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LOWER SHABEELLE IN THE CIVIL WAR

HISTORICAL DYNAMICS OF LAND CONFLICTS IN A SOMALI REGION

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Foreword and disclaimer

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The views reflected in the report do not necessarily reflect the opinion of FAO, EU or NIS and the maps do not imply an endorsement of territorial boundaries.

List of acronyms

AFIS:	<i>Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia</i>
AMISOM:	AU Mission in Somalia
EU:	European Union
HDDM:	<i>Hisbul Disturil Digil-Mirifle</i>
HMS:	<i>Harakada Mujaahidiinta Alshabaab</i>
ICU:	Islamic Courts Union
IGAD:	Inter Governmental Authority on Development
RRA:	Rahanweyn Resistance Army
Shabaab:	<i>Harakada Mujaahidiinta Alshabaab</i>
SDF:	Somali Democratic Front
SFG:	Somali Federal Government
SNA:	Somali National Army
SNG:	Somali National Government
SNM:	Somali National Movement
SPM:	Somali Patriotic Movement
SSDF:	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
SSNM:	Southern Somali National Movement
SWS:	Interim Administration of the South West State
SYL:	Somali Youth League
TFG:	Transitional Federal Government
UNITAF:	United Task Force
UNOSOM II:	United Nations Operation in Somalia
USC:	United Somali Congress

Recommendations

“Salus populi suprema lex esto”

A. *Executive Summary*

1. Lower Shabeelle is the third most populated region of Somalia. This region hosts one of the richest agricultural areas of the country as well as significant proportion of pastoralists. Lower Shabeelle is made up of 8 districts and its capital is Merka. While its irrigated lands have attracted much attention, rain-fed agriculture has also developed, besides pastoralism.
2. The social fabric of the region is very original as it offers the characteristics of a coastal civilisation. It is the result of important migrations from northern Somalia and Ethiopia, which have taken place over the last centuries that overwhelmed the autochthonous population made up of Bantus. While Lower Shabeelle people refer to the clan segmentary model to define their identity, the reality is more complex than this model as people's identity is defined different ways, depending on which clan their ancestor or themselves belonged to when they arrived in the region and which clan has been hosting them for generations. The Digil clan confederation is the best illustration of this social process of integration and identification.
3. Islam developed in this region at a time of great predicament. The main Sufi orders are well represented among all sectors of the population. In the 19th century, they offered a way to build a shared identity beyond clan and social classes. Islamic communities constituted a first successful attempt to build egalitarian social bonds between captives, former slaves, casted Somalis and others.
4. Lower Shabeelle became an important site for the colonial encounter. Italian settlers deprived local people from their best land and launched new cash crops that eventually provided hard currency besides the livestock exports. Colonial regulations concerning land and the relations between customary land management and state laws were not affected by independence and did not change until the early 1970's.
5. From 1975 up to 1990, the state took over the best land of Lower Shabeelle, which was subsequently allocated to well-connected people, cooperatives and firms. Land laws were poorly enforced, which meant that cronies, business people and state officials found ways to acquire farms at the cost of the customary landholding. This did not generate higher agricultural outputs as many bought land just to have access to bank loans that were then used to buy luxury items or for trade purposes. These loans were rarely reimbursed.
6. In 1990 before Mogadishu upheaval, tensions in Lower Shabeelle escalated as many skirmishes opposed the local population and the new settlers. However, those incidents were nothing serious compared to what happened after January 1991. All foreign farms and public properties were looted and land taken over, sometimes by local people and kinsmen employed as militias, more often by Hawiye militias who had come from Mogadishu.

7. The international interventions (UNITAF and UNOSOM II) from December 1992 to March 1995 did too little to stabilise the political crisis; they may have rather fed it as far as Lower Shabeelle is concerned. As a consequence, by 1995, all districts of Lower Shabeelle were subject to the dominance of Haber Gidir militias who favoured at one point General 'Aydiiid. Local situations were diverse. In some areas, local people had a say in their affairs, in others they could only obey, pay taxes and wait for change. Yet, despite the illegitimacy of these would-be rulers, the situation cooled down, bandits and thugs were often arrested or chased away. A superficial normalisation was taking place.
8. While these local administrations did not address the issue of occupied lands, other social processes were at play to help the genuine owners to recover their properties. Haber Gidir long-term residents or traders were often instrumental to mediate between contenders and find a settlement that was not perfect but achieved some results. Slowly, politics also played a role in improving relations between different clans and settling their land issues in a peaceful manner. Improvements were slow but real.
9. No major changes in local administrations occurred until Shabaab took over Lower Shabeelle in 2008. Shabaab invested in this region for obvious reasons: it was very close to Mogadishu and could be used as a sanctuary for its members; the social setting was cosmopolitan and offered many ways to recruit young people; the humiliation faced by many powerless clans could be turned into a willingness to settle scores with more powerful clans; the economic and religious contexts also offered opportunities compared to the central region. This strategy has been successful whichever way one tries to qualify it.
10. Shabaab set up Shari'a Courts that contributed to solve a number of pending land conflicts. Nearly all farms that belonged to private Somali people were handed over to their genuine owners. Basically, farms that are owned by foreigners, cooperative farms and a few farms that belong to firms are still occupied. The explanation for this may be that Shabaab does not want or cannot set up a policy concerning state properties because it needs a state to set up its own choices and priorities. This is an implicit acknowledgement that Shabaab cannot fully rule the region.
11. This normalisation brought about by Shabaab somewhat antagonizes the customary land management promoted by elders or clans of Lower Shabeelle (with differences). Shabaab does not follow customary law but Shari'a, which means that Somali newcomers might settle on a piece of land that is not in use and start cultivating. This is not accepted by clans such as Biimaal. But Shabaab, if in its interest, has been keen to contain and address most of the petty clan confrontations in the region.
12. Shabaab is and will continue to be omnipresent in Lower Shabeelle since it significantly benefits from several clan conflicts that are not yet resolved by the Somali authorities based in Baydhabo or Mogadishu. The setting up of a federal entity, the Interim South West Administration (aka South West State in this report) has yet to alter the parameters of the situation on the ground. A weaker Shabaab behaves more opportunistically in the face of local grievances and may not maintain order as it previously did. Expectations on federalism are mostly rooted in a very clannish understanding of power allocation in the region.
13. The current situation is therefore very fluid, both politically and militarily. Shabaab may retreat but it is far from sure that the authorities in Baydhabo and Mogadishu might be able to fill the vacuum and consolidate peace

while carrying out a reconciliation process between Haber Gidir and Biimaal, currently the main confrontation. AMISOM and the Somali National Army (SNA) are fighting Shabaab with some success but the latter is losing the battle for heart and mind among its own population while AMISOM has already lost popular consideration.

B. Recommendations

1. Most of what has been achieved in terms of handing over land to their genuine owners has been done through social mechanisms, not state enforcement. Lower Shabeelle is not uniformed and homogenous. This calls for a differentiated approach, not only because the land conflicts do not follow the same paradigms but also because the ability of the state to be seen as a legitimate regulatory agency many not always be accepted as a starting point.
2. An elementary point should be made first. There has not been any reconciliation process in the region since 2012, when AMISOM was able to free the Lower Shabeelle main cities from Shabaab. This is counter-productive to the extreme as Shabaab is rebuilding itself using and manipulating land and clan conflicts everywhere in Somalia. The Somali Federal Government and the Baydhabo Administration should invest politically in this reconciliation. This will take time and should include people on the ground as a priority, not MPs or diaspora people commuting from Nairobi to Mogadishu. These latter might be useful only if they accept to spend time within their community.
3. One may envision a two-phase process. First of all, reconciliation should take place at the very local level and the Baydhabo and Mogadishu Administrations should provide an environment conducive enough to have all issues freely discussed and a settlement found. A second step will be to somehow capitalise on all local reconciliations at the region level and determine how both Administrations could act to strengthen this mood and initiate collaborative economic programs involving former foes. This raises the question of the division of labour between the Somali Federal Government and the South West State in that complicated process.
4. There is no doubt that a symbolic apology towards the people of Lower Shabeelle (especially those wrongly being called “minorities”) has to be made by the highest authorities in Mogadishu and Baydhabo. The logic is to recognize the damages this section of the population suffered and convince it not to keep playing the Shabaab card. The government needs to regain the support of the population and all possible steps should be taken to reach that outcome. Lower Shabeelle people were not the only ones who paid a high price to the civil war and, to a certain extent, they share some responsibility in it but Somali leaders have to make their mind on how long this war might last if they deny obvious political alignments between segments of the population and Shabaab due to the continuation of land and clan conflicts.
5. As the ground situation does not currently allow for implementing any policy, the two Administrations should start thinking about what they could achieve in Lower Shabeelle, were Shabaab presence significantly weakened. Any policy will require state institutions to manage it and for the time being there are no institutions capable of doing that. There are at least four tasks that could be carried out at this time.
6. The first one is to have a better understanding of the ground situation. This report findings need to be cross checked and further data should be collected to have the most accurate and detailed vision possible to discuss a menu of options. One could look in three different directions: de-escalating the Shabaab conflict (which means understanding why people support the Jihadi organisation, while they do not share its agenda); mapping the productive land in Lower Shabeelle with regards to the land organisation that existed at the time prior the civil war; and identifying the site of potential conflicts and their seriousness.

7. The second duty should be a smart review of the Somali land laws in interaction with cadres from the region. The aim of this exercise would be to revisit the legal system to understand how to strengthen transparency, limit corruption and also associate local people to any process of land allocation. Those involved in this work should be flexible enough to think about how to accommodate the current reality, in which peace and reconciliation are top priorities, legality, and the mobilisation of the farmers to produce more and better. It will also be important to look at the unintended consequences of any new law and to consider the fact that its validity would be beyond Lower Shabeelle.
8. The third duty is to look at who is doing what in Lower Shabeelle. This report avoided quoting names but at some point Somali authorities will have to reach out to people who took over foreign farms and state farms. Engaging those people does not imply putting them under arrest or expulsing them from the farm but a dialogue has to take off in a sensible manner. A menu of options has to be articulated to clarify the condition of those who settled without any clearance and started cleaning the land and farming.
9. The last task is to look at which kind of division of labour the Baydhabo and Mogadishu governments should accept to productively manage the situation in the future. Due to the current abyssal lack of working institutions in both locations, humility and realism should prevail (a too reasonable dream to come true).
10. The whole concept of regaining control of foreign and state farms should be discussed in a framework in which the two Administrations would allocate new resources to the agriculture sector. Many occupiers have already understood that their status is too precarious to make their living on farms or land that does not belong to them. Often they legally bought a farm that is nowadays their own. If resources are available, it won't be too difficult to bargain over the departure of an occupied land in exchange for support to increase land productivity in their own farms.
11. Coercion won't work for two reasons. Illegal occupiers may intend to fight and Shabaab will have the best opportunity to reassert itself in the region, which would not be good news for anybody; many of those settled illegally in these farms have connection with powerful clans in Mogadishu and therefore could quickly mobilise dozens of trained fighters. Therefore, coercion won't be a solution.
12. The Mogadishu and Baydhabo governments should be more transparent vis-à-vis the public in dealing with those sensitive issues. Civil society associations and elders should be part of the conversation not only because they may have good ideas but also because they need to understand the legal stakes and the rationale of the government's behaviour. Trust will need quite an effort to be built.
13. Donors are in a difficult position to act decisively while hardly physically present in the country. The agriculture sector is vital for the country and needs to be taken care of after many years of neglect. Land conflicts have to be solved in a way that strengthens both peace and authorities' legitimacy against Shabaab. Legal confusion is extreme and the whole set of existing laws and regulations should undergo significant overhaul, the sooner the better.
14. Technical expertise will be more than necessary to unfold many issues that sound so obvious to many Somalis (starting with the uniqueness of their bananas, the best in the world). However, to be peace compliant, this

expertise should be transparent vis-à-vis all stakeholders, the federal and regional governments but also the elders and civil society organisations. This will require further efforts and a change of habit for some of the donors but building trust has a price.

Introduction

Studying land conflicts in Lower Shabeelle over the civil war period raises many different questions and this introduction intends to reflect on them. Time, space, population and state-making are all parameters that should be rooted in any conversation on land policy during and after the civil war period.

The first question is to make sense of the period. As it will be developed in the next chapters, the civil war has not been homogenous in terms of duration. Although actors kept being the same, their legitimacy (or lack of) evolved and the way they got perceived by the lay population changed overtime: many local parameters interfered with more central political dynamics and this should remind readers that much more grounded research has to be carried out before a much clearer understanding of the period could be framed. For instance, although many districts of Lower Shabeelle kept being ruled by the same people after 1994, there seems to have been a point by which the rulers were not legitimate but no more labelled thugs as before: the militias fever was down and managing cities or areas was done in a longer term perspective which implied that keeping some kind of law and order became a genuine and permanent task and duty. No political conclusion could be drawn from that period, especially when compared with the years under Harakada Mujaahidiinta Alshabaab (hereafter Shabaab or HMS). The same remark also applies when Siyaad Barre time is concerned. Most people interviewed for this study kept talking about one regime –identical in time and space - that went from “scientific socialism” to “structural adjustment programs” or that was applauded at once to be hated at last but not by everyone and not for the same reasons. This also means that many genuine aspects of the way the state took over land and promoted (with donors support) new land policies have been forgotten or kept in the margins: cooperatives for instance are mostly described as a politicised way for individuals to take over land from their (clan) legitimate owners while the former were set up under public scrutiny and benefited from services and equipment that often were looted in the very early days of the upheaval, not an excuse to have forgotten these features.

A second remark concerns the political geography of the state. Lower Shabeelle is adjacent to Banaadir and well connected to the capital city (at least compared to other big cities of south central Somalia). Yet, the commoditisation of land followed different patterns in the region due to specific colonial settlement policies and social settings. For instance, in many regards the land property structure is very similar in Afgooye region compared to Merka district. Yet, land issues and conflicts are notably different and rebuilding trust among new and old settlers will follow very different pathways. While land confiscation or state appropriation was a pillar of the socialist policy, it was not perceived the same way in the 1970's compared to the 1980's. In both periods, the state (with often donors support) promoted itself as the best development agent that cultivated distrust against private initiatives, either from the farmers themselves or from those servicing the farms. Yet, in the 1980's, agriculture was the new economic frontier of a regime that had lost much of its popular support after the failure in the Ogaden War, the collapse of the industrial sector and the emergence of armed fronts in northern Somalia. Land appropriation by the state and allocation to firms or cooperatives were increasingly contested and seen as building up a demagogic system of booty attribution that rewarded political appointees, kinsmen, and opponents who had been bought back. This retrospective vision of Somalia's history should not be accepted as such despite its very popular endorsement. Such a difference of perceptions also sheds light on the taste for land at the beginning of the civil war: looting equipment, taking over properties and selling them to the “new

riches" were seen as an appropriate answer to a decade of deprivation of rights and social status, more than access to land.

A third remark needs to be borne in mind. Lower Shabeelle is a cosmopolitan region that encompasses social groups that reflect a long history of migrations and contacts with long-distance civilisations. Lower Shabeelle also was marginal in all political disputes that took place after the Second World War. One knows for sure that the *Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia* (AFIS) shifted its interests to the Somali Youth League, made up of politicians whose constituencies belong to major pastoral clans and dismissed its first interlocutors and allies who were settled between the Shabeelle and Jubba rivers. This political and tactical choice had many unplanned consequences and, among them, the tendency to look at clans settled in that region as politically irrelevant despite their demographic weight and the agricultural wealth they could produce. The months of anomaly Lower Shabeelle faced in 1991 and 1992 would not have occurred had it been populated by the pastoral clans that were leading the fight on both sides.

Nonetheless, history is never simple and it would be naïve to adhere to the discourse on the poor, unarmed and innocent clans who were victimized by Hawiye clans (or using an understatement, people from the Central Region). Indeed, many people were once defenceless and suffered horribly from the militia's violence but people belong to clans and to social classes and use the leverage they had (either building family connections or buying people) to regain leverage. Long before Shabaab took over the region, the power lines were somewhat blurred due to individuals who due to their life history, their wealth and their friends were much more powerful than their kinsmen.

While the Islamic Courts Union did not affect much the ground situation – it did not rule for long-, Shabaab undertook a radical social reform by empowering clans and people who were marginalised under the first decade and half of the civil war. It needed allies and wanted to appear a different organisation compared to the clan factions or the Islamic Courts local people had had to cope with. To a certain extent, Shabaab has been successful to the extent that in 2016 still many people in Lower Shabeelle would not fight for the Somali government in Mogadishu or the federal state, the South West State, Lower Shabeelle is part of. More important for Shabaab, this complex web of populations provides hope that conflicts could erupt at any time since the two governments just mentioned have little taste or ability to decently rule the area and Shabaab has been a mastermind in using local or parochial conflicts to root its organisation and recruit people at the time it eliminated potential opponents. The cosmopolitan character of the region that should have been one of its advantages has become a bloody liability due to the poor ability of the Somali government to reconcile its own population and defeat an unpopular Jihadi movement.

A last point deserves a cautious thinking. Over the two decades, outsiders – foreigners and donors - have somewhat cultivated a neo-traditionalist understanding of the Somali society, despite the fact that most social and political dynamics are eminently modern. Concerning land issues, some may support the view that indeed clan ownership is the solution and is a driver of peace. The research does not support or oppose this opinion. It merely points to the consequences of any decisions. For instance, if all allocations of land are put in questions because they were decided under Mahamed Siyaad Barre, then this calling into question should be extended to any locations in the country, especially in cities: chaos usually does not bring peace. Readers should be aware that too simple views are simplistic at best and would undermine the very institutions that need to be built to address land issues and solve conflicts. Lower Shabeelle is without any doubt one of the most challenging regions in that regard. Yet, how would it be possible to stabilise the capital city when a nearby region keeps being torn by war? A question the Somali government and the donors fail to answer until now.

The following paragraphs detail several important aspects that are at the core of this report. First, the plural dimension of the civil war has strong implications on the way its actors could be described, and its rational analysed. Lower Shabeelle is also very peculiar in Somalia, even compared to other agricultural areas such as Middle Shabeelle or even Lower Jubba.

1. Interpreting the civil war

The understanding of the Somali civil war is framed for most observers within a narrative that put clan competitions as the key undercurrents of the political and social dynamics that triggered the civil conflict. Journalists, aid workers and academics provided us with plenty of evidence attesting that indeed clan allegiance was central to explain major events. The late Ion Lewis, a leading scholar on Somalia, published in 1989 an article that promoted an acronym as the cornerstone of any analysis: MOD (meaning Mareehaan, Ogaadeeni, and Duulbaahaante) summarising the agnatic identity and alliance of Mahamed Siyaad Barre that had monopolised power and resources for too long according to other clans¹.

The armed factions that were set up from the late 1970's onward adopted names that all promoted a sense of Somali nationalism² but soon were accurately described as a weak alliance of clans militias who split again and again up to 2002 when they numbered no less than 23 at the Mbagathi conference. Let us remember for one second the (mostly Hawiye grounded) United Somali Congress that never existed as one group, the (Daarood but actually Ogaadeeni) Somali Patriotic Movement that split as soon as opposition grew in the countryside in Lower Jubba and the older Somali National Movement and Somali Salvation Democratic Front which social constituency did not correspond well their names.

Yet, such a consensual vision is simplistic in many accounts. The SNM and SSDF at one point in their history gathered different sectors of the opposition to Mahamed Siyaad Barre rule and genuinely wanted to challenge a regime in Mogadishu, not merely a clan. Hawiye people were in the SNM leadership and gave up only in 1987 for reasons that deserve a deeper analysis than only clan differences. In the last years of his regime, Mahamed Siyaad Barre used all tools to split its armed opposition into clan fiefdoms in order to weaken their appeal and provoke infightings. He was successful but too late for him to stay in power. So, clan competition was not built, or only built, on primordial identities but also on specific agencies to reframe the moral economy of the armed opposition.

These remarks do not provide a real analysis but intend to illustrate that if indeed clan competition was framing the new political arena in the civil war, it was more often than not the outcome of complex political and social processes in which the role of the state could not be underplayed.

Furthermore, by focussing on identity politics, observers did not consider many other aspects. Somalia's economy in 1980 was somewhat dual and schizophrenic: sometimes a pure command economy that had lost its ground, sometimes an ultra-liberal one inspired by the Chicago boys. This political economy played a major role to reconfigure the social

¹ Ion Lewis, "The Ogaden and the fragility of the Somali segmentary nationalism", *African Affairs*, vol. 88, n° 353, 1989.

² Daniel Compagnon, "The Somali opposition fronts: some comments and questions," *Horn of Africa*, XIII, n° 1 and 2, January-June 1990.

realm and frame grievances that eventually helped armed groups to gain strength and legitimacy. The entire connections between informal and formal economies were redefined and participated into a new division of labour that brought also some new social tensions and expectations of a better economic growth³.

Land was one of the major issues that appeared at the core of the contest in the 1980's, much beyond the refugee settlement policy enforced in what is now called Somaliland⁴. It had not been the case for long years. In the 1960's for instance, the various governments and their officials did not see land as a major asset and showed a "benign neglect" - as Ken Menkhaus wrote - towards farming land. Even in the 1970's, the new military regime first entertained a socialist vision and the few land laws⁵ that were passed were inspired by a socialist doxa and the assumptions made by international development agencies that thought that customary forms of landholding did not provide the security of land rights considered essential for agricultural investment and that the solution lay in programmes of registration and titling to produce proprietary rights.

However, whatever the original intentions of the Land Law of 1975⁶, the insecurity that resulted from its implementation posed perhaps the greatest challenge yet to the future of smallholder agriculture in Somalia. By eradicating the legitimacy of customary land tenure and making state title the only legal means of claiming land rights, this law tipped the balance of land tenure claims in favour of those with privileged access to the mechanisms of registration⁷. Even though people today mention the greed of state officials, nothing much happened in the 1970's mostly because the regime was still focussed on fighting Ethiopia and coping with its own defeat. This changed dramatically in the 1980's as western donors and international agencies poured huge resources in the country, which helped strengthening a new economic sector. This growth had many unintended consequences on migrations and conflicts.

Was therefore, as Lee Cassanelli and his colleagues may suggest⁸, the Somali civil war a resource war, a war for land⁹? What has been happening in Lower Shabeelle (and in Jubbaland) and is somewhat described in this report may provide some additional flesh to this thesis: big commercial farms were taken over by militias and military entrepreneurs and became the rational for continuing a war. Politicians and elders from these Somali regions have denounced land grabbing in recurrent ways over the last 25 years, even though their motives have also been questioned.

Today, nearly a quarter of century after the beginning of the civil war, one of the many hurdles the new Somali state should address is to tackle this land issue in a difficult context. First, despite AMISOM military victories, one can hardly pretend that the Jihadi insurgency has lost ground in Lower Shabeelle (and Jubbaland) except a few enclaves where security is highly fragile. This grim situation is also made more intractable since many Shabaab's recruits are originated

³ Allan Hoben and alii, *Somalia: A Social and Institutional Profile*, Boston, African Studies Centre, March 1983.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *A Government at War with its Own People*, Washington, January 1990,

<https://www.hrw.org/report/1990/01/31/government-war-its-own-people/testimonies-about-killings-and-conflict-north>

⁵ Especially the 1975 Land Law that provided the legal framework for land policies until 1990. But one should also quote the Law n°40 passed on 4th October 1973 on Cooperative development and so on.

⁶ Already under AFIS, the land was defined as a sette property. But the state had to provide land to its citizens according to their need.

⁷ Catherine Besteman, "Individualisation and the assault on customary tenure in Africa title registration programmes and the case of Somalia", *Africa* (London), vol. 64, n° 4, 1994.

⁸ Catherine Besteman and Lee Cassanelli (eds.), *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: the War behind the War*, London, Westview Press, 1996.

⁹ Catherine Besteman and Lee Cassanelli (eds.), *op. cit.*, 1996.

from the region. Second, while the ground conflicts have evolved over time and the return to a pacified situation achieved in many areas, the legal situation is still unaddressed and a limited number of clashes have changed themselves into a major confrontation with dozens of people killed that put into question both the legitimacy of the central government and the newly established federal state. As many actors foresee a possible clarification of the terms of the occupation of farms, the conflict is getting more violent and benefits to the Shabaab insurgency that has all interests to fuel it.

This reality is congruent with many studies that illustrate how land rights and managements express power relations between groups, or/and people and the state. Studies carried out elsewhere on the African continent also proved that the commoditisation of land and the conflicts it provokes produce a stricter definition of those with legitimate claims to resources, that is, group boundaries become more exclusively defined. This salience is illustrated in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire which produced a narrative on autochthony versus migrants that is similar to what can be heard in certain (Biimaal) quarters in Lower Shabeelle.

Yet a cautious reminder should be borne in mind, especially among foreigners who sometimes develop an exotic vision of Somalia. Customary law and authorities should be subjects to questions and assumptions. For instance, extensive research has proven that "Customary tenure acts neither as an obstacle to investment... nor as an inalienable safety net for the poor"¹⁰. Customary law is not always congruent with justice: it expresses a balance of forces between different constituencies at a certain time. It can evolve fast if the situation requires and proves inefficient in front of certain problems.

Therefore, one should not forget the broader picture. The multi layers of the Somali civil war cannot be only captured by the notion of resources war¹¹ in the same way identity politics was not the sole or main driver for people to rebel. Historical processes have their own complexities and it would be simplistic to not consider other dimensions and the actual dynamic of events that contradict much this sole explanation. Fighting took place in many areas where the economic expectations were low and reasons to wage an endless war were often rooted more in a certain moral economy of the conflict than in practical and tangible interests: sometimes status is more important than resource.

2. Lower Shabeelle within Somalia

The civil war in Somalia took many various forms according to the period and the place considered. Although interconnected, those episodes should be valued differently because they took place in regions that had a specific history and negotiated their insertion within the state (in that sense Lower Jubba is dramatically different of Lower Shabeelle) and where different military actors were competing for power, sometimes access to land and other resources.

While Lower Shabeelle historically has been part of Banaadir and was integrated in the political economy of the state from the early Italian presence until now, the Jubba Valley remained marginal to Somalia's political economy throughout the first three quarters of the 20th century. Only changes happened after 1982 and were going to materialise at the onset of the civil war.

¹⁰ Philip Woodhouse, « African enclosures: a default mode of development », *World Development*, vol. 31, n° 10, 2003, p. 1717.

¹¹ The notion of resource war is most often based on unwarranted assumptions about the relationships between resources, conflicts and governance and simply lacks empirical evidence. See Jeroen Cuvelier, Koen Vlassenroot, Nathaniel Olin, « Resources, conflict and governance a critical review », *The Extractive Industries and Society*, vol. 1, 2014,

What makes Lower Shabeelle history in the civil war original is also the fact that local competitions often echoed others that took place in Mogadishu. All major political events produced consequences in Lower Shabeelle and fighting there also translated often in new balance of forces in Mogadishu. In that sense, Lower Shabeelle is absolutely different of Middle Shabeelle: the plurality of stakeholders, the social setting and the very peculiar history make the former unique. The emergence of an Islamic insurgency confirms further this state of affairs.

Lower Shabeelle was the site of important events, sometimes even turning points, in the civil war. Let us give a few examples. The collapse of the alliance between the three armed movements SNM, USC and SPM took place in Afgooye in February 1991: from that moment, it became clear that political antagonisms would be expressed by clan alignments and armed factions' monopoly on the political arena. The political failure of UNOSOM became manifest a few months after October 1993 when clan factions fought in Lower Shabeelle main cities and General Mahamed Faarah 'Aydiid forces won. When Islamic Courts emerged as powerful actors in South Mogadishu mid 1998 at a time the Banaadir Administration collapsed, their first move outside Mogadishu was to Qoryooley, the hometown of one of their leaders, Yuusuf Mahamed Siyaad Indha 'Aade. Today, early 2016, Lower Shabeelle also illustrates the current ambiguous military situation: while most district capitals are "controlled by AMISOM and the Somali National Army, the truth is that Shabaab still controls most of the territory.

But Lower Shabeelle brings also another series of specificities. It is the most populated of the 18th administrative regions of Somalia – allegedly above 1.2 million inhabitants - and one of the richest in terms of agriculture potential though it still hosts a fair number of pastoralists. Its farming development predates Italian colonialism and was connected to the expansion of the Zanzibar Sultanate and the supply of international markets. Slavery developed, as local manpower was limited and could not respond to market demands. Italian colonialism had eventually to negotiate with local clans and managed through coercion to establish commercial farms that deprived local inhabitants of their best lands while mobilising new technologies and cash crops beyond cotton. After independence, especially from the 1970's, Lower Shabeelle provided the easiest access to land to those interested to start farming, either cooperatives or companies.

Moreover, Lower Shabeelle has been the site of many globalising dynamics of the last centuries, in terms of religious and Sufi expansion, and commercial agriculture and connections with the outside world from the Portuguese to the Sultanate of Zanzibar and Oman. It also hosted two important kingdoms, Ajuuraan and Geledi ones that shaped the political economy of the whole region up to the arrival of Italian colonizers.

The 19th century has been a time of drastic changes: Sufi orders developed at a time the populations were facing recurrent wars and environmental incidents and were looking for a protection against a changing economic order that benefitted to some while altering the livelihood of many. It is actually interesting to compare this period of the 19th century with the last two decades: at that time, Islam faced incredibly fast transformations in the practices of the believers and offered a way to cope with the hardships of the moment brought by political competitions and wars. While most of the 20th century could be described as the reign of secular politics in that region, the last two decades witnessed brutality against most of the population and an insecurity that prepared the ground for radical movements such as Shabaab. More grounded research would offer an alternative explanation to the behaviour of some sections of the population: Shabaab recruited indeed many youth and may have indoctrinated them but one can also state that people joined also the Jihadi group because they had to settle score with many and Shabaab was just a tool in that moment. Many incidents

that occurred after 2008 just proved this point. Certainly, Shabaab growth in Lower Shabeelle expresses one side of a creeping citizenship crisis that has been resolved until now only in favour of the great pastoral clans.

3. Land conflicts and the building of a new state

By placing land management under the institution of chieftaincy, the colonial state intensified competition among the various incumbents of traditional leadership roles and centres for control of land and its resources. The fixing of territorial boundaries over which traditional authorities were made trustees greatly reinforced the link between political authority and authority over land. These land conflicts constitute sites of debate over the social meaning of property and the place of the past in contemporary struggles over governance and the distribution of resources¹². These also reveal processes of social exclusion and deepening social divisions and class formation and are deeply implicated in the shaping of nation and citizenship across Africa¹³.

Competition over land in Africa is not new but has become pervasive and is associated with deepening social differentiation among land-users. Similarly government programmes of decentralisation that entail the demarcation of new or amended districts have tended to create or resurrect rivalries among traditional authorities and to enable such authorities to capture the benefits of decentralised forms of management.

As alluded to in a previous section, the Somali independent state was not very concerned by land policy. Yet, different processes transformed the economic and political landscape from the mid-1970's and converged to intensify the competition for land. Agricultural land became more valuable in relations to other sources of investment and speculation. The collapse of the relations with the Soviet Union due to the Ogaden war signed the end of most of the industrial sector in Somalia. Years were needed to replace plants and buy new equipment. In the early 1980's, the Saudi ban on livestock exports meant that earnings from that sector collapsed. High inflation rates encouraged also investment in durable assets. And eventually, the abolition of price control on grains and the spiralling demand for fruits and vegetables in urban centres became also significant incentives to buy land.

The shift to the West in the Cold War meant also a return of international institutions that campaigned for a more "rational" development policy. Foreign aid especially in the farming sector was too big to be ignored either in terms of farming facilities or bank loans to expand agricultural land. Overseas remittances and the increasing inequalities of revenues in the urban society accelerate the process of class formation and therefore the interest to invest in commercial farms.

Especially after 1979, the growing concentration of state powers among a limited sector of the population had many implications. Some who were excluded from political power had opportunity to accumulate wealth as far as it did not come directly from state resource. Dir, Rahanweyn, and Hawiye wealthy people could easily invest in the agricultural sector based on the assumption that their wealth would not create new political aspirations. This system amplified in the 1980's for at least two reasons: corruption and nepotism developed into a system where even low-middle class people

¹² Sara Berry, "Debating the land question in Africa", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 54, 2002, p. 640.

¹³ Catherine Boone, "Property and constitutional order: land tenure reform and the future of the African state", *African Affairs*, vol. 106, n° 425, 2007.

could get property titles without fulfilling the legal conditions. The authoritarian nature of the regime and the "routinisation" of coercion also meant that eviction of people from their land was not seen as a major breach.

In the 1980's, the urbanisation of the Somali society grew even faster than before, notably because of the growing differences between livelihoods in the countryside and the main cities and insecurity. This process intensified regional migrations in the country and created new consumption demands or grievances that impacted the country natural resources. In the very last years before the outbreak of the civil war in southern Somalia, the situation was getting out of hand. While land appropriation required a number of legal steps and checks and balance, the whole system seemed to split into autonomous agencies: staff at the ministry of Agriculture could over rule certain decisions, elders and local administrators were bought for a pottage of lentils and the banking sector had lost even the will to check its loans were rightly directed if not reimbursed. One should remember this period because structural adjustment programs failed recurrently but no one in the international community wanted to take the lead to start asking simple questions about the accuracy of figures at the central Bank and a corruption that had emptied all rules and regulations¹⁴.

The violence that erupted throughout the first years of the civil war had deep roots in the contempt the populace was kept in the last years of the regime: inequalities were growing steadily and the only option left was to get into an informal economy that either eventually benefitted to the regime or was providing the means for armed rebellions to open new frontlines in the country. The key issue for the new state in Somalia is to think deeply about this history of misappropriation and marginalisation and find a better way to reconcile people and relaunch a land policy that could respond to different challenges, either in terms of security, social status and food security.

4. Conclusion

To a large extent, the post 2012 Somali state is the heir of the Mahamed Siyaad Barre regime. During the 1960's and 1970's many African states were encouraged to modernize their agriculture and introduced new land policies. These were premised on the notion that customary forms of landholding did not provide the security of land rights considered essential for the agricultural investments and that the solution lay in programmes of registration and titling to produce proprietary rights. In Somalia, these policies did not lead to the expected increase in agricultural investment and productivity but tended to exacerbate conflicts¹⁵.

As Pauline Peters notes, even though in the late 1990's the new land reform policies claim to take on board land policy as a pro-poor tool, the call for more transparent and accountable forms of land administration and management, the need to boost agricultural production and productivity, there is mounting evidence that the land that has been treated as customary by generations of users is being appropriated by governments and other agents.

Over the past decade, large tracts of land, significantly always watered land, has been acquired by foreign governments, corporations and investment companies in generally poor countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The role of foreign investors must not obscure the centrality of national agents, government officials, political authorities and powerful private

¹⁴ Carl D. Ekstrom, "Budgetary chaos and evasion: the case of Somalia", *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol.16, n° 7, 1993, pp. 1053-1070.

¹⁵ Pauline Peters, "Conflicts over land and threats to customary tenure in Africa", *African Affairs*, vol. 112, n° 449, 2013.

investors in those deals. This is only one further episode within a longer history of land appropriation by national governments of land under “customary tenure”.

The interests of African governments in facilitating land deals include the loan and aid packages that often accompany land leasing, private return in terms of fees or more indirect benefit from foreign investments. Most African governments find it impossible to provide the necessary complementary investment (such as infrastructure) in agriculture without foreign funding. Yet, the actual processes do not often meet those hopes¹⁶. The response by agencies like the World Bank to emerging reports of displacement and dispossession of land users has been a Code of Conduct supposed to discipline big land deals and the Principles of Responsible Agricultural Investments. Unfortunately, these principles have often proved weak in the face of powerful economic and political interests.

This description reflects one danger ahead for the new Somali state. Easy deals on agriculture may repeat what we already witness in the fishery sector. Despite lip services paid to the rights of its own people and the international virtuous regulations, some top officials may find agricultural land an easy resource to entertain international (not to say Gulf) interests. If this study is right, they should know that war will be the real price of those deals, neither economic growth nor rural development.

¹⁶ Lorenzo Cotula, Sonja Vermeulen, Rebecca Leonard and James Keeley, *Land Grab or Development Opportunity? Agricultural Investment and International Land Deals in Africa*, IFAD 2009, http://www.ifad.org/pub/land/land_grab.pdf

Chapter one

A cosmopolitan social setting

Described as one of the most prosperous regions of Somalia, Lower Shabeelle is the third most populated region after Banaadir¹⁷. Agriculture has been its main economic pillar for centuries: the region supplied the Zanzibar Sultanate and the Southern Gulf in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries. As soon as Italians were able to secure their new colony, they started an agricultural colonisation in the region that deprived population of their rights but also contributed to build the needed infrastructure to supply Mogadishu and Italian markets. Beyond basic foodstuffs, Lower Shabeelle provided a large part of the country's cash crops (e. g. bananas). The Italian colonisation after several indigenous attempts also developed an irrigation system that is still functioning, although a large part of the farming is on rain-fed land. To a large extent, the post-independence period was until the early 1980's a period of decay for Lower Shabeelle. It was only reversed when the liberalisation policy in agriculture, generously sponsored by international aid, created new opportunities at a time livestock exports went into a deep crisis due to the Saudi ban. The regional capital, Merka, was also a major Somali industrial centre at independence but did not cope well with the hurdles created by the diplomatic choices of Mogadishu in the Cold War.

Until 1974, Lower Shabeelle was not an administrative region *per se* but part of Banaadir that included also Middle Shabeelle. Nothing else expresses better the deep human and economic connections that have existed between these three pre-civil war regions (Banaadir, Middle Shabeelle and Lower Shabeelle) that faced different fates in the civil war and nowadays are parts of three different federal entities. Yet, while Mogadishu was the capital city and hosted all sorts of people, Middle Shabeelle owned a much simpler social fabric since the population there is divided between Bantus (mostly Shiddle) and Abgaal (Hawiye). In that regard, Lower Shabeelle is much more cosmopolitan and its population reflects a long history of migrations and settlements from the Gulf (mostly on the Coast) and what is today Somaliland and Ethiopia. Some of the Bantus settled there are the heirs of slaves who were bought in what are today northern Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya. In that sense, Lower Shabeelle may embody a change of paradigm that some Somali scholars advocate: focussing much less on the pastoral reality and much more on the farming and urbanisation process¹⁸.

A reason for Lower Shabeelle not to be treated as a strategic asset for Somalia is certainly linked to these features as analysed in details in another chapter. Agriculture was not considered a major resource or important activity both for symbolic and practical reasons among the Somali political elites who originated from great pastoral clans from central and northern Somalia. None of the most politically important clans was settled in Lower Shabeelle and to a large extent the political control on the region was often perceived as a "natural" consequence of its proximity with the capital city. At least, the civil war put in question this apparent obviousness, though Lower Shabeelle was affected by all military dynamics taking place in the capital city.

¹⁷ Most people would certainly agree that Lower Shabeelle is the second most populated region in Somalia but the politically correctness – or simply facts – states that it is the third. See UNFPA and Federal Republic of Somalia, *Population Estimation: 2014 Survey for the 18 pre-war regions of Somalia*, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/population-estimation-survey-2014-18-pre-war-regions-somalia>

¹⁸ Ali Jimale Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*, Lawrenceville (NJ), The Red Sea Press, 1995.

In this chapter, a presentation of the social background of Lower Shabeelle is provided with attention being paid to the changes that occurred after the civil war. The most striking feature common to the different historical periods is that this region has always been a zone where newcomers settle and get involved in farming. These migrations have shaped the social fabric for centuries: the existence of the Digil clan family is the clearest expression of that historical process as explained later. Throughout the colonial period, the state organised the migrations - largely for taxation purposes or in search for manpower – and promoted commercial farming in the countryside at a level that neither Ajuuraan nor Geledi kingdoms had achieved. This had strong implications on the social setting (especially on the former slaves' social identity) and also built a habit of authoritarian interventionism in the agrarian world that was not challenged after the independence.

The logic of settlement and the management of clan relations have been quite different from other areas where pastoralism or agro-pastoralism is the main mode of production. Irrigated agriculture and the coastal economy brought qualitative differences in the inter-clan relationships that can allow comparing this region only with Lower Jubba (though differences are substantial). A point that is often not considered seriously enough is that Lower Shabeelle hosts also agro-pastoralists who move seasonally on the borderland of the region with Middle Shabeelle and Baay. This economic reality also feeds another -more customary - paradigm of land conflicts, between pastoralists and agriculturists. They happen often and elders are not shy about this long history of small clashes. However, no one is very concerned since they are most often resolved without escalation.

Islam has also been a crucial component of the social fabric of the region. Although an Islamic presence was noticeable more than a millennium ago, the way it grew was different according to the historical moments. The coastal civilisation certainly provided the first important Islamic centres after the 12th century. It developed also in relation with political power (Ajuuraan theocracy could qualify that moment). In other periods, its growth was completely decentralised and helped the most destitute parts of the society to cope with oppressive authorities. In the last two centuries, its role has been important and most often embodied in Sufi orders (sing. *Tariqa*, plu. *Turuq*). It developed an overall sociability that contributed to creating deep bonds between large sectors of Lower Shabeelle residents beyond clan allegiance and other social hierarchies.

The disruption provoked by the civil war and the sharp competition both at inter-clan and intra-clan levels had dramatic effects on the social fabric of the region. Emerging new Islamic movements tried with some successes to develop their own understanding of Islam based on a *Salafi* vision of the religion and an ambitious political agenda. Yet, ideological differences do not translate so clearly into social behaviour. Only Shabaab was willing to violently confront the Sufi beliefs while other Salafi movements were less systematic in their proselytism and more reluctant to affront popular religious practices at a time they had to cope with more existential enemies. Whether the population openly confronted these views or not, there is no doubt that for most of the people in Lower Shabeelle, Sufi orders kept being the backbone of their religious identity and references.

War always creates migrations, either forced as some groups left their cities and went back to their traditional clan territory (*deegaan*), or voluntary as individuals coming from the bush were looking for more hospitable places to settle. To a large extent, this reflects the way Somalis got settled in what is today Somalia: they were not autochthonous people and moved repeatedly to escape defeat or a leadership they could not accept. Lower Shabeelle history is built on recurrent episodes of new settlements that occurred through war or peace. What is somewhat paradoxical in today Lower Shabeelle is the discourse on autochthony among people who are all – except a few Jareer lineages – migrants

whose ancestors came from Somaliland and Ethiopia. Often Digil elders are the most sarcastic about this rhetoric since it negates the very rational Digil history is built on: integrating new comers in existing communities and building bonds rooted in the new livelihood. While the political dimension of those migrations deserves scrutiny, what is at stake is the way people settle in new places, the changes they bring to the way of life of the long-time settlers and their attitude in the face of the social rules of the region.

1 A brief description of Lower Shabeelle

Lower Shabeelle has been part of Banaadir ("Place of ports") up to 1974: this name already showed that the knowledge of the area was mostly confined to the coast and to the main ports that were Mareeg, Mogadishu, Merka and Baraawe. It is only in the modern period that the region took its present name associated with the Shabeelle River, the Webi Shabeelle¹⁹.

Lower Shabeelle River enters Somalia near Beled Weyne and meanders about 640 km before terminating in a swamp about 30 km from the Indian Ocean. It is 14 km far away from Merka and proceeds to the sea for around 300 km until turning itself to marshland after Balle in Lower Jubba. The annual flow of the Shabeelle River is estimated at 1,800 million m³ and the monthly flow ranges from a low of 10-20 million m³ in January and February to a high of 385 million m³ in September and October. Figures concerning the Jubba River are three times higher²⁰.

The region can be divided into two main areas. First there is one coastal area (*deeh*) of sand hills. Some of them are sterile, move because of the wind and constitute a major ecological problem for the region for quite a long time: they are called *ba'aad* (sand) or *'arro-'ad* (white land). On the immobile sand dunes, *'arro gaduud*, acacias and small vegetation grow spontaneously and form a grazing area used by the herds during the rainy season because there is no malaria carrying mosquitoes or tsetse flies (*gindi*) inoculating the trypanosomiasis (*gol*) that infects the river banks. On the other flank adjacent to the hinterland (*dheh*), sorghum and kidney beans can be grown during the same period. The second zone is made up of clay laid down by the alluvia. This area, called *dhoobey* or *'arro madoow* (black land), has a great value for agriculture and is mostly near the riverbanks. However, this land is partially under the level of the river and is susceptible to flooding.

The Lower Shabeelle region borders a third zone that belonged to the old Banaadir region. This zone, *buur* (hill), is further in the hinterland. This part of the land is full of stones with small prickly trees. This area is mostly used for herding camels and goats. The most prominent hill is the one of Buurhakaba (located in Baay, outside the region) that is 200 m high.

The geographical features of the region have determined for a long time the dominant modes of production as well as the limits of clan territories. For instance, Wa'daan and Geledi near Afgooye have delineated their lands using the river as a boundary. The same applies for Jiiddu and Tunni near Baraawe. The Biimaal, settled in the Merka district, have divided their territory into strips going from the sea up to the river. As it is traditionally asserted, every Biimaal *reer* has access to the three waters, from the sea, from the well and from the river. Of course, these boundaries have been altered by colonisation and purchase of land in the post-independence period as well as the irrigation networks.

¹⁹ See also the description provided at www.landinfo.no/asset/2736/1/2736_1.pdf.

²⁰ Peter Conze & Thomas Labhan (eds.), *Somalia: Agriculture in the Winds of Change*, Saarbrücken, EPI Verlag, 1986, pp. 93-114.

Penetration in the hinterland has been a slow process mostly because of the sicknesses “caused” by the river. Malaria, trypanosomiasis, and tuberculosis are endemic near the river and have decimated populations and livestock in the past centuries. For that reason, people either avoided settling near the river or, at the other extreme, found safe haven there especially during the colonial time as the police was reluctant looking for “delinquents” in an area infested by such serious parasites.

Administratively, the region is divided into eight districts, named by their respective district capital: Merka, Baraawe, Qoryooley, Awdheegle, Sablaale, Kurtunwaarey, Afgooye, and Wanlaweyn. Merka is a district as well as regional capital. Hereby indicated is a list of the most important clans in every district for the current period. This list does not take into account the recent comers (from 1991 onwards) but quotes the old-settled clans or clan segments. The presence of Daarood communities in the region is still a contentious argument. Old Daarood communities were settled in major coastal towns (Afgooye, Merka, and Baraawe). There were also a few other groups settled in the countryside, mostly in the 1980's. Most escaped at the time of the civil war and very few are back despite significant improvements in clan families' relations.

Naming can be a very political exercise and Lower Shabeelle is no exception to this rule. For the author, Bantus, seen as an ethnic group (*Jareer*), constitute without any doubt the most numerous group of the region. Nevertheless, they won't appear in the following list because they “traditionally”²¹ belong to certain lineages of Somali clans: they claim to be Biimaal, Jiiddu, Tunni and so on. The Lower Shabeelle Region has been often identified with the Biimaal. This is a mistake based on the fact that this latter clan is the most numerous in Merka district. If any group could claim a majority in Lower Shabeelle (what for?), it should be the Digil who clearly outnumbers any other group, either the Biimaal (even adding some Dir clans) or the Hawiye.

Therefore, there is a strong ambiguity in the list, rooted in the social fabric of the region, which differs from most of the other places in Somalia. For instance, the *Gibil 'ad* (“white skin”, i.e. descendants of people coming from outside, mostly Arabs who settled centuries ago in the coastal towns) are considered in Merka as an independent group. In Baraawe and Afgooye, they may be seen as part of a Digil clan, at least by some sections of the population. As described later in this chapter, clans in Lower Shabeelle look more like confederations of clusters of different origins than nice segmentary and genealogical units. Virginia Luling made this very clear in her seminal study of the Geledi²². Keeping in mind all these qualifications, the list appears as follows.

Merka district: Dir/Biimaal, *Gibil 'ad* including the important Reer Maayo), Jiiddu, Hiraab (Sheekhaal, Haber Gidir, Haber Gidir, Abgaal, Murusade), Dir/Qubeys, Dir/Sure, Majeerteen/'Usmaan Mahamuud, *Jareer*. The town, like all towns in Somalia, is mixed and most Somali clans are represented.

Afgooye district: Digil/Geledi, Hawiye/Hintire, Hiraab/Mudulood/Wa'daan, Digil/Garre, Hiraab/Mudulood/Abgaal, Hiraab/Murusade, Hiraab/Haber Gidir, Rahanweyn.

²¹ A tradition that became paramount only with colonial times and the slowly enforced prohibition of slavery.

²² Virginia Luling, *Somali Sultanate. The Geledi City-State over 150 years*, London, Haan, 2002.

Baraawe district: Tunni, *Gibil 'ad*, Jiiddu, Hiraab. There were also two Abgaal sub-clans (Harti Abgaal, and Wa'isle), Haber Gidir, Biimaal, and Sheekhaal. Most of them were integrated in the Tunni sub-clans up to the modern time. For instance, Haber Gidir/'Ayr/Yabadhaallo families when they arrived in the late 19th century became parts Tunni/Da'afaraat.

Qoryooley district: Digil/Jiiddu, Digil/Garre, Digil/Bagadi, Hiraab/Hawaadle, Hiraab/Haber Gidir/'Ayr. To these communities were added in the late 1970s refugee camps whose clan composition is as follows. Camps 1 & 2: Garre, Degodie, Karanle, and Ajuuraan. Camp 3: Ogaadeeni. One should also keep in mind the Sheekh Banaaney religious settlement founded in the 1950's where around 8,000 Rahanweyn/Liisaan are settled.

Awdheegle district: Digil/Garre, Digil/Bagadi, Digil/Dabarre, Dir/Biimaal.

Wanlaweyn: Digil/Shanta 'Aleemood, Hiraab/Abgaal/Daa'uud, Hiraab/Murusade/Fool'ulus, Hawiye/Galje'el, Digil/Garre and Rahanweyn. After the civil war, the number of Haber Gidir expanded because they provided the core militias to secure Ballidoogle airport.

Sablaale district: This district was set up in 1975 when the Somali government settled thousands of people there. Initially the population was made up of Digil/Tunni, Digil/Jiiddu and a few Rahanweyn. But one has also to consider the *Dan-Wadaag*, i.e. the people who settled after the disastrous drought in 1974 in Central and Northern Somalia. Among them, one should quote: Haber Gidir/Saruur, Haber Gidir/'Ayr, Haber Gidir/Duduble, Isaaq, Dhulbaahaante, Mareehaan, and Ogaadeeni.

Kurtunwaarey district: The district was created in 1975 when the *Dan-Wadaag* refugees were settled there. Initially, the population was Digil/Jiiddu, Digil/Garre, Digil/Iroole, Digil/Dabarre, and few Rahanweyn families (from Hariin, Eelaay, and Liisaan sub-clans). To this old-settled population, one should add the *Dan-Wadaag*: Duulbaahaante, Haber Gidir/Duduble, Haber Gidir/'Ayr.

Due to the classic patterns of migration, the settlement of certain groups created opportunities for relatives to visit the area and often to join (*ka tirsan*, i.e. part of the clan). It explains why minor settlements could appear after one or two generations as significant ones. This pattern is not new: it has for centuries shaped the identity of the Lower Shabeelle Region. It is often at the root of many land conflicts: land is provided to families scattered among a local clan but after a couple of generations, those families have grown substantially and request greater land and may even question their *ka tirsan* status.

2 A vibrant coastal civilisation

The population settlement in the Lower Shabeelle region could be drawn according to two different migration patterns. The first one is the coastal civilisation that is well documented for a number of Somali cities. Trade with the Arab peninsula, Iran, as well as India and China developed very early and brought to Somalia people from Hadhrami, Iranian, Indian or later Portuguese origin. These lineages are known through different names, Reer Hamar, Reer Merka, and Reer Baraawe. In this report, although one may have to qualify from time to time, they are called *Gibil cad* ("white skin").

However, they were not the first inhabitants of the region but they mixed to various extents with the original population as well as the newcomers during the last millennium²³.

Merka was already mentioned by the Arab geographer Al-Idrisi (1099-1166) who lived in Palermo that was at that time one of the main cultural and commercial Mediterranean centres²⁴. A Chinese geographer, Fei Hsin (1436), described a town near Mu-ku-tu-shu (Mogadishu) called Chu-pu that could correspond to Merka. And in this latter town, several clans are the heirs of these contacts between foreign civilisations and what is now Somalia. This aspect is also very important for the religious dimension of this civilisation: Islam developed quite early due to the relationships with Arabia, i.e. in the eighth century. Of course, this Islamisation was limited to the coastal towns and expanded to the countryside very slowly. Arab travellers let us believe that Berbera was pagan in the 9th century and that Sayla' only had a few Muslims in the 11th century. In the 13th century the chronicle of a travel undertaken by an Arab historian Yaqut (1219-1229) signalled that the population in coastal Banaadir was very superficially Islamized. The oldest mosques in Mogadishu were built in that period. Islam developed at a later stage thanks to the migrations from Northern Somalia and the late development of Sufi orders in the 19th century.

Political events also played a crucial role in the settlement of foreign migrants. After the collapse of the Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (Ahmed Gurey, "The left-handed") offensive in the mid-sixteenth century, many Hadhrami drifted southwards in the hope of establishing new positions of authority for themselves. It is not difficult to imagine that they served as religious counsellors, legal experts and tax collectors in the Ajuraan administration that was by that time controlling Banaadir.

Merka and Baraawe do express, despite diverse contacts with the foreign world, the same deep synthesis of different cultures. One can highlight it considering the oldest clans who claim to be the "traditional owners" of these towns. Merka traditionally belongs to the twelve *kofii* (literally "hats", but it means here clans) and not to the Biimaal, as it is so often believed, confusing the town and its hinterland. Six are *gibil 'ad*, six are *gibil madoow*. Marriage was traditionally prohibited between them up to the modern time. The town itself expresses this political geography, with each of these clans being mostly settled in one specific area.

The Gaameedle are known to be the ones who ruled the town in the pre-colonial time. They were allied to the Ajuraan who controlled the region for two centuries before the Biimaal and the Geledi took it over. The origin of this clan (as they have reformulated their social structure using the Somali segmentary system) is unknown but legends say that they were Christians from Portuguese stock and previously called Hamdani. Elders from the Gaameedle say that they come from Hadhramaut (Yemen).

The Duruqbo are divided into two, the Reer Ogey and the Reer Kubar. The former, the oldest one, is said to come from Aqaba, near Mecca. The latter are the descendants of the Shanda section of the Reer Baraawe, who went to Merka about 13 generations ago to solve a clan problem and settled there. They are said to come from Oman. A key Somali

²³ One may consider two main migratory moments: the Shirazi migration (people came from Persia and especially Shiraz from the 8th century) and the Arab moment when the supporters of Ali bin Abu Talib moved to the East African coast and helped building an Afro-Arab civilization that emerged in the 12th and 13th century. See Scott Reese, *Renewers of the Age. Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2008.

²⁴ The following paragraphs follow closely Hassan Osman Ahmed, *La Citta' di Merka, I Biimaal e Il Dominio sulla Costa Somala. La Prima Colonizzazione Italiana del Benaadir ca. 1800-1910*, Naples, PhD Dissertation, 1994.

religious figure belongs to this clan: Sheekh 'Ali Maye (d. 1917) who founded the Ahmediyya *tariqa* in Merka and spread it into Southern Somalia. The Duruqbo are almost all traders in Merka.

The Shanshiya pretend to descend from 'Abdirahmaan bin Kof, a close disciple of the Prophet. According to Cerulli, they are relatives of the Jid'ati who were one of the 12 clans that formed the ancient Arab federation ruling Mogadishu between 900 and 1250. They originated from the North of the Arab Peninsula (Iraq or Syria) and migrated to Somalia after a stay in Hadhramaut. Traditionally they were the main traders in Merka importing especially clothes from Arab countries and India.

The Ashraaf may have come from Bassorah in Iraq through Hadhramaut in the sixteenth century. They first settled in Shaangani, a neighbourhood in Mogadishu and members of their community moved to Merka in the eighteenth century after a strong disagreement between the two branches (Ashraaf ba Hasan and Ashraaf ba Alawi).

The Haatim claim to have come from Yemen and settled in Baraawe 600 years ago. They also settled in Merka in the 18th century. Their community is divided into three, the Haatim based in Baraawe, the Haatim Taib settled in Merka whose ancestors were from Northern Yemen and the Haatim Yahuud, who allegedly are part of the Ethiopian Falashas.

The Sheekhaal are a religious lineage linked to Khalif Abu Baker as-Sadiiq, the first Khalife who succeeded the Prophet in 632. The main branch (Reer Faqi 'Umar) is divided into five segments. The head of one sub-lineage, Sheekh Aw Qudub is buried in Somaliland in Sheekh between Berbera and Bur'o and his tomb is the place of an important pilgrimage. Two segments, Aw Cali and Aw Hasan went to Southern Somalia. The Sheekhaal Loobage are called Martille Hiraab (guests of the Hiraab) because they live among them. The Aw 'Usmaan Gendershe have founded a village, Gendershe, located 20 km north of Merka. Although the other segments got "Somalised", the Sheekhaal Gendershe have still an Arab complexion. They are traders in the main towns of Banaadir. In Gendershe, there is the tomb of another very important regional religious figure, Sheekh Aw 'Usmaan Gerweyne, which pilgrims used to visit.

The *gibil madoow* could be described as follows. The Reer Maanyo claimed to be from Persian stock, when Cerulli studied them. Their tradition explains that they came long before the other Merka communities. When the Ajuuraan took over the region, they used to kill anyone not speaking their language. However, when they arrived in Merka they were very surprised because the local language was so different and the "indigenous" people ate fish. So, the Ajuuraan decided not to kill these people and gave them their current name: Reer Maanyo, ("people from the sea"). In 1990, they did not mention anymore their Persian origin but referred to it in their four divisions. The Haaji pretended to have come from Ethiopia and to be Ogaadeeni; the 'Umar claimed to belong to the Garre; the Hasan to be Sheekhaal; the Abaale were the only ones to claim an Arab origin from Yemen.

The Shukureere, whose name comes from *shubto ku reer* (silence on its origin), are an enigma. Some people claim that they come from a lineage of a Biimaal sub-clan called Saleebaan. Before the civil war, some of them claimed to be Murusade. They are petty traders. An alternative explanation is rooted in a saying "Shukureere shay Biimaal" (i.e. Shukureere belong to Biimaal as they are Jareer)

The Ahmed Nuur claim to belong to the Sheekhaal Gendershe. They form a very small community, present in all coastal towns of North-Eastern Africa. Before the civil war they were also settled in Hamar Weyne, in the 'Abdalla-Shiddey area. They were known as big merchants.

The Kafaari are craftsmen and are considered as Midgan by other Somalis. They are a section of the Biimaal/Sa'ad. They are traditionally blacksmiths near the fish market in Merka but now more often mechanics and drivers.

The Junji are traditionally blacksmiths and shoemakers. Some also prepare hides and skins. They also work as porters, masons and carpenters.

The Biimaal are of course the main clan of the Merka district. They may today be the majority of the population in town. However, their urbanisation is recent and dates more or less back to the colonial time. The Biimaal Sultan got the right to inhabit Merka only in the late nineteenth century through an agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar. Up to now, the main urban Biimaal area is located at the outskirts of Merka.

There is no need here to repeat an equivalent list for Baraawe. However, an important conclusion can be drawn from this description. The urban reality is an old one and has established strong bonds between the inhabitants. These links are rooted in common history, a dialect, and the same religious pilgrimages. As such they do not concern all the inhabitants at the same time but they constitute a supra-clan identity that make people identify themselves with the town, without giving up their clan identity. A very good illustration of this situation is the feast of the first day of the year. All inhabitants are involved not through clan lines but through areas of the town again putting more emphasis on the residency (especially in the modern time, when urban settlement no longer fits with clan) than on clan identity. The first of the year, that is the last day of the Hagaa season is called *Nayruus* and sounds like the Persian name for the same date, *Nowruz*.

There are similar celebrations in Qoryooley and Afgooye. As will be described at a later stage, Islam is not the only culture of the area and numerous social rituals might be linked to other sources, including pagan ones. These feasts seem to be related to an agricultural cult. Witchcraft has always been an important dimension of the religious culture of this region, since it has been channelled through the *turuq* or spirit cults like the *Mingis* or Zaar Bori (also well spread in Khartoum, Tigray and North-Eastern Sudan). And the political competitions in the 19th century were often translated in a competition between magic powers, more than armies.

This coastal social setting could be compared to the Swahili civilisation. It shaped the urban identity and structured the international commercial networks that developed early with Somalia. It was also important for the spreading of Islam in the whole area, since these first settlers were often more knowledgeable than the nomads in reading the Holy Quran and discussing the *Sunnah* (the tradition of the Prophet). Both aspects (religion and trade) were crucial in the sense that they helped connecting the Somali hinterland to the international economy and cultural trends through the trading posts that Merka, Baraawe and Mogadishu were for centuries²⁵.

However, the history of Lower Shabeelle relies also on another dynamic that is more important in terms of demography and economy. Merka and Baraawe inhabitants, like the first Swahilis, were not used to travelling in the hinterland. They built commercial relationships with the strong clans of the hinterland who were the only ones able to take goods up to the main commercial centres like Baardheere or Luuq and bring back ivory, cotton and grains to supply the regional

²⁵ See Scoot Reese, *op. cit.* 2008.

economy in the nineteenth century, whose centre was Zanzibar. So, attention should now be paid to the various population settlements that took place up to the modern time.

3 *The hinterland migrations*

A second logic of migration is linked to the river Shabeelle itself: people moved southwards following the riverbank, and looked for land where they could settle. The expansion of the Somalis (and Bantus) followed this pattern to a large extent and brought into the region different new populations that are now organised through clans. One may sum up very quickly the main events of settlement in the region, taking into account the fact that the port cities themselves were mostly kept aloof from all these changes.

One can start with the establishment of the Ajuuraan theocracy around 1500. Very little is known about the original people of the area, except that the region was not ethnically Somali. The first chronicles (mostly Arab's) focussed mainly on the towns or ports, not on the countryside and do not bring much evidence about the indigenous rural population, which was Jareer. Interviews mentioned connections with the Shiddle from Middle Shabeelle but even if true, this does not fully answer the question.

The first well-documented event in Lower Shabeelle is the domination of the Ajuuraan that may have been at that time more a conglomerate of Hawiye clans than the proper group that bears this name today. They dominated a large portion of Southern Somalia, a triangle whose extremities were Qallafo in Ethiopia on the Upper Shabeelle River, Mareeg on the Indian Ocean Coast and the Jubba River in Southern Somalia.

To this people are attributed a great variety of technological marvels: large stone wells, systems of dikes and dams for irrigation along the Shabeelle, huge houses and fortifications of stone. One should add one supplementary achievement when looking at the current situation in Somalia: the Ajuuraan were able to impose a regular system of tribute on their kingdom since they controlled the critical watering sites and river crossings but also the trade roads. Taxes collected from nomads, farmers, and caravan traders provided the basis of their wealth and power.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, various contenders started challenging the hegemony of the Ajuuraan. The Abgaal took over the hinterland of Mogadishu; the Hawiye assumed power in Merka region for 34 years before being taking over by the Biimaal for a short while; the Sil'is/Guurgarte settled near Afgooye and the Galje'el and Baadi 'Adde (Gugundhabe) controlled the mid-Shabeelle. All these changes were a consequence of huge migrations that took place at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The clans, known today as Digil and Rahanweyn, invaded the region. The Eelaay occupied the tract of Baydhabo and Buurhakaba. The Geledi settled near Afgooye. The Tunni were augmented by new arrivals in the hinterland of Baraawe. In less than a century, the complete political map of the region was changed. Through warfare, clientelism and genealogical assimilation, the Biimaal, Tunni, and Geledi acquired political dominance in the districts of Merka, Baraawe, and Afgooye. Hawiye clans were either displaced or made politically subordinate to the new clan confederations along the Shabeelle River.

This period is crucial in the history of the region because it shaped the political power and the economy among the most powerful clans of the Lower Shabeelle region. The Geledi and the Wa'daan allied to get rid of the oppressive Sil'i domination²⁶. The alliance was not only military. They defined their respective territories and in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Wa'daan accepted the rule of a Geledi sultan coming from the Gobroon lineage.

The Gobroon lineage of the Geledi appeared in the 17th century and was capable to unify the continuously squabbling sub-clans of the Geledi. By the beginning of the 19th century, the Gobroon had turned their religious prestige into political power and were recognised as the rulers of an increasingly centralised and wealthy state. Using slave labour obtained through the coastal ports, the Geledi shifted their economic base away from its traditional dependency on pastoralism and subsistence agriculture to one built largely on plantation agriculture and the production of cash crops such as grain, cotton, and sesame.

This alliance between Geledi and Wa'daan has been enforced and respected until now. The Wa'daan kept neutral in the civil war between Abgaal and Haber Gidir, endorsing the attitude of their Geledi neighbours, though by genealogy they are part of the Mudulood supporting (theoretically) 'Ali Mahdi. The Tunni were already in Baraawe but got substantial reinforcements from former clients (*shegaad*) of the Ajuuraan and even former slaves. This episode makes sense to their internal division between the Shan Gamas of Baraawe and the Tunni Tore based in the hinterland of the port.

For the Biimaal, the changes were also crucial. They arrived in Lower Shabeelle in the 17th century after leaving the Sayla' area in the aftermath of a war against their Dir kinsmen, the Gadabuursi. They then settled for a short time among the Abgaal/Daa'uud where is now Middle Shabeelle. They had a hard time with the Ajuuraan and fought several wars against them. Although their legends indicate that they took over from the Ajuuraan, historical evidence suggests that a short period (34 years) separated the collapse of the Ajuuraan and the taking over by the Biimaal. Through the destruction of the Ajuuraan rule, they created a Sultanate, whose Mahamuud Abroon Mahamuud was the first one of a long line, after he led the offensive against the rulers of their region. The Biimaal may have settled in Lower Shabeelle through an agreement with the Gendershe Sheekhaal.; interestingly enough, they settled without antagonising other clans, though they eventually fought twice against the Geledi.

The Jiiddu were divided under the Ajuuraan into one group located North of Baraawe and a second one North-East of Awdheegle. The struggle against the Ajuuraan united them and they became for decades the strongest clan in the countryside through an alliance with the Biimaal, which gave to the latter a *shegaad* status ahead of the former (*arifato*; i.e. new comers). At a later stage, the Jiiddu again established the equality, as they needed military support. The Geledi, the Eelaay, the Shanta 'Aleemood and the Biimaal took up agriculture to supplement their animal husbandry. Certain sections of these clans (for instance the lismin among the Biimaal) either farmed the land themselves or incorporated into their economy families of riverine farmers previously in the area. Epizooties destroyed part of the local economy and the shift to agriculture was a matter of survival. It is difficult to believe in a spontaneous decision, especially when the then Sultan of the Biimaal, Sadiiq, employed an Indian expert to train his people.

A last crucial change that took place in this period is discussed at a later stage: Islam developed increasingly through indigenous saints who helped to spread Islam in the hinterland. They served as protectors of the land and the herds, assisting the *roobdoon* (rain-seeking) ceremonies; they mediated in clan and lineage disputes and helped to assess

²⁶ See Virginia Luling, *op; cit.* 2002.

payments of the *diyya* or *mag* (blood compensation). Their expertise was not in Shari'a but in *asraar* (religious secrets), *ta'adad* (sacred witchcraft) and *wardi* (divining).

4 A complex social configuration

The social fabric of Lower Shabeelle is therefore quite different from the one dominating the most nomadic areas of Central and North Somalia. The explanations lie in two fundamental characteristics of the region.

The migrations into the region were recurrent and mostly were not military conquests. E. Cerulli argued that such movements rarely involved large-scale military conquests. More typically, they were constituted of small clan segments infiltrating the grazing lands of other groups and attracting further migrations of kinsmen to the area. Cerulli's work does provide considerable evidence of assimilation, resource sharing and peaceful trade between groups of pastoral immigrants and the previous hunting or agricultural community. These migrants were quite often integrated as *shegaad* (clients)²⁷.

The mode of production and the need for collaboration among farmers also changed other patterns. Historically, access to agricultural land in Southern Somalia was contingent upon membership of a corporate group. Southern Somali clans were "land holding units", which granted men individual rights to specific parcels of land for household use. Moreover, as wrote I. O. Lewis, "No single Digil or Rahanweyn clan is wholly devoted to nomadism, however and throughout this area where people of these groups do practice pastoralism, it is ancillary to their fundamental concern with cultivation. Thus, here, in contrast to the North the primary focus of Digil and Rahanweyn social organisation is the maintenance of territorial solidarity in relation to arable land, water-ponds and wells".

For instance, the notion of neighbour (*jiiraan*) refers not only to the person living in the vicinity but also to those whose fields' border on each other. Among them, the sharing of labour is common. Whatever their lineage association, all the members of a village are regularly associated with the construction and maintenance of water ponds, the actual watering of stock and similarly in any aspect of cultivation which requires collective endeavour (like the *barbaar* that is an arrangement to sharing agricultural labour for the youth). There is a distinct sense of village unity and autonomy, although this may cut across the various lineages and other external ties of village members.

As Virginia Luling summarises it, "On the one hand, agro-pastoral clans consists of lineages assembled from a variety of sources; on the other, each lineage recognises genealogical ties with branches in other clans. These are in effect two genealogical systems superposed on one another: (a) the real one, which is held to represent biological decent and (b) the adoptive one, which is an admitted legal fiction. To conclude: the solution here is to combine lineage groups by means of alliances, which not infrequently shift, to a "core" lineage: this makes it possible to maintain the genealogical framework as a legal fiction". Whereas among the pastoral nomadic Somalis, identity and allegiances are relatively clear, among the agro-pastoralists of the South, nearly everyone has a double identity with his clan of residence and to the clan from which he actually traces descent. In many cases, the latter is actually one of the Hawiye or Daarood.

An example taken from Lower Shabeelle can help to better understand the concept. The Tunni of Baraawe district are divided into five sub-clans. According to tradition, the newcomers are divided among them. For instance, the Haber Gidir

²⁷ Enrico Cerulli, *Somalia. Scritti vari editi e inediti*, Rome, Libreria del Stato, 1957-1964 (3 vol.).

(mostly Sa'ad/Nim'aale) were under the Da'faraat as well as the Abgaal/Wa'isle. The Abgaal/Reer Mataan were under the Tunni/Wirile, while the Sheekhaal were under the Goygal. The Biimaal (mostly section of its Saleebaan sub-clan) were under the Daaqtira. The implications are important. The first one is that all these "new" comers accepted the *heer* of the place and paid the *diyya* with the sub-clan they were guests of. They received the land they needed from the elders of this latter sub-clan and shared with it the same rights and duties. But the same could be made for other Digil clans of the region. For instance, in Afgooye area, the "new" comers from Hawiye clans used to go under the Wa'daan when the Digil-Mirifle went under the Geledi. A way to understand the dual origin is also to look at the genealogy itself of a person (*abtiris* that means "counting the ancestors"): the part relative to the guest-clan will be abnormally short.

This traditional way of settlement has been slightly transformed in the last two centuries. According to the features of the migrations, some newcomers may have kept their identity with minor changes. That is for instance the case in Qoryooley district where all Hawiye (including Hawaadle and Murusade) are seen as Dame and agglutinated to the first arrived Haber Gidir community (mostly 'Ayr/Haber Eji).

These remarks show that the three social status, *dalaad* (authentic lineal descendants), *duhun* (long-standing residents) and *shegaad* (recent client recruits) are different but can evolve if conditions are there. The civil war was not the best period to mix these different categories. The social setting was considerably disturbed by armed or unarmed migrants and the new balance of power between clans pushed people to stress the most profitable identity against the collective interests of the community. It is doubtless that the same phenomenon occurred in the past.

Slavery was also a major aspect of the social setting of the region. The presence of Bantu before the coming of the present Somali clans is attested as well as the integration of some of them into the Digil when the Ajuuraan dynasty collapsed. By that time, it is unclear if slavery was already developed although one may suspect that the Ajuuraan had already set up servile labour among the groups they were dominating.

The *Jareer*, like some *shegaad* groups, were the actual farmers under the supervision of the Somali clans who were ruling the territory, where they were settled. The statuses of these two groups were radically diverse. Client-cultivators of the Lower Shabeelle typically enjoyed uncontested rights to the land they worked on. These farming groups provided warriors for the dominant clan's defence; they received a portion of the spoils of war; they were entitled to blood compensation in case of homicide and injury and participated (with certain restrictions) in the rainmaking and religious ceremonies of the larger confederation. The slaves (*Adoon*) were excluded from all these activities. Unlike the long established group of client-cultivators, the slaves had no political and legal rights within the larger community. If a slave was killed, the owner demanded from the murderer not the standard *diyya* but the market value of the slave.

Dramatic change occurred in the 1800's. The expansion of agriculture along the Lower Shabeelle was possible only by the supply of new agricultural labour, black slaves from East Africa (mostly, Tanzania, North of Mozambique and Zambia). In less than a generation, there was a new class of dependent labour, the deployment of which was not constrained by customs. Slaveholders (few had more than ten or fifteen slaves) could turn to commercial agriculture without threatening subsistence production and without disrupting the social fabric that bonds patron clans to their client-cultivators.

In Lower Shabeelle, the two clans who benefited the most from the slavery were the Wa'daan and the Biimaal. It does explain why their reactions in front of the abolitionists were so hostile. In 1873 and 1876, under the pressure of the

Western States, Sultan Bargash of Zanzibar passed two ordinances prohibiting the slave trade. While abolitionist efforts never succeeded in totally cutting off the supply of slaves to Banaadir, they did make it easier for escaped slaves to find refuge.

The flight of slaves from river plantations with the abandonment of agriculture by small farmers who could no longer obtain servile labour brought to an end a half-century of economic expansion in the Shabeelle River. While subsistence farming continued among the older communities of client-cultivators, large-scale commercial production declined almost everywhere in Banaadir. The *jama'a* set up by Sufi sheikhs served most often as the place of refuge and social integration for the ex-slaves,

Nevertheless, Luigi-Robecci-Brichetti's careful census of 1903 revealed that nearly one-third of Mogadishu's population consisted of slaves, a pattern of social and economic stratification that in all likelihood had characterised town life from the beginning. It shows, as the long fight between Biimaal and Italian colonisers, that changes were slow²⁸.

The colonial humanism was very light. Slavery was prohibited mostly because it was seen as a contributing factor to the commercial power of Zanzibar and because of the pressure of the liberal opinion in Europe against the most accommodating views of the first Italian administrators in Lower Shabeelle. As puts R. Hess, "Slavery was gradually converted into domestic servitude to the evident satisfaction of master, slave and government. In time the domestic servant would be able to buy himself out of bondage and would supply a ready source of labour for future agricultural enterprises. If, as Cerrina Feroni claimed, there were 25,000 to 30,000 slaves and domestic servants in the colony, the record of emancipation is not very spectacular. From 1900 to 1914, Italian authorities liberated only about 4,300 slaves. Many ex-slaves remained with their masters as bond servants, preferring a life of security and tribute payments to one of freedom and economic uncertainty".

Thus, serfdom succeeded slavery. Without going through the various periods of the Italian policy regarding agriculture and forced labour, it is important to keep in mind two main outcomes of these events. First of all, the *Jareer* do constitute the strongest demographic component of the Lower Shabeelle population. They are mostly working the land either as small farmers or as casual workers. But their economic role is not yet recognised despite some genuine progress under Mahamed Siyaad Barre. The segregation is still very much enforced by the ethnic Somalis. This discrimination is social more than political or economic: there is no law prohibiting the *Jareer* to get involved in a specific activity but they won't be socially considered. The only time they are used is when there is a discussion on numbers. Then, the *Jareer* are put under the Somali clan that owned their parents and can therefore claim a demographic majority in the area.

Without any doubt, the Bantu question is one of the major problems in Southern Somalia. Although their situation has changed during the civil war, there is currently little hope that this issue could be fairly addressed: only their involvement in Shabaab makes this question a strategic one for any government and maybe for a population that has not been eager to acknowledge its past misbehaviour. Considering the Bantu own internal situation, two main reasons may explain this lack of progress. One cause is their division. Because of a strong social conformism, although they share the same tough discriminations, they still keep identifying themselves with the clan they formally belong to. This first division is amplified by a strong individualism that may come from the fragile social and economic status the majority of them share. A second reason is linked to the lack of leadership and organic intellectuals. They have of course Sultans and

²⁸ Quoted in Scott Reese, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 144.

Ugaas, but they have not yet a cluster of people who could organise them into the modern political arena. Their organic intellectuals are outside the country or foreigners (often academics), which leaves little hope that the real conversation will take place in Lower Shabeelle or with the new authorities in Baydhabo or Mogadishu.

5 Conclusion

From these descriptions two major features emerge and should be considered as strategic assets for addressing the current predicament. First, Lower Shabeelle is characterised by a social fabric that could accommodate new comers and settle conflicts in a way that is congruent to economic development. One may be reluctant to share this view at a time clan conflicts tear apart Merka and provide an incentive for Shabaab to root its influence. This is true but one should consider the bigger picture and admit that indeed several political issues (land claims, power politics in the region, bitterness linked to traumatic events throughout the civil war) are unresolved and feed Shabaab as it could have fed any insurgencies. But the social hatred that so much characterised the first decade of the civil war is over. Rivalries, competitions, bitterness against impunity could be witnessed but do not challenge a social order that provides room, much more room than elsewhere, for an internal accommodation. The weakness is on the political side and one may hope that the new federal or national authorities will be more proactive in addressing those issues and cooling down tensions.

A second asset of Lower Shabeelle is its cosmopolitan character. Far from the jingoism that often characterises Somali discourse, people in Lower Shabeelle have had to accept new comers with a sense that they will eventually bring improvements. Again, one can be sarcastic looking at what *mooryaan* brought to the region: looting, destruction, and economic recession. But the bigger picture could pay attention to other more positive aspects. While before 1991, the region was seen as a periphery of the capital (and still may be considered by most), its status has changed at different layers. In terms of stabilisation, a structural weakening of Shabaab will need to pay attention to Lower Shabeelle and undo what Shabaab did rather successfully: mobilise those who paid the highest price to the civil war on its side. This will require a much greater respect for the cosmopolitan nature of the region. Economically, agricultural growth won't be possible if this original social fabric is not respected: this may sound as a limitative condition but is not since the population owns an expertise and a know-how that will be absolutely needed to relaunch agriculture and move beyond the current mostly subsistence threshold.

Lower Shabeelle will be also a good barometer of the achievements obtained by all stakeholders. If livelihoods improve, security comes back and agricultural outputs grow, Somalia will be on a dynamic by which rural people won't suffer for the well-being or the urban population. History, this time won't repeat itself.

Chapter two

At the margin?

A glance at the political history of Lower Shabeelle

This chapter intends to provide an overview of the political history of Lower Shabeelle up to the civil war. It also offers a long development on Islam as the expansion of Islam in Lower Shabeelle is congruent with a specific configuration of the political setting. The connections with Banaadir have been less mechanical than expected, maybe because politics was self-centred and marginally affected the region, while economically its role was much greater.

The commonalities Lower Shabeelle shared historically with Banaadir were challenged in the 19th century by important factors that affected both human settlements and the economy of the region: the collapse of the weakened Ajurraan empire in the late 17th century or early 18th century was not followed by the same kind of authorities even though the Geledi kingdom became for decades the structuring element of the regional political order. In the 19th century, Islamic dynamics reshaped the region and promoted Sufi orders and forms of human settlements (*jama'a*) that are until today important parts of the Lower Shabeelle social reality. This Islamic awakening was a multi-layer phenomenon that reshaped the citizenship and tried to ease the racial divisions that surged with the increase of slavery and the migrations of Somali pastoral clans into the region. Religious figures not only greatly contributed to the expansion of Sufi orders but also were efficient peacemakers between agriculturists and pastoralists.

This Islamic moral economy was durably challenged by the colonial encounter with Italy and the lack of highly charismatic religious figures, who would have continued the work of the 19th century sheikhs. The Italian colonizers were eager to undermine any opposition and played well the divide and rule game by getting support from some important clans of the region against others. But at one point, they made an important strategic choice, that was to accommodate the big Somali pastoral clans (gathered then in the Somali Youth League) and pay much less attention to the inter-riverine populations: it might have been electoral realism but it had much larger consequences than thought.

The first decade of the independent state was therefore felt as a moment of regional marginalisation despite the economic functions fulfilled by Lower Shabeelle. The high-rank civil service counted few people who were born in the region and, though very close to Mogadishu, Lower Shabeelle could be then considered as a political periphery of the state. This situation was slowly altered by the commoditization of land in the 1970's when becoming a farmer was a further step in the gentrification of the Mogadishu new administrative and political elites. This process was speeded up in the 1980's, especially after 1986. The debt crisis and the increasing deterioration of the exchange rate pushed privileged people to pay more attention to agriculture. There was an economic calculus about a profitable activity but more often the considerations were more prosaic: being involved in agriculture meant having access to generous bank loans that could be used without much control to buy luxury items or initiate import trade. International aid was very generous in pouring money into that sector through a banking system that was hardly accountable. The regime also wanted to reward its clients and the opponents who chose to rally it after having joined armed opposition groups, especially the SSDF. The poor health of Mahamed Siyaad Barre after a car crash in 1986 meant that he could hardly control those who wanted to grab public properties and embezzle state money, had he wish to do so.

While the *doxa* points the responsibility of his kinsmen, one should argue that the regime clients were recruited in all clans, including those who in majority had opted for the opposition and that corruption and embezzlement were no more characteristic of the top scale of the state apparatus but affected all levels and allowed many in the civil service willing to use that way to become richer. In the last two years before the civil war broke out in Mogadishu, political alliances helped to somewhat contain this grim situation. Hawiye needed allies to fight against Mahamed Siyaad Barre and gave Lower Shabeelle more consideration than Daarood: it made their behaviour less predatory not because of honesty, because of broadening their political alliances. It was at that time that the discourse on autochthony became articulated paradoxically first by Hawiye politicians, especially General Mahamed Faarah 'Aydiid, who was trying to build a national constituency to his ambition to rule Somalia.

A deeper description would pay attention to much continuity that survived important political events. Elders, for instance, did not elaborate much on changes brought by the independence. Some important laws were passed and regulations changed as described below but more tangible reforms took place only in the 1970's. The new emphasis on "Somalisation" produced ambivalent effects on Lower Shabeelle. Better roads made the circulation of goods easier and cheaper. The state civil servants were more rooted in the districts even if the governors changed quite often. A political consciousness also emerged in the 1967 elections, which did not exist much in 1961. The status of the land was redefined in socialist terms but one should also admit that the colonial state had a not so distant understanding of the same subject, when the socialist rhetoric was taken away.

An important discontinuity will be the economic divide that took shape in the 1980's when a vibrant Somali informal economy developed, while the formal realm kept mostly stagnant. Despite donors support, the people living in the countryside faced increasingly the discrepancy between these two realities and had little leverage to improve their livelihood. While this report is focused on land conflicts, it should be clear that the resentment against the Siyaad Barre regime touched many other very sensitive issues out of the main cities. Unique causality hardly works to explain the solidarity towards the upheaval in 1990.

The following sections intend to provide a deeper and more detailed description of those different periods. The following chapter scrutinises deeper the most recent period.

1 The role of Islam

Islam played a major role in the way people settled in the region and defined their social and political identities. Inscriptions confirm the early arrival of Islam in the coastal cities in the late 8th or early 9th century. By the end of the 12th century most people in what is today Somalia had at least been in touch with Islam, which does not mean that they knew much about it or were practicing it. The development of this faith in Lower Shabeelle went through three different periods.

The first one is linked to the Ajuraan theocracy. For L. Cassanelli, "What fragmentary evidence suggests is the existence in sixteenth century Banaadir of a theocratic conception of government and its identification with a specific clan confederation {the Ajuraan}. Available evidence further suggests that the emergence of a theocratic tradition in Banaadir be linked to events in the northern parts of the Horn of Africa more than with developments among the nearby Indian Ocean coast. It is known that some sections of the Hawiye participated in the sixteenth century *Jihad* of Ahmed Gragne

against Abyssinia. The Garen who provided the Imam of the Ajuraan appear to have ruled a kingdom in the Ogaden prior to their appearance in the Banaadir”²⁹.

Following the passing of the Ajuraan, the saints or holy men became the main public expression of the Islamic faith. They spread Islam in the Banaadir hinterland. The religious aura surrounding these holy men, particularly after their death, led commonly to the development of veneration cults and periodic pilgrimages to the sites of their tombs. The territorial focus of these saint cults made them particularly appropriate vehicles for integrating people of diverse genealogical origins, as members of the evolving Banaadir confederation frequently were.

The transition from a theocratic idea towards a distinctly local political tradition can also be seen in the modified political status of the *Gibil ‘Ad*. In place of the *Gibil ‘Ad*, the Somali saints became the main link between the sacred and the secular. Yet, as Scott Reese underlines, “Sufism was certainly known before that time (19th century) but appears to have been of a few individual ascetics. Its development as a dynamic social movement only occurred with the appearance of a number of charismatic preachers after 1880”³⁰. For instance the Shanta ‘Aleemood people of Dafeed (today called Wanlaweyn) have a tradition of being consolidated through the efforts of the seventeenth century Sheekh ‘Usmaan Sharif Dalwaaq. What gives them their cohesiveness apart from territorial contiguity are these traditions of early saintly mediators and, in some instances, their continued allegiances to the descendants of the saints who were recognised as nominal spiritual leaders like the Gobroon of the Geledi.

The last phase is the development of the *turuq* in the nineteenth century as well as the religious settlements (*jamaa’ā*). The three most important Sufi orders in Southern Somalia are the Qadiriyya, the Ahmediyya, and the Sahlihiyya.

The Qadiriyya, named after its twelfth century Iraqi founder, Abdel-Qadir al-Jilani, is probably the largest Sufi order in Somalia and was also the first one to reach the country, since it had already branches on the coastal towns by the end of the eighteenth century. The support it has enjoyed until now is the result of the campaign of Sheekh Uways Mahamed Baraawi (1847-1913) during the decades around the turn of the century. About 1880, Sheekh Uways began to establish small *jamaa’ā* along the Lower Shabeelle River and in the dry-farming land beyond Baydhabo. Sheekh Uways descended from a family of former slaves in the city of Baraawe (he belonged to the Tunni/Goygal) and returned after his studies in Baraawe to become the leader of a local branch of the Qadiriyya order, nowadays often named Uwaysiyya. Sheekh Uways and his disciples spread poetry and religious songs composed in local dialects that articulated insights into local political affairs with the teachings of the Qadiriyya order. A Sahlihiyya member killed him in Biyoole near Baydhabo in 1913.

The Ahmediyya order was founded in Mecca by Sayyed Ahmed al-Idriss al Fasi (1760-1837). This reformist (slightly rigorist, should we add) movement was spread in Somalia by Sheekh ‘Ali Maye (d. 1917) in the 1860’s. The Ahmediyya was very influential amongst its adherents, wealthy merchants of the coastal towns, agriculturists in the countryside and former slaves. It produced social reformers such as Sheekh Nuryani Ahmed Sabr in Baraawe and played an important role in mediating between low status villagers and local pastoralists. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw intense competition between the Ahmediyya and Qadiriyya. The Ahmediyya is particularly popular in the Merka region and in

²⁹ Lee Cassanelli, *The Shaping of the Somali Society 1600-1800*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, p.99.

³⁰ Scott Reese, *op. cit.* 2008, p. 9.

the area between Wanlaweyn and Baydhabo thanks to two local sheikhs, Sheekh Mahamed Wa'isle and Sheekh Hasan Ma'allin.

The Sahlihiyya order is originally an offshoot from the Ahmediyya and was founded in Mecca by Sayyed Mohamed Salih (1853-1917). Under the leadership of Sayyed Mahamed 'Abdulle Hasan (1856-1920), this order developed into a militant movement that for twenty years kept up an armed struggle against the presence of the British and Ethiopian troops on Somali soil³¹. The Sayyed's followers – known as the Dervishes – at times pursued large-scale armed raids against his (Somali) opponents. They saw the Qadiriyya movement as their particular enemy. While the Sahlihiyya has its greatest impact in the North of the Peninsula, it also has a considerable following in the South. Sheekh 'Abdi Abuukar Gafle – one of the best-known resistance leaders in the South – belonged to the Sahlihiyya order in the Merka district. The Sahlihiyya was indeed more rigorist in its interpretation and often accused to promote Wahhabism³². In the south, it developed mostly in rural areas among agriculturists and pastoralists of the Shabeelle and Jubba rivers. The two other Sufi orders were more connected to cities.

Beside the expansion of the *turuq*, the holy men became involved in creating new settlements in the countryside. They drew historical inspiration from the many small sultanates that existed in Northern Somalia and Ethiopia between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most of these *jama'a*'s were established in cultivable districts. Occasionally, clan elders granted tracts of abandoned land to the founding sheikhs. In other instances, the settlement occupied border territory disputed by two neighbouring clans and this provided a solution acceptable to both parties. For instance, Baardheere was established as a *jama'a* by Sheekh Ibraahim Hasan Jeberow who was an Ahmediyya leader while the area was Qadiri.

In Qoryooley district, the Mubarak settlement was formed in the year 1818 by Sheekh 'Abdi Dayow. The basic rules were belief in the Quran, obedience to the laws of the Prophet and recognition of the village chief as the final authority on all matters. This meant in practice that the village chief could issue directives, which were binding, governing the people and land; he had nominal possession of the land, which had been made available for housing the settlers; the land provided for cultivation was to be collectively cleared for cultivation and husbandry (after his death, production began to be conducted on an individual basis).

By providing within their settlements an economic security and a sense of community, the sheikhs were able to attract many of the marginal elements of the Southern society (for instance the escaped or reluctantly released slaves) to the *turuq*. Since the religious settlements have often served as safe havens for people in difficulty, the growth and establishment of many *jama'a*'s seem to be connected with social unrest and upheaval. A wave of settlements was established shortly after the large manumissions of slaves in the mid-1920s. Another peak in settlement activities occurred shortly after the Second World War. Again in the 1970s many of the ethnic Somalis who had fled Ethiopia found sanctuary in the religious communities.

³¹ Abdi Sheikh-Abdi, *Divine Madness. Mohammed Abdulle Hassan (1856-1920)*, London, Zed Books, 1993.

³² This is untrue and such a belief illustrates the often cultivated confusion between a more knowledge-based practice of Islam and a popular religion that provided great room to magic and other pagan cults. This nuance is important when specific events are discussed including for instance the Baardheere Jihad that actually was not a Jihad but a genuine confrontation between two different styles of Islamic leadership. On this point, it is interesting to compare the arguments made in the two seminal books written by L. Cassanelli and his (former) student, Scott Reese.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this short description of the Islamic presence in Lower Shabeelle. Islam, though it has periodically served to unite Somalis against foreign enemies, has not transformed the Somali society. Situated in the interstices of clan society and drawing their initial membership largely from its marginal elements, the *turuq* did not have the military ethos or the warrior strength to pose a serious threat to colonial forces. The competition between these various religious orders often worked against the development of a united Islamic front.

Despite the potential for transcending parochial clan allegiances inherent in *tariqa* organisation, most of their leaders came from "client" groups or from small religious lineages. Like the very popular possession cults, they may still appear to a certain extent as a way to differentiate from the ruling elite. It might be meaningful that only few Biimaal in Merka are members of the Ahmediyya that is massively recruiting among the *Jareer*, the *Gibil cad* and Hawiye clans.

A last point can be emphasised. A look at the religious and political dynamics in Lower Shabeelle in the past three centuries shows the great difficulty for any ruler to assume simultaneously religious and political powers. The traditional pastoral Somali society has a duality of power studied by anthropologists that can be sum up in the two figures of the *warenleh* (the fighter) and the *wadaad* (the religious man)³³. It is dubious that the same figures can be applied in a region like Lower Shabeelle where the cultural paradigms are not exactly the ones valid in Central or Northern Somalia.

Nevertheless, the few experiences in which politico-religious figures tried to rule failed. The Ajuuraan theocracy collapsed for its inability to co-opt clans whose power was growing. The Sil'i's rule, whose religious component was strong, was defeated a few decades after. The Baardheere Sheekh, like so many others, was successful setting up his *jama'a* in Baardheere in the 1820's. However, they met the strongest opposition when they became zealots with political ambitions: they destroyed the religious Qadiri town of Baraawe but lost the war in 1843 when their *jama'a* was completely burnt by their opponents. The Biimaal defeated even the Geledi sultan who was a political figure with a strong religious and magic support. This lesson from the history of the region should help to balance the sensationalism that characterises the Western attention towards the new Islamic movements in Somalia. Surely, they are there, active and ambitious. But their model of power is not so compatible with the popular representations of politics and religion in Lower Shabeelle.

Another historical comparison may be worth drawing. As just described, Islam and Sufi orders developed at a time of great social and economic changes. Agrarian capitalism was emerging and migrations had brought new people (such as Biimaal) who became the new farming entrepreneurs, dramatic droughts and epizooties also took place especially in the 1880's. The economy was getting internationalised since manpower was brought from neighbouring countries to work as slaves and agricultural outputs were sold not only in Mogadishu but reached Luuq (and therefore Ethiopia and Kenya) and even Zanzibar. Italians eventually took over the whole Banaadir region. Islamic preachers at that time talked much less about colonialism than a moral crisis and corruption (*fesaad*) that had created all those problems, as Scott Reeve reminds us. The growth of Sufi orders represented, in some aspects, an attempt to cope with that societal crisis.

Half a century after the independence, many Somalis in Lower Shabeelle and elsewhere may share the same idea that the continuation of the civil war is an expression of a deep moral crisis that has its roots not in militias but in a societal configuration that needed to be reformed: western style of state, clan social fabric and Sufi orders failed to avoid the civil war. Foreigners are controlling parts of the Somali soil and the political elites as in the 19th century collaborate with

³³ Iain Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: a Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somalis of the Horn of Africa*, London, Africana Publishing company, 1982, pp.213-217.

them. A movement such as Shabaab has not been indifferent to that ideological quest and proposes its own solutions, arguing that both the clan system and the Sufi orders have been unable and unwilling to restore an Islamic ethics that would save the Somali society. The youth has not been so reluctant to that kind of discourse for some years before measuring better that such a “solution” was just a call for an endless war.

It is also interesting to underline how in both periods the question of the social status was a driving force for change. The *jama'a* constituted a genuine melting pot where former slaves and slaves who had escaped socialise with casted Somalis and non-casted Somalis under the authority of a saint. Sheikhs were eager in their daw'a to remind all that they were God's subjects and as such equal in front of Him. In a different but not so dissimilar manner, the civil war very much questioned the social status of many communities in Lower Shabeelle and Shabaab offered a new design that would (in terms Shabaab would never use) establish a new citizenship after the failed (but genuine) attempt that took place under Mahamed Siyaad Barre.

What follows is looking at the past two centuries paying more attention to the political economy of that long period.

2 A turbulent 19th century³⁴

At the time of Ibn Battuta visit in 1331, the cities of Banaadir appeared to have been at their zenith. By 1800, the coastal settlements retained but a shadow of their former glory. Much of Mogadishu was in ruins and the other ports were reduced to minor backwaters of the Indian Ocean trade. This was precipitated by a combination of Portuguese intervention in the Indian Ocean and the pastoral expansion from the Somali interior into the urban sphere. The critical decline coincided with the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century. They tried to remove the Somali ports as a source of serious commercial competitors. Mogadishu was shelled in 1499, Baraawe sacked in 1507. By 1700, the Abgaal controlled the entire Mogadishu.

The transformation of this region into a commercial enterprise was the result of settlements of pastoral groups in the early years of the 19th century. Each of them – Tunni in Baraawe, Biimaal in Merka, Geledi in Afgooye – established ownership rights to the fertile land and within a short time made local cultivators their clients. By the mid-19th century, pastoral entrepreneurs using their client cultivators and importing slave labour from Southern Ethiopia and elsewhere in East Africa were producing large amount of grains, sesame and later cotton for commercial markets. While the urban residents of coastal towns did not at first own agricultural land in the interior, they benefitted through their domination of the ports. Pastoral entrepreneurs lacked facilities and contacts to export their goods to the world market. By 1890, Banaadir merchants could be found everywhere including Luuq, Baardheere, and Buurhakaba³⁵.

The nineteenth century is therefore dominated by two main events. The first one is the growing commercial integration into the Zanzibar sultanate. While the impact of international trade grew during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Shabeelle agriculture contributed an increasing share to the entire exports. Whereas in the 1840's approximately half of Banaadir exports consisted of ivory, aromatic woods, gems and myrrh, data from the 1890's reveal that these items made up less than one-fourth of the value of total exports from Southern Somalia. Dura (sorghum), sesame products,

³⁴ This section follows closely Scoot Reeve

³⁵ Scoot Reeve *op. cit.* 2008, p. 50.

cotton, and other agricultural exports had assumed new importance. As wrote a traveller in 1844, "The Banaadir region has become the Grain Coast for supply of South Arabia". The pattern of change owed much to the unique geography of the region. The Somali Banaadir is the only coastal zone of East Africa to have its immediate hinterland a fertile riverine plain.

Due to a shortage of farmers, the increasing agricultural potential of the Shabeelle area and the growing demand from coastal settlements and traders caused an inflow of slave labour, which was employed on small-scale plantations and flood irrigated farms. Cash crops like cotton were introduced. Maize increasingly replaced sorghum on flood-irrigated land. Consequently, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Shabeelle farming region presented itself as a wealthy society based on livestock exports and a relatively highly commercialised agriculture, thus attracting the European colonial powers. Such prosperity also contributed to raising the competition between powerful figures of the region and triggered conflicts including the "Baardheere Jihad". Two were prominent at that time. The first one was the Sultan of the Geledi, whose influence went over Lower Shabeelle and reached Bay and Bakool, causing concerns and fierce hatred among the Biimaal. He could not only call upon a warrior force in excess of 20 000 but was also reputed to be an expert in *ta'adad* or *taar* in Somali (sacred magic usually applied for military ends). The second one was the emerging power of the Baardheere Sheekh, Abuukar Aadan Durow, who destroyed Baraawe in 1840 and submitted the population to his rule³⁶.

Confrontation was inevitable for two main reasons. First of all, these new Islamic zealots were prohibiting the ivory trade (ivory was declared *haram*, impure) and strictly controlled the main caravan roads reaching Mogadishu, Merka, Baraawe. Therefore they represented a clear danger to all clans, like Tunni, Jiiddu, Biimaal and above all Geledi, who were benefiting from the trade. The semi-sedentary populations of Banaadir also feared a large-scale invasion by immigrating camel herders. Although most of the leaders in Baardheere were members of the Southern Somali clans, the warriors they put into the field consisted largely of Daarood nomads originated from Ogaden and Majeerteeniyya, whose migration carried them ultimately to the Tana River in modern day Kenya. But peace did not last very long after the defeat of the Sheikh in 1843. The Biimaal, strengthened by an alliance with the Sultan of Zanzibar, decided to wage war against the Digil and their ruler, the Sultan of the Geledi. Several skirmishes and battles took place giving fragile victories. The Geledi Sultan, Ahmed Yuusuf, was finally killed in a battle that marks the decadence of the Sultanate. That explains also, when the Italians fought a few decades after against the Biimaal, why most of the Geledi and Digil did not help them to oppose the foreigners.

3 Colonial transformations

From the early 1880's, Italy developed a colonial policy that would lead to its recognition as a great power on the international scene but it is an overstatement to say that a weak country like Italy was thinking of adopting a colonial policy aimed at proving its credentials as a Nation-State. Italian historians, such as Luigi Goglia, refers to this project as an imperialism of the poor (imperial ragamuffin) which could be better illustrated by the speech made by an Italian MP in 1901: "All those who travelled through Italy are aware that we have a bit of Africa in our country that needs to be colonised"³⁷. Actually, the Italian presence in Somalia never succeeded to mobilise much strategic planning and money

³⁶ Lee Cassanelli, *op.cit.*, 1982, pp.119-146 and Scott Reese, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 51-61.

³⁷ Quoted in Paolo Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia. Rome and Mogadishu from Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope*, London, Macmillan Press, 1999, p. 21.

from Rome. The first years of presence in Banaadir were handed over to Italian concessionary firms (Filonardi and Società del Benadir) that failed dramatically to invest enough to make the Italian presence economically profitable. As in Eritrea, the Italian policy changed with Mussolini rise to power and his use of the colonies to his demagogic. At the difference of Eritrea, Somalia did not benefit much in terms of infrastructure and eventually the changes were more in terms of style than vision. Some developments in the agricultural realm are mentioned below.

After a troubled period when Mogadishu was for several years ruled by the British Military Administration, Italy got the international mandate to bring Somalia to the independence. The *Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia* (AFIS) period lasted ten years that were also a traumatic time in Italy itself. After the defeat and the destruction of the country, Rome had to cope with daunting tasks: the reconstruction thanks to the Marshall plan, a new democratic constitution that could have been a model for some of its neighbours and the consolidation of a state that had dramatically failed. Attention to Somalia was either knee-jerk reaction or lip service (especially when funding AFIS was debated). AFIS missed the lack of vision concerning Somali politics. As P. Tripodi explains, “[the main AFIS ambition] was to identify the strongest political formation and establish with it links that would remain strong even after the end of the mandate”³⁸.

Consequently, Italy disregarded all political parties except the Somali Youth League. It benefitted from the setback in the relations between the Somali Youth League and The British in 1954³⁹. *Hisbul Disturil Digil-Mirifle* which members came mostly from the people settled in the region between the Shabeelle and Jubba Rivers was not advocating against the independence, at the contrary. Its political program articulated a number of important grievances that could still be heard today: equal treatment for all in the civil service and the army; federal state; raising the standard of education and encouraging agriculture and trade⁴⁰. This Italian policy was not only guided by a lack of strategy and political opportunism: it also aimed at protecting Italian economic interests at all costs. This priority was reflected in the economic policy enforced by the AFIS. Cotton, salt production and leather were for instance dis-considered while banana output grew at the expense of all other fruits (these four commodities accounted for 75% of the exports before 1940). Useless to say that banana plantations were monopolized by Italian interests. At the independence, the Italian community (about 2000 people) was in control of 70% of the Somali economy. Italian farmers were responsible for three-quarters of Somalia agricultural output⁴¹.

The Somali part of this history is also necessary. After defeating the Geledi Sultanate, the Biimaal became too confident in their power and this incited them to fight the Italians who wanted to control their land and, above all, did prohibit the slavery that was a determining condition of the Lower Shabeelle prosperity. If political and religious reasons motivated the hostility to the colonisers, it is indeed sure that the cancellation of slavery, affecting more than 30 000 workers in Banaadir was clearly a leading motive for revolt. The recurrent Biimaal upheavals lasted more than ten years but failed to change the Italian determination to take over Banaadir. The last one in 1926 just confirmed that accommodation was unavoidable.

³⁸ P. Tripodi, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 71.

³⁹ This was caused by the signature of a treaty between London and Addis-Ababa which gave Ogaden and the Haud to the latter.

⁴⁰ Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, “The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia From 1947-1960”, *Ufahamu* 17, n° 2 (1989), pp. 75-95.

⁴¹ P. Tripodi, *op. cit.* 1999, p. 95.

These skirmishes had one important consequence: they promoted direct rule and pushed the colonial administration to employ elders: in 1910, these latter were 67 Biimaal and 57 Geledi –compared to 23 Abgaal in Bal’ad. After a first unimpressive decade, the real colonisation process took off. In 1911, the authorities decreed that it had the right to confiscate any land that was not cultivated. Forced labour was imposed as a way to build public infrastructure such as roads, canals and administrative buildings. An experimental farm was opened in Janaale in 1911 where cotton, sugar cane, banana and other tropical cultures were tested. As a consequence, after 1922 land confiscation grew rapidly. In 1922, there were two concessions for an area of 1500 ha. In 1940, they were 138 for 25,561 ha⁴². In 1935, a 200 m long bank was built as an alternative to a genuine port in Merka; it was used until 1974 and the opening of Mogadishu international port that changed Merka from an active industrial city into a touristic and sleepy resort for week-end.

The human cost of those changes should not be underestimated. The Biimaal who had gained economic prominence just before the Italian colonisation were the most affected by these new developments. In a matter of two decades, they lost the best land (near the river) and their manpower as their former slaves were employed in the newly established Italian farms. Some tried to restart pastoralism and migrated towards Baraawe where recurrent conflicts erupted. As a consequence, the Italian administrators allocated them better land first near Awdheegle and later on between Awdheegle and Afgooye where canals were built and irrigated agriculture expanded: the Biimaal sultan was the counterpart in this conversation. Those farms were the first to be occupied by Biimaal militias at the dawn of the civil war.

4 The independent State (1960-1991)

In its drive to replace tribal particularism by national solidarity, the young Somali government passed a law on 2nd March 1960 officially abolishing the status of client (*shegaad*)⁴³ and upholding the right of every Somali citizen to live and settle where he/she should choose, irrespective of his/her particular clan and lineage affiliation. The effects of this law apparently were not sufficiently clear because the military regime did pass it a second time in 1970.

The understanding of this law could be quite controversial. On one side, this decision was cancelling limitations designed by the colonial authorities to easily control the territory. This nationalist decision was putting Somalia in accordance with international standards. On the other, the law was understood by certain sections of the society as a green light to take over land in regions where the major clans (in terms of political representation) had not their own territory. Representatives of the *Hisbul Disturil Digil-Mirifle* as well as people from the riverine area were not so enthusiastic about the concrete consequences of this law. Yet, there is little evidence that incidents happened.

The 1960’s were not the best period for Lower Shabeelle. The new Somali State was eager to curb the Italian influence in Somalia and took decisions that hindered foreign (i.e. Italian) investments in the region. This policy brought a recession as Italian farmers simply gave up. Some Somali citizens purchased farms, mostly successful politicians like Mahamed Ibraahim ‘Igaal or Aadan ‘Abdulle ‘Usmaan, but were not in a position to make the same kind of investments and pay for the same expertise as the Italian farmers had done previously.

⁴² All figures in this paragraph are quoted from Hassan Osman Ahmed, *op. cit.* 1994, pp. 152-162.

⁴³ See for further discussion of the term, Lee Cassanelli, “Hosts and Guests. A historical interpretation of land conflicts in southern and central Somalia”, Rift Valley Institute Research paper 2, 2015, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f86b8f4.html>.

Another dimension has to be taken into account. The new government, many from Lower Shabeelle put emphasis on the Majeerteen influence in it, also decided to develop Kismaayo more than Merka. Although the Lower Shabeelle population was expecting the building of a port in Merka, decision was taken to build it in Kismaayo (which was - one must add - quite more logical). Moreover, the few light industrial plants established in Merka closed or moved to the capital city. This economic decay was not stopped by the overthrow of the civilian government in October 1969. The socialist orientation of the economic policy was not the most positive move expected by the farmers. The State started to build various agencies whose role was basically to make sure that towns could get cheap food whatever the situation of the farmers.

The State was politically and economically authoritarian, regulating the market as well as the political arena. It also wanted to carry out a modernisation of the society through the literacy campaign and the emphasis on sedentarisation and urban life against tribalism and religious traditions. In 1974, a disastrous drought was responsible for the economic ruin of approximately a quarter of a million nomads in northern and central parts of Somalia. Based on the experiences of the Soviet Union when carrying out the forced resettlement of nomads in its Southern Republics, the Somali government decided on a huge program of resettlement. In 1975, more than 110,000 nomads were settled initially into three agricultural and three fishery projects far away from their traditional living location. In accordance with socialist aims, the projects were assigned the status of co-operatives with a rigidly organised political and administrative structure. These nomads were hardly involved in decision making within their co-operatives. The main economic aim of the settlement projects was the creation of self-supporting economic units. However, this could not be achieved. On the contrary, the population had to be supplied with large amounts of food from WFP well after the initial phases of the project.

A large number of nomads turned their backs on these settlement projects during the first years. While women and children often remained in the settlements so that they could continue to enjoy the free food rations as well as the education system and medical care, the majority of men migrated to the capital Mogadishu and even to the Gulf states, and a small number returned to nomadic livestock-keeping.

In Lower Shabeelle three places were directly concerned with this policy. Sablaale and Kurtunwaarey districts were set up after the settlement of these nomads in lands that were not selected so carefully. For instance, Sablaale farmers quite often face flooding and little can be done except a huge project to consolidate the riverbanks or to draw other irrigation canals that could relieve the flood by diverting water. Baraawe also got a fishery project, built beside the traditional town. This project was mostly deserted when the civil war started.

These nomads were called *Dan Wadaag* ("those who share common interests") and to a large extent showed that this name was appropriate during the civil war. Although they were mostly Daarood and Hawiye, they kept united in front of the various militias who came to take over on behalf of the various factions in their district. According to the information collected, there have not been major incidents between them especially in Sablaale where the economic situation is more precarious than in Kurtunwaarey.

Beside these settlements, refugee camps were settled after the Ogaden war of 1977-78. Many Somalis from Ogaden left their country because of the growing insecurity in their region or were convinced to join Somalia before a complete liberation of their country. But the project of the Greater Somalia never materialised and the only tangible consequence was the mushrooming of refugee camps in Somaliland and Southern Somalia, which provided a strong argument to get

food aid from the international community. Discussions about the real figures of refugees triggered several crises between the Somali government eager to increase food aid as much as possible and UNHCR representatives who did not understand their role as food suppliers for the ruling clique and its coercion forces. In 1986, there were still 36 refugee camps with about 700,000 residents, though the Somali government was claiming a much higher figure.

In Lower Shabeelle different refugee camps were set up. The main area was Farjano near Sablaale where 2,000 families were settled. There were also three camps near Qoryooley. These camps faced serious problems at the time of the civil war. The Hawiye refugees from Ogaden did stay without much difficulty. The Ogaadeeni had more trouble because of their association with other Daarood factions opposing the Hawiye. Moreover, serious fights occurred near Beled Weyne between Hawaadle and Ogaadeeni and considerably worsened the situation of the Ogaadeeni refugees in Lower Shabeelle. At the end, the Ogaadeeni refugees returned to their home or to Jubbaland.

A last wave of migrants arrived in Lower Shabeelle before the civil war. Most of them were brought by the new economic opportunities in that region after the shift of the economic policy towards a more liberal approach to agriculture in the early 1980's. There were two different strata: one made up of high-ranking civil servants, prominent business people, members of the ruling elite; another made up of modest people trying to improve their poor condition. One should say also that many people came to Mogadishu first because of the attractions of the capital city and the growing insecurity in the countryside, increasingly provoked by skirmishes between clans allied with the regime and their opponents. Life in Mogadishu was not always easy. New comers in Lower Shabeelle were looking for relatives who came before independence or as *Dan Wadaag* or as internally displaced people because of the skirmishes on the Somali-Ethiopian border. Since the international community was still pouring large amounts of money into agricultural projects in Lower Shabeelle and Jubbaland, there were more job opportunities in these areas. To a large extent, migrations that occurred after the civil war were already initiated in the last period of the regime.

When everyone quotes the land law passed in 1975, one should carefully assess the way it was enforced. This law made the state the owner of all land in the country and required cultivated agricultural land to be registered with the government in order for the occupant to obtain a 50-year leasehold. Throughout our fieldwork, many elders talked about dispossession and unlawful appropriation by state officials. These very holistic statements have to be heard with caution. People often in their memory intend to placate their understanding of the last years of Mahamed Siyaad Barre with the whole period he has been ruling Somalia⁴⁴. This is highly debatable, not so much because there would be a good period and a bad period but mostly because the legitimacy of the regime evolved as well as its ability to fulfil its own regulations and laws. People should be aware that contesting state decisions taken over 22 years may just bring chaos and hardly prepare the ground for a successful (and peaceful) state building process.

As just mentioned, the state involvement in agricultural policies varied over time. The conditions in which land was confiscated or bought changed substantially from the 1960's to the late 1980's. At the end, there were three different categories of land appropriation and each of them deserves a specific attention. One should also remind readers that appropriation was not achieved by the gun as it may have happened in the Jubba project because the commoditisation of land in Lower Shabeelle has a much longer history than in Middle Jubba.

⁴⁴ See for instance Mohamed Abdel Rahim Mohamed Salih & Lennart Wohlgemuth (eds.), *Crisis management and the politics of reconciliation in Somalia*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1994.

One does not need here to repeat the whole range of questions raised by land registration. As alluded to in the introduction, this put local people in an often unfavourable position in front of urban settlers who had privileged access to the state apparatus, better knowledge of the law and the way to play with it. Yet, the law mentioned also a number of checks and balances that many local people have forgotten in their sole condemnation of the central state. For instance, elders had to be consulted and had to confirm that the land was indeed free and not cultivated by anyone.

In our interviews, allegations of corruption were often made (as they were likely) but no elders seemed to reflect on the fact that the alternative to the state law they propose spontaneously would be to empower a social strata of elders that already and consistently betrayed their kinsmen in the past. Moreover, this issue of corruption is not limited to elders. Elders indeed were not the only ones able to stop a buying process: local administrators were also monitoring land titling and could have reacted when their own friends or neighbours who had been working for years on a piece of land were suddenly edged out.

There were three very different categories of farms set up through the state laws in the 1980's. The first one was made up of private farms that belonged to individuals. Many of those farms were still in the hands of foreigners, Italians and Gulf citizens. Italian farms were owned for a long time and lawful. The second category is made up of co-operatives. Often, people seem to ignore that if one takes the text of the law seriously local people could be part of the co-operative and benefit from the facilities offered by the state in terms of technical knowledge and equipment. This point is hardly quoted in the assessments made retrospectively by the elders.

In fact, most of the criticisms raised against those farms concern the fact that they were appropriated by a cluster of people who were often high rank bureaucrats and politicians. The last category encompasses all farms bought by companies. This was the latest way to invest in agriculture and one may share even more the doubts expressed by elders but one should also remember that donors were pushing to open up this economic sector and that funds that were allocated to increase agricultural outputs were coming from big western institutions in the midst of structural adjustment programs. The question is whether Somalia's friends were serious enough or just wanted to spend money.

These points are raised here as food for thought. They make clear that any decent land policy has to address or consider aspects that rely on other components of the state functions in addition to historic land related contexts. The 1975 Land Law and what followed in terms of regulations could be criticised on many regards but one should be confident to not restrict criticisms to the usual suspects (even if they were indeed guilty) and look at a bigger picture. This should be done for the sake of a better analysis but also today for a more realistic policy to address land issues in Lower Shabeelle and elsewhere. Today, any reform may need to respond to the weaknesses witnessed in the enforcement of the law (notably the checks and balances aspect) and should put community reconciliation as an important component of any proper agrarian reform.

5 Conclusion

Local history is often as intricate as national history and this chapter just proved how a region like Lower Shabeelle could have been part of many dynamics that have shaped the Somali society without having been recognized the role it played in them.

The British anthropologist, Siegfried Nadel, used to say that the peasant belongs to his land more than the land belongs to the peasant⁴⁵. This discussion here intends to show that the very notion of property has been defined in interaction between different sets of actors and also with different cultural minds. In Lower Shabeelle, the concept that customary property is managed through the elders has been challenged in many different ways because power was rarely in the hands of the elders. Saints, rulers and colonisers long before a proper state apparatus existed obliged the customary rights to evolve in different directions that expressed new relations of power and also the growing influence of outsiders, being newly settlers or a state that was slowly proving its ability to regulate beyond the cities.

It is also important to put Lower Shabeelle and Somalia in perspectives. The political and economic processes witnessed under Mahamed Siyaad Barre are hardly different of what could have been envisioned at a certain time in Sudan. This implies that reflecting on what happened in Somalia should also take note of lessons learned elsewhere.

A question that may get some sort of answer in the next chapters is whether normalisation in Somalia (or for this instance, Lower Shabeelle) means a return to the status quo ante. This chapter intended to show that such an option is no more valid and that any policy to clarify land issues will have to propose more original solutions than those found in the 1970's and 1980's with better institutions. This is a true challenge.

⁴⁵ Siegfried Nadel, "Land tenure on the Eritrean plateau", Africa (London), vol. 16, n° 1, 1946, pp. 1-22 and vol. 16, n° 2, pp. 99-109.

Chapter three

The civil war: from “mooryaanism” to Jihad

Contrary to common sense, the time of the civil war has not been homogenous. First, one should be very cautious to put aside the usual vision of a fight of all against all that never stopped. The opposite was the norm, except with strong qualifications in 1991 and 1992: fighting was extremely localised and involved only very specific segments of the society, most often militias who belonged to certain clans. Wars in Lower Shabeelle - understood here as a series of significant military incidents – were short and maybe limited to two, if one excepts the period of Islamic insurgency that started in 2007.

Land conflicts followed this rule as well. Biimaal/Haber Gidir conflict to name it this way – some would say Dir/Hawiye – encompassed many skirmishes over the years separated with long lulls for reasons that deserve an analysis. The current state of cold war between the two clans is therefore not inevitable, but corresponds to specific mobilisations of certain stakeholders. It illustrates the failure of the governments in Mogadishu and Baydhabo to comprehensively address the tensions and create a space for reconciliation.

Even the period that could be characterised by the rule of clan factions is not homogenous. As analysed in the following sections, as far as Lower Shabeelle is concerned, one may differentiate several different periods which do not coincide if one considers the political or the military dimensions. From 1994 to 2007, most of the region was ruled by the very same groups but their behaviour changed and, eventually, they were acknowledged by the population, even if still perceived as illegitimate by some of its quarters. This was achieved by a curious mix of social accommodation, balance of force between different clans and as well events that took place outside the region but had impact on it.

The Islamic moment of Lower Shabeelle started actually in early summer 2006 when the Islamic Courts Union took over Mogadishu and quickly expanded to Merka, Baraawe, Afgooye and Wanlaweyn⁴⁶. But no major change occurred before the Ethiopian military intervention in December 2006. The 'Abdullaahi Yuusuf Ahmed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) tried to appoint new district administrations in Lower Shabeelle, that collapsed quickly after its establishment for reasons analysed below. This inability to fill a political vacuum did not last for long. The insurgents had their own weaknesses: they were divided militarily and ideologically (at least in the way they wanted to deal with the local population). Shabaab emerged winner from this competition because of the indecisiveness of its competitors more than its own strength. Lower Shabeelle kept ruled by the Jihadi organisation up to 2012. In that year, AMISOM and the Somali National Army took over the main regional cities but were unable to rein in Shabaab control of the country side. In 2015, two AMISOM camps were taken over as evidence that this small war will be a long war⁴⁷.

This political overview of the region is important to bear in mind because it explains several important progresses in addressing peacefully land conflicts. Political alliances have social implications that have been often denied by outside observers because they were (rightly) perceived as pure tactical moves with little credibility. The point is that it does not

⁴⁶ One may remember that al-Ittihaad al-Islaamiyya had controlled Merka port for several months in the period 1991-1998 and Mogadishu Islamic Courts had a grip on most of Lower Shabeelle from late 1998 to 2000. These events are analyzed later in this chapter.

⁴⁷ Roland Marchal, « From a small to a long war : Somalia woping with Shabaab », *African Review of Books*, vol. 10, n°2, 2014.

always work the same way within the society. People may use the opportunity of a sudden political alliance to normalise relations that had been highly conflictual and take back properties that were occupied. As anything, there is a give and a take and one should not confuse these positive developments with law enforcement.

What makes the Somali case so intriguing is the strength of the social fabric compared to many other conflicts taking place in the region. This strength should not be seen as a positive factor *per se*. It pushed people to get involved in a nasty “popular” war in 1991 and 1992; contesting social segregations never became a priority until a militant form of Islam was promoted by an armed group; on many occasions, people got hijacked by their own leaders and so on and so forth. But the clan system does not limit itself to a balance of power that can be contested only by war; it also brings into the discussion certain ethical values and legitimate behaviours that allow space for negotiation and reconciliation. A British historian, John Lansdale, coined this in a nice formula: “Moral ethnicity versus political tribalism”⁴⁸. This obliges to look deeper and for instance differentiate interests of the long-time settlers from the new ones whatever clan they belong to and also understand how long term economic interests may police the behaviour of some new farmers as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

Shabaab seemed to have hesitated to its will to rule Lower Shabeelle but, as often, was forced to act because of the requests of the local population that thought that any authority should provide guidance and Shabaab was not the least legitimate to make decision (and enforce them). Acknowledging Shabaab authority does not mean that people liked Shabaab in absolute terms but many saw Shabaab as a more efficient instrument to restore some rule of law in a region that was already so deeply harmed by the civil war.

1 Civil war: secular politics and “mooryaanism”

The situation in Lower Shabeelle got tenser before the upheaval in Mogadishu. Local clans and especially Biimaal were arguing against decisions to attribute land in such a way that - contrary to the tradition (and their needs) - their livestock could not have any more access to the river. Several clashes with new owners happened up to the Ministry of Agriculture sorted out the problem by designing new accesses to the river every 10 km on the road from K 50 to Merka.

These incidents meant more than small skirmishes between “traditional” pastoralists and the new agriculturist “actors”: they reflected a new speed in allocating land in Lower Shabeelle after 1986 without respecting the genuine legal conditions. They provided a window of opportunity for Hawiye opponents to Mahamed Siyaad Barre to build an alliance with Biimaal and Digil as the prospect of a major confrontation with the regime was becoming likelier. Quite ironically, in those months before Mogadishu’s upheaval (that started on Sunday 30th December 1990), the ones who were promoting the autochthony discourse for Lower Shabeelle were Hawiye, not Biimaal or Digil, which explains why many inhabitants of the region at first sided with General Mahamed Faarah ‘Aydiid because he was seen as a strong supporter of radical changes and did not have the ambiguous relations with the Mogadishu elites (especially Daarood) entertained by his main contender, ‘Ali Mahdi Mahamed.

⁴⁸ John Lonsdale, “Moral ethnicity and political tribalism”, in I. Kaarsholm & J. Hultin (eds.), *Inventions and Boundaries, : Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Roskilde University, Institute of Development Studies, 1994, pp. 131-150.

The popular perception of the regime was very simplistic and polarised by clan competition: land in Lower Shabeelle had been confiscated and allocated to Daarood people who were either the President kinsmen or Majeerteen opponents who had been bought back from SSDF. This version of history allowed keeping silent on the big farms owned by Rahanweyn, Isaaq and Hawiye officials and big business people and to better analyse by which ways the dispossession of land had taken place.

The two years 1991 and 1992 were the most difficult for all people: the Mogadishu battle was inconclusive as Mahamed Siyaad Barre was able to retreat to Baydhabo, Baraawe and Kismaayo while the struggle for power and the division among Hawiye leaders became apparent to all. Lower Shabeelle became the playing ground of the new battles for one year. Fighting broke out in February 1991 in Afgooye and destroyed the weak alliance General 'Aydiid had forged with the Ahmed Jess (Daarood/Ogaadeeni) SPM and the (Isaaq) SNM led then by 'Abdirahmaan Ahmed 'Ali Tuur⁴⁹. What followed was a series of offensives and counter-offensives against Mahamed Siyaad Barre forces that lasted up to spring 1992 when the later eventually left to Kenya.

A good fight needs to be celebrated by a good looting and Lower Shabeelle paid a high price for that celebration. Testimonies from elders indicate that Siyaad Barre supporters were not as predatory as the militias who came from Mogadishu to defeat them. For instance, Tunni elders decided at one point to side with the former ruler because his troops were behaving slightly better than Hawiye *mooryaan*. Elsewhere, even if people were supporting the upheaval they could not do much to stop the looting except looting first. Throughout these months the leaders willingly or unwillingly did not control their own fighters. They knew that the war was not over and a new confrontation might be decisive, which meant that they needed more cannon fodder, not disciplined fighters. It is true that in Lower Shabeelle Hawiye (especially Haber Gidir, Murusade, Abgaal and Hawaadle) militias committed huge violations of the law of war but one should not forget that they were not alone as many others (including Biimaal and Garre) in the region wanted their share of the cake. Many farms were occupied, their equipment looted and many infrastructures salvaged. Often, farms workers were calling friends or relatives from Mogadishu to help them do so. The allocation of spoils was already contentious: In spring 1992 Hawaadle militias had expected to take over Kismaayo port after having chased away Siyaad Barre remnants but were pushed north by Haber Gidir/Sa'ad *mooryaan* whose leaders knew the strategic value of such an infrastructure. The former were allocated Baraawe and stayed there until they decided to confront their Haber Gidir competitors late 1993 and early 1994: they were quickly defeated and the battle moved up to Mogadishu with the same outcome. Hawaadle lost their share of power in Lower Shabeelle⁵⁰.

Junior clan factions emerged also from the chaotic attempt to reunify the Hawiye leadership. A Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM) was set up to gather Southern Dir militias who eventually in spring 1992 became in charge of Merka. It slightly mirrored the "Biimaal" militias that were set up after 2013 in the same district: a good number were actually Dir/Qubeys and Dir/Sure and Biimaal IDP from Jilib and Jamaame in Lower Jubba. Another faction, the Somali Democratic Front led by 'Abdiqaadir "Zoppe" (who became Vice-President at the Djibouti conference in July 1991), claimed to gather Digil-Mirifle people but had little influence in Lower Shabeelle for two reasons. First, it was set up in Mogadishu and had little root in the home region of the clans it pretended to represent. Second, there was already

⁴⁹ On the Somali armed fronts of that period, the best description is provided by Daniel Compagnon, "The *Somali Opposition Fronts*: Some Comments and Questions," Horn of Africa, vol.13 (January-June 1990), pp. 29-54.

⁵⁰ Yet, the current Shabaab leader in Lower Shabeelle is Hawaadle, which has some resonance in the small Hawaadle community still settled in Lower Shabeelle in Qoryooley area for many of them.

uneasiness between Digil and Mirifle: Digil argued that positions should be shared 50% - 50% while Mirifle leaders were counting the sub-clans to decide that the allocation should be 1/3 for Digil and 2/3 for Mirifle. This point came again in the discussion in 2014 and 2015 at the time different options were discussed to build what became the South West State.

In the narrative of the civil war until today, these two years are central even though the fighting was intermittent. After April 1992, the insecurity was increasingly connected to the massive drought that affected all southern and eastern Africa and the subsequent starvation in south central Somalia as coping mechanisms could not work anymore in a country under competing militia forces. Even the richest agricultural areas in Lower Shabeelle suffered much because their inhabitants were not armed or armed enough to cope with well-equipped gangs from Mogadishu. Food aid was poured in huge quantities and often looted to enrich a new business class or faction leaders.

The neo-traditionalism that structured the understanding of the international actors was shaped in that summer 1992: promoting elders as counterpart was seen as a more ethical alternative than dealing with those nowadays called warlords who looted food aid. This choice had many unintended consequences. One that went unnoticed for years was that many clans had no traditional leaders and had to create one to be represented. It was rarely a peaceful, transparent and inclusive process. A second consequence was that traditional leaders were empowered but not all were fit for the new responsibilities: this again created rivalries and tensions that sometimes ended up in killing (such as a Biimaal sultan in 1992). A third consequence was that this stance consolidated clan ambitions and promoted a rhetoric on autochthony. In Merka, for instance, Hawiye militias became the scapegoats for the predicament of the population and the presence of Hawiye residents was questioned as if they were responsible for all bad events that had happened.

The international intervention slowly improved the situation, as the UNITAF forces were slow to deploy outside Mogadishu. UNITAF did not claim a political mandate, even though its leadership played games with faction leaders to have greater access to the population without confronting them. UNISOM II was much more ambitious and not well prepared to face a complex political arena and a public opinion that was still much attached to clan factions.

What eventually triggered the fight was a quite childish attempt to build local administration without –officially – paying attention to clan faction leaders and emphasizing “autochthonous” clans against others without a proper understanding of history. Actually, many observers would correct this by underlining that some leaders were heavily involved while others (including General ‘Aydiid) were not. Early 1994, fighting erupted in Lower Shabeelle and Haber Gidir militias took over most of the region against Biimaal and Hawaadle militias. Many observers often overstated the role General ‘Aydiid played in those confrontations but forgot to consider another aspect that shed light on the many mistakes made by international actors and their complacency towards pressures by “autochthonous” leaders to promote their kinsmen for employment in INGOs and agencies. The political dynamic just before the April 1994 fighting was an attempt to negate the rights of long term Hawiye (especially Haber Gidir) residents which triggered a staunch reaction. Although the discourse on armed newcomers corresponded to a tragic reality, the social fabric of Lower Shabeelle was much more complicated than the sketchy vision adopted by many aid workers and diplomats. The neo traditionalist vision had met its limits.

In this messy situation, UNOSOM troops did what they could and often helped keeping casualties low. But politically, UNOSOM was an absolute failure that allowed General ‘Aydiid to claim authority on Lower Shabeelle. The truth is that he had actually much less power than he pretended. In a matter of the two following years, the management of

Ballidoogle and Merka airports (not the same size!) provoked an internal crisis that made the alliance ‘Ayr/Sa’ad collapse in Lower Shabeelle. From that period on, despite the fact that the would-be heads of the district administration were appointed by ‘Aydiid government’ set up in June 1995, the truth was they could exist only if their appointment fit a certain local consensus among the local “powerful” clans. In Merka, the ‘Aydiid appointee was side lined and did not do much up to the time he was replaced by Yuusuf Indha ‘Adde in 1999 who took over as a representative of Mogadishu Islamic Courts and later as an appointee of the Somali National Government set up in ‘Arta (Djibouti) in summer 2000. In Baraawe, after the death of General ‘Aydiid, his son Huseen (named new president thanks to a strange reading of the constitution) wanted to please the family-in-law of his brother Hasan and promoted a new local governor who basically escaped the city in a matter of weeks because he was not welcome. In Afgooye, the local governor stayed – certainly the most stable position from 1994 up to 2007 – but belong to a powerful ‘Ayr sub-clan, which allowed him to be fairly autonomous from the faction that had appointed him. In Wanlaweyn, no administration could exist without the agreement of those managing the Ballidoogle airport and this hardly changed up to 2006 when the Islamic Courts Union militias decided to take over the airport facilities. With no much surprise, the former militias joined ‘Abdulaahi Yuusuf Ahmed and his TFG.

An assessment of that period will stress three points. First, security improved significantly over the years. After ‘Aydiid death, the Rahanweyn Resistance Army tried to make breakthrough in Lower Shabeelle but was defeated by Yuusuf Indha ‘Adde forces reinforced by militias from the Mogadishu Islamic Courts⁵¹. An attempt to build a Gare Resistance Front never took off despite some Garre politicians pleading their cause to Ethiopia that was arming the RRA. Highway bandits were fought by the local governors successfully. Secondly, a primitive taxation system was put in place to pay for the militias, the little administrative services and even in some case the cleaning of the canals. But ambitions as capabilities were very limited and rumours of misappropriation of tax money were recurrent all over the district capitals. A point that underlines the differences with Shabaab. Thirdly, despite the fact that the situation had genuinely cooled down, the legitimacy of those administrations was always contested. Contrary to what is often heard, militias were not all from Haber Gidir and integrated many recruits from clans that claimed to be the sole autochthonous (including therefore Biimaal) and civilian positions also were filled with local people but the perception was that power was in the hand of men who were outsiders (even though Yuusuf Indha ‘Adde grew in Qoryooley).

While none of these local authorities had the ability or the will to address land conflicts in Lower Shabeelle, the overall situation improved due to a number of dynamics detailed in the next chapter. One noticeable point is the impact national politics had to help owners to get their farms back. For instance, in Qoryooley some Mareehaan led by General Khalif Mahamed Samatar after having opted for ‘Aydiid side were able to recover their farms (about 250 ha) and settle peacefully in 1996. The ‘Arta conference provided another venue to talk about misappropriation of farms and some were handed over to their pre-1991 owners.

While the early years of the civil war were anomic, the Haber Gidir long-time residents played in the following years a more positive role (generally speaking). They wanted to keep good relations with their neighbours as they knew that they could not stay by the barrel of a gun, whatever *mooryaan* believed. They were not ready to leave the region they were born there and had nothing to do in the Central Region, a place their family had often left for several generations. Sometimes, they stopped potential fighting; in few occasions they paid for the workers in occupied farms or forced the

⁵¹ This support had different motivations. It was clearly clan solidarity at the level of the Courts but there was also a paramount anti-Ethiopian feeling as the RRA would not have been powerful without Ethiopian supplies, training; and, sometimes, direct support.

new occupiers to do so because they knew that if workers left their farm, they would not be able to manage their own. Sometimes, individual interests fit well more collective ones. The *mooryaan* also cooled down somewhat: they wanted to be socially integrated and needed to find a less controversial occupation, in the trading sector for instance.

2 Civil war: Islamic politics and Shabaab rule

Clan factions were not the only ones that wanted to take over. Islamists split on whether they should build an armed movement or keep educating or re-Islamizing the society bottom up. While the Muslim Brothers decided to keep weapons at bay, the Salafi al-Ittihaad al-Islaamiyya decided to move in the opposite direction. There are different explanations to these different strategies but one point is important to borne in mind when Lower Shabeelle is concerned is that the Muslim Brothers (organised in al-Islaah) recruited at that time in small clans, many of them kept unarmed throughout of the civil war, while the more militant al-Ittihaad got its recruits from numerous and armed clans.

After failing to play a role in the spring 1991 in the capital city and being humiliated later on in Kismaayo by General 'Aydiid forces, al-Ittihaad decided to take over medium size cities that could generate revenues, therefore mostly ports. They settled in Merka and Baraawe but could hardly play the same role as in Boosaaso because they could not connect the same way with clan factions (at that time the SSDF leader was Mahamed Abshir Muuse who was Wahhabi, though politically he stayed close to the Muslim Brothers of al-Islaah) and secure the port city as they did in Boosaaso. Al-Ittihaad had little support among the population and actually left Merka before UNITAF troops deployed there.

They never came back. The security situation in Lower Shabeelle started deteriorating when the Rahanweyn Resistance Army – set up in October 1995 - launched its war against General 'Aydiid presence in Baydhabo and the occupation of most of Baay by his troops. Ethiopia was behind this movement and provided intelligence, training, guidance as well as weapons and ammunitions. Incidents happened in and around Merka as well as in Qoryooley area where Jiiddu and Garre fought. The violence never reached a high level but they provided opportunity for bandits to restart activities. By October 1999, militias who belonged to the Islamic Courts set up in South Mogadishu were able to control Lower Shabeelle district capitals (Qoryooley, Afgooye, Awdheegle, Merka and Baraawe). Until today, many elders interviewed for this study are sarcastic about these Haber Gidir troops who grew beard and were new-born Muslims. The truth is that the Islamic Courts militias were in great majority Haber Gidir and after taking over the region the Islamic Courts did not try seriously any bottom up approach to design local administrative structures. The priority was securitizing the region and therefore the trust was directed to their military leaders, especially in this case Yuusuf Indha 'Adde.

There were no significant ideological transformations at that time, beyond the destruction of few places where alcohol was produced and drunk. One reason was that the Islamic Courts were a melting pot of different religious trends and that al-Ittihaad supporters were not numerous enough to guide others into their direction. Another much more practical reason was that they did not stay long in power as the 'Arta Conference set up the Somali National Government that absorbed the Courts by mid-September 2000. In Lower Shabeelle, there was no significant change of positions under Yuusuf Indha 'Adde, and the mood was not militant until 2006, when Shabaab emerged as a quite novel political and military actor.

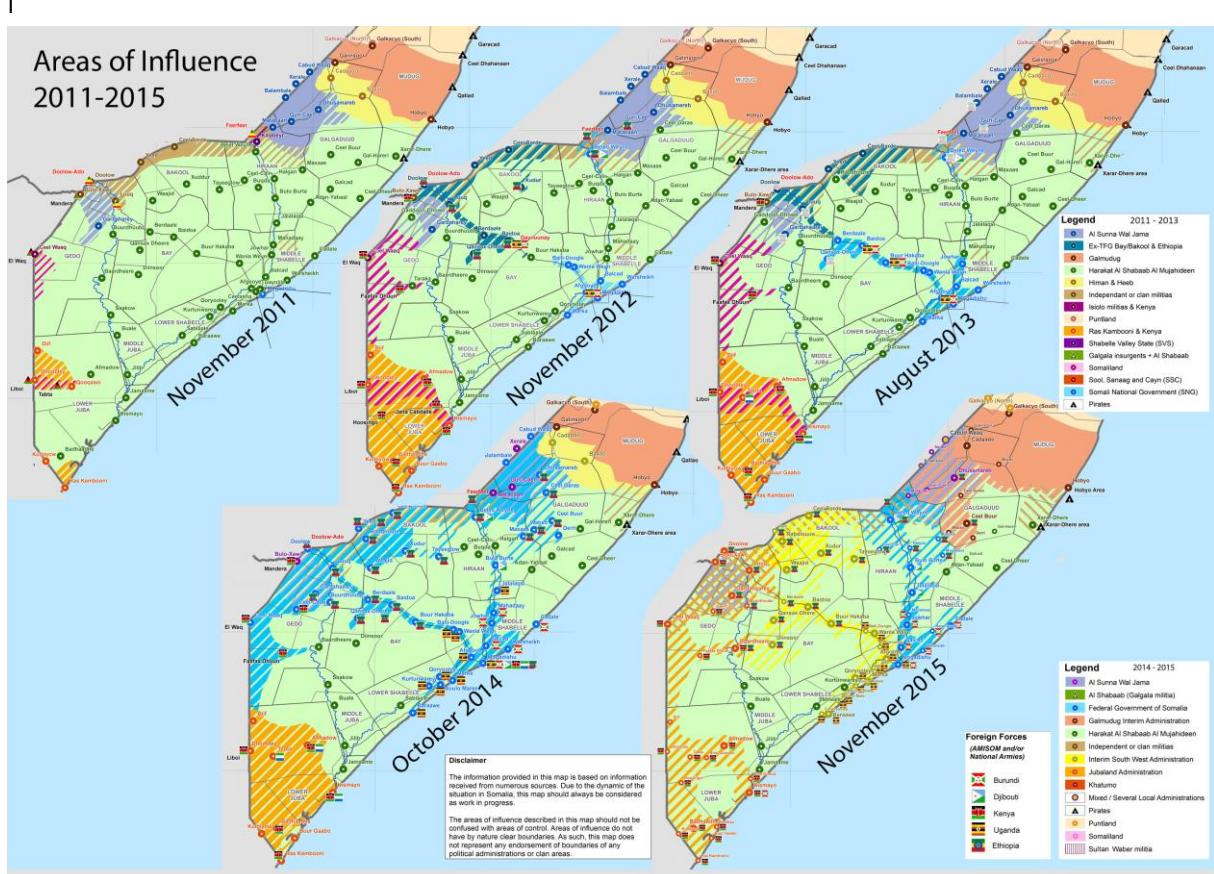
Little is known of the early days of Shabaab in Lower Shabeelle in the second semester 2006. A story –maybe apocryphal – emphasized how its attention was directed to “marginal” clans from the very beginning. The wife of an important sheikh

– the story said Fu'aad Shongole - thought that her gold was stolen by the cleaners of her house who were Jareer. ICU officers arrested them and tortured them to the point that one passed away. Because they were Jareer, things could have stopped there but Shabaab protested and said that the whole case should have been handled through Shari'a. It obliged the ICU officers to pay for the *diyya* (blood money) to the family of the dead woman. Consequently, Jareer and other marginalized clans understood that HMS indeed was not playing the same game as others and joined the movement. What is confirmed by interviews is that after 2007, many youth who belonged to *Gibil 'Ad*, Geledi, Jiiddu and Garre joined Shabaab while at that time the core members were Rahanweyn, Murusade, Duduble, and Galje'el. There is no doubt that many of this willing recruits intended to settle score against those (from major clans, especially Hawiye) who had humiliated or despoiled them for too long.

Shabaab proceeds always the same manner when entering new villages of Lower Shabeelle. They first want to make clear that elders' power is null: they gather them and explain that Shari'a is the only law of the land, neither *heer* (customary law) nor any state law. They thank the elders for their support but ask them not to come to complain on behalf of their fellow citizens. They show no hesitation to put under arrest any elders reluctant to accept the new governance. Shabaab leaders will also ask a certain number of recruits to be provided and weapons to be supplied by the population. At the same time, they will reward people and build a large group of clients who can play secondary role at the local level and provide intelligence on people and debates within the village community. Such a spying network is powerful even when AMISOM is able to force Shabaab to leave a location.

In its first months, Shabaab shows no mercy for those who do not comply fully with its understanding of Shari'a. *Huduud* (physical punishments) are sentenced in the first weeks to make clear that Shabaab is not joking and is not the usual Somali faction that could have crossed their village in the past. Smartphones are prohibited (paranoia on pictures to be taken and transmitted electronically and GPS) and phones are checked especially if people are travelling to areas that are not under Shabaab control. Women have to be dressed a certain way and the poorest may be helped to buy the right clothes.

A system of taxation is put in place that goes from Zakat up to payment for "services". This is detailed elsewhere but two points can be made. The first one is that people hate paying taxes even though Shabaab provides more services than any previous administrations (security, courts, and rehabilitation of roads) and many criticisms heard about Shabaab may be tomorrow directed to any authority that may try to raise taxes. The second point makes Shabaab not comparable with clan factions or the various governments after 2000: people pay once, not at each roadblock as it happens today between Mogadishu and Merka or Afgooye. Counter-terrorism experts in Somalia celebrate their many successes but traders won't have any hesitation to pay taxes to Shabaab and use a rough road because the tarmac road is controlled by the SNA or surrogate forces which means that any truck may have to pay not twice by 10 times at checkpoints.



Source: INSO

Shabaab also intends to show that it is promoting the right Islam (i.e. its own understanding of Islam). Sufi activities are prohibited and Sufi tombs were even destroyed at one point. Quranic teachers are gathered to get trained in all Islamic subjects and are ordered to stop reciting Quran the usual Sufi way (often too quickly to grasp the words) and psalmody it the Wahhabi way (as in Saudi Arabia, all words could be heard and understood). There are also attempts to reduce the number of students in the Quranic classes but this is not systematic enough to be seen as a policy promoted by the organisation itself.

HMS also is proactive compared what can be witnessed on the other side. It reacts speedily and does not fear to make decision but this has to follow a proper process. People are asked to make their case in front of a Shari'a Court and bring evidence and testimonies. Shabaab may even carry out its own investigation but once the Court makes its decision, it is enforced and Lower Shabeelle people got to know that Shabaab does not play game.

While this description encompasses the major features of Shabaab presence, one should be aware that differences exist and allow qualifying this sketchy description. First, Shabaab intolerance is subject to some flexibility especially when Shabaab is losing ground. In 2012, when Afgooye got under AMISOM, in the southern part of Lower Shabeelle people got greater room to breathe. Second, there are differences among Shabaab officers: some are more open-minded than others; some also know better the people or the place than others and this brings a spectrum of attitudes in front of the same problem. Third, Shabaab is also fighting corruption internally. Misbehaviour or stealing by Shabaab people are reported to higher officers and, at the difference of clan factions or the Somali government, some kind of

accountability is enforced, though one can doubt that Shari'a is always enforced in petty crimes when Shabaab members are involved. But full impunity is rare, at least for what interviews said.

Shabaab has lost the popularity it may have enjoyed at one point of the Ethiopian intervention in 2007, although Ethiopian military presence is getting more assertive from late 2014 and may exacerbate the same hostility. For what elders said, Shabaab should be seen as a nuisance among others, sometimes the most serious one, sometimes a benign one. This was clearly reflected by the last series of military developments in Lower Shabeelle. Shabaab and Biimaal militias are not fighting each other because they both considered that AMISOM keeps an unfair status quo and that Haber Gidir are parts of the current SFG. After the emotion created by AMISOM giving up Merka to Shabaab in January 2016, a first offensive was planned that associated AMISOM with a group of Somali soldiers who were in majority Biimaal trained in Ethiopia and led by a Biimaal officer. Haber Gidir militias who controlled the city before Shabaab entered it decided not to fight Shabaab from inside but to ally with them against troops, they could not decipher the political agenda. This attempt failed but a couple of days after a new offensive took off but the SNA contingent associated with AMISOM was made up of Haber Gidir and other Hawiye soldiers. Haber Gidir militias in the city welcomed them. Like Da'esh in Syria, Shabaab in Lower Shabeelle (and Jubbaland) is increasingly considered by all military stakeholders as the secondary enemy: tactical alliances are possible if they allow weakening a common primary enemy but Shabaab is no more an existential threat for them.

3 The South West State: expectations and disappointments

Federalism was supposed to be a response to the grievances raised against an omnipotent central state and the dominance of clans that were indifferent to the rights of the indigenous population in the regions. We are not going to discuss here the dramatic discrepancies between the concept articulated in the draft constitution and the actual political process that led to the establishment of several federal entities. Our purpose is to sum up the viewpoints expressed by elders and politicians of the region to feed a conversation on the future of such a political arrangement.

Lower Shabeelle was involved in three very different projects: a federal entity made up of 6 regions south of Mogadishu, the return to the "Great" Banaadir Region as it existed for decades and the South West State made up of Baay, Bakool and, indeed, Lower Shabeelle. Lower Shabeelle is nowadays part of the South West State led by the seasoned politician, Shariif Hasan Sheekh Aadan. It is important to reflect on the dynamic of events that produced such an outcome.

The first one – here called South West 6 – was an attempt to build a federal entity made up of all regions that include significant Rahanweyn settlements: Gedo, Middle Jubba, Lower Jubba, Baay, Bakool, and Lower Shabeelle. This prospect was not popular among the main international players that thought that undoing the first federal entity, the Interim Jubbaland Administration, was not the best way to build a new federal order in Somalia. This attempt was therefore undermined even though it got some support among the population of those regions and its initiators were able to organise a gathering of representatives of the six regions that was as good or as bad as the proponents of the two other projects in terms of clan representation. As a consequence, Rahanweyn clans were split into two entities, which soon became a matter of tensions between the two neighbouring federal states as the South West State claimed that Rahanweyn were not getting their decent share and Kismaayo pushed Ogaadeeni to exert the same kind of pressure on Baydhabo.

A second alternative was to set up again the Great Banaadir Region as it had existed for decades: it would have connected Lower and Middle Shabeelle with Mogadishu, a federal capital city without yet a clear status. This project had some backing among Abgaal elites who knew that Hiiran would not be an easy partner in any attempt to build a federal state by merging with Middle Shabeelle and wanted the greatest part of the Abgaal clan organised within the same polity (even though Abgaal – Wa'isle - communities are present in Galgaduud). Haber Gidir elites were divided for reasons that deserve some explanations. Their first priority was the making up of what became known as the new Galmudug State; many political players were marginally interested in Lower Shabeelle and even fewer understood the long term stakes of the new administrative map of the country. Many also were divided on the personality of Shariif Hasan: Haber Gidir business people knew him personally long before he became Minister of Finances under Sheekh Shariif Sheekh Ahmed in 2009 and thought that he would be friendly in his handling of Lower Shabeelle politics, without putting Haber Gidir at the forefront. They therefore endorsed his project more than reviving the Great Banaadir Region that would have empowered Abgaal clan beyond the reasonable and brought attention to Haber Gidir and their ally, the Garre clan, in Lower Shabeelle. Few, often originated from Lower Shabeelle, were supportive of the Great Banaadir option because that was a way to strengthen their alliance with Garre clan and contain the “negative” criticisms articulated by Biimaal and Dir politicians against the “Sunday” people who had occupied “their” land⁵². However, figures such as General Yuusuf Indha 'Addo were supporting Shariif Hasan and not the Great Banaadir State as they thought that the alliance with Rahanweyn (or Digil-Mirifle) was more rational for what the social fabric of Lower Shabeelle was. The argument made by Digil elders and politicians that Mirifle were getting a disproportionate number of positions compared to Digil was merely dismissed as the usual recriminations of one clan against another at the time of political competition. Anyway, the international community was not positive towards this project – the UN SRSG dismissed it in one sentence – especially because it was building a strong and powerful Hawiye State that would have controlled the main economic assets of the country (richest agricultural area, large grazing lands, international port and airport) and *de facto* political power in the capital city.

One major difference between these two projects and the current South West State was the support Shariif Hasan was able to gather compared to the others. By getting most of Digil-Mirifle in the new federal entity, he made sure that a strong constituency would defend his project. This entity also includes access to the sea and allows a number of officials to believe that an international port can be built in the near future. By nominating Baraawe the capital of the federal entity, the South West State rewarded the Tunni and the Digil, while avoiding being under Biimaal influence in Merka. It also connected the South West State with Mogadishu through the acknowledgment by Hawiye leaders including the President, that this new federal state was legitimate. Furthermore, since the South West State includes Daarood (notably Mareehaan and Ogaadeeni) it could also have some leverage on Jubbaland internal representation. As we witnessed, it only contributed to raise tension between Ogaadeeni districts in Upper Bakool and South West state at the dawn of an electoral campaign.

The IGAD – which means here Ethiopia - was positive toward Shariif's strategy and this support meant that other international players rallied behind it despite some good arguments raised by the proponents of other views. Somalia's President, Hasan Sheekh Mahamuud, was also an outspoken supporter of Shariif Hasan despite a possible tension with

⁵² While Biimaal and Dir elders and politicians were adamant to expulse even long-term residents from Hawiye clans, they wanted to welcome all Dir from Gedo and Central Region: the question was not anymore newcomers versus autochthonous people but Dir-versus other clans. Digil could not share that view for obvious reasons. This debate only illustrates how federalism could be understood once one leaves the top elites discussing with the international community.

his clan interests. He knew how most sectors of the international community were inclined to support Shariif Hasan and his enterprise and was unwilling to antagonise that sympathy at a time he was recovering from his divisive argument against his second Prime Minister. He also had to pay back the support he got from Shariif Hasan and the Digil-Mirifle MPs he had convinced to pass a vote of no confidence to get rid of his first Prime minister.

There were also some other reasons that were part of the conversation but nobody knew for sure whether they were a way to rationalise a decision or a parameter in making it. For instance, access to the sea was suddenly described as an essential asset for all federal entities acknowledging an implicit need for each state to get its own ports to import and export commodities, certainly not the best signal that federalism will help easing the economic bottlenecks by fostering cooperation between the federal entities.

The establishment of South West State suffered from a number of processes that jeopardise until today the support it may get among the Lower Shabeelle population. The first and recurrent one is that the representation of the population has been selected in a way that gave Shariif Hasan a full control of the Baydhabo Conference that decided the establishment of this federal entity. Its friends played a major role and were embodied with representation rights and legitimacy that could be questioned. This way of doing politics is hardly new in Somalia and was the norm in the establishment of all other federal entities. This weakness means that elders or local leaders may claim with some credibility that the whole process was biased and that their clan was not properly represented. Beyond this recurrent criticism that seems rooted in Somali politics for the time being, two aspects are clearly controversial.

The first one is that the process is hijacked by few dozens of people who have been key in making decisions in all national reconciliation conferences and nowadays in the establishment of federal states: this was not exactly the purpose of enforcing federalism in Somalia... The second one is both an asset and liability of Shariif Hasan character: his ability to change deals because some are unhappy with them. "Constitutionally" the Parliament was supposed to be made up of 95 MPs, it grew overnight to 125 MPs but then 145 MPs and, at the time this report is written, has reached 149. Due to this flexibility or will to accommodate all at the price of questioning previous deals, Shariif Hasan may face increasingly problems to build genuine institutions as everything essential is subjected to changes before it even functions. The sustainability of those institutions is also a problem left without any reasonable answer: who is going to pay salaries? The setting up of roadblocks at the boundary with Banaadir created tensions and one may doubt that they constitute the answer to the sustainability of the new federal administration built by the South West State.

Lower Shabeelle is not badly represented within the South West State. In the council of ministers, Lower Shabeelle has the same number of representatives as Baay and Bakool together. Concerning the Parliament, at least initially, Baay and Bakool got 60% of the MPs while Lower Shabeelle got 40% of them. In terms of clan repartition, Biimaal got 10 MPs (plus 3 Dir women who are strangely enough associated with Biimaal when they belong to other Dir clans); Garre, Jiiddu, Tunni got each 4 MPs; Shanta 'Aleen got 5MPs while Geledi got 3. The contentious figure at least for Biimaal is that Hawiye got 15 MPs, the argument being that they are well represented in Afgooye district, not only due to their historic presence there but also to the forced migrations at the time Ethiopian forces controlled Mogadishu in 2007 and 2008: thousands if not dozens thousands are still settled in 'Eelasha Biyaha.

Federalism did not solve intra-clan problems. Shariif Hasan was keen to entertain a dialogue with elders before appointing District Commissioners but critics argue that consultation with a cluster MPs of the area, business people

and few influential ministers of his council of ministers were instrumental in the decision. In Merka, the newly appointed DC was not welcome since the former one had not renounced his position and had militias ready for a fight.

For all politicians and officials interviewed in this research, the Biimaal/Haber Gidir conflict is fundamentally a political confrontation, not a clan issue, largely spurred on by local ambitions and a wrong understanding of federalism. Most non-Biimaal officials, including Digil-Mirifle, do not understand the Biimaal view: "If Hawiye have to leave Lower Shabeelle, should we send back Biimaal to Somaliland because they should not have argued against 'Iise and Gadabuursi and left to the South?" declared a high ranking official of South West State. When Mahamed 'Usmaan Yariisow the Merka DC was removed, he was also promoted but he kept his fierce opposition to the new DC and his council because the latter included Hawiye members...

Because of the competition with the Great Banaadir State project, Shariif Hasan courted the Biimaal clan leaders who today believe that they should get more than whatever is proposed to them. Today, all acknowledge that the new SWS officials are distant from the lay population. This mechanically means that security is low as intelligence is bad. The behaviour of the SNA is a very sensitive issue especially at a time the South West State gets no proper forces to send in Lower Shabeelle.

Officials recurrently made two important points. First, the SNA misbehaviour has to be analysed. The Somali national Army (SNA) in Lower Shabeelle is mostly made up of Hawiye soldiers who loot and extort money to the lay population. Elsewhere, in Galgaduud, Hiiran and Middle Shabeelle their attitude is much better. Why so and why did the government never take any action to punish their crimes?

Among all clans of Lower Shabeelle, Biimaal look the most intransigent and the less prone to any sort of compromise. During the elders seminar organised for this research, one Biimaal elder even stood up and called his Digil colleagues to arm themselves and fight Haber Gidir domination in Lower Shabeelle. Those who would not do that were labelled Hawiye stooges.

The following reasons could be mentioned mostly as food for thought. There are no Biimaal public opinion pools to make sure that what is heard from a limited number of elders does reflect the overall views of Biimaal members. Clans do not exist as a concrete entity, they are a potential repertory to frame collective actions and it is therefore very difficult to claim that all members share the same views even though a consensus seems to exist at the level of its politicians and traditional authorities.

As noticed in one earlier section, Biimaal entrepreneurship was rising in the second half of the 19th century despite wars and hardships. Agrarian capitalism was framing new social differentiations among Biimaal people and between Biimaal and other clans of the region. Yet, the Italian colonial arrival just froze this dynamic and destroyed all hopes that Biimaal would become an economically powerful clan. This became self-evident at the political level but the enforcement of an agrarian colonisation that required land dispossession and forced manpower was seen as the most humiliating moment, even though Biimaal traditional authorities had to compromise to survive this onslaught on their privileges.

At the time the civil war broke out in 1990, the Biimaal elites thought as all other oppositional elites that they would recover their legitimate rights on their land and not be any more curbed in their rights to benefit from their resources, which mean here their land. This will to catch up with history was even made stronger because the atmosphere was

blaming Mahamed Siyaad Barre regime for all bad things and the Hawiye were not the last to comfort these hopes to make sure that Biimaal will side the opposition against the regime. Again, what happened after 1991 was very different from what had been expected in the last days of the dictatorship or in the first weeks of the civil war. Hawiye (and among them Haber Gidir) suddenly did not pay much attention to whatever implicit commitments their political elites had made in Mogadishu and militias took over land and farms without considering Biimaal claims, whether legitimate or not.

But other features also played a role. Two deserve a mention here, because they are still very present in the political landscape of Lower Shabeelle. The first one is the inequality of access to wealth and power between Biimaal and Haber Gidir. The latter are numerous, hard workers, well represented in the business class, military powerful and getting allied with them or not antagonising them is potentially a condition to be co-opted into the political elites in Mogadishu. The former is prisoner of its home region, even if close to Mogadishu and was not powerful enough to create the conditions of another potential clan alliance that could be an alternative to the influence enjoyed by Haber Gidir in Mogadishu politics. All southern Dir ambitious politicians have therefore to play carefully not to be seen as cultivating a radical enmity that would corner them. All Biimaal activists resent this with bitterness⁵³.

A second aspect is also the outcome of Haber Gidir economic influence. Influent Biimaal elders are related to Haber Gidir through their mother and their opponents inside the clan claim that they were able to get that position because they benefitted from HG money to convince their reluctant kin. Not being a “pure” Biimaal means that they are potentially bought by Hawiye or Haber Gidir...

One should also not exclude federalism as a major cause for feeding the conflict. Whatever is discussed on the international zone at the Mogadishu Airport, most Somalis have a very peculiar understanding of federalism and Biimaal are not the only ones to believe that since they are autochthonous (at least, that is what is said), residents from other clans have to go back to their “home region”. Even at one point, Biimaal elders complained that some Biimaal appointees in Merka were not from Merka but from Jamaame and therefore should not have been selected.

4 Conclusion

Lower Shabeelle region had to cope with different periods in the civil war and was a side victim of conflicts that took place either in Mogadishu or in Baydhabo. Today, its cosmopolitan social fabric and the recurrence of fighting between Haber Gidir and Biimaal among others less serious bones of contention allow Shabaab to resist its unpopularity and military setbacks by AMISOM and its allies. What has changed over the 25 years of civil war is that one can more easily than before distinguish social and political problems. To a large extent, some of the potential tensions could be addressed with a cold mind by their stakeholders.

For instance, the Jiiddu/Garre and Jiiddu/Tunni conflicts of the 1990's may erupt again but elders were confident that the usual procedures of clan peace making can succeed to avoid any serious escalations: they refer to problems between pastoralists and agriculturists (access to water mostly) and there is no clan hatred as such. Near Afgooye, Geledi are concerned by Abgaal pastoralists' encroachments and believe that this is due to the fact that the latter believe

⁵³ Biimaal as any clan today is divided even on the Haber Gidir and autochthony argument. To make it simple the Bantu component (*Afaf*) may not be as hardliners as the Somali (*Udub*) one in the discussion.

that owning the country President means that they should not be any more prisoner of past agreements but again there are ways to contain this kind of move, even though it is time consuming and that the President and his office should get involved (which is not the case despite several calls by local elders). And then, there is the Biimaal/Haber Gidir confrontation that resuscitated after Shabaab grip on Lower Shabeelle was somewhat dismantled in 2012 at a time federalism was paramount in the new Somali political discourse.

Often in this research, the question of the politics of truth was raised. How could people articulate discourses that were for an external observer so far from their own history and the past of most people they were living with? Biimaal are daily in contact with Digil whose history is a perfect illustration of how the social fabric of Lower Shabeelle has emerged from traumatic events, peaceful migrations, ecological hazards and so on. Yet, this is refused by Biimaal. This certainly could be discussed in details keeping in mind the study on whether Greeks actually believed in their own myths by a leading European historian, Paul Veyne⁵⁴.

Major mistakes have been made by the current and previous governments to address the clan conflicts in Lower Shabeelle, even though in Mogadishu most were aware that the fight was escalating and was not any more mobilising only residents of Lower Shabeelle: the diaspora, politicians, the SNA, business people and others were also involved to make the situation worse not better.

Attempts by the new Somali state to handle the conflict were always short-lived and/or left in the hands of mediators who had little skills to perform honourably. Funding has been a recurrent problem: MPs lamented that they received per-diems for a couple of days and no additional security to stay longer than the planned period. Such kind of divisive arguments deserve patience and time as well as dedication.

This report has not been shy on the Biimaal shortcomings but an analysis does not provide a solution if more efforts are not put to talk to them and make them accept a solution they will contribute to frame. Military strength allows winning battles, never ending such a war.

⁵⁴ Paul Veyne, *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes ? Essai sur l'imagination constitutive*, Paris, Livre de poche, 2014.

Chapter four

An overview of land conflicts in present day Lower Shabeelle

This chapter intends to provide an overview of land issues in Lower Shabeelle and shed some light on the social and political mechanisms that brought about a certain kind of normalization despite the lack of any state or legitimate authority. Because of the duration of the civil war, it is important not to confuse the region's situation in 1991 and with the present day conditions, 25 years later. A striking point is that elders or politicians often intend to offer a description of land issues that sounds a bit outdated. This is not to say that the present context is much better than it used to be but this should push observers to analyze better the current challenges (they are many) and not dismiss a number of issues whose consequences need to be thoroughly reflected upon.

Paradoxically, the fact that Shabaab is still waging war in Lower Shabeelle give Somali authorities and donors some time to reflect upon policies that might reshape the agriculture sector while being conducive to peace and development⁵⁵. In particular, if the description provided below has some validity, one point should deserve a cautious approach. Most of what has been accomplished so far in terms of returning land to its actual owners has been achieved through social mechanisms rather than state enforcement. Shabaab as well helped to rectify property abuses but did it by involving the local population and Shari'a, not state laws. One should be aware that if the state starts interfering in these issues (and it has the duty to do so), it should be perceived as a legitimate actor (it is not sure yet whether it is being perceived as such), which is capable of fostering peace and collective interests. If not, one may face a situation in which positive steps are likely to be undone and social tensions revived without any actual improvements in terms of law enforcement and development.

This chapter also highlights another important aspect. Lower Shabeelle, as explained earlier in this report, is not uniform and homogenous. Irrigated lands, rain-fed land, farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists are all parts of the region's variety. This should remind the reader that in some areas in Lower Shabeelle there is a long history of state presence and therefore acceptance, while elsewhere the attitude towards the state and land laws may vary. This calls for a differentiated approach, not only because land conflicts do not follow the same paradigms everywhere but also because the ability of the state to be seen as a legitimate and regulatory actor may not be accepted by everyone as a starting point. As a consequence, the state or the two administrations may have to prove their relevance before interfering into land issues and illustrate their added value compared to mere social mechanisms of land conflict resolution.

A last remark should be made before going into a more precise description. Data were collected under the stipulation that no name will be provided not only because of Shabaab's habit to kill or persecute whoever is in touch with foreigners but also because it is not the aim of this report to decide to whom the land belongs, who may have legitimately taken over farms, who has the right to cultivate land that is not his actual property. Sometimes, this stipulation makes the description more repetitive than it should be, had names been provided.

⁵⁵ And also this situation may allow reflecting in policies and drivers that can explain the duration of the war.

1 A glance at the current situation in Lower Shabeelle

The complex political situation that the Lower Shabeelle population is facing today should be nuanced – at least if one wants to adopt a long-term perspective – by a look at the current state of conflicts in the region beyond the major Shabaab/SFG confrontation and the recurrent skirmishes between Biimaal and Haber Gidir militias.

For someone who paid attention to this region 19 years ago, the issue of land ownership is much less contentious today than it was in 1997. As analyzed in the previous chapter, the political situation was then still unstable, the rumblings of war were being heard either in Baay and Bakool where the RRA was winning against Huseen ‘Aydiid forces and in Jubbaland where Ethiopian influence was empowering “secular” Mareehaan militias who soon would join their efforts with Haber Gidir fighters to take over Kismaayo. The emergence of successful Islamic Courts in Mogadishu did not go unnoticed as their symbiotic relationships with business people meant that they would sooner or later become involved in the region.

19 years later, the situation has dramatically changed. Even staying in Lower Shabeelle – except as part of a military expedition – is not safely doable while in 1997 visiting all districts was possible (though painful for your back). Unless major political initiatives are undertaken, Shabaab war is not going to end soon and the AMISOM’s new counter-offensive supported by its western allies should not mislead readers: it is unlikely that military setbacks alone may strategically weaken the Jihadi movement at this point in time. Yet, land issues could be summed up in a much easier way today than they were earlier, at a time when any description was a real patchwork of very local situations.

As already known, there are four kinds of farms in Lower Shabeelle. The first one is made up of private farms owned either by Somali or foreign citizens. The second one is constituted by cooperatives: these legally belong to the state but were managed by entities that do not exist anymore⁵⁶. The third one is made up of farms, which were allocated to firms. This was an attempt to bypass the legal limitation as to the farming area that could be allocated to individuals. The aim was also to develop a modern commercial farming that could provide the state with hard currency. The fourth kind of farms included land that was allocated to people through the traditional *heer* system outside the authority of the state.

Based on several interviews and tentative crosschecking, the following picture can be drawn. It may be amended, once it is possible to have full access to all districts and have trusted people on the ground to check data.

First, let us remind that in the 1980's, land was often confiscated and re-allocated to people for political reasons. In the Afgooye area, for instance three cooperatives (Gooleh, Owburale and ‘Annole) were set up to be allocated to former political SSDF opponents and high rank military officers. The Geledi, Hintire and Jareer people, who were settled there and were farming, were simply kicked out. But in that area (which was particularly rich) these cases were rare since most of the land had already been allocated to Italian farms: Mahamed Siyaad Barre did not want to get into trouble with Somalia's main donor.

⁵⁶ Especially, because many cooperatives provided just a fig leaf for well-connected people who were thereby able to acquire a farm larger than the one authorized by law that was limited to 60 ha in the late 1980's.

Private farms (mostly owned by Italians) were located in Afgooye, Golweyn, Buulo Mareer and Janaale areas. Generically, most are identified as "Somalifruit" as nearly all of them produced bananas and the Italians dominated this sector before the civil war. The current situation is very simple to depict: most of these farms are in the hands of Haber Gidir while some are under the control of Qubeys, Biimaal, Murusade, Abgaal and Ajuuraan people.

Nearly all the farms owned by Gibil 'Ad people from the region were handed back to their pre-1991 owners during the period Shabaab ruled Lower Shabeelle. Interviews with elders revealed that the Gibil 'Ad youth were the first people to become interested in joining Shabaab and they did it on purpose: they wanted to revenge the humiliation they had faced for years in front of Somali clans and wanted their property back as well. Except if one Gibil 'Ad could mobilize friends or in-laws from a powerful local clan, he did not have any hope of preserving his farms (and often even his urban properties). That is why, sometimes, the better off people among the Gibil 'Ad were keen to marry their daughter to a *mooryaan*: that was the best protection those people could obtain. Marriage to Shabaab officers conveyed a different meaning, i.e. a social recognition within the community rather than the strict protection of their possessions.

After 1991, all cooperatives farms were taken over. A list was provided by a farmer shows some (tentative) evidence of cooperatives that are not controlled by Haber Gidir (which contradicts the *doxa*). As an illustration, one can notice that 'Eel Waregoow (2000 ha), Ambanaane Crash Program (400 ha), Aseendo Maceero (Shalamhood), Kaytooy Italian (600 ha?), Abikarow Talyani farm (200 ha), Frank Lungo farm (60 ha) are controlled by Biimaal (some spellings are tentative). For instance, Garsaleh, Warmahan, Tihsiile, Tijaabo and Abuur Badin were occupied by Haber Gidir, Abgaal, Murusade, and Wa'daan. Basically, all big farms were controlled by people who belonged to important Hawiye clans. In this early stage of the civil war, people did not differentiate much between Hawiye clans. It was only after 1994 that Haber Gidir, Murusade and Abgaal were seen as different and competitors.

As for the smaller farms, the new caretakers were often a mix of local people and militias called upon from the outside. Biimaal took over cash-program farms from Boofow up to Km 50 and successively sold some of these farms to private people. They also took over farms from 'Eel Wareeyow to Janaale on the riverside. This military move reflected grievances that arose after 1988.

Prison Wardens had two farms in the Afgooye area. Nowadays, one is controlled by Murusade, while the other one seems to belong to a cluster of Mareehaan and Majeerteen with Hawiye (Haber Gidir?) connections. The military got three farms in the Afgooye area. One is controlled by Abgaal people. The second one is controlled by a group of Baadi'adde, Galje'el, and Sheekhaal. The third one is located to the south west of Afgooye. Some Mareehaan (including Maslah Siyaad Barre) got the property title in 1990 just before the upheaval that overthrew the dictator. In 1991, this farm passed into the hands of Haber Gidir but at the time of the 'Arta Conference, these Mareehaan were able to get their farm back and, subsequently, sold it to several Abgaal and Haber Gidir. All the farms quoted in this paragraph were above 100 ha.

Due to the duration of the war, many changes may have occurred. Current occupiers may be the pre-1991 owners, the ones who took over, the heirs of those who took over or even people who genuinely bought the farms from whoever was in charge (false documents are not difficult to get).

As for the farms, which were owned by companies before 1991, the situation is mixed. The big farms, which were owned by big companies, are still functioning. Most of these farms are in the areas surrounding Afgooye, Janaale and Qoryooley

(a few) [plus some others in Bal'ad area in Middle Shabeelle]. The above-mentioned companies were big enough to find among their shareholders people from the “right” clan to protect the farm. It is worth noting that non-Hawiye often sold their shares when they thought that the dynamics of the war were such that they would not be able to come back to Mogadishu. The fact that big traders have become shareholders in those companies/farms over the last ten years is yet another intriguing aspect. The situation of the small farms is not as good. Most of these were abandoned because of security reasons and left to whomever was settled on them. It is difficult to go into further description because some of the firms that officially owned the farm only existed on paper to capture bank loans and trade: those firms were not interested in farming at all.

This description has been focusing so far on land that was taken over by the state and allocated to people or entities through different means. Nevertheless, Lower Shabeelle still faces a number of potential conflicts that are more related to competing clan ambitions and the structural containment of tensions between pastoralists and farmers. What follows intends to provide a quick and superficial overview of these issues, as they are both recurrent and circumstantial. However, they deserve to be carefully examined since their recurrence is likely to undermine popular support for any administration which is unable to improve the situation by reducing the number of skirmishes.

Wanlaweyn presents distinctive characteristics compared to the core of the Lower Shabeelle region. It is a rain-fed area and most of the population is made up of pastoralists. Therefore most of the problems examined above are irrelevant to this case, as they are typically connected to the presence of irrigated land and high-value farming. The key issue in Wanlaweyn district is actually related to the demographic growth of Abgaal and Murusade communities that are settled in Shanta 'Aleemood territory. The complexity of this case lies in the following features. First of all, in this district, Murusade are considered to be part of Digil. Therefore, they were easily allocated land by Shanta 'Aleemood elders. But the situation changed during the civil war and even more after the election of Hasan Sheekh Mahamuud in September 2012. First of all, many Abgaal fled Middle Shabeelle to escape Shabaab and moved to Wanlaweyn district. Besides, other Abgaal people nowadays feel empowered by the fact that they “own” the President and believe that they could extend their grazing land without any discussion with autochthonous elders. The Murusade slightly tends to behave the same way but the reason for this may be that they were well represented among Shabaab members and therefore they expected to be treated with greater respect. Neither Hasan Sheekh nor Shabaab are responsible for this state of affairs which already existed in the 1990's when Mahamed Faarah 'Aydiid was seen as the “great Hawiye leader”, not to mention Mahamed Siyaad Barre, even earlier.

As for Baraawe district, land issues there are not very numerous and are mainly centered to farming areas, although there many small incidents take place between pastoralists and farmers. The main conflict includes Tunni and Jiiddu in the Arboow Herow area near Kurtunwaarey as far as Sablaale along the riverside. Jiiddu crossed the customary boundary and settled near the river. Tunni have never accepted this. Also, Jiiddu are still unhappy with land settlement in the Qoryooley area (they claim greater influence) but this issue seems manageable.

2 Social mechanisms at play

Up to 1994, when local people mentioned farm occupation, they used to talk about Hawiye occupants. Only after the fights in Baraawe and Merka, they started mentioning Haber Gidir as such. However, the situation on the ground was not so clear. In some areas (e.g. Merka or Baraawe) Haber Gidir dominance was indeed obvious and those who were

occupying farms had to make sure that they could stay without getting into troubles. This was possible if they were kinsmen or if they had good friends or in-laws among the local Haber Gidir community etc... In other areas, like Afgooye, the situation was different. Murusade *mooryaan* had been bothering the inhabitants for too long and the new Haber Gidir governor who took over after 1994 seemed at first to be the only chance to stop the gangs of thugs who were coming from Mogadishu or, to put it another way, the strongest thug. Only time allowed people to make differences though taxation kept being highly unpopular.

Among those who were likely to be involved in normalizing the situation, one should mention two important categories⁵⁷. The Haber Gidir traders needed warm relations with all clans to be successful, secure their commodities and increase the number of their potential buyers. Normalization was their long term vested interest and they tried to police disrespectful *mooryaan*, reminding them that, as kinsmen, they were obliged to follow their elders.

The second category was made up of the old Haber Gidir settlers. Even if, as in any clan, some people thought that they could benefit from the *mooryaan* presence to settle old scores, grab properties and loot here and there, the majority of the old settlers was well connected with the other components of the local population and they knew all too well that they would eventually pay for the misbehavior of the newcomers as they were not willing (and most often unable) to move elsewhere, in Mogadishu or in the Central Region. As a consequence, they attempted to contain the bad behavior of certain kinsmen and to mediate between contenders in case of tensions.

In one case, old Haber Gidir settlers paid the salary of workers employed in a farm that was “ruled” by newcomers to make sure that those workers would not leave the area (shortage of manpower has been an issue in Lower Shabeelle for long and no one can be kept prisoner of the place where he lives – except by force⁵⁸). However, this spirit of goodwill – which was not permanent – faced its own limits when, for instance, conflicts were reframed into pure clan confrontations or were not purely local.

Besides the political dynamics described in the previous chapter and, of course, inflation, the strong increase of the amount paid for *diyya/mag* (blood money) in the *heer* Digil provides an illustration of this situation. In the central region the *diyya* is the big amount of money because the prospect of killing is ever-present and, if materialized, it could strain the balance within a community. Among the Digil, the opposite is true: people are usually quiet and lethal conflict is not so likely. As a result, the Digil *diyya* was not expensive. Today, *diyya* in Lower Shabeelle has reached above 12 Sosh million, after much opposition from the Digil side. The amount of money to be paid is still lower than in the Central Region but this proves how this latter's dynamics impacted on the situation in Lower Shabeelle.

Murusade occupiers were actually quite numerous but their role in taking over farms was never been emphasized to the same extent. There are two reasons for that. First, Haber Gidir got tough and challenging neighbors, the Biimaal, who were also willing to grab these farms and got some politicians who were able to articulate a rhetoric on occupation and autochthony. On the contrary, in the Afgooye area, Murusade militias were not from newcomers or “Sunday

⁵⁷ Not to say that their role over those years was only focussed on normalizing the situation...

⁵⁸ This system predates the independence. Even, colonial farmers allowed their manpower to cultivate land and grow food stuff. The area donated could vary according to the quality of the land and the generosity of the owner. Workers have been paid for by the farmers; there is no sharecropping.

people”⁵⁹, and most of the population considered that Murusade were indeed Digil. Furthermore, the great majority of those Murusade who took over farms in the Afgooye area were people from the region, not newcomers, even though the latter were somehow involved in the process.

Now let us describe various cases of what might be called property misadventures in Lower Shabeelle. Let us start with private farms. If the owner was a foreigner, people took over the farm. Often the key persons in this process were people who had been working in the farm and who called on their kinsmen to help them secure their new “property”. Occasionally, some staff from the ministry of Agriculture was involved. At this stage, few foreigners were able or smart enough to indirectly negotiate with the new occupiers and recover their property by employing a local front man capable of defending it⁶⁰. Most foreigners just gave up (such as the De Nadai family) especially after the banana boom of 1994-1996 collapsed⁶¹. Sooner or later, those foreigners sooner or later will claim their rights and it will be difficult for the government to prevent them to do so. A decent exit option has to be proposed to the occupiers (new land, money,...); if not, there is a high risk that new conflicts erupt and involve people settled in Mogadishu.

When the real owner was a Somali, taking over his farm requested a sort of clan excuse: either he was Daaroood or closely linked to Mahamed Siyaad Barre or from a minority clan. The situation could be reversed using different stratagems. One consisted of the real owner entertaining warm relations with an important militia commander. They could threaten the new occupiers and negotiate their departure with compensation money for “having taken care of the farm”. Usually, it was important to appoint a caretaker who belonged to a powerful clan in the area to make sure that any new attempt to grab the property will be thwarted by the mobilization of the clan, acting to secure it (a bit like the *abbaan* system described elsewhere). The only alternative was to sell the farm to whoever was interested in order to save at least a part of its value. This was not an easy choice but it was such a violent period that many could not envision going back one day to Mogadishu or to Lower Shabeelle. Nevertheless, looking at the issue retrospectively, one may argue that the sale was made under duress⁶².

The cooperative farms were a more contentious case since they could have been taken over by a series of different actors. For instance, Biimaal militias took over an experimental farm near Janaale and looted the equipment as usual. They were pastoralists and actually had little notion of what to do with their new property. They used it as grazing lands for a while and then sold portions of it to whoever was willing to buy.

This example brings a new layer of problems into our description. Especially in big farms owned by the state or parastatals, the civil war dynamic unfolded as follows. In the first days of the upheaval, these farms were taken over by a mixed group of civilians and militias. Civilians were people whose work was somewhat connected to the farm, and

⁵⁹ “Sunday people” is the nickname attributed to the militias who entered Mogadishu on December 30th, 1990. It emphasizes the fact that they were newcomers from the Central Region, not autochthonous people.

⁶⁰ As in the case of Sheikh Saïd (UAE citizen) farm.

⁶¹ At a time when the WTO doctrine was not being clearly stated, privileged access to the European market became the object of a competition between two international companies, Dole and the more grounded Italian-Somali Somalifruit. At one point, militias protecting both companies fought each other but the “banana war” as such was mostly a proxy war to lift the subsidies to Somali bananas’ producers exporting to the European market (mostly Italy) due to ACP agreement. When the WTO made its decision, the interest in Somali bananas collapsed and banana stopped being exported in huge quantities.

⁶² This does not address another problem: the proliferation of fake title deeds, which were sometimes accepted and successively rejected. This is a going to be a real issue for any government involved in resolving land conflicts in Lower Shabeelle

who either stayed on the latter or were servicing there. After the political crisis in Mogadishu deepened, some people whether they were civilians or militias decided to leave the farms either because they feared for their own security or because they wanted to participate in the war somewhere else, where the booty was more promising. By 1994, the situation had been getting clearer regarding who was welcome and who was not.

The fact that many new comers had no clue about how to manage a farm was one problem. Many of them were from the Central Region and thought that good land and water were enough to become rich. They spoiled harvest, flooded fields and eventually got nothing except troubles. Many left, full of frustrations. Others had skilled friends and were patient enough not to grab everything but invest on time. Those stayed on the farm and may be regarded today as average farmers. Managing a farm also means respecting a number of rules dealing with workers: they have the right to cultivate a certain area for themselves besides being paid for the work they do. Not respecting these rules is a source of tensions with the workers and neighbors who do not want the former to leave the area. This would create a shortage of manpower and oblige neighboring farmers to spend more money in order to attract workers. Managing seasonal productions is another issue. Often, newcomers who wanted to become successful had few options: either empowering someone who had had responsibility before the civil war and would become the *de facto* manager or getting married with a local lady in order to have relatives in law better fit for the job. To a certain extent, Shabaab learnt as well the lesson: if you want to get closer to people, marry their daughters.

Often, these new entrepreneurs understood, overtime, that they were not the real owners of the farm and sooner or later they might face problems with the real owner's clan or the state (as national reconciliation conferences were taking place). As a result, they bought another piece of land and kept cultivating both, hoping that at one point the state might give them some reward for having kept those farms in a productive way. They make a living but it is unknown to the author whether they have invested more in their own farm or whether their own farm would be enough to sustain them and their family. This is an issue that should be carefully considered before any decision on addressing land issues is made in Mogadishu and Baydhabo.

However, there are other options, especially in areas where the land is not so fertile and the work is pretty tough. An often-witnessed option is that the farm is taken over but the new occupants give it up for livestock a few weeks later. Local people would claim (rightly) that the land is theirs but won't be interested in growing basic foodstuff or cash crops. This is certainly a problem for any government since this land could produce a lot. Another option that also occurred from time to time in the above-mentioned case is that the new occupiers would sell portions of land to people who had nothing to do with the first episode of the civil war. The commoditization of land is such that over the last 20 years, land or farms might have been sold twice or thrice, even though the initial seller was not the actual owner. This will require a thorough investigation to understand whether the acquirers were aware of the dubious nature of the property they bought. But the state will have to offer other compensations if peace is at stake: a mechanism by which acquirers pay something to the real owner who might be provided with new land to farm.

It would be easy to call these new farmers (or business people who had already invested in agriculture) receivers. Legally this would be absolutely legitimate but one should be more cautious. Stating the illegitimacy of their buying is right but one should be aware of the fact that this won't pacify the area and a more pragmatic attitude will be needed because chasing them away may just provoke what a good policy looks for: security and greater investment for development.

Another issue that emerged from the interviews from time to time in the interviews is the endorsement by elders. This is because in the Qoryooley and Wanlaweyn areas, people got land through an agreement for which consultation was required with the elders' approval. But two different sets of problems might arise – at least during the civil war period, when there was no land register in place –. The first one is linked to the elders. When those who certified the agreement pass away, their colleagues are often willing to dispute the right of the occupants to stay or they ask for additional payments. For instance, this happened in the village where an EU-funded demobilization center acquired land to convert former militias into farming. Some of the elders claimed we interviewed claimed (wrongly) that the militias had unlawfully occupied the land; their interviewees' local colleagues never mentioned to them the support the EU provided to the villagers in terms of social services and equipment... Bad faith is not uncommon in Lower Shabeelle.

Demography, fertility rate and extended family are another issue. Once land has been allocated in the traditional way, within a generation, the number of people living on that land might increase dramatically and the new settlers might ask for a bigger portion of land or refuse to pay customary gifts since the land allocated to them is not large enough to sustain the family. This is a real embarrassment even though Lower Shabeelle is neither Rwanda nor Burundi and the productive use of new land is still possible.

3 The impact of Somali politics and Shabaab

Somali politics is something very strange to look at. Observers (including this author) have often downplayed the multiple connections that may exist at some point in time between political moves and social issues which sometimes are quite far away from the political market place. Clan factions were paramount whether through fight or alliances to reach a dominant position and their history has been chronicled with more or less success. What has often been missed is the social implication of such agreements. Factional alliances were immediately translated into a superficial friendship as imposed by the pastoral way of life and you cannot treat your friend the way you treat your enemy...

For instance, in 1992, the Hawiye militias handed over the control of Merka to the SSNM as they thought that these people were allies. In 1994, when the SSNM thought that it would get UNOSOM support to pressure the Hawiye (*de facto* Haber Gidir) and deny any resident rights to them (including owning properties and working in INGOs), Haber Gidir elders called on their faction to end the SSNM rule. After 'Aydiid set up his own government in June 1995, he needed to court Daaroood clans to make his cabinet's nickname real: *salbalar* (large basis i.e. all-inclusive). Mareehaan and Majeerteen somewhat benefitted from this need in the sense that, being "represented" within the cabinet, they could bargain with their properties occupiers with better leverage: one should not occupy the property of a political ally.

The creation of the Jubba Valley alliance in 1998 confirmed that the friendship between Haber Gidir/Ayr and Mareehaan was indeed close enough to take over Kismaayo. All those political events that were very much related to clan factions and did not reflect the politics of these clans as a whole, were mobilized to accommodate claims and restore ownership rights either by Mareehaan or Haber Gidir people.

The National Reconciliation Conferences that subsequently took place in 'Arta and Mbagathi consolidated this process of normalization. One may argue that they provided a symbolic moment for carrying out normalization, which was taking shape in several other realms at the same time (economic growth was significant after 1998).

Of course, one should not idealize those deals. Money changed hands and there was no way occupiers could just leave without demanding any payment for having allegedly protected a farm, which had been looted several times. However, when the deal was too expensive to be struck, the failed attempt showed other people that, although the farm could be bought, this would create a clan issue with potential consequences if power balance changes in the region. Often, this was likely to follow a two-step process: firstly, the farm would get back to its owners and, secondly, the latter would put the farm on sale quickly afterwards, in order to avoid bitterness growing on the other side. As described above, it is clear that this normalization did not follow any legal process and did not fully protect property rights but, as customary law (*heer*) very often indicated, one should first preserve peace between two communities even at the cost of impunity and injustice.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Shabaab took over Lower Shabeelle at the time the Djibouti process was taking off. For them, it was an important region since it hosted many cosmopolitan and marginalized groups that would have had chance to get involved in the other Islamic component of *Muqawama* (Resistance), Hisbuul Islaam (which recruited among powerful –and mostly Hawiye –clans). The region was very close to Mogadishu and could be used as a sanctuary to prepare attacks in the capital city. Besides, access to the sea was a further advantage in case weapons, ammunitions and people had to be brought from another place.

As explained before, Shabaab adopted a recruitment policy that proved successful. Biimaal got several important leaders in the organization, including Ahmed Sahal Ameey (aka Isku-dhuuq) who was killed by a US drone on 2nd January 2014, 'Abdi Muuse and 'Abdiqaadir Maleleh. Garre for instance are not represented at the same level: they have intermediary cadres but no senior officers. One reason for this is that they invested in Mukhtaa Roobow and Fu'aad Shongole who were the first Shabaab leading commanders to visit Qoryooley. Jareer were reluctant to join Shabaab. Although the first ones were recruited by force, they came back shortly afterwards to explain to their fellow youngsters that there were already many Jareer (maybe Shiddle or Gosha) in Shabaab and that they were well treated.

Shabaab never tried to contain conflicts, except when it was in full control: on the contrary, this organization did whatever it could to deepen conflicts. These could be exploited to get rid of those – on both sides - might have opposed Shabaab's attempts to take over the area. It is always the same refrain: appearing as the ones who guarantee peace and security, emphasizing the Islamic identity of the organization by teaching Shari'a to the pastoral clans or improving pedagogy in the urban Quranic schools.

In the villages, Shabaab was first made up of outsiders but the number of local people increased over time. The two most important figures within Shabaab are the *Amiir Daw'a* and *Amiir Qariya*; the first one guides the villagers while the second one is in charge of local administration. Judges operate at the district level as well as *Hisba* (# police). Shabaab' secret services (*Amniyat*) and military wing (*Jabhaat*) are managed at the regional level.

Shabaab also developed a taxation system. For instance, the heavy equipment used in the farm was taxed 250 USD/year (it is worth noting that the machines which were looted in 1991 are already out of service). Land was taxed 3 USD/ha/season. Harvests might or might not be taxed. Sesame was taxed 1/10⁶³ of its value but basic foodstuff was not directly taxed. Nevertheless, the trucks carrying foodstuffs to the market will be taxed as the market place. Fruit trees are also taxed: 0.35% per 15kg sack and zakat is payed for each producing tree (2.5 USD/year).

⁶³ Sufi orders used to ask for 1/100.

Throughout the first two years Shabaab controlled Merka, it managed day-to-day problems but did not build a genuine system of governance. This may be explained by the fact that Shabaab was still competing with Hisbuul Islaam in Lower Shabeelle and needed some time to weaken its adversary before enforcing its own views on the population (*qaaf* and cigarettes were not prohibited at the beginning). In 2010 and 2011, Shabaab set up a real Court which began ruling and sentencing people on land issues.

Shabaab's *modus operandi* is elementary but, still, very impressive compared to the government inaction given the circumstances. Their Court requests the two parties to bring evidence, documents, titles, and testimonies. The judge asks questions, and may request Shabaab-controlled police to conduct further investigations, if necessary. He may even indirectly consult those on the government side who have access to the land register of the area - where available - and then make a ruling. The decision is based on rational arguments expressed in front of the parties and immediately enforceable. Most of the elders interviewed for this study did not disagree with this legal process, although some of them were unhappy with it.

There are indeed decisions, which oppose traditional customs and are difficult to swallow. For instance, Shabaab raised no objection when Somalis occupied a piece of land, cleaned it and started farming without the formal endorsement of local elders. Whenever the latter went to complain with the Shabaab local commander, they were told that the newcomers were Muslims in their own country and had the right to cultivate land that did not belong to anybody: clan is not a category used by Shari'a and some hadiths support the viewpoint of Shabaab.

Jiiddu once complained that pastoralist Garre took over an area that belonged to their own clan. Shabaab officials went to visit the area, and met the local people. Garre elders argued that since all people there were Digil, there was no border to be respected. They added that Jiiddu were free to dig a borehole for their own livestock. Jiiddu could just prove that traditionally the land belonged to them. Shabaab dismissed the case, arguing that the case was not substantiated. In another location near Sablaale, Jiiddu wanted to take over a big farm that had been given to the Somali Abo (Garre) in 1974. Shabaab again requested the two parts to prove their ownership. The Garre were able to convince Shabaab to dismiss the case, by providing titles which had been produced by the Siyaad Barre administration

Shabaab ruled the Baraawe area from 2009 to 2014. The organization addressed all local complaints and proved to have a policy to do so. When new people settled on a land parcel that was not farmed, Shabaab never created any difficulties. In towns and villages, they made sure that the real owners could recover their houses and land back. Concerning state lands, they were very cautious and avoided to make any decision unless someone could produce hard evidence that he had been settled on that land at some point. If this was not the case, Shabaab requested people to freeze their claims and wait for a "real state" (sic) to make the decision.

In Wanlaweyn, the main land issues actually occurred in the city or in its surrounding outskirts. Shabaab seemed to be cautious and played their card right in order not to get bogged down in too contentious cases. The organization did its best to settle some conflicts but avoided dealing with others because the resulting tensions would have been too high to manage at a time when Shabaab they felt they had other priorities that were much more important.

Most of the time, Shabaab's decisions concerning private properties were well accepted. Nevertheless, problems arose when the pre-1991 owners of two farms near Qoryooley and Kurtunwaarey where many Garre were settled, wanted to

recover their properties. Garre people fought and there were casualties on both sides. Due to the level of mobilization and the deteriorating context in the region with regards to AMISOM progress, Shabaab decided not to react and not to challenge the status quo⁶⁴. If Shabaab manages to consolidate its presence in 2016 – one may wish it does not – it will be interesting to see whether they are act decisively on these two farms or will keep quiet.

In another case, Shabaab decided not to antagonize public opinion. The story is interesting. A Mareehaan took a piece of land between Jasaley and Qoryooley (13km). In 1991, he decided to “join” the Garre. The deal provided that the largest part of the farm, which was already used for grazing, could be utilized by all. The agreement was respected until 2008. When Shabaab took over the area, the Mareehaan owner went to the leading officer and requested to be given all its land back and showed the documents he had got. Shabaab first decided was to agree to his request. But then it seems that some Garre people paid Shabaab not to enforce the decision. The Garre claimed that the initial owner was a cooperative that was actually made up of just three people, which was clearly illegal. The case was transferred to a higher level of Shabaab regional administration. This latter found out that the first decision had been made by a Shabaab contingent consisting of Mareehaan, which suddenly sounded suspect. As a consequence, Shabaab regional leadership decided not to enforce the decision and to appease Garre people. The trust in legal documents became more nuanced, as Shabaab understood that many people tried to get close to them to influence their decisions. Internal corruption was also an issue that came to be discussed but no details emerged from the interviews.

4 Challenges of the current situation

If the description provided by this research is valid, one can better measure the challenges that any authority faces today in order to build a new political order in Lower Shabeelle (and beyond). The following list does not try to build a hierarchy of challenges, as these may be greater or smaller, according to the area one focuses in Lower Shabeelle.

The first challenge is the war against Shabaab. Not only does this mean that Lower Shabeelle is the playing ground of a lasting confrontation between a Jihadi insurgency, on one hand, and AMISOM along with its Somali and foreign allies on the other hand. This also means that Shabaab has been smart enough to reshape its ideological discourse and act in a way that allowed the organization to win constituencies among the Lower Shabeelle population. The motivations of those who join Shabaab might be difficult to identify sometimes but one can be sure that the lack of any decent attempt to reconcile the population with itself provides major support to the insurgency. Many people joined the militant movement to settle a score with “big clans” which are still controlling the national political agenda and do not see a need for reconciling and apologizing for what happened because of them in Lower Shabeelle. This seems to concern not only Haber Gidir but also important Hawiye and Daarood clans to say the least. There is no reflection from any side on how to build the conditions for reconciliation.

The second challenge is the behavior of those who allegedly represent the population and are supposed to protect it against thugs and Jihadi militants. During the interviews and the seminar, which was held with elders from the whole region, two main points were underscored by all participants, although sometimes they had significant differences on other issues. The first one is a bitter disillusionment with parliamentary politics. According to the elders, most of the region’s MPs have been holding that position for the last 16 years (i.e. since ‘Arta) and do not pay much attention to

⁶⁴ Yet Shabaab helped those land owners regain control of another farm located in Buulo Mareer.

regional issues since they have built a “coterie” of elders who can make their re-election easy. This concern may become even bigger when people talk in similar terms of the newly established South West State. It was beyond the scope of this research to look closely at this specific issue but one may say that, if true, this does not bode well for the near future.

But this criticism is still nothing compared to what we heard about the Somali National Army. Some elders compared the behavior of these soldiers with that of the *mooryaan* in 1991; most looked desperate to face the same security problems as in the early 1990's; some said that they regretted the Haber Gidir administration of the late 1990's because even if they were collecting taxes at least they fought bandits and thugs. The SWS new battalions are yet to favorably impress the local people yet. Wanlaweyn and Afgooye elders talked badly about these soldiers and when the latter attempted to lead a counter-attack to take over Merka from Shabaab in January, Haber Gidir militias were so distrustful that they preferred to join Shabaab... One may hope for better signals for people liberation.

There is another aspect that is so well known that it does not deserve much comment. Many elders agreed that the key issue for explaining land confiscation was neither the President's clan nor the *mooryaan*, but the corruption of all those (elders, ministry of agriculture staff, local administration) who were involved in the process of allocating land. This process allowed a number of checks and balances before any parcel of land could be allocated but those were disregarded because money changed hands. It is easy to single out a President or a minister for dubious choices but most often the disrespect for the legal process was the responsibility of middle-ranking civil servants, local administrators, and elders.

The third challenge is the implementation of federalism. The international community has pressured the government to implement federalism. More concretely, the international players have supported attempts to build federal entities, even though the constitutionality of these processes was debatable. The international community has spent little time to examine how lay people understood the notion of federalism. Whether the latter is the solution for Somalia is not being discussed here: the popular meaning of federalism is. There is no doubt that the Biimaal hardline on federalism has been framed within a very dubious understanding of this notion that cannot be accepted if the Somali social fabric and even citizenship still means something. The Biimaal stance has been fed by their diaspora and Mogadishu elites (including MPs), which is revealing about the current challenges. On another side, Geledi and Shanta 'Aleemood people are not the last ones to complain about the way in which the South West State was built. They lament the fact that elders were selected by Shariif Hasan himself, not by their kinsmen. It is beyond the purpose of this report to assess the consequences of such loose procedures but it may safely be said that, sooner or later, the legitimacy of the federal entity will be contested by significant fractions of the Lower Shabeelle population, especially because the new authorities have very little to offer to these people, no action plan and no impressive system of taxation directed at funding the would-be SWS bureaucracy.

A fourth challenge is the cost of democracy. Let us imagine that Lower Shabeelle gets rid of Shabaab and can eventually enjoy the same situation, that Mogadishu or Middle Shabeelle are enjoying today. In this case, the issue will be to see what might happen next. Ambitions might be frozen in order to keep peace as long as possible or some entrepreneurs might try either to settle scores or to comfort their primacy using their leverage in South West State or the SFG. It will be essential that the national and regional authorities agree on a common strategy of reconciliation to avoid a political vacuum that could benefit spoilers. This will be a difficult task if the international community is not proactive on this matter.

A last challenge deserves to be recalled here. Even if peace is precarious, the commoditization of land is already a stunning reality in Mogadishu. The authorities should make sure that their own administrations or leaders do not start selling parcels of land and allocating property rights in the region before they have a clear understanding of the policy they want to carry out toward agriculture, land conflicts and relations with federal entities. They might easily cross the red line and antagonize people who might call on their militias or even welcome Shabaab back just for the sake of taking revenge against a government that is not willing to change the rules of the game such as defined under Mahamed Siyaad Barre.

5 Conclusion

This chapter intended to provide an overview of land conflicts in Lower Shabeelle “from below”. The situation described here is contrasted but not gloomy actually. Important avenues for strengthening peace and accommodation have not been explored and, Shabaab put aside, they provide some hope that not only is the situation manageable but it can be improved for the better of the population.

Paradoxically, the real challenges lie more on the authorities’ side than on the population’s. Important choices should be made at the state level on the stance to be adopted toward occupied cooperatives and private farms. A menu of options has to be articulated to clarify the position of those who settled without any authorization and started clearing the land and farming.

The difficulty is not only to identify the different facets of a suitable policy towards Lower Shabeelle, it is also to make sure that this policy will be consistent with the land policy enforced in other regions, although the social setting might be quite different there and in urban areas. War has a very intricate relationship with migrations and one can be sure that sectors of the population will be very sensitive in regard to any decisions made on Lower Shabeelle. A side issue due to the hasty implementation of federalism will be to know who at the central or federal level is going to decide these matters and who is going to enforce the decisions made. This issue may sound marginal but looking back at the last two years, one may hold the opposite view.

Several issues have been left out of our analysis, although they might be part of the problem and, therefore, part of the solution. Lower Shabeelle grabbed the headlines of the international media in 1994 when the “banana war” broke out between Dole/Sombana and Somalifruit. Retrospectively, it may be said that this event was clearly overstated, maybe for political reasons: banana exports were benefitting ‘Aydiid’s friends at a time when the latter were not very popular with international circles and their monopoly on organizing and protecting banana exports was seen as an outrageous means of supporting a bloody warlord. Nowadays, people are more sensitive in regard to other aspects: ‘Aydiid’s friends worked for themselves and did not support him much in his war in Baay and Bakool. Eventually, banana exports also helped those who were working on the farms even though the farm managers rarely were the legitimate owners. It is still unclear today whether cash-crop production in Somalia should bet on bananas. An assessment is needed along with a study exploring possible alternative. For years, the refrain among certain experts has been that the Somali banana was too expensive to be sold on non-EU markets. Yet, small quantities of bananas are currently exported to Gulf countries and Djibouti. The point here is that the social division of labor necessary for banana production may be

transformed as well if other cash crops are introduced. In that case, some of the land issues discussed in this report would mechanically loose part of their significance, which might help to identifying a settlement.

Annexes

Lower Shabeelle main clan trees

Biimal Maxmed

Biimal Ismin

Galadi

GaladiYabadhaale

Gare (1 and 2)

Jiido Moholan Maxamed

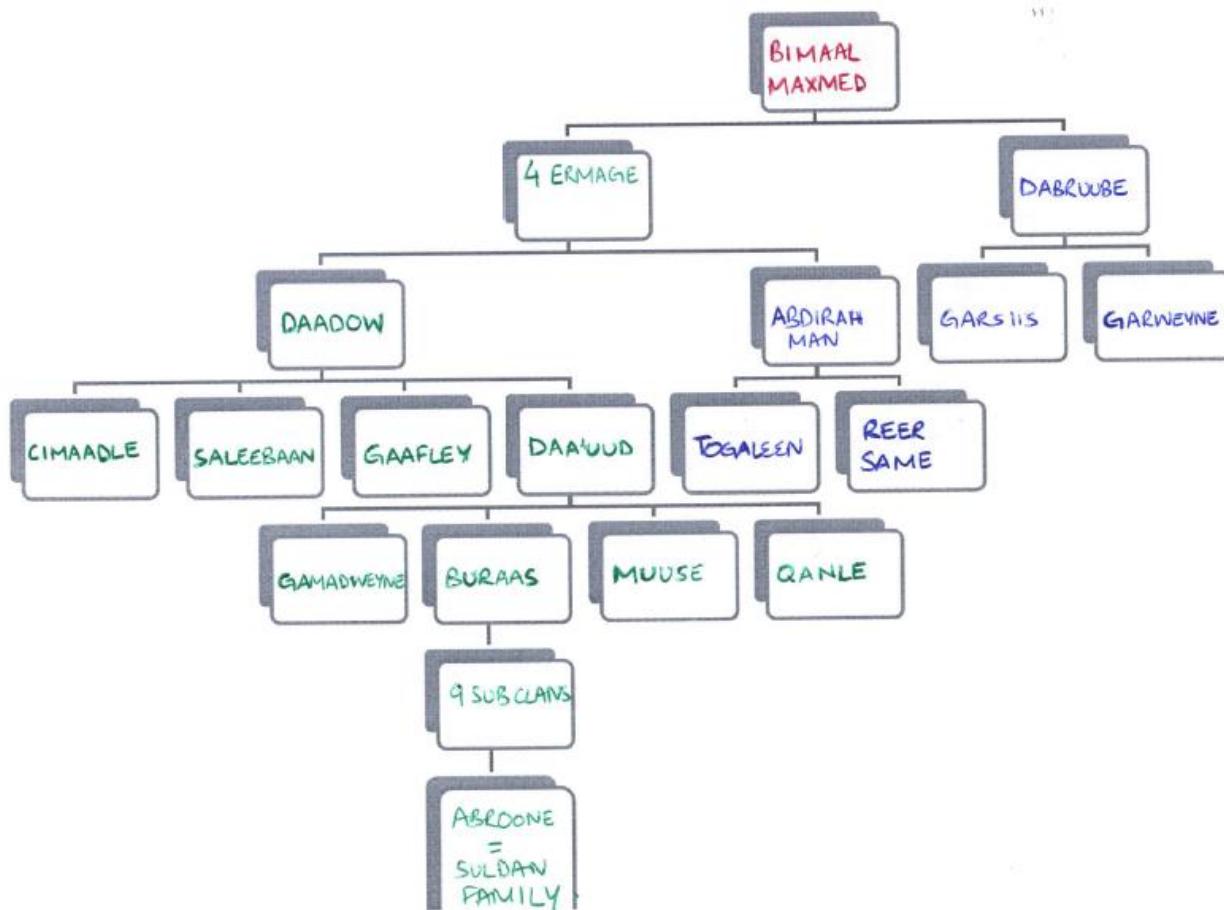
Jiido Safar Yare

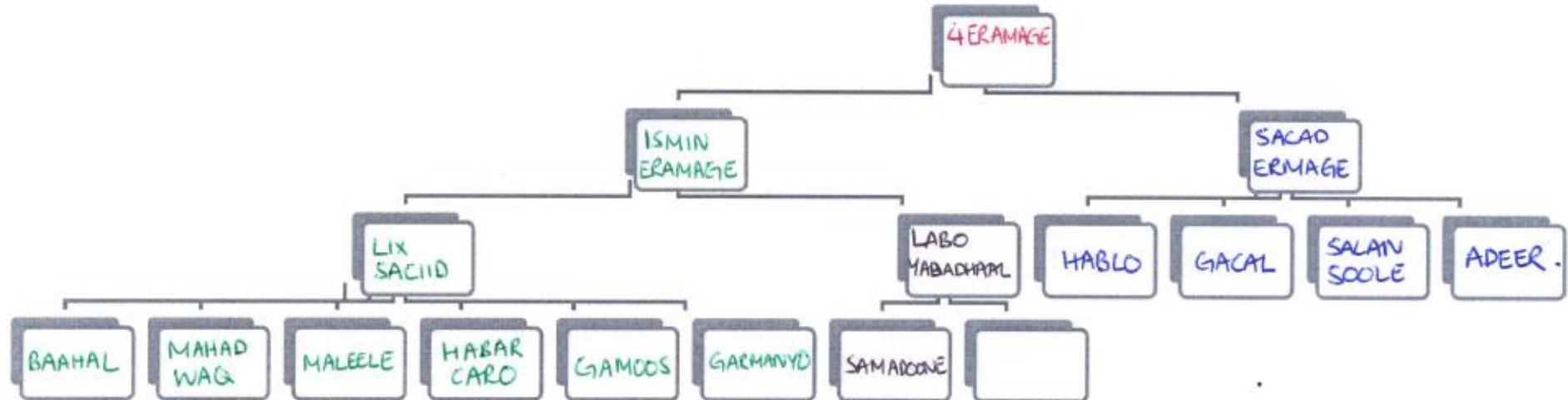
Jiido

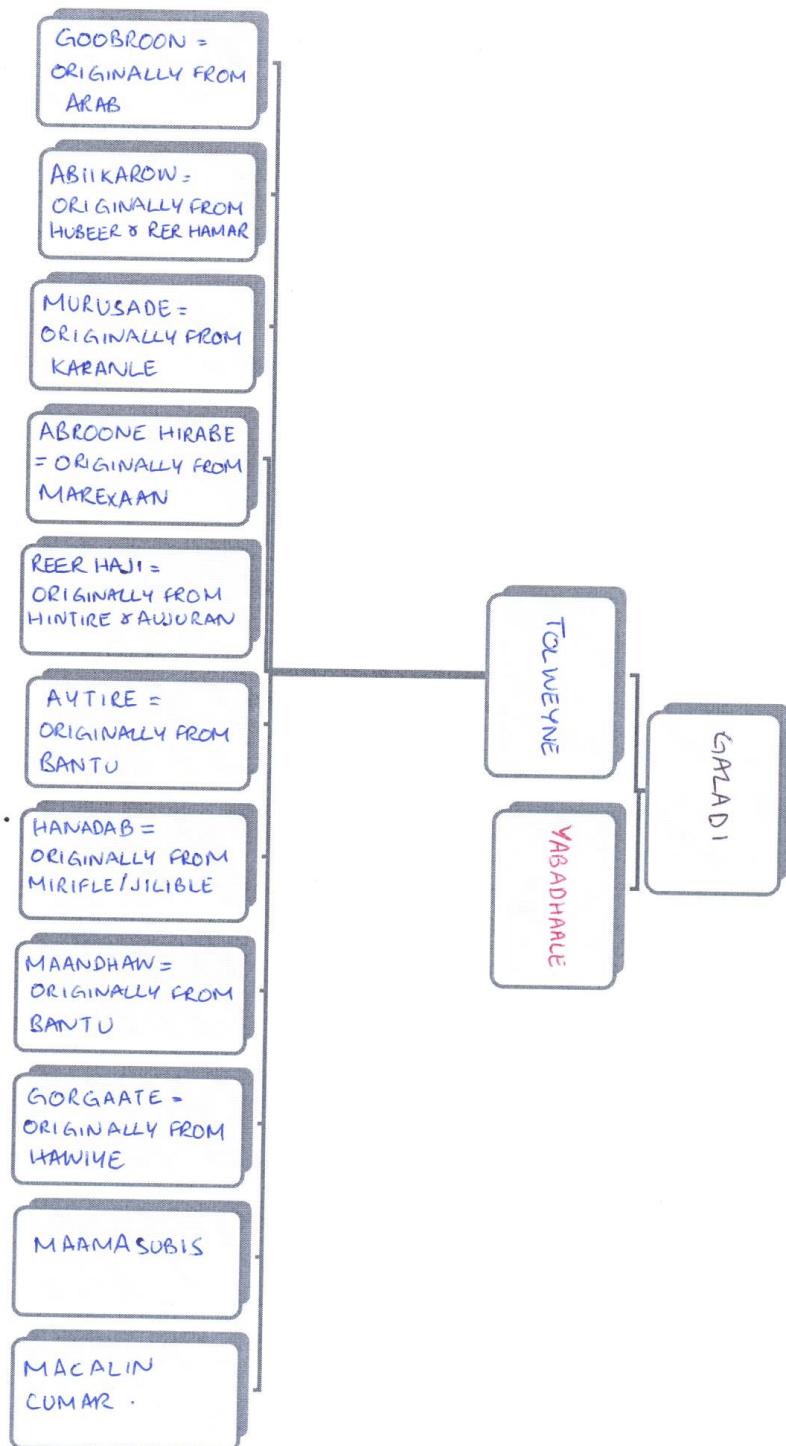
Koofi

Shanta Caleen

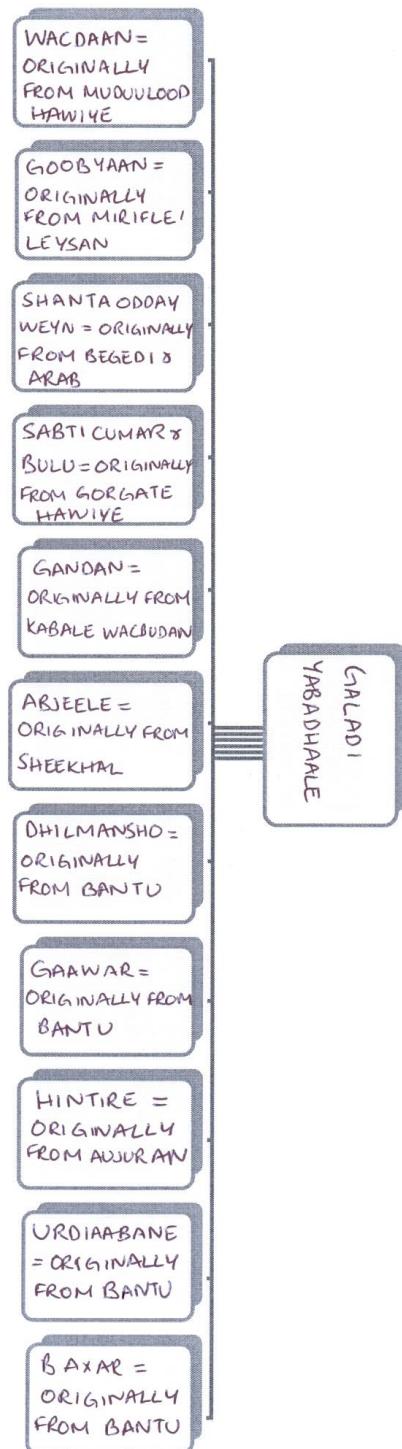
Biimal Maxmed



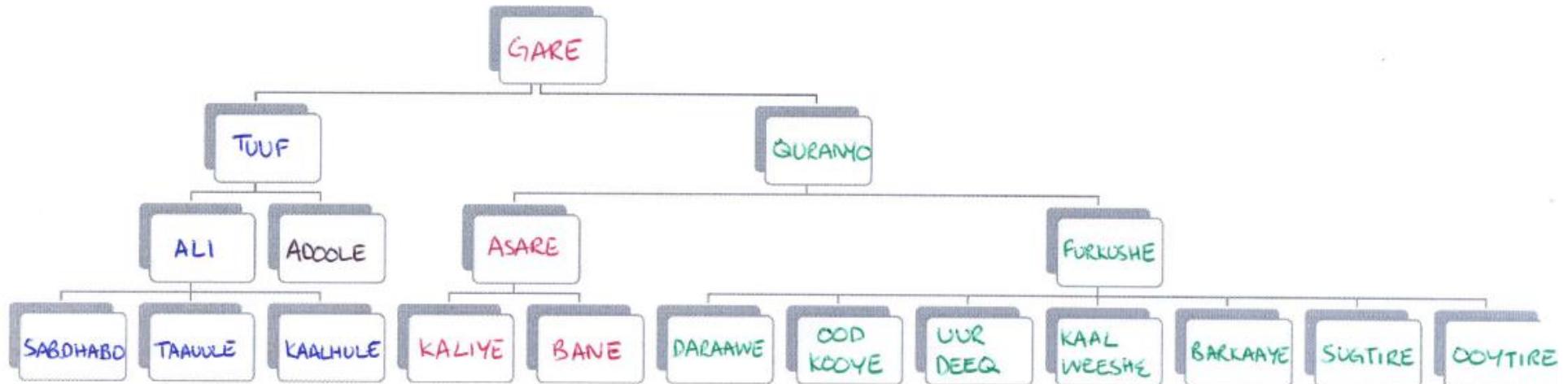


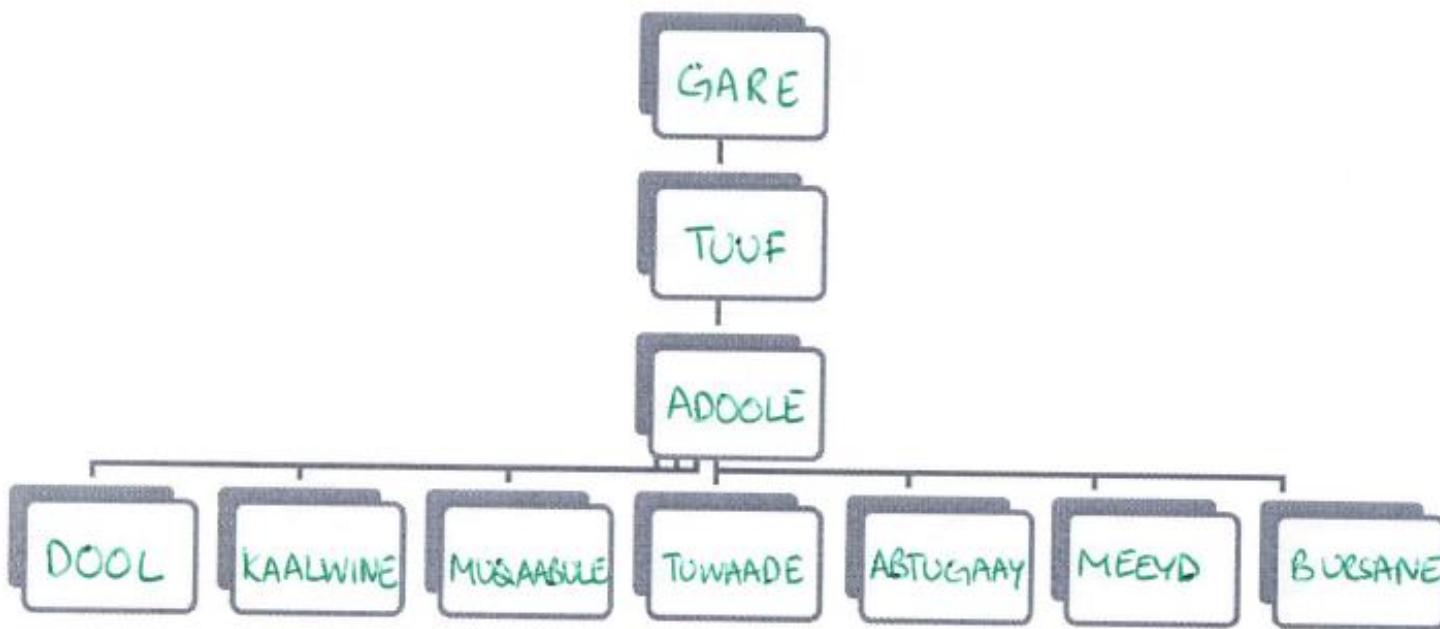


Galadi Yabadhaale

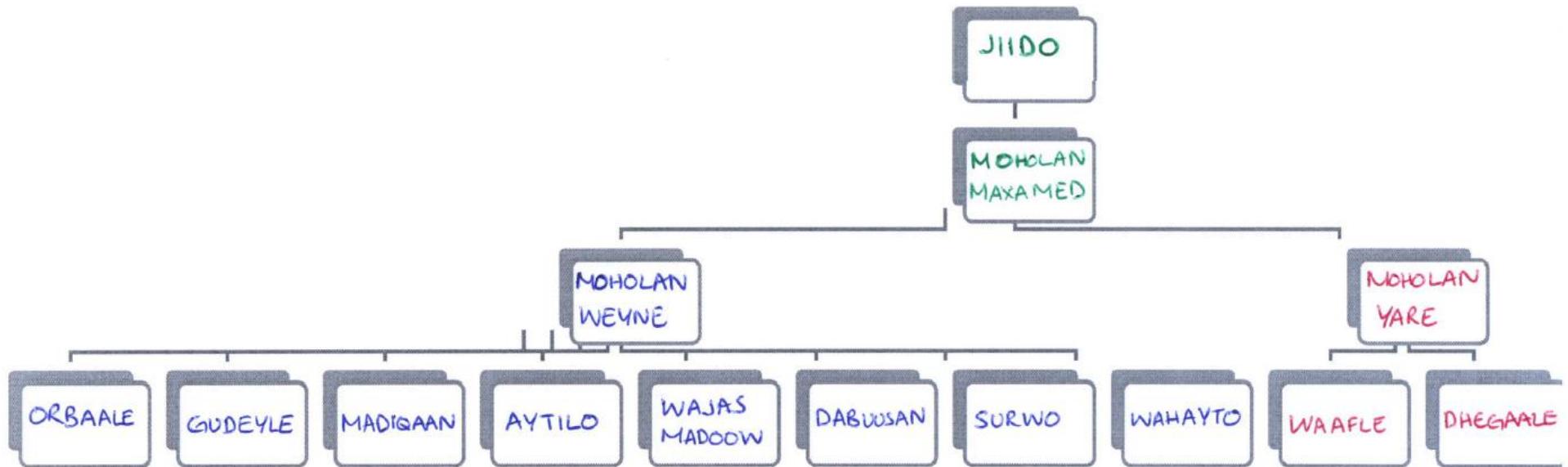


Gare

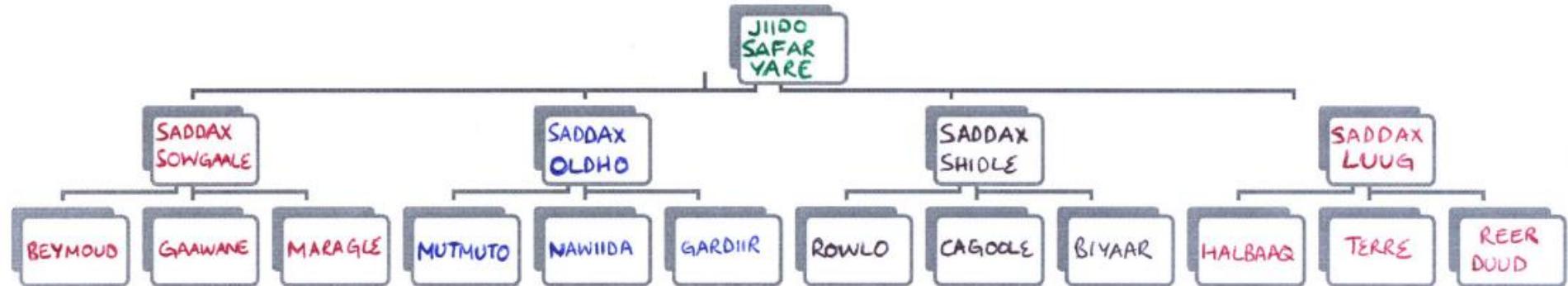




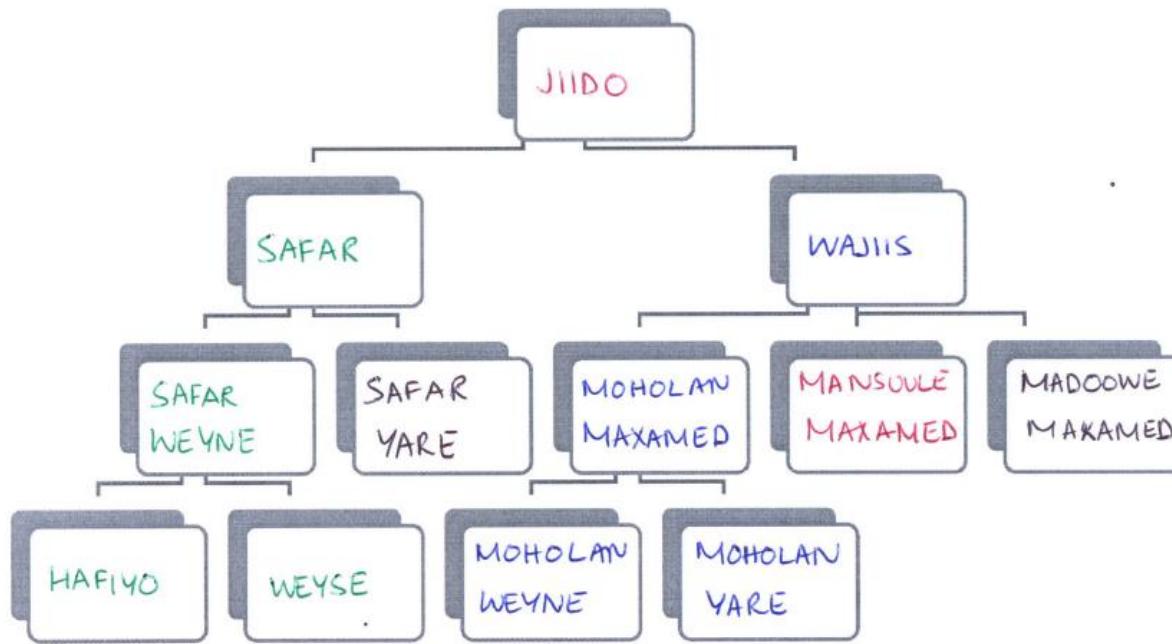
Jiido Moholan Maxamed



Jiido Safar Yare

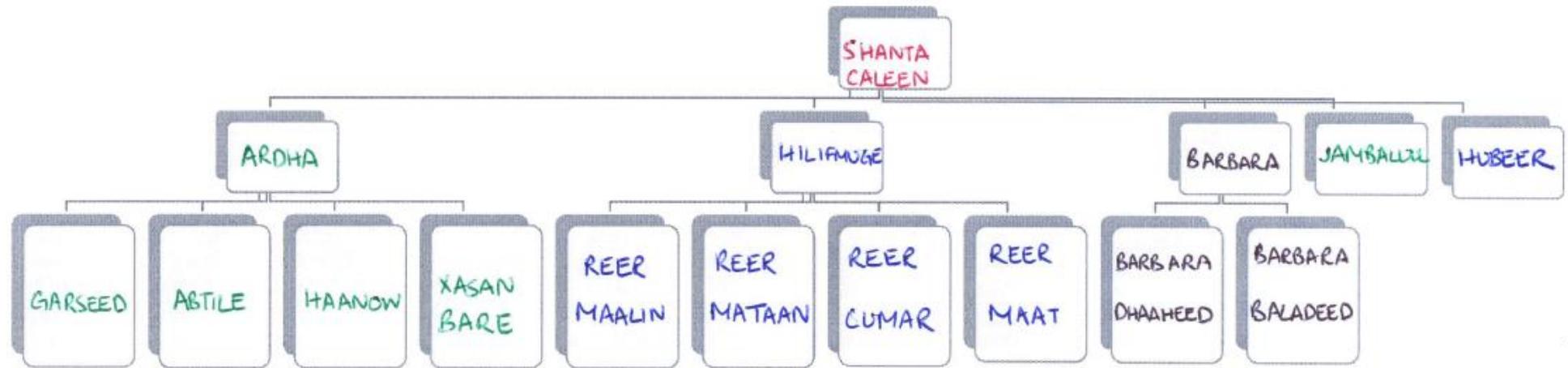


Jiido





Shanta Caleen



Lower Shabeelle administrative maps

Somalia – Administrative Boundaries

Somalia – Administrative Districts

Lower Shabelle and Bay Regions – Administrative Map