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THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF

SOUTHERN SOMALI TRIBES

by

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SUMMARY

The subject is the social structure of a southern Somali community of about six thousand people, the Geledi, in the pre-colonial period; and the manner in which it has reacted to colonial and other modern influences.

Part A deals with the pre-colonial situation. Section 1 deals with the historical background up to the nineteenth century, first giving the general geographic and ethnographic setting, to show what elements went to the making of this community, and then giving the Geledi's own account of their history and movement up to that time.

Section 2 deals with the structure of the society during the nineteenth century. Successive chapters deal with the basic units and categories into which this community divided both itself and the others with which it was in contact; with their material culture; with economic life; with slavery, which is shown to have been at the foundation of the social order; with the political and legal structure; and with the conduct of war. The chapter on the 'sultanate' examines the politico-religious office of the Sheikh or Sultan as the focal point of the community, and how under successive occupants of this position, the Geledi became the dominant power in this part of Somalia.

Part B deals with colonial and post-colonial influences. After an outline of the history of Somalia since 1889, with special reference to Geledi, the changes in society brought about by those events are

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described. The section on Afgoi in the nineteen-sixties deals with the developments in population, general culture, economic life, politics and law.

A chapter describes the New Year customary 'stick fight', and considers the significance of this tradition in the life of Geledi.

The concluding Section D summarises the developments in this community, in its transition from an autonomous small polity to a part of a modern nation state. The old elite based on wealth, originally in slaves, was being replaced by a new one based on education; but the latter derived from the former, and the representatives of both co-operated together.

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INTRODUCTION

This account of a south Somali community was undertaken with two objects. The first was to carry out an intensive study of a single community, to supplement the broader and more general studies of south Somali society made in the past by such Italian ethnographers as Cerulli and Colucci, and more recently by Prof. I.M. Lewis, and thus to carry forward the comparison between the two major divisions of the Somali people; the pastoral nomads living mainly in the north of the country, and the settled agricultural population of the south. The second, which led specifically to the town of Afgoi-Geledi being chosen as a location, was to investigate the social background of a custom peculiar to that town and which has attracted a good deal of attention in Somalia, the annual 'stick fight' between the young men. This fight, and the festival of which it forms a part, are dealt with in Section C.

With regard to the first object; the society of Geledi is here considered as a part of southern Somali society at large. The simple

and flexible political and social system of the northern, nomadic Somali (see Lewis 1961) was developed in response to the precise pressures of a very spare environment. It is the society of a people who are (with the exception of some quite small subsidiary groups) homogeneous in origin and culture, and conscious of their common descent. Ties of locality play almost no part in it, and neither does fixed political subordination. It exists over a wide area with little variation, and can therefore only be suitably analysed in its full extent. It is also a society which appears to have changed very little within its known history, so that Richard Burton's book of 1856 can be described by Lewis in 1961 as still 'the best general account of northern Somali society'. (p.ln)

The southern Somali show what has become of a basically similar cultural tradition in a different environment and subject to other influences. The chief of these was sedenterisation, and one of the effects of this is that we find, instead of an unbroken social fabric stretching continuously over a whole area, a collection of separate units of population, which in spite of many links of tradition and communication between them, have tended as it were to shrink away from one another and concentrate their social life within themselves. Local variations are therefore much greater here than in the north.

In order to describe southern Somali society in any detail, it is necessary to concentrate on one such unit, and examine it without

making any assumptions as to whether or not it is 'typical' of the rest. This must balance and supplement broader investigations; it is to be hoped that eventually other close studies may be made of other such communities, so that a more complete picture may be built up before the whole has changed beyond recognition.

In the limited field of agricultural Somalia, it would not be feasible to make an anonymous study, like the 'village studies' that have been made in India and elsewhere, taking one community which is assumed to be representative of many others, and describing it as an example of a type. Settlements of any size are too few in Somalia, and the differences between them too marked, to admit of this kind of treatment.

There is some danger, perhaps, of moving too far the other way, from treating the community to be described as typical, to implying that it is more exceptional than it is in fact, and under-emphasizing its part in the continuous social life of the nation of which it is a part. I hope that the emphasis on history and development which is here adopted may help to avoid both dangers. Geledi is not merely a sample of the southern Somali society, but has been a political force of considerable importance within it.

Life in southern Somalia has been modified much more than in the north by the historical changes which came with Italian colonization, since this more favourable environment attracted a settler population, and efforts at development during the colonial period, which the north

missed through its lack of natural resources. In view of this, and of the historical importance of Geledi, the present work is planned as a diachronic study in development.

It is therefore divided into two main parts, the first dealing with the pre-colonial society, the second with its response to colonial and modern influences. What this means, in effect, is the incorporation of what had been an autonomous political unit, interacting with others of the same kind, into a larger state system, of which it has become merely one small part; and the modifications which this entailed in the structure of the community itself.

The fieldwork for this study was carried out over sixteen months in 1966 - 68, and a further two months in the summer of 1969. The description and analysis of contemporary conditions given here are therefore based on my own observations during that time, supplemented by some statistical material taken from official records. It was three months after I finally left the country in 1969 that the military coup occurred which has changed its political structure yet again; this account therefore only applies to the situation up to that date.

For conditions before the colonial period, and for developments under colonial rule, I have relied partly on what I was told by informants, partly on those aspects of the older social structure which still survive, and partly on the published writings of European ethnographers, travellers and administrators of the past, who recorded what they saw in

Somalia. These three sources supplement one another, and, used together, make up a fairly complete picture.

In describing the particular type of social unit represented by (traditional) Geledi, a problem of terminology arises. The main groupings of the Somali nation are generally referred to in the older ethnography, English and Italian, as 'tribes' (tribù). This word was used, for instance, to translate the Arabic loanword qabila; in those works the Geledi would have been designated a 'tribe'.

There are several reasons for abandoning this usage. Apart from the fact that for many people at the present day the word has disparaging connotations, it has too many possible meanings, (see e.g. Gulliver p.7 ff.) and none of them really fit the Somali case. In popular usage, and that of some anthropologists dealing with African material, it means not a limited political unit but an entire cultural or ethnic group. Other anthropologists, following Evans Pritchard ('The **Nuer**' p.5) have used it to mean the unit within which some sort of rule of law, as opposed to warfare, holds. This sense would apply to Geledi, but there is a further reason for not using it.

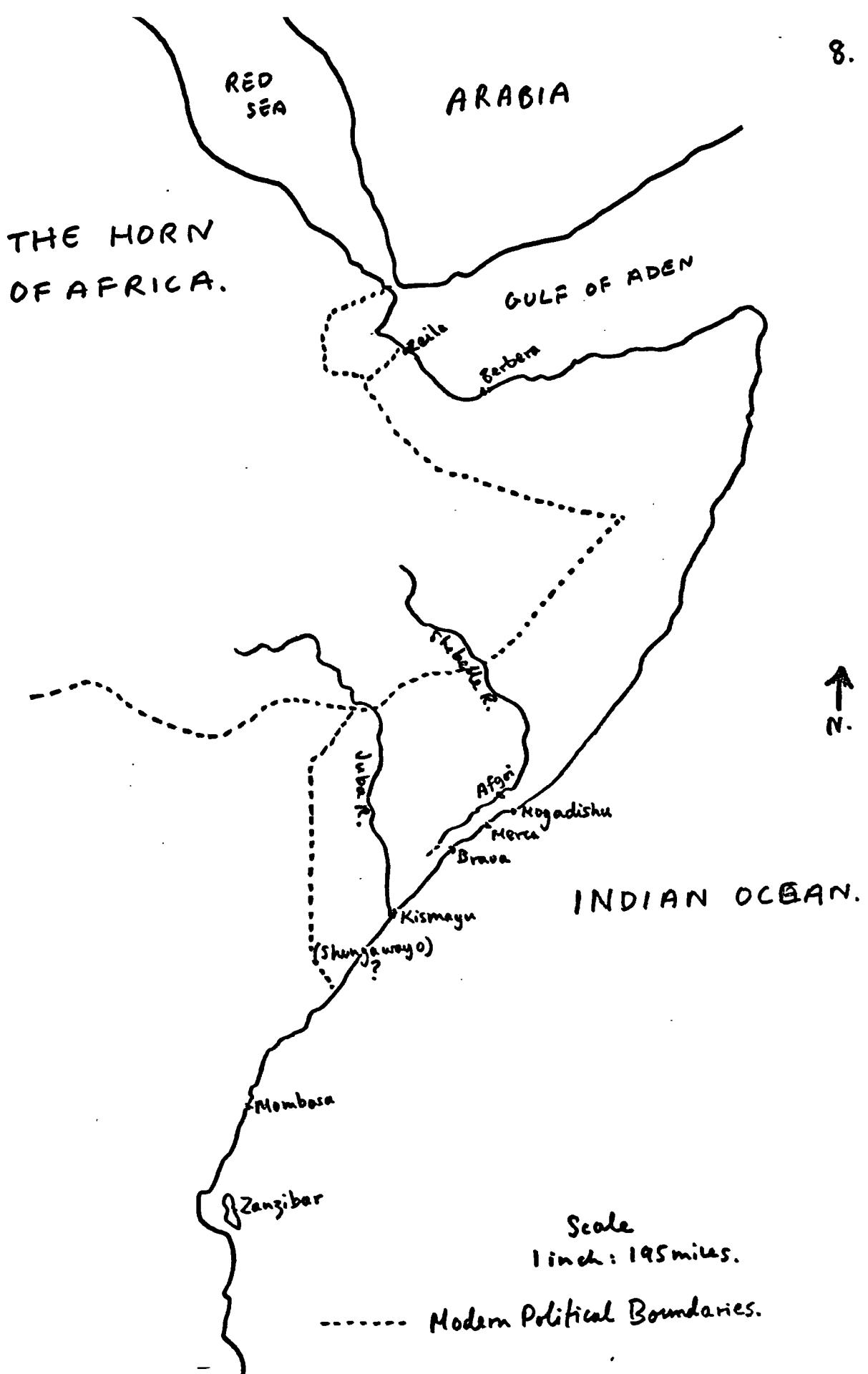
'Tribe' in English anthropological terminology has generally been distinguished from 'clan'; the latter referring to a grouping based entirely on descent linking (real or putative) whereas the former usually denotes a group joined by other ties, such as those of locality, and often including within it a number of 'clans'. In his writings on the

northern Somali, Lewis has therefore substituted 'clan' for the 'tribe' of earlier writers; northern Somali clans are indeed grouped into larger units at a higher level of segmentation, but as these too are based purely on ties of descent, not common territory, and as their unity is of a very loose kind, Lewis preferred the term 'clan-family' for them. (1961 p.2.) He has continued to use the word 'clan' when writing on the southern Somali, for political units equivalent in size and significance to north Somali clans, using the word where Italian ethnographers like Cerulli use 'tribù'.

In order to keep a uniform terminology while dealing with the whole field of Somali society, it seems best therefore to keep to the word 'clan' when referring to units of equivalent size and significance. On the other hand, to use the word to refer to the whole of a grouping like that of the Geledi would go directly against the regular usage, since ties of descent link only one section of that grouping, not the whole.

I have used the word 'clan' therefore to refer only to this nucleus, the Geledi 'Nobles', while calling the whole population of those resident in Geledi and round about, the Geledi 'community'. For units of this kind, formed around a descent group though not linked by descent throughout, the term 'clan-community' might be an appropriate, if rather cumbersome, one.

Somali words used here have been spelt according to the same system used by Lewis (1961 etc.), except in the case of certain place names, for which I use the spelling which has become conventional; e.g. Genale; Audegle not Awdeegle; and Afgoi, not Afgooye.



A. 1.a. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

The settlement of Afgoi lies on the lower course of the Shebelle (1) river, where it runs parallel with the southern Somali coastline, about twenty Km. directly inland from the port of Mogadishu, now the capital of the Somali Republic. The territory with which this study will be mainly concerned is therefore that on either bank of the lower Shebelle, and the adjacent coast; but this has to be seen as part of a wider area, the whole of southern Somalia, and that in turn in relation to the Horn of Africa and the north-east African coast generally.

This is in the main a semi-desert region. The sandy soils and light rainfall produce a vegetation of grass and thorny scrub which can afford a livelihood to humans only if they are nomads, whether hunters or herdsmen. The exception is the area of the two rivers, the Shebelle and the Juba, and the plain between them. Here, both the higher rainfall, and the richer soil brought down by the rivers from the south Ethiopian highlands where they have their sources, produce a country more suitable for farming.

(1) It is a mistake to translate this as 'leopard river' (shabeel = leopard) and still more to assume that this was the Somali name for the whole river. To most of the people who live near it it was and is simply 'the river'; it was also named, at various points along its course, after the different peoples through whose land it flows. One of these is the Shebelle clan, and this name was adopted and applied to the whole river by Europeans.

The two rivers through most of their lengths follow roughly parallel courses, north-west to south-east; but the Shebelle, instead of entering the sea, where it nears the coast bends south-west and runs parallel to it, until it loses itself in the swamps at Havai. Thus it makes the south-eastern border of the inter-river plain, while between it and the coast is a belt of sandy scrub country which extends along the whole of the south Somali coast.

The coast itself consists mainly of sandy beach merging into sand dunes, with occasional rocks. It lacks natural harbours, but is sheltered by a reef; where this is broken, as it is at Mogadishu, small vessels can anchor inside it.

A traveller going inland crosses first the line of dunes, then the rolling belt of "white earth" - the Somali name - with its vegetation of acacias and low bushes, most of them thorny. The soil here is so loose and sandy as to make walking difficult for feet not accustomed to it. After about twenty to thirty kilometres the country dips and the sand gives way abruptly to the "black earth" of the river sides. Its natural thick cover of trees is now cleared for crops in most places, and the landscape is flat and open. When it rains the earth here turns into deep mud of uncommon stickiness.

The Shebelle is a small and, in this part of its course, slow-moving river, which presents no serious barrier to travel. During the period of low water from January to March it can in fact be crossed on foot in most places.

On the further side the "black earth" gives way more gradually to the "red earth" of the inter-river plain, which is good grazing country of grass and acacia trees, interspersed with occasional patches of "black earth". For about fifty kilometres inland the country is flat, and entirely featureless, except where it is broken by the tall granite outcrops locally called bur, which rise abruptly out of the plain like rocky islands. There are three of these; Bur Hakaba, Bur Heybe and Bur Helleda, at some distance from one another.

After this the ground rises steeply into a stony plateau. The principal settlement here has grown up round the spring of Baidoa, famous for its constant supply of water. Apart from this, there are no permanent springs or watercourses between the Shebelle and the Juba, and water can only be got from pools or reservoirs filled by the rains. Beyond the Baidoa plateau the land continues to rise into the highlands of Bali in Ethiopia.

Temperatures in the Shebelle area remain relatively uniform through the year, the hottest periods being February-April and October-November. Monthly maximum temperatures range from 30 - 35c, and minimum temperatures from 21 - 24c.

The heat is kept from being oppressive by the dryness of the climate, and the almost perpetual breeze. The north-east monsoon blows from December to March, the south-west from June to September; in the interim months the rains are brought by winds from off the

Indian Ocean. The more important of the rainy seasons is Gu, lasting from late March till June; the lesser is Dheyr, in October and November. After Gu come Hagaa, the coolest time of the year (comparatively); before Dheyr the weather becomes hotter again. The hottest and dryest season is Jilaal, lasting from December to March. The total annual rainfall is between 350 and 500 mm (13 - 20 ins.).

The lower Shebelle area is, in terms both of communications and ecology, a border zone. The fertile soil of the river banks is the north-eastern limit of the farming country which extends inland to the mountains and southwards to the Juba. On the other hand the sandy coastal belt is a continuation of the arid lands north of the Shebelle, which is typical of the remainder of the Horn of Africa. Beyond this belt is the coast, which belongs to the world of the Indian Ocean trade; in the other direction the way is open to the interior and the Ethiopian highlands. The significance of this placing in the life of the area will become apparent in what follows.

Population and History

From the Middle Stone Age, the Horn of Africa supported a scattered population of hunters and gatherers. Pastoralism and agriculture, on the other hand, did not reach the area until quite a late date. Stone implements and other remains of the Later Stone Age inhabitants of southern Somalia have been found by archaeologists

at Bur Hakaba, Bur Heybe and a number of other sites, mainly in the red earth area of the inter-river plain known to the Somali as doi; hence the name "Doian" has been given to the principal Late Stone Age culture of the region. The people who left this debris "...were hunters and food-gatherers, owning no domestic animals, unless it were the dog, and planting no crops." (Clarke p.250).

There survive in Somalia today, as throughout N.E. Africa, small groups of hunters, occupying the lowest place in modern society, in common with other despised occupational groups such as potters and shoemakers. Some in fact combine both these occupations: an example are the Eyle, a nomadic group living in the Afgoi area (1). It is very likely that there is a connection between such groups and the former hunters, the makers of the stone implements. The archaeological evidence indeed points to this, especially that from the two Burs, where there has been continuous occupation and development from the period of the Doian implements up to modern times, with evidence of domestic cattle or agriculture only in the latest stages (Clarke p.250). Clarke also points out the near-identity in form between the stone arrowheads and modern iron ones of the area.

(1) Bur Heybe is settled by a group called Eyle, who are farmers and potters of the Habash category (see sect A.2.a.). They are distinct from the hunting Eyle, who are nomadic; however, the coincidence of name must have some significance, and possibly they represent a hunting group which changed its way of life, and perhaps mixed with later comers. The name 'Eyle' means 'dog owners', and indicates both a hunting way of life, and their social distance from their Somali overlords, to whom dogs are unclean creatures.

Remains of other Stone Age groups of related culture were found along the coast lines, some in rock shelters. This population evidently lived largely on shellfish. Clarke connects them both with the modern "Reer Manyo", a fisher-people living, it appears, much the same sort of life (and now, like the hunting groups, at the bottom of society); and with fourth-century references to "fish-eaters" and "cave dwellers" (ichthyophagi and trogloditae) on the Gulf of Aden coasts (Clarke pp. 252, 286-7, and frontispiece).

It is probable enough, then, that such modern "low-caste" groups are the distant but direct cultural heirs of the "Doian" and other Stone Age peoples (see also Cole pp. 208-220, 340). How far they are actually their physical descendants is another question. Almost no bones of these early inhabitants have been found, only their artefacts; there is not enough skeletal material to give any clue as to their ethnic affiliations. According to Clarke "...there was probably one basic racial stock in Late Stone Age times in the Horn. Whether this physical type was Hamitic, Negroid or Bush remains still to be determined (p. 159). As for the modern hunting groups, they have never been systematically studied from the physical point of view, but in general appearance they tend to resemble the rest of the neighbouring population, whether this is broadly "caucasoid" as with the Midgaan of the north or the Yibir of the Majerteyn, or Negroid as generally in the south. (The Eyle, from superficial inspection, look somewhere between the two, as do

many people of the area.) The Ribi and Boni of the Juba are said to have bushmanlike characteristics (Lewis 1965. p.19).

Probably as far as descent goes these groups are largely of the same stock as their masters, as a result both of interbreeding between the latter and the original very small population of hunters, and of this lowest social group recruiting itself over the centuries from impoverished or outcast members of the dominant societies (Cerulli II p.113); as happened elsewhere in E. Africa (^{Sutton} ~~Zamani~~ p.92) and indeed tends to happen everywhere with groups in a similar position.

Agriculture seems to have begun in this area with the coming of the Bantu, who entered it, at the furthest limit of their expansion, sometime during the first millennium A.D. They are the first people here who were unquestionably Negroid. These were the people known to the Arabs as the Zanj, whose country extended up the E. African coast to just north of Mogadishu; being a movement of agricultural people, the Bantu expansion naturally reached its limit where the cultivable land gives out, not far north of the Shebelle, (not, as some maps show it, at the Juba, where the present-day language line is).

The chief settlement of the Zanj was Shungwaya (the name, it appears, of both the region and its capital town) south of the Juba probably near modern Bur Gao. Here, until they were driven out by the attacks of the Galla during the sixteenth century, they had an

established culture and a quite complex system of government (~~Zanj~~ chittick p. 107, "Book of the Zanj" Cerulli I p.253 ff). Of the life of those Bantu who settled further north nothing definite can be said, since although their descendants form an important part of the modern population (see p 3646) culturally they have been entirely swamped by later comers.

To the north and west of this Bantu area there was living another people; the Galla; Cushitic-speakers, of the same dark Caucasoid "Hamitic" stock which has constituted much of the population of N.E. Africa in historical times. A pastoral people, they ranged over the inland part of south and central Somalia up to the sixteenth century. At what time they previously had entered the area is obscure, however, for it does not seem to be their place of origin as a people, though this has been asserted (Huntingford p. 19). More likely they came from the south-east Ethiopian highlands, and spread into the lowland area in search of pasture (Haberland pp. 5-7).

While the Galla and the "Zanj" thus divided the interior of the country between them, (and the original small population of hunters became absorbed or adjusted as best they could) a development of a different kind was taking place on the coast. Since classical times there had been trading posts along the coast of E. Africa, where goods were exchanged for the produce of the interior, by foreign, often Arab, merchants. However, there is no evidence whether or not there were permanent settlements attached to them. But from the eighth

or ninth century on, the string of coastal towns began to grow up which have given the south Somali coast its name: Benadir = "the ports". The chief of them were Brava, Merca and Mogadishu.

Their founders were Arab immigrants (with some Persians among them) who settled among and doubtless married with the local people - that is to say, initially, with the Bantu. The Benadir ports were part of the same development as the towns further south which produced Swahili civilization. In the early period of their development the society was probably much the same as there. "The ruling class....was of mixed Arab and African ancestry, brown in colour, well read in the faith of Islam. Such would probably also be the landowners, the skilled artisans, and most of the religious functionaries, and merchants. Inferior to them (in many cases in a state of slavery) were the pure blooded Africans....who performed the menial tasks, and tilled the fields." (N. Chittick in Zamani p. 113).

The goods which were exported from Mogadishu and Brava were, according to ^a thirteenth century Arab geographer; ivory, ambergris, "ebony" (some other dark wood must be meant since ebony does not grow in E. Africa) and sandalwood. The last may in fact mean incense, for which the semi-desert country of the Horn (north from these ports) has been famous since ancient times (Pankhurst ¹⁹⁶¹ p. 351; Guillain I p. 235). Ibn Battuta, who was in Mogadishu in the following century, said that the inhabitants (besides having many sheep and camels) manufactured a type of cloth which was exported as far as Egypt; this apparently

indicates the beginning of the famous Benadir weaving industry, which is still carried on. Of these export goods, the cloth was the only one produced in the city; the rest, portable luxury items, were brought from the interior, probably often over long distances. Slaves, though a regular article of export at this time from the ports on the Red Sea, and later to become so from the Swahili towns further south, seem never to have been an important export from the Benadir coast, and at this period there is no evidence of a slave-trade here at all.

It was not yet the era of regular caravan trade, organised from the coast; goods probably found their way to the ports by passing from hand to hand until they were brought into town by the "natives" (Chittick pp. 108-9). It is worth noting, however, that as soon as there was any kind of route or track leading to Mogadishu from the interior, it must have crossed the river somewhere near where Afgoi now is.

As the prosperity of these coastal cities grew, and the original light huts were replaced by stone houses of two or three storeys, they became well established city-states. Their life is described in some detail in Ibn Battuta's account of his visit to Mogadishu, then the chief city of the coast, in 1331. Originally it had been governed as an oligarchy by representatives of the leading families, but by this time it had a hereditary Sultan (Cerulli I p. 24). A point worth noting is that "...it is their custom here to call the Sultan 'Sheikh'." (Freeman - Grenville p. 28). It will be seen presently

that the usage of treating these two titles as synonyms is still found in the area.

The Benadir city-states had a culture which was sophisticated, even luxurious, at least for the ruling classes. It was one, however, which looked entirely seawards, towards the rest of the Arab world, and took little account of its own hinterland except as a source of profit.

At the same time that these cities were beginning to rise to prosperity, to the north of the region of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coasts, there were developments of another kind.

Corresponding to the Benadir and Swahili towns of the south, were the ports of Zeila, Mait and Berbera on this coast: Arab trading cities, but here the native population with whom the settlers mingled were Caucasoid "Hamites" speaking Cushitic languages; the Afar and the Somali. They were, as they largely still are, pastoral nomads, whose chief wealth was in their camels.

In the course of the ninth or tenth centuries, it seems, the Somali people became converted to Islam. At about the same time they began their great series of migrations southwards, conquering or expelling those peoples who had previously occupied the rest of the Horn. It is very likely that their zeal as fresh converts helped to give this conquest its impetus (Lewis 1965 p. 20).

Their expansion was not a concerted movement, but happened piecemeal over the centuries, in separate groups and by various routes.

Presumably even before it began the Somali consisted of a number of sub-groupings. In the course of their migrations, these fanned out, sub-divided further as the generations passed, split up, re-combined, and took on some identity with the various parts of the country they came to occupy. The situation of the Somali clans in modern times merely represents a stage in this continuing process; though now frozen by the imposition of governments and frontiers.

The traditional Somali political and social structure is given its form by patrilineal descent. It is a classical example of a segmentary lineage system. This is still true of the larger part of the nation, and we may assume that it was originally true of the whole.

The main division of the nation is into two groups of clans; the Samaale (the "Somali" proper, whose name has been given by extension to the whole people); and the Sab. This division is cultural as well as political, to a degree beyond that of the lesser subdivisions. The difference in dialect alone - their speech is not mutually intelligible without learning - shows that their separation (1) must be of early date. In fact, most of the Sab clans penetrated southwards by a different route from the Samaale.

(1) To write of the two groups as having separated from an original unity is probably to over-simplify greatly a situation which very likely involved both accretions and segmentation. What justifies considering both groups of clans as one nation is their community of religion, of language (which underlies the variations) and, not least, the traditional conviction of being somehow connected which has expressed itself in the 'total genealogy', even if this latter is to some extent a fabrication.

The Sab are divided into two "clan families", the Digil and Rahanwiin. The latter is in terms of genealogy simply a branch of the former, but it has grown to become far the larger of the two groups. It is to the Rahanwiin that the Geledi clan, the subject of this study, belong. However they do not generally refer to themselves either as Rahanwiin or as Sab (1). When they do use a genealogical frame of reference, which is seldom (the reasons for this will be discussed later) they are more likely to say that they are Digil. I shall therefore use this name, as more handy than Digil-Rahanwiin, to cover both sets of clans.

Of the four Samaale clan-families (Dir, Isaaq, Daarood and Hawiye) the only one which will concern us much is the Hawiye, for it is they who occupy much of the Shebelle region. They were not, it seems, the first Somali to arrive there; the Jiddu, a branch of the Digil, had arrived earlier, moving down from the upper course of the river, (Cerulli I p. 61), separated from the other Digil whose migration followed a different path. The Jiddu were driven out by the Hawiye, however, and now live in a more restricted area on the lower Shebelle. The Hawiye moved down the coast, following the line of coastal wells, and they had occupied the region round Merca by the thirteenth century; this is shown by a statement of the Arab geographer

(1) Partly, I believe, because both these terms may have a derogatory tone; "Sab" because it is also the term used by the Samaale for their own "low-caste" groups; "Rahanwiin" because it is actually a nickname meaning "large crowd" and reflects the miscellaneous origin of this group of clans.

Ibn Sa'id. (There seems to be another reference to them a century earlier, but their location is there not clear.) (*Cerulli I* pp.93-4) On the other hand, Mogadishu is in the thirteenth century referred to as "Mogadishu of the Zanj". (*Cerulli I p44*) Ibn Battutah says specifically that the Sultan of his day was a "berber", i.e. a Somali; but he says nothing about the rest of the citizens. He also mentions that the Sultan spoke "the language of Mogadishu" - evidently not Arabic - which could conceivably be Somali, but is more likely to mean a dialect specific to the city. Such a language, related to Swahili, is still spoken at Brava.

The general confusion of the evidence suggests, in fact, that there was a period of transition, with both Somali and "Zanj" in the area, and the Arabized cities having dealings with both. This is what one would expect. Gradually, however, the "Zanj" lost their hold, and were either driven south or remained as groups of dependant allies of the Somali, whose language and culture they absorbed as the generations passed.

Different Hawiye groups dominated the area in succession. The Ajuran were allied with the Mudaffar dynasty of Sultans in Mogadishu, under whom the city reached its greatest prosperity during the fifteenth century. The eventual downfall of the Ajuran is popularly attributed to their pride. They were followed by the Abgal, who took possession of the city; with them its decline apparently set in. This was probably due basically, however, to loss of trade; it was the time of

Portuguese ascendancy in the Indian Ocean, disruption of earlier lines of communication, and hard times for Muslim merchants. The Abgal merely took advantage of the city's weakness to become its overlords.

The original city population remained, however. They adopted the Somali language, but kept their distinctive way of life, though its standard declined steeply, and continued to marry only among themselves. They remained, as they still are, a light-skinned people quite different in appearance from the Somali. A document from the eighteenth century (Cerulli I pp.21-24) shows, firstly, that Somali was by that time the language of the city, and secondly, that the population could be classified into "white, red and black", probably referring to the resident pure Arabs, the old city-population, and the Somali respectively. Similar populations survive at Merca and Brava.

Until the early seventeenth century the Galla still occupied the interior. By then, it seems, they were already being pressed by newcomers from the north; these were the Digil Somali. They had come from what is now north-west Somalia, and the Harar region; they moved southward and crossed the upper waters of the Shebelle and the Juba. From there, spreading south-east with a reflex movement, they recrossed the Juba, and their various branches began to scatter over the Baidoa plateau, and then down into the plain. One of their most powerful clans, the Elay, finally drove the Galla out of Bur Hakaba, their last stronghold. If there are descendants of the Galla in southern Somalia today, they are merged with their Somali conquerors

and indistinguishable from them. The main body of that people had moved away, however, for it was in 1522 that their conquest of Abyssinia began.

By the eighteenth century, then, the present pattern of occupation had been largely established. The Digil clans occupied the inter-river plain as far as the Shebelle, on the other bank of which were the Hawiye. In fact, along most of the river there were Hawiye groups on both sides, while the actual banks were still partly occupied by the remnants of the "Zanj". The region round Merca on the coast was meanwhile taken over by the Bimal, an isolated offshoot of the Dir clan-family, the rest of which had remained in the north. The picture is a complicated one, with nomadic groups interpenetrating one another, and some of them gradually settling down to a sedentary life.

Meanwhile, the Digil were outflanked by some of the Daarood clans who moved further south still, beyond the Juba. They will not concern us here.

Of all the Digil clans, the Geledi are settled the furthest to the south-east. On one side of them they had other Digil, whose culture resembled their own. On the other they came into contact with the Hawiye, who, though they shared the same basic culture and language, had been separated from them for so many generations that many of their habits were different and their dialects mutually

incomprehensible. They also came into relatively close contact with the urban cultures of Mogadishu and Merca. These and other influences were to have their significance in the development of Geledi society.

A. 1.b. LEGENDARY HISTORY OF THE GELEDI

The traditions of the Geledi concerning their past must be understood in the historical context described above. I give here the story of their migration and settlement, taking a certain licence in presenting as a continuous narrative, followed by a commentary, material which I actually collected piecemeal from various informants, supplemented with some previously published by Barile, Colucci and Cerulli. (I may be able to compare their different texts in more detail elsewhere; the procedure would be too lengthy here.) They sometimes confirm, sometimes supplement one another; often differ over details but almost never on major points. Where they do so, I note the fact. I must also point out here that different informants have their attitudes to what they tell affected by their differences in status and experience, so that some give a very "folkloric" account full of magic and odd detail; others a more "rationalized" one, suppressing elements they feel to be improbable or undignified. These elements, nevertheless, offer an insight into ideas and attitudes which still exist, and which must once have been universal or nearly so.

Material relating to their later history is included in subsequent chapters.

Summary of legendary history

(For discussion see the notes below.)

Geledi tradition begins from the name of 'Umur Diine. (a).

He, it is said was one of four brothers, all men of religion possessing miraculous powers. One of the others was Fakhri Diine (i.e. Fakhr-ad-diin) who became Sultan of Mogadishu (b); the names of the two others are given variously as Shamse Diine, (Shams-ad-diin), Umudi Diine, Alahi Diine and Ahmed Diine. They came from Arabia, and are therefore known as "the four who came", afarta timid. They were given hospitality by a Sultan (c). A woman served them meat and milk; then she waited and listened to what they would say. The first one said; the calf (d) whose flesh has been served us sucked milk from a dog. The second said; this milk comes from a black cow. The third said; the woman who brought it in is menstruating. The fourth one said; the Sultan was born a bastard.

The woman reported this to her master, who questioned her and discovered that the first three statements were true. He went to his mother and made her swear by the Koran to tell him the truth about his birth; she admitted that once when she had gone out into the bush to bathe herself, she had been raped by a herdsman (e) and he was this man's son.

The Sultan turned the four brothers out of his town. They

came to the settlement of another people, where they slept in the mosque. This people were about to set out on a raid. A man passing the mosque heard one of the brothers say to another; they will be defeated, but if they would take us as their 'uluma they would win. They duly lost the battle. Then the man reported what he had heard, and the people said; we want these men for our 'uluma. At their next battle the brothers helped them by their sacred magic (f) and they were victorious.

Alemo the Sultan of the Digil had a daughter, 'Aasha. This woman had (for what reason is not clear) a poisonous snake lodged in her belly, whose bite was fatal to any man who lay with her. She had had seven husbands, none of whom survived his wedding night. 'Umur Diine in his turn married her, but before going to bed with her he had brought in a vessel of the curds from which ghee is made, with fire to heat it and a wooden ladel (qarsin). He made the ghee and annointed his wife's body with it and - with God's help - the serpent came out of her. At this she said; he has done me a service (galad), and thereafter he became known as Geledi. She bore him twin sons, who were called Dab (fire) and Qarsin.

'Umur Diine had another wife who was Hawiye. Their son was Mahamed 'Umur Diine, who was the father of the Ajuran (g).

'Umur Diine Geledi first came from Adari (h) to Lugh, where he married 'Aasha Alemo. His descendants lived at

Gedo (Gada) and Gesaso, which are near Lugh. The descendants of Qarsin 'Umur stayed there, but those of Dab migrated further.

Dab's son was Subuge (subug = ghee). He had three sons: Yerau, Warantable and Wariile Subuge. There was a chief of the Galla, through whose country they passed (i). He demanded the gift of an unmarried girl as tribute; but the girl who was chosen refused to go, and the people agreed to defy the demand. It was Yerau Subuge who led them in their refusal, and for this he became known by the title Gob u roon = "the most noble" (j), which was transmitted to all his descendants.

The great-grandson of Warantable Subuge was called 'Eelqode; he had three sons: Iman, Jiliible and Geelidle. The descendants of Geelidle live at Tijeeglo, those of Jiliible at Hudur Hadama and other places, though some of them also continued to move on with the descendants of Iman. (see also p. 141.)

So they say the Geledi are three: the first house (min hore) is those who remained at Lugh, the descendants of Qarsin 'Umur (i.e. the Gasar-Gudda); the middle house (min dho) is at Hudur Hadama; and the last house (min dlambe) is this one, the Geledi of Geledi town (k).

As the descendants of the three sons of Subuge continued their wanderings, they repeatedly had to fight against the gaal madlow, the black gaal or infidels. One of their chiefs was called Barambarow; the Geledi defeated him (l).

The descendants of Warantable Subuge travelled in one party, the descendants of Yerau and Wariile Subuge together in another. The former are called Tolwiine, the latter Yebdaale (m).

Finally they arrived near the river, but they did not realise it. This place was then called Gooble. The Tolwiine encamped at the place called Aw 'Isma'il, the Yebdaale at Sheikh Aw Jiraw (n).

There was a white camel which used regularly to escape and then come back; people noticed that she was thriving when other livestock were short of water, and concluded she must have found a supply. They followed her and so discovered the river. After this both groups moved to the river bank and settled there, and they began to cut the trees.

At that time the most powerful people in the area were the Sil'is, one of the Hawiye Gurgaate clans. They had their town, called Lamma Jiidle, "two roads" (o) on the opposite bank of the river and between the two Geledi settlements. The site is now empty but it is said that you can find broken potsherds there, which shows that it used to be inhabited (p).

The Sil'is imposed their dominion on the Geledi, who had to pay as tribute a measure (suus) of grain every day from each household; it was collected and loaded on a camel, others say a donkey. A tax was also imposed on those who brought their

stock to water at the river. People were also compelled to go on Fridays to pray at the mosque in Lamma Jiiddle, instead of in their own villages.

The Sil'is had certain peculiarities: they tied their garments on the left instead of on the right; the main partition of their houses was on the left instead of the right of the door (see Sect. 2.a.). Their shoes had no heel pieces (q).

Their Sultan used to claim the ius primae noctis over the brides of his subjects (r).

The last Sultan of the Sil'is was 'Umur Abukar Abroone. His daughter Imbia used to go round collecting the daily tribute of grain, accompanied by her slaves.

When the Geledi eventually decided to free themselves from this oppression, they first chose out a certain man called Moordiile Husseyn, of the Maama Suubis lineage, who was a well-known coward. He was sent to penetrate, disguised as a beggar, into the Sultan's house, and by doing so to break the spells on which the latter relied. Accordingly they placed a protective ta'dad (sacred magic) on him; they also gave him a gourd to hide in his clothing, and told him not to eat anything while in the Sultan's house, but to put it in the ground.

He set out at the hour before sunset (wahti); when he came to the Sultan's house he passed through seven doors, each guarded by a slave and made secure with spells. He found

'Umur Abukar eating his evening meal, and accosted him by saying "magan Allah", as beggars do. The Sultan, astonished that the man could have penetrated his defences, gave him some of the porridge he was eating. Moordiile put it in his gourd, but when that was full he had to eat some of it in order to keep up his part as a famished beggar.

When he got back to the Geledi and told them of his success, they asked whether he had eaten anything, and he told them he had. In that case, they said, you will die. He said he was content so long as his people were victorious.

The next day when the Sultan's daughter came round to collect the tribute, she got a beating instead of the grain. When she ran and told her father, he said; they have cut off my mouth, waa la i afgooye (s), and so the place has been known as Afgoi ever since.

Then the Geledi attacked the Sil'is and defeated them utterly. They became an insignificant, scattered people (t).

The people of the Yebaale group had, so at least the Tolwiine say, stayed on the side of the Sil'is, but only because they were afraid of them and wanted peace. When they saw the success of the Tolwiine they joined them. To commemorate this league with the Sil'is, their houses used to have a sab, a wicker frame for carrying a water-jar on the back, on the point of the roof (u).

In this way the Geledi got their freedom (v).

Notes on the above

With regard to all the episodes up to the settlement, informants tend to be vague, not only about the time and place, but about whether they are recounting the movements of individuals or groups. What is assumed throughout is the (generally recognised) claim of the Gobron lineage to hold the special role of 'uluma' or holy men, which is linked with the office of Sultan, to all the Digil. It is shown how the founder of the dynasty attains his position by marrying the daughter of the Sultan of a former dynasty, and how he proves the supernatural powers which mark him out for the office; these powers continue in his descendants. It can be seen how from the beginning the function of the dynasty is seen as religio-magical rather than politico-military. This point will be discussed in detail in section 2.f.

The Geledi as a whole are here almost identified with the Gobron, and through them with their special relation to the rest of the Digil. Apart from this, the precise genealogical connections between them and the other Digil clans is not made clear. The genealogy set out here in appendix 1 may be compared with the diagrams given by Colucci, pp.102-3.

(a) The name is "formed by a people who did not speak Arabic as their mother tongue, after the analogy of Shams-ad-Din, Sa'd ad-Dinetc.". Thus the Encyclopedia of Islam comments on the

sixteenth century Sultan of the Muslim state of Harar, who also had this name (Vol.II p.263). One Geledi told me that 'Umur Diine is buried at Harar, thus identifying his own ancestor with that Sultan, whose tomb is in fact shown there. "Diin" though not a personal name in Arabic is actually used as one by the Somali; Diine Nuure was one of Colucci's informants, and his son, 'Usman Diine one of mine.

- (b) In fact a Fakhr ad-Din is said to be the founder of the dynasty which ruled Mogadishu in the Middle Ages; the oldest mosque there is still called after him. This puts him probably in the twelfth century (Cerulli I p.19). The coincidence of names has led to his being made a brother of 'Umur Diine, who, if he existed, may well have been his contemporary, but whom he can scarcely have met.
- (c) This is another version of the story given by Colucci p.106, from a Gasar Gudde informant. There, the Sultan who harbours the four men is the Sultan of the Shebelle, and he asks them to stay with him. However, neither of the two peoples they first stay among is identified by my informants, nor are they explicitly connected with the Digil Sultan Alemo of the third story.
- (d) I have never known Somali to eat veal, but this is my informant's word.
- (e) Hired herdsmen, keeping other people's stock, are of low status and Geledi will not take this work.
- (f) Sacred magic, ta'dad, is properly distinguished from seher, common sorcery. See section 2.3.

- (g) This statement, which was made to me by two separate Geledi, does not agree with other traditions about the Ajuran (v. Colucci, p.96.).
- (h) Adari is the usual Somali name for the city of Harar. (This was the capital of the medieval emirate of Adal.)
- (i) This story is from Barile, p.78, where however it is placed at Obok, which is inconsistent with the foregoing. I have in my notes a not very clear reference to what seems to be the same story, associated with this later stage of their migration.
- (j) The word gob is used by the Geledi as a generalised term of praise, not as the name of a particular political office.
- (k) There may be a confusion here; the classification does not allow for the Geelidle. Otherwise it clearly covers the same group of clans given by Colucci (p.103) as descended from 'Umur Diine (Omardin) and 'Aasha; that is to say, all the Rahanwiin Sagaal except the Kassanle. My informant's account simply represents a more localised viewpoint on the same traditional material.
- (l) The black gaal - distinguished from the white gaal i.e. Europeans - were presumably the Galla. The defeat of Barambarow (barambara = cockroach) is also claimed by the Elay (Colucci p.160).
- (m) These two names for "major" and "minor" division are also used by other clans. See the following section for a discussion of their significance in Geledi.
- (n) All informants (including Barile's) agree about the two camping places. Both are now cemeteries, not far from Geledi town, named

after the most distinguished men buried in each. From this point on, the different accounts confirm one another much more fully.

- (o) One of the "two roads" in question is presumably that from Mogadishu inland; the other is perhaps that to Merca, or leading up-river. The name suggests that this particular site was given importance by its place on a junction of routes, even before the time of the Geledi.
- (p) Unfortunately I did not check this.
- (q) These details were told me by an old man of the Wa'dan; I did not hear them from the Geledi. In other respects the Wa'dan have their own version of the fall of the Sil'is, which differs from this one in some points.
- (r) A habit regularly attributed to tyrants in this part of Somalia.
- (s) Meaning either "they have cut off my supplies" or "they have made my commands ineffective". Other tellers place the saying either when he found the beggar had entered his house, or after his final defeat. See also p.62.
- (t) The remnant of them are said to live in the village of Raqayle Aw Samow, near Merere in Hintire territory.
- (u) The point of a roof always has some sort of ornament (see section 2.b.); but never this one. Probably it implies cowardice, being a typically feminine contraption.
- (v) Informants disagree under which Sultan this event (which unquestionably has an historical basis) took place. The whole

question of Sultanates will be discussed in Section 2.^g; in my opinion the defeat of the Sil'is happened near the end of the eighteenth century.

Conclusion to Part A.

The Geledi seem (from a calculation of generations which I shall discuss in the section on the Sultanate) to have settled on their present site early in the seventeenth century. This is consonant with what is known of the Somali migrations. They were only a small outlying branch of the Digil, and for the next two centuries or so they remained, as far as can be seen, a small and unimportant clan. Indeed it appears that they were for some or all of that time subject to a more powerful Hawiye group. The point at which they freed themselves from this subjection is probably to be placed at the end of the eighteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth, the Geledi Sultanate had become the principal power in southern Somalia.

In the following chapters I shall attempt to examine what Geledi society was during the time of this pre-eminence. I take as my chief point of reference the 1840s; this was a decade during which the Geledi were visited by the two Europeans who recorded their observations of them; the English Lt. Christopher, and the French Captain Charles Guillain. It was also that in which their influence was at its height; during which they achieved their most memorable success, and suffered their first serious defeat.

A. 2.a. THE DIVISIONS OF SOCIETY

The task of the first part of this study is to describe the society of Geledi as it existed in the middle and later 19th century. I shall discuss the material background of people's daily existence, their economic and political life; but first it will be necessary to outline the basic categorisation of society, not only in Geledi but in the surrounding area generally⁽¹⁾; without some initial grasp of this, a description of material culture and economic life would be lacking in reality.

In the preceding sections I have written as though the Geledi were a single homogeneous descent group. This is not so. To understand the way in which the community was divided up, I shall consider the various distinctions according to which, in its view, human beings could be classified; this section then attempts to draw a map of the traditional social universe of the Geledi, by describing one by one the distinctions between different kinds of person which made up its outlines. In subsequent sections I shall consider how the groups outlined by these distinctions were organised, both internally and in relation to one another.

The question arises how far this can be done on the evidence from the present day. I believe that such a map can be drawn for the

(1) In this context, and throughout the following pages, statements will be made about Geledi which in fact apply also to the Benadir and middle Shebelle area generally, or to the whole of southern Somalia, to all the Somali, or indeed to the whole Muslim world. I have sometimes indicated the range of application, but where I am uncertain of this, I confine my observation to Geledi. Where I do not specifically mention other clans or areas which share the same characteristics, this does not necessarily imply that Geledi is unique.

mid 19th century with a reasonable degree of accuracy on the basis of the social distinctions which still exist today (since such institutions are resistant to change) supplemented by what people say about the past, and checked by the accounts of European travellers to Somalia in the last century (making allowances where necessary for the superficiality of the latter).

To begin with the distinction, so important in the modern political context, between Somali and non-Somali: there is no evidence that the Geledi or their neighbours would have applied the name 'Somali' to themselves before the colonial period. Certainly they had no idea of belonging to a unity which included the Somali of the north. The Daarood of the Mudug and Majerteyn areas were the most northerly people of whom they had any definite idea; of those Somali who live further north they had apparently never heard. This is not to assert, obviously, that individual Geledi, travelled or in some other way well informed, may not have known of them; the point is that they were not, any more than the pagans of the far south, part of the ordinary social universe of this community.

The only people from overseas of whom the Geledi knew much at this period, were the Arabs. In tradition and religion, Arabia was of the greatest significance in their world-view. Their experience of actual Arabs was limited, however. There were certainly Arabs to be found in

the coastal cities, but they did not settle further inland, so they may have been familiar as political or business contacts, but not as neighbours.

At this period, in fact, the Geledi, whose past and traditions referred wholly to the interior, were, as their power increased, interacting with the society of Mogadishu and the other coastal cities, and beyond them with the outer world. It was a world, however, about which they had only scanty information.

Of the Somali clan-families, those who remain part of the Geledi consciousness are the Digil, to whom they belong; the Hawiye, and less importantly, the Daarood. In terms of the Somali 'total genealogy', these are seen as related descent groups; but the Geledi are noticeably less conscious of descent, as a way of expressing the relation between such large groups as clans, than are the Hawiye, and the Northern Somali generally. Whereas their neighbours, the Wa'dan, for instance, are always ready to point out that they and the Abgal or Hillibey are 'brothers', and quote the relevant piece of genealogy to prove it; Geledi do not make this assertion unprompted about their relation to the Eléy or the Dafet clans, who stand in much the same social relationship to them; though the genealogical connection is more remote and only a small minority know it at all precisely. For them the differences and connections between their neighbours and themselves are much more readily expressed in cultural, particularly linguistic, terms.

Though classified as 'Rahanweyn' in the genealogical scheme current among other clans, they do not, as I mentioned earlier, refer to themselves by this name, but as Digil, and as such, together with neighbouring groups such as the Elay, opposed to the Hawiye. Much more often, however, the distinction between the two populations is made in terms of their respective dialects. The Hawiye of this area speak the Benadir dialect; the Geledi speak Digil; in common parlance the two speeches are designated by their respective phrases for 'what did you say?' - maha tiri and may tiri. Digil is generally just known as may-may, which in the mouth of a speaker of another dialect has a tone of mockery, amiable or otherwise. This is so particularly at the present time, when the coastal, urban and northern cultures are largely dominant: in the period we are dealing with however, political dominance was with the culture of the plain and the 'may' speakers; in the Geledi confederation it was the 'maha tiri' who were the clients.

This difference in speech is the measure of a cultural difference which, in spite of the many underlying similarities between the two groups, leads to a certain mutual mistrust. (Though this has never amounted to a consistent enmity; and the Digil-Rajanwiin and the Hawiyye have fought among themselves as often as they have one another.) The distance was expressed in its most direct form in two remarks which were made to me: one by a Hawiye (Galja'el) woman in Afgoi; 'I don't like those people on the other bank; you can't understand what they say'; and the other by a Geledi; 'All Hawiye are thieves'.

Nevertheless the Geledi made alliance (alone among the Digil) with two Hawiye groups: the Wa'dan clan, and a section of the Murunsade. The latter settled in three villages on the right bank of the river, upstream from Geledi town; the former were given possession of the left bank.

The distinction between nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmer is one of the basic divisions of social life in southern Somalia as in so many countries where conditions lend themselves to both modes of life. Here, broadly speaking, it coincides with the last division discussed, the Digil-Rahanwiin being farmers and the Hawiye pastoralists; but there are exceptions both ways. Thus along the Shebelle several Hawiye clans are now farmers on the 'black earth', like the Hintire immediately downstream from Afgoi, or the Murusade mentioned above. The Wa'dan, like the Abgal, are also partly 'black earth' farmers, while the larger part of the clan leads a semi-nomad life on the 'deh', living both by stock herding and a certain amount of shifting cultivation on the sandy soil. On the plain the migration routes of the nomads, the geer guura', 'travelling' or 'moving' people, flow round the fixed islands of farm land and villages. The principal such groups are here the Galja'el (Hawiye) and the Garre (Digil)⁽¹⁾, whose long-standing enmity is a byword.

The dominant section of the Geledi (see below) must during their migrations have been wholly or mainly pastoralists, but since their

(1) Colucci classifies the Garre as 'pre-Hawiye', but Mahony (p.2) says they are Digil.

settlement became entirely sedentary and dependent economically on land and crops, not stock. Cattle were still a secondary source of wealth, however, and their ownership gave prestige; they were generally herded, away from the farmland, either by a junior member of the family or by a hired herdsman from some other clan, who moved with them, living in the nomadic style.

Cutting across clan and clan-family divisions, there is in this area a hereditary categorization of a different kind.

Throughout much of southern Somalia, two ethnic types are apparent in the population, physically more or less clearly distinguishable. The nature of this difference in appearance needs to be clearly understood if one is to map the social structure of the area, because it is emphasised by the people themselves, among whom it is the sign of a basic social division.

This division is a firmly-rooted one, and was certainly important during the 19th century (see e.g. Ferrandi). A description of the present day situation may, therefore, be taken as applying to that period also, in its essential features.

One physical type is like that of the northern Somali and the other Cushitic speaking peoples. These people have features of a rather European cast, their noses being long and their lips narrow in comparison to those of negro Africans (though commonly wider than those of Europeans); their hair grows to shoulder-length and is moderately curly. The other type is definitely negroid, distinguished by broad noses, full

lips, and hair which is short and kinky - in the local idiom 'hard', as opposed to the 'soft' hair of the others. Both types have the same range of skin colour (from medium brown to very dark in some individuals) and this is not a criterion for social distinction (but see below).

What has just been described is a pair of stereotypes. The opposition 'broad nose, big mouth, hard hair/thin nose, narrow mouth, soft hair' is always pointed out as characterising the two main social categories into which the population is divided. It also corresponds fairly closely with the facts; an observer trying to place individuals in one or the other category purely on the basis of their facial characteristics would probably guess right, say, seven out of ten times.

The actual basis of classification is in fact descent; the two categories being endogamous.

The first category is the socially superior one. They call themselves Bilis, a complimentary term which I translate as 'Noble'; it must be remembered however, that the feudal connotations of that term do not apply here. People of the inferior category are designated by various names (all more or less derogatory in tone⁽¹⁾) in different parts of southern Somalia. In the Afgoi area the word generally used is 'Habash'⁽²⁾; this term I shall use, for lack of any possible English

(1) e.g. Boon, Gum.

(2) Among the northern Somali this word means 'Abyssinian'. As a slave-dealer's term (from the same arabic derivation) it used to mean a slave from Abyssinia, generally a Galla; specifically not negroid. (C.Snowck — Hurgronje, quoted in Steiner p.3). This suggests two possible ways the word could have developed; (a) during the southward migration of the Digil clans, 'Abyssinian' - 'indigenous non-Somali' - 'indigenous negroid people'; (b) via slave-dealers' jargon, 'Galla slave' - 'slave in general' - 'physical type associated with slavery'. (cf the Arabic word 'abd' = slave, which in many dialects came to mean 'black man' in general.) (See B. Lewis, p.28.)

equivalent, although it is a name imposed on the people in question by others, and not used by themselves.

The Noble and the Habash are then two social categories into which the Geledi and Wa'dan, in common with most of the other south Somali, particularly along the rivers, are divided. Within a given community, where people's antecedents are known, a person is classed as one or the other according to his descent. If he comes from a Noble lineage, he is a Noble, even if his nose is distinctly broad and flat; if he comes from a Habash lineage, he is Habash, however long his hair may be. Such anomalous characteristics in individuals are noticed and admitted to, often with laughter, but they do not disturb the stereotype. In the case of a stranger whose origin is unknown, however, the stereotype has to be used in order to classify him, since the distinction is assumed to apply to all humanity. Europeans, for example, are normally counted as Noble, so are Arabs; in the nineteen-sixties, the Chinese were to provide a nice problem in classification. (See p. 250)

The category 'Habash' is further subdivided. Inasmuch as it refers to physical type it covers two different kinds of status and origin. On the one hand there are the slaves. In the last century slavery was an important institution among the Geledi as among the other agricultural Somali; there were slaves in large numbers, mainly imported from Zanzibar and the E. African coast (see Section 2. d.). Though the word Habash can apply to these too, they were generally referred to as ooji, distinguishing them from the Habash proper, who though of inferior status are free citizens. There is a term, 'jerir', which covers both categories; it refers specifically to their curly hair. In theory

even a slave who had been freed by his master - and this was an established practice - still carried the stigma and so do his descendants, who remain separate from and even lower than the Habash.

In practice, however, the distinction becomes blurred as time passes. In fact the Nobles commonly assert that all the Habash are ultimately the descendants of slaves, and that this is how they came to be in the community. It may be that in some communities this is so; in such a case the words 'slave' (ooji or adoon) and 'Habash' would be synonymous, and this actually seems to be the case among the Wa'dan, with only the shade of meaning that the latter refers to physical appearance rather than status, and is not quite so insulting as the former.

There exist, however, entire clans all of whose members are Habash. Such are the Shiidle of the middle Shebelle, or the Eyle of Bur Heybe. As Cerulli long ago pointed out (II. pp.115-121) these must be, partly at least, the descendants of the early, Bantu-speaking population of the area. It seems most probable that the Habash element in other clans is also derived at least partly from this source.

In many cases Habash cultivating clans have formed alliances with Noble pastoral clans, taking on a patron-client relationship to them. An example of such an alliance is that of the Shiidle with the Moblen. If such a pastoral clan were to take up farming and settle down side by side with their Habash clients, the result would be a

political grouping made up of lineages from both categories. This is precisely the situation among the Geledi. Whereas among the Wa'dan the Habash form part of the same lineage groups as the Nobles - which agrees with their having no separate status from that of freed slaves and suggests that they may all be of slave origin - among the Geledi the Habash lineages are independent and have, at least formally, equal legal status with that of the Nobles. Freed slaves, on the other hand, form part of the lineages of their former masters.

Certain Habash lineages, however, are supposed to stand in a special relation to particular Noble lineages, and are said to be 'their' Habash. It seems likely that these are descended at least in part from slaves freed at an early period; especially since the few genealogies which I have been able to obtain from such lineages converge with those of the appropriate Noble groups, and slaves normally use the genealogy of their master. In fact since slaves were customarily freed, and given land, from early times, and since ex-slaves always aim to raise their status by getting accepted as free Habash, it seems likely that all the present-day Habash lineage-groups may be of mixed slave and free origins. Clues to the ultimate origins of such groups might be found by studying their artefacts, and certain rituals peculiar to them, and seeing where in East Africa comparable ones are known (see p.32).

The Nobles say, as I have mentioned, that Habash are all descendants of slaves; the idea of their representing an earlier population is not known, and they would probably reject it. The Habash for their

part are vague and evasive about their origins; they usually say that they came with the Nobles into the region. They have no desire to stress their separation from the Nobles, for to do so would only be to emphasise their own inferiority. (Though Robacchi-Bricchetti (p.418) mentions 'an old tradition' among the Shebelle, that they were descended from 'a very ancient autochthonous population, of which however they have only vague and confused memories'.)

Whereas the Nobles have, as we have seen, in Section A.1.b., definite traditions asserting their own common ancestry, and see their unity in those terms, the link between them and the Habash is of a different order, based on locality, social and economic subordination and political collaboration.

In the past there was no intermarriage between Noble and Habash. This rule, it seems, was absolute (as to a large extent it still is). Nobles also still do not eat in the houses of Habash, though the converse does not apply; Nobles have no objection to Habash eating their food; indeed, as the wealthy members of the community they have a religious duty to offer good on feast-days to their poorer neighbours, who are most likely to be Habash.

While farming used to be the basic means of livelihood for Noble and Habash alike, slaves were used for field-labour by those who could afford them, and Nobles did not work their own lands before modern times Ferrandi (p.110) observed in the 1890s that if one saw a man cultivating his own field, then he was certainly of 'slave' - i.e. Habash - descent.

Certain specialised trades were and are practised only by Habash; they are carpenters and house-builders, weavers, potters and will butcher animals for payment, whereas a Noble would do so only for his own family. There is the interesting case of the Bahar lineages, the fisher-ferrymen of the river. (I shall discuss all these in the section on economic life.) These occupations are not felt to be intrinsically "unclean". Nobles do not leave them to Habash because they are low, but rather consider them low because Habash typically perform them.

Here we have then, a society divided into two layers; the upper one a group with common descent and traditions; the other inferior both in wealth and status, whose members, though not slaves but independent small farmers, carried less weight politically than their betters.

This is not the whole picture however. There is a third category of persons to be considered.

Among the Geledi as among many of the clans of this area there are people who are known to their neighbours as Gibil 'ad, White-skins or Lightskins, as opposed to the other Somali, who are Gibil madlow, Blackskins or Darkskins. They are in fact distinguished by cafe-au-lait complexions noticeably lighter than those of the rest of the population, which suggests that they are descended from immigrants from the Arab countries. They must not be confused with modern Arab immigrants, however: their language and entire way of life is Somali. Very likely they are connected somehow with the old city populations of the Benadir ports, who have the same light complexion.

One of the principal settlements of these people is at Audegle and the surrounding villages, down-river from Afgoi, where they are dominant among the Begeda clan.

Lightskins are said to be 'uluma'; that is to say, all of them, (the males that is) are classified as men of religion (sheikhs or wadaado) by right of descent, irrespective of whether as individuals they are particularly pious or learned. In fact however, religious learning does seem to be cultivated among them much more consistently than among the population at large. As with all groups who are classified as 'uluma', what is attributed to them is not simply religious prestige but magical powers; notably the ability to divine the future by reading in the Koran. Many people also suspect them of practising magical arts of a less reputable kind; and they are felt to have something generally uncanny about them.

They are classified as Noble, not Habash, but other Nobles treat them with a certain reserve and distrust, and do not admit them as equals, although they are not inferior in the same way as Habash are; they are not so much 'low' as just 'different'. Intermarriage between Darkskin and Lightskin Nobles is traditionally excluded⁽¹⁾; the latter, of course, will not marry Habash either. Nor do other Nobles eat in the houses of Lightskins, there is not an absolute-ban the other way;

(1) Prof. I. Lewis tells me that in his experience Darkskin people will give their daughters in marriage to Lightskins more often than the reverse. I have not myself known a case of this, and in Geledi Darkskin Nobles seem averse to the idea of such marriages; the strength of such barriers probably varies from place to place. In modern urban society they are in any case beginning to break down.

but whereas Habash very often take food in the houses of Nobles for whom they are working, for instance, Lightskins do not do so, and the two superior groups mix comparatively little socially.

Unlike the Habash, the Lightskins are far from generally poor; indeed many of them are noticeably prosperous, and this appears to have been as true in the past as today. Again, unlike the Habash, who seem to have been up to the present time largely acquiescent in their inferior position, Lightskins manifestly consider themselves as good as their darker-skinned neighbours if not better.

They do not form any separate unit in the traditional political structure of the area, but live in scattered groups among the various clans, of which they form distinct sections, fellow-citizens but not brothers. They do not trace their descent in the same line as the dark skinned Nobles; their genealogies also go back to holy men from Arabia, but not to the same ones.

This division of the population into three categories, to which I shall now simply refer as Noble, Lightskin and Habash, has some of the features of a caste system. Thus, although the division is not theoretically based on occupation, many occupations are in practice reserved for the Habash category. The separation of the three categories is reinforced by mystical beliefs about the potentially dangerous character of the people concerned (Lightskins are held to have the evil eye, and some though not all Habash are suspected of sorcery and of doctoring people's food). Nevertheless, since the word 'caste' raises problems of

comparison and definition which might confuse the issue, I have preferred to avoid it.

The divisions which I have so far discussed operate not only among the Geledi but throughout the lower Shebelle area, if not all southern Somalia. I come now to those which apply only within the structure of the Geledi community itself.

This community consists today, as it did in the past, of a confederation of lineage groups. Some of these groups are Noble, some Lightskin, and some Habash. They may contain up to several hundred individuals⁽¹⁾. Each group has a certain legal autonomy, that is to say it has its own presiding elders, and forms a solitary group in its dealings with the others. The Noble lineage groups at least have a tendency to endogamy, and this is said to have been more strictly kept to in the past. Members of a lineage group know one another, and have a strong sense of identity and particularity.

There are nine such groups among the Nobles, each having today generation-depth of between 9 and 15 generations. Beyond their respective apical ancestors, they all trace descent from the three sons of Subuge (see p.21 and the chart in Appendix 1).

(1) Nowadays, that is; see Section 2.e and Appendix IV. There appear to be among the Geledi about equal numbers of Noble and Habash, and rather over half as many Lightskins. About the numbers in the last century it is, of course, impossible to know, but there seems no reason to suppose the proportions have changed much.

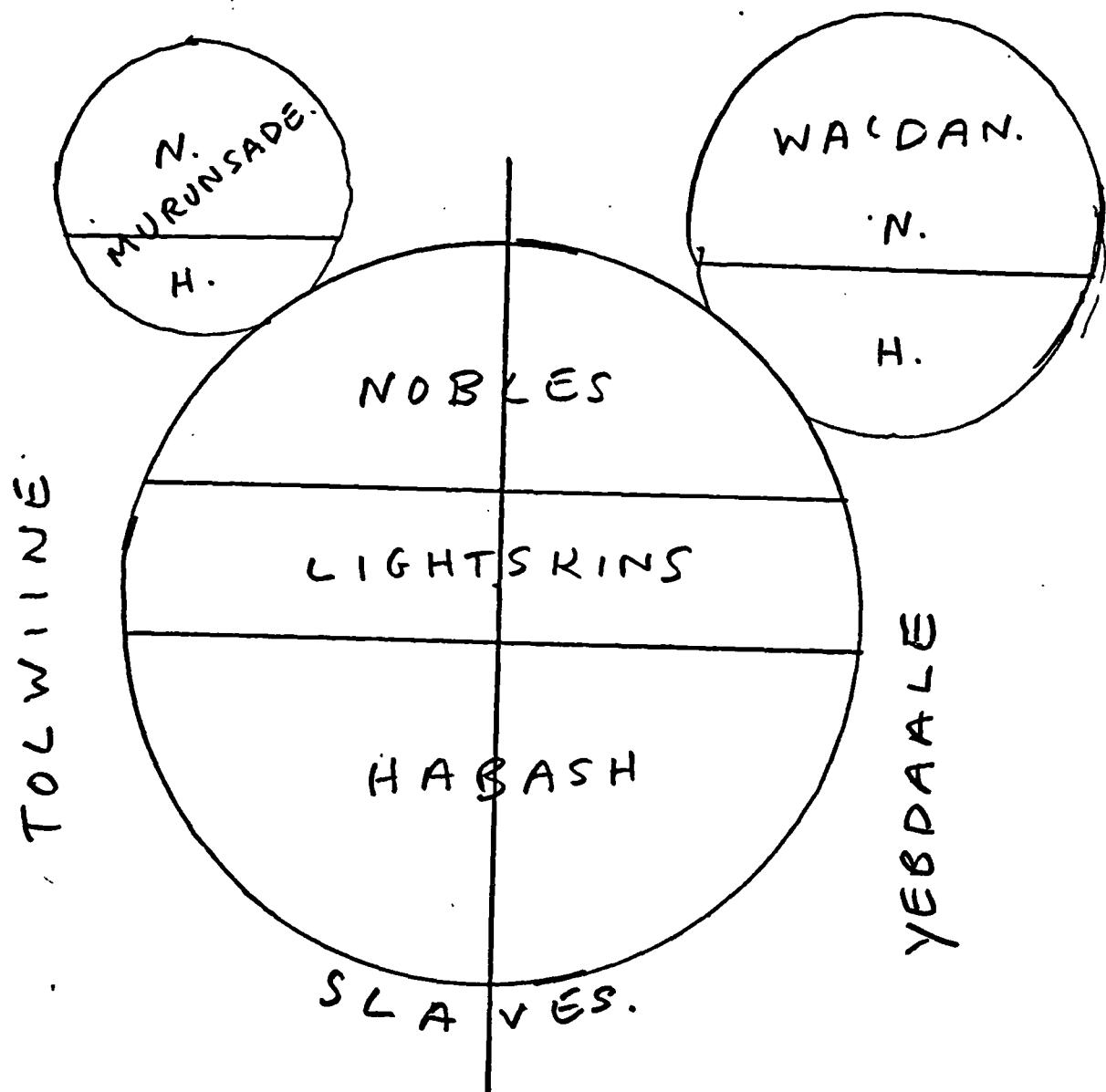
These lineage groups are not further segmented. Below the level of the lineage the names of common ancestors may be used by their descendants to identify one another as kinsmen, their significance is merely sentimental or honorific. People of close common ancestry in the male line will invite one another to weddings, for instance; but then they will equally invite matrilateral kin, and neighbours who are no relation at all.

Noble lineages are divided between two moieties, Tolwiine and Yebdaale. The former trace their descent from Warantable Subuge, the latter from Wariile Subuge. The descendants of Yerau Subuge are the Gobron lineage, who are counted (at any rate since the last century) as part of the Tolwiine; they are a special case and will be dealt with in Section (f).

This division is reflected in the settlement pattern; the Tolwiine live in a group of villages, one of which is called 'Eelqode (the name also attributed to the ancestor of this moiety). The Yebdaale live mainly in the village of Balguri about half a mile downstream; the two are often known simply as the reer 'Eelqode and the reer Balguri.

The Habash lineages are similarly distributed between the two moieties, but for them it is not a question of descent, but simply of residence. The same applies to the Lightskin; their main lineage group, the Adawiin, live in both settlements, though legally and genealogically they are one group. The moiety division is in fact derived from the

DIAGRAM OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL
STRUCTURE OF GELEDI.



genealogy of the Nobles and imposed on the other categories. Or rather, though expressed in terms of the descent groupings of the dominant category, it for practical purposes consists simply of two residential groupings. Between them there is quite a noticeable social distance; there are people living in 'Eelqode who can declare that they know nobody living in Balguri, about ten minutes walk away.

The division has no political or legal significance, however. The legal units are the lineage groups. In fact it has no practical significance at all except as a residence grouping with certain historical associations. It becomes formally important, however, during the New Year "stick-fight", which is described in the final chapter.

Clan, Community and Sultanate.

At this point it is possible to summarize the composition of what I shall call the Geledi community, as it existed during the 19th century, and then examine its relation to a term of wider application, the Geledi Sultanate.

The Geledi community was a political union, not all of whose members were connected by ties of descent, either real or presumed, but which was constituted by bonds of locality, custom and contract, as well as common allegiance to a politico-religious leader, the Sheikh or Sultan.

It was composed of three caste-like categories of persons, each comprising several lineage groups. There was no intermarriage between categories and only limited social contact. They were:

(1) Nobles: This, the dominant category, was the core of the community. It was the only one whose members together constituted not only a category, defined from outside itself, but a solidary group, considering themselves as a unity and taking pride in the fact. This assertion of unity rested on a claim to common descent; they could thus be properly called a clan in the same sense as other Somali clans. As with these latter, this claim to common descent might in the case of some lineages be an open fiction; nevertheless, it was into a genealogical framework that they were fitted. This was not so of the other categories.

(2) Lightskins: This category consists of one main lineage, the Adawiin, and some small splinter groups. They did not claim common descent either with one another or with the Nobles. The religious and magical powers with which they were credited were both valued and to some extent feared by the rest of the community.

(3) Habash: In this category the genealogical picture is very vague, for reasons which have been suggested. They appear to have consisted of many small lineages of very shallow genealogical depth, clustered into two main groupings. Certain artisan occupations were reserved to them.

In subsequent sections I shall discuss in more detail the structure of the various lineage groups in each category, and the relations between them.

The three categories were unequal economically, since the Habash were poorer than the other two, and socially, since the Nobles looked down on the Lightskins and both looked down on the Habash. Both Light-skin and Habash lineages appear to have participated in the political activities of the community only through the mediation of the Noble lineages to which they were attached; nevertheless as individuals, all were counted as freemen, entitled, for instance, to equal compensation in case of injury.

The community also contained another element, probably a large one, which did not belong in any of the above categories, namely the slaves. Their case will be discussed separately.

The division into moieties cut across the three categories. For the Noble lineages, this was a division based on genealogy; for the rest, it was merely one of locality. There was a noticeable social hiatus between the two groups, but for legal and political purposes the division had no real significance.

This, then, was the Geledi community. The simplest definition of it would be "those people who, if asked, would say that they were Geledi". It can also be called the Geledi clan, in a broad sense, inasmuch as it was a political unit of comparable size, and at the higher level structurally equivalent, to other Somali clans. The word "clan" is more properly used, however, only of the Nobles, who base their unity on their supposed common descent.

The Geledi Sultanate, however, also contained other people, who would not have described themselves as Geledi. These were in the first place, their allied clans; the chief of whom were the Hawiye Wa'dan clan, and a section of the Murunsade. These had all been granted land by the Geledi. They did not directly take part in Geledi internal politics, having their own political structure, but were united to them by contractual agreements about the payment of bloodwealth, mutual support in war, and by their acknowledgment of the authority of the Geledi Sultan.

The Wa'dan were associated with the Yebaale moiety who, it is said, originally ceded them the land they occupy. The Murunsade on the other hand, were given their land by one of the Tolwiine lineages, the Abikerow.

The position of these allies in the Sultanate is to be distinguished from that on the one hand of those aliens who were actually adopted into one or other of the Geledi lineages, (see pp.154 -5) and on the other from that of the other Digil clans which acknowledged the Geledi Sultan's authority. For most of the time this latter recognition was purely nominal, a distant respect for a religious office and a focus of tradition, involving no actual obligations. This vague commitment was activated for some of them at least, during the wars of Sultan Yusuf Mahamud and his successors in the mid 19th century. The Geledi hegemony was then real and effective enough, but temporary in character.

It was these clans that Christopher (p.92) in 1843 referred to as 'the more republican-spirited districts, which nominally own his authority, and are certainly not under the dread or influence of any other Sheikh'.

In yet another position were those defeated enemy clans who had been made subjects, ra'i. The Hintire (Hawiye) for instance, were for a time in this position. It is not clear just what this subjugation involved, since it is now so far in the past. They had to support the Geledi in war, but do not seem to have been assimilated to them politically, nor to have paid any regular tribute. That it was felt as a burdensome or humiliating status is shown, however, by the fact that many of them rebelled against it. The position of these allied or subject clans is further discussed in Section 2.(g).

I have indicated the elements of which the Geledi community was composed, and its idea of the world and their place in it. Later sections will examine in greater detail the political and legal structure of this community, and its history up to and during the 19th century. First, however, I shall discuss its material basis.

A. 2.b. SETTLEMENT AND DAILY LIFE IN GELEDI IN THE 19TH CENTURY

I begin with a brief description of the principal features of material culture and daily life in Geledi during the last century, in so far as they can be known. I take as a basis Guillain's short but illuminating account of his impressions in 1847, commenting on it in the light of my own observations of the traditional way of life as it continues today, statements from informants, and information on southern Somalia generally, contained in other writers.

Settlement

The area actually settled by the Geledi as distinct from the much larger one over which they have at times had influence, measures roughly 15 Km from NW to SE and perhaps 10 Km NE to SW; Somali clans do not have precisely defined frontiers, so it is only possible to give a rough estimate. For practical purposes, their south-eastern boundary is the river (though traditionally they lay claim to the other bank and some do have land there); to the south-west are the villages of the Hintire, to the north-east settlements of Gurgaate, Abgal and other Hawiye groups; and then Moblen territory. To the north-west cultivated land gives way to grazing grounds and open bush; Geledi land here marches with that of the Elay. The boundary is said to be at Warmahan, about 20 Km from Afgoi on the road to Baidoa.

'Geledi', says Guillain, '....is a collection of huts of uniform appearance....grouped into three large villages; one on the left bank,

and to the east of which we crossed the river on our arrival; another, the largest, on the right bank opposite the first one...., the third on the same bank a short way upstream from the main village and hardly separate from it; together they contain between fifteen and eighteen hundred huts.' (II.b p.21-22).

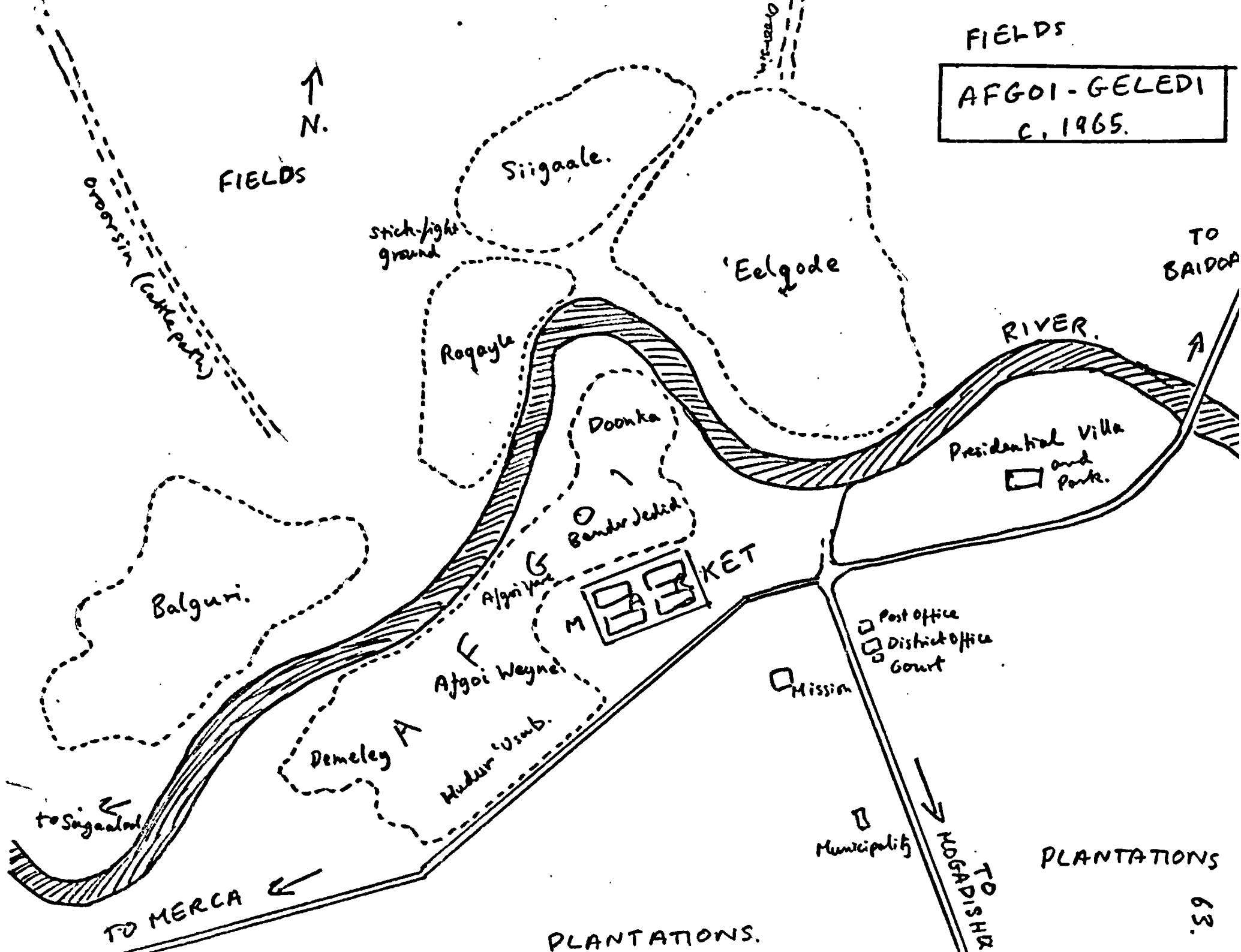
The general aspect and layout of Geledi (right-bank) has changed remarkably little, and the places mentioned are easily identifiable. The left-bank village was Afgoi, properly so called. I believe it was the Italian administration who first used this name to designate the entire settlement; the Geledi themselves still do not generally use it so. It was clearly unknown to Guillain. Almost certainly at the time the above sentences were written, left-bank Afgoi was already occupied by the Wa'dan, to whom the Geledi had granted occupation of the land on that side of the river. It was then quite a small settlement. G. Sorrentino in 1897 called it 'a village of about 600 inhabitants' which may be an underestimate, but is in any case indicative. It was the Wa'dan Habash however who lived and farmed in the riverside village; while the Nobles continued their pastoral life in the sand brush. (~~see sect.~~). It is possible that the name 'Afgoi' in fact derives from the settlement there of a Hawiye people, whose dialect or speech - af - is different - gooye - from that of the Geledi.

(See p.32 however for the generally accepted story, which gives it quite a different meaning).⁽¹⁾

The right-bank settlement was known to its inhabitants and to Guillain simply as 'Geledi'; I shall refer to it as Geledi town. That of the left-bank I call 'Left-bank Afgoi', and the two together 'Afgoi', in accordance with the general modern usage. Geledi town was and is the 'capital' of the Sultanate. Even at that date its size - at least in comparison to the surrounding villages - and its position as a centre of government, warrant calling it a 'town', though in respect of the type of dwellings which composed it, and its general plan, or rather lack of one, it was not at all urban. It was very different from neighbouring Mogadishu, for instance; for it had come into being by a different process. In form it was, and still is, a collection of farming villages, strung out along the river bank at a point where the ground rises into a series of low mounds, making it possible to build above flood-level. But it was beginning to behave like a city; its inhabitants to think of themselves as reer beled - citizens or townspeople, like those of the Benadir ports, as opposed to the reer badiyo, unsophisticated country or 'bush' people.

The 'principal village' of which Guillain writes, that in which the Sultan lives, is Siigaale; next to it is Raqayle, which is counted as a separate village though the two run into each other; this was

(1) Since the coup of 1969, the old name has acquired a new significance since political detainees are kept there, in what used to be the presidential villa.



FIELDS

AFGOI - GELEDI
c. 1965.

FIELDS

N.

Siigaale.

stick-fight
ground

'Eelgode

Rogayle

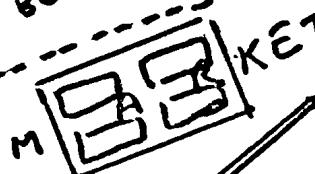
Doonka

Bunder Jeedid

Balguri.

RIVER.

President Villa
and Park.



KET

G

F

Afgoi Weyne

L

Demeley

A

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Y

Z

to Sugaalad

to MERCA

PLANTATIONS.

TO
NOGADISHA

PLANTATIONS

63

evidently so already since Guillain counted them as one. Just upstream is 'Eelqode'; These three (or two) form the settlement of the Tolwiine moiety.

In his few days residence Guillain failed to notice the existence of another large village a short way downstream; this is the main settlement of the Yebdaale moiety; Balguri. The lie of the land, and the trees (which seem to have been thicker then) could easily hide it; there is no question that it was there already, for tradition is firm that the two moieties settled here at the same time, and their histories had been bound together since well before that time. Also Yebdaale is ,
Sagaalad, a smaller village about half an hour's walk further down-
stream. These five villages make up Geledi town.

The villages are not 'wards' or administrative divisions. They are not identified with particular lineages, apart from the division into Tolwiine and Yebdaale settlements. It is true that members of the same lineage are often found living near one another in one quarter of a village, but this is the result of chance, preference, or the mechanism of land inheritance; not a **normative** rule. Members of different lineages often live interspersed. Households of the same category are sometimes clustered together; most of the Aitire (Habash) for instance, live at the same end of 'Eelqode village (the lower, muddier part); but they are not obliged to do so by law or custom, and in other places households of all three categories stand side by side.

Before colonial times, this, like all other settlements, was surrounded by a defensive hedge or fence of thorn bushes. These barriers have now vanished. (See e.g. Christopher p.85.)

A good idea of the general look of the town in the middle of the last century is given by Guillain's description of his impressions; (II.b p.34).

'I enjoyed following the many paths which ran through the village, many of them wider than the streets of Zanzibar, but irregular and capricious as an arabesque design. The picturesque appearance of this barbarian city, dotted here and there with trees, shrubs and little patches of millet or sesame, was not without charm. The gaiety of the inhabitants' facial expression, the vivacity of their gait, gestures and speech; the women, carrying jars on their heads⁽¹⁾ to fill them in the river; the great oxen, the donkeys with their loads, the lines of camels making their way through the fields or fording the river, followed and urged on by their drivers with long slender spears; and then, in the midst of the groups of huts gilded by the sun, clumps of greenery where a multitude of brilliantly coloured birds fluttered, sometimes hanging their nests on the very tips of the branches which overhung the river; and finally the river itself, with its deep bed, its winding course, its steep banks edged with a border of dense brushwood; rolling its muddied waters, constantly stirred up by the trampling

(1) The method of carrying water jars is in fact on the shoulder, or in a wicker frame on the back, supported by a headband. The latter is the usual way for women to carry burdens of all sorts. I never saw anyone carry anything on the head in this area, though they do so further south in the lower Juba.

of men and beasts on their way across; all this formed a picture as cheerful as it was animated, and in which there was a perfect harmony between the actors and the scene.'

One thing which emerges clearly from the above is that settlement was sparser than it is today, with households often separated from one another, as they still are in smaller villages, by empty ground, and even patches of crops.

Guillain's figure of 1,500 - 1,800 huts, if the modern ratio of one hut per person suggested below applied then, would give about the same number for the population of the Tolwiine villages plus left-bank Afgoi. Guillain's own estimate, however, was 6,000 people (II.b p.34); while Lt. Christopher asserted that he was met by a crowd of about 7,000, (though he shows a general tendency to exaggerate). The figure for the three Tolwiine villages in the 1954 census was 2,115; probably an underestimate, but still a sufficient contrast with the former figures. One can only conclude that there is not enough evidence for any definite statement about the population of Geledi town at that time.

In addition to this, there was that of the villages further inland. There are today fifteen or so of these villages and hamlets scattered through Geledi territory, the larger of which probably date from an early period. The largest now has 125 households and a population of at least 300; the smallest ones are single homesteads.

These villages are not separate political or administrative units, but simply extensions of the central settlement. They grow directly out of the system of land ownership, which is to be described in the following section. If a farmer in Geledi town has lands which are too far away to reach easily on foot, he may decide to build a house on the land and live there either permanently or part of the time. Sometimes one brother may live out on the family land while another stays in the town. Such an arrangement will also enable the owner to be nearer his cattle, which usually pasture in the bush beyond the cultivated land.

Such a homestead may continue to stand by itself, and perhaps eventually be abandoned. On the other hand it may attract other settlers, particularly if the owner is a wealthy man. These may be people whose own land is nearby, but more often they are persons to whom the original farmer has rented or given land, or otherwise given permission to settle. So a village develops. A small hamlet may still quite clearly 'belong' to one man, the larger ones are said to belong to the lineage on whose ground they stand, though their population may include many people of other origins.

A village like this, standing far from the river, relies for its water supply on its war; this is an artificial pool, or reservoir, beside it. The earth originally dug out to make the pool is piled in a tall bank around it, which makes a good vantage point and, in this

totally flat landscape, is generally the first thing one sees when approaching a village. Through gaps in the bank the channels run in which gather the rainwater from the surrounding land, for a war is dug where, if possible, a natural dip in the ground will drain the water towards it. A large village will have two or more war; even so, in the height of the dry season they all end by drying up, and the women have to walk to the river for water, taking most of the day if necessary.

In some cases a war has been excavated by the common labour of the village. In this case it is also the duty of everyone to share in the work of clearing out the silt from the bottom and keeping the channels clear. This is done in the dry season. The dry bed of the war is divided into squares (moos), and each villager is responsible for one section. This does not mean they necessarily work at the same time: each man may go out and clear his part at his own convenience. This is a common or public war, war gumeed. There are also private ones, war gofleh, which some wealthy person has had excavated at his own expense, and keeps up himself. He has then a right to charge for its use by others, though generally as long as the water is plentiful he will let them use it free.

Houses

The basic type of dwelling in Geledi, as in all the farming settle-

ments of the lower Shebelle region, is the round hut with a central pillar, wattle walls and thatched roof, here generally called mundul. Originally these are windowless, any light coming in through the door. Inside they are, as Guillain remarked, 'very cool, and less dark than one would suppose'. He noted that they were about six metres in diameter on the inside, but that some, belonging to people of greater wealth or rank, were larger.

In fact, two sizes of such buildings are today distinguished in the local vocabulary. The larger are mundul or min, the smaller waab. The measurement used is the foot's length, suun (pl. suumood); this Somali 'foot' is approximately the same as the English one. A min is anything with a radius (from the centre-post, tir, to the wall) of 6 suumood or more; a waab with one of less than 6, often 3 or 4 suumood. The latter are often used as storehouses, kitchens, or for shutting up goats or chickens.

In particular Guillain noticed the principal min of the Sultan, which was 'much larger and better appointed than all the others of the country. Handsome partitions, to the height of the wall, in black wood, very clean, separated its different compartments, and the furniture and utensils were more comfortable and better cared for than those of other households' (II.b p.24).

Many of the better-off families in Geledi today have inherited buildings which accord with this description. They inherit, that is to say, the centre-post, the beams of the roof, the door and its posts

and lintel, any of which may be a hundred or more years old, besides of course the site and groundplan. The wattle walls may need to be renewed every 30 - 40 years, and the thatched roof every ten or more often. Even if the hut is demolished altogether this woodwork will be preserved to re-use on some other building, for the large tree trunks out of which they were made are now almost unobtainable, since most of the trees of the river bank have been cut down. A tir of modern make is generally of two smaller trunks fitted together.

The shiny black surface on the wood, which Guillain noted, is produced by staining it with a preparation called assal, made by boiling a reddish wood of the same name; this is said to help preserve it from termites. In many of the wealthier homes some of the doors and doorposts are intricately carved. This work used to be done by Habash carvers; it is found in many of the villages along the river, such as those of the Shiidle. While some of the designs show clearly the influence of the Arab-style doorways found in the coastal cities, others are entirely different, being variations on a single pattern which might be a formalised human figure. This art seems to be peculiar to the region, and clearly derives from the Habash element in the population; even if, as in Geledi, it was practised mainly for the benefit of their Noble patrons.

'Each family' says Guillain, 'according to the number of persons of which it is composed, occupies one or more of these (huts), in the latter case connected by sections of walling.' This arrangement

which is usual in the villages of the lower Shebelle, is different from that found further up-country, where the huts of a single household are surrounded by an enclosing fence, inside which they stand separately.

The arrangement in the river villages is much more compact. Guillain's statement shows that this difference is not a modern development - one made necessary by increasing density of population in the river villages, for instance - but a matter of long-standing tradition.

A single household - which can be defined as the people who usually have their food cooked together - then occupies a house consisting of several huts; I use this word to refer to all separate constructions, though it is hardly appropriate to the larger and better-built ones. There is rarely more than six feet or so between any two huts; the restricted space in the middle is used for general sitting and conversation, and for cooking, except when it rains. It is only then that the small kitchen huts come into use; fires are never lit inside living-huts. This yard or living space is usually kept shady by running a rough lattice of poles between the roofs of the huts and spreading this with the straw of the latest harvest. In larger households there may be two or more of these small yards, each enclosed by the round sides of the huts, and their walls, with doorways leading from one yard to another. There is only one door to the outside world, however, and this can be locked or bolted at night, or when the house is empty. Somali housebreakers in fact never waste their efforts on these heavy and solid doors, but knock holes in the more vulnerable wattle walls.

The craft of building these houses is entirely carried on by Habash.

The normal Geledi household today consists merely of a nuclear family, with perhaps an old parent or some other relative; a divorced or widowed sister of one of the couple, for instance. It is very rare for two brothers to go on using a house in common; but they may run a partition wall through it and continue to live as neighbours. Men with more than one wife usually keep two separate households. During the period when the wealthier families kept slaves, however, these formed a part of the household, which must consequently have been a larger unit.

In 48 modern households (mostly Geledi, with a few from left-bank Afgoi) of which I have details, the average number of huts was 4.4. In most cases this includes the kitchen hut, and a washing place, the latter not roofed. The average number of persons was 3.5 (the Dept. of Statistics Survey of Afgoi gives 3.7 for average household size). It will be seen that counting rooftops is, therefore, not a bad way of estimating population; since, allowing for the roofless wash-places, the number of huts and people per household is about the same. This may be a recent situation, however, resulting from the move of so many people to Mogadishu and elsewhere. If Guillain's estimates of both huts and people were anywhere near correct, the proportion would then have been 3 - 4 persons per hut.

Transport

People travelled on foot; horses are virtually unknown in this area, and camels are not ridden. Donkeys, which are now generally used to pull carts, were then used as pack-animals over short distances.

Guillain saw people and animals fording the river. But this was in March, at the height of the dry season; it can never have been possible during high water, though doubtless animals could be swum across. For everyday human passage, however, there was at least one ferry-boat, which Guillain says held four or five people (II.b p.18). Christopher (p.86) describes such a ferry as 'consisting of a single boat, uncaulked, made of six rough hewn four-inch planks, rudely tied together, something in the form of a large open chest; the rope was a fibrous creeper from the thicket, knotted in twenty places (for an illustration see Cerulli 1959, fig.20). There are now about a dozen such boats (modern ones are rather larger but of the same shape) run on wire ropes stretched across the water. They are made and operated by the Habash Bahar lineages, whose nature and functions I describe in Section 2.e.

Clothing

Whereas in the Majerteyn in the nineteenth century, women still dressed partly in leather, in the south all clothing was made of cotton cloth.

A little cotton may have been grown locally, as it was rather later on the upper Juba (Bottego p.432), though Guillain was under the

contrary impression (III p.28). Christopher (p.82) saw cotton growing near Brava. The bulk of the raw cotton was imported however, from India via Mogadishu (Guillain II.a p.531); (Pankhurst 1956 p.45).⁽¹⁾

Noble women might spin in their homes, but the yarn was woven up by male professional weavers, who were always Habash. The weavers of Mogadishu and the other ports producing 'Benadir cloth' had long been famous. There, weaving was a major industry, which occupied entire streets. Some of their product was sold inland, perhaps in Geledi, but there may also have been local weavers as there are today. These work individually, each in his own yard.

The cloth produced was plain white or cream, for the cotton was imported in its natural state, and there was no local knowledge of dyeing techniques. I have been told that women's cloths might be decorated with a coloured border of imported silk thread, woven in. Also imported were the kerchiefs with which married women covered their heads; these were either a coarse black or dark blue gauze, or, for those who could afford them, silk squares with a red and black pattern from India (Ferrandi p.363).

American and other imported textiles were beginning to appear in the Somali markets, and by the end of the century textiles were to become one of the chief imports of the coast (Guillain II.b p.532; Pankhurst 1955, p.45-6). But Guillain's fears that this would soon kill off the local weaving industry were not realised; the plain Benadir cloth continued to be the favourite. It was probably still

(1) Mr. Lee Cassanelli suggests that cotton was grown more extensively in Somalia in the later part of the 19th century, in order to reduce the cost of the local cloth, in the face of competition from American imports.

cheaper than the imported goods, and certainly more hardwearing.

Iron for hoes and weapons was another import; it used to be brought from India as iron bars (Guillain I, p.538).

Nowadays there are a number of smiths permanently working in Afgoi market; none of them, so far as I know, are Geledi. They do not, however, form a separate social grouping of their own, as in the north, but are Habash from various clans. Whether before modern times iron implements were made in Geledi or brought in to sell, perhaps by itinerant smiths, is not clear.

Food

The staple diet of the area is grain; nowadays both maize and sorghum. It is generally ground between two round stones and cooked into a thick porridge, to which meat in broth, milk or vegetable is added.

Sorghum was grown in such quantities in this area of the river that the surplus was taken to Mogadishu to sell, and also shipped abroad (see following chapter). Guillain says that maize was grown only 'in very small quantities'; but as his visit followed the harvest of the deyr crop, which today is generally all sorghum, ~~so~~ this is hardly conclusive. However, the fact that maize, unlike sorghum, was apparently not exported suggests that at this time it was not so commonly grown.

Food is traditionally served in large wooden dishes, round each of which up to five or six people can sit, and scoop it up with their right hands. A large party is split up into such groups, often sitting

in separate huts, divided according to sex and status. Thus children generally eat together, and specially honoured guests apart with their host. Husband and wife may eat from the same dish if they are alone together, never otherwise.

In the middle of the last century it seems that neither tea nor coffee, as a drink, was known in Geledi. Their equivalent, as a snack, a mild stimulant, and the refreshment invariably offered to guests, was the preparation of fried coffee beans known as bun. The beans are cooked in their husks; Guillain says that the fat used was generally animal suet, though sesame oil was also used and highly prized. He does not mention ghee, but this was presumably also used as it is today. Suet seems to have gone out of favour for this purpose. Bun is generally served accompanied by parched grain; nowadays usually maize, though sorghum is also used.

This dish has in southern Somali social life the same sort of place as that held by tea among those of the north; or in Europe by both alcohol on the one hand, and on the other the cups of tea or coffee that women drink together. An old woman asking for a tip, demands fool bahsi; this means she wants something to buy bun; the words refer to the habit of rubbing the hot fat on the face and limbs. This is the only occasion that people feel hot liquid on their skins; so that to the pleasure of a cup of coffee is added that of a hot bath.

Daily routine

Then as now, life generally began at sunrise or before. For the

Habash, the daily routine must have been what for many of them it still is: for men, work in the fields from the early morning till midday, when they either return home to eat or, if there is much to be done, a snack in the shade of a tree, and then go on till sunset. For women, housework was the primary task, though they also worked in the fields when necessary.

The second meal of the day is taken at sunset or any time after; doors are locked by eight or nine o'clock, but often people sit up talking till much later. The only form of lighting in the pre-colonial period, apart from the cooking fire, was a small saucer-lamp filled with animal suet.

The Noble - which in this context includes the Lightskin landowner - went out to his fields, not to work himself but to direct his slaves at their labour. For him too, evenings were the time for exchange of visits and conversation. This would include consultation on public matters (for not all or even the most important part of local politics is carried out at the meetings specially called for the purpose). Such meetings, when they did occur, might be day-long affairs; these, and religious festivities, and private gatherings for weddings, circumcision feasts or funerals, were, as they are today, the breaks in the every day routine. Another kind of interruption, not uncommon in the pre-colonial period, was war.

The wives of nobles, like those of the Gasar Gudda (Ferrandi p.221) did not fetch water or firewood, or cook. This was slaves' work; their

mistress would merely direct them, while she did light handwork, such as twisting a fringe for her cloth, But Bottego's description of the wife of the Gasar Gudda Sultan in the 1890s gives a picture of an energetic housekeeper, which might apply equally in Geledi:

'She gets up before the sun; distributed their provisions as early as possible to the leaders of those slaves who are assigned to herding or work in the fields. Later, she prepares the coffee for her family with her own hands' (preparing bun was, unlike ordinary cooking, a suitable task for noble females), 'sweeps the royal hut diligently as far as the threshold, the limit of her domestic realm' (presumably then the slaves swept the yard), 'orders the dinner and supervises the slave women while they prepare it; then, when the times comes to eat, she deals out their helpings to the Sultan and the other members of the family, just like a good housewife among us.'

At about three in the afternoon she often entertains her women friends, to whom she passes round according to the custom, the burner of sweet smelling incense with which the belles of Lugh....love to perfume their clothes and persons, even underneath their draperies' (this is a common pastime among groups of women). 'At the same time of day, she herself often goes out to return their visits.'

He also mentions the quantities of silver jewelry (Bottego p.394) which she delighted to wear. The making of this was an art imported from the coast, where it is still practised. I gather that the ladies of Geledi bought theirs from Mogadishu or Merca; there were no resident silversmiths.

Conclusions

Two points emerge even from this very short and selective account of the general culture of Geledi. One is the extent to which the whole community was indebted for the physical basis of that culture to its Habash component. By this I mean not merely that housebuilding, carving, weaving and the other crafts, not to mention farming, were actually performed by Habash, but that these techniques of settled life must be derived from the Bantu 'Habash' population, which occupied the river area before the pastoral Nobles ever arrived there.

The other is, the extent to which the community was still self-sufficient. Of the commodities essential to their life, three were imported from outside, namely cotton, slaves and iron. Other imports were luxuries like bun and silk. Slaves were the most important of these imports; their employment gave the society its character. I shall examine why this was so, and something of the slave's place in the society, in the following two sections.

Etiquette and 'Character'

This has no pretensions to be a psychological study. However, from the point of view of the political integration of the community, it is worth commenting, though inevitably in an impressionistic way, on certain aspects of the character of the people as they appear to the outsider.

Observers of northern Somali society have been consistently struck and often shocked, by the lack of formality observed in social relations,

and have naturally associated this with the extreme egalitarianism of their way of life. In Geledi, as probably among the Digil generally, there is, as one would expect with a certain degree of hierarchical organisation, rather greater formality of speech and behaviour, though it still does not approach the level generally expected by Europeans. Thus the foreigner notices the absence in the language of any formula for 'please', deferential forms for the second person, and so on. Certain forms are observed here, however, like the use in addressing older men of the word Aw, literally 'father', prefixed to the name like the English 'Mr.'. In the north, this is a title reserved for men of religion. Similarly, women are addressed Ai, 'Mother'. Nobles talking to Habash use these forms scrupulously.

Women talking together use the word Abay, 'elder sister', as the polite form of address, and are inclined to reiterate it in every sentence, rather as Frenchwomen do 'Madame'; this strikes people from northern Somalia as comic.

One characteristic of the people of this southern region generally, which is noticed by northern Somali as much as by foreigners from Guillain onwards, is their happy and carefree appearance and ready laughter. They seem a cheerful people; so they are, but this is not the result of some inborn mechanism which operates automatically. It is an attitude formed by the deliberate following of a cultural ideal, both implicitly and explicitly inculcated.

The good person in Geledi is the cheerful, sociable person. Pensiveness is not encouraged; it is apt to be equated with worry, and to indulge in worry in public is as much a social fault as noisy exhibitions of emotion would be in middle-class English society. This was brought home to me early in my stay in Afgoi, when the old lady who had undertaken my education found me sitting with my chin in my hand and told me firmly to stop. To my puzzlement she explained that this is the attitude in which poor people sit when they brood on their troubles.

A permanently thoughtful or strained expression is the sign, not of a serious and reliable person, but of a sulky, disagreeable one. The greatest social fault is to be kibir, which can be translated as 'proud' or 'stand-offish'. It is used equally of notable examples of arrogance like the behaviour attributed to the Handab (see p. 144) and of children, or adults, having a fit of sulks.

The proud person is not so much one who makes too heavy demands on others, as one who refuses their demands on him. One should be always socially open and available. On the other hand, there is among the Geledi a greater feeling for the privacy of the home than among their Hawiye neighbours, which to some extent modifies this openness in them. Privacy is encouraged by the layout of their houses, with their high wattle walls screening the yard and their one outside door. A young Geledi living in Mogadishu pointed out to me the difference between his own people and those he had come to know in his new surroundings; whereas the latter just walk into their friends' houses, when they feel like it,

a Geledi would wait at the door until invited to come further. In his time, Guillain observed that, whereas his lodgings in Mogadishu were always full of uninvited guests, in Geledi his tent was treated as sacrosanct, however much people might crowd around outside it.

The cultural emphasis on cheerfulness and openness is connected with another characteristic in these people; their preference for an easy-going, tolerant, accommodating attitude. An openly aggressive person is no more acceptable than a gloomy one. It is this which in the southern Somali in general contrasts most markedly with those of the north. It seems reasonable to see it as connected with the less harsh and strenuous life of the settled populations, and the necessity in their society for groups with rather different habits to live together and interact peacefully. Perhaps also the riverine Bantu people, while they seem to have swallowed whole the eidos of their Somali allies and overlords, may have given them in return something of their own ethos.

This accommodating, unaggressive attitude may in many situations be no more than appearance, but it is an appearance which people deliberately keep up. This is noticeable in relations between members of the different social categories. The visitor notices at once the friendly and relaxed quality of interchanges between them; only later he realizes what the people involved are always aware of, the limits set to such friendship, however genuine it may be. Only, as this is what one may loosely call an extrovert culture, situations which in an English context (for instance) might produce an awkward silence and a

quick change of subject, here find expression in loud laughter from everyone present. Laughter is often used, where the English person would expect simply evasion, to negotiate areas of social tension without spoiling the friendly atmosphere.

The character of the southern Somali provokes mixed reactions in Somali from other areas. A man from the north may be startled and pleased at the ready hospitality offered him by total strangers. On the other hand the reaction of one western-educated young man from the upper Shebelle (Beled Weyn) in comparing the Geledi people with his own, was that they seemed to have 'given up in the battle of life'. A truer way of expressing what he had noticed would be that for the Geledi life is not supposed to be a battle, but rather a series of orderly, amicable arrangements. The strenuous and the heroic have their place, but it is one apart from everyday conduct; interruptions, though memorable ones in the ordinary flow of existence.

A. 2.c. ECONOMIC LIFE

A picture of the economic life of pre-colonial Geledi must be built up from three sources: surviving rules and practices; accounts of what is remembered of the past and inferences from documents like Guillain's account.

The basis of that life was, as it still is, the land.

Land ownership:

The Geledi farmland stretches away from the river for seven or eight kilometres before giving way to the red, sandy soil more suitable for pasture. Each Geledi lineage group lays claim to a particular segment of farming land; in theory these lie neatly side by side, reaching from the river to the pasture area, though the reality is not so regular. Those of the Tolwiine moiety lie upstream and those of the Yebaale downstream, so that the division between them is a continuation of that between the two groups of villages.

The segments are called furun, a word which seems to derive from fur = to open; it may perhaps refer to the 'opening' of the as yet uncultivated bush. The meaning of assigning a furun to a lineage group was that the members of that group, and only they, had the right to open up and cultivate the land within that area, each man taking up as much as he pleased and could manage, subject to ratification by the elders of the group. Up to the time of the Italian colonisation, there was in every furun land still unclaimed, so that problems of

overcrowding and boundary disputes had not arisen. The only type of control exercised by the lineage, in the persons of its elders, over the furun, was to see that no other person used the land without express permission; this control was exercised by each lineage separately, not by the Geledi as a whole. Non-Geledi could obtain land only by becoming clients or subjects, sheegat, of the lineage whose land they were permitted to occupy. The question of the legal and political status of such people - who do not seem to have ever constituted a very large proportion of the Geledi population - is discussed in the following Section (A. 2.C.).

Land once taken up was the property of the individual and his family, to be passed on to their heirs. Inheritance was supposed to follow the rule of the Shari'a. An individual might, when at the point of death, make an individual testament, dardaaran, giving specific instructions how his property was to be disposed. In any other case, it was divided according to rule, each son taking an equal share, and daughters half the amount.

Brothers might continue to work their patrimony as one unit, but generally they divided it. Here, as in their household structure, the principle that brothers are as one is often invoked but rarely put into practice. In fact, to find the land of two or three brothers being worked in common is probably more usual now than in earlier periods, since men going away to find some other employment may leave the family land to one remaining brother to work on their behalf. More often,

however, the inheritance is split up, and this seems to have been the rule in the past also.

In many Somali clans it is not possible - in spite of orthodox Muslim law - for a woman to inherit. Where clan-exogamy prevails, the reason is obvious; it would lead to quantities of movable property (flocks and herds) being lost to the clan; or in the case of land, to numbers of strangers inheriting clan territory. Among the Geledi this is not so; daughters traditionally inherit their regular half share, and this is one of the reasons given by the people for the preference for lineage endogamy, which is said to have been much more strictly enforced in the past. Should a man die leaving only daughters, his property was divided between them and his brothers or other male kin. These rules apply both to farming land, and to land and buildings in town or village.

Today, once a woman has inherited property it is hers for life, not passing to her husband when she marries, and she can manage it as she thinks fit, and there is no indication that things were otherwise in the past. This fact contributes more than anything to the high degree of independence enjoyed by Geledi women. Numbers of widowed or divorced women live by themselves on the property they have inherited. On the other hand, on a woman's death her property will pass to her sons; hence the emphasis on endogamy mentioned above.

As for the actual sale of land, whether for cash or goods, it is doubtful whether it was practised at all in the pre-colonial period.

Informants' statements conflict about this. I have been told categorically that land used never to be sold at all; and equally so, that people used to sell land to members of the same moiety, but not outside it. Certainly any alienation of land to a non-Geledi could not have been done without the consent of the owner's lineage as a whole, on the same terms as a grant of uncleared land, but as long as uncleared and unclaimed land was freely available, sale can hardly have been an issue; seemingly contradictory statements then perhaps refer to different periods.

The position at the present day seems to be roughly as follows: to alienate, as opposed to renting, one's inherited land is rather disapproved. (A man of the Gobyan (Yebdaale) lineage told me that, whatever others might do, his group will still not sell their land at all.) If land is sold, however, it should be kept as nearly as possible to the original owner's descent line. The individual who wishes to sell is obliged to give first refusal on it to his brothers, father's brothers and their sons, or other close male kin. If none of these want it, he may sell, but preferably within his lineage or at least his own moiety. Any Geledi, or Wa'dan would be preferable to a complete outsider. Such feelings are strong only among the older generation, however, and sales to complete outsiders (Arabs for instance) do occur, and would doubtless be more frequent if the demand for land were heavier; discussion of this belongs in the second part of this study.

If outright sale of land is relatively rare, renting is now common. A more ancient form of temporary transfer of land is, however, what is called doonful; sometimes this consisted in the free loan of a piece of land; sometimes it was in effect a share-cropping arrangement, a fixed quantity of grain being handed over at each harvest by the tenant. In either case, the owner was free to take back the land whenever he wished. Immigrants from other clans might be lent land on this basis for a number of years, preparatory to being granted or sold land outright when they had lived long enough in the community to be judged and accepted.

If a man died without heirs, his land reverted to his lineage, to be taken up by others at the discretion of the elders.

Land; cultivation and subsistence

The staple diet of all sections of this society is grain; either sorghum or maize. Milk and meat are additions to this, like bun and other luxuries. (I assume that maize was cultivated in the past as much as today, though this is not certain.) Soya and castor beans, sesame, and perhaps cotton have also been grown, at least since the last century. Tomatoes (very small ones), water-melons and papaya are also now grown, but in very small quantities.

Before substitutes like rice or pasta were available, grain was the unvaried basis of the Geledi diet, the same for slave and free, Habash and Noble, though the latter might get more meat and milk to add to it.

In this section I look at the traditional techniques used to grow it, and I attempt to answer a question; how it would be possible, with these techniques and under these conditions, to produce a surplus above the needs of the population - for there is some evidence that in the last century this was done. I therefore ask, how much grain is needed for an individual or a family to live, and how much land and work was needed to produce this. In doing so I employ the units of measurement in current use; these are traditional in origin, though their exact present dimensions may be affected by modern conditions.

Grain is usually measured after being removed from the head, but before being ground. The standard small measure used in Mogadishu and Geledi is the suus; This was already in use in the 1890s, when the measuring container was a plain wooden bowl (Ferrandi p.347). Nowadays it is an empty tin can, generally one which once held tomato puree (a notable item in the Italian contribution to modern south-Somali culture). It is supposed to be equivalent to 1.5 kg. but is generally rather less, about 1.3 kg. (Hunting report III p.15.) Twelve suus make one tanak (an oil can), a measure which has replaced the equivalent tabla. Other measures formerly used were the jisla = 60 suus, and the diwi = 30 suus; these are obsolete and replaced by the juuni (sack), which = 6 tanak, or 72 suus. The sacks are ordinary hessian ones. The juuni is often called a 'quintal', but in fact the average weight is between 94 and 96 kg.

An adult is said to need every day, if he is living on grain without substitutes like rice, one suus of maize per day, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ suus of sorghum; i.e. nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ kg of maize, or 2 - $2\frac{1}{4}$ of sorghum. One sack will, it is estimated, keep a single person for two months, a couple for one month, and an average family for half a month.

The way in which land is measured is directly related to the methods used in cultivating it, and the two must be understood together.

Further down the Shebelle, at Audegle and around Genale, a system of irrigation ditches has been in use since well before colonial times; in the Geledi region the river banks are too high to allow this. Irrigation, as it is used on the large plantations to-day, means the use of motor pumps to raise the water. Without these the fields, except for a few small plots by the very edge of the water, are as dependent on rainwater as those far inland.

No fallowing or crop-rotation is practised. In fact, a field which has been cultivated continuously for many seasons is preferred to one which was recently cleared, or re-cleared after being allowed to grow over, because the former produces fewer weeds and so is easier to work; it is said to be silah = smooth. A variety of crops are inter-planted, however, and sorghum and maize are grown in alternate seasons; the latter, which needs more rain, being sown in Gu.

The sorghum grown in Geledi is the red variety; White and Aburas sorghum are grown further inland (round Baidoa for instance) but these

are particularly attacked by birds which are more rife in the river area than anywhere else, and so are not grown there. (Maize, on the other hand, is hardly grown at all on the lighter soils of the interior.)

Almost the only agricultural tool is the short handled hoe (yambo) which is used for every kind of work.

For each of the two yearly crops, the sequence of farming operations is the same. The first step is to clear the ground of weeds, and the stubble of the last season's crop; this is done by 'turning over the soil', aragedis, which should be done well before the rains are due, in March or September.

This is followed by the procedure called kewawa. This ingenious technique is typical of the region, and is at the basis of the system of land measurement. Guillain describes it thus: 'The field that is to be sown is divided into squares, a metre and a half on each side, by means of regularly spaced ridges ten or twelve centimetres high, so that it looks rather like a chessboard. This is to catch the rainwater and prevent it from running off where the ground slopes.' Since his visit was in March, he saw these squares ready for the Gu crop.

My own measurement makes them two metres square or rather more which agrees with the other measurements given below. There is room for diversity, however, since the actual measure used is simply the labourer's own stride: two paces, tilaab, for each side of the square, which is known as moos.

It is this which forms the basic unit. A strip of such squares

is an 'ul', 'staff'; the number of moos per 'ul' varies from one district to another; that of the Geledi is 50, while other clans such as the neighbouring Hintire use one of 40. Whatever the length of the 'ul', twelve of them side by side equal one darab, and this is the commonest unit of measurement for farmland. The Geledi darab this = 60 moos. Four darab are nowadays reckoned as equivalent to one hectare. As a rule of thumb this is adequate; it would of course be pointless to try and calculate a precise equivalence, since the darab is not a precise measurement; no two are quite the same. However, as one of 60 moos would, if each moos is two metres square, be $24 \times 100\text{m}.$, it will be seen that, as this is a minimum estimate, 4 darab to the hectare is near enough.

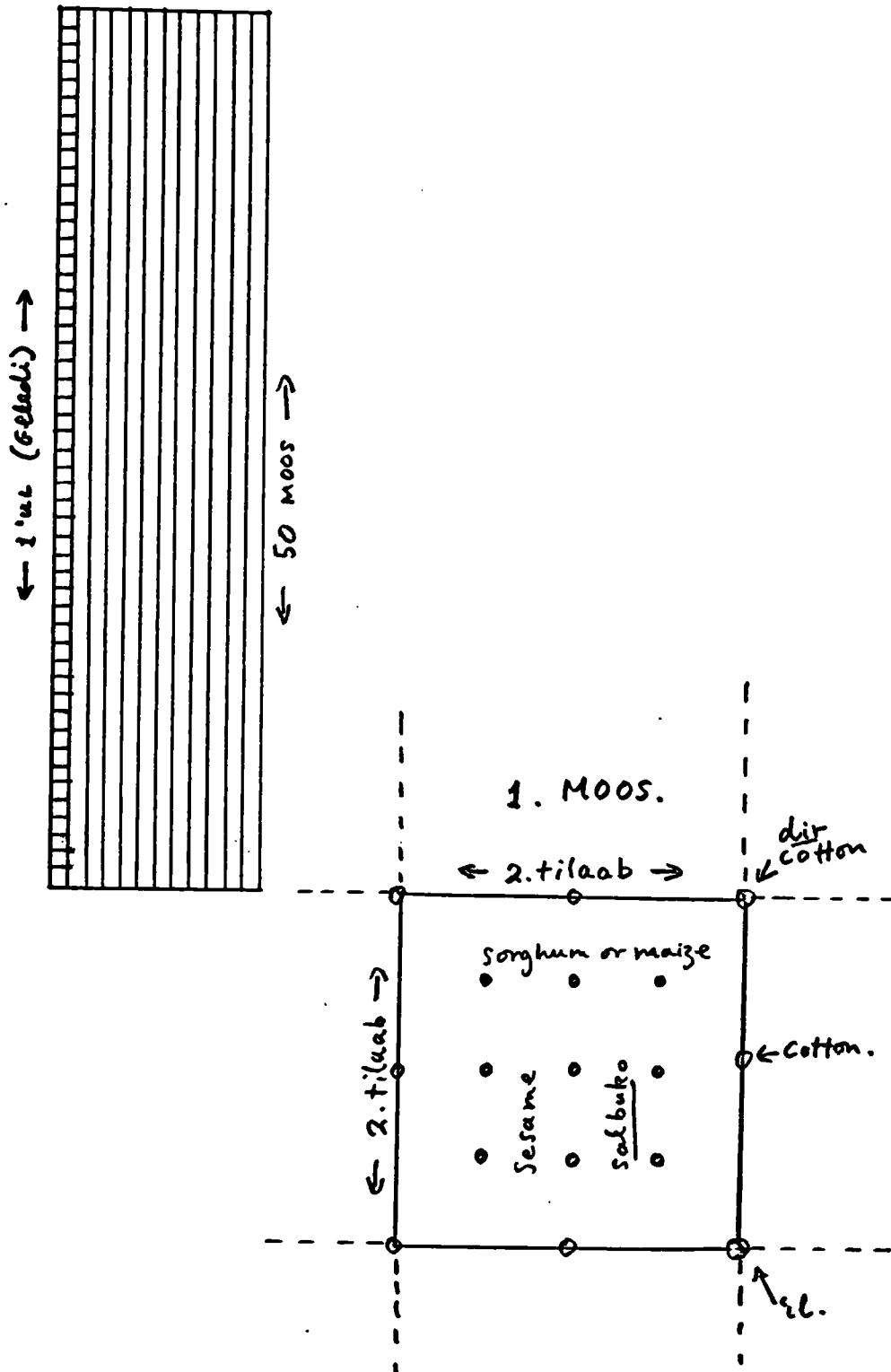
Traditionally, 4 darab make one alguud, a term now rarely used. A smaller measure, often used instead of the darab for small plots such as women cultivate for themselves, or poor non-Geledi may rent or borrow, is the jubal. There are said to be 4 to a darab but this is only an approximation. I was also told that a jubal is 20 tilaab (paces) square; this is not a quarter of either the Geledi darab of 600, or one of 480 moos. The fact is that the two measures are not part of the same scale; the one is not a sub-division of the other, but is used on different occasions, when smaller parcels of land are in question than those conveniently measurable by the long 'ul'.

This fairly sophisticated and yet unstandardized system of measurement, in which it has not been necessary to make the two units (which may

GELEDI LAND-MEASUREMENT.

93.

IDARAB.



well have historically separate origins) consistent, belongs with an economic situation where there was no market in land, and where it was too freely available for people to trouble determining relative areas very precisely. The essence of these measures is in fact not the area of the ground surface, but the amount of labour needed to cultivate it.

The kewawa technique is as follows: the criss-cross pattern is first marked on the ground with a stick; then the ridges are made with a special implement, also called kewawa. This looks like a long handled rake, with instead of teeth a narrow board nearly two metres long; it takes two men to operate it, one pushing with the handle, the other pulling from the other side on a rope attached to it. The 'pusher' stands on the inside of the moos and, with three or four shoves, makes the loose dry soil into a ridge on one side, while his companion stands on the outside and pulls on the rope. The first man then turns at an angle of 45°, the other steps or more often leaps over to face him, and they attack the next side. When that ridge is done the second man turns to face in his original direction, while the first moves to face him, in the square cornerwise to the previous one. They carry on this curious dance diagonally across the field, making a step pattern of ridges; as they cross it repeatedly these build up into squares. The work is strenuous, especially that of pulling the rope, and the two exchange tasks at intervals, often after each half darab.

Sowing, awur, should be done before the rains start; in the case of the Gu crop this is known as jilaal duug. However, if the rains are

early or the farmer late, he may have to sow in the wet soil; this is called seer duug or lun guduud.

The labourer first makes small holes, lun, with his hoe inside the moos, generally three rows of three holes each. He then drops a few seeds into each hole, and covers them up; as they are not sure how many will germinate, farmers often use more seeds than necessary, sometimes 5-10 in each hole. The two jobs, making the holes and dropping the seed in, may be done by separate people; in which case the second one is often a woman. This, weeding and harvesting are quite often done by women, but the heavy work of hoeing the ground only if absolutely necessary; so far as I know, women never do kewawa.

To sow one darab, I was told, needs $1-1\frac{1}{2}$ suus (1.5-2.25 kg. or under) or sorghum; or 2 suus (3 kg. or under) of maize. A hired labourer would use more than a man sowing his own field, since the former will prefer speed to economy and throw the seed around carelessly. Independent studies have found that to sow one hectare, farmers used 6-9 kg. of sorghum (though some near Baidoa used as many as 11) or 12 kg. of maize. If a hectare = 4 darab, this tallies with my informant's statement.

During the growing period of about 3 months, the crop should be weeded three times through. This is done by hoeing between the plants, and in the process the weaker shoots may also be removed.

The first hoeing (yambo hore) which is done soon after the first shoots appear, is also the most laborious; the weeds tend to be thick

at this stage, and the worker must be careful to distinguish them from the crop. The second yambo is generally easier; at this stage the grain may be interplanted with soya beans (dir), castor beans (salbuko) and cotton when this is grown. Sesame (sisin) on the other hand, is planted just before the Gu maize harvest, and grows up with the Hagai light rains. Sisin and salbuko are sown inside the moos; dir on account of its spreading growth, at the corners (called 'il', eye). Cotton is planted at the corners and sides.

If the rain is so heavy the ground is waterlogged, it becomes impossible to walk on, and all the weeding may not be done.

After seventy days or so, the plants are tall and the grain already forming. After 80 days it is ripe; the sorghum when it turns red is sometimes said in a rather charming phrase to be 'putting on henna' (gelaan saarati), like a girl. All the time that the grain is ripening, birds are the farmers constant worry. Generally some member of the family, or a labourer, is posted in the field, standing on a tree or a specially constructed platform, to scare the birds with shouts and cracks of an improvised whip or of plant stems. Because of the danger from birds, farmers tend to harvest as soon as possible, though this may mean the grain is barely ripe.

Harvesting is done with the hoe. The labourer grips the stems with his spare hand and gives the plant a smart chop with the hoe blade a few inches from the ground. The harvested plants lie in small heaps all around the field, and he later collects them for stooking. In other

areas of southern Somalia, the heads are cut off short; here the stalks are cut long, so that a stock can be made with the heads inside, the straw protecting them from the birds. They are left like this to dry out thoroughly before the heads are pulled off for use or storage.

On irrigated land it may be possible to get a second crop in the same season. Here this cannot be done, but the second growth from the roots makes good grazing for cattle and is often so used.

When the grain is dried out the heads are removed; getting the grain off the head is a job that may be done directly, in the field, by men flailing it with sticks; the grain is then packed into sacks.

This is done nowadays if it is to be taken straight to market. In 1843 Christopher saw '30 or 40 persons' threshing grain in this way by the river in the region of Merca; it was then packed in 'baskets of a peculiar form' to be taken to the coast for export to the Hadramaut and Oman (pp. 84-5). If for domestic use, it is brought home on the head, in sacks or baskets. Before the days of lorries or carts, donkeys or camels were used as pack animals for this, but small quantities may be brought in before the main load, the family carrying it themselves.

At home, the separation of the grain from the heads is done by women pounding them in a wooden mortar. One sack of heads (sawul) is reckoned to produce two of separated grains (d̄ay). The d̄ay must be pounded again when it is to be cooked, to remove the husks. It can then be parched, boiled whole, or, most commonly, ground into meal to make porridge. Grinding used always to be done, as it still is in the

villages and by poorer townspeople, between round millstones. It is women's work; the worker sits on the ground with legs outstretched, the stones between her knees on a mat, which catches the meal as it trickles out. Nowadays in town, everyone but the poorest takes their grain to a motor-operated milling machine, saving themselves this long hard chore.

Though a sack or two of grain may be kept in the house for immediate use, long-term storage is done in special granary pits, which are dug between the houses. The pits are thickly lined with bundles of straw; the grain on the head is put in, covered with more straw, and the earth heaped over. A large pit will hold 100 sacks or so of sawul; some very large ones take 200 or more; but many are much smaller. Grain in these pits will keep for several years - I have heard of its being eaten after ten - but the flavour goes off, and new grain is preferred. Grain from store is not used for seed, as it often fails to germinate. Moreover, if the rain does get in through the straw packing, a whole pitfull may be ruined and when opened prove to be a stinking mess. Even when the contents keep dry, some will be eaten by insects.

The time required for farm work varies very much according to the state of the ground and the weather. To prepare the soil, one may may take anything from a day to a week to finish one darab, depending on whether it is very overgrown. Two men can kewawa one darab in half to one day; it will take one man half a day to sow it, four days to weed it if the weeds are thick (less if it is silah), and one to three days to harvest it, depending on the crop.

It is evident that a farmer operating on his own, supposing he worked a farm of 4 - 6 darab ($1 - 1\frac{1}{2}$ hectares), might have his hands full at certain seasons. This is in fact said to be the most a single worker can manage⁽¹⁾. The larger his family, of course, the more help he has, but also the more mouths to feed.

Co-operative work groups, such as are found in other parts of Somalia (Lewis 1955 p.77), seem to be unknown in Geledi, at any rate at the present day. I have been told that the Habash used to use such a system in the past however, and this is very likely (cf Carletti p.102). Conditions have (as I shall show in Part B) changed so radically in the last 50 years that such customs might easily be lost. Nevertheless, the usual expectation is for each owner to manage his own land, and this fits in with the each-nuclear-family- to-itself ethos which is typical of Geledi; I think it unlikely that large scale co-operation was ever practised much.

Let us suppose then, for the sake of the argument, that a man with a wife and two children works (with some help from them) a farm of two hectares - 8 darab. How much grain will it produce for them bearing in mind that they need perhaps $1\frac{1}{2}$ sacks of grain (dway) per month.

According to my informants, one darab should produce in a good year, 7 - 8 sacks of sawul (grain on the head) of either sorghum or

(1) In the Baidoa area, where the soil is light, $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 hectares is supposed to be the maximum; while around Bur Hakaba, where it is lighter still, the area is larger. (Grain Marketing Survey Report)

millet, which would give 3 - 4 sacks of dMay (loose grain); i.e. 12 - 16 sacks per hectare.

This would be a very satisfactory yield; indeed it seems to be rather what people hope for than what they generally get. A survey I made in 1968-9 of farms on the left bank of the Shebelle near Afgoi (Hunting p.46) found that the actual yield for those two seasons was, on average, 4 sacks of either type of grain per hectare. Information given me about the yields of ten farms near Geledi during 1966-7 suggests a general yield of 15 - 20 sacks per hectare in Deyr 1966 (a particularly good season), of 8 - 10 sacks per hectare in Gu 1967, and only 3 - 6 in Deyr 1967.

With this may be compared the harvests recorded near Baidoa during the same two years. (Grain Marketing Survey Report - unpublished.) The harvest of Gu 1966 produced an average of 7 quintals per hectare, that of Deyr 1966 4.6, while that of Gu 1967 was expected to produce only 2.3 per hectare.

There can be great variation between the yields of different farms even in the same season, because of circumstances affecting the individual farmer, which have nothing to do with the climate. A crop may be partly spoilt or eaten by birds, because the owner cannot harvest it quickly enough, or guard it properly, for lack of extra labour. And to all alike there are bad years and the occasional years of total crop failure.

For such a time, as well as for occasional expenses such as weddings and funerals, the farmer needs a reserve of grain in his storage

pit. He has also to pay for such regular expenses as clothes and house repairs; today, by selling his grain when the occasion arises; in the past, by giving it direct in return for these services. Whereas in a good year the produce of 2 hectares (24 - 32 sacks) would provide a reserve for a year or more, in a poor one it might produce only eight sacks - barely subsistence for 6 months.

These figures are intended only as pointers; they are too rough and scanty to prove anything. The main uncertainty is the proportion of good seasons to bad; this would need specialist study to find out. It is not possible to say simply from looking at the Geledi today, when their way of life has been greatly affected by outside influences and their agriculture disorganised, to what level of prosperity it could have reached in former times; but clans further inland, where rainfall and conditions are similar but people still depend on farming to a much greater degree, certainly seem to grow no more than will just support them.

It seems, then, that the individual subsistence farmer in this area can reckon just to support himself and his family, with an occasional small surplus of grain which may buy him other necessaries, but no regular or large surplus.

In the last century, however, we find mention of grain being sold from Geledi and the surrounding area, in Mogadishu, and from there exported to the Arab countries, and Zanzibar. Guillain (p.530) says that Mogadishu exported 20,000 jezela (of sorghum per year), which, reckoning

by his own account of local measures would be equivalent to 22,200 quintals. Grain from the river area was still being sold in Mogadishu in the 1890s (Ferrandi p.318. See also Parkhurst⁽¹⁹⁶⁵⁾ p.41.).

The statement that the grain was brought 'from Geledi' does not, of course, necessarily mean that all of it was grown on the land of the clan; it could come from any part of the Middle Shebelle, where the Geledi were dominant. Doubtless it came from up and down river, for instance from around Audegle, where irrigation made possible two crops a year. (From further downstream any products would have gone to Merca.) However, it is likely that Geledi itself contributed a proportion; the fact that they were buying cotton, metal goods, and luxuries like bun from outside suggests that they were selling something. They had clearly reached a certain level of comfort and prosperity, and though they collected dues from passing caravans (see below) it is not likely that this alone would have accounted for the prosperity of more than a few families. The evidence is that Geledi, like other communities on the Shebelle, regularly exported grain in some quantity, a supply larger than one would expect from the occasional small surpluses of peasant farmers.

The possibility must be considered that the fertility of the soil was higher, when the river bank area had only comparatively recently been cleared of trees and brought under cultivation. Since no form of fallowing or crop-rotation is practised, the land may have deteriorated since then. On the other hand, the rainfall has not altered, and it is this which ultimately sets the limits to the productivity of the area.

Leaving this aside, the obvious factor in the production of comparatively large quantities of grain at that time is the employment of slave labour by Noble and Lightskin landowners, who were thereby enabled to cultivate comparatively big areas of land.

It is here argued that this was the basis for the prosperity of Geledi, and of the whole area, during the 19th century, and for the economic dominance of such landowners; also that without slave labour or some equivalent it would not be possible, under these ecological conditions and with this technological equipment, to achieve prosperity as opposed to mere subsistence. It follows that, as we shall see in Part B, with the abolition of slavery, farming ceased to be a paying proposition, until mechanization began to provide a substitute.

That the use of slave labour would produce such a regular surplus is, however, not all that obvious. The actual methods of cultivation used were identical with those used by the small (Habash) farmer on his plot of 4 - 6 darab, so why should the product be greater? The slaves had to be fed themselves, and if their diet was plainer than that of their masters, this would simply mean that they consumed more grain in proportion ~~to~~ other foods. There is no evidence that they were starved.

On the other hand, the estimates given above for the amount of land an individual expects to be able to handle are based, not so much on the limits of his physical capacity as on the amount of effort a man thinks it reasonable to spend, leaving himself time for some family and social life. Since this sort of consideration would be unlikely to apply

to the work demanded of a slave, one can assume that the latter would work longer hours. Moreover, the fact of working in a team, as they did for the more prosperous landowners, might increase their efficiency even without the use of any special techniques.

Slaves were not simply sent to the fields and left to get on with it, as hired labourers most often are today. An old Noble, complaining of the laziness of the younger generation, described how a landowner used to be out in his fields from early morning - not, of course, to work in them himself, but to oversee his slaves. Allowing for some idealization, this shows a solidly economic attitude towards land and work-people.

That this sort of farming was profitable is evident, finally, from the fact that such Nobles thought it worthwhile to buy 5 - 10 slaves and take up land in proportion to employ them on. To begin with, perhaps, it was simply a question of hands to grow enough to support themselves and their owners, since the latter would not do such work themselves. But if, say, one slave or two could feed their owners as well as themselves, then any further additions to this team should have been able to produce something over.

Wealthy men might have grain storage-pits holding several hundred quintals. This implies quite a few hectares of land, and many men still lay claim to-day to 'estates' which, by hoe-cultivation standards, are very big. One elderly Gobron known to me owns two farms which he inherited from his father, one of 30 and the other of 107 darab - a total

of about 34 hectares. It seems that properties of this size were not uncommon. At the present day he farms only a fraction of this; one of the difficulties of ascertaining to-day the size of people's holdings is that the figure given may refer to either the total area to which the individual lays claim, or the much smaller one he is actually cultivating.

Nevertheless, the following figures are suggestive: the Hunting Survey (1968) took a census of farms in the small village of 'Idimun, on the opposite bank of the river from Geledi, with 39 households, most if not all of them certainly Habash. It was found that 'the average area cultivated by a farmer was 2.3 hectares, and the largest cultivated as one area was 5.7 hectares' (III p.13).

This, however, takes account neither of the sex nor the status of owners. Out of eleven farms in Geledi owned by men of Noble and Lightskin descent, of which I have details, the average size was 29.1 darab, i.e. just over 7 hectares. Besides the two mentioned above and owned by the same man, they include another of 30 and one of 40 darab. Of the 11, 8 had been inherited by the present owners and were family property, only 1 had been bought, while for the remaining two I have no information.

Out of 6 farms held by Noble women, however, the average size was 2.2 darab - about half a hectare. Two of these were rented, three were inherited, while one was a gift from the (still living) father of the holder.

Unfortunately my information on land held by Habash is even scrappier than this; but I know nothing to contradict the common assertion that their farms are much smaller than those of Nobles. About three hectares is probably the upper limit to the holding of a single Habash farmer, working it with his family. Such a man in the past might have acquired a slave or two if he were lucky, but they would remain additions to the family labour force, rather than sources of extra wealth.

It seems then that the size of farms in Geledi varied between the one or two hectares of the subsistence farmer, and the ten to forty hectares of wealthy men, worked by teams of slaves.

It is evident that farmers of the first kind were mainly Habash, and the second Noble or Lightskin. There are wealthy Habash and poor Nobles to-day, and probably in the past too, but the contrary was the norm. Why this should be so needs some consideration, for there was no legal limitation to the size of farms a Habash might own, and no ban on his acquiring slaves. It was the latter that were crucial, since land was still freely available.

The reason seems to be, that Noble and Habash did not start even. The former had the military superiority which enabled them to have the latter as their clients, and employ them as, for instance, builders or ferrymen, for no high payment. And they came to the river area as a pastoral people, with their wealth in cattle. This kind of wealth they were able to partly convert into a new kind; they sold cows for men.

For the Habash, with few cattle or none, such investment was not

possible. Enough has been said of the conditions of rain farming in this area to suggest that it would be rare for a subsistence-farmer to grow wealthy. Often enough it seems that the reverse happened. A man who could not make his store of grain last till the next harvest might have to borrow from someone more fortunate; this is still done by people in the bush or more remote villages, too far from market centres to get casual employment. It has long been common practice for lenders to take interest on such loans; though this is against Muslim law, ways can be found to circumvent the prohibition, as they are in many Muslim countries. A common way is to demand as repayment, not the sack of grain which was originally lent, but its market value at the time of the loan. Since this will have been just before harvest, when grain reaches its top price, the debtor may have to pay two bags after harvest to cover the cost of one (see also Ferrandi p.342). This implies a market and a money standard; another method of profiting by a loan apart from a cash mechanism, is to lend a quantity of grain which the debtor needs for some large outlay (a wedding for instance) to be paid back over several years, in instalments at each harvest. In the interval, the debtor has to cultivate some of the creditor's land for him - say 3 darab - leaving him only to bring home the harvested grain. Practices such as this would make the small farmer's chances of making good even slimmer than they would otherwise have been.

There was then a division between rich and poor in this society, which roughly, though probably not entirely, coincided with that between

Noble/Lightskin and Habash; and its basis was the ownership of slave labour. This was made possible by the transfer to agriculture from a cattle economy. The Geledi nobles settled down not to farm, but to letting their slaves farm.

This applies, at whatever precise period the transfer took place. It is possible that it was already beginning while the Noble lineages were in the course of their migrations across the inter-river plain; like other Digil clans they may have been occupying different places and farming there temporarily before moving on. It seems likely, though that when they reached the river, probably in the early 17th century, they were still a mainly pastoral people, and their gradual move to the new form of economy occupied the 17th and 18th centuries. Being within easy reach of the coast, they could take advantage of the slave trade which already brought up the Benadir coast captives from the south, who, unlike the Galla from inland, were accustomed to farm work. Like the Bimal and the other Somali of the river, the Geledi made use of this supply and of the fertility of their new territory.

The Habash who attached themselves to them on the other hand, whether in the course of their migrations or after they reached the river, continued mainly with the subsistence farming which they had long practised. It was very likely from these 'Habash', however, that the Nobles learnt their farming techniques, like the other arts of settled life (see p. 79.).

Cattle

The Nobles did not give up their cattle because the centre of their economy had shifted elsewhere. These graze in the open country called gel-gel, beyond the farmland. The grazing grounds of the Geledi are divided roughly into sections for each lineage-group, like the farmland furun of which they form a continuation. The grazing grounds of a lineage are used in common by all its members.

Guillain remarked on "...the large number of domestic animals the Geledi possess; innumerable flocks of camels, cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats cover the river-banks...". But he was misled in supposing that all these animals belonged to the Geledi. His visit was in March, at the end of the Jilaal dry season, when water supplied^s in the interior dry up, and the pastoral clans of the region all bring their flocks and herds to the river to water. The Geledi permit them - in the past, only those with whom they were on friendly terms - to do so without payment (unlike the Sil'is, who according to tradition taxed the watering places (see p. 30.). The banks are accordingly always covered with animals at this season.

Special cattle-paths are left among the cultivated fields; strips of uncleared bush down which the animals can be driven without damaging crops. There are two such tracks, called oroorsin, through Geledi land, one for each moiety, coming out the one near 'Eelqode and the other near Balguri. In spite of these precautions, some animals always do get into

the fields, and elders and (nowadays) the police are regularly swamped at that time of year with the ensuing disputes.

Guillain's statement is therefore no evidence of the actual size of the Geledi herds at that period. They are not camel people, and do not nowadays keep flocks of sheep or goats (only a few domestic goats). Their only stock, in fact, is cattle, which are kept for milk, and occasional sale or slaughter.

People in general avoid discussing the number of their cattle. Herds of twenty or thirty exist, but even a comparatively well-to-do man may own only eight or ten head. It is likely that herds were larger in the past. Cattle pest did much damage at the end of the last century (Mantegazza p.210) and with the changes that have come about since the incentive to build up herds has been less.

Herds are kept in the grazing grounds in the charge of either a member of the family, or a hired herdsman, who may be a man from another clan, even an Eyle. When a cow in milk is available, she is brought in and kept by the owner's house to provide milk, either in a small yard or, preferably, under some sort of cover during the wet season. People who have only one or two cows may keep them permanently in this way. Such animals are taken out to graze every day by one of the town herdsmen, and brought back at sunset. These herdsmen make their living by taking a small monthly payment for each cow. These arrangements seem to continue unchanged from the last century.

Nowadays many families also own goats. These are kept in the town and feed themselves in the street, off whatever scraps are thrown out; They know their own homes and come back to them. Their milk is considered very inferior to that of cows, and is not sold, but it is a help in feeding a family, and the animals are cheap and trouble free to keep. These goats are of a different breed from those kept by the pastoral clans, and seem to be a modern introduction to the domestic economy.

Chickens are regularly kept by most households - Guillain (II p.70) mentions their abundance - though they are scraggy enough creatures. All Geledi now eat both chicken and eggs, though probably Nobles would at one time have refused them, as the Casar Gudda did (Ferrandi p.248). The fish of the river, on the other hand, were and are caught and eaten by Habash only, Nobles sharing the usual Somali aversion to fish.

Crafts

Crafts and services of all kinds were the department of either Habash or slaves. The main ones are: housebuilder, woodworker, weaver, smith, potter, leatherworker, fisher-ferryman.

Woodcarvers are few nowadays, since the supply of suitable trees near the river has run low; it is generally agreed that the best wood-carving comes from inland, from the Baidoa area. They make wooden dishes and spoons, pestles and mortars for grain, hoe and axe handles, and more

fancy objects such as combs. The carving of decorated house-doors seems to be a lost art, at any rate in this area.

Housebuilding and weaving thrive today as in the past. The former includes thatching the roof as well as setting up the centre post and the wattle walls. Plastering the wattle with a mixture of earth and cow-dung is a separate job, however, and is women's work. Traditionally this too is confined to Habash or slave women.

Workers in leather in this area are generally Eyle (see p. 14.). Potters and smiths also are likely to be non-Geledi.

The men who practice these crafts (if they are Geledi, not itinerants) are normally farmers as well; they are supplementary not alternative means of livelihood, and this has always been so.

Though nowadays cash payments are always made, in the past payments in kind were usual, and it seems that where there was a client relationship between a Noble and a Habash lineage (see p. 14.) the immediate payment might be no more than the worker's food, while regular gifts would be given him at harvest time and on religious feasts such as 'Iid.

The fisher-ferrymen are an interesting special case. Both jobs are done by the same people, exclusively by members of the Habash lineages called Bahar. The position of these lineages among the rest, and certain beliefs connected with them, I shall discuss in the next chapter. Bahar is the name both of the occupation and those who practise it; there are Bahar in other river settlements, and on the Juba.

As the fish of the Shebelle are not plentiful, and only Habash will eat them, fishing is not economically a very important activity. It is done during the high water season, with nets; two men standing up to their necks in the water pull a long net between them. A hand-net from the bank is also used. Young boys sometimes go fishing with hook and line; both techniques were present in the last century (Christopher P.86).

More important is the role of the Bahar as ferrymen. It is they who operate the flat-bottomed boats which ply on ropes across the river. The boats are individually owned, and the Bahar is held responsible for the safety of his passengers. In the past, and in many cases still, Geledi paid no 'fare' on the ferry, though strangers did and do; but kept up a permanent patron-client relationship with a particular boat-owner, whose services they would use regularly. In return he received grain and other gifts at harvest and on feast days. (see also pp.150-51.)

Trade

Geledi stands at the first natural stopping place and watering point on the journey inland from Mogadishu, and at the junction of the routes up the Shebelle with that across the inter-river plain to Baidoa and the upper Juba. Guillain (II pp.41 ff) points to the importance of this in the mid 19th century, while the name 'Lamma Jiidle', 'the two roads', given to the Sil'is settlement in the legend (see p.30.) suggests that the significance of the site as a route junction antedates the rise of the Geledi themselves.

It was not until the 19th century, however, that the caravan trade began in East Africa. In the Benadir it was mainly concerned with bringing ivory from the Juba region to the coast; slaves, cotton and iron were taken in the opposite direction. The Geledi, a settled people, did not themselves take part in this trade as caravaneers, unlike the nomadic Garre, who had the reputation of being the most honest at the work (Ferrandi p.343). They were able, however, to profit by the trade which passed by their settlement.

Markets were held beside the town; these seem to have been occasional affairs, dependant on the arrival of caravans, and the merchants paid market dues. Guillain (IIb p.148) reports that in 1847 the tariff paid by merchants passing through Gelede was 3 piasters per loaded camel. (At the time, 4 - 5 piasters was the price of an ox) This implies an economy at least partly reduced to money; was the equivalent value perhaps sometimes taken in kind? Again, according to Guillain, it was the Sultan himself who received it (IIb p.41); but did he keep it all?

For comparison, one may take the system at Iugh in the 1890s, as reported by Ferrandi (p.345) and Bottego (pp.445 - 446). In return for the protection of the market and some control over the honesty of the dealings, merchants had to pay an entrance tax in proportion to the number of camels and the nature of their merchandise; there were also taxes on every animal or lot of ivory sold. Beduin coming in from the bush with their goods were not taxed, however; they would only have gone

elsewhere. Payment was made, at this date, either in lengths of cloth or in Maria Teresa dollars. The proceeds were divided as follows: 20% to the Gerad (Sultan), 20% to the elders of the Gubahin (Habash) lineages and 60% to those of the Gasar Gudda (Nobles).

Too much importance should not be attached, however, to this long-distance trade. The only important commodity brought from inland was ivory; as trade routes go, this one was of minor importance. It seems likely though that the Geledi market also served as a collecting place for grain and livestock from the Shebelle area, which were funnelled through it on their way to Mogadishu, from where they were exported. It was also the place where imported commodities like cotton and iron, and, most important, slaves, could be bought in exchange. If this is correct, it was a combination of local and long-distance trade, as well as the products of their own land, which brought Geledi to its degree of prosperity at the beginning of the 19th century.

It was at the same period that Geledi began conquering and making alliances with neighbouring clans. There is no particular evidence that this was in order to make them bring their trade to Geledi market; nevertheless there may be some connection. The nearest other market of any importance on the Shebelle river was Audegle, the centre of the Begeda clan, and this was one of the places which early became subject to Geledi;

Beyond Audegle, however, the crossings of the Shebelle were controlled by the important Bimal clan, who occupy the land round the port

of Merca. They also farmed, with their slaves, the land near the river, and exported the grain which it produced. Inevitably, the Bimal and Geledi were rivals, and the former had the advantage of directly controlling the port of Merca, whereas the Geledi did not directly control Mogadishu, though they may have overawed its rulers. One may guess that these economic facts had much to do with the wars between the two clans, which constitute the greater part of both their histories during the middle and later 19th century. An account of these wars is given in Section A.2.g.

Conclusion

Geledi in the 19th century, while basically a subsistence economy, was already connected to a wider network of international trade, and dependent on it for several important commodities. The main source of wealth to pay for these was the sale of grain, and it was the use of slave labour which made this possible, while it also helped support the dominance of the Noble and Lightskin sections of the population over the Habash.

In addition, Geledi had begun to be a market both for local and long distance trade. This fact may to some degree underlie the political developments which are to be described in the following sections.

A. 2.d. THE SLAVES

"If the economic and political elite depended primarily on slave labour for basic production, then one may speak of a slave society."

(Finlay, Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences,
Article on 'Slavery'.)

Enough has been said already to make it clear that Geledi in the nineteenth century was a slave society in the sense defined above. It was the Noble and Lightskin members of the community who were the principal slave owners, and this was the source of their relative wealth and political dominance.

What kind of institution, then, was slavery in this society, and what kind of life did slaves have?

On this question, evidence is particularly hard to come by at the present day. It is fifty years since the last slaves were legally set free (see p. 224); at that time many of them left Geledi, while those who remain, or their descendants, often try to conceal their origin, and in any case have no desire to discuss their past disabilities. Such evidence as there is, besides being drawn from rather distant memories, comes mainly from former slave-owners and their families, with the bias that implies. Fortunately, however, this is supplemented by such accounts dating from the end of the last or the beginning of this century as those of Bottego, Ferrandi and Carletti.

The bulk of the slaves on the lower Shebelle had been brought from what is now Kenya, and other parts of the E. African coast, or from Zanzibar, and imported via Mogadishu and the other Benadir ports (Guillain p.537); in 1846, nearly 600 were imported to Mogadishu, and this trade continued, in spite of attempts to control it, up to the time of the Italian occupation.

Both Geledi and Audegle were well-known slave markets (Carletti p.179). Presumably, being the first stage on the route up from the coast, they were convenient places for buyers from landowning clans both along the river and from the interior to come and meet dealers from the coast.

Some slaves were also brought from the other direction, from the Galla tribes (Ferrandi p.316) but these were few in number as far south-east as this. Galla women were valued for their beauty, and commanded good prices as concubines, but for field labour, at which the Galla had no experience, slaves from the south were preferred.

In terms of the distinction drawn by Segal and others between chattel slavery and domestic slavery, those of Geledi would have to be classified as chattel slaves. A system of chattel slavery characteristically makes use of persons captured or bought from foreign peoples; there are no ties of origin between slaves and their owner, and he need not fear the same fate overtaking himself. This is a harder form than domestic slavery, in which there is a quasi-family relation between slave and master; it can allow of extremes of harsh treatment. However, it does

not necessarily entail them, and when chattel slaves are held only in small numbers it can be 'a relatively mild form of bondage'. So it seems to have been here; indeed in many ways it rather resembled the domestic type.

How many slaves would a landowner keep? At this distance in time, one would expect some exaggeration in peoples' estimates. Eight farm workers, or two or three families, have been quoted to me; some may have owned more than this, but many smaller farmers would have had only one or two. It may be noted that a man with ten hectares (~~40~~ darab) of land would need, if my rough calculations in the last chapter are correct, at least five workers.

I have mentioned that Guillain estimated 600 slaves imported into Mogadishu in one year at the middle of the century. If these were the supply not only for the city but much of the middle Shebelle, (one may assume a similar figure for Merca) it is not a very large figure; but if the supply kept up year after year, while those slaves already in the country meanwhile reproduced themselves, it would amount to quite a large population. In 1911, Cerrina Feroni estimated that the total number of slaves and serfs in southern Somalia was 25,000 to 30,000 in a population of about 300,000 (quoted in Hess p.96).

For Geledi itself there is not even an estimate, but an interesting light is thrown by the figures given by Ferrandi for Lugh in the 1890s, taken from information supplied by lineage elders. These represent the Gasar Gudda (Noble) population and the slaves owned by

them. The high proportion of slaves to freemen is striking. A community of 164 adults or near-adult males owned 121 male slaves (unfortunately it is not made clear whether the figures for slaves included children), this would imply an average of one or two per household; how they were actually distributed one cannot say. The number of female slaves, however, is almost double that of males, which suggests that the Gasar Gudda put pleasure before business; though women can be used for field labour. But this was a community which lived by commerce rather than agriculture. The farming clans of the Shebelle, including the Geledi, may have had a higher proportion of labourers.

The picture that emerges, however, is of groups of slaves numbering only up to ten or so, and living as families rather than gangs.

Slaves lived as part of the household of their owners, in huts which were part of the same house-complex⁽¹⁾. They addressed their master as 'elder brother', abow; in return they had their place in the family structure, and the older slave his measure of respect from his master's children, who addressed him as 'mother's brother', 'abti', ('father's brother', adeer, would be impossible in this context as it means 'fellow-clansman'). Men and boys were kept for work in the

(1) This was generally true (see e.g. Bottego pp.422-5), but Christopher (p.85) found the slaves of the Bimal living out near the farms, and wrote that 'their only shelter is formed by loose stalks of the common millet piled up in a conical shape, and allowing three or four persons to sit together in the interior'. But this looks like a description of the usual little shelters put up in the fields during harvest time, and he may have been mistaken in assuming they were used all the year round.

fields, women mainly for household tasks; grinding grain, fetching water, cooking. At family rituals such as weddings and circumcision feasts, the family slaves came into their own and had an important role to play.

Foreign witnesses on the whole agree that slaves were treated mildly in Somalia, except in one or two clans (the Bimal and Moblen for instance, see e.g. Carletti p.180). Ferrandi (p.111) emphasises the affection which could, in some cases exist between slave and master, and says that when a slave was badly off it was generally on account of the poverty of the master.

A master had certain obligations towards his slaves. This is shown by the sense of responsibility persisting in many Noble families towards the families of what used to be their slaves; the latter may still do some services to them, but these do not amount to more than occasional odd jobs. The master's family would consider it disgraceful not to give them such help as contributions to wedding and funeral expenses, and gifts of food or cash when necessary.

A master, then had duties towards his slave, and these were morally binding, not legally enforceable. On his side, however, his rights over the slave were absolute, even if they were not often exercised to the limit. There was no authority to which a slave could appeal against his master. He was expected to be submissive and his master to discipline him; the usual punishments were the whip, karbash, and the leg irons. The latter were used only for those who had attempted to

escape. (In 1843, Christopher saw one slave near Merca who had been fettered like this for three years.) The former was, it seems, normally carried by a man overseeing his slaves' work, and remains in people's minds as a sort of symbol of slave status, and of the master-slave relationship⁽¹⁾.

While both Muslim law and public opinion were against a master's killing his slave, there was no authority to prevent his doing so if he chose. A man might - so I was told - flog a slave so much that he died, and order the others to bury him on the spot in the field, and the incident closed there. (This was put to me as a general possibility, but may have been a particular case.) In a case reported by Ferrandi (p.231) an owner killed his runaway slave when he caught him; public opinion was against him, not so much for the killing as for the cold-blooded manner in which it was done, but there was no possible sanction against the owner.

If a slave was killed, by a person other than his owner, his bloodwealth - half that of a free man - was payable to his owner. The owner, on the other hand, was liable for any damage done by his slave to others or their property.

The children of a male slave became the slaves of his master, whoever might be the owner of the mother.

(1) There is an interesting series of carvings on the beams of one of the old houses of Geledi; they represent the paraphernalia of a Somali gentleman; spear, dagger, headrest, wooden kurbum for eating coffee; the whip and fetter figure among them.

It is clear that female slaves were often kept as concubines, as Muslim law permits. (See e.g. Bottego p.409, Ferrandi pp.112, 256.) Again by Muslim law, the child of such a union must be acknowledged by the father. In this context it should be remembered that since in this part of Somalia people of both sexes commonly have several spouses in a lifetime, there is nothing unusual in a man's having in his house several children by different mothers. In fact, whereas everyone who knows a man must know his father's name, any but close acquaintances are likely not to know who his mother was.

Whether there were Galla girls in Geledi is a matter of conjecture. In Lugh, both Galla and 'swahili' girls were kept as concubines (Ferrandi p.256) but I have been told that Geledi would not take a slave mistress (i.e. a negro girl) because he would not want a son with 'habash' features. I would treat this statement with reserve, but not discount it entirely, for the attitude behind it is a real one. It perhaps indicates a disapproving attitude to such cases (G.B. Lewis p.32). Of course the objection would only apply to a publicly acknowledged union.

To give a faithful slave his freedom was an act of piety. When this was done, his master had to provide him with a house and two darab of land. Indeed, to free a man without such provision would have been a mockery, equivalent to turning him adrift to starve. (It was for this reason that some slaves later objected to the idea of being liberated by the Italian administration.)

The 'Jumaato' festival and the 'cow'

The festival known as Jumaato was held only by the slaves of the Geledi; it is unknown elsewhere. It is still held, though in a reduced form, by the remaining ex-slaves and their descendants; other members of Habash lineages join in, but Nobles attend only as spectators, apart from occasional young men who join in the dance for fun. The name seems to derive simply from Jim'aa = Friday. The slaves of the two moieties each hold a separate festival; those of the 'Eelqode village group about a month after the Istun celebrations for the Somali new year in early August (see section C); those of Balguri a week after that.

The object around which the ceremonies centre is, in each case, what is called 'the cow'. This is apparently a rough model of wood and leather, or simply one of the low leather-seated benches (jimbaar) which are a common article of furniture. It is kept in great secrecy and I did not get to see it. It has a hut by itself, in the household of one of the older slaves, and outsiders are forbidden, especially Nobles, who in this context they call 'hyenas', waraabe, the proverbial word for a dangerous, hostile person.

The following account is taken partly from my own observation, partly from accounts given me by Nobles, since those former slaves whom I met were uncommunicative.

The festival begins in the morning, with a group of men, accompanied by a drummer, performing a dance which gradually moves round the whole group of the Tolwiine villages. (I am speaking of the festival

of that moiety; that at Balguri is similar.) As they dance they sing the usual sort of extemporised dancing song, which does not seem to have any particular reference to the nature of the celebrations, but is a mixture of amorous, proverbial and pious couplets.

In the afternoon, the singing changes its character. A group of men (more of them young ones than before) charge around the town carrying sticks, and chanting taunts at any girls of Noble lineages who may have given birth to illegitimate children during that year. 'Faduma (or whatever the girl's name may be) her vagina; let them burn it! Let them burn!' and on this refrain they shake their sticks. If there have been no cases of bastardy that year, I am told that they fall back on names from previous years. (It is worth noting that since only the girl's own name and not her father's is used, and since the number of girls' names in use is restricted, this might only identify the victim to those who already knew which Faduma or Halima was meant.) The Nobles say that this is a salutary custom, since it teaches girls to behave themselves.

While this is in progress inside the town, another group of slaves goes into the fields outside; this is called bananbah, 'going out'. On the outskirts of the town they lie in wait for any Noble who passes; they are supposed to set on him and strip off his cloth; and on this day their behaviour is licenced. I did not observe this part of the celebrations myself, but I gather that nowadays nobody in fact gets stripped, probably because the personnel of this particular institution is now reduced to a few old men.

In the past, I am told, they used to come back into town like a victorious war party, flourishing the cloths they had collected and shouting 'I have killed my abow'. A comment offered to me on this was that 'every slave wants to kill his master and take his wife'. (This statement, which seems to be proverbial, would suggest if taken too literally that the Geledi Nobles lived permanently in a state of paranoid suspicion; but it is probably rather ~~as~~ a piece of occasional cynicism.)

After dark all the participants, including the women who before had only watched the dancers, congregate outside the hut where the 'cow' is kept. Inside it, the cow is then 'milked'; only a few of the senior slaves are allowed inside. The sound of the long leather trumpets which are customarily blown by slaves on ceremonial occasions are heard; these are supposed to represent the lowing of the cow. The actual milking is apparently done by attaching a piece of rubber tubing to the underside of the 'cow' and putting a wet rag inside it so that it can be squeezed out. (See Moreno pp.383-4.) Outside, singers chant the praises (amaan) of the 'cow', calling her by the name 'Barey'. The chanting, dancing, and the women's trilling is kept up all night.

At first light next morning, the 'cow' is taken down to the river, still carefully hidden; there she is supposed to graze and drink, before being escorted back to her hut.

This is one of two yearly outings; she is also, I was told, taken out and down to the river in the month of Arinfa, but without ceremony and secretly.

On the next day a band of slaves (nowadays this amounts only to a few old men) go round from house to house, singing, while one of them blows a leather trumpet. The householders each give them a little grain or other food or, nowadays, money. With this the festival is over.

The Nobles join readily enough in keeping up the fiction about the 'cow', which they regard as rather a joke. The slaves insist absolutely that she is talked about as a real cow (though indeed my impression is that they would rather not discuss the subject with outsiders at all). I was told that they are permitted to demand a fine from any Noble or other person who breaks this rule, of a goat and a measure of oil. They could, in the old days, enforce such a fine by withholding services from the person who refused to pay it. It is difficult to see how such a boycott could have been maintained during the time of real slavery; perhaps it refers to the period following the official ending of slavery, when former slaves were in effect working as servants for their master.

The attitude of the Nobles towards the whole thing is one of rather patronizing tolerance, as towards a piece of harmless childish foolery. This attitude includes the part of the festivities which seems to be a direct expression of hostility to them; perhaps an example of the characteristic strategy of dealing with potentially awkward or disruptive situation by treating it as a joke.

The free Habash, on the other hand, join in the dancing and singing, and to some extent seem to regard the festival as theirs also. As I have already indicated, the dividing line between Habash and slave is often unclear; for many of the former, slavery may in fact lie only a generation or two back, so that it is not surprising if they are ready to join in an occasion like this one.

The existence of these rituals (and of certain others mentioned in Section C), shows that the slave population formed a community of its own inside the larger one of the Geledi as a whole; though they had lost their original roots, they were able to put down new ones, and to some degree develop a sub-culture of their own. This implies, what appears from other sources, that once purchased a slave was likely to spend his life in the same household. The slave population was not moved around, but remained largely stable.

In trying to assess the significance of these customs, one is hampered both by the evasive secrecy of the former slaves themselves, and by the assumption of the Nobles that the whole thing is beneath serious consideration.

The meaning of the 'cow' seems plain enough, however. Cattle are the mark of Noble status; the Noble lineages keep up the tradition of pastoralism, and many of their members still own herds. The possession of cattle is rare among Habash; and it used to be forbidden to slaves. Even when they were manumitted and given their two darab, it was not completed by a cow.

So the ritual assertion the 'we too have our cow' is a claim to equality; an intrinsic equality which could be expressed in the closed world of a rite; though it might not attempt recognition outside it. And the bananbah, with its attack on and symbolic killing of the masters, seems to be as clear an expression of rebellious sentiments as one could well imagine.

On the face of it, this looks like a perfect example of a 'ritual of rebellion', as Max Gluckman has made the term current; indeed a more striking example than some of Gluckman's own. But it differs from them in being performed by and for only a section of the community, not the whole of it. The masters do not join in any playful reversal of roles; they do not even encourage it, they merely tolerate. They dissociate themselves from the whole thing; it is the slaves' festival - not theirs. And I was not told that it was supposed to bring good fortune to the community in any way. Possibly the slaves themselves attach some such meaning to it, or used to (the informant who gave Moreno his text (cited above), and who seems to know something about it, said that 'if they did not dance, the year would be bad').

According to Gluckman's theory, such rituals actually contribute the stability of the system which they appear to attack. Whether or no that is true of this ritual, it certainly presupposes such stability. It is hard to think that a community of masters who felt themselves in any real danger from their slaves would have tolerated such an expression: the slaves on their side, by expressing their rebellion against their lot

in this purely symbolic, playful way, in a context of festivity and in the form of a charade, seem to have been implicitly accepting it as beyond change.

On balance I would conclude that this ritual did not merely undermine the social system, but actually strengthened it. Firstly, because the open expression of mock-rebellion would encourage the idea that the notion of rebellion was intrinsically absurd and not to be taken seriously. At this level it appears as a large-scale example of the strategy of dealing with the socially awkward or dangerous area by laughing at it. Secondly, because the slave-community has in this, its own particular festival, just as the other sections of the community do (though not having, like them, a common ancestor to honour, they used another focus). By doing so, they showed that they had an identity as a group; and by allowing it, their superiors allowed them this identity and their measure of respect. This is another reason to suggest that their form of bondage was a relatively mild one, and consequently Geledi was not in danger from its slaves.

Nowadays, while the form of the festival remains the same, the social situation behind it has altered entirely. It is organised by a small group of old men, the last surviving ex-slaves of the community, and the motives behind its continuance seem to be partly simply a desire for merrymaking, and partly piety to tradition. To anticipate the second part of this study, those ex-slaves who remain in Geledi now, and who declare themselves to be such, are in fact often making use of their

peculiar status for the benefits of their relationship with their former masters. For such people, the keeping up of the old customs may act as a legitimation of their claim.

A. 2.e. LINEAGE GROUPS AND LAW

Characteristics of the lineage group

The structure of lineage groups in Geledi appears to be still basically what it was in the 19th century, and the rules which then governed relations between them still, to some extent, apply today. A description of their present situation should therefore give an adequate idea of that which existed in pre-colonial times.

The lineage group⁽¹⁾ is the basic political unit. Below this level, segmentation is recognised; the Gobron, for instance, consist of five lines; the Adawiin also have five divisions. People say 'the - are five' (or three or four) and name the sub-divisions, each after a son or grandson of their common ancestor.

But this is only a device for placing individuals genealogically, and ascertaining how closely related they are to one another. These subdivisions have no existence as actual functioning groups, and certainly no political autonomy.

This would only happen when one such group leaves to live elsewhere, as in the case of the Handab, four of whose six divisions live among the Elay. A similar fission has in a sense taken place in recent times, when large numbers of a lineage live in Mogadishu and almost form a subdivision

(1) Such groups are called reer, but this Somali word is not useful for analysis as it can refer not only to these groupings but to any human group of any description. Thus: reer Geledi = the Geledi clan; reer 'Abdi = 'Abdi's family; reer beled = townspeople; reer kalsho = football team (from Italian calcio).

there; but, in the first place, this division does not occur along descent lines, and in the second, though they may hold meetings separately the two parts of the lineage still pay bloodwealth together; and are not formally separated.

It is likely that some sort of fission process must occur when such a group becomes too large, however, and it looks as though this is what happened at some time in the past in the case of the set of four Noble lineages known as the 'four 'Umur Page' (see below). This split, however, must have happened either before or soon after the clan settled on its present site; and the same is true of the separation of the Jiliible into Diine and Handab. Otherwise the pattern set at the time of the settlement seems to have been preserved, and no group has grown so large as to need to be divided. The largest (Maama Suubis) is today probably not more than a thousand persons.

Each lineage group has its elders, or akhyar. There is no formal process of election or appointment for these; a man becomes an akhyar by gradually winning recognition as such among his lineage, and acceptance by the other akhyar. The word indicates wisdom and maturity of judgement; it can be used simply as a term of praise, for instance, to a young man, implying that he is serious and responsible beyond his years. Thus in one sense the akhyar of a lineage are all its mature men; but in the more operative one, they are only those four or five outstanding ones, who will be generally called upon to settle disputes, and to consult together over public business. There is no fixed number of akhyar, but there should be four or five main ones in each lineage.

A meeting of the group's akhyar is called googul. Each lineage has its traditional meeting place at the house of some prominent member; this office is hereditary. The Handab (see below) are googul for all the Geledi Nobles together; their meeting place was, and in theory still is, at the house of a particular member of that lineage.

Other meetings were held, not only for the akhyar but for all adult males of the lineage. These are called kulun, and strict etiquette should be observed during them; young men must not speak until their fathers have spoken. These are probably less common in modern times than they used to be. Neither sort of meeting occurs at any fixed intervals; instead, they are called ad hoc, generally over questions of bloodwealth or other legal compensation. In any case, much business is and probably always was, done not at 'official' general meetings, but in the course of private visits and conversations.

There seem to have been also kulun for the entire Geledi, or at least for the Nobles, but these are virtually unknown nowadays.

Each group has one or more religious festival peculiar to itself; this is the annual siyaro or memorial feast of their founding ancestor. A siyaro is held for any person known as a saint; there are many held throughout Somalia for men who are for various reasons venerated as holy, whether these are legendary figures of the far past, or sheikhs of quite recent memory; and the festivals vary in size from small local affairs to huge religious celebrations to which pilgrims travel from all over the country.

Among them, those which celebrate the heads of clans or lineage groups hold a special place, in that they act as a ritual symbolizing the unity of the group concerned. Among the northern Somali, important ones are held at clan level, but in the south this is not so. Among many southern clans, the equivalent is a communal rain-making ceremony (Lewis 1966); in Geledi the main rituals involving the whole clan are those which centre round the Is-tun (see Section C.).

A lineage, however, generally has an annual siyaro for its founding ancestor, since such ancestors are ex officio saints and men of blessing (baraka) and sometimes other siyaro for other forebears. One such feast was witnessed in 1843 by Lt. Christopher (p. 91) and was evidently very much like those held today. Most of these feasts have distinctive features and customs connected with them, but some elements are common to all. These are: the visit to the tomb of the sheikh, feasting, generally by families or groups of families in their homes, often reading of the Koran, and some sort of dancing and singing. (Details about some of these occasions will be found below in the notes on particular lineage groups).

Lineages have each their own mark for identifying cattle and camels. These are cut on the skin of the animal, and are identifiable by their placing as well as their form. Thus the Gobron use an L-shaped mark, while the Maama Suubis sign their camels with a horizontal line across the nose.

Each lineage has, besides its ordinary name, an honorific or praise-name which can be used in addressing its members, male or female.

This consists of the title gaw followed by a distinguishing word, generally the name of an ancestor, other than the one from whom the lineage gets its usual name. Thus both the Abikerow and Maama Suubis lineages are addressed as Gaw 'Umur, 'Umur Fage being the ancestor from whom both are said to be descended. The Gobron, however, are called Gaw Gaalow, which is not a personal name. Most people do not know the meaning of it, and it has been explained to me in various ways. One is that it refers to the great generosity of the Gobron, who would kill a camel (gaal in the archaic pronunciation) to feed only a few (gab) guests. This sounds like a manufactured explanation. A more convincing story is that the name was gained after the Gobron had helped the people in a battle against the gaal = infidels (i.e. the Galla) and killed their leader. The same informant said that gaw or gawow was an old word for 'man'. It is not used now, however, except in this one context.

Law and relations between lineages

Disputes arising within a lineage group should be settled within it, by the intervention, if necessary, of the akhyar. In the case of a dispute between members of two lineages, the akhyar of both should meet and settle the matter between them. Before the colonial period there were no other judicial offices, though the Sultan is said to have acted as supreme judge, under what circumstances is not clear.

At the present day, serious cases are taken to the police and the courts; the following notes on the procedures followed in pre-colonial

times are therefore only what I have been told by older men, though few can be old enough to remember these institutions functioning fully.

Whereas in cases between Geledi and members of other clans (except allies) bloodshed is compensated for by payment of bloodwealth, within the Geledi community bloodwealth was not and is not payable, and nor are other forms of compensation. The object here was not so much to impose a penalty or get restitution, as to bring about a reconciliation which would restore the peace and friendliness proper to the community. The sign of this reconciliation was the recital of the fataha by both parties to the dispute and their akhyar.

Within a lineage group the case would be settled by the akhyar of that group. In the case of a dispute between members of two groups, the person who considered himself offended would first go to his own akhyar, who would then approach their colleagues in the lineage of the aggressor, and the two sides would hold a googol together to decide on a settlement.

In a case of insult, what was required was simply an apology, hoyeesho, which can be formally made by kneeling and holding the other person's legs, or touching the chin or arm, as a gesture of submission. People making such an apology bring a compensatory gift, sameen, generally a goat.

If a man was wounded, the aggressor's kinsmen would go and not only make apology but read the Koran for his recovery. If, then, he subsequently died, they were absolved from blame.

In the case of a homicide within the community, it is said that originally this too was settled simply by the akhyar bringing about a reconciliation, sealed by reciting the fataha. Within more recent pre-colonial times, however, such homicides were executed. This change was a decision reached, it is said, by general agreement, because the number of killings had been increasing so that they were afraid the clan would be weakened and such retribution seemed the only way to control it.

The lineage of the dead man would go to that of the killer and say, 'We want our brother's blood'. It was then the duty of the latter to hand him over for execution, which was carried out by the dead man's kin. The method apparently was stabbing in the back of the neck ('the Somali coup de grace' (Bottego p.476); men and crocodiles are killed in this way, as opposed to goats and other animals which have their throats cut).

According to a tradition of the Abikerow lineage, the first person to suffer this penalty was a man of that lineage called 'Ali Abikar Bore, who had killed a Gobron. They say that he had accepted his fate for the sake of the peace of the community, and refused to let anyone lay hands on him or bind him while he walked from his house to the place of execution, which was a spot in Geledi town called Bia Daga. A large crowd accompanied him, chanting gabay in his honour, until he reached it and was killed in the manner just described, after laying himself down on one of the leather topped benches called jimbaar.

Thieves if caught could also be handed over for punishment to the injured party. First or second offences would generally be let pass

with an apology, but if a man persisted he could be beaten and even executed.

There was one particularly horrible punishment, though I am not clear for what crime it could be inflicted; it was apparently for either persistent thievery or for troublemaking in general. The victim had a rope wound tightly round his arm from shoulder to wrist, till the blood came out below his finger-nails. He was then left out of doors without food, water, or shade for three days and nights. If he survived this, he was then released.

In cases where the offence is between members of different clans, compensation and bloodwealth were the rule. Each clan settled the amount which it demands of others; that for a woman is always half the man's.

The bloodwealth demanded by Geledi used to be 100 camels for a man, 50 for a woman; the usual payment in Somali Muslim law. For injuries not resulting in death, there were lesser payments. For wounding a Geledi, the traditional compensation has been quoted to me as five she-camels in calf.

Cases involving such compensations were settled by consultation of the akhyar of both sides, as they still are, though in the modern context of course, police and government courts enter into the process. (Discussion of the role of these latter belongs in part B of this study.) For the payment of a relatively small compensation (nowadays of one less than 300 shillings) only the lineage group of the individual concerned is responsible; such small payments are called shafa-shafa. For a larger

sum, the payment is distributed throughout the community, each lineage being responsible for raising its share. Within the lineage each man's contribution is assessed according to his means; the very poor may not have to pay anything. These contributions are known as qaaran.

Of a bloodwealth received by the Geledi, the greater part is given to the immediate kin of the dead person - father, brothers or sons - and the remainder is divided up among the community, lineage by lineage.

Between the Geledi and their two allied groups, the Wa'dan and Murunsade, no bloodwealth is payable. The aggressor's clan should, however, pay the funeral expenses, duug, which may amount to a few hundred shillings. (This is also paid in a case of homicide within the Geledi community, now that the retributive side is in the hands of the agents of the central government.) Lesser payments are, in practise, settled according to each case by the akhyar of the clans and lineages concerned.

Such contemporary evidence, when projected into the past, necessarily gives a picture lacking in concreteness and detail; but it provides some idea, however theoretical, of the politico-legal structure of 19th century Geledi. The missing part of this structure is the office of the Sultan, which will be discussed in Section A.2 (g). A fuller account of traditional law as it operates in a modern context is given in Section B.2 (c).

Conclusion

The Geledi community was not so much a single group, as a federation of lineage groups, each with its own autonomy and sense of identity

with respect to the rest; but united as against other clans, both in war, and in the giving and receiving of bloodwealth and other compensation.

Particular groups

Here follows some account of the arrangement and separate characteristics of these groups as they still exist today, in each of the three categories:

(a) Nobles

The Noble lineage groups are, as we have seen, the core of the Geledi community, and can properly be designated as a clan. Unlike the lineage groups of the other two categories, they have a clear and consistent account of their own number and relationship to one another. That this account does not altogether tally with social reality, suggests that it became standardised during a past period, since which conditions have altered.

This standard account of the structure of the Geledi clan is as follows: there are nine lineage groups, all ultimately descended from Subuge 'Umur Diine (see p.27). Seven of these are in the Tolwiine moiety; the Maama Suubis, Abikerow, Reer Haaji, Abroone Herab (or Herabow), Diin Jiliible, Handab Jiliible, and Gobron; the first six being descended from Warantable Subuge and the last from Yeraw Subuge. The two lineages in the Yebaale moiety are the Gobyan and Galbehe, descended from Wariile Subuge.

What is the contemporary situation in fact? To begin with, it appears overwhelmingly likely that the genealogical connection between the

two moieties, and indeed that between some of the Tolwiine lineages, is a fictional one. Everything about the relationship between them suggests that two groups not connected to one another, (or rather whose ultimate relationship had long been forgotten) settled on neighbouring sites and formed an alliance for tactical reasons, which was then hallowed by being given a genealogical basis. Each group derives its genealogy from an apical ancestor who may be between nine and fifteen generations back; the supposed derivation from the three sons of Subuge goes back a further ten or twelve generations again; many people remember no further back than their lineage ancestor, and those who can list the connections to the common ancestor tend to be vague and not consistent with one another.

Of the nine groups which are generally named, four are nowadays virtually extinct (the Reer Haaji, Merabow, Diin Jiliible and Galbehe) and another, the Handab, is very reduced in numbers, (122 in Geledi according to the 1954 census; all figures after quoted are from this, unless otherwise stated; see also appendix). Thus in effect the Noble category among the Yebaale consists simply of the Gobyan lineage (257) while among the Tolwiine the two major-lineage groups of the Abikerow (267) and the Maama Suubis (623) share effective dominance with the sacred or 'royal' lineage, the Gobron (365).

Particular groups: (i) The Gobron

Though enjoying the prestige of being the Sultan's lineage, the Gobron have not, as a group, any greater powers or privileges than the

other Nobles. It was not the lineage, but the single figure of the Sultan himself, who used to hold power. There was no custom of giving posts in authority to kinsmen, as there were no such posts to give (see the following chapter on the lack of hierarchical organization).

They do, however, have the distinction of being hereditary 'uluma', sheiks or men of religion; as such they provide men who are called in to read the Koran for the benefit of less instructed people. Other clans similarly have their lineage of 'uluma'; the Reer Sheikh Mumin and the Walamoge among the Elay, for instance, or the Wakbarre among the Dabarre. The Gobron are not the only 'uluma' of the Geledi; all Lightskins and at least one Habash lineage have the same claim, but they are the titular ones of the community. The place of men of religion and of religion in general, in its life, I shall examine in the next chapter.

(ii) Handab

Two of the Tolwiine lineage groups are said to be descended from Jiliible, son of 'Eelqode, himself a descendant of Warantable Subuge; this means that they are cognate with the Jiliible clan of Hudur (see p.21). There are said to be six lines descended from the six sons of Jiliible (see also Colucci, p.137); four of these are the nucleus of the Jiliible clan; the other two are those which became part of the Geledi community, Diin Jiliible and Handab Jiliible. The first of these is now reduced, however, to two or three individuals.

The Handab are considered the senior or first born lineage, 'urud', of the Geledi. They say that they derive from a descendant of Jiliible,

Haji Yusuf, whom they venerate as their founding ancestor, who lived 11 - 12 generations ago⁽¹⁾. It is generally agreed that before the Gobron dynasty reached its leading status, the Handab were the most powerful of the Geledi lineages, as well as having the ritual priority which they still enjoy. They retain to this day the right to go first in the processions (shir) during the New Year celebrations; and the house of their senior man is by tradition the meeting place, googul, for councils of the entire Geledi clan (though such general councils are rarely, if ever, held nowadays).

It is said that in the past their primacy was not simply ritual but rested on superior force. It was a purely secular dominance, unlike their successors the Gobron, the Handab are not 'uluma'. They are said (by other lineages) to have been proud and overbearing; they would allow no one's cattle to go out to pasture before theirs; they used to walk, as Somali herdsmen do, resting their arms on a staff laid across their shoulders, and went like this through the narrow alleys between the wattle houses of the town; if the end of a staff caught on a house wall,

(1) According to one account, this man died in Hiran, and his four sons then moved to Geledi, where they settled. They are also said to have been the first to arrive, along with the Adawiin. The other Geledi chose the youngest of the four men, Mohamed, to be their leader; this affronted the three elder brothers, who left for Bur Hakaba, where their descendants still live as part of the Elay clan.

they would insist on having the wall pulled down. (1)

The Handab declined in numbers, and hence in effective dominance; others tend to see this as a punishment; a more complimentary explanation is that they were very warlike, and were killed off through their excessive bravery. In any case, the 1954 census shows only 122 of them. Their decline seems to have coincided with the rise of the Gobron Sultanate, so that people say that the Gobron replaced the Handab.

(iii) The Abikerow

The four remaining Tolwiine lineages are known as the 'four 'Umur Fage', after their common ancestor, who is himself said to have been a descendant of Iman 'Eelqode, brother of Jiliible. Of these four the Maama Suubis are now by far the largest, while the Herabow and Reer Haaji had been reduced at the last count to 3 and 25 individuals respectively.

The Abikerow (267) call themselves gaba'il, the leaders or powerful ones. They claim to be the 'king making' lineage, implying that the Gobron Sultans owed their position to their support. Their strength came largely, they say, from their standing as patrons to the Habash Aitire, who were their supporters. It is not clear, however, how

(1) This anecdote, would seem to refer to an early period of the settlement (assuming that the Handab lost their dominance in the 18th century). Whether or not it has any factual basis, it can be seen as symbolic, not just of pride in general, but of the clash between the customary behaviour of a pastoral people, and the demands of a settled, close-set community. What is harmless in the bush may become intolerable in town; in this story, the Handab represent the type of man who refuses to accommodate himself to the new surroundings, but insists that they are accommodated to him. But in the end the town won.

big a group the Aitire actually used to be (see below), or whether they all supported the Abikerow exclusively.

(iv) The Herabow

These held the title of Malak, war leader. What was implied by this is explained on page 158. Their decline in numbers is generally attributed to this function, but the same thing happened to other lineages who had no such lethal honour.

(v) The Gobyan

These are the Nobles of the Yebdaale moiety. They formerly occupied villages on both sides of the river, but ceded their land on the left bank to the Wa'dan. The tomb of their apical ancestor, sheikh Hassan Madfay, is in what is now part of the market in left-bank Afgoi; his siyaro is held on the third day of the Is-tun New Year festival, and at the feasting no grain grown on the left bank may be eaten and no firewood used which has been gathered there. This would seem to be a ritual underlining of their separation from their former site.

(b) The Lightskins

The Lightskin lineages, at least according to informants among the Nobles, formerly took part in clan politics only through the Noble groups to which they were attached. The Adawiin, the chief Lightskin group, was so attached to the Abikerow lineage (possibly, however, this only applies to the section of it living in the Tolwiine villages); they would join in the kulun of the lineage, and criticise or advise, but not

veto, or make their own proposals. They also joined with the Noble group in paying garan, contributions to bloodwealth payments.

The only full lineage of this category in Geledi is the Adawiin. Their ancestor is said, in fact, to have been one of the founders of the settlement (see above). They live equally in the villages of both moieties, but remain themselves one group. In Balguri (Yebdaale) they actually seem to form the majority of the population.

The Adawiin therefore are a focus round which the other small Lightskin groups gather. The significance of this will be discussed in Section B. Of these, the Deegle, the Abajibil and the Abasad are all splinters of groups actually centred at Audegle. The Orawane represent one of the earliest Geledi conquests; they are a small group living in Raqayle. They have a rather doubtful status and other Lightskins will not marry with them⁽¹⁾; I have been told that this is because they are supposed to be 'descendants of a dead man', a story told of other groups in this part of the world, for instance, among the Galla (Haberland p.447).

(c) The Habash

It seems that in the past, the Habash had their own lineage organisation and akhyar, much as they have now, to deal with their own affairs and disputes with other lineage groups, but had little or no say

(1) If this is strictly correct, they must marry no one but one another.

in the wider policy of the whole community. (Compare position of the Gobawiin among the Gasar Gudda, Ferrandi p.238.)

The Habash of the Tolwiine moiety are a group called the Aitire. Viewed from the outside, this is a lineage group since it holds an equivalent position to other lineage groups, in paying and receiving compensation, for instance (see pp. 139-40). In its internal structure, however, it is not a single lineage but a collection of smaller ones, each with its own name, and with no traceable genealogical connection between them. Thus, if the Noble lineages and their sub-divisions are branches of a single stem, this is a bundle of broken-off sticks tied together.

They are divided into two groups, Aitire Ban and Aitire Gol. In 'Eelqode village this seems to bear some relation to their residence pattern, the two living in different groups of houses; gol here may be the word for 'south'. The most reliable informants count seven lineages in each half; but it is difficult to get general agreement on just how many Aitire lineages there are, because it is not always agreed whether certain lineages count as Aitire or not.

A statement that there are only four main Aitire lineages, two Ban and two Gol (so that they are called either 'the two' or 'the four' Aitire) suggests that these perhaps constituted the original Habash group who entered the Geledi community. What seems to have happened is that other small groups attached themselves to these, including ex-slaves, small immigrant groups from other clans, and perhaps other Geledi Habash lineages

too small to function as groups on their own. I once overheard one Noble saying to another 'They all call themselves Aitire now'. At the present day all the Habash in the Tolwiine moiety can be taken as forming part of the Aitire, at least for administrative purposes. An exception is the Beriow, who are closely associated with the Handab (Noble) lineage, used to be in some sort of client relationship to them and are very probably in fact descended from freedmen of theirs. (The only Beriow genealogy I have derives from that of the Handab; this indicates slave origin since slaves took the genealogies of their masters.)

The Abikerow (Noble) lineage claim to have stood in a similar patron-client relation to the whole of the Aitire. This is perhaps true only of the original four Aitire groups.

In the Yebaale villages, the equivalent of the Aitire is the Sapti 'Umur group, which also consists of a number of small lineages. In the village of Sagaalad, however, a separate group of Habash are unflatteringly named Dilmaansho, 'Mosquitoes'.

But, though for administrative and legal purposes many small lineages may operate as a single group, they retain certain separate traditions and honour different founding ancestors.

Among the Aitire an outstanding lineage is that of the Ma'alim 'Umur. These, like the Adawiin and the Gobron, are 'uluma', a priestly lineage, and are respected as such even by those who have in other respects a status superior to theirs. They are distinguished by possessing two large sacred drums. These are known as alwan, and may not on pain

of a fine be referred to by the ordinary word for drum, gurban (which has associations both with profane, sometimes very profane, dancing, and with spirit-cults of dubious orthodoxy). According to one account, these drums were brought from Medina; by another, they were given by a Jinni to the lineage-ancestor Aw Mukulal Shambe, 'Great Cat', so called because he had the gift of being able to transform himself into a cat, and so elude his enemies. These drums are replaced as they wear out, and their sacred character is transmitted from the old drum to the new, but there are never more than two at a time. They are beaten to accompany the religious chanting and dancing at the annual Siyaro of Aw Ma'alin 'Umur, ancestor of the lineage and son of Mukulal Shambe; and also at weddings and other lineage festivities.

Another Aitire lineage are the Bahar. The special role of these people as fishers and ferrymen has been already mentioned. They are in fact the people of the river, and there are Bahar lineages in most river settlements. Balguri has its own group. From the point of view of the community at large, fishing is an activity of minor importance; but the running of the ferry boats is essential to life, as before the building of bridges (which are still very few) there was no other way of crossing the river during most of the year. The essential qualifications of the Bahar for running them is that they are held to have a special relationship with the crocodiles, the chief danger of the river, and hence can protect passengers against them.

Bahar are said to tame particular crocodiles, feed them and talk to them. (I never managed to see this done, in spite of efforts to arrange it, as the conditions never seemed to be right, but I see no reason to doubt that it is sometimes done.) Nowadays there are fewer crocodiles in the river than there used to be, since many have been shot, which may make such relationships rarer. Stories are told about the supposed powers of the Bahar over their tame crocodiles. (One which is often told, not in Geledi but among people who live far from the river, is that a Bahar can get any girl he wants for a wife by sending his crocodile to fetch her; of course, she dare not refuse.)

Each ferryboat is used to operate on a particular section of the river bank or halo, and each was the responsibility of individual who owned the boat. Formerly only he or one of his sons could operate it, and one of them had always to be in charge, since it was their responsibility to protect their passengers from accident. There was no 'fare' paid by those Geledi who used the ferry, but each had a fixed relationship with the Bahar whose boat he always used, and would give him a regular payment at harvest, and contributions if the boat needed repairing.

If an accident did occur, the boat in question and that section of the bank were hagas, impure; the Bahar would have to kill a goat and hold a ceremony of purification (hagasbih) before it could be used again. I am told that the Bahar would not be punished legally, however; but presumably a Bahar who failed to protect his passengers adequately would lose custom. It used to be forbidden to enter a ferryboat with shoes on, 'out of respect'.

These regulations are largely going out of use nowadays, probably because the danger from crocodiles is less (though people are still mauled or killed occasionally) and there are other means of crossing available.

The Bahar as a group hold an annual festival in which they pray for blessing on the river, that the water may be clear, and crocodiles and hippopotami keep away. This takes place at the same time as the Is-tun, at the New Year in August, and will be described in Section C, with the other rites belonging to that time of year.

Allied and Client Groups

Geledi is a mixed community of groups of different origins. Those of the Noble category, however, at least claim to be of common descent. One may doubt the historicity of this claim, at least in its genealogical form; I have already pointed out that the Yebdaale moiety could well be a group of separate origin from the Tolwiine, and it is not unlikely that the latter are themselves not homogeneous; the two Jiliible lineages, the four 'Umur Fage, and the Gobron representing three separate lines of descent, rather than three branches of the same line.

They are, however, all of Digil-Rahanwiin origin; there is no trace of tradition deriving any of them from the 'Samaale' half of the Somali people. Their assertion that they are all descended from 'Umur Diine, therefore, is not simply a genealogical fiction to justify a particular alliance, but represents, however confusedly, a real common origin, a sharing of traditions going back to the folk-movements of the

of the 12th and 13th centuries.

The Lightskins also, though claiming no common descent with the Darkskin Nobles, are all counted as Digil. The Adawiin of Geledi are supposed to be among the first settlers, and there is no reason to think this tradition is not founded on fact. The place of the Habash lineages is a separate question, which I have discussed elsewhere.

All these groups would be described unhesitatingly by themselves and others as 'Geledi'. Whatever the historical processes underlying their traditions, they are for the period within memory clearly distinguished from the other groups, who occupy Geledi land and are in political alliance with them, but who would not be described as Geledi by others or by themselves; these are the Wa'dan and the Murunsade. Though allied for the purposes of paying and receiving compensation, and for war, they were never incorporated into the Geledi lineage structure, and continued to maintain a separate identity and run their internal affairs by themselves.

Certain other small groups, also living on Geledi land are the Jambelul and Galawer, and villages of groups of Shekhal Loboge and Elay, offshoots of their main clans. I am not clear about the precise position of these, but the Galawer and Jambelul at least seem to be incorporated to the Geledi for purposes of compensation payments. Whether they count as Geledi or not is ambiguous; such groups could perhaps be described as in process of assimilation.

The incorporation of such groups into the community has not led in Geledi to the tensions sometimes found in other clans, especially where groups of a northern 'Samaale' origin have become clients or sheegat of Digil-Rahanwiin clans (Lewis/p.196). There seem to be various reasons why this is so; one is that these groups are small and unimportant and therefore unlikely to assert themselves; another, that they too are of Digil origin and share the same traditions as the Geledi proper.

Exceptions on both counts are the Wa'dan and Murunsade, who are Hawiye, and constitute sizeable groups. They remain conscious of their separateness, but since this has always been recognised, and there has never been any attempt to affiliate them to Geledi lineage structure directly, it does not constitute a social irritant. The Wa'dan, at all events, consider themselves not as clients but as equal allies, and do not see the bond between themselves and Geledi as any derogation of their own status.

Another possible reason lies in the historical situation of the pre-colonial Geledi, involved in dominating a whole series of other clans, whether as subjects or allies. The status of a sheegat group under these circumstances was not so different from that of an ally, and certainly superior to that of a conquered subject clan, ra'i. Their position was not particularly odd, and therefore humiliating; indeed, to be associated with the Geledi in any way meant sharing in their success and prestige.

More often than whole village-communities or sections of clans, however, it was single individuals and their families who were permitted

to take up (or buy) land, and so become part of one or another lineage-group, usually only after living among them for some time on a temporary basis. These are mainly from such neighbouring clans as those of Dafet; this, and their being assimilated successively as individuals, not as a group, prevented their constituting a special section of the community, with the problems that might have ensued.

A. 2.f. WARFARE

There was nothing resembling a standing army; no system of age-regiments or anything similar, among the Geledi or any other south Somali clan. A war-party was a purely ad-hoc organization, composed simply of the men of suitable age from that clan; in fact, usually of only a small proportion of them. One of the unique things about the Bardera campaign (see Section A.2.g.) was that it is said to have emptied the villages of men.

An idea of the usual numbers involved in inter-clan fighting is given by the statement that in an attack by the Geledi on the Bagade of Audegle, the Yebaale moiety sent 40 men, and the Hintire clan (at that time their allies) another 40. But at the time of their greatest power the Geledi could threaten Mogadishu with an army of 8,000 men. One of my informants said that the Sultan~~s~~ of Geledi had an army of 30,000 at call; this is supported by Christopher's opinion (in 1843) that Yusuf Mahamud 'by a moderate computation, deducting three fourths of native accounts,could bring 20,000 spearmen into the field, perhaps 50,000, if he made large promises to and flattered the more republican-spirited districts, which nominally own his authority....'

There was a custom of issuing a formal challenge or declaration of war by means of a messenger, generally a slave.

When the Geledi went to war, the men of each lineage group marched and encamped together. There was little that could be called discipline and not much attempt at strategy (but see Ferrandi p.272) the emphasis

was rather on simple fury of attack, and individual prowess. Both spears and bows and arrows were used; according to Ferrandi (loc.cit.) the spearmen would attack first, protected by the archers.

It is worth quoting his further remarks on this subject, as his contemporary witness is probably more reliable than the inevitably highly coloured accounts of tradition. '... a battle is soon over, and whichever side gives way signals its own defeat, since the attackers allow no time to regroup. Indeed these encounters are rarely very bloody, on account of the narrow front of battle, and the speed with which the defeated scatter and disappear.' Some of them were bloody enough, however.

Burning enemy villages was a regular practice; partly as a means of smoking out the inhabitants, partly in order to mark the completeness of the victory, (thatch and wattle huts burn very easily). Prisoners were not taken, except for slaves, which counted as booty. Enemy wounded were just killed. Women were supposed to be spared, and generally were so; as were boys of up to fifteen or so, who still wore their hair in the child's style, with the front of the head shaved.

In Geledi, the Sultan used to lead his army, but he did so in his religious capacity, as Sheikh. That is to say, he did not himself fight, but instead prayed throughout the action; he was thus giving his followers the greatest support he could, by bringing to bear his supernatural power on their behalf. It was while he was doing so that Yusuf Mahamud was killed, with his brother; and later his two sons, Ahmed and Abukar in the same way.

The office of Malak, or battle leader, has been mentioned (p. 146). In Geledi this was always taken by men of the Herabow lineage. The group as a whole are known by this title, but the one or two men who were actually to take the part of Malak on a particular expedition, would be chosen for the occasion by their fellow-lineage members, who would bless them for their task by reciting the fataha four times over them. (This is known as afar-afar; afar = four.) The Malak led the battle, and was under the obligation in no circumstance to run away. If the rest of the band did so, he had to lie down on the spot and wait for the enemy to arrive and kill him; this was known as 'laying his head on his cloth'. People say that this is why there are so few of the Herabow left.

Among the Abgal and other Hawiye, the same office is held by certain lineages, who in this case are called Islaw.

In case this example was not enough to discourage flight, men with whips followed at the rear of the band to stop anyone who ran. According to one informant, these were slaves (who regularly went to battle with their masters); another says they were men of the Aitire (Habash) lineage. It looks as though these measures were taken as a deliberate attempt to prevent the kind of situation described by Ferrandi, where as soon as those in front gave way, a general rout followed.

A war expedition was sent on its way and encouraged by Laashin. These are bards or chanters of extemporized verses, who still play an

important part at public gatherings, and at private festivities such as weddings. They have a large stock of traditional lore, phrases and couplets, the purpose of which is to praise the person or lineage which is employing them at the time; it is easy to see how this could be used in the context of war, and indeed their traditional phraseology bears the marks of this function. A Laashin could have a great effect on his hearers: there is a story, for instance, of a group of Begeda at the village of Malable, who were attacked by the Geledi expedition mentioned above. Though greatly out-numbered, they listened to their Laashin, the gist of whose verses was 'if you do not fight now you will be shamed for ever'; they left the village and attacked and, says my informant, were all killed.

The preparation for an expedition was the assembly of those who were to go, in their various lineages. They first paraded in files, each singing its own couplet (mar). (At a procession or dance, any man can improvise such a couplet, and the rest repeat it again and again; this is often combined with the chanting of gabay, longer passages of connected verse, by the Laashins.)

Today, the big assembly (shir) before the Is-tun at the New Year celebrations preserves many of the features of the old shir before setting out to war, and from it one can still get some idea of those occasions.

The conduct of war in Geledi seems to have had a theatrical quality; it was something removed from the ordinary conduct of life as

it was lived among neighbours. Whereas there everything is done to minimize any tendency to assertiveness or aggression, here those impulses had to be stirred up. The formal challenge, the muster (shir), the chanting and singing, combined to mark out the occasion, and to rouse the fighters; but within this special context only, where they could leave those emotions firmly behind when they went back to peaceful pursuits. It seems probable that the same sort of mechanism could be observed in other similar societies.

A. 2.g. THE GOBRON SULTANATE

Some account has been given of the lineage groups and their relation to one another in the traditional Geledi political organization. I go on to consider the office of the titular head of this organization, the Sultan (Suldaan) or Sheikh, and the position of his lineage, the Gobron.

This consists of those who descend in the male line from Sheikh Adeer 'Aalin, who lived 7-8 generations ago, (apart from a small branch which diverged two generations earlier). They are classified as 'uluma, men of religion, but apart from this have no special status among the other Noble lineage groups. At the centre of the lineage however, there is the Gobron dynasty, the line in which the headship of the Geledi has descended to its present holder, 'Abdi 'Usman.

As the double title 'Sheikh' and 'Sultan' implies, this is as much a religious position as a political one, a matter of supernatural as well as human power. (It will be seen below that the relative importance of each aspect is still a live issue in Geledi today.)

Both titles are in common use among Somali, but not normally for the same office. Among the northern Somali the positions of clan head (Suldaan, Ugaas, Bogor) and man of religion (Sheikh, Wadaad) are not only different but incompatible; human and divine power are seen as complementary, and men of religion are supposed to stand outside the rivalries of clan politics (Lewis 1963).

The situation in southern Somali society is rather different, since here any clan is expected to have its sheikh, who in the past would support it with the powers available to him, just as its warriors would with theirs (cf. p. 157). Geledi is unusual, however, in the degree to which its 'Sheikh', the bearer of supernatural power, also took political command.

It will therefore be necessary to look at the place held by religion, and by ideas of mystical power, in the life and thought of the Geledi, as of the other clans of the area.

Religion and Magic in Geledi

Islam is the life of everyone; its teachings, however imperfectly understood or mixed with ideas of other origins, are the basic assumptions; its practices, however falteringly observed, are the framework of their days and years.

The southern Somali are considered by those from the North to be the more pious part of the nation, in the sense of observing more closely the formal rules of Islam. In fact, only the particularly devout say the daily prayers with regularity. All men visit the Mosque on a Friday, and there is a good deal of attendance on weekdays too. There are a large number of Mosques in Afgoi, and at least one in all but the tiniest villages. (Village Mosques are simply large round Munduuls; those in the town used to be the same but are now all in masonry, the gifts of wealthy members of their congregation.) Women are not permitted inside the mosques, and very few of them pray regularly. (There

is a sharp increase in piety in both sexes during Ramadan, at least in the first part of the month.)

The Koran plays a crucial part in religious life. To be able to read, or rather recite it, is the primary, and often the only, qualification for being called a sheikh. To read it, or if one cannot do so oneself, to have it read, is both an act of piety, worthy in itself, and a means of gaining blessing on one's crops, a sick person, or any new enterprise. Also, as in other parts of the Muslim world, passages from it are written out to be used as amulets, sewn in leather pieces and worn round the neck or arms, or hidden in the roof of the house. A solution of ink in which the holy letters have been written is held to be efficacious, whether given to a sick person to drink or sprinkled over the crops.

Everywhere there are little Koranic schools (duksi), where in a rough lean-to made of brushwood a master (Ma'alim) teaches about 20 young boys - and nowadays a few girls also - to read and write the holy book. To 'read' means, in effect, to recite it, for by the end of the process they know the text by heart. There are few boys who do not spend at least a short time at a duksi, but not many complete the course and end by knowing the whole Koran. Those who do will generally become sheikhs or teachers themselves.

What is really learnt is the shape and sound of the sacred words, not their meaning. Those who pursue religious learning seriously learn this meaning later, but to the general unlearned public it is something extra, not the essence of the matter.

The Koran is thus really regarded as a supremely sacred object, whether it takes the form of spoken sound, or written paper, or ink dissolved in water. It is supremely holy because of its divine origin, and is thus both a means of men's pleasing God, and a channel of blessing of God to man; but once the element of meaning is removed, it is equally so whether read, heard, sprinkled or swallowed. With this goes a tendency to regard it in simple quantitative terms; 'They read lots of Koran', implying the more the better, as of an undifferentiated substance.

This sort of assumption, however, can allow people to treat it either instrumentally, as a medicine or good luck charm, or as something to be valued in itself as commanded by God, or, in most cases, with both these attitudes in varying combinations. It would certainly be a mistake to assume that the greater the degree of ignorance the more purely instrumental the attitude; the two things very independently.

Men of religion⁽¹⁾ are a wide category. The only criterion is popular acceptance; he is a sheikh who is thought to be so. He may be a full time professional, often a wanderer from town to town, or simply a local householder who is known for his piety and a higher degree of learning than his neighbours. He may be deeply learned, or perhaps know no more than is necessary to intone a few passages or write out amulets.

(1) The local treatment of Arabic loan words is rather complicated here. The Somali word wadaad is used synonymously with sheikh. In the plural, either is equivalent to the term 'uluma', which is generally used to refer to hereditary groups of the kind discussed here. On the other hand, the singular ma'alin is used only for the teacher of a Koranic school. 'Aalin' occurs as a personal name.

The status of sheikh is in some cases an achieved, in others an ascriptive one. Many men of religion have become so on their personal decision, regardless of their origin; but there are also certain descent groups who are considered, as groups, to be 'uluma'. In Geledi these include, as well as the Gobron, all Lightskins and at least one Habash lineage. Men born into these groups do not necessarily live a different life from their neighbours of equal status, but it is probably true that a greater number of them pray and attend the mosque regularly, and know their Koran from end to end and can when called upon, read it for their own or their neighbour's benefit.

The statement that a group are 'uluma' means both that there is actually a tradition among them of religious practice and learning, and that there is believed to be an innate quality in its members, a blessing inherited from their ancestor, which may give them uncommon powers, and which clings as a sort of residual sacredness to even the least pious among them.

But the words wadaad and 'uluma' are also connected in the popular mind with such things as divination, occult powers and acquaintance with Jinni, the uncanny spirits who are believed to haunt waste places, but are not seen by most men.

There are devout men who see these things - which can be roughly lumped together as 'magical' - as extraneous and alien to true religion; and this attitude is not merely a modern introduction. Movements of religious renewal and purification have made themselves felt in Somalia

since the last century at least; an example is that headed by the Sheikhs of Bardera whose war with Geledi is described below. But there is a deeply rooted folk-tradition, which may be taken as typical of older ways of thought, to which it seems quite natural that a holy man should also be a magician, and that indeed his 'magical' powers are the manifestation and proof of his holiness and God's favour towards him. To the same way of thinking, the Koran is as suitably used for divination and magic as for other purposes. This tradition doubtless includes local pre-Islamic elements, as well as magical beliefs and techniques associated with Islam itself, and found everywhere with it.

As well as the powers attributed to sheikhs and to the Koranic text, there are other sorts of power, either beneficial or harmful, which figure in popular belief. To describe them all in detail would not be relevant here; but the following chart suggests their range. (I include such 'pragmatic' techniques as traditional and modern medicine, because in practice they are treated as alternatives to magical techniques, and the distinction between the two is often blurred.)

MEANS OF POWER

	BENEFICIAL	HARMFUL
INNATE POWERS:	<u>Religious</u> <u>'Baraka'</u>	<u>Extra-religious</u> Friendship with <u>Jinni</u> Possession Cults.
TECHNIQUES: (with or without special powers)	<u>Ta'dad</u> <u>Wardi</u> Reading Koran <u>Tahlil</u> Amulets	Divination Techniques Herbal medicine Other traditional medicine Modern medicine

Many of these beliefs do not actually figure much in practical life. Sorcery, for instance, is believed to occur; but it is not the normal explanation offered for sickness. It is not really a belief which affects actions at all, but rather one which expresses and perpetuates the social distance between groups. The commonest explanation for misfortune in practice remains the inclusive one of 'God's will', which undercuts any other, and the favourite remedy is still the Koran.

Abnormal powers of every sort are the attributes of groups rather than individuals. The evil eye is a case in point. It is thought of as a danger, and people hang up bottles of sea-water in their houses as a protection against it. Groups which are 'uluma' are also supposed to have 'the eye'. The Lightskins are all said to have it by people of other categories, including the Gobron; at the same time others fear it in the Gobron themselves. Others say that Arabs have it. But I never heard it attributed to any particular individual. Nor was it ever suggested as the explanation for any serious misfortune; only for such things as spots on the skin, falling off a bicycle, or breaking two tumblers in succession. Since it is attributed to whole sections of the population, it is practically impossible to avoid; one cannot go to market, for instance, without exposing oneself to the risk, and so any large crowd, at a wedding for instance, is dangerous as a matter of course. If really serious evils were supposed to be caused in this way, it would be hard to maintain the normal friendly relations with the section of the community believed to be behind them (since the individual source is

never pinned down). Such suspicions both foster and express attitudes of distrust and restraint, but not of downright hostility to the groups in question. The same is true of beliefs about sorcery and other forms of magic.

From the point of view of the history of the Gobron, it is important to understand the distinction they make between sacred magic - ta'dad - and sorcery - seher. The latter is a general word for magic, and outsiders, Hawiye for instance, think that it is practised by the Gobron and indeed the Geledi as a whole. Geledi, however distinguish between this and ta'dad. Seher is vulgar sorcery, making use of herbs and material techniques; morally dubious and often malicious in intention. (It includes love-philtres and methods of causing people's death.) Habash particularly are said to practise it; the worst practitioners are not local at all but are said to live 'in the south' - in the Lower Juba area. So far as I know it is simply a matter of technique and does not require any innate power. Ta'dad on the other hand is said to be performed by reading in the Koran, and needs great learning to practise. There is also wardi - seeing past or future events and divining what steps ought to be taken, also by reading in the Koran. The Gobron may not practice these arts so much nowadays, but they are important elements in their past reputation. And their successful use of them was not only a matter of superior technique, but of a power or blessing they inherit, which made their spells more effective and their divination more accurate than those of others. The

most interesting of the powers ascribed to them is that of flying through the air; in order to do so all they need to do, if my informants are to be trusted, is to read a particular sura of the Koran⁽¹⁾.

The Gobron Dynasty

Some of the earlier legends about the Geledi tell how the remoter ancestors of the Gobron line showed the supernatural powers which belong to it. There is a gap, however, between these stories of early times, and the beginning of the lineage which is known as Gobron today, about 7 - 8 generations ago.

The rise of the Gobron to political dominance is bound up with the rise of the Geledi as a whole to power in the river area. The earlier history of the lineage is legendary. In their genealogy there is coherence and agreement as far back as 12 generations ago; there is also agreement over the earliest names of all; the ancestors which they share with the other Geledi nobles. Between these two points however, there is vagueness and disagreement even over the number of intervening generations. The same thing is observable of other Geledi genealogies (as indeed in those of other peoples); which suggests that the actual links between them are doubtful, and that this represents a period of settlement, when the community was in process of formation, and the various traditions of different groups moving together. It also suggests

(1) The ability to fly is often attributed in Somali legend to saints, and particularly to their bodies after death. One saint is in fact known as 'Sheikh Buube', i.e. 'flying'. (See e.g. Orelli 1957 p.206). In Geledi the gift is supposed to belong to the Gobron as a group, rather than to any particular ancestor.

that the claim that the Gobron descent line has always held a special position among the Digil is simply a shadow thrown back over earlier times by their de facto dominance in the Nineteenth century.

Geledi are generally vague as to how long they have occupied their present territory. According to members of the Sultan's family (and Barile's informant) the first settlement was in the time of Ahmed Mohamed of the Gobron, 10-11 generations ago; i.e. probably sometime in the Seventeenth century. Even if other lineages had established themselves first, this would mean a date only slightly earlier. Otherwise, the two first settlers are said to have been Mohamed Haji Yusuf of the Handab and Sheikh 'Ali Qalar of the Adawiin, both of them, too, about 11 generations back. A Seventeenth century date agrees well with what is known of the history of the area, and so may be taken as a basis.

Ahmed Mohamed Fage, from whom all the Gobron are descended, is said to have come to Geledi as a sheikh, and taught in a duksi. His descent is traced from neither of the ancestors of the Tolwiine and Yebaale, but from the third son of Subuge, which gives his descendants a neutral position with respect to the moiety division.

At first, it is said, he and his family lived in Balguri among the Yebaale. He had two sons, Warre and 'Abdalle. The tradition that he taught in a duksi means that he was not a person of much importance; if the powers shown by 'Umur Diine and his brothers had been passed on to this particular line of his descendants rather than any other, this had yet to become manifest.

At this time the Handab were the dominant lineage. The way in which the Gobron moved their residence to the other moiety, and became acknowledged as the sheikhs of Geledi, is the subject of the following legend:

At that time, the Yebaale villages enjoyed sunlight as they do today, but those of the Tolwiine lived in a permanent twilight or mist, like that just before dawn. The man who saw the remedy for this was a member of the Adawiin (the main Lightskin lineage, themselves 'uluma). By reading his Koran (wardi) he perceived that the Gobron line was to provide the good fortune of the community, and that if the Tolwiine could get their representative among them, they too would have the sun.

One day the boys of the two settlements had challenged one another to a game called 'ool-'ool', a sort of 'prisoners' base'. ('ool' = 'war-band' or 'enemy'.) They played on the large open space on the riverbank between their villages. Among them was the young 'Aalin Warre of the Gobron. Abikar 'Umur (the founder of the Abikerow lineage), sent two of his slaves, who waited near the 'base' and when 'Aalin ran up to it, caught him and carried him off to the Tolwiine villages. (Or, as I was also told it, Abikar himself caught the boy and refused to let go, though he was beaten about the head with sticks.) Afterwards the Tolwiine made a propitiatory gift (sameen) to the Yebaale, who accepted the situation; 'Aalin and his family lived in Siigale and became the 'uluma of the Geledi in place of the Diin Jiliible who had held the status before, and the sun rose over the Tolwiine settlement.

The son of 'Aalin Warre, Adeer, had five sons, from whom are descended all those who call themselves Gobron today (except a few descended from 'Abdalle Ahmed; I have been told that the Geledi sheikhs always have five sons, so that the line is safe from dying out.)

The events in traditional history given so far belong definitely to the category of legend. That is to say, while there is probably a good deal of fact in them, mixed with mythical invention, there is no way of knowing where it begins and ends. In so far as these events are tied to names recorded in genealogies, they can be roughly placed in time-sequence by reckoning generations, but their relation to actuality remains unclear.

At this point, however, we are getting near to established history. The first firm datum is the Gobron genealogy. This is established firmly enough as far back as 13 generations from the present Sultan; Guillain wrote it down in 1847, and all subsequent information agrees with his. The first definite dates available relate to the reign of Sultan Yusuf Mahamud, who died in 1848. Lt. Christopher, who met him in 1843, noted that he was then in his middle forties; he was therefore born about the turn of the century. His grandfather was Ibrahim, one of the five sons of Adeer mentioned above. He is agreed by the more reliable informants to have been the first of his line to take the title 'Sultan'; previously they had been simply 'Sheikh' (see Appendix II). He must have lived in the middle Eighteenth century, which puts the

legendary events recounted above in the early Eighteenth and Seventeenth centuries.

This adoption of the style of 'Sultan' is related by Barile's informant to the defeat of the Sil'is and the consequent emergence of the Geledi as an independent force locally. This has some probability; with the defeat of the Sil'is 'Sultan', the title as it were, fell vacant. The date of this defeat is unclear, however (~~see Appendix IV~~); it is not generally linked to the name of any particular Gobron Sheikh, but is recounted rather as an achievement of the whole people. It seems to belong, in fact, to a stage before the dynasty became so important in the life of the community as to take a leading role in events automatically.

What is easier to relate to the Gobron dynasty is the aftermath of this initial assertion of independence. According to the story, 'Umur Abroone of the Sil'is did not accept his expropriation, but went to look for allies who would help reinstate him. He found them among the other clans of the Gurgaate branch of the Hawiye, of which the Sil'is were part; the Hillibey, Moblen, Abgal and Hintire, the first three of whom inhabit the villages directly upstream from Geledi. It was the beginning of a state of hostility between Geledi and the Gurgaate clans, of which many traditions are preserved. This lasted until the middle of the Nineteenth century, when Sultan Yusuf Mahamud, followed by his son Ahmed, defeated their final attacks. In the process of defending themselves and their new-found independence, the Geledi subjugated the Gurgaate, and became the dominant power in the middle Shebelle area.

The period in which the clan as a whole, then, were becoming a force was also that during which the Gobron dynasty were becoming acknowledged as their leaders. The two facts seem to be two sides of the same movement, which was made explicit by their assumption of the title of Sultan.

Most of the neighbouring clans became either subjects or allies. Besides the Gurgaate, including the Hintire, the Orawane from near Audegle were conquered and became subjects, ra'i. It is not quite clear what this status involved apart from the obligation to support the Geledi in war, as is implied by the meaning of ra'i, from the verb 'to follow'. There does not seem to have been any tribute exacted, after the initial plunder following conquest; and they were not assimilated except for the Orawane who became part of the Geledi community. Neither were they continuously administered in any way, but went on running their internal affairs according to their separate traditions.

Allies, on the other hand, were the Wa'dan clan and a section of the Murunsade (both Hawiye). The latter had been driven from where they had previously lived in the north east, by the Moblen. They were granted land to settle on by the Abikerow lineage, in the east of the Geledi territory, where they still inhabit four villages. This was early in the Nineteenth century (according to one account, in Mahamud Ibrahim's time; to another in that of his son, Yusuf).

The Wa'dan on the other hand, the more important ally, seem to have arrived in the time of Adeer 'Aalin, a century or so earlier. A

basically pastoral clan, they are closely related by descent to the Abgal and the Moblen (see Appendix III). They had been driven by the Abgal from their previous position, and migrated to the left bank of the Shebelle, where the Geledi Yebaale moiety ceded them possession of the river bank land. This, however, was almost exclusively occupied by their Habash, who farmed the soil there for them; whether these were in fact slaves and freedmen, or actually represent an indigenous community which had become their clients, is not clear to me. The former seems more likely in the case of the Wa'dan, since these 'Habash' do not form lineages of their own, but remain appendages of those of their masters. On the other hand, some Geledi 'Habash' occupying the riverside village could well have passed with it to these new masters, and the survival of certain peculiar customs among them rather suggests a well-rooted tradition.

The Wa'dan Nobles on the other hand, went on occupying, with their flocks and herds, the sandy bush in between the river and the sea called the deh, the 'in between'. In theory they occupied this too by favour of the Geledi, but the latter's claim to it must have been nominal, since they never occupied it, and they presumably simply ratified an existing situation.

In spite of differences between them in way of life, language and traditions, Geledi and Wa'dan formed a close and lasting alliance. Together, they are known as 'Subuge and Maalinle', after their respective ancestors. They were allies in was (isku 'ool, the same war-band, or isku warran, the same spear); bloodwealth was not and is not payable

between them; and the Wa'dan recognise, though vaguely, the status of the Gobron Sultan.

The various Digil clans living further inland had their ties of ancestry and tradition with the Geledi, but at the beginning of the Nineteenth century these had not been activated for a long time. The further expansion of Geledi power and influence came in the time of the best-remembered Sultan of Geledi, Yusuf Mahamud Ibrahim.

Yusuf Mahamud and Ahmed Yusuf

'Sheikh Sultan Yusuf bin Mohammad (sic)...is a tall man with an intelligent countenance, about 45 years old....his head was shaven and he had a scant beard round the edge of the lower part of the face....'

This observation is dated April 11th 1843; the writer is the English Lt. Christopher, who visited Geledi in the course of exploring the Benadir Coast. With his account, and that of Charles Guillain four years later, it is possible, emerging from the ambiguities of tradition, to place the Gobron dynasty firmly in its historical context. Guillain failed to achieve the meeting with Yusuf that both men had hoped for, but met his two brothers Ibrahim and Muuse, of whom he recorded these impressions:

'Ibrahim, the elder, was 43 or 44 when I met him.....(he) seemed to be a man of authority and ideas. His sharp, jutting profile suggested a spirit of cunning and intrigue. Muuse is of colossal height and well proportioned....his physionomy is gentle, and though his features do not show the energy of the soldier, he generally accompanies Yusuf when he goes to war. Muuse is perhaps 38 years old,' (IIb p.36).

By this time the Geledi with Yusuf at their head had made themselves masters of the Shebelle region, and were acknowledged as such in the coastal towns; so much so that Christopher had made a detour inland in order to meet Yusuf. The latter showed great interest in the Europeans; 'Everything I had, to the knitting of a stocking, I explained as carefully as I could' - apparently he saw in them, armed as they were with guns, possible allies for himself.

Already at this period the Sultanate of Zanzibar claimed sovereignty over the Benadir ports, but the control exercised was merely nominal. As far as Mogadishu was concerned, it was Yusuf who had the more immediately superior power. The city was then in the hands of the Abgal, and in a state of decay and near-ruin. Two years before, Yusuf had been called in to mediate in a dispute over the succession to the position of Sheikh; the city was divided into two hostile quarters, which had become in effect rival towns. He had arrived with an army of about 8,000 men, and gave his decision in favour of the chief of the Shingani quarter. This latter's rival, unwilling to accept the decision, but unable to resist Yusuf's superior force, escaped from the city, leaving his section of it to be ruled by a kinsman.

Yusuf tried to enlist the help of Christopher and his men in putting down the recalcitrant party in Mogadishu, besides supporting him in his campaign against Bardera (see below).

Later, his brother Ibrahim 'made me a private visit, and proposed me to assist him, and land with 100 Englishmen at (Mungiya), and

establish it as the grain port of this coast.' (p.90) This is interesting, because 30 years later we find Yusuf's son, Ahmed, also declaring his intention to found a Geledi village at Mungiya (Barile p.95). This is a landing place south of Merca, at the point where the coast is closest to the river; there were then some ruins there which showed it had once been a settlement of the Arabicized population of the coastal towns, but it was no longer inhabited. The Geledi already had control of most of the river villages as far south as this point, and if they could have founded their own port on such a favourable site, they could have sold their grain direct to the traders from the Arab countries without going through the intermediaries of Mogadishu or Merca. What prevented this plan from ever being realized was the presence on the coast around Merca of the Bimal clan, their perennial enemies.

'This chief' wrote Christopher of Yusuf, 'has a great idea of maintaining the character of being fortunate in all his undertakings' (p.94). His career up to that time had indeed been a successful one; but at the time of Christopher's visit he was preparing for the campaign which was to be his best-remembered triumph, and crucial in the history of the region.

'This month (April 1843) he sets out on a most important expedition, hoping to crush the chief of Bardeh. The whole of the Somalis are enraged against that chief and the people of Bardeh, as they stigmatise the natives as Kaffirs, first, because they allow their women to

walk about the streets with their arms and faces uncovered; secondly because they use tobacco; so to prove they are not 'munefik' or 'hypocrite' but 'moslems' or 'faithful' the whole country is about to follow at the heels of Sheikh Yusuf in order to annihilate the fanatical tribe of Barderh, and burn their villages to the ground.'

Bardera is a town on the Juba river, inhabited in fact not by 'a tribe', but by a religious community, jema'a, of men from different clans, united by their adherence to the same mystical 'way', tariqa. The head of this community at that time was a Sheikh ⁽¹⁾ whose puritanical zeal to reform the customs of all the southern Somali had won some support, particularly in the coastal towns and among Arab immigrants, but much more widespread hostility. Besides tobacco chewing and women going unveiled, he prohibited dancing; he also forbade the handling of elephant or hippopotamus tusks, since these were unclean animals; a proposal which would have meant ruin to the ivory trade, and which consequently made him an enemy to trading clans like the Gasar Gudda of Lugh (Ferrandi P.227-228). He had started to impose these reforms by force on the surrounding clans, and had captured the city of Brava, where the inhabitants were obliged to obey his orders.

As the strongest Somali leader in the area, it was naturally to Yusuf that the other clans turned for protection and leadership. Chief among them were the Jiddu, the Tunni, the Begeda of Audegle, some of the Garre. The Elay of Bur Hakaba and the five Dafet clans, who were more nearly related to the Geledi, also resented Bardera and looked to Yusuf

(1) According to Barile's informants his name was Ibrahim (which was also that of the founder of the community); but Guillain (p.75) calls him Haji Abaile.

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The hostility between the two sheikhs, each in his way a religious leader, is said to have come to a head when the Bardera Sheikh sent Yusuf a message written on a shoe - a highly insulting gesture - whose gist was: 'Yusuf Mahamud is a gal - an infidel'. Whether or not he ever sent such a message, this probably represents accurately enough his opinion of Yusuf.

Whether because of this, or the appeal for help from the citizens of Brava, after some years of inconclusive skirmishing, Yusuf finally attacked Bardera with a large army drawn from many clans. After some hard fighting they conquered and burnt it; the Sheikh himself was killed in the battle. With this the Geledi became undisputed in their dominance between the two rivers.

The bare fact of this victory is reported by Guillain, visiting Geledi four years after it. But popular memory has surrounded the campaign with legendary details; these are some of them:

It is remembered that they travelled to Bardera by a circuitous route, in order to pass through the territories of different clans and rally support along the way. (This is fact; it is confirmed by Guillain (IIb p.42) who was given the precise itinerary by a man who had been on the expedition.) The whole country, it is said, was empty of men - only old men, women and children were left; but Yusuf said that they would be safe until his return; nobody would be able to approach Geledi, not even merchants, let alone armed men.

The Murunsade had at that time only recently been driven from their territory and given new land by the Geledi; those who were well enough followed Yusuf, but many of them were still suffering from the wounds they had got in their fight against the Hillibey. Yusuf told his people that while he was away they were to respect these allies in their weakness; if so much as a chicken belonging to the Murunsade was killed, the Geledi were to offer to pay its price; but if the Murunsade offended them, they were to make no claim. This was his dardaar, his parting command to them (the word is also used of the 'will' of a dying man).

They went through Wanle Weyn, where they were joined by the five Dafet clans, with the exception of the Huweer. When they came to Baidoa the other 'Geledi' of the doi came to their support; the Jiliible, Geelidle and Hadama.

When they came to the Juba river, they found that a woman there had called out all the crocodiles, so that it was dangerous to go near the water, (her name was Makay Walaalow). Yusuf said that whoever could bring him water from the river should be his Bahar, (see p.150) from then on. Many tried to make the crocodiles go away, but failed. Finally a man called Yusuf 'Usman Bagey went down and stuck a piece of wood into the bank, and all the crocodiles fled. He and his descendants thereafter became the chief Bahar of Geledi; and for this reason the expedition is called Bardera of the two Yusufs. (I owe this last story to a Habash (Aitire) informant: I do not believe a Noble would use the last phrase.)

Among the men studying religion at Bardera, there was one of the Gobyan (Geledi) lineage. He consulted his Koran, and said to the Sheikh, 'Look, Yusuf Mahamud has come!' The Sheikh, who had also been looking in the Koran, replied 'Yusuf Mahamud is not here; he is still in Geledi, with his wooden clogs on.' (Clogs were used for walking in mud. If the expedition was in April, the Gu rains would have been falling; it seems an unlikely time to take an army across country, but perhaps was chosen for that reason, to take the Bardeans off guard; this may be what is implied here.) The Sheikh is represented as practising wardi, like Yusuf himself; but he had not the same gift, and his divination proved false.

But when the sun rose in the morning, he saw Yusuf's army before the town. He was so frightened that he could not control his bowels, and had to rush out of doors.

Yusuf's army had with them four large milk vessels (haan) filled with bees. They opened these, and the bees flew out, driving the army of Bardera into panic. After this, the Gobron are praised as 'shinni duulio', 'who make war with bees'.

After they had burnt the town of Bardera, the tall palm tree (bar dheere) after which the town was named, remained standing. Someone pointed it out to Yusuf, who turned back and cut it down.

When they came back through Dafet, the Huweer came out to meet them with gifts of milk and food, to ask Yusuf's pardon for not having supported him, which he finally granted.

In the stories which have been told here of the Gobron dynasty, they are shown as having mythical links to all sections of the Geledi community. They belong to neither and yet to both of the two moieties. The Lightskin lineages enter in the person of the Adawiin sheikh, who divined that the boy 'Aalin Warre would be the luck of the people. The Habash Bahar lineage also have their account of their own special association with the dynasty. Such stories underline the particular position of the Gobron Sheikhs, able to command a respect and loyalty which went beyond the rivalries and resentments which otherwise divided the community.

This, however, merely made the loyalty of these heterogeneous groups possible, in that it offered no obstacles to their common indentification with their Sheikh; but if anything could actually arouse such loyalty and retain it, it would be a series of spectacular military successes against outsiders. The prestige which the earlier members of the dynasty had gained by leading or encouraging the Geledi in their fight against the Sil's and the other Gurgaate, was increased to its highest point by the conquests of Yusuf Mahamud. It is likely indeed that it was these earlier struggles against common dangers, which secured the sense of unity, for which the Gobron dynasty supplied a necessary focus; and this was reinforced by their later successes.

One enemy, however, which remained intractable was the Bimal clan. These occupy the land around Merca, where they had over-powered the old city population, just as the Abgas had those of Mogadishu. They occupy

a long stretch of the coast, and as far inland as the river, where they had farms worked by villages of 'slaves' (some of them perhaps really client-Habash; but many were undoubtedly slaves in the strict sense). Themselves by tradition a pastoral people, the Bimal are alone in this area in belonging to neither the Digil-Rahanwiin, nor the Hawiye clan-families, but are a branch of the Dir, whose cognates live far to the north.

They had been supporters of the Sheikh of Bardera; the reason for this was not so much enthusiasm for his religious ideals as hostility to the Geledi, whose growing power over the villages down-river was threatening to encroach on that of the Bimal themselves. Possibly what was at issue was not only fear of their military strength, but trade rivalry. The Bimal, like the Geledi, were grain producers from their slave-worked farms by the river, and prospered by their exports to the Arab countries through the port of Merca. Their caravan trade perhaps also suffered when the river crossing of Audegle became part of the Geledi sphere.

During Yusuf's absence at Bardera, they had done their part in supporting their ally and harassing Yusuf, by attacking the Begeda of Audegle (Guillain II b p.76). For the next four years there was constant fighting between the two clans. In 1847 the Bimal got an ally from the outside in Haji 'Ali, a chieftain of the southern Majerteyn in east central Somalia, who had himself had plans to form a colony at Mungiya, and had obtained permission to do so from Sayyid Said of Zanzibar, but been prevented by Yusuf (Guillain, II a p.443). He brought to the

support of the Bimal 100-150 men, 40 rifles and four cannon. He seems to have raided some of Yusuf's dependant villages near the river, but was finally repulsed at Golwiin, a village of Habash farmers who were 'very devoted to Yusuf' (Guillain II b p. 56. , Barile p.87).

Yusuf, at the head of the usual mixed army, attacked Merca early in 1847, the Bimal and their ally were defeated, and the city surrendered. But the main body of the Bimal, living outside the town, had not submitted to him. The following year, Yusuf gathered an army at Golwiin, in order to give battle to these latter. His brother, Muuse, was with him as usual.

The news of the outcome reached Guillain at Zanzibar, as he was about to sail for France. On the 11th May 1848 Yusuf 'set out in pursuit of his enemies, and the following day at mid-day their encounter took place near Jilib.⁽¹⁾ The band of the Gobron Sultan was put to flight and Yusuf, together with his brother Muuse, died in the mêlée. The battle was very bloody....Ibrahim was determined to continue the war....' Guillain assumed that Ibrahim would take over his brother's position, and that the general political situation in the Benadir would not be seriously affected.

But it is said by some people today, including Gobron, that Yusuf and Muuse did not die in the battle, but disappeared, and were not seen again in the country. One of the powers attributed to the Gobron, it will be remembered, is that of flying through the air. One story is that

(1) At a place called 'Ad-'Adey, according to tradition.

a man of the Maandhow (Habash) lineage, a certain Haji 'Abdi Garun, saw Yusuf Mahamud after this at Mecca. Yusuf forbade him to tell anyone of their meeting, and said he would curse him and all his lineage with an incurable disease if he did so. (Evidently he did obeyed, in spite of which the Maandhow lineage still flourishes.)

Yusuf was succeeded by his sons, Ahmed and Abikar, who were still in their teens. (It is not clear what became of Ibrahim.) They divided their father's territory between them, Ahmed remaining at Geledi, while Abikar became 'Sultan' of Buulo Marer, a village downstream opposite Bimal territory and at the other end from Geledi of that stretch of the Shebelle which had become the Gobron sphere. The most likely motive for this, apart from giving a position to the younger brother, is that it was safer to have a member of the family permanently based in that area, in view of the Bimal habit of raiding and burning the nearest villages which owed allegiance to the Geledi. Meanwhile, Ahmed could give his attention the Gurgaate, who had once again started to give trouble.

On the whole, however, it seems that Guillain was right in his forecast; the dominance of the Geledi was not seriously challenged.

A third brother, Hassan, disappointed at not getting a position like those of the other two, attempted to go south and get himself a kingdom beyond the Juba (Barile pp. 88-89); but his band was attacked by the Begeda and the Jiddu while on its way through their territory and he himself killed. The man behind the attack was said to be another

Gobron, Sheikh 'Umur Haji, who was however hostile to Yu uf's family.

After that he continued to foment revolt among the Begeda and the other clans to the south-west of Geledi, the immediate cause of their fighting, according to my account, was three wooden doors with decorative carving, which had been made in Buule Marer and sent to Ahmed Yusuf; the Begeda intercepted them and kept them from Sheikh 'Umur Haji. Ahmed and Abukar together, however, put down this rebellion.

When Sultan Sayyid Bargash, who had succeeded to the rule of Zanzibar, wanted to build the garesa or palace for his representative in Mogadishu, it was from Ahmed that he asked for help in inducing the Abgal not to interfere with the project (Barile p.90). This was carried out in 1870. In 1873 Kirk, writing on the Benadir coast, and noting the quantity of grain from the Geledi area that was being loaded into ships off Mogadishu and Merca, mentioned that the ruler of Geledi was still Ahmed Yusuf.

Ahmed's death, therefore, was not until after 1873. Its circumstances were almost a repetition of his father's. The difference was that now the control of Zanzibar over the coastal towns was being enforced rather more seriously, and both Bimal and Geledi were trying to use it for their own advantage.

Since 1848, indecisive raids and counter-raids had continued between the two rival clans. According to the story retailed by Barile, the immediate provocation for this last outbreak of fighting was an accusation of treachery towards Sayyid Bargash that Ahmed made to him against the Bimal.

At all events, the outcome was that an army drawn from various subject and allied clans and led by both Ahmed and Abukar mustered at Golwiin and met the Bimal at Agren, near Merca. Both brothers were killed and their followers put to flight.

Ahmed was succeeded by his son 'Usman, and Abukar at Buule Marer by his son Ahmed. Another son of Ahmed Yusuf, Abukar, became 'Sultan' of the Eyle at Bur Heybe. The e had previously acknowledged his father as Sultan, and had, for instance, sent a contingent to his war against Merca. The Eyle are said to have invited him to live among them, for the honour of having a Gobron Sheikh of their own; this is perfectly likely, while at the same time it was politically useful for the Gobron to have their representative living inland as well as the two near the river. The three Sultans now marked the points of a triangle, with which was the main area of Geledi influence.

Agaren seems to have been the last battle fought by the Geledi that was of much importance. 'Usman Ahmed at some point led a large army against the Hintire, of what provocation I am not clear, but returned without fighting them, because his brother had killed one of the enemy before the order to attack had been given (i.e. presumably, not at an auspicious moment). He is said to have told them that they would fight no more battles after that; the Hintire, he said, would be conquered not by him but by others.

I have been told that the Geledi were tired of wars and wanted peace and order. Though in the present day context this is a

rationalization of their attitude to the Italian conquest, there is probably truth in it. It would not be surprising if 'Usman Ahmed showed less appetite for military adventure than his father and grandfather, and a readiness to try other means of gaining his ends.

Position and Powers of the Sultan

Guillain noted that the house of Yusuf Mahamud was larger and better constructed than most of its neighbours, but it was of the same basic type as they. His style of life and that of his successors did not differ from that of other well-to-do members of the same community. What power he had, too, depended directly on that community; he had no private body of followers who could have imposed it on them. His only support was his inherited religious and magical prestige, and his own ability and character.

At the very basis of his position, for his personal subsistence, he was dependent on his people. Alone among the Geledi Nobles, the Sultan owned no land of his own; instead, each member of the community brought him a share of grain and other produce from every harvest. Though in practice this was a tribute to a ruler, it still recalls the alms given to poor or itinerant sheikhs in return for their prayers.

Though the use of the Sheikh's powers of blessing and divination is chiefly recalled in the context of war, it was and is part of his relationship to the community that he should concern himself with their peacetime life, and above all with their crops. No one was allowed to

begin his harvest until the Sultan had declared, from his reading in the Koran, that the propitious moment had arrived. (This rule is still in force, but is increasingly ignored in practice. To start too early used to be a finable offence; I am told that at one time the government D.C. would enforce this, but it is no longer so.)

The rule of the akhyar has been dealt with (p.133); in addition to these there are office holders known as 'ul-hay', staff-bearers. Their specific task was to mediate between the lineage group and the Sultan. They exist only in the Noble lineages of the Tolwiine moiety; two each for the Gobron, Abikerow and Maama Suubis, and one for the Handab. They are chosen informally from among themselves by the Akhyar of the lineage. They seem to have had an important function in transmitting their fellow lineage-members' point of view to the Sultan, and his instructions back again, including his ritual ordinances. (Nowadays these are the only ones; e.g. about the time of the harvest.)

The Sultan is said to have been formerly the supreme judge of the community, though it is not clear how he exercised this function; whether it was a case of presiding over the decisions of the akhyar, or perhaps of having particularly difficult cases referred to him.

He is also said to have had a bodyguard of slaves, who acted as a kind of police, to detect and prevent disaffection.

Just how great the power of the Sultan actually used to be, is now difficult to determine. 'He is the master' says Guillain of Yusuf Lahamud, 'who strikes loud and says "I will have it so!" and none dare

reply "I will not." ' But he is writing, not of the personal power of Yusuf over the Geledi, but of that of the Geledi over the neighbouring peoples, especially the enfeebled coastal towns. Yusuf had power through rather than over his people.

The question of how far past Sultans were really masters can still raise passions in Geledi today. The Gobron tend to imply that they were absolute rulers, obeyed without question by the rest of the population. (One wonders if this view has not in fact taken some colour from the experience of Italian colonial rule, through which the community has since passed.) From certain members of other Noble lineages, on the other hand, it seems that the Sultan was always politically a mere figurehead, set in his place and maintained there by the warriors who were the real masters. This view emphasizes his religious function, and insists on the title 'Sheikh' instead of 'Sultan'.

In theory it is the Geledi community, or rather its more powerful members, who choose the Sultan and 'put the turban on him' (dubeen). (Since the turban is his sign of office, the verb has the same significance as the English 'crown'.) The Abikerow say that as gaba'il it is they who do so. In practice, however, the office has passed from father to son for so many generations, that this can be seen only as a process of ratification. Perhaps, since there is no strict rule of primogeniture, they had some influence in deciding which son was to succeed.

Between these two views of the Sultan's position I have not the evidence to decide. But to refuse to accede to either is not merely a confession of ignorance; on the contrary, it seems very likely that neither party is simply 'right' but that this contradiction is built into the situation itself. What is today a dispute, really of historical and sentimental interest only, is the continuation of what a century ago was an active struggle for influence. The Gobron dynasty extended both the power of their own clan over others, and at the same time their own power over their fellow-clansmen. Such a concentration of power was strange to all Somali tradition, even in the south, where there is not the same thorough egalitarianism as in the north. It would be odd if such a change in political structure could be brought about and evoke no opposition. It is unlikely that it could have got as far as it did, without the impetus of outside conquest to unite the whole community behind the Sheikh. From the point of view of such outsiders, certainly, the Sultan was Geledi; but from within the clan the picture was doubtless not so simple. The Gobron never came near to establishing a despotism (supposing that they had wanted to.)

Did they, however, establish an empire? The word is not an appropriate one for the loose federation of clans which they, temporarily, headed. Apart from the division of the dynasty into three branches in different places, they established no regular delegates of their own among the various clans, and no machinery to turn into a unity this miscellaneous collection of alliances and submissions, held together by

three things only; the advantage of being on a winning side, the traditional religious prestige of the Gobron line, and the personal character of Yusuf and, to some extent, his successors. Perhaps some unity could have been made out of it, but only by a radical change in the traditional local political structures, which they never seem to have contemplated. Much more probably, the whole thing would eventually have fallen to pieces.

But whatever the potential futures of the Geledi political organisation and those of their allies, they were not to be realised. The next stage in their history was to be decided by events outside their control or knowledge.

B.1. HISTORICAL OUTLINE 1889 - 1969 ¹

During the latter half of the Nineteenth century, while the clans of the Somali interior remained free from domination except by one another, the Benadir ports were nominally subject to the Sultanate of Zanzibar, though in practice this meant merely that certain customs dues were collected by the Sultan's representative. It was against the background of this situation that the Geddi had established their hegemony over the lower Shebelle area, and most of the inter-river plain.

In the year 1889, the then Sultan of Zanzibar, Said Khalifa, surrounded by growing British and German power in East Africa and under diplomatic pressure from Italy also, granted a lease of the Benadir ports, with the right to administer them, to the Imperial British East Africa Company. The company in its turn, by an arrangement already made, sublet the ports to Italy, which had in the same year established protectorates over the two central Somali Sultanates of Majerteynia and Obbia; so that the Somali coast from Kismayu to Cape Guardafui was now, at least, nominally, under Italian jurisdiction.

In 1891 an agreement signed between Britain and Italy, assigning each country its sphere of influence in N. E. Africa, confirmed this situation, the country south of the Juba river being in the British sphere

¹ The facts in this outline are taken, where other reference is not given, from Lewis 1965, Chapters III - VII, and Hess, Chapters II - V and VII.

(at that time) and that to the north of it in the Italian. Further north, on the Red Sea coast, British control had already been established, and the territory of the northern Somali became the British Somaliland Protectorate. Finally, in 1892, Said Khalifa's successor, Said 'Ali, granted the Benadir ports, this time on direct lease, to Italy for a period of 25 years.

Italy's interest in N. E. Africa dated from some years before these events. An increasingly influential section of Italian opinion hoped for the foundation of an empire in Africa to rival those being established by Britain, France and Germany; and for a solution to their country's problems of over-population and under-employment, by providing colonies overseas to take the emigrants who were otherwise forced to leave for the Americas or elsewhere. During the 1880s and 1890s the travels of Italian explorers, such as Cecchi, Bottego, Robecchi-Bricchetti and others, in Ethiopia and Somalia were prompted by these interests. Eritrea as well as Somalia was gradually appropriated by Italy at this time.

The desire to colonise Somalia in particular was stimulated by the over enthusiastic guesses of certain travellers as to its fertility and potential agricultural wealth. Less openly expressed, and better founded, was the hope that the possession of this territory would eventually make it possible to penetrate Ethiopia itself.

Italian imperialism, however, was not at this date militaristic in tone. The aim of the colonisers was supposed to be commercial

expansion and peaceful penetration of the territories concerned - though in practice this would turn out to mean the use of military force when required.

At the beginning of the 1890s, then, Italy had control in southern Somalia only over the coastal towns and the area of semi-desert immediately surrounding each of them. Their management was at first entrusted to a commercial chartered company, V. Filonardi e Co. After three years this enterprise failed for lack of funds, and, after an interval of provisional government by the Italian state, was replaced by the Benadir company, which administered the territory until 1905. It was only then that the state finally took over direct control. In the same year Italy finally purchased the Benadir ports outright from Zanzibar. During this time, also, the Italians were beginning to extend their power inland.

The Sultan in Geledi at the time was 'Usman Ahmed Yusuf (son of the Ahmed who had been killed at Agaren). According to a story told by one of his descendants (a serious and reliable man), Geledi was visited about this period from a man from Brava, Sherif Sidi, who had travelled widely and seen the arrival of Europeans in other parts of East Africa. His advice to the Geledi was to make an alliance with the Italians, rather than wait to be taken over instead by the British or the Germans. To attempt to fight them would be useless, he said. Accordingly, Sheikh 'Usman sent a letter to the Italians in Merca, where they were hemmed in by the hostile Bimal (see below). The subsequent course of events confirms the implication of this story, that the Geledi

(or at least the Sultan's party) were from the beginning prepared to treat the Italians as allies rather than enemies.

Among other clans, however, along the coast and in the deh, there was bitter resistance to the Italians, particularly encouraged by the religious leaders of the vicinity.¹ This was in large part provoked also by the attempts of the Italian administration to do away with slavery; since these clans of the coastal strip were by tradition semi-nomadic pastoralists, keeping their stock on the sandy 'white earth', but had reached a high level of prosperity by cultivating the 'black earth' of the river by means of slave labour, and selling the grain and sesame produced. They included the Abgal, the Wa'dan (the allies of Geledi) and the Hintire, and most notably the Bimal of the Merca region.

The enmity of these clans was manifest from the beginning of the Italian settlement. In 1895 a party of Italians was massacred while camping in Wa'dan territory, at a place called Lafole; out of seventeen Italians, only three survived. The party had been headed by Antonio Cecchi, famous as an explorer and one of the most enthusiastic and influential advocates of Italian colonisation in this area. This event made a profound impression on public opinion in Italy; it led to strong reprisals and the forcible pacification of the land as far as the Shebelle.

¹ A number of settlements of religious communities, jema'at, are located along the middle Shebelle; those belonging to the Salihyya religious order (tariqa) are especially numerous. (Cerulli I pp 192-3, 200.)

The circumstances of the massacre remain unclear,¹ but if what has been said above is correct, it does not seem likely that the Geledi Sultan was directly involved, as has been alleged, though there may have been those in Geledi who sympathised with the act. At all events the Italian show of force that followed seems to have supplied the final proof for the Geledi that the Italians were better to have as friends than enemies.

Originally, accommodation to the Italians may well have seemed to the Geledi ruling group, not as mere capitulation to superior force, but as a successful stroke of diplomacy. The Bimal, the chief resisters of the Italians, were the traditional enemies and rivals of Geledi; while with the Hintire they had recently been carrying on an inconclusive war (see p. 188.). Previously, in their enmity to the Geledi, the Bimal had been ready to accept the help and nominal overlordship of a foreign power, that of Zanzibar. Perhaps the Geledi in their turn saw the Italian power in a similar light, and were willing to use it against their enemies. The long-distance, largely token rule of Zanzibar was what they knew; that the overlordship of the Italians would amount to more than this quite possibly did not enter into their calculations.

Meanwhile, in the north, among the Somali clans in the area where British and Ethiopian power was becoming established, Muhammad 'Abdille

¹The Italian commissioners investigating the incident found it to have been instigated by two Arabs holding positions under the Filonardi administration, which they were afraid of losing through Cecchi's assuming control. (Hess, p.65.)

Hassan, known as the 'Mad Mullah' was beginning his campaign of resistance against the foreigners, which was to continue for twenty years. As his movement spread, it began to cause alarm in the Italian sphere; those clans and religious groups in the Benadir who were most hostile to the Italians were in contact with the Dervishes (as they were called) and even received weapons from them, especially the Bimal. On the other hand, certain religious leaders, notably Sheikh 'Uways Muhammad of Brava, were strongly opposed to the Dervishes and denounced them as heretics.

The attitude of the Sultan and the ruling party in Geledi to the Dervishes was, it seems, coloured by the hostility traditionally felt by the settled populations of the Benadir towards what they saw as predatory lawless northerners. Nevertheless it was known that many individuals in Geledi sympathised with them.

In December 1902, the following agreement was signed by Sultan 'Usman and the then Governor of the Benadir (for the Benadir Company):

"This agreement is made with the help of God, for the good of the government of the Benadir and of Sheikh Osman, Sultan of the Geledi, and for the benefit of all the population of the town of the Dhe¹ and of those who live on the river, both to the right and left of it.

The protection of God be with us. If Mohamed Abdullahi comes down into the Benadir to make war or raid or rob or

¹What is meant is, of course, the Deh, not a town but the sandy region between the river and the coast.

impose tribute, Sheikh Osman promises never to enter into friendship with him, but to help the government of his Majesty the King of Italy with all his powers, with words and with the men who are subject to him, in order to prevent any harm to the subjects of the Italian Government, and to drive the invader from the country.

The government of the Benadir accedes to the request made by Sheikh Osman and grants him a presidio of forty ascaris who will be based in Geledi.

These ascaris will serve as guard of honour for the Sultan, and as a police force in Geledi.

They will be paid by the colonial Government; Sheikh Osman will provide the huts for their accommodation and give them the necessary land.

The ascaris may not receive orders without the permission of the Governor, except in the case of the pursuit of robbers carrying away goods stolen in Geledi.

If the 'Mad Mullah' should come down into the Benadir, the number of the ascaris will be increased as much as would be necessary for defensive purposes.

At the head of the ascaris will be an aghida, chosen by the Governor of the colony and taking his orders directly from him, so that the ascaris shall be completely under the authority of

the colonial government the aghida shall act under the orders of the Sultan only for purposes of policing the town, and serving as guard of honour in the province of Geledi"

(Quoted in Perticone, pp. 246-247.)

These ascaris became known as the 'Geledi Band'; they were mainly of non-Somali origin (Lewis 1965 p.87). The above document shows how the interests of the two parties were balanced, as well as the alarm which Muhammad 'Abdille Hassan's rising caused to the Italians, far off though it still was. It is clear that by providing the Sultan, for the first time, with an independent military force at his own command, the Italians had (without aiming to do so) decisively affected the balance of power within Geledi, between him and the other Nobles, including those who tended to sympathise with the Dervishes. At the same time the real power, outside the limited local situation, already lay with the Italians, though it had not yet been officially established.

In 1905, the Benadir company was wound up, partly as a result of a scandal caused by its failure to put an end to slavery in the area. From then on the Somali colony was to be directly administered by the Italian state. In the same year the Sultan of Zanzibar ceded the Benadir ports to Italy absolutely, and all connection between Zanzibar and Somalia came to an end.

In the February of 1908, a party of Dervishes actually did come down the Shebelle, and did considerable damage before they were defeated near Balad and driven back. In the year or so before this, Italian

forces had also defeated the Bimal, who, provoked by the anti-slavery policy and encouraged by hopes of support from the Dervishes, had virtually besieged Merca from the land side. They also crushed the Hintire and burnt their largest settlement, Mererey; in this the Geledi were inclined to feel the Italians had done them a favour in finishing their work for them.

Later in 1908, an Italian party arrived at Afgoi-Geledi to set up a station there; the Sultan visited the commandant and sent 29 cows to his troops as a token of friendship (information from Mr. Lee Cassarelli).

By 1910 the whole of the Benadir area had been subdued, and Italian rule extended as far as Balad, Lugh and Jilib near Brava. In 1911 a great shir or assembly of the clans from across the Shebelle was held at Geledi, in which twelve thousand men joined, from the Garre, the Gal Ja'el, the (Habash) Shiidle, the five Dafet clans, the Hillibey, Murunsade and others. The government's plans to occupy the area were explained to them and accepted without further resistance; from there the Italians went on to occupy the upper Shebelle and the inter-river plain, and by 1914 the boundaries of the colony were approximately what they were to remain until 1934. (Kismayu and the strip of territory south of the Juba were peacefully transferred to Italy by Britain in 1919 and 1924.)

During the following years the machinery of Italian administration was established throughout the colony. At Geledi, the Italian settlement and the administrative buildings were concentrated on the left bank of

the river (i.e. the side accessible from Mogadishu) near the little Wa'dan village of Afgoi, which consequently gave its name to the whole settlement as an administrative centre. From this point on it therefore becomes appropriate to call the town Afgoi rather than Geledi. On account of its position as a route juncture and its importance as a market, it naturally was made the centre of government for the district, to which it gave its name.

By the mid 1930s, Afgoi, now easily accessible by road from Mogadishu, had already become what it was to remain; a place where office workers and shopkeepers from the capital of the colony come for relaxation at the weekends in the cool beside the river. It was even something of a tourist attraction. The government 'planted trees along the principal roads created a magnificent villa and a handsome park, and designed a simple but artistic small piazza at the junction of the roads to Mogadishu and Kismayu' - so Barile (p.112) gushingly described the modest reality.

The years up to the outbreak of World War two were also those during which the Italians set themselves to exploit the agricultural potential of their colony. This turned out to be rather less than had once been hoped. The government had declared all land not actually under cultivation by Somali to be demaniale or public land, available for colonists to take up in the form of concessions. (This was in fact generally the land least suitable for farming, since the more fertile was naturally used first by the Somali - see Maino, p.75) Schemes for

settling a population of industrious Italian colonists on their own smallholdings faded away. Instead, plantation agriculture was started along the rivers, where the land could be irrigated, making use of native labour. The most important product turned out to be bananas, which were exported to Italy. The largest and most successful such enterprise was the complex of plantations owned by the Societa Agricola Italo-Somala (S.A.I.S.) at Jowhar (Villagio Duca degli Abruzzi), which was started in 1919. Near Afgoi plantations were started on a basis of private ownership. The economic and social significance and consequences of these enterprises will be discussed in the next chapters.

Already by 1913 the first bridge across the Shebelle had been built at Geledi (De Martino p.65); a network of rough roads was being made throughout the country. In 1924 the first stage of a light railway was finished from Mogadishu to Afgoi; it crossed the river on a stone-built bridge and cut through the village of 'Eelqode. By 1927 it was extended to Villagio Duca, in order to transport the product of the plantations.

According to one of my informants, the Italians remained 'respectful' towards Sultan 'Usman Ahmed, and consequently to his people, during his lifetime, but after his death in the early 1920s, (when he was succeeded by his son 'Abdi) their behaviour changed. It seems probable that there was a genuine change of style in the relations between colonial officials and Geledi at about that time, but this is not only to be attributed to the old Sultan's death. Somalia had been on the whole

slackly administered; after the Fascists had come to power in Italy in 1922, a period of more forceful government was supposed to begin in the colonies as well as at home. In Somalia, however, this impetus showed itself largely in public works, such as the construction of roads, and of buildings in Mogadishu and the other larger towns. More funds were put into the development of the plantation economy; but with all this, the colony continued to run at a deficit, until it became tacitly accepted that its value to Italy was as a source of prestige, not wealth.

In 1934, the Italo-Abyssinian war began with an incident at the disputed Somali border. After the war, in which Somali troops, some men from Geledi among them, played a considerable part, Somalia became a province of the short-lived Italian East-African Empire.

The second world war brought the most momentous change in the history of Somalia since the beginning of the century. In 1941 Italian rule ended, as their African Empire fell to the British army. After crossing the Shebelle to retreat up country, the Italian forces mined the railway bridge at Afgoi behind them; one Geledi was killed by a bit of flying rail. (The bridge was never subsequently rebuilt, but the stubs are still used as landings for the ferry boats.)¹ Whatever their initial attitudes to the Italian presence may have been, it seems that by this time the Geledi, like the other clans of the area, were willing to see them go, and rather gleeful to have them proved not after

¹ The track, locomotives, etc. were removed by the British Army for use in the Middle East. (Rodd, p.169.)

all invincible. Following the custom of naming important years after their outstanding events, the year 1940-41 is known in Geledi as ka-la-roor, 'run-away'.

In the uncertainty and dangers of the time, traditional expectations of the religio-magical role of the Gobron once again were in people's minds, as they had been a hundred years earlier. It was rumoured, on the one hand, that the Italian government had consulted Sheikh 'Abdi 'Usman to foretell the outcome of the war (Lewis 1965, p.98); on the other, some of the Gobron say that the success of the English army was owed to a rite performed by the Gobron elders, during which they buried a black ox in the ground.

After 1941, therefore, Somalia was for nine years under British military administration. It was during this time that the outlines of the future Somali Republic began to be drawn. As public opinion in Europe gradually set against imperialism, the British in southern Somalia, in their role as liberators from Fascist oppression, planned in terms of eventual self-government for the Somali; they tolerated and even encouraged such manifestations of emerging national consciousness among the more educated Somali as the setting up of cultural and mutual-benefit societies, which were to be the beginning of modern political parties. Most important of these was the Somali Youth Club, later the Somali Youth League (S.Y.L.), which was to become one of the chief forces for Somali independence. This was (at least originally) pan-Somali in its membership and aims; other societies, however, supported more local interests.

Chief among these was what was to become the A.D.M.S. (see below section B.3 (c)) which got its support among the Digil-Rahanweyn clans, and consequently became the party of Geledi, though not of their Wa'dan allies, or of left-bank Afgoi.

At the local level the British, while taking over the Italian administrative structure (replacing the personnel by British officials) encouraged the formation of 'tribal' councils to take an active part in the running of local affairs.

While the whole of N. E. Africa was temporarily under British control, hopes were raised that all the territory inhabited by Somalis would become united into one modern State. These hopes were frustrated, however, as the former frontiers of both Ethiopia and Kenya, which included Somali populations, were re-established. The fate of southern Somalia was intensely debated. The more articulate section of Somali national feeling, headed by the S.Y.L., was bitterly opposed, on the whole, to any return to Italian control; on the other hand, the not inconsiderable Italian population demanded a return of the colony to their mother country. Certain Somali groups supported them, partly on account of local hostilities, partly induced by Italian money.

In 1948 a United Nations commission arrived in Mogadishu to adjudicate the issue; while they were there, demonstrations by the different parties led to rioting and loss of lives, heaviest among the Italians. But though political feelings could run so high in the capital, where there was a high concentration of those Somali who had

some degree of western education, and were politically conscious in the modern sense, it was to take longer before the new words and ideas acquired any meaning in a place like Afgoi, with its quiet population still mainly concerned with their own farming and local business. The violence in Mogadishu had no repercussions there.

Finally in 1950, control over southern Somalia was handed back to Italy, but for a period of 10 years only, and under United Nations trusteeship. The Italian Trust Administration was to 'foster the development of free political institutions and to promote the development of the inhabitants of the territory towards independence'. The U.N. retained the ultimate authority to ensure that this obligation was carried out.

The Italian Administration on the whole carried out efficiently their unprecedeted task of setting up a new state by the 'deadline method' (Karp p.13). In the course of ten years, education was greatly extended, administrative posts handed over gradually to Somalis, and an elected National Assembly finally established. It was still not possible, however, to so transform the economic structure of the country that it could become, as a modern state, financially as well as formally independent. Somalia would continue to rely heavily on foreign aid; an aspect of this which is important to the economy of the riverine areas was the special arrangement by which the banana growing industry continued to be controlled by an Italian state monopoly, and the fruit sold on the

Italian market. This provided a prospect of some stability though not of expansion for the industry, which had come to be one of Somalia's two main exports (the other one being livestock).

During the trusteeship period, desire for a unified Somali state became an increasingly important force, both in Italian Somalia and in the north, in British Somaliland, where preparations for independence had also been going forward. In the South, this was counterbalanced by a widespread desire among the Digil-Rahanweyn and riverine clans for some measure of regional autonomy; the distrust, rooted in the past, of northerners as uncouth and predatory, speaking an incomprehensible dialect, was still active in many people. It was the desire for a completely unified state which won, however; in 1960, the Italian and British Somalilands became fully independent within a week of one another, and promptly amalgamated formally to form a single new state, the Somali Republic.

This new state was to be a parliamentary democracy, governed by a President and an elected Assembly. It continued in that form through nine years and three general elections. Among the many problems that it had to face was that of making a single nation out of a multitude of communities who, though recognising an over-riding unity as against the rest of the world, were divided in many ways; by inherited grudges, differences in way of life, differences of speech, and by the divergent legal structures left behind by two different colonial regimes. (In section B. 3 (c) I intend to look at the way in which the new political situation worked specifically at the local level.)

Another problem which dogged the new Republic was that of corruption in public life. Often what this meant in effect was not the pursuit of individual gain, but the putting of local before national loyalties. At all events, accusations of corruption and of rigged results were particularly rife in the country after the general elections held in March 1969. This, with discontent among the younger educated people in the country at the lack of definitive economic progress, and a feeling that the government as constituted was inefficient, were the background to the coup staged by the army in October 1969. It was an entirely bloodless affair. Power was taken by a Supreme Revolutionary Council consisting of army officers, and the country retitled the Somali Democratic Republic. It needs to be understood that though public discontent preceded the coup, it was in no way popularly organised, but must have come as a complete surprise to nearly all the electorate, including the people of Afgoi-Geledi.

This occurred several months after I had finally left the country. Consequently, the political situation described in the following sections is already out of date, and it must be understood that statements here given refer to conditions in 1967-69; to what extent they have since changed I am not always able to say.

In the next few chapters I attempt to trace the influence of the historical events outlined in this last section - on the development of the community described in Part A.

B.2. SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE 20TH CENTURY(a) Colonization

The development of Geledi society from 1908, when the Italian 'residence' was established there, can be divided into two phases, which may be labelled colonization and de-colonization. The former lasts from the time when Italian rule began in the area, to that when the British Military Administration took over; the latter from 1950 - the beginning of the Italian trusteeship - to the present day, counting the intervening decade as an interim period. These dates are not to be taken too precisely however; what is in question is not two periods of time so much as two movements, or rather two stages in the same impetus or movement, the second of which partly continued and partly reversed the trends set in motion by the first.

During this first, colonial phase, the Italian rule was the ultimate condition of all the outside influences at work on Geledi society, and the consequent developments within it. The Italians were there for purposes both of trade and settlement, a large part of their intention in annexing Somalia being to provide land for colonists, and open up the area economically. Accordingly the effects here were felt not merely, as in British Somaliland, in political subordination, but even more strongly if less directly in the economic sphere, and thus eventually in the social structure of the community.

The main changes which Italian rule brought to the life of the area were, the loss of political autonomy; the cession of lands

to Italian colonists; the emancipation of the slaves; increased communications overseas; better communications inland; and the direct (if limited) contact with an entirely strange culture. I shall consider these in order, and trace the ramifying effects on the life of the community.

(i) Loss of political autonomy

The Italian administration governed by a system of indirect rule applied throughout the country. It was divided into four regions (Afgoi was in the Middle Webi Shebelle region) with at the head of each a Regional Commissioner who was directly responsible to the governor of the colony. At the next level, each region was divided into Residencies, each of which was administered by a Resident, rather the equivalent of the District Commissioner in a British territory; that is to say he had very broad general powers and was in direct relationship with the recognized indigenous leaders, who were under his authority, but were expected to assist him in an advisory capacity. Most of these residents were military men, active or retired (Hess, p.107).

The residency of Afgoi comprised the lands occupied by the Geledi, Wa'dan, Hintire and the territory of the Gurgaate clans upstream, which had long been under Geledi domination. Those other clans which had been under Geledi headship or influence were in other administrative divisions.

The Geledi had lost their supreme status in the area; their hegemony had been a matter of military alliances, and now that there were to be no more local wars, it had no further existence.

The system of indirect rule meant the institution of stipended capi or warrant-chiefs in each clan, as well as Qadis, judges in Islamic law. These capi meant in fact an important modification of the political structure in some clans. They were 'the point of contact between the government and its colonial subjects' (Hess, p.108). In the case of a pastoral clan like the Wa'dan, however, almost any man who appeared to be of some standing and authority might be classified by the Italians as a 'chief', and those stipended by the government were chosen from among these. In these clans therefore the colonial regime actually created new offices, by translating informal temporary influence into permanent authority backed by the superior power; an effect observed in similar situations in many parts of the world.

'As a check on each dependant chief and cadi, the residents submitted annual reports to the regional commissioners, who classified the chiefs and cadis in schoolmasterly fashion as 'bad, mediocre, good, or excellent.' By 1917 the colonial minister could boast.....: "With respect to the tribal chiefs of our territory, we can now rely upon their loyalty to the government and upon their performance in the interest of the colony'.' (Hess, pp 108-9)

In the case of the Wa'dan, this meant that the three main subdivisions of the clan, hitherto governed only by the assembly of their adult men, now had each a titular head; an important modification of political structure. Later, these chiefs came to be assisted by lieutenants chosen by themselves, also receiving a small subsidy, and

known locally as matabale, a corruption of the Italian word notabili = notables.

In the case of the Geledi, each lineage group large enough eventually came to have its government chief; but initially there were only two; the chief of the Abikerow lineage, and the Sultan himself. The latter held a position of especial importance and regard in the eyes of the government, and was assigned a salary of 150 rupees per month¹, as against the 6 to 50 rupees received by an ordinary chief.

The situation here was therefore different from that of the Wa'dan, where a set of hitherto unknown offices had been created; here this delegated power was given mainly to the individual who had held the highest office in the traditional system; so that the form of the traditional polity was scarcely changed, though its functions were altered. In fact, the arrangement probably increased the political power of the Sultan relative to that of the Noble lineages; and possibly the experience of this period actually colours present-day memories of what the position was in pre-colonial times. In absolute terms, however, his powers were obviously much restricted, and he had become merely an intermediary for the ruling power.

The importance of the salary given to government chiefs should not be exaggerated; it did not turn them into a class of wealthy men. As

¹ Between 1910 and 1920 the currency of the colony was the Italian silver rupee, specially minted, its value being (from 1919) fifteen to the pound sterling. (Hess, p.120)

their fellow-clansmen came to accept their position, so the demands made on them for help and hospitality increased, and these demands had to be met if they were not to lose their influence, and with it their usefulness to the government and consequently their positions. This would quickly use up a not very large stipend; in my experience to be a government chief remains rather a liability than an asset financially.

One further office which was added to the local scene was that of the specially appointed Muslim judge or Qadi; previously, the only judges in Geledi had been the akhyar and the Sultan himself. Both Muslim law and local customary law were recognized by the Italians as valid, providing they were not incompatible with the fundamental principles of Italian law. (The main issue on which they were over-ruled was that of slavery.) The Qadi's court, while reducing the powers of the elders and providing a check on those of the government chiefs, preserved much of the customary law, tastur, which it continued to administer in conjunction with the Shari'a.

To deal with cases involving Somalis and not covered by either the Shari'a or by customary law, the politico-military Tribunato dell'Indigenato was established, consisting in each region of the regional commissioner, the local resident, and the commander of the local military presidio; sometimes Somali elders would be called in, but for consultation only. This tribunal dealt mainly with offences against the government, such as smuggling arms, or non-co-operation in supplying labour or requisitions. Its decisions were sanctioned by confiscation

of goods, by collective punishment of the clan or lineage group, or in extreme cases by deportation. (Hess, p.109)

Two police forces were established in the colony; separate from the main national police, consisting of Somali recruits with Italian officers, was the armed rural constabulary known as the google, which operated at the local level, and supported the government chiefs in their role.

As time went on, more and more Somali were recruited into the Italian army, Geledi among them, These Askari played an important part in the Abyssinian campaign. Their importance to their own society is perhaps chiefly in the reports of their experiences they brought home, and the effect of this on culture and ideas.

Under Italian rule, therefore, the traditional political structure of Geledi continued not directly modified, apart from the introduction of the government chiefs. Those of the Geledi had in fact less importance to their followers than colonial policy assumed, with the exception of the Sultan himself, whose traditional prestige was underwritten by the colonial government. What one might call the old regime of Geledi was therefore not suppressed, but its jurisdiction was curtailed; it was kept functioning as it were at low power. The individuals composing it - the Sultan and the elders of the Noble groups - were able to act only within narrow limits; they were no longer the leaders of a tribal hegemony, but of one small district, and even there the real authority was out of their hands. The forms of their dignity remained;

but these too declined, as they became not only less powerful but less wealthy than they had been.

(ii) The Plantations

As elsewhere along the two rivers of Somalia, land near the river at Afgoi was taken up by Italian colonists for plantation agriculture. The individual colonists did not generally acquire their lands by direct negotiation with the former Somali owners (one of the features which made the S.A.I.S. enterprise at Villagio unique was that it did come to terms directly with the local population); instead, they obtained permanent or temporary concessions from the colonial government, which had declared all land not actually under cultivation by the local population as public and available for that purpose. The 'zona di colonizzazione' of Afgoi amounted to about 1,500 hectares, of which however only about 10% was actually cultivated. Unlike the large co-operative enterprises at Villagio and at Genale further down the Shebelle, the plantations at Afgoi were financed by small-scale private capital, and were not very profitable (Barile p.111, Hess p.166). Early experiments in cultivation with Italian workers were unsuccessful; one concessionary failed altogether, while another soon ceased to employ Italians in favour of local labour, and had to have the size of his concession reduced (Corni II p.468). This latter continued in business, however, and by 1931 was the largest of four plantations, with 200 hectares; the remaining three had 100, 15 and 5 hectares (*ibid* p.469). The last was a market garden rather than a plantation, and later on the Afgoi concessionaries

concentrated on producing, rather than bananas and other large scale crops, fruit and vegetables for the Italian population in Mogadishu.
(Karp p.88)

The removal in this way of much of their reserve lands does not seem to have produced distress or bitterness in Geledi, however. Partly this is due to the fact that at the same time their own demands on land were becoming less, as a result of the loss of slave-labour, which will be discussed below. There is also another factor; the lie of the land on this part of the Shebelle. At other points further down river, where there were native irrigation systems, cultivation naturally concentrated on the river banks, and the most valuable land was there; precisely where the newcomers needed to establish their plantations. The solution (since it was only unoccupied land that had been declared public by the government) was to buy or rent privately from clan elders or from individuals, as S.A.I.S. did from the Shiddle. Private owners also might do this, as one did from the Bimal clan near Caitoi (*Maino p 112, n. 2.*). At Afgoi, however, since the banks of the river are too high for irrigation without pumps, the Geledi and Wa'dan cultivations did not cling to the riverbank but extended inland. The plantations, in any case few in number in this area, did not encroach on such land.

Generally speaking the taking up of land did not have the profound effect on South Somali society which someone familiar with other colonial territories might anticipate. Perhaps it would have eventually, had Italian Somalia become the settlers colony some of its early advocates had

hoped; but in fact it never began to pay its way economically; the land was not productive enough to counterbalance the difficulties in transporting its products - mainly bananas - back to Europe; and there were other difficulties, chief among which was that of getting native labour. It was in fact labour, not land, which was to be a perpetual problem to the settlers, and a lasting grievance to the Somali.

The latter were on the whole unwilling to leave their own lands to work for others, and those of the purely pastoral tradition in any case regarded such work as degrading. Italian concessionaries were driven to use forced recruitment to get an adequate permanent labour force. Even the Duke of the Abruzzi's plantation scheme near Jowhar, which began by establishing its workers, who were also the original owners of the land, as 'participants' in the enterprise, and offered good conditions of employment, found itself short of labour at a critical moment and was driven back on coercion. The towns along the river, like Afgoi, Audegle and Buulo Marer, were required by the government to provide each its quota of workers, both for Villagio and eventually for the plantations at Genale also. Local chiefs and others were required to help in rounding people up. (The landowners of Afgoi itself required labour on a more modest scale, and obtained it by recruiting directly among the local population, without the intervention of the government (Corni II p.469). Forced recruitment in the Afgoi area was therefore mainly for work elsewhere.)

This business caused bitter divisions within the local populations, and left hard memories behind. Those Somali who acted as agents for recruitment were generally hated; on the other hand, there were men who are honoured for refusing to do such work.

From the point of view of the Nobles, forced recruiting only really became an outrage when it affected themselves, and they were forced to do work which in their eyes properly belonged only to Habash. At all social levels, however, it caused much unhappiness. An incident which is remembered from that time suggests the state of public feeling. A Geledi Habash man had had his daughter taken away to work at Genale or Villagio. Driven mad, so it was supposed, by grief, he went berserk and killed nine people. Whatever the reasons behind his attack may actually have been, the fact that it was assumed to be the loss of his daughter which triggered it off shows the light in which such separations were regarded.

According to the account I received from a member of his family (the same quoted above p. 196) Sheikh 'Abdi of Geledi and his kinsman Ahmed Abukar of Buulo Marer both initially refused to collect labour for the plantations. The government tried to get their other kinsman, Sheikh Abukar 'Guurey' of Bur Heybe, to persuade them to co-operate. When this failed, they took Ahmed to Jowhar where he finally agreed to sign a contract for the work, and he over-ruled his cousin's objections. At all events, the outcome was that both men became prominent in recruiting labour, thus making themselves popular with the Italian officials

(see e.g. Barile p. 178) but not with the surrounding clans. Geledi itself, however, seems to have been relatively little affected by these conscriptions, perhaps through the sheikh's using his influence on their behalf.

In imitation of the system adopted with some success on the S.A.I.S. plantations, some concessionaries at Afgoi established residential villages on their estates for their workpeople, who were attached to them by contract. (See Barile p. 181.) The census record for 1954 seems to show that by that time these villages, (colonie) had acquired a population from a mixture of clans, mainly Hawiye, but with Wa'dan predominating. Only one, however, had by that date a population of more than two or three households; this one, the largest in the district, had 66 inhabitants, of which 25 were Wa'dan.

No Geledi, then, became landless as a result of the Italians' taking up the land, and only a few became permanent labourers on the plantations. However, the Italians provided jobs for the local people not only as field labourers but as domestic staff, with officials and shopkeepers as well as plantation owners. This is important not so much for its economic implications - the numbers involved being very small in relation to the population - as for the way it gave some Somali a peculiarly close view of one sort of European material culture and habit of life. This, together with the more formal contacts that leading members of the community had with Italian officials, contributed to the spread of the Italian influence.

(iii) The emancipation of the Slaves

Part of the reason why the grant of so much land to strangers was little felt in Geledi lies in the effects of another imposition which had much greater effects, namely the loss of their slaves.

The Italian administration, in spite of pressure from public opinion at home, did not find it possible to abolish slavery in Somalia at one stroke; it was an institution too deeply embedded in the local society. Nevertheless, even before 1914, the sale of slaves was suppressed, numbers of individuals liberated by local 'Residents', and 'slavery was gradually converted into domestic servitude' (Hess p.100), an uninformative phrase which appears to mean that, masters no longer being able to keep them at their work by force, many slaves still went on serving simply for their keep, since this at least offered a secure livelihood and they had nowhere else to go. Nevertheless, if the slave labour-force did not scatter all at once, it did trickle away slowly and could no longer be replaced. Many slaves, I have been told, left their former masters and went away 'south' - i.e. in the direction from which they had originally been brought. Whether any of them reached their original homelands is another question; some perhaps joined the settlements formed by freed slaves on the lower Shebelle or the Juba, or joined the population of the coastal towns.

Only a minority finally remained in Geledi, and these with their children and grandchildren continued to maintain a quasi-familial patron-client relationship with the families of their former owners. It seems

likely that those who chose to remain were the more privileged ones, and those who had been longer in slavery and therefore had nowhere else to go.

The wealthier Geledi therefore found themselves gradually deprived of their labour force. They could not farm the comparatively large areas of land they had before; they remained its owners, but it lay disused (see e.g. Maino p.116). Wage-labour to replace the slaves was barely available, as the plantation-owners were discovering, and even if it had been they could not have afforded to pay enough workers, for their wealth had consisted precisely in the slaves which they had lost. Farming, therefore, from being a source of wealth to the Geledi Nobles (including Lightskins) became universally no more than a subsistence activity. (This situation had been foretold e.g. by Ciamorra in 1910, p.47.)

For the first time Nobles had to work in their own fields, and their wives to cook their own dinners; yet they were not reduced altogether to the hand to mouth existence of the poorer Habash. They retained their cattle, of course, but this alone would not have kept them in their superior position. What accounts for their remaining, though relatively impoverished, still head and shoulders above the other part of the community, is rather their sense of their own status, that they ought by rights to have wealth, which made them ready to take the new opportunities for acquiring it, which were beginning to present themselves, in the shape of paid employment with Italians, or commerce in the growing local market.

(iv) Growth of inland communications and overseas trade

The former implies both the construction of roads (however rough) throughout the country, which was one of the priorities of Italian colonialism, the introduction of motor transport, and the imposition of peace and order, which made long distance trade and travel easier.

This made possible in a new way the movement of individuals between communities throughout Somalia. Together with the increase in trade from overseas it meant the revival and growth in prosperity and size of Mogadishu and the other coastal towns; and so there began a movement of population out of Geledi to the coast and to other centres, particularly Mogadishu, the nearest. At first, however, this movement was probably only on a small scale, but it was to continue and increase in the post-colonial phase.

In terms of total population, however, this movement was counterbalanced by the flow into Afgoi. This was due to two factors; the new importance of the town as a road-junction, and, itself the result of this and of the new abundance of foreign consumer-goods, the growth of the Afgoi market.

The importance of Geledi as a market formerly had come from its being situated where the caravan route from Mogadishu crossed the river, an important watering point and an obvious halting place, from which two routes led, one to Lugh and Bardera, the other up the river and north to the Ethiopian interior. The old markets had been held on the right bank, and must originally have been ad hoc affairs, happening whenever a caravan arrived.

Under the colonial government, an inland route running parallel to the coast began to be used, serving the Benadir ports (which had formerly communicated with each other if at all, by sea) and also the plantations along the river. To the north, the same road extends up the river to the towns of the upper Shebelle, including Villagio with its plantations and sugar factory. This latter was also linked with Mogadishu by its own light railway, which ran through Afgoi. By the 1920's the town was therefore becoming a junction of routes, which carried much more traffic than before, and of a new kind. This led to an ever-increasing number of the population working at jobs connected with transport - bus and lorry drivers, garage hands and mechanics. At the same time, with the increased flow of consumer goods, it meant the development of the new market. This was held on the left bank, where the road junction is. It came to be open continuously, and to serve both long distance trade in cattle and grain, and the daily shopping of local housewives, with the establishment of small shops selling foodstuffs, textiles and hardware.

This has been the most important factor in the growth of left-bank Afgoi from a small farming village of Wa'dan Habash, to a spreading tin-roofed slum, with a mixed population entirely different from that of Geledi on the opposite bank. It is typically urban; heterogeneous, shifting, living by various forms of commerce.

One major component in this population was the Arabs. Immigrants from the Yemen and Hadramaut, these were traders and small shopkeepers;

those in Afgoi and the surrounding villages represented the overflow from Mogadishu and the coastal towns. They began arriving three generations ago; many married Somali wives, and they became an integral and on the whole, an accepted part of the population, while retaining much of their own culture.

The new market also led to new economic opportunities for those Geledi who had or could raise enough capital to start a shop themselves. There were the beginnings of a more diversified economy.

The extension of trade added to the material culture of the area. A greater variety of textiles, foreign crockery and pots and pans appeared in peoples houses; so did, eventually, iron bedsteads, chests of drawers, and even chairs. Tea, coffee (as a beverage), rice, sugar and pasta entered their diet, and became as customary as the traditional milk and grain. All these things, starting as luxuries for the more wealthy, and for townspeople as opposed to those of the bush, gradually spread and became more and more common; though to this day they are rare in the further villages, where the way of life is much closer to its traditional sparseness.

All this implies the increasing use of cash in the transactions of everyday life. During the 19th century, money had been known in Somalia, in the shape of Maria Theresa dollars, and the besa of Zanzibar; but its use was not very widespread. Gradually, however, the use of coinage became a matter of course for everyone, in spite of the confusion of repeated changes in the type of currency (Hess p.119-120)

Cultural contact and education

Together with its political and economic consequences, the presence of the Italians was having its direct effect on people's minds, altering their culture and modifying their idea of the world they lived in.

Fascist ideology, which ruled in the colony during its most active phase, was opposed to any social mixing of the races, and did not reckon on educating Somalis beyond the most elementary level, if at all.

By 1936, there was a mission primary school in Afgoi, which had 72 Somali pupils (and 4 Italians) but these children were not expected to take their studies further than the primary level. (Hess p.170)

As for the mission, it was not allowed to proselytize by the Italian government, which for its part encouraged Islamic institutions. The local population in return treated the foreigners' worship, of which they saw little, with the easy tolerance which was already built into their culture. The impact of the conquerors' religion on the life of the conquered was therefore negligible, and the troubles of the time did not include religious strife.

At the local level, contact between Italian settlers and the Somali population was very restricted in scope. Although certain scholars and administrators acquired a knowledge and understanding of Somali culture, ordinary settlers were content to let the natives remain a background to their own concerns, and their communication with them be confined to what was necessary in order to run the plantation, the business or the house.

Nevertheless, from contacts with government officials, with superiors in the army or the police force, with employees as labourers or domestic servants, people from Geledi as from other Somali clans picked up some knowledge of the Italian language, and some idea of the foreigners' life, and the place they had come from. Inevitably, while remaining firmly centred in their own culture, many began to copy some of what they saw and heard.

About Somali attitudes to Italian culture there was and remains a certain ambivalence. On the one hand there was resentment against a conqueror and distrust of the alien and infidel; this attitude was to be reinforced by contempt after the Italian's defeat in the second World War. On the other hand, Italy represented wealth, power and the wider world. So far as I could judge, this latter attitude seemed to be predominant in Geledi, where relations with the Italians had always been particularly good.¹

Certain chiefs and elders were taken to Rome to be shown the centre of their Empire, other men saw it as soldiers. The memories of many older men of service in the Italian army, chiefly in Ethiopia, is another ingredient of popular consciousness of some importance. (To this day, ex-Askari's draw Italian pensions.)

But to most people, Italy remained a fabulous region. The name is sometimes applied in a proverbial or poetic way to any place supposed to

¹ I did not hear in Geledi the idea which apparently is current elsewhere in Somalia, that the Italians are the boon or habash of Europe, i.e. the inferior category, in terms of the Somali social structure.

be particularly favoured: so the home of a lineage chief is 'his Italy' to the singer chanting in his honour; particularly good grazing country is 'the Italy of the cattle'.

The would-be sophisticated began to spice their conversation with Italian words and phrases, and many of these have found their way into the general vocabulary, often in barely recognisable forms, (e.g. sefaleti = girl's headscarf, from fazoletto; matabale - from notabile (see p. 214); baramila = waterproof, or rubber or plastic sheeting, from impermeabile).¹

Conclusion

I have given the main causes of change in the colonial phase as: loss of political autonomy; improved external and internal communications; the emancipation of the slave population; the establishment of Italian-owned plantations; and cultural contact with Italian influences.

The results of these forces can be summarised as follows: the traditional political structure preserved intact in its outline, but with its functions restricted; farming from being a means of (relative) wealth to the upper stratum of the community becoming merely a subsistence activity, and consequent impoverishment of the Nobles; the community from being almost exclusively one of farmers and herdsmen becoming more economically diversified; the composition of the population

¹ Other loanwords which seem to have been taken into the vocabulary as part of the same process are not Italian but Swahili in origin. I have noticed that the words shamba = farm and futa = cloth are supposed by Somali to be Italian, and by Italians to be Somali. The oddest colonial borrowings are the Anglo-Italian hybrid terms for male and female servant, il boy and la boyessa.

changing, the slaves having largely gone, but left-bank Afgoi beginning to acquire a much larger, more mixed population, in which immigrant Arabs formed an important element; on the other hand, people beginning to move out of Geledi itself, especially to Mogadishu; and finally, foreign words and ideas beginning to filter into the local culture.

(b) De-colonization

With the second phase, that of de-colonization, most of the trends originated by colonization continued and increased. After the Second World War the flow and variety of foreign consumer goods into Somali markets grew further, and eventually such things as packet detergents, tinned foods, wrist watches and transistor radios became part of the material equipment of an increasing number of townspeople. Following independence, the road system began to be further improved (though the railway was never restored). During the Nineteen-Sixties, the roads to Mogadishu, now the capital of the new Republic, and to Merca, were built with a fully metalled surface; access to Mogadishu became easier than ever, and lorries and buses travelling from there and nearly all parts of southern Somalia pass through Afgoi.

With independence and the preparation for it, however, new and different factors began to affect local society.

Culturally, though the Italian presence was still strong, other kinds of foreigner and different influences entered the national and local consciousness, even for those people who had no schooling. The invasion by the British had demonstrated that the Italians were not invincible; after independence other peoples, Americans, Russians, Chinese and others appeared on the scene. So the ordinary Somali's conception of Europe and of the world at large became extended; this was so particularly in the capital, where the influx of foreigners was naturally concentrated, but also affected ideas in a place like Afgoi-Geledi which is near enough to Mogadishu for frequent contact.

Many of the Italian settlers went back to Italy, and this seems to have led to loss of employment for a number of people. It was in about 1952 that the plantation owners of Afgoi had to abandon growing chiefly fruit and vegetables for the Mogadishu market, since the number of Italians there had decreased sharply after the establishment of the trust administration, (Karp p.88) and concentrate on bananas.

From the point of view of the local society, however, the two chief factors for change arising out of de-colonization were the extension of western style education, and the Somalization of the central and local government.

In the now Somali Republic it became possible once again for Geledi to act within a larger framework than that of village affairs. It was possible, however, only for selected individuals, and those not the same ones who had held and continued to hold offices in the traditional system. A new office came into being; that of Deputy to the National Assembly. There was the possibility of employment in the administration; this had inherited its form from the colonial one; only the lower officials came from the district itself; the District Commissioner and senior officials being assigned to one part of the country after another; they could therefore come from a nearby area, or from the other end of the country. A man from Geledi who made his career in this field, therefore, would not be dealing with his own people, at any rate during most of it.

The formal relation between government administration and traditional office-holders continued; the system of government chiefs remained, and their number had been increased under the British administration. But whereas before the members of the two systems had had little in common culturally, and could communicate only at a rather elementary level, now both sides shared culture and assumptions to a large extent, and the members of the traditional system could influence the representatives of the national one as they could never have done before.

The main qualification for any official post was education on the western model. In the 1930's there had been a mission primary school in Afgoi; by the middle 1960's there were two primary schools, the mission and a government school; the former asking a small fee; the latter free. Up to 1968 for education beyond primary level pupils had to go to Mogadishu; in that year a middle school was started in Afgoi. For secondary education young people still had to go elsewhere. (In 1966 there were only 7 Secondary schools in the whole of southern Somalia.) Beyond this, for a few, is the possibility of a scholarship to an overseas university.

Education can lead to wealth and status for a young man, either by enabling him to take government employment or other salaried work, or by helping him to go into business on a larger scale than that of small shopkeeper.

But in order to take advantage even of the free schooling offered by the government, a child must come from a family which, firstly, lives in the town or near enough to it to allow him to walk to school daily; and, secondly, which is relatively well off already. Pupils are expected to provide their own exercise books and pencils, and to wear the regulation dress, which includes tennis shoes and socks. For many families these items represent an expense which is either prohibitive, or simply not worth the effort and sacrifice in their eyes. And still, for the majority living outside the town, children are part of the family labour force, not easily spared from helping to hoe the farm or to keep the goats. This is a context therefore in which only relative wealth can make more wealth.

Though my no means all those educated to any level will necessarily get the jobs they aim at, nor succeed in business, yet those who do will necessarily be the children of the more prosperous section of the community. This means they will probably be Nobles, either dark or Lightskin. It is my impression, though it has not been possible to check it statistically, that the latter form a high proportion of those who make use of modern education, owing to their traditional commitment, as 'uluma, to literacy. Noble families in general, who feel that they have a right to positions of power and influence, adopt education for their sons as the means by which these are obtainable in the modern context; Habash families have not the same hereditary incentive, so that even where their

means are equal to those of Nobles they are less likely to have children at school. Nevertheless, the opportunity is there for them too, and there are those who can and will take advantage of it.

The last major change which independence has brought is the result of the unification of south with north (formerly British) Somaliland. This has meant the influx into Mogadishu and its surrounding area of large numbers of northerners. Not only are there many Daarood from central Somalia, who were at least previously known by reputation and occasionally seen in the Benadir, but people from those northern clans of whom they had not even heard before, and who have become known simply by the borrowed English term 'Somaliland'; they are to be found both in high government positions and as pennyless vagrants. The people of Afgoi have had to learn to recognise these as co-nationals: inevitably, they are not always fully or immediately accepted.

The old genealogical and cultural divisions between Digil-Rahanwiin and Hawiye, and reactions to northerners in general, find their expression in modern politics through the medium of party allegiance.

These points will be taken up, and the effects explained more fully, in the following sections.

B.3 (a) AFGOI IN THE NINETEEN-SIXTIES: SETTLEMENT AND DAILY LIFE

(i) Settlement and population

Geledi town today is still recognizably the same place described by Christopher and Guillain in the Eighteen-forties. It is the settlement on the opposite bank which chiefly shows the changes of the last century.

What was once to the people of Mogadishu a savage and dangerous place, to be reached only after a long painful day's march, is now only half an hour's drive away on a good road. Afgoi has become a favourite place to go from the capital for a meal out, especially in the hot season when the greenery by the river makes a pleasant change from the dryness of the coast.

The first thing such a visitor sees of Afgoi town, after the road has left the sandy bush behind and is running through the flat area of cultivated fields, is a large billboard advertising cigarettes; the first and for many years the only one in Somalia. Opposite it is the newest of the town's three European-style restaurants; the proprietor is a Somali from the north. The other two, longer-established restaurants are owned by members of the remaining Italian community, and are near the river itself.

Here, in an area centred on the point where the road reaches the river, the visitor may notice various other buildings, scattered about and separated from one another by gardens of flowering shrubs, and stretches of road and empty dirt. These are the houses of one or two

Italian plantation-owners, the District Commissioner's office, the Post Office, the offices of the Municipality of Afgoi, the police station, the prison, the Italian Franciscan Mission - which is forbidden to proselytize, but runs a school and an orphanage for foundlings - the elementary and middle State Schools, the two cinemas, and the imposing Presidential Villa in its large garden¹. All these are concrete buildings, tin roofed (with the exception of the villa). They are all that the visitor is likely to see at Afgoi, except for a glimpse of the market, and perhaps of the ferry across the river, and the wattle houses on the opposite bank. These establishments embody the modern world, as it impinges on Afgoi; on the opposite side of the river, Geledi still to a large extent represents the traditional order; but the rest of left-bank Afgoi, situated east of the road and largely hidden from the visitor behind the market, is neither thing, but the hybrid and unintentional product of both.

It consists of six quarters; these are not administrative divisions, and are not clearly separated, but known from one another by the townspeople. Of these, Afgoi Weyne and Afgoi Yere - 'big' and 'little Afgoi' - are clearly the original settlement. There are older houses too in Doonka ('the ferry', on the tongue of land opposite Siigaale) and Demeley (just downstream, opposite Balguri, perhaps once a separate village). The two remaining quarters, Hudur 'Usub and Bender Jedid, show their character by their names, both of which mean 'new town'.

¹ This was erected shortly after independence. It was intended as a residence for the president of the Republic, but in practice was never furnished and only used to give lunch in to visiting dignitaries from abroad, until after October 1969, when it became a place of detention for political prisoners.

In left-bank Afgoi, especially near the centre, round the market, there are more houses on the ground, and more people to each house than in Geledi. Whereas there, as in the villages, a single house will contain only members of the same family, and the renting of houses or parts of them is very rare, in left-bank Afgoi renting is common, and many houses contain several families.

The official survey of Afgoi Municipality, carried out in 1964, estimated a total population of 16,575 persons (the numbers of males and females being more or less equal). This includes Afgoi town, the Geledi and Wa'dan villages, and also the surrounding Gurgaate and Hintire villages included in the municipality boundaries; the official list for tax purposes gives 47 villages and hamlets altogether. It does not, however, include the semi-nomadic population of the deh, who comprise most of the Wa'dan.

The survey gives no separate estimate for Afgoi town. However, the Italian census of 1954 (see Appendix IV) gives a total of 3,544 for Geledi town, of whom 2,644 were actually Geledi, 32 Wa'dan, 610 immigrants from various clans, 75 Arabs, with 249 whose origins are obscure. For left-bank Afgoi the total was 2,215, of whom 687 were Wa'dan, 544 Arabs, 107 Geledi, 599 immigrants from other Somali clans, and 378 obscure. A further 450 people are listed for Afgoi town, but which half is not clear. These figures may represent an underestimate, since individuals could easily have been omitted, but as they were listed by name it is unlikely any would have been added in. At all events, this gives a population of

about 5,500 - 6,000 for the town at that date. Of these, between one quarter and a third were neither Geledi nor Wa'dan, but either Arabs, who amounted to over 10% of the town's population, or immigrants from other parts of Somalia. In left-bank Afgoi, these were mainly Hawiye; in Geledi, Digil from nearby clans such as the Elay, or those of Dafet.

This process of immigration from other clans continued: the following table is taken from the government survey made 10 years later, in 1964. The figures are here estimated based on a sample of about one fifth of the population, and are intended to apply to the whole municipality, not only the town, though it is of course in the town that the immigrants are concentrated.

Distribution of persons in Afgoi Municipality according to the place from where immigrated and date of immigration

<u>Former Residence</u>	<u>Date of immigration</u>					<u>Before 1934</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>1960-64</u>	<u>1954-59</u>	<u>1944-53</u>	<u>1934-43</u>			
Urban areas of ex-Italian Somalia	346	45	78	107	28	604	
Other areas of ex-Italian Somalia	535	317	293	179	195	1,519	
Urban areas of ex-British Somalia	25	-	-	9	-	34	
Outside the Republic	38	27	-	27	54	146	
Total Immigrants	944	389	371	322	277	2,303	
Resident from Birth	2,641	2,347	2,577	2,106	4,601	14,272	
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>3,585</u>	<u>2,736</u>	<u>2,948</u>	<u>2,428</u>	<u>4,878</u>	<u>16,575</u>	

It will be noticed that most immigrants are from rural southern Somalia; there are very few people from ex-British Somalia, and those there are mostly arrived after independence. Arrivals from outside Somalia - i.e. Arabs (almost without exception) - ceased during the war years and the British Military Administration; since most of the Arab population of Afgoi are second generation, however, the majority of them would be counted as resident from birth.

It will be seen that there has been a gradual and steady increase in immigration during the Italian period, with a sudden upsurge just before independence and continuing after it.

This movement into Afgoi has been counterbalanced, however, by movements out of Afgoi and its area, particularly into Mogadishu. Figures are not available for this, but to speak from my personal observation, I hardly met one Geledi or Wa'dan family which did not have at least one member living in Mogadishu, and sometimes several. Geledi lineage groups have enough members living there to hold their own meetings, and almost to constitute quasi-segmentary groupings on their own, (though not literally, as they do not pay or receive compensation separately).

(ii) Developments in Material Culture

I propose here to look briefly at the material culture of present-day Afgoi-Geledi and its environ , pointing out the ways in which new elements have been taken up into the traditional way of life. I consider briefly the development of houses, domestic objects, food and dress: in

all these things there are differences between old and young people, town and 'bush' dwellers, poor and relatively rich, the old-fashioned and the modern minded, but there are no sharp discontinuities, only gradations.

Houses

In Geledi town and the surrounding villages, the old thatched round mundul dwellings are still almost universal; a few now have small windows in their walls. (The rectangular thatched ariish, which is traditional in some parts of the country, is very rare here.) In left-bank Afgoi, however, they are increasingly outnumbered by the newer type which is also general on the outskirts of Mogadishu and the other towns, the rectangular barakka¹ with a corrugated tin roof. The more prosperous and modern minded now whitewash the inside. Generally the walls are of the usual wattle and cow-dung plaster, but occasionally of hammered out petrol tins. In general, though a tin roof lasts better than thatch, these constructions are neither so solidly built nor so cool as the old mundulo.

A house consists of a complex of huts using the same outer door (see p.61). Each hut in fact functions as a room, and where they are of this rectangular type, and the yard between them is also roofed over with tin, the result is in effect a house with a central living room or hall, and bedrooms and other rooms opening off.

¹ The word is an Italian borrowing.

Inside these dwellings there are differences in furnishing between town and country, and between better off and poorer. The simpler homes are still furnished with beds in the old style, built on poles driven into the earth, and covered with a lattice-work of twigs, with cow skins on top. The more sophisticated, however, have now for many years had iron bedsteads, while the most up to date of all have varnished wooden ones, manufactured in Mogadishu. Traditional seats are leather topped benches (jimbaar) or low stools (wambar or gember). Many people now have at least one European-style chair, either a string-seated armchair or a wooden upright one. The latter without the tables they are designed to complement, are much less comfortable to sit on than the old fashioned stool, but are valued as status symbols, and invariably given to the honoured guest.

Cloths and other objects are stored in painted wooden boxes, or in wicker milk vessels hung on the wall. The more advanced have chests of drawers. Increasingly, also, ceramic or enamel plates and bowls replace the old wooden dishes.

Often the modern beds and chests of drawers have covers and cushions embroidered by the women and girls with many-coloured designs, which combine flowers and leaves with birds, animals and the insignia of the various political parties. This modern popular art seems to belong originally in Mogadishu and the other coastal towns; it is not a 'European' import, and neither has it anything to do with the older culture of the interior.

Dress

The traditional style of dress has been described on p. A. It is still worn by the poor, and by country people all the time, and by the better off townspeople some of the time. Geledi and Wa'dan men, when they wear the draped cloth, have only a white, handwoven one of the traditional kind.¹ Women, on the other hand, wear coloured cloths, whether imported cottons from Europe, India or Japan, in a great variety of prints, or the local Benadir cloth, which is now made in brightly coloured tartan weaves.² Geledi women, however, keep the traditional white cloth with a red patterned border as their formal dress for weddings and other festivities.

Townswomen increasingly wear instead of the draped cloth a full-skirted sleeveless dress, ultimately based on the European model. In southern Somalia these are now worn at calf-length, a fact indicative of the rather more relaxed sexual climate there; for in the more puritanical north of the country, skirts to the ankle or below are obligatory. The tendency is to treat the dress as a formal, outdoor costume, and the old style cloth as something comfortable to wear at home; a visitor is often offered a cloth to change into.

¹ The traditional style is different in some other clans, particularly nomads like the Garre and Gal Ja'el, who favour bright checked cloths.

² The hand-weavers move with the times by constantly introducing new designs, often with topical names. During my stay two new patterns became fashionable, called 'Coca cola' and 'Fanta' to celebrate the introduction of those drinks on the Somali market.

Fully European dress, especially with a short skirt, would only be worn by a few educated and very westernised girls, or by the more expensive sort of prostitute; neither type is found in Afgoi.

The adaptation of male costume has been more complex, since men have adopted not only the European style shirt and trousers, but, more commonly, the wrapped waist-cloth characteristic of the Arabs in this part of the world. Different styles of dress may be worn by the same person on different occasions, so that they become (as in other societies where dress is complex) a sign of the type of activity going on and the wearer's role in it. As an example I take a man whom I knew well, a fairly prosperous Geledi who kept a shop and took some part in public life. To work in his shop he wore an Arab-style wrapped waist cloth with a string vest. To go to Mogadishu, or to a political meeting, or to confer with local government officials, he wore a shirt and trousers. When he came home he borrowed one of his wife's patterned cloths (quite a common habit) to relax, eat his evening meal, and chat with friends who called round. Later, when he went to the mosque for the evening prayer, he put on a plain white cloth of the traditional kind. He would wear this also for a local festival like the Is-tun (see Section C) and generally at weddings or funerals.

Ready-made clothes are scarcely available in Somalia. (There are a few imported shirts or sweaters.) Consequently the result of the increasing adoption of European and semi-European sewed garments, is the large number of small tailoring/dressmaking businesses, of which there are many in Afgoi market (see the following section).

Food

Though grain-porridge, meat and milk are still the basis of the diet, spaghetti or rice as substitutes for the porridge are popular among townspeople. Though more expensive than grain, they are less trouble to prepare, and make a welcome change. While the use of pasta is obviously an Italian introduction, rice is also eaten by the nomadic Somali, who make it a traditional supplement to their meat and milk diet, and is a part of the cuisine of the Benadir towns. Its increasing use among the Somali farming populations is mainly among the better off.

Such families also, if they live in town, eat meat every day, in the form of sauce for their porridge or other food. Poorer people, or those living further from the butchers' stalls, see it less often. They may eat their porridge with milk only, or with a sauce of greens picked in the bush; the latter is a recognised sign of poverty. Meat is generally bought daily from the butcher; on festive occasions a family may themselves slaughter an animal to feed a party.

Breads ready baked are also part of townspeople's diet; they include both European-style rolls from a local bakery, and the flat maize cakes called muufo, which some women bake in their homes.

Sugar in general is now a major item in everyone's diet. There is a tumblerful of it in every kettle of tea, and it is added freely to milk, bun, and parched or boiled corn. Since (as will be seen in the section on economic life) the habit of drinking tea is kept up in households whose diet may otherwise be meagre, the sugar taken in this way probably is nutritionally important.

Vegetables like onion and tomatoes are eaten as constituents in meat sauce; bananas accompany the porridge and meat, or are eaten as a snack with coffee; other sorts of fruit are eaten more rarely.

Bun, generally served with parched corn, is still the Geledi cocktail, indispensable to social life. Tea and drinking coffee are now popular, however, and often taken at odd hours during the day. Tea is brewed with spices and quantities of sugar, and coffee with ginger. Whereas the habit of drinking coffee seems to have been introduced from the coastal towns, tea is the drink of the Somali nomad, and the habit appears to have spread from them to the sedentary population.

Alcoholic drink of any kind remains merely a name to most people in Afgoi. The religious prohibition on it is accepted without question. Drinking is known among Somali only at either the very top or the very bottom of society; among a few well-to-do 'emancipated' individuals of very westernised habits, or among the outcasts of the Mogadishu streets, who drink household alcohol, (laced, so I am told, with lemon). Both these extremes are remote from life in Afgoi.

Two main meals are eaten in the day, one at midday or in the early afternoon, the other in the evening. There is also a snack for breakfast, and people may take tea, coffee or bun at almost any hour. Here, for instance, is the daily diet of one household for a week (not counting glasses of tea or coffee taken at odd hours). Its monotony is relieved to some degree by special food on the Friday holiday.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Breakfast	Muufo & sesame oil Tea	Muufo & bananas Tea	Muufo Tea	Muufo Tea	Dates Coffee	Muufo Tea
Midday	Maize porridge Meat Milk Bananas	Maize porridge Meat Milk	Maize porridge Meat Milk	Maize porridge Meat Milk	Maize porridge Chicken Milk	Maize porridge Meat Milk
Supper	Muufo Meat	Ambuulo* pasta	Porridge Milk	Porridge Milk	Muufo Porridge	Porridge Meat Milk

* Boiled whole grains of corn, or beans, usually served with oil and sugar.

(iii) General Culture: The Italian legacy and the modern world

Few cultures are so simple as to be absolutely uniform; in Geledi during its ascertainable history there has been all along a range, though not a very wide one, of cultural possibilities, distributed according to the status of the individual. Guillain (see p.60) already noticed that some houses were larger and better equipped than others. Those with religious or magical learning, with various kinds of skill, the ruling elite who knew more of the world beyond their home area than the bulk of the population did; all these constituted specialising minorities within the general culture. All such specialised knowledge was moreover a matter of degree, from the most learned to the least.

With the introduction of a wider range of consumer goods, of western style education, of modern business activities and national politics,

the range of possible kinds of possessions, knowledge and behaviour has become much wider, and with it the number of specialisations within the general culture, and the gap between the richest and poorest, the best informed and the most ignorant. It would no longer be in touch with reality, if it ever was so, to say without qualification: Geledi do, think or believe such and such; now that those who are by inheritance members of the Geledi community include shopkeepers and office clerks, students and an ambassador, as well as farmers, farm labourers and housewives carrying their water pots from the river. Those Geledi who live in Mogadishu, too, are ipso facto subject to other cultural influences, and likely to have a rather different view of the political situation, for instance, than those who remain in Geledi or live elsewhere outside the capital, even though their level of income or education may be the same.

This does not mean a complete fragmentation of culture, however, since all these people still hold many assumptions and habits in common; still less does it imply a social fragmentation, as the sense of belonging to the Geledi community has remained strong, and the legal obligations consequent on ~~a~~ clanship were still binding at least until 1969.

For cultural influences from the West, Italy has been the main channel in this century. Much that is important still remains from the period of Italian rule, both in the concrete of everyday life and in the popular mind.

There is still a considerable Italian community (see below) running plantations, or keeping shops in Mogadishu and the other larger towns. Some of the most sought-after schools are still the Italian ones, which teach the regular curriculum of their mother country. Of those young men who go to study abroad on scholarships, the greatest number still go to Italy. Most of the films shown are distributed from Italy, and have Italian dialogue. (One might mention that a large proportion of Somalia's foreign aid comes from Italy, but this is not an order of fact most people are aware of.)

Perhaps even more important than such continuing concrete presences, is the impression which the years of Italian occupation have left on people's view of the world. The clearest sign of this is the use of the Italian language. All public officials trained in southern Somalia to date were educated in it. Up to 1967 it was the third official language of the Republic (with English and Arabic) and taught in all the schools of the South. The change to English is only beginning to take effect, and Italian is still the language most generally used for official business and public written announcements.

Even among the majority who never had any kind of secular education, many have picked up a working knowledge of Italian, or at any rate know a few words of it; and it has left its mark in the common language of the area. This has been mentioned in Section B. 2, and in general the ambivalent attitude to Italy there described persists today.

The British occupation, though it was to have political consequences of fundamental importance, by beginning the end of the colonial system, seems to have left little mark culturally on the area. The only introduction I can definitely assign to it is the game of hopscotch which is played to this day by the children of Afgoi.

In the Nineteen-Sixties representatives of many other foreign nations began to be seen in Somalia, with their embassies and foreign aid projects. Some of them are seen in Afgoi also; the American of U.S. Aid running a government experimental farm; the Chinese team from one of the Mogadishu hospitals who ran a weekly clinic, (the latter always with a big attendance).

The traditional links between the Somali and the Arab world have been emphasized in the new political context by the United Arab Republic, whose representatives are very much part of the scene in Mogadishu, but not on the whole outside it.

On the whole, though the political significance and intentions of these various groups are understood, in varying degrees, by the more educated - to the majority the reasons for their presence remain obscure. I do not believe, for example, that many people had grasped the difference between the American run experimental farm, and the ordinary commercial aziende. The foreigners do not hold a prominent part in people's thoughts, and there is no obvious connection between any of them and the business of Somali party politics.

What has happened is that, for those without schooling, a number of new kinds of human-being have to be fitted into a conception of the world which is still very small in scale. Distances are still thought of in terms of days' journey on foot or by truck; a people as occupying perhaps a single town and its surrounding country, on the same scale as a Somali clan.

There is, however, a general appreciation of the fact that Somalia has become one of a world of independent nations. For those who think about such things, there is also a strong sense of solidarity with the Islamic, and especially the Arab, world. This solidarity, based on the religion^s which is a basic part of the general life, and on long-standing historical links, is more real to most people than any idea of belonging to the new Africa. Two factors inhibit any ready identification with other African states; the two nearest of them, Kenya and Ethiopia, are in hostile relations with Somalia on account of the border disputes between them; and in terms of the categories recognised by Nobles in south Somalia, these nations all consist of 'Habash' and this includes their leaders.

Somalia has its own broadcasting service in Radio Mogadishu, and there is no doubt that the radio is one of the most important channels for the spread of new ideas and facts. To own a radio is desirable as a source of information, entertainment and prestige; however, they are expensive and still owned only by the few. Most people must still rely for their news on transmission by word of mouth.

Among the Somali, if Afgoi may here be taken as a sample, an understanding of the modern world and their place in it is spreading, but it is still far from universal or complete.

(iv) The New Urban Culture

The new influences which have been brought to bear on life in Afgoi - Geledi come from a variety of sources; Italian, Arab, the traditional culture of the coastal towns; other parts of Somalia.

This composite change has affected the whole community, but some sections of it more profoundly than others. Innovations are not distributed at random through the population, but are found in certain households rather than others; and novelties of different kinds tend to go together. Thus the family which owns modern varnished wood furniture is also the one which will cover it with embroidered cotton draperies, whitewash their walls and decorate them with photographs cut from magazines, eat spaghetti and own a radio. The wife will wear a dress, the husband wear trousers and shoes, have a wristwatch and speak some Italian. They will send their children to school.

The family which lives in this way is youngish, and urban; the husband is a wage-earner of some kind, an official, or a shopkeeper. The style of life of such families is new and characteristic, distinct from the old one which persists outside the town almost unaltered, often lived by the father or brothers of the new townsman; distinct also from the more fully Europeanised ways of the very small westernised elite.

This new style, which amounts to a recognisable sub-culture, is formed by a synthesis of the influences mentioned above. I would call it the new urban sub-culture.

It is the same whether in Afgoi or the Mogadishu suburbs, or in the other south Somali towns; it is national, not local. Different households approximate to it in different degrees - there are many stages in between it and the older culture. It is, however, in its fully developed form, a sort of norm to which town dwellers try to approximate, as far as their means permit. The part of the community of which it is most typical is what I have called the "local establishment"; consisting of local notables and officials; I explain the nature of this grouping in Section 3 (c), where the social framework of these cultural changes is more fully discussed.

(v) Foreign Communities

The Arabs

We have seen that the Arabs form a large section of the town community, especially in left-bank Afgoi. They have no separate quarter of their own, though they tend to live near one another and near the market, where most of them have shops. There are even one or two in the outlying villages. They are first, second or sometimes third generation immigrants; though most live by trade or transport of one kind or another, some have bought land and farm for profit.

In the general conditions of their lives there is very little difference between Arab and Somali in Afgoi. They live in the same types of dwelling; their dress is much the same, for although Arab men do not wear the Somali draped cloth, many of the latter adopt the Arab wrapped waist cloth, and trousers and shirts are worn by both. Arab women on the other hand wear the Somali cloth when at home. The Arabs have learned to speak the local Somali, and do the same sort of business as their neighbours, in equal competition.

Below this surface, however, profound differences of culture become apparent. The compound family of father, sons and sons' wives and children, a unit almost unknown in the Somali population, is the norm among the Arabs. Divorce, which is frequent and easy among the Somali, is rare among them and felt as something shameful. Arab women, and the Somali wives of Arabs, keep the traditional Muslim seclusion as far as possible, rarely going outside the house, and when they do, wearing the enveloping black domino and face veil. Their family life, a man's relationship with his wife and children, is much more authoritarian in tone; their behaviour is more restrained and formal than that of the Somali, and their conversation quieter. Even in such a cultural feature as the preparation of food they show the difference, for the Arabs, starting from the same raw materials, have a much more consciously artistic cuisine than the Somali.

Arab men will take Somali wives, and most of them have done so, for there are few female immigrants. The second and third generation

are therefore nearly all physically part Somali; this is not culturally recognised, however, and they count as Arabs. Arabs do not however allow their daughters to marry Somali men. This implies that they consider Somali inferior to themselves; nevertheless relations between the two groups are generally easy and cordial. (Similar prohibitions divide the Somali community itself, and are not allowed to raise hostility there.)

Behind all these very real differences in custom and outlook, Arab and Somali share a basic world view in the Muslim faith. It is probably this more than anything that makes it possible for them to become, while maintaining their separation, parts of one more or less harmonious community. There is also the fact that the Somali community of Geledi, as in the Benadir area in general, has long been accustomed to consisting of diverse groups living side by side, and developed the tolerance of attitude which makes this possible.

The Italians

Another group of foreigners remains resident at Afgoi, whose relation to the native population is very different from that of the Arabs. The latter, though distinct, have become part of the same community as their hosts; the former, though physically resident in the municipality, hardly occupy the same mental space as its other inhabitants. It is symptomatic of their position that the government survey of Afgoi has nothing to say about them; with reference to the Geledi

community and its modern extensions, they appear not as participants but as an external force.

At the time of my residence in Afgoi, the Italian community there amounted to only about thirty individuals (including one or two with Somali mothers). They consisted of plantation owners, restaurant proprietors, and the priests and nuns of the mission. Their houses were built mainly outside the town, surrounded by their gardens and land.

They did not in any way form a social unit of their own, but were simply an extension of the general Italian community of Somalia, which centred on Mogadishu. There, only half an hour's drive away, they did their shopping and had most of their social contacts. This wider Italian community included many individuals who had a more than superficial knowledge of Somali culture, and close contacts with Somali individuals. (These latter were generally themselves Italian-educated.) But at the local level, contacts between the Afgoi population and the Italian residents there occurred as between employer and employee, or tradesman and customer; the language used was the sort of pidgen-Italian usual in such circumstances, and the content of their mutual communications was very limited.

The division between the two populations was not impenetrable. An example to the contrary is the Italian with a Somali wife (married by the Muslim rite) and a family; there has been at least one other such mixed family in Afgoi before, where the children grew up accepted to some extent by both communities. (Temporary concubinage is a rather different

matter; it was quite common in Somalia generally during the colonial period, but I know of no specific cases locally.) But the basic separation remains a fact; there was and is personal contact between the two groups, but hardly cultural contact.

With local government completely somalized, these expatriates lived their lives as private individuals, and their importance in the area was economic rather than political. The primary school run by the mission had a cultural significance, since it continued to use the Italian language as its teaching medium, and, like the other Italian schools, to teach the same curriculum as in the mother country. Apart from this the chief way in which the presence of the mission affected the town, was that this firmly Muslim community set its wristwatches by the angelus bell.

B. 3 (b) ECONOMIC LIFE

The economic life of modern Afgoi can be said to have four main components; traditional farming, traditional pastoralism, the plantations, the market, and the road. I shall begin by giving a descriptive account of each of these, analyse their relation to one another, and then consider how the population is actually affected by them.

Traditional farming

Farming on the traditional pattern is still the occupation of over 80% of the population of the Afgoi area (see below). It is a subsistence activity carried on in the way described in Section A.2 (c). While all vacant and unclaimed land legally belongs to the state, the Somali government has confirmed the right of possession of farmers to any land they have inherited. However, though new purchases or grants of land have to be registered officially, such traditional claims are not; and in practice, except where a particular piece of land is required for some government project, officialdom does not enquire what man is hoeing what bit of ground. Questions of possession and inheritance are regulated, as they always were, by the memories of the people concerned and the recognition of the community. If I did not hear of any disputes over inheritance, this is probably because up to the time of my stay there was little pressure on the land, much of which stood uncultivated.

It is not possible, in this climate, to make more than a slender

living from dry farming without either a supply of very cheap labour, which vanished with slavery, or modern machinery and techniques (see Karp p.83). The latter are only just beginning to be available, and have as yet affected few farmers. During my stay in Afgoi, a tractor and driver could be hired from a government agency, and its ploughing is said to give better yields than hand hoeing, but it cost 120 shillings to plough a hectare in this way, as opposed to 20 - 40 shillings for hiring labourers.

The traditional farmer, though his wants have been to some extent increased by the supply of new kinds of goods, basically lives the same kind of life, defined by the same restrictions, as was described in Part A of this study. His labour force is himself, his wife and children. Hired labour is scarce and, at 3 - 5 shillings a day plus an afternoon meal, expensive by his standards. To cultivate one hectare by hired labour alone costs about 200 shillings a season. The labour available often takes the form of men from Dafet or further inland, who come in search of work when lack of rain has spoilt their own harvest. The chances are that when this happens, the season will be bad in the Afgoi area as well, so that labour is most easily available precisely when it is least needed.

A farmer of this kind grows grain primarily for his own use. He may, when he has a surplus after a good season, take a sack or two of grain to the market and sell it to a dealer (who will probably store

it for a few months until the price of grain goes up, as it regularly does between harvests). Rather than sellin_o it at once after the harvest, however, most farmers store their grain themselves, either in larger quantities in ground pits, or in smaller ones in sacks in the house. It can then be either used up by the family, or sold a sack at a time whenever cash is needed for some particular purpose. Often, for instance, the hire of a labourer to help with one season's planting and hoeing will be met by sellin_o left-over grain from the last season. People prefer to store their resources in this form, rather than keeping cash in the house.

To pay for everyday expenses, grain can be sold off in smaller quantities; in this case it will probably be sold not to a dealer but directly in the market by the farmer's wife, for it is women who engage in such petty trade, sitting with baskets in the market place and selling to townspeople buying their daily ration. Other products which farmers also grow in lesser quantities can be sold in the same way; soya and castor beans, sesame seed, small local tomatoes that are left to grow wild among the other plants. Chaff from the grain can also be sold for animal feeding, and straw for feed and bedding, or for lining grain-pits. Those who own cows can sell their milk when enou_h is available, and those with hens sell the eggs. Transactions like these are often carried on between neighbours for small payments, instead of the sellers going to market. Some farmers also grow some cotton, and this has to

be taken to a dealer who collects it for resale.¹

Of other ways for the farmer to supplement what he gets from his land, the most obvious, if his holding is small, is to hire out his own labour during the time he does not require it himself. Only Habash, however, do this. The women of a household, especially if they live in town, can earn extra cash by such work as making mats or baskets, or baking muufo (a flat Arab style maize bread) or griddle cakes and selling them to the eating places of the town; or sometimes by taking occasional work at the local banana-packing plant.

Traditional pastoralism

The economy of the nomadic or semi-nomadic clans of the area in itself lies outside the scope of this study; but it touches that of the farmers and townspeople of Afgoi, and is an element in the total economy of the area. Chief among these clans are the Garre and the Gal Ja'el, whose grazing grounds are in the inter-river plain, so that their movements take them into the general area served by the Afgoi market, and they keep up certain relationships with the villages of the area, including those of Geledi. These arrangements include permission to water their flocks and herds at the war of the village, sometimes for a small payment, and, in the height of the dry season, to bring them as far as the river.

Also in this category are the Wa'dan and Abgal of the deh, who

¹ Nowadays this is sold to the newly set-up textile mill at Bal'ad, further up the Shebelle.

live partly by their stock and partly by cultivating small plots on the infertile sandy soil.

All these people sell both their stock and their milk in Afgoi market, and in return buy their provisions there; they therefore provide much of the meat and milk supply of the town, as well as contributing to the livelihood of shopkeepers and brokers.

Plantations

By the Nineteen-Sixties there were about a dozen of these in the neighbourhood of Afgoi, at intervals along the river banks. Five of these were still owned by Italians. Some such large holdings granted under the colonial government, were confirmed under the Somali Republic as permanent possessions, while others enjoyed concessions which could in principle be revoked.

One of the largest estates in the Afgoi area in the Nineteen-Sixties was a government experimental farm, run by U.S. Aid; another large area was taken up by an experimental dairy farm given by West German aid.

The main crop was bananas, which were exported to Italy where they sold at above world prices under a state monopoly arrangement. (Bananas form about 30% of Somalia's total exports.) Other fruits, such as papaya and lemons, are sold within the country. In recent years there have been experiments with rice and other crops.

From the point of view of the local population, the importance of the plantations was as employers of labour. In the main, this was

casual; men were hired by the day, and continued for longer or shorter periods, depending on the season and what other work was available. Some, however, kept to this sort of work permanently; out of these, men who held positions as foremen got higher wages, and could even become prosperous by local standards, and count as solid members of the community. Nobles, however, did not do such work. Many labourers were not Geledi or Wa'dan, but immigrants from other places and clans.

The banana industry also provided occasional work for women at the local packing-plant; this was available only when there was a ship to be loaded up, when they contracted for a few days at a time.

Since the other Italian concessionaries left the country, their land had in many cases been bought up by Somali, either well-to-do local men, or outsiders from Mogadishu or newcomers from the north. They had found, as the Italians did before them, that plantation farming in Somalia was not an easy road to wealth, and not all of them had been able to survive economically, what with the expenses of machinery and transport, the difficulties of keeping a regular labour force, and low profits from bananas and other fruit. The difficulty of operating profitably increased when the owner was a ~~Deputy~~ or otherwise busy elsewhere, and had to leave the management of his plantation to a steward. To own a plantation was a status symbol, however, and many were kept mainly for that reason.

The Market

The Afgoi market serves both local and long-distance trade, the latter in grain and livestock. It consists, in physical terms, of lines of wood and concrete booths, built under the Italian administration, arranged in four rectangles. They are divided into small shops, each with a door and a window, of which there were 144 in 1968. These shop spaces are privately owned, some by the men who use them, while others are rented out. They are not all in use at one time, and there is a good deal of opening, closing and moving of businesses constantly going on.

The most common type of shop is the small general provision store (dukaan) dealing in dry foodstuffs, household goods and things such as flashlights, rubber sandals, kettles and vacuum flasks. In 1966 the Afgoi municipality sold licences for 51 of these in Afgoi market itself, besides 49 scattered about the town, and 15 in the smaller villages. Next in frequency are the drapers' shops, which sell cloth, both the local Benadir hand woven variety¹ and imported cottons and synthetics. They are generally combined with a tailoring/dressmaking business, i.e. a sewing machine at the side of the shop, with a young assistant at work on it.² There were also 3 shops selling sweetmeats

¹ The Benadir cloth sold in such shops is of poor quality and is mostly bought in quantity from Mogadishu and elsewhere. The local weavers of Afgoi itself generally sell direct to the customer, and all the best cloths are made to commission in this way.

² This work is always done by men. Somali women traditionally do no sewing, draped cloths not requiring it, and only the most westernised could use a sewing machine. Arab women on the other hand often do dressmaking, but only in their own homes since they cannot go out.

and biscuits, 2 pharmacies, and one or two shops selling builders materials - wood, corrugated iron and cement - and 9 dealers in fruit and vegetables. The butchers of the town buy animals in the live-stock market, slaughter them and sell the meat in a large concrete-pillared shelter with stone slabs constructed for the purpose. There are a large number of them, operating each on his own account, or in partnerships of two or three; 66 of them were licensed in 1966, though I do not think there were so many actually selling at one time.

Besides being used for retail purposes, some of the market shops are hired as storehouses for grain. There are also diesel grain-mills, where housewives bring their corn to be ground; there were 14 of these in the town in 1966 - and oil presses for sesame seed. One or two old camel presses, of the type which used to be common and is illustrated in Guillain's book (see Lewis 1965, plate 11) are still operating, but most pressing is now also done by motor-powered machine. The oil produced from a camel-press is, however, said to be superior in quality. 8 oil presses altogether were licenced in 1966.

Other shop premises are used for services; in 1966 licences were given for 9 barbers, 2 laundrymen (there were other laundrymen working in other parts of the town - presumably unlicenced) and 14 makayo, eating places without the pretensions of the European-style restaurants, normally serving tea to drink, and a variety of snacks and Arab-style dishes. One or two of these are more modern in outlook, call themselves 'bars' and serve espresso coffee.

The market booths are sometimes let for other than commercial purposes; in the year before the 1969 elections, one or two were taken by political parties as campaign headquarters.

In between and around these buildings, the other business of the market is carried on. The main long-distance trade which passes through Afgoi is that in livestock. Cattle, camels and goats are sold in an open space at one end of the main market; some are those bought in by the nomads of the region, a few by the local farming people, and others are being driven from the interior of the country on their way to Mogadishu. Many men living locally make their living as livestock brokers, an occupation with a strong tradition among the Somali; these are generally not born locally, however, but belong to various clans, since men selling animals prefer to deal with brokers of their own clan. In the sale of an animal, each party employs a broker who takes a small commission. Animals are bought by traders who take them to Mogadishu, for export or for the local meat cannery; or by the Afgoi butchers, or a few of them by local people. In 1966, 64 licences were issued for trading in livestock.

Other occupations are also carried on in the open, between the shops, different areas being by custom reserved for different commodities. Grain, though it may be stored under cover, is generally sold by the retailer in the open, the dealer sitting surrounded by various sacks and baskets with different types and qualities of grain, and of the local types of beans. In 1966 there were 12 men licensed to sell grain in this way.

Rows of women selling milk sit in another part of the market; these have walked in from their village or nomad camps at dawn, each with her milk vessel on her back, or paid for a place on a truck, to sell it to those townspeople who have no cows of their own. Cows' and camels' milk and buttermilk each has its own corner. The ghee made out of the latter is sold, if at all, separately; it is not plentiful in this area, where sesame oil is more often used for cooking, but is more common and cheaper at places like Baidoa or Bur Hakaba, which are in the pasture region.

Other women sell bundles of firewood, brought in on camels or donkeys; these are generally Wa'dan from the deh. Others, the poorest of the townswomen, collect grass and sell it in bundles to those who need fodder for the cows in their yards. Others sell small piles of vegetables and fruit, either from their own fields, or bought from the lorries which bring them from plantations and market gardens.

Two bakeries operate, making European-style rolls and bread. As well as serving the restaurants, some of these are sold in the market by men and women who get a small commission. Elsewhere, stalls sell string and rope (an important commodity for the nomads), baskets and second-hand bottles.

Three crafts carried on in the market are worth mentioning. One is that of shoe-making and leatherwork. This is nearly always done in this area by the Eyle people, one of the low-status occupational groups which are found throughout Somalia and north east Africa generally.

Besides being cobblers, the Eyle are hunters, and are perhaps successors in this respect to the prehistoric hunters of the area (see Section A.1). Leatherwork is a highly developed craft in Somalia, and shoes of the traditional pattern, both men's and women's, are closely decorated, as are belts, straps for suspending amulets, and other leather articles. In the modern context, however, where many people wear rubber or factory made sandals, much of the workers' time is taken up with repairing these. Men sit out in the open doing this kind of work; there are others who specialise in the traditional, more expensive, decorative leather work, and during my stay four of these had hired a shop in Afgoi where they carried it on.

The smiths work under an open shelter in another part of the market; their main trade is in hoes, axes and knives, but they also make daggers of various sizes, and spear heads. The metal is nowadays obtained from old car bodies, and bought from the local car repair shops. Horn for handles is bought from the butchers, and wooden handles and shafts from men who make them out in the bush and bring them to town to sell. Smiths work in pairs - since there has to be a man to work the bellows - and divide their takings. (Otherwise, partnerships are unusual among Somali craftsmen, who generally work each man for himself, as they do on their farms.) Smiths (tumaal) do not form a descent group to themselves in southern Somalia as they do in the north, but like other crafts theirs is strictly a Habash occupation. The smiths of Afgoi prefer not to discuss their origins, but they seem not to be Geledi nor Wa'dan.

Adjoining the smith's pitch is that of the fringe-weavers.

There are about 20 men constantly at this work, which consists of providing a decorative border for a man's or woman's cloth; they never seem short of employment. Any cloth to be worn in the traditional draped style, whether it is a local hand weave or an imported textile, will have such a border if the owner can afford it. Sometimes the weaver will twist the loose threads at the edge into a fringe for a small extra payment, or will leave this to the customer. Some of the men who do this are Geledi, others Habash from different clans.

In 1966, 27 donkey carts were licensed in Afgoi, and others could have been operating unlicensed. These vehicles can be hired for any type of carrying job; sacks of grain, cement, house furniture, cans of dung for plastering walls or anything else. Many of the men who run them are Wa'dan who live in the deh; since such families often have a donkey and cart anyway to fetch their water and other provisions, this is a convenient way for a man to earn some extra money, or even to support himself should his livestock and crops be unlucky.

The Road

The position of Afgoi as a road junction means that many of its people get their living either by running transport of some kind, or by providing services for the lorries, buses and other vehicles which pass through, and for the men who drive and ride in them.

A large number of small buses ply constantly between Afgoi and Mogadishu, and other buses and lorries carrying passengers and goods

set out at intervals on the road south, to Merca and beyond, or inland on the Wanle Weyn - Baidoa route. (Not for the towns of the upper Shebelle, as the main road to them now runs not via Afgoi but direct from Mogadishu.) These vehicles are run independently, generally owned by the men who drive them, though some owners may have two or three and employ drivers. In 1966, 26 of these buses were registered as being owned at Afgoi, and the number seemed to be increasing every year. In the same year there were 12 taxis licensed; these carry people to and from the surrounding villages, and sometimes as far as Mogadishu.

On the service side, there are two petrol stations, and various car repair workshops and dealers in spare parts and secondhand tyres. The latter, when they are finally so worn down that they cannot be used by even the most economical driver, are bought up by shoemakers and made into sandals; these sell well especially among the country people, since they are even cheaper than the Japanese rubber kind, and are becoming commoner than the old leather ones.

Having described the five main areas of local economic life, we can analyse how they interact with one another, and how they actually employ the different sections of the present-day population.

Traditional agriculture in the Afgoi area supports the trade of the market by supplying it with most of its customers. The same is true of the nomadic and semi-nomadic people of the region, who come there for their provisions. Of the goods sold there, on the other hand, only a small proportion are the actual products of the immediate area; but these - grain and other crops, milk, firewood and so on - probably account for much of the actual activity of the market, though not for much of the cash that changes hands. A certain amount of business from the Geledi and other surrounding farmers, however, goes to the markets of Mogadishu (which adds to the traffic of the road).

The only link between traditional farming and plantation agriculture is the fact that farmers while not working their own land might take casual work on a plantation, while others who worked permanently as labourers alternated between the two types of job.

The plantations operated in a national and international context, not a local one; their product in the main went by truck to Mogadishu, from where most of it was exported. Some fruit and vegetables, however, were sold retail on the Afgoi market. In one small way the plantations contributed to the local economy without intention on the part of their owners; much of the grass which was sold in Afgoi was gathered from the banks of their irrigation canals.

The profits made out of the plantations, such as they were, though they might contribute to the national economy, had little effect on the local one. Most of the owners' shopping was done in Mogadishu and the daily eating expenses of a small number of individuals living in no very extravagant style were not a serious factor in local commerce. They did, however, still provide employment for a few domestic servants.

The importance of the market has been sufficiently stressed. It is closely linked to that of the road. Shops get their supplies from Mogadishu, transported by bus or truck. Transport carrying other supplies, such as charcoal, passes through to and from Mogadishu without unloading; so do buses carrying passengers and their small-scale supplies in the shape of bags of grain, milk vessels and bundles of hens. All these vehicles may halt, however, and their drivers and passengers provide custom for the eating places and shops of the town. Another sort of custom finds the European style restaurants - the better off residents of Mogadishu relaxing on their evenings and holidays. All these eating places provide work for men and women as cooks and waiters, and a steady demand for chicken, fruit and other foodstuffs. The muufo and griddle cakes served in the makhayo are made off the premises by townswomen, who earn a little extra by selling them.

According to the 1964 survey of Afgoi, 37% of the municipality's population are economically active (this does not include housewives). Of these, 81.7% are engaged in agriculture, nearly ^{all} working on their own family land, only 5.8% of them being employees. Of the remainder, 6.2%

were found to be living by trade, wholesale or retail, while 2.8% were transport workers.

The following table is extracted from the data given in the 1954 census of Afgoi; it gives the relative numbers in various occupations at that date, and the relation between occupation and descent grouping;¹ certain points emerge from it which confirm my observations of a decade later. Only males of 15 and over are listed, including those who are not 'economically active', and only those from Afgoi town itself, since the population of the villages consists of farmers only, with the exception of koranic teachers and occasional shopkeepers.

The table should be taken as giving an impression of the range of Occupations in this society and their relative importance, rather than an accurate account of the numbers employed in each. This is because many individuals have more than one occupation, and it is to some extent a matter of chance by which one they choose to describe themselves. (The fact, for instance, that only one ferryman is entered may be due to the others being put down as farmers.)

The occupations listed are divided into three categories; those which are a part of the traditional way of life; those which, as

¹ The classifications adopted in the 1964 survey are not very useful from my point of view as they are too general to give a clear idea of what actually goes on. The classification of people given here suffers from my having copied the material before I appreciated the nature of the Noble/Habash distinction or the sub-division of the Geledi.

employment either by the government or European residents, are the direct product of the colonial impact; and those which have arisen indirectly from that impact, as a result of the economic and social developments which came with it.

AEGOI TOWN 1954 : MALE POPULATION OF 15 AND OVER
BY DESCENT AND OCCUPATION

Occupation	Geledi	Wa'dan	Others	'Somali'	Arab	Total
<u>A. Traditional Occupations</u>						
Farmer	538	147	136	42	24	887
Wadaad (incl. koranic teacher)	33	4	26	2	1	66
Weaver (incl. fringe weaver)	15	1	18	2		36
Carpenter	12	4	6	5		27
Smith			2	1	1	4
Shoemaker	1		4			5
Goldsmith	1			2		3
Oil-presser			1			1
Boatman	1					1
Potter			1			1
Woodcutter	5		4			9
Charcoal burner	1		6	2		9
'Livestock owner'	1			1		2
'Rich man'	3	1		1		5
Herdsman	4					4
Beggar	1		7	1		9
	616	157	211	59	26	1,069

AFGOI TOWN 1954 : MALE POPULATION OF 15 AND OVER
BY DESCENT AND OCCUPATION (Contd.)

Occupation	Geledi	Wa'dan	Others	'Somali'	Arab	Total
B. Occupations introduced by European rule.						
Police & Army	15	9	18	1	5	48
Guard, Watchman	2		10	3	3	18
Domestic Servant	19	2	5	5	1	32
Cook	2	3	9	7	2	23
Clerk	4		6	2	14	26
Telephone Operator	1			1		2
Teacher	1		1			2
At school	23	1	4	1		29
Government Chief	1	2				3
" Inspector				1		1
Interpreter			1		1	2
Medical dresser	2		2			4
Tractor driver			1		1	2
Qadi			1			1
Road Sweeper	1		3	1		5
Farm Labourer	37	6	26	16	1	86
	108	23	87	38	28	284

C. Other 'modern' Occupations

Shopkeeper/ Dealer	21	5	33	15	73	147
Porter/Labourer	28	5	31	11	3	78
Painter/Builder	7	7	7	2	1	24
c/f	56	17	71	28	77	249

AFGOI TOWN 1954 : MALE POPULATION OF 15 AND OVER
BY DESCENT AND OCCUPATION (Contd.)

Occupation	Geledi	Wa'dan	Others	'Somali'	Arab	Total
b/f	56	17	71	28	77	249
Livestock Trader			1	1		2
Broker	1	3	12	21	4	41
Butcher	19	2	6	7	1	35
Baker			2			2
Driver	4	8	12	16	12	52
Driver's tout	1		5	1	8	15
Eating-house Owner				1	2	3
Waiter	3		4	15	6	28
Washer-up				3	6	9
Mechanic	7	4	1	8	2	22
Bicycle Hire				1	1	2
Donkey cart			1	1	6	8
Tailor			4		4	8
Tobacconist				1	1	2
Laundryman	2		3	4		9
Barber	1		4		1	6
Grain Mill		1	1	2	1	5
Warehouse Keeper	2					2
Salt Seller					1	1
Water-carrier				1	1	2
Chicken Seller				1		1
Watch Repair					1	1
Bread Seller			1			1
c/f	96	35	128	112	135	506

AFGOI TOWN 1954 : MALE POPULATION OF 15 AND OVER
BY DESCENT AND OCCUPATION (Contd.)

Occupation	Geledi	Wa'dan	Others	'Somali'	Arab	Total
b/f	96	35	128	112	135	506
Electrician				1		1
(?) Solderer				3		3
	96	35	128	116	135	510
Entry obscure or illegible	4	2	14	5	4	29
TOTAL	824	217	440	218	193	1,892

It seems that in Afgoi town by the mid-Nineteen-Fifties, farmers were still by far the largest single occupational group, and this remains true. In general, there were more people in traditional occupations than in newer ones, though not many more; since then, the number of people in the second and third categories seems to have increased, but not very greatly. There are, for instance, more makayos and grain-mills, but fewer domestic servants. By and large, I do not believe the picture has changed much.

In all the Somali groups, the majority are farmers; only among the Arabs are they a minority. Whereas the majority of Arabs are in the third group (commercial) the majority of Somali are in the first (traditional), but this disproportion is much higher among the Geledi than the Wa'dan or the Somali from other clans, since the latter are

immigrants and live by the market, while the bulk of the Wa'dan do not live in the town but follow their traditional life in the deh. The Arabs provide the most clerks; they account in fact for almost exactly half the total of shopkeepers and dealers, though for only about one-tenth of the whole number of people listed.

The relatively large number of Geledi both in domestic service and at school is also interesting; it is only the Geledi who have more people in the second group than in the third. This seems to reflect the standing good relations of the Geledi with the Italian government, and their characteristic willingness both to accept and to profit by it.

A person who gave his origins simply as 'Somali' to the census takers did so either because he had modern ideas, or because he wished to hide his low status; the two of course may go together. Young men on the move are especially likely to have political ideas of this kind, so it is not surprising that the 'Somali' group includes both a high proportion of the young men of working age (compared to its total in the town population - see Appendix IV), and among these a large number in such occupations as broker or driver, which imply both enterprise and a mobile way of life.

Among the shopkeepers and businessmen, apart from the Arabs, the high proportion of Somali from other clans than Geledi or Wa'dan is noteworthy. Such immigrants carry on much of the market's commercial activity, since this belongs to a wider network than the merely local

one, and to some extent makes its own community, alongside the older one in the midst of which it lives.

The tendency, found in northern Somalia, for people to go to a shopkeeper belonging to their own clan does not seem to exist here, at least among the sedentary population. Probably this sort of check is not necessary, since a person of fixed habitation cannot so easily escape his creditor that the latter needs the tie of kinship to be sure of him; consequently people can get credit without it. Ties between shopkeepers and their habitual customers are formed on other grounds, of friendship or mutual convenience, and the shopkeeper extends credit according to his judgement of the customer's position, or sometimes to his own degree of soft-heartedness, without reference to their relative positions genealogically.

Household Expenditure

To discuss or compare incomes is difficult, since so many people are wholly or partly dependent on their own subsistence farming. The lowest paid workers are perhaps farm labourers, who get 3 - 5 shillings a day depending on the demand and conditions, when they can find work. A man working as a driver may get 400 - 500 shillings a month.

Grain is still the staple food, and a major item of expense for those who do not grow it themselves. Otherwise, meat and milk are the most expensive foods for most families. Tea, with the sugar which is

an essential part of the beverage, and coffee in both its forms, are important. A household expenditure survey made in Mogadishu¹ shows clearly what is easily observable in visiting different households, that the poorer people are, the higher proportion of their income they spend on tea and coffee. People will do without meat or milk sooner than without these. With this may be contrasted expenditure on tobacco; the better off people are, the more, in proportion, they spend on this.

I append as illustration of day to day living expenses, two lists of daily expenses from two different households in Afgoi town. This sort of expenditure barely varies from day to day, and these are quite typical of the better-off households. (Household 'A' consists of 8 adults and 4 children, household 'B' of 3 adults and 4 children.) Poorer families, or those living out of town, would not buy the same variety of vegetables or fruit, or such things as rolls or pasta, and eat meat less often.

For comparison, I put beside them the average percentage distribution of family expenditure as tabled in the Mogadishu survey for families spending between 100 and 1,000 shillings a month. This includes categories of expense such as clothes, furniture and transport and medicine which come outside the daily shopping list, though the two Afgoi households in question spend quite a lot on them. Their proportionate

¹ This was made in 1966, in order to construct a cost of living index. It included 600 households, with incomes of from under 100 shillings to over 1,000 a month.

expenditure would probably be found to be much the same as that in Mogadishu, except for the very large amount which there goes on house rent. The usual rent in Afgoi during my time there was 5 shillings per month; but most people still own their houses, as did both the families here.

	Percen- age Dis- tribution (Mog.survey)	Household 'A'	Household 'B'
Cereals and cereal substitutes	12.2	Maize 1.40 2 suus	Maize from farm 2 suus Muufo 0.50
		Rolls 10 .80	
		Pasta 1 Pkt. 1.70	
Sugar	8.5	Sugar $\frac{1}{2}$ kilo 1.20	Sugar 1 kilo 2.40
Pulses (beans)	0.5		
Vegetables	4.4	Tomatoes 0.20 Onion 0.20 Peppers 0.05 Greens 0.20	Tomatoes 0.10 Onion 0.10
Fruit	5.1	Lemons 10 0.10 Bananas 15 0.30 Mangoes 3 0.60	Bananas 0.20
Meat, fish, eggs	8.7	Goat $\frac{3}{4}$ k. 2.40	Beef 1 k 3.00
Milk	10.2	Camel's 1 fiasco 1.20	From own cow
Oil & fats	5.3	Sesame oil 1.00	Sesame oil 5.00 (1 bottle for 2 days)
Salt & spices	1.0	Salt (for several days) 0.10 Tomato puree 0.20 Spices for tea 0.20	Salt (for several days) 0.20 Ginger for coffee (for 2 days) 0.70 Spices for tea 0.10
c/f	55.9	11.85	12.30

¹ Bought by the spoonful in a screw of paper.

	<u>Percen-</u> <u>tage Dis-</u> <u>tribution</u> <u>(Hog. survey)</u>	<u>Household</u> <u>'A'</u>	<u>Household</u> <u>'B'</u>
b/f	55.9	11.85	12.30
Tea & coffee	3.7	Tea 0.30 Coffee $\frac{1}{2}$ k (for 3 days) 1.00 Bun 0.10	Tea 0.30 Coffee $\frac{1}{2}$ k (for 2 days) 0.90 Bun 0.20
Tobacco	3.6		
Fuel	3.8	Firewood 0.30 Charcoal 0.40 Paraffin 0.35	Firewood 0.50 Paraffin 0.40
Housing and water	16.1	Water 1.25 12 jars ²	Water 0.20 4 jars
Furniture	0.4		
Household operation	3.3	Grinding maize by machine 0.20	Grinding maize by machine 0.20 Soap 1.00
Clothes	2.8		
Miscellaneous ³	10.4	Ice 1 Thermos 0.40	Children's breakfast ⁴ at school ⁴ 1.50
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>16.15 shill.</u>	<u>17.50 sh</u>

² i.e. payment to the woman who brings them. Household 'A' had all its water brought from one of the town wells; in household 'B' the wife fetched water from the well herself, but paid for 4 jars from the river for drinking. River water is preferred for its taste.

³ This includes transport, education, medical care, etc.

⁴ As their home was some way from the school, they were expected to buy their mid-morning snack at one of the market eating-houses.

Examples

To show how these mixed ways of livelihood work out in practice, I conclude with some examples of the way in which actual families support themselves.

Case (a): A couple with four young children, living in a village about two hours' walk from Geledi town. They are both Geledi Nobles. They cultivate 8 darab (2 hectares) from his family land, besides ownin_o about 10 head of cattle. Living mainly on their own grain and milk, they are the nearest of these cases to the traditional way of life.

Case (b): A couple living in Geledi town, Nobles, with three young children; (two boys at school) and the 11 year old daughter of the husband's brother, who helps with the housework. The husband keeps a provision shop (dukaan) in Afgoi market; he also owns 30 darab ($7\frac{1}{2}$ hectares) of inherited land at some distance from the town; 9 darab of it are cultivated by hired labourers, and his wife helps. They own a few cows, which are grazed by a hired cowherd in the pastures at the edge of the Geledi territory.

Case (c): A couple living in Geledi town, Habash, with 1 adult daughter and 3 youn_o r c'ildren. They cultivate 4 darab (1 hectare) which they rent. The wife makes and sells baskets and bakes muufo which she sells to housewives of the quarter and to the makhayo. The daughter works at the banana packing plant.

Case (d): Wa'dan noble with a wife and baby living in left-bank Afgoi. He works as a driver for one of the government experimental farms, but has 4 darab of inherited land of his own. When he can afford it, he hires a tractor and driver from the government agency to plough it, and labourers to weed and harvest.

Case (e): Divorced woman of middle age, Noble, living alone in Geledi town. She has 4 darab, inherited from her father, which she cultivates herself with the help of labourers. She also does a trade in the local woven cloth, which she buys direct from the weaver and sells to contacts in other towns. She has inherited a house of five huts, and lets off the part she does not occupy.

Case (f): An Arab family with an adult son and four daughters, living in left-bank Afgoi. The husband owns a shop in the market where he and the son work. He had also bought 10 darab ($2\frac{1}{2}$ hectares) of land, near a village where his brother owns another shop, and cultivates this with hired labour. Much of the produce he sells in his own shop.

Case (g): A Wa'dan (Noble) family living in the deh, with two adult and three younger sons. They own 6 camels, 4 cows and a flock of about a dozen goats. They have a farm of two or three darab on the 'black earth' and also cultivate a plot on the infertile 'white earth' of the deh. (Here the technique is of shifting, slash and burn cultivation, and plots are not measured by darab.) The eldest son has a donkey cart, which he drives to Afgoi market every day to work, coming

home in the evening; at the same time he gets their provisions or tea, salt and so forth, and their water, when their camp is not within reach of a well.

Conclusion

The relatively simple economy indicated in the first part of this study has become complicated and diversified. Though agriculture is still the basic livelihood of most of the population, it is not that of the more ambitious or 'progressive' part of it, no man in the Afgoi region in modern times who wished to make good would try to do so in traditional farming. In the old order, status was based on slaves and land; in the newer one it has another basis. What this is will be examined in the following section.

B. 3 (c) AFGOI TODAY; POLITICS AND LAW

The Geledi community described in Part A, as it existed in the 19th century, was a small scale, autonomous polity, organised by decisions taken at face to face discussions and often informally. Political power belonged to the hereditary Sultan, and to an elite consisting of the elders of the Noble lineage groups, (probably including Lightskins) whose position rested on their wealth in land and slaves.

With colonization, Geledi became 'encapsulated' as a political system within the larger one of Italian Somalia, without being fully a part of it, in the sense that though the larger structure could control the smaller one, the reverse was not the case; Geledi elders could influence the behaviour of the government officials with whom they had to deal only to a very small extent, and communication between the two sides was restricted.

With independence, the smaller structure was still part of a larger one to which it was subordinate, but its members could now to a more or less degree participate in the working of that larger one. Political power, however, was now increasingly in the hands of a new elite of a different kind, the basis of the former distribution of wealth and power having been eliminated with slavery. For the Nobles of Geledi (and other Somali communities of the same kind) the problem of the new order was how to ensure for themselves, and still more for their children

the power and prestige to which they felt themselves to be entitled, by means suited to the new circumstances.

The following section describes the political and legal situation as I observed it in the later nineteen-sixties, before the changes following the coup of 1969. I will discuss this situation, first, with reference to local government, and then to national party politics as they appeared in this small district.

The old structure of Sultan, akhyar, and solidary lineage groups continued to exist and function in a reduced way, modified both by the addition to its personnel of the Lineage Chiefs (capi) and by having superimposed upon it the official apparatus of local government. The organs of this latter were the District Commissioner, the Municipal Council, the court and police.

Somalia consists for administrative purposes of regions divided into Districts. Afgoi is the centre of its District and the seat of local government there. The post of District Commissioner was the descendant of that of Resident in the Italian colonial system. He was the representative in his district of the central administration, and as such subordinate to the Governor of the Region. In the Nineteen-sixties his job was to supervise and work in close co-operation with the Municipal Council; this consisted of 21 Councillors (the number depended on the size of the municipality) elected by the local community;

some were Lineage Chiefs, others businessmen or other local men of standing. They were supposed to be under the presidency of a mayor (Sindaco) chosen from among their number; during my stay in Afgoi however, this office was there in abeyance since its last two incumbents had been imprisoned for embezzling the municipal funds, and its functions had been taken over by the Commissioner.

The functions were in any case mainly formal and ceremonial. The day to day administration of the municipality was in the hands of a full time executive Secretary (appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for the municipalities), and a staff of two or three clerks.

The duties of the Municipal Council included keeping public records, registering sales or grants of land, and controlling the market. It was responsible for the local street lighting and electricity supply (a small diesel powered dynamo) and for such public health measures as the periodical spraying of all the houses with DDT. (This is fatal to people's chickens; I am not sure that it kills anything else.) The council was expected by law to pay itself for the services which it provided, and hence was authorised to collect a house tax and market dues. This kind of job was carried out by the rural constabulary (Google), who are generally local men. These are not to be confused with the Somali police force proper, which is organised at the national level and not controlled by local government, though

they co-operated, apparently smoothly, None of the police that I knew were Geledi men by origin.

As the centre of its district, Afgoi houses the local court-house and had a judge to try local cases. Under the Italians there had been two systems of courts, one with Muslim Qadis to decide on matters of Shariat, and customary law, and another to apply state law; in a rather complicated division of functions the former dealt with nearly all controversies between Somali (and other Muslims), but any case where western-type legal documents were involved came under the jurisdiction of state law. In 1962, however, a unified system was adopted, whereby cases under state, Shariat and local customary law were all to be dealt with by the same courts.

In the District courts, the lowest in order, civil cases were dealt with where the value at issue did not exceed 3,000 shillings, besides all those which came under Shariat or customary law; and criminal cases where the penalty did not exceed a fine of 3,000 shillings, or a three year imprisonment or both. Other cases went to the regional courts; which in the case of the Benadir area are in Mogadishu. This includes all cases of homicide, for instance.

(Contini pp.36-6.)

Afgoi has a police station which is responsible for the surrounding district, and a small prison. Relations between police and public are on the whole good. As opposed to the situation in some

parts of the interior of the country, where nomadic groups are prone to regard the police as unwelcome interferers, the townspeople of Afgoi mostly regard them as useful punishers of thieves and other undesirables, and their services are called on readily enough. There is little tendency to identify with prisoners, and it is generally taken for granted that criminals are beaten to make them confess. The possibility that an innocent person might be arrested evidently does not figure enough in people's minds to affect this attitude.

Geledi has a tradition of lawkeeping within the community. Vengeance, as we saw in Part A. 2(e), was either forbidden or publicly regulated. For offences involving other clans, proper compensation rather than revenge is acceptable. Feuding (contemptuously described as is-dildilow 'keeping on killing each other', an untranslatable succinct phrase) is considered as something to be expected among rough nomads like the Garre and Gal Ja'el, but not among the more civil Geledi. This attitude receives backhanded confirmation from the opinion of other clans, particularly Hawiye, that the Geledi are soft and unwarlike. And from the limited number of cases that I heard about during my stay in Afgoi, it does appear that violence and homicide are more likely among the mixed population of the left bank.

We have seen (pp. 26-30) the traditional methods for settling offences within the Geledi community, and between them and other clans. Now that a police and court system had been superimposed on the old

structure, many minor cases continued to be settled outside them, by informal arbitration by an elder or lineage chief, or by consultation between the akhyar of the parties concerned. In cases of theft, violence or homicide, however, the police are called in or intervene. There is an area, however, where the authorities work in with the traditional ways, rather than superceding them. Thus in minor disputes that flare up, a policeman, if called in, often simply takes on the role of arbitrator as a lineage elder would, and gets the matter argued out and settled on the spot. The way in which people co-operate in this shows how a modern institution can be fitted into established patterns of social behaviour. So also a stipended lineage chief would often accompany fellow lineage-members to court, or to the police station, speak for them and sometimes get them bail. (This role of the lineage chief is discussed further below.)

Somali law, while imposing prison and death sentences for violence and homicide, also recognised the right of the injured party and his kin to compensation in such cases. Compensation is now payable in cash, rather than in livestock as was once done (see p.129). During the Nineteen-sixties the rates of compensation were as follows (the collection of the money has been dealt with in Part A).

For the purposes of paying such compensation, the Geledi, Wa'dan and the allied section of the Murunsade counted as one group. If a member of it was killed by an outsider, the bloodwealth (diya) charged is 10,000 shillings; if the victim was a woman 5,000. This was the usual figure in the area. It could however, be reduced if the elders

of the injured lineage agree to it. Thus at the end of 1966, a Wa'dan was killed by a man of the Garre; of the 10,000 shillings 2,000 were excused, so that he only had to pay 8,000; of this his clan had to produce 2,000 at once, and were given two months to collect the remainder.

Among the Wa'dan clan bloodwealth is also demanded for a killing between the three sections of the clan; the price in 1967 was 5,000 shillings for a man, 2,500 for a woman. For a death within the section, however, there is no payment; but a rite of reconciliation, with recitation of the fataha.

In cases of wounding, the payment may vary according to the circumstances and the seriousness of the injury. Thus, in 1967, an Abgal whose car ran into a Wa'dan and broke his leg had to pay 2,000s compensation. In a similar case between an Arab and a man from the Ogaden, also a motor accident, the payment was 1,000s. (Many cases of injury in modern times are the results of traffic accidents instead of fighting.) On the other hand, in a case in 1964, between a man from Galawer (a Geledi allied group) and a Hawadle, the payment was only 320 shillings.

The compensation for threatening a man with a weapon, even if no injury is caused, is 500 shillings.

There are cases where the process of state law does not satisfy the offended party. Thus, I was told of a case some years before my

time in Afgoi, in which a Geledi employed as a guard in an Italian plantation shot a Wafdan who was watering his cattle by the river, mistaking his movement among the trees for a hippopotamus; the man died.

The homicide was only kept in prison for a few days and then released (on bail?). The brother of the dead man found him sitting in an eating house, went up and said good morning to him, and stabbed him. He died on the spot; I was not told what happened to the avenger.

A case which occurred during my stay involved two of the elements of the newer population of left bank Afgoi; the Arabs, and Daarood Somali from the NFD. The son of one of the wealthier Arab residents was accused of indecent assault by a Daarood boy, and arrested, though he protested his innocence. His father managed to get him released on bail pending the trial. While on his way to the police station one morning, he was attacked by four of the boy's fellow clansmen and seriously wounded. One of the attackers was arrested, but the other three escaped.

District Commissioner, Judge, Secretary to the Municipality, police, were all men whose origins were outside the community, though during their time of duty there they became important members of it. Of their subordinate assistants and clerks, some were also from outside the community, while some were local young men (which may mean Geledi,

Wa'dan, Hintire or other neighbouring groups, Arabs or people from other areas living in Afgoi).

As has been already pointed out, the prerequisite for any official post at whatever level is western-style education, and this is only available to families with a certain amount of money already, and only taken advantage of by those with some desire to see their children become influential. There was, therefore, likely to be some continuity between the old elite and the new, and in fact this was true to the extent that the latter were often the sons of the former. This was so, however, only taking the country as a whole; there was not a direct succession within the same district. It is conceivable in terms of the system that the civil servant could have been the brother or son of the Lineage Chief or elder with whom he had to deal, but I do not know of such a case and it seems likely that an appointment of the kind would have been avoided. During my time in Afgoi a close relative of the Geledi Sultan was in fact holding the post of district commissioner, not there, but in the neighbouring district of Wanle Weyn; the Commissioner of Afgoi came from further up the Shebelle. If the civil servant was not related to the men he dealt with, the chances are that he was to men of equivalent status and position elsewhere.

Members of the Municipal Council, on the other hand, were by definition men from the local community, and many were also lineage Chiefs.

Position and function of Lineage Chiefs

From the point of view of a government committed, as was that of the Somali Republic, to abolishing 'tribalism', the office of government salaried Lineage Chief must ^{be} an anomaly, since it exists precisely in terms of that clan structure which modern government is supposed to ignore, while local administration operates on a purely territorial basis. It remained one even though Chiefs were now elected by their fellow lineage-members¹ and made official Councillors.

Nevertheless, up to 1969 the office continued, and it fulfilled a necessary function.

During the colonial period these 'capi', like their equivalent in other colonies, had the uneasy job of mediating between the two political structures, the Italian central government and the clan organisation. The somalization of the central government and civil service has not obviated the need for a link between it and the local population, for as long as that population remains, in the main illiterate, and traditional in its ways of thought. Officials and police may be fellow Somali, but they are still unfamiliar faces from other areas, and they operate in terms of a system which is unfamiliar and

¹ When I saw one such election, the lineage assembled, in the presence of local officialdom, and the voting was done by show of hands; but in fact the vote was unanimous, since there was only one candidate, the other having withdrawn a day or two before. The choice, that is to say, had already been made by informal consultation, and the 'vote' was simply a formal ratification of this.

confusing to many of their fellow citizens. Now that the larger 'encapsulating' structure to some extent interpenetrated with the old clan structure and could be affected by it, lineage chiefs no longer so much represented their group as a whole, as they advised and helped their fellow lineage members as individuals, and particularly the more countrified and unsophisticated of those individuals, when they had to come into contact with police or local government.

A Chief could go with his protege to the police station, the court, or the Commissioner's office, speak for him and guide him through the unfamiliar formalities. This function was explicitly recognized by the officials concerned; on one occasion when I accompanied some plaintiffs to the police station (actually with the idea of observing what went on, but it was assumed on both sides that I had made them my protégés), The Captain said 'So you have become their capo'.

Some role of this kind is likely to be found, whether officially recognised or not, wherever there are problems of communication between a controlling organisation and the people affected by it; that is to say, in any large scale centralized political system. (One does not have to be an illiterate peasant to find modern bureaucracy bewildering.) The same kind of function that is performed by a lineage chief in Afgoi is carried out in the Indian village described by Bailey (p. 173) by 'brokers' who are paid and despised by their fellow

villagers; in Britain for the well-to-do by solicitors and bank managers; or for their less fortunate fellow countrymen by charitable organizations such as 'Shelter' (which undertakes specifically to do just this).

These examples suggest that social duty or cash payment can both act as incentives to people to undertake the task of mediator. It is a situation where the mediator can help but also exploit his client, if the latter has to pay for his services.

The Lineage Chief got no cash payment from his protégés, but he did from the central authority, to which he was of use since he could make the administration process smoother. Apart from settling many problems without bothering government officials at all, he could save their expending time and energy on bewildered or suspicious people, possibly with no effect. He might also get some return from the other side also, since to a man who had further political ambitions, to perform this role zealously was an excellent way of becoming popular.

It appears that under the new government the office of lineage chief has been abolished (as have most other offices of local government). It would be instructive to see whether under the circumstances other (unofficial) mediating roles appear to replace them, and if so whether cash payment is involved.

The highest office of this kind remained that of the Geledi Sultan, which is a special case. The present incumbent is an old man

who has retired from overt political activity, scarcely leaves his house, and spends his time in religious study and prayer. This is a matter of his personal choice; there is nothing in the traditional nature of his role to force such a retirement in the face of modern conditions. It is in the nature of that role, however, that in spite of this retirement he is still an important figure in his community. The political power of the Geledi Sultans was founded on their religious significance; and when the former is in abeyance, the latter remains. The Sultan is still the Sheikh, the holy man, and the symbolic centre of Geledi.

The Local Establishment

Thus, the persons of importance in Geledi-Afgoi were, on the one hand, salaried civil servants mostly from outside the community, and on the other, representatives of the traditional clan structure - for the Lineage Chiefs can be considered as such, even though theirs was not itself a traditional office.

These two sets of people, though they might be analytically opposed to one another, as belonging to different systems, in practice not only co-operated but merged socially. Together they formed the local 'establishment'. They ran the affairs of the community, not only by official consultation but by informal arrangements and understandings. They lunched together in restaurants. They tended towards a common life-style, marked by a certain modernity in dress

and house furnishings, command of Italian, and some degree of education (for though Chiefs and Councillors were not required to have any schooling, many of them did). The division here is not between the official administration and the office holders of the clan system, but within the latter; between the younger or more progressive men, and the more elderly or old fashioned chiefs and elders, who kept to the traditional dress and way of life generally. This however did not prevent them from being at their ease with officials and co-operating with them.

The 'local establishment' thus partly consists of what P.C. Lloyd (1966) would call the 'sub elite', this being defined as those with some education - post-primary or some secondary schooling - but not to the standard of the national elite; 'the executive clerical grades, primary school teachers and artisans'; (pp. 12-13). (His other category, the 'marginal elite', consisting of holders of traditional offices who have some education, and 'wealthy traders', belongs rather to a West African context.)

The word 'elite' however, suggests a group which is homogeneous at least in its method of recruitment; the local establishment is not so. It consists partly of those who have through education attained minor government rank, and partly of those who held positions established under an earlier system; this was in itself the product both of the indigenous social system and of the Italian colonial structure. It was thus an amalgamation of two sorts of elite, joined at the local level by common interests and responsibilities.

The humbler person, meanwhile, tended to see his relationship to all such men of influence and wealth, whether businessman, Lineage Chief or civil servant, in much the same terms as he would once have seen his relation to the Sultan, or to some wealthy landowner. He asked for personal favours, and saw himself as having the right to do so; in return he would give political support if it was required.

Deputies, Party Politics and Clanship

An important figure in the local establishment was the Deputy to the National Assembly. (In the case of Afgoi, the capital is so near that deputies could stay in close touch with their constituents.)

Party politics in Somalia has been bedevilled by the question of 'tribalism', a word which there does not refer to the same phenomenon as it does in other African states, but to one which has much the same implications from the point of view of a government trying to run a centralised state (see Lewis /969.b.). In the rest of Africa 'tribalism' is what in Europe is known as nationalism, and a 'tribe' is a large ethnic grouping which bases its sense of unity on common cultural traditions. In this sense, 'tribe' refers to the entire Somali people, and Somali 'tribalism' counts as seditious in the states adjacent to the Republic. In Somali itself, however, the same phenomenon is called, following the European usage, Nationalism, and is progressive and a good thing. What goes under the label of 'tribalism' and is reactionary and a bad thing, is the Somali clan and lineage system;

or rather, not the system as such, but the persistence of its old ties, obligations and hostilities in a context where the wider national loyalty ought to be paramount.

The nearest thing in Somali society to the sort of cultural discontinuity that is the definition of 'tribal' problems elsewhere is the division between the northern 'Samaale' and the southern 'Sab' (Digil-Rahanweyn) clans. This division, though it would probably shrink into insignificance were Somalis of both groups living together surrounded by alien communities, is still deep enough to take the place, to some extent, in Somali life, of the complete cultural and linguistic differences which split other nations.

In Somali towns there are therefore no problems like those of the multi-ethnic cities of other African countries (or for that matter of the U.S.A. and other plural societies.) There is neither the sharp cleavage between different groups in town, nor that between town life and the distant tribal homeland. People of different clans and clan-families live interspersed and mix freely; this applies both to the Mogadishu suburbs and to smaller places like left-bank Afgoi.

The Somali Republic has since its constitution set out to transcend old clan loyalties in favour of a wider, national loyalty, and to encourage its citizens to do so. This has meant endeavouring to abolish 'tribalism' at every level of the national life, and eliminating the clan structure, if not from people's lives, at least from

the official vocabulary. At the same time the Republic was supposed to function as a representative democracy, with elections held between political parties. As was natural, however, in a population with no class system on a national scale, or any large groupings with divergent politico-economic interests, there was little practical difference between the ideology or programmes of the different parties. In the circumstances it was foreseeable that different parties, if they were to mean anything at all to the general population, should tend to become identified with the actual groupings rooted in that society, namely those of clan and clan family. At the level of local elections at least, a regime committed to eliminating 'tribalism' with one hand while introducing party politics with the other is caught in a paradox.

There is a gap here between the official point of view, that of a minority thoroughly educated in western ideas, to whom 'tribalism' means such abuses as nepotism, and incompetent men holding government posts through influence, and that of the bulk of the electorate. The former are largely, if not entirely, concentrated on the capital, and see the national government as a whole, of which particular deputies and officials are only parts, whose main duty is to that whole; they are moreover conscious of the way in which during the period of foreign colonisation rivalries between clan groups helped smooth the way for the conquerors (the Geledi and Bimal are an example of this). For the average person, however, local interests are the primary reality, and in them what counts is the personal character of a candidate and his clan affiliation.

To such a person it is not only legitimate and normal to vote on the basis of clanship; he cannot imagine any other basis for political alignment. To him, the local Deputy is 'our' man, one of us, whom we have sent as our representative to the seat of power in order to look after our interests. His position is held to be one of great wealth as well as power - wealth which he has attained by the favour of those who elected him - and hence he should repay them by helping them not only collectively but, on occasion, individually. They have a right to make demands on him for help in getting work, for instance, or medicine, or for financial help, as they might from any other wealthy fellow clansman.

It would be nonsense to suggest that every person in a place like Afgoi holds precisely this attitude; the difference in point of view is not a total cleavage; there are degrees both of education and political sophistication, and there are increasing numbers of people even at the level of the local electorate who hold progressive views at least some of the time. But the sort of assumptions described remain those of the majority.

The history of party politics in Somalia as a whole has been a complex one; although the Somali Youth League (see p. 206) was the majority party continuously up to 1969, numerous small splinter parties have come and gone in opposition. From the point of view of Afgoi-Geledi, most of these may be ignored. To understand the meaning of

party politics as it has been experienced there it is necessary to go back to the period of the Italian Trusteeship Administration.

When the Assembly was instituted and the first national elections held in southern Somalia, the tendency to form parties according to clan interests was much stronger and more overt than it later became. The S.Y.L. however was from the first a pan-Somali organisation; the main opposition to it became the H.D.M.S. party, (Hizbia Digil Mirifle Somali) which represented the Digil-Rahanweyn clans. (The Mirifle clans are the largest section of the Rahanweyn.) In 1956 the party changed its title, while retaining the same initials, to Hizbia Dastur Mustaqil Somali (Somali Independent Constitutional Party); it is in any case generally just called the Hizbia. It was nevertheless still the party specifically of the Digil, and as such supported by the Geledi as a whole. It shared with the S.Y.L. the aim of unification with northern Somalia and the other Somali areas, but unlike the S.Y.L. which demanded a unitary state with a high degree of central authority, the H.D.M.S. favoured a federal type of state, with a large measure of regional autonomy. This desire betrayed the suspicion on the part of the Digil-Rayanweyn that centralised rule would mean rule by northerners; on the other side, the H.D.M.S. were felt by S.Y.L. supporters to be too pro-Italian. (See Lewis 1965 pp. 157-161.) When in the end the aim of the S.Y.L. for a unitary state prevailed, a feeling remained among some elements in the south that their interests had been betrayed.

When I was in Afgoi in 1966-68, the two party organisations which flourished there were the S.Y.L. and the H.D.M.S., and it was taken for granted that they drew their support from the left and right banks respectively. (There was also a branch of the S.N.C. but it had little local impact.) There were some Geledi whose progressive views or personal ambitions took them into the S.Y.L., but it would have been unthinkable for any of the Hawiye from the left bank, to belong to the H.D.M.S. So the old Digil-Hawiye division crystallised in the new political form.

When the southern Assembly was first elected in 1956, though in towns like Mogadishu the vote was by secret ballot, in rural areas the attempt was made to use the old open clan assemblies to choose the candidates. At the next election, in 1959, however, the deputies were chosen by universal suffrage, including women, by secret ballot on the proportional representation system. After unification, this system was continued and was extended to the whole country.

Somalia was divided into electoral districts, with a specified number of deputies for each. The Afgoi district returned two deputies. Any political party was entitled to present a list of candidates in any electoral district, provided that each list was accompanied by the signature of at least five hundred supporting voters, and a deposit. The number of seats allotted to each list was proportional to the votes it obtained in the district, calculated on the basis of electoral

quotients. The quotient for a district was found by dividing the total number of votes cast by the number of deputies to be elected there; a list was allotted as many seats as the number of quotients obtained (Contini p.20). This system tended to result in the fiercest competition being between candidates of the same party for the top place on the list, since the occupant of that position who would get the seat, if any, allotted to his party. Thus the result was that - as in other electoral systems - where there was a 'safe seat' it was actually the party organisation which chose the Deputy.

This system appeared to work out very neatly in Afgoi; it was taken as a natural thing while I was first there that one of the two Deputies should be a S.Y.L. man and a Hawiye (he was in point of fact an Abgal by origin, resident in Afgoi) and the other a member of the H.D.M.S. and a Geledi (he was actually a Gobron). There seemed to be a perfect fit between party and clan allegiance.

The election of 1969, however, showed that this was not quite so, and also which of the two was the primary loyalty for most people. In that campaign a candidate from Geledi joined the S.Y.L. and stood for election; by some manoeuvre whose nature I was left to guess at, he contrived to jump the queue and be at the head of the list. When the returns therefore gave each party one seat as before, both were occupied by Geledi.

This led to bitterness and resentment, particularly from the Wa'dan, who had counted on getting their own man in and felt that they

had been double-crossed. The Geledi on the other hand were jubilant and full of self congratulation. Something of their mood may be gauged from these couplets (barambur) among others improvised by Gobron women at the sivaro of their ancestor 'Aalin Warre in June 1969.

'The son of the copier of the Koran (The Sheikh)....

He destroyed Bardera.'

'Is not Subuge on top of the Red House (i.e. the Assembly,
which is of red brick)
Let no one else be set up there!'

Praising their lineage they mention both the recent political victory and the military triumphs of the past; the implication is that the Gobron are on top where they belong.

Another interesting feature of this election was the behaviour of the members of the two lower social categories. One of the two deputies elected was a Lightskin; the Lightskins of the area had in fact begun organising themselves as a group, both those of Geledi and the Audegle, forming an alliance which cut across clan identities and taking their common traditional status as its basis; a quite new departure. The result of the election was, therefore, satisfactory to this interest also.

Among the candidates there had also been a man from a Habash lineage (Aitire). It is not perhaps surprising that he failed to get a seat, but the fact that he stood at all goes to show that this category of the population was also beginning to assert itself. It does

not seem however that the Habash are likely to form themselves into a political grouping on the basis of their status like the Lightskins; if they attempt to assert their equality with their former superiors, it is not by emphasizing the difference between them and declaring themselves equal as a parallel group, but by suppressing those differences and trying to merge with the Nobles, either as equal subgroupings within the same clan or, ultimately, as equal individuals within the nation.

Conclusion

The remaining representatives of the older ruling elite, whose position was based on land and slaves, were being overtaken and replaced by a new one based on education. The two were connected however, both by the newer one being derived from the old, and by their co-operating and merging in practice.

In spite of the official emphasis of replacing 'tribalism', political parties were still seen by people at large as the expression of hereditary divisions; however where clan and party did not coincide it was the former which counted.

In the months following the accession to power of the military government in 1969, the situation described above was altered radically. The municipal councils were abolished, the District Commissioners and government-stipended chiefs deprived of their posts, and local government became much more directly controlled by the central authority,

which is entirely military. It would appear therefore that the compromise situation represented by the 'local establishment' is over, and the traditional local political institutions by-passed even more completely than under the Italian colonial regime. It remains to be seen how the structure of the community will respond to this latest development in the society of which it is a part.

C. THE STICK-FIGHT AND NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

To the inhabitants of the rest of Somalia, the name 'Afgoi' suggests before anything else its most famous institution, the yearly is-tun or 'feast of beating'. This is a contest between young men armed with sticks and divided into two parties drawn from the two Geledi moieties, the Tolwiine and Yebdaale; it is held at the beginning of the New Year according to the Somali solar reckoning, at the beginning of August.

This contest has no parallel elsewhere in Somalia; Afgoi may in fact be identified as "the place where they hit each other" (la is-tumayaan). Since the colonial era the occasion has become something of a tourist attraction, known both among the Somali and the Italian and other foreign residents. It remains rather a mystery to outsiders, however, and their attempts to explain the origin and purpose of the custom to each other have led to many fanciful statements about it which are widely accepted.

Before discussing the questions of its origins and meaning, it is necessary to have clear what actually occurs during the festival. A first point to be grasped about the is-tun, and one which is not always apparent to visitors who only see the fight itself, is that it is not an isolated custom, but is held as an integral part of a three-day festival, a high point of the year, which comprises a whole collection of diverse customs and rites. First, since this is a calendrical feast, we may look at the system of reckoning the year.

Time and the Somali

Though in many ways the traditional Somali life (pastoral or agricultural) can rightly be described as simple, this is not so of their attitudes to time and methods of reckoning it. For many centuries the Somali - that is to say, those learned men and experts whose business it is - have been accustomed to using not one but two calendrical systems, and have had to develop a money-changer's skill in running them concurrently. One is the Islamic lunar calendar, which they share with the other Muslim peoples; it is used for timing religious festivals (including most siyaro). It has no fixed correspondence with the seasons of the year, so that an individual in his lifetime will celebrate that same feast in each season successively as he grows older. The other is the Somali solar year, which is fixed by the occultation of the star Spica (Cerulli I p.220), an event which almost always falls on one of the first four days of August in the European reckoning (in 1967 it was July 31; see Muusa Galaal p.46). Since it is in fixed relationship to the seasons, calculations of the probable weather conditions at different times start from this point. Both these systems are used in astrology, and for calculating days of good and evil omen, and their conjunctions and relationship to one another are also considered significant. Traditional Somali time reckoning is therefore both complex and important for the ordering of life, and the Solar New Year is a crucial point in it. (See Cerulli III pp.162 ff.; Muusa Galaal p.45 ff.)

To these two systems the educated and ruling members of the nation now add a third; the European Gregorian calendar, which was introduced by the Italians and is needed in dealing with Europeans and for business generally.

The New Year Festival in Geledi

Among Somali in all parts of their country, the transition from the old to the new Solar year is celebrated by a rite of jumping over a fire, which each household kindles in front of its door. In many places there are additional customs to mark the date, but these vary from place to place. The festivities in Geledi are particularly long and complex, occupying three days altogether; the most outstanding feature is the is-tun, which is also called shabley, the name of the kind of sticks used.

Preparations for this begin long in advance. For two or three months beforehand, every Friday eve (i.e. Thursday night, in our terms) the young men begin warming up for it by going in bands to the villages of the opposing party. The Wa'dan allies on the left bank count as belonging to the Yebaale side; so do the Galawer (a small allied group with a village nearby); the Murunsade allies join with the Tolwiine. These nightly parties only visit those opponent villages which form part of Afgoi-Geledi town, however, not the outlying ones. There, they dance through the streets and sing satirical couplets about the other side; each band has its laashin, a man with a gift for inventing such couplets, who leads the singing. (This type of song and dance

together is known as shirib, and is common at celebrations of all kinds.) The words may be generalised insults to the other side, or, very often, personal digs at individuals, like this one (aimed at the wife of a resident of left bank Afgoi, who was supposed to have lost her looks since her marriage):

Maal a ka dumaa, korka waa gedoomaa;
Maryam muufo gadow, iyyuka ma mirsaday.

Money is wasted her body is spoilt;
 Maryam the muufo seller she has not improved.

There are three separate bands who do this; one from the three Tolwiine villages, 'Eelqode, Siigaale and Raqayle; one from Balguri, the Yebaale settlement (Sagaalad do not join in this) and a separate one from the Wa'dan.

During June and July 1969, the Geledi akhyar, forbade these rounds for two or three weeks, after a fight had broken out between some Wa'dan and Geledi youths. This had been on account of the Wa'dan resentment over the Geledi's success at the elections of that year, which was causing much ill feeling (see p.307). It was even considered cancelling the fight for that year. In July, a meeting was held between the elders concerned, with the District Commissioner in attendance, at which it was decided that the shirib should be allowed to go on again, and this was announced by the town crier¹.

¹ This is an old man who is occasionally paid a few pennies to make announcements of public interest. 'Eelqode and Balguri each have one.

During the period before the fight also, the teams which are to take part in it meet to practise with their sticks and arrange tactics.

The final shirib is held on the eve of the first day of the festival, which is the last but one of the old year. It is the best attended of all, and goes on all night, beginning an hour or so before midnight and finishing at dawn.

The following day is the first of the fight, which is held in three days. This first one is on a rather small scale, since the contingents of young men from the outlying villages have not arrived; it begins in the afternoon, after the participants have had the morning to rest after the night's shirib.

For the fight itself the participants on each side are formed into separate teams. The organisation is done entirely by the young men themselves, and is voluntary. Young men and boys of all social categories join in, mostly those in their late teens or twenties; there is no absolute obligation to do so however.

The numbers in each team are variable. People may if they wish move from one team into another; they can even move to the other side. This is sometimes done by people who want to make the fight an occasion for getting at a particular adversary, and so injuring him with impunity, for ordinary compensation is waived for injuries sustained during the is-tun. Since it is known in advance which team will be opposite which,

a man can select the one which will bring him up against the opponent he wishes.

The teams recruit themselves on a neighbourhood basis, each from a different part of the town. Though this cuts across lineage divisions, it may mean that in a particular team a certain lineage predominates. In the case of the Aitire (Habash) the lineage is identified with the part of 'Eelqode village which it exclusively occupies.

The contestants are, by tradition, marked out by dress. Up to a few years ago, this meant that many of them took their wives' coloured cloths to put round them. I have been told that this was to prevent bloodstains from showing; this may be a rationalisation however; it is only to be expected that an occasion of this kind should be marked by special dress, and have an element of 'fancy dress' in it. The teams were then (I was told) distinguished by their coloured headbands (biid).

Since about 1965, however, a new element has been introduced. The contestants now wear, as many of them as can afford to, special uniforms of shirt and shorts, clearly based on those of football teams. These are specially made up for them by the tailors of the market. Each team has its colours and pattern; with this goes the carrying of a banner, which has a device in embroidery and appliquéd work (also done by the local tailors) and the adoption of a title for the team, generally an Italian word or phrase. The influences here seem to be,

besides football, the organisations of political parties, which go in for this sort of heraldry.

These were the teams in 1967:

<u>Part of town</u>	<u>Colours</u>	<u>Name (if any)</u>
Daf Eyle (a part of Eelgode village)	Red & Yellow	
Aitire gol	Blue & Green	Serpente
Aitire (both sections)	Black & Blue	Due stelle
Siigaale (mainly Gobron)	Red & Black	Pericoloso or Pericolo Morte
Siigaale	Black & White	Otto-Otto ¹
Balguri	Red & Yellow	Saango
Balguri and Sagaaled	Black & Yellow	
Wa'dan (a)	Blue	
Wa'dan (b)	Red & White	

Traditionally, the teams are so disposed in the fight that the same groups always find the same adversaries. Thus I was told that Balguri fight Raqayle, the Abikerow lineage against Sagaaled and Galawer, then Wa'dan against the Aitire, Siigaale and Daf Eyle. (This does not quite square with the arrangement above; this may be due partly to the

¹88 is the Police telephone number.

informant's confusion, and partly to the fact that the reality is rather more fluid than these schematic arrangements.)

Before the fight, each team assembles at a fixed place of rendezvous. Each has a leader, and one or more laashin. They parade round the town, dressed in their regalia, carrying their sticks over their shoulders, chanting their shirib. This is of a different character from the taunting verses of the night before. The latter are invented fresh for each year, but some at least of these couplets (mar) are traditional. They are supposed to express and encourage the fighters' determination;

Ruuha gooye Rabbi waaye

Ka ma roorayo - ha roorin

He who cuts the life is God

I shall not run - do not you run.

(i.e. Death will come whenever God decides, so flight is pointless).

On the first day, this takes up much of the afternoon, and the fight itself begins at about 5 p.m. The different teams snake their way through the town, and meet up at an open ground outside Geledi, between Siigaale and Balguri villages. The ground itself has nothing to distinguish it, and for the rest of the year is simply a piece of waste land. For this occasion only it is surrounded by a crowd of people, which turns it into a kind of arena

When I saw this occasion during 1967 and 1969, the crowd was a large and mixed one. Besides Geledi and other neighbouring people,

there were large numbers from Mogadishu and round about. Many had come by car, and cars and trucks were parked around to serve as grandstands, for there is no rise in the ground anywhere to give a vantage point. One or two people climb trees, but there are few of these.

The crowd included Italian and American families and other foreigners. There was also the riot squad of the Somali police force, a team from Radio Mogadishu to report on the occasion, and an ambulance from one of the Mogadishu hospitals. The local establishment was there; the District Commissioner, the local Captain of Police (whose men were there in force) the government chiefs and elders, the Deputies. While everybody waited, small boys went about selling peanuts and chewing gum. One or two boys from Mogadishu, armed with sticks, started a small fight on their own, and some of the visitors thought this was the thing itself beginning.

Finally, the teams arrived, one by one, and paraded around the ground, chanting their couplets, before lining up on each side. There were perhaps 30-40 young men and boys in each team, and others who joined in for the fight, after the parading was over. The numbers on the first day are smaller, but by the second there seemed to be up to 500 or so men involved.

Before the spectator could tell what was happening, the two sides had begun to attack each other. The fight was a very confused business, with the mêlée, bristling with sticks and on the days when the ground

was dry obscured in a cloud of dust, swaying from one side of the ground to the other. The side which can finally put the other to flight is the winner for the day. When things showed signs of getting rough, the elders and government chiefs, supported by the police, rushed in between to stop them. The help of the riot squad was not needed while I was there. One result of this intervention was that the fight was often prevented from coming to any decisive conclusion at all, since neither side was allowed to beat the other thoroughly enough to put them to flight. This did not seem to bother the contestants or the public much, however; it appeared that the game itself was more important than the outcome. The whole affair lasted on each occasion only about half an hour. In 1967 things were hampered by rain, which had made the ground muddy so that the fighters slipped about; this led to the third day of the contest being cancelled by agreement of the elders and the government authorities. In 1969, however, the weather was dry and conditions good.

The second day, the last of the old year, is the most important one, both of the fight and of the festival as a whole. The fight is held, this time, in the morning, the preliminary shirib around the town beginning at about 11.0 a.m. By this time already many of the contestants have sticking plaster or bandages round their heads. To have a wound is something to show off, and is said to bring good luck.

On this day, women or girls who go out without being accompanied by a man, are waylaid by groups of small boys with sticks, who attack

them. The sticks used are very light switches, and the attacks are clearly only playful. Possibly this custom was originally connected with the stick fight, but it is now quite separate; the boys who do it are generally only children, too young to take part in the fight, who hang around the market where the women will go to do their shopping.

On the afternoon of the second day, several important ceremonies are held. In Geledi, the Tolwiine moiety hold their ceremonial procession, called shir. In most of Somalia, this word means the assembly of a group for public discussion, a moot. In this area, however, its meaning seems to be restricted, at any rate in modern times, to that of a ceremonial assembly. Formerly, such a shir was held before going to war. The word shirib seems to derive from it, and to mean in fact the type of dance and chant which accompanies this sort of procession.

For the shir, the men dress in their traditional white cloths, which nowadays constitute a formal dress for special occasions. (With them, though some wear the old fashioned decorated leather sandals, many now take European style lace-up black shoes and socks, which to foreign eyes gives a strange effect.) They carry spears over their shoulders. Unlike the shirib of the contestants in the stick fight, this procession consists largely of mature and elderly men, including lineage chiefs and akhyar. The procession is followed and watched by the women, who also dress in their formal white cloths, if they have them. They greet the appearance of the men of their own lineage with the

trilling or ululation which is the usual form of cheering for women in north east Africa.

The Tolwiine shir consists of four troops, for the four main lineage groups; the Gobron, Abikerow, Maama Suubis (all Noble) and the Aitire (Habash). Members of other lineages, whose numbers are too small to make up a troop on their own, join in with the main four, in any troop they choose. Each troop is accompanied by laashin, who lead the chanting. Each troop assembles at its own point, they make their way round the town with a half-dancing step, accompanied by their own chanting, two or three abreast. The chanting, which is led by the improvisations of the laashin, deals with the praises (amaan) of the group in question, with allusions to past history worked in. On their way, the four troops meet up with each other, and form a single procession, which winds its way through the Sultan's village of Siigaale. The Sultan himself did not appear at this stage, however, at the time I was there.

The Abikerow lineage, besides participating in the shir, hold on this same day the siyaro or religious commemoration of their ancestor, Aw Abikar. The siyaro of an ancestor always involves a visit to his tomb, where his descendants pick up the dust and rub it on their foreheads; this is held to transfer to them the blessing baraka of the dead man, who is venerated as a sheikh, and particularly favoured by God.

In the case of the Abikerow, this visiting of the tomb is fitted in with the shir. At one point, after they have been round the village of Siigaale, the Abikerow troop break away from the general procession to go to the cemetery just outside the town where their ancestor's tomb is situated, and make their way back in time for the concluding ceremonies of the day. This means that they have to dash to the tomb and back at what seems an irreverent speed.

All finally assemble at a spot just outside 'Eelqode village, where there is one of the large ficus sicomorus trees which are called mugoy.¹ By this time it is getting near sunset, When I saw this ceremony in 1969, the people, men, women and children, formed a large semi-circle; some chairs were set out at the open side, which were occupied by the elders and men of religion who had been at the head of the procession, and by the District Commissioner and the Captain of Police. The Sultan finally arrived, brought in a taxi, and sat down in the centre of the row.

Two young men brought up a very large vessel of the sort generally used for holding milk (dil). This contains tahlil, water in which the words of the Koran have been dissolved. This has been prepared in

¹ Swahili mukuyu. Unlike other apparently Swahili words in southern Somali (e.g. those for coins) this seems likely to be in fact a survival of the pre-Somali Bantu speech of the area; the names of natural features and plants commonly survive in this way.

advance; passages from the Koran are copied out on wooden boards, as is generally done by the children in koranic schools. This work is done at home by individuals (the schoolboy son of the house where I stayed was preparing one of these planks two or three days before the feast, under the dictation of his grandfather, a man of religion who could not write himself, as he was blind). The boards are collected at the chief mosque in Siigaale, where the ink is washed off them into the water, and honey mixed in with it.

Four or five old men first went round the assembly brandishing their staffs and making a kind of ghostly ululation; this appeared to be a call to order. When the people were quiet, the young men went around the circle with the tahlil, sprinkling it on the crowd.

After this, four goats were brought on and slaughtered (I was told that three others had previously been so at the mosque.) Immediately that the throat of the last one had been cut, the young men and boys present rushed up, pulled out some of the animals' hair and rubbed it on their foreheads. They are said to siyaro the goats; the same word that is used of the honouring of a dead sheikh, where the people rub the dust from the tomb on their foreheads.

After this most of the company went home, as it was now sunset, to carry out the fire-jumping rite which concludes the day. The Sultan remained, with the group of elders and 'uluma', the District Commissioner, and the Police Captain. There were prayers, and the Sultan gave a short

address that seemed to be a sermon. Men offered contributions to the 'uluma', whether money or gifts of grain or other food; this, I was told, is for their blessing during the coming year. After the Sultan had spoken (by which time it was quite dark) the company dispersed.

Meanwhile each family performed the fire lighting dab-shid, which gives its name to the occasion. A small fire is lit in front of the house door, and all the members of the family, beginning with the head, jump or step over it. This marks the actual transition from the old year to the new; since in Muslim reckoning the day is counted from the preceding night, beginning at sunset.

The above ceremonies are not the only ones which mark the last day of the year. While the Tolwiine shir is in progress on the right side of the river, the Wa'dan Habash of the left bank have a performance which is called Muudey Shoongo (reputedly the name of the man, Aw Muudey Shoongo¹, who invented it); other names are Dawafet, Aw Dangoole, or Baldorow ('chicken feather'). Four Women (the ones I saw were elderly) stand in the river, two by each bank, up to their thighs in the water. Each holds a hurbin; this is a long stick with a mushroom-shaped end, used for stirring maize porridge in the pot; as such it is normally a typically feminine implement. Here however it is used to represent a penis, which the women wield vigorously enough, while shaking their bodies and shouting 'Muudeyshoongo!'

¹ Muudey is a fairly common name, and appears to be a shortening of 'Mahamud'. Shoongo is a very un-Somali word. Songwe in Swahili is a type of bird; if the two words are connected, the name seems to parallel Aw Mukulal Shambe (cat-Shambe; see p.140). On the other hand it is perhaps not originally a proper name at all.

Meanwhile the other participants go along the river bank, men and women, doing the shimmying body movement called ninkis; this is done by Habash women on festive occasions, but never by Nobles. On this occasion the dance climaxes when the men and women stand body to body and mimic copulation. It should perhaps be made clear that the imitation, though absolutely explicit, is well removed from reality. The general atmosphere is one of bawdy fun, not orgy.

The dance moves along the river bank, starting at the far downstream end of the left bank settlement, Dameley, and ending at the other end of the town, by the ferry and the remains of the Italian railway bridge. When they reach this point I am told that they cut open the fruit of a plant which has a reddish juice, which is called da'ar. The word used for this cutting open is qal, = cutting its throat; this is a word used of slaughtering animals (or killing humans). It would never be normally used of cutting a plant; the fruit is thus identified as an animal victim. The participants then rub the juice on their foreheads; the identification with blood is explicitly made. (This part of the proceedings I did not observe myself, as I was only told about it too late to do so.)

Done at the same time, it not directly associated with this, is the custom of 'pouring water' biyo-shub. This, so I was told, used once to be done by the Habash of both Geledi and Wa'dan, but now only the Wa'dan do it. Children go from house to house and pour pots of

water over women who have just been married in that year; this is accompanied by ninkis by the adults present. The women who are scoused like this will, it is said, have many children.

The following day, the third of the festival is the last. The final part of the is-tun is held in the morning. In the afternoon, it is the turn of the Yebaale moiety and the Wa'dan to hold their shir. The Geledi Yebaale procession goes from Balguri across the river to the left bank, where it meets that of the Wa'dan; in the nineteen sixties, this meant making a long round by the bridge, which is about half a mile upstream from the town. The shir is just like that described for the Tolwiine. This, and the stick fight, are the only two points where the Wa'dan Nobles join in the festival; apart from this they are not much concerned with what goes on, except to amuse themselves by watching the Muudey Shoongo dance.

This is also the day on which the Gobyan lineage hold the siyaro of their ancestor, Aw Hassan Madfay. His tomb is in left-bank Afgoi, in the market place where the shir comes to an end. The tomb is nowadays housed in a shed, which is only unlocked on this day. Members of the lineage go to visit it all through the day, and to rub its dust on their foreheads. Something has already been said of this siyaro on p.136.

When the Yebaale shir comes to an end, about sunset, the market place fills up with groups of dancers, both inhabitants of the town and

people who have come in from the bush, from all the surrounding clan groups, for the occasion. The dancing goes on until late into the night.

At the same time as the general festival, the Bahar lineage groups of fisher-ferrymen (see pp. 140-42) hold sacrifices of their own. For five days - the three of the is-tun and two before - the old men of the group go round from house to house in Geledi collecting contributions of grain from families of all the other lineages. This constitutes a return for the service they do the community in running the ferryboats and in protecting them against crocodiles, though nowadays cash payments are also made for the ferry. While going from house to house in this way, they blow a conch shell trumpet.

At dawn on the fifth day (the third of the is-tun,) they kill a female goat on the bank of the river. Later in the day a large he-goat is slaughtered at the house of the leader of their group. (I was told this, but did not see it.) This is said to be to bless (do'o) the river, so that crocodiles and hippos may keep away.

The Meanings of the Festival

Having described the course of the festivities, we can consider their significance.

If one asks people the origin or purpose of the is-tun, no immediately satisfying answer emerges. There is no 'mythical charter', no story of who began it, when or why. It seems to have been going

on for the last century at least. Mostly people say simply that their ancestors have always done it. One type of attempt to answer the question is given in the following account, which was written for me (in Italian) by the young educated Geledi Noble who worked as my assistant. He had this to say:

According to reliable sources, the origin of this is-tun (shabley) began when some children joined together and took sides, and then threw at each other the mud which they found on the banks of the Shebelle river. Then their parents thought that this game was bad because it might have dangerous results, that is to say they might lose an eye; therefore they substituted for the mud small wands called lavey, which are found in abundance on the banks of the river. These wands are soft and could not do any grave personal damage.

Another consideration was that this could be for them (the boys) a useful training for combat, since this town (Geledi) was surrounded by enemies

With the passage of time this game became famous, and adults too continued to take part in it. They too were divided into equal sides, with the intention of making it a pre-military training, with an efficient organisation, teams and team-leaders, and distinctive insignia for each team, and the two sides were called Tolwiine and Yebdaale, i.e. greater tribe and lesser tribe.

It is worth making clear that some people have misinterpreted this is-tun, or have misunderstood the principal aim of this game. We can affirm that it has nothing to do with religious faith, whereas some people say that if the people do not play the shabley they will not get a good harvest, and will become sick. All these mistaken ideas are completely contrary to the purpose for which it was instituted...

...near the left bank of the Shebelle they do the dance called Muudey Shoongo, who is the person who founded the dance; however this is considered merely an accessory dance like any other, and has no importance at all.

These views are typical of his position both as a Noble and as an educated person. The rather defensive reaction against ideas held or thought to be held by outsiders about the festival is common among Geledi who are influenced either by modern education or by religion, and who are anxious to refute the idea that the stick fight is superstitious in character, and to show that as an element in their native culture it is consonant both with progressive attitudes and religious orthodoxy. Nobles meanwhile dissociate their own ceremonies from those of the Habash, which they see as trivial.

The statement that the stick fight is a form of military exercise was made to be repeatedly, and this is surely a real part of its significance, traditionally as well as by contemporary rationalisation.

On the other hand, it is also asserted, by Gobron and other people (especially elder ones) holding a responsible position in the traditional order, that the fight does bring good fortune for the coming year, assures fertility for the farms and keeps away disease. For the fighters, to be wounded or grazed is a token of individual good fortune in the coming year. This is phrased as though it were a matter of direct causation; there is no suggestion it is a prayer to God or to any other being.

With the above may be contrasted the text printed in Moreno's linguistic work (pp. 383-84), given by a Geledi informant who seems on internal evidence to have been Habash.

"The is-tun is a ta'dad (i.e. a magical rite). If the people do not hit one another, they become sick, and the year (i.e. the harvest) is bad. The people refused to let them abolish it, so the Sultan let it go on.

At first they fought with cloths; then they fought with light wands; then they began to fight with rather bigger sticks (shabley). Now they fight with big cudgels. But this year they have agreed to fight with small sticks.... The government has ordered it so that they shall not hurt each other....the young men have agreed on it, and if anyone disobeys the young men, the government will arrest him and punish him.

...The Wa'dan women go down to the river; then they begin the dance; they throw off their cloths and shake their bodies

(ninkis). The men beat the rhythm with their hands and go around by the river. On the third day, they parade (shir) through the market. All the men dress in their best and so do the women, they slaughter goats; this is their custom every year. If they do not do it their year will be bad.

On the second day, the Geledi too do the same thing; they go outside the town, dress in their best and ~~slaughter~~ animals. If they do not do it the year will be unlucky. The Balguri too, parade, they also kill animals, the year will be bad for them too if they leave off doing this. They do the dance of the Jumaato (see p.114 f.f.); if they do not, their year will be bad. Those who dance the Jumaato are the slaves (co:ji); the Nobles do not do it; that would be a disgrace ('eeb)...."

This account, though rather muddled, has several interesting points. At the time (in the Nineteen-fifties) the fight was dangerous, as really heavy sticks were in use; hence official attempts to abolish it altogether, and the compromise agreement to limit the size of the weapons. However, both these accounts and all my informants agree that the use of dangerously heavy clubs was a late development, and that the contest was originally innocuous. More than one person said that it was originally fought out with mud. (The idea that the substitution of sticks was a safety precaution seems unlikely.)

As Moreno's simple informant emphasized, the is-tun is, for the majority of those concerned and whatever the more progressive may think, both 'ceremony' and 'ritual' - in the sense that Max Gluckman, following Monical Wilson, has distinguished 'ceremonious' behaviour - any fixed customary action - from 'ritual' actions which are similar but contain in addition 'mystical notions' - (Gluckman 1961 pp.21, 30). "Ritual, that is to say, is associated with notions that its performance in some mysterious way, by processes out of sensory control, affects the well-being of the participants."

However, as my assistant and others quite rightly emphasize, this is not a religious ritual. This is so both in the sense that it is not related to Islam, which is the religion of this society and governs its metaphysical ideas, and in that it is not addressed to any supernatural being, but is merely thought of in an undefined general way as lucky.¹

This character, however, belongs not simply to the fight, but to the whole festival, as Moreno's informant makes clear, this is implied too, in this shirib (verse), for instance:

Shiribkaynaa shuushka waa bahaa

Our shirib drives away disease

We must look, then, at the whole festival, and all the customs connected with it. In the case of each, three separate though connected

¹ Cerulli writes in 'Somalia' Vol.III (pp.163-4), that the fight 'was considered by the Geledi as a homage to the Earth, to provoke its fertility', and refers to the 'well known cult of the terra mater'. I did not hear any Geledi refer to the earth as personal, or to the fight as a 'homage'; this idea seems rather to be based on Frazerian a priori assumptions.

questions can be asked: how did it originate; what is its meaning for those who participate in it; and what are its social effects (function), if any?

The origins of the various customs which make up the festival constitute a complex problem, and one which soon leads to mere speculation. The probability, in any complex of rituals, is that different elements are of diverse origin and age. One has only to consider the case of the English Christmas celebrations; here, pre-Christian elements (holly) are found beside post-industrial ones (paper crackers), and yet the participants do not differentiate between them, and it would be impossible to distinguish between them if one had not the historical information, simply by analysing the contemporary ceremonial. The situation here may be analogous. Analysis in terms of meaning and function is more promising; but it cannot be entirely separated from speculation as to the sources of various elements.

Throughout the Somali nation, the solar New Year is celebrated with the rite of jumping over the fires, which gives the occasion its name; dab shid = fire-kindling. It is certainly an ancient, very likely a pre-Islamic rite. The kindling of fire is a wide-spread symbol of new beginning, though there is not the ceremonial quenching of other fires, found in many places (e.g. among the Galla; Baxter p.74). The jumping through or over seems to mark the passage from one year to the other. Whatever precise religious significance it may once have had, it is now simply a celebration of a year safely passed, and in a general way thought to bring luck in the year to come.

In Geledi, as everywhere in Somalia, this is a household rite; the unit which performs it is the family group. Though it has a cardinal position in the course of the festival - marking the actual transfer at sunset from the old to the new year - its importance is diminished among all the other ceremonies.

These are of a communal character. Lewis (1969) points out that among many south Somali clans, the feast where they chiefly celebrate their unity as groups is not (as among the northern Somali) the siyaro of a founding ancestor, but an annual rainmaking ceremony. In Geledi, there is no such ceremony (some minor groups may hold meetings to pray for rain, but they are not outstanding occasions) its place, as a major festival uniting the community, is undoubtedly taken by this New Year festival. Yet at the same time that it brings the community together, it emphasizes some of the divisions within it.

Though not a harvest festival - there is no ritual involving either crops or seed - it falls after the Gu harvest and before the Deyr sowing, at a suitable moment therefore for invoking good luck on the crops of the coming two seasons.

The shir, or procession through the town of the various lineage groups, has less of a ritual character and more of a civic or military ceremony. It has already been pointed out that this reproduces the assemblies for war in former times. Here, local patriotism is explicitly evoked.

Two lineage groups, the Maama Suubis and the Gobyan, also hold their siyaro for their founding ancestor - the crucial ceremony for expressing unity at lineage group level - during this time. The Gobyan rite emphasizes their separation from their former land on the left bank. These are religious rites properly speaking. They are thought of by those who participate as an intrinsic part of Islamic practice. The baraka that is derived from the tomb of the ancestor is blessing in religious terms - this particular word is not used of the is-tun for instance. This is one of the points at which a specifically religious sacredness enters the largely extra-religious ritual of the festival.

The other point at which the proceedings are sanctified in terms of Islamic religion, is at the close of the second day, the last of the old year, just before the household fire ritual. Here prayers are offered, the Sheikh addresses the elders, and the people are sprinkled with the tahlil, whose properties of blessing derive directly from the sanctity of the Koran.

There is also, as a part of this rite, the slaughtering of goats and the rubbing of their hair on the young men's foreheads. This is identified by name (siyaro) with the similar rubbing with the dust from a holy man's tomb, which also conveys blessing.

Though in orthodox Islam, animal sacrifice plays only a very small part in religious cult, the slaughter of beasts is in Somalia a common feature of religious ceremonies. Often this is simply to be

explained as a feast for the company, but sometimes it appears to have the significance of a sacrifice; so it is here. What is striking is the parallel with the other ritual, which is performed simultaneously on the river bank by the Wa'dan Habash. There, it is not an animal which is 'slaughtered' but a vegetable, which explicitly serves as a substitute for one; and the 'blood' of this victim is rubbed on the foreheads of the participants.

It is tempting to infer that both rites derive from an original where animal blood was actually used; and both modified, perhaps to reconcile them with a more orthodox sensitivity; one by substituting for blood the more neutral hair of the animal; the other substituting for the animal itself a vegetable.¹ The latter is also cheaper, and marks off the inferior status of the participants. Further, when one considers the close association of this act with the sprinkling of the tahlil, one is inclined to speculate whether at some time blood was not sprinkled on the people.

Two sets of rituals are performed exclusively by people of the Habash category (the others involving people of all categories). One is that of the Bahar groups for the protection of the river. In its form, this reflects their dependent relationship with their patrons

¹ This is very reminiscent of the Nuer's use of a plant as an 'ox' for sacrifice. nearer to this area, the southern Galla (Baxter ^) when they fry bun as a religious ritual, speak of 'sacrificing' it, using the same word gal as here. (Somali and Galla are related languages with many similarities of vocabulary.)

(Noble and other); their going from house to house for contributions recalls the similar performance of the slaves at the Jumaato (see below)

The other Habash ceremony is the Muudey Shoongo dancing and bawdy pantomime, the 'slaughter' of the da'ar fruit, and the associated throwing of water over the newly married women. These belong only to the Wa'dan Habash population; the Geledi Habash participate in the same ceremonies as their Nobles; which go on at the same time.

I am inclined to attribute much more importance to this than do my Geledi Noble informants, to whom it is just low comedy, and 'merely accessory'. For whereas the performance of the whole festival is traditionally supposed to bring a good year and fertility to the crops, at no other point in it is fertility of man or earth ritually represented. Only here is human sexuality associated with the water of the river, which fertilizes the land and on which this population depends; both by the women's performance at the river, and by the throwing of water on those whose child-bearing life has just begun. (The same idea seems to be suggested by the playful attacks on females who go out without men.) With this is associated the 'slaughter' and 'blood' of the da'ar fruit. There is nothing like this among purely Somali rituals. All this suggests that we may be dealing with a survival from the pre-Somali settlement of the area, and perhaps one of the roots of the whole institution of the festival - the Somali dab shid being the other. It is possible that something of the sort survived among the Habash of the left bank, while those of the right-bank

villages joined in the more sober rites of their Noble overlords, because the Wa'dan Nobles to whom these people are supposed to belong have no corresponding rite, and indeed only participate marginally in the festival. (It may be recalled that until recent times the Wa'dan Nobles lived in the Deh, not in Afgoi, and that even now there are few of them in the town.)

In this context, more needs to be known about the rituals of the other surviving Habash groups of the area, such as the Shiidle.

In the Mundey Shoongo, women mimic the male. This reversal of roles, and the (purely imitation) licence of the dancing, and the general atmosphere of merriment, recall the carnival element in other ritual cycles. More reversal of roles, and licensed insult, is found in the slaves' Jumaata festival described in section A 2 (d). This is held, not at Dabshid, but at a fixed interval after it, so that the two can perhaps be considered as a continuity. Moreno's informant (see above) evidently connects the two festivals and passes from the one to the other as if as a matter of course.

The contrast between such behaviour, and the formality displayed at the shir, recalls the observation made by Edmund Leach (p. 132 ff.) that such contrasts are particularly characteristic of rituals which mark the passage of time. One need not, to accept this, necessarily bring in Leach's theory of time primitively conceived as alternation. The Somali conception of time is cyclical and (as has been pointed out) very sophisticated. The essence of such saturnalia is rather the

marking of the transitional period of a rite de passage. Often, formal behaviour on the one hand and masquerade or role reversal on the other are carried out by the same people successively. Here they are performed simultaneously by different people. Part of the lower section of the population is left to indulge in licence and masquerade while the rest hold a solemn formal ceremony. Whatever the historical derivations of these two forms of rite may be, their effect in contemporary practice is to emphasize the social division within the population.

There is one major piece of masquerading, however, in which all sections of the population join. This is the stick fight itself. Here we are once again faced by the double problem of origin and meaning.

It has often been assumed, by Cerulli for instance (*loc cit*) that the fight is a very old institution, of pre-Islamic origin. If we accept this, the implication is that it is from the Habash element in the population that it originates. If it came from the Nobles, and were really antique, it would be hard to see why it should be unique to Geledi and not also practised by the other Digil clans, to whom they are closely related. If it is considered as an old riverine custom, the same objection applies; why is it not found among the other Habash groups of the river, such as the Shiidle? Though it can happen that a formerly widespread custom survives only in one place, the simplest way of accounting for its being found only in Geledi is that it originated there.

One could quite well suppose an original fertility festival of a riverine population as the origin of both the other Habash rites and of the is-tun, which became taken up into the New Year celebrations of the newly arrived dominant Noble groups. At this point its elements would have parted company, some to be taken up by the Nobles and made part of their festival; the others to be confined to certain Habash groups, and considered low and trivial by the Nobles. At the same time one would have to suppose that much of the original significance of the fight was forgotten, i.e. any connection with specific pagan religious ideas, leaving only the vague notion that it was somehow lucky.

All this is perfectly possible but remains pure speculation; however, if one is to talk at all about 'pre-Islamic origins' it is as well to be precise, and to spell out in some detail what such an idea, if accepted would imply.

It is also possible that the origin of the fight is of no very remote date. The contrary idea turns out, when one examines it, to be based on the assumption that any magical ideal or ritual practice which is non-Islamic must, in a society like this, be pre-Islamic. It is possible, however, for ideas of this sort, of a marginal kind, to grow up and continue locally under the shadow of a dominant world religion. In this case, the luck-bringing attributes of the fight are vaguely formulated enough to suggest that they may be secondary. It may be

that my informants are perfectly correct in saying that it is by origin a sporting contest and a way of training young men for war, rather than a magical rite. In that case, its magical effectiveness would derive, not from the act of fighting itself, but from the occasion of which it is a part. We have already seen that the festival as a whole is a fortune bringing ritual; the fight perhaps has had some of that ritual force as it were rubbed off on it.

More light may be shed on the question by looking at the nature of the contest itself. The first point to be clearly understood is that it is thought of by all concerned, not as a solemn or religious act, nor as a battle involving actual hostility, but as a game. The word used to refer to it is invariably deel, which is used of children's games, and also means 'dance'.

It is, admittedly, a rough game. The blows struck can be hard, and before the government took a hand in regulating it, much heavier sticks were often used than those now allowed. We have seen, however, that it is generally agreed that this use of heavy weapons was itself a late development and indeed an abuse. The attempts of contestants to use more dangerous weapons continues; men imbed pieces of razor, or broken bottle in their sticks, or get a friend on the side to hand them a heavier stick during the fight. But this tendency to become more dangerous does not contradict the character of the is-tun as a game. On the contrary, it is the universal tendency of fighting sports to escalate in this way, as opponents try to get the advantage over

each other, unless there is some capable authority to control them. One of the functions of sporting associations is to provide such a control. Nowadays the Somali police force takes on the role of umpire, which it can fulfil more effectively than could a small group of elders. Before this, the sport was indeed a dangerous one, and couplets about man's life being in the hand of God, not mere rhetoric.

It is known that men were sometimes killed during the game; and the rule remains that death or any injury sustained during it is not liable for bloodwealth or other compensation. This does not mean that it is the purpose of the contest to inflict death or serious injury. It is rather an acknowledgement of the fact that in a sport of this kind accidents will happen, and contestants must enter at their own risk. Normally, even a threatening gesture is liable for compensation, but here, since the whole point is to hit each other, (as the name of the game states) it would be absurd to impose sanctions for doing so. Also, in the case of a serious injury, it would generally be quite impossible to establish who in the mêlée had struck the crucial blow, and this in itself would justify the rule.

Ritual and Play

I have said that the is-tun is above all, and whatever other significance it may have, a game. By 'game' or 'play' (taking the two words as equivalent) one means an activity engaged in primarily for the pleasure it gives, which is its own end, not merely serving

some extraneous purpose, and which takes place in a social context of its own, a 'play world' consciously opposed to the 'serious' world of 'real life' however this is understood by a particular society. It may or may not involve an element of competition or contest.

'Play' does not figure among the categories into which anthropologists tend to divide social life - politics, economic life, ritual and the rest. They are concerned rather in examining any institution to relate it to the 'real world' of the society in which it exists, whether in terms of its effects (the idea of function) or of symbolic meaning. There may be occasions, however, when such an approach leaves out aspects which are important in the reality of the situation. It may be worth while taking the example of Johan Huizinga's classic study '*Homo Ludens*' and examining play, in an ethnographic context, as a significant part of social life in its own right.

By treating play as an autonomous activity, one does not of course deny its relevance to society at large, both functionally and symbolically. The play world is separated from the 'real' world, not sealed off from it.¹ Prestige acquired in a play context, for instance, can be carried over into life. A team game can, on occasion, become a focus for ethnic or ideological conflicts which are very much part of the real world. The analysis of a game should tell one much about the society which plays it.

¹ That this border between play world and real world is a shifting one, is at the basis of Huizinga's thesis, which is that culture as a whole arose out of play and continues as one great game. Whether or not one accepts this idea, it is clear that at a more superficial level, 'play' is defined by being distinguished from 'real' life.

The moment play is taken seriously (if one can use the word) as a category of social life, it becomes possible to look at its relationships, which can be complex and varied, with other categories of life. The other activity with which it shows most affinity, so much so that the two are often assimilated or confused, is ritual; or rather, ceremonial - to follow Gluckman in using this word to cover both 'ritual' and 'ceremonious' behaviour (see above).

The relationship between play and ceremonial is twofold. On the one hand, a game qua institution is likely to have its own ceremonial - special costumes, songs, etiquette associated with it. In the case of the is-tun these have been described. On the other hand the game may itself be ceremonious, in that it is held to mark or honour a particular occasion in the real world, or ritual, in that its proper performance is held to produce mystical effects.

It might seem that in this last case the status of play as an autonomous activity is lost; a game played as a ritual is just a ritual, and nothing is gained by introducing another concept. But to describe it as a ritual merely would be a very misleading account of an activity like the present one; it would leave out too much. There is the genuine uncertainty of the outcome, the attitudes of contestants and spectators, the way in which they describe what they are doing. These are not made irrelevant by the fact that they also believe the activity to be a lucky one.

The same is true of many forms of celebration, which can be accurately described both as ritual and play. Huizinga (p. 37.) goes so far as to classify all ritual as a kind of exalted play; but from the ethnographic point of view this (though an interesting idea) goes too far and blurs a necessary distinction. Ritual, as anthropologists have used the word, is concerned with the 'real world' of the society which performs it; it seeks to influence that world, and symbolically tells us something about its nature. Play makes its own world and is its own end. Rites and ceremonies are often elaborated and added to, however, far beyond what might seem to be necessary to convey their social message; they include dancing or other performances or, as here, competitive sports, or the rites themselves are interminably embroidered. People 'play around' with ceremonial in fact, because it is an activity enjoyed in itself as well as expressing social truths and/or producing magical results. This seems to be what is referred to by the too often quoted (see e.g. Beattie p.154) unhelpful phrase about the symbolic elements in life having a 'tendency to run wild' like tropical vegetation (as though they did it by themselves while the participants' backs were turned).

We need not suppose, then, that the is-tun is any less a game for being a ritual, or any less a ritual for being a game. It must not be forgotten, however, that as a ritual it is of a peripheral and minor kind, the ideas connected with it vague, not comparable in the

minds of the participants to the actions and ideas of the central cult, which is the religion of Islam.

A Ritual of Aggression?

I have called the contest 'ritual' in that beneficial results are expected to flow from it, both to the community at large, and to the individuals participating in it. A parallel that suggests itself is with those rituals of aggression or rebellion, which Max Gluckman has analysed as insuring the unity of a society by giving permitted expression to the tensions within it (Gluckman 1954). The parallel fails here in two respects, however. Firstly, this is not, as in the cases cited by Gluckman, mere mimed or verbal expression of aggressive sentiments, but actual physical violence, though limited and made into a sport. Secondly, between the two Geledi moieties there is no latent hostility nor any reason why there should be any as they are not rivals in any sphere. Nor is there evidence that there ever was serious hostility between them, though there may be a certain degree of social distance and mistrust, which could have been greater in the past.

The Wa'dan and Murunsade enter into the fight by virtue of their being identified with the Geledi moieties; it is not primarily a case of Wa'dan versus Geledi. On one occasion, as we have seen, when there actually was hostility between the two sides - or rather a section of one side, the Wa'dan, and all the rest - the reaction of the leaders of the community was to attempt to ban the whole thing, until a formal reconciliation was made.

In fact, it appears that it is not the division between the two sides, but the game itself which is the primary thing. The sides are not even fixed; individuals sometimes choose to fight in one of the opposite teams. In order to have a fight game, there have to be two sides, and the moiety division is simply a convenient way of assigning people to one or the other. Games in every society draw their teams from social units which already exist in the real world (counties, universities) and the contests between them do not necessarily imply enmity between those units outside the play context.

The point about Gluckman's 'rituals of rebellion' however, is that they are actually, in their ultimate effect, reinforcements of the over-riding unity of the group concerned. This is certainly true of the is-tun, and to this degree we may accept Gluckman's formulation as shedding some light on its function. The festival as a whole clearly has as one of its significances the presentation of the Geledi unity and identity, including that of their Wa'dan allies. The Shir, with the songs recalling old triumphs, as well as the general blessing of the people presided over by their ritual focus, the Sheikh, do affirm their identity and pride as a community quite explicitly and overtly. Today especially, when such local identities are beginning to be threatened with assimilation to the general national unity, this festival has a significance as an assertion before the world of the special character of Geledi.

In such a celebration of unity, the fight has a part to play. There are certainly tensions within this community - between Noble and Habash, between the different lineage groups, between Geledi and their Hawiye allies. It is precisely not along these divisions that the contest is played. It could be argued that, such tensions could be relieved, and at the same time the attention of the community directed away from them, by playing out a fictional enmity which in real life has no significance. Such a formulation would be moving some distance away from Gluckman's original proposition, however; it is in essence simply the idea applicable to team games everywhere, that they release suppressed aggression; a psychological proposition, which would have to be criticised on its own terms. In this case, nothing I was able to observe either confirms or refutes it, and I am not inclined to give it much weight.

On the whole it seems preferable to account for the luck-bringing character of the fight by its being a part of a festival, the whole of which is a luck-bringing ritual. Since one aspect of the festival consists of a display of warlike strength, a war game is an appropriate part of it.

Conclusion

I began with three questions; what is the origin of these customs, what is their meaning for the participants, and what are their social consequences? To the first I have suggested some possible answers, while

emphasizing their hypothetical nature. To the second the answer is multiple. This is a calendrical festival, marking the transition from the old to the new year. It is a celebration of group identity, both that of the whole Geledi community and that of the various lineage groups that make it up. It is a chance for young men to prove their manhood. It is also play; including not only the is-tun, which is a competitive game, but the festival as a whole. By this I mean that one answer to the question 'Why do they do this?' is 'Because they enjoy doing it'.

It is also in part a religious occasion, when prayers are addressed to God and sacrifices made. It is in part a non-religious rite, which is held to bring health and prosperity, without any specific ideas of divine intervention. If one asks why people should expect it to do so; comparatively it is commonly found that calendrical festivals have associations of 'luck for the coming year'; the nature of the occasion naturally leads to everything connected with it being seen as potentially an omen - granted that the idea of omens exists at all, as it emphatically does among the Somali (the whole of Muusa Galaal's book, cited above, makes this clear). It has already been suggested that at one time there may have been more specific religious ideas behind some at least of the ceremonies; but one need only recall Malinowski's observations about the effect of magical rites in giving confidence in uncertain circumstances, to understand that people may tend to hold on to such ideas, even when they have no clearly expressible theoretical

basis for them. (In this case, the people who are concerned to have a clear consistent theory of things, are the ones who reject the ideas as superstitious; which is an aspect of the wider socio-historical situation.) If the other factors are enough to ensure that people continue to hold the festival, this one ensures that they continue to expect it to benefit them.¹

As to the social consequences, these are mainly explicit in the intentions of the participants. The stick fight is designed to encourage a fighting spirit in the young men, and in the past it must have served as a preparation for war, as people say it did. Now, as in the past, the shir is a statement of the identity and unity of the Geledi and their allies, and nourishes their consciousness of it. The separate rites of some of the Habash groups, however, have the effect of confirming their lower status.

In modern times the fight itself has taken on a new significance as it has gained fame outside Geledi. It has become a symbol of Afgoi to outsiders; despised by some as being non-Somali, superstitious and tribalistic; accepted by others as an interesting piece of local folklore, and a part of the general inheritance of Somali culture. To the Geledi themselves, conscious that people come from far and near to

¹ It is possible that there survive more specific ideas that I have not recorded, particularly among the Habash. About the Muudey Shoongo dance, in particular, my information is very inadequate. This was a consequence of my getting too much identified with the Noble section of the population, to have enough access to ideas held by the Habash.

watch their show, it is something to be justified, explained, modernised with new accoutrements, and displayed more than ever as a focus for local identity and pride.

D. CONCLUSION

The first part of this study described the Geledi community before the impact of colonisation, modernity and intensified contact with the rest of the world.

The clans of southern Somalia vary in their structure, and Geledi cannot be offered simply as representative of them all. Nevertheless, it shows the basic features of the south Somali type of political structure, which distinguish it from the strictly descent-based nomadic democracy of the northern pastoral Somali; that is to say 'the formation of large, stable politico-legal groups; the associated development of a hierarchical, though far from strongly centralised, authority system, and the widespread adoption of foreign clients in group formation' (Lewis 1969 p.59).

The position of Geledi at a river crossing meant that a settlement grew up there which was large enough to stand out in a sparsely inhabited countryside, and to form the centre and focus of the community. Unlike those Somali groups who live in a number of small settlements scattered over a wide area, the Geledi were identified with their town, in which the majority of them seem to have lived from the beginning, with their fields lying around about. Guillain described it as cette cité sauvage, and it would not be altogether

inappropriate to describe Geledi in the nineteenth century as a city (if a minuscule one).¹

It was dominated by an elite, whose position was based on their wealth in slaves, which carried with it the power to work comparatively large areas of land - land itself being too freely available to be a differentiating factor between rich and poor. This wealth in slaves seems to have been based on their earlier wealth in cattle, which had given them the power to take advantage of the supply made available by the Arab East African slave trade.

With this manpower at their command, they were able to produce a surplus of grain, which they sold to the coastal towns and the Arab lands; this brought them prosperity and also trade rivalry with the Bimal, another elite group in a structurally similar position.

This elite consisted of members of the Noble and Lightskin categories, but of the two, the Lightskins were in Geledi fewer in numbers and consequently politically subordinate. The Geledi Nobles expressed their unity in terms of common descent, and thus formed the Geledi clan; round this the Geledi community crystallized. It was a group united not by descent but attachment to the nuclear group which, itself, was descent based.

¹ With perhaps 1,000 - 2,000 adult male citizens (see p.56). Many ancient Greek cities had 5,000 citizens or less, implying a total population of about ten times the number (Kitto p.66) Geledi would have come within Aristotle's definition of a city: 'It must have a population large enough to cater for all the needs of a self-sufficient existence, but not so large that it cannot be easily supervised', (*Politics*, Book VII, ch.4).

It was, as we have seen, a complex structure, whose individual members lived in terms of multiple identities. Such a community lends itself to analysis in Gluckmanian terms of coherence by means of cross-cutting allegiances. Thus rivalries between the different lineage groups were offset by the conscious separateness of the three horizontal categories (Noble, Lightskin and Habash) in the community; in turn, potential resentments between these were neutralised by their consciousness of identity as a Geledi, against other communities.

On the other hand, since Geledi itself was only one unit in a larger population, one would have to consider how the extension of the same cross cutting ties throughout the wider society affected the stability or otherwise of the latter. Here armed conflict was common, though the small scale of the units involved, and the absence of organised or professional armies, kept it within bounds.

The presence of offshoots from one clan living as clients or allies within another (e.g. the Handab among the Elay), might seem likely to inhibit hostilities between them, but in practice this did not necessarily happen. In the fighting between the Geledi and Hintire at the end of the last century, for instance, those Lightskins from Geledi who were living among the latter sided with them.

The three social categories which did cut across society at large, inasmuch as they were categories, not groups with any common organisation or sense of solidarity, did not have a restraining effect

either on inter-group hostilities. It seems in fact, that in south Somalia generally, as in Geledi in particular, it was the clan or clan-community which was the significant unit on nearly all occasions. Those identities which cut across it were not strong enough by comparison with its identity, to provide any check on rivalries between them.

There were other factors, also, which contributed to the unity of the Geledi. The Habash were the less likely to question their inferior status or attempt to challenge the Nobles, in that there were people whose status was yet lower, against whom they could identify themselves as respectable; namely the slaves. The Sheikh as symbolic figurehead provided a point of identification for the whole community.

The loose form of political organisation found here and elsewhere in southern Somalia, though it allows a higher degree of authority to clan elders than in the north, does not generally give permanent power to any fixed hereditary office. It does however allow of particular individuals gaining considerable power and prestige as leaders, while they can hold it by their ability and character, particularly if they have the prestige of men of religion. (Most of the really notable men in southern Somalia in the last century or so have been sheikhs of one kind or another; many of them leaders of religious communities, like Sheikh Ibrahim of Bardera.)

This personal factor was probably important in the history of Geledi; Sheikh Yusuf Mahamud in his lifetime both held them together

as a unit, and made them the centre of a wider hegemony over their neighbours, and he left behind him the impetus and prestige which enabled his successors to hold on to the position he had built up.

Thus this small federation of lineage groups, focussed on its 'city' and dominated by its elite of slave-owners and led rather than ruled by a man who combined political influence and religious reverence, at the centre of a sphere of influence rather than an 'empire' over the other clans of the region, at the end of the nineteenth century lost its autonomy and became fitted into the wider framework of an alien system of government. We have seen how with the changes brought by Italian colonisation, the internal structure of the community altered at the same time as its relation to the society outside itself. When it exchanged European domination for independence, it was now as only a small unit in a modern state.

As a settlement, Geledi expanded and altered its character. Nevertheless it kept the old clan-community largely unaltered as its core. It corresponds in fact to type A in Aidan Southall's classification of African towns, (Southall pp. 6-7) which is 'characterised by a more or less indigenous population core' and where subsistence agriculture still plays a part in life¹; it is not an urbanised community in the .

¹ Though it is not the case here that the indigenous community 'provides a scale of status to which immigrants from a distance must conform'. Immigrants to left-bank Afgoi keep their own clan affiliations and there is no question of their being assimilated to either Geledi or Wa'dan; this contrasts with the traditional situation when a stranger wished to take up clan land. Further points of resemblance to other African 'Type A' towns are that it is 'clerical and commercial rather than industrial', 'working groups are small and independent entrepreneurs numerous' and there is 'landlordism, extensive renting and taking of lodgers' and no public housing.

sense that the population of an industrial town (Southall's type B) is 'urbanised'. (Since there is no mining or large scale industry in Somalia, all Somali towns with settled populations are type A.)

Politically, Geledi had undergone the process which F.G. Bailey calls 'encapsulation' of the smaller unit inside the larger one. (Bailey p. 144 ff). However, the relationship between the Somali Republic (in its original form) and the communities like Geledi contained within it does not quite conform to the type envisaged by Bailey, basically on the model of the Indian village community and state government. (I do not discuss the colonial situation.)

The difference is partly one of scale, and partly the related fact that we are here dealing with members of the same cultural and ethnic group. It follows that the wider, national structure does not merely control and impinge on the local one from without, but partly derives its personnel from it, and is in every way more open to influence from it than if there were either some basic cultural divergence between them, or simply a great physical distance between the seat of national government and the governed. It also follows from the community of culture within the whole nation, that the people of small units like Geledi found it the easier to accept the new national government as being their own, and rather than looking back to the time of their autonomy, to take to national politics as the new method by which their interests as a group could be advanced, if necessary against those

of their neighbours, instead of the old one of working out such conflict of interests by feud and war. (See also Lewis 1969 p.353.)

Geledi has always been a commercially minded community. Since the older forms of wealth seeking were abolished, there is a readiness to take to new forms, whether in business or public life, and no resistance to modernity as such, when it is offered through the medium of a state with which they can to any extent identify. Their attachment to Islam, and age-long connection with the Arab world, also make it easier for people to assimilate ideas about modernisation and progress, which that world now represents. The Arab countries have always been centres of wealth and sophistication relative to the Somali, and the present situation is an extension of this older one.

There is thus not the ideological conflict found in some countries, between the norms accepted for political aims and activities at the local level, and those represented by the central authority. There is, however, a conflict between the demands of the larger structure as such, for the commitment of its personnel and the citizens generally, and the continuing local loyalties and claims of the smaller structures. But it is not at the local level that this conflict bites. Those who suffer it and have to resolve it in their work are the functionaries of the national structure, since they are all necessarily connected by origin to one or another of the smaller, encapsulated structures. During the nineteen sixties it was probably chiefly the deputies

to the National Assembly who were in this position. By contrast the local society had settled down to a situation of fairly easy compromise between old and new, represented by the local establishment, a ruling set drawn partly from the elite of the traditional system and partly from the local 'sub-elite' of the new system.

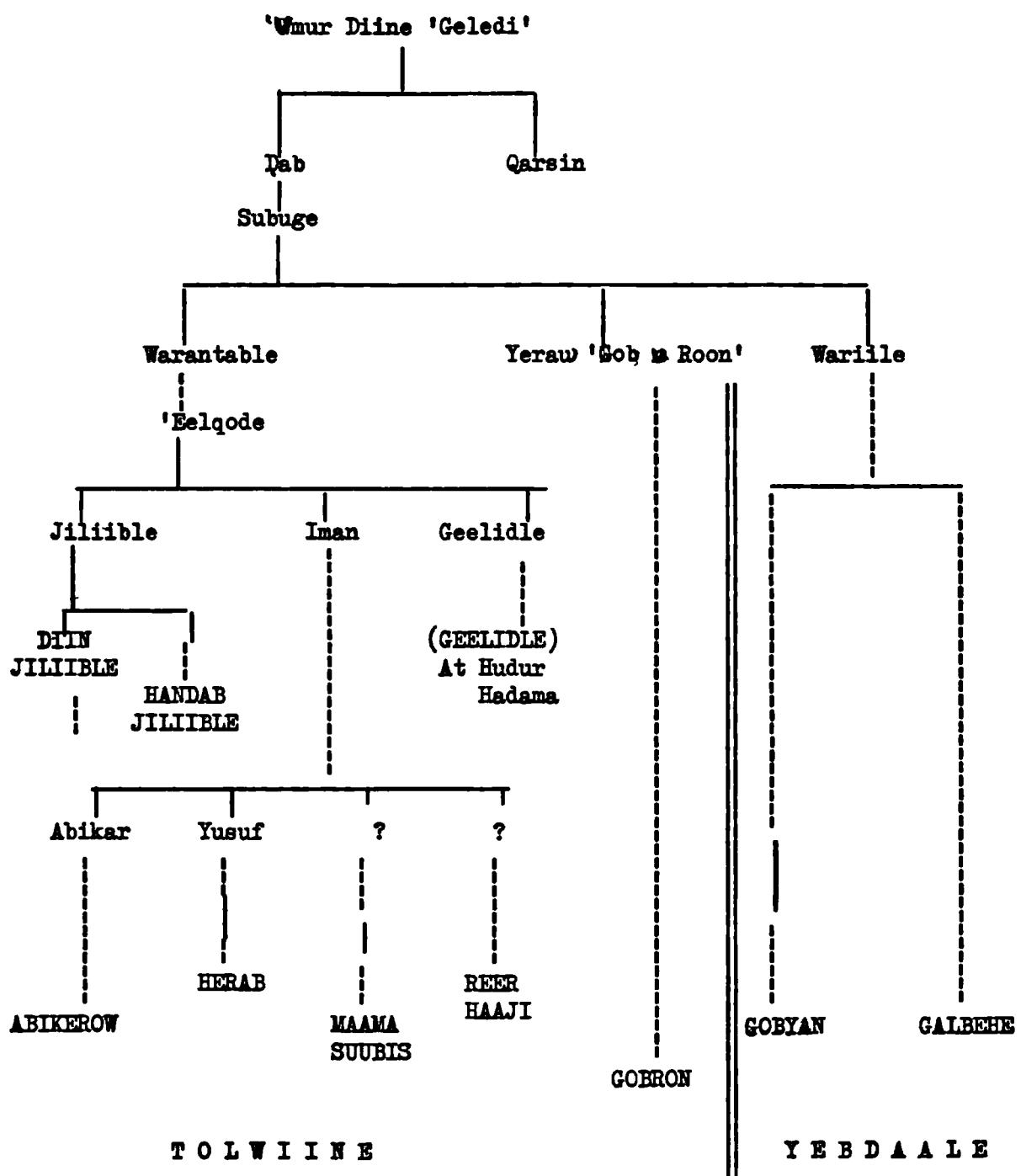
So not only were the values and purposes of the local community not overwhelmed by those of the nation state, but they showed signs of themselves influencing the state from all sides. To use Bailey's 'game' analogy, the players in the peripheral arenas were getting those in the main arena (many players had places in both) to play their game. This provoked strong reactions from those of the national elite who were committed to the contrary principle. This was among the factors which led to the coup of 1969, which abolished the old compromises, and decreed that from then on everyone should play the same game in the same arena.

Meanwhile, we have seen that the members of one of the three social categories which cut across the old clan structure, the Lightskins, have shown signs of asserting themselves within the new framework, by becoming a united group, disregarding the old boundaries; this is something which could not have happened before Somalia became a single state.

The lower category, the Habash, however, have so far not reacted in this way. This is because in the traditional system of values their status carries a stigma, and they have not as yet absorbed any ideas which might make it instead a matter of pride. Consequently if

they attempt to raise their status socially it is not by emphasising their category membership but by attempting to ignore and abolish it as a classification, and to present themselves simply as 'Somali'. This too, is a way of making use of the new, national framework and would have been impossible under the old system.

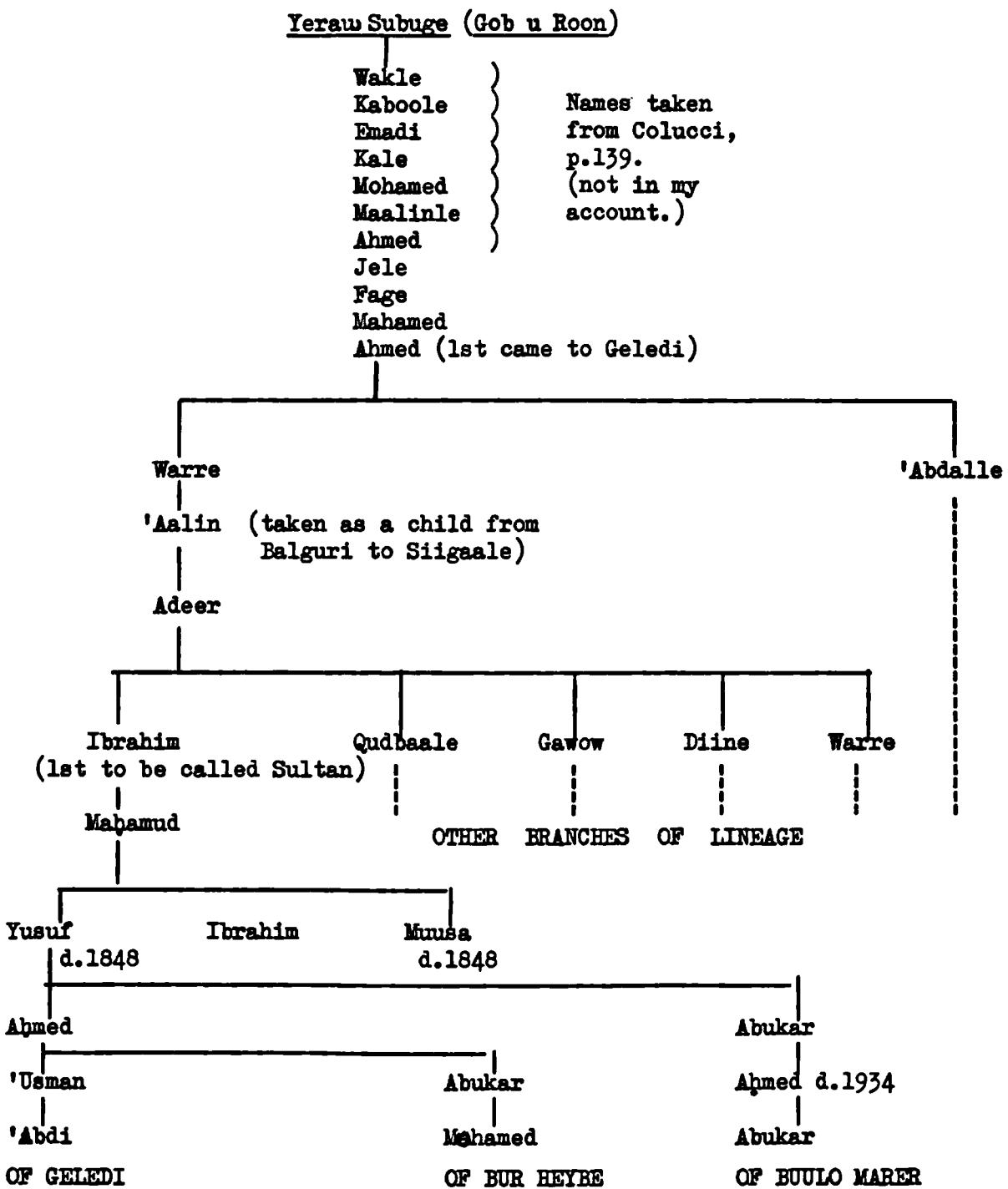
Thus the experience of 'encapsulation', in Geledi and communities like it, while initially it has only confirmed the traditional pattern of stratification, also has effects which may in the end undermine it.

APPENDIX IGENEALOGICAL CHART OF GELEDI NOBLE LINEAGES

Names in block letters = lineage or moiety groups.
 Dotted lines show intervening names omitted, or not known.

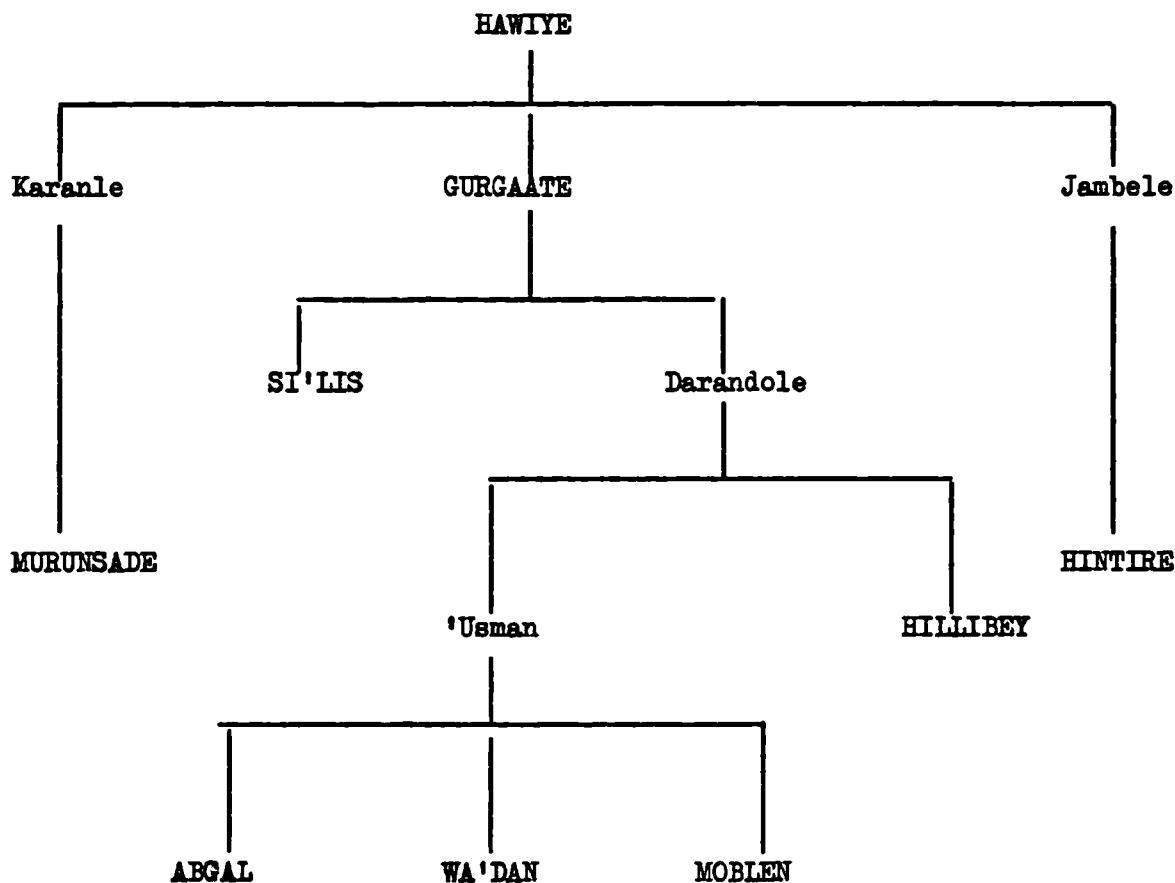
APPENDIX II

GENEALOGY OF THE GOBRON DYNASTY



APPENDIX III

**GENEALOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE
HAWIYE GROUPS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT (SIMPLIFIED).**



Clan and clan-family names in block letters; other ancestors in lower case.

APPENDIXPOPULATION OF GELEDI-AFGOI TOWN IN 1954 (from Government Census)

VILLAGE DESCENT GROUP	TOLWIINE						YEBDAALE			AFGOI (L. B.)	PLACE UN- CERTAIN	TOTAL BY SEX	TOTAL
	E.		S.		R.		B.		S.				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Geledi Nobles	M F	139 172	111 122	41 60	51 69	56 56	3	25 5	424 484				908
Lightskins	M F	55 69	79 75	40 43	233 239	1 3	5 8	12 9	425 441				871
Habash	M F	186 220	16 19	1 5	155 151	68 72	1	15 15	421 483				904
Obscure	M F	11 14	5 9	2 7	1	3 4					21 35		56
Total	M F	381 475	211 225	83 115	439 460	129 135	45 62	50 29					2,739
Other Digil	M F	75 91	15 25	12 19	23 39	3	95 128	39 36	259 341				600
Wa'dan	M F	3 5	4 4	.	10	1 5	323 364	15 15	346 403				749
Other Hawiye	M F	6 15	7 13	2 4	16 11	1	101 103	46 30	179 176				355
Religious*	M F	4 8	5 13	1	10 11		51 33	4 4	74 60				134
Other	M F	26 28	6 12	9 13	3 8	1	44 47	17 10	105 119				224
'Somali'	M F	30 24	17 18	7 12	54 11		159 164	36 32	203 261				464
Arab	M F	9 7	13 7	4 7	8 9	7 4	304 240	44 19	389 293				682
Obscure	M F	7 14	5 7	7 4	9 16	3 4	25 30	15 9	71 84				155
Total by Sexes	M F	541 667	283 324	124 175	562 575	141 152	1147 1168	256 194					
TOTAL		1,208	607	299	1,137	293	2,315	450					6,309
No. of Houses (1968 Local Govt. figures)		331	122	87	257	96	801						1,683

* i.e. the 'sacred' lineages Aalmaf and Shekhal. These are found in many clans, but not the Geledi or Wa'dan.

APPENDIX VCHRONOLOGY OF MAIN HISTORICAL EVENTS AFFECTING GELEDI

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Events in Geledi</u>	<u>National & World Events</u>
10th-15th Centuries	'Zanj' in the riverine area.	Migrations of Somali clans. Benadir towns flourish
16th Century	Digil and Hawiye clans in S. Somalia.	Portuguese in E. Africa. Decline of Benadir towns.
17th Century	Geledi settlement established.	
18th Century	Defeat of the Sil'is Alliance with Wa'dan. Ibrahim Adeer takes the title 'Sultan'.	
19th Century		
1843	Bardera Campaign	
1848	Yusuf Mahamud killed at battle of 'Ad-'Adey.	
c.1880?	Ahmed Yusuf killed at battle of Agaren	
1892		Sultan of Zanzibar leases Benadir ports to Italy
1895	Massacre of Lafole	
20th Century		
1908	Italian 'station' at Afgoi	
1922	Railway built	Fascists in power in Italy
1924-1927		
1934		Italo-Abyssinian War
1941	British Military Administration	British army defeats Italians in E.Africa.
1950	Italian Trustee Administration.	
1961	Somali Independence	
1969	Coup d'etat and Military Government	

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