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**The Arab Factor in Somali History:
The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise
and Cultural Influences in the Somali Peninsula**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History**

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Arab Factor in Somali History:
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by

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The purpose of this work is to examine the historical process by which the Somali acquired the outwardly visible Arab influences in their culture which today they so openly and proudly flaunt. While the work is essentially a chronological presentation of the ancient cultural and economic ties between Arabia and Somaliland, it is not merely a narrative history. For instance, where appropriate I attempt to evaluate critically the impact that this Arab connection has had for the Somalis. Throughout the thesis I also develop a number of parallel themes which collectively considered would argue for an alternative interpretation to the old-fashioned guesses about population pressure, movement of ethnic groups, and the impact of a "higher" culture upon a

presumably "lower" form of civilization which have distorted the history of Arab-Somali interaction. The development of a thesis about just what the Arab impact amounted to, however, is really beyond the concerns of this study. It is an interesting and important topic which deserves a separate and an equal treatment of its own, and therefore will be given only secondary attention throughout the thesis.

The first chapter examines the ethnographic picture of the Somali peninsula with the aim of bringing out the Arab elements in the Somalis' contemporary culture. The second chapter looks at the Horn of Africa's international relations during pre-Islamic times and makes an evaluation of the relative importance of the connections which it established with different parts of the world. Chapter three, four, five, and six deal respectively with the immigration of Arabs and other southwest Asian peoples into Somaliland up to A.D. 1500, the Islamization of the Somalis, the trade of the Horn of Africa from the advent of Islam to roughly A.D. 1500, and the role of southwest Asian immigrants in the politics of Somaliland during this period. The cumulative conclusion of these four chapters is that: a) immigration from southwest Asia (which was dominated by Arabs) was numerically small and confined largely to the peripheries of the Horn; b) in religion the immigrants had a dramatic impact, helping to make Islam the national religion of the Somalis by A.D. 1500; and c) economically and politically the southwest Asians had

an importance inordinately greater than their numerical strength, but less than their religious influence.

Chapter seven considers the period from 1500 to 1800, which was marked by a general decline in Arab activities and influences in Somaliland. Portuguese and Turkish interference and internal problems account for this decline. Despite this weakening of ties, however, relations were never quite severed.

Chapter eight examines the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when events in Somaliland were dominated by the colonial experience and an Islamic revival which together restored the strength of the old ties with Arabia to their previous levels and even helped these ties to develop deeper intimacy, making the Arab impact upon the Somalis assume the political identification which it has recently evinced.

The study concludes with the general remarks contained in chapter nine which summarily recapitulates the major conclusions of the different chapters of this work, and makes some tentative suggestions for an alternative view to the traditional reconstruction of Arab-Somali relations.

INTRODUCTION

To a reader who is aware of the Somali Democratic Republic's membership in the Arab League but not intimately acquainted with Somali society, the very title of this dissertation--"The Arab Factor in Somali History"--would sound somewhat anomalous. How can anybody speak of the "Arab factor", one may legitimately ask, if the Somali Democratic Republic is an Arab state? Is there more to Somali than its "Arab factor"?

It is not only the title of this dissertation that is paradoxical however, but also the very nature of Arab-Somali relations is problematic. A Somali asked to trace his or her descent will unhesitatingly recite the names of a long list of forebears which invariably ends with an Arab Sheikh, usually with one of Prophet Muhammad's immediate relatives or with one of his not-far-removed Quraishite companions. The claims of noble pedigree in these genealogies by themselves constitute sufficient grounds for doubt. Indeed, even before a surface digging is carried out their doubtful authenticity becomes self-evident. To begin with, the existence of many non-Arab names in the genealogical chain clearly attests to their spurious nature. Stronger evidence is provided by the very Somalis who make these claims. For strange as it may sound, and despite the universal currency of these claims, the Somalis do not consider themselves as

Arabs ethnically or even culturally.¹

Today the Somali Democratic Republic is in the Arab League. This League consists of some twenty states who were brought together primarily by a shared sense of belonging to one Arab nation, rather than by any other commonality of interests.² Any independent Arab state whose application has been approved by the Council of the League can become a member.³ We may mention here that the League has never attempted to legally define who is an Arab or what constitutes an Arab state. Over the years, however, scholars and Arab statesmen have made various pronouncements as to who is an Arab, and today there exist some "vaguely delimited" but generally accepted definitions formulated around linguistic and cultural characteristics which are said to be the common possession of the members of the Arab nation.⁴ Judged by

¹I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa (New York, 1961), pp. 11. Dr. Lewis also points to the Somalis' contempt for the Arabs. Ordinarily there would be nothing to interest us in this emotion. It is an instance of the Somalis' ethnocentric sense of superiority which they share with all other peoples who to varying degrees all express this feeling towards foreigners. In the case of the Somalis, however, this particular attitude towards the Arabs is quite at variance with their contradictory pride in Arab descent.

²Dr. M. H. Ghanim, Muhadarat Can Jami'at ad-Duwal al-Arabiya (Cairo, 1961), pp. 28-29, 41, 117; M. F. Anabtawi, Arab Unity in Terms of Law (The Hague, 1963), pp. 72-73.

³Ibid., pp. 72-76.

⁴See Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History, fourth edition (London, 1966), pp. 9-20, from which the phrase is taken.

these criteria alone, the Somali Democratic Republic's membership in the League of Arab States would be questionable.⁵

Considering these preliminary remarks, perhaps the title of this dissertation will not sound so paradoxical after all. Behind the adoption of this title, and as partially intimated in these remarks, is the assertion that the Somali society should not be considered merely as a derivative Arab-Muslim subculture but should rather be seen for what it is -- a veritable and independent African cultural unit into the development of which one major set of influences came from the Arab and Islamic world. This work will concern itself with the search for the origins of Arab-Somali ties, and will trace the development and vicissitudes of the Arab cultural influences upon the Somalis which have resulted in this anomalous position for the Somali Democratic Republic in Africa and the Near East.

Chapter one constitutes a survey of contemporary Somali culture, pointing out the outstanding Arab features embedded within it. This is followed by a chapter seeking the roots of Arab-Somali relations in their ancient and classical beginnings. Chapter three chronicles the various Arab and

⁵In Somaliland Arabic is widely taught (and has always been since the advent of Islam) for religious and other purposes, but it is neither a mother tongue nor is it sufficiently wellknown to all the Somalis as to compete with Somali for official recognition. The Somali Democratic Republic, therefore, is the only member of the Arab League which has an official language that is not Arabic. This puts it in a unique position within the Arab League, which goes to prove

other Southwest Asian migrations to and settlement in the Somali Horn of Africa from the rise of Islam to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The fourth chapter is devoted to the rise of Islam in Somaliland, the ways and means by which it was spread, and by whom it was propagated among interior, as well as coastal, Somalis. Chapters five and six evaluate the role which Arab and other Southwest Asian immigrants played in the evolution of economic opportunities and political structures before A.D. 1500. The seventh chapter examines the following three centuries in which Arab posture, interests, and influences in Somaliland were threatened by combined external and internal hostile factors. The study is brought to the present by an eighth chapter, dealing with colonialism and Islamic revival, which are considered as the two most significant factors bringing the Somalis and the Arabs into their present-day intimate association. Quick recapitulations of the important conclusions of the individual chapters will finally be brought together in the concluding general remarks contained in chapter nine.

The chapters of this work (with the exception of one, two, and eight) derive their information mainly from the writings of medieval Arab geographers and historians. Some of these works have been previously published. Others are

that its admission into this Arab club was based on more inclusive considerations than the cultural and linguistic criteria implied in the League's covenant.

still preserved in manuscript form in various museums and archives scattered around Europe and some Near Eastern countries. Of almost equal importance to the composition of this work are the report of Europeans, starting with the anonymously authored Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, continuing with the sixteenth and seventeenth century Portuguese observations, and culminating in the eighteenth and nineteenth century descriptions of travellers and explorers. Besides containing partial information and side commentaries on conditions in the Horn of Africa on various occasions since the sixteenth century, these European accounts are useful in that they frequently verify unwritten local data.

It is natural that some of our sources are oral since the Somalis did not have a written literary tradition before October 1972. The author is aware of the existence of a very rich oral literature which when properly employed can be of invaluable assistance, especially for the history of more recent periods. This literature consists of folk tales and poetry of all kinds ranging from the youthful lover's light and playful lyrics to the wise man's most profound commentaries on social, political, religious, and philosophical questions. Because of this literature's general bias towards Islamic claims and Arab ties, I have used only that part of it which was found to be supportive of, or was confirmed, by the outside written sources.

Because of the length of the period surveyed here (and

the antiquity of parts of it) many lacunae were encountered in both the written and oral sources. In putting this work together, therefore, I had recourse, rather amateurishly, to a number of parahistorical studies for information with which to fill in these gaps, and in the event was rewarded with some unexpectedly valuable insights. Linguistic studies, for instance, proved to be specially vital in determining the direction of communal migrations in the Horn of Africa, and the analysis of the genealogical claims helped to clarify the changing political conditions as well as the time depth of the events described in the oral traditions. The visible remnants of the mute past cultures--ruins, graveyards, tools and utensils, and patterns of settlement distribution--also helped to elucidate certain points. These parahistorical aids do not apply to any particular period of time or part of the study, but are integrated throughout the thesis whenever applicable.

This work also relies heavily upon secondary sources, both Arabic and European, especially for information about recent decades. In this regard the works of Drs. I. M. Lewis and Enrico Cerulli clearly stand out. The studies of these two scholars (in particular those of Dr. Lewis) touch on just about every aspect of Somali life, and anybody who wants to do any work on the Somalis is well advised to begin his/her research by first going through their works. Some of the European writers referred to in this study (e.g. John Drysdale

and I. M. Lewis) enjoyed the confidence of the Somali governments in the 1960s and at times base their writings on confidential material (written or oral), otherwise not available for everybody's perusal. Their analyses of Somali politics of the 1960s may, therefore, be considered as good as original sources. Arabic sources (written largely by Egyptians who spent some time teaching in Somalia), though in general not of the same scholarly calibre as the European works, are also valuable in that they are usually based on local documents and oral information which they were able to acquire because of the confidence they commanded among the Somali Culema (learned men) and because of their personal acquaintance with the country and its people. However, they share a common weakness: namely, they often dwell too much on the Arab element in the Somali heritage without giving enough consideration to other aspects of the culture.

Finally, a word is in order about the transcription of Somali and Arabic words. Despite the existence of some "scientific" systems of transliteration for some time Arabic words and place or people's names have always been written in English in several different forms. To cite two examples, in the wide literature on Islam such universally known Islamic terms as 'Muslim' or 'Muhammad' have yet to acquire standard transcriptions, even within academic circles. This dissertation offers no solutions. Because a rigorous transcription would contravene the necessities of style, and in the event

would only be useful only to those who already know Arabic, I have decided to adopt the version of each word or name which is most commonly used in the current literature, and thus is most readily understandable to the general reader.

As regards Somali or Somalized Arabic terms, again a certain amount of common sense usage will be observed. This is mainly due to the varieties of languages in which such words were originally written and are apt to appear in passages quoted in this work. In the body of the text the standard orthography for Somali which was adopted in 1972 but which really has not had enough time yet to develop a proper lexicography was passed over because of its infancy and difficulties for the English reader. Certain difficulties in the transliteration of Somalized Arabic terms appear to be particularly insurmountable because of the divergent metamorphoses which these terms have undergone in different dialectal situations. A simple name as Muhammad may appear in such diverse forms as Mamad, Mamed, Mahamed, Mahamad, Muhumed, etc. In this work, therefore, I have tried to maintain for each word or name my own redering of it from Arabic throughout the thesis, and wherever necessary insert my version in brackets for clarification. Needless to say stylistic necessities have prevented me from being altogether consistent in this regard, especially where attempts at clarification appeared to be injurious to style while not contributing very much to comprehensibility.

CHAPTER ONE

The Land, the People and their Culture

In the Horn of Africa, in what is today the Somali Democratic Republic, the Republic of Djibouti, Ethiopia's Harar Province, and the Northern Province of Kenya live the Somali people. As of now nobody had taken an accurate census, but informed guesses have reckoned them to number around five million.¹ They occupy a territory slightly less than 400,000 square miles in extent, stretching from the tip of the East African Horn on the east to the environs of Harar on the west, and from Djibouti in the north to River Tana in the south. Although there are variations from one region to another and from one year to the next, rainfall is

¹Tom J. Farer, War Clouds on the Horn of Africa: A Crisis for Detente (Washington D.C., 1976), p. 49. Professor Farer gives the figure of three and a half to five million of whom about one million live in Ethiopia, a quarter of a million in Kenya, and sixty to one-hundred thousand in what has since become the Republic of Djibouti (Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa: Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, August 4, 5, and 6, 1976. Washington, 1976), pp. 74-75. The Somali Government took population census in 1974, but the figures have not been released yet. According to Mr. M. Y. Artam, the director of statistics at the Somali Directorate of Planning who supervised this census, the population of the Somali Democratic Republic is just shy of the four million mark. This added to Prof. Farer's numbers for the other territories would put the total number of the Somali nation above the five million figure.

generally inadequate, and the country consists largely of dry savannah plains sparsely covered with wiry tufts of coarse grass. It is also dotted with thorny acacia trees, occasional boobabs, and a multitude of giant termite hills. It is generally hot the year around, though seasonal winds and elevation have a moderating effect in localized mountain areas.

From this harsh and unenviable natural conditions, bordering on a desert-type climate characterized by insufficiency and unreliability of rainfall as well as frequent droughts, the Somalis eke out an austere existence by herding flocks of hardy goats and sheep and herds of cattle and camels. Very early in their history they mastered their environment and animals to the extent that their traditional corpus of astronomical knowledge and animal husbandry has astonished modern scientists by its richness and scientific content.² They spread themselves very thinly over a wide expanse of land and engaged in endless cycles of seasonal transhumance. By this technique they struck a balance with nature and found a reasonable solution to the important problem of existence. Theirs is a perfect example of nomadic pastoralism, duplicated very rarely elsewhere, of man and his stock

²Muuse Xaaji Ismaaciil Galaal, The Terminology and Practice of Somali Weather Lore, Astronomy, and Astrology (Mogadishu, 1968); also the same author, Some Aspects of Somali Pastoral Medicine (Mogadishu, 1969).

permanently on the move in perpetual search for water and fresh pasture.³

The only area with, or within easy reach of, perennial water supply is the belt between and around the Juba and Shabeelle rivers in southern Somaliland. Here, in this relatively better-provisioned part of the country, a lucky minority--estimated at 30% of the whole population but constantly on the increase at the expense of the nomadic sector--has taken to the less-demanding life of sedentary cultivation and part-time pastoralism. Even here, despite its relative abundance of food and water vis-a-vis northern poverty, life is not all that easy, for the rivers are bound to dry up every now and then, and rainfall is not altogether reliable.⁴ The agriculturalist, therefore, has found it necessary to rotate crops and/or to leave patches of his land fallow so as to increase productivity by judicious conservation of the soil. Some, especially those at a distance from the rivers, even refrain from cutting bushes and trees in their farms, and merely plant their crops around the trees

³ This nomadic wandering of the Somalis bears such a close resemblance to the Arab desert dweller's life style that some nineteenth century European writers (e.g. Richard F. Burton, First Footsteps in East Africa, or an Exploration of Harar, London, 1856 passim), mistakenly referred to the Somalis as "Bedouin" or "Somal"--clear misnomers suggesting Arab affinity which might have misled subsequent writers about the Somalis.

⁴ The Shabeelle dries up for one month in an average year, but the Juba usually does not. In 1975, however, both rivers dried up, and there are memories in local traditions

in order to reduce the weathering effect of winds during the dry season and abrasion of the top soil by water run-offs during the rainy seasons which are usually characterized by small flash floods.

Much ink has been spilled since the nineteenth century, in a tediously repetitions fashion, on the nature and peculiarities of the Somali social system.⁵ We shall, therefore, dispense with unnecessary details and present here a quick overview, pointing out only the most prominent features of the system and the principles at its base.

The Somali nation is divided into six clan families which, nevertheless, all claim descent from two eponymous ancestors, brothers known as Sab and Samaale. Each clan family is in turn subdivided into clans, lineages, sublineages, and so on down to the individual family. The largest political unit in this system is the clan,⁶ which recognizes the leadership of a hereditary Sultan, variously known among

of the Juba drying up in past hard years.

⁵The most scholarly works on the subject are: I. M. Lewis, Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar, and Saho (London, 1955), A Pastoral Democracy (London, 1961); Massimo Colucci, Principi di Diritto Consuetudinario della Somalia Italiana Meridionale (Florence, 1924); and Enrico Cerulli, Somalia: Scritti Vari Editi Ed Inediti, 3 vols. (Roma, 1957, 1959, 1964), but there are many other works.

⁶It is pertinent to note here that the system of clan-ship has been under attack, with increasing success, since the 1940s by the Nationalist Parties and Governments trying to create national political loyalties transcending the clan affiliations. The new Revolutionary Regime banned clanism and abolished all privileges, offices, titles and institutions

the Somalis as Suldaan, Boqor, Ugaas, Wabeer, Garaad, Malaaq, Imaam, Islaan, or Islaw.⁷ This title is really misleading, for the Somali Sultan can hardly be said to possess any more authority than other clan elders who theoretically include all the adult males in the clan. In fact an ordinary clan member can by dint of wisdom, experience, and other personal attributes overshadow and command more respect or authority than the Sultan himself. Ultimately, though, it is neither the Sultan nor such illustrious personalities who wield authority. Rather it is the totality of all the adult males in the clan in assemblage that decides on important issues, the Sultan being only an honoured primus inter pares within this assembly.

This essentially anti-authoritarian character is such a basic and striking trait in the Somali culture and social system that it has never escaped the notice of anybody who came in contact with the Somalis, be they African or European. A British traveller in East Africa who consulted his Muganda escort about the identity of some caravaners they encountered on the road was surprised with the contemptuous, yet revealing reply: "Somalis, Bwana, they no good; each man his own

connected with clan politics, and so our discussions here pertain only to the pre-revolutionary traditional society, and not necessarily to present conditions.

⁷ Cerulli, Somalia, III, pp. 56-58. Cerulli thinks that boqor, ugaas, and wabeer are of Cushitic origin, and garaad, Imaam, and malaq from the 'Adal Emirate. Sultan which is of Persian origin, was borrowed from Arabic. Islaan and Islaw

Sultan".⁸ An equally unsympathetic and ignorant opinion of this Somali cultural peculiarity was recorded by an English colonial officer:

It is this contempt for duly constituted authority, combined with an ardent love of freedom, that is the most outstanding feature of the Somali character. Jack is as good as, nay, better than his master. Youth has no respect for age, nor poverty for wealth, nor ignorance for wisdom, as Europeans understand these terms.⁹

Despite this apparent reign of anarchical egalitarianism, the system maintains a remarkable degree of political and social cohesiveness. In the place of chiefly or kingly authority around which political loyalties are organized in other parts of the world, the Somalis are held together by the principle of patrilineal kinship, which binds members of a clan for their mutual defence and for any kind of common political action.¹⁰ Through orally recorded genealogies (of the agnate line of descent), which everyone memorises at childhood, a Somali thus finds his/her position in society first as a member of a lineage, then of a clan, clan family, and finally of the Somali nation. In this hierarchy of

too appear to be derived from Islam though the circumstances of their derivation is not clear.

⁸Ralph E. Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland (London, 1912), pp. 102.

⁹Douglas Jardine, The Mad Mullah of Somaliland (London, 1923) p. 309.

¹⁰I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy, chapter five, and throughout his other works on the Somalis.

affiliations, genealogical distance determines one's political attachments and associations, the most binding loyalty being reserved for the closest agnatic kinsmen (numbering from a few hundred to a few thousands), with whom one shares corporate political and jurial responsibilities.

Baffled by the inexact definition of this body and the multiplicity of Somali terms for it--for example qolo, tol, rer, i.e., agnates¹¹--European scholars coined and popularized for their convenience a curious descriptive compound phrase for this unit. They called it "diya-paying group" (diya: Arabic, Somali, mag, compensation for murder), because the members of this body are forever bound by a contractual agreement to share the responsibilities and reparations for murder. Compensations for injuries to body (qoomaal or haq) or to pride and dignity (haal), on the other hand, are given or received individually or shared by the immediate family or relatives in the case of a serious hurt. For this reason social and political cohesion within the clan is strongest and most intimate at this lineage or diya-paying level. In the circumstance of an external threat, however, all the members of the clan can be rallied on short notice to the common cause.

These political loyalties based on patrilineal descent from a common ancestor are reinforced by a politico-legal

¹¹There is another term (jilib, literally knee-joint) which means a segmentation or division, that is of the agnates.

contract (heer) which regulates social relationships within the clan as well as its external dealings with the neighbouring clans. Relationships among members of the clan are stipulated in internal clan covenants (heshiisyo, heerar; sing. heshiis, heer) and external collective responsibilities by a similar series of agreements with the surrounding clans. Technically, therefore (and this is always the case), different treaties with different clans are liable to embody differing terms of settlement for the same kind of dispute. Thus injuries to body or pride are evaluated for compensation by no general standard, but according to the terms of the explicit treaties between the respective clans of the parties to any violation.¹²

In southern Somaliland, where agriculture has been the way of life for centuries, the system underwent a certain amount of modification in adaptation to the different environmental and economic exigencies. Here, attachments to the soil and the neighbourhood have come to replace the pastoralist's loyalties based on agnatic connections. Understandably, lineage and sometimes clan names tend to be derived from localities of settlement rather than from eponymous ancestors. Moreover, the process of conversion to cultivation or semi-sedentary life style has given rise to three distinctive social classes with varying rights to the

¹²Murder, on the other hand, has the standard value of 100 camels for a male and 50 for a female.

ownership and utilization of the land. Thus the first settlers of any locality (Curad, literally first born) form a sort of politico-religious aristocracy over subsequent but long-settled and recent accretions who enjoy respectively less and least secure privileges.¹³ Better yet, the semi-anarchical pastoral politics of the nomad has given way to an incipient institution of chieftaincy.

This economic and cultural differentiation between the northern pastoralist and the southern farmer, however, is not as serious as it may sound on first hearing. There are no natural barriers to separate them, and their habitation of the same contiguous territory entails constant rubbing of shoulders. Economic complementarity, whereby the pastoralist barter his milk and meat for the farmer's grain and richer pasture, also helps the maintenance of contacts and cultural intermingling. A commonality of language and rich oral literature--notwithstanding dialectal differences coinciding with the cultural cleavage--and, a shared religion (Islam) are other factors also militating against the process of cultural differentiation.¹⁴ Five hundred years of more or less continual conflicts with Christian Ethiopia have also

¹³ Lee Vincent Cassanelli, "The Benaadir Past: Essays in Southern Somali History," an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1973, p. 13; I. M. Lewis, The Modern History of Somaliland (New York, 1965), p. 13. A more detailed study of these social differences is found in I. M. Lewis, "From Nomadism to Cultivation: the Expansion of Political Solidarity in Southern Somalia," in M. Douglas and P. Kaberry (eds.) Man in Africa (London, 1969).

¹⁴ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 14.

been cited as another factor contributing to the homogeneity of the Somali nation.¹⁵ Thus, despite the existence of two different traditions and principles of political affiliation in the two (pastoral and farming) economic areas, the Somalis still maintain their belief in a common lineal descent from one eponymous ancestor. And even though historically they have never come under one political system, the shared heritage of Islam and belief in a common ancestor make for a strong sense of pan-Somali cultural nationalism.

Since the nineteenth century Somali studies have been plagued by, as yet unresolved, two apparently interdependent controversies over: a) Somali ethnic origins, and b) the dispersal point of the Somali nation, the latter coming to the fore since 1960. In their genealogies the Somalis have always claimed descent from Arab noble families, invariably of Qurishi stock (Prophet Muhammad's clan) and holy.¹⁶ The problem of Somali ethnic claims was confounded by the pioneering works of some European scholars who gave at least partial validity to these claims of noble pedigree in the Somali genealogical charters.¹⁷ However, from the point of view of scientific anthropology and historical linguistics these claims appear merely vulgar--more like an innocuous

¹⁵ Farer, War Clouds, p. 50.

¹⁶ I. M. Lewis, Peoples, pp. 14-41, passim.

¹⁷ Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, Chapter six; F. B. Pearce, Rambles in Lion Land (London, 1898), p. 46; Burton, First Footsteps, Chapter Four.

idiom expressing the Somalis' deep-rooted religious and cultural ties with Arabia. Needless-to-say, the issue has not been settled to the Somalis' satisfaction, and the claims still linger on with even greater ramifications.

As just intimated, serious scholarship has never really given any credence to these Somali claims, and there has not been much disagreement over the ethnic identity of the nation. The more serious controversy arose out of the discussions regarding the Somalis' original home and the direction of their subsequent expansion. Before the 1960s scholars generally regarded the Ma'akhir (northeast) coast of Somaliland as the cradle of the nation. This coast and its immediate hinterland supposedly contain the graves and tombs of the founding fathers of most of the larger clans and clan families. Moreover, Somali oral traditions are consistent in their claims of national genesis there, and point to a gradual movement of some of the clans south- and westwards away from the original home of the nation. Finally, these older theories maintain, it was Arab population pressures and technological, political and religious influences that occasioned these Somali movements.¹⁸

These theories further maintain that the Horn of Africa was inhabited prior to the arrival of the Somalis (from where

¹⁸I. M. Lewis, "The Somalis Conquest of the Horn of Africa," Journal of African History (hereafter, JAH), 1(1960), pp. 213-230.

we are not told!) by Bantu and Oromo peoples, the former occupying the southern portions and the latter situated in the central and northern areas. Dr. Enrico Cerulli, one of the scholars who champion this theory, points to place names and other linguistic evidences supposedly suggesting Oromo occupation before the Somalis of territories in central and northern Somaliland which are inhabited today exclusively by Somalis.¹⁹ Prof. I. M. Lewis also mentions (as a tentative evidence in support of this theory) Somali traditions which unanimously ascribe to the Oromo the numerous earth-and-stone tumuli found in northern and central Somaliland--the "so-called Galla graves".²⁰ According to this theory, in their expansion and march south- and westwards the Somalis shoved in front of them the Oromo, who in their turn pushed the Bantu before them, the trend continuing until the Somali drive was arrested by the establishment of colonial boundaries in the late nineteenth century.²¹ The Somali tide, continue

¹⁹ Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 72-73, 101-2, 163. The linguistic evidence used by Cerulli revolves around the root gaal (infidel or non-Muslim, but also camels) which occurs frequently in place names and traditional references to earlier peoples, battles and other major past events. This has been applied rather uncritically to refer to the Oromo nation before the recent reappraisal.

²⁰ I. M. Lewis, "The so-called Galla Graves in Northern Somaliland," Man, 61, 132 (1961), p. 103. Dr. Lewis shows how Somali association of the cairn graves with the Oromo has been marred by linguistic confusions.

²¹ W. B. Huntingford, The Galla of Ethiopia (London, 1955), p. 19; I. M. Lewis, "Somali Conquest," pp. 213-230; Vinigi L. Grottanelli, "The Peopling of the Horn of Africa," Africa 28, 3(1972), pp. 364-94, subsequently published with slight

the proponents of this theory, frequently outpaced the other groups, thus occasionally trapping small pockets of these peoples in the Horn of Africa where they still remain today at various stages of assimilation within the Somali society.²²

This reconstruction has been under attack in recent years by newer research which attempts to contradict its major premises. Employing anthropological data and historical linguistics the latter day research has arrived at a different view which seeks the origins of the Somalis, and the ethnically related Oromo, in the general area of south-eastern Ethiopia.²³ Moreover, the revisionist theory asserts that the Somalis have moved into the Horn of Africa northwards from the Cushites' dispersal point in southern Ethiopia earlier than the Oromo who started their expansion in the sixteenth century, and only partially followed in the steps of the Somalis.²⁴

revision in H. Neville Chittick and Robert I. Rotberg (eds.), East Africa and the Orient (New York, 1975), pp. 44-75. It is mainly Dr. Lewis who delineates the specific Arab pressures upon the Somalis, but the other authors are in agreement with him as regards the demographic changes in the Horn of Africa over the centuries.

²² I. M. Lewis, "The Galla in Northern Somaliland," Rassegna di Studi Etiopici (hereafter, RSE), XV(1959), pp. 21-38.

²³ G. P. Murdock, Africa: its Peoples and their Culture History (New York, 1959), pp. 319-20, 323-24; J. H. Greenberg, "The Mogogodo: a forgotten Cushitic People," Journal of African Languages (1963), pp. 29-43; H. C. Fleming, "Baiso and Rendille: Somali Outliers," RSE, XX(1964), pp. 35-96; H. S. Lewis, "The Origin of the Galla and Somali," JAH, VII,1(1966), pp. 27-46.

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 41-42. Dr. Herbert Lewis is partially

That the Somalis belong to the group of nations in north-eastern Africa collectively known as the Eastern Cushites is by all available evidences securely established. That their nearest kin within this family of nations (the Baiso and the Rendille), as well as a preponderant majority of all the Eastern Cushites, are still clustered around, or within a short distance from, what must have been the cradleland of the group is also well-known.²⁵ It must be accepted, therefore, that the original movement of the Somalis was north- and eastwards into the Horn rather than south- and westwards out of it. The linguistic and archaeological arguments advanced for the Oromo presence in the Horn of Africa before the Somali occupation have also been proven to be untenable.²⁶ With this established Dr. I. M. Lewis's examples of pockets of Oromo peoples among the northwestern Somalis as an indication of Oromo presence there before the Somali onslaught loses credibility. In fact, these pockets can very legitimately be attributed to Oromo incursions into Somali Territory since the sixteenth century.²⁷

dependent upon the Ethiopian Monk Bahrey who witnessed the Oromo movements in the sixteenth century and wrote the famous History of the Galla included in C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford (translators and editors), Some Records of Ethiopia 1594-1646 (London, 1954), pp. 109-29.

²⁵H. S. Lewis, "The Origin of the Galla and Somali," p. 39; Fleming, "Baiso and Rendille," passim.

²⁶See note 20 above.

²⁷See below chapter seven.

Ultimately, though, the weightiest evidence for the southward ethnic migrations was drawn by earlier scholarship from the oral traditions. All other arguments are employed merely to shore up the oral reconstruction. But the vistas of oral traditions are fraught with built-in abuses which do frequently cancel out their legitimate uses. Each generation, unwittingly and sometimes consciously, grafts on the past a lot of the ideas and ideals currently in vogue. They are usually imprecise as far as chronology goes and tend to be confused with regard to events occurring in more distant ages. Without denying their legitimate use as one of the hallmarks of true African historiography, and for that matter of other non-literate societies, one must nevertheless guard against this hamstringing tendency of oral traditions towards the bizarre, and treat them with delicate care. In his numerous studies Dr. I. M. Lewis has shown time and again how Somali traditions are lacking in precise factual content and are only representational charters justifying contemporary conditions and beliefs.²⁸

A closer examination of the very oral traditions, which are employed by the earlier scholars to prove Somali origins in the north, would show that these traditions actually relate to recent migrations occurring since the sixteenth

²⁸I. M. Lewis, "Historical Aspects of Genealogies in Northern Somali Social Structure," *JAH*, III(1962), pp. 35-48, but this argument is found sprinkled throughout all Professor Lewis's other works on the Somalis.

century and have nothing to do with distant events. They may well be confused and suspect as regards time depth and even inaccurate in the case of detail and chronology. Their description of events occurring on the Horn of Africa in recent centuries, however, is in outline fairly reliable and persuasive. They narrate the story of Islamized Somalis marching inland from northern and eastern coasts in conditions of intermittent conflict with non-Muslim or superficially islamized groups of peoples normally referred to simply as Galla Madow (Black infidels). This accords well with the events described in chapter seven below and may even partially reach back to the more distant movements intimated in chapter four. On the other hand, the question of the "so-called Galla graves" will have to await a more thorough archaeological investigation, though again Dr. I. M. Lewis's excavation of three samples has made him conclude that at least some of them (why not all of them?) "are comparatively recent and contain Somali remain".²⁹

Some written sources seem to lend support to the theory propounding Somali migrations south- and westwards, especially movements occurring during more recent centuries of the Islamic era. For instance the Futuh al-Habasha, which was written in

²⁹ I. M. Lewis, "The So-Called Galla Graves," p. 106. Having found through carbon-dating that these graves are not older than 250 years, and also convinced that the Oromo were driven out earlier, Dr. Lewis attributes the tumuli he examined to the Somalis. Already wedded to the Galla hypothesis, Dr. Lewis, however, cannot help but suspect that there may be older Oromo relics that he had missed in his sampling.

the sixteenth century, speaks in its enumeration of the participants in the sixteenth century jihad against Ethiopia of a number of what are today huge clan families (widely scattered and too numerous to be contained in any of the traditional political structures) as though they were only small lineage groups in localized areas far to the north and east.³⁰ Therefore, their differentiation into widely dispersed clans, lineages, and diya-paying groups must have taken place since then as a result of rapid population increases and territorial expansion. One elderly Somali scholar, after examining the genealogies of the northern Somali princely families, arrived at the conclusion that two hundred years ago the Somali population could not have been a quarter of its present magnitude.³¹ This multiplication and expansion of the Islamized Somali groups since the sixteenth century may help elucidate the process of Islam's penetration of the interior, but it cannot say anything about the Somali nation's origins. What transpires from our discussion thus far is that while the Somalis have moved up north into the Horn at an indefinite time in the past³² there

³⁰ Shihab ad-Din Ahmad ibn Abdulqadir ibn Salim ibn Uthman al-Jifzani, famous as Arab Faqih, Tuhfat az-Zaman or Futuh al-Habasha (Cairo, 1974), pp. 22, 23, 35, 40, 66, 92.

³² Muhammad Ahmad Ali, personal communication. Muhammad was one of the first Somalis to receive modern education, the spread of which among the Somalis he devoted his life over a forty year period. In retirement now he divided his time between research on Somali Culture and part-time counselling in education.

³¹ Christopher Ehret, "Cushitic Prehistory," in M. L.

was a reverse movement occasioned by increases in population, perhaps periodically given impetus by the desire to spread Islam.

Irrespective of whether they appeared as a nation on the northern shores of the Horn or further to the south, it is clear that the Somalis are indigenous to the northeastern Horn of Africa. What cannot be so easily explained is their strong attachment to, and identification with, the Arab world. In the following few paragraphs we shall try to explore the various means by which Somali striving for Arab identity has found expression, and the Arab elements in the Somali culture that may be said to be behind this otherwise inexplicable campaign.

A cursory examination of Somali history and present conditions in the Somali Democratic Republic will reveal the striking impact the Arabs and their culture have had on the Somalis.³³ Superficially, one encounters this Arab influence if one enquires into the origins of the ethnic name Somali. Out of five popular explanations, three are based on Arabic etymologies, the other two being, naturally enough, from

Bender (ed.) The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia (East Lansing, Michigan, 1976). Dr. Ehret dates the migration of the Somalis from the "Baiso-Somaloid homeland" sometime around the beginning of the Christian Era.

33

The Somali Democratic Republic joined the Arab League in 1974 after eleven years of independence and eleven years of membership in the Organization of African Unity. Since 1974 Arabic has become a second official language, and all public and official announcements, government documents, business and governmental regulatory signs have been required

Amharic and Somali sources.³⁴ These explanations (all of dubious authenticity, as they are nothing more than the fancies of folk literature and philological speculations) nonetheless do express, albeit mythologically, the Somalis' indebtedness to the Arabs.

Since its inception in 1960 the Somali Republic (officially the Somali Democratic Republic as of October 21st, 1969) felt the pressure of outstanding Somali politicians and some Arab Governments which desired it to join the Arab League. Its sentiments, however, proved to be more Islamic than Arabic, for it hosted one Pan-Islamic Conference but

to be transcribed in Arabic parallel with the Somali version.

³⁴Burton, First Footsteps, p. 101. Burton claims, on the authority of the qamus (dictionary, but which one he does not say), that the name Somali has its roots in the Arabic word samala (he thrust out) because an Arab clan head (presumably the ancestor of the Somalis) had thrust out his brother's eye and had to flee Arabia, coming to Somaliland. Ralph Drake-Brockman in his British Somaliland, p. 15 and p. 71 derived the term from the Arabic phrase zu-mal (the wealthy), the son of a wealthy Arab or Indian who inherited his father's vast quantities of wealth and subsequently fathered the Somali race. I. M. Lewis in his Peoples of the Horn of Africa, p. 14, states that the British Military Report on East Africa (1945) claims that Somali comes from Soma bin Tersoma Najashi who ruled from Zaila' to Hafun (as the name Najashi suggests for Ethiopia, but when we are not told). The Somali explanation derives the name from soo (go) and maal (milk), the most likely words a foreigner would hear as his Somali host gave orders for the preparation of the guest's meal, (I. M. Lewis, Peoples, p. 14). The Amharic explanation is related to Soumahe (Amh., heathen), suggesting the religious differences between the Christian Amharas and the Muslim Somalis. See Charles Johnston, Travels in Southern Abyssinia (London, 1844), p. 13.

balked at any suggestion of it joining the Arab League.³⁵ To harbour sentiments of Pan-Islamic brotherhood and solidarity with the neighbouring Arab co-religionists was one thing, but to substitute an Arab identity for the Somali one was quite another. In any case, during the 1960s this Somali attachment to the Arab (Islamic) world frustrated attempts to write the previously unwritten Somali in Latin or locally developed scripts for religious and cultural reasons.³⁶ But on October 21st, 1972, Somali was written in Latin anyway. This important decision, however, posed no difficulties to the campaign for Arab identity which finally achieved political results with the joining of the Arab League by the Somali Democratic Republic on February 14, 1974.

³⁵This conference was held in Mogadishu between Dec. 27, 1965 and Jan. 3, 1966. This Somali attachment to Islamic as differentiated from Arab loyalties is shown by article VI (para. 4) of the now defunct constitution of the Somali Republic which committed the state to solidarity with African and Islamic peoples. During an extended tour of Arab states by the Somali Minister for Somali affairs in April and May of 1966 news got around that the Somali Republic was seeking membership in the Arab League, but the Somali Prime Minister made a categorical denial of any basis to these rumours: see Africa Report, vol. 11, no. 6 (June, 1966). In fact after a visit to Saudi Arabia by the Somali Head of State (August 2-9, 1966), the Somalis and the Saudi Arabians declared in their joint statement that they considered the Somali Republic a "geographical and historical meeting point of Islamic and African cultures". See: the Somali News, August 12, 1966.

³⁶Hussein M. Adam, "A Nation in Search of a Script: the Problem of establishing a National Orthography for Somali," unpublished Master's thesis in African Studies submitted at Makerere University (Kampala, Uganda, 1968); Jeanne Contini, "The Illiterate Poets of Somalis," The Reporter (March 14, 1963), pp. 36-38, an expanded version of which was later published as "Somali Republic: A Nation of Poets in Search of an Alphabet," Africa Report, 8, 11 (December, 1963): pp. 15-18.

Ethnically, continued colonization of the Somali coasts by Arabs and other Muslim Asians has given rise to partially-Somalized communities who, despite their being domiciled in Somaliland for centuries, have nevertheless preserved their Arab culture and display it in all aspects of their life. They are usually met with in the Banaadir ports,³⁷ where they constitute significant proportions of the urban population and attract attention by their distinctive Arab features and dress. Fewer have penetrated inland as shopkeepers and religious leaders in interior towns. Others went further ahead and took to cultivation or the pastoral life of the nomadic Somalis with whom they intermarried. They are totally indistinguishable physically, linguistically, or culturally from the other Somalis, though their recent arrival is still remembered, and their special affinity with the Arabs is recognized.³⁸

Culturally, the Arab (Muslim) impact is most readily seen in coastal population centers where it pervades almost

³⁷The term Banaadir is the plural of Bandar (Persian, port). It is the name by which towns on the southern coast of Somaliland were collectively known to the Arabs and other Asians frequenting that coast. Occasionally they were also known as Maqaadiish (plural of Maqdashu, Mogadishu). Today, the term is applied to refer to the coast containing these towns (from Adale north to Kismayo in the south) and its immediate hinterland.

³⁸For a full identification of the Somalized Arabs consult I. M. Lewis, The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: a General Introduction to Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions (Hargeisa, 1957); also Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 109-110. Some who practice cultivation

all aspects of urban life. Arabo-Persian influences are clearly visible, even to the untrained observer, in the architectural styles on the Somali coasts. The structural design, construction material used, characteristic artistic motif, engravings on wooden doors and windows and all other decorative additions of coastal buildings exhibit Arabo-Persian affinities.³⁹ The science of building permanent dwellings out of stone-and-mortar is unknown to the nomad and the agriculturalist of the countryside though some of that skill has been taken in a simplified form to interior towns founded within the last hundred years. Some of the settlements of the Adal Sultanate, such as Harar and other abandoned ruined towns in northwestern Somaliland, also appear to have been very much influenced by Arab building techniques.⁴⁰ Written sources which ascribe the peopling, if not the founding, of the coastal towns to immigrant groups

within a close proximity of the Banaadir ports have retained some of their Asian features and are collectively known as Gibif Ad (white-skinned).

³⁹J. Monneret de Villard, "I Minareti de Mogadiscio," RSE, III (Rome, 1943), pp. 127-130. Monneret discovered the Persian characteristics of the mosque minarets in Mogadishu; Yinigi L. Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences on Somali Culture," Ethnos, XII, 4 (1947), pp. 153-181. Besides pointing out the architectural influences Grottanelli maintains that all additions to the material culture of the Somalis came from Asia; see also Peter S. Garlake, The Early Islamic Architecture of the East African Coast (London, 1966), for drawings of Mogadishan mosques.

⁴⁰J. M. Watson, "The Historical Background to the Ruined Towns in the West of the Protectorate," Somaliland Journal, I, 2 (Hargeisa, 1955), pp. 120-125; A. T. Curle, "The Ruined

from Southwestern Asia also provide some support for the Asiatic borrowings,⁴¹ and the inscriptions on the most ancient buildings in these towns, which attribute their construction to Persian or Arab masons and benefactors, give further corroboration.⁴²

Most of the tools, utensils, other household ware, ornaments and perfumes, sartorial styles and their colour designs, some of the foodstuffs and the culinary art, etc., that constitute the totality of the urban material culture, are unmistakably of Arab-Islamic derivation as Vinigi Grottanelli has observed:

In some cases, a direct Arab (Mohamedan) origin is self evident: tisbas (Islamic rosaries), wooden tablets, kohl bottles, horse-trappings, most of the silverworks, such as bracelets, anklets, amulet-cases etc., are not only of Arab type, but are often produced by Arab (or Persian) craftsmen living in the coastal towns of Somalia.⁴³

Even the advanced weaving and dyeing techniques of the Ban-aadir, though known nowhere outside this coast, has been credited with some justification to overseas Asiatic influences.⁴⁴ Almost all these elements of the coastal culture are known by their Arabic nomenclature, a fact which

Towns of Somaliland," Antiquity (September, 1937), pp. 315-27.

⁴¹See Chapter three below where Asiatic settlements on the Somali coasts is discussed.

⁴²Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 9-10, 99-100.

⁴³Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," p. 156.

⁴⁴Ibid, pp. 156-57.

undoubtedly identifies the carriers, if not the original source, of these cultural borrowings.⁴⁵

In the countryside, also, some Asiatic cultural influences have been noticed, but with the exception of a few fineries and regalia for ceremonial display, none of them could be traced to an Arab origin. Some scholars who believe that the Somalis forcibly pushed the Oromo peoples and others out of the Horn of Africa account for this feat, among other things, by the Somalis' possession of superior Arab technology.⁴⁶ Of course, this technology, which helped in a war situation, must have been more advanced weaponry. For this reason we shall look at the traditional Somali weaponry and try to see if it owes anything to Arab craftsmanship.

Among the outstanding traditional weapons which the Somalis use the most common item is the dagger (billaawe, amley, toorrey), a double-edged short (occasionally long and arched) cutting blade used in war (for stabbing), hunting and eating, and for all sundry household cutting purposes.⁴⁷ This weapon has been found to be native to the Somali and the Danakil (Afar) country.⁴⁸ It has also been judged to be of great antiquity among these peoples as evidenced by

⁴⁵Andrzej Zaborski, "Arabic Loan-words in Somali: Preliminary Survey," Folia Orientalia, Tome VIII(1967), pp. 125-175.

⁴⁶See above, footnote 18.

⁴⁷I. M. Lewis, Peoples, p. 133.

⁴⁸Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," p. 159.

ancient rock engravings of it in Somaliland,⁴⁹ as well as pictures of this same dagger in Egyptian drawings of the Land of Punt made by Queen Hatshepsut's expedition there.⁵⁰ Another weapon which is just as common and is a perpetual companion of the Somali pastoralist is the spear (Somali, waran). It consists of a wooden shaft made from hard wood, and in length is about two yards. On one end it carries a double-edged blade about a foot long which gradually tapers to a fine point, and on the other end is fixed a cylindrical pointed iron peg used for making the spear stand up-right and thus avoid soiling. The spear and its kin, the javelin (murjin, taraawil), as suggested by their names, appear to be local inventions. However, at least one variety of the Somali spear (one with a slightly triangular blade laterally fastened to the shaft) which has no representation among the wide array of spears used by the Cushitic and Bantu-speaking peoples of East Africa shows some affinity with Indonesian brands.⁵¹ The club (budh), the sling (wadhaf, used now only to drive birds from millet fields), bows and arrows with poisoned heads (qaanso and leeb, respectively), quiver (qabooye) and the shield (qaashaan), which make for the rest

⁴⁹p. Graziosi, L'eta della Pietra in Somalia (Firenze, 1940), p. 2, as reported in Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," p. 159.

⁵⁰G. Revoil, La Vallee du Darror (Paris, 1888), p. 299.

⁵¹Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," p. 166.

of Somali traditional weaponry, show no influence from outside northeast Africa.

Among the weapons worn for ceremonial display of wealth or office and which were originally of foreign contrivance is a decorated type of dagger found in the coastal settlements. Within this category also is a very rare kind of sword which betrays Moroccan or Indonesian influences.⁵² During the fifteenth century Abyssinian armies fighting Muslim forces of which the Somalis constituted a significant proportion were known to use Moroccan swords. In the sixteenth century, during the great jihads, Moroccan adventurers fought with Muslim forces against the Abyssinians, and could thus have imparted their skills to the Somalis.⁵³ The Indonesian motif, however, is equally evident and the possibility of its introduction from that direction during pre-Islamic times is equally plausible.

Wooden sandals, men's skull caps, and musical instruments found in the interior of Somaliland have been related by ethnologists to Indonesian types.⁵⁴ Indeed, Indonesian influences upon the Somalis may be greater than otherwise assumed. The Bajun in southern Somaliland use a fishing canoe which is related to outriggers of Madagascar and

⁵²Ibid, p. 163

⁵³Arab Faqih, Futuh al-Habasha, p. 242.

⁵⁴Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," pp. 167-77.

Indonesia.⁵⁵ The Bajun system of sea-turtle fishing in which the turtle is located by the use of sucking-fish, is also said to be of Indonesian origin.⁵⁶ "Coconut scrapers (called mbusi in Brava), coconut vessels, and the plangi system of dyeing hagog kerchiefs" employed in the southern part of the Banaadir coast are all said to be native to Indo-Melanesia.⁵⁷ What is significant here is that apart from Brava, which historically had stronger ties with the East African coast to the south, these apparently Indonesian influences are not commonly found along the coasts colonized by the Muslim Southwest Asians.⁵⁸ This means that the resemblances are either coincidental (though it is difficult to account for all those by chance similarities) or, more plausibly, that these cultural items were introduced during pre-Islamic times before the Arab and Persian colonization of the Banaadir coast.

The most dramatic and deep-rooted Arab-Islamic influences upon the Somalis, however, are in the non-material aspects of culture and pertain essentially to religion and learning. Though not to the same extent, these influences are common to both city and countryside among the decidedly Islamic

⁵⁶Grottanelli, "Asiatic Influences," p. 157.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 157.

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 180.

Somali citizenry. The most obvious index of this is the Arabic language which, as the medium of religion, business, and all other social activities requiring literary skill, was always taught and propagated throughout the country.⁵⁹ The impact of the Arabic language and the non-material Arab-Islamic culture it expresses is so great that of twenty-two different categories into which Arabic loan-words in Somali were divided by far the largest category consists of verbs, adjectives, and abstract nouns not included in the other categories.⁶⁰

More significant than the language itself is the traditional educational system for which the language served as a medium. All Somali terms pertaining to religion, learning, reading, writing, and education in general are derived from Arabic.⁶¹ Traditional Islamic learning involved two distinct steps and institutions.⁶² At the first stage, at which children learn the Quran, pupils attend Quranic Schools (Arabic: khilwa, Somali: malCamad or dugsi). After finishing their Quranic school (usually in their early or middle 'teens) those who aspire to religious careers as teachers, mosque

⁵⁹I. M. Lewis, Peoples, p. 12; Zaborski, "Arabic Loan-words," p. 125.

⁶⁰Ibid, pp. 169-75

⁶¹Ibid, pp. 149-50

⁶²To my knowledge there are no scholarly studies on Somali traditional education. In putting together the information contained in the following few pages I have,

imams or missionaries then proceed to mosque universities (called zāwiyya if it has residential quarters). Here the students learn religious subjects such as Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), traditions (hadīth), translations of the Quran (tafsīr), some interpretation depending upon the learning of the teacher (ta'wīl), Islamic law (sharī'ca), and linguistic studies such as the language itself (luġha), grammar (nahw), literature (adab), prosody (ḥarud), etc. This also includes a number of other non-religious subjects such as tārīkh (history) and mantaq (logic). The separation of the two institutions i.e. Quranic schools and mosque universities, which appears to have been a more recent development was necessitated by the fear of children's pilferage and lack of respect for standards of cleanliness required in mosques.

The Quranic school, one of the characteristic features of Muslim societies, is an institution which is as old as Islam. Teaching the youth to learn the Quran is among the Somalis, as in all Muslim societies, a very serious affair. Usually beginning their studies before the age of seven children at first only learn the Quran, but as they progress in age as well as in their studies they accompany it with some Arabic and, especially in urban centers, with arithmetic.

therefore, drawn on my personal childhood experiences in Quranic schools as well as the recent observations of such Quranic and Mosque schools in different parts of the Somali Democratic Republic.

The importance of Arabic lies in the fact that it is the language of the religion. A knowledge of some arithmetic also was always held to be desirable in the Muslim societies which traditionally displayed strong partiality to business pursuits. Among the Somalis arithmetic is important for those aspiring to religious careers since such learned personalities are frequently called upon to divide inheritance according to the proportions prescribed in the Shari'ca, and also to assess and divide compensations for injuries, the latter being an event of frequent occurrence among the turbulent pastoralists.

Education at this stage aims at teaching the children Arabic diction and making them commit the Quran--as much of it as possible--to memory. The pupils use slates or tablets (usually wooden) on which the teacher writes a few verses (āyāt) from the Quran. When the pupil memorizes these the slate is washed and the succeeding set of verses are then assigned. The student follows this procedure starting with shorter chapters and shorter lessons and progresses to longer and harder assignments until the whole Quran is covered.⁶³ Somewhere along the way, as the student becomes more familiar with the Arabic language and as lessons become longer, the pupil gives up the slate and starts getting his lessons from the Quran itself.

⁶³This is a very old Arab method of learning which most certainly was adopted from the Arabs. The circumstances of its introduction, however, are unknown.

Among the nomads and in certain rural villages lessons begin in the last third of the night. This may have originated because of the need for children to herd livestock or work in the fields during the day, but it has now become a tradition, and even where there is no need for their services children still wake up before three O'clock and sit around bonfires by the lights of which they read their lessons until daybreak. Each student is required to bring a load of firewood every evening for the next morning's fire. The teacher joins his pupils, who are disciplined by senior students during his absence, after the morning prayers and tests them individually on the previous lessons before giving them more assignments. Failure usually calls for corporal punishment and, more seriously, public humiliation in front of one's peers.

At the higher level, also, the method of education is the same classical Arab system of learning. Normally students sit in front of the teacher, forming a series of semi-circular rows facing him. The teacher, or one of his students (at times an advanced student assistant), reads aloud from the text and sheikh explains it with the class following from their individual (sometimes shared) texts. Since the teacher rather than the institution is the center of the system, students usually have to travel to different places to study different subjects under different masters. In this personal method of instruction the student chooses the subject

he wants to study and the master under whom he wishes to study, and even sets his own pace. There is no set syllabus, and the teacher graduates his student when he feels he has acquired enough knowledge. Graduation here, which is the same classical Arab system of personal certification, means that the master allows his student to use his name and texts in his future career.

In the countryside, teachers frequently wander to the farthest corners of the country collecting students and depositing graduates as they move from one settlement to the next. This roving institution depends mainly on the hospitality of the different communities whose livestock, farms, babies, and weddings they bless and for whom they write amulets (Qardhaas or Hirsi) and prepare prophylactic potions (^CAshar). During their short stays in the farming villages or at nomadic encampments the Sheikh and his students are feasted.

A few places such as Harar, "the Timbuktu of East Africa," Mogadishu, Brava, Hargeisa, and many lesser centers of learning, especially Tarjooa settlements (Jama^Ca), have acquired national renown and attract students from all over the country. A number of students travel abroad to such famous centers of learning as the Azhar University in Cairo, Zabid, and San^Caa in the Yaman. Others go to the Holy Sanctuaries, Mecca and Medina, and remain there a number of years in quest of learning and blessings before returning home. Through these

returnees elements and values of the Arab culture are constantly brought over to Somaliland, and the Arabization of the Somalis is thus continued.

As might be expected, Arab cultural influences upon the Somali were not all positive. Along with the constructive additions there came some negative contributions. These are elements involving moral laxity such as prostitution, gambling and the consumption of drugs and alcoholic drinks. Their Arab provenance is proven by the fact that they are associated almost exclusively with the urban life in which the Arab influences, as we have already seen, figure so much. Though the circumstances of their introduction into the country is not altogether clear, nevertheless linguistics leave no doubt of their Arab origin.⁶⁴

Having said all this, the small group of Arab and other Asian immigrants aside, the inhabitants of Somaliland belong ethnically and culturally to the Cushitic speaking family of nations in northeastern Africa. Islam and other Arab cultural influences might well have given Arab-Islamic clothing to Somali ethnic identity (they always appeal to their commonality of religion when making peace or seeking mass support for any cause), but anthropologically and linguistically the Somalis could hardly be said to be different from the neighboring Oromo, fellow Cushites who unlike the Somalis make no

⁶⁴The Somali terms for drugs (*hashish*), alcoholic beverage (*khamri*), prostitute (*qabhad* or *sharmuuta*), sodomite

claims to Arab ancestry. Moreover, as already hinted at and as will be shown in subsequent chapters, it seems that Arab and other Asiatic settlements along the Somali coasts were neither great numerically nor as influential politically as claimed by some authorities. To understand properly how the Arab influences came to exercise such a telling effect on Somali cultural attitudes we need to look at the historical development of these influences. It will be the task of the remaining chapters to trace the course of their development from their ancient beginnings to the present.

(makhnuud), a game of cards (li^cib), etc., are all loan-words from Arabic. For a partial list of the Arabic loan-words in Somali pertaining to moral laxity consult Zaborski, "Arabic Loan-Words," p. 168. Needless to say all Somali moral breaches cannot be blamed upon the Arabs.

The Horn of Africa in Ancient and Classical Times

The earliest possible mention of the land of the Somalis is contained in some "semi-legendary Akkado-Sumerian sources" of third millennium B.C. It seems that these sources referred to the Horn of Africa as the "Black land of Meluha," whence came ships that visited Mesopotamian ports for trade purposes.¹ We say "possible mention" because there is no general agreement among scholars as to the true identity of this "Black land of Meluha".² What is more, so far no other dependable historical document substantiating these "semi-legendary" reports regarding the trade contacts in that era between the Persian Gulf area and the Horn of Africa has come to light. At the same time the mere fact that these uncertain reports suggest ancient commercial ties between Somaliland and parts of Arabia holds a specially intriguing interest for us. Indeed, in the light of historical literature contemporary with the Mesopotamian legends and dealing with the Horn of Africa's commercial importance at the time, one should not

¹Yu. M. Kobischanov, "On the Problem of Sea Voyages of Ancient Africans in the Indian Ocean," JAH, VI 2 (1965), pp. 137-141, reprinted as "The Sea Voyages of Ancient Ethiopians in the Indian Ocean," Proceedings of the The Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies 1966 (Addis Ababa, 1969), pp. 19-23.

²George Fadio Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian

discard these reports simply as legendary or irrelevant.

The Horn of Africa had a more bountiful environment than the desert conditions of Arabia, a fact testified to, as will be shown presently, by ancient Egyptian reports. It was, therefore, bound to attract the attention of the desert dwellers of Arabia across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. That alone could have secured a profitable trading position for the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa vis-a-vis their neighbours on the opposite shore of the Red Sea. And indeed that might have been the case at the beginning. But there was more. The northeastern coasts of Somaliland gained a commercial renown very early in history mainly as a producer of valuable medicinal and aromatic gums and resins. Myrrh and frankincense, native only in Southern Arabia and the Red Sea coasts of Somaliland, were in great demand throughout the civilizations and centuries of the ancient world as two "of the most ancient and precious articles of commerce".³ Frankincense, "a resin exuded from various species of *Boswellia*," was used in the manufacture of "incense, perfumes, and ointments".⁴ Myrrh, "a gum from the bark of a small tree,"

Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times, (hereafter, Arab Seafaring), (Princeton, New Jersey, 1951), p. 6, who identifies Melukkhā (our Meluha) on insufficient evidence with present-day Uman.

³Anon, "The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," Select portions from the version edited by W. H. Schoff, Somaliya (Mogadishu, 1967), p. 64; Edward Naville, The Temple of Leir al-Bahri (London, 1854), p. 22.

⁴"The Periplus," p. 62.

also figured in the preparation of these products, and in addition "was an ingredient of the Hebrew anointing oil..., and was also one of the numerous components of the celebrated Kyphi of the Egyptians, a preparation in fumigations, medicine, and embalming".⁵ Ancient Egyptians, the Hebrews, the Assyrians, the Persians, and the Macedonians were all known to have cherished these fragrant products. It is conceivable that other peoples of that ancient world similarly regarded these goods with esteem. They paid high prices for their delivery, and periodically even fitted out their own expeditions by land or by sea to Southern Arabia and the Horn of Africa to acquire them at their source.⁶

Though the "semi-legendary Akkado-Sumerian sources" referred to suggest maritime relations between the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, most sources extant point to stronger ties between Egypt and that part of Africa. At the time the Gulf of Aden coast of Somaliland was known to the Egyptians as the "Land of Punt".⁷ Frankincense and Myrrh were so significant for Egyptian religion and other ritual

⁵ Ibid, p. 62; G. Maspero, New Light on Ancient Egypt, second edition, (New York, 1909), p. 98; Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 22.

⁶ "The Periplus," pp. 62-68.

⁷ Because of the fact that Myrrh and Frankincense are native in Southern Arabia as well as in Somaliland scholars do not agree which one of them is the "Land of Punt" of the Egyptians. Some take it to include both sides of the Gulf of Aden, others apply it exclusively, as the case may be, to either side so as to suit their own theories. While products

practices that they not only guaranteed the maintenance of ties between Egypt and the Horn of Africa, but, in times, the "Land of Punt" acquired in the minds of the Egyptians a certain quality of sacredness, as the home of the goods necessary for divine propitiation.⁸ The "Land of Punt" came to be known alternatively as "Gods Land", and was even reputed to have been the original home of the godly Pharaohs.⁹ Indeed there might have been more to these ancient ties between Egypt and the Horn of Africa than the simple exchange of goods. Some pre-dynastic Egyptian inscriptions, we are told, recorded the arrival in Egypt of immigrants from the "Land of Punt".¹⁰ It is also mentioned that the son of Khufu (Cheops), the Pharaoh for whom the great Pyramid was constructed, had under his employ one officer who was originally from the "Land of Punt".¹¹

of both coasts of the Gulf of Aden might have reached Egyptian markets it appears from the report of Hatshepsut's expedition that the Egyptians gave the name to, and dealt mainly with, the Somali coast.

⁸ Edward Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 22.

⁹ Muhammad ^CAbdulfatah Hindi, "Tārīkh as-Sūmāl fī 'l-^Cusūr al-Qadīmah," Somaliya (Mogadishu, 1967) p. 13; Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 22; J. H. Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt, Vol. III (Chicago, 1906) Record 116.

¹⁰ Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 12; General Muhammad Ibrāhīm Ahmad, The History of Somaliland: The Ancient Land of Punt (cyclostyled, n.d.) p. 13; L. Cottrell, The Lost Pharaohs (New York, 1961), p. 16. This Puntite migration may be behind the belief that some ancient Egyptians thought of themselves as originating in the Land of Punt.

¹¹ Hindi, "Tārīkh as-Sūmāl," pp. 12-13; Sheikh ^CAbdurahman an-Najār, al-Islām fī 'S-Sūmāl (Cairo, 1973) p. 53. This

Documentation for this commercial connection between Egypt and the northern Somali coast is plentiful enough to afford a fairly clear outline picture of its chronology and depth. During the reign of the early dynasties the trade in incense was largely in the hands of the "People of Punt and God's Land," who brought these goods "overland to the Upper Nile" and was "not sought out by the Pharaohs" directly.¹² However, by the time of the fifth Dynasty, the 26th century B.C., the Egyptians began to fit out their own expeditions which sailed directly to the sources of the merchandise. What made the Egyptians embark on these trips at that time cannot be ascertained now. It might have been because the Punt merchants were charging too much for their monopolistic services. It could have been because an intermediary power was controlling the flow of incense in exchange for expensive political and or economic favours. Or it might have been simply because the Egyptians has at that time reached, in the development of their maritime power and knowledge of geography and navigation, a stage which precluded any need for dependen

hinted at extra-commercial relationship between the ancient Egyptians and the contemporary inhabitants of the Horn of Africa is lent some support by preliminary linguistic investigation which reveals similarity between Egyptian and Somali terms for some cultural elements and natural phenomena. However, these linguistic studies are not exhaustive enough as to afford conclusive evidence. See Hindi, "Tārīkh as-Šumā" pp.13-16.

¹² "The Periplus," p. 65; A Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt (New York, 1894) p. 505; G. Maspero, New Light on Ancient Egypt, p. 98.

upon foreigners for the delivery of the goods they imported.

Whatever the reason, the first known Egyptian expedition to the Land of Punt took place during the Fifth Dynasty.¹³ The primary aim of the mission was to acquire the aromatic and medicinal products of the country. The expedition, which merited to be recorded as a successful business venture and a credit to the reigning Pharaoh on whose monument its record was preserved, netted "80,000 measures of myrrh from Punt."¹⁴ With occasional trips such as this the Egyptians were gradually breaking the trade monopoly, though for sometime the Puntite continued to dominate it. The Sixth Dynasty continued this tradition making "journeys ... quite frequently by land or by sea to the country of Punt".¹⁵ And so did the Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom (2100-1700 B.C.). It appears that the naval missions during the Middle Kingdom were many and a lot more frequent than at any time before, to the extent that we observe in the Egyptian literature of the time the development of numerous marine yarns so reminiscent of the travel adventures of Sinbad the sailor and Suleiman the Sirafi in medieval Arab and Persian literature.¹⁶

The most authentic piece of historical literature treating the ancient history of Somaliland, and especially its

¹³ George Fadlo Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 7, "the Periplus," p. 65.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 62.

¹⁵ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 7; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, pp. 10-11; Erman.

connection with ancient Egypt, is found in the diary of an Egyptian commercial expedition despatched there by Queen Hatshepsut of the New Kingdom in the early part of the fifteenth century B.C.¹⁷ This expedition was sent there, like the others preceeding it, primarily for the acquisition of the fragrant gums and resins used in Egyptian homes and, especially, in their tombs, temples, and other places of religious significance. Hatshepsut's mission has a double importance. Firstly, it marks a renewal of contacts between Egypt and the Somali coast severed during the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos about a century and half earlier and the exhaustion in the meantime of Egypt's stores of Puntite gums and frankincense. Secondly, and more importantly for the purposes of this work, the report of the expedition furnishes us with the oldest eyewitness account of the characteristics of the people living in the Horn of Africa and the cultural conditions obtaining there.

In all, the expedition consisted of five huge sail-boats. Each one had aboard one hundred men consisting of crew, soldiers, porters, scribes, and artists.¹⁸ Besides merchandise intended for barter, the Egyptians brought with them a

Life in Ancient Egypt, pp. 508-510.

¹⁷Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 7; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 4; Nājar, al-Islām fi 'S-Sūmāl, p. 53; Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 21, 22.

¹⁸Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 22; Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 7; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 5.

sizeable quantity of presents with which to buy the good will of the Puntite authorities, and the commander of the expedition carried from his queen a diplomatic note recommending the mission to the monarch of Punt.¹⁹

By our reckoning from the descriptions of the expedition, the Egyptians landed, after two months journey due south down the Red Sea, at a spot not far from the present site of ^cAlūla, in the neighbourhood of which the King of Punt resided. There is, as yet, no agreement among scholars as to the exact location of the port which the Egyptians visited, though it is generally accepted that it was within the confines of the present district of ^cAlūla in northeastern Somaliland, just to the west and southeast of Ras Guardafui.²⁰ Here the Egyptians were welcomed with great hospitality, and were asked many questions about Egypt and its royal family as

¹⁹Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 23; Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 512; Najār, al-Islām fī 's-Sūmāl, p. 53.

²⁰Mr. Hindi thinks it could have been Ras Felik, Cape Elephant of the "Periplus" (Boolimoog in Somali) or Ollog, a village about three kilometers west of Ras Guardafui. Some of the local residents however, insist that it was Daamo, immediately to the west of Ras Guardafui. Maspero (New Light on Ancient Egypt, p. 77) and Naville (The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 22) both think that the port was situated between Ras Felik and Cape Guardafui. In his "On the Neighbourhood of Bunder Marayah," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society vol. 42 (1872) p. 62, Capt. S. B. Miles reported he had seen a salt creek "half a mile long," near Mur'anyo west of Alula, and a lagoon "affording very fair shelter for native craft," at 'Alula itself. The latter was reported in Report on Archaeological Reconnaissance in Somalia 1975 by H. N. Chittick.

well as the reason why they (the Egyptians) had temporarily discontinued their visits to the Land of Punt, in an apparent reference to the frequent contacts before the Hyksos interregnum.²¹ The report declares that members of the mission were continuously feasted and entertained, and the head guest of honour was boarded in the king's residence during the whole period of the mission's stay.²² In exchange for their cloth, swords and daggers, bows, and ornamental objects the Egyptians collected "all the goodly fragrant woods of God's Land (Land of Punt) heaps of myrrh resin, fresh myrrh trees, ebony, pure ivory, green gold of Emu, cinnamon wood, khyst wood, ihmut incense, souter incense, eye cosmetic, apes and monkeys, dogs, skins of southern panther, natives and their children".²³ It is pertinent to mention here that the most important items among the "marvels of the country of Punt" obtained by this expedition were myrrh and frankincense, clearly the object of the trip, and the like of which "never was brought ... for any king who has been since the

²¹Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 23; Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 511; Najār, al-Islām fī 's-Sūmāl, p. 53.

²²Hindī, Tārīkh as-Ṣūmāl, p. 7; Najār al-Islām fī 's-Sūmāl, p. 53.

²³Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, pp. 24-25; Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 512. The importation of natives and their children implies slave trade, but it has been suggested by some authorities (i.e. Mr. Hindī, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 9 and Najār, al-Islām fī 's-Sūmāl, p. 54) that a number of Puntites had voluntarily migrated to Egypt by riding back

beginning".²⁴

The way the Egyptians were received and the questions they were asked about the conditions back home and the health of the Pharaoh reveal a strong brotherly concern on the part of the Puntites. This is strange considering the distance and the mass of peoples and nations separating the two countries. Stranger still are the drawings which the Egyptian artist made of the people of Punt. They are pictured as resembling the Egyptians in clothing, colour, coiffure, and physical built.²⁵ How much of this can be attributed to artistic stylization on the part of the drawer cannot be determined at the moment with certainty. One thing is sure: the artist felt at home among the Puntite enough to forget about the obvious differences between the two peoples,²⁶ of which there must have been at least a few glaring examples.

In their drawings the Egyptians depicted the physical environment they witnessed. They portrayed a climate which by Egyptian standards was abundant in rainfall, and a grass-land ecology with some trees inhabited by herds and swarms of wildlife. On the surface this may not bear much resemblance

with the expedition, which fact might be the subject of this report.

²⁴Naville, The Temple of Deir el-Bahri, p. 25; Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 512.

^{25c}Abdulmun^{cim} CAbdulhalim, in a lecture delivered at the Egyptian Cultural Center in Mogadishu 1958 (cyclostyled), also personal communication.

²⁶With the exception of the Puntite Queen's obesity so graphically depicted.

to present conditions in northeastern Somaliland. The apparent discrepancy, however, can easily be accounted for by the fact of the gradual dessication of the great Sahara Desert and its encroachment upon bordering Sahelian belt of which the Somali Horn of Africa forms the eastern extremity. The 1972-75 drought which swept this Sahelian belt was an instance albeit of dramatic proportions, of a process which has been slowly taking place over the millenia.²⁷ Of course, the mission's arrival could have coincided with a rainy season or after one of these infrequent rain storms which dramatically change the face of the earth.²⁸ Except for this minor climatic point the picture drawn by the Egyptians of Puntite culture, of round huts, short-horned cattle, donkeys, and dogs, but with no mention of agriculture, could be very compatible with a modern description of the Somalis' nomadic style of existence. One notable exception is the absence of the camel from the Egyptians pictures, though today the camel forms the backbone of the Somalis' pastoral life and possessions.²⁹

²⁷ In his "on the Neighbourhood of Bunder Marayah," JRGS, 42 (1872) pp. 71, 75, 76, Captain Miles claims to have seen an elephant hunter in the district though today the climate of that area cannot support elephant life. On a trip to 'Aldla in 1975 this writer was told in passing by some local residents that the area which is today totally denuded had more grass and trees not long ago.

²⁸ Examples of such storms occurred in 1971, 1972 and 1973.

²⁹ I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy, throughout the book and in most of Dr. Lewis's works about the Somalis. The absence of the camel from the Horn of Africa at the time

Despite this recorded similarity between the Puntite and the present Somali inhabitants of the Horn of Africa, we really cannot be sure whether the inhabitants of the Land of Punt were the direct ancestors of the Somalis or not.³⁰ We cannot be sure either of the territorial extent of the Land of Punt; whether it was limited to the northeastern coastal districts of the present Somali Democratic Republic or not; whether this king residing near 'Alūla was the king of all the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa or not; and whether there were other kings and communities unnoticed by the Egyptian recorders.

Be that as it may, the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (an anonymously authored merchants guidebook³¹ to the Indian Ocean and its Red Sea and Persian Gulf adjuncts) written around A.D. 50, authoritatively reported that the land of the Somalis (known to this Greek author and also to all medieval Arab Geographers and historians as the Berbers, emphatically differentiated from the Berbers of North Africa) extended from Bab el-Mandeb in the northwest to the Banaadir coast in the southeast. The author of the Periplus listed a number of prosperous commercial towns he visited on the Somali coast

apparently supports the theories which claim that it was introduced into the continent by the Romans during the first century of the Christian era.

³⁰

See above footnote 30 of Chapter One on page 25.

³¹

In his "The dating and the significance of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," in H. Naville Chittick and Robert I. Rotberg (eds.) East Africa and the Orient (New York, 1975)

the most important of whom were Avalites (most likely Zaila^c) Malao (Berbera), Mundis (Hfis), Mosyllum (Ras Hantara) the market and Cape of Spices immediately before the coast trends south round the Cape³², Opone (Hafun) and a number of lesser villages southwards down the Indian Ocean coast.

The culture described in the Periplus bears a close affinity with that of the present Somali people, though some of the trade goods exported from the country, such as cinnamon, were not, contrary to the belief of the author of the Periplus, produced there but were imported from further East to Opone and the Market of Spices whence they were transhipped to the West for resale. Politically, the inhabitants of the Horn were described as having no central government and, for that matter, no kingly authorities. They consisted of numerous, independent, small-town communities ruled by their "separate" chiefs who recognized no higher authorities.³³ Many writers have claimed that the Indian Ocean Somali coast was at the time under the rule of Mapharitic (south Arabian) princes.³⁴ From what we can make out of the Periplus, the

p. 154 Gervase Mathew feels that it was an official report on the traffic of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

³² In his unpublished Report on Archaeological Reconnaissance in Somalia 1975, H. Neville Chittick suggests that "some remarkable wall-like features cut out of rock," to the east of the present village of Damo may be the remains of "the Market of Spices of the Periplus".

³³ "The Periplus,: p. 13.

³⁴ William Vincent, The Commerce and Navigation of the

area referred to was to the south of the Somali coast.³⁵ Moreover, what was interpreted by these authorities as an actual South Arabian rule appears to have been merely a monopoly of trade relations with that coast.

Arab contacts with the peoples of the Horn of Africa also go back to pre-Christian centuries. Suitably located between the civilizations of Egypt, the Levant and the Mediterranean in the west and those of Persia and the Indian sub-continent to the east, and bound by sea on three sides, the Arabs, especially those of the south, embarked on a seafaring career very early in their history. "Sabaea, Hadramawt, and Oman," states William Vincent, "were the residence of navigators in all ages, from the time that history begins to speak of them; and there is every reason to imagine that they were equally so, before the historians acquired a knowledge of them, as they have since continued down to the present age".³⁶ It has even been alleged that the great powers of the ancient and classical worlds were averse to maritime activities, and so it devolved upon the Arabs to carry overseas trade among them, as well as between them and other sources of the trade goods.³⁷ They "were the first navigators

Ancients in the Indian Ocean (hereafter, Vincent, The Commerce and Navigation) Vol. II (London, 1807), p. 45; Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, p. 2; Enrico Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 147.

³⁵"The Periplus," p. 14; G. A. Wainwright, "Early Foreign Trade in East Africa," Man, XLVII, 161 (Nov., 1947), p. 144.

³⁶Vincent, The Commerce and Navigation, p. 63.

³⁷Ibid, p. 62; F. B. Pearce, Zanzibar: The Island

of the Indian Ocean, and the first carriers of Indian" and African produce to the West.³⁸ In the third century B.C. "both land and sea trade between Southern Arabia and Egypt were largely in the hands of Arabs".³⁹ And according to Agatharchides, that great second century B.C. president of the Alexandrian Library, the Arabs had centuries earlier established a commercial empire between East and West, even sending out colonies or factories to India.⁴⁰ These far-flung trading operations of the South Arabians were the basis of the Arabs prosperity and the appellations of Arabia Eudaemon, and Arabia the Blessed. Agatharchides's report is born out by Artemidorus (c. 100 B.C.)⁴¹ who attested to the prosperity of the Arabs accruing from their commercial and maritime self-extension, and also by pliny (A.D. 23-77), the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (c. 50 A.D.), and Cosmas Indicopleustes (early sixth century A.D.), who all confirm the existence of Arab trading colonies in the west Indian ports.⁴²

As the source of gold, ivory, incense, tortoise shells, ostrich feathers, hides and skins, and live pet animals Africa

Metropolis of Eastern Africa (London, 1920), p. 20.

³⁸ Vincent, The Commerce and Navigation, pp. 2-60.

³⁹ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 21. (Itallics are mine).

⁴⁰ Vincent, Commerce and Navigation, p. 328; Hadi Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation (London, 1928), p. 47.

⁴¹ Pearce, Zanzibar, p. 20.

⁴² Vincent, Commerce and Navigation, p. 329.

was one of the areas visited by the Arabs for commercial purposes. The Somali Horn of Africa, famous since the early dynasties of Egypt for its aromatic products and besides only a stone's throw away from Arabia, was one of the spots on the African continent most frequented by the maritime peoples of Southern Arabia. The "relative ease of navigation in the southern half of the Red Sea, the seafaring disposition of the Southern Arabians and the presence of natural harbours on the African coast" were among the many factors which facilitated the "frequent intercourse between the two shores" so early in history.⁴³ The poverty of the Arabian Peninsula and its periodic overpopulation and continued gradual desiccation, aggravated by occasional droughts, had always forced the Semitic peoples of Arabia not only to be constantly on the look-out for trading opportunities but to migrate, when necessary, to better provisioned neighbouring territories.⁴⁴ A number of such migrations resulted in the Semitic colonization of the Eritrean-Tigrean highlands, and the Gurage-Adari regions of south-central Ethiopia, giving birth to the Abyssinian⁴⁵ Ethiopic languages and culture.⁴⁶ It is to this

⁴³ Yūsuf Faḍl Hasan, The Arabs and the Sudan (London, 1969), p. 12.

⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History, revised edition (New York, 1967), pp. 22-23.

⁴⁵ Modern Ethiopia, an Empire before the overthrow of the royal family in 1974, is a conglomerate of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, mainly of Semitic, Cushitic, and Nilotic groups. The Semitic speaking element of this composite has historically been referred to as the Abyssinians.

⁴⁶ Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History, p. 24.

population movement, together with the conversion of the Abyssinians to Christianity, that we attribute the mythological claims of the recently deposed Ethiopian royal family of descent from Solomon.

The commercial Arab empire solidly established by the third century B.C. between the Mediterranean Sea in the north to Rhapta in the south, and the East African coast in the west to Western India in the east, was challenged soon thereafter by merchants and navies from both East and West. It all happened accidentally. Early in that third century B.C. the Greek rulers of Egypt, the Ptolemies, initiated a policy of expansion down the African Red Sea coast. "Their purpose was to catch elephants [the tanks of the ancient world] for the wars against the Seleucids of Syria [who menaced the security of Egypt with their Indian elephants], though no doubt they did not ignore the incense, ebony, ivory and other valuables".⁴⁷ They founded permanent bases on the Eritrean coast, and soon extended their interests inland with the establishment during the reign of Ptolemy III (245-222 B.C.) of a Greek post at Aksum.⁴⁸ This elephant hunting Greek policy in northeast Africa lasted one hundred years only. After that, relations were maintained by merchants dealing in incense and other products. The companies financed for the

⁴⁷Wainwright, "Early Foreign Trade." p. 144; also Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 19.

⁴⁸Wainwright, "Early Foreign Trade." p. 144.

Incense trade during the second century B.C. , following the cessation of the elephant hunting expeditions, gradually extended their field of operations down the African coast until they rounded the eastern Horn of Africa, and by the first century B.C. explored to the East African coast of the Indian Ocean.⁴⁹ A coin of Ptolemy X (115-80 B.C.) found at Masani, to the north of Dar es-Salaam by a short distance, show how far and fast Greek commerce was growing along the East African littoral.⁵⁰

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea testifies to a brisk trade between the southern shore of the Gulf of Aden and Roman Egypt.⁵¹ Muza (modern Mokha) on the Yamani coast, which up until then prospered as the most cosmopolitan trade, and collecting, center for merchandise from Arabia, Africa, India, the Far East, Egypt, and Mediterranean lands was beginning its journey of decline and was being fast eclipsed by the prospering ports of Adulis on the Eritrean coast and Mosyllum and Opone on the Somali coast as the chief beneficiaries of this East-West trade.⁵² Slightly earlier (first

⁴⁹ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁰ Wainwright, "Early Foreign Trade," p. 144.

⁵¹ "The Periplus," pp. 11-13.

⁵² Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, p. 7; Gervase Mathew, "The East African Coast Until the Coming of the Portuguese," in R. Oliver and G. Mathew (eds.), History of East Africa, 1 (London, 1966), pp. 94-96.

century B.C.) the Greeks discovered the navigational value of the Monsoon winds and, consequently, established direct trade links with India, thus by-passing the Arab middlemen.⁵³

The nations of the East also began to reach out to the West in attempts to do away with Arab brokerage and instead establish direct trade ties with the ultimate buyers of their merchandise in Africa and further west. Indians, especially, were crowding in, and asserting their right to a share in the carriage of the East-West and the Indian Ocean trade. We learn of their presence in this trade traffic for the first time during the fourth century B.C.. A naval expedition, despatched by Alexander the Macedonian to conquer the island of Socotra, was supposed to have successfully concluded its "task by defeating the Indians settled there".⁵⁴ By the second century B.C. "already ... Socotra had acquired its cosmopolitan character, with Indians, Arabs, Greeks, and probably Persians and Africans mingling in its markets".⁵⁵ In the first century B.C., it is reported that Indians constituted the most significant element among a number of ethnic

⁵³ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 24, and many other authorities. However, the best evidence for this seems to be the writing, sometimes during the first century A.D., of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea which describes a new world and new opportunities, apparently discovered earlier but at the time still not very well-known.

⁵⁴ Richard Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence at Massawa, The Dahlak Islands and the Horn of Africa," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, vol. XII, No.1 (Addis Ababa, Jan. 1974), p. 185.

⁵⁵ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 22.

groups carrying on business with the Island,⁵⁶ At the time of the Periplus Indians hailing from the northwestern ports of Ariaca and Barygaza were ubiquitously found in the coastal towns of Somaliland, bringing to these markets such Indian products as "wheat, rice, clarified butter (ghee), sesame oil, cotton cloth ... girdles," and cane sugar.⁵⁷ They were seen trading with the Ethiopian port of Adulis.⁵⁸ Recent archaeological finds including a ring bearing Indian inscription and "a hoard of 103 Kushana gold coins from northwestern India" confirm this Ethiopian connection.⁵⁹ The Periplus also confirms Indian presence in the island of Socotra whose population was reported to have been "foreigners, a mixture of Arabs and Indians and Greeks, who have emigrated to carry on trade there".⁶⁰ The exportation of coconut oil, native in India, from East Africa at the time of the Periplus has also been interpreted as an indication of a much older connection, direct or indirect, between East Africa and India.⁶¹

⁵⁶Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence," p. 185.

⁵⁷"The Periplus," p. 13.

⁵⁸Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence," pp. 185-186; "The Periplus," p. 11.

⁵⁹Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence," p. 186; Kobischanov, "The Sea Voyages of Ancient Ethiopians," p. 22.

⁶⁰"The Periplus," p. 19.

⁶¹Pearce, Zanzibar, p. 32. Pearce goes on to hypothesize that while Arabs might have dominated the carriage of the goods between India and East Africa, the actual bartering and purchase of merchandise was in the hands of the Indian merchants.

There are indications that Africans, too, and in particular the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa, were competing with the Arabs and fitting out their own ships for trading, and sometimes piratical, purposes. In most of the literature dealing with Africa's relations with the outside world we are told only about foreigners coming to the continent and going away with chained Africans as merchandise to be sold abroad.⁶² It is not inconceivable, however, that there were movements of African peoples in the opposite direction in addition to the involuntary slave migrations. The topic has not been properly explored yet, and in the absence of bona fide data it is only prudent that we refrain from speculating on the point. The little evidence that we do have indicates "that as early as the second and first centuries B.C., the inhabitants of Somalia sometimes, even though rarely, crossed the Indian Ocean. Later on, such sea voyages were also occasionally made".⁶³ The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea states that the Berbers of the Horn of Africa were engaged in maritime trade and that part of their spices, ivory, tortoise-shells, myrrh and frankincense exported to Arabia were carried in small craft of their own contrivance.⁶⁴

⁶² As far as Black Africa is concerned the literature dealing with Ethiopian conquests of Yaman in the third and sixth centuries A.D. constitute the only two exceptions to this tradition.

⁶³ Kobitschanov, "The Sea Voyages of Ancient Ethiopians," p. 20.

⁶⁴ "The Periplus," p. 11; Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 42.

Despite these Greek, Roman, Indian, and African pressures upon them, the Arabs continued, in the first two centuries of the Christian Era, to play a preponderant role in the East-West and Indian Ocean trade. In particular the trade of the Horn, and the eastern coast of Africa, was largely in their hands. Muza (Mokha) was a place "crowded with Arab shipowners and seafaring men, and was busy with the affairs of commerce; for they carried on trade with the far-side coast (Eritrea and Somaliland) and with Barygaza, sending their ships there".⁶⁵ More than that one of the Yamani states, by some ancient arrangement among them, controlled the trade, if not the politics, of the southern Azanian (southern Somalia-Kenyan-Tanzanian) Coast, sending "thither many large ships; using Arab captains and agents, who are familiar with the natives and intermarry with them, and who know the whole coast and understand the language".⁶⁶ With regard to India we have the testimony of Pliny, the Periplus, and Cosmas Indicopleustes for the persistence of Arab factors and merchant colonies there down to the sixth century A.D.⁶⁷ Things were not much different in the Persian Gulf either. There too the Arabs were dominant. As will be shown presently, the Persian Gulf remained down to the middle of the third century A.D. essentially an Arab lake not only from a commercial point of view but even at times also from a military point of view.

⁶⁵"The Periplus," p. 16. Italics are mine.

⁶⁶Ibid, p. 14.

⁶⁷See above footnote 42 on page 57.

Indian, African, and Greco-Roman commercial expansion made significant encroachments upon the Arab commercial empire without really destroying it. The coup de grace was dealt to Arab dominance by the sea-oriented, Persian Sasanid Dynasty. The first Emperor of this dynasty, Ardashir I (225-241 A.D.), built or rebuilt at least eleven ports.⁶⁸ Half a century after Ardashir, it was reported that Emperor "Naresh (293-302 A.D.) had relations with the "Zand Afrik Shah," i.e. the king of the Zang nation of Eastern Somaliland".⁶⁹ At the time Arab influence was still so great that even the Iranian province of Khuzistan came to be know alternatively as Arabistan.⁷⁰ There was at least one occasion when Arabs crossed the Persian Gulf from al-Bahrayn (c. 310 A.D.) to wage war against the Persians. This did not go unavenged for "Emperor Shapur II repaid the visit, slaughtering many of the people of al-Bahrayn and settling Persian colonists there," thus wresting control of the Persian Gulf from the Arabs.⁷¹ By the middle of the fifth century A.D. the Sasanids were masters of the Indian Ocean trade as well.⁷² Sixth-century African and European reports on the Indian Ocean trade complain bitterly about Persian monopolistic control of the sea lanes between Adulis and Ceylon, the two termini respectively

⁶⁸ Hādī Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation, p. 62.

⁶⁹ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 38.

⁷⁰ Hādī Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation, p. 50.

⁷¹ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 38.

⁷² Hādī Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation, p. 65.

of the Greek and Chinese shipping.⁷³ While we have so much literature regarding Persian maritime supremacy, and even an occasional mention of Ethiopian shipping, there is hardly any reference to Arab seafaring during the sixth century, proof enough that Arab shipping was "now playing no noteworthy part on the high seas".⁷⁴ The total domination of the high seas by the Persians can better be appreciated perhaps by examining the name by which China came to be known to the West. The term was Tsinistan and clearly Persian in form, and it was indeed remarkable that even such a travelling geographer as Cosmas Indicopleustes should have used it.⁷⁵ The Persians reached the pinnacle of their successes in the last quarter of the sixth century A.D. when they added the maritime South Arabian states and whatever interests these states had in East Africa to their own possessions, half a century or so before the Arab Muslim onslaught set on. Some writers even suggest that the Persians might have, following their conquest of Yaman, introduced into East Africa "the art of building in stone, the production of lime and cement, wood-carving, and the weaving of cotton".⁷⁶

| The diversion of trade from western Arabia to the Red

⁷³Kobischanov, "The Sea Voyages of Ancient Ethiopians," p. 21; Hourani, Arab Seafaring, pp. 40, 43.

⁷⁴Ibid, pp. 42-43.

⁷⁵Ibid, p. 41. Hādī Hasan adds that the Persians also introduced the Arabs to the Chinese.

⁷⁶Pearce, Zanzibar, p. 351.

Sea lanes, African coasts and the Persian Gulf-Euphrates route (now in Persian hands) spelled disaster for the prosperous culture of Arabia Felix. Here, the breaking of the dam of prosperity, the memory of which is immortalized in the Ma'rib disaster, occasioned the migration of South Arabians northwards.⁷⁷ Some of the South Arabians who were involved in the trade between the African and Arabian coasts of the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea might have moved at that time to the northern coast of Somaliland. But this has yet to be shown to our satisfaction. Neither Arab popular memories, which record only masses of people moving up north to languish in the crippling haven of nomadism, nor Somali traditions take note of any Arab immigration to Somaliland during these pre-Islamic times.

To recapitulate briefly what has been said thus far, it appears that by the third millennium B.C. the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa were beginning to make a name for themselves even in that early stage in the history of international trade. The evidence presented here shows that the Horn of Africa came to the stage of history contemporaneous with dynastic Egypt and other Near Eastern civilizations. It then went on to play a very important role in world trade partly because of its proximity to seafaring peoples, but more importantly because of its production of some of the most prized items of international trade, i.e. myrrh.

⁷⁷Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History, pp. 24-25.

frankincense, ostrich feathers, tortoise shells, rare pet animals, slaves, etc. Commercial ties were established between the Horn of Africa and the leading civilizations of the time and it appears, from circumstantial outside sources such as the "semi-legendary Akkado-Sumerian" reference cited above, that the inhabitants of Somaliland were active, even if they did not take a lead, in the development of these relations. Available evidence shows that the Egyptians were the first people to deal with the Horn of Africa, and that their supplies of northeastern African merchandise were at the beginning brought to them by people from that area. This was to change with the rise of an Egyptian commercial fleet in the Red Sea by the time of the Fifth Dynasty. Sometime before the third century B.C. South Arabian maritime states created for themselves an extensive trade empire encompassing the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf waters, and as a result came to monopolize the trade of the Horn for centuries afterwards. Indians and Greeks contested the Arab dominance, but it was the Sasanid Persians who finally overcame them.

One thing is certain. The peoples of the Eastern Horn of Africa were culturally influenced by this commercial intercourse with other peoples and civilizations. For a number of reasons, however--chief among which can be counted the absence, until recently, of a literary tradition from the Horn itself, the time depth involved, which mocks any recourse to oral

traditions, and, very importantly, the revolutionary changes which have taken place there since then, especially since the introduction of Islam--it is difficult to assess now the significance of the cultural impact these connections might have had.

Of the four peoples (Egyptians, Persians, Indians, and Arabs) most closely associated with the trade of the Horn in ancient and classical times, the Egyptians, judging from contemporary written outside sources and also from the cultural survivals from that age in the present Somali society, seem to have had the greatest impact upon the area. As depicted on the walls of an Egyptian government official's tomb at Luxor, there was a great similarity in the style of construction between Egyptian and Puntite boats.⁷⁸ So were their sails also reported to have been alike. Today the nomadic Somali carries around with him at all times a wooden headrest for the protection of his Afro-coiffure from dust and spoilage, and this pillow is almost a carbon copy of its ancient Egyptian counterpart. Moreover, the pillow is known to the present Somalis by the term "Berkin" or "Barshin" or "Barshi" which bears considerable resemblance to the Egyptian term "Barsi" by which the pillow was known to the Egyptians.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 15.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 7. On page 12 of the same source Mr. Hindi further reports that arrows found in the "Dooy" region of Somaliland west of the Shābeelle river, characterized by loose fluffy red sand and jungles of acacia trees, were found to be of the same age and in shape very much alike others discovered in the Fayyum in Egypt. Other hunting equipment

The numerous tumuli (ancient cairn graves) surviving today throughout much of northern Somaliland, can be with some justification seen to be the result of attempts at pyramid building. For like the more elaborate Egyptian pyramids these simple structures contain some of the deceased's material possessions besides his body.⁸⁰ Naturally this smacks of some similarity in religious belief, and maybe even of actual cultural borrowing. In fact there still survives in Somali the word "Hur" applied to a bird which symbolized god known to the ancient Egyptians by that same name.⁸¹ And in certain parts of Somaliland there is found a beautifully coloured bird about the size of a fully-grown chicken which, besides its other Somali name, is alternatively known as "shimbir Fir^Coon", that is Pharaonic bird.⁸² Besides borrowing a number of words for incense from the Land of Punt,⁸³ the Egyptians were known to have imported from there a god called Besa or Bisou.⁸⁴

found in the same "Dooy" area also show great resemblance to weaponry unearthed at Hilwan of Egypt. Mr. Hindi, however, leaves the issue at that and does not clarify the specific affinities he is trying to point to. Pending proper archaeological and linguistic investigations, therefore, we shall refrain from any conclusions.

⁸⁰I. M. Lewis, "The so-called 'Galla Graves' of Northern Somaliland," pp. 103-106; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmal, pp. 15-16.

^{81c}Abd as-Sabuur Marzuq, Adhwa ^CA1a 's-Sūmāl (Cairo, 1962) p. 29.

⁸²Ibid. p. 29.

⁸³Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 514.

⁸⁴Maspero, New Light on Ancient Egypt, p. 18.

As in ancient Egypt the beginning of the new agricultural year in Somaliland is today marked by regular festivities. Bonfires are kindled and glowing charcoal hurled at the four directions to ward off approaching evil forces. This is followed by feasts and a series of songs and dances in which praises are sung to God, the Prophet, and the saints, and the soil is exhorted to greater fertility in the coming year. In certain localized riverine areas the celebrations include stick fight sport competitions, which are held also in rural Egypt where the competition is known as "tahtib". stick fight.⁸⁵

The Indians appear to have had the least influence. Their position was always nebulous. They were there always and everywhere, but were never significant politically or culturally. Persian influence, too, cannot be determined. Some authorities credit them with much of the cultural possessions of the peoples of East Africa.⁸⁶ But even if we temporarily accept this assertion as true it would still be impossible, as research stands today and also because of Persian importance in East Africa during the Middle Ages as well, to tell whether these influences were effected in the classical era during the Middle Ages. The fact that the name, Zanj,⁸⁷

⁸⁵Hindi, "Tārīkh aṣ-Ṣumāl", p. 16.

⁸⁶Hadi Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation, pp. 76, 134-136, Pearce, Zanzibar, p. 351.

⁸⁷While the Arabs refer to other Black Africans they are familiar with by their names, i.e. Ḥabasha, Barābira,

by which East Africans came to be known to Near Easterners is of Persian derivation belies one very important fact: the existence of very strong ties between East Africa and Persia in that era, perhaps stronger and earlier than Arab connections with the area.

South Arabians had the most contacts with the Somali coasts. These early contacts, however, seem to have been fortuitous and historically unimportant. Despite this a number of reputable scholars have gone so far as to insist that there were Himyaritic (South Arabian) colonies on the Somali coast.⁸⁸ This, they imply, resulted in the transfusion of Arab blood into Somali ethnicity. The view of these erstwhile authorities is based partly on supposed "himyaritic" ruins found on the Somali coasts, and partly on the periplus of the Erythraean Sea which makes some vague references to Mapharitic (South Arabian) traditional rights of overlordship over the Azanian coast, and the presence of Arab sea captains and agents there. Strange as this may sound, however, these supposed "Himyaritic" ruins have not been fully investigated so far by any professional archaeologist. And the whole

Takrūrī, Nūbī, Ghanāwī, etc., or by the generic name of as-Sūdān (the Blacks), they have no name for the people of East Africa other than the Persian term of Zanj, excepting the Swāhīlī of course.

⁸⁸Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, pp. 2-3. I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland: a Study in Tribal Islam," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (hereafter, I. M. Lewis, "Sufism", B. of SOAS) 17 (1955), 581-602 and 18(1956), 146-160, J. S. Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia

hypothesis has an unsavory odour about it. It is an uneconomical explanation marred by the palpably presumptuous notion that the local inhabitants were incapable of founding permanent settlements, and hence attributes these ruins to more knowledgeable foreign settlers. It is, to say the least, difficult to see how, by any stretch of the imagination, one can conclude from the scattered and non-corroborative survivals of mute masonry, which have yet to be dated, that there were Arab colonies along these coasts. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea confirms South Arabian trade relations with the Somali coasts, and these connections were carried on by a few Arab sea captains who, because of their frequent visits to the area, cultivated strong ties with the local people, sometimes marrying from them. Ptolemy's Geography (c.150 A.D. fails to take notice of this Arab element. Unless one hypothesizes the occurrence of some, now forgotten, cataclysmic natural disasters which completely wiped out the colonists these arguments would appear somewhat threadbare. Certainly, on both sides of the Gulf of Aden, memories of this "bygone age" have proven to be ephemeral. There are no permanent material or human testimonies to that effect; no monuments of the kind which characterized Southern Arabian civilizations no linguistic survivals (written or spoken) or semitic

(London, 1965) p.214. E. Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 147, all claim that there were Phoenician or Himyaritic colonies on the coasts of Somaliland, during pre-Islamic times.

communities which, like the Abyssinian communities of Ethiopia, rightly claim descent from the bygone age.

Finally, the influence, so striking that it is taken on prima facie evidence, which the Arabs have had upon the Somalis appears to have developed roots much later. It grew out of connections revived during the Islamic era, and was therefore intensely Islamic in character. Its propagators were Muslim traders, missionaries, and political or religious discontents who came to the Somali coasts at different times and for different reasons. And so we now turn to a discussion of these groups.

Arab and Other West Asian Settlements
on the Somali Coast 7th-15th Centuries

Following the rise of Islam in Arabia during the seventh century A.D. and its subsequent spread beyond the Arab world, Arab interest in, visits to, and reports on Somaliland became more frequent. The ancient commercial relations between Arabia and the Somali Horn of Africa underwent some changes with these new developments. To be sure, the seasonal visits of the monsoon-driven merchants continued as before, but now there came to the scene a new kind of traveller who sought a permanent home on the Somali coasts. This was only natural because Islam strongly urged its adherents to travel and emigrate when necessary: a) for the betterment of their economic lot by taking advantage of opportunities otherwise not available at home; b) for the sake of learning; and c) for the cause of spreading and teaching Islam among non-believers or Muslims in need of teachers.¹ Moreover, the comings and goings of the early Muslim messengers sent out to call neighbouring countries to Islam² and the armies which soon followed

¹Dr. Zahir Riyad, "Zaila^c" *Nahdat Ifriqiyya*, II (Cairo Sept. 1958), p. 66. There are a number of the Prophet's traditions enjoining the faithful to the search for knowledge from cradle to the grave even if that entails travelling to places as far as China, the furthest place imaginable at the time.

²The policy of sending emissaries to neighbouring peoples

in their footsteps all helped to disseminate information among the Arabs about these countries and about the prospects of individual self-improvement which emigration to these territories held for the impoverished citizens of Arabia.

A look at a man of the Near East will testify to the logic of this Arab interest in Somaliland, and a perusal of their written documents and folk memories will bear witness to its actuality. Indeed, there is a considerable amount of literature, written and oral, Arabic and non-Arabic, and of varying degree of usefulness, which deals with the movement of peoples to the Somali coasts. The evidence we have shows that starting in the first century of Islam there occurred migrations of Southwest Asian (Arab, Persian, and sometimes Indian) individuals and groups to the coasts of the Horn of Africa. Invariably they came in quest of trade opportunities or in search of non-Muslim communities among whom they could proselytize. With the passage of time and the growth of political complications resulting in revolts and fratricidal civil wars in the Islamic Caliphates, these early immigrants were joined by more numerous political or religious non-conformists who sought refuge from the inhospitable political or religious climate, in their own homes. Occasionally, some who came as

asking them to join Islam before sending warring parties was initiated by Muhammad himself who first sent them to Arab tribes and then to Arab satellite principalities respectively of the Byzantines and Persians in southern Syria and Iraq. It remained a standard policy for successive Muslim regimes.

members of official military expeditions sent from the Islamic Caliphates apparently opted to stay on and tried their luck on these coasts.

These immigrants all came from the Arabian Peninsula, i.e. from al-Ahsa, the Island of al-Bahrayn, ^CUman, Hadramawt and the Yaman, or from the Persian Gulf littoral of Iran.³ These countries are all characterized by extreme heat and poverty in resources, and are inhabited by seafaring peoples. They were all far-removed from the centers of political power in Islam and were known to harbour rebellious political groups and religious sectarians opposed to the Orthodox regimes of the Caliphates. This would explain not only their willingness to emigrate but also, having come from hotter areas, their ability to adjust to the warm climate of the Somali and other East African coasts.⁴

There is good reason to believe that the earliest wave of Arab immigrants began with missionary merchants coming as early as the reigns of the rightly-guided, that is the first four, Caliphs (632-661). In fact many Arab authors, who unfortunately do not always reveal their sources, claim that the Muslims, who because of Meccan persecution took refuge in what was then Abyssinia during the early years of the

³ Hasan Ibrāhīm Hasan, Intishār al-Islām wa al-Gurūbah fīmā Yālī as-Sahra al-Kubra Sharq al-Gurrah al-Ifrīqiyyah wa Qarbiha (Cairo, 1957), p. 127; Dr. Salah al-'Aqad and Jamal Zakriya Qasim, Zanjibar (Cairo, 1959), p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

Prophet Muhammad's preaching, passed through Zaila^c on their way to and from Abyssinia, and that some of these refugees stayed behind on the Zaila^c coast.⁵ Though the Arabs invariably identify the country which hosted the Muslim refugees as Abyssinia, there are strong suspicions that this may not have been the case. For one thing it appears that the Arabs were not until very recently (some are not to this day) aware of the differences between the Abyssinians and the Cushitic peoples (Somalis, Oroma, Afar-Saho, etc.) bordering on the Abyssinians.⁶ Furthermore, Muslim descriptions of the supposed Abyssinian kingdom which welcomed the Muslim refugees is clearly at variance with conditions obtaining then in Abyssinia. For instance, according to early Muslim historiography, the reigning Abyssinian king had converted to Islam and had even extended military and financial assistance to the Muslim forces combatting the Meccan pagans.⁷ The Abyssinian king and Muhammad were supposed to have exchanged gifts, and when the former died the Prophet conducted Muslim

⁵Muhammad ^cAbdufatah Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl (Cairo, 1961), p. 27; Dr. 'Abdurahman Zaki, "al-'Urdubah fi Sharq Ifriqiyyah," al-Hadaf (Cairo, n.d.), p. 19; and many more.

⁶R. B. Serjeant, The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast: Hadrami Chronicles: with Yemeni and European Accounts of Dutch Pirates off Mocha in the Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1963), p. 88. Prof. Serjeant cites one 16th century Hadrami manuscript which refers to Somali soldiers as Abyssinians. In fact all Muslims hailing from the Horn of Africa (Somali, Dankali, or Abyssinian) were generally referred in Arab writings as Jabarti or Zaila^ci.

⁷Ahmad al-Hafani al-Qanai, al-Jawhar al-Hisani (Cairo,

burial services for him in Arabia.⁸ There are numerous references in the Quran to this Abyssinian king to give credence to these Muslim claims. In the traditions of the Prophet this king was singled out as one of the nobility of the Black Race and, for his kindnesses to the Muslim refugees, was promised unconditional entrance into paradise.¹⁰ There is, however, no mention in Abyssinian history of this royal conversion. This could well mean that Abyssinian historians had intentionally suppressed this chapter of their royal family's history, since traditionally only a Christian could legitimately reign over this Christian kingdom.¹¹ It could also mean that the king himself had, for security reasons or otherwise, kept his conversion a secret from his people. Or, possibly, and more plausibly, this king referred to was not an Abyssinian after all. If this could be proven (and we are very far from proving it now), the claims of some Arabs settling in Somaliland during the lifetime of Muhammad would become a strong possibility.

1903), p. 42; Abu al-Ma'Ali 'Ala ad-Din Muhammad 'Abd 'l-Baqi al-Bukhari al-Maki, at-Tiraz al-Mangush fi Mahasin al-Hubush, MS Laud. Or 120 Bod. Oxford, fol. 36b-37a.

⁸ Ibid, fol. 25-30.

⁹ al-Qana'fi, al-Jawhar, pp. 40-44; I. Guidi, "Abyssinia", in M. th. Houtsma et al (eds.) Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. I (London, 1913), p. 119, testifies to the correspondence between Muhammad and this Abyssinian king.

¹⁰ Al-Qana'fi, al-Jawhar al-Hisani, pp. 45-46.

¹¹ This is a well known fact, perhaps best illustrated by

The twenty years following Prophet Muhammad's death were very crucial for the history of Islam. In those years the Arabs of the Peninsula, now unified under the banner of Islam, relentlessly waged wars against, and conquered Persian Iraq, Persia itself, and the Byzantine provinces of Syria and Egypt. Those were, if we may believe Arab historians, years equally momentous for the history of Islam in East Africa. The story runs thus: the ^CUmani Arabs were geographically isolated from the Hijaz and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. Consequently, they could not participate in the wars of conquest in which all the other Arab tribes of the Peninsula took part. But since they were fired up with the fervour of this newly acquired faith, they could not just sit around doing nothing while everybody else was making history. Their maritime experience and knowledge of the Monsoon winds naturally turned them towards East Africa where they found an outlet for their energies.¹² But this view, universally held among Arab scholars, does not have much evidence to support it.

A number of unconfirmed reports suggest that there might have been some migrations from the Yaman to the Banaadir

the forceful deposition of Emperor Iij Yasu in 1916 when his sympathies for Islam came to be known.

¹² Dr. ^CAqād and Qāsim, *Zanjihār*, p. 6; ^CA'isha Ali as-Sayār, *Dawlat al-Ya^Caruba: fi ^CUman wa Sharq Ifriqiyya* (Beirut, 1975), p. 91. ^CA'isha talks about migrations from ^CUman in the year A.D. 684.

coast of Somaliland about the beginning of Islam, or shortly before. A citizen of Mogadishu, who depends mainly on Mogadishan oral traditions and manuscripts in private hands, talks about one Sultan As^Cad al-Himyarī (the Himyarite) who ruled over Mogadishu during pre-Islamic time.¹³ Ibn Sibāhī, in his Awdah al-Masālik (n.d.), said that the Berbers (Somalis) were "a nation ... between the Abyssinians and the Zanj who cut their enemies male sex organs and present them as trophies to their women. They are all the sons (descendants) of Qays Ghaylānī or they are two Himyaritic lineages, Sanhīja and Kunamah, who had gone to the country of the Berbers in the days of King Friqus's conquests in Africa".¹⁴ The Kitab

¹³Sharīf ^CAidarūs ibn Sharīf ^CAll al-^CAidarūs, Bughyat al-Āmal fī Tārīkh as-Sūmāl (Mogadishu, 1955), p. 36. Sharīf ^CAidarūs pushes the date of As^Cad's reign back to eight centuries before Islam. The Kitab az-Zunūj (see footnote 15 of this chapter), on the other hand, is not sure of this and merely mentions how conflicting traditions put him variously as a contemporary of Moses or Muhammad.

¹⁴Muhammad ibn-Sibahī, Awdah al-Masālik ilā Ma^Crīfat 'l-Buldan wa 'l-Mamalik, MS Pocock 302 Bodleian, Oxford, fol. 30a. Richard Burton (First Footsteps, pp. 100-101) quotes a dictionary, Qamus (which one he does not say) relating the same tradition. It defines the Barbar as a race between the Abyssinians and Zanj descended from two Himyar chiefs, Sanhāj and Thumamah (Summamah), who had arrived in that country during "the conquest of Africa by the King Afrīkūs (Scipio Africanus?)". The dictionary then gives few details about "the subject of mutilation and excision" which report made Burton conclude that the subject of this report were the ancestors of the Somalis. Ibn Khaldun (Encyclopaedia of Islam, II, p. 454) talks about one king Ifriqos b. Qays b. Saifi of Yaman who had made conquests in North Africa and after whom eastern North Africa was named Ifriqiyya. Ibn Khaldun, however, is noncommittal. Today the habit of cutting an enemy's sex organ and its presentation to one's girl-friend as a sign of one's bravery and worthiness is unknown in Somaliland, though

az-Zunuj has more details to offer. Following the disasters of the "Year of the Elephant"¹⁶ the Abyssinians (thrown out by the Persians) withdrew from the Yaman accompanied by Himyarites and descendants of Qays Ghaylani who had supported them in the Yaman. These Arabs settled in Abyssinia, converted to Christianity, and even adopted the Abyssinian

in certain quarters, i.e. in the extreme northwest, manhood is at times equated with killing an enemy and trophies to memorialize the act are worn. Two thirteenth century reports from widely separated sources, the one Arabic (yaqut, Mu^cjam al-Buldān, II, p. 967) and the other Chinese (Wheatley, "Analecta," p. 97) which relate the same story, however, leave no doubt whatsoever that sometime in the past the Somalis used to practice this custom. Though those traditions all refer to the country of the Somalis, we really cannot be sure about the migration of these so-called Himyarite chiefs and the fact of their fathering the Somalis.

¹⁵The Kitab az-Zunuj is an anonymously authored Arabic manuscript which was found early this century on the southern coast of Somaliland and was published by its discoverer Dr. Enrico Cerulli in his Somalia, I, pp. 233-251. Written sometime towards the end of the nineteenth century, the book purports to contain material going back for two thousand years or so. In detail it is highly garbled and also very suspect with regard to chronology. In this work, therefore, we cite it only where it corroborates more reliable sources.

¹⁶In the A.D. 560s the Abyssinian governor of yaman attempted to attract Arabs who used to go to Mecca for trade and pilgrimage by building a temple in San'aa. The temple was burnt down by an unknown saboteur and in 570-71 the governor fitted out an expedition with elephants against Mecca to avenge this act of terror. It was, however, destroyed at the gates of Mecca by an unknown epidemic. This year is known in Islamic history as the "Year of the Elephant" and is also celebrated as Muhammad's birth date. It marks the waning of Abyssinian power in the Yaman from which they were thrown out by the Persians soon after. This is a well-known tradition which is even recorded in the Quran. For a controversial view which expresses the western opinion of these events consult A. F. L. Beeston, "al-Fil," in Bernard Lewis et al (eds) Encyclopedia of Islam, III (London, 1965), p. 895.

tongue. But when all the Arabs of the Peninsula turned to Islam, for some unknown reason they and their Abyssinian hosts fell afoul of each other, and so they moved en masse and eventually resettled at the Juba district of what is today southern Somaliland. These sons of Qays Ghayani were known for their notorious custom of cutting off their enemies' male sex organs. The poorly organized Zanjs of the area could not resist these aggressive immigrants. Instead, some submitted and the rest fled southwards. The Bajunis, too, were terrorized by this grisly mutilation of limb practised by the Arabs.¹⁷ Here, then, is another source confirming Arab migration to the coasts of Somaliland in the early years of Islam. But the paucity of historical literature treating these early migrations could mean only one thing: that even if they did take place they were numerically insignificant and largely unorganized.

Immigrants came in large numbers during the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. These groups were mainly religious or political refugees--schismatic dissidents who when offered a choice between violating their consciences (religiously or

¹⁷These details were collected from the Kitab az-Zunuj which, as we have mentioned earlier (footnote 15), cannot command much confidence. In the light of H. Neville Chittick's well-taken criticisms of the East African documents ("The Shirazi Colonization of East Africa," JAH, VI, 3, 1965, pp. 275-94; "A New Look at the History of Pate," JAH, X, 3, 1969, pp. 375-91; "The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," The Cambridge History of Africa, IV, 1977, pp. 183-231), we are all the more obliged to withhold our credence from these documents as far as detail and ancient events are concerned without rejecting them altogether.

politically) by conforming or migrating, chose the latter and came to these African coasts. The first immigration of such a group on a large scale took place in or shortly after A.D. 695, when the Umayyad viceroy in Iraq, al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafi, destroyed the forces of the Sheikdom of Ḥuman, which was at the time openly supporting the Meccan pretender to the Caliphate, ḤAbdullahī ibn Zubair.¹⁸ The group led by the brothers Sulaiman and Saʿīd (leaders of the rebellion against the Umayyads in Ḥuman) came to, and settled at, an unidentified point on the East African Zanj coast.¹⁹ A number of historians write, in apparent reference to these Ḥumani immigrants, of Arab immigrants who fled the Peninsula towards the end of the seventh century in the wake of conflicts and internecine wars which were rife in their homes in southern Arabia.²⁰

Official Ḥumani sources (the Annals of Oman and its partial copy, the History of the Imams and Sayyids of Oman) are not very specific as to the causes of the hostilities or the destination of the refugees, but they otherwise confirm the

¹⁸Muhammad ḤAbdulmunʿim Yūnis, as-Sūmāl: Watanan wa ShaḤban (Cairo, 1966), pp. 65-66. Other writers do not mention this connection between the Ḥumani rebellion and ibn Zubair's claims in Mecca.

¹⁹Dr. ḤAbdurahman Zaki, al-Islām wa 'l-Muslimūn fī Sharq Ifrīqiyya (Cairo, 1965), p. 71; as-Sayyar, Dawlat al-YaḤaruba, p. 91.

²⁰al-ḤAqad and Qasim, Zanjibar, p. 6; ḤAbd as-Sabur Marzūq, Adwā' ḤAla as-Sūmāl (Cairo, 1962), p. 106, and others.

reports of ^CUmani migration to East Africa at that time. The kingdom of ^CUman, which never came under the sway of the Umayyads, was enjoying its independence under the joint overnorship of the Julanda brothers, Sulaiman and Sa^Cid. To subjugate it the Umayyad governor of Iraq sent armies against it, but on each occasion the ^CUmanis defeated the attackers "and put them to flight".²¹ Despite these successful sorties, however, the brothers could not indefinitely sustain the resistance to the superior forces of the Umayyads. They were warned of impending doom by a fellow tribesman, a member of an Umayyad reinforcement sent from Iraq. So, "taking with them their families, property, and those of their tribe who chose to follow them, they reached one of the districts of the Zanj, where they abode until their death".²²

In which district of the Zanj did the ^CUmanis settle? As mentioned above, we are still unable to identify the exact spot. The anonymous author of the Kitab az-Zunuj points out that some of the residents of Faza, Lamu, Mombasa, and of a number of other (as yet unidentified) places claimed origins in ^CUman. Specifically, the ^CUmani citizens of Mombasa were

²¹Sirhan bin Sa^Cid bin Sirhan, Annals of Oman (Keshf ul-Ghummeh, or Dispeller of Grief), edited by E. C. Ross (Calcutta, 1874), p. 10; Salil bin Razik, History of the Imams and Sayyids of Oman, edited by G. P. Badger (London, 1871), pp. 186-189; Sheikh Nur ad-Din ^CAbdalla ibn Humaid as-Salimi, Tuhfat al-A^Cyan bi Sirat ahl ^CUman (Cairo, A.H. 1350/1931-32), pp. 61-62, and others.

²²Ibn Sirhan, Annals, p. 11; Ibn Razik, Imams and Sayyids, p. 189; as-Salimi, Tuhfat, p. 62.

said to have descended from the Julanda family of Sulaiman and Sa'īd. This would imply that the Āmanīs had settled on the coast to the south of Somaliland, but the fact that the author of the Kitab az-Zunuj did not address himself to the Arabs of the Banaadir coast might mean he was less qualified to talk about that area, and so the possibility of Āmanīs settling there as implied by some authorities cannot be ruled out. In fact it is even doubtful that Mombasa was in existence at that time.²⁴

In about the same year (A.H. 75) we hear of arrivals from a different direction. The Kitab az-Zunuj claims that the Caliph Ābdulmalik ibn Marwan (685-705) sent a Syrian army under one Amir Musa ibn Āumar, of the Khathāam tribe, to the East African coast where there were pre-Islamic Arab settlements (one wonders why) which had accepted Islam during the caliphate of Āumar ibn al-Khattab (634-44).²⁵ This assertion finds support in the chronicles of Lamu and Pate, the former of which attributes the city's founding to Ābdulmalik, and the latter listing thirty-five other towns

²³Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 236

²⁴H. Neville Chittick, "The Peopling of the East African Coast," H. Neville Chittick and Robert Rotberg (eds), East Africa and the Orient (New York, 1975), p. 37.

²⁵G. Mathew, "The East African Coast until the coming of the Portuguese," in Roland Oliver and G. Mathew (eds.), History of East Africa, Vol. 1, p. 102; Marzuq, Adwā', pp. 65-66; Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 238

"founded by his Syrians in A.D. 696",²⁶ Abdulmalik's expedition was allegedly crowned with success. The Somalis were reported to have accepted Islam without resistance and the soldiers stayed on to spread the faith further, while contributing to the foundations of the Somali ethnic composition and Afro-Arab culture.

A third group of Arab immigrants came in the year A. D. 739.²⁷ It consisted of Zaidi Shi'ites who fled from the Persian Gulf area following the murder of their leader in that year. For almost two centuries this group dominated the Banadir coast, making some expansion inland, and moving southwards until it reached the equator. Due to a strong pressure from a third contingent of new arrivals, the members were forced to penetrate further inland, taking refuge among and inter-marrying with the indigenous African peoples, and only gradually losing their distinctiveness as a separate ethnic group.²⁸ In his da Asia, Joao de Barros made reference to an heretical Muslim sect called Emozaidi (Umma Zaidiyya?) members of whom fled to East Africa and later penetrated into the interior.²⁹ "They have been identified,"

²⁶ Mathew, "East African Coast", p. 102. Considerable doubt has been cast on the truthfulness of the East African documents by the researches of Neville Chittick. They are certainly muddled as far as chronology goes, but they cannot be discarded altogether either pending a more exhaustive archaeological works.

²⁷ Marzuq, Adwa, p. 107.

²⁸ Yunis, as-Sumal, p. 66.

²⁹ Joao de Barros, Decadas da Asia, I, Book VIII,

states G. Mathew, "with the followers of the Shiite pretender, Saïd [sic] ibn Ali, who was killed in A.D. 739".³⁰ The man erroneously named Saïd ibn Ali was most certainly Zaid ibn ^CAli, the great great grandson of Muhammad, and the founder of the Shi^Cite sub-sect named after him, which today has its strongest following in the Arab Republic of Yaman, though it has small numbers of adherents in other Muslim countries, especially Iraq. Zaid, a brother of the fifth Shi^Cite Imam, led in 739 an abortive uprising at Kufah in southern Iraq where he was abandoned at the last moment by most of his supporters, captured and subsequently executed by hanging.³¹ Zaid's rebellion and his followers' emigration can be followed with a degree of certainty. What cannot be so easily verified is the significance of the immigrants' religious affiliation for Somali history. Today, as they were in the fourteenth century when that famous globetrotter, Ibn Battuta, paid a visit to their coasts, the Somalis are exclusively Sunnite and adhere to the Shafi^C school of law. Obviously the group's influence today is insignificant as it was in the fourteenth century. But we cannot be all that certain about earlier periods. The whole of the East African coast, including the Banaadir, was described as being on bad

Chapter IV, as quoted in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, The Medieval History of the Coast of Tanganyika (New York, 1962), pp. 31-32.

³⁰ Mathew, "East African Coast," p. 102.

³¹ Abu 'l-Hasan ^CAli ibn 'l-Husayn al-Mas^Cûdi, a-Tanbîh

terms with the Baghdad Caliphate during the eighth and ninth centuries.³² Whether, however, these frictions can be related to religious hostility or to political differences is uncertain.

Sharif ^CAidarus maintains that there were immigrations of Arab tribes from San^Caa (Yaman) and Iraq in A.H. 149.³³ The causes of these simultaneous migrations from the Yaman and Iraq is not stated, but they are said to have all gone to Mogadishu and its Banaadir neighbourhood. The Kitab az-Zunuj claims that Abu Ja^Cfar ^CAbdalla al-Mansur, the second Abbasid Caliph, sent one of his ministers, Yahya ibn ^CUmar ^{al-}^CAnzi as an ambassador to the Muslim communities in East Africa demanding their recognition of the new Abbasid regime. The ambassador supposedly convinced the East Africans with eloquence and "sweet words" and went back to Iraq to please his master with the tribute he collected and the good news of East Africa's submission. This might have been the subject of Sharif ^CAidarus's report, but considering the fact that this was a period of hostilities in which one regime, the Abbasids, forcibly overthrew another, the Umayyads, it is possible that some Umayyad supporters fled the country in

wa 'l-Ashraf (Cairo, 1938), p. 279.

³²Mathew, "East African Coast," p. 102, based on the Kitab az-Zunuj.

³³Sharif ^CAidarus, Bughyat 'l-Amal, p. 42.

³⁴Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 238-39; Sharif ^CAidarus (Bughyat 'l-Amal, p. 45) also reports the mission.

the wake of Abbasid persecution.

In the year 189 A. H., the East Africans rebelled against Abbasid rule by refusing to pay the annual tribute. Therefore, Harun ar-Rashid sent an army to East Africa and installed a number of Persian governors to manage the East African cities for him.³⁵ In the year 209 A.H., during the reign of al-Ma'mun, the East Africans again rose in rebellion and were able to maintain their independence for some time while the Caliph was busy with Mu^ctazila dispute (fitna) in Baghdad. But with things somewhat settled at home, the Caliph sent in 214 A.H. an army of 50,000 men with which he was able to subjugate the rebellious towns and forced them to pay all the tribute in arrears.³⁶ The figure of 50,000 men sent to East Africa is most certainly representational only, but it does report nevertheless the arrival of West Asians in East Africa at that time.

Another flock of immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula who were forced to leave their homes by the inhospitable political climate there arrived on or around A.D. ³⁷920. This group was led by seven brothers from the al-Ahsa district on the Persian Gulf Arabian littoral. Members of this group were credited with the founding of Mogadishu and Brava, and

³⁵Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 239. This is the first mention of Persian arrivals in East Africa.

³⁶Ibid, p. 239.

³⁷Yunis, as-Sumal, p. 66; Zaki, "al-^cUruba," p. 20.

also with the pushing of the Zaidites inland. There is nothing to cast doubt on the possibility of such a group coming to the Banaadir coast, but their responsibility for the founding of Mogadishu and Brava--strangely enough never questioned by scholars thus far--does not have much to validate it. On the contrary we have strong oral, written, and archaeological evidence to deny it. For one thing the modern cities of Mogadishu and Brava have been tentatively identified by W. H. Schoff with some justification, respectively, with "Sarapion" and "Nicon" of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea.³⁸ For another, the discovery of inscriptions on the tomb-stones of a lady deceased in Mogadishu in the year 101 of the Islamic calendar would unquestionably push back that city's beginnings to the first century A. H., if not earlier.³⁹ In any case, as we have seen earlier, Mogadishu was one of the communities which the Abbasid emissary visited in 169 A. H., which means that the city was already in existence two centuries before the arrival of this group from al-Ahsa. With regard to Brava we have oral traditions which, though unable to fix the exact date of the city's birth, unanimously claim that Brava was first founded by a Somali folk-hero, Aw 'Ali, whose descendants and followers welcomed Arab immigrants

³⁸"The Periplus," pp. 60-61.

³⁹An inscription preserved in the National Museum, Mogadishu, Somali Democratic Republic.

centuries later.⁴⁰ A source of confusion might have been the Arabic word "amarū" which is frequently employed by Arab writers when talking about Asiatic settlements on these coasts. The word means: they built, developed, or populated, and sometimes carries the connotation of building up from nothing.

The eighth and the last of the early group-immigrations, probably the largest of its kind and this time coming from Persia, also took place in the tenth century. This Persian group was led by al-Hasan (Husein?) ibn ^CAli, Sultan of Shirāz, for whom life at home had become unbearable because of his lowly origin as the son of an Abyssinian lady.⁴¹ We are unable to verify the identity of this group leader, for there was nobody by that name among the tenth and eleventh century Buwayhid rulers of Shirāz.⁴² Also, the Arabic version

⁴⁰Sharif ^CAldarus, Bughyat 'l Āmāl, p.58. I encountered these unanimous traditions on making verbal enquiries about the city's origins among the population of the city and residents of two villages in its immediate hinterland during three different visits to that city and its environs in 1974 and 1975.

⁴¹The Portuguese version of the Kilwa Chronicle reproduced in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, Medieval History, p. 75.

⁴²In his article, "Tenth Century Settlement of the East African Coast: the Case for Qarmatian/Ismaili Connections," Azania, Vol. IX (1974), pp. 65-74, Randall L. Pouwells proposes the interesting suggestion that the seven brothers from al-Ahsa founding settlements in the Banaadir and the story of seven Shirāzīs immigrating to the coast further south may refer to one and the same tradition of Qarmatian colonization of the East African coast. However, during the ninth and tenth centuries al-Ahsa-al-Bahrayn region was under the control of the fearsome Qarmatians and the refugees could as well have been Sunnis fleeing their persecution. This interpretation would be compatible with the view that the

of the Kilwa Chronicle gives a different reason for the group migration, to add confusion to those already conflicting reports:

The story goes that there was a Sultan of Shiraz named Hasan b. Ali. This Sultan had six sons, and one day he saw a vision of a rat with an iron snout nibbling and gnawing at the walls. From this he foreboded the ruin of the country, and so, his first thought being naturally of his own safety, he determined to make good his escape while there was yet time... And the whole family, seven in number, sailed away from the doomed country in as many ships.⁴³

The kernel of these conflicting reports, the migration of Persians or Arabs from the Fars region of Iran, is confirmed in general outline, if not in detail, by the authenticated reports of Shirāz's strong connection, through its entrepot of Sīrāf, with the East African coast during the 9th-12th centuries;⁴⁴ by the presence of Afro-Shirāzi Swahili people

group was preceded by Zaidis who because of religious differences fled inland in the wake of these Sunnite arrivals. Furthermore, it is stated that the Shirazis, who were most certainly Shiite if their claims of dynastic connection with the rulers of 10th century Shiraz has any validity at all, briefly stopped at the Banaadir (where the group from al-Ahsa had supposedly settled in), but finding the area dominated by people of a different sect (presumably Sunnite) continued their journey down the East African coast. Indeed it would be hard to imagine Qarmatians fleeing the persecution of their fellow sectarians at a time when they were in a state of war against the Abbasid Caliphate.

⁴³ Abdalla ibn Mūsah aṣ-Suwāfi (copyist), Kitāb aṣ-Salwa fī Akhbār Kilwa, MS 6493 Central Library of the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, a photocopy of the MS in the British Museum. This extract is from S.A. Strong's edition of the MS quoted in Zoe Marsh East Africa Through Contemporary Records (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 6-7. Complete translations of this Arabic version of the chronicle and its Portuguese redaction are reproduced in Freeman-Grenville's Medieval History, Chapter Three.

⁴⁴ Ibn Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad al-Fārisī al-Iṣṭakha

who claim origin in Persia all over the East African Coast;⁴⁵ and by the strong Persian influence upon the architectural styles of coastal East Africa.⁴⁶

These are the known group migrations to the East African coast before the sixteenth century as reported by contemporary and often complementary Arabian and African sources. It appears, however, that there were many small groups, families or individuals, who though unnoticed by the medieval chroniclers also came to make their homes on the East African coast. Mosque inscriptions, religious and sometimes historical manuscripts, oral traditions and recorded genealogical claims of Arab families and tribes in southern Somaliland, while substantiating the group migrations, also verify the immigration of the smaller groups and individuals. Meccan and Medinan Arab descendants of the Prophet's companions who were considered noble, like the Shi'a descendants of 'Ali and Fatima, continually challenged the legality of the Umayyad regime.

al-Masālik wa 'l-Mamālik (Cairo, 1961), p. 32; Abū 'l-Hasan 'Alī ibn 'l-Husayn al-Mas'ūdī, Muruj ad-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar, I (Cairo, 1927-28) p. 59; Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 80.

⁴⁵Whereas the northern Swahili generally claim Arab ancestry the southern Swahili identify more with Persia: (al-'Aqad and Qasim, Zanzibar, p. 12), hence the name Afro-Shirazi party in Zanzibar. In a number of coastal settlements in southern Somaliland, i.e. Warsheikh, Mogadishu, and Marka live a people known as Rer Manyo (people of the sea). They were named thus because of their exclusive dependence upon the sea for subsistence. The Marka Rer Manyo, significantly, today carry the name of Sirafi.

⁴⁶Hadi Hasan, Persian Navigation, pp. 134-136; more importantly, De Villard, "I Minareti," p. 156. See also the more general works: P. S. Garlake, The Early Islamic

Consequently, they were subjected to a certain amount of persecution. This was the cause of their periodic flights to the Eastern Horn of Africa where they were invariably received with the honour due the descendants of the Prophet's companions. Banaadir manuscripts show the arrival of Makhzum tribesmen in Mogadishu and other Banaadir ports early in Islamic history.⁴⁷ The Kitab az-Zunuĵ declares that there were Arabs from al-Hijaz in Mombasa, Lamu, and in other East African ports.⁴⁸ Among a cluster of graves dating back to the thirteenth century and situated to the northeast of Mogadishu is found the grave of one al-Haj Sa^cid al-Khazraĵi from the Hijaz.⁴⁹ To the southwest of the city is found the grave of another Hijazi, Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ĥāĵ Ahmad al-Madani deceased on the 29th of Safar 766 (25th Nov., 1364).⁵⁰ And among the numerous Mogadishu manuscripts dealing with genealogical and family relationships of the Banaadir Arab residents is found one which tells of the arrival in the year 149 (A.D. 16th February, 766-5th February, 767) of one Isma^cil ibn ^cUmar of the Bani ^cAffān tribe.⁵¹ The best evidence, however, of Hijazi migrations to the Horn of Africa in the early centuries of the Islamic era is the founding of

Architecture of the East African Coast and D. N. Wilber, The Architecture of Islamic Iran (Princeton, 1955).

⁴⁷ Sharif ^cAldarus, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 42

⁴⁸ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 238.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 25.

a Mukhzumi (Meccan family) dynasty in Eastern Shoa in the ninth century A.D.

The frequent mention in the Banaadir manuscripts and inscriptions of people with Persian names, while not clearly spelling out the time or the form of Persian immigration, undoubtedly attests to the presence in the Banaadir coast of people hailing from that country. One such manuscript claims that ^CAqb as-Sīrafi (descending from Meccan Arabs, but coming from the Fars region of Iran as proven by the title of as-Sīrafi) probably the progenitor of the ^CAqb tribe of Mogadishu, arrived in that city in the year 150 (6th February 767-25th January 768).⁵² One of the most ancient graves discovered so far in Mogadishu is that of Abu ^CAbdalla ibn Raya ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad an-Nisabūri al-Khurasani who died on Tuesday Rabī^C al-Awal 614 (8th June-7th July 1217).⁵³ The city of Nishapur (Nisabūr in Arabic) rose to prominence during the ninth century when it was the capital of the Tahirid regime in Persian Khurasan. It remained a center of learning and a prosperous entrepot for the caravan trade until it was destroyed by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. In Muslim historical and geographical works one invariably encounters numerous Nishapurian sheikhs going on pilgrimage trips to the Holy Sanctuaries and from there proceeding to different parts

⁵²ibid, p. 26.

⁵³ibid, p. 2.

of the Muslim world for trade, teaching, travel, and exploration during the heyday of the city's prosperity before its destruction.⁵⁴ In the last inscription cited we witness the death of one such itinerant Nishapurian savant in early thirteenth century Mogadishu. The Nishapurian community in Mogadishu must have been fairly substantial, at least in influence if not in number, because they were supposed to have given to one of the two ancient quarters of Mogadishu, the one in which they settled, the name of Shangani in honour of their residential neighbourhood in the city of Nishapur which bore that name.⁵⁵ The Shirazi Persians had also left behind a permanent record of their presence in Mogadishu on a mosque called Arba^ca Rukn. Inside the Imam's niche (mibrāb) of this mosque is inscribed the name of the man who built or financed the building of the mosque and the year of its construction--Khusraw ibn Muhammad a-Shirāzi in the year 667 (1268-1269 A.D.).⁵⁶ Here we have the record only of individua

⁵⁴ Richard N. Frye (ed.), The Histories of Nishapur, Volume 45 of the Harvard Oriental Series (London, 1965).

⁵⁵ Sharif ^cAidarus, Bughyat 'l-Amāl, p. 36. The present writer encountered in Mogadishu in the 1970s traditional stories giving the same explanation of that sector's naming, but it is not possible to tell whether they are from Sharif ^cAidarus's collection or from independent sources because the informants have all shown familiarity with Sharif ^cAidarus's work. H. N. Chittick ("The East African Coast, Madagascar, and the Indian Ocean," p. 189) and J. S. Trimingham, Islam in East Africa (Oxford, 1964), pp. 6-7, No. 3, both claim that the name is Swahili. I am not familiar enough with either Swahili or Persian to verify the word's origin.

⁵⁶ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 9.

Persians leaving behind an imprint of their presence in the city, but the importance of the Persian element can be better judged from their ability, as will be shown in a later chapter, to muster enough political and numerical strength in the fourteenth century to give rise to two different Persian dynasties in the Banaadir.

Oral traditions and genealogical claims report the arrival in the Banaadir early in the thirteenth century of a wave of immigrants from a-Shash, a very prosperous village and district in Transoxiana.⁵⁷ Muslim historians claim that when the Mongols started their attacks against the Muslim lands, the ruler of Samarkand forcibly threw the inhabitants of Shash out of their homes and farms and scorched the whole district with fire lest the Mongols be attracted by its unequalled natural bounties and beauty and refuse to leave this Muslim land afterwards.⁵⁸ The dislocated citizens of Shash dispersed in all directions, some of them coming to settle on the Banaadir coast of Somaliland.⁵⁹

Apparently there were also occasional Arab immigrations

⁵⁷ Sharif A'idarus, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, pp. 45-46. The Shanshiya today constitute one of the more important Somali tribes of Mogadishu and other Banaadir towns, but were of original Arab/Persian descent.

⁵⁸ Abdurahman ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, as-Safar al-Khamis min Kitab al-'Ibar wa Diwan al-Muhtada^c wa 'l-Khabar min ayyam al-'Arab wa 'l-'Ajjam wa 'l-Barbar wa min 'Awasimihim min dhawi as-Sultan al-Akbar MS Or. 330 Bod., Oxford, fol. 284b.

⁵⁹ Sharif A'idarus, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 46.

from Egypt. The Kitab az-Zunuj has some Egyptians settling around Kismayo,⁶⁰ and Sharif ^CAidarus intimates Egyptian lordship over Mogadishu sometime in the thirteenth century A.D.⁶¹ Egyptian presence in the Banaadir is clearly attested to by Ibn Battuta, who reported that the Chief Judge (Qādi) of Mogadishu at the time of his visit to the city in 1331 was an Egyptian.⁶² There are also local traditions which are persistent in their claim that the town of Marka was helped to rise to prosperity in the fourteenth century by an Abbasid notable whose grandfather had fled from Egypt in the thirteenth century when the Mongols were threatening that country with destruction.⁶³

At an indefinite time before the fifteenth century ^CImran tribesmen from ^CUmān or al-Yaman arrived in Brava which had been founded by Somalis and was in existence for quite some time then.⁶⁴ Towards the end of the fifteenth century the city received new citizens in the form of Arab returnees from Spain who had wandered up and down East Africa before they finally came to settle permanently in Brava.⁶⁵ This new element plus Brava's strong trade ties with the coast to the

⁶⁰Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 235.

⁶¹Sharif ^CAidarus, Bughyat'l-Āmāl, p. 85.

⁶²Abu ^CAbdallah Muhammad ibn ^CAbdallah, Ibn Battuta, Rihlat Ibn Battuta (Beirut, 1960), p. 254.

⁶³Sharif ^CAidarus, Bughyat'l-Āmāl, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁴Ibid, p. 61.

⁶⁵Ibid, pp. 62-64.

south might be the origin of the Swahili dialect spoken in that city today.⁶⁶

Sada or Ashraf (descendants of the Prophet through his daughter, Fatima, and son-in-law and cousin, ^CAli) also came from Hadramawt on individual basis as teachers and honoured guests.⁶⁷ They came on a large scale only in the sixteenth century and afterwards, but there is mention of at least one Hadrami dying in Mogadishu on 13th Ramadan 759 (19th August, 1358). The first bona fide descendant of the Prophet to take permanent residence in the Horn of Africa was supposed to have gone to Abyssinia through Zaila^C in 837 (A.D. 1434-35)⁶⁸

There are numerous grave and mosque inscriptions in the Banaadir coast, as yet not fully studied, which incidentally corroborate the genealogical claims of the Banaadir Arabs as well as the traditional histories of the area's political and religious development. One such chance inscription is that which records the death of Muhammad ibn ^CAbdusamad ibn Muhammad ^CAli Husayn on a Tuesday in 670 (9th August 1271-28th July 1272).⁶⁹ This inscription confirms local traditions

⁶⁶ For a different view of this dialect's origins see: J. S. Trimingham, Islam in East Africa (Oxford, 1964) pp. 6-7 No. 3.

⁶⁷ Sharif 'Aidarus, Bughyat 'l-Amāl, p. 42; Muhammad ibn ^CAbdurahman ibn Shihab al-Alawi al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^CAlawiyya al-Mustawtina bi Ifriqiyya a-Sharqiyya wa 'l-Jaza'ir al-Qamariyya," Shakib Arsalan (ed.) Hadir al-'Alam al-Islami 3, 2nd edition (Cairo, 1933/4), pp. 158-183.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 175.

⁶⁹ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 4.

which speak of the arrival together of three religious worthies in Mogadishu from Arabia--Fakhr ud-Din, Shams ad-Din, and ⁷⁰Alā ad-Din. The first two Sheikhs settled in Hamarweyne and the last one took residence in Shangani.* Fakhr ud-Din built in Mogadishu a mosque which still bears his name,⁷¹ and founded or had a son who founded the first hereditary Sultanate in Mogadishu.⁷² Shams ad-Din was the progenitor of a group of people known as "Rer Shams" who today still reside in Hamarweyne. ⁷³Alā ad-Din was the grandfather of a saint (wali) ⁷⁴Abd as-Ṣamad (today very much venerated among the residents of the Shangani quarter). The death of Muhammad ibn ⁷⁵Abd as-Samad in 1271-72 and the foundation of the Sultanate of Mogadishu by Fakhr ud-Din or his son, Abu Bakr, in the second half of the thirteenth century proves the contemporaneous arrival of two of these three personages who are said to have arrived together.

Medieval Arab general works on world geography and Islamic history also contain reports which complement and at times even validate in detail the local written works and

⁷⁰Ibid, p. 5.

*Hamarweyne and Shangani were the two sectors of which Mogadishu consisted before its expansion in the 20th Century. The former is a compound name: Hamar (another name for Mogadishu) and Weyne (bigger or older), which implies that it was the larger of the two quarters and is generally considered older. The origin of the name Shangani has been traced by some people to one of the quarters of medieval Nishapur (see p. 97 and n.55). Needless to say there are many other philological explanations of the meanings and origins of these names.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 9, also figure V opposite page 10.

⁷²See below Chapter Six.

oral traditions. For instance, in support of oral traditions which claim Somali settlement at Brava prior to the arrival of the Southwest Asians, al-Idrisi, writing as early as 1154, alluded to Marka and Baruwat (Brava) as Barbar (Somali) towns.⁷³ Better yet, al-Idrisi went on to report on other communities living in the area which were generally ignored by the traditions of the city dwellers, and thus gave a more complete picture of ethnic distribution in the region at the time of his writing than we can ever hope to get from the traditional histories. He stated that there were many village-like settlements down the Banaadir coast known as the Hāwiya (Hawiye).⁷⁴ Early in the 13th century Yaqut wrote: "Barbara is another country between the country of Abyssinians, the Zanj, and al-Yaman on the Yaman or the Zanj sea [Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean respectively]. The people are very dark and they speak a language which they carry in their heads [unwritten?] known only to them".⁷⁵ According to Yaqut the Somalis did considerable amount of hunting and their country was full of strange wild animals, such as giraffes, rhinoceroses, leopards, and elephants "not found elsewhere," (perhaps in such large

⁷³ Abu ^cAbdallah Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Idrisi, Kitab Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq, I, MS 1335 Central Library, univ. of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, p. 39; al-Idrisi, Kitab Uns al-Muhaj, MS National Assembly Library, Tehran, Iran, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Al-Idrisi, Nuzhat al-Mushtaq (Tehran), p. 39, Uns, p. 6

⁷⁵ Al-Sheikh al-Imam Shihab ad-Din ^cAbdalla Yaqut al-Hamawi ar-Rumi al-Baghdadi, Kitab Mu^cjam al-Buldān, 4 vols. (Tehran, 1965) Vol. I, p. 543.

numbers!).⁷⁶ Those Barbaras (Somalis) were largely nomadic pastoralists⁷⁷ and they made their houses from grass.⁷⁸ Among the towns of the Barbar was the seaport called Mogadishu whose "inhabitants were all foreigners and not black".⁷⁹ Ibn Sa'id (d. 1286) was equally explicit and informative about the peoples and areas adjoining the coastal cities. He maintained that in the thirteenth century Marka was the capital of the Hawiye Somali clan, and the town of Barma (Brava) also was among the Barbar (Somali) towns.⁸⁰

The picture we perceive from these reports is one of small Southwest Asian communities forming on these coasts and gradually mixing with the larger indigeneous Somali populations around them. By the time of Ibn Battuta's visit to the area in 1331 even Mogadishu, which had a totally foreign population in the thirteenth century, had become indigenized to the point where a Somali was the city's ruler.⁸¹ And in that same century we see the appearance for the first time

⁷⁶Ibid., I, p. 543.

⁷⁷Ibid., I, p. 502.

⁷⁸Ibid., II, p. 967.

⁷⁹Ibid., I, p. 502; IV, p. 602.

⁸⁰Prince Yusuf Kamal, Monumenta Cartographica Africae et Aegypti Tome IV, Fascicule 2, "Ibn Sa'id," (Cairo, 1926-51), p. 1080. This report by Ibn Sa'id was rendered into English by Dr. I. M. Lewis in his article "The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa," p. 221 to mean that "the land lying round the Arabian settlement of Merka was occupied by Hawiye". This is a clear case of misreading since Ibn Sa'id refers to that city as the qa'ida (seat, capital) of the Hawiye villages, without making any references to an Arab settlement there.

⁸¹Ibn Battuta, Rihlat, p. 254. Agreeing with the

of Somali calendar names on tomb inscriptions.⁸²

Along the northern coast (on the Gulf of Aden) Arabs frequented the towns of Zaila^C and Berbera, especially the former, which monopolized the import and export trade of what is now Modern Ethiopia's southeastern hinterland.⁸³ The exact date of the first arrivals there, as might be expected, is altogether unknown. Dr. I. M. Lewis speaks of a string of Arab-settled ports, possibly dating back to pre-Islamic times, coming to life shortly after the Hijra.⁸⁴ Saadia Touval and the British Colonial Office both imagine the existence of an Arab Sultanate at Zaila^C in the seventh century A.D.⁸⁵ There

traditional reconstruction of Somali origins in the north and their subsequent expansion southwards, H. Neville Chittick surmises that the Barbar Sheikh ruling in Mogadishu at the time of Ibn Battuta's visit, speaking a "Maqdashii" tongue, was Bantu and the language he spoke Swahili. Trimmingham, Islam in East Africa, pp. 6-7, footnote 3, had suggested this earlier but he thought the Barbar Sheikh was from S.E. Ethiopia. Their argument is partially based on the fact that one of the sectors of the city has a Swahili sounding name which is not proven to be so.

⁸² Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 6.

⁸³ Abu 'l-Hasan 'Alī ibn 'l-Husayn al-Mas'ūdī, Muruj a-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar, Vol I, (Cairo, 1927-28), pp. 235-36; and most of medieval Arab geographers. Al-Mas'ūdī, who was one of the earliest and most authoritative Arabs to write about Zaila^C, relied for his descriptions of the Somali coast upon eye-witness reports of 'Umani seamen who plied adjacent waters and frequented that city for trading purposes.

⁸⁴ I. M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa (London, 1966), pp. 6-7; also in his "The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa," p. 217.

⁸⁵ Saadia Touval, Somali Nationalism (Cambridge, 1963), p. 69; Great Britain, Colonial Office, Somaliland: Report for 1958-59 (London, 1960), p. 52.

might have been feverish trade activity in the area following the rise of Islam and Arab expansion in that century, but the talk of an Arab Sultanate is purely conjectural and based on an exaggerated assessment of these economic activities.

As late as 950 A.D. contemporary sources still described Zaila^C as a non-Arab city. In A.D. 935 al-Mas'ūdi asserted that Zaila^C, Dahlak, and Nāṣi^C (Bādi^C?) were Abyssinian ports. Further, there were Muslims in those cities who were dhimmis (protected tributaries) to the Abyssinians.⁸⁶ Al-Istakhari writing just before A.D. 960 stated that the people living on the coasts opposite Aden (whom he calls Abyssinians) were in colour close to the Arabs (but, of course, different from them), neither black nor white.⁸⁷ Ibn Hawqal (writing in 977) quoted al-Istakhari verbatim when talking about the Abyssinians, and reported no change whatsoever in Zaila^C's population character. However, he did not confirm Zaila^C Abyssinian political affiliation. Instead he implied that the city was not part of Abyssinia, though as a neighbouring port it was used by that country in its trade with the Yaman and the Hijaz.⁸⁸ Al-Birruni (in 1030), al-Bakri (37 years later),

⁸⁶ al-Mas'ūdi, Muruj ad-Dhahab, p. 245.

⁸⁷ al-Istakhari, al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik, p. 32.

⁸⁸ Abi 'l-Qasim Ibn Hawqal an-Nusaibi, Kitāb Surat 'l-Ard (Beirut, n.d.), p. 61.

and al-Idrisi, writing in the far west in 1154, all mentioned Zaila^C in their works, but none of them has left us an idea about the city's ethnic complexion.

Finally, in the thirteenth century, Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229) reported that Zaila^C, a city adjacent to Abyssinia, had a black population consisting of Barbar (Somali) and other groups.⁸⁹ What he does not tell us is whether there were Arabs among the citizens of Zaila^C and, if there were any, what proportion of the city's inhabitants they constituted. Even Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who paid a visit to that city, does not help at all.⁹⁰ Yaqut implied a totally black population, consisting of a distinctly Zaila^Ci or Dankali stock and of a Barbar (Somali) portion.⁹¹ Whether the "hybrid 'Zaila^Cawi' culture ... formed by a blending of Arab Somali, and ^CAfar (Dankali) elements,"⁹² of which Dr. I. M. Lewis speaks so much, had developed by that time or not cannot be ascertained from the reports of Yaqut and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Whatever the case, Arab settlement in that area must have been insignificant, otherwise we would have heard about it at least as much as, if not more than, we did of the immigrants to the Banaadir coast.

To the north of Mogadishu and east of Zaila^C lie the

⁸⁹Yaqut, Mu^Cjam al-Buldān, II, p. 967.

⁹⁰Ibn Battuta, Rihlat, pp. 252-253.

⁹¹Yaqut, Mu^Cjam al-Buldān, II, p. 969.

⁹²I. M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa, p. 7. Italics are mine.

greater part of the Somali coasts. According to Somali oral traditions and some European writers, it was here that Arab population pressures were most decisively applied on the Horn of Africa.⁹³ Supposedly the Arabs had, by intermarrying with the indigenous Africans (one wonders who they were!), given rise to most of the present Somali groups by the fourteenth century. This newly-formed Somali society equipped with its "superior" Arab technology, religion, and "superior" ways of political organization soon multiplied numerically and began to expand south- and westwards at the expense of its maternal relatives until by the nineteenth century it came to occupy the whole of the Horn of Africa.

Medieval geographical and historical sources are all but silent about this coastal stretch.⁹⁴ An immediate, and also the most reasonable, interpretation of this silence would regard it as meaning that there were no significant Arab settlements or activities along that coast. This initial reaction is given strong support by the fact that, unlike Zaila^c and the Banaadir coasts, the intervening Somali coast proper did not develop a hybrid culture comparable to the Swahili culture of East Africa. If the claims of Somali oral traditions and the European writers who partially support

⁹³See Chapter One, pp. 19-20.

⁹⁴Most of the Arab authors cited above refer to those coasts as the coasts of the Barbar (Somali) land, but none of them, not even Ibn Battuta, gives us reliable details about conditions there, or any indication as to what Arab interests there might have been.

these claims have any truth, how can one explain such meagre, indeed incidental, references to the area and the Arab pressures which provided the causes of such disruptive and far-reaching events, literally revolutionizing the ethnic distribution throughout the Horn of Africa? This is puzzling. Stranger yet is the fact that so many authorities have persisted in these far-fetched and untenable explanations. A reappraisal is clearly in order. Linguistics, anthropology, archaeology, and contemporary Arab sources indicate that that Arab immigration to, and settlement along, the Somali coasts upto the end of the fifteenth century were not very great. Moreover, Arab (rather Southwest Asian) immigration, for all it was worth, was directed to the extreme peripheries of Somaliland where the "hybrid" Zaila^Cawi and Banaadiri sub-cultures sprung up in time. But for the intervening Somali coast proper, the supposed cradle of the Somali nation, it was irrelevant.

CHAPTER FOUR

Islamization of the Somalis

With the exception of a few converts recently won over by Christian Missions, the Somalis today are all Muslims largely observing the Shafi'i Sunnite school of law. They do not only constitute one of the two most thoroughly Islamized societies in tropical Africa (the other is Zanzibar), but they also boast one of the highest percentages of adherence to Islam anywhere in the world. Islam as a religion and a system of values so thoroughly permeates all aspects of Somali life that it is difficult to conceive of any meaning in the term Somali itself without at the same time implying Islamic identity. Otherwise constantly threatened with destruction by differences of clan affiliations, the Somali nation nevertheless maintained through the centuries a strong sense of nationhood superseding these cleavages mainly because of this shared Islamic cultural heritage. This sense of belonging to a common culture enabled Ahmed Ibrahim Gurey (in the sixteenth century) and Muhammad Abdull Hasan (in the twentieth) to successfully rally diverse Somali clans, traditionally hostile to each other, against what they perceived to be external threats to their independence and culture.

While thus combatting, through its universalizing

influences, the excesses and horrors of pastoral turbulence, Islam also determines the nation's external cultural and emotional affiliations. Indeed, it is here, in the conversion of the Somalis into Muslims, that the single most important Arab influence upon the Somalis can be observed. For despite their geographical presence in Africa as well as ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affinity with other neighbouring African communities, the Somalis identify through their religion, emotionally and culturally with Arabia and the wider world of Islam. One scholar who knows the Somalis very well put the point succinctly as follows:

It is not too much to say that in many respects Islam has become one of the mainsprings of Somali culture; and to nomad and cultivator alike the profession of the faith has the force almost of an initiation rite into their society.¹

How the Somalis came to assume an Arabico-Islamic identity in preference to their African heritage, when, and by whom they were converted is today not well known. But though the process of their Islamization remains in detail one of the least documented aspects of Somali history, yet we can with the help of Somali oral traditions and external written sources reconstruct a fairly well defined outline.

From the available evidence it appears conclusively that the process of the introduction of Islam into the Horn of Africa and its subsequent spread inland was essentially a

¹J. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 16.

peaceful one. For some reason the Horn of Africa was spared the wars of Arab conquests at the time when the Muslims were forcibly exploding into the territories of the more powerful Byzantine and Persian Empires. We have seen in the preceding chapter how during Muhammad's lifetime the Abyssinians gave safe refuge to a group of Muslims who fled Meccan persecution, and for their good deed the Prophet presumably enjoined his followers never to attack the Abyssinians so long as they remained nonbelligerent.² A less romantic explanation would account for this Arab restraint by the unavailability at that time of a Muslim navy. Moreover, to the Arabs, the neighbouring Arab territories of Iraq and Syria, and the wealthy Byzantine province of Egypt must have appeared more important and more attractive than the African territories across the Red Sea. By the time Spain and Central Asia were taken Arab crusading spirit had spent itself.

We have record of five Muslim armies coming to the Horn of Africa before the sixteenth century, and of these only one, that despatched by the Umayyad Caliph Abdulmalik Ibn Marwan (685-705) to East Africa in the closing years of the seventh century A.D., had the intention of spreading Islam. In the event, even that army ended up fighting no wars, for the East Africans were found to be more readily disposed to

²Muhandis Fathi Gaith, al-Islam wa 'l-Habasha ‘Abr a-Tarikh (Cairo, 1967), p. 60.

accept Islam than the Caliph had imagined them to be and the soldiers merely stayed on as peaceful propagators of the faith. The other four were punitive expeditions with totally different purposes. Two of these military missions were sent against Abyssinian pirates who threatened Muslim seaborne trade and Red Sea ports. The earlier of these two was fitted out by the second Caliph Umar Ibn 'l-Khattab (634-644) and accomplished very little, but the latter mounted by the Umayyad Abdulmalik Ibn Marwan in the year 83 A.H. established a base on the Dahlak Islands off Musawa.³ The remaining two expeditions, one organized by the Abbasid Caliph Harun al Rashid (786-809) and the other by his son al-Ma'mun (813-833) were dispatched to punish rebellious but already Islamised East African cities.⁴

In the absence of conquering Muslim armies the task of teaching Islam to the Somalis, at least in the initial stages of its introduction, devolved upon the individual missionaries and Muslim merchants, and more so upon the latter since there never was a properly organized program of missionary effort in Islam during this early period. The Muslim merchant doubled wherever he went as the peddler of both divine and profane merchandise. If he was himself too busy, not well learned, or not very much inclined to preaching, he always

³Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 46.

⁴Mathew, "East African Coast," p. 102; Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 239.

brought a learned brother to teach his children and, in time, the non-Muslim hosts among whom the merchant settled.⁵ In Africa, Central Asia, and the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean it is the merchant rather than the occasional missionary savant who must be credited with the spreading of Muhammad's message.

Some authorities maintain that Islam was introduced to the Zaila^c region of northern Somaliland in the early years of Muhammad's teaching by the Muslim escapees who sought refuge from Meccan attacks in Abyssinia.⁶ This is largely conjectural, though the possibility of individual enthusiasts going over to the Somali coast for missionary work in the early decades of Islam is not far-fetched. In fact, there is strong evidence to show that Islam was present in Somalia within the first century of its history. This is attested to by the death in Mogadishu of two Muslim women, Fatima bint ^cAbd as-Samad Ya^cqub in A. H. 101 and al-Hajiya bint Muhammad Muqqaddam in A. H. 138.⁷ The inscriptions on the tomb-stones of these two women came to be known through chance discoveries, and with proper archaeological work more, and even older, records of Islam's presence could be unearthed.

⁵I. M. Lewis.(ed.), Islam in Tropical Africa, p. 20.

⁶Sheikh Ahmad ^cAbdullahi Rirash, Kashf as-Sudūl ^cin Tarikh as-Sūmāl: wa Mamalikahum as-Sab^cah (Mogadishu, 1974), p. 12; Najjar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 62.

⁷Rirash, Kashf as-Sudūl, p. 12.

Despite these tantalizing indications of Islam's early introduction into the area we can safely assume that proselytization and conversions on any significant scale took place only after the arrival of immigrant groups towards the end of the seventh century A.D. Considering the long distance separating it from Arabia, the Banaadir coast of southern Somaliland, in particular, could hardly have been aware of Islam before the convergence there of the ^CUmani Julanda refugees and ^CAbdulmalik's Syrian forces in the A. D. 690s. But though the identity of the individual who first introduced Islam to the Banaadir is still obscure, the presence of Islam in a big way by the end of the seventh century A.D. is comfortably confirmed by the arrival there of these Syrian and ^CUmani Muslims.

In the year 739-40 there came to the Banaadir coast the Shi^Cite Zaidis (the Emozaidij of the Portuguese), who for almost two centuries dominated that coast, but whose influence to this day remains an unresolved riddle. Considering Ibn Battuta's report in the fourteenth century that the Somalis were Shafi^Ci and the Sunnite character of modern Somali Islam, most authors dismiss the Zaidis as of no consequence for the history of Islam in Somaliland.⁸ These authors, however, conveniently overlook the obvious Shi^Ci elements in the contemporary Somali Islam as well as the occasional reports by mediaeval authorities of Shi^Cite

⁸Ghaith, al-Islām wa 'l-Habasha, pp. 74-75.

presence in the Horn of Africa. While claiming in general that the Somalis were Shafi^Ci Sunnis, Ibn Battuta specifically maintained that the majority of the population of Zaila^C were Rafida (Zaidi Shi^Cis).⁹ A century earlier, ad-Dimashqi reported that the island of Berbera was inhabited by black Muslims who were partly Zaidite and partly Shafi^Ci.¹⁰ This evidence and the fact of Zaidi domination of the Ban-aadir coast for two centuries and their subsequent penetration of the hinterland earlier than any other group¹¹ suggest a more important role for them than they have been credited with so far. One cannot help but suspect that the reported antagonism between the East African coast and the Baghdad Caliphate during the eighth and ninth centuries, and the repeated East African rebellions against ^CAbbasid suzerainty were in part at least expressions of sectarian hostilities inspired, or led, by these Zaidis.

The excessive reverence with which ^CAli, Fatima, and their Sada* and Ashraf* descendants are held among the Somalis today also reveals a strong Shi^Cite influence in the past which centuries of Sunnite teachings could not wipe out altogether. And though, unlike the Shi^Cis, they do not deny

⁹ Ibn Battuta, *Rihlat*, p. 252.

¹⁰ Shams ad-Din Abu ^CAbdalla Muhammad ad-Dimashqi, *Nukhbat ad-Dahr fi ^CAja'ib 'l-Barr wa 'l-Bahr*, edited by M. A. F. Mehren (Amsterdam, 1964), p. 218.

¹¹ See Chapter Three above.

* The terms Sada (singular, Sayyid) and Ashraf (singular

the legitimacy of the other Caliphs, the Somalis, perhaps uniquely among Sunni Muslims, regard ^CAli with a special honour coming close to extremist Shi^Cite apotheosis. Fatima's personality, too, has developed into a cult for whom in certain urban quarters ladies hold regular weekly memorial services (dhikr). Further still, the contemporary Sada and Ashraf, distant descendants of Fatima and ^CAli, are credited with saintly attributes or quasi-divine powers (baraka) with which they are automatically born, and never fail to exercise no matter how irreverent or irreligious their life-style may be. What is more, some of the Somali groups have come to adopt for their political heads or chiefs the politico-religious title of Imam, a term applied normally only to leaders of the Shi^Cite sects.¹²⁾

To be sure, there was also a presumably Sunnite group arriving from the al-Ahsa district of the Persian Gulf Arabian littoral in Somaliland two centuries after the arrival of Zaidites.¹³ They belonged to the al-Harith Arab tribe inhabiting the coastal strip facing the island of al-Bahrayn, and were generally reckoned to have been fleeing from their king's (Qarmattian?) oppressive rule.¹⁴ However, the whole of the al-Ahsa-Bahrayn area was in Isma^Cili Shi^Cite

Sharif), especially the latter, are titles of noble birth denoting descent from the Prophet through his daughter, Fatima, and cousin, ^CAli.

¹²Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 136.

¹³See Chapter Three above.

¹⁴as-Sayyar, Dawlat al-Ya^Caruba, p. 93.

hands during the ninth and tenth centuries, and in a state of continuous warfare against the Baghdad Caliphate. Therefore, as already suggested by Mr. Randall Pouels,¹⁵ these immigrants could as well have been Qarmatian refugees, and might have been responsible for a secondary introduction of Shi^cite doctrine into Somali Sunnism.

Be that as it may, it appears from both local oral traditions and supportive external sources that in the first few centuries Islam was confined to the coastal Asiatic settlements and the neighbouring Somali groups. According to a contemporary Chinese report, ninth century Berbera (northern Somaliland) was either non-Islamic or hardly touched by Islam.¹⁶ Tenth and eleventh century Arab sources all described Zaila^c as an Abyssinian Christian city which traded peacefully with the Yamani ports across the Red Sea. The only Muslims in it were a few tributary (protected *dhimmi*) merchants who were there solely for the sake of carrying on business.¹⁷ Writing as late as the middle of the twelfth century, al-Idrisi confirmed the city's Christian connection

¹⁵See Chapter Three, footnote 39.

¹⁶J. J. Duyvendak, *China's Discovery of Africa* (London, 1949), pp. 12-14; Paul Wheatley, "Analecta Sino-Africana Recensa," in H. Neville Chittick and Robert L. Rothenberg (eds.), *East Africa and the Orient*, pp. 76-114.

¹⁷al-Mas^cudi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, p. 245; al-Istakhari, *al-Masalik*, p. 32; Kariai, *Monumenta Cartographica*, Tome IV, Fascicule 2, "al-Biruni," p. 712; "al-Bakri," p. 740.

¹⁸al-Idrisi, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq*, Tehran, p. 25.

Conditions on the Banaadir coast, where Muslim immigrants had been taking residence since the seventh century, were not much different. There, too, for centuries it was only among the townsmen and surrounding coastal tribes that Islam was to gain adherence. The interior countryside remained largely untouched. Al-Idrisi referred to the Somali country south of, and including, the city of Brava as "The country of the pagans who do not believe in anything. They take erect stones [as their gods] anoint them with fish-oil and prostrate themselves [in worship of these stones]. This superstition and the like of it [constitute] their system of worship and corrupt faith. And in that [belief] they persist."¹⁹ To dispel any doubt as to the ethnic identity of the people he was describing al-Idrisi went on to say that some of those pagans were "obedient to the king of the Berbers," that is, they were Somalis. Al-Idrisi did not concern himself directly with the religion of the many "small village-like Hawiye settlements" to the north of Brava, but his opinion regarding the dietary practices of the coastal tribes reveals much the author did not otherwise directly state. He was disgusted with their custom of eating "fish, shellfish, frogs, snakes, rats," see turtles, "and many other animals which are not eaten," presumably by the Muslims.²⁰

¹⁹ Abu 'Abdalla Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abdalla al-Idrisi, Kitab Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Iktirag al-Afaq, MS Pococke 375, Arch. O.C. 2 Bodleian, Oxford (hereafter, Nuzhat al-Mushtaq, Oxford), p. 52.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 52.

According to the writings of an early 13th century Chinese writer, the Somalis were then Muslims.²¹ Yaqut (d. 1229) also counted the country of the Somalis within the abode of Islam, but his description of their culture reveals to us a society only very lightly touched by Islam. Six centuries after the introduction of Islam into their country the Somalis were still known for such non-Islamic practices as cutting off their victim's male sexual organ.²² Their system of engagement and marriage was equally repugnant to Islamic sensibilities.²³ At the time of Yaqut's writing there were many of them seen in Egypt and al-Maghrib who lived a life of piety and total rejection of worldliness. Yaqut, however, then assured us that these people led the life of austerity for no particular natural inclination on their part towards holiness. Rather they were social reject who could not pass the rugged test of their cruel society, and had turned to worship only as a last resort.²⁴

The thirteenth century Arab geographer, Ibn Said (d.128) declared that by his time the majority of the Somalis had become Muslim, that their country was counted within the

²¹ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 14; Wheatley, "Analecta," p. 103.

²² Yaqut, Mu^cjam al-Buldan, I, p. 543.

²³ Ibid., II, p. 967; for a contemporary Chinese report which approximates Yaqut refer to P. Wheatley, "Analecta," p. 97.

²⁴ Yaqut, Mu^cjam al-Buldan, II, p. 967.

world of Islam, and that, therefore, slaves from their country had become rare in the Muslim world.²⁵ Merka, the capital of over fifty Hawiye villages, was Muslim, and so was the famous Muslim city, Mogadishu, which was frequently mentioned by Muslim travellers.²⁶ The coastal Somalis who were described by al-Idrisi as pagan; by Yaqut as superficially converted and by Ibn Sa'id as mostly Islamic, were by the middle of the fourteenth century completely Islamized. Or, so it would seem from the eye-witness account of Ibn Battuta, who on his visits to Zaila^c and Mogadishu in 1331 failed to notice any pagan community or culture in the area. And so, despite current popular myths,²⁷ which insist that the Somalis were totally converted within decades following the advent of Islam, it appears that the proper Islamization of even the town's people and sedentary coastal farming and fishing communities was a long, slow process spanning a period of seven centuries.

Available evidence shows that the process was much slower in the countryside. It took many more centuries of dedicated, and sometimes concerted, effort of missionary labour before anything approaching universal acceptance of the new religion among the nomads of the interior could be

²⁵This is recorded in 'Imad ad-Din Isma'ili ibn Nur ad-Din Abu l'Fida, Kitab Taqwim al-Buldan (Paris, 1840) p. 159.

²⁶Ibid., p. 163.

²⁷Rirash, Kashf as-Sudul, pp. 10-12; Sharif 'Aidarus, Bughyat ul-Amal, p. 37.

realised. In the interior "Islam had to contend against a virile paganism and especially a body of customary law which is still even in our day resisting the encroachment of the Shari'ca".²⁸ Sir Thomas Arnold encountered a tradition current among the Somalis of the north which relates the career of a noble Arab sheikh who at an indefinite date in the past fled his home in Arabia and came to preach the faith among the northern Somalis.²⁹ There are three Arab notables who are in northern Somalis traditions most closely associated with the spread of Islam in the Horn of Africa during the first five centuries of the Islamic era. But we are unable to tell from this statement to whom Arnold's tradition refer-

The arrival date of the first one of them, one Sheikh Abdurahman Ibn Ismail Jabarti, who because of some difference with his uncle-Sultan fled his homeland, is variously set as the 75th or 295th year after the Hejira.³⁰ He landed near the northeastern tip of the Horn slightly to the west of Cap

²⁸Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 215.

²⁹Sir Thomas Arnold, The Preaching of Islam (London, 1913). p. 350.

³⁰Georges Revoll, La Vallée du Daror, p. 316 and R. E. Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, p. 71 both recorded traditions setting this Sheikh's arrival on the 75th A.H., while Michele Pirone, "What the Ogaden say about their past," trans. by Dr. G. Chiavalon Somaliland Journal, 1, 2 (Hargeisa, 1955) pp. 83-91, fixes it on the authority of Ogaden traditions as the 295th A.H./907-8. Dr. I. M. Lewis, The Modern History of Somaliland, p. 22, on the other hand, thinks it could have been as late as sometime in the 11th century. Revoll, apparently on the authority of his informants who claimed descent from this Sheikh, identified the Sheikh as the father of 'Abdurahman, Isma'il, and not 'Abdurahman himself. The

Guardafui, where a shrine commemorating his historic arrival is still maintained today. Here, Abdurahman married the daughter of the local chief and gave rise to one of the larger Somali clan families. In his lifetime he carried out a certain amount of missionary work among his hosts and in-laws who were at the time either pagan or very lightly touched by Islam. His prominence in the history of Islam on the Horn of Africa, however, derives from the fact of his fathering the first generation of nomadic Somalis born in Islam, who then propagated the faith further inland as they increased in numbers and expanded south and westwards from their cradle on the northeastern seaboard of the Somali Horn of Africa.

The second hero in these traditions, Sheikh Ishaq ibn Ahmed of Alawi* pedigree, left Baghdad in A.H. 498/1104-5 along with ninety people who were relatives or near relatives of his. He lived in the Hijaz and northern Yaman for some time before he came to Zaila^c in the year A.H. 548/1153.³¹ For sixteen years Sheikh Ishaq taught in Zaila and Harar, after which time he travelled through the Arussi country, finally coming to settle at the small town of Meit on the Somali shore of the Gulf of Aden. There he remains buried

present author heard during his childhood other traditions agreeing with Revoil's version.

³¹Ali Sheikh Muhammad, "The Origin of the Isaq Peoples," Somaliland Journal, 1, 1 (Hargeisa, Dec. 1954) pp. 22-25. According to I. M. Lewis (The Modern History of Somaliland, p. 22) Sheikh Ishaq came to the Somali coast two centuries after Sheikh Abdurahman, that is, in the 12th or 13th century A.D.

*Descendant from Ali ibn Abi Talik, cousin of the

in state under a magnificent whitewashed dome, the object of a stream of round-the-year reverent visitations (siyaro) by hundreds of Somalis. His personal contribution aside, Sheikh Ishaq is, like his predecessor Sheikh Abdurahman, immortalized as the progenitor of large clan families who in their expansion helped the spread of Islam to the heart of Somaliland.

Today the Somalis who claim descent from those Arab sheikhs cannot be considered in any way more like the Arabs than the rest of the Somalis. In language and culture there is nothing to distinguish them from the other Somalis. Archaeologically, the cradle of these two groups had the least signs of Arab habitation in the whole of the Somali coast. It has nothing to compare with the visually and linguistical obvious signs of Arab settlement in the Banaadir coast and Zaila^C region. And as far as written sources go, we have already seen medieval Arabs who talked about their connection with Zaila^C and the Banaadir coast, but were silent as regards the intervening coast (the supposed original home of these Arab descendents) where apparently there were no significant Arab interests. Inside this blur of misty folk fables one can detect real historical events taking shape. Arab missionary activity which at its initial stages concentrated on the coasts was by the twelfth century beginning to move inland

Prophet and husband of his daughter--Fatima--, also the fourth of the first four (Rightly-guided) Caliphs in Islam.

and have an impact in the interior as well. This accords well with outside Arab sources which, as exemplified by Yaqut, described a partially Islamized culture in the Horn early in the thirteenth century A.D.³²

The third cultural hero coming out of that early period is one Sharif Yusuf Aw Barkhadle (the blessed one). Also known as Yusuf al-ikhwan (Yusuf of the two worlds) he remains the single most accomplished missionary saint in Somali popular memories.³³ The life story of this sheikh, the ultimate paragon of saintly virtues and powers (baraka), comes to us mainly through a cycle of folk tales which give the story its clothes of legendary miracles. Nevertheless, with slight regional variations, the story is told with a remarkable degree of consistency throughout northern, central, and southern Somaliland. Inside the surrounding wall of romantic fantasy one can observe a concrete central core-- a true personality and the story of his indeed remarkable achievements.

Dr. I. M. Lewis came across traditions which relate this Sheikh to the ruling dynasties of Ifat and Adal.³⁴ The location of the Sheikh's tomb-shrine at Dhogor "Some twenty miles to the northeast of the provincial capital of Hargeisa" in northwestern Somaliland near a number of other ruined sites

³²See above, page 119.

³³I. M. Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle: The Blessed Saint of Somaliland," Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Addis Ababa), pp. 75-81.

³⁴Ibid., p. 75.

historically associated with these medieval states furnishes some corroboration to the assertions of the local traditions.³⁵ Their greatest support, however, comes from written sources. One Harar chronicle first popularized by Dr. Enrico Cerulli in 1931 identified Sheikh Yusuf Barkhadle as the sixth ascending ancestor of ^CUmar Walasma^C, the founder of the Asma^C dynasty of Ifat in Eastern Shoa.³⁶ In a manuscript listing the kings of Adal which Dr. Lewis discovered in 1956 and which appears to be an incomplete version of Cerulli's document one "Sheikh Yusuf al-Ikhwan, nicknamed 'Barkhadle'" is listed as the fifth ancestor of Umar, the dynasty's founder.³⁷ A copy of this same manuscript*, slightly more substantial than Dr. Lewis's version, which I found in Hargeisa in 1971 also has "Sheikh Yusuf, that is Barkatle," as the fifth ancestor in ^CUmar Ibn Dunyahuz's genealogy.

^CUmar Ibn Dunyahuz (Asma^C or Alasma^C) is generally taken to have died sometime after A.H. 688/1289 A.D., the year in which he brought the Shoan Muslim principalities under his

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 75-76.

³⁶ Enrico Cerulli, "Documenti Arabi per la Storia Dell' Etiopia," Memorie Della Reale Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei (Hereafter, M.R.A.L.) Serie VI, Vol. IV, Fascicolo II (Roma, 1931), pp. 40, 43.

³⁷ I. M. Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle," p. 77.

*This document was among a number of religious and historical manuscripts bound together in one volume, supposedly taken from the tomb of Amir Nur in Harar, and was (in 1971) in the safekeep of Sheikh Ahmed Abdullahi Rirash of Hargeisa. A photocopy of it has since been published as an appendix to

effective rule.³⁸ Going back five or six generations from that date, Sheikh Yusuf must have lived around the middle of the twelfth century A.D. This reckoning agrees with local traditions which speak of Sheikh Yusuf and Sheikh Ishaq Ahmed as contemporaries and relate stories of their meeting.³⁹ No matter what the truth of falsity or the Sheikh's association with the ruling families of Ifat and Adal may be, the fact that in the sixteenth century his shrine was regarded a holy place by the people of Harar clearly proves his significance for the Islam of the whole area.⁴⁰

In Somaliland Sheikh Yusuf is known for his teaching of Islam rather than his dynastic connection. He is especially

Sheikh Ahmed Abdullahi's book Kashf as-Sudul ^cAn Tārīkh as-Sūmāl published in 1974.

³⁸E. Cerulli, "Il Sultanato dello Scioa nel secolo XIII secondo un nuovo documento storico," Rassegna di Studi Etiopici Vol. I, (1941) pp. 5-42. Dr. Lewis's king-list and Sheikh Ahmed Abdullahi's manuscript would mark Umar's death in 689/1290. They are contradicted by Cerulli's version of the Harar king-list which ends Umar's rule in 687/1288 and J. S. Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, who has him die in 674/1275-76.

³⁹I. M. Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle," p. 79; Ali Sheikh Muhammad, "The Origin of the Isaq Peoples," p. 24, who claims that Sheikh Ishaq had landed at Zeila^c in 548/1153. The above are contradicted by the records kept at Sharif Yusuf's shrine (i.e., Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle," p. 76). These latter claim that the Prophet had predicted the Sheikh would be born in 666/1266-67, and also by Richard Burton, First Footsteps in East Africa (London, 1856) pp. 101, who at Zeila^c in 1854 was told about one Sayyid Yusuf al-Baghdadi visiting near Berbera in A.H. 666/1266-67.

⁴⁰Abu Bakr Ibn Muhammad Ibn Husain Ibn Muhammad Ibn ^cAlawi Shanbali ba ^cAlawi, Tārīkh al-Mujahidin bibalad 'l-Habasha, MS (hereafter, Tārīkh al-Mujahidin). This manuscript which is included in the bound volume kept by Sheikh Ahmad ^cAbdullahi Rirash was previously published by

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remembered for his system of rendering Arabic vowel function and usage into Somali, a system which made the reading of the Quran much easier. In certain areas he is also credited with the introduction into Somalia of the black-headed fat-tailed sheep.⁴¹

In the early struggles between Islam and paganism for dominance in the Horn of Africa, Sheikh Yusuf always appears in the local traditions, as Islam's standard bearer. The story is told in the form of dramatic legend in which Sheikh Yusuf is pitted against, and overcomes, superior evil forces which despite their intelligent machinations must bow to the forces of truth. When Sheikh Yusuf came to northern Somaliland, he found the country under the oppressive rule of Muhammad Hanif (Bu^Cur Ba^Cayr), a pagan magician who was using his magical tricks to maintain his authority and misguide the people. Sensing the danger which the Sheikh's preaching presented to his authority, the magician invited the Sheikh to an open contest, witnessed by all the people, in which they would demonstrate their powers to prove the truth of their faiths. The Sheikh was not a magician but, confident as he was of the superior powers of God and of God's succor to the faithful in the hour of distress, he willingly accep-

P. Paulntschke in his Harar, Forschungsreise nach den Somal- und Galla-Ländern Ost-Africas (Leipzig, 1888) and E. Cerulli "Documenti Arabi per la Storia Dell' Etiopia," M.R.A.L., 1931.

⁴¹I. M. Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle," p. 75.

the challenge. The magician went first with the display of his powers twice passing miraculously through a mountain and awing his spectators. The Sheikh asked for a third performance and while the magician was "in the middle of his third demonstration of his powers, Sharif Yusuf invoked the superior might of God and imprisoned his rival for ever within the mountain."⁴² With this act paganism was vanquished and Islam triumphed. This event is immortalized in Somali culture by the gifts made to the descendants of the magician at the birth of a child in recompense (dia) for the loss of their father.

Around Baidoa, in southwestern Somalia and about a thousand miles away from Sharif Yusuf's shrine, the same miraculous event figures in the local traditions. There, where he is popularly known as Konton Barkhadle (the fifty times blessed), Sheikh Yusuf encountered a pagan Galla Chief called Qanana who challenged him to a similar contest, whereupon with the help of Sural al-Yasin he trapped the pagan chief in a mountain, he was passing through for the third time.⁴³

In the traditions of the Ogaden (the Harar province of present day Ethiopia) the introduction of Islam is attributed to one Aw Yusuf* of Zabid who saw the Prophet in a dream and

⁴² ibid, p. 80.

⁴³ ibid, p. 80. Dr. Lewis states that the chief was a Galla (Oromo) but on making enquiries about the true identity of this figure among people from that area all that the present author could make out was that the man was pagan and black, and not necessarily a member of the Oromo nation.

*The Somali title "Aw" or "Au" is synonymous to the

was instructed by him to proselytize among the Somalis.⁴⁴ Here also local traditions allude to a dramatic collision between Islam and paganism in a story almost identical with the confrontation between Sheikh Yusuf and Muhammad Hanif. The Muslim missionary protagonist who is in the Ogaden remembered as Aw Samirra found the country infested with numerous magicians who were collecting followers around them. The Sheikh challenged them and then happened what follows:

...A magician accepted the challenge, saying he would miraculously pass through mount Hanfalei without making a tunnel nor leaving any trace of his passage; he then disappeared into the side of the mountain after making magical invocations. Au-Samirra, by the help of the one true God of the Believers rose in the air and placed his feet on the two sides of the mountain, where the magician has gone in and where he was due to emerge. The magician died suffocated in the mountain. Such a miracle marked the end of the magicians and the decisive triumph of the true religion.⁴⁵

And so among the nomadic Ogaden, "at the birth of every male child, a kid would be offered to the first descendant of the imprisoned magician presenting himself."⁴⁶

This ubiquitous presence of Sheikh Yusuf's name throughout Somaliland could mean, as some northern Somali traditions allege, that the saint had in his missionary labours travelled

Arabic word Sheikh (learned man).

⁴⁴M. Pirone, "What the Ogaden Somali say", p. 87.

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 87.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 87. Italics represent a paraphrase of the original.

to all those parts. More plausibly, however, it was his students who spread the Sheikh's name abroad. Whatever the case, it is clear from this brief survey that the central figure in the missionary campaign among the nomads was Sheikh Yusuf, Aw Barkhadle.

According to the Harar king-list Sheikh Yusuf Barkhadle was a direct descendant of Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, hence the title of Sharif.⁴⁷ Among the Somali, however, the Sheikh is usually referred to simply as Aw Barkhadle (the blessed learned one), a somewhat rustic appellation which would not be applied to a learned noble Arab. Moreover, his system of Somali notation for the Arabic vowels sounds too authentically Somali to be the work of an Arab without the assistance of Somalis. And so, despite these many sources which assert or imply his Sharifian descent, the true identity of Yusuf Aw Barkhadle still remains obscure.

Traditions also speak of a band of forty-four Hadrami Sheikhs who came in the fifteenth century to the Somali coast for missionary work among the interior Somalis whose Islam was still largely imperfect. They landed at Berbera whence they dispersed in all directions to cover the whole country.

⁴⁷I. M. Lewis, "Sharif Yusuf Barkhadle," p. 77. The hagiology kept at the saint's tomb-shrine also makes this claim. Richard Burton's informant who referred to the Sheikh as Sayyid Yusuf al-Baghdadi also implied his descent from Ali as the title Sayyid is normally reserved for Ali's descendants. The usage of Sharif or Sayyid by some learned Somalis to refer to Barkhadle, however, is not a dependable indication of his noble birth. Among the Somali a saint

One of these Hadramis, Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Zarbay (Abu dhar?), arrived in 1430 A.D. at the city of Harar where he won over many people to the Islamic faith. It is also said that he is buried there and his tomb has become a sacred shrine,⁴⁸ "A hill near Berberah is still called the Mount of Saints (Kombo Awliya) in memory of these missionaries, who are said to have sat there in solemn conclave before scattering far and wide to the work of conversion".⁴⁹ What came of the missionaries other than Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Zarbay is not known, as none of them has left behind a memory comparable to that of Sheikh Ibrahim.

almost always acquires the title of Sayyid, and the term Sharif at times means only a man of good deeds.

⁴⁸Arnold, Preaching, p. 350. Richard Burton (First Footsteps, pp. 75-76) claims to have seen Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Zarbay's tomb in Zaila^c but he confirms the Sheikh's arrival in Harar in A.D. 1430, "His name," maintains Burton, "is immortalized in El-Yaman by the introduction of El-Qat". However, it appears that Burton and Arnold have confused Sheikh Ibrahim a-Zaila^c who is buried in Zaila^c with Sheikh Abādir who is most closely associated with the preaching of Islam in Harar in which city Burton saw his grave (First Footsteps, p. 323). For further details see Lothrop Stoddard, Hadir al Alam al-Islami edited by Amir Shakib Arsalan, Vol. III, (Cairo, 1933), p. 118; J. Schleifer, "Harar," in M. th. Houtsma et al (eds.) Encyclopaedia of Islam, London: Luzac and Co., 1927, p. 263-64. Today in Western Somaliland saint Abādir (Ar., Abā Dhar) of Harar is connected with the popularization of Qāt, a plant whose young leaves are chewed for their stimulating effect. Now it is universally chewed in Yaman and Somaliland, but formerly it was used only by the pious who wanted to stay awake for the specially meritorious nightly worship. For some detail regarding the popularity of Qāt in the Horn of Africa during the first half of the fifteenth century consult Ahmad ibn ^cAli ibn ^cAli ibn ^cAbdulqadir ibn Muhammad al-Maqrizi, al-Ilmām bi Akhbār man bi Ard 'l-Habasha min Muluk 'l-Islam (Cairo, 1895), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁹Arnold, Preaching, 350.

Despite these popular memories of Arab missionary activity it appears that most of the work of conversion and teaching among the nomads was carried out by Somalis and not Arabs. The absence of such typically Arab characteristics as a written literary tradition, mosque and grave inscriptions from the nomad's culture lends some support to this view. By the fourteenth century there were enough Somali learned men to shoulder the task of proselytization among their nomadic countrymen who otherwise would have had a hard time communicating with the Arabs. Yaqut said that already in the thirteenth century there were many Somalis in north Africa pursuing a life of study, and in the fourteenth century Ibn Battuta witnessed a "Riwaq (portico) in the Azhar and a section of the Mosque of the Umayyads at Damascus... reserved for students from Zaila^c.⁵⁰

The traffic between the Somali coast and Yaman was especially great during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One Yamanite historian, al-Khazraji, in his chronicle of the Rasulid dynasty of Yaman (1227/8-1454/5), recorded the death in Yaman of at least sixteen Zaila^c's who in the fourteenth century distinguished themselves as some of the top scholars and teachers in the country.⁵¹ One of them, Sheikh Isma^cil ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ibrahim al-Jabarti (1322-1403) stands out as one of the greatest Yamanite saints of all time.

⁵⁰Yāqūt, Mu^cjam al-Buldān, II, p. 967; Trimmingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 62.

⁵¹Sheikh Ali ibn 'l-Hasan al-Khazraji, Kftab al-^cuqūd

the patron saint of the University city of Zabīd, where he was born and his shrine still stands--the object of annual visitations by thousands of pilgrims seeking his blessings--Sheikh Isma^Cil not only dominated the affairs of that city but was so renowned nationally that his council was indispensable to the authorities in San^Caa.⁵² In 1393/5, for example, Sheikh Isma^Cil ordered, without the local governor's permission, the whipping and expulsion from the city of one of Zabīd's citizens for some unspecified wrongdoing. Two weeks later the Sheikh effected the whipping of another transgressor, this time even recommending to the Sultan in San^Caa that the man be completely thrown out of Yaman altogether.⁵³ The king obliged and gave orders to the city's governor to carry out the sentence. Sheikh Isma^Cil was only the most renowned of these men for, like Faqih Isa Ibn Musa az-Zaīla^Ci, who died in Zabīd in 1399/1400, four years before Sheikh Isma^Cil's death in the same city, and whose funeral was attended "by all the luminaries of state,"⁵⁴ the other Zaīla^Ci Sheikhs were all well remembered for their piety and learning.⁵⁵

al-Lu^Clu^Cyya fī Tārīkh ad-Dawla ar-Rasūliyya, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1911, 1914) Vol. I, pp. 63-64, 343-344, 363, 374-375, 394-395, 411, 365-366; Vol. II, pp. 14, 54, 56-57, 82, 85, 148-149, 191.

⁵² Ibid, II, pp. 272-273.

⁵³ Ibid, II, pp. 272-273.

⁵⁴ Ibid, II, p. 310.

⁵⁵ Some gained renown further afield. A couple of examples are ^CAdalla Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ayūb Ibn Mūsā

Occasionally, one even comes across individual Zaila^Cis or "Barbars" figuring in the local politics, as in the case of Ibrahim a-Zaila^Ci, "a famous horseman," who in 1361/62 took part in a local civil war and was killed in it.⁵⁶

Of course, besides these famous scholars there was a large number of less significant students, many of whom went back home after receiving their masters' certification to teach. It was largely due to the efforts of these returning graduates, who went about the countryside as itinerant missionary priests, that Islam established a permanent foothold in the interior.

In the south, especially, traditions specify not only how Islam spread there, but also who spread it. Here traditions associate the spread of Islam with the learned Ajuran who began, after their Islamization in the fourteenth century A.D., to move inland from their coastal bases.⁵⁷ Traditions which I have encountered in the lower Shabelle region and central Somalia all credit the Ajuran with the spread of

al-Hanafī az-Zaila^Ci (d. 762 A.H. /1360-61) whose work Nasb ar-Rāya li Ahādīth al-Hidāya is considered a great reference work by all four Orthodox (Sunnite) schools of law. Sheikh Abdalla's teacher (also from Zaila^C), Fakhr 'd-Dīn az-Zaila^Ci, the author of Tabyīn al-Haqa'iq fi Sharh Kanz ad-Daqa'iq in six large volumes, is equally popular and well-known. But there were many more.

⁵⁶ al-Khazraji, al-'Uqud al-Lulu'iyya, II, p. 121.

⁵⁷ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 24. Dr. Lewis speaks of an Ajuran state dominating the lower reaches of the Shabelle in the fifteenth century. See Chapter Six below for a discussion of the Ajuran.

Islam there, and also with superhuman knowledge and skills.⁵⁸ Ruined towns and mosques strewn all over the place are all said to be the works of these skillful Ajuran.*

Among the many traditions of the Ogaden in far western Somaliland is that which relates the career of the proud and powerful Garen and Ajuran conquerors of the Ogaden, formerly occupied by pagans. Sometimes remembered as one single people, and at times as two different waves of Muslim migrants coming from the Indian Ocean coast, the Garen and Ajuran are said to be responsible for the popularization of the Islamic culture in the heart of western Somaliland. Coming to a decadent pagan culture, traditions insist, the Garen-Ajuran combination first posed as traders with peaceable intentions, but then they gradually employed their superior workmanship and political adroitness to wage war against, and to obliterate, the pagan regime and culture of the country.⁵⁹ This Ogaden tradition accords well with the traditions from Eastern parts which refer to an Ajuran state intervening commercially and geographically between Mogadishu and the interior

⁵⁸ Interview with Sheikh YQsuf Muhyiddin, Mererey, August 26, 1971; Interview with Sheikhs Ahmad Waasuge and Faatah Gaabow, Mahaas, September 16, 1972. I have heard these traditions in passing throughout Brava, Afgoi, Mogadishu, Eel Dheer, Harar Dheere areas.

*There are many ruins in the area, but the best example is probably the multitude of mosques and other ruined buildings in the vicinity of the village of Mahaas between Buleburde and Eel Buur.

⁵⁹ M. Pirone, "What the Ogaden say," p. 84.

sources of the trade items.⁶⁰ "Wells dug in rock and lime-mortar thought to be graves and sometimes called 'Ajuran houses,' are indeed a tribute to the period of Ajuran domination".⁶¹ With these Garen-Ajuran conquests, as Michele Pirone correctly surmised, "it is possible that the new religion recently introduced on the Somali coasts by Arab traders, was contending with the old and slowly penetrating inland also".⁶²

The movement of Islam inland was given a strong impetus by the hardening of hostilities in the fourteenth century between the Christian state of Abyssinia and the Muslim principalities to the southeast. Since the advent of Islam in the 7th century A.D. Islam and Christianity were contending against each other for dominance in the Horn of Africa. For centuries the competition was peaceful and missionary in nature, but in the fourteenth century A.D., with Haqq ad-Din's (d. 1386) accession to power in Ifat the contest assumed a crusading character and was expressed from then on in the form of periodic skirmishes and annual forays into each other's territory.⁶³ The standing rivalry between Islam (Muslim statelets of the Horn) and Christianity (Abyssinia), which

⁶⁰I. M. Lewis, The Modern History of Somaliland, p. 24.

⁶¹M. Pirone, "What the Ogaden say," p. 85.

⁶²Ibid, p. 86.

⁶³I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 24.

had been expanding southwards from its base in Eritrea and the Tigrean highlands, culminated in the sixteenth century in the all-out Jihad (1527-42) led by Ahmed Ibrahim Guray* of the state of ^CAdal from its capital base of Harar.

Within this larger Muslim struggle against the pretensions of the Christian state was a series of internal Jihads waged against semi-Islamized nomadic groups and remnants of paganism. Local manuscripts chronicle the tedious story of an endless series of engagements, of raids and punitive counter raids, between the forces of Islam and pagan resistors in the last half of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth.⁶⁴ Though the pagan resistors in these struggles are usually (if not always) identified as Galla, it appears that they were non-Islamic Somali, since the Galla were not there before the sixteenth century.⁶⁵ This is authenticated by Shihab ad-Din, the Arab Faqih, who chronicled the sixteenth century Jihads led by Ahmed Ibrahim Gurey and in his listing of ethnic groups present in the area

*The sixteenth century ruler of the state of Adal, Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghāzi, known to the outside world by the Amharic appellation Gran (the left-handed), is known to the Somalis as Gurey, the Somali term for "the left-handed". Another variant of the word is Gurrane.

⁶⁴Ritrāsh, Kashf as-Sudūl, pp. 36-67; al-Maqrizi in the al-Ilmam, p. 16 reports on rebellious Somalis which Sultan Jamāl ad-Dīn of Adal (825-835 A.H.) had to contend with before starting his religious wars: ^CAbdulmajīd ^CAbdīn, Bayn al-Habasha wa 'l-^CArab, (Cairo, 1974); p. 181.

⁶⁵Herbert S. Lewis, "The Origins of the Galla and Somali," pp. 27-46.

left out only the Gallas.⁶⁶ Despite the dubious authenticity of some of the remarks made in these reports, the chronicles unmistakably illustrate the efforts made by the Muslim leaders towards internal consolidation before embarking on the all-out war against the Christian state. As late as the sixteenth century Ahmed Gurey had to forcibly pacify the Somalis, the "road-cutters" according to Shihab ad-Din, before he could wage his holy wars against the Christians.⁶⁷ This entailed not only peaceful missionary suasion but, more commonly, downright forceful conversions. In the end this policy of internal crusade prior to any action against the external enemy paid off because the nomads, now fired with the fervour of the newly acquired faith, flocked to the Muslim armies and decided the day, if only fleetingly, for the cause of Islam. It is mainly because of the crucial nature of the role which the nomads played in these struggles after their pacification that some authorities have come to interpret the conflict as an outcome of the nomads' expansion.⁶⁸

These local crusades not only drew the nomads into the

⁶⁶Shihāb ad-Dīn Ahmad ibn ^cAbdulqādir ibn Sālim ibn-
^cUthmān al-Jīzanī, or Arab Faqīh, Tuhfat 'l-Zamān or Futuh
al-Habasha (Cairo, 1974), throughout the book.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 7; pp. 22-23.

⁶⁸J. S. Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 79; also C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford, Some Records of Ethiopia, (London, 1954) p. LXXI.

hostilities in which they formed the backbone of the Muslim armies, but they also attracted a wave of Muslim missionaries from abroad. The forty-four Hadrami Sheikhs who landed near Berbera early in the fifteenth century constituted the first arrivals of this wave. Yaman, Hijaz, and even North Africa were all represented in this wave, but the majority were no doubt from Hadramawt where these crusades were followed with exceptional interest and Ahmed Garey's Jihads chronicled on a day-to-day basis.⁶⁹ Most prominent among these Hadarima were the Ashraf descendants of Ali, the first of whom was reported to have arrived at the Horn in A.H. 837/1433-34. It might have been because of the Ashraf's association with teaching and proselytization during that era that the title of "Sharif", besides implying noble birth, acquired among the simple and uncultivated Somalis a certain amount of saintly virtues.

The evidence presented here indicates that Islam was introduced into the Somali Peninsula rather peacefully and somewhat incidentally sometime in the second half of the seventh century A.D. by people who came to the Horn for non-religious concerns. The agents of its introduction into, and establishment on, the coasts were individual Arab traders, followed by a larger body of Arab and Persian political, and sometimes religious, dissidents fleeing the persecution of the Islamic Caliphates. Among these early immigrants to the

⁶⁹ al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butūn al-^cAlawlyya," p. 170.

Somali coast were some Zaidi Shi^Cites who appear to have made a more important contribution to the conversion of the Somalis, at least in the early centuries of Islam's introduction, than they have been credited with so far. The presence of unacknowledged elements of Shi^Cite doctrine in Somali Islam, purportedly Sunnite, clearly attests to a strong Shi^Cite influence sometime in the past antecedent to Ibn Battuta's visit to the country in the fourteenth century. Written outside sources to corroborate this viewpoint, albeit their scarcity in number, are not by any means lacking either. After a centuries-long process of consolidation on the coast Islam was carried into the interior during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by a new class of learned Somalis, a significant number of whom had their training abroad, especially in such centers as Zabid in the Yaman and the Azhar University in Cairo. The fifteenth and sixteenth century Jihadic struggles against Abyssinia forced the leaders of the Muslim states on the Horn of Africa to missionarize among the Somali and Afar non-Muslim or semi-Islamized interior clans, often by force rather than by peaceful means, in order to recruit the manpower resources of the nomads who were renowned for their fabulous fighting prowess and uncompromizing religious zeal, in contrast to the soft and worldly city inhabitants. In this cause they received unsolicited, but timely (and as events proved crucial), aid from abroad, especially from the large Shariffian community in Hadramawt.

Thus the Somalis accepted Islam by the sixteenth century as their national religion. They bore the brunt of the struggles against Christianity on the Horn of Africa, and from that time on became culturally and, especially, emotionally tied to the Arab world.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Horn of Africa in the Commerce of the Indian Ocean 900-1500

We have seen in an earlier chapter how, because of its near-monopoly production of aromatic resins, the Horn of Africa had in very remote times developed profitable trade relations with most of the ancient and classical civilizations. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Persians, and perhaps even Phoenicians and the peoples of Mesopotamia had all, at one time or the other, engaged in commercial intercourse with the area which has since become Somaliland. Of all those different ties the Arab connection proved the most lasting in duration, and in influence most consequential. The significance of Arab trading activities for the genesis and development of Somali commercial culture can better be appreciated by a quick glance at the enormous number of Arabic commercial loan-words in the Somali language. Such elementary business terms as trader, profit, loss, debt, loan, bankruptcy, cash, pawn, capital, usury, and company in current Somali, to present only a few, are all of Arabic provenance.¹ One wonders if the Somalis ever engaged in any kind of business activity before coming in contact with the Arabs!

¹Zaborski, "Arabic loan-words in Somali," pp. 125-175.

One thing is certain. The Arabs and some of their Southwest Asian colleagues together made international trade, during the Islamic era, a permanent feature of the Somalis' economy. Along the coasts of Somaliland there are ruins of medieval settlements, relic reminders of the vitality of the trade in those centuries. Inland trade opened tracks through trails rarely trodden before, thus fostering the growth of inter-clan amity and extra-clan peaceful relations.² Admittedly, trade frequently intensifies rivalry and conflict, and it might at times have had precisely that effect in the Horn. However, from the picture of trade activities and number of unprotected urban centers along the trade routes, it seems that the period was relatively peaceful and diplomatic relations were carefully maintained to safeguard mutual economic interests accruing from the trade. Besides the change in the ethnic composition at the two peripheries and the introduction of Islam, it is in this area of trade and general economy that the Arabs had their most significant impact upon the Somali culture.

The conversion of the Somalis to Islam and the proximity of Somali coast to Arabia facilitated the constant flow of ideas and cultural elements (in both directions) across the

²At Harar (in 1854) Richard Burton was told stories of Somalis travelling to places far to the west in quest of trade goods, and possibly, reaching the Atlantic coast. While these connections have been growing over the centuries in depth and complexity, the origins of trade in the Islamic era can be traced back to the permanent market for ivory and

narrow waterway separating Africa from Arabia. The most important reason, however, for the Arabization of the Somali commercial culture was the migration, in the early centuries of Islam, of Arabs and other partially Arabized Southwest Asian peoples to the Somali coasts, and their domination of the Somalis' external trade ever since. On the Indian Ocean coast of Somaliland "Muslim Arab, and in some cases also Persian colonists, established--or continued--a string of trading posts from shortly after the hijra".³ There is at least one outside Arab source which suggests that the colonists in the Banaadir might have depended for subsistence upon fishing, and even practised a certain amount of agriculture along the banks of the Shabelle River where it comes close to the sea coast.⁴ Most authorities, however, agree that these were essentially trading communities whose prosperity depended upon their position as middlemen between the interior sources of African produce and the Asian consumers.⁵ In fact, except for the Qarmatian political dissidents from al-Ahsa and the Zaidi religious schismatics who immigrated to the

slaves which came into being in the Near East shortly after the rise of the Arab Caliphates.

³ I. M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa, pp. 6-7; and many others.

⁴ al-Idrisi, Nuzhat al-Mushtaq (Tehran), I, p. 39; Captain C. H. Stigand in his The Land of Zinj (p. 9), has the interesting interpretation that the sea turtles which the Banaadir residents ate and called "lebeh" might refer to the Somali "Libaah Badeed" (Shark) which is still craved by both the Arabs and Somalis in that area.

⁵ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 22.

Banaadir coast, Arab and other Southwest Asian visitors to the Somali coasts came primarily for trade reasons and in quest of other economic opportunities only. Their sojourns there were always brief and seasonal as they still continue to be to this day. The preponderance of these Southwest Asians' travels to, and/or settlement in, Zaila^c, the emporium of the Ethiopian trade, and the relatively fertile Banaadir coast constitutes eloquent testimony to such economic motives behind these migrations.

Populating such already existing trading stations as, Mogadishu and Brava, and even founding smaller satellite colonies in between and to the south of them through secondary migrations, the immigrant groups in time developed their own fleets, reaching the apogee of their commercial power in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, by which time they were sending commercial factors to western India and founding ruling dynasties on the eastern coast to the south of them.⁶

⁶ Before the rise of Kilwa to a position of prominence on the southern coast in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, Mogadishu appears to have partially prospered from the lucrative Zimbabwean gold trade through Sofala. Our source for this piece of information is the Portuguese writer Joao De Barros (G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, The Medieval History of the Coast of Tanganyika, New York, 1962, pp. 88-89) who on the authority of the Kilwa Chronicle claims that it was Mogadishu that opened the gold trade with Sofala first, and that Kilwa had become aware of the trade, and established control over it much later. By examining external written sources and local archaeological evidences H. Neville Chittick was able to date Kilwa's rise to power toward the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth. Agreeing with J. S. Trimingham's reconstruction of Asiatic settlements on the coast Chittick relates the founding of this powerful Kilwa state to secondary Asiatic migrations from the

For the time being, however, the colonists depended upon Persian and ^CUmāni sea transport for the conveyance of their merchandise to Asian markets, especially upon Persian shipping which was dominant in the carriage business of the East African coast from about A.D. 550 on.⁷ Available evidence shows that as late as the tenth century A.D. the Persians were in full control of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea trade as far north as Jedda. According to the Akhbār as-Sin wa 'l-Hind (the news of China and India), a ninth century work usually ascribed to a merchant named Suleimān, Indian and Chinese shipping did not stir west of the Persian seaport of Sīrāf.⁸ In A.D. 916 a native of Sīrāf, Abu Zayd al-Hasan ibn al-Yazīd, reported on large ocean-going Sīrāfī dhows disposing of their loads at Jedda for transshipment in smaller craft up the reef-ridden tumultuous waters of the northern half of the Red Sea to Egypt.⁹

Banaadir coast of Southern Somaliland. For the rise of Kilwa and the decline of Mogadishu consult Chittick's: 1) "The 'Shirazi' Colonization of East Africa," JAH, VI, 3 (1965), pp. 275-94; 2) "The Peopling of the East African Coast," in Chittick and Rotberg, East Africa and the Orient, pp. 16-43; 3) "The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," R. Oliver (ed.) The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 3 (New York, 1977) pp. 183-231. See also J. S. Trimingham, Islam in East Africa (New York, 1964), pp. 6-7; 10-11; G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, "Some Archaeological Works on the Tanganyika Coast," Man, 58, 155 (July, 1958), pp. 106-112.

⁷ Paul Wheatley, "The Land of Zanj: Exegetical notes on Chinese knowledge of East Africa prior to A.D. 1500," Geographers and the Tropics: Liverpool Essays, Robert W. Steel and R. Mansell Prothero (eds.) (London, 1964), pp. 139-187.

⁸ Eusebius Renaudot (trans.), Ancient Accounts of India and China by two Mohammedan Travellers (London, 1733), p. VIII.

⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

The East African branch of the Indian Ocean trade was first captured by the seafaring citizens of ^CUmān who won a special honour among the East Africans through their export of dates there, a commodity for which the East Africans developed a peculiar taste. Abu Zayd reports somewhat half-humourously:

In their hearts they [the East Africans] have a profound veneration for the Arabs, and when they chance to see anyone of them, they fall down before him, and cry, this man comes from the kingdom where flourishes the date-bearing palm, for they are fond of dates.¹⁰

Apparently, this Umāni monopoly of the East African trade did not last very long. Al-Mas^Cūdī, who travelled to East Africa, making his last voyage in 917 A.D. from an East African island to ^CUmān, witnessed ships from both ^CUmān and Siraf trading with the East Africans as far south as Sofala.¹¹ This was a dangerous journey, especially towards the approaches of Cape Guardafui where the sea was always stormy and the waves were liable to become "mad". "The people who sail on this sea are ^CUmani Arabs of the tribe of Azd; when they get into the middle of this sea and find themselves between waves of the kind we described which lift them up and lower them, they sing the following rhyme at their work:

'Barbara and Jafuna [Hafun] made are thy waves,
Jafuna and Barbara see their waves.'¹²

Around the middle of the tenth century A.D. a Persian sea

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹¹ al-Has^Cūdī, *Murūj a-Dhahab*, Vol. I, pp. 64-65

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65, translated by George Fadio Hourani who quotes it in his *Arab Seafaring*, p. 81.

captain, one Buzurg ibn Shahriyar of Ramhurmuz, put together in the Kitab al-Aja'ib al-Hind (the Book of the wonders of India) a collection of sea yarns strikingly reminiscent of the well-known adventures of Sinbad the Sailor in the Arabian Nights. These Indian, East African, and Far Eastern stories in themselves have no particular bearing upon the topic at hand. What is so significant about the work is the fact that the majority of the merchants and sea captains whom the author quotes, all citizens of ^CUmān, Sīrāf, and al-Basrah, were of Persian extraction--an indication perhaps of Persian commercial dominance in the Indian Ocean at that time.¹³ Al-Istakhari, a contemporary of Buzurg, has more specific information to add to these reports. Jedda, he asserted, was dependent primarily upon her trade with Persia.¹⁴ Further, the city of Sīraf's splendid houses, several storeys high, were constructed of teakwood (he probably meant mangroves) imported from East Africa.¹⁵ In 966 A.D., a dozen years or so after al-Istakhari's writing, the state of ^CUmān was annexed to Iran by the Buwayhid governors of Fars, whereupon all her overseas commercial interests fell, almost exclusively, into Persian hands. Consequently by the time of al-Muqaddasi's

¹³Hadī Hasan, A History of Persian Navigation, p. 126, George Fadl Hourani in his Arab Seafaring, p. 65, however, intimates that the author of the Aja'ib al-Hind who was an Iranian had relied mainly on Iranians of Sīraf, which fact would account for the majority of Iranian authorities interviewed.

¹⁴Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 80.

¹⁵al-Istakhari, al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik, p. 32.

writing (985 A.D.) "the language of the people of this country (^cUmān) is Arabic, except in Suhar (the capital occupied by the Persians) where they speak and call out to each other in Persian".¹⁶

In the Red Sea the Persian posture was equally preponderant. According to al-Muqaddasi "the greater part of the inhabitants of 'Adan and Juddah are Persians, but the language is Arabic".¹⁷ Better yet, at the "flourishing and populous" city of Jedda, "the granary of Makkah and the emporium of al-Yaman and Egypt," and where, therefore the "inhabitants are chiefly merchants and people of wealth... the Persians are the ruling class and live in splendid palaces".¹⁸ It is most likely due to this Persian domination of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in the early centuries of the Medieval Era that we now find so many marine terms of Persian origin in Arabic and Somali nautical vocabulary.¹⁹

The Gulf of Aden coast of northern Somaliland also experienced a similar revival of economic opportunities

¹⁶ Shams ad-Dīn Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasi, Ahsan a-Taqaṣīm fi Maḥrifat al-Aqālīm, trans. by G. S. A. Ranking and R. F. Azoo (Calcutta, 1897-1901), p.147; Adolf Grahmann, "Suhār," Encyclopaedia of Islam, IV, edited by M. Th. Houtsma et al (London, 1934), p. 504.

¹⁷ al-Muqaddasi, Ahsan a-Taqaṣīm, p. 147.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁹ Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 65. Most of these terms are also found in Somali marine terminology. Whether they have been taken directly from the Persians, or indirectly through the Arabs, cannot be determined now.

following the rise of Islam.²⁰ Some authorities even insist, though unconvincingly, that there were Arab migrations to that coast comparable to the Arab and Persian settlements on the Banaadir coast.²¹ Contemporary Arab sources, as has been seen earlier (see Chapter Three), clearly contradict that, but the growth of Arab trade interests and connections in the area from the ninth century A.D., and perhaps earlier, is an undisputed fact.²² Zaila^c and Berbera, especially the former which was the emporium for the export-import trade of the resource-rich southern Ethiopia, soon regained the economic stature they enjoyed during classical times. The initiators and beneficiaries of these commercial interests were largely Muslim Yamanis who, as alleged by some authorities, might have kept the lion's share, if not all, of the "trade of the interior (of Abyssinia) in their hands until the arrival of the Turks at the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century."²³ We cannot determine precisely at what time these interests developed, but by the beginning of the tenth century A.D. they must have been fairly considerable. Earlier, some Arab merchants from the Hijaz claiming descent from the Makhzumite clan of Khalid ibn 'l-Walid had already penetrated inland and founded a small state in eastern Shoa

²⁰I. M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa, pp. 6-7.

²¹Touval, Somali Nationalism, p. 9.

²²al-Mus^cūdi, Murūj a-Dhahab, Vol. I, p. 245.

²³Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, p. 15.

sometime towards the end of the ninth century.²⁴ In the tenth century, reported al-Mas'udi, Zaila^C had a small community of resident Muslim merchants carrying on business with Abyssinia, and the Yamanite governor of Zabid was dispatching his commercial fleets there on a regular basis.²⁵ Zaila^C's trade affiliation, on the one hand with Abyssinia and on the other with Yaman and the Hijaz, is reported throughout the medieval Arab geographical writings which give progressively more detailed information about the town's economic conditions and resources.²⁶

Even here, on the northern coasts, the Persian masters of the high seas were vigorously competing with the Yamani and Hijazi pioneers. Documentation for this Persian involvement in the trade of the Horn is scarce and largely indirect. An example of this type of documentation is found in a ninth century Chinese text, Yu-Yang-tsa-tsu, written by a scholar who died in 863 A.D., which talks about Persians trading in the vicinity of Berbera, and also gives an idea about the business practices of the Somalis on that coast. "If Persian (Po-ssi) merchants wish to go into the country," states the

²⁴ Enrico Cerulli, "Il Sultanato dello Shoa nel Secolo XIII," Rassegna di Studi Etiopici, I (1941) pp. 5-42. Traditions claim that these immigrants had arrived in Ethiopia during the reign of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab.

²⁵ al-Mas'udi, Muruj a-Dhahab, Vol. I, p. 245.

²⁶ Ibn Hawqal, Kitab Sūrat ul-Ard (p. 61), al-Idrisi, Nuzhat ul-Mushtaq (Tehran) (p. 25), Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan (Vol. II, p. 966), Abul Fidā, Taqwim al-Buldan (p. 161) quoting Ibn Sa'īd; and the rest.

Chinese scholar, "they collect around them several thousand men and present them with strips of cloth. All, whether old or young draw blood and swear an oath, and then only do they trade their products".²⁷ This Somali practice of exacting presents from foreign merchants before allowing them to trade on their soil, or for safe conduct through their territory, was reported by Yaqut who stated that a merchant going to the Somali country for trade had to seek the protection of one of them, who would conduct "affairs," (business) for him.²⁸ Ibn Battuta personally witnessed this same custom in operation when a swarm of youths clambered on board his boat as soon as it lowered anchor at Mogadishu's harbour and the merchants were distributed, according to the first-come-first-served rules of the system, to the safe-keep of these youthful protectors, adding that it was of some gain to them.²⁹ The contractual agreement between the foreign merchant and his protector-beneficiary (Abbān, in Somali), which in the ninth century was very rudimentary and haphazard and guaranteed, as evidenced in this Chinese report, by ritual oath ceremonies, in time developed into a mature and sophisticated permanent institution in the Somali business culture--indeed still very much alive today--entailing a set of multifarious binding

²⁷ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, pp. 13-14; Wheatley, "Analecta," p. 104.

²⁸ Yaqut, Mu^cjam al-Buldān, IV, p. 602.

²⁹ Ibn Battuta, Rihlat ibn Battuta, p. 253. By then the system entailed more than the simple obligation of protecting

obligations on, and benefits for, both sides, Richard Burton, who was conducted through the territories of the different Somali clans by a network of relay-Abbāns, had this to say about the system at its maturity:

The Abban acts at once broker, escort, agent, and interpreter, and the institution may be considered the earliest form of transition dues. In all sales he receives a certain percentage, his food and lodging are provided at the expense of his employer, and he not unfrequently exacts small presents from his kindered. In return he is bound to arrange all differences, and even to fight the battles of his client against his fellow-countrymen. Should the Abban be slain, his tribe is bound to take up the cause and to make good the losses of their protege.³⁰

What was the role of the Somalis in the development of these commercial ties? It is safe to say that only very few of the coastal Somalis have ever participated in the dhow traffic to their land. At the present the number of Somalis profitably employed in that profession, mainly because of the arrival of the steamer, is understandably insignificant. But even early in the nineteenth century, before steamer services to the country became regular, most travellers to the Somali coasts saw only Arab or Indian boats plying the Somali waters.³¹

the life and property of the merchant for, according to Ibn Battuta, the protector also had the extra duty of assuring a fair price for his client's merchandise, and any sales concluded in his absence which did not meet his approval were automatically null and void.

³⁰Burton, First Footsteps, p. 89.

³¹Lieut. T. Postans, "Some account of the Present State of Trade, between the Port of Mandavie in Cutch, and the Eastern Coast of Africa," Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society, Vol. III (June 1839-February 1840) pp. 169-176;

Outside medieval sources also mention only foreign shipping carrying goods to and from the Somali coasts. The coastal strip surrounding the eastern tip of the Somali Peninsula, however, is occupied today by clan families which have seafaring traditions which appear to have a longevity extending back to pre-Islamic times. "From the earliest times", says Drake-Brockman, who carried out research into the topic early in this century, "the entire trade seems to have been in the hands of these eastern tribes".³² Their traditions are substantiated by circumstantial outside sources such as the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea which attests to the piratical tendencies of the coastal people to the south of Hafun, but more specifically by Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.) who related the story of a Greek merchant who was captured at sea by pirates from northern Somaliland.³³ The overseas trade of this region, therefore, appears to have been carried

Lieut. C. J. Cruttenden, I. N. "Report on the Mijjertheyn Tribe of Somalies, inhabiting the district forming the North-East Point of Africa," ibid, Vol. VII (May 1844-December 1846) pp. 111-126--The former says they were mostly Indian and the latter Arab.

³² Drake-Brockman, British Somaliland, p. 48. Italics are mine. If these traditions have any validity at all, they fly smack in the face of Somali genealogical claims and the thesis of those writers who trace the origins of these clans to Islamic times, and thus makes them (the traditions) all the more significant and worthy of investigation.

³³ "The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," p. 14; Kabischanov, "The Sea Voyages of Ancient Africans," p.19 or "On the Problem of Sea Voyages of Ancient Africans," p. 137. Kabischanov also talks about the seafaring habits of the inhabitants of Somaliland as far back as the second and first centuries B.C.

on mainly by local merchants and shipmasters. Indeed, the absence from that coast of significant traces of Arab settlement, be they ethnic, linguistic, or other survivals of Arab material culture, comparable to the hybrid Zailā^Cawi or Banaadir sub-cultures, means that Arab settlement in or interests there were never meaningful enough to bring about any material change in the original culture.

Along with the Arab and Persian traders and settlers there came in considerable numbers Indian merchants and adventurers. In the literature of the eighth century A.D. we learn of Indians attacking the Muslim trading bases on the Dahlak Islands off Musawa^C, and in the tenth century al-Mas^Cūdi noticed Indian merchants in Socotra where they "were often in conflict with the Muslims".³⁴ On an indefinite occasion before the thirteenth century some Somalis, or members of the Arabo-Persian colonists on the Somali coast, migrated for an unknown reason to the western coast of India, where they were mistakenly given the ethnic name of Habashi or Sidi, and were in the thirteenth century recruited into Indian armies and navies.³⁵ On the other hand, there are Arab and Indian traditions which record a movement of peoples

³⁴Pankhurst, "The 'Banyani' or Indian Presence." p. 186.

³⁵Abidīn, Bayn al-Habasha wa 'l-^CArab, p. 151; Prof. R. B. Serjeant in his The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast (Oxford, 1963) p. 88, cites a Hadrami chronicle which mentions Hubush, Somali by his reckoning, who fought in the service of the Turks and the king of Gujerat against the Portuguese in 1538-39. See also The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. II, M. th. Houtsma et al, eds. (London, 1927), p. 480.

in the opposite direction. In the eleventh century A.D., traditions mention that a group of marauding Indians laid waste a number of unsuspecting settlements on the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and then crossed over to Africa, finally putting an end to their career of plunder by settling down to a normal life at unspecified spots on the Eritrean and Somali coasts. These Indian settlements supposedly flourished only to be destroyed and their temples either razed or converted to mosques (despite their willingness to pay the normal tribute, jizya, required of non-Muslims residing among Muslims) by an ^CUmāni army dispatched there to clear them out, presumably during or after the ^CUmāni fights against the Portuguese in East Africa. It is said that some English officers on a mission to chart a map of Somaliland, apparently from the Government of Bombay which administered the Somali coast Protectorate through Aden during 1885-98, claimed to have seen ruins which reminded them of Indian temples.³⁶ Moreover, the presence of a fairly large number of Indian words in the Somali language can be accounted for only by a long-drawn contact between the two peoples.³⁷

³⁶Abidīn, Bayn al-Habasha wa 'l-^CArab, pp. 151-152.

³⁷The northern Somali words for laundryman (doobbi), table (miis), pail (baaldj), car or donkey- or horse-cart (qaadhi), kettle (kidhji), lame person (laangadhe), etc., are all of Indian origin. Some verb suffixes in urban Somali such as -qaree and -wale are also said to be of Indian provenance. I am indebted for this information to Mr. Muhamud ^CAwil Ibrahim, a Somali friend who has learned some Hindi.

A much better evidence for this Indian connection is provided by the Arab geographer, ad-Dimashqi (1256-1327), who referred to a regular trade connection between Mogadishu and the Maldive Islands.³⁸ Ibn Battuta's report shortly after ad-Dimashqi's is more revealing of intimate relations existing between the Somali coast and India. On the Malabar coast of southwestern India Ibn Battuta came across a citizen of Mogadishu, an itinerant saint called Sa^cid who had resided fourteen years in each of the two Holy Sanctuaries of Islam, Mecca and Medina, before going over to those Indian coasts.³⁹ In the Maldive Islands our traveller saw "a kind of Musk perfume brought from Mogadishu,"⁴⁰ and at one time was presented with the generous gift of five sheep, very rare and expensive in those islands because they were brought from places as far as Mogadishu.⁴¹ The discovery of a few twelfth and thirteenth century Ceylonese coins in Mogadishu gives further proof of this connection between India and the Banaadir coast.⁴² Andrea Corsali, a sailor from Florence, saw at Berbera "many ships from the Indies" carrying, among other things, "incense, pepper and cloth".⁴³ And early in the sixteenth century A.D.

³⁸ ad-Dimashqi, Nukhbat ad-Dahr, p. 215.

³⁹ Ibn Battuta, Rihlat, p. 561.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 574. Translation is by Mahdi Husain, The Rehla of Ibn Battuta (Baroda, India, 1953), p. 199.

⁴¹ Ibn Battuta, Rihlat, pp. 583-584.

⁴² Freeman-Grenville, "East African Coin Finds and their Historical Significance," JAH I, 1 (1960), pp. 31-43.

⁴³ Pankhurst, "The 'Banyani' or Indian Presence," p. 186.

Duarte Barbosa claimed to have seen during his travels Indian craft, mainly from "Cambay carry away," from Berbera, "much gold, and ivory, and other things".⁴⁴ A few years earlier Ludvico di Varthema witnessed immense quantities of the same trade goods taken away from Zaila^C, intended, among other places, for India.⁴⁵ And so was Tome Pires impressed with the far-flung trade connections the Somali ports had, on the one hand, with Indian Ocean countries and, on the other, with Egypt and the Mediterranean Lands.⁴⁶ At Zaila^C the memory of the Indian connection is today preserved in a body of Zaila^Cawi love and dance lyric poetry commemorating the successful completion of numerous trips to Indian ports, or mourning the loss of loved ones who never came back, and generally commenting on the agony and painful deprivations of solitude during the loved ones' long periods of absence to India. Ships to India which travelled the longest distances brought the most sought-after goods, but they were subject to higher

⁴⁴ Duarte Barbosa, A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century, trans. from the Spanish by the Hon. Henry E. J. Stanley (London, 1866) p. 17.

⁴⁵ George Percy Badger (ed.), The Travels of Ludvico Di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, In Persia, India and Ethiopia, 1503-1608, trans. from the original Italian edition of 1510 with a preface by John Winter Jones, Esq. F.S.A. (New York, 1863), p. 86.

⁴⁶ G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, The East African Coast (Oxford, 1962), pp. 125-126.

risks and always, as reported of later periods,⁴⁷ arrived last and hence this literature.⁴⁸

By the ninth century A.D., the Chinese, too, were showing signs of interest in the African trade. A Chinese scholar of that century wrote what amounts to be the first Chinese detailed account of the people and culture of Po-Pa-Li (Berbera), more accurately the whole of the Gulf of Aden coast of northern Somaliland. According to this scholar, who probably depended for his information about Africa upon Persian merchants but nevertheless displayed a scholarly concern with detail, only ivory and ambergris were exported from the northern coast of Somaliland.⁴⁹ This Chinese interest in the African produce, developed during, and already considerable by the end of, the T'ang Dynasty (618-906), increased enormously during the reign of the sea-minded Sung Dynasty (900-1279).⁵⁰ "From 1049-53 the annual importation [into China] of elephants' tusks, rhinoceros' horns, strings of pearls, aromatics, incense, etc., was over 53,000 units of count. In 1175 this annual amount had risen to over

⁴⁷ Mordechai Abir, Ethiopia: the Era of the Princes (Oxford, 1962, pp. 125-126.

⁴⁸ Those songs which are sung as an accompaniment to very popular Zaila^{wi} dances performed during important holidays are preserved only in oral form. A constant theme in those songs is the late and uncertain arrival of loved ones traveling on ships from India, especially Bombay.

⁴⁹ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

500,000 units".⁵¹ The dramatic growth in the Chinese trade to Africa, albeit indirect, during the Sung Dynasty is reflected in the preponderance of the Sung variety among the Chinese coins found in East Africa.⁵² With respect to Somaliland, one Chinese commissioner of Foreign trade wrote in 1226 A.D. a book in which he specified the most important commercial products of "Pi-Pa-Lo", northern Somaliland and the Po-Pa-Li of the ninth century scholar, which might be of potential interest to Chinese entrepreneurs:

The country produces dragon's saliva [ambergris], big elephants' tusks, and big rhinoceros horns. Some elephants' tusks weigh more than 100 catty and some rhinoceros horns more than 10 catty. There is also much patchuk, liquid storax gum, myrrh, and tortoise shell which is extremely thick, and which (people from) other countries all come to buy. Among the products there is further the so-called camel-crane [ostrich].⁵³

The Chinese Empire, at the time certainly the most self-contained power and civilization in the world, and even publicly purporting, not without some reason, to have had no need for others' goods, nevertheless took the initiative at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to expand her foreign trade.⁵⁴ Instead of waiting, as formerly, for Arab,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16. According to Paul Wheatley, "Analecta," pp. 85-86, during the Southern Sung (A.D. 1127-1279) "income from maritime commerce amounted on occasion to as much as a fifth of the total cash revenue of the state."

⁵² Freeman-Grenville, "East African Coin Finds," p. 34.

⁵³ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Persian, and Mongol merchants to bring them the produce of Africa, Europe, and Western Asia, the Chinese now began to fit out their own commercial fleets and to seek the merchandise at its source. Between 1405 and 1432 the Chinese sent out to the Indian Ocean seven naval expeditions, partly for the sake of trade and in part with the aim of compelling foreigners to pay tribute and homage to their exalted Emperor. Under the command of a Muslim court eunuch, Geng Ho, the son of Haji Ma, the sixth of these seven fleets visited Mogadishu, Brava and Juba of southern Somaliland, bringing "coloured silks, gold, silver, porcelains, pepper, coloured satins, rice and other cereals," and went back laden with such Somali products as 'dragon's saliva [ambergris], incense, and golden amber" with some ivory, raw gold, iron, ostrich feathers and live pet-animals.⁵⁵ Shortly before the arrival of the Chinese navy, "during the reign of Yung Lo (1403-1425) an envoy came to China from Chu pu" of Southern Somaliland,⁵⁶ and in 1427 an ambassador "arrived at the Chinese court from Mu-Ku-Tu-Su," (Mogadishu).⁵⁷ The vitality of these Chinese-Somali commercial ties is evidenced by the presence of Chinese coins of the Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1911)

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 30; E. Bretschneider, The Knowledge Possessed by the Ancient Chinese of the Arabs and Arabian Colonies and other Western countries mentioned in Chinese Books (London, 1871), p. 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 21.

dynasties only on the Somali stretch of the East African coast.⁵⁸ What is more, some as yet not fully explored linguistic evidences also suggest that the Chinese term for giraffe, k'i-lin, might have been borrowed from the Somali word for that animal, geri or gerin.⁵⁹ The Chinese definitely had a longer lasting connection with the Somali coast, as attested to by the Ming and Ching dynasty coins found only in the Banaadir, than they had with the rest of the East African coast. But in the final analysis, it is difficult to point to anything the Chinese had contributed to the budding medieval Somali culture other than a few consumer goods, such as cereals, spices, silks, ornaments and perishable chinaware, which temporarily enriched the life there (especially that of the trading towns) but were quickly forgotten with the cessation of contacts.

At this juncture it may not be amiss to introduce briefly another group of people, the Jewish merchants, who might have figured in the commerce of the Horn of Africa, but whose precise role still remains largely unknown. During the high Middle Ages, ninth through twelfth centuries, in both Islam and Christendom, Jews were debarred, with varying degrees of prejudice and effectiveness, from military service and the

⁵⁸Freeman-Grenville, "East African Coin Finds," p. 34.

⁵⁹Wheatley, "The Land of Zanj," p. 183 n. 138; Same, "Annalecta," pp. 93-94.

top echelons of political offices. Excluded from two of the most important means for personal improvement in medieval society, a large number of the Mediterranean Jews sought excellence and expression for their talents in the cloistered haven of the religio-academic field or, if they were mundanely inclined, in the field of business which was relatively free from legal proscription. In both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean commerce Mediterranean Jewish merchants played a role disproportionately great for their numbers. By establishing clearing houses in Cairo, Aydhab (in the Sudan), and Aden, they brought a direct and unfiltered Mediterranean element into the commercial web spanning the entire Indian Ocean. Prof. S. D. Goitein's research into this aspect of medieval trade shows clearly that the Jewish traders involved were catering only to Indian and Mediterranean markets, without paying much attention to intervening establishments.⁶⁰ While these merchants were primarily thus engaged, there might have been few of them who were sidetracked into the East African coast, an offshoot of, and particularly important by way for the merchant involved in the Indian Ocean trade system. A couple of cases pertaining to the Somali Horn of Africa may be instructive. In 1139 a Jewish agent at Aden informed a friend of his on the Malabar coast of India how a consignment of pepper which he had sent had not been received because the vessel carrying it was

⁶⁰S. D. Goitein, (ed., trans.), Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders (Princeton, New Jersey, 1973).

driven by a storm off Berbera and run aground near Bab al-Mandab, where it discharged all its contents into the sea.⁶¹ Five years later, in 1144, a Jewish merchant to India abandoned a slave-woman (who bore him a child) at Berbera on his return journey, and was publicly rebuked by one of his fellow Jewish colleagues in front of a Muslim audience. The merchant felt insulted by this accusation and charged his accuser before the governor of the city of Aydhab, in the Sudan, with calumination, and demanded satisfaction. After a brief investigation the governor ordered that the accuser to be flogged and thrown into jail.⁶² In a number of towns on the northern coast of Somaliland, especially at Berbera and Zaila^c, there are lingering memories of past Jewish involvement in the area's trade, but it is not known whether these memories relate to that remote period or to more recent times.⁶³ Only 80 Jewish business letters from that age (11th-12th centuries) out of 1200 preserved in the Cairo Geniza alone have been published so far.⁶⁴ We only hope that a fuller exploration of this enormous treasure and other similar depositories will

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 335-338; S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society Vol. 1, Economic Conditions (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 133.

⁶³ There are sections of Berbera which people used to talk of in the 1950's as the home of Jewish merchants in the past. Similarly I have been told in Zaila^c in 1971 and 1975 (though unauthoritatively) that Jewish interests in that city used to be considerable in the past.

⁶⁴ Goitein, Letters, pp. 3-4.

help clarify the role of this indeed important group in the trade of the Horn.

Before we move to a discussion of the effect the trade had upon the Somali society, we may say now a word or two about the nature of goods sought in Somaliland. "Through Zaila^C," it is often stated, "local Somali produce, consisting chiefly of hides and skins, precious gums, ghee, and ostrich feathers, and slaves and ivory from the Abyssinian hinterland, was exported; and cloth, dates iron, weapons, and chinaware and pottery imported."⁶⁵ Medieval Arab and Chinese sources from various periods cite these products as the most important items of trade from the area. A ninth century Chinese source states that ivory and ambergris were the two notable products of northern Somaliland.⁶⁶ Al-Istakhri noticed hides and leopard skins exported from Zaila^C used in the manufacture of shoes in the Yaman.⁶⁷ According to Yaqut the exports of northern Somaliland were mainly ivory, rhinoceros horns, giraffes, and leopard skins.⁶⁸ Pearls were mentioned by al-Biruni as one of the exports of Zaila^C.⁶⁹ and al-Harrani added another improbable item, mercury, to the

⁶⁵I. H. Lewis, "The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa," p. 74.

⁶⁶Duyvendak, China's Discovery of Africa, p. 13.

⁶⁷al-Istakhari, al-Masalik wa l-Mamalik, p. 32.

⁶⁸Yaqut, Mu^Cjam al-Buldan, Vol. II, p. 967.

⁶⁹Yusuf Kamal, Monumenta, "al-Biruni," p. 712.

list of exports from that port.⁷⁰

Mogadishu's trade must have been very similar judging from its hinterland's natural resources. Yaqut thought sandalwood, ebony, ivory, and ambergris constituted the city's chief exports.⁷¹ Ibn Baṭṭuṭa saw musk and livestock in the Maldivé Islands exported from Mogadishu.⁷² More importantly the demand for clothes was so great that the city developed a textile industry which by the time of Ibn Baṭṭuṭa's visit not only met local demand but was also catering to clientele in markets as far as Egypt.⁷³ Thirteenth and fifteenth century Chinese sources all indicate that their commercial connection with the Banaadir was established primarily for the acquisition of ivory, ostrich feathers, tortoise shells, rhinoceros horns, giraffe hides, leopard skins, gums and aromatic products.⁷⁴ Duarte Barbosa who visited Mogadish at the beginning of the sixteenth century lists the most important exports from that city as gold, ivory, and beeswax.⁷⁵

A particularly prized item in this Southwest Asian and Indian Ocean trade with the Horn of Africa was human merchandise. Arab involvement in the buying and selling of Northeast

⁷⁰ Ibid., "al-Harrani," p. 1127.

⁷¹ Yaqut, Muḥjam al-Buldān, Vol. IV, p. 602.

⁷² Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, Rihlat, p. 574, 583-584.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 253.

⁷⁴ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, pp. 14, 31; Bretschneider, Knowledge Possessed by the Ancient Chinese, pp. 21-22.

⁷⁵ Barbosa, Description, p. 16.

Africans has a long history. Nomadic Arabs imported African victims to bolster their fighting forces or to tend livestock. The females were employed to render sundry household services as mistresses, nurses, and midwives; and eunuchs were prized as guardians of wealth and other characteristically Near Eastern household affairs. The pre-Islamic epics and sagas of Arabs abound in heroic black figures, such as the poets ^cAntara ibn Shaddaa, Khaf ibn Nadba, Salik ibn Salka, and Sahim ^cAbd bani 'I-Ḥaṣḥaṣ, who by dint of personal character had risen from their inferior positions in society to the limelight of glory. Today they are still remembered because of their contributions to the musical traditions, horsemanship, lyric poetry and poetry of dispraise of the Arabs.⁷⁶ Atypical as they were, they shone brilliantly, standing incongruously tall amidst numerous Arabian historical giants, living memorials to Africa's long-standing tradition of loss of blood.

At the time of Muhammad's preaching there lived in Mecca Bilal, the Abyssinian, singularly remembered for the great honour of being the first Mu^cazzin in Islam. Early Muslim literature is replete with prominent "Arab" personalities of African origin who excelled in literature (Nusaib), art (ibn Musajjih), and government (Kafūr).⁷⁷ Towards the end of the seventh century A.D. there was a minor Zanj (East African)

^{76c}Abidīn, Bayn al-Habasha wa 'l-^cArab, pp. 123-124.

⁷⁷Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, second edition (Chicago, 1953) p. 210.

revolt in Arabia.⁷⁸ By the end of the Ommayyad Caliphate (661-749) the African population in Arabia--free and slave--must have been great for there were four thousand black rebel soldiers fighting in Abi 'l-'^CAbbas's army on the side of the Abbasids.⁷⁹ And of course there was the oft-mentioned Zanj revolt in al-Iraq in A.D. 868-83.⁸⁰ The small Qarmatian community of al-Bahrayn alone had in the ninth and tenth centuries tens of thousands of black slaves employed in agricultural work.⁸¹ Ibn Hawqal mentioned a tribute of amber, leopard skins, and slaves (specified by Aba Muhammad ^CUmmara in his Tārīkh al Yaman to have been 1000 heads of whom 500 were Abyssinian and Nubian girls) paid by the ruler of Dahlak to the king of al-Yaman.⁸²

⁷⁸ George Fadlo Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 79.

⁷⁹ C. Guillain, Wathā'iq Tarīkhīyya wa Jughrafiyya wa Tijāriyya ^CAn Ifriqiyya a-Shardqiyya, trans. by Yusuf Kamal (Cairo, 1927) p. 73. This is an Arabic translation in precis of Guillain's original work in French: Documents sur l'Histoire, la géographie et le Commerce de l'Afrique Orientale, 3 vols. (Paris, 1856). Unable to read French I have depended mainly on the Arabic translation though I have frequently cross-checked my reference with the assistances of French speaking friends. Because of this linguistic handicap citations from this work will be from the Arabic translation.

⁸⁰ J. J. Saunders, A History of Medieval Islam, second impression. (London, 1966), pp. 122, 129.

⁸¹ S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society, Vol. I, p. 131.

⁸² Najm ad-Din ^CUmmarah al-Hakami, Yaman: its Early Medieval History translated and annotated by Henry Cassels Kay (London, 1892), p. 8. This report, incidentally, contradicts al-Mas^Cudi and al-Istakhari's statements that Dahlak was an Abyssinian city at the time of their writing (see Chapter Three). This may mean that Dahlak as Trimingham surmises, had frequently changed hands, or that the Arab

Al-Idrisi, writing in the far west in A.D. 1154, talks about Abyssinian Zaligh (Zalla^c) whence issue slaves and silver, but which is poor in gold resources.⁸³ Chinese sources also attest to the importation of Africans from Madagascar and the East African littoral to Arabia.⁸⁴ The traffic in those centuries must have been heavy, for there was a dynasty of Abyssinian Mamluks (the Banu Najāh) which reigned at Zabid from A.D. 1022 to 1159.⁸⁵

The fifteenth and sixteenth century Jihadic hostilities between Christian Abyssinia and the neighbouring Muslim principalities greatly increased the slave traffic going abroad. Sultan Jamal ad-Din (1422-1432 A.D.) alone killed and captured so many Christians that "India, Yaman, Hormuz, Hijaz, Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, Iraq, and Fars were flooded with the captives taken from them in those forays."⁸⁶

Among this traffic must have been some Somali victims, if for no other reason than the simple fact that the Somali coast is so close to Arabia. A measure of certainty is given

writers, only observing the Island's economic connections, had erroneously counted it as part of Abyssinia, and later of Yaman as the case might have been, without really knowing the city's true political ties.

⁸³ al-Idrisi, Muzhat al-Mushtaq, I (Tehran), p. 25.

⁸⁴ Duyvendak, China's Discovery, pp. 22-24. The Chinese name for the original home of these slaves, Seng-Chih, was obviously derived from the Perso-Arabic work for East Africans, Zanj.

⁸⁵ ^cUmjarah, Yaman, pp. 81-123.

⁸⁶ al-Maqrizi, al-Ilmām, pp. 5, 24.

to this opinion by Ibn Sa^cid who cited the pre-Islamic poet, Imr ^cul-Qais, as speaking of the Barbar (Somalis) being renowned for their horses and the superior slaves they made.⁸⁷ The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea includes slaves among the trade items imported into Egypt from Opone.⁸⁸ Yu-Yang-Tsa-Tsu, that ninth century Chinese text, refers to the sale of Somali women to foreigners on the northern Gulf of Aden coast. "Their women", declares the document, "are clean and of proper behaviour. The inhabitants themselves kidnap them, and if they sell them to foreign merchants, they fetch several times their price."⁸⁹ By Ibn Sa^cid's time, however, most of the Somalis were converted and as such their country was considered part of Dar'ul-Islam.⁹⁰ This implies that slaves were not obtained there anymore, at least not legally, since Islam does not allow the enslavement of Muslims. To be sure even after Islamization, the old practice of stealing unguarded and stray children by unscrupulous traders continued. This latter practice, indeed, might have been heightened by the insatiable demand for slaves which was created in the Near East because of the decline in slave labour after the deluge in the early years of conquests,⁹¹ and also as a

⁸⁷Abul Fida, Taqwim al-Buldān, (Paris, 1840) p. 159.

⁸⁸"Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," p. 13.

⁸⁹Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 13.

⁹⁰Abul Fida, Taqwim al-Buldān, p. 13.

⁹¹Yusuf Fadl Hasan, The Arabs and the Sudan: from the

result of a succession of Caliphates growing progressively more worldly.

Strategically located between coastal colonists and visitors and the interior sources of most of the trade goods, the Somali groups enjoyed their privileged position as middle-men and, it seems, tended to move in the direction of the trade routes and the coastal settlements rather than away from them. An example of such Somali movement towards trade areas is afforded by the Ajuran case. "Under a hereditary dynasty which may have had its seat at Meregh the Ajuran consolidated their position as the masters of the fertile reaches of the lower Shabelle basin and established a commercial connexion with the important port of Mogadishu".⁹² And as Dr. I. M. Lewis rightly declares it was the Somali who "provided the main link in the chain of trade connexions" between the coast and the inland sources of the merchandise.⁹³ This contention is born out by the plentiful evidence for settlements along what once must have been busy traffic routes, where the trade had initiated a grudging movement towards urbanization, and the absence of any signs of Arab penetration into the interior except into the town of Harar. Dr. Lewis identifies two main sets of trade routes. They are the Zaila^c-Harar

seventh century to the early sixteenth century (Edinburgh, 1967) p. 43.

⁹² I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 24.

⁹³ I. M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa, p. 23.

line, which at the latter city bifurcates into a western branch which proceeds to Shoa and Sidamo and a southern line which goes through Ogaden region to the Upper Shabelle area. The other route, with branches starting from the Banaadir coastal cities, runs up the Juba valley to southeastern Ethiopia.⁹⁴ Besides these two main trunk lines there was a host of other much less important trade routes catering to the coastal demand. Cases in point here are the Berbera-Sheikh-Haud region line, the Hiis-Kal Sheikh-Maduna-Boo^cane track, the Las Qoray-Rhat-Nugaal route, and the numerous other routes leading inland from Indian Ocean ports to the Nugaal Basin or the Shabelle valley which not only have ruins of medieval settlements to bear witness to the existence of such trade, but also still function to this day. This intermediary area, between the Banaadir and Zaïla^c region was, however, lacking in two of the major trade items of interest to the Arabs: that is, gold and slaves. Its neglect by medieval writers thus indicates it was not of much use to the Arabs.

There are at least 21 sites of medieval settlement in the western interior of what used to be British Somaliland. A preliminary archaeological survey carried out in 1934 by an amateur enthusiast, A. T. Curle, showed that the sites flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹⁵ They

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

⁹⁵ Curle, "Ruined Towns," pp. 315-327.

were definitely Islamic as the remains of mosques and their system of burial indicated. Some quasi-scientific investigations carried out by British colonial officers into the culture of these ruined towns intimated that a certain amount of agriculture might have been practised by the towns' residents before their decline. One of these officers reported:

Both at Ad^C near Jara Horato and at Abbas I have examined structures which are clearly dam walls. The dams themselves have long since silted up. In suitable localities agriculture was practised and Mr. Seager of the Agricultural Department, Borama, has convincingly shown me remains of terraces. Underground silos exist in some of the towns.⁹⁶

"It is evident," concludes the reporting officer, "that the chief raison d'etre of the towns can be found in the trade between southern Abyssinia and Zeilah".⁹⁷ Except for two of them the sites are all excellently located on the Harar-Zaila^C trade route, and so their origins must be sought in that direction, as their decline must be attributed in part at least to the decline of the trade. On his journey from Zaila^C to Harar in 1854 Richard Burton came upon some of these ruins and noted the close affinity between them and the ruins at Zaila^C, notably the emporium for the areas trade and the part-time capital of the state of ^CAdal.⁹⁸

How these settlements declined and why they were abandoned by their residents may never be given documented explanation.

⁹⁶ J. M. Watson, "Historical Background", p. 123.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 123.

⁹⁸ Burton, First Footsteps, pp. 98-140.

Inferences from the little evidence we have, both direct and indirect, point to abrupt but natural causes with near-cataclysmic results. The decline of the state of Adal following Ahmad Gurey's death in 1543 and the resultant Abyssinian threat, the disruptions wrought by the Oromo invasions of the sixteenth century, climatic changes which deprived the towns of their meagre water resources,⁹⁹ and consecutive years of drought and famines, epidemics, and interclanal feuds which occurred in the area during the sixteenth century individually or in combination could have driven the residents from their sedentary life to favour independent nomadism.¹⁰⁰ This, of course, is a frequent phenomenon in semi-desert areas.¹⁰¹

Practically all those who have written about these ruined towns ascribed their founding to Arab traders, some even suggesting pre-Islamic origins.¹⁰² Describing the fauna of the

⁹⁹ John Parkinson, "An Unsolved Riddle of Africa: Mysterious ruins in Somaliland," Illustrated London News (January 26, 1935), pp. 126-127. According to Mr. Parkinson none of these sites was near a source of sufficient water supply.

¹⁰⁰ The Harar Chronicle, Tarikh al-Mujahidin by Ba 'Alawi, testifies to the depredations of the Gallas and refers to a number of famines in which people resorted to cannibalism, as well as wide-spread pestilence following the defeat of Gurey. Amir Nur, the successor of Gurey, died either of plague or cholera, da'cun, according to the chronicle.

¹⁰¹ Witness the universal spread of nomadism in Arabia after the Ma'rib disaster. In Somaliland, while on one of his Seventeen trips through Somaliland (London, 1900) p. 25, Major H. G. C. Swayne came across remnants of such a sedentary settlement which had been abandoned in favour of nomadism only a few years earlier.

¹⁰² Watson, "Historical Background," p. 120.

mountainous region which he traversed, Burton mused upon the fact that a certain tree called Guraato by the "vulgar Somali" was known to the "more learned" by its Arabic name--Shajarat al-Zakkum.¹⁰³ This affords a minor historical inference of a not inconsequential interest. The use of the Arabic name to indicate a tree found well into the interior suggests Arab penetration of, if not settlement in, these highlands and towns. And the argument appears all the more convincing as there are in the area ruins of past settlement indicative of a life-style quite different from the nomadic mode of existence which the Somalis lead now. But as Joseph J. Pia argues "Arabic is the language of culture and education" for the decidedly Islamic Somali society.¹⁰⁴ And this application of Arabic appellation to trees by the cultivated Somalis is only a manifestation of the dominance in the present Somali culture of the Arabico-Islamic element over the pre-Islamic indigeneous component which persists in an inferior status vis-a-vis the other, given some recognition in Dr. Von Grunebaum's vivid terms with "latitudinarian" tolerance.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, there are no inscriptions in the cemeteries of these towns, and no elaborate tombs. And, very significantly,

¹⁰³Burton, First Footsteps, p. 122.

¹⁰⁴Joseph J. Pia, "Language in Somalia," Linguistic Reporter: Newsletter of the Center for Applied Linguistics, VIII, 3(Washington D.C., June 1966), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁵Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization (Chicago, 1955), p. 32.

the towns lack defensive planning.¹⁰⁶ What all this suggests is that these settlements were certainly not the work of foreign Arab merchants. How else can one account for this sense of security and the absence of tombs and Arabic inscriptions? Finally, the fact that these settlements, the material embodiment of the Arab influences, were so readily abandoned makes a relevant comment: namely, that the so-called superior Arab culture which has been held accountable for much of the presumed revolutionary disruptions, such as the "Somali conquest of the Horn of Africa," really never penetrated Somali culture very deeply. Or, more plausibly as far as the interior was concerned, it had no reality at all.

In a very general sense the growth of commercial ties between the Horn of Africa and Asiatic peoples may be seen as an instance of the essential unity of the Indian Ocean region, nurtured through the centuries by frequent contacts and cultural cross-fertilization across the maritime space. That the Arab element vis-a-vis other Asiatic elements involved in the trade of the Horn of Africa ultimately scored a more dominant influence upon the consciousness of the Somalis was also understandable. As a result of Arab overseas enterprise and missionary labours, the whole of the Indian Ocean region, no doubt with local variations depending upon the degree of acceptance of Islam in each locality, experienced a certain amount of Arabization. The Somali Peninsula was no exception to that all-encompassing fact.

¹⁰⁶Curle, "Ruined Towns," pp. 315-319.

CHAPTER SIX

Southwest Asians and State Formation in the Horn of Africa 900-1560s A.D.

To the Somali pastoralist, forever on the move with his flocks of sheep and goats and large herds of camels in search of water and fresh pasture, a state of chiefdom with central political authority meant nothing, as indeed it does not even to this day. The idea itself was an unthinkable anathema. If anything, such a state with its limited territorial definition ill accorded with his need for unchecked nomadic wandering and would only hamper his quest for existence, instead of advancing it. The most basic functions of government--internal security and defense against external aggression--were somewhat imperfectly rendered for him by his membership in a clan of his immediate patrilineal kinsmen, and also by a "form of political contract", (heer), which regulated all social relationships within the clan as well as the clan's relations with other clans territorially bordering on it. Political authority within the clan (as has been seen in Chapter One) was invested in an advisory council of elders--the membership of which was frequently extended to all the adult males of the clan--who arbitrated internal disputes and gave their advice on issues requiring joint communal action.¹

¹ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 10-12. For a most

Besides the nomadic mode of existence there was one other factor which militated against the formation of state structures in Somaliland; the poverty of the Somali environment. The question of which is primary to the other, military power or wealth, in the formation of states may be, like the question of the chicken and the egg, forever debated and never settled. But we know that they are mutually supportive in the breeding of ambition and are both essential requirements for aspiring state builders. In the absence of readily exploitable wealth the absence, for a long time, of state formation in the Somali Peninsula can be appreciated.

And so despite their consciousness of a unifying shared cultural heritage which, as in the case of Ahmad Gurey's Jihads against Abyssinia in the sixteenth century and Sayyid Muhammad^c Abdulla Hasan's² Dervish movement in the twentieth

penetrating analysis of the social system of the Somali nomad, however, refer to Dr. Lewis' other works: People of the Horn of Africa; The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy; and especially A Pastoral Democracy.

²This is the man generally known to the outside world by the name which his enemies gave him--The Mad Mullah. He led an uprising against the British, Italians and Ethiopia in the first 20 years of this century. For details, see: I. M. Lewis, Modern History, Chapter Four; Touval, Somali Nationalism, pp. 51-60; Robert L. Hess, "The 'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia," JAH, V, 3 (1964), pp. 415-33 and "The Poor Man of Good--Muhammed Abdullah Hassan," in Norman Re. Bennet (ed.) Leadership in East Africa (Boston, 1968); E. R. Turton, "The Impact of Mohammed Abdille Hassan in the East African Protectorate," JAH, X, 4 (1969), pp. 641-57; Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 153-56.

century, was occasionally expressed in brief but violent bursts of pan-Somali nationalism, the Somalis never came, partially or wholly, under any sort of political scale superceding the clan before the nineteenth century.³

Neither local traditions nor external sources have any recollection of states existing on the Somali Horn of Africa before the arrival of Muslim Arab and other Southwest Asian immigrant colonists there. This is, of course, excepting ancient Egyptian references to a Puntite king residing near CAIŪla at the eastern tip of the Horn. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea described a politically fragmented Horn of Africa with no central government, and for that matter no kingly authorities, consisting of numerous independent small communities under separate elderly chiefs.⁴ We get the same picture of political fragmentation on the Horn of Africa from medieval sources describing Somali society.⁵

For a while the southwest Asian immigrants to the Somali coasts, themselves having come from various tribal, political, and cultural backgrounds, could not agree on any form of

³Besides the colonial regimes there was at least one successful experiment at supra-clan state-building. This was the Obbia (Hobyo) Sultanate built by Sultan Yusuf Ali around 1870, which lasted until its destruction by the Fascist Italian regime in the 1920s. In the sixteenth century the Ajuran (a Somali clan) attempted a similar experiment in southern Somaliland, but it was more of a military conquest than a political hegemony and its authority was based on traditions never universally accepted; hence its subsequent ready demise.

⁴"The Periplus," p. 13.

⁵Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 14; Yaqut, Mu^Cjam al-Buldān, IV, p. 602.

centralized authorities. Mogadishu alone, the most important Asiatic community settlement on the Somali coast, had thirty-nine Arab tribes settling there at different times,⁶ besides unknown numbers of Persian groups from Fārs and Khurasān regions of Iran.⁷ There was an overriding need for them to organize themselves politically and militarily for defense against nomadic encroachments upon their community, as well as against piratical naval attacks on their cities and their overseas commerce.⁸ But in these circumstances of tribal divisions, religious sectarian antagonisms, and sometimes cultural differences, the idea of a central government was, for a while at least, out of the question. From the tenth century, when the main immigrant groups arrived, to the thirteenth century there existed in Mogadishu a form of tribal confederacy in which the heads of the constituent tribes got together periodically to discuss and decide on issues of mutual interest, but otherwise with no kingly or centralized chiefly authorities. One of the constituent tribes in the confederacy, now claiming a noble Qaḥṭānī birth (*nisbah*), imposed a certain amount of hegemony over the other tribes. The Qaḥṭānis, we are told, settled at the city site

⁶ Sharif ʿAldarus, *Bughyat 'l-Amāl*, p. 42; Cerulli, *Somalia*, I, p. 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

earlier than any other tribe, cleared its bushes, and then welcomed other tribes to build the city with them.⁹ More importantly, this tribe acquired a reputation for learning and piety, and for this its members were honoured with the right to fill the offices of the city's judge (qādi) and imām of the Cathedral Mosque (jāmi^c).¹⁰ Local manuscripts hint that above the tribal assembly, which was called into session only periodically, there might have been a senate of four representing the most powerful four tribal groups or alliances in the town.¹¹ This was essentially a plutocratic city government with the characteristic theocratic tinge of all Muslim regimes, a state in which the learned people of means lorded their wealth and knowledge over the poor and the unlettered, and monopolized what little power the system afforded. This regime's concern with commerce and learning soon attracted numerous Muslim merchants and itinerant saints from the Yaman, Hadramawt, Hijaz, Egypt and from Persia, thus contributing to the city's ethnic complexity and renown in the Islamic world where it was frequently mentioned, according to Ibn Sa'id (d. 1286), by merchants and travellers.

This tribal confederacy was finally converted (in the second half of the thirteenth century) into a sultanate with a hereditary dynasty by the election of Fakhr u-Dīn, a newly

⁹ Ibid., p. 14; also Sharif ^cAidarūs, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, pp. 42, 56-57.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 42, 57; also Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 14.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 15, 39.

arrived immigrant belonging to an Arab tribe which was not one of the resident thirty-nine tribes of the city.¹² Besides being a foreigner, who could not be identified with any of the contending tribal interests, Fakhr u-Dīn had the additional qualifications of religious piety and wealth--the two most important criteria for election to political office. A Mogadishu manuscript dealing with the founding of the sultanate and Fakhr u-Din's election is explicit on the religious and property considerations involved in his election:

Then came a stranger of the Banī Ghassān tribe called Abū Bakr ibn Fakhr u-Dīn¹³, a poor man with no property. He was, however, married to a wealthy wife, the daughter of Sheikh ^CAbduljabbar. One day a poor man stood up in the Cathedral Mosque [jami^C] and asked for a collection. But nobody paid him any attention. Then our Sheikhs al-Hāj Husayn and al-Hāj Mūsa pleaded on his behalf, but to no effect. The Sheikhs were saddened, whereupon Abu Bakr stood up and promised one hundred dirhams though knowing full well he did not have that amount. The Sheikhs were pleased and blessed him and then everybody went home. When Abū Bakr reached home his wife noticed that he was sad and the complexion of his face changed. [She asked him why he looked so sad and pale and he told her what had happened at the Mosque and about the promise he made to the poor man but which he was not able to fulfill. She gave him the money for the poor man, and in that same night he found a mound of ambergris thrown out by the sea onto the shore.]... This [newly found] wealth made Abū Bakr well-known in the town. After that the Senate of four (Arba^C a Rukn) met and decided to elect a Sultan. They all agreed upon Fakhr u-Dīn whom they elected as their sultan.¹⁴

¹² Ibid, pp. 9, 14.

¹³ There may be a clerical error here. According to Sharīf ^CAidarus's version of the manuscript (Bughyat l-Amāl, p. 56) and even later on in this very copy the man is referred to as Fakhr u-Dīn and not as the son of Fakhr u-Dīn as stated here, Abu Bakr being his name-title (kunya).

¹⁴ Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 14-15. There are numerous

The established tribes contested the nomination, each one of them claiming that they were entitled to it more than others, and especially voicing their opposition to the nomination of the foreigner. They even challenged the rationale of forming a hereditary dynasty since for three centuries they had lived without one. They insisted that if they ever needed one they would have elected one from among the Banī Qaḥṭān who had always supplied their judges (gāḍī) and principal mosque prayer leaders (imam-Khatīb). At this point Fakhr u-Dīn proposed a compromise solution. He declared he would confirm the Banī Qaḥṭān in their traditional offices of gāḍī and khatīb, and in addition he would appoint them as his administrative lieutenants, who would officiate at the naming ceremonies of newly born babies and oversee the sale of land and other deeds. With this compromise Fakhr u-Dīn was confirmed in office by all the tribes who, traditions insist, now realized that as a foreigner who had no tribal attachments he stood a better chance of dispensing justice more fairly than anybody else.¹⁵ The tradition of the "wise stranger", the pious, wealthy, knowledgeable, skilled or noble foreigner who makes good in local politics is a theme of frequent recurrence in African political

copies of this document in private hands in Mogadishu, and in checking several of them against Cerulli's version this writer found no discrepancy whatsoever.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 15.

history.¹⁶ Traditions are mute on this point, but it seems that conditions in the city were unsettled immediately before Fakhr u-Dīn's election, thus enabling this sudden and drastic change in the political system.

According to Dr. Cerulli, this dynasty lasted for three centuries until it was overthrown in the sixteenth century by another, the Muzaffar, which was like its predecessor in claiming Arab descent.¹⁷ However, the picture we conceive from outside reports as well as written and oral internal sources is much more complicated than that and points to the persistence of much less stable conditions and to a succession of short-lived Somali and Asiatic dynasties. In the

¹⁶ A number of cases in point are: 1) The Somali clan ancestors who are invariably said to have been examples of such gifted foreigners and usually of noble descent. Witness the traditions (only a few samples) reproduced in Cerulli, *Somalia*, II, pp. 251-53; M. Laurence, *A Tree for Poverty* (New York, 1970), pp. 138-46; 2) The talented hunter, Ilunga Mbilli, whose progeny succeeded to the crown of the Luba in J. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison, 1968), p. 71; Bayajidda, the man from Baghdad, who killed the evil snake and then gave rise to the Hausa nation and states in C. C. Ifemesia, "States of the Central Sudan," J. F. Ade. Ajayi and I. Espie (eds.) *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan, 1965), pp. 91-92; 3) Mbegha, the skilled hunter, who was welcomed by the Shambaa and installed as their chief in S. Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom* (Madison, 1974), Chapter Two and Three. For myths surrounding the founding of the Forest States, i.e. Benin and the Yoruba consult Ajayi and Espie (eds.) *Thousand Years*, pp. 188, 193; also see R. S. O'Fahey, "Slavery and the Slave trade in Dar Fur," *JAH*, XIV, 1 (1973), pp. 29-43, for a similar tradition in Dar Fur of the Sudan Republic.

¹⁷ Cerulli, *Somalia*, I, p. 136.

following pages I shall attempt to reconstruct Mogadishu and southern Somaliland's political history and to point out the role of the Asians in these events.

In the first half of the thirteenth century the population of Mogadishu was reported to have consisted totally of foreign white (presumably Arab and Persian) settlers.¹⁸

Politically, the city was still under the rule of the tribal chiefs. Sometime during the second half of that same century the sultanate of the Fakhr u-Dīn dynasty replaced the tribal order. When Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the city in the fourteenth century, the Fakhr u-Dīn Arab family was no longer in power. In its place reigned a Somali, bearing the title of Sheikh instead of sultan.¹⁹ Furthermore, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited both Zaila^c and Mogadishu and claimed that the

¹⁸ Yaqut, Muḥjam al-Buldān, 4, p. 602.

¹⁹ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Rihlat, p. 254. Despite Ibn Battuta's specific statement that the reigning Sultan was "originally of the Barbar," some authorities such as Dr. Cerulli still insist he was an Arab descendant of Fakhr u-Dīn. J. S. Trimmingham suggested that this ruler was non-Somali and from southeast Ethiopia, and H. Neville Chittick opined that he was most probably a member of a now forgotten Bantu nation then resident in the area. (See Chapter Three, footnote 81). It appears, however, that their views are conditioned by their previous commitment to the orthodox interpretation of Somali origins--that is in the north. In light of al-Idrisi's report that Marka and Brava were "Barbar" towns in his time, Ibn Sa'id's often quoted remark about Marka being the capital of the Hawiye Somali, Ibn Battuta's report, and the recent theories about the Somalis' origins in the south, the present writer differs with Chittick and Trimmingham. It is interesting to note that Chittick argues ("The East African Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," p. 189) that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa had not mentioned "anything that would indicate the presence of hunting or pastoral people on the coast,"

Barbar country extended between these two towns, failed to notice any difference in their populations. It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that sometime during the fifty years separating Fakhr u-Dīn's accession from Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's visit the town must have been overrun by nomadic Somalis and political power wrested from the colonists.

If this suggested revision is correct, despite these dynastic changes the state must have persisted in its oligarchic form, for a remarkable degree of continuity is observed with nomadic elements now adapting to the ways and life-style of the settled people. Trade was, as in the days of Yaqut's report, jealously guarded and under strict control by the state. When a ship arrived, the Sheikh's officers used to board it to find out its port of origin and take inventory of its contents and passengers. Only after this was done were the passengers allowed to go onshore. No foreign merchant was allowed to buy or sell without the supervision of one of the citizens.²⁰ Whether the king imposed taxes on trade or not (though it is difficult to see how he could otherwise meet the expenses of state) and whether currency was used or goods were exchanged through simple

though Ibn Baṭṭūṭa specifically stated (Rihlat, p. 253) that the inhabitants of Mogadishu "own many camels of whom they slaughter two hundred everyday and many sheep/goats". What is more indicative of pastoralism, we may ask, than the possession of camels and sheep/goats in plenitude?

²⁰ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Rihlat, p. 23.

barter cannot be ascertained from Ibn Baṭṭuṭa's report.²¹

One noticeable change, as evidenced by the ruler's assumption of the religious title Sheikh in preference to the secular Sultan, was the growth in the power of the religious element in the state. Ibn Baṭṭuṭa was impressed by the respect extended to the learned by both the Sheikh and the populace. As a travelling scholar he himself was lodged, to his pleasant surprise, at the students' hostel as guest of the qādi and feasted throughout his stay at state expense. None other than the qādi, not even ministers of state or military commanders, could boast the honour of sitting next to the Sheikh on the royal platform, and it was only the fuqahā^c (jurisconsults) and the Ulemā' (the learned) who sat with the sheikh, separate from everybody else, for the afternoon chat following the conclusion of the Friday prayers.²²

Ibn Baṭṭuṭa found Mogadishu to be a very prosperous state. He especially marvelled at the plentifulness of food supplies: meats, poultry, cereals, fruits, and vegetables were consumed in large quantities by the people of Mogadishu. A citizen

²¹In his "East African Coin Finds and their Historical Significance," JAH, I, 1(1960), pp. 31-43 and "Coins from Mogadishu," Numismatic Chronicle, seventh series, III (1963), pp. 179-2-0, G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville asserts, though not very convincingly, that Mogadishu was minting its own coinage from early fourteenth century on.

²²Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, Rihlat, p. 256.

of Mogadishu, asserted Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, could consume as much as several ordinary people ate. Consequently they tended to grow fat. The houses were furnished with "carpets and stuffs of Egyptian and Jerusalem make," and the people liberally wore perfumes from Damascus.²³

Politically, Ibn Baṭṭuṭa testified to the development of incipient monarchy with offices, functions, titles, and distinctions of the hierarchical structures clearly defined. The distinctions between the ruler and the ruled were also clearly drawn. It was a state strongly influenced by, and probably consciously modelled after, oriental forms of government, and obviously sporting the trappings and the regal splendour of oriental courts. The sultan walked in procession under a silken canopy topped by a golden bird. In front of him marched soldiers, ministers and the Culema. It was more like a Persian court than an Arab chieftaincy.

From then until the sixteenth century local manuscripts speak of a series of less known dynasties, usually headed by Somalized families, but who were nevertheless perpetuating the names of their original homes in Arabia or Persia. The first one to come to power called itself Arab, tracing its origin origin to Halwan in Iraq. The exact date of the dynasty's accession is not known but is generally taken to have occurred about one hundred years after the foundation

²³ Ibid., pp. 254-256.

of the sultanate. The founding family hailed from Marka, which though previously being only a satellite of Mogadishu had now become the capital of the Banaadir and this regime. The sultan himself, it is said, resided in Mogadishu, but his chief officers remained behind in Marka and also in a string of newly established stations on the coastal stretch between the two cities. These stations were founded evidently for the sake of facilitating speedy communication between the capital and the sultan in Mogadishu.²⁴

In contrast to the material abundance and splendour which Ibn Baṭṭūṭa witnessed in Mogadishu during the previous regime the Halwani period was characterized by hardships and severe privations. Traditional historians attributed the shortages occurring at the time to the miserliness of the Halwani sultans who, it was said, hoarded their gold and buried it in the ground and would not spend it even on necessities. They ate only dry bread and wore rough clothing, and would never entertain the idea of spending any of their gold to relieve the citizens' plight.²⁵ More plausibly, the regime, which

²⁴Sharīf Ḥaidarūs, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 83. The village of Gondarshē near Marka was supposed to have been founded at that time and was the residence of the chief vizier. Of course, the rise of a regional town to the position of leadership is not unique to the Banaadir: witness the Tanzanian coast where the early families of the Shirazi dynasty had ruled from Mafia before the Kilwan family took over. Even after this the Maffians continued to exercise great influence, twice installing one of their men in, or actually conquering, Kilwa. About the Kilwa-Mafia Shirazi dynasty consult Chittick, "The East African Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," pp. 202-204.

²⁵Sharīf Ḥaidarūs, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, pp. 83-84. According

represented an urban rebellion against the countryside and in the process drove the Somali dynasty of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's day out of office, was most likely subjected to an economic blockade and boycott by the nomads and farmers, and its interior caravan trade continually harried with assaults. Such internal pressures would have coincided with external problems stemming from the rise of Kilwa from the end of the thirteenth century following the deposition of the Shirazis, whose trade used to be focused on Mogadishu, and the assumption of power by the Mahdali family which was claiming origin in, and trading with, the Yaman. The Mahdali not only monopolized the Sofala gold trade, but they also excluded Mogadishu from it altogether by trading directly with their kinsmen in the Yaman, thus bypassing and partially impoverishing Mogadishu from the 1330s on.²⁶ This contraction in the city's fortunes naturally necessitated some rationing and stringent measures against wasteful spending. Very likely, there were cutbacks in the liberal state expenditure of former times on the learned and the numerous itinerant priests. It was a policy which, sound as it might seem to an economist or a statesman, was liable to solicit the wrath

to Sharīf ʿAīdarūs the stinginess of the Halwani rulers was such that today in the Banaadir an excessively miserly person is always likened to a Halwani. This writer, however, could not verify this claim. The traditions regarding the difficulties of this dynasty are also reproduced almost verbatim in Hindi, Tarīkh as-Sumāl, p. 29.

²⁶Chittick, "The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," pp. 204-207.

of the beneficiaries of the state gifts--the Culemā'--, a class which had a monopolistic claim upon the use of the pen.

Towards the end of this dynasty the problem of shortages was compounded by severe droughts which killed off much livestock and caused prices for meat to rise to prohibitive levels. It also reduced agricultural production to starvation standards.²⁷ These events and the generally harsh times accompanying this regime were reported in Mecca by a Lamu judge (qādi) on a pilgrimage trip (haj) in A.H. 839 (A. D. 1435). "Since the year 800 (1398 A.D.)," reported the Lamu judge, "baboons had taken possession of Mogadishu, and used to rob the inhabitants of their food". on one occasion, continued the judge, the officers "prostrating themselves according to custom before the Sultan who was standing in his window," were surprised by a baboon in the Sultan's place.²⁸ Under these circumstances no regime could last very long.

Around the middle of the fifteenth century a new dynasty called the Zuzni and as shown by its name boasting origins in Persian Khurasan took over the reins of state in Mogadishu. The founder, who is frequently described in the local manuscripts as a despicable tyrant, appears to have

²⁷Sharīf Aīdarūs, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 84; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Sūmāl, p. 29.

²⁸Captain C. H. Stigand, The Land of Zinj (London, 1913), p. 12.

been a military strongman who rose to power in the wake of the civil unrest during the last years of the Halwani dynasty, and to have subsequently preserved his power by force of arms only, thus alienating the vocal Cu'lemā'. His military background and connections are proven by his neglect of agriculture and commerce.²⁹ During the less than half century of this family's rule the city experienced a certain amount of economic decline and cultural decadence, and social unrest accompanied by political instability. To aggravate the situation persistent drought continued to be a major factor in the history of the town. What is constantly described by the local manuscripts as droughts and lack of prosperity, for which the misrule of the dynasties is partially held responsible, might have been the continued worsening of the town's trade position following its exclusion from the gold trade by Kilwa early in the fourteenth century and the subsequent rise of the vigorous state of Mombasa in the fifteenth century.

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century an apparently affluent and therefore socially prominent family from Persian Fārs (Shirazi) replaced the Khurasanian tyranny. How this change of regime was effected is not stated by the local manuscripts, but the Shirazis who posed, it is stated,

²⁹This detail and much of the information regarding Mogadishu's dynasties are taken from Sharif ʿAīdarūs's collection of Banaadir manuscripts which are reproduced in his Bughyat 'l-ʿAnāl, pp. 83-85.

as peaceable traders soon took advantage of their newly gained political power and enriched themselves at the expense of the populace. Taking their lessons from previous droughts they used to buy agricultural crops cheaply at harvest times, store them in underground silos, and then sell them later on at much higher monopolistic prices.³⁰ This policy of hoarding created artificial famine conditions similar, in effect, to those created by the natural drought cycles of the Halwani era. These unnecessary shortages created near starvation conditions in which the state came close to being ruined. One aspect of this regime which somewhat dilutes the chroniclers' invective against its rule was its concern with the promotion of religious interests and institutions.

A few Banaadir manuscripts also mention an Egyptian regime which did not long endure, but which similarly contributed significantly to the advancement of Islamic learning, especially through the construction of mosques and schools (madāris).³¹ Unfortunately, there are no outside written sources or internal oral traditions which corroborate these manuscripts. It is possible they were referring to the regime of an Egyptian governor or mayor under one of these dynasties and not to a proper dynasty. In any case, Egyptian presence in the Banaadir has been attested to

³⁰Ibid, pp. 84-85.

³¹Ibid, p. 85.

travellers³² to the area, and the possibility of one of them becoming governor of the capital or chief vizier of the sultan's government is not out of the question.

In the closing years of the fifteenth century, or early in the sixteenth century, the city was brought into respectable order and given a new lease on political stability by the rise to power in it of the Muzaffar dynasty. Much more Somalized than its predecessors, and partially dependent on the economic, and probably military, support of the interior Somalis, this dynasty gave the city over a century of peace, political stability and economic prosperity. For much of these accomplishments the Muzaffar dynasty depended upon the goodwill and solidarity of the Ajuran Somalis, who had some kinsmen settled in Mogadishu and who at about the same time that the Muzaffar came to power in the city had built their own state in the lower Shabeelle river valley.³³ The Ajuran experimented with enlarged political scale, occupying an area extending from Brava in the southeast to the middle Shabeelle valley in the northwest, and from Hobyo (Obbia) in the northeast to Baardheere in the southwest.³⁴ They might

³² Ibn Battuta, Rihlat, p. 254, states that Ibn al-Burhan, the gadi of Mōgādīshū, was an Egyptian. The Kitab az-Zunuj (Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 235) also talks about Egyptians settling around Kismayo in southern Somaliland.

³³ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 24.

³⁴ Sharif ^cAidarūs, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 99. Traditions which the present author encountered in the area chronicle the same detail: a) Interview with Sheikh Ahmad Waasuge and Sheikh Faatah Gaabow, Mahaas, 16 September, 1972; b) On

its trade with the interior, and his comments on the people furnish us with a rare insight into the mixed ethnic composition of the city's population:

It has a king over it, and is a place of great trade in merchandise. Ships come there from the kingdom of Cambay and from Aden with stuffs of all kinds, and with spices. And they carry away from there much gold, ivory, beeswax, and other things upon which they make a profit. In this town there is plenty of meat, wheat, barley, and horses, and much fruit; it is a very rich place. All the people speak Arabic; they are dusky, and black, and some of them white.³⁷

Most of the Banaadir coast was included in the Sultanate of Mogadishu, and because of Mogadishu's prosperity and wide commercial connections the Banaadir coast cities came to be known collectively as Maqadish (plural of Maqdashu).³⁸ Brava, however, where there were settlements of Somali and Southwest Asian groups, maintained its own separate identity. It evolved its own tribal confederacy similar to the pre-dynastic government of Mogadishu. Oral traditions imply that the city might have been conquered by, and annexed to, the Ajuran Sultanate.³⁹ But, even if that was the case, Brava must have

³⁷Ibid, p. 16; reproduced in Documents on the Portuguese in Mozambique and Central Africa, 1497-1840, V (Lisboa, 1966), p. 381.

³⁸Guillain, Watha^{Cq}, p. 184; Sharīf ^CAidarūs, Buḡhyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 31. The territorial influence of the Mogadishu Sultanate in the fifteenth century can be better appreciated by the fact that its forces were included on one occasion (battle of Gogut, 1445) in a grand Muslim alliance against King Zarca Yaqob of the Ethiopian Christian State. For details see: a) Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 136; b) Taddesse Tamrat, "Ethiopia, The Red Sea and the Horn," in Roland Oliver (ed.) The Cambridge History of Africa, III (New York, 1977), p. 155.

³⁹Sharif ^CAidarūs, Buḡhyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 99.

secured a certain amount of autonomy, for the Portuguese found it early in the sixteenth century under the rule of twelve elders representing the constituent tribes of the city's population.⁴⁰ This report was confirmed less than a generation later by Duarte Barbosa who described it as a "town of the Moors, well-walled, and built of good houses of stone and whitewash ... it has not got a king; it is governed by its elders, they being honoured and respectable persons."⁴¹

Such is the picture one gains from the mutually supportive external and internal written sources. What about local oral traditions? In general, the local traditions confirm these written reports, though as might be expected they are frequently confused as regards detail and in the order of succession of these dynasties. Contrary to the written records, which speak first of a federation of thirty-nine Arab tribes followed by the Fakhr u-Dīn dynasty, most of the oral traditions maintain that the first inhabitants of Mogadishu as well as its first dynasty were Shirāzi Persians.⁴² At times they even mention dynasties not verified by the written

⁴⁰Joao de Barros, Decadas da Asia, I, Book VIII, Chapter IV, as reproduced in Freeman-Grenville, The Medieval History of the Coast of Tanganyika, pp. 31-32; Guillaum, Bathna'iq, p. 85, also quoting de Barros.

⁴¹Barros, Description, p. 15.

⁴²Cerulli, Somalia, II, pp. 237-238, 245-247; also Chittick, "The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean," p. 200, based upon Cerulli's collection.

literature.⁴³ In their general content, however, the traditions do verify the succession of a number of short-lived dynasties of Arab, Persian, and Somali origins. Furthermore, from these traditions it becomes evident that the Persian element on the Banaadir was greater numerically, and politically more influential, than the Arab records would have us believe. Finally, the oral traditions confirm the reported alliance and friendly relations between the Muzaffar dynasty on the coast and the Ajuran state in the hinterland.⁴⁴

And so the Southwest Asian immigrants not only gave rise directly to a number of city governments of varying forms and stages of development on the Banaadir coast, but also through their commercial connections with the interior they helped create in the hinterland conditions conducive to the rise of political formations different from, and superceding, the traditional Somali tribal forms of political association. The Ajuran state was the first, and the most illustrious, of a number of such political formations inspired by the presence of the Asiatics on the Banaadir.

In the western region of the Gulf of Aden coast the process of state formation coincided with the spread of Islam

⁴³ E.g. the Madagan Arab dynasty which supposedly succeeded the Shirazi family. From this name the family's Arab identification is clearly of doubtful authenticity.

⁴⁴ Cerulli, Somalia, II, pp. 245-246.

and the growth of Arab economic and cultural interests there. Somalia, Afars, Arabs and Islamized Ethiopians (Jabarta) had all participated in the commerce and politics of the area, which was nevertheless clearly dominated, in cultural influence if not numerically, by the Arab element. This can be explained by the identification people made between Islam and the Prophet with the Arabs. The growth of Arab commercial interests in eastern Ethiopia and Zaila^C region led in the closing years of the ninth century to the rise of a state headed by a Muslim dynasty claiming descent from the Meccan tribe of Banī Makhzūm. This Mudhzūmī dynasty ruled one of a number of Muslim principalities gradually spreading their influence inland from coastal bases until by the beginning of the fourteenth century they spread to form a crescent round the eastern and southeastern borders of the Ethiopian Christian state.⁴⁵ By A.D. 1289 the Asma^C dynasty of Ifāt (Awfāt), also of eastern Shoa, toppled the Makhzūmīs and soon after brought under its control other principalities, including Mora and the Zaila^C based emirate of ^CAdal. With this incorporation of Zaila^C in the state of Ifat, the Somalis of ^CAdal joined, and occasionally played a decisive role in, the struggle between Islam and Christianity for dominance in the Horn of Africa. Appearing between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries these states varied in number and

⁴⁵Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, pp. 66-67.

importance at different times. By the fourteenth century, according to al-^CUmari, who interviewed Sheikh ^CAbdallah az-Zaila^C, these states numbered seven. Of these Ifat, which included Mora and ^CAdal (whose capital of Zaila^C was already the most important emporium for the Christian state) within its territorial domain, was the most important.⁴⁶ In fact, the fame of Zaila^C abroad (as the outlet for the important Ethiopian trade and the embarkation point for Northeast African Muslims travelling for learning and pilgrimage to the Muslim lands) was already such that the whole region of western Somaliland-eastern Ethiopia was known in Egypt and Syria as "the country of Zaila^C," though it was only one of the ports of this hinterland.⁴⁷ A century later the term "land of Zaila^C" was extended so as to include the whole of the Somali Peninsula and the Islamized portions of southeastern Ethiopia. Al Maqrizi writes:

The length of the land of Zaila^C is by land as well as by sea about two months journey and its width is more than two months [journey]. However, it is largely desolate country and uninhabited. The inhabited portion is in length the distance of 43 days journey and in width 40 days. It is divided into seven kingdoms, viz; ⁴⁸Awfat, Dawaro, Arabini, Hadya, Sharkha, Bali, and Dara.

⁴⁶ Ibn Fadl Allah al-^CUmari, Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amsār, translated and annotated with an introduction by Gaudefroy-Demombynes, I (Paris, 1927), pp. 1-2; Abī al-'Abbās Ahmad al-Qalqshandi, Kitāb Subh al-Aṣḥā, V (Cairo, 1915), pp. 332-333, who called Sheikh ^CAbdallah by the name of ^CAbdulmu'min.

⁴⁷ al-^CUmari, Masālik al-Abṣār, p. 4; al-Maqrizi, al-Ilmām, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

These were essentially trading states and in their competition, despite their being co-religionists, they jostled each other for commercial favours from the Ethiopian Emperor, who naturally took advantage of their divisions and dominated them all, even imposing annual tribute of cloth and other goods.⁴⁹ The Ethiopian domination of the divided Muslim principalities was so effective that, according to al-^CUmari, the contending rival sons and relatives of a deceased Muslim prince would compete for the Ethiopian king's favours with gifts and pledges of loyalty, whereupon the Christian king confirmed in office only those he felt were amenable to his dictation.⁵⁰ In 1376 Haqq ad-Dīn II of Ifat rebelled against the Ethiopians and initiated a cycle of hostilities which a century and a half later culminated in a full-fledged jihād. In less than ten years Haqq ad-Dīn fought twenty-five encounters, only to lose his life in battle in A.H. 776 (A.D. 1374/5)⁵¹ His brother and successor, Sa^Cd ad-Dīn II (A.D. 1375-1415) fought more like a crusader than a rebel and even gained some initial successes. But in the end he, too, was vanquished, losing his life in action. Al-Maqrizi's description of the final struggles of this sultan reveals clearly the saintly aura which has developed in popular Muslim memories around Sa^Cd ad-Dīn II:

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 6; al-^CUmari, Masālik al-Ahṣār, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

⁵¹ al-Maqrīzī, al-Ilmām, p. 11.

With Sa^cd ad-Dīn were jurisconsults, dervishes, peasants, and all the inhabitants of the country. They all made a death-convenant. A fierce battle took place between them. Four hundred godly Shaikhs, each with his ablution jug and having under him a great number of dervishes, fell martyrs. The slaughter of the Muslims continued until the majority had perished and the remainder were broken to pieces.⁵²

Following the rout of his army Sa^cd ad-Dīn fled in the direction of Zaila^c, hotly pursued by the Ethiopian army. He took refuge in the island which still bears his name just off Zaila^c, where he was captured and executed in A.D. 1415. With the death of Sa^cd ad-Dīn the state of Ifat disappeared altogether.⁵³

Sa^cd ad-Dīn's ten sons now crossed over to the Yaman where they were welcomed and honoured by Ahmad ibn al-Ashraf, king of al-Yaman, and then sent back equipped with supplies to resume the struggle. The name of the Sultaate was changed to ^cAdal and its headquarters moved to Dakar, southeast of Harar near Fiyambiro, away from Ethiopian ravages. It was this state which after a century of minor border skirmishes finally took the struggle in the sixteenth century to jihadic proportions and under the leadership of the resourceful Imam Ahmad Gurey (Gran) briefly turned the tables upon the Ethiopian kingdom.

⁵² Ibid, p. 13; this translation is by Trimmingham, who quotes it in Islam in Ethiopia, p. 74.

⁵³ In his "Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn," pp. 148-151, Taddesse Tamrat begins the disappearance of Ifat with the movement of its capital by Haqq ad-Dīn from Ifat to the as yet unidentified Wahal sometime in the 1360s.

From the ensuing conflicts there emerged a new class of Muslim Amirs, hardened warriors, who were more committed to the jihad than were the traditional leaders and who began to depend for recruits more and more upon the newly converted nomadic Somalis and Afars. Throughout this period a struggle was going on between two distinct forces and interests within the state. The traditional, urban, commercially minded elite were being challenged by the jihadists and the nomadic groups "with whom the Jihad ranked as the primary duty of Islam".⁵⁴ By the beginning of the sixteenth century political power had for all practical purposes passed on to the emerging leaders and their nomadic supporters. Trimingham suggests that these Amirs "began by carving out for themselves principalities within the Sultanate of Adal itself in the regions between Harar and the sea and relegated the Walasma^c dynasty to the position of nominal rulers".⁵⁵ Shihab ad-Din, the Arab Faqih

⁵⁴ Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, p. 81; Tadesse Tamrat, "Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn," p. 148. Observing the split of Haqq ad-Din II and his brother Sa^cd ad-Din with the pacifist policies of their grandfather, Ali b. Sabr ad-Din, as well as the brothers' vigorous prosecution of the war against Ethiopia, Tamrat thinks that the class cleavage within the state had begun before the relocation of the capital in WahaI. It appears, however, as he himself points out in this same work (pp. 145-146), that the nomadic supporters of the new leaders did not figure in the affairs of the Muslim state in any positive manner before the end of the fourteenth century. In fact, it was the very descendants of Haqq ad-Din and Sa^cd ad-Din who were being challenged by the jihadists for their worldliness and lack of religious zeal. The new leaders came from commoner classes.

⁵⁵ Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, p. 80; Tamrat, "Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn," pp. 166-170.

who chronicled Imam Ahmad Gurey's wars, described the situation in ^CAdal just before the beginning of hostilities:

It was the custom in the country of Sa^Cd ad-Dīn that every Amir had power to prosecute or withhold action, to carry out raids, and to make holy war.⁵⁶

It appears that besides championing a more vigorous prosecution of the war, the new groups believed in a strong government which would enforce a more austere life and strict adherence to the precepts and basic tenets of Islam. The older groups, on the other hand, were not concerned so much about the morality of the citizenry as they were about peace and commercial prosperity. Two regimes which succeeded each other in a five years period before Ahmad Gurey will illustrate the point. The first was headed by al-Jarād Abūn ibn Adash, one of the new leadership, who

re-established law and order, affirming the right and forbidding the wrong. He exterminated highway robbers, forbade drinking carousals, gambling and dancing with drums, in consequence of which the country prospered. He loved the Ashrāf (descendants of the Prophet), jurists, derishes and Shaikhs. He really controlled the country and cared for his subjects.⁵⁷

The second is that of his murderer and successor, Sultan Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad and a member of the Walasma^C dynasty.

He ruined the country; highway robbery and drunken carousals reappeared. In his time his subjects used

⁵⁶Shihab ad-Dīn Ahmad ibn Abdulqādir ibn Sālim ibn ^CUthmān al-Jizānī, Arab Faqīh, Tuhfat az-Zaman or Futuh al-Habasha ed. by F. M. Shaltut, (Cairo, 1974), pp. 13-14, trans. by Trimmingham, who quotes it in his Islam in Ethiopia, p. 80.

⁵⁷Arab Faqīh, Futuh al-Habasha, pp. 6-7, quoted in Trimmingham, Islam in Ethiopia, pp. 84-85.

to hold up travellers and plunder them. Vices re-
appeared and no one in his time could get restitution
for injustices.⁵⁸

The writer of these two passages was one of the learned men in Ahmed Gurey's retinue, and obviously a partisan of the revolutionary faction in ^CAdal. But the ideological divergence between the two contending forces in the state comes out clearly from these otherwise partial statements. Religious zeal and resistance to Christian rule were the ideological weapons which the new leaders employed against the commercially oriented, urban, and less warlike old guard.

Be that as it may, the outcome of this passage of power to the militant group was an all-out jihad (1527-1543) against the Christian Ethiopian kingdom. In 1527 Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghāzī (1506-43) caused the murder of Sultan Abū Bakr ibn Muhammad and installing a puppet in his place assumed leadership in the state of ^CAdal. In that same year Ahmad ordered the discontinuation of the payment of the hated annual tribute to the king of Ethiopian and soon thereafter the inevitable war was on. With a force largely of nomadic Somali and ^CAfar groups, but also including many other Muslim Abyssinian nationalities as well as Arabs, Ahmad Gurey invaded the territory of the Ethiopian kingdom in 1527. He scored a series of quick victories and, encouraged by these initial triumphs, marched steadily deeper into the heartland of Abyssinian kingdom. By the latter part of 1530s the

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 85, quoting from Arab Faqih, Futuh al-Habasha, p. 7.

Imām's forces had overrun the whole of the Abyssinian Highlands, forcing conversions, burning down churches, and destroying all other symbols of Christianity.⁵⁹ For almost five years the Ethiopian king was "a hunted fugitive, harried from one mountain fastness to another; from Tigrai through Wagara, Dambya, Begamder, Gojam, and back again to Tigrai".⁶⁰

In 1535 the reigning king, Lebna Dengel (1508-40), sent a delegation to Rome and the king of Portugal appealing for military assistance against the invading Muslims. It took six years for the Portuguese to respond and the contingent of 400 Portuguese musketeers arrived in 1541, one year after Lebna Dengel's death. With the arrival of the Portuguese reinforcement the Ethiopians regained morale and, rallying their forces again for the war, were able with Portuguese support to inflict two defeats upon the Muslims in 1542. Imām Ahmad, now realizing the effect of firearms in the war, wrote for help to the Turkish Pasha of Zabīd, who sent him a reinforcement of 900 musketeers and ten cannon.⁶¹ With these the Imām engaged the Portuguese, killing more than half of the contingent, including the commander and many of the other leaders in the first battle. Soon after this

⁵⁹ An eyewitness account of the war and the devastations the Christians suffered are contained in Shihab ad-Din's Futūh al-Habasha.

⁶⁰ Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 87.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 89; A contemporary hadrami chronicler (Sergeant, The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, pp. 102-103) maintains that the Portuguese reinforcement to

victory, either "thinking that his position was now unassailable,"⁶² or fearing Turkinsh ambitions, the Imām quickly paid off the Turks and sent them back home. A contemporary Hadrami historian accounted for this hasty return of the Turks before the conclusion of the hostilities in these terms:

The Turks ... were inspired by cupidity of al-Mujahid, and a party of desperadoes [mufadīn] came to him in deputation, entering his own tent, saying: 'we want 10,000 ukiyahs of gold this very moment or else we shall kill you!' He returned them a most favourable answer, but their comrades got to hear of it, and others did the same. So now when he had come to know what they were like, and (since) God had decreed victory over the Franks so (complete) that he annihilated all but fifty of them who took to flight along with the king of Abyssinia, al-Mujahid fitted out the Turks for their departure, treating them kindly and using them well.⁶³

For this hasty decision the Imām paid dearly. A short while later, the surviving members of the Portuguese expedition and the Ethiopian king, Galawdewos (1540-59), joined forces and gave battle to him on 22nd February, 1543 at his headquarters near Lake Tana. The Imām was fatally wounded, whereupon his undisciplined motley host, previously held together only by his personal charisma, immediately fell apart and withdrew in disorderly haste from the Ethiopian highland territory.

With this defeat the state of ḤAdal began her journey

Abyssinia and the Turkish contingent sent to bolster the Imam's forces each numbered 500.

⁶²Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, p. 89.

⁶³Serjeant, The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, p. 103.

of decline. After almost ten years of confusion in the wake of the defeat, Ahmad Gurey's nephew, Amīr Nūr (1551-67), established a degree of stability and order in the state, even partially restoring her lost morale. Entitled the Sāhib al-Fath a-thānī (leader of the second conquest), Amīr Nūr revived the jihad by going on the offensive and invading Shoa, the neighbouring province of Christian Ethiopia. Galawdewos was apparently not prepared to face the attackers and tried to force the Muslim army to withdraw from his territory by despatching an army against the unguarded capital city of Harar, but the Amir would not seize the bait. His maneuver failing, the Ethiopian king now collected some forces and met the attackers in battle in 1559 and was killed. At this point, however, the state of ^CAdal was faced with a more dangerous menace in the expansion of the Oromo (Gallas), who had begun their irruptions from their cradeland in south-eastern Ethiopia about twenty years earlier. Before his death in 1567 Amīr Nūr was able to inflict some initial defeats upon the Oromo vanguard, but the state of ^CAdal, successfully weakened by fifteen years of continuous fighting against Ethiopia, ten years of civil unrest and political instability, twenty years of intermittent mini-jihads, and above all else by successive years of drought, famine and pestilence, could not sustain the resistance to the waves of Galla hordes. By the end of the century ^CAdal was reduced to the city walls, and the Galla were left free to ravage the

countryside and other urban centers on the prosperous trade routes radiating from the city in all directions.⁶⁴

The Somalis' participation in the affairs of the Muslim principalities, enjoying their glories and sharing their trials, left a permanent imprint upon the Somali political consciousness and their cultural identity. In these struggles the Somalis fought alongside Arabs and other Muslims against the Christian alliance and as a consequence of this experience developed a tradition of hostility towards Christian Ethiopia and a contrasting unqualified love for and identification with all Muslims, especially the Arabs. The memories of these struggles are today, four centuries later, still alive in the consciousness of the Somalis (Ethiopian occupation of a Somali territory since the closing years of the nineteenth century being an important contributory factor to their persistence) and to a significant degree determine the contemporary Somalis' consciousness of their ethnic identity and external relations.

The subdivision (during the fifteenth century) of the state of ^CAdal into principalities under semi-autonomous Amirs, under whom many Somalis took service, also appears to have had an influence upon the development of Somali political structures and institutions. Traditionally stateless

⁶⁴In northwestern Somaliland alone there are about ~~twenty ruined towns~~ perfectly situated on the trade route between Harar and Zaila^C, the entrepot for the trade of western Somaliland and southeastern Ethiopia. a preliminary

and ruled only by advisory clan assemblies, each assembly consisting of the totality of the respective clan's male elders, the Somalis appear to have been inspired by these Amīrs to adopt hereditary dynasties which in the pastoral circumstances could not grow to centralized authorities, but have assumed the titles of Sultan, garād, etc. in emulation of the ^CAdal Amīrs and dynasts. Interviews with many elders in northwestern Somaliland have proven to me that none of the clan heads from that area can trace their dynastic origins back to periods preceeding the seventeenth century, and usually for no more than six or seven generations.⁶⁵ Indeed, in the Futuh al-Habasha, the Somali clan contingents participating in the jihad were commanded by men referred to simply as leaders, with no intimation of dynastic rule or titles. And no contemporary princely family is mentioned.

There are strong indication that all of the northern Somalis might have been united, if only fleetingly, under the ^CAdal Sultanate. All the northern clan families were represented in the Muslim army which invaded Ethiopia, some

archaeological survey carried out in the 1930s (Curle, "Ruined Towns," p. 315-27) proved that they all prospered in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the time when ^CAdal reached the apogee of its power and prosperity. Their abandonment by their inhabitants also coincides with the arrival of the Oromo in the area. For further details of the Oromo devastation see Chapter Seven.

⁶⁵ Interview with Hajj ^CAbdi, Borama, February 14, 1971; personal communication from Mr. Muhammad Ahmad Ali, Mogadishu, May 25, 1971. A number of other old genealogists confirmed this to me also.

of them coming from as far as the Ma'akhir coast near Ras^c Asayr (Cape Guardafui).⁶⁶ This opinion is lent some further support by Alvarez, who declared that "the kingdom of Adel (as they say) is a large kingdom, and it extends over the Cape of Guardafuy, and there in that part another rules subject to Adel".⁶⁷

The development of political structures along the intervening coastal stretch between Zaila^c and Mogadishu was, because of the paucity of ambition-breeding wealth and commercial interests, understandably much slower than at the two busy extremities. According to ninth century Arabo-Persian reports recorded by a Chinese scholar, "Berbera [the northern Somali coast] was a country of half naked and feuding pastoralists who owed allegiance to none, but which yielded certain valuable products".⁶⁸ By the thirteenth century things had not changed much. Again our source is a Chinese writer who interviewed Arab and/or Persian merchants to China. Though four departmental cities⁶⁹ had come into existence by the thirteenth century, the people were mostly "scattered through the countryside in warring villages, where they followed a

⁶⁶ Arab Faqih, Futūh al-Habasha, p. 40.

⁶⁷ Francisco Alvarez, Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia During the years 1520-1527, trans. by Lord Stanley of Alderley (London, 1881), p. 346.

⁶⁸ Wheatley, "The Land of Zanj," p. 149; Duyvendak, China's Discovery, p. 14.

⁶⁹ The Berbera [Chinese, Pi-Pa-Lo] of this report may

pastoral mode of life".⁷⁰ Only one important state seems to have evolved there before the sixteenth century. This was a semi-nomadic Sultanate, partially dependent upon seafaring, with headquarters variously at Bosaso, ^CAlula, Gessaley, Bargal, and Hurdio (just across the estuary from Hafun). Traditions of the area trace the state's origins back to the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century.⁷¹ This is probably the same state which Alvarez located near Cape Guardafui and said was "subject to Adal". The rest of the Somali territory, largely untouched by direct Arab commercial influence and inhabited by nomadic bedouins, did not give birth to any sort of political organization worthy of mention here.

refer to the whole of Somaliland, whereupon the four cities mentioned might have been Zaila^C, Berbera, Mogadishu, and Brava which were the most important cities in Somaliland and frequently visited by Arabs and Persians. Otherwise they may refer to Zaila^C, Berbera, and two of the less important towns to the east of Berbera.

⁷⁰ Wheatley, "the Land of Zanj," p. 149.

⁷¹ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 26.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Arabs and Somaliland:

from c. 1500 to c. 1800

In the four preceding chapters we have dealt with the settlement of southwest Asians (mainly Arabs) on the coasts of the Horn of Africa, and the role these peoples played in the Islamization, the trade, and the political culture of the Somali nation. The chapters summarized nearly a millennium of Arab immigrations to, and monsoonal trade with, Somaliland. We have seen how along with these immigrations and long-drawn-out commercial relations the process of Islamization and its corollary, the cultural Arabization of the Somalis, made continued and steady (albeit slow) progress. By the year 1500, Islam (still imperfectly understood) had become the national religion of the Somalis. The Arabs and the Somalis had by then also become well acquainted with each other, and the Somali economy was especially closely intertwined with the overseas economic interests of Arabia. In short, by the beginning of the sixteenth century Somaliland was religiously part of Dār 'l-Islām and commercially a segment of the Arab commercial empire spanning the Indian Ocean expanse.

In the present chapter we shall examine a period in which the Arab involvement in the affairs of the Horn of

of Africa was threatened with extinction by a chance combination of hostile external and internal factors. Externally the irruption onto the Indian Ocean scene by the crusading Portuguese lusting for Muslim communities to plunder dealt a severe blow to the thriving Arab commerce not only in East Africa but throughout the Indian Ocean region. The establishment at about the same time of Ottoman rule in Arabia, partially facilitated by the explosion of the Portuguese into the eastern seas, also contributed to the decline of the Arab overseas enterprise. Internally, the Horn of Africa experienced movements of peoples who, besides disrupting the traditional pattern of ethnic and clan distribution in the area, destroyed most of the urban centers in the interior. Even coastal Asiatic settlements in which the Arab culture was first planted and from which it was being gradually spread inland were endangered by these population movements, and some of them actually overrun. Opposed in effect to the external Portuguese and Turkish interference, as well as to internal disruptions, was the arrival of a fresh wave of immigrants from the Hadramawt in southern Arabia. The latter immigrants passed through an ineffectual wall of Portuguese naval blockade and came to give continuity to the long established connections between Somaliland and Arabia which was briefly threatened with severance early in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese interlopers and throughout the sixteenth century and part of the seventeenth by unsettled conditions in the Horn created by continued and destructive

ethnic and clan movements,

With the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese in the closing years of the fifteenth century, Western Europe and the civilizations of the East, which had hitherto known of each other only indirectly through the exchange of good transmitted back and forth between them by the centrally located Muslim civilization, came into direct contact. The partial elimination of the need for an intermediary in the transmission of merchandise was potentially of considerable economic gain for both Western Europe and the Asian producers of the goods sought by the Europeans, out for the Muslim brokers and carriers the event spelled a disaster from which they have yet to recover completely.¹ European competition in the Indian Ocean trade was bound to cause the Neareastern Arab and Mamluk states a lessening of revenue, and that alone would have meant real hardships, as it ultimately did for most of them. At the beginning, however, the real cause of Muslim difficulties stemmed not so much from the opening of the new route as it did from the character of Portuguese policy in the area.

¹ Asiatic products which changed hands many times through a relay of Indian, Persian, Jewish, and Arab merchants, and paid dues at a number of ports on the way, were sold to the Europeans at the Mediterranean at 2000% their original cost. C. R. Boxer, "The Portuguese in the East 1500-1800," in H. V. Livermore (ed.) Portugal and Brazil: an Introduction (London, 1953), p. 191. With the establishment of the direct route and Portuguese partial closure of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf routes the Muslims lost the merchants' profits and the transit dues collected by the rulers which now went

On their arrival in India in 1498 the Portuguese were asked what brought them there, and they replied: "Christians and spices".² Vasco Da Gama, the commander of this exploratory naval expedition, explained this innocent sounding reply in action on his way back home when he surprised the city of Mogadishu with bombardment.³ This was no freak action, but rather a pious and patriotic act carried out in the name of God and the Portuguese King. Indeed, one of the primary motives behind Portuguese expansion abroad from the early fifteenth century on was the desire to continue overseas the crusade against Islam just then successfully concluded in the Iberian Peninsula.⁴ And though, to be sure, Portuguese attempts to establish direct trade ties with the countries of the farther orient also had important mundane aims behind them, the whole effort can be legitimately seen as an alternative way of pursuing the war by subtle and gainful means.

to the European rulers' and entrepreneurs' coffers. It thus undermined the Mamluk and Arab states and facilitated their conquest by the Ottomans. See *Ibid*, p. 194; Stanford Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. I (New York, 1976), p. 83.

² C. R. Boxer, Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion 1415-1825: A Succinct Survey (Los Angeles, 1969), p. 14, and The Portuguese Seaborne Empire (New York, 1969) p. 37.

³ Justus Strandes, The Portuguese Period in East Africa, trans. by Jean F. Wallwork and edited with topographical notes by J. S. Kirkman (Nairobi, 1961), p. 32.

⁴ Boxer, Four Centuries, p. 6; *idem*, Seaborn Empire, pp. 20-23; M. N. Pearson, Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat (Los Angeles, 1976), pp. 30, 52-56.

This attitude was manifest in the instructions which King Manuel of Portugal gave to D. Francisco de Almeida, his first appointee to the viceroyalty of Portuguese India. In those portions of the instructions relating to East Africa the King "enjoined him to seize and enslave all Muslim merchants at Sofala, but not to do any harm to the local Negroes".⁵ Furthermore, while Portuguese discriminatory policies cut across the spectrum of colour, class, caste, and creed, it was the hated Muslim who was always singled out for the severest measures. This remained, according to professor Boxer, "the keynote of Portuguese policy in that region for the next hundred years".⁶

The cargo of spices which Vasco da Gama collected in India netted in Portugal more than "sixty times the cost of equipping the voyage".⁷ This profit was beyond anybody's expectations and aroused the acquisitive instincts of not only the Portuguese but of all the Western Europeans. The results, of this first expedition added a new dimension to Portuguese overseas policy which now came under the guidance of two equally forceful motives: "to monopolize the spice trade, and where possible, smite the Moslem enemy and propagate the

⁵C. R. Boxer, Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825 (Oxford, 1963) p. 41.

⁶Ibid, p. 42.

⁷Strandes, Portuguese Period, p. 35; L. S. Stravrianos, The World Since 1500: A Global History (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1975), p. 86.

faith".⁸

At this time trade between the West and the East, the basis to a very large extent of Near Eastern prosperity for millennia, went through two routes. They "ran from India to Hormuz and up the Persian Gulf to Aleppo, or via the Gulf of Aden and Jeddah to Cairo and Venice".⁹ These, as well as the Indian Ocean trade with East Africa, were in the hands of Arabs and Gujarati Indians.¹⁰ It was into this state of affairs that the Portuguese burst, armed with their double-pronged policy of crusade against Islam and trade monopoly. To enforce this policy Afonso de Albuquerque, Governor-General (1508-1515), took possession of the two Islands of Socotra and Humuz, guarding the gates to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, respectively. Taxes were imposed upon all merchandise entering African and Asian ports, and all shipping was subjected to attack unless protected by Portuguese passports.¹¹ Contemporary Hadrami and Yamaní manuscripts

⁸ Ibid, p. 87.

⁹ Sergeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, p. 3. For some time during the high Middle Ages Chinese trade to the west went partially overland through the territories of the Mongol Empire, but with the destruction of the latter in the 14th century that route was closed.

¹⁰ Boxer, Four Centuries, p. 15.

¹¹ Boxer, Seaborne Empire, p. 48. Some decades later Muslim ships captured at sea were usually freed on the payment of ransom, but in the early years they were invariably looted first and then their passengers and crew were put to the sword, in keeping with the state's policy of crusade against Islam.

attest to the depredations caused by the Portuguese and be-
moan the resultant state of insecurity.¹² The immediate out-
come of the Portuguese violence and severe impositions was
that many Muslim and Arab merchants and shipmasters simply
refrained from putting to sea altogether. Thus violently
interfered with, the thriving Muslim commercial empire in the
Indian Ocean was in the first three decades of the sixteenth
century nearly strangled, and the whole of the "Arab lands
in East Africa and (to a lesser extent) in the Arabian lit-
toral" suffered a marked, and in certain cases, a ruinous,
economic decline.¹³

One dramatic consequence for the Horn of Africa from
the Portuguese attacks on Arab shipping was the near mono-
poly relations which Indians soon came to enjoy in the trade
of East Africa. Indians have always been involved in the
commerce of East Africa since ancient and classical times,
but until the sixteenth century they played only a secondary
role vis-a-vis the Arabs and the Persians. In the course of
the sixteenth century the Indians came to dominate the carry-
ing and also the actual transactions of both the Indian
Ocean and Red Sea commerce. In particular Indian merchants
from Gujarat, who had already been active in the Indian Ocean
trade since the rise of their Sultanate to prominence late

¹² Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, pp. 41-111, passim; 'Isa ibn Lutf Allah ibn 'I-Muttahar, Rawh ar-Rawh Fima Jara Ba'd 'I-Mi'a a-Tasi'a min al-Fitan wa 'I-Fuzuh, MS Or. 4583, Brit. Mus., fol. 13.

¹³ Boxer, "Portuguese in the East," p. 221.

in the fourteenth century, were, according to early Portuguese accounts, the most dominant group in the commerce of the early sixteenth century Indian Ocean.¹⁴ Portuguese inability to close the Red Sea route, their increasing dependence for revenue on local Asian trade, and, especially, Indian (Gujarati) ability to adapt to, as well as willingness to cooperate with, the Portuguese regime all worked together to guarantee Indian predominance.¹⁵ With regard to East Africa, early sixteenth century Portuguese reports contain much comment on Indian merchants and shipping from Cambay calling at the different local ports and prospering from the great demand for their textile products.¹⁶ Seventeenth century European travellers in the area noticed and marvelled at the large number of Indian nationals (always called Banyan) found along the coasts of the Horn of Africa, either as businessmen or as crews of the Indian merchant fleets.¹⁷ Zaila^C, which was the main outlet for the Ethiopian produce of "gold, ivory, musk, skins, some agricultural products and slaves," was the

¹⁴ Edward A. Alpers, "Gujarat and the Trade of East Africa, c. 1500-1800," The International Journal of African Historical Studies, IX, 1 (1976), pp. 22-44; M. N. Pearson, Merchants and Rulers, pp. 10-12. Dr. Pearson thinks that the Gujaratis were already dominant by 1500, but the Portuguese pointed attacks against the Arabs must have helped from then on.

¹⁵ Ibid, Chapter 2, 3, and 4, especially the last, passim.

¹⁶ Alpers, "Gujarat," pp. 30-31.

¹⁷ Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence," p. 189.

chief Indian base on the Red Sea coasts.¹⁸ Berbera and a host of smaller ports to the east also attracted a certain amount of Indian interests.¹⁹ In the Banaadir their numbers and interests were such that in the nineteenth century one of them became all but the de facto ruler of the city of Marka.²⁰

Besides impeding Arab trade visits to East Africa, the Portuguese also physically destroyed some of the coastal Arab settlements there. All along the East African coast cities which resisted or in any way refused to give their unqualified cooperation (at times simply because they were Islamic) were surprised with bombardment, looted, and set on fire.²¹ Though some of the towns to the south suffered a worse fate, cities on the Somali coast and other Muslim communities bordering on Christian Ethiopia were marked for the worst reprisals. Muslims of the Horn of Africa were ranked with the Turks as Portugal's greatest enemies and were stipulated in the trade passes issued to shipmasters as illegal passengers never to be carried in such licensed boats.²²

¹⁸ Mordechai Abir, Ethiopia: the Era of Princes (London, 1968) p. 1.

¹⁹ Pankhurst, "The 'Banyan' or Indian Presence," p. 196.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 196-197.

²¹ Strandes, Portuguese Period, Chapter 3, 4, and 5.

²² Pearson, Merchants and Rulers, p. 41. In 1555 a licensed Gujarati merchant ship was confiscated because it had eight Turkish passengers on board.

Mogadishu, as has already been stated, was shelled without provocation by Vasco da Gama in 1499. Zaila^c was burnt by Lopo Soares in 1517 during the absence of the city's garrison, and Berbera was sacked by Saldanha in the following year. It was Brava, however, which suffered most from the Portuguese visitations. In 1506, during the viceroyalty of D. Francisco de Almeida, the city was reduced to ashes. A captain under Albuquerque, the future governor-general and one of the two naval commanders attacking the town, recalled with revulsion the brutal excesses committed by his countrymen:

[The Portuguese flotilla] arrived at a city called Brava, and had entered it by force of arms killing many Moors and stealing great wealth which its owners disdained to save, thinking only of defending themselves; nor their women, who were left there with great wealth and elegance, with seven or eight bangles on each arm, and as many on the legs, very thick and valuable. This gave occasion to great cruelty because the men, more blinded by greed than inspired by mercy, and not to waste time, cut off their arms, legs and ears, where they carried the jewelry, without any thought of pity. This was not done by the men of quality, seeing that they were women, the bearers of generations, soft and delicate of flesh, tender of quality; who could not be moved to pity when contemplating their beauty; who would not let the sword fall from his hand rather than shed a woman's blood. However, it is likely that those who behaved thus were neither the best nor the middling. All the women were going about the streets weeping, bathed in blood. And others were fleeing, with their children in their arms, without finding shelter. Some and many of them defended and supported the righteous who were there. Which city was ordered to be burned to ashes, which was done, and then they went against another city, called Mogadishu....²³

²³ "Chapters relating to East Africa in the account of Martin Fernandes De Figueroa, 1505-1511," in Documents on the Portuguese in Mozambique and Central Africa 1497-1840, III, (Lisboa, 1964), pp. 624-627.

In his Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar, Duarte Barbosa confirms this sacking of the town and then adds further detail which is of significance here:

It is a place of trade, which has already been destroyed by the Portuguese, with great slaughter of the inhabitants, of whom many were made captives, and great riches in gold, silver, and other merchandise were taken here, and those who escaped fled into the country, and after the place was destroyed they returned to people it.²⁴

As claimed in the local traditions, and as partially substantiated by this quote from Barbosa, many of the Banaadir coastal residents in the wake of continual Portuguese attacks fled inland where, it is said, they contributed greatly to the advancement of Islamic learning among the nomads and the cultivators.²⁵ They might have also infused some Arab blood into some of these nomadic or agricultural tribes. For the

²⁴Barbosa, Description, p. 15.

²⁵Dr. ^cAbdurahman Zaki, al-Islam wa'l-Muslimun fi Sharq Ifriqiyya (Cairo, 1965), pp. 73-74. It is generally believed in the Banaadir that the Portuguese not only burnt the city, but that they also settled there for a while, leaving behind some of their issue who constitute a portion of the city's population today. There are no historical, linguistic or, for that matter, other cultural factors to support these popular claims. However, the presence of a number of agricultural communities bearing the names of Arab countries or cities, such as Miṣr (Egypt), Alexandria, Baghdad, Mansura, Basra, etc., inland in close proximity to the coastal cities may bear out the claims of coastal peoples fleeing inland. There are a number of Somali groups whose colour, countenance, and collective name Gibil ^cad (white skinned) point to their non-African (Arab or Persian) origins. Whether they are the product of intermarriage between the local Africans and the renowned "Emozaidij", or descendants of the few who stayed behind after the refugees from the Portuguese attacks had gone back to their coastal homes, cannot be determined now. They themselves are today conscious only of their Somali

purposes of the topic under discussion in this work, however, a more important consequence of the Portuguese ravages was the initial decline in the volume and frequency of Arab trading visits and scale of Arab immigration to the Banadir coast of Somaliland.²⁶ A few hardy souls tried to run what in effect was a Portuguese blockade, but this was a highly risky venture, frequently ending in seizures and loss of property and lives.

In 1532-33 A.D., the Portuguese seized at Shihr (in the Hadramawt) a boat from Zaila^c laden with slaves.²⁷ Six years later, (1538-39) a combination of Mahrah desperadoes and the Portuguese "came to Zaila^c at a time when a trading fleet (Muslim) of the Indian ships lay there, and fought an engagement with the (Indian) ships' crews, but (had to) retire unsuccessfully, and brought about distress, slaughter, and rapine among their fellows".²⁸ A boat coming out of Berbera in 1541-42 was captured off Aden and taken towards India. Fortunately, it was separated from the main body of the Portuguese fleet by a hurricane off Mukulla, whereupon the crew and the passengers overpowered the Portuguese guard and

identity. A number of scholars (e.g. Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past", pp. 21-22, and others he cites) claim that these are descendants of 16th century Hadarima, but investigations among these peoples by the writer would not verify these claims either.

²⁶The only exception, as will be shown presently, was the massive Hadrami migration at the time to northwestern Somaliland and Ethiopia.

²⁷Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, p.66.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 81-82.

sailed back to Aden.²⁹ In that same year another "skiff from Zaila^c with coffee-husk (kishr) and ghee (saman)" fell victim to a Portuguese expedition.³⁰ And many were the other unfortunate victims who suffered a similar fate in anonymity.

The effect of the Portuguese blockades of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea lanes was quickly felt by Mamluk Egypt, the western terminus of the Indian Ocean trade to the west, and by Venice, which was the chief beneficiary of the carrying trade of the Mediterranean. So, in 1508, Egypt and Venice sent a jointly-financed naval expedition to help the Arabs and the Indians (Gujarat) clear the Indian Ocean of the Portuguese menace. This expedition was defeated off Diu in 1509 by Francisco de Almeida, but the Ottomans, who had conquered Egypt in 1517, now continued the campaign and sent a number of fleets out to the Indian Ocean. In the event, however, nothing materialized from these naval exercise. They were too insignificant numerically, and were also sent out too infrequently to pose any real or permanent danger to Portuguese dominance. The Turks "were greatly hampered in these occasional efforts to build fleets for service in the Indian Ocean by the total absence of timber on the shores of the Red Sea and the Gulf".³¹ The Indian and East African

²⁹ Ibid, p. 101.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 105.

³¹ Boxer, Four Centuries, p. 15; idem, "Portuguese in the East," p. 197.

sources of timber were controlled by the Portuguese, who not only frightened away Muslim shipping but forbade the carriage of timber to Arabia lest it be used for the construction of hostile navies,³² thus partially frustrating Turkish attempts at naval building and also causing Arab navigation in the Indian Ocean to undergo a steady and "slow decline".³³ In the process of the campaign the Turks overran the Arabian Peninsula coming to control by 1547 the whole of the Arabian Red Sea littoral.

At first the Turks were welcomed as fellow Muslim brothers fighting the hated Portuguese enemy. They partially relieved the Red Sea coasts of the Portuguese attacks and even contributed to Muslim successes in the Ethiopian jihads. But, the Turkish regime was equally oppressive and their excesses soon set the people against them. Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm Gurey, the leader of the Muslim jihad in Ethiopia, was incensed by the extortionate demands of the Turkish reinforcement he received from the governor of Zabid, and he felt compelled to send them back before winning the war. In the Yaman their authority survived only with great difficulty, for the campaign against their rule never quite ended before the Turkish defeat in the First World War.³⁴ The Turkish regime was very

³²Pearson, Merchants and Rulers, p. 41.

³³Hourani, Arab Seafaring, p. 84.

³⁴A detailed account of the Turkish campaign in the Yaman is contained in 'Isa ibn 'l-Muttahar's Rawḥ ar-Rawḥ, passim. Very conveniently the account of these campaigns

militaristic and was characterized by arbitrary seizures and heavy duties on anything which appeared lucrative. Like the Portuguese, therefore, the Turks had an inhibiting influence upon the commerce of, and movement of peoples in, the area. The oppressive nature of the Turkish regime in Arabia and the resultant diminished economic opportunities were reflected in a certain amount of lawlessness and lack of respect for authorities which rendered travel, trade, and pilgrimage visits (haj) to Arabia highly dangerous.³⁵ "By the last quarter of the eighteenth century," maintains Abir, "it was quite evident that the economy of the Red Sea basin was stagnating".³⁶ And with the incorporation of Zaila^c into the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century the trade of the Red Sea coast came largely under this unfavourable Turkish control.³⁷

More important than the external Portuguese and Turkish causes of decline were the internal problems. An event of great import was the Oromo invasions of Ethiopia and Somaliland following the mutual exhaustion of the Christian state

affords us an eloquent testimony to the strong connections between the Yaman and the northern Somali coast. In it the author refers to a number of Zaila^c's who figured in the affairs of the state as consultants to the rulers and frequently took opposite sides in the local struggles.

³⁵ Abir, Ethiopia, p. 3.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

³⁷ Zaila^c became a dependency of the Sharifs of Mokha, who made vague claims of suzerainty over the whole Gulf of Aden coast of Somaliland.

and ^CAdal. Ethiopian and Harari documents of this period frequently mourn the disastrous Oromo scourge afflicting their lands.³⁸ The Jesuit father, Manoel de Almeida, who witnessed some of the effects of the Galla ravages interpreted these invasions as a "plague and scourge of God," an act of divine recompense, visited upon ^CAdal and Ethiopia for their wrong-doing:

They also invaded the Kingdom of Adel which we call Zeila, bordering on Baly, for the Gallas were the scourge, not only of the Abyssinians, but also of the Moors of Adel. This was either so that they should not be proud about their victories over the Abyssinians, or else so that the Abyssinians should understand that, through Granh and the Moors of Adel, God was punishing them as a loving father, to make them ask for help from the King of Portugal, promise to obey the Roman Pontiff, accept the true faith and abominate the heresies of Eutyches and Dioscurus.³⁹

Unable to stem the tide of Oromo intrusions, the ruling dynasty of ^CAdal moved in 1577 to the Oasis of Aussa in the Danakil lowlands.⁴⁰ The city of Harar, left behind under the care of Amirs who soon broke their allegiance to Aussa, was subjected to unceasing attacks by foraging Oromo bands. These

³⁸Bahrey, "History of the Galla," Some Records of Ethiopia, trans. and edited by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford (London, 1954), pp. 109-129; Ba ^CAlawi, Tarikh al-Mujahidin, passim.

³⁹Manoel de Almeida, "The History of High Ethiopia or Abassia," Some Records of Ethiopia, p. 134.

⁴⁰H. Abir, "Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa," in Richard Gray (ed.) The Cambridge History of Africa (New York, 1975), p. 541.

Oromo forays were carried deeply into the Somali territory, sometimes penetrating as far as the sea.⁴¹ These long distance attacks were made possible by the use of the horse which, it is said, the Oromo had just then acquired from the Somalis and had also put to good use in their invasions of Ethiopia.⁴² The conditions of anarchy prevailing in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ethiopia in the wake of the Oromo depredations and Jesuit interference, and the resultant disruption of the peaceful flow of goods all but killed Arab trade incentive in the Horn of Africa.⁴³ Deprived of their life-line of trade connections with southern Ethiopia, on the one hand, and with Arabia or other Asian lands, on the other, the thriving urban centers in northwestern Somaliland went through a period of decay and ultimate ruin. This disaster, coupled with droughts, famine, and pestilence finally forced the residents of these towns to abandon urban life and to take to independent nomadism.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 540-541; Sheikh Ahmad Rirash, Kashf as-Sudul, p. 75. Sheikh Ahmad claims that the Oromo reached the coast somewhere between Berbera and Zaila^c, and on their march devastated some one hundred Muslim villages; I. M. Lewis, in his "the Galla in northern Somaliland," p. 31, refers to a local Somali manuscript which relates the defeat of the Oromo by Ugas 'Ali Makahil (born in 1575) somewhere in northwestern Somaliland deep into Somali territory, and not very far from the coast.

⁴² I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 32; Abir, "Ethiopia and the Horn," p. 543.

⁴³ Sheikh Ahmad Rirash, Kashf as-Sudul, p. 77; Abir ("Ethiopia and the Horn," p. 550) maintains that the partial diversion of trade to the Cape of Good Hope route in the

More important yet were the effects of the Oromo raids upon the pastoral communities of the interior. The Oromo invasions hurled the whole countryside into confusion, into an era of ceaseless warfare in which Somali fought against Oromo, Somali battled Somali, and both Somali and Oromo nomads ravaged the settled and urbanized communities. In these conditions of warfare, of each against all and all against all, many Somali clans took up arms and in their march to, or flight away from, the battle zone effected internal migrations and shifts of residences. With the main thrust of the Oromo migrations now turned westwards towards Ethiopia, the Somalis, partially recovering from the early shocks of the near simultaneous inland Oromo and coastal Portuguese attacks, went on the offensive by the middle of the seventeenth century and began to surround or drive out the few Oromo who spearheaded intrusions into their territory.⁴⁴ These Somali sorties were directed largely against the Oromo intruders--in the north against the Raftu and the Arussi and in the south against the Warday and the Boran--⁴⁵

16th Century made the trade of the Horn more important than it was previously, and led to its development. As regards Somaliland (through which much of Southeastern Ethiopia's trade passed), this could not have been the case. The abandonment of the trading towns on the important Harar-Zaila^c route (see Chapter Five) clearly contradicts Abir's view.

⁴⁴Abir (*Ibid*, pp. 541-42) talks about Somalis fleeing from the Oromo. However, Somali migrations "northwards, southwards, and even into the interior" appears to imply the opposite.

⁴⁵I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 32.

but in the process some small Somali groups were trampled upon unintentionally. The period covering the seventeenth century and most of the eighteenth, characterized most prominently by unending warfare and interclanal jostling, naturally saw the decline of Arab interests in Somaliland, but it is popularly remembered as a heroic age in the history of Somali Islam. The displaced or vanquished clans, Somali or otherwise, are in the oral traditions frequently denounced as balck infidels (Gaia Madow), a phrase which gave rise to a number of misconceptions about Somali origins and migrations.⁴⁶ Invariably the traditions point to a movement of peoples southwards or westwards, an assertion which very significantly accords well with the spread of Islam inland from coastal bases.

In southern Somaliland, just to the north of the Sultanate of Mogadishu, Somali groups led by individuals carrying the politico-religious title of Imam overran the city's forces early in the seventeenth century, displaced its Muzaffar dynasty by murdering the reigning Sultan, and then

⁴⁶This writer believes that the so-called out-caste groups of Somaliland constitute the descendants of the small clans or previously dominant groups who were subjugated in the clanal jostling of that era, or since then. Besides scholarly studies which found no distinctions between them and other Somalis (Dr. K. L. G. Goldsmith and Dr. I. M. Lewis, "A Preliminary Investigation of the Blood Groups of the Sab Bondsmen of Northern Somaliland," Man, 58, 252, Dec. 1958, pp. 188-190) and the obvious lack of other physical or cultural characteristics which could distinguish them from other Somalis, the author is impressed by the fact that these groups are always associated with regimes which perpetuated

proceeded to dislodge the Ajuran, allies of the Muzaffar, from the Shabeelle valley hinterland of the Banaadir coast.⁴⁷ Taken over by nomadic groups who cared little about the development of the arts, industry, and commerce, and cut off from the interior sources of commercial goods by the conditions of anarchy reigning in the hinterland, the city quickly lost its prosperity and soon fell into decline. The process of decay was hastened first by the violent periodic Portuguese visitations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was then accelerated by the colonial activity of other Europeans in the Indian Ocean. There was at least one occasion in 1700 when the British attacked the city, but its decline may be more plausibly attributed to the Europeans' efficient monopoly of the Indian Ocean trade after the Portuguese period than to their actual violence.⁴⁸ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the city--which had been

their authority with pagan claims of supernatural powers, and the fact that their conquerors are said to have broken their hold upon the people with the true belief of Islam. For a discussion of the confusions caused by the term Gal or Gala refer to Chapter One, pp.20-21 and also below p. 233 and footnote 51.

⁴⁷ Cerulli, Somalia, II, pp. 245-247. Cerulli's tradition is born out by a Jesuit Missionary, Father de Valesco (I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 208, n. 7) who on a visit to Pate and Malindi in 1624 heard of the city's conquest by the nomads. Traditions of the Banaadir and its hinterland insist that the Ajuran had shown intransigence and hostility to the new conquerors, who were otherwise disposed to peaceable relations with them.

⁴⁸ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 21. William Vincent, Commerce and Navigation, p. 252, n. 469, refers to a curious document

for some time torn by internal dissensions and civil wars-- was already divided into two warring camps, Hamarweyne had Shangani quarters.⁴⁹ By then, also, the city had become fully Somalized to the extent that the Arab and other Asian tribes settled there and abandoned their foreign names and had, with the exception of the recently arrived and noble Ashraf, all assumed Somali names:

The "Akbi" clan became the "rer Shekh"; the "Djida^cti" were called "Shanshiya"; the "Afifi" took the name of "Gudmana"; and even the "Mukri (Kahtani)" changed their name for the Somali "rer Fakih".⁵⁰

Farther north, in central Somaliland, other nomadic groups waged war against unidentified people who are variously remembered as Oromo, black pagans, or people of former times (dadki hore), but who are unmistakably renowned for their ownership of large herds of camels.⁵¹ By the middle of the

preserved in the British Museum which records the story of a Mulatto who was a member of the crew of an English ship, Albemarle, that visited Mogadishu in 1700. The ship put on shore a boat which was seized by the residents. Those who went on shore, with the exception of the Mulatto, who was unslaved, were all killed. The Mulatto finally escaped on a Dutch ship and returned to England in 1724 and penned the document which Vincent saw in the British Museum. Besides most likely corroborating the local tradition about the British attack the Mulatto's report, according to Vincent, is noteworthy in that it described a political system headed by a tribal chief, unlike the centralized dynasties of the earlier times. This author has not had the chance to examine Vincent's document.

⁴⁹ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid., I, pp. 135-137. Even the Sada and Ashraf in time became Somalized enough to the point that they also assumed some Somali names: See Muhammad el-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 182.

⁵¹ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 28. Probably inter-

seventeenth century these people were put to flight and their homes around the wells of Galka^Cayo came under the control of their present Somali occupants.

In the Ogaden, bands of nomadic Somalis and Oromo were constantly harrying settled trading communities who surrounded themselves with protective walls against their attacks. Who were the occupants of these settlement cannot be ascertained now, but it seems they were most likely connected with the trading Amirate of Harar, which despite its decline following the defeat of ^CAdal and the Oromo invasions nevertheless maintained a reduced trade with the Ogaden and the Ethiopian highlands. Some of these settlements were, by the standards of these days, fairly large and prosperous towns constructed for permanent dwelling:

There are ruins of the masonry of these fortified towns at Balambal near El-Fud and at Bullaleh. The remains of about thirty buildings constructed of stone and lime-mortar could be seen in the year 1937 at Blambal. In the center there was a square mosque, with a well preserved mihrab, a ground floor with low arcades and some remains of arcades of the second and third floors.⁵²

The architectural characteristics of these buildings as well as the local traditions all point to their being lodging for soldiers and traders, and also their being used as storage

pretting the word "Galka^Cayo" as the place from which the Galla were dislodged, Prof. Lewis identifies these people with the Oromo nation. Further investigation has proven to me that this interpretation is quite unjustified, and that the term refers to camels (gal) rather than the Oromo nation.

⁵²Pirone, "What the Ogaden Say," pp. 88-89.

and collecting centers for merchandise awaiting shipment by escorted caravans to Harar and coastal emporia. And so in the Ogaden, also, we see the reduction by the nomads of commercial settlements linked with and supplying the Asiatic communities on the coast, thus greatly minimizing Arab interests and influence in the interior.

Despite all these impediments, Arab-Somali relations were never quite severed. For one thing, the Portuguese never established a permanent base on the Somali shores from which they could more efficiently monitor movements along the long Somali coast. For another, their inability to control the Red Sea, which by 1560 "was being used almost as freely as in the preceding century" for the north-south trade as well as for the more celebrated East-West trade, meant that contacts were maintained even more regularly through the Gulf of Aden.⁵³ This gap in the Portuguese blockade served as a convenient route for sixteenth and seventeenth century movement of people from southern Arabia which was occasioned by a combination of internal developments and events occurring on the Horn of Africa.

During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries there occurred the most important Arab migration to the Somali coasts since the earlier 10th-13th centuries migrations, and possibly the most significant immigration for the cementing of ties between the Arabs and the Somalis. This was the

⁵³Boxer, "The Portuguese in the East," p. 215.

Hadarima and Sada-Ashraf migrations from the Hadramawt. Indeed, there had been for centuries individual Hadrami immigrations to the Somali and East African coasts as part of the general Arab and other Asian settlements in Africa. However, they began to arrive in large numbers only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, the latter wave is significant in that it contained large numbers of Sada and Ashraf descendants of the Prophet. Like their predecessors, the Hadarima immigrants went to the two peripheries of Somaliland, the traditional destinations of Arab immigration, though a few might have settled among communities of the intermediary coast.

The Hadarima were well-known among the Arabs (as they still are to this day) for their love of travel, and so were the Sada and the Ashraf, who after a long sojourn in Hadramawt began to emulate the Hadarima.⁵⁴ The Ashraf were encouraged in this venture by the special welcome and honour extended to them wherever they went in the world of Islam because of their noble birth and semi-divine attributes (baraka). Many of them became men of learning who took to missionary work, a fact which greatly enhanced their already enviable reputation. Very often the Sharifs were invited by Muslim leaders and communities to come and honour them

⁵⁴ Muhammad al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," pp. 168-169. It is said that, besides the Hadrami influence, the Sada and Ashraf who originated in the trading city of Mecca were from the start as a group given to travel and overseas trade and adventures. Even before coming to the

by establishing residence in their lands. A case in point, though only one of many examples which need not be marshalled here, is the example of that sixteenth century Sultan of Pate who sent an envoy to Arabia seeking the blessings of a Sharif who would settle in his country. This Sultan got his wish and in time there grew up a clan of Sharifs in the region.⁵⁵

Climate and demographic pressures might also have had something to do with Hadrami travel abroad. The general aridness of the country, its unreliable rainfall, frequent droughts and occasional disastrous floods have always forced the inhabitants of Hadramawt to seek better and more secure livelihood abroad whenever occasion presented itself.⁵⁶ To that effect, it is reported that the Hadramawt was swept in 1532-33 by floods which destroyed much of the agricultural lands, and that in 1538-39 famine took away much life.⁵⁷ Furthermore, for about 120 years in the sixteenth and

Hadramawt they had done some travelling in the Arabian Peninsula and in ^CIraq.

⁵⁵ Stigand, The Land of Zinj, p. 50. It is difficult to verify the identity of this Sultan or the authenticity of the report. What is important in this report, even if it is apocryphal, is the implied fact that having a Sharif around was considered auspicious, honourable, and enough to justify a regime. As regards Somaliland we have the case of Sharif Faqi ^CUmar being invited to honour and help the spread of Islam in Ogadenia: See Pirone, "What the Ogaden Say," p. 87.

⁵⁶ B. G. Martin, "Migrations from Hadramawt to East Africa and Indonesia c. 1200-1900," an unpublished paper presented at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Philadelphia, Nov. 1972, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Al-Hadrami, "Dhinkr al-Butun al-^CAlawiyya," p. 170; and Martin, "Migrations," p. 5, based on al-Hadrami.

seventeenth centuries there raged in the country almost continuous warfare, which made life there highly precarious and caused many to seek peace abroad.⁵⁸ But probably more significant at the time than anything else were the attractions of the jihad in the Horn of Africa for the adventurous mercenary and holy missionary alike. Although the Arab warrior and missionary participants in this jihad had come practically from all the Arab countries, it was from Hadramawt where it is said that the war was followed on a day-to-day basis,⁵⁹ that the majority of the Arab jihadists had come.⁶⁰ Contemporary Arab sources record the migration of a large number of Hadarima and Ashraf (also from Hadramawt) warriors and religious teachers to the land of Sa^cd ad-Dīn, the state of ^cAdal.⁶¹

The first Sayyid to arrive in Ethiopia was supposed to have reached there by travelling inland from the city of Zaila^c in the year 1433-34.⁶² A century later they were

⁵⁸ al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 170; and Martin, "Migrations," p. 1, based on al-Hadrami.

⁵⁹ al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 170.

⁶⁰ Other than the Turkish reinforcement which the Imam borrowed from the Governor of Zabid when the Ethiopians acquired the Portuguese musketeer contingent, the only significant foreign troops in the service of the Imam were Hadarima mercenaries. These were numerically significant enough to dictate their conditions of service: See Martin, "Migrations," p. 2.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶² al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 175.

found in large numbers both on the coast and interior parts.⁶³ In the 1520s, when Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Gurey and the reigning Sultan engaged the state of ^cAdal in a civil war, it was Sharifs, jurists, and other amirs who mediated between them and made them agree to a political compromise.⁶⁴ Many group or individual Sharifs were mentioned as playing a crucial role in the execution of the jihad, and there was at least one of them who distinguished himself to the point that he was appointed a governor of an important district, if only fleetingly. On one occasion, when the Muslim army came across a water barrier, the Imam called the Arabs, the Ashraf, the North Africans, and the Mahrah into session and asked them to devise the means of riding the waves since they were seafaring peoples.⁶⁵ On another occasion, the Imam refrained from fighting or travelling for ten days because one of the important Sharifs in his company, Sharif Ahmad al-Qudami, was sick.⁶⁶ Only after the Sharif's death and burial did the Imam resume his jihad. Besides the Futuh al-Habasha, a number of other Arab sources talk about the presence of numerous

⁶³ Arab Faqih, Futuh al-Habasha, passim.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 242; also al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 165, based on the Arab Faqih.

⁶⁶ Arab Faqih, Futuh al-Habasha, p. 249; also al-Hadrami, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^cAlawiyya," p. 165.

Sada and Ashraf in the Horn of Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁷ From around the middle of the seventeenth century the office of gadi in Zaila^C was occupied by "Sayyids from Arabia,"⁶⁸ and very possibly the local governor had a body of Hadarima matchlockmen to garrison the town against the nomadic Somali groups.⁶⁹

On the Banaadir coast of southern Somaliland there are a number of Sharif clans who claim origin from that era.⁷⁰ Two clans, Āl a-Nadīr and Āl Ba-Faraj, are known to have been there for almost four centuries, while others have been arriving at different times.⁷¹ Local records claim that a member of the Āl a-Nadīr had left his home in Tarīm in 1591/2 A.D. and briefly settled at a-Shīhr, the traditional point of departure for migrating Hadrami mercenaries and scholars. Accompanied by his son he boarded a boat for East Africa, arriving in Mogadishu in the year 1594/95. The son married

⁶⁷ Martin, "migrations," p. 2. Muhammad al-^CAlawī al-Hadramī, who utilizes Sada and Ashraf genealogical and other historical documents, lists numerous Sharifs who died in Abyssinia or in the land of Sa'd ad-Dīn during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

⁶⁸ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 34.

⁶⁹ Even in the nineteenth century when the town was farmed out to Somali and Afar governors, Yamanis and Hadarima constituted its small armed force: See Burton, First Footsteps, p. 32.

⁷⁰ Sharif ^CAidarus, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, pp. 42-44.

⁷¹ Muhammad al-Hadramī, "Dhikr al-Butun al-^CAlawīyya," pp. 182-83.

in Mogadishu but after a while he left his father behind in that city and proceeded to Lamu "where he died in 1027/1617-18."⁷² The descendants of these two worthies gave rise to the Al a-Nadir clan found all along the East African coast where they have played a prominent role in the spread and consolidation of Islam. Through secondary and tertiary migrations they also founded similar communities in Indian Gujarat.⁷³

In East Africa the Hadarima are usually associated with religious revival. For their learning, and in the case of the Sada and Ashraf also because of their noble descent, they tended to occupy important positions in society as advisors to the rulers, and as qadis and mosque Imams officiating at important religious functions. In time they also gave rise to "Afro-Sharifs" in certain parts of East Africa.⁷⁴ Generally the Sada and Ashraf immigrants were, like the other Hadarima, of Sunnite persuasion. Their presence and social prominence, however, reinforced the Shi'ite doctrinal elements which seeped into Somali religious belief and practice.

Besides the Hadarima, the other Arab people who contributed to the maintenance of ties between Somaliland and the Arab world, and whose activity in the Horn of Africa grew

⁷²Martin, "Migrations," p. 10.

⁷³Ibid, p. 10.

⁷⁴Ibid, p. 4.

during the seventeenth and the eighteenth century period, were ^CUmanis. The Imamate of ^CUman, which by the middle of the seventeenth century had developed into a strong naval power and was able to evict the Portuguese from its territories, now began to send her fleets to East Africa, at the invitation of Mombasa, to help drive the Portuguese out of there, too. Three expeditions despatched in 1652, 1661, and 1670 could not accomplish the task, but in 1698 the Portuguese stronghold of Fort Jesus in Mombasa finally fell to ^CUmanis. The Portuguese returned in 1728, but they were ousted by local opposition in the following year, never to return to the northern coast of East Africa.⁷⁵ During this ^CUmani-Portuguese rivalry for mastery in East Africa, Mogadishu and other Somali ports were briefly occupied by the forces of Imam Saif ibn Sultan (d. 1704) under the command of Amir Salim aṣ-Ṣarīmi.⁷⁶ Apparently finding the Somali coast unworthy of colonization, the ^CUmanis withdrew their forces, but by driving the Portuguese out of East Africa they helped revive the old trade between the Banaadir coast and the Arab world.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Boxer, "Portuguese in the East," p. 236.

⁷⁶Sharif ^CAldarās, Bughyat 'l-Āmāl, p. 98; Hindi, Tārīkh as-Somāl, p. 35. On the authority of a Mogadishu manuscript Hindi declares that it was the Somalis who appealed to ^CUman for help against the Portuguese, hence their hasty withdrawal.

⁷⁷Abir, "Ethiopia and the Horn," p. 553.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Hadarima and ^CUmanis thus partially restored the traditional pattern of periodic Arab migration (on a group or individual basis), and seasonal trading visits, to the Somali Peninsula. By this normalization of contacts the process of Arabization of coastal Somaliland was continued, but at a greatly reduced tempo. With regard to trade the Indian dominance which was established during the sixteenth century was never seriously challenged. Declining Arab shipping vis-a-vis that of the Indian and the unequalled demand for Indian goods, especially textile products, throughout the East African coast naturally put the Arabs in a highly disadvantageous position. With the repulsion of the Oromo attacks conditions in the interior were in general improving from the middle of the seventeenth century on. However, the damage done to Islam and Arab interests there was for the time being almost irreparable. Except for Harar the urban trade and cultural centers of the interior were all destroyed and abandoned. And the pastoral turbulence which took over from the relatively pacific missionary and trade activities of the previous centuries was never quelled before the nineteenth century. Only with the upsurge of religious revivalism in the last century were conditions somewhat established and the road opened once more for the penetration of Islam and Arab culture into the interior.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Religious Revivalism, Imperialism, and the Deepening of Arab-Somali Connections during the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Present-day Somali political and religious solidarity with the Arabs can be attributed in great measure to two historical phenomena which came to exercise significant, and almost simultaneous, impact in the Horn of Africa during the nineteenth century. These are 1) the rise and spread of Muslim fraternities (turuq, singular tarīqa) as a consequence of the 18th and 19th century revivalist movement in the world of Islam and 2) the imposition of Christian Ethio-European alien rule in Somaliland. First, through missionary activity the turuq helped strengthen the hold of Islam on the broad populace. Equally notable was their unswerving championship of transclanai loyalties derived from the commonality of the shared Muslim faith in preference to the divisive kinship-based traditional ties.¹ By this work they fairly effectively combatted the centrifugal elements in the Somali segmentary social system and thus raised Somali national consciousness to a high pitch. Moreover, by their appeal to the universalistic ethos of Islam, they emphasized and made the Somalis

¹Besides preaching the turuq took some practical steps

more conscious than ever before of their essential unity with all Muslim peoples, especially with the neighbouring Arabs.² Second, the colonial powers first robbed the Somalis of their political sovereignty, at times even threatened their very existence as a nation.³ After securing political dominance the colonial regimes then imposed certain administrative demands and restrictions which appeared unreasonable and degrading to Somali religious and social sensibilities. The Somali struggle against these impositions was at first anti-Christian in spirit. In time it ceased to be a merely negative response to Christian demands and evolved progressively towards a more positive pro-Arab stance.

in that direction. They founded communities (Jama^{Ca}, sing. Jama^{Ca}) for their adherents in which the sole criterion for membership, besides being a Muslim, was the severance of all previous lineage or clanal affiliations.

²Stronger ties with the world of Islam was a natural development of the intensified Islamization propaganda. After unifying the Somalis on the basis of Islam the next step towards a more catholic identification was the brotherhood of all Muslims. Of course, Christian colonial rule, which evoked memories of the Crusades as well as the local religious struggles, must also have encouraged this tendency. The special connection with the Arabs derives from the near-contiguity of Arabia with Somaliland; the more frequent contacts the Somalis have had historically with the Arabs than with any other Muslim people; and most significantly, from the special honour with which the Prophet and his Sada and Ashraf descendants are traditionally regarded in Somaliland. For details see chapter three above.

³This mention of a threat to the nation's existence does not purport to point to any genocidal policy, actual or imagined, pursued by the colonial regimes. It rather refers only to the division of the Somali territory into five parts which the contemporary Somalis correctly perceived as a danger to their unity and general welfare.

We shall, therefore, be dealing in this chapter with the genesis, growth, and activities of the brotherhoods in Somaliland and their effect upon the culture of the Somalis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We shall also say something about the nature of colonialism in Somaliland and how in their attempts to ameliorate their condition the Somalis were perforce pushed into an ever-deepening intimacy with the Arab world.

Though the Qadiriyya had been in Somaliland since the fifteenth century it appears that the tariqa orders were not very significant in the Islam of the Somalis before the nineteenth century. The fact that the Qadiriyya, the only order which was there before the nineteenth century, is today identified in northern and southern Somaliland with Sheikh 'Abdu-rahman az-Zaila^C (d. 1283) and Sheikh Uways Muhammad al-Barawi (d. 1909)⁴, respectively, plus the lack of any other cultural heroes in the order's local traditions, is a clear indication that the brotherhood never had universal acceptance or importance in the country before the nineteenth century. And yet today the Somalis as a whole belong to one or the other of a number of Sufi orders (turuq), and to the educated as well as the unlettered adherence to Islam implies membership in a tariqa.⁵ This is true even of those Somalis who

⁴I. H. Lewis, Modern History, p. 64.

⁵A similar situation apparently obtains in West Africa where according to J. S. Trimingham (History of Islam in West Africa, London, 1962, p. 159), "during that century [19th.]

through secular education and exposure to materialistic European culture have given up Islam all but in name. As it is, a Somali is born a tariqa member, is blessed at birth by the local tariqa sheikh, attends the local tariqa Quranic school, prefers to pray in the mosque of his order, and while travelling away from home always seeks out the fellowship of his tariqa brethren.

In Somaliland only four Sufi orders--the Qadiriyya, the Ahmadiyya, the Salihyya, and the Rifa^ciyya--have won significant numbers of adherents to their "ways".⁶ Of these the Qadiriyya, the oldest order in Islam, which was founded by ^cAbdulqadir al-Jilani, who died in Baghdad in 1166 A.D., was the first to arrive in the Horn of Africa. It was first introduced to Mussawa^c, Zaila^c, and Mogadishu by immigrants from the Yaman and Hadramawt who soon thereafter also took it down to all the coastal cities of East Africa.⁷ From these coastal towns the order gradually penetrated into the

adherence to either the Qādirīyya and Tījanīyya became equivalent to being a Muslim".

⁶The Dandarawiyya order, which originated in rural Egypt, won some converts in Berbera and established a number of interior settlements (jama^cat), such as those at Hargeisa, Odweyne, and Sheikh. The Mirghaniyya or the Khatimiyya also was propagated in Somaliland, but with little success, by one Sheikh Ramadan al-Mussawa^ci. In the closing years of the nineteenth century agents of the Sanussiyya order were seen actively propagandising in northern Somaliland, but apparently to no effect.

⁷Najar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 68; Rirash, Kashf as-Sudul, p. 178.

interior of Somaliland and Muslim Ethiopia, and established a strong base in the city of Harar. The exact date of the order's introduction into the Horn of Africa cannot be determined now, though its presence there before the sixteenth century is comfortably assured, for in 1503 A.D. the man who popularized it in Harar, one Sharif ^CAbdalla al-^CAidarūs, died in Aden.⁸

The Qadiriyya's line of historical development through the centuries is as yet unclear and cannot be traced in any meaningful sense. One is handicapped here by the absence of reliable documentation. It appears, however, from the extant oral traditions which go back only to the last century, and more importantly from the paucity of written literature regarding the order's history in Somaliland before the nineteenth century, that the Qadiriyya did not have much support in the interior before that century.⁹

With the eighteenth century revivalist movement in the wider world of Islam in time making itself felt in Somaliland, the Qadiriyya began to win universal acceptance even among the nomads. At the beginning of the nineteenth century

⁸ Najjar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 68; I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland: A Study in Tribal Islam," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XVII, 3 (1955), pp. 581-602, XVIII, 1 (1956), pp. 145-60, I, p. 592. Dr Lewis identifies this saint as Sharif Abu Bakr ibn Abdalla al-^CAidarūs who died 1508-9 instead of 1503.

⁹ To my knowledge no historical literature, oral or written, dealing with the tariqa's history in Somaliland before the nineteenth century, other than minor references to Sharif

learned adherents of the order, imbued with the revivalist doctrines of the day were soon moving about the countryside preaching a return to the old precepts of Islam in their most pristine and unadulterated form. They waged a vigorous campaign against the Somali social system of lineage and clanal affiliations which, they pointed out, was the cause of many impious acts and the basis of pastoral turbulence. They sought to create a harmonious community in the place of the fissiparous tribalism. Setting an example by their pacifist policies, austerity, and denial of worldly delights and possessions, these itinerant friars were able to attract many followers to ^CAbdulqadir al-Jilani's "path".¹⁰

In 1819 A.D. one Sheikh Ibrahim Hasan founded the Qadiriyya Order's first known settlement in the interior at Bardhere on the middle reaches of the River Juba.¹¹ Shortly thereafter other Qadiriyya leaders followed Sheikh Ibrahim's example and a number of smaller settlements sprung up along the same stretch of the river. These were essentially farming, but partially stockherding, religious communities whose

^CAbdalla al-^CAidarus has yet come to light.

¹⁰An exception to this general rule can be seen in southern Somaliland, where tariqa prohibition against the ivory--the elephant being considered an unclean animal--and worldly gains as well, and the flocking of servile classes to the settlements angered the trading and ruling classes in the area. A grand alliance was formed against them, and the Qadiriyya settlement near Bardhere was attacked and raised to the ground in 1843. For an adequate study of the issue involved in this war refer to Lee Vincent Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," Chapter Three.

¹¹Sheikh ^CAbduraaman an-Najar, al-Islam fi aṣ-Ṣūmāl, p.69.

members devoted a significant proportion of their time to study and worship. In line with the doctrines of the order, the members of these settlements voluntarily renounced their clan ties and loyalties and came to identify solely with their tariqa community. Despite their diverse clan backgrounds, and as proof of their radical break with the traditional tribal order, they considered themselves--even addressed each other--as brethren (ikhwān).

The remarkable Sheikh Uways Muhammad Muhyidin al-Qadiri al-Barawi (significantly he was Qadiri first and Barawi second), who had spent a lifetime of tireless missionary activity not only in Somaliland but throughout East Africa and who has been singularly credited with the spread of Islam in East Africa at the turn of the century,¹² also did much to propagate the order in the interior of southern Somaliland. After moving about the countryside for a number of years, Sheikh Uways finally settled and founded a Qadiriyya settlement (jama^ca) at Biyole, near Tiyogle, on the upper reaches of the Juba River. The mosque-school that the Sheikh

¹²There are two traditional sources on Sheikh Uways, both written by the same author in Arabic. These are Abdurahman ibn Sheikh Umar al-^cAli al-Qadiri, Jala' al-^cAynayn fi Manaqib a-Sheikhayn, a-Sheikh al-Wali Haji Uways al-Qadiri wa 'l-Sheikh al-Kamil... ^cAbdurahman az-Zaila'i (Cairo, n.d) and al-Jawhar a-Nafis fe Khawass a-Sheikh Uways (Cairo, 1383 H/1964). However the most scholarly piece of work on the Sheikh is B. G. Martin, "Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Sheikh Uways b. Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa," JAH, X, 3(1969) pp. 471-486. According to Martin the Sheikh's influence spread to the Ogaden, the Bajun Islands, Zanzibar, the Comoro Islands,

founded there quickly became the most important center for Qadiriyya propagandization in southern Somaliland.¹³ Sheikh Uways composed a number of mystic verses in Arabic two of which were printed in an anthology of Somali religious poetry in the Majamū^cat al-Qasā'id (a collection of songs) edited and published by a fellow Bravan, Sheikh Qasim ibn Muhyidin. He also composed at least five known religious poems in Somali, which besides their religious and literary value have the singular "honour" of being the first pieces of Somali literature written in the Arabic script.¹⁴ One of the latter is a polemic directed against the Dervish¹⁵ Salihyya movement and Salihyya pretensions, in general. A party of the Darvish forces, who were incenced by the Sheikh's attack, sacked the village of Biyole in 1909 and killed Sheikh Uways.¹⁶

Sheikh Uway's influence was so great that today one speaks of an Uwaysiyya sub-order throughout the southern half of Somaliland and down the East African coast as far south as the coast of Tanzania and in the island of Zanzibar.

and to Hadramawt besides southern Somaliland. Perhaps a measure of this Sheikh's greatness can be seen from the fact that both of the Ibadi Sultan's of Zanzibar, Barghash and Hamid b. Thuwayni, considered themselves representatives of Sheikh Uways.

¹³ Najjar, al-Islām fī as-Sōmal, p. 69.

¹⁴ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 150.

¹⁵ For an explanation of the Dervish movement, see footnote number 28 below.

¹⁶ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 64.

His tomb is the scene of annual memorial gatherings (ziyara or visitations) which last three days, attended by visitors from different parts of the country, and even from farther afield.¹⁷

Among Sheikh Uways's many outstanding students and devoted followers who made the Uwaysiyya the success it has become in East Africa was the almost equally famous Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Abdalla al-Shashi, popularly known as Sheikh Sufi. Like his illustrious predecessor, Sheikh Sufi devoted the whole of his life to worship, teaching, and the propagation of the Qadiriyya tariqa. He did his work largely in the coastal cities, especially in Mogadishu where he founded a mosque and a school and died in 1919.¹⁸ He is considered by many as the patron-saint of the city, and consequently his tomb attracts thousands of people seeking his blessings, many of whom are not even of Qadiriyya persuasion.¹⁹

Another eminent figure was Sheikh ^CAbdullahi ibn Yusuf al-Qutbi al-Qalanquli who took the order westwards into the interior and also northwards, and whose work al-Majmu^Ca al-Mubaraka (the blessed collection), printed in Cairo, constitutes the single most important volume of Sufi literature

¹⁷ For an eyewitness account of one of these Ziyaras, refer to Sheikh Abdurahman a-Najar, who participated in the 1962 visitation: al-Islam fi as-Sūmāl, pp. 69-70.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 69; also ^CAbdulmun^Cim ^CAbdulhalim, Somalia, pp. 206-207.

¹⁹ an-Najar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 70.

coming out of Somaliland. No less outstanding was Sheikh Qasim Muhyiddin al-Barawi, who was mentioned above as the editor of the Majmu^cat al-Qasa'id. Besides becoming famous for his biting attack upon the Salihyya in his poetry, Sheikh Qasim is known today for his learning and successful promotion of the Uwaysiyya in southern Somalia.²⁰

Early in the nineteenth century another branch of the Qadiriyya Order was showing signs of renewed vigour in the north under the leadership of new brand of religious revivalists. Inspiration for this movement, which had its beginnings in the Yaman, came from the north and northwest, from teachers in Harar and Aussa.²¹ The movement was initiated by Sheikh Isma^cil ibn ^cUmar al-Maqdashi (from Mogadishu), who studied under Sayyid Hamza ibn Muhammad al-^cAwsi, but the most accomplished missionary in that sub-order was al-Maqdashi's student, Sheikh ^cAbdurahman ibn Ahmad a-Zaila^ci. For many years Sheikh ^cAbdurahman taught tirelessly during missionary travels which took him far and wide in what has since become British Somaliland and Ethiopian Ogadenia, in the latter of

²⁰ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 150.

²¹ The historical and spiritual connection between Yaman, especially the city of Zabid, and the northern Somali coast has a long history. In previous chapters we have come across frequent mention of Zaila^ci's figuring in the politics and religious learning of the Yaman's, again especially in Zabid. On a visit to that city between 15-20 February, 1976, this author was privileged to witness these connections which are today as much alive as they have ever been. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Muhammad Jaddi az-Zabidi has shown me numerous correspondences between Zabidi and Somali Sheikhs. This is

which he died in 1883.²² In these two areas the Order is today associated exclusively with his name. Sheikh ^CAbdurahman authored, in prose as well as in verse, many mystical works which are studied and popularly held to be sacred by the followers of the Qadiriyya.²³

Another order of importance is that of the Idrisiyya, or as it is locally known Ahmadiyya, Brotherhood, founded by the Moroccan Sayyid Ahmad ibn idris al-Fasi, who died in Saudi Arabian ^CAsir in 1837. It was introduced into Somaliland by a learned Somali, Sheikh ^CAli Maye Durogba, a very pious and popular man. Sheikh ^CAli collected many students around him and acquired numerous followers in the region of the middle and lower Shabeelle River valley.²⁴ At the present time this order is strongest in such urban centers of the Banaadir as Mogadishu and Marka, and also in the inland district of Bur Hakaba. However, it has been taken to different parts of the country by individual enthusiasts and consequently today one finds individuals or small groups of Ahmadiyya adherents in most towns of Somaliland. Despite its fairly significant numerical strength and urban base, the

a topic which deserves a separate study of its own and we need not concern ourselves with it here. The ties are so strong that most of these Somali correspondents have adopted the title of Zabidi.

²²I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 64.

²³Rirash, Kashf as-Sudūl, p. 180.

²⁴Abdulmun^Cim ^CAbdulhalīm, Somalia, p. 207; Najjar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 70; Zaki, al-Is'lām wa 'l-Muslimūn, p. 74.

order cannot boast any noteworthy scholar or piece of scholarly work.

Another significant Order, second in importance only to the much older Qadiriyya, and which is very vocal and especially noted for its political activism, is the Salihyya Brotherhood, an off-shoot of the drisiyya tariqa. It was founded in the Hijaz by Muhammad ibn Salih, one of the student disciples of the Sudanese Sufi Ibrahim al-Rashid, a follower of Sayyid Ahmad ibn Idris.²⁵ Muhammad Salih lived in Mecca, but the order was introduced into Somaliland by one of his Somali students, Sheikh Muhammad Guleed, whom he appointed as his representative (khalifa) in that country.²⁶ Sheikh Muhammad won strongest support amongst the farming communities in the Jowhar-Bal^cad area, in whose territory he founded a school and the headquarters of his brotherhood.²⁷

One of the famous canonized Sheikhs of this order was Sheikh ^cAli Nairobi who founded a Brotherhood settlement (jama^ca) on the middle reaches of the Juba river. By far, though, the most distinguished member of this Brotherhood

²⁵Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (Oxford, 1971), p. 121.

²⁶Ibid., p. 121; Najar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 70.

²⁷Whereas authority among the Qadiriyya and Ahmadiyya Brotherhoods tends to be diffuse and there is no generally recognized headquarters for either of them, in the Salihyya it is centralised and the settlement called Misr, which Sheikh Muhammad Guleed founded, is considered the seat and spiritual home of the vicariate of Southern Somaliland. (See Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 151). This form of centralised

was Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdulla Hasan, the leader of the Dervish movement against British, Ethiopian, and Italian rule in northern and western Somaliland between A.D. 1899 and 1921.²⁸ Another popular figure who added to the order's connection with political activism was Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf, who led a shortlived uprising in 1917 under the order's banner against

organization does not seem to have caught on in northern Somaliland.

²⁸The term "dervish" (Arabic and Somali, darwīsh, pl. darāwīsh) is of Persian provenance (darvesh) and means a Muslim mendicant, frequently a member of an order characterized by trance-inducing devotional exercises. The native Arabic word for this person is faqir (poor or needy person, i.e. in need of God), which is the source of the English term "fakir". In Somaliland the term is applied exclusively to Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdulla Hasan's followers and also to those who were inspired by his movement to take up arms against the colonial powers. The Sayyid used it to refer to his followers to show their adherence to the Saihiyya Sufi Order, and also in order to give them a basis for unity "transcending clan affiliations". It is perhaps in recognition of the implied poverty for knowledge of God in the word "dervish" that one contemporary scholar referred to the Sayyid as "the poor man of God": (Hess, "The Poor Man of God-- Muhammed Abdullah Hassan"). Certainly the Sayyid himself gave that impression on a number of occasions by signing his correspondence with "Sayyid Muhammad bin Abdulla Hasan, the Dervish". For this see D. Jardine, The Mad Mullah of Somaliland, pp. 210, 249.

Sayyid Muhammad's movement spilled over to neighbouring Somali territories under colonial rule where local Somalis began to emulate him or openly showed their sympathies. (See Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," Chapter 5, part D; I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 85-87; and E. R. Turton's two articles "The Impact of Muhammad Abdille Hassan in the East African Protectorate," and "Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya 1893-1960," JAH, 13,1 (1972), pp. 117-143; and Hess, "The 'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia".

It is because of the Sayyid's fight against clan fissures and his nearly successful campaign to rally pan-Somali resistance to colonialism that present-day Somalis and some writers consider him as the inspirer and symbol of modern

Ethiopia in the upper Shabeelle river valley.²⁹ Many lesser figures, who came under Muhammad Salih's influence while travelling or studying in Arabia, came back home and laboured mightily for the order throughout Somaliland.

Since the time of the jihads led by Sayyid Muhammad ^CAbdulla Hasan and Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf, the Salhiyya has always been associated with active opposition to Christian colonial rule and, in general, with political militancy. In scholarship and numerical strength the Salhiyya cannot match the older Qadiriyya Order. But what it lacks in these aspects it more than makes up for in enthusiasm and vigour. With settlements (jama^Cat) scattered around agricultural areas and much political strength within urban areas, even with groups of itinerant Salhiyya adherents (her) roving among the nomads, the Order has achieved, like the Qadiriyya, a national following throughout the Somali territories.

Another old order, the Rifa^C iyya, named after its founder Ahmad ibn a-Rifa^C i (d. A.D. 1182), also has some significance. I. M. Lewis notes that it "is represented amongst Arab settlers but is not widely distributed".³⁰ Indeed, it is largely confined to such Banaadir urban centers as Mogadishu, though a few adherents have also been observed in the former British territory. Its importance derives from the fact that

Somali nationalism. See Saadia Touval, Somali Nationalism Chapter Five.

²⁹ Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 151.

³⁰ I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland," I, p. 592.

it has among its membership some of the best learned religious leaders in the country.

How has the spread of the turuq among the Somalis since the nineteenth century affected the character of Islam in that society? How has it affected Somali culture in general? A tariqa (way) is essentially a systematic method of worship with prescribed exercises which can lead the aspiring devotee to a clear knowledge (maʿrifā) of God and to the ideal virtuous life. The particular devotional exercises of each tariqa were prescribed by the founder of each respective order who, through his exemplary life of righteousness and miracle working,³¹ had proven their efficacy and then commended them to his followers. Invariably, there is associated with the founders some kind of divine powers (baraka), the mark of sainthood and the source of their miracle workings, which they had acquired by their good works or was graciously bestowed upon them by God. These powers are usually passed on to successors or designated representatives (khulafā', sing. khalīfa) to other countries. In addition to this investiture with baraka, the khalīfa is empowered to appoint lesser sheikhs to head tariqa communities (jamaʿāt) acknowledging the suzerainty of the khalīfa. By this appointment a jamaʿa head becomes "the spiritual heir of the founder,

³¹Tariqa founders and other Muslim saints, (Awliya'), are always credited with miraculous feats. Among the many powers frequently attributed to them is the ability to travel long distances in no time at all by flying or riding the clouds, the powers to heal the sick or revive the dead,

whose qualities and powers become inherent in him upon his succession".³² Each congregational head (Sheikh al-jamā'ca) or regional representative (khalīfa) thus inherits his authority through a chain of spiritual ancestors (silsilat 'l-baraka) which represents his predecessors or superiors in office and link him with the founder of the Order. It must be pointed out here that succession is strictly spiritual and has nothing to do with lineal descent.³³

To justify the legality of his "way" and to avoid legal banishment which is a sure consequence of any kind of innovation in Islam a tariqa founder must provide a chain of authority which connect him to one of the "Rightly-guided Caliphs", and thereby with the Prophet.³⁴ This is the chain of initiation (Silsilat 'l-Wird or Irada), and like the Silsilat 'l-Baraka, which only attempts to validate a Sheikh's or a Khalīfa's succession to an office, it pertains to office rather than the person.³⁵ With these two silsilats, therefore, the powerline, so to speak, between the incumbent

powers over natural forces such as the winds and oceans, and frequent visits to the Prophet and communication with God himself.

³²Trimingham, Sufi Orders, p. 173.

³³ According to Ibid, p. 173, in the Arab world, however, the tendency has been for succession to the leadership of Brotherhood congregations to become hereditary on the principle of lineal descent.

³⁴Ibid, p. 150.

³⁵I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland," I, p. 591.

congregational head, (Sheikh 'l-Jamā^ca) or the vicar, (khalīfa), and the Prophet is completed and fully established.

In Somaliland, as elsewhere in the world of Islam, the system of spiritual descent soon underwent certain modifications. Since Divine Grace was bestowed upon the person of the Prophet Muhammad, and perhaps because of the popularity of the Shi^cite doctrines among the masses, the Sāda and Ashrāf descendants of the Prophet tended to inherit these powers automatically, irrespective of their lifestyle. As mass veneration for the Prophet's Quraishitic clan gained ground, it became obvious that the best candidate for the leadership of a tariqa at any level was he who could combine spiritual connections with kinship or lineal descent. And so the tariqa leaders began to seek genealogical linkage with the Prophet. The reason for this new development which tries to approximate spiritual descent to lineal descent, as has been hinted at, is not difficult to seek. As I. M. Lewis noted:

.... Those in whose blood (recorded in personal genealogies) the Prophet's grace (Baraka) flows are eminently suitable for election to the office of head (Khalifa) of an Order or of a congregation (Sheikh). Sheikhs and Khalifas, as also the founders of the Orders themselves, have personal genealogies tracing descent from ancestors connected with Mohammed....The tradition is that descent from Quraysh entitles to religious office and that to be a Sufi sheikh or Khalifa implies such descent.³⁶

Among the masses in Somaliland, but also throughout the world of Islam, the association of divine grace (Baraka) with

³⁶ Ibid, p. 591.

the Sufi and other religious leaders whose piety has been proven implies saintly powers of intercession with God in the interest of their followers. Because of this their favours are constantly sought by the needy, and the wealthy alike, the afflicted and the healthy, those embarking on major undertakings, such as marriages, pregnancy, travel, or business ventures. This normally entails visitations to, memorial services and sacrifices at their tombs. In certain localized areas the genealogy of the Sheikh al-Jamā^c is adopted by the members of the congregation he heads and by all those non-members who seek his blessings.³⁷ The panegyrics celebrating these saints' achievements frequently ascribe a Quraishitic genealogy to them.

Perhaps inevitably, the masses seeking this divine grace also cannonize their eponymous ancestors who might have even preceeded Islam, or alternatively adopt genealogies of famous Muslim historical personalities--Arab missionaries or Sufi saints--who might have figured in the spread of Islam among them. Accounting, among other things, for the Somalis' claim to Arab ancestry, Dr. I. M. Lewis observes with commendable insight:

We have seen how Quraysh is the symbol of divine grace and how the genealogies of Sufi sheikhs and Khalifas vaunt connexion with the Prophet's lineage. We have also seen how in its client status, and thus at some point in the history of every jama^c, the community is identified with its head and with his

³⁷Trimingham, Sufi Orders, p. 235; I. M. Lewis, "Sufism

genealogy. It is the incorporation of such genealogies, I believe, which leads ultimately to the inclusive ascription of the Somali nation to the Qurayshite lineage of the Prophet.³⁸

In other parts of the world (Central Asia and Kashmir, for instance) where the Sufis have been active for centuries, Sufi-inspired attempts to forge links with distant sources of Baraka have led to a degree of syncretism in the popular religious belief and practices, a sort of accommodation with pre-Islamic religion which entails the naturalization of elements of the previous religion into Islam:

Old sacred places were Islamized as saints' tomb, legends from earlier religious strata were incorporated and adapted, whilst yoga exercises and ritual dances were assimilated to the forms of the dhikr.³⁹

This same process has also taken place in Somaliland. Here the catholic inclusiveness and tolerance of Sufi theosophy was helped by the striking similarity between the religious and political functions of Sufi spiritual and Somali personal genealogies. This not only made the task of spreading Islam easier, but it also virtually rendered the Sufi brand of Islam as the form most suited to, and characteristic of, Somaliland.⁴⁰ It is in this process of incorporation of

in Somaliland," I, pp. 591, 601.

³⁸ Ibid, I, p. 601.

³⁹ Trimingham, Sufi Orders, p. 230.

⁴⁰ For a perceptive analysis of the functional resemblance between Sufi and Somali genealogies, the "underlying similarities in the Cushitic and Sufi religious concepts which attach to genealogies," and how the genealogies of Sufi leaders and Arab Sheikhs are assumed by the Somalis, see I. M. Lewis,

pre-Islamic rites into the popular Islam that the separate identity of the pre-Islamic cultural substratum is being gradually buried and an increased Arabo-Islamic character is being given to the Somali culture. To be sure, this method of adoption guarantees continued existence to elements of the old culture, but only in modified forms defined and sanctioned by the dominant Islamic tradition.

Among the numerous pre-Islamic remnant rites in the present-day Somali Islam is the ceremony of the zar (in Somali, Sar). Most likely a propitiatory sacred dance in former times,⁴¹ the zar is now performed in the contemporary Islamic milieu to drive out demons (jinn or wadaaddo) from victims whom they periodically seize and afflict with ailments.⁴² Recognizing, perhaps, the zar's pre-Islamic provenance, the orthodox clergy strongly denounce and oppose the ceremony. It is also losing respect today as a result of the spread of modern education and science. In certain quarters it is only the wives of rich men who are struck--or feign possession, as some say--by the malevolent spirit. Consequently, the credibility of the zar institution is being questioned by an increasing number of skeptics who view the whole thing as

"Sufism in Somaliland," I and II, passim.

⁴¹Cerulli, Somalia, I p. 148.

⁴²Zar, which appears to have been the supreme deity in a pre-Islamic Cushitic divine hierarchy, was introduced into the World of Islam in the nineteenth century by slaves hailing from Ethiopia. By then Zar had lost his lofty status and

nothing more than a ruse to wring presents from credulous husbands.⁴³ Nevertheless, the dance is popular among the masses and it is widely practised.

Certain aspects of this dance, which invariably climaxes with the afflicted victim going into a trance signalling his liberation, appear to have been coopted into--and certainly find close parallel in--the services (dhikr) of the Sufi turuq, which also end in similar trances and convulsions. Historically, many Muslim mystic orders have been known to practice trance-inducing devotional exercises. Which of the numerous varieties of exercises practised elsewhere, if any, have found their way to Somaliland cannot be determined now. In whatever form they came they appear to have been modified so as to conform to the sar dance. This would, therefore, account for the noted close "similarities between the attainment of spirit possession (or the release from possession) and absorption in Allah which are the objects of the dance and the dhikr respectively".⁴⁴ In the circumstances of orthodox hostility and attacks by scientific knowledge, the sar

was reincarnated only as a down-graded evil spirit (jinni). In Somaliland this Cushitic god is known variously as Eebbe or Waaq (Oromo, Waaqa), but it has been Islamized and is today synonymous with Allah. The history of the sar dance and the circumstances of its advent in Somaliland, however, remains obscure. For the origins and spread of Zar, consult Cerulli, Somalia, I, pp. 157-158 or M. th. Houtsma, et al (eds.) The Encyclopedia of Islam, IV(London, 1934), p. 1217; I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland," II, pp. 146-147.

⁴³Ibid, p. 147.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 154.

ceremonies to drive out the evil genius may atrophy in time, but the traditional propitiatory dance to the Waaq divinity, bereft of its Cushitic character and shrouded in an Islamic garment, will most certainly remain so long as there are Sufis in Somaliland.

Another pre-Islamic custom--the festival of the Somali New Year, called dabshid (the making of fires), because it is marked, among other things, by bonfires--has won the stamp of approval "as a Muslim expiatory rite".⁴⁵ In certain localities people ascribe supernatural powers to the hereditary clan heads,⁴⁶ a belief which most certainly has its origin in a pre-Islamic idea that such clan heads could commune with Waaq through the ancestors, but is now interpreted as divine grace (baraka) collateral with his burdensome responsibilities.⁴⁷ Contemporary Muslim leaders have inherited the powers and the very titles of their counterparts in the previous religious system, and even conduct their duties by the same methods and rites employed by their predecessors. Dr. Cerulli briefly observed that:

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 148.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 149; Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 149.

⁴⁷ Though the actual belief in the supernatural powers of the clan head is confined to certain communities in southern Somaliland, the feeling that responsibility implies blessing is one of wide currency, and is one of the things which makes a Sultan's counsel weightier than it otherwise would have been among a people whose opposition to authority has been noted by all these who came in contact with them.

Ancient heathen magicians have been replaced by Muslim scholars, although they have kept their name *wadad* and may be also applied to magical practices. Propitiatory blessing is given as in paganism by spitting.⁴⁸⁾

As has been seen, the process of accommodation has taken place at the popular level, for the legalistic religion of orthodoxy had always been intolerant of syncretic situations. The means by which it was effected also was equally unorthodox. It was through Sufism, with its capacity to embrace "a wide range of religious experience, from the primitive nature-mysticism, spirit-raising, and power-cults of folk religion to the refined, desiccated reaches of philosophical monism," that the work was carried out.⁴⁹ With the Islamic tradition being the dominant of the two mixing cultural traditions, the process was at the level of consciousness understandably always in favour of Islamization and Arabization. The outcome is a curious syncretic situation, a cultural blend in which today its African and Arabico-Islamic component parts are both operative and unmistakably displayed, but which identifies solely with its Islamic heritage. The same can be said about the people in terms of what they conceive of their true ethnic identity. Despite physical and cultural appearances to the contrary, they still "cling to a belief in an actual descent from an Arab saint--the myth in no wise detracting

⁴⁸Cerulli, Somalia, I, p. 149.

⁴⁹Trimingham, Sufi Orders, p. 230.

from the sociological significance of such beliefs".⁵⁰

It must be pointed out here that the process of Arabization had been taking place even prior to the arrival of the Qadiriyya in the fifteenth century. Indeed, it may be said to have begun and gone hand in hand with the entire process of Islamization. What the resurgence of the revivalist movement in the nineteenth century did was to appreciably increase the number and activities of the Sufi orders and, as might be expected, hasten a process long since underway. In the absence of accurate statistical data it is difficult, to say the least, to quantify the acceleration in the work effected towards Arabization by the turuq since the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the dramatic increase in the range and tempo of their activity during this period must have necessarily been accompanied by a corresponding widening and deepening of their influence.

An index of the latter-day contribution of the turuq, tangibly and outwardly very prominent, is the increase in the learning of the Arabic language. As the language of religion since the beginning of the Islamic era Arabic was always studied in Somaliland, especially in the urban centers. It was vigorously promoted by the Sufis, who were more than any other group committed to religious learning. As the only means of literary expression (Somali being unwritten) Arabic

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 235-236.

always had a certain amount of prestige attached to it. With-
in the coastal sultanates it was also the language of busi-
ness and government. But now with the increased prolifer-
ation of tariqa settlements (jamā'āt) and roving sufi bands
(her) in the countryside since the beginning of the nine-
teenth century, the language gained an unprecedented currency,
and came to be identified in both city and countryside with
culture and learning.⁵¹ The revivalist movement initiated
a period of literary flowering, expressed largely in the
Arabic language, out of which the only known written liter-
ary tradition in Somaliland has developed.⁵²

The wide spread belief in the saintly virtues and powers
of the tariqa leaders has gradually tended to ascribe these
powers to all the religious leadership, and has greatly en-
hanced their prestige and influence in society. Never ex-
pected to directly participate in political and other worldly
activities, the clergy nevertheless exercise a powerful lead-
ership authority deriving from their religious knowledge and
potential for virtue.⁵³ In a sense they have become the

⁵¹ Najar, al-Islām fī as-Sūmāl, p. 73; Ahmad as-Sawar, as-Sūmāl al-Kabir (Cairo, 1959), pp. 20-26. In his "Language in Somalia," Linguistic Reporter: Newsletter of the Center for Applied Linguistics, VIII, 3 (1966), pp. 1-2, Joseph J. Pla correctly declares that "Arabic is the language of culture and education" for the decidedly Islamic Somali society.

⁵² See examples of this tradition cited above here.

⁵³ Traditionally a Somali was either a man of religion (wadaad, plural, wadaaddo, Arabic, sheikh) who abstained from the concerns of this world, or a man of war (waranleh, lit. spear bearer) whose chief interests were the affairs of this

conscience of society, the material embodiment of its ideals, and in the societal division of labour they have been assigned to the role of philosopher kings. They lead in prayers solemnize, and officiate at, public ceremonies and festivities, and bless all communal projects. More importantly, because of their concern with religious matters and championship of tariqa ideals of Muslim brotherhood, the religious leaders enjoy the added prestige of not being identified with any particularistic group or clan interests. "In keeping with this," writes Dr. I. M. Lewis, "men of religion are highly valued as go-betweens and as members of peace embassies because they are by definition non-combatants and ideally stand above particularistic loyalties".⁵⁴ They figured very prominently in the nationalist movement of the 1940s and 1950s which promoted a significant number of them into parliament. In their attempts to mobilize mass support for the nationalist parties the religious leaders appealed to the brotherhood of all Muslims which transcend the clan cleavages, and thus gave the movement its ideals of pan-Islamic unity. It was these men who in the 1950s and 1960s thwarted all attempts to write Somali in Latin or in any of the other locally developed scripts, facetiously equating Latin with

world, which in the pastoral conditions were settled only by the use of the spear (waran).

⁵⁴I. M. Lewis, "Sheikhs and Warriors in Somaliland," in G. Dieterlen and M. Fortes (eds.), African Systems of Thought, Religion and Ritual (New York, 1965), p. 211.

with la dīn (no religion) in their campaign. They repeatedly called for closer association with the Muslim and the Arab world, some of them even demanding that the Somali Republic apply for membership in the Arab League.

Be that what it may, there are other respects in which the turuq have facilitated the development of Arab-Somali connections. As daughter branches of Sufi orders founded in Arabia, the Somali turuq fostered the growth of contacts between Somaliland and the spiritual homes of the turuq in Arabia. Tariqa students frequently journey to these centers in Arabia for study and in quest of blessing, and even occasionally contribute donations to them.⁵⁵ Of course, travel to these places has recently been rendered much easier than in anytime before by the establishment of steamship services between Somaliland and Arabia, and so contacts have become more frequent during the last century.⁵⁶

We have seen how new Sufi orders and revitalized old ones have since the beginning of the nineteenth century been helping to expedite the process of Arabization among the Somalis. In this task the turuq found an unlikely ally in European and Christian imperialism. In as much as their work was religious and missionary in nature the turuq aimed at and attained results in the cultural and religious fields. Colonialism was to add a political dimension to this cultural

⁵⁵I. M. Lewis, Pastoral Democracy, p. 221.

⁵⁶See above footnote 21 for an example of such contacts.

process. In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century Ethiopia and European powers divided Somaliland among themselves into five territories.⁵⁷ It is in this balkanization of the Somali country by none other than Christian powers that the unintended contributions of imperialism lie and here one must necessarily seek the ultimate reason for the Somalis' relentless political identification with the Arab world. In the course of the remaining pages of this chapter I shall, therefore, attempt to show how colonial pressures forced the Somalis to fall back internally upon their religion (Islam) as a source of strength with which to combat imperialism, and also to reach out to their Arab co-religionists for external support.

The European colonial powers acquired their respective portions of Somali territory through peacefully negotiated protection treaties which, as subsequent events were to prove, meant different things to the European and Somali contracting parties.⁵⁸ Ethiopia, on the other hand, got its share by means of military conquest. As concerns the different interpretations given to the treaties, it appears that the Somali signatories had no intention of signing away their

⁵⁷ These are former British Somaliland and the Italian Trust territory of Somalia (united on independence on July 1st, 1960 to form the present Somali Democratic Republic), French Somaliland (the Republic of Djibouti as of June 27, 1977), the Northern Province of Kenya, and the Harar region of Ethiopia.

⁵⁸ Misinterpretation of treaties was not unique to Euro-Somali relations. Just next door, different readings of the

sovereignty, but that they thought they were getting into beneficial alliances with these powers. The Europeans, however, had different ideas. As evidenced in the preamble of the 1884-86 Anglo-Somali treaties, the Somalis were merely "desirous of entering into an agreement with the British Government for the maintenance of ... [their] independence, the preservation of order, and other good and sufficient reasons".⁵⁹ Notwithstanding these vague "other good and sufficient reasons" which might not even have been explained to the signatories, the treaties did not imply any cession of sovereignty or territory to Britain, for in wording and in spirit they were not different from the "contractual alliances of the same sort as these used so extensively in internal Somali clan politics".⁶⁰ In return for the protection and other favours which the British Government promised them, the Somalis covenanted with their ally "never to cede, sell,

Ethio-Italian Treaty of 1889 finally led to war and the disastrous defeat of the Italians at Aduwa in 1896.

⁵⁹ Sir E. Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaties, 3 vols., third edition (London, 1967), I, pp. 407-411. The most comprehensive collection of Somali treaties with the colonial powers, however, is found in a work by the Somali Government called The Somali Peninsula: A New Light on Imperial Motives (London, 1962).

⁶⁰ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 46-47. Though she frequently acted contrary to the intent of these treaties (as in the case of her giving a portion of the Somali territory under her 'protection' to Ethiopia in the Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1897), Britain nevertheless insisted as a precondition for independence for the territory in 1960 that the clan elders, for whom she apparently held the territory in trust as stipulated in the treaties, "publicly demonstrate their acceptance of the decision to grant independence".

mortgage or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British Government, any portion of the territory presently inhabited by them or being under their control".⁶¹ Similarly, the Somalis in the territory which came under the French control, hopeful of an "eternal friendship" between them and France, decided to "hand over their country to France that she may protect it against all foreigners".⁶² The treaties signed with Italy were all similarly worded.⁶³ In fact, the Somalis did not become aware of the full implications of these treaties--the fragmentation of the Somali nation and country--until work on the demarcation of the colonial boundaries on the ground was begun during the 1930s.⁶⁴ We shall presently return to the question of the colonial boundaries, but now let us proceed to an examination of the colonial regimes.

Even before the turn of the century, while the Europeans were still confined to a few coastal bases, the loss of sovereignty implied in these protection treaties was having a telling effect in many forms. Customs duties collected by

⁶¹Hertslet, The Map of Africa, pp. 407-411.

⁶²Ibid, II, p. 633.

⁶³Besides the Somali Peninsula, other works which contain the Italian treaties are: Camera dei Deputati, Documenti Diplomatici al Parlamento italiano dal Ministro degli Affari Esteri: Somalia Italiana 1885-95 (Rome, 1895) and Documenti Diplomatici ... Somalia Italiana 1895-1905 (Rome, 1905). Hertslet's The Map of Africa, III, pp. 1119-25, also reproduces a partial list of these treaties.

⁶⁴I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 107.

the Europeans to pay for the expenses of administration loomed like an unfair imposition to the stateless Somali nomads of the north traditionally not burdened by such irritants.⁶⁵ In certain areas the Europeans directly interfered in the social and the economic life of the Somalis and had to contend with active defiance and armed resistance.⁶⁶ The European system of government and justice were equally repugnant to the Somali sense of dignity. In British Somaliland, "besides fines, imprisonment, and flogging other forms of public embarrassment and humiliation were often used to punish offenders in flagrant disregard for Somali judicial processes".⁶⁷ On the Banaadir coast the Italian regime was at times quite brutal. In Marka five prominent Ashraf leaders were suspected of complicity in the murder of an Italian resident and on these spurious suspicions alone were incarcerated.

The prisoners were sent to Mogadishu, where all five mysteriously perished in the garesa prison. Their fate was soon known along the entire East African coast, and in Zanzibar it became common to say that those who entered the prisons of the Banaadir left only as corpses.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Charles Lee Gesheker, "British Imperialism in the Horn of Africa and the Somali Response, 1884-1899," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1972, pp. 104-105.

⁶⁶ A case in point is the Italian abolition of slavery in southern Somaliland, which solicited eighteen months of active warfare from the affected communities. See Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," pp. 144-145.

⁶⁷ Gesheker, "British Imperialism," p. 122.

⁶⁸ Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," p. 144.

The details of French colonial administration in this early period are not well-known, but circumstantial outside evidence points to a regime clearly inimical to Somali interests and thus subjected to constant harassment. In his Secret Notes on a Visit to Jibouti in May 1897, Captain E. J. S. Swayne reported that even after fifteen years of rule the French were almost in a state of siege and quite unsure of their position.⁶⁹

Even clans in the distant interior could not escape the negative effects of imperialism. In British Somaliland up-country clans who were not signatories to the Anglo-Somali treaties frequently challenged coast-bound caravans traveling through their territory as an expression of their displeasure with the British Government. In the first year of the Protectorate (1885-86) over fifty incidents of such interference with the caravan trade were reported.⁷⁰ To guard against the pretensions of these clans the British organized "armed guards (biladiya), who were paid by merchants, subsidized by the British administration, and stationed along inland routes".⁷¹ The biladiya were poorly trained and insufficiently supplied with arms, thus proving ineffective

⁶⁹Cited in the Somali Government, The Portion of Somali Territory under Ethiopian Colonization (Mogadishu, 1974), p.24.

⁷⁰Gesheker, "British Imperialism," p. 110.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 109.

against superior numbers. So, the British began to send punitive expeditions to punish the recalcitrant clans.⁷² Frequently, "captured cattle from such raids were auctioned at Berbera to cover the expenses of the manoeuvres, thereby eliminating any reflection of their cost or occurrence in annual reports".⁷³ As late as the 1890s, when the British were almost in complete control of the situation, such punitive raids were still being mounted for gainful purposes. According to Gesheker,

The economical British rarely called on the taxpayer, Indian or English, to contribute to the 'butchery and scuttle' expeditions. It is hard to imagine a more plunderous method of imperial expropriation among pastoral peoples.⁷⁴

Thanks to their 1896 debacle at Aduwa in Ethiopia and their setback at Lafoole in southern Somaliland in the same year, however, the Italians were wary about upcountry adventures until the twentieth century.⁷⁵

Worse than the disruptions caused by European colonialism--as far as interior clans were concerned--were the deprivations that the Somalis suffered at the hands of wandering Ethiopian troops who constantly raided the Somali territory

⁷² Ibid, chapter 3 and 4, passim.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 122.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 165.

⁷⁵ Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," pp. 139-143; See also Robert L. Hess, Italian Colonialism in Somalia (Chicago, 1966), pp. 63-84.

in the 1890s following their conquest of Harar in 1887. "When the Ethiopians come," reported some Somalis arriving at the coast to their English 'Protectors', "they always say their mouths are empty and come to fill them".⁷⁶ A number of travellers in the area bore out these Somali claims and described wanton destruction of life and property. In his address to the Royal Geographical Society on 6th January 1896, the American traveller, Dr. Donaldson Smith, beboaned the misfortunes of the inhabitants of a very prosperous village called Sesabene, south of Milmil, which he had visited two years earlier in 1894:

You may imagine my chagrin when I heard, a few days afterwards, that they have just been raided by the Abyssinians under Makonnen. Their animals have all been driven off, the boys and girls taken as slaves, and the elder people killed or mutilated.⁷⁷

With that incident and others he personally witnessed in mind, Dr. Smith concluded that the "black neighbours of the Abyssinians ... [were] in the worst plight".⁷⁸ H. S. H. Cavendish, another traveller who went through that country early in 1896 had this to say:

We came to the town of Lobarí. Here we found that we were in the rear of an Abyssinian war-party, which had left only the day before, after looting the surrounding villages and driving off all the unfortunate

⁷⁶ Gesheker, "British Imperialism," p. 143.

⁷⁷ Dr. A. Donaldson Smith, "Expedition through Somaliland to Lake Rudolf," The Geographical Journal, Vol. VIII (Jul-Dec., 1896), pp. 120-127, 221-239.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

natives' livestock,... For the next four days we marched through desolate country which had been⁷⁹ devastated immediately before by the Abyssinian herds,

Debarred from the acquisition of firearms by the European adherents to the Brussels General Act, the Somalis could not resist the marauding Ethiopian bands, whilst no help was forthcoming from the colonial 'Protectors'. No wonder, then, that the Somalis imagined a concerted Ethio-European Christian alliance against them. The whole country was astir with rumours of impending invasions, and "some clan elders in the interior and influential ... holymen called on all Somali to join in and repulse the ruthless Ethiopians."⁸⁰ Others, incensed by British inactivity in the face of Ethiopian plunder, took up arms and sought vent for their frustrations in attacks against British friendlies and caravans.⁸¹ The alarm spread abroad by Ethio-European pressures was having effect even among the "normally quiescent" coastal communities, who now began to assail the symbols of the colonial regime--the Askaris (policemen) and messengers in the employ of the Europeans.⁸²

The issue was compounded by the arrival in northern Somaliland of Christian missions in the 1890s, at a time when

⁷⁹ H. S. H. Cavendish, "Through Somaliland and Around and South of Lake Rudolf," The Geographical Journal, Vol. XI (Jan.-June, 1898), pp. 372-396.

⁸⁰ Geshekte, "British Imperialism," p. 148.

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 144-146.

⁸² Cassanelli, "The Banaadir Past," p. 142.

news of the Mahdist struggle in the Sudan was filtering in. The missions were, therefore, seen by many as another European attack upon the Somali nation and an attempt to destroy its faith.⁸³ While Christian missionary work at the coast, condoned and even abetted by the colonial regime, painfully gnawed at the Somali conscience, forceful Ethiopian activities in the interior seemed to be specifically directed against Islam, as "Ras Makonnen's forces deliberately destroyed tariqa settlements as part of their expansion into the Ogaden".⁸⁴

This conjunction of events lent credence to the rumours of a preplanned Ethio-European joint attack upon the Somalis. Many Somalis turned to the tariqas, especially to the militant Salhiyya, which had just arrived in the country and was making conversions among the nomads.⁸⁵ Even the northeastern Somalis of Bargal and Hobyo (Obbia) on the Indian Ocean seaboard were talking about raising 50,000 troops to relieve Harar, which was conquered in 1887, and bring it back to the foid.⁸⁶ In the event, though, it was the religious leaders who by their appeal to religious sentiments prevailed upon the Somalis and rallied them for an all-out jihad against the

⁸³I. H. Lewis, *Modern History*, p. 67. For a more recent study of Christian missionary activity in northern Somaliland refer to chapter five of Gesheker's "British Imperialism".

⁸⁴Gesheker, "British Imperialism," p. 192.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 192; see above pp. 255-257.

⁸⁶The Portion of Somali Territory, p. 25.

Christians. The efforts of the religious leaders finally crystallized into the protracted Dervish war led by Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdulla Hasan.⁸⁷ Militarily the Dervish movement failed, but it helped spread the militant Salhiyya tariqa to which the Sayyid adhered and which became the standard and creed of all the resisters.

In this early period imperialism did not, however, lead directly to Somali identification with the Arabs. That was to come later. It only made them militantly anti-Christian, an attitude which coloured all their subsequent political activities and made their identification with the Arabs much easier than it otherwise would have been.

The vague claims to Arab ancestry which the Somalis traditionally made in their genealogies was given a political focus in the 1930s and has gathered momentum ever since until it culminated in 1974 in the Somali Democratic Republic's full membership in the League of Arab states. This movement can be related directly to the social inequities of the colonial regime. Very significantly, the impetus for this drive originated outside Somaliland, in the system of racial distinctions of the East and Central African colonies where increasing numbers of Somalis have been taking residence since 1900.

⁸⁷ Besides the Dervish movement there were other minor resistances inspired by the Dervish war and in which Salhiyya Sheikhs and Dervish agents figured significantly. See above, footnote 28.

The colonial colour bar divided the East African communities into three racially-defined classes--European, Asian, and native (or African), in descending order. Public places such as hotels, recreational centers, hospitals, clubs, etc., were separate for the different races and maintained with unequal funding so as to correspond to their unequal class statuses. First class facilities in public transport were reserved for the European, second class for the Asian, and third class for the African. Managerial jobs were a preserve for the European, the Asian could aspire to, and generally filled, secretarial and middle class positions, while the African deserved and was forced to accept only manual work. Pay was unequitable and the rate of promotion correspondingly slower for lower classes. In 1932, besides the indivisible administrative expenditure which was born by all the racial groups, the Kenya government spent 171,247 Pounds Sterling on 17,285 Europeans, 46,080 Pounds on 56,903 Asians, and 331,956 Pounds on an estimated (but surely larger) 3,000,000 Africans.⁸⁸ The colonial educational system, too, was discriminatory and unequal. Whereas the per capita expenditure on the European schooler in 1924 was approximately 12 Pounds, and the expenditure on the Asian child was about 2 Pounds, that on the African child was too negligible to be recorded.⁸⁹

⁸⁸William Malcolm Hatley Hatley, An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara (New York, 1945), pp. 339, 1457-1458.

⁸⁹Thomas Jesse Jones, Education in East Africa: A Study

In 1936 the figures for educational expenditure in four colonies in East and Central Africa where there were substantial numbers of Somalis were as follows:⁹⁰

**EXPENDITURE PER HEAD OF SCHOOL CHILDREN
(in Pounds Sterling)**

<u>Country</u>	<u>European</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>African</u>
Rhodesia	30 13 09	10 01 00	00 13 09
Kenya	26 07 05	05 00 00	00 16 00
Uganda	14 10 08	04 02 11	00 05 03
Tanganyika (1935)	10 18 02	02 11 04	00 05 07

Caught up in this situation, the East African Somalis began to agitate for non-Native classification (which in the circumstances meant Asian) so that they might enjoy the privileges of the Asian. One colonial administrator who was quite familiar with the Somalis thought that their campaign was motivated by the belief "that Asiatic status would confer,

of East Central and South Africa by the second African Education Commission under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, in cooperation with the International Education Board (London, 1925), pp. 118, 152, 176.

⁹⁰ Halley, African Survey (1945), p. 1308. The condition remained pretty much unchanged until independence. The 1960 figures for the cost of education in the United Nations' Trust Territory of Tanganyika will illustrate the point. In that year the Government of Tanganyika spent 95 Pounds Sterling on the primary school European child, 15 Pounds on the Asian child, and only 3 Pounds on the African child. At the secondary school level the European student cost the government 262 Pounds and the African student 162 Pounds. For this see: Atifeyo Bartholomew Chilivumbo, "Tanganyika Mono-Party Regime: A Study in the Problems, Conditions and Processes of the Emergence and Development of the One-Party State on the Mainland of Tanzania," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in sociology, University of California at Los Angeles, 1968, p. 126. For more general surveys of colonial education policies and administrations see also: Helen Kitchen (ed.), The Educated African: A Country-by-Country Survey of Educational Develop-

amongst other things, immunity from arrest by African police constables, special accommodation in hospitals and prisons, more favourable treatment in the law courts, and eventually the sharing with the Indians in the 'White highlands'.⁹¹ They were encouraged in their struggle by the fact that in 1919 they were legally classified in Kenya as "non-Natives" and had since then been paying the non-Native poll-tax, though in practice "almost all native legislation was still made to apply to them with only a small number of exemptions".⁹² Despite these administrative handicaps, their classification as non-Natives and payment of Asian poll-tax tended to conveniently reinforce their fictive claims to Arab (Sharifian) pedigree in their genealogical charters, and made them all the more resistant to any attempts at their reclassification as native Africans.

So when the 1936 Non-Native Poll Tax Ordinance set their per capita taxation below that of the Asians, the Somalis interpreted the Ordinance as an act signalling a downward slide in their social status, and a diminution of their "privileges". They sent petitions to the Colonial Secretary and King George VI, and appealed to the Somalis in the British

ment in Africa (New York, 1962); Martena Sasnett and Inez Sepmeyer, Educational Systems of Africa (Berkley and Los Angeles, 1966).

⁹¹G. Reece to Chief Secretary, 9 May 1944, as quoted in E. R. Turton, "The Isaq Somali Diaspora and Poll-Tax Agitation in Kenya, 1936-41," African Affairs, Vol. 73, 202 (July, 1974), pp. 325-346.

⁹²Ibid., p. 327, also pp. 345-346.

Protectorate as well as those domiciled in Britain to pressure the British Government on their behalf. In both areas the response was instartaneous and the British Government was soon flooded with petitions, subjected to political and legal lobbying, and was threatened with political harangue in the House of Commons by Members of Parliament sympathetic to the Somali cause. One Somali Qadi of Hargeisa thought that a government suggestion to write Somali in Latin script was only a pretext to kill the Somalis' Arab identity and declared:

We Somalis are Arabs by origin and we like to consider ourselves as still being of the Arabic race. We can never consent to our being considered as Africans.⁹³

In Kenya, where the campaign was initiated, the Somalis began to organize themselves more effectively and to secretly coordinate their efforts throughout East Africa. They continued to pay taxes at the Asian rate, but when the Government refused to accept the whole amount they simply refrained from paying taxes pending the King's reply to their petition, and otherwise did nothing but to brace themselves for passive defiance of the law.⁹⁴ Some took their complaints to higher authorities. In Tanganyika, where in the 1948 census the Somalis were classified as Africans, there occurred a number of protests, and petitions were sent to the United Nations

⁹³ Ibid., p. 330.

⁹⁴ Turton, "Isaq Somali Diaspora," pp. 337-341.

Secretary General. A partial quote from one of these reads as follows:

If the reason for the administration to classify us as Africans or natives (is) because of our country which is situated in Africa, this will not, however, coincide with the fact that many parts of Africa, e.g., Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, etc., though in Africa yet the inhabitants of these countries are not known as Africans but are classified as Arabs, thus natives of Asia.⁹⁵

There is something very sinister and disturbing about this telegram. What most probably started as a simple campaign to wring a few privileges out of an oppressive situation was turning, only after a decade, into a racist ideology propagated on its own terms on honest convictions. Or so it seems from the content of this telegram.

Whatever the case, by 1950 the Somalis in East and Central Africa, with the exception of those in Rhodesia, were granted what amounted to an Asian status. In the 1950s "in the Kenyan legislation Somalis with Arabs and Abyssinians ... [were] classified as 'non-Africans', and 'non-Natives'".⁹⁶ Even the Europeans were beginning to concede recognition to Somali claims to Asiatic (Arab) origins. Finding the Somali-inhabited northern province of Kenya too small for a separate

⁹⁵Chilivumbo, "Tanganyika Mono-Party Regime," p. 42.

⁹⁶I. M. Lewis, Modern Political Movements in Somaliland, reprinted from Africa, XXVIII, 3, July 1958; 4, October 1958 (New York, 1958), part II, p. 356. See also Turton, "The Isaq Somali Diaspora," p. 345 and footnote E7 on page 346; Chilivumbo, "Tanganyika Mono-Party Regime," p. 42.

constituency, the Government entertained the suggestion of combining it with another African constituency in the 1956/7 elections. But before taking any action on the proposal, the Government asked the inhabitants for their opinion in a democratic manner highly uncharacteristic of its previous policies but in an obvious concurrence with the Somali ethnic claims. To nobody's surprise the Somalis, who were watchful of anything that might counter their recently gained privileges (no matter that these were largely imagined), unanimously rejected the idea and opted for lack of representation rather than be identified with Africans.⁹⁷

An understandable, but from the point of view of the Somalis unfortunate, consequence of this Somali agitation for Asian status was a growing consternation of other Africans with this inexplicable attitude of the Somalis. Besides this identification with the Asians, which hardly endeared them in the eyes of other Africans, the Somalis bemused everybody by "their proud, reserved bearing and haughty demeanour towards other East African peoples".⁹⁸ With some understatement one European scholar wrote of this African impatience

⁹⁷I. M. Lewis, Modern Political Movements, II, p. 357.

⁹⁸Turton, "The Isaaq Somali Diaspora," p. 326. Needless to say, ethnocentrism was not unique to the Somalis and these reports should not be taken to mean that other Africans did not have particularistic ethnic pride. For the tribal element in East African life see the studies contained in P. H. Gulliver (ed.), Tradition and Transition in East Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

with Somali pretensions in the 1950s as follows:

Africans regard this as typical Somali snobbery, and there is no doubt that whatever tangible benefits may result from their classification as 'non-Natives,... [Somali] honour is at stake,⁹⁹

This African hostility to Somali ethnic pretensions, together with the dismemberment of the Somali nation--both of them outgrowths of European imperialism (in its neo-colonial as well as colonial forms)--constitutes another important element in the resurgence of the feeling of Arab identity and solidarity with the Arabs among the Somalis.

We have previously made passing reference to the anti-Christian feeling which pervaded Somali nationalist movements. This we said was the natural reaction to the simultaneous Ethno-European attacks upon Somali independence and territories. "Nationalist ideals," wrote Dr. Lewis in 1958, "... always tend to be associated in Somaliland with Islamic unity opposed to Christian Government".¹⁰⁰ At the height of the nationalist movement in the 1950s the anti-Christian feeling was translated into a pro-Arab sympathy. Practically all the major nationalist parties in British Somaliland and the United Nations Trust Territory openly played up their pro-Arab sentiments. In 1958 the two most important political parties in British Somaliland (The Somaliland National League) and in the Italian Trust Territory of Somalia (The Somali Youth

⁹⁹I. M. Lewis, Modern Political Movements, I, p. 254.

¹⁰⁰Ibid, I, p. 252.

League) were guided by political platforms "predominantly Muslim in outlook" and were in close contact with Egypt, the spokesman of the Arab world.¹⁰¹ The pro-Arab feeling was heightened by the 1956 Anglo-French-Israeli tripartite upon Egypt following the nationalization of the Suez Canal.¹⁰² In the Trust Territory also "a wave of pro-Egyptian sympathy followed the assassination, in April 1957, of the Egyptian member of the United Nations Advisory Council in Mogadishu".¹⁰³

That the Somalis harboured strong pro-Arab sentiments during the 1950s was understandable because it was only the Arabs who showed unflinching support for Somali independence.¹⁰⁴ Egypt, the most important Arab state, was known for her special interest in and assistance to Somali nationalism.

Since the 1950s, Egypt in particular has been active in this respect, through radio broadcasts in the Somali Language and through the dissemination of propaganda by Egyptian teachers in Somalia and by Pan-Islamic organizations linked with Cairo.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 255; II, pp. 360-361.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, I, p. 256. A national united front of all the political parties in the Trust Territory demonstrated in support of Egypt, the Government sent telegrams to Nasir expressing their support, parties and civil servants went on strike, and even centers were opened for the registration of volunteers and for the collection of donations to Egypt's war effort. The protest in the British territory, however, was not quite as well organized. For an eye-witness account of these events in the Italian territory see, Yunis, *as-Sūmāl*, p. 219.

¹⁰³ I. M. Lewis, *Modern Political Movements*, II, p. 361.

¹⁰⁴ An exception to this tradition can be found in the 1949 United Nations General Assembly vote on the future of the former Italian colonies when, in exchange for Libyan

Egyptian attacks on "imperialism" have not been aimed at the British and French alone, but at "Ethiopian imperialism" as well.¹⁰⁵

Besides sending teachers to man the numerous Egyptian assisted private schools Egypt also gave scholarships to many Somali students to study in Egyptian schools and universities.¹⁰⁶ Most prominent among those who studied in Egypt was one of the foremost leaders of the nationalist movement, Haji Muhammad Husein, a founding member of the Somali Youth League, its president in 1957-58, and the head of a number of other national parties in subsequent years.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Cairo was throughout the period of nationalist movement a safe refuge for a number of political leaders fleeing colonial persecution, who on their return home actively sponsored pro-Egyptian (pro-Arab) policies.¹⁰⁸

The problem of colonial boundaries alluded to earlier came to exercise decisive importance after the gaining of independence by the Somali Republic. The Somali Republic

independence, the Arab states supported Italian trusteeship in Somalia.

¹⁰⁵ Touval, Somali Nationalism, pp. 81-82.

¹⁰⁶ According to Somali students I saw in Cairo in 1976 they were paid preferential stipends which were discontinued only in 1975 perhaps as an austerity measure. Some, however, alleged that this was done because of Egyptian displeasure with Somalia and others maintained that it was removed as part of the campaign to wipe out Nasir's policies.

¹⁰⁷ I. M. Lewis, Modern Political Movements, II, pp. 360-361.

¹⁰⁸ Among those who after a sojourn in Cairo came back to champion closer relations with the Arabs were Haji

(The Somali Democratic Republic as of October 21st, 1969)--formed on July 1st, 1960 by the amalgamation of the former British Protectorate with the Italian Trust Territory--was born with a constitutional obligation to the reunification of the dismembered Somali nation. Reunification of the nation was always enshrined as a highest priority in the platforms of the Somali nationalist parties.¹⁰⁹ With the union of the two independent territories the search for Somali unity was given a stronger affirmation by the concession of constitutional commitment to it.¹¹⁰ The restoration of two of the missing territories proved to be particularly difficult because they were included in neighbouring independent states (Kenya and Ethiopia) who saw Pan-Somalism as a threat to their very existence. The danger they perceived in Pan-Somalism was of two kind: a) it entailed a diminution of "their" territories, and b) it had the potential of encouraging further secessions within their ethnically diversified populations. The third territory, French Somaliland

Muhammad Hussein of the Italian territory and Muhammad Harbi from French Somaliland.

¹⁰⁹J. M. Lewis, Modern Political Movements, I, pp. 255, 257; "Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism," Journal of Modern African Studies, I, 2 (1963), p. 149; Four Power Commission, Report of the Four Power Commission, II, (London, 1949), pp. 10-11; A. A. Castagno, "The Somali-Kenyan Controversy: Implications for the Future," The Journal of Modern African Studies, II, 2(1964), p. 173.

¹¹⁰See Article VI, section 4, of the suspended constitution of the Somali Republic.

(the territory of the Afars and Issas since 1967), was a colonial possession which was bound to achieve its independence sooner or later, as it has done just this year as the Republic of Djibouti.¹¹¹

For three years the young Republic, upon which now devolved the search for unity, tried by diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain, the administering Colonial Power in Kenya, to effect secession of the Somali inhabited territory in Kenya before that colony achieved independence.¹¹² Failing to make headway by this approach, the Somali Government decided to take the whole of the pan-Somali question to the arena of African continental politics. The first opportunity presented itself in May 1963 when the African heads of state gathered in Addis Ababa for the founding Conference of the Organization of African Unity.¹¹³ To their dismay the Somalis found very little sympathy for their cause among the African Heads of state.¹¹⁴ Even Egypt, traditionally the most consistent supporter of Somali nationalism, intimated that her

¹¹¹Even here Ethiopian economic interests in the port of Djibouti and the presence of other ethnic groups in the territory tended to complicate the issue of the territory's unification with the Republic.

¹¹²I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 183-95; John Drysdale, The Somali Dispute (London, 1964), pp. 103-45.

¹¹³Samuel Chime, "The Organization of African Unity and African Boundaries," in Carl Gosta Widstrand (ed.), African Boundary Problems (Uppsala, 1969), p. 71; I. M. Lewis, Modern History, p. 198; Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, pp. 147-49.

¹¹⁴I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 198-199; Castagno "The Somali-Kenyan Controversy," p. 182; I. William Zartman, "The Foreign and Military Politics of African Boundary

assistance could not always be counted upon by taking a wavering and enigmatic position of neutrality.

An inkling of Africa's hostility towards pan-Somalism had been gradually unfolding over the three years preceding the 1963 meeting. In those years the Somali claims against her neighbours were raised at a number of all-African peoples' and non-Aligned nations conferences and were coolly snubbed.¹¹⁵ A "significant factor weighing against the Somali was the hostility aroused by their traditional attitudes of ethnic superiority".¹¹⁶ More importantly, however, the Somali challenge of the legitimacy of Kenyan and Ethiopian boundaries was fraught with complicated implications and was bound to have continent-wide repercussions which other African states could not countenance. Pan-Somalism which was trying to create a state out of a nation divided by colonialism appeared as a dangerous precedent to other Africans who were trying to forge nations out of colonially defined multi-ethnic states. Dr. I. M. Lewis writes thus:

Problems," in Widstrand (ed), African Boundary Problems, p.82.

¹¹⁵ I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 195-98.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 197. Ethiopia, as the only African country which did not succumb to European colonialism, has always been looked up to as the symbol of African independence. The 1935 Italian aggression has also won it universal sympathy. Haile Selassie's international stature, too, did much to enhance Ethiopia's position vis-a-vis the Somalis, who were by comparison an unknown entity.

/The Somali/ desire to move from nationhood to stathood which is the crux of the Pan-Somali aim, runs counter to the process of national unification in other African states. For the general problem elsewhere in Africa is the construction of nations from the poly(ict and polytribal territorially defined states, with their arbitrary frontiers, which are the legacy of colonialism.¹¹⁷

There is one aspect of the Somali quest for national reunification which is overshadowed by the diplomatic (at times armed) dispute between Ethiopia and the Somali Republic, on the one hand, and the Somali Republic and Kenya, on the other. This is the question of spontaneous and popular participation in the campaign for unification, the diplomatic aspect of which the Republic was waging. So far the literature on the Ethiopia-Somalia-Kenya dispute has tended to play down the popular base of the campaign and has mistakenly characterized it as a merely irredentist policy of the Somali Republic. To a certain extent the topic is somewhat outside the concerns of this work, but we shall briefly look at it anyway if only because of its importance for the formulation of any Somali Government's foreign policy and also because of the direct bearing of the Somali search for unity upon the Somali Democratic Republic's membership in the Arab League.

When the Somalis realized in the 1940s that the Four Powers were considering what to do with Italy's former colonies, they hurried into Pan-Somali conferences and soon a

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 196. For a theoretical consideration of the "status quo attitudes" of the African states with respect to the colonially defined boundaries, see Saadia Touval, "The sources of Status Quo and irredentist Policies," in Widstrand

bona fide movement for national reunification was underway. Representatives from all the different territories met in Mogadishu and sent petitions to the Four Power Commission and then to the Secretary General of the United Nations.¹¹⁸ In 1959 as independence for the Italian Trust Territory near Mogadishu was selected as the venue for a Pan-Somali movement meeting for representatives from all the five Somali territories, and the attending members pledged their commitment to the struggle for the independence and unification of all the Somali territories.¹¹⁹ In both the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya and the Ogaden it was the local Somalis who initiated the political and guerilla activities (the so-called "Shifa") against the local administrations, and though these movements partially depended on Mogadishu for the acquisition of or passages of arms to them they have demonstrated their independence of action on a number of occasions.¹²⁰

(ed.) African Boundary Problems, especially pp. 104-108. See also Immanuel Wallerstein, Africa: The Politics of Unity, Vintage Edition (New York, 1969), pp. 76-77.

¹¹⁸ Appendices B (1) and B (2) to The Portion of Somali Territory under Ethiopian Colonization, pp. 57-64

¹¹⁹ Il Corriere Della Somalia, 31st August, 1959 as cited in I. M. Lewis, "Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism," p. 150.

¹²⁰ As early as 1960 and upto the British Government's decision to keep the Northern Frontiers Province in Kenya in 1963 the Somalis of that region were publicly agitating for secession and union with the Somali Republic. For the Northern Frontier Province Somalis' struggle see Castagno, "The Somali-Kenyan Controversy," Passim; I. M. Lewis, "Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism," Passim, "The Problem of the Northern

In the Republic "the eventual union of all the Somalis in the African Horn has been the central plank in the political platform of all the parties both before and since July 1960".¹²¹ Thus no Somali Government could afford to neglect the all important question of Somali unity. In 1962 a government was saved from a parliamentary vote of no-confidence by its strong stand on the question of Somali unification,¹²² and in 1963 this same government was forced against her will by popular demand to break diplomatic relations with Great Britain when the government of the latter country decided, contrary to the wishes of the people in the Northern Frontier

Frontier District of Kenya," Race, X, 1 (London, 1963), pp. 48-60; A People in Isolation: A Call by Political Parties of the Northern District of Kenya for Union with the Somali Republic (London, 1962), a pamphlet which was published by the KFD parties for the 1962 Lancaster House Kenya Constitutional Conference; British Government: Report of the Northern Frontier District Commission (Cmd. 1900), London, 1962; Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, chapter 11; Zartman, "The Foreign and Military Politics," p. 91; Carl G. Rosberg, "Independent Kenya: Problems and Prospects," Africa Report, 8, 11 (Dec., 1963), pp. 3-7, who claims that "the Somali Government appears more willing to seek a compromise solution than the Somalis of the Region". For the movements in Ethiopia and French Somaliland see: John Drysdale, "The Problem of French Somaliland," Africa Report, 11, 8 (Nov., 1966), pp. 10-17; I. M. Lewis, "The Referendum in French Somaliland: aftermath and Prospects in the Somali Dispute," The World Today (London, July, 1967), pp. 308-314; "Somalia; Shades of the Mad Mullah," Newsweek (April 13, 1964), p. 48; See also The New York Times, March 19, 1964 and March 27, 1964.

121J. Contini, "The Somali Republic; Politics with a Difference," Africa Report, 9, 10 (Nov., 1964), pp. 3-8.

122A. A. Castagno, "The Political Party System in the Somali Republic," in J. S. Coleman and C. Rosberg (eds.), Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), p. 548.

Province, to create a seventh province within Kenya out of the Somali inhabited portion of that province. The mass support for the reunification movement was so strong that Prime Minister Egal's pacifist policies appeared as though the government had sold out to the neighbours and was faced with instantaneous parliamentary and popular revolt.¹²³

Whatever the case, by 1963 the idea of African unity based on an all-African peoples movement was going out of fashion in African political circles and was giving way to less idealistic measures. A consensus was quietly shaping up to let sleeping dogs lie, and to maintain the status quo as regards colonial boundaries, and to build a comity of African nations out of the colonially defined nation-states. To most African leaders, therefore, the Somali call for the revision of the colonial boundaries so as to approximate ethnic divisions posed a threat to the kind of order and stability they had decided to sponsor by 1963. Mr. A. Milton Obote, the then Prime Minister of Uganda, spoke for most African leaders when he wrote to his Somali counterpart on March 25, 1963, at the height of the Anglo-Somali imbroglio over the question of the Somali-inhabited Northern Frontier District of Kenya. In a letter general very critical of the

¹²³J. Drysdale, "The Situation in December 1967--Review and Prospect," in Catherine Hoskyns, Case Studies in African Diplomacy: 2, The Ethiopia-Somali-Kenya Dispute 1960-67 (Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, 1969), p. 86; Christopher Clapham, "Ethiopia and Somalia," in Conflicts in Africa, Adelphi Papers, no. 93 (London, 1972), p. 16.

Somali position, Mr. Obote urged the Somali Government to reconsider her stand with regard to the colonial boundaries because "in almost every country in Africa there are minority groups having racial religious or tribal affinities with neighbouring countries".¹²⁴ Pan-Somalism was proving incompatible with the post-independence Pan-Africanism. The Somali Republic became a political pariah, "the odd-man-out in African affairs". And for seven long years she languished in this uncomfortable position of isolation in the arena of pan-African politics.

Then came October 21, 1969. On that day a revolutionary regime militantly committed to Pan-Africanism and the support for the African Nationalist Movements took the reins of state in Mogadishu. By assuming a more active role in Pan-African and Third World politics the new regime pulled the country within a few years out of the isolationist trap it was relegated to in the 1960s. Indeed, in the African affairs of the 1970s Somalia began to loom larger in stature than either of her pro-Western Neighbours.¹²⁵ It was a remarkable achievement.

¹²⁴Quoted in Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, p. 146.

¹²⁵A clear indication of Somalia's growth in the African eyes is the formerly unthinkable split which occurred among the African Heads of State and Foreign Ministers over the Ethio-Somali dispute during the 1973 Organization of African Unity Summit held in Addis Ababa. It is very significant, too, that when the Somali Head of State declared his inability to attend the conference because of an emergency situation on the common border with Ethiopia the OAU Chairman sent a

To be sure, these gains in Africa were not enough by themselves to help the Somalis realize their goal of national reunification. It was one thing for Somalia to come out of isolation, but quite another thing to make good her claims against her neighbours. The old African opposition to territorial changes has persisted. Outside support, diplomatic or otherwise, was clearly essential. This meant a favourable disposition to the Somali cause on the part of the big powers, who because of their global interests became increasingly involved in the confusing tangle of Northeast African affairs. By its commitment to Marxist revolutionary change, Somalia gained the respect of the Socialist camp, but in the process the Western Powers which traditionally regarded it with mere neglect now assumed a posture of outright hostility towards it.¹²⁶ In the circumstances alliance with the West was out of the question.¹²⁷ But for a successful Somali solution to the problem it was necessary that the Western Powers cease to be hostile and be at least neutral on the question of the Somali Democratic Republic's dispute with its neighbours. And with French Somaliland still in their hands the Western Powers could not be antagonized any further. They still had

special delegation to urge him to attend as his presence was considered vital to the success of the meeting.

¹²⁶ As a show of displeasure with the Somali Democratic Republic's leftist policies the United States of America and West Germany cut off aid to Somalia in 1970.

¹²⁷ Even before Somalia turned to Socialism, by the sheer weight of their superiority in population numbers and economic

to be handled with care.

A willing ally and an intermediary to that goal was found in the Arab world, which because of its near-monopoly production of the all important energy product of petrol was now beginning to exercise a significant leverage in international politics.¹²⁸ Their influence in Paris and London was already obvious, and their voice was getting increasing receptivity in Washington D.C. Why not make the Somali cause an Arab cause? The Somali leadership must have reasoned along those lines. Somalia applied for membership in the League of Arab States, and was admitted in on the 14th of February 1974.¹²⁹ Explainable historically, this event is nevertheless one of the anomalies in contemporary Somali political history. As has been seen, the Somalis never made a secret of their desire for closer association with the Arab world. The paradox lies in the fact that a Marxist regime which has displayed Pan-African militancy finally accomplished what successive Somali Governments dominated by clan and religious leaders who were committed to Pan-Islamic brotherhood and imbued with the traditional Somali belief of their descent from Arab sheikhs could not achieve--the inclusion

resources Ethiopia and Kenya always outbid Somalia in their competition for the friendship of the West.

¹²⁸Some feeble attempts were made in the 1960s to win total Arab support without membership but to no avail: See Zartman, "The Foreign and Military Politics," p. 93; Africa Report, 11,6(June, 1966), p. 32.

¹²⁹Somali Government, Ministry of Information and

of the Somali state in the Arab League.

In 1965 when Somalia was at the nadir of its political fortunes Dr. I. M. Lewis accurately assessed the abiding sense of frustration that the Somalis felt, and how despite their brooding they were in no hurry to compromise their independence or distinctive identity:

The moral that, however just the cause, in conflicts of this kind the weak must eventually yield to the strong is one with which Somalis are very familiar from their own traditional political experience. This leads many modern nationalists and educated Somalis to feel even more acutely their vulnerability in the modern world, their present isolation, and their urgent and continuing need for external support. This realistic assessment of their global position, however, ill accords with the exalted sense of independence and intense self-esteem which are such prominent features of the Somali character.¹³⁰

What Dr. Lewis failed to understand (though one cannot really blame him for not acting the prophet), is to what extent the Somalis were willing to go to achieve their pan-Somali goal. Only two years earlier another writer who was also intimately familiar with the Somali problem made an intimation of what the Somalis might do. He wrote:

Somali determination to unite as one state has always been underestimated by foreign observers because of the internal fissures which are so characteristic of Somali society; but, as we have seen, these fissures do not snap a deep, underlying spirit of national unity, which, under severe provocation unleashes considerable emotion. "Real men," they say, "prefer to suffer the anguish of hell, than to endure the pangs of unavenged

National Guidance, Somalia and the Arab League: A Wider Role in Afro-Arab Affairs (Pogadishu, June 1974), p. 35.

¹³⁰I. M. Lewis, Modern History, pp. 203-204.

Perhaps Drysdale was right. Certainly the Somalis have demonstrated that they were willing to go to any length in order to achieve their goal of national reunification. On the pretext of very slender evidence for their Arab connections they have partially compromised their African posture and heritage. Joining the Arab League was a political gamble. Whether, and how much, it will pay off in the long run, however, must remain problematic.

¹³¹Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, pp. 165-166.

CHAPTER NINE

Concluding Remarks

The preceding chapters have shown that Arab-Somali relations have a longevity extending back to the beginning of the Somali people's history, indeed to their pre-history. That the Somalis and the Arabs engaged very early in history in commercial intercourse of mutual benefit was seen to be in part a natural outcome of their geographical proximity, and in part also because of their economic and trade complementarity. The study showed how the economic relations established in the ancient and classical times have led to the cultivation of other ties which grew in complexity and intensity until they culminated at the present time in the commonality of Arab-Somali global economic, political, and cultural interests evidenced by the Somali Democratic Republic's membership in the League of Arab States.

Following the rise of prosperous Muslim Caliphates in Arabia and the immigration of groups of Arabs into Somaliland, the contacts between the Somalis and the Arabs became more frequent and, with the rise of Arab settler communities, also more important. These ties were further strengthened by the conversion of the Somalis into Islam, an occurrence

which gave an added emotional dimension to the strong commercial and feeble ethnic bonds already established. Finally, two events occurring since the beginning of the nineteenth century, namely religious revivalism and alien (Christian) rule, was said to account for the intimate relations which have since developed between the Arabs and the Somalis. In particular, the colonial experience, which divided the Somali nation and territory into five parts, left behind for the Somalis a unique heritage of isolation in African councils. The Somalis' struggle for national reunification was opposed by most Africans who saw this otherwise legitimate cause as a threat to the order of peace and Pan-African amity they had planned for the continent. This African hostility to what they considered as a just cause increasingly estranged the Somalis emotionally and politically from Africa and forced them to seek closer association with the Arab world.

To bring this work to a conclusion we may briefly consider here an argument whose salient points are sprinkled throughout this dissertation. This is our contention against the traditional reconstruction of Somali history which places the cradleland of the Somalis in the north of the Horn and then accounts for Somali migrations southwards in terms of Arab population pressures and superior cultural influences. Our opposition to this reconstruction has been stated many times throughout this thesis, and especially in chapter one where it is more amply dealt with, and consequently we need

not repeat ourselves here. But to briefly recapitulate the conclusions of this work with respect to that reconstruction, the Arabs have had a lasting impact on Somali life. This is prima facie evident and cannot be denied. But it was an impact of a kind different from the hypothesized population and technological pressures which supposedly caused the so-called ethnic movements in the Horn of Africa.

If for the sake of a more accurate historical perspective we discard the old theory, the question is asked, are we left with anything to replace it? The answer is yes, and we can advance some suggestions at this point.

In the first place Arab immigration to Somaliland was never numerically significant enough as to cause any population pressures. Insignificant as it was, however, it led to a slight change in the ethnic composition of the populations on the Somali coasts. This is seen clearly at the two peripheries where the mixed Banaadiri and Zaila^cawi sub-cultures came into being. But this slight concession cannot be extended to the intervening northeastern coast where, according to the older theory, Arab population and cultural pressures were most effectively applied.

Secondly, the Arabs introduced a form of Islam which because of its connection with individual proselytizers was akin to Sufism, the spread of which it later on facilitated. This latter Sufi Islam, introduced before the sixteenth century but widely spread only in the nineteenth and the

twentieth centuries, has been very important for Somali history and contemporary Somali politics because it not only is the particular brand which the Somalis purport to follow,¹ but it is also responsible for the Somalis' claim of descent from noble Arab Sheikhs.²

Thirdly, with Islam and the Arab settlers on the Somali coasts there arrived some Arab cultural elements. These elements, seen most clearly in metropolitan coastal settlements (i.e. architectural styles and techniques, sartorial designs, household implements, foodstuffs and table etiquette, schooling and written literary traditions, etc.), added to the diversification and enrichment of the Somali culture, technologically and otherwise. It has been suggested by some writers that Arab technological influences upon the Somalis, such as more effective weaponry, had facilitated Somali Migrations south- and westwards out from the Horn of Africa. This assertion, however, by our estimation can be verified only by anticipating it.

In a more general sense, Islam and contact with the Arabs may be said to be responsible for the birth of the modern Somali ethnic consciousness and its formulation around Arab-Islamic values. Islam bequeathed to the Somalis a universalism of sorts based on this shared Islamic (sometimes Arabic) heritage, a widening of horizons which ever since the

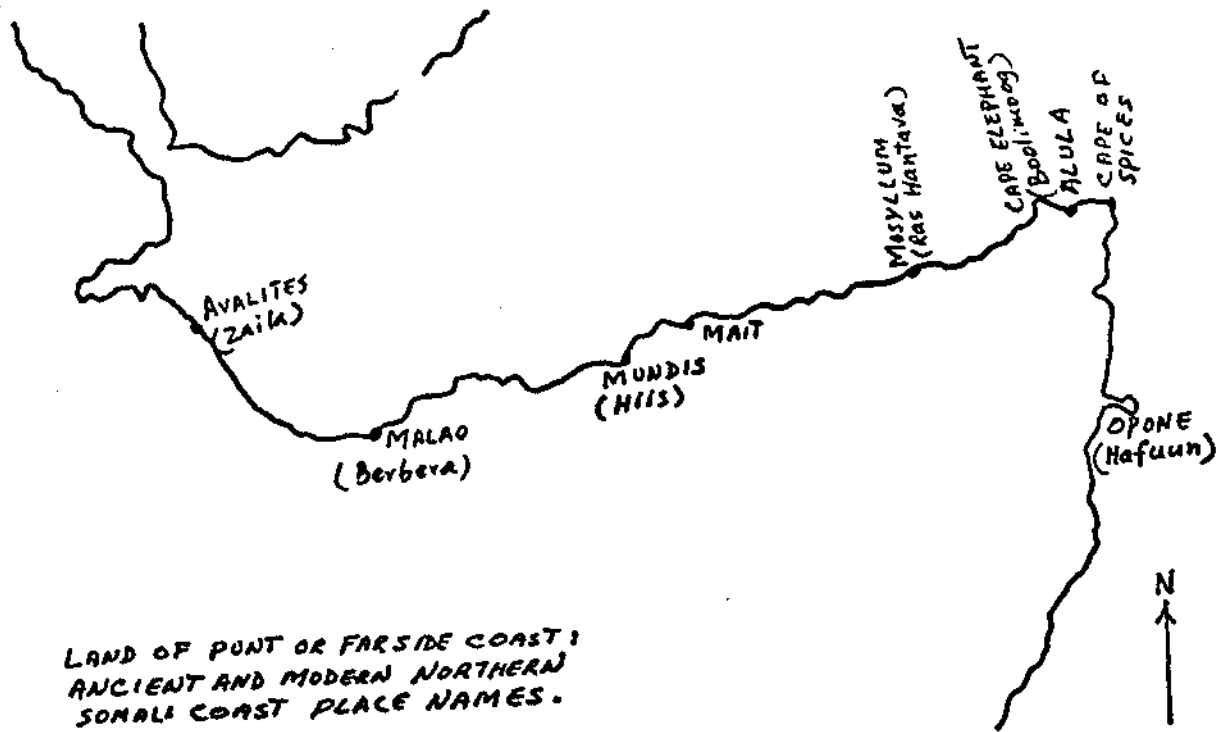
¹I. M. Lewis, "Sufism in Somaliland," also "Sheikhs and Warriors," passim.

²See above Chapter Eight, pp. 246-7, 261-2 and n. 40.

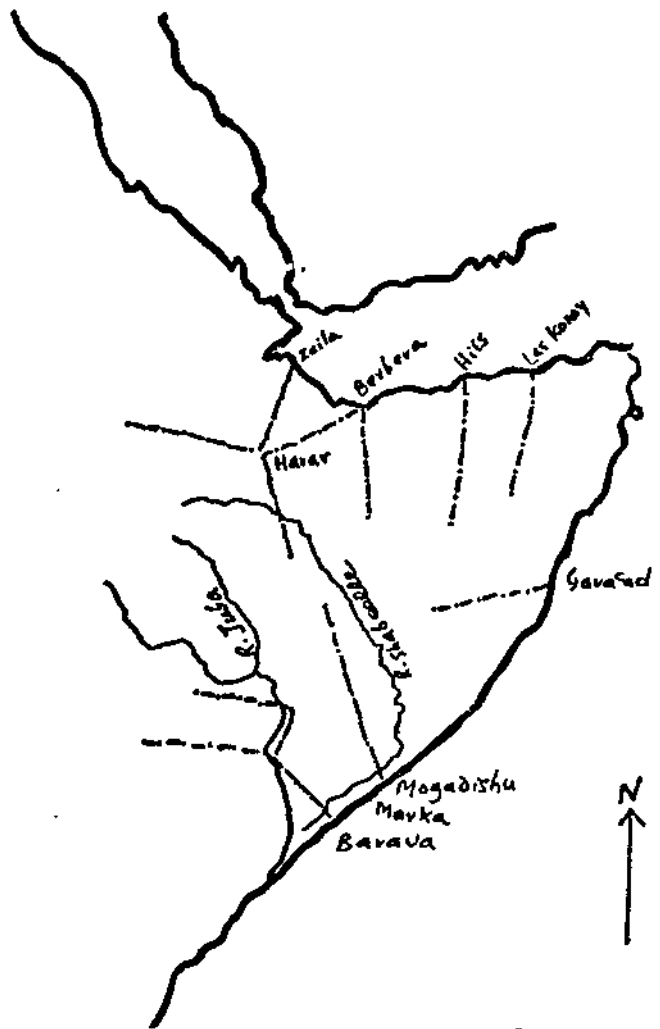
Somalis' conversion has been combatting clan differences. And while the Somalis' enigmatic tendencies towards anarchical divisions have persisted to these revolutionary days, the excesses of pastoral turbulence have been mitigated, if not altogether quelled. Without the universalizing influences of Islam it is difficult to see how the divers Somali clans, traditionally hostile to each other, could have maintained the national unity which they have relentlessly displayed to this day, despite their political disunity, and a century of divergent experiences under different colonial regimes.

Finally, the Arabs figured very significantly (as they still do) in the economy and politics of the Somalis. On the coasts of Somaliland there are numerous ruins of their mediaeval trading settlements. The importance of the Arabs for the development of the trade networks of the Horn of Africa is proven by the proliferation of inland trade routes radiating from and catering to these settlements. Politically, they gave rise on the Banaadir coast to some political structures previously unknown to the Somalis. These structures, as evidenced by the rise of Somali sultanates such as the Ajuran state and the assumption of such titles as Imaam, Islaam, or Islaw by Somali political leaders, have greatly influenced Somali political institutions. In the northwest the example of the Arab-influenced Amirs and Sultans of Adal state was emulated by individual Somali leaders who assumed such Adal titles as Sultan, Garad, Malaag.

etc., and even created hereditary dynasties which in the event could not develop into proper kingdoms or chiefdoms because of pastoral militancy against political centralization. Beyond the noted influences in these four general areas there is nothing else in Somali life and culture, now or in the past, which could be attributed to the Arabs.

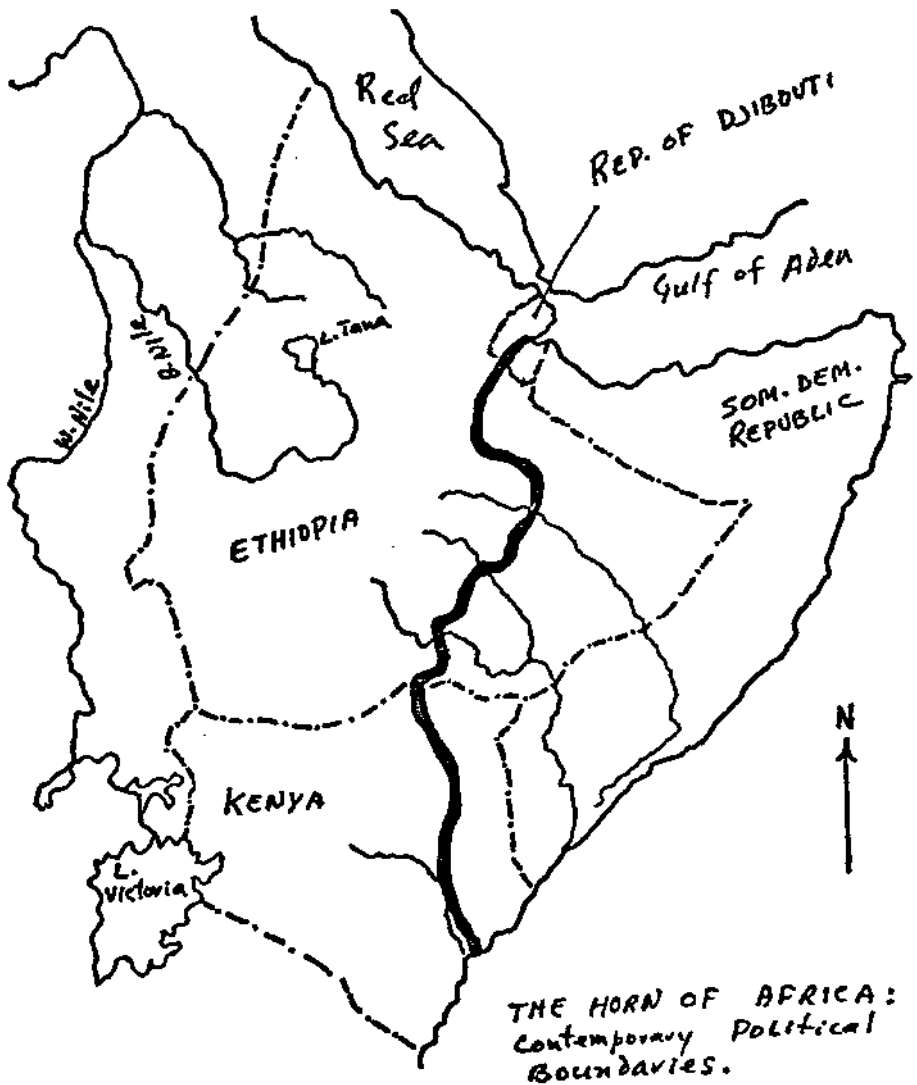


LAND OF PUNT OR FAR SIDE COAST;
 ANCIENT AND MODERN NORTHERN
 SOMALI COAST PLACE NAMES.



TRADE SYSTEMS OF THE
SOMALI PENINSULA

————— Trade Routes



----- International Boundaries

~~~~~ Limit of territory occupied  
by Somalis

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Because of their pastoral wandering and the absence of centralized political authorities the Somalis never developed institutions like the griot-systems of West Africa or the elaborate historical traditions that marked many other societies in pre-literate Africa. This is not to say that the Somalis have no recollection of their past. Some history is preserved as else-where by the memories of the individual participants. After that history passes into folk legend. Some of the major events are given a slightly longer lease to life by commemorative references to them in the most popular cultural medium of the Somali people--poetry. However, even poems are not remembered for long, so that today there is hardly any Somali poem that can be said to be older than 100 years. It is because of this fact that many Somalis believe that poetry, at least as they know it today evolved only about a century ago.

Though through the study of the folk legends and the

surviving poetry much history can be salvaged from anonymity, one must nevertheless be specially careful when dealing with Somali memories of the distant past. Consequently, I have put very little trust in the extant oral reconstructions of the Somali history. The little oral evidences that I used were already recorded or interpreted in the works of Margaret Laurence, I. M. Lewis, Enrico Cerulli, Michele Pirone, Richard Burton, Sheikh Ahmad <sup>C</sup>Abdullahi Rirsh, <sup>C</sup>Ali Sheikh Muhammad, Sharif <sup>C</sup>Aidarūs ibn Sharif <sup>C</sup>Ali al-<sup>C</sup>Aidarūs, and a few others. During my travels through Somaliland I have checked the accuracy of these writers' recordings against the memories of many Somalis in different parts of the country. Though I have gained some valuable insights through these interviews only the following elders deserve mention here for their original contributions to my research:

<sup>C</sup>Abdulli Jim<sup>C</sup>aaale (55 years), Mahaas, Information about the the Ajuran state.

Haji <sup>C</sup>Abdi (in his 70s), Borama. Has an extensive knowledge of Somali genealogies and religious history as well as a general history of the Oromo and the Somali.

Muhammuud Ahmad <sup>C</sup>Ali (around 70), Hargeisa. Has shown strong interest in the study of Somali history, and has provided me information on the history of some of the clan dynasties.

Sheikh Ahmad Waasuge (87 years). Mahaas. Information about the Ajuran and Sultan Yusuf <sup>C</sup>Ali's sultanate.

Sheikh Faatah Gaabow (85 years). Mahaas. The Ajuran state.

Sheikh Yusuf Muhyiddin (in his 70s). Mererey. Sheikh Yusuf provided me much information on southern Somali history, especially on the Ajuran state.

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