('Al-hadath Al-Kabeer is a title that means the big event', *translator's note*)

Al-daeey Ela Allah Mr. Alawy Al-Maliky, [?] and transferred him to the principles of Al-sheikh Al-Ameer in the basics. This certificate is held in reserve with us and it is recorded in the first section of Mujama' Al-zawaed.



## Appendix 2 (i)

### Photograph of Sheikh Abba



Sheikh Abba (left) and Mohamed Osman in Xamar Weyne, May 1993  
(Photograph: Mohamed Osman.)

## Appendix 2 (ii)

### Photographs: Sheikh Abba Dugsi('school') Prize Giving 2008

Photographs included in rear pocket of Thesis.

## Glossary

All Somali words and terms in the text are explained at first mention. Some of the more

<i>Abtirsiiimo</i>	genealogy (paternal lineage), family tree
<i>Af</i>	mouth, language as in <i>af</i> -Somali ('the Somali language')
<i>alindi</i>	hand woven cotton cloth produced by Banaadiri weavers, and worn by both men and women.
<i>Arday</i>	student
<i>'asr</i>	the afternoon prayer
<i>Ayah</i>	a miracle.
<i>Baraka</i>	charisma, holiness, virtue as inherent spiritual power.
<i>Dhikr</i>	sufi ritual involving rhythmic repetition, a spiritual exercise designed to render God's presence throughout one's being.
<i>diya</i>	blood compensation
<i>du'a (duca)</i>	a prayer
<i>Eid</i>	a festivity, celebration. There are two Eids in the Muslim year
<i>fajr</i>	morning prayer, performed at dawn
<i>gibil cad/gibil madow</i>	literally meaning light skin, and dark skin, but among the Banaadiri has an historical and social dimension associated with status.
<i>Hadith</i>	traditions of the Prophet
<i>Hafiz</i>	person who memorises the whole Koran
<i>Hajj</i>	Muslim pilgrimage; obligatory once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage (if one is able).
<i>hai/hajiya</i>	Muslim pilgrim (m/f)
<i>Hijrah</i>	means migration; Hijrah refers to the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Madinah, and marks the start of the Islamic calendar.
<i>imam</i>	religious leader, leader in prayer

<i>isha</i>	the nighttime/evening prayer
<i>jaama'</i>	Friday mosque
<i>jama'a</i>	religious community, religious settlement
<i>khatiib</i>	prayer leader and speaker of the mosque at Friday prayers.
<i>koobirow</i>	marriage-initiation teacher
<i>maghrib</i>	prayers performed at sunset
<i>malaakh</i>	chief, leader
<i>manaqib</i>	hagiography – a genre of biographical literature in praise of a <i>weli</i> .
<i>Masjid</i>	mosque
<i>Mowliid/mowlīd</i>	religious festival celebrating the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday
<i>nabi-amaan</i>	poems and prayers recited in praise of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>qādi</i>	Muslim judge
<i>qasida</i>	a praise poem (ode)
<i>reer</i>	most usually translated as meaning 'family',
<i>seyyid</i> (pl. <i>sada</i> )	"master", name also used as alternative to sharif for a person claiming descent from Prophet Muhammad.
<i>shahada</i> –	the Muslim profession of faith, bearing witness that Allah is God and Muhammad is his Messenger.
<i>shari'a</i>	sacred law of Islam
<i>sharif</i> (pl. <i>asharaf</i> )	person from a family claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad (alternative to <i>seyyid/sada</i> )
<i>sheikh, shaykh</i>	sufi leader, spiritual director, ruler in some Muslim countries
<i>silsilaat al-baraka</i>	chain of blessing
<i>siyaaro</i>	anniversary visit to the shrine of an ancestor or <i>weli</i> ,

<i>tahliil</i>	make holy water
<i>sufi</i>	Muslim mystic
<i>tariqa</i> (pl. <i>turuq</i> )	religious order, Sufi brotherhood
<i>'ulāma</i> (Ar.), <i>culiima</i> (Som.) (sing. <i>'alim</i> )	learned men, those trained in religious sciences
<i>weli</i> (pl. <i>awliya</i> )	derivation: Ar. <i>wali</i> ) – literal meaning is ‘friend of God’, usually translated as ‘saint’
<i>xaafad</i>	residential neighbourhood
<i>xus</i>	celebration, anniversary commemoration.
<i>Zawīya</i>	sufi centre, religious meeting place (usually attached to a mosque)
<i>Zuhr</i>	prayers performed at noon.

Spellings of words for which there are conventional transliterations from Arabic:

Sheikh

Qadi

Shafi'i

Koran

Muhammad (in the case of the Prophet)

Hajj

Place names

Afgooye	Afgoi	Muqdisho	Mogadishu (It.
Baraawe	Brava		Mogadiscio)
Baydhabo	Baidoa	Xamar	Hamar
Marka	Merca	Zayla', Saylac	Zeila

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### *Oral Sources*

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Abdulaziz Mohamed Hussen: Correspondence 23 May 2008; 25 June 2008; 08 February 2010 ; Interviews: 13, 14 March 2010 , New York Helmsely Hotel.

Aw Abdurahman Sheikh Mohamud, Interviews: 31 January 2009; 12 October 2009, London

Dr. Ahmed Sharif Abbas, Interviews: 10 October, 4, 7, 14, 21 November 2010

Dr. Khalif Mowlana of Baraawe, 21 November 2010 (telephone).

Khalid Maou; Continuing contact 2008-present. Interviews: 25 June 2009 (Victoria Station); 13 February 2010 (British Library); 19 June 2010 (Grosvenor Hotel).

Mohamed Osman Omar, Continuing correspondence and contacts 2004-10; accompanied me to interview Sheikh Abba in Hamburg, and Aw Abdurahman in London x2

Omar Shekhey, Interviews 16, 20 August 2007 Columbus Ohio, US; Correspondence 30 August 2007, 10 May 2008.

Sheikh Abba, Interview: 29 October 2005, Hamburg.

Additional miscellaneous information from persons are as footnoted

In the interests of protecting the privacy of interviewees, in the following instances the names are omitted, and in most instances their lineage affiliation. Interviewees identified as PR were among my principle informants for this research, and additional information on their profiles is given. Combined lineage affiliation is: Asharaf Ba

Alawi, Asharaf Sarman, Bandhawow, Reer Baraawe, Dhabar Weyne, Reer Faqi, Morshe, Shanshiye, Reer Sheikh Sufi, Other numbered sources, beginning IN were formally interviewed in the context of their seeking refuge in the UK, and their identities have been anonymised.

PR No.1, M. (70+); Meeting, phone contact.

PR No.2, M. (65-75); Meetings, email, telephone.

PR No 3, M. (65-70) Elder: Meetings, email and telephone.

PR No 4, M. (60+) Elder/Writer, Meetings, email, telephone.

PR No 5, M. (65-75) Elder/Journalist; Meetings, and telephone.

PR No 6, M. (50+) Professional; Meeting, email, telephone.

PR No 7, M. (50-60) Teacher; Meeting.

PR No 8, M. (60+) Interpreter; Meetings, email, telephone.

PR No 9, M. (50-60) Religious leader; Meeting, email.

PR No 10, M. (50+) Religious leader; Meetings.

PR No 11, M. (40+) Professional; Meetings, email.

PR No 12, F. (40+) Housewife; Meeting.

PR No 13, F. (30+) Housewife; Meetings, telephone.

PR No 14, M. (30-40) Shopkeeper; Meetings.

PR No 15, M. (30+) Interpreter; Meetings, email telephone.

PR No 16, M. (60-70) Politician & Elder; Telephone.

IN1 Female 20-30 yrs.

IN2 Female 30-40 yrs.

IN3 Male 50-60 yrs.

IN4 Male 20-30 yrs.

IN5 Female 20-30 yrs.

IN6 Male 20-30 yrs.

IN7 Male 20-30 yrs.

IN8 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN9 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN10 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN11 Female 20-30 yrs.  
  
IN12 Female 16yrs  
IN13 Female 30-40 yrs.  
IN14 Male 35-40yrs.  
IN15 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN16 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN17 Male 30-40 yrs.  
IN18 Male 30-40 yrs.  
IN19 Male 30-40 yrs.  
IN20 Female 30-40 yrs.  
IN21 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN22 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN23 Male 25-30 yrs.  
IN24 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN25 Female 20-30 yrs.  
  
IN26 Female 60-70 yrs.  
IN27 Female 30-40 yrs.  
IN28 Male 30-40 yrs.  
IN29 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN30 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN31 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN32 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN33 Male 30-40 yrs.  
IN34 Female 18-20 yrs.  
IN35 Male 20-30 yrs.  
IN36 Female 20-30 yrs.  
IN37 Male 40-50 yrs.  
IN38 Female 50-60 yrs.  
IN39 Female 30-40 yrs.  
IN40 Female 30-40 yrs.  
IN41 Male 20-40 yrs.

IN42 Male 40-50 yrs.

IN43 Male 20-30 yrs.

IN44 Female 20-30 yrs.

IN45 Female 30-40 yrs.

IN46 Female 20-30 yrs.

IN47 Male 30-40 yrs.

IN48 Male 40-50 yrs.

IN49 Female 20-30 yrs.

IN50 Male 40-50 yrs.